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EDITORIAL

As one season of the academic work of the Colombo Theological Seminary comes to a close at this graduation in July 2017, we present this volume of the CTS journal as a part of its proceedings. We are mindful of the flow that makes the teaching of pastoral and theological education so meaningful in a country where Christians form a small minority. At every graduation ceremony we encourage our students to move wisely into the world, while at the same time we wish to encourage a new group of students eager to learn to be Christian workers of quality. Our journal is published every year in order to strengthen the Protestant Christian community in Sri Lanka to take account of the issues that are relevant to the church today. We have endeavoured to keep the reader informed of the concerns of the contemporary Christian Church in the South Asia region. Our writers have always taken an impartial and scholarly view in dealing with theological and pastoral considerations while keeping the evangelical point of view.

In several of the last issues of our journal we have noted the importance of scholarly publications to advance a field of theological discourse. The Colombo Theological Journal offers opportunities to explore the innovative and pioneering thinking in the contexts of our discipline. We wish to thank all our contributors from the beginning of our journal for helping use to keep our journal lively. We are also happy to welcome any articles of academic quality to consider in future issues of this journal.

Following are the summaries of the papers that appear in this year's journal.

David deSilva explores the significance of the Roman imperial cult as a background for understanding Galatians. He describes the physical manifestations of the cult in Pisidian Antioch, the chief city in South Galatia, and shows how Paul's proclamation of his gospel would have challenged Roman imperial ideology by

rejecting society's claims concerning Augustus's achievement and by telling an alternative story of a universal rescue by a different "Son of God" and "Savior" (titles lavished on Augustus before the birth of Jesus). His call to Gentile Christian converts to withdraw from all forms of idolatry would have included standing aloof from the imperial cult and accepting the tension with their neighbors that this would bring. Nevertheless, deSilva rejects recent claims advanced by some scholars that Paul is particularly concerned about his converts' returning to the imperial cult when he writes Gal 4:8-11, or that the rival teachers themselves are concerned with giving Christians legal standing for their withdrawal for the cult by making them Jewish proselytes (Gal 6:12-13).

The Apostle Paul's reference to "the god of this age" in 2 Corinthians 4:4 is both intriguing as it is unique. It has the distinction of being interpreted historically in absolutely contradictory fashion: one argument claiming that the referent is Satan, while the other contending that it refers to God. Through a near-exhaustive examination of commentary on 2 Corinthians - from Marcion (2nd century) to Murray Harris (2005). Ivor Poobalan demonstrates that the present consensus opinion (that it refers to Satan), stands on much weaker grounds than the traditional interpretation (that it refers to God). The latter was the view that predominated from the second to the fifteenth centuries AD.

Somaratna provides a historical account of the positive contribution made by the Protestant Christian missions in the socio-economic development of the Jaffna Peninsula of Sri Lanka. Special attention is given to the work of the missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Mihindukulasuriya's biographical essay features a major figure in early 20th century Sri Lankan Christian history. The illustrious life and ministry of the Methodist clergyman Rev. John Simon de Silva is examined from the perspective of his engagement with the

emergent nationalist movement. The well documented article draws on extensive readings of de Silva's diaries and other archival sources.

The Editor wishes to thank Mr. Prabo Mihindukulasuriya for extensive assistance in all phases of editing from the original design to final proofreading of some articles submitted for publication in this journal.

G P V Somaratna
July 2017

THE IMPERIAL CULT AND PAUL'S PROCLAMATION IN GALATIA

DAVID A. DESILVA

Introduction

The cult of the goddess *Roma* and her emperors was a major ideological, architectural, and liturgical feature of the life of most cities in the Roman East, including the cities of Southern Galatia, as exemplified by Pisidian Antioch.[1] The gospel Paul preached

[1] Seminal studies on the imperial cult in the Roman world include: R. Mellor, *ΘΕΑ ΡΩΜΗ: The Worship of the Goddess Roma in the Greek World* (Hypomnemata 42. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975); S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: University Press, 1984). K. Scott, *The Imperial Cult under the Flavians* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936); Lily R. Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, CT: American Philological Association, 1931); Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988), 297-333. Information on imperial cult in particular cities and helpful summaries of the data can be found in Steven Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-131; D. A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 37-48; *Unholy Allegiances: Heeding Revelation's Warning* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 11-34; John D. Crossan, "Roman Imperial Theology," pp. 59-73 in Richard Horsley, ed., *In the Shadow of Empire* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). On the "Roman peace" in particular, see Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and*

throughout the cities of South Galatia interacted with the claims of Roman imperial ideology at many points, and his Galatian converts (and their neighboring non-converts!) would likely have made many of these connections. The changes in practice that Paul demanded of his converts – most notably the forsaking of all idolatrous cult and worship of any other god (see 1 Thess. 1:9-10) – would have changed his converts' relationship with the imperial cult alongside the many other Greco-Roman religious cults with which they had been familiar and in which they had participated. It is well worth considering, therefore, both the phenomenon of imperial cult in Galatia and the implications of Paul's gospel for the gospel of empire and its cult.

At the same time, it is important not to make *more* of this background than Paul himself makes. The surge of interest in the imperial cult and Roman imperial ideology in recent decades has led to a swell in attempts to locate concern with this cult at the center of the issue in Galatia to which Paul must respond as he writes this letter. For reasons that will be laid out in the second half of this article, these currents threaten to throw our understanding of the situation in Galatia and the program of the rival teachers (that is, the presenting needs that elicited Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians) off course.

The Imperial Cult in a Leading City of Galatia

Even while Rome was still governed as a republic, cities in the eastern empire (for Rome was an *empire* long before it had *emperors*) erected temples to the divinized personification of Rome, the goddess Roma, in acknowledgement of its power, in expression of the locals' loyalty, and in hope of beneficent relations. From the earliest years of Octavian's (Augustus's) rule, cults of Rome's rulers, deceased and living, exploded throughout

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the Peace of Jesus Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 7-54. The present article is taken, with some modification, from the forthcoming commentary by D. A. deSilva on Galatians in the New International Commentary on the New Testament series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).

the cities of Italy, Greece, (modern) Turkey, Syria, and the territories in between and beyond. Two authors – Nicolaus of Damascus (a personal friend of Herod the Great) and Philo of Alexandria – give eloquent testimony to this phenomenon *and* its motivation:

> People gave him this name [Augustus] in view of his claim to honor; and, scattered over islands and continents, through city and tribe, they revere him by building temples and by sacrificing to him, thus requiting him for his great virtue and acts of kindness toward themselves. (Nicolaus of Damascus, *Life of Augustus*, 1; tr. Clayton Hall)

> If ever there was a man to whom it was proper that new and unprecedented honors should be voted, it was certainly fitting that such should be decreed to … Augustus, not [only] because he was the first, and greatest, and universal benefactor … but also because the whole of the rest of the habitable world had decreed him honors equal to those of the Olympian gods. And we have evidence of this in the temples, and porticoes, and sacred precincts, and groves, and colonnades which have been erected, so that all the cities put together, ancient and modern, which exhibit magnificent works, are surpassed, by the beauty and magnitude of the buildings erected in honor of Caesar, and especially by those raised in our city of Alexandria. (Philo, *Leg.* 149-150; tr. H. D. Yonge)

Not merely the phenomenon of the worship of the emperors and Roma, but the ideology of the beneficent and divinely instituted ordering of the *orbis terrarum*, the circle of the inhabited lands about the Mediterranan, through their rule is a foundational – and loudly trumpeted – component of the public discourse of the entire region and, therefore, an important backdrop for thinking about the significance of the Christian gospel, the challenges both faced and *posed* by the early Christian movement, and the ways

in which imperial cult factors into the situations addressed by the New Testament writings themselves.[2]

The cities addressed by Paul's letter to the Galatians were no exception to this enthusiasm for the Roman emperors and the cultic expression thereof. Here we focus on Pisidian Antioch, the leading city of South Galatia, though much of what is said below could also be affirmed, with slight modifications, in regard to Ancyra, the leading city of North Galatia.[3] The Antioch that Paul knew was a revitalized Roman colony dominated architecturally and spatially by edifices related to imperial cult and the honoring

[2] The greatest energy and attention has been devoted to the relevance of the imperial cult for the interpretation of Revelation: see especially Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 132-217; Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (JSNTSS 132. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); G. Biguzzi, "Ephesus, its Artemision, its Temple to the Flavian Emperors, and Idolatry in Revelation," *NovT* 40 (1998): 276-90; D. A. deSilva, "The Image of the Beast and the Christians in Asia Minor," *Trinity Journal* 12 ns (1991): 185-206; *Seeing Things John's Way*, 93-116, 193-215, 257-284; *Unholy Allegiances*, 35-76; Jörg Frey, "The Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult for the Book of Revelation," pp. 231-255 in John Fotopoulos [ed.], *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006). Studies covering the whole of the New Testament include Dominique Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* (Fribourg: University Press, 1974); Bruce W. Winter, *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Response* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), with varying success in regard to particular texts.

[3] There is considerable debate concerning the breadth of Paul's missionary activity in the Roman province of Galatia, whether it remained concentrated in the southern part (with Paul continuing to nourish the congregations he and Barnabas founded together early in their missionary work; see Acts 13-14) or expanded into central and northern Galatia at a later period. On this debate, and for an argument in favor of locating Paul's activities and interests in south Galatia, see D. A. deSilva, *Reading Paul Through Asian Eyes: A Sri Lankan Commentary on Galatians* (Kohuwela: Colombo Theological Seminary, 2014), 22-33.

of the imperial family more generally. Phrygia and Galatia came under direct Roman rule in 25 BC, united in the new Roman province of Galatia. Augustus, the then-ruling emperor, injected new life into the city by settling upwards of three thousand veterans and their families there as citizens of the newly re-founded *Colonia Caesarea Antiochia*.

By far the most impressive structure on the archaeological site, as no doubt in Paul's lifetime as well, is the Augusteum, a monumental temple built to honor Augustus as a god. It is likely to have been completed by the turn of the era. The central feature was a temple with a footprint of about 85 by 50 feet. The original height of the temple has been estimated at between 45 and 55 feet. Within the temple would have stood (or sat) a colossal cult image of Augustus. The sacred space was rendered far more impressive by the construction of a two-storey semicircular portico behind the temple. Porticoes extended from the ends of the semicircle past the temple, creating an open courtyard of about 300 by 300 feet before the temple. The temple along with its porticoes were graced with ornate carvings. A common motif involves garlands and the heads of bulls, reminiscent of the sacrifices performed here to honor Augustus on the 23rd of every month (in celebration of his birthday on September 23) to express loyalty and gratitude to the emperor for his divine gifts and as particular benefactor of this colony, and to pray to the other gods, like Jupiter Best and Greatest, for the emperor's continued well-being during his lifetime. The worship of Augustus continued long after his death and his official recognition by the Senate as a "god," after which it was customary to refer to him as "the Divine Augustus" in all public inscriptions.

The residents of Antioch further aggrandized this monument by constructing a massive gateway, called a Propylaeum, to the sacred area. Although almost nothing remains of this building today except for its footprint, this was originally a tall structure decorated with statues of members of the imperial family. One of

these showed a male figure, perhaps Augustus himself, with a barbarian kneeling before him as a captive. Such "art" also communicated a clear message to the indigenous inhabitants around Antioch: one way or another, they would submit to Roman rule.

Civic improvements continued in this area under the reign of Tiberius, Augustus's successor. A rich citizen named Titus Baebius Asiaticus paved a large open area in front of the Propylaeum, dedicating it to Tiberius. This area functioned as a place for recreation and commerce, to judge from the shops, bars, and restaurants found surrounding the square and in close proximity. Some of the few remaining paving stones still bear game boards that had been scratched into them in antiquity. Citizens were invited to enjoy some of the benefits of the imperial peace here in the shadow of the great Augusteum complex.

One of the most important inscriptions from the Augustan period is the *Res Gestae Divi Augustus*, "the things accomplished by the divine Augustus."[4] The emperor composed this text himself in the months prior to his death, intending it to be the epitaph on his life's achievement. The inscription speaks of his deliverance of the Roman world from civil war,[5] his successful neutralizing of threats to the borders, his lavish benefactions upon the Roman people, the staggering number of public buildings erected at his expense (that is, from his share in the spoils of war), his diligence

[4] The full text in English can be found in F. W. Danker, *Benefactor: An Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton House Publishing, 1982), 256-80; the Latin and an older translation can be found in F. W. Shipley (tr.), *Velleius Paterculus; Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (LCL 152; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924).

[5] This would refer to the civil war between Octavian (who would later be given the title "Augustus") and his forces, on the one side, against Marc Antony and Cleopatra VII of Egypt and their armies on the other, effectively brought to an end with Octavian's victory in the naval battle at Actium in 31 BC.

in rewarding veterans, and the many public honors awarded to him on account of his virtue. Augustus ordered that this lengthy document be engraved on bronze plates and placed in front of his mausoleum in Rome. A copy in both Latin and Greek was found inscribed on the ancient temples of Rome and Augustus in Ancyra (modern Ankara) and in Apollonia in Pisidia; it was also engraved in full on the Propylaeum in front of the Augusteum in Pisidian Antioch. About a hundred pieces of this inscription were found in the area of "Tiberius Square."

Two sentences from the Res Gestae are particularly appropriate as we consider Antioch. Augustus recalls how "citizens everywhere, privately as individuals and collectively as municipalities, sacrificed unremittingly at all the shrines on behalf of my health." This would have included the Augusteum in Antioch and its surrounding shrines. In another paragraph, Augustus recalls how "In Africa, Sicily, Macedonia, the two Spanish provinces, Achaia, Asia, Syria, Narbonian Gaul, and *Pisidia*, I settled colonies of soldiers." Pisidian Antioch was one such colony.

The prominence of the imperial cult and of the ideology of the emperors that the cult represented suggests that Paul's audience would have heard significantly political overtones in his proclamation of a "son of a god" who came as a "savior" to bring deliverance to the whole world, whose coming was "good news" ("gospel") for all people. The term "gospel" (*euangelion*), common no doubt in Paul's preaching as it was in his letters, appears in imperial as well as Christian contexts, though in the plural rather than the singular form that is typical for Christian discourse. An inscription from Priene looks back upon the birth of Augustus as "the beginning of good news (*euangeliōn*)" for the whole world.[6] Josephus uses the term to refer to the accession of Vespasian to the imperial power (*War* 4.9.5 §656). It appears also

[6] For the full text, translation, and discussion, see Danker, *Benefactor*, 215-218.

in an inscription from Pergamum by a gymnasiarch honoring Augustus.[7] Augustus was lauded as "son of the deified [Julius]" (*divi filius*) on coins, inscriptions, and the like, as were his own successors in relationship to him after his death and formal divinization by the Senate. Latin makes a distinction between a "god" (*deus*) and a "deified being" (*divus*). Greek inscriptions, however, show no such distinction: Augustus and many of his successors were called "son of God" (*huios theou*), using the very phrase also used to describe Jesus in the New Testament and, no doubt, in the early preaching of Christian missionaries.

Augustus was also hailed as "Savior" (*sōtēr*, as, for example, in the inscription on the Temple of Augustus and Roma on the Acropolis in Athens), another common way to speak of Jesus in the New Testament and early Christian preaching. What Paul calls "this present evil age" (Gal 1:4), from which rescue is desperately needed, is celebrated as the Golden Age of the Augustan Peace in all manner of public discourse. When Paul identifies that "Savior" (Acts 13:23; Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:10) as Jesus, "the Son of God" (Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:19; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:13), he claims for an executed Judean titles that are commonly ascribed to the emperor in Rome. His message was a challenge to imperial ideology on all fronts, as would be the witness of Christians increasingly during the first three centuries of the Church.

The Imperial Cult Behind the Problems in Galatians?

Given the prominence of the imperial cult and the ideology that it represents, it is not surprising to find inquiries being made into the degree to which this phenomenon might have played a part

[7] *IGR* 4.317; see Taylor, *Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 275. These three known instances, however, hardly justify claiming that the word "was *often* used in contexts dealing with imperial good news (e.g., the birthdays, victories, and health of the emperors)" (Justin Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* [WUNT 2.237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 139, who only actually cites the first one on p. 33 of his book; emphasis mine).

in the situation addressed by Galatians. To what extent did local pressures to participate in the imperial cult's calendar of festivals weigh on the Gentile Christians in Galatia? Was circumcision an attractive possibility because it would clarify their status in the community as full proselytes to Judaism and, therefore, exempt them from participation in the *worship* of the emperors and the iconic rites in which Gentiles typically engaged? Two recent scholars, Bruce Winter and Justin Hardin, have attempted to demonstrate that the imperial cult was a major consideration behind the program of the rival teachers and in the apostasy that was underway among the Galatian Christians.

Hardin looks to Gal 4:10 – "You are observing days and months and seasons and years!" – for evidence that the Galatian Christians are beginning to observe the religious festivals of the local imperial cult. Hardin is correct that, "far from being a Christian ghetto with no pressures from society, the Galatian Jesus-believers were forced to negotiate their obligations in society vis-à-vis the imperial cult."[8] This fact does not, however, provide any evidence that they are succumbing to *those* particular pressures at this time. It is important for us to realize that the imperial cult was not merely a matter of lifeless architecture and statuary: it was also a matter of a regular calendar of civic festivals into which the majority of a city's population was swept.

> Imperial temples and sanctuaries were wreathed with flowers. Animals were sacrificed at various altars throughout the main locations of the city, for example, the council house, temples of other deities, theatres, the main squares, stadiums, and gymnasiums. These political, religious, and public buildings were linked together by processions and dignitaries, garlanded animals being led to slaughter, and bearers of icons and symbols of the emperor. As the procession passed by, householders would sacrifice

[8] Hardin, *Imperial Cult*, 141.

> on small altars outside their homes. The whole city thus had opportunity to join in the celebration.[9]

Nevertheless, we have no clear evidence in Galatians that the Christian converts in Galatia were faltering in negotiating their way through a polytheistic city without succumbing to idolatry.

Hardin claims that "Paul does not actually employ any Jewish terms" when speaking of the religious calendar of festivals to which the Galatians have begun to return.[10] However, the unmistakable resonance with Gen. 1:14 in Gal. 4:10, which Hardin discusses only briefly in a footnote, seems far more significant here than he allows. The language of Gal. 4:10 specifically recalls the old Greek translation of Genesis 1:14, where the stars and other astronomical bodies are created to serve "for signs and for seasons and for days and annual festivals." These are precisely the same terms as found in Gal. 4:10 (with the substitution of "months" or "new moon" festivals for "signs").[11] The Galatians were beginning to observe the Sabbath days (Exod. 20:8-11; 31:16-17; Deut. 5:12-15), quite possibly the new moon festivals (Num. 10:10; 28:11-15), and could be expected, then, to observe the seasonal feasts (feasts lasting more than a day, like Passover, Tabernacles, and Booths)[12] and annual commemorations, like the

[9] Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 162.

[10] Hardin, *Imperial Cult*, 120.

[11] Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 192-193; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 205-206. The use of "and" to separate each constituent in this list also reflects the syntax of Gen 1:14, though D. Francois Tolmie (*Persuading the Galatians: A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of a Pauline Letter* [WUNT 2/190; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 154-155) suggests that this may have the effect of emphasizing the tediousness of the endless observances to which the Galatians are about to commit themselves.

[12] See Exod. 13:10; 23:14-17; 34:23-24; Lev. 23:4-8, 15-22, 33-36, 39-41; Num. 9:2-3.

New Year.[13] The observance of the Sabbath, together with circumcision and the distinctive dietary practices, were the most obvious and most universally well-known "works of the Law" that set Jews apart from Gentiles. Paul's words here indicate that some of the Galatian Christians, at least, had begun to observe a particular calendar of religious festivals, which is still most likely to be identified as the sacred days of the Jewish religious calendar. This would have represented an initial step on their part toward conforming their lives to Torah's regulations, as the rival teachers were urging.[14] While it is true that Paul is not hostile to the Jewish calendar in other contexts, this is no argument against reading Gal. 4:10 as Paul taking the Galatian converts to task for adopting these observances *as part of the package* of aligning oneself with the Torah as the means of attaining righteousness and entering into "life" before God.[15]

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[13] Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; New York: Scribners, 1920), 233–34; J. D. G. Dunn, "Echoes of Intra-Jewish Polemic in Paul's Letter to the Galatians" (*JBL* 113 [1993] 459-77), 470-473; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990), 182. One need not suppose that enough time had passed for the Galatians to observe everything in the calendar; it was enough that they had begun to observe the cycle. Genesis 1:14, not the list of actual festivals already observed by his converts, accounts for the scope of Paul's language. Hardin (*Imperial Cult*, 121) claims that it would have been impossible for the Galatians to have actually observed the annual festivals by the time Paul writes, as they were not yet circumcised (cf. Exod. 12:43-51, which explicitly excludes the uncircumcised from celebrating the Passover along with Jews). He deduces from this that Paul *cannot* be referring to the Jewish calendar of observances, but this deduction depends on not allowing Paul any room for exaggeration.

[14] This verse also provides clear evidence that the rival teachers were promoting more than merely circumcision, as John Chrysostom recognized: "Hence is plain that their teachers were preaching to them not only circumcision, but also the feast-days and new-moons" (*Comm. in Gal.* 4:10; NPNF^2 13.31).

[15] Contra Hardin, *Imperial Cult*, 120-121.

The early Christian movement was adamant in regard to promoting non-participation in the cults of the traditional gods and, indeed, any other gods besides the God of Israel. Gentile converts to the movement would have realigned their practice in ways that would have provoked a considerable amount of peer pressure from their non-Christian neighbors to return to their former, *pious* practice. Nevertheless, it seems highly unlikely that they have returned to observing any of the rites on the "pagan" religious calendars at the time of Paul's writing, including imperial cult festivals. The rival teachers, being committed to the Torah in all its particulars, would have opposed such practice as adamantly as Paul.[16]

Were the rival teachers motivated to promote circumcision among the Gentile converts to the Christian movement out of a desire to preserve a uniformly Jewish face to the movement and, thus, simplify the movement's relationship to this ubiquitous cult? Jews were allowed to demonstrate their loyalty to the emperor in ways appropriate to their historic commitment to henotheism.[17] In Jerusalem, sacrifices were offered in the Temple

[16] There is evidence that *some* Christians faltered in this regard in *some* settings. The movement known by the name "Nicolaitans" in Revelation (Rev. 2:6, 14-15), along with the followers of the Christian prophet whom John labels "Jezebel" (Rev. 2:20-22), were certainly seeking to make room in the Christian life for participation in idolatrous worship, no doubt for the sake of dissipating the tension between the polytheistic society and the exclusively monotheistic (and increasingly Gentile) sect. It is noteworthy, however, that where a return to involvement in idolatry is a problem, it is clearly named and attacked as such (so also in Paul's writings, cf. 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:1-33). On the importance of the imperial cult as a feature of the landscape of the churches addressed by John's Revelation – and as a feature of the landscape of Revelation itself – see D. A. deSilva, *Reading Revelation: From Ancient Asia Minor to Modern South Asia* (Kohuwela: Colombo Theological Seminary, forthcoming).

[17] Although Hardin's discussion of the forms of honor shown the emperor by the Jewish people in various locales is generally quite

on behalf of the emperor, rather than *to* the emperor in his own temple. Only Caligula challenged the practice, but he was – in all respects – an aberration. Diaspora Jews enjoyed the covering, as it were, provided by the rites in their central Temple, though they also honored the emperors in their synagogues with inscriptions and other aniconic honors, as well as, no doubt, prayers on behalf of the rulers.[18] The Jews' displays of loyalty and gratitude did not constitute imperial *cult* in any form. In Jerusalem, the "cult" was offered to the One God of Israel alongside prayers to this One God that the emperors would be well. In the synagogues, Jews offered or inscribed political honors that could in no way be understood by the participants or observers as *worship* of the emperors, which was the obvious goal of the activity in the Augusteum of Antioch as in hundreds of other such temples throughout the Roman world. If all the males among the Christian groups were circumcised, the groups would enjoy the same toleration as the synagogue since they would also clearly identify themselves as *Jewish* groups.

Whether or not this was actually on the minds of the rival teachers is beyond our capacity to retrieve. We can say, however, against the recent proposals by Bruce Winter that *Paul* does not give us any indication that concerns over the imperial cult motivated the rival teachers to urge, even constrain (to the

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solid (*Imperial Cult*, 102-114), it blurs the distinctions too much to say, with him, that "Jews did not have special exemption from observing the imperial cult, but in fact were active participants *along with Gentiles*" (p. 110, emphasis mine). No Torah-observant Jew would have been an active participant *along with a Gentile*, for the Gentiles participated in some form of idolatrous rite as part of their observance of the imperial cult and offered sacrifices *to* the emperor as well as to other gods *on behalf of* the emperor. Jews were "active participants" in their own, carefully qualified and restricted ways and also off on their own rather than alongside their neighbors in the latter's rites.

[18] See the fine discussion of Jewish displays of loyalty both in Israel and throughout the diaspora, as well as imperial responses to the same, in Winter, *Divine Honours*, 94-114.

extent possible), the Gentile converts in these cities to accept circumcision. According to Winter, the persecution that the rival teachers seek to avoid (6:12) comes from local Roman authorities. The rival teachers desire "to show a good face in the flesh" (*euprosōpēsai*, 6:12) means "wanting to secure a good *legal* face or standing."[19] It is true that, in legal contexts, the Greek word "face" (*prosōpon*) can carry legal connotations in the idiom "have face" (*prosōpon echein*). However, Paul does not use this technical language. Winter is mapping the meaning of "face" (*prosōpon*) as it appears in the idiom "have face" over the meanings of words belonging to the *euprosōpos* word group, a word group that tends to denote a pleasing appearance and, by extension, a specious concern with outward appearances.[20] This is, of course, a basic lexical fallacy to be avoided.

The rival teachers want "to look good" to someone (6:12). The boast that Paul imagines the rival teachers making in Gal. 6:13 could *only* be made before a Jewish court of reputation; no other group would give honor to Jews who talked Gentiles into undergoing what was, in their eyes, a disgusting body modification procedure. It is before their fellow Jews that Paul accuses the rival teachers of wanting to "look good" by their actions among Gentiles in the (renegade Jewish) Christian movement (6:12).[21] Jewish Christians who meet together are not

[19] Winter, *Divine Honours*, 243-249; *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 137-140 .

[20] LSJ 728 col. 2. Winter's interpretation also leaves aside the important qualifier, "in the flesh."

[21] One reason that Winter (*Divine Honours*, 244) rejects the typical meaning of εὐπροσωπῆσαι ("to make a fair showing") here is that he finds it "difficult to see how the outcome of circumcision could ever have been construed as a 'fair show' in the flesh with the male genital organ bereft of its adorning foreskin." The difficulty only remains for him, however, because he never questions his decision about the panel of judges that would be making this determination, namely Greeks or Romans. This would be normal and appropriate in the eyes of Jews, for

legally endangered by the presence of uncircumcised Gentiles in their midst; such Gentiles are to be found, in admittedly smaller numbers, in the synagogues as well. Indeed, the full proselytization of Gentiles tended, throughout the first century and beyond, to *invite* rather than *alleviate* negative attention from Roman authorities, resulting in expulsion from Rome on at least one occasion.[22] The practice of circumcising Gentiles came to be subjected to severe, restrictive legislation in the period after Hadrian.[23] It makes far better sense, therefore, to continue to regard the persecution that the rival teachers seek to avoid by promoting circumcision among Gentile Christians also to come from a Jewish quarter. The agitators seek to turn a cause for persecution into a boast before the same court of opinion.[24]

Conclusion

Paul's gospel challenged Roman imperial ideology by clearly rejecting the dominant culture's claims on behalf of Augustus's

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whom the foreskin was the abomination. Winter also subtly shifts the subject of what is going to "look good" from the rival teachers to the penis, which is a bit of rhetorical sleight of hand as he doesn't retain this shift in his own interpretation – merely uses it to discredit the traditional view.

[22] See Tacitus, *Annals* 2.85; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.3.4-5 §§65, 81-85; Suetonius, *Tib.* 36, all of which treat the expulsion of Jews under Tiberius in connection with the purging of Rome of religious practices deemed infectious superstition.

[23] Winter, *Divine Honours*, 231-232.

[24] Andrew A. Das (*Galatians* [St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2014], 636) decisively and rightly concludes: "Paul, for his part, does not mention the emperor cult as a factor in the rivals' or the Galatians' motivations. He never alludes to any pressure on the gentiles from the governing authorities. He never mentions other gentiles at Galatia who might be pressuring the Christ-believers. Throughout Galatians persecution always derives from Jewish groups or communities, and never from pagan communities or the government (see 1:13, 23 [Paul himself!]; 4:29; 5:11; cf. 2 Cor. 11:24-25)." See also Das, *Paul and the Stories of Israel: Grand Thematic Narratives in Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 210-215.

achievement and by telling an alternative story of universal rescue by a different Son of God and Savior. Gentile Christian practice challenged Roman imperial ideology by withdrawing from former cultic displays of loyalty and gratitude toward *all* the Greco-Roman gods, including the divinized emperors. Gentile Christians would face increasing pressure from their neighbors and, eventually, local and imperial authorities because of this withdrawal. In the early second century, Pliny the Younger would require of Christians that they offer wine and incense to the statues of the emperor Trajan and the traditional gods, or else suffer execution (or detention for further trial in Rome). Nevertheless, the imperial cult and the ideology of Rome and her emperors cannot be allowed to become the "new Gnosticism" (which was for a period of decades following the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library promoted as a presenting problem behind nearly every New Testament text), such that we begin to see it as the focal issue behind *every* situation addressed by one of the New Testament writings.

THE HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4

IVOR POOBALAN

Ideology resides not only in biblical texts; it also resides in interpretive traditions that have been granted positions of authority[1]

1. Introduction

To research the validity of the common interpretation of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου (the God of This Age) in 2 Cor 4:4 raises the question about how this phrase has been explained in the history of biblical interpretation. Has there been a contradictory opinion at any point in history? If so, on what grounds has this been advanced? In what ways have these interpretations been affected by the social or ideological particularities of the interpreters' own contexts? And, are we in a position to arrive at a more objective appropriation of the meaning of the phrase by distinguishing between the text in its original context and the text within the historical contexts of its interpretation?

The first hopeful indication that our quest is not without merit is the fact that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου has been explained in radically contradictory terms in the history of its interpretation.

[1] V K Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1996), 200.

Some have understood the referent of the phrase to be the devil, while others have read the very phrase as a description of the God of the Bible. For reasons we may consider below, while the latter position predominated from earliest Christianity (almost certainly as far forward as the period of the Renaissance), the former position, beginning in the period of the Reformation, has almost completely replaced its alternative effectively up to the present time.

This astonishing ambivalence towards 2 Cor 4:4 is not without some plausible historical explanations. First, Marcion, the second-century heretic, had used the phrase to justify his argument for *two gods*: the inferior, vindictive, and partisan god of the Hebrew Bible, and the superior, loving, and universal Father-God revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.[2] As a result, when the early interpreters commented on this verse, they were partly, and sometimes wholly, constrained to react to Marcion and, in later years, to Manichaean teachings that had also appropriated 2 Cor 4:4 to serve its ends.[3] Second, 2 Cor 4:4 received its definitive repositioning in the sixteenth century through the hugely influential writings of J Calvin. He had, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, asserted that no one who reads Paul "with a clear mind" could fail to conclude that in 4:4 Paul was certainly referring to the devil and not to God.[4] Could Calvin's stature in post-Reformation hermeneutics, and the severity of his censure of early Christian writers, be reasons for commentators since to

[2] See M M Mitchell, "Second Epistle to the Corinthians," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception,* ed. H-J Klauck, D C Allison, and D Apostolos-Cappadonna (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2009), 787. For an extremely helpful summary of Marcion's thirty *Antitheses*, see A von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God,* trans. J E Steely and L D Bierma (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1990), 60-63.

[3] See the section below entitled "2 Corinthians 4:4 in the Patristic Writers".

[4] See J Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon,* trans. T A Smail (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:53-54.

have felt disinclined to question the status quo? Are there ideological reasons behind what appears to be active neglect of the alternative position whenever it has been argued during this later era? One outstanding example of the latter is the work of A Clarke in 1826 (which we shall look at below), who cogently argued that "God" is the referent in 2 Cor 4:4; but his proposals have not even been dignified by a footnote in subsequent discussions on the subject.[5]

Robbins explains that "the spectrum of ideology for socio-rhetorical criticism occurs in four special locations", of which one is "authoritative traditions of interpretation".[6] In this chapter, we will have ample opportunity to test this claim both because the survey covers a long-enough period (twenty centuries) of interpretation, and because the verse has been contentious, and has resulted in polar-opposite interpretations: "[Discourse] creates a world of pluriform meanings and a pluralism of symbolic universes, and this means that discourse is always implicated in power. . . . The discourse of historical interpretation, therefore, has ideological texture".[7]

To consider the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 we shall examine the views of exegetes and commentators within six successive periods of church history, covering a broad sweep of extant literature from the second century to the twenty-first century: 1) the period of the patristic writers; 2) the sixth to eighth centuries; 3) the Carolingian period to the thirteenth century; 4) the Renaissance to the eighteenth century; 5) the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century; and, 6) the latter half of the twentieth century to the present day.

[5] A Clarke, *The New Testament: Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York, NY: Bangs and Emory, 1826), 314-316.

[6] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 193.

[7] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 200.

2. The Earliest Reception of 2 Corinthians

Most scholars hold to the position that 2 Corinthians is indisputably Pauline.[8] Given this consensus, it is perplexing that the epistle does not feature in the early writings of the post-apostolic period. For certain, not all of Paul's epistles are referred to in this period, but the fact that 1 Corinthians is so thoroughly attested makes the silence about 2 Corinthians remarkable.[9] This fact can play well into the interests of those who argue for the composite nature of the letter: the suggestion that disparate units of Pauline correspondence with the Corinthians circulated for a period, until a redactor collated them into a unified whole, canonical 2 Corinthians, presumably sometime in the first half of the second century.[10]

However, in a 2002 essay entitled, "'Take up the Epistle of the Blessed Paul the Apostle': The Contrasting Fates of Paul's Letters

[8] M Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 1: "One of the areas in which there is a consensus among NT scholars is that Paul was the author of 2 Corinthians"; M E Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* vol. 1, *Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I—VIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 3: "Whatever the earliest date at which 2 Corinthians was generally known in the church, it is certain that it is genuinely Pauline*".*

[9] Clement of Rome (96 CE) and Ignatius of Antioch (early 2nd century) refer extensively to 1 Corinthians in their writings, and seem to know only *one* letter to the Corinthians: "Take up the letter (την ἐπιστολην) of the blessed Paul the Apostle*".* See Harris, *Second Epistle*, 2-3.

