



60. MISSIONARYISM – II

Luther advocated that salvation¹ could not be achieved through religious duties nor through the individual's intention or free will. The consequence of this assertion was the abandonment of rituals as instruments of salvation. In fact, Protestant ceremonies are merely secular commemorations of the Gospel events. Nevertheless, he recognised to faith a certain efficacy as an individual's emotional transport towards God. And so, if God was pleased and he would reward the believer with unexpected blessings. Calvin, on the other hand, denied even this possibility. Salvation for the human being was, therefore, arbitrarily bestowed by the Deity. In one way or another, the salvation of the soul was regulated according to the theory of predestination. This led to specific behavioural consequences and prejudices among those who embraced the various sects of Protestantism. It is worth to mention, for instance, their conviction that the individual's worldly success, fortune and well-being are the outward sign of divine benevolence; and, equally, the belief that birth into a given status, race, nation and religious confession indicates a clear heavenly choice². This demonstrates the close relationship between capitalist ideologies and Protestantism.



1. Predestination

From this perspective, the theory of predestination is based on the fact that God is omniscient and, as such, knows in advance anything that will happen. Every happening is therefore written in destiny *ab aeterno* and develops in time according to His will since the moment He creates the world³. On the contrary, both in Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, predestination is balanced by the recognition of human free will. God knows everything in principle and determines the course of human and universal destinies, but human beings are free to choose one path rather than another, precisely because they benefit

¹ Let us recall that in the exotericism of monotheistic religions, salvation consists simply in the posthumous preservation of one's individuality in the heavens (svarga) and in avoiding the fall into hell (*naraka*). The means to achieve these destinies are compulsory religious ritual duties, identical for all believers. As far as the Renaissance period is concerned, the posthumous destinies conceived by the Catholic initiatic organisations cannot be taken into account, since they either disappeared or were in a larval state and, therefore, completely absent as protagonists in religious life. Moreover, salvation cannot be confused with the *mokṣa* of *sanātana dharma*, as some Indian authors, admirers of Christianity superficially do.

² This is what is implied today by the acronym WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) that some culturally depressed masses in the northern hemisphere are proud of. There is no understandable pride in being born into a heretical, barbaric environment and, on top of everything, they are not even really white. In fact, they legally define themselves 'Caucasians' in order to welcome their friends from the Near East under that denomination.

³ This is further proof of the closeness of Protestant sects to Judaism. Islam too, in perfect harmony with the Semitic mentality, participates in the same beliefs.



from their ignorance¹. Until the end of the Middle Ages, Christian theology witnessed the struggle of different currents of thought that, while accepting both divine foreknowledge and free will², leaned more towards one or the other of the two visions concerning human destiny. It was, indeed, extremely difficult for any theologian to maintain the right balance between such opposing points of view³.

The Protestant theory of predestination had the effect of easing the burden of individual responsibility from any action that was made. Even sin was reduced to a moralistic and behavioural infraction with a social dimension, which was nevertheless foreseen and willed by God. So even the sinner, provided he had faith, participated in the mysterious divine plans of salvation⁴.



2. Free will

The Catholic Counter-Reformation rejected the Protestant thesis as heterodox, emphasising on the fundamental importance of free will in the choice between good and evil. Jesuitism was the religious movement that gave most prominence to free will over predestination, to the point of risking limiting the very concept of divine omniscience. Paradoxically, these two trends, the Protestant and the Jesuit, although opposed to each other, represented the two sides of the same Renaissance individualism.

Jesuitism

Ignatius (Iñigo) López de Oñaz y Loyola (1491-1556) was born into a fallen noble family. After an adolescence spent as a page at the court of Germana de Foix, second wife of Ferdinand the Catholic, he sought military glory as an officer in the war against France (1521) with disappointing results and where he suffered a wound that forced him to limp. During his convalescence Ignatius occupied his time reading

¹ Of course, reconciliation between the two opposing views is impossible because the question is simply ill-posed. Only the doctrine of *karma*, although considered from an *advitīya* point of view, is able to give a perfect solution. First, Brahman is neither before nor after time, for he is perfectly eternal and outside that condition. Secondly, the concept of a personal God endowed with anthropomorphic qualities, such as will and knowledge of contingent events, and the fact of being a creator, is all considered a projection of ignorance. Thirdly, the individual is the sole doer (*kartr*) of his destiny as long as he remains involved in the illusion of *samsāra*. In this way, only through the realization of one's non-dual Self, all the struggles of Christian theology aporias would be nullified.

