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THE TWO APOSTLES OF INDIA

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PART I

ST. THOMAS IN NORTHERN INDIA

I. Parthia or India ?

An apparent contradiction in the early writers who speak about the mission of the Apostle St. Thomas is the greatest proof of the historicity of the mission of St. Thomas in India. St. Ephrem of Nisibis in the middle of the 4th century,¹ St. Gregory of Nazianzum shortly after,² St. Ambrose³ and St. Jerome⁴ tell us that St. Thomas went to India to preach the Gospel of Christ. But Origen in the 3rd century,⁵ *The Clementine Recognitions*,⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea,⁷ Rufinus of Aquileia⁸ and Socrates⁹ state that he preached the Gospel in Parthia.

In order to make these two opinions tally, a third group of writers imagined that Thomas went by land through Mesopotamia to Parthia and Persia, finally entering India. So write the Pseudo-Hippolytus,¹⁰ Dorotheus of Beyrout,¹¹ Bar-Hebraeus (a Syriac scholar

¹ Bkell, *Sti. Ephraemi Syri Carmina Nisibena*, p. 163 (Leipzig, 1866).

² *Oratio XXXIII, Contra Arianos*, II: Migne, P. G. XXXVI, col. 227.

³ *In Ps. XLV Enarratio*, 21: Migne, P. L., XIV, col. 1143.

⁴ *Epistola LIX Ad Marcellam*, Migne, P. L., XXII, col. 589.

⁵ *Commentaries in Genesim*, III, Migne, P. G., XII, col. 92A.

⁶ Smith, *Ante-Nicene Library*, III: *Recognitions Clementinae*, IX, 29.

⁷ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 1: Migne, P. G. XX, col. 213-215.

⁸ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 5: Migne, P. L., XXI, col. 478.

⁹ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 19: Migne, P. G., LXVII, col. 126.

¹⁰ *Ante-Nicene Library IX*, pl. 2, p. 131; Salmond, *The Writings of Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus*, II, p. 131 (Edinburg 1859).

¹¹ *Historia Ecclesiastica*: Migne, P. G. L., XCII, col. 107.

of the 13th century),¹ and the Roman Martyrology. To-day, as we are better acquainted with the ancient history of the East, another explanation of this discrepancy may be easily found.

Parthia was a small mountainous province to the north of the old Achaemenian Empire of Persia. After the death of Alexander the Great, Persia had remained under King Seleucus of Syria and his dynasty; but such a vast Empire, from India to Asia Minor, could not be retained for long. The first to revolt was Bactria, under a Greek general. Parthia followed suit c. 250 B. C. under a native chieftain named Arsaces. He and his successors successfully fought the Greeks and extended their dominions till finally the whole of the ancient Persian Empire was brought under their sway. The Parthian dynasty of Persia is also called Arsacidan after its founder. At the time of St. Thomas therefore Parthia was identified with Persia, for Parthian sovereigns ruled over it. Why was Parthia, i.e. Persia, considered so important a field for evangelisation by one of the Apostles?

We may recall that at the time of the first sermon of St. Peter on Pentecost day, a number of Jews and proselytes who had come from Parthia were present, and undoubtedly some of them were reckoned among the three thousand who were baptized forthwith.² The Book of Esther already mentions "the nation of the Jews that were in the kingdom of Assuerus;"³ many of them were relics of the ten tribes of Israel taken into captivity by Sargon II, king of Assyria and had already spread through the neighbouring nations; whereas others, who belonged to the kingdom of Juda, had been captives at Babylon, such as Mardocheus.⁴ The Afghans still call themselves "Beni Israel," children of Israel.⁵

¹ Assemani, *Biblioteca Orientalis*, II: Mar Hebraeus, *Chronicon, Ecclesiasticum*, I, 34.

² Acts, II, 9. ³ *Ibid.*, 41. ⁴ Esther, III, 6. ⁵ *Ibid.*, XI, 4.

⁶ Masson, *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara*, I, pp. XIV, 7, 16, 81.

The Jews of Persia in particular seem to have been very numerous. Aman, the Minister of king Assuerus Khohayarsha or Xerxes I described them to the king thus: "There is a people scattered through all the provinces of thy kingdom, and separated one from another, that use new laws and ceremonies, and moreover despise the king's ordinances; and thou knowest very well that it is not expedient for thy kingdom that they should grow insolent with impunity."¹ When the conspiracy to exterminate them was discovered and their lives were saved through the intervention of Esther, "in all peoples, cities and provinces, whithersoever the king's commandment came, there was wonderful rejoicing, feasts and banquets and keeping holy day: insomuch that many of other nations and religion joined themselves to their worship and ceremonies. For a great dread of the name of the Jews had fallen upon all."²

Jewish influence had grown so much during the Parthian domination of Persia that Aramaic inscriptions—the language used by the Jews after the captivity—appear in a number of their coins.³ Moreover even down in the time of the Sassanian King, Shapur a Hebrew-Pehlvi inscription was inscribed at Hajjabad.⁴ It is not therefore strange that the lot to proceed to Parthia, i.e. to the kingdom of the Parthians fell to St. Thomas. It is well known that the Apostles went first to the Jewish centres to preach the Gospel.

But some political change of importance had taken place in the East in the meantime. King Mithridates I, the real founder of the Parthian Empire had already marched on the Greek kingdoms of Bactria and Panjab. One of his successors Mithridates II had subjugated the whole of modern Afghanistan, but at

¹ Esther, III 8.

² *Ibid.*, VIII, 17.

³ Kian, *Introduction a l'Histoire de la Monnaie et Histoire Monetaire de la Perse des Origines a la Fin de la Periode Parthe*, pp. 221-222 (Paris, 1934).

⁴ Thomas, *Early Sassanian Inscriptions, Seals and Coins*, pp. 70-101.

the time of his death those districts became independent. It was then towards the middle of the first century B. C., that a Parthian General, named Vonones entered India, defeated the last Saka Kings, and settled in the north-western frontier districts, creating a new independent Parthian kingdom in Northern Panjab.