[10] R F Collins, *Second Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 11-12 summarizes: "One proposal that has emerged is that extant 2 Corinthians is not a text that Paul dictated in one prolonged session. Rather, they opine, the text of 2 Corinthians that has been handed down through the centuries was not originally a single text but is a composite text compiled from as many as six different letter fragments. Some anonymous editor would have put them all together, using just one opening salutation and one letter closing, rather than incorporating a number of presumably similar opening salutations and letter closings*".*

to Corinth in the Patristic Period",[11] L L Welborn presents a novel argument. He asserts that 2 Corinthians suffered neglect in the early post-apostolic period due to the enormous emphasis given to 1 Corinthians by Clement of Rome, and the specific interpretation of its essence. Clement, the secretary of the Roman church, wrote a lengthy letter to the Corinthians in response to a revolt that had aimed to oust the presbyters there. Clement's purpose was to restore peace and order in the community, and to this end, he "marshals arguments from a variety of sources": the Jewish scriptures, Greek and Roman history, and the emerging Christian scriptures. He makes several allusions to Paul's epistles. In particular, Clement finds Paul's rhetoric against faction in 1 Corinthians well-suited to his cause, and proceeds to employ it with rigour in the service of his agenda. Welborn argues that although "[taken] to its logical conclusion, Paul's 'word of the cross' leads to a radical democratization of power", by lifting Paul's Corinthian appeal out of context, Clement made it an argument for hierarchical church politics: "Clement's ideal of 'peace and concord' by contrast, is oligarchic in character: it consists in submission to recognized authorities*"*.[12] Thus, although 2 Corinthians makes Paul's politics of power more explicit – that "only powerlessness is power" – the firm establishment of 1 Corinthians by the Roman church overshadowed and forestalled the serious reading of 2 Corinthians even when it became available to the churches of the early second century.[13] Following Wellborn's argument to its logical conclusion we may surmise that the impetus for the

[11] L L Welborn, "'Take up the Epistle of the Blessed Paul the Apostle': The Contrasting Fates of Paul's Letters to Corinth in the Patristic Period," in *Reading Communities Reading Scripture,* ed. G A Phillips and N W Duran (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 345-357.

[12] Welborn, "Take up the Epistle," 350.

[13] Welborn, "Take up the Epistle," 352. On the dominating influence of 1 Corinthians, see p 350: "It was in the Roman church that 1 Corinthians came to be so highly prized, and it was this church that gave to 1 Corinthians the position of special honor which it came to occupy in churches elsewhere (Antioch, Smyrna)*"*.

publication of 2 Corinthians may have come from a segment of the Corinthian church that wished to underscore Paul's point that power was to be found in weakness and not in oligarchic and hierarchical domination.[14]

Ironically, the earliest certain references to 2 Corinthians come from the pen of Marcion, whose view of the radical discontinuity between Jewish religion of the Old Testament and the revelation of Jesus Christ was buttressed by an appeal to a "canon" of writings that included an edited version of Luke and several letters of Paul.[15] What is even more significant is that in the course of arguing the finer points of his theology contrasting the God and Father of the Lord Jesus with the Creator God known to Judaism, Marcion made specific use of 2 Cor 4:4, and thus invested the earliest reception history of the text under review with an element of notoriety.[16]

It is rather unfortunate, therefore, that the exegesis of 2 Cor 4:4 in the ensuing period was somewhat muddied by the polemical environment of anti-Marcionism that continued for over two centuries.[17] Although preceded by Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 120-195),

[14] I am grateful to Professor C A Wanamaker (University of Cape Town) for proposing this latter point.

[15] See Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 3: "Marcion created his own version of the New Testament in Rome between 139 and 144 C.E., and it is clear from later writers that it included 2 Corinthians*".* For arguably the most influential treatment on Marcion see, von Harnack, *Marcion*.

[16] Mitchell, "Second Epistle," 787: "Second Corinthians was clearly known at Rome by ca. 140 CE, as it is found in the canon of Marcion; *indeed, 2 Cor 4:4 ("the god of this age") was pivotal for his doctrine of two gods*" (emphasis added).

[17] von Harnack, *Marcion*, 99-101; H Räisänen, "Marcion," in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul,* ed. S Westerholm (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 301: "The dissenter did not give in but founded a church of his own. For a long time this was a success – a formidable rival to the emerging Catholic church. It was only suppressed through a

in the main it was Tertullian (160–225) who levelled the most systematic counter-attack on Marcion's assertions in his *Adversus Marcionem*. One consequence of this specialized interest led to an emendation of the text.

[18] We are, therefore, fortunate to have a number of extant polemics and commentaries on biblical texts dating from the late second to the fifth centuries, especially where they include comments on 2 Corinthians 2–4.

3. Second Corinthians 4:4 in the Patristic Writers (150–500 CE)

The period of the Early Church Fathers (100 to the Council of Chalcedon, 451), was marked by a ferment of theological enquiry and controversies that fortuitously resulted in a slew of writings that speculated and commented on the written records of the apostolic period, some of which would, in the latter stages of this era, be recognized as canonical. Several of these influential figures commented on 2 Cor 4:4, and we are in a position to examine in detail the views of seven extant works below.

3.1 Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus was Bishop of Lyons in the second century, and during the years 175–185, he wrote several treatises termed *Against Heresies*. With the passing away of the apostolic era, and the absence of an authoritative code for Christian beliefs, this period saw the proliferation of diverse and contradictory ideas about the faith that had been handed down by the apostles. Marcion was just one of many teachers and philosophers who espoused views about Christianity that would, in time, be classified as heretical. Irenaeus refers to Marcion's argument from 2 Cor 4:4 and was probably the first to articulate an apologetic based on a particular reading of the grammar:

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lengthy process after the Constantinian turn when the mainstream church joined forces with the state to destroy the 'heretics'*".*

[18] See Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 306-307

> As to their affirming that Paul said plainly in the Second [Epistle] to the Corinthians: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not," and maintaining that there is indeed one god of this world, but another who is beyond all principality, and beginning, and power, we are not to blame if they, who give out that they do themselves know mysteries beyond God, know not how to read Paul. For if any one read the passage thus (i.e. according to Paul's custom), as I show elsewhere, and by many examples, that he uses transposition of words ("In whom God"), then pointing it off, and making a slight interval, and at the same time read also the rest [of the sentence] in one [clause] "hath blinded the minds of them of this world that believe not," he shall find out the true [sense]; that it is contained in the expression "God hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world". And this is shown by means of the little interval [between the clause]. For Paul does not say, "the God of this world" as if recognising any other beyond Him; but he confessed God as indeed God. And he says "the unbelievers of this world," because they shall not inherit the future age of incorruption. I shall show from Paul himself, how it is that God has blinded the minds of them that believe not, in the course of this work, that we may not just at present distract our mind from the matter in hand, [by wandering] at large.[19]

Given that this is the earliest post-Marcion interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4, it will be important to pay attention to Irenaeus' exegetical methodology. First, his charge that the opponents "know not how to read Paul" suggests that the context in which he writes must have been one of vigorous hermeneutical debate. Certainly, we know that the trend of rigorous textual study had already begun in the work of Marcion, and through superior organization of his movement, he mounted the greatest threat to catholic

[19] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* Book III, Chapter VII, accessed February 21, 2014, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html.

Christianity, and this most intensely in the period 150-190.[20] Second, Irenaeus introduces a methodology of exegesis called "transposition of words" and which, he claims, brings the reader closer to Paul's intention in the text. Further, by observing a specified vocalization of the text ("then pointing it off and making a slight interval") Irenaeus argues that one may read the text to mean that "God hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world*".* He presses this argument through additional examples to do with texts from Galatians and 2 Thessalonians. Third, his hermeneutic exclusively focuses on syntax and reading-strategies – the transposition of words and knowing how to read Paul – giving no attention to context, whether historical or literary; nor does he show the slightest concern about the theological implication of his interpretation, that the God of this text is reputed to blind people to the light of the gospel.

3.2 Tertullian of Carthage

A vigorous polemicist, Tertullian wrote a specific treatise against Marcion entitled *Against Marcion*. Staying within the Pauline corpus that Marcion had recognized as authoritative, Tertullian constructed a more thoroughgoing refutation of Marcion's beliefs. His comments on 2 Cor 4:4 show a development beyond Irenaeus:

> I am aware that certain expressions can be made of doubtful meaning through accent in pronunciation and manner of punctuation, where there is room for a double possibility in such respects. Marcion was catching at this when he read, *In whom the god of this age*, so that by pointing to the Creator as the god of this age he might

[20] von Harnack, *Marcion*, 100: "The danger that this church presented to Christianity was greatest in the generation between 150 and 190. *In this period it, and it alone, was actually a counterchurch*: this observation is evident from the abundance of opposing writings, and it can be read from the nature of the opposition offered by Justin and from the work of Celsus as well*".*

> suggest the idea of a different god of a different age. I however affirm that it must be punctuated like this: *In whom God*; and then, *Hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this age*: *In whom*, meaning the unbelieving Jews, in whom was covered up – the gospel beneath Moses' veil. For against them, for loving him with their lips but in their heart removing far off from him, God had uttered threats: *With the ear ye shall hear, and not hear; with eyes ye shall see, and not see*, and, *Unless ye believe ye shall not understand*: and, *I will take away the wisdom of the wise, and will make of none effect the prudence of the prudent*. But it was not concerning the hiding away of the gospel of an unknown god that he made these threats. And so, even though it were, *The god this world*, yet it is of the unbelievers of this world that he blinds the heart, because they have not of their own selves recognized his Christ, whom they ought to have known of from the scriptures.[21]

Tertullian, we see, maintains Irenaeus' earlier argument for a transposition of words to render the text: "In whom God . . . hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this age". However, unlike Irenaeus, he reads 4:4 in the light of its immediate context, and concludes that the "unbelievers" (ἄπίστοι) are continuous with the Jews of chapter 3: "In whom, meaning the unbelieving Jews in whom was covered up – the gospel beneath Moses' veil". To further advance his argument, he makes recourse to prophecies in the Hebrew Bible that threaten the Jews with a divine judgement that will completely incapacitate their spiritual faculties. While he specifically cites Isa. 29:13, he also quotes Isa. 6:9 and 29:14. We find that these references play no small part in early Christian texts that advanced a polemic against the unbelief

[21] E Evans, ed. and trans., *Tertullian Adversus Marcionem*, Books 4 and 5, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 581 and 583.

of Jewish audiences when confronted with the message of Jesus (see Mk 7:6-7; Rom 11:8; 9:20-21).[22]

3.3 Ambrosiaster

"The figure known to us as Ambrosiaster may well be the greatest enigma in the history of Pauline exegesis".[23] The name is used for an anonymous Latin writer of the late fourth century, who nevertheless bequeathed to posterity the earliest extant complete commentary on the Pauline corpus in Western Christianity. He can with certainty be dated to the Pontificate of Damasus I (366–384), and he directly influenced both Augustine and Pelagius in the fifth century.[24] The extent to which his influence was felt may be noted by the fact that "there are roughly seventy manuscripts of the commentaries dating back to the sixth century":[25]

> Paul is saying that God dims the sight of worldly people because they are hostile to the faith of Christ, and he does not want them to see the truth of the gospel of Christ's majesty. He is giving them what they want, since it is because people are hostile and tell lies that they are helped toward not being able to believe what they do not want to believe. They claim that Christ is a mere man, although he is the image of God, and leaving aside his claims, they talk only about his flesh. Isaiah said of such people: *He has blinded*

[22] On this see C A Evans, ed., *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 147-162.

[23] J Papsdorf, "'Ambrosiaster' in Paul in the Middle Ages," in *A Companion to St Paul in the Middle Ages,* ed. S Cartwright (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 51.

[24] See Papsdorf, "Ambrosiaster," 51-77; also see Alexander Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), 39-95.

[25] Papsdorf, "Ambrosiaster," 74.

> *their eyes, so that right until now they cannot see with their eyes or hear with their ears*.[26]

Ambrosiaster takes *Deus saeculi* (God of the world) in 4:4 as an indisputable reference to God. In his understanding, God is entirely capable of blinding people who are predisposed to be hostile to the faith of Christ; God is simply helping them "toward not being able to believe what they do not want to believe". It is noteworthy that he does not require the emendation of the text, as seen in Irenaeus and Tertullian, to argue such a position; neither does he seem to be bearing the burden of dealing with heretical movements as the latter Church Fathers did. His critique is levelled against people who denied the divinity of Christ. These may have been Jewish polemicists or pagans. Given that Ambrosiaster wrote some rebuttals against the latter in his *Quaestiones*, it is not impossible that he was referring to pagan unbelievers.[27] At the same time he, too, finds a scriptural warrant for his position in Isa. 6:10: "He has blinded their eyes, so that right until now they cannot see with their eyes or hear with their ears".

3.4 John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom (the "Golden Mouth") (349-407) was appointed the Archbishop of Constantinople in 397. He has a reputation for being one of the greatest expositors of Paul in the early centuries of Christianity.[28] With respect to 2 Cor 4:4 he wrote:

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[26] G L Bray, trans., *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians: Ambrosiaster* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 220.

[27] Papsdorf, "Ambrosiaster," 57-58: "He also devotes two of his longest *quaestiones* to rebutting pagan practices and beliefs, which was likely prompted by an on-going engagement with the remnants of pagan nobility that are known to have been active in late fourth-century Rome*".*

[28] For a careful treatment of Chrysostom's reading of Paul, see C A Hall, "Chrysostom," in S Westerholm, *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 330-344.

> The "god of this world" may refer neither to the devil nor to another creator, as the Manichaeans say, but to the God of the universe, who has blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world. In the world to come there are no unbelievers, only in this one.[29]

The church of Chrysostom's time found itself under serious threat from Manichaesim, perhaps the greatest of all the gnostic movements to challenge early Christianity.[30] Manichaesim was a syncretistic, gnostic movement that spread rapidly from the east in the third and fourth century. It incorporated elements of Zoroastrianism from Persia and Christianity into its complex system of thought that was characterised by cosmic dualism, that is, the struggle of light against darkness, and the principle of good against evil. In the Manichaean system Darkness, or matter, tries to hold on to the particles of light emitted by the realm of light where the King of the Paradise of Light or God dwells. In an attempt to hold on to light pariticles he has gained, Darkness creates the world and Adam and Eve through two demons who procreate them. However, the plan of Darkness is thwarted ultimately because the realm of light sends an envoy, the "Jesus Splendour", to enlighten humankind with saving esoteric knowledge.[31] In the statement above from Chrysostom, it would seem that he denies any possible connection of "the god of this world" with Satan, the adversary of God in the Christian system, as well as any possible connection to the Manichaean notion of the Darkness as creator of the world and humankind. Instead, Chrysostom is quite explicit that "the god of this world" can only

[29] Bray, *Ancient Christian Commentary,* 228.

[30] Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: the Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. and ed. R M Wilson, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983), 326-327 describes Manichaeism as one of only "four world religions known to the history of religions" (the others are Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam). At one time Manichaeism was found from Spain in the West to China in the East, and survived for nearly a thousand years before falling prey to empires, and particularly to aggressive Islam.

[31] See Rudolph, *Gnosis,* 336-339.

have one referent: "the God of the universe". Again, Chrysostom finds no discomfort (as many modern interpreters experience) in asserting that God "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers", although unlike Tertullian he is silent about who exactly he thinks these "unbelievers" are. Together with all exegetes preceding him, Chrysostom interprets αἰων as "world" and not "age". This fact is most important, because it seems clear that to the patristic writers the noun most naturally connoted the world of nature or κοσμος, rather than a technical expression for an "age" within the framework of apocalypticism and its purported temporal dualism. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the early Latin translations rendered the phrase as *Deus huius saeculi* (God of this world) and not *Deus aeui huius* (God of this age).

3.5 Augustine of Hippo

Augustine of Hippo (354–430), a passionate reader of Paul, has had the greatest influence on Western Christianity's interpretations of Paul's theology and hermeneutics. In fact, the present assumption of the Christian doctrine of grace was most carefully formulated in the writings of Augustine, which in turn was disseminated throughout the Middle Ages, and eventually influenced the Reformation from the sixteenth century on, and the Great Awakenings on either side of the Atlantic in the eighteenth century.[32]

Through his writings on Paul, Augustine is careful to refute the heresies of both the Arians and the Manicheans. Of these, the

[32] A Canty, "Saint Paul in Augustine," in *A Companion to St Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. S Cartwright (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 142: "Particularly important in this regard is Augustine's doctrine of grace, which shaped Latin theology long after the Pelagian controversy ended. Aside from its formative influence in the fifth and sixth centuries on numerous ecclesiastical councils (e.g., those of Arles and Orange) and on several notable theologians, such as Prosper of Aquitaine, Faustus of Riez, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Caesarius of Arles, and Gregory the Great, Augustine's doctrine of grace found a legacy in the theological and spiritual heritage of the entire Middle Ages*".*

latter group received his sharpest critiques as he had himself been a full-blown Manichean for the nine years preceding his conversion to Catholic Christianity in 386. His most vigorous polemic is recorded against one Faustus, whom the Manicheans of the time regarded as the most authoritative teacher of their beliefs.

Although Augustine was one of those that Calvin charged for not reading Paul with a calm mind, he was a trained grammarian and rhetorician.[33]

Augustine's comments on 2 Cor 4:4 are found in chapter XXI in his *Against Faustus:*

> Most of us punctuate this sentence differently, and explain it as meaning that the true God has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They put a stop after the word God, and read the following words together. Or without this punctuation you may, for the sake of exposition, change the order of the words, and read, "In whom God has blinded the minds of unbelievers of this world," which gives the same sense. The act of blinding the minds of unbelievers may in one sense be ascribed to God, as the effect not of malice, but of justice. Thus Paul himself says elsewhere, "Is God unjust, who taketh vengeance?" And again, "What shall we say then? Is

[33] Lewis Ayres, "Augustine," in Westerholm, *Blackwell Companion*, 346-347, notes: "Most importantly, Augustine reads Paul "grammatically"; that is, he reads Paul using the grammatical and rhetorical analysis that were the possession of all educated Romans of his time. . . . These skills were taught initially by a figure called a *grammaticus*. The g*rammaticus* taught Augustine such basic moves as identifying the overall plot of a given text in order to interpret particular passages, the importance of interpreting words and phrases by analysing their use throughout the text being interpreted, and how to explore the meanings of terms by making use of resonant philosophical and scientific resources. As with most of the more highly educated ancient exegetes, Augustine also reads Paul in the light of that discipline which was in many ways grammar's fulfilment: rhetoric*".*

> there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For Moses saith, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. . . . Here we see how the true and just God blinds the minds of unbelievers. For in all these words quoted from the apostle no other God is understood than He whose Son, sent by Him, came saying, "For judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind. Here, again, it is plain to the minds of believers how God blinds the minds of unbelievers. For among the secret things, which contain the righteous principles of God's judgment, there is a secret which determines that the minds of some shall be blinded, and the minds of some enlightened.[34]

We can see Augustine's dependence on the original representation of 2 Cor 4:4 by Irenaeus, in that he, too, perpetuates the notion of the 'transposition of words' first introduced by Irenaeus. At the same time, it is remarkable that well over two hundred years after Irenaeus, orthodox Catholic theologians were in no doubt about the subject of the act of blinding in 4:4. Here, again, Augustine is careful to identify that it is the work of the "true God" and proceeds to assert that looking at the wider context of Paul's language, no other inference may be drawn. He introduces into the discussion a Johannine reference (Jn 9:39), which hints at the divine prerogative to both blind and to enlighten human beings at will; an attribute Augustine assigns to the "secret things" of "God's judgement".[35]

3.6 Pelagius

Born in Britain in 354, Pelagius' most important contribution to Pauline studies was his *Commentary on Romans*, completed

[34] R Strothert, trans. *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Heresy*, in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine Bishop of Hippo,* ed. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872), 5:383, 384.

[35] Strothert, *Writings,* 384.

sometime in 410.[36] New studies on Pelagius have only confirmed the controversy associated with him. Initially, Augustine viewed him as a "distinguished Christian gentleman" and a "highly advanced Christian". Later, however, on account of his disagreement with Pelagius' interpretation of Romans 5:12, Augustine called him "the enemy of God's grace".[37] So, despite modern reappraisals of Pelagius' theological traditionalism, it is Augustine's labelling of him that has most impacted his reception in history.[38] Pelagius departs from his predecessors and adopts a truly ambivalent stance:

> The god of this world may be understood to be the devil, on the ground that he has claimed to rule over unbelievers. Or, on account of the attacks of the heretics it may be understood to mean that God has blinded the minds of unbelievers precisely because of their unbelief.[39]

Pelagius is the first exegete, to whom we have access, who takes up a position of total ambivalence with regard to 4:4. He equivocates between the possibility that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος has as its referent "the devil" or "God". It is also difficult to know to what exactly Pelagius is referring when he says that the devil "has claimed to rule over unbelievers". Is this an extrapolation from a text in scripture, or was Pelagius appealing to some established doctrines of the time, or even popular religious belief? The possibility that God has sovereignly caused the blinding is sufficiently tempered by Pelagius' characteristic safeguarding of human culpability: ". . . it may be understood to mean that God has blinded the minds of unbelievers precisely because of their unbelief".

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[36] T P Scheck, "Pelagius's Interpretation of Romans," in Cartwright, *A Companion to St Paul*, 79.

[37] Scheck, "Pelagius's Interpretation."

[38] Scheck, "Pelagius's Interpretation," 79-82.

[39] Bray, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 228.

3.7 Theodoret of Cyrus

Theodoret was Bishop of Cyrus from 423–458. Although his diocese may have been a "little backwater" in the context of the more established centres of Christianity in the fifth century, yet he had responsibility for over 800 parishes and "was credited with many social and civic improvements".[40]

Theodoret was from the Antiochene School and had as his great predecessors Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, and Diodore of Tarsus, all of whom had written on Paul's letters. R Hill comments: "His indebtedness to their work, if not specifically acknowledged, is discernible in his Commentary".[41] Theodoret states:

> To them God (a break must be observed here) blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world lest they be enlightened by the illumination of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God's image (v.4). He brought out that unbelief is confined to this world; in the next life truth is clearly revealed to everyone. God blinded them, not imparting unbelief to them, but perceiving their unbelief and not allowing them to see the hidden mysteries. "Do not give holy things to dogs," he says, "nor cast your pearls before swine," and again, "the reason I speak to them in parables is this, that looking they do not see, and listening they do not understand". Knowledge and belief are necessary, after all, for sharing in the light; the sun, remember, is inimical to weak eyes.[42]

Theodoret persists with Irenaeus' transposition of words in the text by attaching "this world" to "the unbelievers" rather than to the immediate antecedent articular noun "God". This one tradition would cast a long shadow of doubt over the patristic

[40] Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St Paul*, vol 1, trans. R C Hill (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 1.

[41] Theodoret, *Commentary*, 2.

[42] Theodoret, *Commentary*, 268.

interpretive history of 2 Cor 4:4 in the minds of later exegetes. From Erasmus and Calvin on to the present time, commentators on 2 Corinthians would go no further in examining the arguments of the patristic writers than to highlight this apparent mishandling of the text, and thereby nullifying and dismissing their conclusions about who Paul was referring to, when he uses "God" in this context.

Theodoret's agreement with his predecessors is seen in a number of ways. First, the argument that "unbelief is confined to this world" echoes Chrysostom's point: "In the world to come there are no unbelievers, only in this one". Second, his apologetic that God's judicial act of blinding need not imply that God also was the author of their unbelief but that God merely allowed them to remain in their self-chosen unbelief ("not allowing them to see the hidden mysteries") resonates both with Ambrosiaster ("it is because people are hostile and tell lies that they are helped toward not being able to believe what they do not want to believe") and Pelagius ("God has blinded the minds of unbelievers precisely because of their unbelief").

Theodoret, too, makes reference to other early Christian texts to explain his view of the divine prerogative of blinding: a) the harsh teaching of Jesus (preserved in the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 7:6) that those in Israel who reject his words may rightfully earn the derogatory epithets "dog" and "swine"; and, b) the later comment preserved in Mt 13:13 (in the context of the Parable of the Soils), where Jesus explains that he used parables paradoxically to hide the message of the Kingdom of God from Israel rather than to illustrate it. Jesus had himself on occasion appealed to texts such as Deut. 29:4 and Isa. 6:9 for biblical justification. Significantly, the Isaiah reference had also been used by Tertullian and Ambrosiaster and, as we shall later see, appears to have been the cornerstone of an early Christian apologetic for explaining Jewish unbelief in Jesus as the messiah.

One last observation may be made about Theodoret's hermeneutic. His comment "the sun, remember, is inimical to weak eyes" refers the reader back to his comments on 2 Cor 2:15-16:

> To those with bad eyes the light is treacherous and unkind, but it is not the sun that causes the harm. It is also said that vultures shun the fragrance of perfume, yet perfume is still sweet-smelling, even if the vultures give it a wide berth. Likewise, too, the saving message brings about salvation for those who believe, but inflicts ruin on the unbelieving.[43]

The point Theodoret makes is an important one (often neglected by modern exegetes): that the phenomenon of blindness in some and sight for others does not in any way compromise the biblical notion of the sovereignty of God nor does it question the veracity of the gospel. The divergent reception and appreciation of the gospel message only points to human culpability. We also find interesting Theodoret's strategy of reading 4:4 in the light of its literary context by going back to 2:14. We shall later argue that the literary unit to which 4:4 belongs is indeed 2 Cor 2:14–4:6.

4. Pauline Exegesis from the Sixth to Eighth Centuries CE

In comparison to the patristic period, the period between 500 and 750 shows a marked drop in manuscript evidence for Pauline exegesis. And, with regard to discussion on 2 Corinthians 4, there is almost no extant commentary. There is, however, one piece of evidence for the reception of 4:4, which obliquely suggests that the dominant interpretation of the patristic writers still prevailed; and now, more importantly, was being disseminated further afield in Western Europe. This evidence comes from records of the Venerable Bede, the Anglo-Saxon monk who lived in England from 672–735. Bede was the first person to write works of scholarship in the English language, and among his many works is

[43] Theodoret, *Commentary*, 262.

preserved one entitled *Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*.[44]

Bede's compilation of Augustine's works on Paul is remarkable, both because it provides evidence for the expanding influence of Augustine on the strongly Christian communities of the British Isles, and because, by virtue of being "excerpts" they show *selectivity* on the part of Bede. So we may presume that he chose certain comments of Augustine because he felt that they were particularly important for the church in the context of England. Consequently, Bede's selection of Augustine's comments on 2 Cor 4:4 point to his agreement with the latter about "the God of this world": "Quite a few people of our time interpret this statement as saying that the true God has blinded the minds of unbelievers".[45] Yet, what might have been the motivation to highlight this interpretation of Augustine? We recall that the only patristic writer to equivocate that "the god of this world" could either be the devil *or* God was Pelagius, the English-born theologian (354–420). It is possible, therefore, that Pelagius' views on 4:4 were well-known in Bede's day, and, therefore, Bede felt the need to confirm more definitively the position that had his sympathy.

5. From the Carolingian Period to the Thirteenth Century CE

5.1 The Carolingian Commentators

The Carolingian era marks the period from about 750 until the late tenth century. Although there was significant interest with regard to the New Testament text, especially the epistles of Paul, it was not a period known for original writings. The Carolingian commentators were, rather, preservers of the traditions and texts of the patristic writers:

[44] D Hurst, trans., *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine of the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1999).

[45] Hurst, *Bede,* 181.

> Reverence for the great learning and the sanctity of the Church Fathers may have inhibited the desire to venture an opinion of one's own but that is not to say that these new commentaries were thereby devoid of significance. Truth be told, there were no mediaeval commentators of any period who detached themselves from patristic authority and influence.[46]

The boldness to break away from the traditions passed on from the Fathers would have to await a period much later — that is, the flowering of the Renaissance from the fourteenth century. In any event, no commentary on 2 Corinthians survives from the Carolingian period, but in the light of the above statement, no great loss may thereby be accounted to our pursuit.

5.2 Theophylact of Ohrid

Theophylact was Archbishop of Ohrid (1078-1107), in modern Bulgaria. He wrote extensive commentaries on both the Gospels and the epistles. He was dependent on the works of Chrysostom, and in turn he provided much material to Erasmus in the writing of his *New Testament and Annotations.*

Theophylact's commentary on Paul's epistles is extant in a publication dated 1636, and provides us with a vital clue to the trajectory of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 between its last occurrence in Bede's compilation of Augustine's commentaries (8th century) and its later arrival within the doorways of the Renaissance and the Reformation.[47] Theophylact takes the plain reading, and has no doubt that the apostle is referring to God: "The God of this world has blinded their minds*".*

[46] See I C Levy, "Commentaries on the Pauline Epistles in the Carolingian Era," in Cartwright, *A Companion to St Paul*, 145.

[47] Theophylacti Archiepiscopi Bulgariae, in *D. Pauli Epistolas commentarii* (London: 1636), 343-357.

He is aware of the various arguments that had been presented by Marcion, and later the Manichaeans, but accepts no merit in their treatment of this phrase:

> But in fact neither of these should be said; further, it was said about our God. And even if He is shown to be God of this world, there is nothing new, since He is also said to be God of heaven. Nor is He only God of this. So too He is called God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob: but He is not only their God, but also of all. What is therefore new if Paul quite fittingly calls Him God of this world?[48]

Theophylact sees the blinding as a judicial act of God on account of the obdurate character of those who refused to believe "the brightness", that is, that Christ was "crucified, that he was received into heaven, and that he would give us the things to come". He sees a parallel to this in the way God had dealt with the ancient Israelites:

> Just as if someone would prevent a conjunctivitis patient from seeing the sun-rays, lest he gets hurt by them, in this case, they became unbelievers on their own [so that] after they had become such, God screened them from the rays of the Gospel's glory just as in the case of the Israelites, He covered the face of Moses.[49]

6. The Fate of 2 Corinthians 4:4 from the Renaissance to the Eighteenth Century

The period of the Renaissance becomes definitive for the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4. Following this era, exegetes and Bible translators display little doubt about how our phrase must be rendered. As we have seen this was not the case before, with several Greek commentators favouring God as the referent, although a small minority and the heresiarchs suggested the devil, the demiurge, or Hyle as candidates for the title. What

[48] Theophylacti, *Pauli,* 355.
[49] Theophylacti, *Pauli*.

changed the complexion of the debate with such near-absolute finality?

The evidence points to the inadvertent collaboration of two men, whose individual comments on 2 Cor 4:4, backed by their stature as formative influences of the novel Bible tradition of the Reformation, combined to render to their particular interpretation of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου the status akin to canonicity. The first was Desiderius Erasmus whose revision of the Greek New Testament, together with the annotations that accompanied it, was decisive for all the reformers, including Luther and Calvin. The other was Calvin, whose commentaries on the letters of Paul, have remained standard works for Pauline exegesis within the Protestant tradition. Their contributions to the discourse are examined below.

6.1 Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536)

Erasmus is synonymous with the Renaissance.[50] He was one of the greatest humanist scholars, and was the first editor of the Greek New Testament. In keeping with the slogan of the Renaissance, *ad fontes* ("back to the sources"), Erasmus was inspired to reach beyond scholasticism and read the early Christian texts essentially as products of a world when rhetoric was still being studied and practiced. He was a critic of ecclesiastical practices and found philological study as a means to appropriate original readings of texts, and thereby to challenge the assumptions about ancient religious texts, such as the New Testament, which had been used to legitimize false religious beliefs. It did mean, therefore, that Erasmus adopted a critical approach to traditional readings of the New Testament, and was particularly enthusiastic to identify invalid readings of the Christian scriptures.

[50] For a helpful summary of the life and work of Erasmus see, J D Tracy, "Desiderius Erasmus: Dutch Humanist and Scholar," accessed July 29, 2015, http://www.britannica.com/ biography/Desiderius-Erasmus.

Our text, 2 Cor 4:4, with its contentious history and the controversial emendation of the text from the time of Irenaeus, naturally became a candidate for Erasmus' particular attention.[51] The factors pertaining to the tradition-history of interpretation became a key consideration as Erasmus grappled with the meaning of *Deus huius seculi* in 4:4. His annotations on the phrase present several important insights into his understanding of the subject.

We first note that Erasmus is the first to explicitly recommend an alternative rendering of the phrase; substituting "this age" for "this world*".* He begins the commentary on 4:4 with the words: *Deus huius seculi*. ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. *id est, Deus aeui huius*, "*that is* god of this *age".*

Second, he mentions "Theophylactus and the Greek commentaries" but also Augustine, Ambrose, Cyril, and Chrysostom. While in the main, the Greek commentaries opted for "God" as the referent, Erasmus alleges that Augustine equivocated: he first adopted the interpretation of his predecessors and claimed that reading "God" to be the subject was Paul's intention, but that he "later denied that it would seem absurd if the devil were to be called the god of this world, as it was also said by Paul: '. . . whose god is their belly'". Chrysostom, however, posed a greater challenge to Erasmus because he demonstrated a more robust hermeneutic. For instance, Chrysostom had argued that God could be called "God of this world" in the same way the scriptures called God "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". Then, with regard to the difficulty of understanding, ("in what sense he is said to blind the hearts of unbelievers") Chrysostom had argued:

[51] The Latin original is accessible in A Reeve and M A Screech, eds., *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: Acts–Romans–I and II Corinthians* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

> It is expedient in the manner of mystical discourse, that God be declared to do what God allows to happen, as it is said in the letter to the Romans that God handed over the philosophers to evil inclinations; and in the Exodus it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.[52]

Erasmus did find Chrysostom's arguments impressive and says: "Piously indeed has Chrysostom written thus," but is not himself convinced ("I judge the other opinion to be right"). We detect his discomfort in disagreeing with Chrysostom because of the parenthetical comment he throws in later: "Let me add this that the commentaries which are brought under the name of Chrysostom are not his, but of someone similar*".*

Third, Erasmus makes his own position clear though: "Hence as to what we said earlier quoting Greek commentaries, it seems farfetched and forced. It is simpler and truer to understand the god of this world as Satan".

Fourth, having come down on the side of Satan as *deus huius seculi*, Erasmus feels the need to mitigate the force of his assertion by way of clarification: "The devil certainly is not simply a 'god' but is a 'god' to those who put him against Christ. Just as money (or mammon) is god for the avaricious, appetite is god for the gluttonous, and man is god for man".

Finally, another argument Erasmus provides in support of his view about ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is that the term "God" has three meanings within the Bible ("divine writings"): 1) according to "nature and truth" only God may be called "God and Lord"; 2) the scriptures sometimes says, "I said you are gods" where the noun is utilized for some other creature; and 3) the example in 1 Cor 8:5: "as there are many gods and many lords" where it acknowledges several entities other than God who may be called "god".

[52] Reeve and Screech, *Erasmus' Annotations*.

6.2 John Calvin (1509–1564)[53]

Calvin's work on biblical exegesis began with the writings of Paul, and in the years 1538–1541, he conducted lectures on the Corinthian letters in Strasbourg. His commentary on 2 Corinthians was finally published in 1547; unusually, though, first in French after which the Latin edition appeared in 1548. His achievement is monumental because by 1551 he had completed commentaries on the entire Pauline corpus, and included Hebrews as well.[54] Lane comments on his method: "Calvin expounded the Greek text, giving his own Latin translation. He made use of existing translations, *especially the Vulgate and Erasmus*, but was not bound to either (emphasis added)".[55] The influence of Erasmus on Calvin is important to note in our enquiry into the factors that went into Calvin's particular interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4.