² With the exception of Pelagianism, the Christian current that had completely denied the concepts of divine foreknowledge and predestination. Pelagius (360-421 A.D.) had consequently abolished the dogma of original sin: the individual determined his destiny thanks to his own free will. He was declared heretical by the Council of Carthage (411 A.D.) because by removing the original sin all motivation for the incarnation and redemptive mission of Jesus had no reason to be.

³ Even St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle's confused thinking on this subject, sometimes seems to give more weight to divine foreknowledge and sometimes to the individual's free will. The only perfectly balanced position was expounded by Dante Alighieri in *Purgatorio* (XVI.52-81); however, it is still an initiatic perspective in a theological context.

⁴ Fredrik Brosché, *Luther on Predestination: The Antinomy and the Unity Between Love and Wrath in Luther's Concept of God*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia, 1978.



the few religious books in his father's library. It was thus that he decided to abandon worldly honours and devote himself to the pursuit of holiness. After taking a vow of total poverty, he travelled to the Holy Land (1523) with the intention of converting Muslims with his oratory. It was the Franciscans of Jerusalem themselves who sent him back to Spain, fearing the predictable reaction of the Ottoman governor. This failure did not end Ignatius' missionary aspiration but it rather intensified it. In the meantime, he was creating and experimenting on himself the *Spiritual Exercises* that would later become the core of Jesuit practice.



3. The *Spiritual Exercises*

In order to give himself a thorough theological education, he attended the Universities of Salamanca and Paris, where he studied under the Dominicans. In Paris, he began to have followers thanks to his eloquence and example. In this period, he decided to found a new religious order. In 1537 he travelled to Venice in order to once again leave and liberate the tomb of Christ from Islamic occupation. This was no longer a knightly crusade, but a missionary campaign. He never managed to leave for the Holy Land, but during that stay in Venice, Ignatius and his six acolytes were ordained priests by papal order. In 1540 the Rule of the new order, called in military style, the Society (originally 'Company') of Jesus, was accepted by Pope Paul III. Ignatius was appointed General of the Society. The Catholic Church, that in the meanwhile was preparing its counter-reformist resurgence, welcomed this new religious order¹, that was rigorously organised as an army. The Society of Jesus was a sudden success and, in a few years, spread throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia.

The Jesuits periodically performed, under the guidance of a more experienced brother, spiritual exercises that were supererogatory to the classical liturgy of the Latin Church. It is necessary to understand what these new practices consisted of. In order to emphasise the importance of free will for the Counter-Reformation church, for St Ignatius of Loyola the mind of the religious man took a newfound importance. It was exercised in solitude on a daily basis to strengthen the individual will and imagination. The will forced the imagination to mentally reproduce the various episodes narrated in the Gospels. The Jesuit had to concentrate on each episode of Jesus' life, reconstructing with his fantasy² every detail of

¹ The strict ascetic and pauperistic rules that Ignatius had imposed on himself for decades were set aside in order to make the new order powerful and influential. In fact, in a short time his religious order became the richest and most powerful in Christendom. The Jesuits and the Theatines (an order founded by Paul III himself) thus became 'religious orders', to differentiate themselves not only from the ancient 'monastic orders', but also from the 'mendicant orders' of the late Middle Ages, such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans.

² As the meditator did not really experience the Gospel episodes, his scenographic reconstruction depended more on the personal inclinations of his fantasy (sskrt. *vikalpa*) than on the imagination (sskrt. *kalpita*). For example, anyone can imagine



the imagined scene. In this way, the individual's mind, together with the five senses were involved in the episode, as if he were living in the event in person. This mental experience was meant to provoke emotions and feelings that made the sacramental experience more vivid. For example, the climax of this psychological tension was reached by mentally reliving the episode of the Last Supper¹. This provoked such an intensity of emotional feelings in the Jesuit's soul that the Eucharist received immediately afterwards became a vivid mystical experience.