St. Thomas, a mere fisherman of the lake of Tiberias, was not much acquainted with Central-Asian geography. When in Alexandria waiting for an occasion to proceed to Parthia, as was his duty, he heard, as we shall learn presently, that there was a Parthian kingdom in Northern India where numerous Jews were living; thinking that that was the goal of his mission and finding an excellent opportunity to start his journey, he proceeded to India, imagining perhaps that he was going to Parthia.¹ All things co-operate in the furtherance of God's designs. Thus the plans of God regarding India were to be fulfilled. How this actually took place we learn from *The Acts of Judas Thomas*.

2. The Acts of Judas Thomas

This is one of the apocryphal books of the New Testament. The late Dr. J. N. Farquhar, M.A., B.D.D., Litt., Professor of Comparative Religion in the Manchester University, has written, an excellent study of this book in connection with the mission of St. Thomas.² We shall make much use of this paper in the following pages.

The book of *The Acts of Judas Thomas*³ was written in Syriac, probably in Edessa of Mesopotamia "as a manual of instruction for visitors, to the shrine of

¹ In point of fact Paulus Orosius in the fifth century says: "Generally the country (from the Indus to the Tigris) is called Parthia Orosius, *Historia*, I, 2; Migne, P. L., XXXI, cols. 676-677.

² Farquhar, "The Apostle Thomas in North India," *Bulletin of John Rylands Library*, Manchester X (1910), pp. 80-111.

³ They were first published in English by Wright, *Syrian Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols. (The English translation is in vol. I (London 1811). For our study we have used James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 364-436 (Oxford, 1926).

the martyr," whose remains had been brought to Edessa, all the way from India during the second century, in a wooden case by a Jewish Christian of Edessa.⁴ The account seems to have been written between 180 and 230 A. D. The book is not very different from other apocryphal books of the New Testament: it is a legendary account of the mission of Saint Thomas⁵ in which not much trustworthy information about the Apostle is available. Yet the fact that some persons referred to in this book have been proved by archaeology to be historical, has rightly led Dr. Farquhar to accept it, at least partially and not without much circumspection, as a good historical source. Consequently he has traced two possible sources of information for the anonymous writer of *The Acts*: A, *a written document*, probably a letter written from India to Edessa, concerning the voyage of St. Thomas to the Parthian kingdom of Gûdnaphar and his mission there. The letter must have been written by the same Thomas, as Dr. Farquhar surmises from the double name "Judas Thomas," for only the Apostle himself would know of it. We know, in point of fact, that Thomas sent letters from India, which were preserved and read in the Church services, as the Syriac work *Doctrine of the Apostles* mentions.⁶

The other source of information, B, is said by Farquhar to be "the tradition about the martyrdom of the Apostle." This tradition, corresponding to the second part of the book, does not seem to contain much reliable information, except the fact of the martyrdom itself. It was very likely an oral tradition, some information brought to Edessa by the merchant or merchants, by whose care the relics of the Apostle

⁴ St. Gregory of Tours, *Libri Miraculorum*, I, 32; Migne, P. L., LXXI, col. 733; St. John Chrysostom, *In Habacucom*, homil. XXV, Migne, P. G., LXIII, col. 179.

⁵ His real name seems to have been Judas. Thomas = Didymus, meaning "twin," seems to have been a pet name to distinguish him from the other two Judases of the Apostolic College.

⁶ Nau, *La Didascalie des Douze*, p. 230 (Paris, 1912).

were translated to Mesopotamia. Furthermore such oral tradition may have been corrupted at a later period in Edessa itself.

There is an Ethiopic version of *The Acts* which seems to be made from Arabic versions, probably during the early part of the 14th century, which were likewise translated from Sahidic Coptic, the dialect of Upper Egypt. This Ethiopic version has been published in original and English translation by Mr. (later Sir) E. A. Wallis Budge, of the British Museum.¹ It substantially agrees with the Syriac book of *The Acts*.

Knowing now what *The Acts of Judas Thomas* contains and what were the sources of information of its writer, we may proceed to the facts narrated therein. We shall omit all irrelevant matter, narrating only what we think strictly historical.

3. The Historicity of the Mission of St. Thomas

The main point of *The Acts of Judas Thomas* that proves the historicity of the Mission of the Apostle to Northern India is the mention of the King of the place and of his brother. The former's name is given as Gūdnaphar, and his brother is said to be named Gad. First of all these two names are evidently corrupted forms of two well-known Parthian names, Vindapharna and Guda.

But the main circumstance regarding these two names is that both personages, the King and his brother, were totally unknown to history until, in the course of the 19th century, coins of the former were discovered,² and that in some of those coins the name

¹ *The Contendings of the Apostles*, 2 vols. (London 1901).

² The first coin of Gūdnaphar or Gondophares was discovered in the village of Bimaran (Afghanistan) by Mr. Charles Masson in about 1834. Cf. Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua*, pp. 76-77 (London, 1841). Cunningham, "Coins of Indian Buddhist Satraps with Greek Inscriptions," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXIII 1845.

of Gad is also inscribed.³ The latter's name also occurs on a pedestal and an intaglio coming from the N. W. Frontier Province.⁴ The name of the king takes different forms in the coins: Gondophares, Guduphara, Gudapharna, Gadapharna, Gondapharna⁵ but it is always unmistakably recognizable.⁶ One of his inscriptions has also been found at Takht-i-Bahi, north-east of Peshawar; it is dated in the 26.⁷ year of the Mahārāya Guduphara.⁸ History now admits that Gondophares is by far the most important king of the Indo-Parthian line.