As we shall see, Calvin vehemently disagreed with patristic exegetes on the identity of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, and this is significant because he is thought to have had "a deep respect for tradition" and "did not lightly depart from established interpretations". He was cognizant of his predecessors' ideas, and seemed to particularly favour Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrose.[56] Three of these writers feature in his comments on 4:4.

Calvin is in no doubt whatsoever that in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul is speaking of Satan: "Nobody of sound judgement can have any doubt that here the apostle is speaking about Satan".[57] He realizes that his latter statement immediately puts him in direct confrontation with the best established exegetes in Christian history, and proceeds to explain the circumstances that prevented Hilary,

[53] Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 53-56.
[54] Lane, "Calvin," 391-405.
[55] Lane, "Calvin," 393.
[56] Lane, "Calvin," 396-397.
[57] Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 53.

Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine from exercising a "sound mind":

> Hilary, who had to deal with Arians who misused this passage in support of their view that Christ was a god, though they had denied His true divinity, twists the text to mean that it is God who has blinded the understanding of this world. Chrysostom later followed this rendering in order to avoid conceding to the Manichaeans their dualistic view of two first principles. Why Ambrose also accepted it is not clear but Augustine's reason was the same as Chrysostom's for he also was involved in the dispute with the Manichaeans. *This is an example of what can happen in the heat of controversy for if all these men had read Paul's words with a calm mind it would never have occurred to them to twist them into a forced meaning in this way* (emphasis added).[58]

In the patristic exegetes' controversies with the heresiarchs, Calvin finds an exclusive explanation for their interpretation of 4:4. He charges that a view that had prevailed for hundreds of years was the product of "the heat of controversy" and simplifies its chief proponents to be men who lacked the capacity to "read Paul with a calm mind". Thereby, Calvin concluded that his predecessors had "twisted [the scripture] into a forced meaning in this way".

The interpretation that Calvin gave to 4:4 was supported exegetically by his reference to 1 Cor 8:5 ("there are many gods and many lords"); and, here it is possible that he is dependent on an argument first ventured by Erasmus.[59] However, his strongest reasons for insisting that the phrase is a description for the devil are his beliefs concerning the devil. First, he asserts that "the devil is called a god because he has dominion over men and is worshipped by them . . . . [T]here is attributed to Satan a power

[58] Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 54.
[59] Calvin, *Second Epistle*.

of blinding and a dominion over unbelievers*".*[60] This notion of Satan's "dominion over unbelievers" is a theological imposition on the text – that is, ὁ θεός in 4:4, who has such dominion as to blind 'the unbelievers', must be the devil because it is the devil who has dominion over unbelievers.

Second, like Erasmus, Calvin proceeds to mitigate the implications of his attribution of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου to the devil. To be given this lofty title does not imply that Satan exercises a dominion independent of God: "In the same way Satan is the prince of this world, not because he has conferred that princely power upon himself or obtained it by his own right or is able to exercise it as his own will, but he has it only so far as the Lord allows it to him".[61]

With his third emphatic doctrinal point about Satan, Calvin almost completely rescues his characteristic teaching on the sovereignty of God, although he indulges in some circular reasoning to get there. He concedes that the scriptures speak of God as an agent of blinding (though he shows no interest to explore such passages as Isaiah 6:6-10, which buttressed the patristic scholars' opinion about divine, judicial blinding), but also asserts that the scriptures attribute the same power to the devil (he cites the story of Ahab and the lying prophets, 1 Kgs 22:21-22). Satan is therefore an *agent of God* who works to execute God's will in the world: "Scripture teaches that Satan blinds men not only with God's permission but at his command to inflict His vengeance".[62] By the very end of his argument, Calvin is able to attribute the blinding of minds to God, but only with the devil performing the role of an obedient servant of God:

> *God is thus said to blind men* because, having deprived us of the right use of our minds, and of the light of His Spirit, *He*

[60] Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 54.
[61] Calvin, *Second Epistle,* 55.
[62] Calvin, *Second Epistle.*

> *hands us over to the devil* to be reduced to a reprobate mind and *gives him the power of deceiving us and thus inflicts just vengeance upon us by the minister of His wrath* (emphasis added).[63]

6.3 Erasmus and Calvin in Collaboration?

Erasmus and Calvin, then, set the trend for Pauline exegesis of 2 Cor 4:4 for the ensuing centuries. Although there is no evidence that Calvin was merely representing ideas he had picked up from Erasmus, there are several features they share in common. These features fall into two broad categories: 1) the ways in which Erasmus and Calvin disregard the exegetical grounds of their predecessors; and, 2) the exegetical grounds that they successfully introduce into the discourse.

First, in what ways do Erasmus and Calvin disregard some of the key exegetical grounds of the patristic authors? Writers such as Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, and Augustine, translated ὁ θεός by the most natural meaning that Paul commonly gives to it – and that is 'God'. Some of them make special note that the context demanded that the "unbelievers" be understood to be unbelieving Jews, but this idea is not picked up by either Erasmus or Calvin. The Church Fathers also ventured to explore texts such as Is 6:9-10; Dt 29:4; and Jn 9:39, which supported their idea that God was often an agent of judicial blinding and hardening of Israel. This again is not considered by the scholars of the Renaissance.

Second, in what ways do Erasmus and Calvin 'collaborate' in setting the trend for the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4? They both mount arguments to invalidate the exegetical foundation of their predecessors. They both appeal to the rather flimsy evidence of 1 Cor 8:5 to argue that Paul's use of ὁ θεός in 4:4 could refer to one of the θεοὶ πολλοὶ of 1 Cor 8:5. They both attempt to retrieve with one hand the threat to divine sovereignty they had

[63] Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 55.

conceded with the other. This is to say that they recognized that assigning 4:4 to Satan was to open a serious threat to the orthodox position on God's sovereignty, and consequently they explicitly disavowed such a conclusion. Erasmus alone can be credited with having successfully introduced "this age" over "this world" into the rendering of the phrase, and Calvin alone offered the more elaborate doctrine of Satan as the grid by which scholars may interpret the meaning of the phrase. In what follows we shall see how these initial impulses dominate the hermeneutical discourse and lead the understanding of 2 Cor 4:4 in its new direction.

From the perspective of ideological texture Calvin has been previously charged with similar offences. In his comments on Acts 14, Calvin "stereotypes the Lycaonians as 'barbarous men', 'superstitious', 'infidels', 'unbelievers', and an 'unlearned multitude'". His virulent description is a launching pad for a wholesale attack on Catholicism in France".[64] In the playing out of such ideological interests, then, the text eventually becomes subservient to the interests of its readers and serves their ends: "Thus, the stereotyping of the Lycaonians does not keep its focus on the people of Lystra; rather, this language is a medium for Calvin to describe the religious opponents against whom he sets himself as a reformer".[65] Is it possible that with 2 Cor 4:4 we find a similar ideological texture?

6.4 Nicholas Hemmingio (1513–1600)[66]

Also known as Niels Hemmingsen, Hemmingio was a professor of divinity in Copenhagen. His commentary on 2 Corinthians in Latin is undated, but since his commentaries on Galatians and Hebrews were known to have been published in 1570, we may surmise

[64] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 202.

[65] Robbins, *Tapestry*.

[66] Nicolao Hemmingio, *Commentarius In Vtram Qve Epistolam Pavli Apostoli AD Corinthios Scriptus* (n.d., accessed from the archives of Pitt Theology Library, Emory University, Atlanta, March 2014).

that the former too was published around the same period.[67] In any case, Hemmingio writes after Erasmus and after the publication of Calvin's commentary on 2 Corinthians in 1547. His work, therefore, provides us an insight into the direction of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 following Calvin's ruling on the matter.

First, he has no doubt that Paul refers to the devil: "Undoubtedly the god of this world provided the cause for the hardening of the unbelievers, that is, Satan blinded the faculties of the unbelievers*".*

Second, in keeping with the established narrative he mentions how the "Arians and the Manichaeans have misused this Pauline text" and how in order to "refute their proposition, Hilary, Irenaeus, Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose and many others spoke of a *hyperbaton* [rearrangement of words] . . . and *in the heat of the controversy interpreted this passage to be about the true God* so that in this way they could deflect the objection of the heretics" (emphasis added).

Third, Hemmingio offers other biblical texts in support of the view that this is Satan: "The devil in John 12 is said to be the Prince of this world; and in Philippians 3 the belly is said to be the god of greedy pursuers". In subsequent discussions of the verse, these references would play a significant role.

Hemmingio's commentary confirms our suspicions that the sixteenth century marks the decisive moment when the interpretive tradition was diverted in an entirely new direction; when an expression that at one time conveyed to the church a description about God Almighty was attached to Satan.

[67] See http://www.mocavo.com/Centenary-Memorial-of-the-Erection-of-the-County-of-Dauphin-and-the-Founding-of-the-City-of-Harrisburg-1885/950138/317, accessed August 3, 2015.

6.5 Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752)[68]

Bengel is well known for his edition of the Greek New Testament and annotations. Of the brief comments he gave on 2 Cor 4:4, Bengel moved forward the new interpretive tradition, and his most lasting contribution was the colourful phrase he coined for Satan based on this verse: *Grandis sed horribilis descriptio Satanae*.[69] It has become almost a signature for those commenting on the verse in question.

7. The Text of 2 Corinthians 4:4 among Commentators of the Nineteenth Century until the First Half of the Twentieth Century

This specific periodization has been proposed for more than one reason. Paul's formulation of 2 Cor 4:4 provokes three pragmatic concerns through its subtext: 1) Are there limitations that prevail on the power of the gospel to bring people to a saving faith? 2) Who ultimately has power over the affairs of the present world? 3) Is Paul's strongly negative "unbelievers" a reference to pagans, or might it be highly specific to the unbelieving Jews of the first century? Each of these concerns has been of great import to the modern period, and I consider them below.

First, the nineteenth century is rightfully called the Century of Protestant Missions because of the unprecedented emphasis given to converting the hitherto unreached "pagans" of the numerous territories and regions in Africa and Asia that had come under the control of European colonial powers. However, although the missionary enterprise was undertaken with great zeal and confidence and thousands of dedicated missionaries fanned out to the countries remotest to Europe, the conversion of the natives, though significant, had no resemblance to the sweeping influence Christianity had had over formerly pagan Europe in the preceding millennium. Why was this so? What prevented Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and animistic peoples from

[68] J A Bengelii, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* Tomus II (Tübingen: Sumtibus Ludov. Frid. Fues, 1836).

[69] Bengelii, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti,* 191-192.

"seeing the light of the gospel"? Had they been blinded? If so, who had blinded them?

Second, this period marks both the height of optimism of the Modern period, as well as its greatest sense of disillusionment with the cataclysmic events of the two great wars. In the context of the former mood of optimism, Christian theologians would presumably have adopted a worldview that focussed on the sovereignty of God. Christianity was ascendant; "Christian nations" were prospering in every way; and it seemed that the world could well be fully evangelized within a generation or two. However, the growing philosophical pessimism of the late nineteenth century and the World Wars of the first half of the twentieth century shattered this utopian dream, and begged the question about who really was in charge of the affairs of the world. In such a dramatic context one would expect a text such as 2 Cor 4:4 to open itself to fresh readings.

Third, although anti-Judaism had been simmering within Western consciousness for centuries, it reached its horrendous climax with the Nazi holocaust of 1933–1945. The awful reality of the annihilation of millions of Jews, followed by the almost incredible reality of the establishment of a state of Israel in 1948 (nearly 2000 years after the fall of Jerusalem), may well have combined to exert a certain pressure on exegetes of 2 Corinthians 3–4 in the period after 1950 that would find no parallel in any period before. How easy would it have been for scholars writing in such a context to argue that Paul seemed to believe that *God* had blinded the majority of the Jewish peoples?

7.1 Adam Clarke (1826)[70]

The earliest commentary we will consider for this period shows the most radical departure from the broad consensus held by Bible scholars from 1516 onward – that is, when Erasmus first

[70] Clarke, *New Testament.*

produced his edition of *the Greek New Testament and Annotations*.

Clarke notes that by the time of his commentary (1826), reading "god of this age" to mean Satan, was undisputed. And yet, he was not convinced:

> I must own I feel considerable reluctance to assign the epithet, ὁ θεός, The God, to Satan; and were there not a rooted prejudice in favour of the common opinion, the contrary might be well vindicated, viz. that by the *God of this world*, the Supreme Being is meant.[71]

What accounts for Clarke's "considerable reluctance"? It turns out that his arguments were indeed considerable, because they were cumulative. History may testify to the accuracy of Clarke's charges of "a rooted prejudice in favour of a common opinion", because, in spite of his careful assessment of 4:4, it was never taken up for reasonable consideration during his time and no literature since (except his contemporary Albert Barnes, who rejected it as we shall see) has afforded it even the significance of a footnote. What then were the points he garnered to argue that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου referred to the "Supreme Being" – the God of this world? We discern four:

1. The theological argument – God's sovereignty and justice allow for God the prerogative to blind people:

   > By the *God of this world*, the Supreme Being is meant, who in his judgment gave over the minds of the unbelieving Jews to spiritual darkness, so that destruction came upon them to the uttermost . . . We are not willing to attribute the blinding of men's minds to God, because we sometimes forget that he is the God of justice, and may in judgment

[71] Clarke, *New Testament*, 315.

> remove mercies from those that abuse them: but this is repeatedly attributed to him in the Bible.[72]

2. The scriptural argument – He saw his theological argument supported by Is 6:9, which in turn becomes a theme within the NT:

> And the expression before us is quite a parallel to the following, Isa vi.9 – *Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. MAKE the HEART of this PEOPLE FAT, and MAKE their EARS HEAVY, and SHUT their EYES, LEST they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart.* And see the parallel places, Matt xiii.14, 15. Mark iv.12. John xii.40, and particularly Rom xi.8 – 10: GOD HATH GIVEN THEM THE SPIRIT OF SLUMBER, EYES that they SHOULD not SEE, and EARS that they SHOULD not HEAR: let their EYES be DARKENED.[73]

For Clarke this recurrent theme leads the exegete to one obvious conclusion:

> Now all this is spoken of the same people, in the same circumstances of wilful rebellion, and obstinate unbelief; and the great God of heaven and earth, is he who judicially blinds their eyes; makes their hearts fat, i.e. stupid; gives them the spirit of slumber, and bows down their back. On these very grounds it is exceedingly likely, that the Apostle means the true God, by the words the God of this age.[74]

3. The linguistic and cognitive-frame argument – For Clarke, αἰών need not carry any greater meaning than this world of time and space: "It is frequently used to explain the whole mundane system, and all that is called time". He cites Mt

[72] Clarke, *New Testament*, 315.

[73] Clarke, *New Testament* [Note: The capitalization is original to the text].

[74] Clarke, *New Testament*.

12:32; Lk 20:34, and 1 Tm 1:17 as clear evidence that the noun need not bear the highly technical sense of Jewish apocalypticism. Furthermore, it is quite interesting that in that early period, he was able and willing to consider the cognitive environment of a text in his hermeneutical strategy:

> This character among the Asiatics is considered essential to God; and therefore in the very first surat of the Koran he is called *Rubbi alalameen* "the Lord of both worlds" an expression perfectly similar to that above.[75]

4. The historical argument – He gives the Church Fathers more credit for their reading, even though they rearranged the text, and takes confidence from the fact that in the fifth century the alternate reading was, in fact, the dominant interpretation:

> Iranaeus, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Photius, Theophylact, and Augustine, all plead for the above meaning; and St. Augustine says that it was the opinion of almost all the ancients.[76]

7.2 Albert Barnes (1844)[77]

> There can be no doubt that Satan is here designated by this appellation; though some of the Fathers supposed that it meant the true God – and Clarke inclines to this opinion . . . The dominion of Satan over this world has been, and is still, almost universal and absolute; nor has the lapse of eighteen hundred years rendered the appellation improper as descriptive of his influence, that he is the god of this age.[78]

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[75] Clarke, *New Testament*, 315.

[76] Clarke, *New Testament,* 315-316.

[77] A Barnes, *Notes on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Gall & Inglis, 1844)

[78] Barnes, *Notes on the Second Epistle*, 77-78.

The doubtlessness expressed by Barnes about Satan being "designated by this appellation" harks back to the sentiments we first encountered in Calvin, but now is seemingly reconfirmed because of the way Barnes sees and experiences the world of his day. Looking at contemporary circumstances, he finds no other explanation than that "the dominion of Satan over the world" was "almost universal and absolute". Significantly, though, he notes, that his near contemporary, A Clarke, had no insuperable difficulty in affirming the sovereignty of God expressed in the phrase "God of this age".

With his views about Satan, Barnes parts company with Calvin who had been careful to argue that although Satan may be called "god of this world," he still was in status merely a servant of God. Barnes, however, takes the Christian view of Satan to a new and critical plane which will, in time, be presented as a "sovereignty" that could be attributed to Satan.[79]

7.3 Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1865)[80]

> In connection with this dark view he introduces the singular expression, 'the God of this world' (for Satan) so as to express in the strongest manner the contrast between Satan as the author of all darkness, and Christ and God as the authors of all light. . . These very words are applied to Satan by the Rabbis, "The true God is the *first* God, but Samael is the *second God"*.. . .Irenaeus, in order to avoid a Gnostic inference from the passage, and after him Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, Ecumenius, Theodoret, and Theophylact, by a violent inversion of the words connect τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου with τὰ νοήματα, so as to

[79] So, D G Reid, "Devil" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters,* ed. G Hawthorne, R Martin and D Reid (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 864: "The underlying point is that Satan is vested with a *sovereignty*, however limited it might ultimately be, that is powerful, compelling and clearly opposed to the work of God" (emphasis added).

[80] A P Stanley, *The Epistles of St Paul to the Corinthians* (London: John Murray, 1865).

> make the sense, "in whom God blinded the thoughts of this world in the unbelieving.[81]

It is with Stanley that we first get introduced to Second Temple ideas as the possible background to 4:4. He proposes that Paul is dependent on "the rabbis", who spoke of the Satan-figure Samael as a "second god".[82] Again, as was the trend set by Erasmus and Calvin, Stanley, too, sweepingly surveys a host of Pauline interpreters from Irenaeus to Theophylact to discount their alternate conclusion about the "God of this age" because he disagrees with their "violent inversion of the words".[83]

7.4 James Denney (1894)[84]

> To St. Paul the Gospel was a very great thing. A light issued from it so dazzling, so overwhelming, in its illuminative power, that it might well be incredible that men should see it. The powers counteracting it, "the world rulers of this darkness", must surely, to judge by their success, have an immense influence. *Even more than an immense influence, they must have an immense malignity. . . Paul's whole sense of the might and the malignity of the powers of darkness is condensed in the title which he here gives to their head – "the god of this world'"* It is literally "of this age," the period

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[81] Stanley, *The Epistles,* 400-401. For another scholar who finds it "historically curious" that so many patristic writers emended the text "in their zeal against the Marcionites and Manicchaeans" see, H Alford, *The Greek Testament Volume 2: The Acts of the Apostles, The Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians* (London: Rivingtons, 1865).

[82] Later, A Plummer, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,* ICC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), would pass this idea on: "The first God is the true God, but the second God is Samael*".*

[83] Erasmus was the first to charge the patristic writers with doing violence to the text; see, Reeve and Screech, *Erasmus' Annotations*, 533: "Proinde quod priore loco diximus ex Graecis scholes id uidetur affectatum ac uiolentum*".*

[84] J Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York, NY: Armstrong & Son, 1894).

> of time which extends to Christ's coming again. The dominion of evil is not unlimited in duration; but while it lasts it is awful in its intensity and range. . . *What St. Paul saw, and what becomes apparent to everyone in proportion as his interest in evangelism becomes intense*, is that evil has a power and dominion in the world, which are betrayed by their counteracting of the Gospel, to be purely malignant – in other words, Satanic – and the dimensions of which, no description can exaggerate. Call such powers Satan, or what you please, but do not imagine that they are inconsiderable. *During this age they reign; they have taken over what should be God's place in the world*. (italics added)[85]

The implications of 2 Cor 4:4 for evangelism takes a special place in Denney's commentary: those who are interested in evangelism will see from the text how "evil has a power and dominion in the world, which are betrayed by their counteracting of the Gospel". Thus, according to Denney, Paul gives the title "God" to Satan to capture the 'immensity' and the 'malignity' of this being that dominates the world.

7.5 Philipp Bachmann (1909)[86]

Bachmann's comments at the beginning of the twentieth century help demonstrate that the Erasmus–Calvin diverted tradition had hardened itself. He rehearses the error that arose when the Early Fathers attempted to refute "the Gnostics and the Arians" but "luckily not without some sense of the impossibility of such a breaking [of the text]". Quoting Bengel's "*Grandis sed horribilis descriptio Satanae*", which would later become a signature of 2 Corinthians commentators, Bachmann proceeds to explain why Satan should be called *der Gott dieser Welt*:

> He bears this title as someone who caused, and still causes the 'anti-Godness' and the resulting ruin. Through this he

[85] Denney, *Second Epistle* 149-150.

[86] P Bachmann, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther,* KNT 3, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: A Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909).

> realizes his will in and through the world and operates as her highest and most dominating power . . . In this case he is specifically considered as such because of the effects of his work, by which it is explained here, why the gospel remains hidden under so many layers. Satan affects the mind, which results in blindness or in opposition to [the gospel].[87]

7.6 Alfred Plummer (1912)[88]

Following what was by his time the dominant interpretation, Plummer widens the cross-references to buttress the argument for positioning Satan as the "god of this age". These include: Eph 2:2; Mk 3:22 (Mt 12:24); Lk 11:15 (Mt 9:34); and 1 Jn 5:19. He hastens, though, to add that such a view does not mean that "God abdicates or surrenders any portion of His dominion to Satan, but that those to whom he has granted free will place themselves under the power of darkness".[89] Plummer is, however, not unaffected by the uniqueness of this instance:

> It is startling to find one who had all his life held idolatry in abomination, and been zealous for the glory of the one true God, using this *grandis et horribilis descriptio Satanae* (Beng.) and electing to apply the term *θεός* to the arch-enemy of God and of mankind.[90]

7.7 F Zorell (1928)[91]

These specific exegetical comments on "the God of this age" by Zorell, although referred to in some modern commentaries, have not been included in the discussion. It is noticeable that as a Roman Catholic scholar Zorell shows impartiality towards the alternative views on the debate on the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4. In his initial summaries of the two positions he introduces

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[87] Bachmann, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus*, 185.

[88] Plummer, *The Second Epistle*.

[89] Plummer, *The Second Epistle*, 114.

[90] Plummer, *The Second Epistle*, 115.

[91] F Zorell, "Deus huius saeculi," *Verbum Domini* 8 (Rome: Pontificio Institutio Biblico, 1928), 54-57.

fresh insights. First, he increases the number who were reputed to have supported the Satan-view: "it is proposed and held by many (cf. Cornely, Belser, Loch-Rischl, Allioli-Arndt) . . . taught by several Greeks (Cyril of Alexandria, John Damascene) . . . and by several Latins". Second, he adds to the list of those known to have supported the God-view, the early exegetes Primasius and Sedilius, and also adds the later scholars Thomas Aquinas and Peter Lombard as proponents of the view. Third, Zorell draws attention to some earlier versions of the New Testament, which adopted the God-view. The Coptic versions called the *Boheirica* and *Sahidica* translated the verse as, "Among whom God hardened the minds of the unbelievers of this world". The Georgian version similarly read: "God has blinded the minds of those unbelievers of this world". However, the Ethiopian version that Zorell presents is unique: "among unbelievers, whose heart the Lord, the Eternal God has obscured".

Zorell is not convinced by either of the positions, and asks if there is a third alternative. He suggests that an alternative would be to see τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as an "explicative genitive," so that the clause would mean that the unbelievers had been blinded by the world of sensual and material enticements. He cites Epiphanius as an ancient supporter of this view, and also sees Phil 3:19 as a cross reference.

8. The Text of 2 Corinthians 4:4 in Commentaries from 1945 to the Present

8.1 Commentary from 1945 to 1979

This period offered little novelty to the discussion on 4:4, but we may discern some important nuances. In his 1962 commentary, P Hughes noted that Paul was provoked to write 4:3-4 due to a criticism of his ministry.[92] Paul's critics had objected that Paul's gospel had been "ineffective in the case of so many, no doubt the

[92] P Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 125.

majority", and Paul concedes this, but not without placing the full responsibility of this veiled-ness on two factors: the wills of those to whom the gospel had been preached, together with the activity of Satan.[93] Nevertheless, it is rarely pointed out that this generalized interpretation that assumes the blinding to be an act of Satan leads to a form of circular reasoning: people are unable to believe because they have been blinded, but they are blind because they don't believe.

J Thompson adopts a qualified view of "the perishing", and suggests that they "are *Paul's opponents, who continue to over-emphasize Moses and the law"* (emphasis added).[94] This introduces the possibility that Paul is speaking within the context of Jewish unbelief. Although he subscribes to the interpretation that "the god of this age" is a reference to Satan, he is mindful that "only here in the New Testament is Satan referred to as a god". Although he draws parallels between the "Jews blinded by the veil" (3:15) and the "unbeliever" in 4:4, he does not explore the implications of these apparent linguistic and conceptual links.[95] In one other way, Thompson comes close to radically challenging ways of reading the text but stops short. He recognizes the theological challenges concerning "free will" posed by the "plain reading" of 4:3-4, but sees no resolution from Paul: "Paul does not concern himself here with the question of the free will of these unbelievers who are blinded*".*[96]

W de Boor comments that "the god of this age" is "a terrible (spooky) enemy agitating (on the scene)*".*[97] A significant contribution that de Boor makes is to suggest that the Satanic

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[93] Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle,* 125.

[94] J Thompson, *The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Austin, TX: R B Sweet, 1970), 58-59.

[95] Thompson, *The Second Letter,* 58-59.

[96] Thompson, *The Second Letter*, 59.

[97] W de Boor, *Der zweite brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, ed. W de Boor and A Pool. WSNT (Wuppertal: R Brockhaus, 1981), 97.

claim about "the world" in Lk 4:6 may be read into 2 Cor 4:4 – "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please".[98]

It was C K Barrett who first made explicit the notion of Jewish apocalypticism as the basis for Paul's construal of "the god of this age". This would gradually pick up to become one of the most common assumptions when interpreting the text in its most recent history:

> *The god of this age* is a bold expression for the devil (cf. I Cor. ii.8), based on the commonplace apocalyptic presupposition that in the present age the devil has usurped God's authority, and is accepted as god by his fellow rebels; only when in the age to come God establishes his kingdom will the devil be driven out.[99]

Yet, although he proposed an apocalyptic background, Barrett was not prepared to concede that Paul operated out of any notions of ethical dualism: "His language is superficially dualistic, but only superficially so. Against his own will the prince of evil is made to serve God, so that true dualism is excluded".[100]

R Bultmann's distinct contribution to the interpretation of 4:4 was the unapologetic assertion that "the god of this age" has been borrowed by Paul from *Gnosticism*: "Paul can take up the Gnostic concept of the θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, since for him the seductive and ruinous power of this aeon or 'world' is a positively active power in opposition to God, not something relatively inferior or basically harmless".[101] In the period post

[98] Boor, *Der zweite brief des Paulus*, 97-99.

[99] C K Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973), 130.

[100] Barrett, *A Commentary*, 131.

[101] R Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985), 104. [Note: The first edition of the commentary appeared in German in 1976]

Bultmann, it has become clearer that full-blown Gnosticism was a phenomenon of the second century CE, and hence too late to have had any influence on Paul.

8.2 Commentary from 1980–1989

During this decade, two major commentaries on 2 Corinthians were published, both of which extensively analysed the Greek text, and exemplified thorough inter-textual research of the literature in the same milieu as 2 Corinthians; the first was by V P Furnish,[102] and the next by R P Martin.[103]

Furnish interprets ὁ θεός primarily by means of the qualifying adjective, τοῦ αἰῶνος: "This age . . . a concept which has both spatial and temporal dimensions and which is not essentially different from his references to 'this world'".[104] However, he considers the possibility that Paul is subscribing to a kind of *Jewish apocalypticism* as evidenced in Qumran: "The dualism apparent here is characteristic of Jewish apocalypticism – e.g., that of the Qumran sectarians; see 1 QS iii.15-21, which describes "the spirits of truth and falsehood".[105]

One possible key to avoid the illogicality of suggesting that unbelieving people in general cannot see the light that comes from the gospel because they have all been blinded is the grammatical construction that begins 4:4; ἐν οἷς, "among whom". Furnish recognizes that this construction, if taken seriously, would significantly limit the reference to "unbelievers"

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[102] V P Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

[103] R P Martin, *2 Corinthians,* WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986). [Note: a revised edition featuring additional articles was published by Zondervan in 2014]

[104] Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 220. Interestingly the patristic writers concur that αἰωνος and κοσμος are merely synonymous in this context, for which reason they routinely exchange the latter for the former!

[105] Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 220.

to "a subgroup within the more general category of 'those who are perishing'".[106] Satisfied, however, that τῶν ἀπίστων is synonymous with τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, he rejects the possibility but we shall later explore the potential of Furnish's insight more fruitfully. Unlike some previous scholars, Furnish does not allow his interpretation of "the god of this age" to draw him into speculating about the moral condition of "this age" nor even the extent of Satan's power exercised in it. The only point Paul is making is that whoever is blinded has been blinded by Satan.[107]

Martin's comments on the phrase are brief, and add little to the discourse. He asserts that "the god of this age" must refer to Satan within Paul's demonology, and reflects Paul's "Jewish doctrine of the two ages . . . so Satan controls this age under God's decree".[108] Unlike Hughes and Furnish (see above), Martin avoids conceding that unbelievers in general are blinded beyond grasping the gospel. He views οἱ ἄπιστοι as a specific group: "those who were false brothers intent on doing Satan's work by undermining Paul's".[109]

8.2.1 Frances Young and David F Ford (1987)[110]

Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians has the distinction of being the first academic publication in the century-and-a-half since Adam Clarke (1826) to unequivocally argue that ὁ θεός in 4:4 is a reference to God. The authors revisit the arguments of Chrysostom, and agree that his first argument – that "of this aeon" should be attached to the "unbelievers" – is admittedly "an

[106] Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 220.

[107] Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 247: "The point is not that the present age is 'evil' or even that Satan's rule is exercised over it. The single point is that Satan, *the god of this age*, is the one who is responsible for the blindness of the *unbelievers".*

[108] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 78.

[109] Martin, *2 Corinthians*.

[110] F Young and D F Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1987).

idea that does seem to strain the language given the word order".[111] Chrysostom's second argument, though, is on firmer grounds:

> God is the God of this world – he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not just the God of heaven*".* Although it is difficult for us to accept that he could blind people, "Scripture often speaks this way when it means he allows these things to happen*".*[112]

Considering the cumulative argument: that Paul does not elsewhere use θεος to designate the devil; that there was merit at least to Chrysostom's second argument that God is the God of this world; and that it is in fact a pervasive biblical theme that God blinds and hardens some people, the authors hold that "there are good grounds for believing that Paul meant God when he said God". Their additional comment is most significant: "It is *both anachronistic, and inappropriate* both to the text and to Paul's views expressed elsewhere to read *theos* as meaning anything other than God (emphasis added)".[113]

8.3 Commentary from 1990 to 2000

This decade began and ended with the publication of two articles with immediate import to our subject of discussion: S R Garrett's "The God of this World and the Affliction of Paul: 2 Cor 4:1-12",[114]

[111] Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth,* 116.

[112] Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 115.

[113] Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 115-117.

[114] S Garrett, "The God of This World and the Affliction of Paul (2 Cor 4:1-12)," in *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, eds. D Balch, E Ferguson and W Meeks (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 99-117.

and M Uddin's "Paul, the Devil and 'Unbelief' in Israel (with Particular Reference to 2 Corinthians 3–4 and Romans 9–11)".[115]

Sandwiched between these were the publications of a number of commentaries, not least of which were the major works of M E Thrall,[116] P W Barnett,[117] and J M Scott.[118]

8.3.1 Susan R Garrett (1990) and Mohan Uddin (1999)

Garrett's chief concern is to discuss the nature and source of Paul's afflictions as an apostle, in which context she draws attention to "the god of this age" in 2 Cor 4:4. She avers that Paul sees his opponents being manipulated by the malevolent power of Satan, and that the "unbelievers" in 4:4 are *not* the "unconverted generally"; rather they are *Paul's opponents* in Corinth who are "controlled by the devil", and determined to undermine his ministry.[119] Paul can designate Satan as "the god of this age" because he operated out of a "dualistic frame of reference", and she proceeds to explain Paul's view of Satan as follows:

> As "god of this age," Satan blinds the minds of some of Paul's hearers, lest they perceive that Christ died to rescue them from the age's dominion (cf. Gal 1:4). Now that the crucifixion and resurrection have occurred, Satan engages in "damage containment". He strives to keep as many as possible from escaping his dominion and seizes every

[115] M Uddin, "Paul, the Devil and 'Unbelief' in Israel (with Particular Reference to 2 Corinthians 3–4 and Romans 9–11)," *TynB* 50 (1999): 265-280.

[116] Thrall, *Second Epistle.*

[117] P W Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

[118] J M Scott, *2 Corinthians*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998).

[119] Garrett, "The God of This World," 101-102.

> opportunity to capture one of the saved (2 Cor 2:11; cf. *T.Dan* 6:3-4).[120]

While this presents us with an interesting hypothesis of Satan's motives, power, and *modus operandi*, it is at best speculative. The fact remains that contrasting strikingly against the backdrop of Second Temple Judaism – with its elaborate and impressive notions of Satan – Paul subscribes to a surprisingly "low view" of Satan. Although he acknowledges a personal being, Paul will mention "Satan" only seven times in the undisputed letters, and that too to warn Christians about an enemy that obstructs, deceives, and entraps God's unsuspecting people. He certainly gives no indication of post-resurrection "damage containment", and no other Pauline text supports the idea that Satan has a dominion in which human beings are helplessly incarcerated.

The chief objective of Mohan Uddin's essay is to explore the causality of Israelite unbelief in Jesus as Messiah in the thinking of Paul. In his comparative study of Romans 9–11 and 2 Cor 3:1–4:6, he argues that both God and the "Satan figure" of 4:4 are attributed with the initiative of making Israel obtuse. He finds a resolution to this apparent contradiction in Paul's cognitive environment of Jewish apocalypticism: "'harmonization' of divine and satanic causal agencies was a possible solution for Jewish thinkers in Paul's day, who were faced with the problem of how to relate satisfactorily the problem of evil with the divine realm".[121]

Given that Uddin works with three specific texts (Romans 9–11, and 2 Corinthians 3 and 4) that each deal with the problem of "Jewish unbelief", and given that he sees the allusion to Isaiah 6:9 as a background echo, and therefore, God as the causal agent in judicial hardening in Romans 11:7 and 2 Cor 3:14, it is curious at the least that he fails to incorporate 2 Cor 4:4 as reiterating the

[120] Garrett, "The God of This World," 104-105.
[121] Uddin, "Paul," 271.

same notion of God as one who causes judicial blinding, especially since the text explicitly states that "the God (ὁ θεός) of this age has blinded". It could be argued that his *a priori* commitment to interpret ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as Satan pre-empted the potential for integrating these texts to better understand the coherence of Pauline logic.