As one can easily recognise, this technique of voluntary imagination was not at all an initiatic method (sskrt. *prakriyā*), but a mere psychological discipline (sskrt. *vinaya*) that in the long run could lead to a permanent mindset modification. In any case, it was a psychological palliative that attempted to replace the absence of initiation and its corresponding method (*dīkṣita sādhanā*). It is evident that this practice marked a strengthening of individualism and, at the same time, a diffusion of self-induced mystical experiences based on the five perceptions at the subtle level.



4. Allegory of the examination of conscience

Soon the practice of the spiritual exercises was extended to lay admirers and followers and became an instrument of moral and behavioural correction used by the Counter-Reformation church. This trend pushed the Church of Rome even further away from the medieval contemplative spirit and contributed to the spread of a modern mentality of voluntaristic activism². The Society of Jesus became the militant arm of the papacy, turning itself in a strict and perfectly efficient organisation, based on the absolute obedience to the Superior General.

Loyola, who was already an elderly man, wanted especially to orientate the Jesuits to the function of confessors. Until then, the sacrament of confession consisted in the declaration of the sins committed by the faithful, followed by penance and absolution by the priest. St Ignatius added a new practice: after hearing the sins, the priest devoted some time to the moral upbuilding of the penitent, insisting on personal responsibility and free will, according to the parameters of the spiritual exercises. The religious were

today what will happen tomorrow in his or her house, a place that he knows in detail: although he cannot foresee the contingencies of future events, the imagined setting will be entirely plausible. On the other hand, even if they knew the events narrated in the Gospels, their setting will be the result not only of their imagination, but of a creative fantasy lacking any link to reality.

¹ René Fülöp-Miller, *Il segreto della potenza dei Gesuiti*, Milano, A.Mondadori ed., 1931, pp. 21-23; 95-144.

² This trait also led to a series of socially useful activities. Also, the mendicant orders had developed a series of initiatives in favour of the poor. The Jesuits, and the other religious orders founded later, specialised the different parts of their organisation in the rehabilitation of prostitutes, the vocational education of foundlings, the nursing in hospitals, and the service to prisoners. All this has little to do with religion, as these are areas concerning the social organisation of the States: at most, each private individual can support these activities as part of what is called charity. However, in post-Counter-reform Catholicism took place a real mental distortion that considers the organisation of socially useful activities as spearhead religiosity.



advised to offer themselves as confessors to the powerful, Emperors, princes, popes, cardinals, ministers and bankers. In this way the Jesuits could engage in an elitist proselytism, which had an immediate political effect and contributed to a change of mentality guided from above.



5. The prince and his confessor

This radical modification of the ancient proselytism was enormously successful, making the new religious order a great cross-state power, that went beyond the extension of the Catholic countries. The scientific practical application of free will and the prevalence of voluntaristic initiative in human actions diminished, in theological terms, the importance of God's omnipotence by reducing the intervention of the divine will. It is therefore understandable how the Jesuit hegemony and the autonomy of its choices soon gave rise to an increasingly secular vision of human freedom. Already a century after the foundation of the Society, the first suspicions circulated in the West that the Jesuits were pursuing power and wealth in a purely worldly sense, far from any spiritual purpose.

With great lucidity, St Ignatius had drawn a plan to control the powerful of the earth through a network of Jesuit confessors, a plan exclusively addressed to the 'Christian' West. Instead, he quite differently had established a missionary plan to conquer power 'from below' in the other continents.

Jesuitical Missionaryism

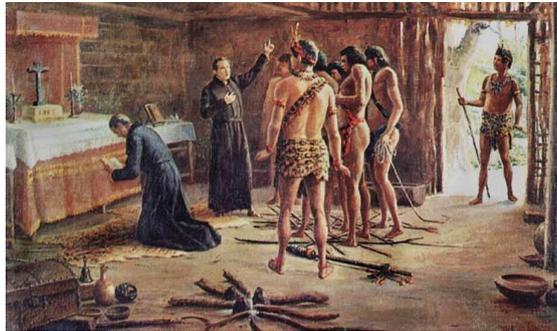
The Jesuits behaved in a markedly different way when directing their work of conversion depending on whether they were addressing poorly civilised or highly civilised populations. For this reason, their behaviour in the Americas should be differentiated from that in Asia.