But there is still another personage who plays a very important part in the story of *The Acts*, which is rightly considered historical also by Farquhar; and that is Habbān. Habbān is said to be "the merchant of King Gūdnaphar."⁹ In the Ethiopic version he is called Abnēs and is styled as one "sent from the King of Gōnā."¹⁰ Oriental kings in those days were at times engaged in commerce on a large scale. The king's trade agent was called in India *rājavadehaka*, i. e., "royal merchant."¹¹ Habbān was therefore something like the Trade Commissioner or Minister of Commerce of King Gondophares.

¹ Cf. Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore*, I, pp. 155-156.

² *Archaeological Survey of India; Annual Report, 1902-3*, p. 167.

³ The real name of the king seems to have been Vindupharna, in Greek spelt as *Gondophares* or *Gundaphores*; Gūdnaphar seems to be the Aramaic form.

⁴ Whitehead, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-155. The coin cabinet of the Indian Historical Research Institute, St. Xavier's College, Bombay, has two coins of this king.

⁵ It is now in the Museum of Lahore.

⁶ James, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

⁷ Wallis Budge, *op. cit.* II, pp. 404-405.

⁸ Cf. Thomas (F. W.) in *The Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 479, where it is said that such was for instance the custom of the Maurya Emperors.

Farquhar says that as Gūdnaphar and Gad are clearly Parthian names, Ḥabbān is an evidently Semitic name; from which he concludes that he very likely was a Jew. This conclusion is fully warranted by the history of the north-western districts. Jewish influence was so great there that even a special script originated in those districts, denominated Khāroṣṭhī script, which is derived from the Hebrew script. The script was officially used during the whole first century. The coins of the Greek, Soythian and Parthian kings bear inscriptions in Greek and Khāroṣṭhī scripts, the language of the latter inscriptions being nevertheless Sanskrit. Khāroṣṭhī script even travelled to Chinese Turkestan.¹ The Khāroṣṭhī inscriptions are very numerous. We may say therefore that Khāroṣṭhī was the official script of the country during the visit of St. Thomas.

But there is, besides, another proof of the numerous Jewish population in the north-western districts. In the course of the excavations conducted at Taxila (old Takṣasīla) a fragment of an Aramaic inscription was unearthed, written in Hebrew characters, which happens to be one of the edicts of Aśoka.² The famous king Priyadarśin, zealous for the propagation of *dharma*, published one of his edicts in Aramaic for his Jewish subjects of the north-west.

Incidentally we may notice here how fitting it is to find this influential Jew in charge of the King's trade. The royal purse must have derived great profit from the business abilities characteristic of his race. Farquhar, moreover, from the fact that Ḥabbān brought St. Thomas to India, deduces that Ḥabbān was a Christian; from which he is inclined to believe that

¹ Rapson-Nobel, *Khāroṣṭhī Inscriptions Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese Turkestan*, (Oxford, 1929).

² Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, pp. 78-79 and pl. XIII: (a); Barnet, "Aramaic Inscription from Taxila," *J. A. S.*, 1915, pp. 340-342; Cowley, "The First Aramaic Inscription from India," *Ibid.*, pp. 342-347; Herzfeld, "A new Asokan Inscription from Taxila," *Epigraphia Indica*, XIX, pp. 251-253.

he might be one of those Parthian Jews who became disciples of Christ on Pentecost day after hearing Peter's first sermon. His official position as *rāja-vaidehaka* gave him great opportunities to travel abroad. His journey to Alexandria, where he met St. Thomas, was evidently not the first time he had left India. We may also suggest, that Ḥabbān may have become a Christian in Alexandria, after he met St. Thomas there.

4. The Mission of St. Thomas

There cannot be any doubt that Ḥabbān was the instrumental cause of St. Thomas' mission to India. They met at Alexandria. Ḥabbān doubtlessly gave the Apostle interesting information about the Jewish community in Northern India, about his own influence with the King, and formally invited him to accompany him on his return journey. Thomas was waiting for such an occasion, and his journey to the Parthian kingdom became a fact.

They sailed from Alexandria up the Nile. The account says that they landed at Andropolis (modern Chabur) on the following day. Farquhar thinks that thence they proceeded by boat up to Koptos; and from there they would march over the desert in a north-eastern direction up to Myos Hormos, on the Red Sea, where they would embark for India. It would be then early in May of 48 or 49 A. D. They would undoubtedly call at the port of Eudemon (Aden), as was customary for all ships going from Egypt to India and vice versa, and on leaving this harbour they would soon feel the south-western winds of the monsoon that start early in June. They very likely reached Pattala, which was then the chief port of the Indus Delta, towards the middle of July. Thence they sailed up the Indus and reached Attock or its neighbourhood, from where a march of about forty miles would bring them to Taxila, towards the middle of August. The Acts indicate that the Apostle arrived at his destination sometime before the Parthian month of Dios (October-November).

St. Thomas was introduced to King Gondophares without delay by Habbân. In the course of his conversation, the King seems to have supposed that the foreigner would understand something of architecture. The King was planning the construction of a new palace, and decided to show him the site selected by him for it. The account says that then the King "took Thomas and went out of the city gates."¹ Fârûghar rightly remarks here how accurately the situation of the old palace is shown, in these words, to be within the city walls. The recent excavations of Taxila, conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India, have discovered the ruins of the royal Palace of Gondophares, "within the walls, facing the west, its front measuring 352 feet and its depth about 270."²

During a visit to a State of Northern India, the present writer found himself in a situation similar to that of St. Thomas. The local Raja wanted to be cured of a certain disease, and asked him whether he could cure him. The writer had to confess his total ignorance in matters of medicine. St. Thomas, a poor fisherman, when asked by Gondophares to build a new palace for him, evidently replied that he did not know anything of the art of building; but he added, remembering one of the instructions of his Divine Master, that he could prepare for him one of "the many mansions in the house of God"³ "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven."⁴ This reply of Thomas is evident from the text of *The Acts*, which puts the words in the mouth of Habbân, replying to the King: "Thou canst not see it (the palace) now, but when thou departest this life, then thou shalt see it."⁵ An echo of this reply of the Apostle to the King is found in the Divine Office recited by the Syrian Clergy of Malabar on the 3rd of July, the feast of the

Saint: "Through Mar Thomas a splendid mansion was built for India in the heights of Heaven."

