

## **CHAPTER 41 : PROTESTANTISM IN AFRICA AND ASIA**

During the Apostolic era Christianity spread into Africa and Asia. These continents thus received the pure gospel at an early period. But like so much of Christendom, heresies abounded in the churches there after the close of the Apostolic era. For the most part, the Bible was a closed book, leaving room for superstition and error to prevail. The rise and spread of Islam compounded the problem. Areas which had been Christian, became dominated by the Muslims. And those that did not succumb to Islam, were at least greatly threatened by it.

Ethiopia is a case in point of a Christian kingdom weighed down by heresy, Islamic threat, and Romish subterfuge. Egyptian Muslims had destroyed the neighboring Nile River valley's Christian states in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Tenuous relations with Christians in Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire continued via the Coptic Church in Egypt. The Coptic patriarchs in Alexandria were responsible for the assignment of Ethiopian patriarchs--a church policy that Egypt's Muslim rulers occasionally tried to use to their advantage. For centuries after the Muslim conquests of the early medieval period, this link with the Eastern churches constituted practically all of Ethiopia's administrative connection with the larger Christian world. A more direct if less formal contact with the outside Christian world was maintained through the Ethiopian Monophysite community in Jerusalem and the visits of Ethiopian pilgrims to the Holy Land. Ethiopian monks from the Jerusalem community attended the Council of Florence in 1441 at the invitation of the Pope, who was seeking to reunite the Eastern and Western churches under the Papacy.

Portugal, the first European power to circumnavigate Africa (under the explorer Vasco da Gama) and enter the Indian Ocean, displayed initial interest in this potential ally by sending a representative to Ethiopia in 1493. The Ethiopians, in turn, sent an envoy to Portugal in 1509 to request a coordinated attack on the Muslims. Europe received its first written accounts of the country from Father Francisco Alvarez, a Franciscan who accompanied a Portuguese diplomatic expedition to Ethiopia in the 1520s. The first Portuguese forces responded to a request for aid in 1541, although by that time the Portuguese were concerned primarily with strengthening their hegemony over the Indian Ocean trade routes and with converting the Ethiopians to Roman Catholicism.

Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in 1554. Efforts to induce the Ethiopians to reject their Monophysite beliefs and accept Rome's supremacy continued for nearly a century and engendered bitterness as pro- and anti-Catholic parties maneuvered for control of the state. At least two emperors in this period allegedly converted to Roman Catholicism. The second of these, Susenyos (who reigned from 1607- 32), after a particularly fierce battle between adherents of the two faiths, abdicated in 1632 in favor of his son, Fasiladas (who reigned from 1632-67), to spare the country further bloodshed. The expulsion of the Jesuits and all Roman Catholic missionaries followed. This religious controversy left a legacy of deep hostility toward foreign Christians and Europeans that continued for centuries.

Moving further eastward, the Portuguese established settlements on the sub-continent of India. Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope from Portugal with four ships, crossed the Indian Ocean and landed in India in 1498. The subjugation of territory in India for the Portuguese Crown was the work of an astute naval general, Alphonso d' Albuquerque. Albuquerque conquered Goa, and as Portugal's first territorial possession in Asia, it became the capital of the whole Portuguese empire in the East. From Goa other Indian territory was conquered by the Portuguese.

The Portuguese were surprised to discover, when they arrived along India's western coasts, that Christianity was already established there. The Christian community there probably dates back to the arrival in 52 AD of Thomas the Apostle, and to the establishing of a Christian community by a contingent of Syrian Christians who arrived in 192 AD via Baghdad. These Christians were part of the East Syrian Church. Since the East Syrian Church was then outside Papal control, the Portuguese moved against the East Syrian Church, leading to tragic ecclesiastical incidents. According to Joas de Castro, the Portuguese Viceroy in Goa in 1548, the sword of the Portuguese was wielded "mainly against the centuries-old Christians of Kerala". This was because only in Kerala did the laity stand steadfast against Western colonization, and the Portuguese, who were under the Roman Church, considered everything outside Roman control as heretical.

The move against the Syrian Church was followed by the Western Church establishing a European diocese in Goa in 1534. In 1557, Pope Paul IV declared Goa an archdiocese with its supremacy extending from the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa to China, and all Christians, including the East Syrian Church, brought under its jurisdiction. This Europeanization process led to divisions in the Church, as there was considerable resistance against Western domination. The Christian communities then split into many groups.

Life in the Portuguese territories like Goa was characterized by great immorality. There were huge gambling saloons, licensed by the municipality, where determined players lodged for weeks together; and every form of vice, except drunkenness, was practised by both sexes. Albuquerque and his successors left almost untouched the pagan customs and constitutions of the thirty village communities on the island, only abolishing the rite of *sati* (widow-burning).