They did not become involved in the missions in South America until 1609. The great empires of Mexico and Peru had already been Christianised by the Dominicans and mostly by the Franciscans. In the great Meshika, Maya and Inca cities there were already splendid cathedrals and convents in Plateresque, Renaissance and Baroque styles. Even the first cases of miracles and visions, such as that of the Virgin of Guadalupe (1531), had already been recorded. The Jesuits, therefore, focused on the Christianisation of the Guaraní of Paraguay¹. These were poorly civilised peoples living in tangled rainforests. Spain guaranteed all natives the same rights to those of all the other subjects of the Crown.

¹ At the time, this area was much larger than the current state of Paraguay, and included part of Bolivia, the southern part of Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay and the north of Argentina.



However, in these wild areas, those who had been entrusted a frontier territory (*encomienda*) by the Crown, taunted the law and often kept the Guaraní in a state of semi-slavery as a labour force.



6. Conversion of the Guaraní

In order to limit the power of the *encomenderos* (commendators), the Crown allowed the Jesuits to establish religious *encomiendas*, known as *reducciones*. In the *reducciones*, the Guaraní *cachiques* (tribal chiefs) were allowed to administer their property and justice; they retained their ancestral communal system¹ along with the barter system, and the Guaraní remained the official language. The Jesuits stayed as educators and controllers² of these local thirty-three republics that effectively belonged to the Kingdom of Spain. Certainly, the efficient Jesuit organisation that overlapped with the tribal one guaranteed a period of peace and prosperity. Many *Indios* fled from the *encomiendas* to seek refuge within the *reducciones*, which were equipped with an indigenous defence system and firearms.



7. Jesuit churches of the *reducciones*

While the Jesuit leadership from a civic point of view brought peace and prosperity³, their mission of conversion was highly questionable. Generally, they required nothing from the Guaraní but to be baptised. Religious instruction was based on an attempted syncretism between some aspects of

¹ Lutheran authors such as Eberhard Gothein (*Lo Stato cristiano-sociale dei Gesuiti nel Paraguay*, Firenze, la Nuova Italia, 1987) interpreted the typical economic structure of tribal societies in a Marxian collectivist sense.

² Generally, there were no more than two or three religious per *encomienda*, each of which numbered between five and fifteen thousand *Indios*. In total, the number of Guaraní in the *encomiendas* was slightly more than one hundred and fifty thousand.

³ In Spain, with the change of dynasty and the arrival of the Bourbons, an anti-religious sentiment, distinctive of the Enlightenment period, began to emerge. In fact, Charles III expelled the Society from his domains. In just a few years the work of the Jesuits vanished. In Paraguay, the *reducciones* were invaded and annexed to the *encomiendas* run by the new South American bourgeoisie who was beyond the control of Madrid. The Guaraní people took refuge in the forests where they quickly went back to a primitive state that still persists today. Thanks to the Enlightenment and the bourgeois mentality, South America entered into the state of chaos in which it still is today. Following the echoes of the French Revolution, the Hispanics of South America discovered nationalism and gradually broke away from the mother country, with the results that are before everyone's eyes nowadays.



Christianity and the ancestral religion. For example, the *indio* God Pay Zumé was identified with St Thomas Aquinas (called Father Tomé). In addition to these bizarre mixtures made in order to convince the Guaraní that their tribal beliefs and Catholicism were similar forms of a single religion, the Jesuits promoted syncretistic *fiestas* and processions, displaying rich and creative costumes typical of the *indios* sacredness¹. They also invented an architectural style for churches that reproduced on a large scale the Guaraní people's huts with their traditional decorations. What is most surprising is that if on one hand there was disregard towards the sincerity of the conversion of the natives, on the other there was a steady diffusion of Renaissance science technologies. For instance, in each *reducción* there was a printing press; in many of them there was a production of clocks and, later, of telescopes. All of the above was indeed an obvious interest towards secularism and the Renaissance scientism.

King John III of Portugal wanted to use his colonies in Asia as bases for Jesuit missionary activity. In 1542 Francis Xavier landed in the Portuguese colony of Goa. Francis (Francisco de Jasso Azpilicueta Atondo y Aznares, lord of Javier) was a close friend and the oldest pupil of St Ignatius. Although based in Goa, Francis Xavier wanted to explore South India in order to understand how to make a breach into the *Hindū* society and convert its people. When he arrived in Kanyā Kumārī, he found fertile ground for missionary work among the pearl fishermen (*paravar*)².



