

TRUTH TRIUMPHANT: CHAPTER 20

The Great Struggle In India

Besides hunting down heretics, Jews, new Christians, and all who were accused of Judaizing (that is, conforming to the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, such as not eating pork, attending the solemnization of the Sabbath, partaking of the paschal lamb, and so forth), the Goanese Inquisitors also replenished their dungeons with persons accused of magic and sorcery.¹

WHILE the Church of the East was expanding in India and the Orient, events in the West were hastening to the crisis which lifted the gloom of the Dark Ages. The conflict between established systems and the word of God had been precipitated. In 1517 Luther had taken his stand for the Holy Scriptures, and they were being reinstated in their proper place. The Dark Ages were passing.

At this time a new Catholic order of monasticism was formed, called the Society of Jesus, generally known as the Jesuits. It was distinctly brought into existence for the purpose of recovering, if possible, what was lost, to repair what was injured, to fortify and guard what remained, and to advance the revival of the Papacy.² Before Spain and Portugal had been reached by the reforming power of a newly born Protestantism, the order of the Jesuits had made a secure alliance with the monarchies of those countries. It was a dark night for the St. Thomas Christians when the Jesuits, supported by the guns of Portugal, arrived in India.

It was the lot of Portugal to erect an astonishing empire in the East. It is amazing how little the public remembers of those seven areas seized by the Portuguese men-of-war and completely claimed by the crown as imperial domain, an act to which the pope gave his sanction.³ Omitting the settlements on the west coast of Africa, this vast colonial dominion may be divided into the following parts: (1) the east coast of Africa with adjacent islands, (2) the south coasts of Arabia and Persia, (3) the coasts of Baluchistan and northwest India, (4) the west coast of India, in which was located, as the Portuguese called it, the "most noble city of Goa," (5) the east coast of India, (6) the west coast of what is today Burma and the Malay states, (7) the coast from Singapore around to Siam, Indo-China, and China, as far north as the island of Macao. While one is astonished at the thrilling exploits of the Portuguese cavaliers who subdued these overseas kingdoms, he is obliged to deplore their fanaticism and cruelty. As J. D. D'Orsey says: "Religion, or rather religious fanaticism, was the inspiring principle, the very mainspring of every movement of every heroic exploit. Their wars were rather crusades than patriotic struggles."⁴

One incident illustrating the cruelty which ultimately caused the downfall of the invaders may be recited. On the third expedition from Portugal (A.D. 1502), commanded by Vasco da Gama, a fleet of twenty vessels sailed for Calicut. On the previous expedition the zamorin (ruler) of the Hindu kingdom of Calicut had been induced by Arabian merchantmen of wealth to fall upon the Portuguese, at which time Gasper Correa, a dear friend of Vasco's, was murdered. Vasco da Gama's motives in this new expedition were to punish the Moslems for this death, as well as for their insults to Catholicism. While on his way, he encountered an ocean vessel filled with Moslem pilgrims returning from Mecca. The Arabs, knowing the superiority of the Portuguese, offered a large ransom, which was accepted. Nevertheless, command was given to fire the boat. The desperate people succeeded in extinguishing the flames, but Da Gama ordered them relighted. It is related that mothers held their children up

toward Da Gama, pleading for mercy. The conflagration was so terrible that one writer has likened it to the fires of the inferno.⁵ Nevertheless, the Jesuits were cold to the awfulness of the deed, claiming that it was simply a prelude to further successes.

One expedition followed another, until the Portuguese supremacy was established. As the result of several wars, Goa, at the wide mouth of the Mandavi River, was seized, strongly fortified, and made the capital of the new empire. The mind visualizes the wide harbor teeming with the shipping of the world, the brilliant military cavalcades, the pomp of state, the coming and going of the ambassadors of the nations, the great warehouses bursting with the merchandise to be exchanged between the West and the East, and the magnificent estates of the Latin nobility. Probably the most glamorous of all the spectacles of those brilliant days were the ecclesiastical processions and functions of the church. At Goa one can still gaze upon the splendid cathedral where the bell was tolled as the victims were led out to their execution. Such was the splendor, power, and wealth of Goa. When one visits Goa today, he finds that the Portuguese territory has dwindled to a small section of the country on the west central coast, so badly desolated that it is but a sickly shadow of its former greatness. However, many vestiges still remain of Goa's past grandeur and fame.