This gave an occasion to Thomas to speak of his real profession to the King, who gave him a sumptuous allowance and gave him freedom to go about his kingdom preaching the new Gospel. What was the system followed by the Apostle was afterwards explained to Gondophares by his own subjects:

"He (Thomas) goeth about the cities and countries, and whatsoever he hath he giveth unto poor, and teacheth of a new God, and healeth the sick, and driveth out devils, and doeth many other wonderful things; and we think him to be a sorcerer. Yet his compassion and his cures which are done by him freely, and moreover the simplicity and kindness of him and his faith, do declare that he is a righteous man or an apostle of the new God whom he preacheth; for he fasteth continually and prayeth, and eateth bread only, with salt, and his drink is water, and he weareth but one garment alike in fair weather and in winter, and receiveth naught of any man, and that he hath he giveth unto others."⁶

The life of Thomas described by the subjects of King Gondophares was the life of a true disciple of Christ, but also the life of an Indian *sannyâsi*. In particular they must have been impressed by his detachment from everything, shown in his giving away whatever he received from the King, and his wearing one garment only, as Indian *bhikshus* do. His diet also was the diet of a *sannyâsi*: *chopatis* and water. This simple life declared him to be "an apostle of the new God whom he preacheth," as they themselves said, and was undoubtedly the cause why many became his disciples and acknowledged the truth of the Gospel.

Among them in the course of time, King Gondophares himself and his brother Gad were received into the Church. What was the old religion of the Parthians is still a matter of conjecture, but they appeared to have been very eclectic in their religious views. During their rule in Persia they seem to have

¹ James, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

² Cf. Marshall, *Guide to Taxila* pp. 68-72.

³ John, XIV, 2.

⁴ II Cor., V, 1.

⁵ James, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 372-373.

professed Zoroastrianism, which was the religion of the country. In India they also accepted the local beliefs. In the country ruled by them there were still many Greeks. Hence it is not strange to find religious figures of Greece in the coins of the Indo-Partbian Kings. In particular the emblems of the coins of Gondophares are: Zeus,¹ Pallas,² Siva,³ and Nike (Victory).⁴

But a real conversion requires conviction of the mind, and St. Thomas would not have actually regenerated the neophytes with the sacrament of water and the Holy Ghost, had they not been convinced of the truth of the faith. *The Acts* have kept the prayer recited by the Apostle on the occasion, when the two noble catechumens professed to be his disciples:

"I praise Thee, O Lord Jesu, that thou hast revealed Thy truth, in these men: for thou only art the God of truth, and none other; and thou art he that knoweth all things that are unknown to the most; thou, Lord, art he that in all things showest compassion and sparest men. For men by reason of the error that is in them have overlooked thee, but thou hast not overlooked them. And now at my supplication and request do thou receive the king and his brother and join them unto thy fold, cleansing them with thy washing and anointing them with thine oil from the error that encompasseth them: and keep them also from the wolves, bearing them into thy meadows. And give them drink out of thine immortal fountain which is neither fouled nor drieth up; for they entreat and supplicate thee and desire to become thy servants and ministers, and for this they are content even to be persecuted of thine enemies, and for thy sake to be hated of them and to be mocked and to die, like as thou for our sake didst suffer all things, that thou mightest preserve us, thou that art Lord and verily the good shepherd. And do thou grant them to have confidence in thee alone, and the succour that cometh of thee, and the hope of their salvation which they look for from thee alone; and that they may be grounded in thy

¹ Whitehead, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-150.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

mysteries and receive the perfect good of thy graces and gifts, and flourish in thy ministry and come to perfection in the Father."¹

A period of probation seemed to have followed, after which,

"They besought him," we read in *The Acts*, "that they also might henceforth receive the seal of the word, [that is the baptismal character] saying unto him: "Seeing that our souls are at leisure and eager toward God give thou us the seal; for we have heard thee say that the God whom thou preachest knoweth his own sheep by his seal." *The Acts* also give the address given by Thomas to the two princes before he actually baptized them. It is as follows: "I also rejoice and entreat you to receive this seal, and to partake with me in this Eucharist and blessing of the Lord, and to be made perfect therein. For this is the Lord and God of all, even Jesus Christ whom I preach, and he is the father of truth, in whom I have taught you to believe."² They were baptized one night by immersion by the Apostle and then when morning came "he brake bread and made them partakers of the Eucharist of the Christ. And they were glad and rejoiced."³

The conversion of the King and his brother was very likely the occasion of many new conversions. This seems to be implied by the words which *The Acts* add after the above mentioned ceremonies: "And many others also, believing, were added to them, and came into the refuge of the Saviour."⁴

Thomas, encouraged by this great success operated through his means by the Grace of God, continued his preaching with new fervour. Just on this occasion *The Acts* have kept one of Thomas' sermons which is fully in consonance with the teachings of Christ, and not less in agreement, with the teachings of the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 376. Dr. Farquhar does not refer these and the above quoted words of the Apostle, nor those of the subjects of Gondophares concerning the life of Thomas. They seem to be quite genuine and full of Apostolic spirit.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Upanishads. The text of this sermon, not given by Farquhar, is as follows:

"Ye, men and women, boys and girls, young men and maidens, strong men and aged, whether bond or free, abstain from fornication and covetousness and the service of the belly: for under these three heads all iniquity cometh about. For fornication blindeth the mind and darkeneth the eyes of the soul, and is an impediment to the life (conversation) of the body, turning the whole man unto weakness and casting the whole body into sickness. And greed putteth the soul into fear and shame; being within the body it seizeth upon the goods of others, I is under fear lest if it restore other men's goods to their owners it to be put to shame. And the service of the belly casteth the soul into thoughts and cares and vexations, taking thought lest it come to be in want, and have need of those things that are far from it. If, then, ye be rid of these ye become free of care and grief and fear, and that abideth with you, which was said by the Saviour: Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Remember also that word of him of whom I spake: Look at the ravens and see the fowls of the heaven, that they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and God dispenseth unto them; how much more unto you. O ye of little faith? But look ye for his coming and have your hope in him and believe on his name. For he is the judge of quick and dead, and he giveth to every one according to their deeds, and at his coming and his latter appearing no man hath any word of excuse when he is to be judged by him, as though he had not heard. For his heralds do proclaim in the four quarters (climates) of the world. Repent ye, therefore, and believe the promise and receive the yoke of meekness and the light burden, that ye may live and not die. These things get, these keep. Come forth of the darkness that the light may receive you! Come unto him that is indeed good, that ye may receive grace of him and implant his sign in your souls."