Albuquerque subsequently extended Portuguese hegemony from Malacca in southern Malaysia to Egypt in the Middle East. After Albuquerque, his successors continued to expand their territories. They added Diu, Daman, Salsette, Bassein, Chaul and Bombay in Western India, San Thome near Madras and Hooghly in Bengal to their possessions.

The king of Portugal invited the Jesuits to carry out their mission in the lands of Portugal's overseas empire, the Jesuits having quickly taken over much of the educational system in Portugal. Jesuit Francisco Xavier left Portugal in 1541 for India as a result of the king's request. He arrived in Goa in 1542 and immediately began proselytizing among the indigenous inhabitants, converting many thousands at least nominally to Romanism. From Goa he went to Cochin and Ceylon; in 1545 he traveled to Malacca, and in 1549, to

Japan, where he stayed for two years. After returning to Goa, in 1552 he went to China, where he died. Other Jesuit missionaries followed Xavier.

The Jesuits were instrumental in subduing many of the Indian natives around Goa. Speaking of their missions in India, Sacchinus, their historian, says that "ten thousand men were baptized in the space of one year." When the Jesuit mission to the East Indies was set on foot in 1559, Torrez procured royal letters to the Portuguese viceroys and governors, empowering them to lend their assistance to the missionaries for the conversion of the Indians. This shortened the process wonderfully. All that had to be done was to ascertain the place where the natives were assembled for some religious festival, and surround them with a troop of soldiers, who, with leveled muskets, offered them the alternative of baptism. The rite followed immediately upon the acceptance of the alternative; and next day the baptized were taught the sign of the cross. In this excellent and summary way was the evangelization of the island of Goa effected!

Christianity had preceded these Romish missionaries in both China and Japan, just as it had preceded them in India. According to tradition Christianity reached China in 64 AD. A small Chinese Christian population remained, but in Japan it had been extinguished. Indeed, many Buddhist temples seem to have been built on top of old, burned down Christian churches left in ruins from earlier centuries.

Jesuit missionaries were successful in converting quite large numbers of people in western Japan, including members of the ruling class. But towards the end of the 16th century, the Jesuits lost their monopoly position in Japan when Franciscan missionaries arrived in Kyoto, despite a first banning edict by the Japanese government. In 1597, the Japanese shogun Hideyoshi proclaimed a more serious banning edict and executed 26 Franciscans in Nagasaki as a warning. After Hideyoshi's death, Ieyasu took the title of shogun of Japan, and his family ruled Japan for over 250 years. They set up at Yedo (later Tokyo) a centralized, efficient, but repressive system of feudal government. The Japanese government was increasingly frustrated by Romish intrigues to bring Japan under Papal subjugation. Accordingly, they sought to repress Romish missionaries and their converts.

In China, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci led the Romanist effort. Matteo was sent to China in 1583 and worked there for 27 years. He was welcomed to the academies and gained many influential friendships, which was indeed the focus of his efforts. When the time was ripe, he opened a residence in Nanking for himself, his fellow Jesuits and his scientific instruments. Eventually he became the court mathematician in Peking. His books *Geometrica Practica* and *Trigonometrica* were translations of Clavius' works into Chinese. He made Western developments in mathematics available to the Chinese and published in 1584 and 1600 the first two maps of China ever available to the West. For the first time the Chinese had an idea of the distribution of oceans and land masses. He introduced trigonometric and astronomical instruments, and translated the first six books of Euclid into Chinese. He sought to win the Chinese leadership to Roman Catholicism by creating a synthesis between the teachings of Confucius and Jesus. Accordingly, Ricci and his colleagues in China came to be known even within the Romish Church as

"accommodationists", though in truth Romanism has always been about accommodating paganism with Christianity. They were responsible for the translation of Chinese classics into Latin. They established sinology as a scholarly discipline, and dominated it throughout the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth centuries. They believed that much of inherited Confucian wisdom and ritual was consistent with Catholic teaching, as they understood the two traditions. This belief was as much practical as theological, for they believed that the first order of evangelization in China was securing the respect of the vaunted Confucian intelligentsia. And they were making real progress in their efforts.

Jesuit enterprise was successful as well in southern Asia. Over time the Jesuits were even able to monopolize trade in Goa and other Portuguese settlements.