8. Francis Xavier converts a *paravar*

The Jesuits in India started their missionary efforts among the low castes and tribals, especially in Tamilnadu and on the Malabar coast. At a certain moment they had the illusion of possibly converting the ruling class: in 1579 Emperor Akbar invited a Jesuit delegation at his court in Fatehpūr Sikrī. In order to ease the conversion of the Muslim ruler, the Society sent to that court, among the delegates, a Persian who had converted to Christianity. But the Great Mughal had a syncretistic vision of religion and, in his utopian conception, he wanted to govern his country with the help of a council of representatives of all

¹ Leopoldo Lugones, *El Imperio Jesuítico*, Buenos Aires, Hyspamérica Ed. Argentina, 1985, pp. 135-138.

² The conversions were helped by money donations that the Jesuits used to ingratiate themselves with the most economically depressed castes. Giuseppe Massei, *Vita di S. Francesco Saverio della compagnia di Gesù apostolo dell'Indie*, Venice, ed. Francesco Andreola, 1818, p. 131.



religions. For more than thirty years, several Jesuits alternated at Akbar's court, without succeeding in converting anyone.



9. Jesuits at the court of the Great Mughal Akbar

In Malabar there was a community of the autocephalous Syriac Church that had taken refuge in India when Syria had been invaded by the Muslims. The Jesuits helped to circulate the legend that this community was founded by the Apostle Thomas¹, and used this rumour as bridgehead for the conversion of India. However, the Syriac Church had adapted to many Hindu caste customs and rituals, and the Jesuits never intervened to stop them. This led to a controversy over the 'Malabar rites' and the Society of Jesus was accused of religious syncretism by Franciscans, Dominicans and even by the pontifical see².



10. Roberto de Nobili disguised as *saṃnyāsīn*

The situation became more complicated when, in 1606, Roberto de Nobili (1557-1656) arrived in Madurai full of missionary zeal. Being from a noble family, he introduced himself to the *Hindūs* as a *rājā*. He soon realised that the *saṃnyāsīn* were the most respected category in India. He therefore decided to disguise himself as a *Hindū* renunciant, he wore the ochre-coloured garment and carried the cane with

¹ Actually, all the oldest sources assigned the evangelisation of the Parthians to St Thomas. The first to mention him and alleged mission to India were Rufinus and St Jerome, but this mission clearly took place in Abyssinia. This confusion between India and Abyssinia continued until the Renaissance. Rosa Conte, "L'evangelizzazione dell'India: quale India?", Napoli, *Orientalia Parthenopea* III, 2006, pp. 27-51.

² As a matter of fact, the successive popes had different opinions depending if the information received was for or against the 'Malabar rites'. The final condemnation was declared in 1744, on the eve of the suppression of the Jesuit order. William V. Bangert, *Storia della Compagnia di Gesù*, Marietti, Genova, 1990.



a tiny axe, the *daṇḍa*, and he became a vegetarian¹. The false *daṇḍi saṃnyāsīn* quickly learned the Tamil and Sanskrit so well that he soon wrote a false *Veda* with the sole purpose of diverting the *Hindūs* from their *dharma* and making them converge towards Christianity². However, this was not the only example of fraud.

During the same time, a companion of Robert de Nobili, Friar Thomas Stephens, had also written and circulated a *Krīsta Purāṇa*³ to convince the Indians that their own sacred texts had predicted the birth of Christ. These Jesuits disguised as *saṃnyāsīn* attended rituals in the villages they visited, abstaining, it seems, only from worshipping the idols (*mūrtis*). For them, the rites of the *sanātana dharma* were not effective and were only social ceremonies; for this reason, they felt authorised to intervene. From Rome, Cardinal Bellarmino thundered against their participation in 'pagan' rites and the consequent syncretism of different faiths. And yet, in view of a few hundred converts from untouchable castes or tribes, Pope Gregory XV ended up blessing such a blatant fraud⁴.

Since then, these two strategies of bribing with money and force the conversion of the poorer, uncultured and fragile sections of the population and the use of fraudulently assuming the customs and traditions of the *Hindū dharma* to be accepted without suspicion in the communities, have become the usual tools of missionaryism even in non-Jesuit settings. Even today, camouflage, lies and blackmailing money-traps are still widely used among the "scheduled" tribes and castes. Moreover, the missionaries circulate the lies that they are the *gurus* of Christians, that baptism is *dīkṣā* and that salvation or redemption is *mokṣa*⁵. Aided by the former pro-Soviet governments in order to eradicate Hinduism from their own land, the missionaries have today the monopoly of private education and their prestigious colleges, financed by the state, shamefully occupy the most luxurious palaces in the city centres⁶.