As the Jesuits were already in control of Spain and Portugal, they accompanied the conquerors principally for the purpose of converting the St. Thomas Christians.⁶ It was the unhappy lot of India to experience the crushing weight of these haughty monks. These men were skilled in sublimated treachery and trained for years in the art of rapid debate in which they could trap an opponent by the cunning use of ambiguous terms; consequently, the simple, trusting St. Thomas Christians were no match for them. The Jesuits proposed to dominate all schools and colleges. This they sought to accomplish in non-Catholic schools by occupying the pulpits and the professorial chairs, not as Jesuits, but as professed adherents of the Protestant churches to which these schools belonged. As an example of their success by 1582, only forty-eight years after the order was founded, they controlled two hundred eighty-seven colleges and universities in Europe, some of which were of their own founding.

It was their studied aim to gain entrance, under the guise of friendship, into services of the state and to climb up as advisers to the highest officers, where they could so influence affairs as to bring them into the orbit of Rome. They were past masters of the ways of deception. They were adept in the policy of secretly bringing on a public disaster, simultaneously providing for salvation from the last terrors of that disaster; thus they would be credited with salvation from the extremity of the calamity, while others were blamed for its cause.

The Jesuits Capture the Council of Trent

This Society of Jesus proposed to subordinate the Holy Scriptures and in their place substitute the interpretations of the Bible by the ecclesiastical writers of the first centuries whom they called the "fathers." All the errors and vagaries of the allegorizers who confused and darkened the first three centuries were selected. The first great papal council which assembled after the Reformation, the Council of Trent (A.D. 1545-1563), was dominated by the Jesuits. This assembly laid down the law, and no papal authority has dared since to dispute it.

In assembling this church council, Emperor Charles V gave the order that only the abuses in the church, not doctrine, should be considered. He was distracted to behold his realm divided between two contending churches, and it mattered little to him which creed prevailed. He only wished some general

assembly to remedy conditions. The emperor desired Lutherans and Catholics to sit together in a general council, and he fondly believed Europe again would be united.

The influence of the Jesuits was immediately seen when the pope ignored the imperial command to notify the Reformers. Weeks passed, and finally the council organized itself and accepted the following as its first four decrees: (1) The Vulgate was the true Bible and not the Received Text which the Reformers followed and which had been the Bible of the Greek Church, the Church of the east, and the true churches of the West through the centuries; (2) tradition was of equal authority with the Sacred Scriptures; (3) the five disputed books found in the Catholic Bible, but rejected by Protestant scholars, were declared canonical; (4) the priests only, and not the laity, were capable of rightly interpreting the Scriptures.⁷

When the emperor learned that the Protestants had not been called to the council, he was enraged. Uttering severe threats, he demanded that his original plan be executed. Though the pope reluctantly and with long delay obeyed, the decrees already passed irrevocably compromised the situation. The Lutherans refused to accept the insulting notifications. In the meantime the pope had died and his successor advocated Jesuit policies. The deliberations proceeded as they had begun. Decree after decree was proclaimed; doctrine after doctrine was settled. Repeatedly the emperor was misled until he expressed his anger strongly to the Roman pontiff over the deceitful maneuvering.

How were the church prelates to defend these doctrines which had no scriptural authority?

Hours, weeks, and months; yes, many sessions went by with this anxious question in their hearts. Then, one morning, January 18, 1562, the archbishop of Rheggio hurried from his room and appeared before his confreres to proclaim that he had the answer. Protestants, he urgently reasoned, never could defend Sunday sacredness,⁸ If they continued to offer as their authority "the Bible and the Bible only," it was clear that they had no Bible command for the first day of the week. According to Pallavicini, papal champion of the council, the archbishop said, "It is then evident that the church has power to change the commandments," because by its power alone and not by the preaching of Jesus it had transferred the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.⁹ Tradition, they concluded, was not antiquity, but continuous inspiration. None could continue to fight the acceptance of tradition when the only authority for Sunday sacredness in the church was tradition. This discovery nerved the council to go forward with its work.

All the doctrines against which the Reformers had protested were thus again formulated and strengthened by Rome. All the rites and practices which the Church in the Wilderness had straggled to escape were incorporated more strongly than ever into papal tradition by the twenty-five sessions of the council between 1545 and 1563.