The Acts also speak of the end of Thomas' mission in Northern India and the provisions he made for the future. He seems to have appointed a head of the newly born church in the person of one named Xanthippus. His name is Greek and he could well be

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 376-377.

a Greek, in any case born in India, for there were still many Greeks in the territory ruled by Gondophares. But was this only perhaps a Greek translation of an Indian or Jewish name? Xanthippus means "auburn" or "yellow horse." His Indian name might then have been *Gaurōsta*, "auburn horse," which happens to be the name of a very ancient king mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.¹ Xanthippus is styled "the deacon." What authority had he over the church? The first deacons, appointed by the Apostles shortly after the Ascension of our Lord, were so constituted in order that they might "serve tables," while the Apostles were preaching "the word of God."² They were therefore the ministers or helpers of the Apostles. In fact the word "deacon" means "minister" and "helper." Later the deacon was not only "the helper" of the Bishops, but also of the priests, they themselves not being raised to the priesthood. But even a priest, as far as he was an assistant of the Bishop, could be, and in point of fact was at times, styled "a deacon." Now, in our case, was this Xanthippus a mere deacon, or perhaps a priest? Our view is that he was a Bishop. Thomas, departing from the newly founded church, could not leave it without a shepherd. A mere priest was not enough for how could new priests be ordained? The Apostles always left successors canonically constituted wherever they founded a new church, and their successors are "the Bishops." He in fact was left instead of the Apostle as Thomas himself announced to them, having therefore his own authority and dignity of Bishop. Very well nevertheless could Xanthippus be called "the deacon" in relation to the Apostle himself. He was in fact "the helper," "the coadjutor" of Thomas, the first Bishop of India, at Taxila.

When Thomas decided to leave the kingdom of Gondophares, "He commanded Xanthippus, the deacon, to assemble all the brethren; and when the whole multitude was gathered, the

¹ *Mahābhārata*, Sabha Parva, 339.

² *Acts*, VI, 2.

Apostle stood in the midst and said: "Children and brethren that have believed in the Lord, abide in this faith, preaching Jesus who was proclaimed unto you by me, to bring you hope in him; and forsake not (be not forsaken of) him, and he will not forsake you. While ye sleep in this slumber that weigheth down the sleepers, he sleeping not, keepeth watch over you; and when ye sail and are in peril and none can help, he walking upon the waters supporteth and aideth. For I am now departing from you, and it appeareth not if I shall again see you according to the flesh. Be ye not therefore like unto the people of Israel, who losing sight of their pastors for an hour, stumbled. But I leave unto you Xanthippus, the deacon, in my stead; for he also like myself proclaimed Jesus; for neither can I aught, nor he, but Jesus only. . . . Let your hope then be in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which is always loved, and always desired; and be mindful of us, as we of you; for we too, if we fulfil not the burden of the commandments, are not worthy to be preachers of this name, and hereafter shall we pay the price (punishment) of our own head."¹

Subsequently "he prayed with them and continued with them a long time in prayer and supplication, and committing them unto the Lord, he said: O Lord that rulest over every soul that is in the body; Lord, Father of the souls that have their hope in thee and expect thy mercies; that reddest from error the men that are thine own and settest free from bondage and corruption thy subjects that come unto thy refuge; be thou in the flock of Xanthippus and anoint it with holy oil, and heal it of sores, and preserve it from the ravaging wolves." And he laid his hand on them and said: "The peace of the Lord shall be upon you and shall journey with us" and on saying this he left them and went to the cart that was waiting for him, "and they all escorted him, weeping and adorning him to make remembrance of them in his prayers and not to forget them."²

Why Thomas decided to leave the Christians of Northern India will be explained in the third chapter of this work.

¹ James, *op. cit.*, p. 395. These and other quoted words might come from subsequent letters of the Apostles or of Habbân or others to the church of Edessa.

² *Ibid.*, pp 395-95

³ *Ibid.*, p.

THE TWO APOSTLES OF INDIA

BY THE REV. HENRY HERAS, S.J.

PART I—(Concluded)

ST. THOMAS IN NORTHERN INDIA

5. Relics of the Christian Community of Northern India

To some of our readers it may appear strange that this Apostolic Church of Northern India disappeared in later times. Let them recollect the geographical situation of the Indo-Parthian kingdom, wherein the Apostle preached. It was, so to say, in the invasion corridor of India. All the invasions that have overrun India from Central Asia have swept the country round Taxila with merciless fury. The Kushânas destroyed the dynasty of Gondophares during the second half of the first century. Then the Hunas followed, who, according to the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang, destroyed all the Buddhist Monasteries of that province. Some time after, the Afghans entered India as conquerors, and finally the Mughal followers of Babar overthrew all the Hindu kingdoms and Afghan Satrapates of North India. It is not strange therefore that, as an effect of these successive onslaughts, the small community of Christians should have perished. They were first scattered, then remained isolated; and finally vanished from the stage of history.

Yet we may perhaps trace a few relics of that Church some centuries later in the kingdom of Persia. Some Parthian or Jewish converts of St. Thomas may have migrated to Persia to their brethren even during the life-time of the Apostle, and before he left Northern India for the South. St. Thomas might have sent some priests with them; and that new Christian colony within Persia might have been the leaven which later on grew into a glorious Church, that gave numerous

Martyrs to the Lord and even one Bishop, St. Hormuzdas, to the See of Rōme.

