

## THE CHURCH MOVES OUT TO THE WHOLE WORLD

After the great missionary expansion of the period of Catholic renewal of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there followed a great decline in the eighteenth; the general spiritual debility of the Church during the Age of Reason was clearly reflected in the mission fields, where the work of the great pioneers Xavier, Ricci, and others in Asia was almost completely undone and where for the most part it was necessary to begin all over again.

The spiritual revival of the Catholic Church during the nineteenth century found an important outlet in missionary zeal, and a whole new period of the missions began. Historians generally give Pope Gregory XVI (1831-46) the credit for inaugurating this new epoch. Of great importance here was the remarkable revival of religious orders of men and of women-many of them dedicated to missionary work. They included the rejuvenated old orders such as Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans as well as new ones like the Scheut Fathers (1862), the White Fathers (1868), and the Mill Hill Fathers.

A comparable awakening of missionary zeal also stirred among the Protestants. From 1792 numerous Protestant missionary societies were founded, the London Missionary Society (1795) being one of the most important.

Gregory XVI looked on India as one of the most promising mission fields, which though fallen on hard times still remained intact-unlike Japan and China-and where Goa still remained a flourishing Catholic community. He nominated four vicars apostolic to supervise the new missionary effort. The work continued to thrive under Pius Nono, who was also an outstanding missionary Pope and who was able to establish Catholic missionaries in almost every part of the world. By Leo XIII's pontificate there were twenty bishops in India.

The Jesuits founded numerous colleges and began the preparation of an intellectual elite. Since then the Church has been able to make substantial progress in this vast subcontinent, which since 1947 has been divided into predominantly Hindu India and

predominantly Moslem Pakistan ( and with the addition of Bangladesh in 1971), By 1958 a large percentage of the clergy and religious (about 75 per cent) were native Indians, including forty-five of seventy-seven bishops. By 1962 Catholics numbered some six million, with the large majority of them concentrated south of an imaginary line drawn between Goa and Madras.

impressive network of institutions-colleges, schools, hospitals, and homes for the aged, made it possible for the Church to reach out beyond its own confines and to influence considerably the general life of India. Mother Teresa,. founder of the Missionaries of Charity, has won worldwide renown for her work in the slums of Calcutta.

China, the most populous of all the countries in the world and the center of a civilization that at one time rivaled the Roman in wealth, culture, and size, exerted a special fascination on missionaries. Ricci and others, as we have seen made considerable headway in the seventeenth century, but cost of the gains were lost during the eighteenth. But a revival of missionary activity-both Protestant and Catholic-began toward the middle of the nineteenth century, and by 1890 some 500,000 baptized Catholics could be counted, including 369 Chinese priests.

A period of great turmoil began with the invasion of China by the colonial powers, who opened it to their merchants and soldiers and divided it into their respective spheres. There followed China's humiliating defeat by the Japanese in the 1890s, the Boxer Rebellion, and China's division into spheres of influence by the Western powers. The fabric of the old Chinese culture and tradition was torn apart, and the Confucian monarchy, which had ruled China for centuries, was replaced by a Western-style republican form of government. China was brutally kicked into the twentieth century.

All of this was accompanied, as might be expected, by a great weakening of the traditional religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and polytheism. A unique opportunity seemed at hand for Christianity as many of the spiritually uprooted seemed willing to listen to the message of the Gospel. And rapid advances were made

by both the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. The Roman Catholics numbered nearly two million by 1922 and showed a significant increase in native clergy.

But after 1922 a strong anti-Christian movement began to take hold; Christianity was denounced as a tool of imperialism, and religion itself was depicted as obsolete by the militant Communists, who under Mao Tse-tung were fashioning a powerful, disciplined party. Nevertheless, until the Japanese invasion of 1937, the Church continued to grow and had reached nearly three million members. There was a growing awareness of the need to develop a native clergy, thanks in particular to the efforts of Pere Lebbe (d. 1940), a Belgian missionary who made it his aim in life to bring about a radical change in missionary methods. Coming to China in the spring of 1901, right after the Boxer Rebellion, he was shocked by the attitudes of the missionaries. European and Chinese priests ate at separate tables; few of his colleagues knew Chinese well, and some could not even read it. The Chinese seminarians were given inferior courses to keep them humble. The faithful had to kneel when greeting a missionary and were not permitted to sit in his presence. Prospective converts were enticed to instructions by gifts of food or money.