Although Portugal dominated Romish outreach in the Far East, Spain was not entirely absent. Ferdinand Magellan set out from Spain in 1519 on the first voyage to circumnavigate the globe with five ships and a complement of 264 crew. Three years later in 1522 only one ship, the Victoria, returned to Spain with 18 men. The Philippines were the death of Magellan. The expedition sighted the island of Samar in 1521. Magellan was welcomed by two Rajas. He named the islands the Archipelago of San Lazaro, erected a cross and claimed the lands for Spain. The friendly Rajas took Magellan to Cebu to meet Raja Humabon. Humabon and 800 Cebuanos were baptized as Roman Catholic Christians. Magellan agreed to help Raja Humabon put down Lapu-Lapu, a rebellious datu on the nearby island of Mactan. In a battle between Spanish soldiers and Lapu-Lapu's warriors, Magellan was killed on April 27, 1521. Disputes over women caused relations between Raja Humabon and the remaining Spaniards to deteriorate. The Cebuanos killed 27 Spaniards in a skirmish, and the Spaniards, deciding to resume their explorations, departed Cebu.

For all its losses, the voyage was a huge financial success. The Victoria's 26 ton cargo of cloves sold for 41,000 ducats. This returned the 20,000 ducats the venture had cost plus a 105 percent profit. Four more expeditions followed between 1525 and 1542. The commander of the fourth expedition, Ruy Lopez de Villalobos, named the islands after Philip, heir to the Spanish throne (r. Philip II 1556-1598).

The Philippines was not formally organized as a Spanish colony until 1565 when Philip II appointed Miguel Lopez de Legazpi the first Governor-General. Legazpi selected Manila for the capital of the colony in 1571 because of its fine natural harbor and the rich lands surrounding the city that could supply it with produce.

The Spanish did not develop the trade potential of the Philippine's agricultural or mineral resources. The colony was administered from Mexico and its commerce centered on the galleon trade between Canton and Acapulco in which Manila functioned secondarily as an entre point. Smaller Chinese junks brought silk and porcelain from Canton to Manila where the cargoes were re-loaded on galleons bound for Acapulco and the Spanish colonies in the Americas. The Chinese goods were paid for in Mexican silver.

Spanish rule had two lasting effects on Philippine society; the near universal conversion of the population to Roman Catholicism and the creation of a landed elite. The monastic orders of the Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, Recollects and Jesuits set to their missionary duties with purpose. Unable to extirpate the indigenous pagan beliefs by coercion and fear, Philippine Catholicism incorporated a deep substrate of native customs and ritual, as has Romanism in most of the world.

So, just as in the Americas, Roman Catholicism had the early advantage in dominating Africa and Asia. Nevertheless, the gates of hell could not hold back the blessings of the Protestant Reformation from Africa and Asia, any more than they were able to hold back Christianity in the Apostolic era.

It was the victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 that really catapulted Dutch and British exploration and colonization in the New World. The navies of the Roman Catholic countries were no longer strong enough to ensure an effective blockade of their New Worlds. English and Dutch ships began to pass the Cape of Good Hope in increasing numbers. Both nations quickly established chartered companies to exploit the commercial possibilities presented to them.

The Netherlands chartered the Dutch East India Company in 1602 to exploit commerce in Asia. It is considered the first company that issued shares. The Dutch East India Company became one of the most powerful commercial organizations the world has ever known. At its height, it owned 150 merchant ships and 40 war ships. It commanded 10,000 soldiers, and paid a 40% dividend. In 1609, the Company dispatched Henry Hudson to search for a new route to China. Instead he discovered the river that still bears his name and founded a Dutch town which he named "New Amsterdam," on the unknown island of Manhattan. Here the Dutch Reformed church was the established church.

From its headquarters at Batavia (current day Jakarta on Java in Indonesia- founded in 1619), the company subdued local rulers, drove the British and Portuguese from Indonesia, Malaya, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and arrogated to itself the fabulous trade of the Spice Islands. Its trade posts were also established in Persia (now Iran), Bengal (now Bangladesh), Formosa (now Taiwan), and southern India. Dutch sailors of the Company were the first white men in Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and the Fiji Islands. Closer to home, Dutch merchant ships ranged from the Baltic through the Mediterranean Sea, returning goods to Amsterdam and reselling them throughout Europe. Even English and French coastal trade was largely in the hands of the Dutch East India Company for a time. And in Japan the Dutch East India Company prevailed over its competitors, though Portugal had the early lead. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the Shogun of Japan effectively suppressed Roman Catholicism in Japan, and forced out all foreign commerce except with the Dutch. The Dutch were permitted a trading post at Nagasaki, Japan. This Dutch trading post would be the only outside contact for the next 200 years of the Shogun isolation.