Our suspicion is not totally groundless. In the sixth century A. D. we find a fully constituted ecclesiastical province in Persia in the civil province of Fars. The Metropolitan of Fars seems to have resided at Rawardshir, but he had numerous bishops scattered in the islands of the Persian Gulf and of the Arabian Sea: Dirin, Ormuz, Socotra, Catara and Masaning. The Patriarchs of Seleucia-Ctesiphon claimed jurisdiction over the Metropolitan of Fars.¹ Now it so happened that towards the close of the eighth century or beginning of the ninth Patriarch Timothy I enjoined a number of precepts upon the Bishops and Christians of Fars; but the Metropolitan and Bishops of Fars, not wishing to obey the Patriarch, declared themselves independent. The reason put forward as a justification for their bold standing was their Apostolic origin: "*Nos Thomae Apostoli discipuli sumus et nihil nobis cum sede Maris commune est.*"² (We are the disciples of the Apostle Thomas and have nothing in common with the See of Maris—that is the Patriarchal See). Was this a mere excuse, or a real tradition amongst them? We are inclined to believe the latter, owing to the fact that no protest against this alleged Apostolic origin is afterwards heard³ of on the part of the Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.

Dr. Joseph Wolff, while travelling through Persia in 1844, met the Chaldaean Christians who had a separate Patriarch and discovered a similar tradition existing amongst them. They called themselves "*Bent Israel*," and seemed consequently to have been old Israelites of the lost ten tribes. They said that St. Thomas had preached the Gospel to them, and since then they were Christians.³

¹ Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*, p. 116 (London, 1937).

² Words kept by Bar Hebraeus which may be read in Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, 2, p. 472.

³ Wolff, *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara*, I, p. 207 (London, 1845).

The Christians of Fars might then have been the descendants of those converted by St. Thomas in the kingdom of Gondophares who migrated to Central Asia. The present writer, during a tour through the kingdom of Afghanistan ten years ago, found another traditional relic of the Christianity of St. Thomas in the kingdom of Gondophares, which extended up to the kingdom of the Hindu-Kush. The last peak of the Asmai mountains to the north-east of Kābul is called Kafir Koh or Dukhtar-i-Kafir. Once I asked the servant of my host, a Kābuli named Muhumaddin—what was the reason of that denomination. He told me that there is a tradition among the people of Kābul that, at the time of the first Muhammadan invasion, a Christian girl was found in that mountain who refused to apostatize. Consequently she was killed by the Muhammadans and buried there. If the tradition is reliable, and there is no reason why we should not take it as such, it would prove that there were Christians in Kābul and generally in Afghanistan in the beginning of the eighth century. The last vestiges of Christianity would then have disappeared at the brunt of the Islamic invasion.

Nor are these the last relics of the Christian Church founded by St. Thomas in Northern India. We may trace them down even to modern times. Among the Syrian Christians living in Malabar there are two clearly different racial denominations. Some are the descendants of the old Indians baptized by St. Thomas in Malabar, whose history will be related in the third part of this work; they are called Nordists. The others, called Suddhists seem to have come from abroad by sea and settled in Malabar through the benevolence of the Malabar princes. So says their tradition.¹ As a remembrance of this famous sea voyage that gave them a home, to them and their children, the ancestors of the present Suddhists had carved the figure of two vessels upon the head of two mermaids on the facade

¹ Job, *The Syrian Church of Malabar*, pp. 6-9. (Changanacherry, 1938). The dates given for the two migrations do not seem acceptable.

of their Church at Kudaturutti, one of the most important churches of their community in Malabar. Wherefrom did these Suddhist Christians come?

The existence in Malabar of a number of stone Crosses with quaint inscriptions around may perhaps give us a clue. These inscriptions are written in Pahlavi characters and have been deciphered in Pahlavi language.¹ This was the language spoken in Persia during the Sassanian Dynasty that preceded the Muhamadan invasion. The Pahlavi script was used in Persia, but to our knowledge was never used in Mesopotamia or elsewhere outside the Persian dominions. Those who carved or ordered those crosses and inscriptions, alluding to the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism through the merits of Christ dying on the cross, were evidently Christians coming from Persia, otherwise they could not know the Pahlavi script and language.

Our further contention is that they came from Fars. This was the maritime province of the Persian Empire, on the Persian Gulf. The Christians of Fars were connected with other Christian communities, which may be called maritime, living in the islands of the Persian Gulf, as seen above. Finally it is a fact that at least up to the end of the eighth century the Metropolitan of Fars held jurisdiction over the Christians of India.² It is therefore quite evident that the Christians of Fars were acquainted with the sea and with Christian communities beyond the sea. They knew that the Christians of Malabar claimed to be "Christians of St. Thomas" as they themselves claimed too. To them they went therefore in the hour of distress: they were all Christians of St. Thomas. They could not find but a kind reception amongst the Christians of St. Thomas in Malabar.

¹ Modi, "A Christian Cross with a Pahlavi Inscription recently discovered in the Travancore State," *J. B. B. R. A. S.*, (N.S.), II, pp. 1-18; Burnell, "Pahlavi Inscriptions in South India," *Indian Antiquary*, III, pp. 368; West, "Inscriptions around Crosses in South India," *Epigraphia Indica*, IV, pp. 174-176, etc.

² Vine, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

This is not the place to discuss the question of the time when this emigration took place. The Malabarian tradition says there have been two expeditions of Suddhists.¹ If so, they might have been: one towards the middle of the 4th century, at the time of the Christian persecution in Persia, during the reign of Shapur II, when the supreme head of the Christians in Persia St. Simeon was imprisoned and killed; the other would be during the 6th or 7th century when the Islamic persecution was sweeping all over the country. At the time when the Parsis of Bombay and Gujerat left their homes, these Christians also left their country and settled in Malabar.