8.3.2 Margaret Thrall (1994)

Thrall too dedicates an inordinate amount of discussion to explicate 4:4 (305-312), showing how enigmatic its various elements are for the task of the exegete. She recognizes that "ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is unique in the NT," but concludes that the appellation is appropriate for Satan because "the pejorative connotations of 'this age' strongly suggest that Satan is meant, and the idea that Satan possesses control over the present world order would have support elsewhere in the NT".[122]

She sees three arguments, however, that have been used to avoid the conclusion that it refers to Satan:[123]

1. The patristic argument that it is God, but this was based on a particular emendation of the Greek sentence structure.

2. The fact that "Paul could well describe God himself as 'the God of this age'. Any other sense for ὁ θεός would be without parallel in the Pauline letters". The latter assertion, however, is challenged by the articular noun ὁ θεός referring to the belly in Philippians 3:19.

3. By comparison with the similar construction in Phil 3:19 (ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία) the suggestion that our phrase could be interpreted to mean something like "their god *is* this age".[124]

[122] Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 306.
[123] Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 306-307.

Although "the prevention of perception is elsewhere ascribed to *God* (3:14; Rom 11:8)," Thrall argues that here "it is *Satan* who prevents perception of the truth of the gospel". As to the question of how Satan can have the power to prevent people from becoming cognizant of the gospel, she responds: "It may well be that for Paul the ultimate causes of unbelief remained an unsolved enigma*".*[125]

8.3.3 Paul Barnett (1997)

In comparison to most other commentaries of similar extent, Barnett's comments on 4:4 are disappointing to our interest. He assumes, rather than argues, the interpretation of the title as a reference to Satan, and merely summarizes the views of Thrall and Hughes in a footnote (fn. 45):

> Gk. ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, a reference to Satan (so Thrall, 1.306-8), for whom elsewhere in this letter see 2:11; 11:14; 12:7. The striking term ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is not found elsewhere in the NT; but see ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (John 12:31). This "god" is the master of this age, the "god" behind every idol, yet subject to the decree of God. "The unregenerate serve Satan as though he were their God" (Hughes, 127). Nonetheless there is no dualism here, as if God and Satan were equals.[126]

8.3.4 James M Scott (1998)

Scott's comments on 4:4 are brief, but offer fresh insight to the background and open up the potential for rethinking the interpretation of the phrase. Among 2 Corinthians commentators from the late twentieth century, Scott is the only one to be convinced that "the god of this age" was more likely a reference to *God* himself.

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[124] The argument for an explicative genitive as advanced by Zorell in "Deus huius saeculi," 56-57.

[125] Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 308.

[126] Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 218-219.

This uniqueness of the phrase prompts him to search for comparable language in Jewish literature — the literary corpus that would have been most familiar to Paul. He finds *two* texts that are not cited in any previous writings, and refer to τὸν θεὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος ("God of the age/world): Dn 5:4 (LXX) and Tob 14:6 (Codex Sinaiticus). Both are unambiguous references to God.[127]

Why then would commentators so readily incline to see here a reference to Satan? Scott explains along the same suggestions offered by Young and Ford,[128] and Thrall:[129]

> Hence, our passage apparently refers to God himself as the one who has blinded the minds of unbelievers, an idea supported by other Pauline passages (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14; Rom. 11:8). Such a notion, however, is as repugnant to the modern mind as the Markan explanation of Jesus' use of parables (Mark 4:12, citing Isa. 6:9-10). Therefore, commentators usually prefer to interpret the expression as a reference to Satan, even though such a designation seems to have no parallels.[130]

The author does equally consider the merits of the preferred view by reference to the characteristic statements about "this age" in the Pauline corpus, and the teachings about "Belial" in Second Temple literature,[131] and draws his arguments to an interesting conclusion:

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[127] Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 85.

[128] Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 116-117: "Furthermore, we cannot discount the theological motivations of modern scholars who take the other view. It eases the difficulty about attributing deliberate blinding to a God conceived of as a good loving Father, something we find as difficult as Marcion ever did*".*

[129] Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 307: "The modern attribution of the term to Satan may be due to what is felt to be the difficulty of supposing that a loving God would deliberately blind people's minds*".*

[130] Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 85.

[131] Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 85-86.

> It is not easy to choose between these options, and each has its own plausibility. *We may give a slight preference to interpreting the expression as referring to God*, who frequently hardens people's hearts against him (e.g., Exod. 4:21; 7:3, 13; 9:12, 35; 14:4, 8; Deut. 2:30; Isa. 63:17) (emphasis added).[132]

9. The Growing Consensus about Jewish Apocalypticism and Temporal Dualism as the Background to "The God of This Age"

We noted that 'apocalypticism' was first *explicitly* proposed as the key to Paul's thought in 2 Cor 4:4 by Barrett in 1973. A cursory glance at the commentaries from the 1990s onwards shows how that idea has rapidly grown in popularity, as the examples below underscore.

In addition, we note that the output of full commentaries on 2 Corinthians following 2000 has been noticeably few,[133] and none appear to offer any new insight to explicate the verse under consideration. All the surveyed commentaries during the period adopt the majority interpretation, but find no great need to dedicate more than a few paragraphs to a discussion on "the god of this age".[134]

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[132] Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 86.

[133] Including the following major works: S Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000); Harris, *Second Epistle*; C A Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); C J Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, ANTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007); F G Carver, *2 Corinthians*, NBBC (Kansas City, MO: Beacons Hill Press, 2009); T D Stegman, *Second Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); R F Collins, *Second Corinthians*.

[134] The most surprising being M Harris, in whose monumental volume of 989 pages, the discussion of the enigmatic phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου only takes four brief paragraphs (see 327-328); and Roetzel does nothing more than mention "the god of this world!" (see 70).

S Kistemaker argues that "Paul calls Satan the god of this age, not to place the devil on a level with God, but to show that Satan is the ruler of this world . . . Jesus called Satan the prince of this world, but Paul designates him 'god'".[135] Kistemaker seemingly subscribes to a full-blown dualism:

> And as the spirit (god) of the age, he has the power to blind the minds of the unbelievers. The contrast is striking: preachers drive away the darkness of the world with Christ's illuminating gospel; Satan strikes the unbelievers with blindness so that their minds are unable to see the light of the gospel.[136]

J Lambrecht is in no doubt that Paul is dependent on a dualistic worldview, although he argues about the "unbelievers" (who are most probably "non-Christian Jews"), and that Paul's rhetoric may "contain a connotation of human culpability":[137] "Here we have an example of the kind of dualism inherent in Paul's own thought. The present age is under the domination of evil cosmic powers, the devil and his angels, who are in conflict with Christ".[138]

D Garland also opts for Satan: "Paul must be referring to Satan as the god of this age." He classifies Satan as a "god" because he has a dominion, however limited by the one true God, and has subjects whom Paul labels "unbelievers".[139] He is further convinced that Paul is completely dependent on the imagery of Jewish apocalypticism that "pictured the Prince of Light and the

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[135] S J Kistemaker, *II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 140.

[136] Kistemaker, *II Corinthians*, 141.

[137] J Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 65.

[138] Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, citing G W MacRae, "Anti-Dualist Polemic in 2 Cor 4,6?" *StEv* 1 (TU 102) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), 420-431.

[139] D E Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 211.

Angel of Darkness ruling different realms and engaged in a life-and-death struggle*"*.[140]

Harris is convinced that "as a Christian Rabbi Paul divided time into two ages or aeons: 'this age'. . . and 'the coming age'*"*. As for the phrase "this age": "the genitive τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου may be taken as an objective genitive: 'the god who rules over this age'*"*.[141]

Keener argues that the reference ought to be to Satan because "apocalyptic Jewish thought accepted both God's sovereignty and Satan's wicked activity. God brings light but Satan, darkness and spiritual blindness".[142]

Carver is again dependent on Jewish apocalypticism: "Paul was aware of the widely held apocalyptic conviction that Satan had usurped God's rule over "the present evil age" . . . Standing in the background of Paul's thought is the apocalyptic dualism of Judaism, which in Paul is primarily temporal and ethical".[143]

Stegman maintains the dualism of Jewish apocalyptic: "The 'god of this age' is Satan. Admittedly paradoxical, referring to Satan as a "god" coheres with Paul's worldview and terminology elsewhere. According to him, the world presently stands at the juncture of two ages".[144]

Collins does not wander from the strongest rationale for the majority view, offered by scholars since the 1970s: "The modified dualism of Paul's apocalyptic thought leads him to affirm that those who are hostile to God are under the control of various cosmic forces, but nowhere is he as blatant as he is here when he

[140] Garland, *2 Corinthians*.
[141] Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 328.
[142] Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 173.
[143] Carver, *2 Corinthians*, 146.
[144] Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 99-100.

affirms that the one whom he calls Satan is 'the god of this age'*"*.[145]

10. Thomas Schmeller (2010)[146]

Schmeller represents German scholarship belonging to the latter end of our period of study. He accepts the preferred interpretation but recognizes that using the term "god" for Satan is surprising and unusual. Like most commentators of this period, he goes for an explanation through *apocalypticism*: "In the background is the apocalyptic idea of a contemporary aeon (which is dominated by God-hostile forces), versus a future aeon in which God will rule as Lord". He notes the parallelism between 4:4 and 4:6 as antithetic in nature, where the antithetical element lies in the meaning we attach to the exact use of ὁ θεος in each clause; in the latter, as meaning "God" and in the former "Satan".[147]

Another significant note he makes is the connection between 4:4 and 3:14 by virtue of the common occurrence of "minds" in both verses, and the alternate actions of hardening and blinding, and comments: "There it was God himself who hardened the mind of Israel. Here it is Satan who has blinded the minds of all unbelievers".[148]

[145] Collins, *Second Corinthians*, 91.

[146] T Schmeller, *Der zweite brief an die Korinther: Teilband 1: 2Kor 1,1–7,4*. EKK. (Neukirchen-Vlyn: Neukirchener Theologie, 2010).

[147] Schmeller, *Der zweite brief an die Korinther*, 241-242.

[148] Schmeller, *Der zweite brief an die Korinther*, 244.

11. Donald Hartley (2005)[149] and Derek R Brown (2008)[150]

It is of the greatest significance that our near-exhaustive survey of the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 comes to a close with two works by most recent scholars that specifically address the identity of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. And, as if seeking to represent the polarity of history, they reach diametrically opposite conclusions: Hartley preferring the view of the patristic writers that this was the God of the universe, and Brown being convinced that "the god of this world" must refer to Satan.

In what may be perhaps the most impressive exegetical argument in support of the interpretation that predominated in the pre-Renaissance period, Daniel Hartley begins with an appraisal of the views of the Early Fathers from Irenaeus to Theodoret, and their respective implications. He then surveys the modern arguments for the devil as the God of this age, and isolates *five* main grounds:

i. "This Age" has a pejorative connotation in the New Testament.

ii. Paul is quite capable of using θεός with a meaning other than "God".

iii. It seems to be the "plain sense".

iv. The Johannine "Prince of this World" is Satan.

[149] D E Hartley, "2 Corinthians 4:4: A Case for Yahweh as the 'God of This Age'" (paper presented at the 57th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Valley Forge, PA, November 16-18, 2005), accessed January 7, 2014, http://rdtwot.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/2cor-44.pdf.

[150] D R Brown, "The God of This Age: Satan in the Churches and the Letters of the Apostle Paul" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2008).

v. It is analogous to Belial, an apocalyptic "Ruler of this World".

Hartley counterargues that ὁ θεός never refers to the devil/Satan, and for "five reasons" the Johannine expression is not equivalent with Paul. However, the main thrust of his argument – that the phrase refers directly and unambiguously to Yahweh – is positive; he sees that 2 Cor 4:4 (along with 3:14 within the context) directly alludes to Isaiah 6:9-10[151] (and, in this he stands within a stream of tradition that goes back all the way to Tertullian of Carthage).

For Hartley, "Isaianic fattening/hardening is best understood as divine (rather than Satanic) deprivation of salvific wisdom".[152]

D Brown, on the other hand, sees no difficulty that "the god of this age" must be Satan: because: a) "other early Christian texts deploy similar expressions and titles to express the theological notion of Satan's role as a powerful rule in the present age"; b) the noun θεός is applied to figures other than "God"; and, c) "the god of this age" (4:4), as Satan, is reported to *blind* the unbelieving.[153]

[151] Hartley, "2 Corinthians 4:4," 9-20. Also, for a comprehensive exploration of the use of Is 6:9-10 in the NT, see D E Hartley, "The Congenitally Hard Hearted: Key to Understanding the Assertion and Use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in the Synoptic Gospels" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2005).

[152] Hartley "2 Corinthians 4:4," 10. Further, he concludes: "If the interpretation above is correct, then Paul explains unbelief in terms of God withholding the *internal* light necessary to embrace the *external* light of the Gospel. . . . That 'the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers' is to say that the true God reserves the right to pass over those not destined for salvation by withholding salvific wisdom leading to repentance," (21).

[153] Brown, "The God of This Age," 151-153.

In the ensuing argument Brown asks: "Why does Paul use the title ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου here rather than ὁ Σατανᾶς? His two-part solution, however, is unconvincing, not least because it merely continues to beg the question. His explanations in summary and our contentions are: a) Paul used ὁ θεός *because* he could not have used ὁ ἄρχών as he had done in 1 Cor 2:6 and 8 where he had referred to "the rulers of this age". Brown is convinced that "rulers of this age" had meant "earthly political rulers", and so using the same noun could have confused Paul's readership of 2 Corinthians, so that in 4:4 too Paul was talking about an earthly figure.[154] Yet, we ask, why then would he not have simply used ὁ Σατανᾶς in the first place? b) the striking, contrasting, parallel clauses in 4:4 and 4:6, both of whose subjects are ὁ θεός, suggest to Brown that the first (4:4) must mean Satan and the other (4:6) must refer to God.[155] Again, this begs the question why then couldn't Paul have simply used ὁ Σατανᾶς in the first instance and made his contrasting statements explicit?

12. Conclusion

Although not exhaustive, our survey of the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 has been extensive, beginning with the very first extant reference to it (in the writings of Marcion) and tracing its mention in the majority of significant, extant texts up to the period of Calvin. Thereafter, we have referred a sufficient volume of literature to determine that post-Calvinian biblical scholarship reached a near-consensus that the phrase referred to Satan, though deductively arriving at the same conclusion via varied means. All known minority voices – those that argued that

[154] Brown, "The God of This Age," 155: "In this case, if in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul were to refer to Satan as ὁ ἄρχων of this age then he would be implying some sort of relationship between Satan and human (political) rulers, a notion not found elsewhere in Paul*".*

[155] Brown, "The God of This Age.": "Paul's use of the term θεός seems motivated by his comparison of the antithetical roles of Satan and God in the passage*".*

2 Cor 4:4 is about the *true God* – in the post-Calvin period have been identified and cited, and they add no small support to our proposal that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is rightly understood to be the God of the biblical faith.

However, if our assumption is to accomplish plausibility, we will have to deal with a number of issues that arise from the above survey of the history. First, what conceptualizations of Satan informed the thought-world of Paul, and to what extent did he adopt or depart from them? Second, what really constituted the influence of Jewish apocalypticism on the cognitive environment of the early Christian writers, and is the apparent temporal dualism of "*this* age" a sufficient basis to argue that Paul's entire logic underlying the context of 2 Cor 4:1-6 is imbued with apocalyptic notions? Third, how do we deal with one of the linchpins of patristic explanations beginning with Irenaeus – the "transposition of words" – and can their conclusion (that Paul refers to the true God) be exegetically sustained even without emending the text as they did? Fourth, and positively, do the literary and historical contexts of 2 Cor 4:4 adequately argue in favour of the idea that when Paul uses ὁ θεός here he was not radically departing from the only way he employs the noun in all his writings, as a reference to the true God as understood by a first century Jew?

AMERICAN PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF JAFFNA SOCIETY (1816 – 1850)

G. P. V. SOMARTNA

Introduction

Many modern scholars have downplayed the value of missionary work, naming them as handmaids of Western Imperialism.[1] Today the history of missions has moved from respect to reproach. Some have marginalized the social contribution made by missionaries given the paucity of converts they made.[2] Missionaries have been attributed with an exceptionally large share of the blame for the vices of imperialism. However, going beyond this attitude there are scholars who are calling for a more objective evaluation of the contribution of missionaries to world civilization. The missionary factor has been significant in shaping

[1] K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western dominance : a survey of the Vasco da Gama epoch of Asian history,1498-1945*, (London: Allen & Unwin,1959), 3; John L. and Jean Comaroff , *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 3; Gaston Perera, *The Portuguese Missionary in 16th and 17th Century Ceylon*, (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2009), 1-7; Andrews, Edward, "Christian Missions and Colonial Empires Reconsidered: A Black Evangelist in West Africa, 1766–1816." *Journal of Church & State* 51, 4 (2010): 663–691; Swarna Jayaweera "European women educators under the British colonial administration in Sri Lanka", *Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 13, Issue 4, (1990), 323-331

[2] Peter van der Veer (ed.), *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 70.

the social conditions of the people of Jaffna. Christian missionaries were not purely religious actors in Sri Lankan history.

In Jaffna, a larger percentage of the population enjoyed the advantages of secondary and higher education in English over a longer period than any other part of the Sri Lanka. There was a higher percentage of English schools in Jaffna than elsewhere on the island. This was a result of the involvement of Christian missionaries and American Protestant missionaries in particular who, with the help of English education, transformed traditional Tamil society in the peninsula into a comparatively progressive and prosperous one. The imbalance resulting from the educational and social advantage of the upwardly mobile classes of Jaffna society is cited as one of the factors contributing to subsequent ethnic tensions in the 20th century.

Many notable educational, literary and medical institutions in Jaffna owed their origins to the American missionaries. Eventually their work became a yardstick for other missionary societies who took up the challenge. The Hindu revival movement that began long before that of the Buddhists in the south also took up the challenge of the Christian missionaries to promote education and other modes of social advancement among Hindu Tamils. Many Jaffna Tamil families, mostly Vellalar, used this opportunity to educate their children. They provided the bulk of the British colonial civil servants in Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaya and North Borneo.[3] By the time Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, Ceylon Tamils comprised 30% of the country's administrative service, 50% of the clerical service, and 60% of engineers and doctors while making up just 11% of the total population.[4]

[3] A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: Its Origins and Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: C. Hurst and Co, 2000), 15.

[4] Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), 235.

Portuguese and Dutch Precursors

The Jaffna peninsula, being a Tamil-speaking part of the country, had close links with southern India. The ambitious missionaries who had the desire to work in both places gave special attention to Jaffna. When the Portuguese controlled the island of Mannar, Henrique Henriques (1520-1600), who made a great contribution to Tamil studies, even contemplated setting up a university in Mannar before he moved to South India.[5] The Portuguese who conquered Jaffna in 1619 encouraged the religious orders to set up schools attached to their 42 churches scattered throughout the peninsula.[6] The Jesuits established a college and later the Franciscans did the same.[7] According to Don Peter these colleges were of high academic standard.

> [Portuguese] was the medium of instruction in the colleges. Being not only the language of the ruling power and administration but also the key to Western knowledge, it was, understandably, taught up to a much higher level in the colleges than in other schools.[8]

Rev. Philippus Baldaeus, who is regarded as the most indefatigable predikant of the Dutch Reformed Church, in the

[5] W. L. A. Don Peter, *Education in Sri Lanka under the Portuguese* (Colombo: Catholic Press, 1978), 153-161; Martin Quere, "Christianity in Mannar: Progress and setbacks, *Aquinas Journal*, III, (1986), 145-170.

[6] Tikiri Abeyasinghe, *Jaffna under the Portuguese* (Colombo Lake House Investment Ltd, 1986), 5-9; Martin Quéré, *Christianity in Sri Lanka Under the Portuguese Padroado, 1597-1658* (Colombo: Catholic Press, 1995), 204.

[7] V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period*, Vol. III (Dehiwela: Tisara, 1991), 91.

[8] Don Peter, *Education in Sri Lanka*, 158.

Dutch period served the Jaffna peninsula. He learnt Tamil and resuscitated defunct Roman Catholic schools.[9]

The Dutch colonial administration established a Seminary for higher education in Jaffna in 1690, nearly two decades before such an establishment was contemplated in the Sinhala speaking south. The same trend continued in the British period with greater finesse.[10]

At the very inception of British rule, a missionary from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), Christian David (1771-1852), who was an Indian evangelist, arrived in Jaffna in 1802. He was instrumental in opening English-medium day schools. He was the pioneer of boarding schools in Jaffna. Thereafter, Wesleyan Methodist missionaries (1814) and missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (1818) also began evangelism through schools.[11]

The arrival of missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (hereafter, ABCFM or American Mission) from Boston, Massachusetts, in 1816 boosted that trend.[12] The missionary societies were much stronger in

[9] S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1687* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Institute for International Cultural Relations, 1958), 219.

[10] S. A. W. Mattau, "Education under the Dutch," *Education in Ceylon: A Centenary Volume*, Part I, (Colombo:Government Press, 1969), 310; Ranjit Ruberu, *Education in Colonial Ceylon* (Kandy: Kandy Press, 1962), 39,

[11] J. E. Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies and Progress during British Rule in Sri Lanka 1796-1948* (Colombo: Associated Educational Publishers, 1976), 58-60; C. N. V. Fernando, "Christian Missions: X. Some Aspects of the Work of American Missionaries in Jaffna District from 1827-1866," *University of Ceylon Review* 9, no. 3 (1951), 191-201.

[12] Bertram Bastiampillai. "The American Missionary Enterprise in Northern Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in its Early Decades," *Indian Church History Review* 30, no. 2 (1996), 85.

Jaffna and its environs in the 19th century than elsewhere in the island and their network of schools was run with greater efficiently.

American Mission

The Jaffna peninsula offered a special advantage for missionary activity as the language spoken in that area was the same as that of South India. There was free access to both areas as they were under British rule. The Americans being non-British subjects did not entertain the inhibitions imparted by the imperial mentality regarding the colonies of the British Empire. British Governor Robert Brownrigg (1812-1820) prevented the American missions from working in the Sinhala areas, but sent them to work among the Tamils in the northern part of the country.

The main intention of the Americans was not colonial domination but the promotion of the Protestant Christian faith among the indigenous people. Therefore, their main focus in the Jaffna peninsula was a spiritual one, which overflowed into socio-economic upliftment.[13] As English-speakers they had more advantages than the Roman Catholic Oblates who came from France in the second half of the nineteenth century with similar vigour to do missionary work in Jaffna. In fact the American missionaries in the early years were zealous to emulate their British brethren in their effort to evangelize the world.[14] They were sympathetic to the traditions of the local people. They came with primary, secondary and higher education, Sabbath Schools, Bible and tract societies, temperance societies, benevolent and humanitarian societies which tended to go beyond their English counterparts. Their pioneering endeavours challenged the other

[13] Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies*, 57.

[14] *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Annual Report, 1834*, 9.

missionary societies, both Protestant and Catholic, as well as Hindu reformers, to enhance the level of their own work.[15]

Commencement

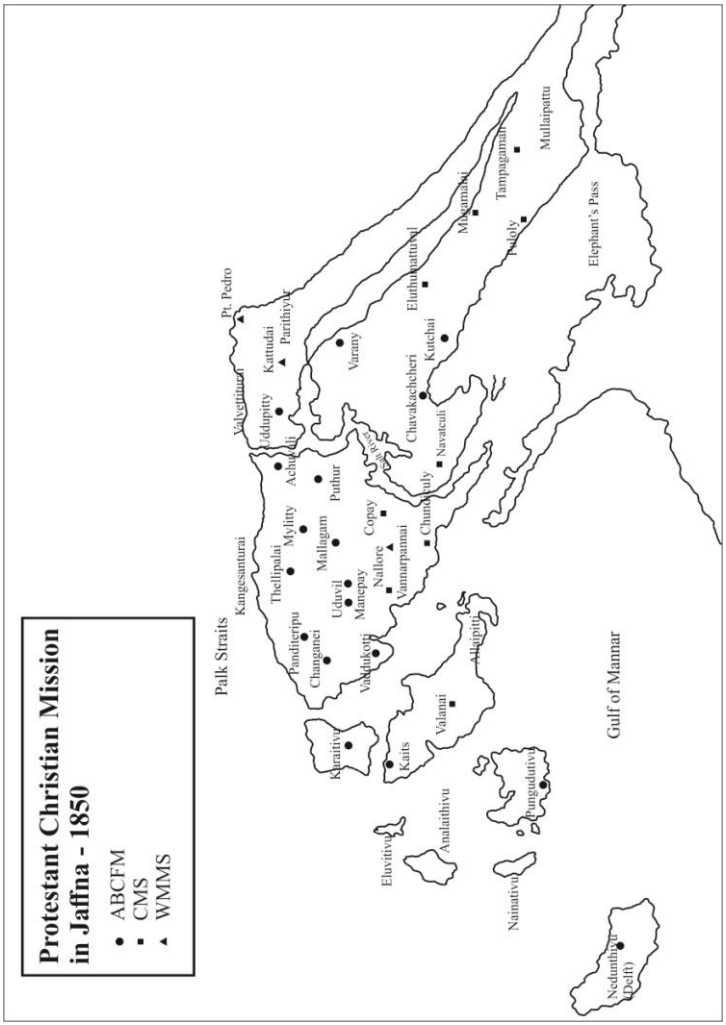
The ABCFM had to concentrate their efforts on an area smaller than all the other Protestant missionary organizations in Sri Lanka. The British Governor Sir Robert Brownrigg confined the American Mission to the Jaffna peninsula which was part of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. It is 65 km long and 50 km broad. Their first stations were Tillipally (Tellipalai), Batticotta (Vattukottai), Oodoville (Uduvil), Manepy (Manipai), Panditerripoo (Pandatarippu), Chavagachery (Chavakaccheri), Varany (Varani) and Oodoopitty (Uduppiddy) with six out-stations in Atchuvaly (Atchuvely), Moolai (Moolaai), Karative (Karaithivu), Valany (Velanai), Koites (Kayts) and Poogerdive (Pungudutivu).[16]

The missionaries of the ABCFM arrived in Sri Lanka just after the Anglo-American war of 1812. Suspicions of each other were still alive. Nevertheless, the foundation for the American involvement in Jaffna was laid by the Rev. Samuel Newell in 1813. He was instrumental in starting up the American missionary connection in Jaffna from his station in Bombay. The first batch of missionaries from the ABCFM included James Richards (1784-1822), Benjamin Meigs (1789-1850), Daniel Poor (1789-1855), Horatio Bradwell (died 1846), and Edward Warren (1776-1818). Almost all the American missionaries who came to Jaffna were college graduates. All of them were ordained in the Presbyterian Church at Newbury before they embarked for Sri Lanka.[17]

[15] *Brief Sketch of the American Ceylon Mission: With an Appendix* (Jaffna: American Mission Press, 1849), 27.

[16] *Brief Sketch*, 4.

[17] *Missionary Herald*, XII (1826), 136.


Protestant Christian Mission in Jaffna - 1850
ABCFM
CMS
WMMS
Palk Straits
Gulf of Mannar
Pt. Pedro
Valvettiturai
Kattudai
Parithiyur
Iddupitty
Achuveli
Puthur
Varany
Kungesanturai
Thellipalai
Mylitty
Mallagam
Uduvil
Manepay
Nallore
Copay
Vannarpannai
Chundikuly
Chavakacheri
Eluthumattuvel
Kutchai
Navatculi
Panditeripu
Changanei
Vaddukoti
Alaipiti
Karaitivu
Kaits
Valanai
Eluvitivu
Analaitivu
Punguditivu
Naimativu
Nedunthivu (Delft)
Elephant's Pass
Mullaipattu
Tampagamam
Paloly
Maguntaki

The English Governor of Sri Lanka at that time was Robert Brownrigg, a keen Christian, who offered an encouraging reception to the missionaries. He readily allowed them to establish themselves in Jaffna. Sir Alexander Johnstone (1775-1849), the Chief Justice of Ceylon, and missionary educationist Rev. Claudius Buchanan (1766-1815) both had great concern to see India opened to missionary work and agreed with the Governor to allocate the Jaffna Peninsula as a gateway to the ABCFM.[18]

Cooperation with others

The instruction to missionaries of the ABCFM required them

> to regard Christian missionaries of every Protestant denomination sent from Europe to the East as their Brethren and withhold themselves most scrupulously from all interference with powers that be, and to submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.[19]

Therefore, they had a very cordial relationship with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) in Jaffna. Rev. Daniel Poor of ABCFM married Ann Knight the sister of Joseph Knight of CMS, on January 21, 1823.[20] That same year, Joseph Knight married the widow of James Richard of the American Mission.[21] When Governor Barnes confiscated the American mission press on its arrival in 1820,

[18] *Missionary Herald,* XIII (1817), 464-7.

[19] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1834*, 28-42.

[20] Charlotte Helen Abbott, *Early Records and Notes of the Furnam Family*, http://www.mhl.org/sites/default/files/files/Abbott/Farnum%20Family.pdf (accessed 31/5/2017)

[21] James Selkirk, *Recollections of Ceylon* (London: J. Hatchard & Son, 1844), 275.

CMS missionaries who received the guardianship of the press allowed the Americans to make full use of it.[22]

In 1850, Emerson Tennent wrote:

> They co-operate most heartily with the other Christian ministers, with whom they have divided the province of Jaffna; their qualified pupils are always readily granted as teachers for the schools of the Wesleyan Methodists; their printing–press is at the service of them and the Church of England; they live terms of amity with the Roman Catholic priesthood, who have manifested no open hostility to their system.[23]

Missionary Work

The ABCFM missionaries were allowed to take over some Dutch churches which were in a neglected state with the concurrence of the government. They bought additional land where new churches had to be set up. Schools for teaching were set up together with churches.[24]

They undertook preaching first through the help of interpreters, and after a period of about one year missionaries started preaching in Tamil. Their missionary spirit was immediately expressed in Sabbath Schools, Bible and tract societies, societies of suppression of vice and intemperance, benevolent societies, and many humanitarian agencies. Most of all, they were keen on educating the natives to equip them as channels of evangelism. Social activities such as education, opposition to slavery, caste

[22] John H. Martyn, *Notes on Jaffna* (Tellippalai: American Mission Press, 1923), 173.

[23] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon* (London: John Murray, 1850), 164.

[24] S. Jebanesan, *The American Mission Seminary (1823-1855) and Modern Education in Jaffna* (Colombo: Jochithra Printers, 2002), 28ff.

discrimination, alcoholism and poverty provided new opportunities for philanthropic action. Eventually they opened their educational establishments to non-Christians also who were interested in education for socio-economic upliftment.

Vision for Education

The school system that developed during the British period was a mixture of government schools and Christian mission schools. The laissez-faire attitude of the government left education in the hands of voluntary agencies such as missionary organizations.[25] Towards the end of the nineteenth century Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim schools also began to receive financial grants from the government. From the beginning, the missionary schools offered the best available education in Sri Lanka. This was due to several reasons. The missionaries of the nineteenth century did their best to enhance the quality of life of the pupils in their schools. They brought the best available methods of education found in their industrially advanced home countries. Evangelism through schools was accompanied by school textbooks, children's literature, and philanthropic organizations. American and British schools and churches were instrumental in filtering down a process of gradual or unconscious assimilation of knowledge. This learning became so potent that it formed a distinctive and powerful moral code which offered a set of values that influenced the personal and collective life of the educated people in Jaffna.[26]

Samuel Newell (1784-1821), who was instrumental in introducing ABCFM missionary work in Jaffna, stated that

> We might establish an institution for the religious education of youth, to raise up and qualify the natives themselves for schoolmasters, catechists and itinerating missionaries, and if

[25] Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies*, 41.

[26] J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 3.

> Christianity be once firmly established in Jaffna, it must from its nature spread into the neighbouring continent.[27]

At the beginning, the desire of the local people for education was negligible. The former colonial experience made them look upon missionary operations with great prejudice. It was hard to find a native to employ in teaching in schools because the former Dutch educational establishment had been neglected. Similarly parents were not willing to send their children to school. Because of the caste prejudices it was very difficult to get high caste Vellalar parents to send their children to boarding schools established by the ABCFM where various castes were placed together. In these boarding schools the children were to be removed from their parents and brought under the singular direction of the missionaries.

The educational establishment of the American mission had several kinds of schools and institutions. The categories of schools were village vernacular schools which were referred to as common schools, central day schools, and free boarding schools. Missionaries opened common schools in their stations. The original teachers were non-Christians. That problem had to be solved through the introduction of higher education.

The missionaries found that the moral influence of common schools over pupils was inadequate. Therefore, they resolved to commence boarding schools. The original boarding schools were the homes of missionary families. They clothed, fed and educated the children, removing the pupils from their homes which were non-Christian. The missionaries made provisions to receive support from benevolent individuals and associations in America for the students in Jaffna. In 1816 itself they started two native free schools. Within five years, the five principal stations, Tellipallai, Uduvil, Manipay, Batticotta (Vaddukoddai) and

[27] *Missionary Herald*, X (1814), 516.

Pandatharippu had large boarding schools. These schools were established for both sexes in five mission stations. By 1820 these five boarding schools had 120 boys and 30 girls. In 1822 there were 42 day schools with 1,800 pupils. In 1823 the girls in the five boarding schools were brought to the school at Uduvil.[28] This was the beginning of collegiate education for girls. In 1824 there were 90 primary schools. Pupils learnt Christianity, English, Tamil grammar, and geography. Tuition was free. In 1825 the boys were gathered into the school at Tellipalai. In 1832 this was made an English day school. Several such institutions were established in other mission stations for the English education of boys. In the meantime the government ruled that only English-educated youth would be employed in public service.[29] They considered the teaching of English as the best way to seek "the treasures of European science and literature, and to bring fully before the mind the evidences of Christianity."[30]

The interest of the mission in education becomes clear when it was stated by the mission that the missionaries concentrated all their numbers and energies to establish schools in the areas they worked.[31] Because it was comparatively a small area, the Americans were in an advantageous position compared to other Protestant missionaries in the country. The American schools were scattered in all parts of the peninsula and were better equipped than other missions.[32]

[28] Rufus Anderson, *History of Missions of the ABCFM to India* (Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1874), 140-141.

[29] C. H. Piyaratna, *American Education in Ceylon, 1816-1875; An Assessment of its Impact* (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 1968), 312.

[30] *Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Volume 12 (1821-1825), 188.

[31] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, 103.

[32] J.E. Jayasuriya, *Educational Policies and Progress during the British Rule in Ceylon, 1796-1948,* (Colombo: Educational Publishers, 1976), 63; R. F. Young and S. Jebanesan, *The Bible Trembled; The Hindu-*

Proselytism is described with negative connotation today. It is applied to activities of one Christian community to win adherents from other Christian communities. As a result proselytism is defined by the World Council of Churches as

> whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in religious matters, or whatever, in the proclamation of the Gospel, does not conform to the ways God draws free men to himself in response to his calls to serve in spirit and in truth.[33]

It is said that "one group's evangelization is another group's proselytism."[34] The missionaries of the nineteenth century believed that preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is God's command for all Christians. Therefore, the goal of these Protestant missionaries was proselytism. They had a positive attitude to it. Education was instrumental in their mission in Jaffna. The evidence suggests that Jaffna benefited from education imparted by the missionary schools.