Lebbe campaigned strenuously to change such practices and also insisted that missionaries dissociate themselves from all foreign governments. In 1919 he had the satisfaction of seeing most of his ideas incorporated into Benedict XV's revolutionary missionary encyclical *Maximum Iud*, which laid down three fundamental principles: promotion of a native clergy, renunciation of all nationalistic attitudes, and respect for the civilization of the mission country. Lebbe also had the happiness of seeing Pius XI consecrate six Chinese bishops in 1926.

At the end of World War II the Church looked forward to a promising era of opportunity. The number of priests had more than doubled, and the hierarchy now embraced twenty archdioceses and seventy-nine dioceses and included a newly made cardinal, Thomas Tien, the archbishop of Peking. Catholics operated several universities and numerous colleges, lower-level schools,

orphanages, and homes for the aged. Though Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, still did not constitute even 1 per cent of the population, Christianity was beginning to exert a significant influence.

The Communist conquest of China, however, which was completed by 1950, brought on a tremendous trial for all Christians. They were accused of being tools of Western imperialism, a charge unfortunately justified to some extent by the history of the Christian missions. All foreign missionaries were either expelled or imprisoned—often after cruel and farcical "public trials."

The Communist strategy was to completely detach the Chinese Catholics from any foreign ties. A Catholic Patriotic Church, completely independent from Rome, was set up, and its hierarchy was initiated with the consecration of two Chinese priests in 1958 by four legitimate Roman Catholic bishops. With the almost complete blackout of information, it is difficult at present to judge the success of this effort, though it is estimated that by 1962 some forty-two bishops were illicitly consecrated, and recent Vatican reports say that the Roman Catholic Church in China has been virtually wiped out.

Next we turn to Japan, where the history of the missions has been an amazing saga of heroism since the first Christian gospel preached by Francis Xavier in 1549. For nearly a century the Church made great progress through the work of the Franciscans and Jesuits in spite of sporadic persecutions. But in 1638 the Shogun Hideyoshi decided to exterminate Christianity. When the Christians of Shimbara revolted, some thirty-five thousand of them were massacred. Some of the victims were subjected to the intolerable torture of the pit: hung upside down suspended in a hole in the ground and kept in agony for days by torturers who bled them slowly from their temples. There were many martyrs and many apostates, until finally all signs of Christianity were obliterated. Japan was sealed off from all foreign contacts for two centuries. It was the United States that opened up a new era of the progress through the work of the Franciscans and Jesuits in spite of sporadic

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It was the United States that opened up a new era of the missions when Commodore Perry appeared with a naval squadron in Edo Bay in 1853 and signed a treaty of commerce and friendship with the Shogun in 1854. A year later, Catholic missionaries from Paris entered Japan and began evangelizing anew. Then an amazing thing happened: A small band of Japanese visited the little mission chapel at Nagasaki and caught the eye of Father, later Bishop, Petitjean, by their unusually pious demeanor. Conversing with them, he was dumbfounded to learn that they were believing Christians who had secretly managed to hold onto the essentials of the Christian faith for two centuries, although without priests and totally isolated from the outside world. Other groups of these crypto-Christians were gradually discovered scattered in the islands and mountains around Nagasaki-numbering in all some ten thousand. Their organization was almost everywhere the same: Usually there were two male leaders who conducted the prayers every Sunday, baptized, and ministered consolation to the dying.

When news of this reached the ears of the Japanese authorities they reacted with fury, for Christianity was still a proscribed religion. They meted out cruel punishment to these heroic believers, some of whom died, while others went into exile.