Thus the last relics of the Christian Church founded in Northern India by St. Thomas were providentially united with the Church of Malabar, also founded by St. Thomas.²

PART II

ST. BARTHOLOMEW IN THE KONKAN

1. The Mission of St. Bartholomew

Ancient ecclesiastical writers, as is well known, place at least a part of the apostolate of St. Bartholomew in India.¹ Yet it was supposed that this India was not India proper, but some other countries around India, such as Arabia or Ethiopia, which were at times denominated India by Greek and Roman geographers. Recently Rev. Fr. A. C. Perumalil, S.J. has contributed a learned article on this subject to *The Journal of Indian History*, Madras, which changes this point of view and establishes the mission of St. Bartholomew in

¹ Cf. Job, *op. et loc. cit.*

² There are Suddhists among the Catholics and among the Jacobites: and both communities belong to jurisdictions different from the jurisdictions of the other Syrian Christians. The centre of these Suddhist jurisdictions in Kottayam.

³ Cf. for instance Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 19: Migne P.G., LXXVII, col. 126.

India proper on a sound basis.¹ This article will be here summarised. We shall perhaps add some new evidence.

In a previous article,² Fr. Perumalil, after a detailed survey of all Greek and Roman Geographers and Ecclesiastical Writers, had concluded that after the expedition of Alexander the Great the early Greeks and Romans were well acquainted with India; and that "they call only one land India, that which was bounded on the West by the river Indus, on the North by the Himalayas, on the East by the mouths of the river Ganges and on the remaining side by the Indian Ocean. Therefore when the early writers of the Church speak of the Mission of St. Bartholomew to India, they speak of India proper beyond any possibility of doubt."

We possess two clear testimonies revealing the Alexandrian tradition about St. Bartholomew's mission. The first is that of Eusebius of Caesarea:—

"Pantaenus was constituted a herald of the Gospel of Christ to the nations of the East, and advanced even as far as India. Pantaenus... is said to have come to the (land of the) Indians; to have found there that the Gospel according to Matthew had anticipated his own arrival among some who knew Christ and to whom Bartholomew, one of the Apostles, had preached and had left them the book of Matthew in Hebrew script, which is also preserved until this time."³

The other testimony is that of St. Jerome: "Pantaenus... was a man of such learning both in Sacred Scriptures and in secular knowledge that he was sent to India by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, at the request of that nation's legates. There he found that the coming of Christ, our Lord, according to the

¹ Perumalil, "The Apostles of Kalyana (Bombay)," *The Journal of Indian History*, (Madras), XXII (1943), pp. 71-92.

² Perumalil, "The India of the Early Greeks and Romans from the Time of Alexander's Invasion till the Fall of Alexandria," *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, (Patna), XXVIII (1942), pp. 341-383.

³ Eusebius Caesariensis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 10: Migne P. G., XX, col. 453-456.

Gospel of Matthew, was preached by Bartholomew, one of the twelve Apostles."¹

From these two testimonies we see quite plainly that the mission work of St. Bartholomew in India was known in Alexandria towards the close of the second century A.D., through the Indian Christian descendants of the early converts who had sent messengers to that city, soliciting new priests to look after the abandoned flock. Evidently the Alexandrian tradition was also derived from St. Pantaenus himself, who had been an eyewitness of the work of St. Bartholomew in India.

But there is still an exponent of a different early tradition which gives, besides, an important detail of St. Bartholomew's mission; and that is Rufinus of Aquileia, contemporary of St. Jerome. Rufinus, as Fr. Perumalil rightly points out, represents the Palestinian tradition concerning the division of the world made by the Apostles among themselves after the Ascension of Our Lord, before they dispersed to preach the Gospel of Christ. The testimony of Rufinus is as follows:

"In that division of the world made by the Apostles for the preaching of the word of God, by drawing lots, while different provinces fell to different Apostles, Parthia fell to Thomas, to Matthew fell Ethiopia, and the Citerior India, adherent to it, is said to have fallen to Bartholomew. Placed between this (Citerior India) and Parthia, but far to the interior, lies 'Ulterior India', inhabited by peoples of many and diverse tongues."²

Rufinus does not give details about Bartholomew's mission in India itself but confirms the two previous authorities by showing that the Apostle came to India by virtue of the lot that fell upon him when the Apostles divided the known world among themselves. As Fr. Perumalil has abundantly shown in the other

¹ St. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 36: Migne, P. L., XXIII, col. 651.

² Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 9: Migne, P. L., XXI, col. 478.

paper mentioned above. "Citerior India" is always for the Romans and Greeks that part of the Western Coast of India roughly corresponding to Gujerat and Northern Konkan. It therefore appears that St. Bartholomew preached the Gospel of Christ to the peoples inhabiting Gujerat and Northern Konkan.

This conclusion is corroborated by the Constantinopolitan tradition that crystallized in the *Menology* codified in the 10th century by order of the Emperor Basil II. In this work we read: "The Apostle Bartholomew, however, went to India Felix."¹ These last words led some to think that the tradition referred to Arabia Felix. But since we now know that this India Felix should be sought in India, we shall not have great difficulty in our search. For in Northern Konkan there is the very ancient city of Kalyāna, the present town of Kalyān, north of Bombay, the name of which in Sanskrit means "happiness," that has been translated here as *Felix*. According to Lassen the strip of coast on either side of the creek of Kalyān was also called Kalyān owing to the importance of that harbour.² The Constantinopolitan tradition therefore points to Kalyān and to the region round Kalyān as the country that witnessed the mission of St. Bartholomew.

The same tradition is repeated by the Pseudo-Sophronius in the 7th century, who writes: "The Apostle Bartholomew preached the Gospel of Christ to the Indians who are called 'the Happy'"³ In this region of Kalyān, precisely one century earlier, Cosmas Indikopleustes found a Christian community whose Bishop was appointed from Persia.⁴ The mission of St. Bartholomew explains the existence of this Christian community on the Western coast of India.