Henceforth, the Papacy was to have only one mission in the world, namely, to command nations and men everywhere to submit to the Council of Trent. The new slogan now invented, which must go reverberating throughout the earth, was, "The Council of Trent, the Council of Trent, the Council of Trent." How poor India was made to tremble and bend beneath this cry!

With the Jesuits the Inquisition came into India. "A still more decided form of compulsion was the Inquisition established at Goa, in the year 1560, which soon made itself felt by its terrible and mysterious punishments."¹⁰ This was a European, not an Asiatic, engine of torment imposed upon the

St. Thomas Christians of India. In it could be found torture by tire, by water, by the rack, and by burning at the stake.

The supreme punishment, of course, was burning at the stake. If the unhappy believer in New Testament Christianity failed to renounce his simple faith and accept all the innovations, rites, and mysteries of the Roman Catholic Church, the day would come when, with a black gown and a cowl over his head, he would be led to the public square to make the supreme sacrifice. Arriving at their Golgotha, those condemned to the flames would be chained to a high stake many feet above the piles of fagots. Then two Jesuits would wail out an exhortation to repent. When finally the nod of the inquisitor was given, blazing torches on long poles were dashed into the faces of the agonizing martyrs; and this continued until their faces were burned to cinder. The flames were then applied below; and as the roaring fire mounted higher and higher, it consumed the sufferers who died for their faith.

About the year 1674, Dr. M. G. Dellon, a French physician, was traveling in India. Suddenly he was seized and put into the prison of the Inquisition at Goa on the charge that he did not honor certain papal doctrines and that he had spoken contemptuously of the Inquisition. The real reason, he suspected, was that he had been sociable with a young lady to whom the Portuguese governor had been paying attention, although the traveler had no serious intentions.¹¹ He was confined in a dungeon ten feet square, where he remained nearly two years without seeing any person but the one who brought him his meals and those who brought him to trial. When arraigned before the court, he was obliged to walk barefoot with other prisoners over the sharp stones of the streets; this wounded his feet and caused the blood to flow. He says that his joy was inexpressible when he heard that he was not to be burned, but was to be sentenced to work as a galley slave for five years.¹²

In his book written upon these experiences in the Inquisition, Dr. Dellon has revealed to the world the horrors of the place. He states that the buildings had two stories and contained about two hundred chambers; that the stench was so excessive that when night approached, he did not dare to lie down for fear of the swarms of vermin and the filth which abounded everywhere.¹³ Repeatedly he heard the cries of his fellow prisoners as they writhed in torture. He did not suffer this form of affliction; but, having undergone many prolonged examinations, he attempted suicide on several occasions. He was sent to serve out his sentence on a ship, but in voyaging he encountered a friend of influence who was able to obtain a commutation of his condemnation.

Recording the burning at the stake which was inflicted upon many of the St. Thomas Christians, the following statements are from the account by Dr. Dellon, reproduced by George M. Rae:

But perhaps the blackest acts of this unholy assembly have yet to be recorded. The cases of such as were doomed to be burnt had yet to be disposed of, and they were accordingly ordered to be brought forward separately. They were a man and a woman, and the images of four men deceased, with the chests in which their bones were deposited.... Two of the four statues also represented persons convicted of magic, who were said to have Judaized One of these had died in the prison of the Holy Office; the other expired in his own house, and his body had been long since interred in his own family burying ground, but, having been accused of Judaism after his decease, as he had left considerable wealth, his tomb was opened, and his remains disinterred to be burnt at the auto-da-fe.... We may well throw a veil over the smoky spectacle on the banks of the river which seems to have attracted the viceroy of Goa and his heartless retinue.¹⁴

How much the wrath of the Jesuits was directed against the St. Thomas Christians because they observed Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the Sabbath may be seen in this further quotation from Rae: "In the remote parts of the diocese, as well towards the south as towards the north, the Christians that dwell in the heaths are guilty of working and merchandizing on Sundays and holy days, especially in the evenings."¹⁵

The Jesuits now proceeded methodically to obliterate the St. Thomas Christians. They depended upon their usual weapons: (1) the founding of a Jesuit college in which the youth won over from the Assyrian communities, or the St. Thomas Christians, were trained as papal clergymen in the Syrian tongue; (2) the power of the selecting of the Assyrian leaders; (3) the calling of a synod which they were assured beforehand they could dominate. The Jesuit college founded at Vaipicotta near Cochin introduced the Syrian language. It allowed the youth of the St. Thomas Christians to use Syrian dress. These youth were indoctrinated in the traditional beliefs and practices of the Papacy. But when the teachers had finished the training of a number of Syrian Christian young people, these youth found that, as they went among their people, the Assyrian Church would not recognize them as clergymen. This church also refused to allow the Portuguese priests to enter into their places of worship.