World opinion stirred up by press reports, however, finally brought an end to the persecution, and in 1889 complete freedom of worship was granted in the new constitution. Missionaries were able to proceed with the slow work of individual conversion, and by 1891, when Leo XIII set up a Japanese hierarchy with the metropolis at Tokyo, there were some 45,000 Catholics.

Progress during the twentieth century for both Protestants and Catholics was slow but steady. The first native bishop was consecrated by Pius XI in 1927 and placed over the diocese of Nagasaki. By 1936 Catholics totaled some 108,000. A Japanese was appointed archbishop of Tokyo in 1937. The Jesuit college, Sophia, became a full-fledged university. In 1940 the entire episcopate was handed over to native Japanese, and at the outbreak of World War II, Catholic membership stood at 121,000. World War II brought many difficulties. All foreign missionaries were interned. Many churches were laid waste by the air raids, and in Nagasaki alone about 8,500 Catholics the nucleus of the oldest Catholic community-perished in the nuclear holocaust.

The end of the war left Japan in a state of complete economic and moral collapse. The official state religion, Shinto, was abolished, and many disillusioned Japanese seemed ready to turn to the Christian religion. Some observers predicted a great wave of conversions. While these hopes proved unrealistic when reconstruction took priority and the Japanese became obsessed with their economic miracle, still the pace of conversions was accelerated. An estimate in 1973 counted some 359,000 Catholics and almost twice that number of Protestants. The number of Japanese priests (almost 400) had more than doubled since 1949. There was also a good increase in the number of schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions run by Catholic sisters and lay brothers, the majority of whom were Japanese.

Elsewhere in Asia missionaries have planted flourishing Christian communities.

In Korea, Christianity experienced a phenomenal growth in the decade immediately following the war (1950-53) as foreign missionaries from Europe, the United States, and Mexico poured in. A number of the native Koreans who studied abroad-including quite a few priests-returned with advanced ideas on social reform, to become a thorn in the side of the authoritarian Park regime. One of the most prominent Catholic spokesmen for social justice has been the bishop of Won Ju, Tji Hak Soun, who was recently arrested in connection with a demonstration of dissent. His conviction and

sentencing to fifteen years' imprisonment has created grave tension between the government and the 800,000 Catholics.

Remarkable success has also attended missionary efforts in Indonesia, especially since the overthrow of the Sukarno government by General Suharto in 1966. A recent figure has 7 million Protestants and 5 million Catholics-nearly 10 percent of the country's total population. The Catholic Church has considerable strength among the intellectual and economic elite, and the largest daily newspaper is run by Catholic.

There are also communities of at least 100,000 Catholics in Pakistan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Ceylon, Malaysia, Burma, and Thailand. In Vietnam Catholics constitute 1.5 million out of 42.6 million.

All told, Catholics number over 48 million in Asia, but 32 million of these are found in the Philippines. In sum, the Church is hardly more than a presence and constitutes only 2.5 per cent of the total Asian population.

Finally, we take up the mission story of Africa, which is one of incredible success during the past century. Christian missionary action in Africa practically ceased during the Age of Enlightenment. A few attempts were made at the end of the Napoleonic Age to set up missions along the coast, but with little reward. Then came the penetration of the interior of Africa in 1849 by the Protestant missionary David Livingstone (d. 1873), who proved that a white man could survive there. His experience aroused the interest of both Protestants and Catholics in the possibilities for Christianity in the vast area south of the Sahara.

The most important mover and shaker on the Catholic side was the fiery Lavigerie (d. 1892), former bishop of Nancy, who as archbishop of Algiers hoped to make Algiers the base for the conversion of the entire continent. With this grandiose scheme in mind he founded the Society of Missionaries of Africa or White Fathers, in 1868. Unable to make any headway in the face of Moslem fanaticism, he turned gladly to the new vistas opened up by Livingstone and sent his men in 1879 into equatorial Uganda, where Protestant missionaries had already begun work. The hardships and

dangers they had to face were atrocious: sudden death in the bush, savage men and savage animals, unbearable heat, treacherous guides and porters, and frequent sickness.