Making use of schools to propagate Christianity was evident in the schools of the American mission. In all these schools attempts were made to teach Christian scripture. The Bible was daily read as a class book. Teachers were summoned once a week to report on the state of their schools and to be better instructed in what they taught, particularly Christianity. The teachers were also required to attend church on Sundays, with all the elder pupils.

Christian Controversies of Nineteenth-Century Ceylon (Vienna: Sammlung De Nobili, 1995), 137.

[33] Joint Theological Commission of World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church, "Common Witness and Proselytism," *The Ecumenical Review* 23, no. 1 (January 1971): 9.

[34] Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. "Mission and the Issue of Proselytism," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20, issue 1 (January 1996), 2.

All these indicated the extent to which the religious tone prevailed in the schools in this mission.[35]

Female Education

In the early years of the nineteenth century Western women were searching for other roles than that of wife.[36] They came to Jaffna with American Christian missionaries and educators and were filled with social class values and gender ideology prevalent in their own societies. Education of girls in Jaffna formed an essential part of the vision of the American mission in Jaffna. In women's education some of the girls' schools to be opened in Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century were by the American mission.[37]

The contribution to female education is also commendable considering the low estimation upon the education of females. On the other hand, education of girls was a practical need in evangelization of the people as women exercised influence in many important decisions in the family. As Christian David stated, "The conversion of one woman is of more importance than of six men."[38] Women in Jaffna had authority and control over property when it came to marriage and dowry.

The Jaffna Tamils in this period considered literacy not relevant for girls. In 1824 missionaries found only "two Tamil women who could read."[39] Society generally believed that education of girls

[35] Ranjit Ruberu, *Education in Colonial Ceylon* (Kandy: Kandy Printers, 1962), 76.

[36] Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 11.

[37] Minnie Hasting Harrison, *Uduvil, 1824-1924. Being the history of one of the oldest girls' schools in Asia* (Tellippalai: American Mission Press, 1925), 1-2.

[38] Harrison, *Uduvil*, 3.

[39] Helen I. Root, *A Century in Ceylon: A Brief History of the Work of the American Board in Ceylon, 1816-1916* (Jaffna: American Mission Press, 1916), 13.

would make them immodest and unsuitable as wives. Social norms required a woman's life to be one of preparation for her eventual goal of wife and mother and of enacting that role within the prescribed social code. According to their tradition the only duties that a woman had were to superintend the affairs of her home and to attend to the needs of her family. In the early stages those who dared to send their daughters to school faced ridicule and reproach in their villages. The missionaries, on the other hand, had the idea that girls should be treated on an equal basis with boys. They believed:

> Until the females are raised by the education as to hold their proper rank in society, and until their hearts are brought under the influence of Christianity, there is little hop that the people of India will rise from idolatry and sin to the dignity and happiness of a Christian people. [40]

The missionaries found that women were kept secluded from men who were not members of the family. The social position that they placed women in was submission and inferiority. They were targets of sexual exploitation and caste prejudice. It was a stumbling block to the missionaries. Even upper class women were blissfully ignorant of their predicament until the missionaries stepped in to educate them. Similarly the attitude of men towards the education of girls was very hostile. Most of those who first came to school were children of poor parents.[41] Getting girls from 'respectable' families to enter the boarding schools was more difficult than boys.

Female education started in 1817 by gathering some girls of lower social ranks to the missionary bungalows to be taught by the ladies of the mission. When Uduvil Girls' School started in

[40] American Mission Report, Jaffna 1839:910 quoted in Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Women's Other Burden, Western Women and South Asia During British Rule,* (New York: Routledge, 199)5 ,33.

[41] *American Ceylon Mission*, 1849, 24.

1823 there was much opposition. Gradually the prejudice against the education of girls began to reduce. In the 1830s the situation changed as the people of high castes realised the value of educating their daughters.[42] However, the result was that people of low castes were gradually eliminated from the English medium schools where the elites decided to send their children. The tenacious benevolence of missionaries won the confidence of the people as each mission station could get a few girls to come to the veranda of the mission house for education.[43] After persistent effort they succeeded in getting a large number of girls into schooling. It was an achievement by itself in that era.

In 1826, the annual report of the ABCFM Prudential Committee states regarding Sri Lanka that the "whole frame of society must be pulled down and rebuilt before women can enjoy their rightful privileges and be elevated to the proper rank."[44] The chief agency for this was the education of women. In 1826 "it was agreed that they should admit girls of good caste, who have some property; such girls as would make suitable companions for the boys in Batticotta."[45]

[42] Joseph Tracy, Solomon Peck, Enoch Mudge, William Cutter and Enoch Mack, *History of American Missions to the Heathen, from Their Commencement to the Present Time* (Worcester: Spooner and Howland, 1840), 282; Harrison, *Uduvil*, 12

[43] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, 13.

[44] Dana L. Roberts, *American Women in Mission: A social history of their thought and practice* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2005), 82.

[45] Harrison, *Uduvil*, 12.

Number of schools and pupils of the ABCFM, 1816-1854.[46]

Period	Schools	Boys	Girls	Total
1816-1820	13	427	4	431
1821-1825	42	1,584	256	1,840
1826-1830	83	2,643	628	3,271
1831-1835	103	3,481	698	4,179
1836-1840	105	3,297	680	3,977
1841-1845	89	2,453	1,149	3,602
1846-1850	95	3,144	1,089	4,233
1851-1855	74	2,371	1,075	3,446

Education of women was radical considering the conservative nature of the people of Jaffna in the early part of the nineteenth century. In many ways it was disruptive of the traditional Hindu system in Jaffna. The education of women can be considered the beginning of this change. American missionaries established common schools for girls and mixed schools of both girls and boys. They also established an academy for the higher education of selected groups of girls. All these schools made a great contribution to society in Jaffna. Other missions began schools for girls very early.

Many missionary women offered their talents to improve the quality of life of women in Jaffna through education. Eliza Agnew who came in 1839 live in Jaffna for over four decades until her death.[47]

[46] C. N. V. Fernando, "Christian Missions," 25.

[47] Maina Chawla Singh (ed.), *Gender, Religion, and the Heathen Lands: American Missionary Women in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 203.

Vernacular schools under ABCGM[48]

Station	Number of schools	Number of children
Batticotta	18	745 (643 boys; 100 girls)
Tillippally	19	846 (743 boys; 103 girls)
Ooduville	19	752 (644 boys; 108 girls)
Panditeripo	12	454 (392 boys; 42 girls)
Manipay	10	320 (190 boys; 130 girls)
Total	78	3,095 (2,612 boys; 483 girls)

Rev. Hastings observed that, in 1816, when the missionaries first came to Jaffna, not a single girl could read in English, but there were now nearly 5,000 girls studying in mission schools and there were over 1,000 Christian female workers in the diverse missions. Jaffna men did not think it worthwhile to teach the girls. The remarks of the Leitch sisters, that "What are girls for, excepting to cook food and that girls could not learn to read any more than the sheep," were how the attitude towards girls' education was expressed.[49] The American challenge spurred other Christian missions on in their work of educating girls. WMMS (Vembadi Girls' High School, 1834) and CMS (Chundikuli Girls' College, 1896) were collegiate institutions.

The school curriculum for girls in this period was strongly oriented towards domestic roles.[50]

[48] Ruberu, *Education in Colonial Ceylon*, 187.

[49] Mary and Margaret Leitch, *Seven Years in Ceylon - Stories of Mission Life* (Delhi: Navrang, 1993), 116.

[50] Leslie A. Flemming, "A New Humanity: American Missionaries' Ideals for Women in North India 1870-1930," in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, (1992), 126.

Number of schools and the students in Jaffna (1819-1900)[51]

Year	Schools	Boys	Girls
1819	15	633	10
1824	90	2,864	613
1836	155	6,037	1,000
1868	60	1,598	728
1879	121	8,120	1,400
1884	138	8,332	1,751
1900	133	10,224	2,791

Catholic Contribution

There were 67 Roman Catholic schools in 1828.[52] Forty were Tamil schools. Jaffna District had the most. In 1845 the vicariate of Ceylon was divided into the two vicariates of Colombo and Jaffna. An Italian Oratorian, Orazio Bettacchini, became the vicar Apostolic while Colombo vicariate was left with the Indian Oratorians who did very little towards the improvement of education. He paved the way for founding two English schools, one for boys and the other for girls. Bettacchini founded the Jaffna Catholic English School in 1850. Bettacchini reported to the Propaganda that he established five schools in Jaffna of which two are in English. One for the boys with three teachers and one for girls with an English teacher. Jaffna Catholic English School was later named Jaffna Boys' Seminary. The school was registered as a High School in 1881 and renamed St. Patrick's College in the

[51] Kandiah Arunthavarajah, "Educational Activities of American Missionaries in Jaffna (1796-1948) - A Historical View," *Proceedings of the Third International Symposium, SEUSL: 6-7 July 2013, Uduvil, Sri Lanka*.
(http://ir.lib.seu.ac.lk/bitstream/handle/123456789/264/Educational%20activities%20of%20American.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y – Accessed 10/6/2017)

[52] Ruberu, *Education in Colonial Ceylon*, 240.

same year. In 1889 vocational subjects were introduced and technical subjects in 1901.[53]

The Jaffna Catholic English Girls' School that Bettacchini established was for elite women.[54] Roman Catholics started English medium schools for girls much later than the Americans.[55] There were twenty-eight girls in this school.[56] In fact they were influenced by the lessons learnt from the American educational establishment. Holy Family Sisters began schools and orphanages in other parts of the Jaffna Peninsula in 1862. Subjects taught were English, arithmetic, sewing, painting and Music. The Jaffna Catholic Girls' school was first managed by an Irish lady called Mrs. Flannagan with the aim of providing English education to the girls in Jaffna. In 1862 the school was taken over by the Sisters of the Holy Family and became the first convent school on the island.

Further development took place when in 1847 the Oblates of Mary Immaculate arrived. The Jaffna vicariate was handed over to the Oblates in 1857, on the death of Bishop Bettacchini. Stephen Semeria, O.M.I., was appointed Vicar Apostolic. In 1868 another Oblate, Christopher Bonjean (1868-1883), succeeded Bishop Semeria (1857-1868). He gave a great impulse to primary education. Two Irish brothers, Brown and Byrne, came in 1859 to teach at the Jaffna Boys' Seminary. Under the leadership of Fr. Michael Murphy it became a college of higher education and changed its name to St. Patrick's College. Students were able to sit for the Cambridge Junior Examination in 1882. The number of

[53] Anton Matthias, *The Catholic Church in Jaffna, 1875-1925* (Jaffna: Sri Lanka Good Shepherd Cetnre, 1992), 71-75.

[54] Martyn, *Notes on Jaffna*, 30.

[55] Nicholapillai Maria Saverimuttu, *The Life and Times of Orazio Bettacchini: The First Vicar Apostolic of Jaffna, Ceylon (1810-1857)* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1980). 6.

[56] Bede Barcatta, *A History of the Southern Vicariate of Colombo* (Ampitiya: Montefano Publishers, 1991), 253.

Catholic missionaries in Jaffna in 1868 was 22, and 50 in 1883. No such development took place in the vicariate of Colombo. In fact there was no seminary to train clergy in Colombo as late as the time of Clement Pagnani (1879-1883). In addition the arrival of six Sisters of the Holy Family from Bordeaux in 1862 to take over the work of the Jaffna Girls' seminary was the beginning of convent school education in Sri Lanka. In all these areas the southern vicariate lagged behind in the nineteenth century.

Schools in Sri Lanka in 1829[57]

Type	Number of Schools	Pupils
Government	97	1,914
Protestant	236	9,274
Roman Catholic	60	1,358
Private	600	8,424
Buddhist Pansala	Over 1,000	6,000

English Education

One aspect in which the American mission differed from the British missionaries was their concern for spreading the knowledge of English language among the local people.[58] They started teaching English on a large scale from the very beginning of their work in Jaffna. Therefore by 1832 the Colebrooke Commission was highly impressed by the English education provided by the Americans.[59] Commenting on the English missionary schools at that time, Colebrooke complained that the "English missionaries have not very generally appreciated the importance of diffusing a knowledge of the English language

[57] K. H. M. Sumathipala, *History of Education in Ceylon 1796-1965* (Dehiwela: Tisara, 1968), 4.

[58] Ruberu, *Education in Colonial Ceylon*, 75.

[59] G. C. Mendis (ed.), *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon, 1796–1833 (*New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 32.

through the medium of their schools", and viewed the activities of the American missionaries in the North of the island with admiration.[60] Therefore, when Colebrooke recommended that "a competent knowledge of the English language should be required in the principal native functionaries throughout the country" the Tamils in Jaffna were ready to benefit from it.[61] They saw the intellectual, moral and material wellbeing of the Jaffna population brought about by the American missionaries and they recommended the government to encourage and support their activities. They also found that the similar institution at Kotte, run by the CMS mission, was not used by the Sinhalese in that manner. The Commission report stated,

> There is a small English clan in the central establishment of the missionaries at Cotta, near Colombo, and a larger one in the principal Seminary of the American missionaries at Vattukottai, near Jaffnapatam. In both seminaries but, chiefly the latter, students have made some creditable proficiency in Mathematics and other branches of useful knowledge, affording the most satisfactory proofs of the capacity of the natives, and other their disposition to avail themselves of the opportunities of improvement afforded to them. The American missionaries are fully impressed with the importance of rendering the English language the general medium of instruction, and of the inestimable value of this acquirement in itself to the people. As the northern districts of the island are chiefly indebted to these missionaries for the progress of educating, the benefits of which are already experienced, it is but just to recommend that they should receive all the encouragement from the government, to which their exertions and exemplary conduct have entitled them.[62]

[60] G.C. Mendis, *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*, 73-74.
[61] Mendis, *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*, 70.
[62] Mendis, *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*, 74.

The use of English as medium of instruction had a good impact on the personality of the pupils and eventually the Tamil community in Jaffna.

The general conflicts between Anglicans and Nonconformists for control of education in England was extended to the southern part of Sri Lanka. Such conflicts were absent in the north as the Americans made it a point to join hands with the British missionaries in a missionary union.[63] In fact the missionaries of WMMS in Jaffna adopted the American system of vernacular schools and colleges on the American model. The Hindus and Catholics also established similar institutions.[64] English was considered as a prestige language and it was a tool through which pupils in the Tamil community in Jaffna could widen the horizons of their world. The English language was at the apex of the linguistic hierarchy and the use of vernacular was regarded as an "admission of inferiority."[65]

College Education

The American missionaries far outstripped the other missionary organizations in their desire to impart literacy to the people in their mission field. By 1823 they had 60 primary schools scattered in various parts of Jaffna Peninsula and the islands. They introduced English education to these schools which other missionaries failed to do. Within seven years after their arrival they came out with the proposal to set up a university deriving on the intake of good students from their schools. In 1823 the ABCFM established an institution of higher learning under the supervision of Daniel Poor to offer an advanced education for better pupils in the five secondary schools of the mission. It lasted

[63] Piyaratna, *American Education in Ceylon,* 209.

[64] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, 143-159.

[65] H. A. Wyndham, *Native Education – Ceylon, Java, Formosa, the Philippines, French Indo-China, and British Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 49.

till 1855 for only 32 years. The impetus created by the Seminary, that released the socio-cultural forces, has lasted until today.

When the proposal for the establishment of the college was sent to the Governor Edward Barnes (1820-1822), he disapproved the establishment of a college. The missionaries therefore changed the name from 'College' (which denoted an independent institution of higher learning offering a course of general studies leading to a bachelor's degree) to 'Seminary'. The Seminary was to prepare "competent native assistants in the several departments of missionary labour among the Tamul [*sic*] people both on the island of Ceylon and the neighbouring continent."[66] Batticotta Seminary predated Christian College, Kotte (1827), run by the CMS, and Colombo Academy, later Royal College (1835) run by the government. In 1823 when the Seminary at Batticotta was proposed "England could still boast of only two Universities".[67]

Their vision regarding the college was expressed in their plan published on the 4th of March 1823. It stated:

1. To impart a thorough knowledge of the English language, as the only way to unlock the treasures which that language contains.
2. The cultivation of Tamil Literature: which is necessary in order to oppose idolatry most successfully and in order to raise up a reading population.
3. The study of Sanskrit by a selected few, from among those who may be designed for native preachers.

[66] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1834*, 78-79.

[67] Sabapathy Kalandran, *A History of Jaffna College (1923-1980*), (Jaffna: Board of Directors, Jaffna College, 1983), 6.

4. To teach Hebrew and in some cases Latin and Greek, to those native preachers who may be employed as translators of the Scriptures.
5. To teach, as far as the circumstances of the country require, the sciences usually studied in the colleges of Europe and America.[68]

Emerson Tennent who visited the institution in 1850 gives his recommendation, saying,

> The whole establishment is full of interest, and forms an impressive and a memorable scene – the familiar objects and arrangements of a college being combined with the remarkable appearance and unwonted costumes of the students; and the domestic buildings presenting all the peculiar characteristics of Oriental life and habits. The sleeping apartments, the dining hall, and the cooking room are in purely Indian taste, but all accurately clean; and, stepping out of these, the contrast was striking between them, and the accustomed features of the lecture-room with its astronomical clock, and transit instrument; the laboratory with its chemical materials, retorts, and electro-magnetic apparatus, and the Museum with its arranged collection of mineral and corallines to illustrate the geology of Ceylon. But the theatre was the centre of attraction, with its benches of white robed students, and lines of turbaned heads, with upturned eager countenances, "God's image carved in Ebony." The examination which took place in our presence was on History, Natural Philosophy, Optics, Astronomy, and Algebra. The knowledge exhibited by the pupils was astonishing; and it is no exaggerated encomium to say that, in the extent of the course of instruction, and in the success of the system for communicating it, the

[68] Joseph Tracy, et al, *History of American Missions*, 115.

> Collegiate Institution of Vattukottai is entitled to rank with many a European University."[69]

The best pupils from the boarding schools at Manipay, Tellipallai, Uduvil, and Batticotta (Vaddukoddai) were brought to this seminary. The majority of them were primarily from the Vellalar caste. They were educated in English and Tamil. Two thirds of the time in the timetable was given to English, only one third was assigned to Tamil. The subjects were Christianity, English and literature, Tamil language and literature, Sanskrit, European and Hindu astronomy, mathematics, native arithmetic, geography, history and chemistry. American missionaries and native teachers shared the teaching workload.

The Americans had a policy of combining English and Tamil studies in their educational set up. In the Batticotta (Vaddukoddai) seminary instruction was offered in four branches: Biblical, Scientific, English and Oriental. The proportion of students following Oriental studies increased after 1835.[70] Attention was paid to Sanskrit, Hindu astronomy and philosophy in addition to Tamil studies. American missionaries expected their pupils eventually to be scholars who could rub shoulders with learned Hindus of the day. In this manner the Seminary produced some outstanding Tamil scholars. Batticotta produced educated Christians and excellent Tamil scholars.

Another objective of the Seminary was to create a simple and forceful Tamil prose literature. This helped to create original Tamil prose literature as well as translations from English. The work of the Seminary contributed to the revival of Tamil culture, the enrichment of the Tamil language and the development of literature. Rev. Henry Hoisington (1801-1858)**,** the Principal of the Seminary from 1836 to 1841, translated Saiva Siddhanta philosophical books such as *Sivagnana Botham*, *Sivapragasam*

[69] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, 178.
[70] *ABCFM Annual Report 1835*, 61.

and *Tatwa Kattalei* into English.[71] The Hindu publications which came from the American printing presses in Jaffna and Madras offered further vitality to the Tamil language which developed a lucid style of prose. The Modern Tamil was enriched by these publications.

The Seminary also maintained a very high standard of English. An examination of the courses offered at the Batticotta Seminary displays the broad vision and aims of the American missionaries. Christianity, Science and Philosophy played an important part in the work of the institution. In addition stress was laid on both pure and applied sciences. Therefore Mathematics, Philosophy, Natural History, Astronomy, Chemistry were offered. English Literature, Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Sanskrit, Geography, Geology, History, Political Economy, and Book-keeping were among the subjects of humanities and social sciences.[72]

Therefore, large numbers applied for admission from seminary feeder schools. In 1842 there were over two hundred students getting their education at the Seminary.[73] Most of them came for their personal advancement. The Seminary stood highest among the educational institutions in the country. Between 1825-1850 nearly six hundred students had completed the course of study at the Seminary. They also set up teacher training colleges, such as Kopay Christian Teachers College.

During the period it existed from 1823 to 1855 it was able to revolutionize the educational and socio-cultural environment of

[71] *Minutes of the special meeting of the Ceylon Mission held in April and May 1855 on the occasion of the visit of the Deputation from the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Madras: American Mission Press, 1855), 57; Piyaratna, *American Education in Ceylon*, 320.

[72] Jebanesan, *The American Mission Seminary*, 87-107.

[73] *ABCFM Annual Report*, *1843*, 129

Jaffna. Emerson Tennent made the following observation on the Batticotta Seminary in 1850.

> The course of education is so comprehensive as to extend over a period of eight years of study. With special regard to the future usefulness of its alumni in the conflict with the Brahmanical system, the curriculum embraces all the ordinary branches of historical and classical learning and all the higher departments of mathematical and physical science combined with the most intimate familiarisation with the great principles and evidence of the Christian religion… The knowledge exhibited by the pupils was astonishing; and it is no exaggerated encomium to say that, in the course of instruction, and in the success of the system of communicating it, the collegiate institution of Batticotta is entitled to rank with many European Universities.[74]

During the period of 33 years it existed it was able to revolutionize the educational and socio-cultural environment of Jaffna. Later generations look up to achievements of the Seminary as it brought about a tremendous upsurge of intellectual life the like of which has never been seen in the country before or after.[75]

Medical Training

The American missionaries began training physicians from the very early years of their ministry, as a part of medical evangelism. It was a remarkable venture even though medical evangelism was hardly known in this period. The American missionaries on principle were given one year's practical medical training before they arrived in Sri Lanka. Edward Warren on his arrival in 1816 in Sri Lanka established a small hospital for the sick and eventually

[74] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, 152.

[75] S. Kulandran, *The Word, Men and Matters (1940-1983)*, Vol. 1, ed. D. J. Ambalavanar (Chunnakam: Institute for the Study of Society and Religion, 1985), 143.

started training a local medical assistant.[76] His work was interrupted as a result of his failing health and eventual death.

Missionaries often stated that they came "not to make capital out of their ignorance but to mitigate their misery."[77] The early American missionaries had some knowledge of medicine before they came to Sri Lanka. James Richards and Edward Warren of the first missionary batch had short courses of medical study at the University of Pennsylvania and a year's practice in hospital work.[78] Initially they hoped to look after their colleagues with the medicine they brought with them. Missionaries had to provide much needed medical and other relief to the people of Jaffna when cholera, smallpox and other epidemics took place. They established a temporary hospital in 1817 at Tellippalai.[79] The first properly qualified medical missionary was Dr. John Scudder (1793-1855) who arrived in Jaffna in 1819. He served in Jaffna from 1820 to 1836.

He established a small hospital at Pandaterippu. While engaged in medical work he went on preaching tours, and took care of a small boarding school for girls and boys at his station in Pandaterippu. He carried medical and surgical instruments in his evangelistic travels. In 1832 he opened a second hospital in Chavakaccheri.

Scudder began to give practical medical training to three local assistants. This medical education of local people was developed into a permanent feature by the next medical missionary, Dr. Nathan Ward. He paid visits to the hospitals at Pandaterippu and Chavakkacheri which his predecessor had set up. In 1841 he

[76] Martyn, *Notes on Jaffna*, 12; Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, 6.

[77] T. Christlieb and W. Hastie, *Protestant Missions to the Heathen* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co, 1882), 29.

[78] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1818*, 185.

[79] Martyn, *Notes on Jaffna*, 12.

established a hospital near the Batticotta Seminary for the purpose of providing practical training for his medical class. In this manner the American Mission Medical School was the first Western medical school in Sri Lanka.

Nathan Ward in his period of thirteen years (1834-1847) began to give practical medical training to some native youth. He started with nine students but only three completed. In 1845 he expressed the hope to have one Tamil medical doctor in each mission station of the ABCFM. In time of cholera or smallpox epidemics he halted teaching and devoted his full attention to tending the sick. In 1846 one tenth of the population of the Jaffna district died of cholera.

The next medical missionary was Dr. Samuel F. Green. He made medical work a permanent part of missionary work. He realized the value of medical help for securing a friendly atmosphere for the Christian message. He wished to train an adequate number of spiritually devoted local doctors skilled in modern medicine. Green served twenty six years in Jaffna from 1847 to 1873. During that period he made a valuable contribution to the development of the medical education of nationals. He wished to train a Western qualified medical doctor for every 10,000 inhabitants of the peninsula and to have them settled in their own villages. The classes were first held at Manipai where his hospital was, and in 1851 transferred to Batticotta. He paid his medical staff well because he did not want them to enter government or plantation service where they could get better remuneration. He, after analysing practice of indigenous medicine, decided to offer his students science and Christianity in addition to their medical studies.

Green wanted to offer this education in Tamil. Therefore, he resolved to provide Tamil books on Hygiene, Physiology and Medicine as most Ayurvedic physicians knew only Tamil. He hoped to educate them through the translation of English books into Tamil. For that purpose he began to prepare a vocabulary

accurately in Tamil for the English terms found in the textbooks. In 1852 he made a glossary of medical terms with the help of Dr. Jeremiah Evarts. Thereafter he ventured to translate the most authoritative medical and surgical books of the period into Tamil. These translations in manuscript form were read in current medical classes in order to clarify their accuracy. Green's supervision was present throughout this long and tedious editorial process. He even saw it through the printing process. In addition, he published several pamphlets to educate the masses on hygiene and distributed them free. Green got the assistance of his students to help in this task of translation work. He trained 80 young men in English as well as in Tamil in his period of 26 years. However, Green noted that "the natives desired to be taught English in order to be eligible to lucrative positions under the Government."[80]

The Government recognized the value of Green's work and therefore provided financial support to stabilize the medical training programme. Previously, when the Anderson Deputation sent by the ABCFM to report on the work of the mission in the East, surveyed the mission in 1854-55, they acknowledged the usefulness of his medical work and agreed that it should continue. At the same time they advised the closure of the Vattukottai Seminary.[81] The Green Memorial Hospital in Manipai, Jaffna, stands as a grateful memorial to his services.

Theological School

American missionaries also considered training the leaders of the church, who would be theologically competent. They were

[80] Ebenezer Cutler, *Life and Letters of Samuel Fisk Green M.D. of Green Hill* (Printed for Family Friends, 1891), 109.

[81] Reginald L. Rajapakse, *Christian Missions, Theosophy and Trade: A History of American Relations with Ceylon 1815-1915,* (PhD Thesis, University Pennsylvania, 1973), 98. (Hereafter Rajapakse) (1973), 180.

needed to minister to the growing congregations. Most of these received biblical and theological training and eventually they were elected to positions of leadership under the missionaries.

From the very beginning the American Mission had English schools to serve as the middle unit for their Common School, Middle School and higher educational Institute structure. This well-balanced system was intended for meeting the paucity of schoolteachers. These institutions educated the teachers who were able to give competent instruction in the schools of the American mission. It was later that the Government, Protestant and Catholic organizations also had such instruction. At the early stages Methodist and CMS teachers were trained in the American mission institution for training teachers. The institution continued throughout the nineteen century.[82] There were 28 pupils in three classes in the teacher training institution, at the beginning of 1875.

> At the close of the second term, in June, two classes, of four and eight members, left; one having completed a course of five years, and the other a course of three years' study. Some of the latter may return and complete their full course in the next class. At the same time a new class of twenty-one members was received. The number of pupils at the close of the year was thirty-five. Of those who left, all but one are engaged in mission service. The records of the institution show, that of the 123 who have from the first been connected with it for a longer or shorter period, one hundred are marked as Christians (including ten who have died). Of the 123, only twenty-six were church members at the time of admission, and only thirteen were children of Christian parents. Fifty-nine are now engaged in mission service, — one pastor, one preacher, nine catechists, one

[82] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, (1850), 106ff.

colporteur, two writers, one school superintendent, and forty-four teachers.[83]

State of Schools of ABCFM in April 1831[84]

Type of Institution	Number of students
Theological school	20
Mission seminary	91
Academy of boys	51
Academy for girls	37
Free schools	3,367

Tamil Language

The American missionaries were convinced about the value of learning Tamil. This included not only the Tamil language but also its intellectual heritage. The American missionaries began their missionary work firstly in Jaffna. They desired eventually to move into South India for evangelism. Therefore, a sound knowledge of Tamil was regarded as useful. They believed that the Christians should be indigenized. The American missionaries had the intention of raising indigenous clergymen through their scheme of education. Education also was concerned with the environmental conditions in Jaffna and its social needs.

The missionaries established a Tamil Academy in 1821 to promote deep learning of the Tamil language. This was contrary to the view held by the British at the time, "that oriental learning was of little value and that knowledge of English would lead to the moral and intellectual improvement of the Eastern peoples."[85] Americans together with other Protestant

[83] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1876*, 63.

[84] B. B. Edwards, *The Missionary Gazetteer* (Boston: William Hyde & Co. 1832), 222.

[85] G.C. Mendis, *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*, (New Delhi: University of Cambridge Press. 1956), lxiii.

missionaries used this resource. The missionaries made an attempt to create a unified orthography for the Tamil language.

The composition of standard works in Tamil by native scholars was one of the objectives of the Seminary.[86] Adequate attention was therefore paid to the study of Tamil classics, Hindu Astronomy and philosophy as well as Sanskrit. The teachers of the Seminary aimed at creating scholars in these fields who could hold their own with any learned Hindu of their day.[87] Many of their graduates proved to be outstanding Tamil scholars.

Many seminary graduates were responsible for publishing a number of Tamil texts of very high standards. The Seminary undertook research and published pioneering books in the Tamil language in local literature, logic, algebra, astronomy, and general science. One of the prominent alumni was C. W. Thamotharampillai, who was also the first graduate (1857) of the University of Madras in India. The American missionaries applied modern Western methods of inquiry and analysis to learn and to teach the Tamil language and culture. The missionaries created a prose literature in Tamil to suit their needs. However, at this stage they were not aware of the commentarial tradition of Tamil prose literature. The Seminary aimed at producing scholars who could hold their own with the learned Hindus of their day. Some of those who passed out of this institution were Thamotharampillai, William Nevins, J. R. Arnold and Wyman Kathiravetpillai. Nevins later turned out to be a scholar and an authority on Tamil learning. Arnold was a writer of stories, poems and other books in Tamil.[88]

[86] Jebanesan, *The American Mission Seminary*, 121.

[87] J.V. Chelliah, *A Century of English Education,* (Jaffna: American Mission Press, 1936), 76-77.

[88] V. Muttucumaraswamy, *Some Eminent Tamils, Writers and Other Leading Figures (19th to 20th Centuries)* (Colombo: Department of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs, 1992), 25.

Books on Religion, Philosophy and Astronomy and Tamil culture published in the West were introduced to Jaffna through the Seminary. Principles of literary and linguistic research were introduced to Tamil scholars of Jaffna through these books. The Seminary students were taught the proper method of collecting information, critically analysing it, and writing essays with a coherent logical order. Among the American missionary scholars who made a study of the Tamil culture, Daniel Poor and H. R. Hoisington, who were Principals of the Seminary (1836 -1841), had made an excellent contribution towards Tamil scholarship. These studies in Tamil culture gave an encouragement to native scholars to pursue studies in that field. That Rev. Joseph Knight's Tamil manuscript collection was bought in 1840 by the American Mission for the Seminary library is an indication of their interest in Tamil culture. Subjects which were prominent in Western universities, like History, Geography, Astronomy, Logic, Chronology, and Geology were taught at the Seminary. These subjects were available to the Tamil reader in the Tamil language.

Tamil Dictionaries

The American missionaries in Jaffna had dealings with learned as well as uneducated people. Therefore, literary as well as spoken Tamil had to be taken into account when they prepared dictionaries and vocabularies. A number of American missionaries took–an interest in lexicography. Levi Spaulding (1791-1873) composed an English Tamil Dictionary in 1842 and Miron Winslow another English Tamil Dictionary.[89] Mr. Kathiravetpillai was a Tamil and Sanskrit scholar, and his Tamil Dictionary is one of the best ever compiled. Miron Winslow and Joseph Knight jointly prepared *A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary of High and Low Tamil.* It was published in Madras in 1862.

[89] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, 31-32; Gerald H. Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 633.

Tamil Printing Press

Like other Protestant missionaries of the ABCFM wanted people to read the Bible in their own languages. Therefore, mass education was crucial. They also rapidly developed literacy programmes to teach people to read. As we noticed earlier, the American missionaries with college education stood above other missionaries in the field of education. Hence from the outset they imported printing presses, created fonts, taught printing technology to the locals and began printing Scripture portions, tracts, newspapers, and later textbooks for their establishments for higher education. The American mission had four presses in the North. On the other hand the Wesleyans (in 1815), CMS (in 1820) and Baptists (in 1840) had only one each in Sri Lanka.[90]

The printing press received from America in 1820 was not allowed by Governor Barnes.[91] This did not discourage them from their printing endeavour. The Americans got their first printing press deposited with the CMS station in Nallur and utilized it to print their tracts and other religious literature. The next Governor, Robert Horton (1831-1837), allowed the Americans to install their press in their mission compound in Manipai in 1834.[92] By 1838 there were four printing presses under the management of the American mission. The report of 1837 stated that "the creative power in education has been the press."[93] They did not retain the management of the press in missionary hands as that would deter the locals from gaining the craft of printing, therefore in 1856 the printing press at Manipai was given to the

[90] G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon under the British*, (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries Co., 1948), 80.

[91] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1821*, 34.

[92] Martyn, *Notes on Jaffna*, 173.

[93] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1836*, 114.

management of indigenous Christians trained by the missionaries.[94]

These printing presses were put to full use for the enrichment and familiarity of contemporary advances of knowledge for the benefit of the people of Jaffna. In addition to the vast number of religious literature they published books on History, Geography, Arithmetic, Algebra, and Anatomy, both in English and Tamil. A number of medical and scientific books in Tamil translations were also published.

The medical missionary Dr. Samuel F. Green, whom we introduced earlier, translated several medical books into Tamil. Cutter's *Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene*, Mansell's *Obstetrics*, Grey's *Anatomy*, Hooper's *Physician's Vade Mecum*, Well's *Chemistry*, Dalton's *Physiology* and Arring's *Indian pharmacopoeia* were among them.[95] He prepared a number of popular treatises and tracts in Tamil to disseminate simple medical and scientific ideas among the people of Jaffna.[96]

Some alumni of the Seminary wrote books to explain Christian theological themes in Tamil. The graduates of their schools and Seminary prepared a comparative study of the Christian and Saivite beliefs. Their polemical writings enabled the Tamil scholars to write in the vernacular prose tradition. Most of these polemical materials appeared in pamphlet form. The contents of these pamphlets showed a new style of writing to the Tamils. Their quality was very much superior to the pamphlets published

[94] Rufus Anderson, *Report of the Deputation to the India Missions Made to the ABCFM at a Special Meeting held in Albany, N.Y. March 4, 1856* (Boston: T. R. Marvin, 1856), 346.