More importantly, evangelization accompanied Dutch commerce. At this time the Dutch Reformed church was the established church of the Netherlands. The Netherlands, along with the Dutch East India Company, rightly sought to establish Protestantism in the territories under their control. So Dutch Reformed chaplains and missionaries were sent along with the Dutch traders. And in all the settlements of the Dutch East India Company the Dutch Reformed church was protected and preferred. Protestantism made progress under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company.

Sri Lanka is an example of how progress was made. The Dutch had assisted a native king in Sri Lanka in removing Portuguese forces from the island. After extensive fighting, the Portuguese surrendered Colombo in 1656 and Jaffna, their last stronghold, in 1658. Superior economic resources and greater naval power enabled the Dutch to dominate the Indian Ocean. They attacked Portuguese positions throughout South Asia and in the end allowed their adversaries to keep only their settlement at Goa. Once the Portuguese were gone, the Sri Lankan king and the Dutch had to come to terms.

Eventually a treaty was signed that gave the Dutch sovereignty over the lowlands of Sri Lanka, while the king retained direct control over the interior. After taking political control of the island, the Dutch proceeded to control all trade. This control was at first limited to cinnamon and elephants but later extended to other goods. The Dutch East India Company was called upon to exercise sovereign responsibilities in Sri Lanka and other parts of Asia. The Dutch Reformed church was made the established church of this territory. Dutch Reformed church ministries in Sri Lanka started in 1642.

Significant effort was made by the Dutch to supplant the Roman Catholicism, which the Portuguese had left behind, with Protestantism. Along with Roman Catholicism, Buddhism and Hinduism were also suppressed. They prohibited open Buddhist and Hindu religious observance in urban areas, and banned Roman Catholic practices. They constructed Protestant chapels on confiscated Roman Catholic Church property.

Although many Sri Lankans retained their old false religious opinions, some converted under this Protestant regime.

In Taiwan, similar progress was being made. The Portuguese left, and the Spanish were forced off. Dutch rule increased the amount of land under cultivation by reorganizing Chinese villages and indigenous territories. Taiwan became a trading and transshipment center for goods between a number of areas, such as Japan, China, and Batavia , as well as Holland. Taiwan's exports to China included rice, sugar, rattan, deer hides, deer horns, and medicine. The island's imports from China included raw silk and silk textiles, porcelain, and medicine. Some products from China were again shipped either to Japan, Batavia, or Europe. Imports to Taiwan from Batavia included spices, amber, tin, lead, cotton, and opium, some of which was later traded to China. Before the Dutch arrived, the Chinese on Taiwan had enjoyed free trade with the Japanese without taxation. The Dutch subsequently established a tax on exports, which at that time consisted mainly of deer hides and sugar. Taiwan proved to be one of the most profitable branches of the Dutch East India Company in the Far East, accounting for 26 percent of the company's world profits in 1649. Meanwhile, Dutch missionaries were active in trying to convert Taiwan's population to Christianity. Protestant missionaries established schools where

Biblical religion and the Dutch language were taught. By 1650, the Dutch had converted 5,900 of the island's inhabitants to Protestant Christianity.

The same missionary efforts were also undertaken in the other Dutch territories. Missionaries were sent by the Company to the Malaysians in the early seventeenth century. And the same was also the case in Indonesia. So in the Dutch controlled territories, there was clear Protestant Christian rule, and there were efforts made to evangelize the native populations. Some significant success was attained in these years, with populations that before had not been exposed to Biblical Christianity.

During the era of Protestant Reformation, in the continents of Asia and Africa, British colonial rule was not yet as extensive as that of the Dutch. Nor did it do as much good in promoting the reformed faith as the Dutch. But in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation, British rule was to prove more enduring, and its effects more extensive.

Even before the Dutch East India Company was founded, Queen Elizabeth I of England made a decision that in the long term would change the structure of world commerce, religion, and politics. Responding to the developing needs of British overseas trade, in 1600 she issued a charter for the creation of what was to become the British East India Company. The Company was granted a monopoly of trade in the East Indies, with the formal restriction that it might not contest the prior trading rights of "any Christian prince." The Company was managed by a governor and 24 directors chosen from its stockholders. The stockholders were a group of London merchants, ordinary city tradesmen and aldermen who were prepared to take a gamble in buying a few ships and filling them with cargo to sell in the East. At the end of the voyage, after the return cargo was sold, the profits would be shared among the shareholders. This system was known as "joint-stock". Initially voyages were made to South East Asia to trade in spices. Huge profits were made from the initial difficult voyages to Southeast Asia, mainly from the sale of pepper acquired from the Sumatran and Javanese trading ports and sold in London. Soon, the East India Company was building more and bigger ships and increasing the number of shareholders.