11. Cochi, Sacred Heart College; Aligarh, Madrasa

¹ Not being fully aware of the caste rules, he also wore the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) of the *kṣatriya* caste, and on the knot he hung a crucifix!

² Pierre Dahmen, *Robert de Nobili S.J.: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Missionsmethode und der Indologie*, Münster, Aschendorff, 1924. Later, in order to remove any trace of this blatant mystification, the Jesuits in India made disappear every copy of the false *Veda*; they thus declared that instead it was a slander by the *Hindūs* to hinder their missionary work. In Appendix A, titled "Robert de Nobili, The Jesuit Missionary", of Brahm Datt Bharti's book, *Max Muller: A Lifelong Masquerade*, New Delhi, Erabooks, 1992, pp. 222-244, it can be found the entire documentation that proves the dishonest misrepresentation made by the Jesuits to cover up Nobili's shameful fraud.

³ Joseph L. Saldanh (ed. by), *The Christian Purana, of Father Thomas Stephens*, Mangalore, Bolar, 1907.

⁴ William V. Bangert, *cit.*

⁵ Since neither Catholicism nor Protestantism have any *dīkṣā*, they can have neither *guru* nor *mokṣa*!

⁶ Like Christian schools, Islamic *madāris* also benefit from abundant state funding, which is therefore mainly paid for by the taxes of the *Hindū* majority. On the contrary, the government considers the secular state school, which even in India certainly does not represent excellence, to be the educational institution for *Hindū* students. Therefore, schools for *Hindūs* not only do not receive subsidies, they simply do not exist.



We will add just a few more observations on missionaryism in the Far East. In fact, Francis Xavier went also to Japan, where he was received with oriental hospitality. Conversions to Catholicism did not really happened: the few Japanese who accepted baptism were merchants who saw it as a shortcut to facilitate the trade with the Portuguese in Macao. The Jesuits who went to Japan later disguised themselves as Zen monks, following their experience in India. Within a generation, however, the attitude of the authorities in Japan turned hostile.



12. Jesuits on their way to Japan

In China, Francis Xavier's attempt to convert failed. It was only at the end of the 16th century that the Society of Jesus resumed its missionary activity with Brother Matteo Ricci. In this case, Ricci chose to fascinate the Chinese with European scientific discoveries, even going so far as teaching the theories of Galileo Galilei, which were condemned by Rome right in that time. In this way, missionaryism also became a way for transmitting the secular scientific mentality to Asia, the outpost of atheistic positivist science. Ricci quickly learned Mandarin language and participated in the Imperial examinations, becoming a Confucian scholar. In this capacity his Jesuits were allowed to participate in Confucian rituals.



13. Matteo Ricci as a Confucian scholar

This sparked a controversy with the papal seat, similar to the one that was going on over the Malabar rituals. The Jesuits argued that the Confucian rituals were simply civil and secular ceremonies, so



participating was compatible with the Catholic rituals. However, as in the case of the Malabar rites, the Jesuits' position was clearly in bad faith, since they were well aware that those rites were used by the Hindus and Chinese for reaching the blessed heavens in the afterlife.

In conclusion, Counter-Reformation missionaryism gave way to a great imposture, comply not only by the Jesuits, but also by the Franciscans and the more recent missionary orders. These were and still are committed to spreading the idea of civil, technological and economic superiority of the West, hiding behind the loving image of Jesus Christ.



14. Between religious preaching and propaganda of secular science

With great delay, but with greater political, economic and military support, the countless Protestant sects also entered in competition with Catholic missionaryism¹. They played an essential role in the thorough penetration of colonialism, especially British colonialism in India. Nowadays the North American Protestant sects, even more aberrant in their beliefs, more fanatical and irrational, but loaded with dollars, are invading the entire planet, replacing even the Catholic missions, by now meaningless and feeble due to the demise of this religious form.

Maria Chiara de' Fenzi

¹ Richard D. N. Dickinson, *The Christian College in Developing India*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971.