The King of Uganda, Mutesa, a handsome, proud monarch whose only concern was to keep the foreigners at bay, played Protestants, Catholics, and Moslems against each other in a subtle game of intrigue. His successor, Mwanga, at first showed favor to Catholic missionaries but soon proved to be a bloodthirsty tyrant and burned alive twenty-two Catholics and eleven Protestants for refusing to indulge his homosexual lust. The Uganda martyrs were recently canonized.

But the missionaries made real progress and found the ordinary African quite receptive to the Gospel. The Baganda or Ugandans were a simple, happy people, loquacious, fond of tall stories, interminably social, and vastly interested in everything. They would crowd into the missionary's hut and stay until he finally had to chase them away. By the time of the First World War the White Fathers and their Mill Hill colleagues could count nearly 150,000 converts.

As marvelous as the success of the mission effort in Uganda, it is eclipsed by the achievement in the former Belgian Congo, now Zaire, which by reason of its size (the largest political unit south of the Sahara) and its mineral wealth will undoubtedly play a big role in the future of Africa. It was allotted to the Belgians when Africa was carved up by the European powers in the 1880s. Catholic missionaries who enjoyed the special favor of the Belgian Government: made much progress-the White Fathers leading the way here, as in Uganda. By 1959 Catholics numbered about 36 per cent of the population, and with Protestants added constituted a Christian portion that represented about half of the population. Native Congolese priests totaled about 400.

Situated on the eastern border of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi (formerly Rwanda-Yrundi, a single political unit) provide another example of spectacular gains. They too were opened up for Catholicism by the White Fathers. About half of their populations are now Christian, the overwhelming majority Roman Catholic.



Phenomenal gains have been made in the East African countries of Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and the South African country of Zambia, according to a recent report of their bishops. Between 1949 and 1974 the number of Catholics in the five countries, whose total population now stands at 4.5 million, rose from just above 2.5 million to 9.93 million—a 290 per cent increase. African vocations have likewise made spectacular progress. Thus the number of priests rose from 280 to 1,159; bishops, from 1 to 45; nuns, from 1,396 to 4,844; and brothers, from 0 to 405. East and west of Zambia lie Mozambique and Angola. With help from Portugal, the Catholic missions made good strides in Angola, so that Christians, including the much smaller body of Protestants, constitute around a fourth of the country's population, though in Mozambique the advance has been much slower.

South Africa, under the dominance of Boers and Britons, has not been a promising mission field for the Catholic Church, and it has remained a small minority. However, in Lesotho (formerly Basutoland) it has penetrated very deeply into the tribes there, so that by 1960 it claimed 41 per cent of the population.

The final area outside of the Moslem belt is West Africa, where over 62 million Nigerians make up the largest population bloc in Africa, by nation, south of the Sahara. Here the Christian community is sizable, and the missions, both Protestant and Catholic, for a long time provided nearly all the education available; as late as 1961, the large majority of the children received their elementary education in Church or mission school, while almost all who moved to higher education in Nigeria itself studied in Christian schools and universities. As a result, most of the Nigerian political leaders who have lately come to the fore are at least nominal Christians.

According to some calculations, black Africa will be 57 per cent Christian by the year 2000, and in Africa as a whole, Christians (175 million Catholics, 176 million Protestants) will surpass the 326 million Moslems. But while conversions continue at a good pace and Africa seems well on the way to becoming a Christian continent, there is no excuse for complacency. The Church in Africa faces

some severe problems. Islam remains a persistent adversary, and its adherents are on the increase. Another threat to African Christianity stems from the failure of the missionaries to accord sufficient importance to African culture and traditions. Christianity was preached in an exclusively Western form and identified with European culture. This caused the alienation of many Africans who have concocted their own hybrid forms of Christianity in a wild array of sects. The Second Vatican Council at least took cognizance of this situation, and in its document on the missions, *Ad Gentes*, it called for a complete rooting out of all vestiges of Christian cultural imperialism. Finally, there is also danger from the considerable increase in materialism and skepticism, the almost inevitable concomitants, as experiences elsewhere suggests, of industrialization and urbanization.