Failing in this school venture, the Jesuits moved upon the heads of the church. One after another they singled out the leaders, Mar Joseph, Mar Abraham, and Mar Simeon. Not having bishops in the accepted usage of the term, the Church of the East called their provincial directors by the title, "mar," meaning "spiritual lord;" while the title "catholicos," or "patriarch," was given to the supreme head, the father of fathers at Bagdad (formerly at Seleucia). The Jesuits surrounded the leaders in India with spies. They threatened them with the terrors of the Inquisition at Goa.

During this time there came to Goa a papal prelate, Alexis de Menezes, the agent of Rome who succeeded in crushing the Assyrian Church. He was a man of invincible tenacity and consummate craft. The Vatican had elevated him to be archbishop of Goa and had commanded him to bring an end to the heresies of the St. Thomas Christians. At the death of Mar Abraham, Menezes turned with all his fury upon Archdeacon George, whom Abraham had appointed to act until the arrival from Bagdad of a new head of the church.

Menezes immediately undertook the difficult and unusual journey of approximately four hundred miles from Goa to the Malabar Coast. Archdeacon George was pressed to subscribe to the doctrines of Rome. He refused, saying that the St. Thomas Christians had always been, and always would be, independent of Rome. Of the immediate results, D'Orsey writes as follows:

Popular excitement was now at its height. The poor mountaineers, who had at first welcomed their Roman fellow Christians so warmly, were thoroughly excited against their oppressors. They looked upon the Portuguese as the relentless enemies of their ancient faith, and as the barbarous persecutors of their beloved bishops and priests. They therefore rose in arms, expelled the Jesuits from their country, and in two instances, were barely restrained from putting them to death.¹⁶

But the worst was yet to come. When the archbishop arrived at Cochin, January, 1599, he was received with an uproarious welcome. He had previously obtained an alliance with the Hindu raja, in whose territory the St. Thomas Christians dwelt, because he had used Portuguese fleets to wipe out a nest of pirates. "The grandest preparation had been made for his reception, richly carpeted stairs had been expressly constructed; the governor and a brilliant staff were at the landing place, and the prince of the

church disembarked amid the waving of flags, the clang of martial music, the shouts of the people, and the thunder of artillery."¹⁷

Having soon disposed of military and political matters, the Roman Catholic primate turned his attention to the main project of his life. He summoned before him the perplexed and terrified archdeacon George. The latter decided to play a double game. He reasoned that if he could only temporize until Archbishop Menezes returned to Goa, time might work in his favor. He and his armed escort went to Cochin to welcome the powerful ecclesiastic. They kissed his hand, and gave him permission to preach and to sing mass in the Syrian churches. But when the archbishop learned that the patriarch of Babylon was mentioned in the prayers of the St. Thomas Christians as the universal pastor of the church, his anger knew no bounds. He summoned the professors, students, archdeacons, and clergy to appear before him, asserting with rage that the pope alone was supreme and that the Assyrian catholicos was a heretic. He produced a written document, excommunicating any person who should in the future pray for the patriarchs of Babylon or Bagdad. "Sign it," he ordered the archdeacon. The war galleys of the Portuguese lay in the harbor. In Menezes were united military power and church authority. To the scandal of Christianity, he forced the evangelical shepherd to surrender the rights of his people. Quailing before the Jesuit archbishop, Archdeacon George signed.

Having struck down the head of the system, the papal prelate now proceeded to make a large number of St. Thomas Christian leaders sign away the remainder of their fifteen-hundred-year-old heritage. Having been given permission to visit the Syrian worshipers on condition that he would teach no papal doctrine, the archbishop broke his promise. He openly preached against the beliefs and practices of the Malabar Church. He even ordained young men to the ministry who promised to renounce the patriarch of Babylon and to recognize the pope. These youth gave up the distinctive teachings of the Church of the East for papal doctrines and rites. This he continued to do until he was assured of enough votes in the approaching synod. The archdeacon appealed to the raja for protection; but Menezes saw to it that by threats and favors all the rajas were restrained. One more act, and he had delivered the final blow.