[95] Reginald L. Rajapakse, *Christian Missions, Theosophy and Trade: A History of American Relations with Ceylon 1815-1915* (PhD Thesis, University Pennsylvania, 1973), 98.

[96] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, 42-43.

in the South in Sinhala in this period. The missionaries published polemical tracts entitled *Blind Way* and *The Hindu Triad*. The literary quality of their tracts was of very high standard because these pamphlets formed a part of the Tamil course at the Batticotta Seminary.[97] These documents antagonised the Hindus. Replies came from the Hindu side in a similar polemical style.

The printing establishment contributed tremendously to both the mission and the people. It is reported that in 1850 it gave employment to about 35 local assistants. The work entailed printing elementary English and Tamil school books as well as other requirements for schools. It printed material for the Jaffna Auxiliary Bible and Tract Society. It also undertook mission and seminary reports and intermittent work for local writers. It is reported that until the end of 1854 the press had produced 171,747,198 pages of printed matter.

In addition, a large number of local people were trained in the skill of printing. This brought printing technology to the people. Daniel Poor who returned to Jaffna in 1840 after a period of three years in South India was surprised to see the growth of printing in Jaffna.[98]

Tamil Journalism

There was nothing by way of journalism in Jaffna before the Americans introduced the publication of newspapers and journals. The challenge they offered eventually brought a reaction from Hindus, Wesleyans and Catholics. In 1841 the American Mission started a publication entitled *Morning Star* in English and Tamil. It was published fortnightly. The content of the journal was devoted to educating the public on matters relating to education, science, general literature, agriculture and religion. It also included articles on government and a summary of

[97] Jebanesan, *The American Mission Seminary*, 142.
[98] *Missionary Herald,* XXXVI (1840), 292.

contemporary events.[99] It entertained articles even of opponents of Christianity in accordance with the best ethics of journalism. It was widely read by the people of Jaffna. In 1856 it was discovered that more than one third of its readers were not Christians.[100] This was a period when there was a dearth of newspapers and what was available was infrequent in Sri Lanka. The contemporary English papers published in Colombo were *Colombo Observer* (1834), *Herald* (1838), the *Ceylon Times* (1846) and the *Ceylon Examiner* (1846); these were not available to many readers in Jaffna. *The Morning Star* provided an adequate reading material for the literate. In addition it exerted influence on the formation of public opinion.[101]

In 1855, *The Morning Star* stated that

> As the number of educated natives has increased, and they have become more widely scattered, this periodical has seemed more and more necessary, as a means of retaining that influence over them, which is a result of their having been trained up under our fostering care, and which we have tried to make use of specially for their spiritual benefit.[102]

Publications

All missionary bodies from the beginning of their activities in Sri Lanka published religious tracts. Compared to the tracts published in the south which largely constituted polemical and personal attacks on opposing religions, the tracts published by the American mission dealt with contemporary issues. *The*

[99] Celestine Fernando, *History of Christianity in Ceylon (1796-1903)* (Colombo: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2013), 201.

[100] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, 39.

[101] Mendis, *Ceylon under the British*, 80.

[102] Quoted in C. N. V. Fernando, "Christian Missions: Some aspects of the work of American Missionaries in Jaffna District from 1827-1866", *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. X, No. 3, (1951), 201.

Morning Star was regularly published fortnightly since 1841. It continues to be published today. It was originally printed in four pages; two in English and two in Tamil, dealing with subjects on science and literature.[103] There was a close relationship between the Seminary and *The Morning Star* till the former was terminated in 1855. The students, alumni, teachers and the Principal of the Seminary had a hand in maintaining the high quality of the journal. The other publication, *Missionary Herald,* was mainly in English. The American Mission also inspired the publications of other missionary organizations in the second half of the nineteenth century. Even the Roman Catholics started a newspaper, *Jaffna Catholic Guardian*, in 1876.[104]

Caste and Religion

The caste system of the Hindu religion was seen as a direct obstacle to the acceptance of the Christian faith. This complex system of castes and their relationships with each other was entrenched into Jaffna society and the missionaries saw its negative effects in their stations. Among the Tamils it was based on a social stratification related to occupations. In the Tamil tradition caste was firmly anchored to Hindu religion. Caste consciousness was pervasive among all communities in Sri Lanka.[105] The high caste members believed that they were liable to be polluted by direct or indirect contact with people of low caste. In many cases, high caste Christians refused to eat food cooked by low caste people and demanded that low caste people always sit on the floor in schools and churches while they sat on chairs and pews. An account of the caste system in Ceylon written in 1851 by a committee of American missionaries shows that the caste system prevalent in Jaffna was less severe than in South India due to preceding European colonial and Christian influence

[103] Martyn, *Notes on Jaffna*, 182.

[104] Martyn, *Notes on Jaffna*, 37.

[105] A. J. V. Chandrakanthan, *Catholic Revival in Post-Colonial Sri Lanka* (Kandy: Social and Economic Development Centre, 1995), 25.

of nearly three centuries.[106] Missionaries found caste prejudice unacceptable and obnoxious. They condemned the system in their preaching, teaching and writing.

Under these circumstances, in 1826, the American mission faced the problem of selecting "girls from good families and from good caste or those from poor families and low caste."[107] It was finally decided to "admit girls of good caste who have some property." The intention was to make suitable companions for the boys of the Batticotta Seminary. Thereafter the Uduvil Girls' School became very popular, therefore "the mission had to limit the number which could be taken."

It is also on record that able men like Christian David of Jaffna and Charles Sinnatamby, who licensed preachers in connection with the churches at Pandateruppu and Karaitivu, were ardent workers for the social amelioration of the low caste converts even before the arrival of European missionaries.[108] They tried to deal with this in their churches and schools. They insisted that children of different castes should sit together in the class irrespective of caste differences. This idea itself was radical and amounted to a social revolution in that period. Teachers were instructed to discourage caste distinctions in schools. Caste marks were prohibited in class rooms of the American Mission. In the boarding schools where children of different castes were compelled to share living quarters, traditional taboos regarding food and water were disregarded. This caused uproar among the people in the early years of the American Mission. Dr. Samuel Green noted, "Caste is worth more than education or property to

[106] Rajapakse, *Christian Missions*, 191.
[107] Harrison, *Uduvil*, 12.
[108] *Sixth Annual Report of ABCFM,* (1876), 60.

a Hindu, and man, in caste would esteem its loss next to the loss of life."[109]

The holding of caste by church members is one of the greatest social obstacles to the progress of Christianity. The caste issue in boarding schools was more difficult for the missionaries. Children of different castes were compelled to share living quarters, dining rooms and wells. This was extremely repulsive to the children who were caste conscious. Some Vellalar boys in the boarding school at Tellippalai tried to eject low caste boys in their midst by force in 1824. The American Mission's policy was that equality should prevail within the Christian community, in churches, chapels and schools. The mission insisted on their members sitting together in the church as equals, sharing the communion cup and eating bread from the same plate. The local pastors and catechists also were instructed to treat all on equal terms. Missionaries expected that education and the gospel would ultimately undermine caste barriers.

On the other hand, the insistence on making the converts going back to their families even when the family were non-Christian gave the impression that conversion to Christianity did not involve loss of caste. As a result, although caste was not tolerated in American Mission churches, there was caste within personal life and social dealings. Nevertheless, by imposing an atmosphere of equality, the American Mission made a contribution towards mitigating the rigidity of caste among Tamils in Jaffna.

Dr. Samuel Fisk Green reported in 1856 that

> We had two well-educated native preachers, Niles, who is still with us, and Martyn; the former of the Farmer caste, the latter of the Fisher caste. Niles was married, and Martyn went to his wedding, and ate; afterwards Martyn was married; Niles attended his wedding in the church, but

[109] Cutler, *Life and Letters*, 122.

> would not go to his house and eat with him and his friends, because, though himself friendly with Martyn and long his fellow-labourer, he could not be induced to implicate his own class in associating with those of lower caste. There is no doubt as to Niles' Christian duty to a brother; but that brother might turn upon him and say: 'Now you have eaten with me and mine and we are equal; you think yourself a great fellow, but there is no difference between us.' All his friends would, likely, throw the same in his teeth.[110]

Caste and marriage concerns held back children from attending schools. Missionaries were made aware that the children would lose caste by eating on the premises of missionaries.[111] It is reported that a father had disowned his two little girls who ate food from Mrs. Winslow in the mission bungalow during a storm. According to the father, the children had broken caste rules and he could not hope to get them married.[112] Missionaries took many such girls under their charge. They provided them with education, clothed and fed them without causing any financial burden to their parents. They arranged marriages for those girls. As a result of the progress made, a boarding school was opened for girls in 1823. Girls were instructed in reading and writing Tamil. In addition, Arithmetic, Geography and Christianity were taught. All were trained in housekeeping. "It was hoped that these girls would form Christian household in the midst of heathen."[113]

In regard to the caste system the missionaries made the people think liberally about social issues. This helped to mitigate caste prejudices and to eliminate a large number of superstitious ideas, enabling them to think in a more progressive way. A Tamil

[110] Cutler, *Life and Letters*, 122-123.
[111] Harrison, *Uduvil*, 7.
[112] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, 13.
[113] *Colombo Journal* (1833), 83.

teacher of the Seminary, observing the change of attitude of boys and their parents, stated in 1848,

> I seem as one born blind, and now just made to see. Everything is so changed! These men, when young, would not receive even a plantain from the missionary; and if they came to his house, they would purify themselves by bathing before going to their own houses. I used to do so. When I first taught the missionaries, I always stopped at the tank on my way home and bathed, else my friends would not have received me. But now, how changed.[114]

In order to eliminate caste distinctions the missionaries were willing to admit youth of any caste, sect or nationality between the age of 12 and 25 who sought admission to the Seminary. However, this dream could not be realised. Their decision was that "no distinction of caste be allowed in the school at Vattukottai." But they had to give in to local prejudices.[115] Most of the students of the Seminary belonged to the Vellalar caste. They came from the higher echelons of Jaffna society. A similar situation arose in India, and the Catholics had to open separate seminaries for high castes and other castes at Verapoly and Alieppei in South India.[116]

Caste affected the missionary work. At one time the missionaries were almost forced to give in to the prejudices of the caste ridden society. It was the highest caste that received the most benefits of the American Mission. The Vellalar caste got the full advantage of missionary education. While maintaining the traditional high position in society, they could improve it further, almost monopolizing the government services, professional and

[114] *ABCFM Annual Report*, *1849*, 25.

[115] Mirion Winslow, *Memoir of Mrs. Harriet L. Winslow: thirteen years a member of the American Mission in Ceylon*, (New York: American Tract Society, 1846), 194.

[116] Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Caste, Class and Catholicism in India 1789-1914* (New York: Curzon Press, 1998), 40.

commercial and other employment sectors.[117] Many Vellalar families used this opportunity to educate their children, and they provided the bulk of the British colonial civil servants in Sri Lanka.

The church and school became the most powerful weapons against caste. The school brought children of various castes into one classroom. It was a social revolution, considering the prejudices of the Tamils in that period. The American mission was able to create a Tamil Christian community which felt distinct and separate. When Jaffna Christians went to Madras for further study, they found that most Christians in South India were of low caste communities. Social pressure persuaded many of them to abandon Christianity at least while in India. In fact, some of them were reconverted to Saivism. Among many such individuals who started off as Christians, C. A. Thamotharampillai can be cited as an example. Even though his father was also a Christian, when he went to Madras, he converted to Saivism and became virulently anti-Christian.[118] For many Vellalar Tamils the caste became more important than their faith. As one way of preventing this happening the missionaries encouraged the Christians to marry within the small Christian community which was predominantly Vellalar. Therefore, one would find that "most Tamil Christians in Jaffna are related," irrespective of denominational affiliations.[119]

European Names

The names given by the missionaries proved to be of immense value in concealing the past and conferring upon them new

[117] Steven Kaplan, *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 113.

[118] Mary Leitch and Margaret Leitch, *Seven Years in Ceylon* (New York: American Tract Society, 1890), 147; S. Ratnajeevan H. Hoole, *C. W. Thamotharampillai, Tamil Revivalist: The Man Behind the Legend of Tamil Nationalism* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1997), 20.

[119] Goolbai Gunasekera, *Chosen Ground* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2007), 79.

identities beyond the search of their caste.[120] This was a habit introduced by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The American missionaries gave their converts the same names as their donors in the US. In addition some of the benefactors were English civilians including one chief Justice of Ceylon.[121] They sent the money needed for the pupils who took the names of the donors. Methodists and CMS missionaries adopted this practice in Jaffna, while such practices were rare in the South among the Sinhalese. The Vellalar Christian community in Jaffna therefore continues to use these European family names.[122]

Self-support

In the early years of the modern missionary movement there were many influences that turned attention towards support for the general principle and practice of reliance on 'native agency'. Missionaries helped to form native societies to help in the evangelistic work in Jaffna. The Native Evangelical Society of Jaffna, formed in 1832, may have been the first indigenous home missionary society in any foreign missionary field.[123]

In 1837 the ABCFM declared that

> the leading object of the mission of the Board among the heathen is, with the blessing of God, to rear up native churches, place them under the care and instruction of competent native elders ordained over them, and furnish

[120] S. N. Sadasivan, *A Social History of India* (APH Publishing Corp, 2000), 443

[121] Tracy, et al., *History of the American Board*, 80; Harrison, *Uduvil*, 11.

[122] For the missionary practice of name-changing of native converts at baptism, see Ingie Hovland, *Mission Station Christianity* (London: Brill, 2013), 115.

[123] Rufus Anderson, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years* (Boston: ABCFM, 1862), 106.

> them with ample, self-propagating gospel instrumentalities, at the earliest possible period.[124]

The Prudential Committee of ABCFM that visited Sri Lanka in 1855 found that the results of the mission in respect of conversion were disappointing. Therefore, they came to the conclusion that indigenous churches led by native pastors must be established and they were to be urged toward self-government, self-support and self-propagation.[125] Educational, humanitarian and social reform activities were regarded as worthy mission concerns essential to the intellectual, social and economic strength of the native Christian population.

By adopting the three-self concept the Americans trained their native communities to help themselves when outside help came to a halt. This spirit of self-help, self-reliance and self-propagation spread to their personal lives as well. In fact, this disposition stimulated their own efforts to promote education even without the help of the ABCFM. In this spirit the alumni of the Batticotta Seminary and other enthusiasts in Jaffna established Jaffna College in 1872 as a result of the fact that the American Mission terminated the education from Batticotta Seminary in 1855.[126]

Protestant Work Ethic

The Protestant Reformation encouraged work in a chosen occupation with an attitude of service to God. It viewed work as a sacred calling and avoided placing greater dignity on one job over another. This concept approved working diligently to achieve maximum productivity and profits, required saving and reinvestment in one's business, and charitable giving. These

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[124] *ABCFM Annual Report*, *1837*, 154; quoted in Rajapakse, *Christian Missions*, 84.

[125] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1856*, 57.

[126] Rufus Anderson, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years* (Boston: ABCFM, 1862), 313.

values were particularly ingrained within the Puritan communities that settled in the pioneering colonies of New England. The pioneers of the American Mission in Jaffna were in every sense the offspring of the nonconformist Puritan ethos of the newly emerged United States of America. It allowed a person to change from the trade or profession of one's father, and oriented the practice of one's vocation as service to God and bestowing dignity upon the worker. This change of perception regarding work and wealth, in combination with long-held indigenous values, stimulated frugality, diligence, enterprise and upward mobility. The American missionaries sowed the seeds of their Protestant work ethic among Jaffna society. The Three-Self Movement of the church indirectly affected the social development of Jaffna. However, one may find that the Protestant work ethic did not permeate into the South with the same force as in the North.

Cooperation among Missionaries

Emerson Tennent noticed in 1850 that the Americans had a very intimate relationship with other Protestant missions. The American missionaries worked together with the other Christian missions in Jaffna on common issues. Tennent stated that they offered their cooperation

> most heartily with the other Christian ministers, with whom they have divided the province of Jaffna; their qualified pupils are always readily granted as teachers for the schools of the Wesleyan Methodists, their printing press at the service of them and the Church of England; they live on terms of amity with the Roman Catholic priesthood who have manifested no open hostility to their system.[127]

The Jaffna Branch of the Ceylon Auxiliary Bible Society fostered cooperation among missionaries of different Protestant denominations. They even pooled resources and promoted cooperation among three Protestant missionary societies in

[127] Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, (1850), 164.

Jaffna. However, this cooperation did not mean that the missionaries ignored their doctrinal differences.[128]

The Protestants of Jaffna belonging to denominations such as the Church of England, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, among others, contributed to the development of Tamil society in Jaffna in three interrelated ways: education, social service and employment.

Schools of the Methodists in Sri Lanka in 1826:[129]

Name of Circuit	Number of Schools	Boys	Girls
Colombo	6	342	33
Negombo	9	338	150
Kurunegala	7	187	1
Galle	10	369	112
Matara	8	279	100
Kalutara	7	292	90
Batticaloa	7	200	…
Trincomalee	4	130	…
Jaffna and Point Pedro	15	435	30
Total of 9 circuits	73	2,572	516

Hindu Reaction and Revival

It is well know that in the revival of Hinduism a number of methods and strategies imitated Christian patterns.[130] Arumuga

[128] Celestine Fernando, *History of Christianity*, 85.

[129] C. N. V. Fernando, "Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Early British Period," *University of Ceylon Review* VII, no. 4 (1949): 274.

[130] Everett L. Cattell, "The Christian Impact on India," *International Review of Mission*, Volume 51, Issue 202, Version of Record online: 8 Feb. 2011, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1962.tb03524.x/pdf; Bernard Bate, "Arumuga Navalar, Saivite sermons, and the delimitation of religion, c. 1850," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 42, no. 4 (2005), 470.

Navalar (1822 - 1879), who had a close association with Peter Percival of the Methodist Mission, responded to the Protestants with the latter's own methods. Navalar was probably the first Hindu leader to offer a Saivite intellectual and institutional response to Christianity. He used forceful logical and scholarly arguments against his Protestant adversaries to defend and strengthen Saivite traditions.

Navalar founded a Hindu printing press in Jaffna to strengthen Hinduism.[131] He is credited with creating a Hindu catechism. Ancient Hindu writings which were available only in ola-leaf manuscripts were made available in print so that a wider readership could use them. The press also attacked the Christian propagandists. He ventured to reform Saiva temple practices to elevate Hindu worship to face the Protestant challenge. His public lectures in Saiva temples, publication on Hindu religious piety are far superior to the Sinhalese Buddhist publications of the same period. Navalar was instrumental in the development of Saivite prose literature. He organized the publication of Hindu classical writings and trained Hindus in Jaffna to read and interpret them.[132]

The school that Navalar founded was called Saivaprakasa Vidyasala or School of Siva's splendour. His teaching methods were based on his exposure with the Missionaries. The curriculum was similar except for the emphasis given to Saivism. These schools produced students who were given an understanding of

[131] Michael Bergunder, Heiko Frese (eds.), *Ritual, Caste, and Religion in Colonial South India* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2011), 119.

[132] Dennis Hudson, "Arumuga Navalar and the Hindu Renaissance among the Tamils," in Kenneth W. Jones (ed.), *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogue in South Indian Languages* (New York: State University of New York, 1992), 27-51. See also, Steven Kaplan, *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 98.

Hindu rituals and theology. In this way, he infused the Hindus of Jaffna with a desire for academic learning.

Raising the Standard of Women's Lives

Social problems such as illiteracy, the inferior status of women, slavery, caste, polygamy and intemperance, were regarded as obstacles to the gospel message. Education of girls was one step towards remedying that predicament. The American contribution of female missionaries of the nineteenth century to the emancipation of Tamil women was commendable. They showed by example that women could do professional work alongside men. They also believed that the religious and ethical values as well as the moral code of the Christian culture—were of inestimable value and which they wanted to impart. Thus American missionaries took a keen interest in female upliftment. The education of girls was a long-term remedy for it. Women missionaries began to arrive in the nineteenth century. Wives of missionaries and single ladies went to houses to preach the gospel and to teach the female occupants reading and writing. Though the Women's Board began work in 1868, education of girls had made a great impact on Jaffna society from the very beginning. The American mission also maintained a large number of Bible women in this period. One Annual Report of the ABCFM states that public meetings propagating the Christian Scripture were conducted entirely by the Christian women, even "when the missionary lady was present; and the wisdom shown by them has been quite remarkable."[133]

In dealing with the benefits of female education in Sri Lanka, Selkirk of the CMS records in 1844, "with respect to the girls, they almost all of them get better husbands, and are treated much more kindly than they used to be."[134] By opening schools and

[133] *ABCFM Annual Report, 1867*, 62.
[134] Selkirk, *Recollections of Ceylon*, 268.

college for girls, opportunities were offered to females to get educated and become leaders.

Temperance Work

The Jaffna Temperance Society was formed in 1834 by the batch of missionaries who came fresh from the temperance agitation in the United States.[135] In due course, Protestant clergy in Sri Lanka provided active leadership in the temperance movement. The habit of liquor consumption was high in Sri Lanka. The production of toddy from palm trees and coconut trees made it widespread among all social classes. The government indirectly encouraged it as it brought tax revenue. American missionaries again did the pioneering work toward the agitation against intemperance. Dr. John Scudder encouraged the missionaries who came from America in 1834 with the idea of temperance to use their pulpits against this social evil. The Jaffna Temperance Society encouraged Protestant Christians to abstain from consuming alcohol.

Conversions

Emerson Tennent was of the opinion that the American Mission failed in its first priority which was to convert the non-Christian to the Protestant faith. The successes in converting people were marginal compared to the cost involved in maintaining the mission. Although the schools were efficiently managed, the cost was very high. It is reported in 1850 that the "number of their nominal converts had barely exceeded six hundred, out of ninety thousand pupils."[136] Even the press was not able to produce the expected success in mission although it made some valuable contributions. Even though the mission failed to convert their pupils to Christianity, they were able to introduce Christian ethics to them.

[135] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, 24.

[136] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, (1850), 170; George Barrow, *Ceylon: Past and Present* (London: John Murray, 1857), 160-161.

Employment

In 1836, out of the 136 students who completed their education, 57 were employed by the American mission in the work in Jaffna. Ten served in other Christian missions and 22 were able to find employment in government service.[137] When the American mission started their Madurai mission in 1836 nine from their Jaffna mission were recruited to service in Madurai. Later a few others were taken from the Batticotta Seminary to Madurai. When the mission in Madras was opened the personnel to help their mission's work were chosen from among the alumni of the Batticotta Seminary. From the second half of the nineteenth century Jaffna Tamils were able to find employment in the government sector in S Lanka, and in Southeast Asian countries of the British Empire.[138]

Tamil Christian Literature

The first batch of missionaries depended only for a short time on the interpreters in their regular preaching. "Daniel Poor preached in Tamil just a year from the day he arrived in Tallippalai."[139] Eventually many missionaries could speak fluent Tamil. The American mission used the Fabricius translation of the Bible and provided a Bible based on this in simple Tamil. With their encouragement valuable Tamil Christian literature composed by the Jaffna Tamil Christians started to emerge. These consisted of lyrics, hymns and books. A student of Batticotta, Arnold Sathasivampillai, composed hundreds of Christian devotional songs. This was essential otherwise they could not communicate with the Jaffna people. They prepared books on Christian theology explained in Tamil.

[137] Bastiampillai, "The American Missionary Enterprise," 106.

[138] A. J. Wilson, *Politics in Sri Lanka, 1947-1973* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 16.

[139] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, (1916) 6.

Conclusion

Critics of the later generations painted the missionary enterprise with a black brush. However, it is necessary to reemphasize the fact that missionaries came "to give and not to take;" not to further their own interests but to serve the interests of the people.[140] Further, the American missionaries of this period had no association with imperialism except for the fact that the British Empire gave an opportunity to fulfil their Christian desires regarding the 'Great Commission'. They were different from the Portuguese, Dutch and British missionaries who were a part of an imperial enterprise. Hence they did not have the ulterior motives or inhibitions attached to the British Protestant missionaries of the contemporary era. The missionaries brought their culture, traditions and language in addition to their religion.

The American missionaries who were in the Tamil regions were unique in many ways. They as well as other missionaries were devout and passionate persons who were zealously committed to evangelization. They utilized the traditional methods of this period such as teaching, preaching and printing. Medical mission, which was an American contribution to missionary work, was introduced to Sri Lanka from the very beginning of their work.

Warren and Richards had taken one year's medical study at the University of Pennsylvania and one year's medical practice before coming to Sri Lanka. The American mission hospitals, University College (Seminary), and boarding schools were pioneering ventures in the missionary field. Their aim in all these philanthropic and benevolent activities was the introduction of the gospel to the personal life of those who enjoyed the services offered. Their success in the achievement of this target was meagre. But they had the contentment of witnessing the moral and social improvement of the people.

[140] Christlieb and Hastie, *Protestant Missions*, (1882), 29.

They devoted their attention to education, humanitarian activities, and social reform. Although they had an evangelistic purpose the results were not wholly evangelisation. Thus the Jaffna Tamils became beneficiaries of an American approach to education and social reform along the lines of the Calvinist tradition. They started primary, secondary and higher education in the vernacular as well as in English. Their medical work and the liberation of women in the Jaffna Tamil society were pioneering activities in the area. According to Rajapakse, "In all these facets of their activity the Americans displayed a greater degree of innovation and bold experimentation, philanthropy and pioneering spirit than their conservative minded British colleagues."[141] Americans stood far above the other missionaries in their services in Jaffna. The ABCFM laid the foundation for the education of the Tamils in Jaffna and supplied every other opportunity that the educated community needed. American missionaries introduced gardening to their pupils.[142] The medical mission was unique to them, and that work has continued up to today. They trained the Tamils of Jaffna in a number of modern professional fields. In addition, their contribution to the modernization of the Tamil language and culture is commendable. They endeavoured to improve the quality of life of the people irrespective of religious affiliations. The distinctively American pragmatism came through with a widely varied academic curriculum but set within a religious environment. The Protestant ethic they imparted to their pupils in schools and through their Tamil and English publications to the general public together with the rationalist and scientific approach to knowledge placed the Tamils in Jaffna on a progressive path.

[141] Rajapakse, *Christian Missions*, (1973), 204.

[142] Alagiyawanna K. L. V. "The Social Impact of Missionary Activities in Sri Lanka in the Early 19th Century", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka,* New Series*,* Vol. 36 (1991/1992), 9.

They may not have reached their targets of conversions. Nevertheless, they were successful in giving the people of Jaffna an excellent system of education both vernacular and English. They played a major role in the socio-economic development of the Tamils during the early British rule. They poured a vast amount of money and effort into developing the educational and medical care facilities of the Peninsula. In this manner they created a highly literate and sophisticated community.

The missionaries of this era displayed Christian love and mercy although with a spirit of paternal benevolence. They had the task of dealing with the caste, class and religion of the Tamil people. They, being total outsiders, could look at social issues without the emotional attachments that the natives had. They refused to regard class and caste distinctions of the Jaffna society. They fed the hungry, nursed the sick, buried the dead and did everything within their capacity to save their souls. The American missionaries on the whole did not condemn native characteristics but praised their hardworking and intellectual capacity. The view of the missionaries was that it was their religion that was debased, corrupt and idolatrous.

Christian missionaries were crucial to the development of formal education in Sri Lanka while the contribution of the American missionaries far exceeded the other missions. They largely provided the first modern Western formal education, in spite of initial local resistance against their work. They revealed the economic value of this education which spurred later demand, although it was mostly limited to the upper echelon of Jaffna society. They trained many of the teachers who staffed non-missionary schools. They pioneered education for women. Their vernacular schools equipped the poor people with literacy and knowledge required for their living. The Americans were the major early teachers of the English language, Western science, and Western medicine. These innovations had a number of important social consequences in Jaffna Tamil society.

American missionary activity in the first half of the nineteenth century contributed in a great way to improving the social-cultural life of the people of Jaffna. They held out the example and the challenge for the other missions to establish similar institutions. The Hindus and Catholics lagged behind by several decades. The Wesleyans and CMS, however, were able to compete with the Americans with somewhat lesser achievements. They revitalized the people of Jaffna by inculcating Protestant values and institutions. Their example was imitated by the other Protestant missionaries, and even the Roman Catholics in Jaffna had to keep up with the progress the Americans were making in a small area of the Jaffna Peninsula. The Methodist Mission started Jaffna Central College (1817), Hartley College, Point Pedro (1838) and Vembadi Girls' High School (1837). The CMS set up St John's College, Jaffna (1823) and Chundikuli Girls' school (1841). St. Patrick's College for Roman Catholics (1850) and Holy Family Convent in Jaffna (1862) which came later were inspired by the Americans. American involvement in Jaffna publicized the situation in Jaffna to the Western enthusiasts. Therefore, one could see the first female educationists of the Roman Catholics coming to Jaffna (1862) long before they began working in other parts of the country.

The Tamil Hindu movement tried to do what the Americans were doing in the field of education, religious reform and printing Hindu literature. The American missionaries first gave the English education and other advantages to Jaffna and challenged others to do likewise. In this way they were able to usher in a new era of educational opportunity which was the passport to material advancement in the country and eventually led the Tamils of Jaffna to a prosperous path.

The ABCFM's interventions in Jaffna also had other unintended consequences. The concentration of efficient Protestant mission schools in Jaffna produced a revival movement among local Hindus led by Arumuga Navalar, who responded by building many

schools within the Jaffna peninsula.[143] Local Catholics too started their own schools as a countermeasure. The state also had its share of primary and secondary schools. Thus saturated with educational opportunities, many Tamils became literate. The British colonial government was able to hire well-educated Tamil recruits as government servants in British-held Ceylon, India, Malaysia and Singapore.

The response to American missionary activity has been one of appreciation even among the severe critics of their evangelism. After an initial hesitation thousands of parents, Christian and non-Christian alike, competed for placement in the schools run by the American mission. These educational establishments offered academic quality, discipline and prestige. The persistent inculcation of Christian values changed the attitude and outlook of people even when they did not accept the gospel. They expressed their appreciation by stating that of those who had an education in missionary schools a

> [...] striking change for the better has taken place among the people; those who have been educated among you, even though they do not turn out religious, yet build better homes, know better manners, are more industrious, and more respectful by the people around them those who have not ... [144]

Piyaratna's statement that "the American frontier had not only moved West but also East – across the India Ocean. Of a sudden, Jaffna was becoming a new world" explains the revolutionary changes that took place in Jaffna.[145] The contribution of English schools to the improvement of the educational, economic and social condition of the people of Jaffna during the first half of the

[143] R. F. Young and S. Jebanesan, *The Bible Trembled: the Hindu-Christian Controversies of Nineteenth-Century Ceylon*, (Vienna, Sammlung De Nobili, 1995) 121-122.

[144] Selkirk, *Recollections of Ceylon*, 268.

[145] Piyaratna, *American Education in Ceylon*, 216.

nineteenth century was immeasurable and bore lasting results. Dr. Samuel Green noted in 1856, "Progress in material things appears to be [the] inevitable result, everywhere, of preaching the gospel to the heathen."[146] The Jaffna Peninsula received a tremendous advantage from the American education system. In the sphere of education the schools of the Americans were far superior to those of the other missions and the Government. The American mission with the help of English education transformed the traditional upper class into a modern elite. Jaffna enjoyed the advantages of secondary and higher education in English from much earlier than any other part of the country. There was a larger percentage of English schools in Jaffna than in any other part of the country. This was a result of the impulse given by the American Mission. While the Buddhists in the South complained about mission activities including education, the people of Jaffna offered their heartfelt gratitude to the American missionaries even as they resisted their evangelistic overtures.

The letter written by Emerson Tennent on March 23, 1848 to the Secretary at Boston expresses his candid opinion of the work of the American missionaries.

> The whole appearance of this district bespeaks of your system. Its domestic character, and its social aspect presents a contrast to any other portion of Ceylon as distinct and remarkable as it is delightful and encouraging. Civilization and secular knowledge are rapidly opening the eyes of the heathen community to a conviction of the superiority of the external. Characteristics of Christianity, and thereby creating a wish to know nothing of the inward principles which lead to an outward development so attractive. Thus the schoolroom, operating simultaneously and in harmony with the pulpit and private counsel, is pioneering and preparing the way for the course of spiritual enlightenment which, I firmly believe, will ere long pour

[146] Cutler, *Life and Letters*, 124.

> fourth in a flood irresistibly, and preserve its wide and calm career comparatively unimpeded, for every grosser obstacle will have been gradually removed.[147]

The missionary societies were much stronger in Jaffna and its environs in the 19th century than elsewhere in the island and their network of schools was run far more efficiently. As Piyaratna concludes, "American Mission got Jaffna off to a head start in British Ceylon leaving the Sinhalese in the South decades behind and, in consequence, at a tremendous disadvantage."[148]

The Buddhist belief that the spiritual development of an individual is more important than the development of material welfare, acted as one deterrent in gaining the maximum benefit from the missionaries in southern of Sri Lanka.[149] The influence of the Buddhist monks on Sinhala society was stronger than the influence of Brahmin priests in Jaffna. The revival of Buddhism was a campaign led by the Sangha unlike Jaffna where Vellalar laity played the dominant role. As a community of renouncers, the Sangha's practical contribution to socio-economic development was marginal. The laity did not look to them for guidance on mundane matters of household and workplace. In that period, the Sangha exhorted the laity to follow traditional ways and amass merit towards the gradual attainment of *nibbana*. Therefore, they reacted apprehensively towards missionary institutions aimed at socio-economic upliftment. Thus the laity were prevented from availing themselves of the facilities offered by the missionaries while retaining their Buddhist identity. This was in clear contrast to Jaffna Tamils who were willing to use Christian institutions and yet hold on to their Hindu identity.

[147] Emerson Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, 182.

[148] Piyaratna, *American Education in Ceylon*, (1968), 589.

[149] K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1998), 258.

Christianity was not very popular among the Goyigama community (the Vellalar counterpart among the Sinhalese) except for reasons of societal prestige. The majority of converts to Christianity came from non-Goyigama castes. On the other hand, the Tamil Vellalars of Jaffna made full use of the facilities offered by the Americans and yet their conversion rate to Christianity was almost the same as the Sinhalese in the South. Americans set the example and the challenge for the other missions to establish similar institutions. The Hindus and Catholics in Jaffna lagged behind by several decades before they too became active in equipping their communities in Jaffna with educational and social services. The Wesleyans and CMS, however, were able to follow the Americans with somewhat lesser achievements. The cumulative effect was that Jaffna was saturated with missionary educational and philanthropic institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Tamils in the Jaffna Peninsula became an advantaged social group because of their learning, work ethics, enterprise, leadership and religious and cultural activities, mostly because of Christian educational activities.