In the Malay archipelago, the British East India Company faced stiff competition from the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch East India Company felt it had prior claim to the region, and it tried to keep out the British East India Company as a rival. Rivalry and tension between the two companies increased to such an extent that in 1620 the Dutch even massacred the personnel at a British depot. After the massacre, the British East India Company turned its attention to India. This was due in part to Dutch resistance, as well as the high costs of financing its voyages to the archipelago. India was also attractive as a source of raw materials for England and as a market for England's finished goods. By this time the British already had a factory at Surat.

The voyage to India had been led by Captain Hawkins. He landed at the west coast of India in Surat and succeeded to get some trade concession for the company from Emperor Jahangir. He also secured permission to set up a factory at Surat. The Portuguese influence in the Mughal Court which ruled India proved an obstacle to the English trade.

In 1612 Captain Best defeated the Portuguese fleet near Surat, thus reducing their influence. He secured permission for building of a factory at Surat. In 1615 King James I of England sent Sir Thomas Roe as his ambassador to the court of Jahangir, and secured permission for the company to set up factories, which was done. However, this was done on the condition that Company ships escort Mughal vessels on their annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

Although its commerce became concentrated in India, British traders with the Company traveled to the Far East as well, actively competing in commerce with the other European powers seeking to do business in the region. And they retained control of some territory outside of India, such as Sumatra in Indonesia.

The Protestant Church of England (or Anglican church) was the established church of the British during all the time when the British East India Company operated. Regrettably, the propagation of the Christian faith to the heathen was not incorporated into the charter of the East India Company. This is in marked contrast to the charters of other English colonial enterprises. For example, here is a statement from the first charter of the Virginia Company in 1606:

"Wee, greatly commanding and graciously accepting of theire desires to the furtherance of soe noble a worke which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tende to the glorie of His Divine Majestie in propagating of Christian religion to suche people as yet live in darkenesse and miserable ignorance of the true knowledghe and worshippe of God and may in tyme bring the infidels and salvages living in those parts to humane civilitie and to a setled and quiet govermente, doe by theise our lettres patents graciously accepte of and agree to theire humble and well intended desires;"

And this is a statement from the Charter of New England (1620):

"We according to our princely Inclination, favouring much their worthy Disposition, in Hope thereby to advance the in Largement of Christian Religion, to the Glory of God Almighty, as also by that Meanes to streatch out the Bounds of our Dominions, and to replenish those Deserts with People governed by Lawes and Magistrates, for the peaceable Commerce of all, that in time to come shall have occasion to traffique into those Territoryes..."

Not only was evangelization not included in the mission of the Company, it does not appear the leaders of the Company had strong religious affections. They prohibited British missionary outreach in the regions under their monopolistic dominion, fearing it would be bad for business.

Nevertheless, God used even the British East India Company to spread his truth to more regions of the world, and to bring them under Christ's dominion. Anglican chaplains served and staffed the employees of the Company, even if they did not engage in evangelization of the indigenous peoples where the Company traded. And as the

Company's territories grew, so grew the spread of the Protestant message carried by the chaplains. Consequently, Anglican ministries were present in all the territories where the Company was present. These churches which at one time were for the English only, eventually would reach out to the heathen peoples, even if that was later in history. And officially at least the territory under British control was under Protestant rule.

So Protestant dominion was increasing, even as Roman Catholic dominion was decreasing. Portuguese influence in India was pushed back to Goa, while Britain became more dominant on the sub-continent. The Portuguese lost their dominion in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia to the Dutch. The Spanish and Portuguese vacated Taiwan, leaving sovereignty to the Dutch. In Japan the Portuguese were removed and replaced by the Dutch. Even in China Roman Catholics started to see their efforts brought to naught. It so happened that just as the Jesuits were gaining a foothold in Chinese political circles that China went through a great social and political cataclysm. The Jesuits were as disconcerted as the Chinese rulers themselves by the violent end of the great Ming Dynasty in 1644. Established in 1368, the Ming house began to crumble in the 1620s, leaving the country open to conquest by the Manchus, a "barbarian" people from beyond the Great Wall. The chaos created by the Manchus' ascendancy was especially great in Beijing, but throughout the country there were acts of real and symbolic Chinese resistance, from the formation of pro-Ming secret societies to suicides born of despair. It took the Manchus another forty years or so to mop up the opposition in the larger country. The Jesuits were not so appreciated by the Manchurian conquerors as they had been by the Ming leadership. And eventually Roman Catholicism was proscribed in China, and the Jesuits were expelled. Roman Catholicism's losses were becoming Protestantism's gains.

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The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.

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