He ordered Archdeacon George to submit to the pope and ratify the papal decrees authorizing the calling of a synod. The archdeacon hesitated. Then Menezes brought out the most terrible weapon of all which he had kept in reserve. He threatened the tormented leader of the helpless people with excommunication, and the Inquisition at Goa. Visions of the gibbet, the rack, and the fagot rose up before the lonely official. Overcome with terror, he signed the ten articles laid before him, which paved the way for the Synod of Diamper.

The Disastrous Synod of Diamper

The morning of June 20, 1599, was the day when a great church gave up its independence. Eleven days previous, Archbishop Menezes had arrived with his supporters and certain subservient Assyrian Church leaders in order to give final touches to the decrees which he proposed the synod should pass. He planned that this assembly should preserve all appearances of a deliberative delegation, while in reality it was a subjected body.

It had been decided to hold the synod in the Church of All Saints at Diamper, a community which lies about fourteen miles east of Cochin. The crowds began to gather early. The government administration officers at Cochin, with a large staff of officers richly costumed in silk, velvet, and lace, blending in dazzling colors with polished mail and plumed helmets, had arrived the evening before.¹⁸

The papal church was represented by the dean, pastor, and choir. Along with them came the town council accompanied by merchants and captains of ships. In fact, all within traveling distance forsook their ordinary avocations in order to be present on the opening day. Archdeacon George, as leader of the St. Thomas Christians, came robed in splendid vestments of dark red silk, a large golden cross hanging from his neck, and his beard reaching below his girdle. One hundred fifty-three of their clergymen accompanied him, clad in their long white vestments and wearing their peculiar headdress of red silk. There were six hundred delegates from various Malabar churches, besides numerous deacons, which increased the body of Syrian representatives to nearly a thousand men.

Menezes delivered an opening address in which he thanked God for the large assembly crowding the little cathedral. His next act was to celebrate a solemn mass using the form designated by the Roman Catholic Church for the removal of the schism. He ignored completely the claims of the Syrian archdeacon to any part in the religious service. Then he mounted the pulpit to set forth vigorously the claims of the Roman pontiff to obedience, because he, as Christ's vicar upon earth, had been commanded to see to it that no Syrian successor should be permitted to land in India after the death of Mar Abraham. After this discourse he brought forth Rome's decrees and demanded that the delegates should pass by and sign them.

The first decree touching the differences between the two churches was like the first decree of the Council of Trent, and was directed against the Protestant Bible. This decree set up the Latin Vulgate as the Bible to be followed in contrast to the Syrian Bible. Other decrees were presented, aimed at the acknowledgment of the seven Roman sacraments, whereas the Syrians had recognized only three; they demanded that communion should be celebrated according to the papal rite, and that the Syrians should recognize in the eucharist, or Lord's Supper, the claim of transubstantiation. Then followed the decrees to bring the Syrian Church into line with the papal doctrines of penance, auricular confession, extreme unction, adoration of images, reverence for relics, purgatory, eternal punishment, the worship of saints, the doctrine of indulgence, papal supremacy, and above all, the worship of the Virgin Mary. All who taught anything contrary to the Council of Trent were to be accursed. Nine decrees were passed respecting the eucharist and fifteen regarding the mass, all pointing to the extirpation of Syrian practices and the introduction of Roman doctrine and ritual without the slightest concession.¹⁹

In addition to eliminating the Syrian Bible, it was demanded that all Syrian books were to be delivered up, altered, or destroyed; that every trace relating to the patriarch of Babylon or to the doctrines of the St. Thomas Christians was to be condemned; and that all St. Thomas Christians were to be subject to the Inquisition at Goa. Forty-one decrees were passed with reference to fasts and festivals, organization, and order in church affairs. In all there were nine sessions lasting a week and promulgating two hundred sixty-seven decrees.