There is a view which suggests that the British followed a policy of discrimination against the majority by favouring the minority. It is said that colonial authorities adopted a policy of 'divide and rule' allied to territorial separation.[150] According to this view, one may assume that a minority community achieved a bigger share of national assets because they were systematically favoured by the colonial government. Whether this is true or not, it is clear that the Tamil community in the Jaffna Peninsula benefited from the benevolence of nonconformist puritans of the newly emerged United States of America and those other missionaries who were challenged by them. Nevertheless, it is clear that the refusal of

[150] A. J. Christopher, "'Divide and Rule': The Impress of British Separation Policies," *Area* 20, no. 3 (Sep, 1988): 233-240; Neil Stewart, "Divide and Rule: British Policy in Indian History," *Science & Society* 15, no. 1 (Winter, 1951): 49-57.

the Sinhalese to derive maximum benefit from benevolent Christian missions may partly be the cause of their comparatively poor educational achievements in the colonial era.

THE CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM OF REV. JOHN SIMON DE SILVA (1868 – 1940)

PRABO MIHINDUKULASURIYA

Introduction

Sri Lanka's foremost historian K. M. de Silva once described the alienating effect of missionary tutelage upon Lankan Christians as follows. "[T]he stronger the Christian faith, the greater the prospect of the Christians becoming a separate and privileged sect who looked down in disgust and contempt on aspects of traditional life."[1] He went on to surmise that among Lankan Christians "the soul-searching about the relation between Christianity and national consciousness which appeared in other parts of Asia and Africa at the tail end of the 19th century either did not emerge at all or came about a generation later." De Silva then made the bleak generalization that "the crucial question—can a Ceylonese become a Christian and yet remain a Ceylonese?—was something that seldom occurred to native Christians."[2]

[1] K. M. de Silva, 'Christian Missions in Sri Lanka and Their Response to Nationalism 1910 - 1948,' *Senarat Paranavitana Commemoration Volume*, Eds. L. Prematilleke, K. Indrapala and J.E. Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 221. This was an expansion of de Silva's earlier review article 'Christian Missions in the Age of Asian-African Nationalism,' *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, N.S. Vol. II, No. 1 (Jan – Jun 1972), 88-90.

[2] De Silva, 'Christian Missions,' 221-22.

Certainly, the estranging effect of Anglo-centric education on native Christians was a matter of serious concern even for the more perceptive of the missionary educators such as Rev. A. G. Fraser.[3] However, de Silva's assertion that national consciousness among Lankan Christians during this period "either did not emerge *at all* or came about *a generation later*" is simply untenable. For at precisely the time that de Silva claims virtually none existed, a vigorous nationalist discourse was taking shape *as a contemporary response* to the accusation of de-nationalization, at least among the island's Protestant Christians as registered both in their vernacular and English language print media.

In this article, I hope to foreground the pioneering contribution of Rev. John Simon de Silva towards the emergence of that Ceylonese Christian nationalism. During the turbulent decades of the 1910s and 20s when intermittent and disparate movements of Buddhist revivalism, temperance activism and social reform decisively converged into a political movement for Ceylonese self-government, de Silva's engagements brought him into prominence as a nationalist leader. In May 1916, the Sinhala newspaper *Dinamina* carried a front-page profile of de Silva as part of a series celebrating 'Men of the Day'.[4] As we shall see, de Silva's nationalism was most remarkable for the way it defied established alliances. On one hand, his Wesleyan zeal occasionally offended his Buddhist and Catholic compatriots. On the other hand, his defiantly nationalist outlook brought him into frequent conflict with European colleagues.

[3] A. G. Fraser, 'The Problem Before Educational Missions in Ceylon,' Pan Anglican Papers, S. D. 2(c), *Pan-Anglican Congress 1908, Volume V, Section D: The Church's Missions in Non-Christian Lands* (London: SPCK, 1908).

[4] 'Men of the Day (18): Revd. John Simon de Silva, B.A.' (Sinhala newspaper article), *Dinamina*, 6 May 1916.

Biographical Sketch

John Simon was born on 17th May 1868, the eldest son to second-generation Methodist parents in Kurana (33 kms north of Colombo).[5] His father Juan de Silva was a schoolmaster who became an itinerant evangelist until he died at the age of 55.

Although the young John Simon received an English-medium education at the CMS-run Prince of Wales College, he also learned Sinhala, Pāli and Sanskrit from Bēruwala Siri Dias *gurunnansē*, a disciple of the revered Palanē Don Andiris Tudawe Pandita Gunawardena. Discerning a vocation in the Methodist ministry, de Silva entered the Theological Institution in Galle (later Richmond College) in 1886. While training for ministry he began reading for a BA in English Literature from the University of Calcutta. De Silva then transferred to Wesley College until he received his degree in 1892 and thereafter served as a teacher. At Wesley, he met D. B. Jayatilaka who was soon to become a prominent Buddhist educationist, temperance organizer and statesman. Despite religious disagreements, de Silva collaborated closely with Jayatilaka in the causes of temperance and the campaign for justice following the 1915 Pogrom.

De Silva was ordained in 1892 and appointed to the Mutwal circuit. He then served in Badulla (1894-97, where he was involved with the Uva Mission), Kurana (1898-1903), Galle (1904-09) and Kalutara (1910-11). As a young minister he was deeply influenced by the recovery of social responsibility within British Methodism by the Forward Movement of Rev. Hugh Price Hughes

[5] For biographical information on de Silva see 'Men of the Day (18): Revd. John Simon de Silva, B.A.' (Sinhala newspaper article), *Dinamina*, 6 May 1916, 1; W. J. T. Small (ed.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Ceylon, 1814-1964* (Colombo: Wesley Press, 1971), 616; S. J. de S. Weerasinghe, 'Birth Centenary of a great leader of the Ceylon Church: John Simon de Silva (1868-1940),' *Ceylon Methodist Church Record*, Vol. 112 (1968), 19-21; L.E. Blazé, 'Obituaries: The Rev. John Simon de Silva,' *CMCR*, Vol. 49 (1940), 95-98.

and popularized by their journal *Methodist Times*.[6] In 1896 he married Constance Winifred née Pereira with who he raised three daughters, and a son who died in infancy.

De Silva's facility with the Sinhala language and considerable literary talent were soon noticed. He became the founding Secretary of the Methodist-initiated ecumenical Sinhalese Literature Society in 1906. In this capacity he launched the Sinhalese weeklies *Rivikirana, Gnānōdaya* and associated monthlies *Ruvan Maldama* and *Sithuyana*. He was also General Editor of the Sinhala *Christian Hymnal* published in 1906.[7] The Methodist hymnbook contained many of his own compositions and translations, many of which subsequent editions have retained to this day.

In 1905, de Silva began his life-long involvement in the temperance movement as a young circuit minister in the southwestern coastal town of Galle. At the 1907 World's Student Christian Federation conference in Tokyo, he heard the young John R. Mott enunciating the opportunities facing the church in emerging nations such as Japan and India. On the same trip he also attended the China Centenary Missionary Conference in Shanghai. The progress of these Asian churches heightened de Silva's awareness of challenges in his own homeland. On returning from his three-month visit to Japan and China, de Silva traveled across the island addressing YMCA meetings from Colombo to Jaffna on developments he had observed in Japan "not with the object of religious progress only, but also the progress of the nation."[8] He would later represent Ceylon at the International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem in 1928.

[6] Rev. Walter Charlesworth, 'Rev. J. Simon de Silva B.A.' (Letter to the Editor), *CMCR*, Vol. 49 (1940), 201.

[7] W. J. T. Small, *A History of the Methodist Church in Ceylon 1814-1964* (Colombo: Wesley Press, 1964), 409, 616.

[8] 'Men of the Day (18): Revd. John Simon de Silva, B.A.' (Sinhala newspaper article), *Dinamina*, 6 May 1916, 1.

In 1911 he was released from circuit ministry, and seconded to serve as Publication Secretary of the Christian Literature Society (CLS). The new assignment gave de Silva greater freedom to pursue a wider compass of activities. He was a founder of the Sinhalese Young Men's Association and the National Day movement. When colonial authorities cracked down on Buddhist temperance activists and journalists following the 1915 anti-Moor Pogrom, he worked tirelessly for their release. This period of adversity opened the opportunity for de Silva to build friendships with several young nationalist leaders who would eventually become the founding fathers of independent Sri Lanka.

Quarrels with missionary colleagues about the work of the CLS led to de Silva being reassigned to circuit ministry. He served in Kandy (1916-24), Kalutara (1925-29), Matara (1930-31) and Mutwal (1932-1939), until retirement. His wife died on 22 March 1933. De Silva lived his last year in Kandy. After a short illness, he died on 16th February 1940 in Colombo.

The Challenge of Nationalism

As early as 1905, de Silva wrote on 'Indigenous Christianity,' expressing confidence in the value of indigenous culture for Christian discipleship. Taking up the issue raised by Buddhists that "Christianity… is a Western religion and that to embrace it is to lose one's national heritage and loyalty to the past," de Silva stated, "Now it cannot be emphasized too much that this is altogether an erroneous idea and that to become a Christian it is not at all necessary to turn one's back upon the inheritance of the past and to give up one's national aspirations."[9] He continued, "Certain Buddhist writers are in the habit of charging Christianity with denationalizing the people and destroying their sense of patriotism. If there is any truth in such a charge, it must be due to a defective understanding of the origin and mission of

[9] J. Simon de Silva, 'Indigenous Christianity,' (letter to the editor), *The Ceylon Standard* (9 June 1905), 2.

Christianity." Specifically addressing the religious heritage of the island, de Silva elucidated that

> [T]he education which these Eastern lands have been receiving in the past ages of their history have not been without meaning and…Buddhism, in common with other world-religions, has its contribution to make to the enrichment of Christianity…. The complete success of Christianity in Ceylon will mean an Eastern form of Christianity, more compatible with the national instincts and aspirations of the Ceylonese. This, I believe, is the work which awaits the Eastern church and for which the providence of God has been preparing the Sinhalese, the Tamils and those of other Eastern nationalities.

In 1914, de Silva wrote an article to the missionary magazine *Harvest Field* directly addressing the issue of 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon.'[10] He began by citing a recent speech by John R. Mott, who had urged churches to embrace "the rising tides of nationalism and of racial patriotism," arguing that these aspirations "if taken advantage of by Christianity, will bring unexampled victories; if not, these nations and races will become opponents and will greatly retard Christianity's peaceful ministry to the world."[11] De Silva pointed out that this was exactly what was happening in Ceylon.

> …[T]he present national awakening is being very largely used to create an atmosphere hostile to Christianity. Buddhist and Hindu leaders have been quick to realize the possibilities of the situation, and are seeking for strength and support in nationalism. Our Buddhist friends want to

[10] Vol. XXXIV, No. 8 (August 1914), 286-91.

[11] The quote is from John R. Mott, 'An Unexpected World Situation,' in Fennell P. Turner (ed.), *Students and the World-wide Expansion of Christianity: Addresses Delivered Before the Seventh International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Kansas City, Missouri, Dec. 31 – Jan. 4, 1914* (NY: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1914), 85.

> make Buddhism and Sinhalese nationality convertible terms, and the doctrine is assiduously taught that to become a Christian is to lose touch with the heritage of the past.[12]

He acknowledged that there was indeed a problem within the Christian community that perpetuated such a view. "…[U]nfortunately," de Silva regretted, "the apparent lack of enthusiasm of very many Christians for the national cause lends colour to this allegation regarding the denationalizing tendencies of Christianity." Firstly, he attributed the origins of that indifference to an earlier era when the island's neophyte Sinhalese Christian communities were encouraged solely to concentrate on learning the beliefs and practices of their new faith. "It was but natural" de Silva conceded, "that the whole attention of the Church in the period of its childhood should be confined to the great subject of religion, to the exclusion, more or less, of matters which were at best of secondary importance, such as patriotism, nationality and the development of industrial pursuits."[13] Secondly, he supposed, "The early missionaries must have felt, too, that it was necessary to constantly guard against the danger of their converts losing the peculiar flavour of their faith by mixing too freely in the social life of their fellow-countrymen." In practice, therefore, "Social customs and festivals, which contained elements incompatible with Christian belief and whose influence the Christians were too weak to resist, were naturally looked upon with disfavour."

While these restraints may have been thought necessary under the early stages of her missionary tutelage, de Silva was fully convinced that it was now time for the Ceylonese church to move forward. "Christianity is now firmly established in the island," he was convinced, "There is no danger now of Christianity being swamped by other faiths."

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[12] De Silva, 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon,' 287.
[13] De Silva, 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon,' 288.

Most important of all, the church had a mission to engage in the nation's hoped-for emancipation.

> …[I]t is only by Christians participating in the life of the people at large that the national life can be purified and permanently elevated. Buddhism, which has filled such a large place in the life of the people during many centuries, and has, without doubt, rendered valuable service to the nation at a certain stage of its history, does not possess within itself the elements which make for the highest national efficiency, and is not equal to the conditions of the stress and strain of modern life, whatever our Buddhist friends may say to the contrary.

The persistence of caste discrimination, de Silva argued, was clear evidence of Buddhism's failure to transform a society beyond a certain point. There was also "a spirit of selfish individualism" in the national character that held back social progress.[14] It was decried by all, but to no avail. "These can only be removed," he believed, "by the entrance of a spirit of self-giving love, of genuine enthusiasm for humanity, which are the peculiar products of the religion of Jesus Christ." De Silva wondered "whether the leaders of the Church are wise enough and statesmanlike enough" to constructively engage the rising tide of nationalism "in the right spirit."

De Silva's article on nationalism ended on a positive and encouraging note with a report about the successful campaign to rally the support of the Sinhala Protestant Christian community for the inaugural 'National Day' celebration on 13th April 1914 at Victoria Park (which we shall discuss in more detail below). He hoped with some confidence that "there will be less mention in the future of the absence of patriotism among Christians, and, as the present movement spreads, as it is bound to do, the charge

[14] De Silva, 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon,' 289

against Christians on this score will probably disappear altogether."[15]

De Silva's own concept of nationalism is distinguishable from two other forms prevalent among his contemporaries. Historian Michael Roberts identifies these "contrasting forms" as 'sectional nationalism' and 'Ceylonese nationalism'.[16] De Silva was clearly opposed to the 'sectional' Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism of Anagarika Dharmapala because it categorically excluded the Christian Sinhalese from their ethnic patrimony and denied any other basis of national formation. At the National Day celebrations of 1919, de Silva openly censured the Kandyan representative P. B. Ratnayake who, in the speech preceding, had essentialized Sinhalese identity upon Buddhist affiliation. De Silva objected that "this was a novel doctrine, at least to those," presumably like himself, "who have promoted the National Day Celebration."[17] True nationalism was mindful that "humanity was above nationality – that all men were brothers, of whatever race or creed or country they might be" and that "there must never be ill-will or hatred towards those who might be of a different community or race from themselves." In 1920, he wrote that he felt he was "fighting single-handed with Buddhist Nationalism" because "the vast majority of Christian workers don't understand it and perhaps care less."[18] And yet, de Silva did not espouse the purely political Ceylonese nationalism devoid of historical-cultural rootedness either. In the same speech just quoted, de Silva expressed his pleasure upon witnessing "the representative

[15] De Silva, 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon,' 291.

[16] Michael Roberts, 'Problems of Collective Identity in a Multi-Ethnic Society: Sectional Nationalism vs Ceylonese Nationalism, 1900-1940,' in Michael Roberts, ed., *Sri Lanka: Collective Identities Revisited: Volume 1* (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1997), (439-460) 439-441.

[17] 'National Day Celebrations at Kandy,' *Ceylon Daily News*, 26 April 1919, 4.

[18] Diary, 20 May 1919. Sri Lanka National Archives (hereafter, SLNA) 25.26/17.

gathering" of Kandyan and Low-Country Sinhalese present "in complete harmony and fellowship as…members of one single community." At a time when the Sinhalese population was still self-consciously divided on religious and regional lines, de Silva believed strongly in the priority of intra-Sinhalese unity as an initial commitment towards wider Ceylonese nationalism.

The Sinhalese focus of the National Day Movement prompted Armand de Souza, the Goanese Catholic editor of the *Ceylon Morning Leader*, to criticize de Silva in a long personal letter.[19] De Silva struggled to sort out his own feelings about the place of Sinhalese identity in the context of an inclusive Ceylonese nationalism. "There are many who don't see eye to eye with us and even fear this movement," he journaled, "[i]t is necessary and useful to try to understand their standpoint and I am making a fresh effort at this."[20]

Such internal struggles were commonly experienced by western-educated elites at the beginning of the nationalist movement. Roberts observes that "[a]mong the reformists as well as radical nationalists there were many shades and variations in conceptual focus" with each actor evincing "ambivalent attitudes" between Sinhalese and Ceylonese nationalism.[21] De Silva worked out these ideological tensions by evaluating the possibilities open to him through his primary commitment – his vocation as a Christian minister. By the beginning of 1920, de Silva had resolved how his nationalist impulse would be best channeled.

> I must resist the temptation to take part in direct political work. There are plenty of others to do it and are able to spare the necessary time. Besides, to have too much to do with politics may interfere with my work as a Christian Minister and the latter is my supreme task. Some of us will probably be able to help the general cause of the country

[19] Diary, 27 April 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[20] Diary, 28 April 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[21] Roberts, 'Problems of Collective Identity,' 450.

> better by making our voice heard when questions of ethical and social significance arise, and when the Reforms are granted, as is likely to be during the present year, it will be our duty to assist in getting the right men elected and in urging these to do their duty. I don't want to be known as a 'political parson'. I am not interested in politics as such. My interest must be in lending a hand, for what it is worth, in having righteousness and justice and truth and mercy being established.[22]

De Silva therefore resolved that his most authentic contribution ought not to be through direct political office. He discovered that at the root of his nationalist aspirations lay the dream to see a Ceylonese nation built on the ethical foundation of "righteousness and justice and truth and mercy."

Relations with Foreign Missionary Colleagues

Another indicator of de Silva's nationalism was manifest in his relations with his European superiors. As early as 1900, he boldly vented his frustrations candidly in the metropolitan *Methodist Times*.

> Here in Ceylon the policy of some missionary Societies affords a singular illustration of the Englishman's traditional love of pre-eminence and power. While some of the highest offices in the civil and judicial departments of the Government are now open to the sons of the soil, and are filled by them with ability, and even distinction, the missionaries guard with a jealous hand the administrative and financial powers which are vested exclusively in them by the authorities at home. The tendency in some missionary Societies is to place as much responsibility and power as possible in the European missionary, irrespective of his local knowledge and experience, and to keep the

[22] Diary, 1 January 1920. SLNA 25.26/17.

> native ministry in a strictly subordinate position.[23]

He found a positive contrast in the policy of the young Anglican Bishop R. S. Coplestone.

> He at least, evidently does not believe in the doctrine that "the Englishman has not his fellow anywhere." And thus it has come to pass that, whilst our own Ceylonese ministry remains in comparative inferiority, and is hardly holding its own in the general advance of the community the Bishop of Colombo possesses a highly cultured body of men for his native clergy, characterized by intellectual ability and social influence.

In 1914, the year that the Wesleyan Missionary Society celebrated its centenary in Ceylon, the Sinhala-oriented South Ceylon Mission employed 16 European missionaries, 34 Ceylonese ministers and 36 Ceylonese catechists. Together they pastored a total of 13,448 confirmed, probationary or baptized believers, congregating in 57 chapels and 118 other preaching stations.[24] Although he considered many of them his friends and brethren, de Silva was nevertheless irked by the presumption of European superiority that pervaded the entire colonized space. "I feel that these men are big blunderers," he once confided in his journal, "and [they] are still obsessed by notions of their own superiority."[25] On another occasion he vented that "[t]he inequality of status in the ministry cannot be tolerated."[26] He

[23] Reproduced in *Christian Patriot* (Madras), 28 February 1900, 2. The editor commented that, "Mr. de Silva must be a bold man, for though the same curious anomalies prevail more or less throught India in the English branch of Methodism, no Indian minister would dare to raise his voice in protest…" I am grateful to Prof. em. Dr. Klaus Koschorke for this source.

[24] George G. Findlay, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 167.

[25] Diary, 18 May 1916. DNA 25.26/15.

[26] Diary, 8 September 1917. DNA 25.26/16.

took heart that "[t]hey are…going to get rid of them in India: a great discussion on the subject is going on there. We must get things righted in Ceylon..."

De Silva experienced these tacit inequalities of power as Literature Secretary of the Christian Literature Society (C.L.S.) when discussing changing social conditions and corresponding adjustments to missionary strategies. He complained that "[t]he European control of the work has been in some measure a hindrance" and that his own initiatives had gone unappreciated.[27] He therefore felt justified in acting with greater independence, outside the mandated priorities of the C.L.S. which he felt were out of touch with the real needs of Sinhalese society as better understood by him as a native minister. Chafing against these constraints of foreign opinion and authority, de Silva expressed his longing for a future political climate free of alien domination where Christian ministry could be shared in a context of true partnership between national and missionary clergy. "When the present wretched form of Government has passed away and we are allowed to exercise some control of affairs in our own house, we shall be placed on an equal footing –at least we hope so– and then full cordiality can be established. That is the position."[28]

Evangelism

The belief that Christ alone is the hope of the nation finds repeated expression in de Silva's public and private writings. In 1910, in anticipation of the World Missionary Conference to be held in Edinburg that June, de Silva presented a paper on the 'Present Missionary Outlook in Ceylon' to the predominantly European participants of the Colombo Missionary Conference.[29] "With all our reverence for the past," he declared, "we must be very sure in our own minds that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the

[27] Diary, 15 April 1917. DNA 25.26/16.

[28] Diary, 1 August 1919. DNA 25.26/17.

[29] Quoted in his 'The Problem of the Evangelisation of Ceylon,' *The Harvest Field*, Vol. XXX, No. 6 (June 1910), 206-215.

one regenerating power for Ceylon, ethically and spiritually, as well as socially and nationally." He continued,

> The command of the Risen Lord still rings across the centuries—'Go ye, and disciple all nations.' Yes, what we need above all else is a deeper consecration to Jesus Christ such as will lead us to feel that it is the duty of each one of us, not of the foreign missionary only or chiefly, to make Christ known to our own people....
>
> I think it is readily recognized that Ceylon will not be converted to Christ until the sons of the soil take this matter up in dead earnest and until they are prepared to practice self-denial about it.[30]

The contents of his paper reveals the comprehensiveness of his insight into the challenges facing a missionary community beset by the advance of the Buddhist revival. In a series of four rhetorical questions, he laid bare the crux of the real challenge confronting the national church:

> Is the quality of our Christianity such as to commend it irresistibly to the attention of non-Christians?
>
> It did this in the early days among the Greeks and the Romans and others: these peoples had ancient religions, great systems of philosophy, and a splendid history to boast of, and yet the superiority of Christianity was so evident as to compel their homage to the lowly and despised Nazarene.

What does the Christian Church tell the people of Ceylon?

> It is here to tell them there is a power—the power of the Risen Christ— which can take up, embody, purify and ennoble all that is true and noble in their national life, as it

[30] De Silva, 'The Problem of the Evangelisation of Ceyon,' 211-212.

> did in the case of the Greek, Hebrew, Roman, and Teutonic life, and as it is still doing, thank God, in many lands the world over.
>
> How far has this result taken place in the case of Ceylonese Christians?
>
> Christianity has done a great work amongst us, and has affected for good almost every department of life. No unprejudiced person can refuse to admit the moral superiority of Christian communities to those of non-Christians.[31]

Then followed, the critical question:

> But is this superiority such as to be sufficiently striking?
>
> I am inclined to think that it is not. There is far too much worldliness, selfishness, caste-feeling, uncharitableness, and insincerity among Christians, and consequently the Buddhist remains unimpressed.

What was required was a "great ethical revival to take place among the Christians in Ceylon" which will demonstrate "…the intimate relationship between the gospel and true social well-being." De Silva thus presented an integral gospel that required both an articulated invitation as well as ethical modeling. For example, he thought that Christian educational work must continue despite its disappointing evangelistic results. In fact, he stated that "sound missionary statesmanship requires the further strengthening of this agency" because "It is of the first importance that we have teachers of the right type, men imbued with lofty ideals, and it follows of necessity that a great deal more attention should be given to the training of teachers."[32] At the same time, he cautioned that "[i]mportant and necessary as

[31] De Silva, 'The Problem of the Evangelisation of Ceylon,' 207.
[32] De Silva, 'The Problem of the Evangelisation of Ceylon,' 212.

educational missions are as part of our evangelistic machinery, it seems clear that the more direct methods of evangelism need to be more fully cultivated than has been the case of late years."[33]

De Silva was thus able to fuse together seamlessly his passion for evangelism and his nationalist commitments. He understood the terms "freedom" and "emancipation" as holistic ideals with theological as much as political meaning.

> What of the National Movement? What is to be the attitude to it? Just what it is now. I must work for the freedom of my people -- to help towards their highest emancipation. This can only take place when the country is permeated with the leaven of Christ. The future civilization of this country must be a Christian civilization i.e. based on the ethics of Christ. No other will do: that is perfectly obvious. But things cannot be hurried. Patient sowing is necessary. We may not live to see the reaping, but what a privilege to be among the Lord's sowers!
>
> This is the raison d'etre of my mission.[34]

De Silva's passion for evangelism was often accompanied by a concomitant criticism of Buddhism. When such statements were uttered in public he offended his Buddhist friends. D. B. Jayatilaka once responded to one of de Silva's public condemnations of Buddhism with a sense of betrayal.

> No Christian Minister in Ceylon has been more intimately associated with the Buddhists than Mr. Silva; no one has, we venture to say, received more kindly and courteous treatment at heir hands. They never hesitated, on the score of religion, to welcome him whenever he appeared among them, and even accepted his guidance in social, and other activities for the common good. Mr. Silva has failed to appreciate this friendly attitude of the Buddhists. Those

[33] De Silva, 'The Problem of the Evangelisation of Ceylon,' 215.
[34] Diary, 13 May 1917. SLNA 25.26/16.

> intimate relations which he maintained so long with them have not imposed on him the duty of restraining himself when he spoke of things which they held sacred.[35]

De Silva made no apparent attempts to resolve these tensions. They were to him an inevitable consequence of his own understanding of Christian nationalism with the gospel as its core transformative factor.

Temperance Movement

De Silva's leadership in the temperance movement was also evangelistically motivated. As he himself reminded readers in an article on the history of the temperance movement in the island,[36] the campaign against alcohol consumption and the British government's proliferation of it to raise excise revenue were initiated by Christian missionaries as early as the 1870s. By the early 1920s, however, Christian partnership had waned in what had become a predominantly Buddhist cause. The relative indifference of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches (the largest sections of the island's Christian community) combined with the anti-Christian slant in much of Buddhist temperance propaganda appear to have been the likely causes of this decline. As a clergyman of the Methodist church, with its historic emphasis on abstinence and moral reform, de Silva was well placed to bear the 'non-Conformist conscience' to the fore.

While pastoring the Galle circuit, de Silva was appointed Secretary of the local temperance association under the Presidency of F. L. Woodward, Principal of Mahinda College. In 1908, de Silva and others organized a petition of 5,000 signatures

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[35] D. B. Jayatilaka, 'Buddhism in the Balance,' reproduced in Ananda W. P. Guruge, *Scholar-Statesman Jayatilaka, Volume One* (Colombo: Godage International, 2011), 285-286.

[36] Rev. John Simon de Silva, 'The Temperance Movement in Ceylon' (Part I), *Ceylon Daily News*, November 10, 1921, p. 5; (Part 2), *CDN*, November 11, 1921, 4 and 5.

calling for a reduction of licensed liquor outlets, stronger deterrents against illicit arrack and toddy sales, revision of the current system of arrack rent 'farming', and inclusion of temperance in the Education Code's 'Hygiene' syllabus.[37] The petition was introduced to the Legislative Council by Sir Christoffel Obeyesekera and seconded by John Ferguson. Despite government assurances, very little was granted.

It took the major temperance campaign of 1912, with a delegation of Ceylonese élites (led by Dr. Marcus Fernando and consisting almost entirely of Christians) to Lord Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary in London, to pressure Governor McCallum's administration to withdraw plans for the proliferation of toddy taverns across the island. Although de Silva was not part of that delegation, he arranged for a number of British temperance organizations to petition the Colonial Office against sanctioning the revenue-driven Excise Ordinance of 1912.

Once de Silva was back in circuit ministry in Kandy, he resumed grassroots organization of the temperance cause. In March 1917, he was instrumental in getting the local church involved by forming the Kandy Christian Temperance Union, resolving that they would "be emphatically a Christian one."[38] In 1917-18, when the colonial government decided to grant 'local option' (whereby a tavern could be shut down if 75% of the area's road tax-payers voted against it), de Silva worked tirelessly to mobilize village communities to assert their choice. Based on an examination of de Silva's diaries, historian Michael Roberts provided the following account of de Silva's activities:

> Revd. De Silva was stationed in Kandy and was one of the principal organisers of the temperance movement in Kandy and the Central Province in 1921. The local option campaign in this region involved discussions with the government

[37] De Silva, 'The Temperance Movement' (Part II), 4.
[38] Diary, 22 March 1917. DNA 25.26/16.

> agent, committee meetings, public meetings, lectures, street preaching, house to house visiting and parades with bands, street drums and cymbals. During the period of 152 days extending from June to November (inclusive) 1921 Revd. De Silva devoted attention to tasks connected with the local option campaign on at least 71 days. On many occasions virtually his whole day was taken up with such work. Besides campaigning in the town of Kandy and its environs (e.g.: Peradeniya, Katugastota, Buwelikada), during this period he also paid visits to Tennekumbura, Teldeniya, Gampola and Nawalapitiya on temperance work.[39]

De Silva's energies in the temperance cause were generated by the desire to debunk the caricature that alcoholism was somehow an indispensable part of the Christian lifestyle. Quoting Mott from the speech already cited, de Silva identified alcoholism as an obvious example of "'the rapid spread of the corrupt influences of so-called Western civilisation,' which makes the position of the Christian missionary among a people, which had had its own system of civilisation for centuries past, a by no means easy one."[40] Temperance work was therefore a natural consequence of his evangelistic inclination.

Christian Literature

W. J. T. Small commented that "It would be true to say that Rev. J. S. de Silva dominated the field of Sinhalese Christian literature in Ceylon during [the period 1889-1930]."[41] His most productive literary output came in the years 1911 to 1916 when he was full-time Publication Secretary of the Christian Literature Society. Drawing on European and Asian sources, de Silva provided scores of short works commending Christian moral ideals for a mixed Sinhala readership.

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[39] Michael Roberts, 'The Political Antecedents of the Revivalist Elite within the MEP Coalition of 1956,' *Modern Sri Lanka Studies,* Vol. 2, Nos. 1-2 (1987), 197.

[40] De Silva, 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon,' 287.

[41] Small, *A History*, 409.

With that same intention, de Silva also translated Rev. Thomas Moscrop's *Life of Christ* and *Life of St. Paul* and À Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. He also translated A. S. Hardy's more contemporary *Life and Letters of Neesima* on Rev. Niijima Jō, the pioneering Meiji-era national Protestant clergyman and educator who founded Doshisha University and Women's College of Liberal Arts. Commenting on the latter, de Silva journaled, "I think its publication will be particularly appropriate and useful at the present time as exhibiting true patriotism as different from the pseudo patriotism in our midst which is responsible for much of the trouble that has come upon us."[42]

While keen to produce literature for the spiritual edification of Sinhalese Christian readers and evangelistic material for non-Christian readers, de Silva's greatest desire was to create a body of general literature that would winsomely introduce Sinhala readers to the Christian worldview. This long-term goal made no sense to his European supervisors. Much to de Silva's consternation, they were more inclined to regurgitate the century-old anti-Buddhist polemics of Robert Spence Hardy.[43] In April 1917 de Silva wrote in frustration that

> The European control of the work has been in some measure a hindrance, and I have seldom had, during the past six years, the appreciation that encourages. ...I cannot of course cease my interest in the Society's work – nothing could be more important in its possibilities but I wish my official position to be modified, so that I may feel more free to undertake other literary work such as the country greatly needs but which the C.L.S. is little likely ever to undertake. My attention is being invited to the latter, and why should I suppose it is not of the Lord?[44]

[42] Diary, 25 June 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[43] Diary, 28 May 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[44] Diary, 15 April 1917. SLNA 25.26/16.

De Silva's literary agenda set its sights on his desire for a nation transformed both politically and spiritually. He articulated these twin priorities as "the winning over of my countrymen to Christ" and "assisting in making this a free, happy and prosperous country." He saw his writing work as "the preparation of the literature that shall help in the above work; my general writing work in the vernacular press, etc., all which is intended to help in the regeneration of the people and removing the hindrances to their acceptance of the truth in Christ."[45]

Despite the limited achievements of the C.L.S., de Silva's vision to infuse the culture with quality Sinhala Christian literature never wavered. In 1931, he reiterated these life-long concerns in an address prepared for the National Christian Council.[46] The extensive growth of vernacular literacy had borne fruit in a culture of newspaper-reading whereby "a strong impression regarding political and national matters is being created in the minds of even the peasants and the labouring classes."[47] While this was commendable on the whole, the press "does not profess to be a medium of moral and religious instruction." "Moreover," he continued, "so far as the religious influence of the vernacular press is concerned it is for the most part non-Christian and in some instances anti-Christian." De Silva insisted on a Christian literature of "a more general kind" which he specified as follows:

> There is the utmost need of literature dealing with ethical and practical problems of the day in the temper and spirit of Jesus.

[45] Diary, 13 November 1919. DNA 25.26/17.

[46] Rev. J. Simon de Silva, 'The Present Position of Christian Literature and the Needs of the Future,' *CMCR*, Vol. 40 (1931), 138-40.

[47] De Silva, 'The Present Position of Christian Literature,' 138.

> The spirit of nationalism must be welcomed because we see in it a force that has the capacity to call out the best in the people.
>
> There is a need of good fiction—of local romances and love-stories—charaterised by clean, wholesome sentiment.
>
> Again, literature for children is urgently needed, including stories. Books of children's poetry, of fairy tales, of stories of adventure and heroism would do incalculable good.
>
> Our literature should always include biographies of great and good souls in all ages—for of all types of books, none has a greater inspiring power than biography.[48]

Finally, de Silva insisted that form must inflect content. "If Christian truth is the highest and best that we have to give to men [sic], it surely follows that it should be conveyed in the best form possible, in a style of which nobody need be ashamed."[49]

Journalism

As passionately as he believed in the direct proclamation of the gospel, de Silva had come to realize the importance of simultaneously orienting public thought and opinion towards greater receptivity of the gospel. He therefore urged his fellow ministers and catechists to read contemporary Buddhist literature, especially their newspapers.

> The style of Buddhist writers, if sometimes a little too high and elaborate, is I venture to think, much more true to the genius of our language than that of the majority of Christian writers, although, I am glad to add, a new class of writers is springing up, chiefly among our younger teachers, who are quite able to hold their own with Buddhist writers. Any one

[48] De Silva, 'The Present Position of Christian Literature,' 139-40.
[49] De Silva, 'The Present Position of Christian Literature,' 140.

> who reads our newspaper "Rivikirana" will find ample proof of this latter statement.[50]

The Sinhala weekly *Rivikirana* was launched on 20 February 1907. De Silva edited it under the direction of the Sinhalese Literature Committee, an ecumenical working group of 21 representatives from the main Protestant denominations.[51] *Gnānōdaya*, another Sinhala weekly edited by de Silva, first came out on 5 September 1923.[52] It was financed and supervised by the newly founded Christian Council of Ceylon "to express the relation of the Christian message and experience to all departments of national life."[53]

De Silva did not confine himself to the Christian public. Early in 1915, he was invited by the national daily *Dinamina* to write a weekly column entitled *Kālīna Lipi* ('Writings for the times'). The newspaper appreciated his ethical perspective as a Christian clergyman in combination with his mastery of Sinhala prose and ability to comment informatively on international affairs to the Sinhala reading public. Often struggling to make ends meet on his meager stipend, de Silva welcomed the additional income.[54] He continued the weekly column until 1938, a body of work spanning 23 years. Listing his priorities in 1920, as he customarily did at the beginning of each year, de Silva resolved that he would continue his journalistic work because he was convinced that "The opportunity I have in the pages of the Dinamina is assuredly God-

[50] 'Sinhalese Literature Notes,' *CMCR*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (June 1908), 58.

[51] [Rev.] J. S. B. M[endis], 'Sinhalese Literature,' *CMCR*, Vol.1, No. 1 (March 1907), 9. Small, *A History*, 407.

[52] Murray G. Brooks, 'Appendix V: Report of the Ceylon Christian Council for 1923,' in *Proceedings of the First Meeting of the National Christian Council, Waltair, Nov. 5-11, 1924* (Calcutta: National Christian Council, 1925), 79.

[53] Small, *A History*, 407.

[54] Diary, 14 June 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

given."[55] Here too, he was deeply conscious of his identity as a Christian minister. Referring to his debate with Armand de Souza on evangelistic prison visitation, de Silva commented, "I made my position as a Christian minister quite clear and unequivocal, and my writings in the Dinamina are also definite in this regard."[56]

The celebrated novelist Martin Wickramasinghe, who was intermittently Editor of the *Dinamina*, reminisced briefly about de Silva's weekly column as follows.

> Simon de Silva was fond of the Sinhalese and the Sinhala language. He wrote topical articles to the *Dinamina* with the intention of bringing together Christians and Buddhists. Some of his ideas about ancient Buddhist culture and Sinhala literature were faulty. Some of his articles on Christianity and Christ angered some Buddhists. There were colleagues at the *Dinamina* who said that these articles should not be published.[57]

In Wickremasinghe's arguably neutral assessment, de Silva's commitment to the education of his Sinhala readers and his literary capabilities were not in question. However, the inescapable fact of his Christian identity and his desire to express his Christian opinion inevitably raised some resistance.

[55] Diary, 1 January 1920 (original underlining). SLNA 25.26/17.

[56] Diary, 25 January 1917 (original underlining). SLNA 25.26/15. For the debate on prison visitation, see J. Simon de Silva, 'British Neutrality in regard to Religion' (letter to the Editor), and 'British Religious Neutrality' (editorial), *Ceylon Morning Leader* (13 January 1917); 'British Religious Neutrality' (letter to Editor), and 'British Religious Neutrality' (editorial), *Ceylon Morning Leader* (17 January 1917).

[57] Martin Wickramasinghe, *Upan Da Sita*; Eng. trans. Malinda Seneviratne, 'More D. R. Wijeywardena Stories,' *Sunday Island*, 25 January 2004.

Bible Translation

Since the 'Cotta Version' controversy of the 1830s, the stilted text of the Bible Society's Sinhala translation had continued to draw the criticism and scorn of the native literati. As de Silva himself explained, the derisive term 'Bible Sinhala' had acquired "a certain currency, chiefly amongst certain Buddhist writers…to speak of a weak, ineffective style of Sinhalese."[58] He proposed over fifty translation amendments to the Bible Society (Ceylon Auxiliary) Revision Committee, of which only about three had been adopted.[59] The Society's Revised Version (1910) had "a certain stiffness and unnaturalness" about its style which needlessly "prejudice[d] the minds of people of literary tastes against reading the Testament."[60] To encourage and commend the reading of the Bible among contemporary Sinhala readers, de Silva urged a fresh translation in an "easy and natural" idiom modeled on recent English paraphrases by R. F. Weymouth (1903) and James Moffatt (1926). He preferred this to "a mere high-flown and ornate style," which modern Sinhala writers were abandoning.

Failure to render the Bible in an effective style invited rejection from both educated readers and illiterate hearers. Colloquialisms and idiosyncratic usage stirred the resistance of the intelligentsia while wrought erudition elevated it beyond the reach of average literacy. He therefore proposed "such a style of language as would commend itself both to the common people and to those of more scholarly tastes."

De Silva was also motivated by an ecumenical desire to see Sinhalese Christians united by a common translation. As early as 1919, he recommended the example of the Madras Auxiliary

[58] J. Simon de Silva, "Bible Sinhalese," *CMCR*, Vol. 32 (April 1923), 57.

[59] C. E. de Silva, "Bible Sinhalese," *CMCR*, Vol. 32 (July 1923), 103.

[60] De Silva, "Bible Sinhalese," *CMCR*, Vol. 32 (April 1923), 57.

Bible Society which had invited interdenominational collaboration for the creation of a single Tamil version. "The time has come," he urged, for "a union version for the whole Sinhalese Protestant Church," because as things remained, "Sinhalese Christians do not possess even a uniform version of the Lord's Prayer."[61]

In 1923 the Ceylon Bible Society decided to implement his ideas and appointed de Silva himself to be the Chief Reviser. He devoted the latter part of his career to this project, making his most abiding contribution to the Sri Lankan church through 13 years of labour. The 1938 'Union Version' (updated in 1995) is still widely used today.

National Day Movement

The proposal to celebrate the traditional Sinhalese New Year (April 13/14) as a 'National Day' celebration in which Christians could take full part was first mooted in the columns of *Rivikirana*.[62] A lively debate ensued among its mostly Protestant readership, culminating in a well-attended conference to discuss its feasibility in Colombo on 24 October 1913.[63] The organization of the event was undertaken by the Sinhala Tharuna Samithiya (Sinhalese Young Men's Association) founded in 1914, which brought together both Christians and Buddhists in a common expression of ethno-cultural solidarity.[64] Underlying other motivations was the strong desire of leaders such as de Silva to open opportunities for Sinhala Christians to affirm their kinship with their Buddhist neighbours on the basis of a common cultural

[61] J. Simon de Silva, 'The Revised Sinhalese Bible and the Need for a Re-Revision' (letter to the Editor), *Ceylon Daily News*, 17 April 1919, 4.

[62] 'Ought Christians to Join in Observing the Sinhalese New Year?' *Rivikirana* (21 May 1913), 7; (28 May 1913), 5; (4 June 1913), 5.

[63] 'National Day Conference', *Rivikirana* (1 Oct 1913), 1, 5.

[64] Michael Roberts, 'Stimulants and Ingredients in the Awakening of Latter-day Nationalism,' Michael Roberts (ed.), *Sri Lanka: Collective Identities Revisited, Vol. 1* (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1997), 280.

bond. At a time when the Christian-Buddhist divide within the majority Sinhalese community was widely regarded as "an insuperable barrier to national unity,"[65] a cultural initiative of this nature was envisaged to have a catalytic effect. In agreement with his fellow organizers, de Silva listed the objectives of the National Day movement as follows.

> [T]he re-establishing of the solidarity of the nation; practical social service on behalf of those who are less favoured than the rest; the discouraging of drinking and harmful social customs, many of which have been borrowed from outside; the fostering of the vernacular and building up of an extensive modern literature in it; the improvement of he social and economic conditions of the masses, etc.[66]

Yet, for de Silva, the National Day movement had deeper significance in terms of Christian mission. Its primary initiators were de Silva and two Methodist laymen, Lionel Mendis (editor, *National Monthly of Ceylon* and *Church of Christ in Ceylon*) and Dr. Solomon Fernando (medical professional and Director, Y.M.C.A.). Their friendship was cemented by a mutual commitment to evangelism, ecumenism and nationalism.[67] They persuaded other like-minded Christians including J. G. C. Mendis (Principal, Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa), C. E. Victor Corea (Proctor, Chilaw), T. B. L. Moonemalle (Kandyan Representative, Legislative Council), Paul E. Peiris (District Judge), E. T. de Silva (barrister), Henry de Mel (mining and plantations proprietor) and Francis de Zoysa (barrister), to join their circle. Their vision of nationalism was suffused with a strong commitment to the emergence of a genuinely indigenous and evangelistic church. They shared the strong belief that God was present and active in the nation's historical process. After a meeting of organizers in October 1913, de Silva expressed delight at the prospects.

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[65] De Silva, 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon,' 290.
[66] De Silva, 'Christianity and Nationalism in Ceylon.'
[67] Small, *A History*, 368.

> Mr. Moonemalle emphasized, and we all felt with him, the immense possibilities that are involved in this movement for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God in this land – by bringing the Christians and Buddhists together, and removing many of the unfortunate prejudices that now exist. It was a great inspiration for men having such common ideals and all alike enthusiastic for the Coming of the King to consult together in this way. Verily, God's good hand is leading us and we pray for more wisdom and grace.[68]

This same conviction, that God was at work among the Ceylonese people, prompted a strong response from de Silva against those who objected to a common Christian-Buddhist celebration for fear that it would harm the distinctiveness of Christian identity. De Silva vehemently disagreed.

> I for one differ absolutely from this view. I hold that nationality is a sacred thing, with which differences of creed should not be allowed to interfere. The Sinhalese Buddhists too have a place in our Father's house and when they know and recognize his love to them, they too would be admitted into the closer fellowship and intimacy of family life. Meanwhile, I am not entitled to keep my 'Kinsmen according to the flesh' at arm's length. Besides, I cannot help recognizing how possible it is for one to make a loud profession of religion and yet be a Sanctimonious Pharisee, and, furthermore, how frequently our non-Christian friends exhibit qualities of kindliness and sympathy and generosity of heart such as might well put many a Christian to shame. And I read too in my Testament that Christ is the light which 'lighteth every man coming into the world.'[69]

[68] Diary, 17 Oct 1913. SLNA 25.26/14.

[69] J. Simon de Silva, 'Mr. Emmanuel Jayawardene and the Sinhalese Community,' (letter to the Editor), *The Ceylonese*, 6 October 1915.

The Pogrom of 1915 and the British reprisal that followed (which we shall discuss shortly) left de Silva and his compatriots deeply shaken. However, the fear of reprisals from a highly suspicious British administration did not deter National Day celebrations in 1916, which was held a week later than usual, on April 24. After an organizing committee meeting in February, de Silva wrote, "It was agreed not to drop the celebration, notwithstanding all that has happened since the last celebration, but to do it in a modified way."[70] Prior to this, on April 13th, he had been invited to preside at a private dinner marking 'Sinhalese New Year' at Queen's Hotel in Kandy. It was a high society event that caused the Methodist temperance worker considerable misgivings. "I did not expect to see so much drinking as did take place," he confided, "and am rather troubled as to my having taken the part I did." He resolved to decline such invitations in the future because "Certainly, it wouldn't be a promotion of national customs."[71]

At the 1917 National Day festivities in Nuwara Eliya, de Silva's opening speech was on "lessons to be derived from the war." The destructive nationalism of Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany was an issue widely discussed among patriotic movements throughout the Empire. Commenting on the other speakers who included Dr. W. A. de Silva, E. A. P. Wijeratna, Rev. Mathias Silva (S. P. G.), D. S. Senanayake and L. W. A. de Soysa, de Silva was "filled with hope for the future of the Sinhalese with such leaders…"[72] Two days later, he wrote, "My nationalistic interests have greatly revived during the past week… It has been a great joy to meet and confer together with a number of true and earnest lovers of their country, and one's hopes for the future of our people have been quickened and strengthened."[73]

[70] Diary, 4 February 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[71] Diary, 13 May 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[72] Diary, 13 April 1917. SLNA 25.26/16.
[73] Diary, 15 April 1917. SLNA 25.26/16.

Although it took over ten years for the Methodist Synod to officially endorse the National Day in 1926,[74] de Silva's leadership in the movement as a Christian clergyman was appreciated by his Buddhist colleagues. These personal relationships deepened during the crisis faced by the Sinhalese elites as a result of the post-riots repression.

5. Post-1915 Campaign for Justice

The most rigorous test of de Silva's Christian nationalism came in the aftermath of the anti-Moor Pogrom of 1915. Primed by a mix of ethno-religious and socio-economic tensions, Sinhalese mobs attacked the homes, mosques and businesses belonging to the migrant South Indian 'Coast Moor' trading community pilloried for their exploitative commercial and money-lending practices. Beginning on 28 May, the loosely organized violence spread from Kandy over the southwestern quadrant of the island and was completely suppressed within a fortnight. The British colonial administration feared a popular rebellion, imposed Martial Law for three months until the end of August and gave free-rein to a combined operation of unprepared police and military officers together with hurriedly deputized patrols of European volunteers to enforce order and punish perpetrators.

In June, de Silva wrote, "Martial Law is still in force, and several prominent Sinhalese people have been arrested and their houses searched. We feared that my connection with the National Day Movement would lead to their visiting this house too, but they have not."[75] As with other western-educated Sinhalese residents of Colombo and its environs, de Silva was shocked by the violence on the streets. "What an ugly nightmare it all has been. One feels inexpressibly distressed and perplexed over what has happened. The Sinh[alese] nation stands disgraced today."[76] Then, as the colonial government's countermeasures took a retaliatory turn,

[74] Small, *A History*, 368.
[75] Diary, 12 June 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[76] Diary, 12 June 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

de Silva's attitude changed from relief that the violence had been suppressed to dismay over the indiscriminate force being meted out across the countryside by armed European volunteers. On 20 June, he wrote,

> The country is under a gloom still. Martial Law continues, and it is announced that it will continue till August. Some of the well-to-do leading Sinhalese (Buddhists) are being hauled up, and some of them, it is alleged, are to be court-martialled [sic]. A large number of people in the villages have been, it is understood, shot already and how many else are being shot, nobody knows.[77]

De Silva turned to his denominational head, Rev. William H. Rigby, Chairman of the South Ceylon Synod, urging him "to take some action by himself if some concrete action on the part of heads of churches is impossible."[78] In the days immediately following the riots, many of the European missionary clergy knew no better than to trust the official view that the arrested Sinhalese leaders had conspired in a treacherous plot against the colonial government. Although the military's actions were intended "not merely to punish wrong-doers but to destroy every possibility of future trouble," de Silva quickly realized that "the Government [was] laying in store, without intending it doubtless, a great harvest of bitterness for the future." In the midst of this "reign of terror"[79] when "[t]here is a great fear, a feeling of deep depression, and a dread uncertainty about the future,"[80] de Silva preached to his Wellawatte Sinhala congregation on Moses "as a true patriot and national leader."[81] Unable to act and speak under the restraints of martial law and censorship, de Silva struggled to trust in God's justice in the face of calamity, not only in his own colonized nation, but over the horizon among the colonizing powers of Europe.

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[77] Diary, 20 June 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[78] Diary, June 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[79] Diary, 7 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[80] Diary, 10 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[81] Diary, 4 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

> One's heart bleeds indeed for the people – one stands aghast at the manner in which Government is carrying out the doctrine of 'frightfulness' – but it would be unfair to pass judgment over on them – the military authority particularly – on the evidence that is before one at the present moment. For it must be always remembered, that the Lord hath still control over things, that they cannot get out of His hands, however dark and foreboding the outlook may be. He reigns. He knows what is happening and will not allow man's wrath to go beyond His prescribed limits. What a comforting and reassuring thought. The war in Europe is looking very grave indeed. The issue is hanging in the balance, and the ruthless German is preparing for a tremendous effort in the West after his great success against the Russians in the East. The Kaiser is reported to have declared that the war would end in October. God in heaven alone knows what is going to happen. And He reigns![82]

In the weeks and months that followed, de Silva's personal efforts to seek justice for his nationalist compatriots took several forms.

Firstly, de Silva brought together a small group of native and missionary clergy who appealed to Governor Chalmers for the appointment of a Special Commission comprised of leading judges instead of the current courts martial proceedings. They also asked for a more equitable system of levying compensation instead of the arbitrary process of exactions that prevailed.[83] De Silva had visited D. B. Jayatilaka, the three Senanayake brothers (Fredrick Richard, Don Stephen and Don Charles), the two Hewavitarne brothers (Dr. Charles and Edmund) and many editors of nationalist Sinhala newspapers at Welikada Prison for the first time on Sunday 11 July, and was deeply shaken. "I fairly

[82] Diary, 10 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

[83] Rev. W. H. Rigby to Sir R. Chalmers, 19 July 1915; reproduced in Douglas Ranasinghe, *The Lion of Kotte: His life and times* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1976), 145-147.

broke down at the sight of them," he wrote, "in their pitiful plight, these wealthy influential men most of them." Following this visit de Silva immediately arranged a meeting with Rev. Henry Highfield (Principal of Wesley College), Rev. Arthur E. Dibben (Secretary of the Church Missionary Society), Rev. John A. Ewing (Field Secretary of the Baptist Mission), and Rev. Arthur E. Restarick (Director of the Colombo City Mission).[84] These were his closest missionary associates with some influence in the European community. He intended to form "a deputation of Sinhalese ministers, with Mr. Rigby to introduce the case and one or two other leading missionaries, to wait on the Governor (if he will receive us) on behalf of these friends." Having met nearly all the Sinhalese clergymen whom he hoped would join, he was pleased to hear that a group of Sinhalese Christian laymen had already made a deputation "with somewhat helpful results."

All through July, de Silva's group of concerned national pastors and their foreign missionary colleagues met several times to discuss, pray and draft two appeals to Governor Chalmers who declined to meet them in person.[85] He was satisfied that their second appeal was "a strong one" because it contained information of illegal police actions that had been personally witnessed by the signatories.[86] However, de Silva was disappointed that his group could not vouch unequivocally for the innocence of the Buddhist leaders because many were not personally acquainted with them as he was. Therefore, de Silva wrote to the Governor himself,[87] only to received a mere acknowledgement. Nevertheless, he noticed a welcome change in the attitude of his missionary colleagues. "It is a very hopeful sign" he stated, "that our missionaries are getting increasingly interested in this matter, and it would appear that the feeling

[84] Diary, 11 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

[85] Diary, 17, 19, 20, 27 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14. H. Gimson to Rev. H. W. Rigby, 21 July 1915; Ranasinghe, *Lion of Kotte*, 146.

[86] Diary, 27 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

[87] Diary, 28 July 1915; 5 August 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

that Government have seriously blundered is growing in the minds of other Europeans too."[88] He was relieved to learn that the government would soon introduce a Special Tribunal presided over by three Supreme Court judges to try cases of sedition, albeit without a jury.

Again, de Silva's theological instincts prompted him to reflect on the sovereignty of God in this calamitous situation. While identifying with the victimized Sinhalese (notice the self-referential "we"), he was nevertheless able to critique both the ethno-religious nationalism of a section of his compatriots as well as the British colonial bureaucracy.

> We needed a chastening such as this. We were too self-satisfied. Our Buddhist friends were entirely in the wrong track in the way they were seeking to improve the people. The question of the moral character of the people did not appear to strike them as being of very great importance. The Sinhalese Editors were just spoiling the people by continually harping upon their ancient greatness and seldom or never going to the root of things. They were some of them quarrelling among themselves and concerned with petty and minor issues.
>
> And in this Centenary Year of the British occupation of the Island particularly, the people were unusually apt to lose their heads, and set up unreasonable claims.
>
> In the midst of this chastening, this terrible visitation has come like a bolt from the blue, and given the country such a shock as it has probably not had before. It is very, very painful, but it will serve a good and refining purpose. Nothing else probably could have effected it. It has shown (or ought to show) the Buddhist leaders where they were, how ineffective their propaganda is to regenerate the people. And God has been pleased to use the local

[88] Diary, 26 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

> bureaucracy, many of whom I fancy are godless men, to bring the people to a calmer and wiser frame of mind. They needed the discipline, quite apart from the harsh methods adopted by the bureaucracy.
>
> The friends are already feeling religious feuds and caste differences must go. Government is probably unaware how well these afflictions are uniting the people. But without doubt a spirit of wonderful unity is coming over the people. They will soon begin to strive, I am persuaded, after better and wiser things.
>
> This is my calm and deliberate judgment.[89]

Secondly, De Silva used the access afforded him by his credentials as a Christian clergyman and his pastoral abilities to visit the prisoners and offer them whatever encouragement he could. Together with his wife Winifred, he also visited the wives and families of those in custody. Between 11 July 1915 and 13 February 1916, his diary records 17 visits to Welikada jail, almost every Sunday after church service. He always refers to the detainees as "friends" and mentions that he took them books to read and, on occasion, prayed with some of them.

On 5 August, he wrote "It is a very great relief to find them being discharged from prison, one by one. They are required to give very heavy security for good behaviour, which is a pity."[90] Shortly afterwards, he visited the Senanayake brothers who had also been released and was gratified to hear that they thought his interventions had helped.[91] By mid-August, most of the Sinhalese leaders arrested for their temperance involvements had been released. De Silva was grateful for these opportunities to demonstrate practical Christian care to members of so many

[89] Diary, 26 July 1915 (original underlining). SLNA 25.26/14.
[90] Diary, 5 August 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[91] Diary, 8 August 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

prominent Buddhist families in their hour of crisis. "One feels very anxious to be worthy of the privilege," he wrote, "that the passing events afford to one and to rise fully to it. No such opportunity will come again. God grant that we all may be found faithful in the day of this Divine Visitation."[92] Always evangelistically burdened, de Silva wondered how the aftermath of the riots would affect Buddhist-Christian relations.

> Friends are wondering what the future attitude of these and other leading Buddhists to Christianity will be: Will they be as bitter and relentless as before? Or will their tragic experiences have softened them? Some of them are fine, gentlemanly men, and would make splendid Christians if they should turn to Christ. A very delicate and highly important situation is before us. Shall we be found wise and faithful?[93]

Thirdly, de Silva volunteered to give evidence at the courts martial, and later, Special Tribunal hearings of the accused temperance organizers and Sinhala newspaper editors. These were often peremptory proceedings in which witnesses were called on the sole discretion of judges. On 17 July, he went to give evidence for A. E. Goonesinha, then editor of the radical newspapers *Searchlight* and *Nation*, but he was not called to testify.[94] On 10 August, he met Attorney General Anton Bertram on behalf of the Sinhala newspaper editors who had been bailed but awaited trial on sedition charges.[95]

Fourthly, de Silva joined the small group of Ceylonese who had banded together to strategize and engage in a campaign to bring the atrocities of the Ceylon government to the attention of the Colonial Office and the British Parliament. Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Harry Creasy and a few other representatives in the

[92] Diary, 19 September 1915. SLNA 25.26/15.
[93] Diary, 5 December 1915. SLNA 25.26/15.
[94] Diary, 17 July 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.
[95] Diary, 10 August 1915. SLNA 25.26/14.

Legislative Council had valiantly argued against the repressive measures of the government. Already by 10 August, de Silva, like many educated Ceylonese who understood the contradictions of Britain's liberal imperialism, became convinced that appeals for justice needed to be addressed directly to decision-makers in the metropolis.

> We have now done nearly all that we could locally. It remains now to carry the whole affair to England. The danger that I fear now is that we may grow cold over it. Memories are often short, and impressions do not retain their intensity long. We may soon find ourselves too ready to 'let bygones be bygones'. It would be disloyalty to the country and the people, and indeed to Government, to do this. The utterly high-handed and cruelly repressive and vindictive measures that have been adopted are being still pursued by Govt. assisted by the European Community (with a few exceptions) have created a very deep impression in the minds of us all of a great injustice. This has been brought home to everyone by the iniquitous indemnity affair which is being ruthlessly exacted from all Sinhalese, Christians as well as Buddhists. Apart from its unjust incidence the levy is disproportionate to the requirements. Our representations concerning it have apparently gone unheeded.
>
> Therefore there is no alternative but to seek every means of making the whole affair known in England. The Governor, from this Council speech the other day, is quite unrepentant: he took the entire responsibility for the doings of the military upon himself. I am sure H. E. does not realize how many of these military men have behaved to the people: how they have boasted to each other about the number of 'niggers' that each had shot down. It is a terrible affair altogether, and we must throw ourselves upon England's well-known sense of equity and fair play. I must do my part in this unwaveringly.[96]

[96] Diary, 10 August 1915 (original underlining). SLNA 25.26/14.

At the very beginning, when practically all the Buddhist leaders had been taken into custody, a small group of prominent Sinhalese Christians, under the leadership of James Peiris, had already sent E. W. Perera to London in July 1915 to secure the release of Dr. W. A. de Silva and the other Buddhist temperance activists.[97] When that goal was accomplished, they turned their full attention to demand a parliamentary commission of inquiry, and to document and publicize evidence of the illegal and excessive actions of the colonial government.[98] The Buddhist leaders who had been recently released soon joined this group, and a concerted effort was made to rally all the western-educated Sinhalese and their Tamil, Burgher and European sympathizers.

After a meeting at the residence of D. R. Wijewardena in late August, de Silva prepared for the possibility that "D. B. Jayatilaka and I may be asked to go for the present, whilst arrangements are made for a later and more influential deputation."[99] All through September de Silva worked in the Sinhalese Committee led by James Peiris and E. J. Samarawickrema to draft a Memorial to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, and to organize the Public Meeting that was held on 25 September in Colombo.[100] At that historic mass protest rally, attended by an estimated five to six thousand people, de Silva lost his closest friend and fellow Christian nationalist Dr. Solomon Fernando who collapsed after delivering his speech.[101] De Silva recalled how only that morning he had remarked to Fernando, upon reading a favourable editorial in the current *Ceylon Methodist Church Record*, that "under God's blessing he and I have been successful in imbuing

[97] E. W. Perera, 'My Mission to England, Part I,' *Ceylon Daily News*, 6 September, 1919, 3-4

[98] P. T. M. Fernando, 'Post-Riots Campaign for Justice,' *The Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 2 (February 1970), 255-266.

[99] Diary, 28 August 1915. SLNA 25.26/15.

[100] Diary, 4, 12, 22 September 1915. SLNA 25.26/15.

[101] *Ceylon Morning Leader*, 27 September 1915.

our church with our sentiments in regard to national matters."[102]

The Sinhalese Committee's 'Sinhalese Memorial,' dated 15 November 1915, was a compelling document, containing precisely documented information and drafted in a consummately refined style of legal prose. It presented the whole case of the nationalist elites concerning the riots and their repression, calling upon the Colonial Secretary for an impartial investigation, for redress, and ultimately, reform. De Silva was the sixteenth among forty-seven signatories to this historic document.[103]

From this point onwards, de Silva threw himself into the task of corresponding with prominent and influential Christian leaders in the British Methodist press and temperance movements with whom he was acquainted. He was especially keen to assist D. B. Jayatilaka, who had joined E. W. Perera in London in January 1916, in his efforts to mobilize the politically influential temperance network in Britain. He wrote to Rev. Dr. J. Scott Lidgett, Editor of the *Methodist Times* and Rev. Dr. Henry Haigh, Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, "explaining the late troubles and commending to them the mission of D.B. Jayatilaka," hoping his letters would not be intercepted by the government Censor.[104] Jayatilaka gratefully acknowledged these useful introductions.[105]

Following a discussion with F. R. Senanayake, de Silva solicited written testimonials from European missionaries regarding Buddhist temperance societies "in view of certain

[102] Diary, 25 September 1915. SLNA 25.26/15.

[103] CO 54/786 (2154), British National Archives. Reproduced in Ranasinghe, *Lion of Kotte*, 8-22.

[104] Diary, 2 January, 11 February 1916; also 20 February, 21, 22 March 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.

[105] Diary, 15 April 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.

misrepresentations that have been made."[106] This had become a formidable obstacle for the campaign in Britain because the Colonial Office had blacklisted Buddhist temperance societies in Ceylon as seditious organizations deserving only punishment, not public sympathy. The letters that de Silva collected from Rev. John A. Ewing (Secretary, BMS), Rev. Stanley Pearce (BMS, Matale), Rev. W. J. T. Small (WMS, Richmond College, Galle) and F. L. Woodward (BTS, Mahinda College, Galle), all of which unequivocally denied any imputation of seditious activity by the local Buddhist temperance societies, were published by Jayatilaka in a pamphlet addressed to British temperance organizations entitled *The Buddhist Temperance Movement of Ceylon: A Vindication and an Appeal*.[107] As we shall see, de Silva himself wrote articles to the British Christian press to combat false allegations against Jayatilaka and the Buddhist temperance societies.

With the formation of the Ceylon National Congress in December 1919 the energies of the Ceylonese nationalist elites were directed to the need for constitutional reform, and the demand of an inquiry into the riots, now four years past, no longer seemed important. De Silva was part of these initial endeavours too. At the Public Meeting for Reforms convened on 16 August 1919, de Silva moved the meeting's second resolution "urging the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lord Milner) to receive the deputation now in England including Messrs. H. J. C. Pereira and D. B. Jayatilaka and any other deputations."[108] "Altogether it was a 'historic' meeting," he wrote hopefully, "and bound to make a strong impression on the Country and [probably] also on Govt." He was disinclined to attend a meeting to renew the demand of a commission of inquiry about the 1915 riots. "I am not at all clear in my mind as to what my attitude should be to the present

[106] Diary, 27, 30 March 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.

[107] (London: Woolridge & Co., 1916), 22-24. See Diary, 4 April 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.

[108] Diary, 16 August 1919. SLNA 25.26/17.

meeting" he wrote the night before, "for I have sometimes felt that it is not so necessary now as for years ago."[109]

Fifthly, de Silva wrote articles on riots-related matters to the national press and British Christian journals. His primary objective was to counteract the allegations propagated by the pro-government European community that accused the Sinhalese Buddhist leaders of the temperance movement of inciting sedition among the masses. Defending the organizers of the Sinhalese Public Meeting against the criticism of the *Ceylon Observer*, de Silva insisted that "Repeated assurances have been given to Government by representative Sinhalese of their utter detestation of the lawless and wicked act of the rioters; and there has been the keenest sympathy with the Moors in the outrageous treatment they received."[110] "And yet," he continued, "with the developments that followed on the introduction of Martial Law…the calamity that overtook the Sinhalese in their turn fairly overshadowed everything else." Therefore, he urged

> By all means let the number of Moormen killed or wounded be ascertained, and how many of their girls and women were maltreated, etc. But in all fairness let it be also ascertained how many hundreds of Sinhalese have been killed during and after the riots; how many Sinhalese women and girls have been maltreated; and how much damage to property they in their turn have suffered.

Later, de Silva pursued this point further, in elucidating 'Why an inquiry is necessary.'[111] On other occasions he wrote privately to the Editors of the *Ceylon Observer* and the *Times of Ceylon*, which reflected the opinion of the European community, "seeking their assistance in persuading Government to grant a revision of Court Martial cases re, riots. I sought also (by request) their support in

[109] Diary, 31 October 1919. SLNA 25.26/17.

[110] J. Simon de Silva, 'Riot Questions for Government,' *The Ceylonese*, 7 October 1915.

[111] Diary, 16 October 1915. SLNA 25.26/15.

getting the extraordinarily harsh policy of the authorities towards the people of Moratuwa in re. Riot Compensation altered."[112] There were occasions when de Silva wrote such strongly critical letters against "the colonial Englishmen" and the colonial bureaucracy that he was almost certain they would not be published.[113]

Throughout 1916, de Silva assisted D. B. Jayatilaka's efforts in Britain by introducing him to editors of Christian newspapers and writing articles in defense of the temperance struggle in Ceylon.[114] His urgent intervention became necessary when the Ceylonese campaign was unexpectedly attacked in the press by a former missionary Rev. Henry Long, whom de Silva considered a friend. De Silva wrote two articles, on 'Drink Traffic and the Ceylon Government' and 'Temperance in Ceylon' to the *Methodist Recorder* "with a view to undo the harm of some foolish letters of Mr. Long."[115] He was glad to hear from Jayatilaka that these articles had indeed been published, and also that another former missionary, Rev. Thomas Moscrop, had responded in his favour.[116] Unbeknown to de Silva, Long regarded the Sinhalese delegates as "trying to create an agitation in England against the Ceylon Government," and balked at de Silva's plea to support their efforts. Long informed the Colonial Office that his collaboration had been sought unsuccessfully "to help in the expulsion from the Island several of the eminent officers of that Colony!!" Furthermore, he implicated de Silva in these perceived intrigues by pointing out that "a few Wesleyan Ceylon Agents are behind this agitation."[117]

[112] Diary, 20 February 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[113] Diary, 12 June, 10 August 1915. SLNA 25.26/15.
[114] Diary, 21 February 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[115] Diary, 21 February, 22 March 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[116] Diary, 15 April 1916. SLNA 25.26/15.
[117] Rev. Henry Long to Bonar Law, 5 August 1916. CO 54/801 (37159).

Conclusion

Rev. John Simon de Silva's nationalist aspirations were thoughtfully framed within his deeply-felt vocation of a Christian minister. It was energized by his Wesleyan evangelical theology of mission as a holistic enterprise. He devoted his considerable intellectual, literary and organizational energies to broaden the outlook of the educated Sinhala Protestant public so they could engage more purposefully with their non-Christian kin and compatriots, just as he did, with evangelistic longing. His privileged bilingual education, his status as a native Christian clergyman in a race- and class-conscious colonial society, his social reform affinities with non-Christian temperance leaders, his ability to contribute to the conversations of a sophisticated vernacular press, were all factors that enthused and enlivened his distinctly Christian patriotism. The crisis of the 1915 Pogrom brought these intersecting circuits of identity and vocation viscerally to the fore. De Silva's personal diary entries are an extraordinary window into the life-world of a Lankan Christian leader at the turn of the 19th into the 20th century.

In that light, it becomes evident that representative western-educated Ceylonese Christians did think, *constantly* and *seriously*, about "[t]he crucial question—can a Ceylonese become a Christian and yet remain a Ceylonese?" K. M. de Silva's allegation that "[t]he stronger the Christian faith, the greater the prospect of the Christians becoming a separate and privileged sect who looked down in disgust and contempt on aspects of traditional life" appears to have elicited a *contemporary* corrective response.

In his own lifetime, D. B. Jayatilaka acknowledged with apparent satisfaction that although "Christian missionary education in the past has had a very denationalizing effect…within recent times a change for the better has taken place which would be unwise and unfair for us not to recognize."[118] He continued that "[a]lthough

[118] D. B. Jayatilaka, 'A Forward Movement,' reproduced in Guruge (ed.), *Scholar-Statesman Jayatilaka*, 296.

the Buddhists may well claim credit for having started the present national awakening[,] of late the Christians too have come forward to make common cause with the Buddhists in matters which affect the welfare of the whole community." Their religious disagreements aside, Jayatilaka would certainly have placed his colleague Rev. John Simon de Silva in the forefront of that welcome change.

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