The submission demanded of the archdeacon and his associated clergy is presented in the following words of the learned Geddes who gives an abbreviated translation of the actions of the synod, handed down by a scribe recognized as official by Portuguese authorities:

The most reverend metropolitan after having made this protestation and confession of faith, rose up, and seating himself in his chair, with his miter on his head, and the holy Gospels, with a cross upon them in his hands; the Reverend George, archdeacon of the said bishopric of the Serra, kneeling down before him, made the same profession of faith, with a loud and intelligible voice, in the Malabar tongue, taking an oath in the hands of the lord metropolitan, and after him all the priests, deacons,

subdeacons, and other ecclesiastics that were present, being upon their knees, Jacob curate of Pallany, and interpreter to the synod, read the said profession in Malabar, all of them saying it along with him; which being ended, they all took the oath in the hands of the lord metropolitan, who asked them one by one in particular, whether they did firmly believe all that was contained in the profession.²⁰

Three of the demands passed by this crushing assembly stand out above all others for their cruelty. First, there was the decree demanding the celibacy of the clergy. If the synod had passed this regulation as of force from then on, it would have been a great enough revolution; but the decree was made retroactive. All the Syrian priests were immediately to put away their wives. Since it had been the practice of the St. Thomas Christians to permit the wife of the priest to draw some little financial pay from the revenues of the church, this also was cut off, leaving the poor woman and her children without support.

Another of the cruel regulations was to single out for burning at the stake those Christians whom the Roman Catholic Church chose to designate as apostate.²¹ As has been noted before, the Christians whom they designated as apostate were generally called Judaizers, or those who observed the seventh day as the Sabbath. Decree 15 of Action VIII, as recorded by Geddes, reads, "The synod doth command all the members thereof upon pain of mortal sin, not to eat flesh upon Saturdays."²² Decree 16, which will not be rendered verbatim, demands that all feast and fast days shall commence and cease at midnight, because the practice of beginning and ending the day at sundown is Jewish.²³ This decree is in direct opposition to the Scriptures which command that the day begin at sunset.

The effort of the Papacy to disgrace the Sabbath by turning it into a fast day is attested by many authors. The historian Neander has stated that the early opposition to the honoring of the seventh-day Sabbath by Christians led to the special observance of Sunday in its place.²⁴ Bishop Victorinus, about 290, betrays the real motive of the Papacy in the introduction of the Sabbath fasting as follows: "Let the parasceve become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews."²⁵ Neander also wrote: "While in the Western, and especially in the Roman Church, where the opposition against Judaism predominated, the custom, on the other hand, grew out of this opposition, of observing the Sabbath also as a fast day."²⁶ Archbishop Menezes, therefore, in harmony with the usual practice of imperial Christianity forced the decree which turned Saturday into a fast day through the Synod of Diamper. This put those St. Thomas Christians who in the future would observe the Sabbath as a festival, into the category of apostate Christians, and destined them for the stake at Goa. Thomas Yeates, who traveled largely in the Orient, writing of the St. Thomas Christians and other Christians of the East, said that Saturday "amongst them is a festival day agreeable to the ancient practice of the Church."²⁷

Samuel Purchas, in enumerating the doctrines of the Syrian Church, said that they believed "that the Holy Ghost proceedeth only from the Father; that they celebrate Divine Service as solemnly on the Sabbath, as on the Lord's Day; that they keep that day festival, eating therein flesh, and fast no Saturday in the year but Easter Eve,...that they acknowledge not purgatory."²⁸

In an earlier chapter it was noted how the Papacy stigmatized as Arians those who disagreed with her in general, and in particular how she branded those as Judaizers who were convinced that "the Sabbath" of the fourth commandment was the seventh day. Writings are extant of irregular Gnostic or semi-Gnostic writers of the first three centuries who attempted to prove that God had abolished the Ten Commandments and that all the conscience needed was the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This no-

law strain was strongly accentuated in ecclesiastical Christianity. Pope Gregory I, in 602, issued his famous bull in which he branded those Christians who conscientiously believed the seventh day to be the holy Sabbath of the fourth commandment as Judaizers and antichrist.²⁹ Consequently, down through the centuries the Papacy has allowed no standing room whatever for sincere Christians who were convinced that the seventh day of the week was still binding upon the followers of Christ.

As an evidence that the St. Thomas Christians came under this unjust and reviling opprobrium of Judaizers because they solemnized the Sabbath, the reader's attention is called to the quotation at the head of this chapter. Moreover, as further testimony that other Christian bodies in India also sanctified Saturday, there is the authority of trustworthy historians that the Armenians kept Saturday as the Sabbath: "The Armenians in Hindustan...have preserved the Bible in its purity, and their doctrines are, as far as the author knows, the doctrines of the Bible. Besides they maintain the solemn observance of Christian worship, throughout our empire, on the seventh day."³⁰

Another act of the Synod of Diamper which historians consider unforgivable, was the decree to destroy, or alter beyond recognition, all the writings of the St. Thomas Christians. Having crushed the distinctive theological values of this church, the assembly reached out to obliterate all the cultural ties which bound her to the past. Manuals of church activities were torn to pieces, records of districts and documents relating the manifold contacts of this wonderful people were burned. What a wealth of evangelical literature was ruined in a moment!

Who can tell how much of the literature destroyed went back even to apostolic days, and would have thrown great light upon the work of the apostle Thomas and upon the early years of the Church of the East? Many difficult problems which face zealous missionary endeavors today in the Far East might have found their solution in this literature so wantonly obliterated. It has been noticed before that certain celebrated writers of the Assyrian Church in Persia and in other parts of the East not only translated their own productions to be sent to fellow believers in India, but also translated productions of other authors of great value and had them carried to the Malabar Coast. One would naturally have expected the Mohammedans to bum and destroy Christian literature when they overran central and farther Asia, but who would ever have expected this attempt to destroy such priceless treasure by a church which calls itself Christian?

Jesuit Seapower Destroyed by the English

While the Jesuits were destroying the Church of the East in India, events were moving toward a world revolution in Europe. In 1582 the Jesuits had launched their new translation of the Latin Vulgate in English in order to counteract the powerful effects of Tyndale's epoch-making Bible translated into English in 1525 from the Received Text in Greek. The 1582 Jesuit New Testament in English declares in its preface its opposition to the Waldensian New Testament.

Spain marshaled all the power and wealth which she had gained from her possessions in the New World to send forth the greatest navy man had yet seen. She had just conquered Portugal, possessing through this conquest the navies of two countries. A fleet of about 130 Spanish ships, great and small, some armed with fifty cannon, sailed up the English Channel to accomplish by force the ruin of English Protestantism.

John Richard Green gives this information about the Spanish Armada:

Within the Armada itself, however, all hope was gone. Huddled together by the wind and the deadly English fire, their sails torn, their masts shot away, the crowded galleons had become mere slaughterhouses. Four thousand men had fallen, and bravely as the seamen fought, they were cower by the terrible butchery. Medina himself was in despair. 'We are lost, Senior Oquenda,' he cried to his bravest captain: 'what are we to do?' 'Let others talk of being lost,' replied Oquenda, 'Your Excellency has only to order up fresh cartridge.' But Oquenda stood alone, and a council of war resolved on retreat to Spain.³¹

Glorious Revolt of the St. Thomas Christians

The victory of the English over Spain paved the way for the Jesuit defeat on the Malabar Coast. It was several years before the full meaning of the conquest over the Spanish Armada worked its way to the Orient. A ray of light was seen by the suffering St. Thomas Christians. They groaned beneath what they called their Babylonian captivity. They loathed the worship of the images, the adoration of relics, processions, incense, confessional, and all the ceremonies their fathers knew not. They longed for the crystal streams of the Scriptures. They yearned for the literature which the church had fostered since the days of the apostles. As they meditated on the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," their spirit burned within them.

Then an event occurred which caused a revolution among the people. The successive victories of the Dutch and English over the papal armies in India had opened the way for the patriarch at Babylon to ordain and send a new head to the church in India, Ahatalla. He was seized when he landed at Mailapore near Madras, shipped to Goa, and burned at the stake. Immediately a cry of horror ran through the Malabar churches. At the summons of protest, they came from town and village. Before a huge cross at a place near Cochin they assembled by the thousands to take their stand against the Papacy. Since all were not able to touch the sacred symbol, long ropes were extended from it which they firmly grasped while they took the oath renouncing their allegiance to Rome. This happened in 1653, and the incident is known as Coonen Cross.

When the papal leaders beheld nearly 400,000 Christians lost to their church, they immediately dispatched monks to go in among them and, if possible, to remedy the disaster. "The result," says Adeney, "was a split of the Syrian Church, one party adhering to the papal church as Romo-Syrians, while the more daring spirits reverted to the Syrian usages. It is estimated that the former, known as Puthencoor, or the new community, now number about 110,000 while the latter, the Palayacoor, or old community, amount to about 330,000."³²

Divisions along these lines still exist there, and a large field presents itself for evangelization by those who give the Bible first place in advancing the kingdom of heaven.