¹ *Menology*, 2 Febr., 17; Migne, P. G. CXVII, col. 317.

² Lassen, *Indische Alerthumskunde*, I, pp. 150-151.

³ Pseudo-Sophronius, *De Vita Apostolorum*, 4; Migne, P. G. L., XXIII, col. 722.

⁴ Cosmas Indikopleustes, *Christian Topography*, 3; Migne, P. G. LXXXVIII, col. 170.

2. The Preaching of St. Bartholomew

The Apostle Bartholomew preached by word of mouth and by example from the very beginning of his landing in Konkan. We cannot doubt that he first of all met the Jews that were living in Kalyān. The Jews denominated *Beni Israel* have been living in Konkan from before the beginning of the Christian era. They very likely are relics of the ten lost tribes. We have already said that the practice of the Apostles always was to preach the Gospel first to the Jews or in Jewish centres. Kalyān, which was then a centre of foreign trade, must have had a good Jewish community. There cannot be any doubt that a number of Jews acknowledged the genuineness of his claim and accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But among his converts there were soon a number of Hindus, for as we shall see presently, the King himself and very likely some members of his family were also received into Christ's fold. On arriving Bartholomew, settled in the main Hindu temple of the place, as a mere pilgrim; but soon, if we are to believe St. Bede, he started preaching within the temple itself. Some people who were after him on arriving at the temple "found him preaching," so he says, and recognized him. And just then a man possessed by the devil ran up to him shouting: "Bartholomew, the apostle of God, the prayers (thy prayers) burn me." And the Apostle said: "Keep silence, O demon, and leave him", and he left him at once.¹

St. Bede besides has kept a beautiful description of the Apostle as given by his contemporaries, which we are going to reproduce here, for its details are very significant in connection with the preaching of the Apostle. He appeared to the Indians as a fervent *sannyāsi* devoted to the service of God:

"He has black hair, his complexion is white, his eyes are large, his nostrils equal and straight, his ears are covered with

¹ St. Bede, *Paroemiae*, Homiliae, III, 40; Migne, P. L. XCIV, cols. 490-491.

the locks of hair from his head, he has a long beard with very few grey hairs. His body is of a proportionate size, neither very tall nor very short. He goes dressed in a white garment ... He prays a hundred times during the day, and as many times during the night; his voice is like the sound of a bugle. The angels of God accompany him, nor do they allow him to undergo fatigue or thirst. He is always in the joy of God, day and night; he foresees everything, and speaks and understands all tongues."

We may easily imagine the impression St. Bartholomew caused in the Indians, seeing his carriage and apparel, "ever practising control, freed from all stain, enjoying with ease the pleasure infinite and the union with God"; "seeking solitude, eating little, restraining speech and body and mind, ever intent on the practice of meditation, turning to desirelessness." St. Bede affirms that "innumerable people of twelve towns (or villages) around believed through his work," and became the disciples of Christ.¹

3. The Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew

The story of the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew has come down to us in two versions, one Latin,² the other Greek,³ which substantially agree with each other. We do not know for certain which was the original version and when and where it was written. St. Gregory of Tours in the sixth century seems to have seen it,⁴ and the *Hieronymian Martyrology* is also in agreement with the story, when on the ninth day of the Kalends of September it reads; "The natal day of the Apostle Bartholomew, who was beheaded in Ceterior India for Christ, by order of king Astrages." The story of the martyrdom is published by the Bollandists,

¹ *Ibid.*, col. 490.

² *Bhagavad-Gitā*, VI, 23.

³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 22.

⁴ St. Bede, *op. cit.*, col. 491.

⁵ Cf. *Analeccta Bollandiana*, XIV (1895), p. 353f.

⁶ Walker, *Ante-Nicene Library*, XVI (1870).

⁷ Gregorius Turonensis, *Miraculorum Liber*, I, 33; Migne, P. L., LXXI, col. 743.

⁸ St. Jerome, *Martyrologium*, Festa Apostolorum, IX Kal. Sept.; Migne, P. L., XXX, col. 436.

and nobody doubts its authenticity. Several circumstances make me suspect that the original version was in Greek.

The account of the martyrdom, as summarized by Fr. Perumalil, runs as follows!—

"To this India, then, the holy Bartholomew the apostle of Christ went, and took up his quarters in the temple of Astaruth, and lived there as one of the pilgrims and the poor. In this temple there was an idol called Astaruth, which was supposed to heal the infirm. But while the Apostle Bartholomew was there, Astaruth gave no response and was not able to cure according to his wont. Because of this inability the sick were obliged to go to another city where there was an idol called Becher (Berith). They sacrificed to this one and asked why their god Astaruth had not answered their prayers. Becher replied that Astaruth was held in chains from the time that Bartholomew came there. The people on their return from Becher's shrine recognized the Apostle.

Now, Polymius, the king of the country (city) had a lunatic daughter. The Apostle cured her of her malady. On the day following the cure the Apostle approached the King and explained to him the Doctrine. The king heard him gladly and as a result of it the temple of Astaruth was deprived of the idol and the king became a disciple of the Apostle. When these things were noised abroad, the non-Christians hastened to Astrages the king, who was the elder brother of Polymius. Astrages sent for the Apostle and ordered him to renounce the religion of Christ and adore his god. But by divine power Baldad, the god of Astrages, together with the idols of the temple were thrown down and broken to pieces. Whereupon Astrages ordered the Apostle to be beaten with rods and finally beheaded. Christians from the vicinity gathered together the remains and laid them in a tomb. When king Astrages heard this, he ordered the remains to be thrown into the sea. Thirty days after this incident king Astrages was strangled by a demon and thus tragically ended his life. King Polymius was made bishop and ruled the Church for 20 years and then passed away."

St. Bede in the 7th century must have known the account of the martyrdom for he reproduces it substantially.¹

¹ St. Bede, *op. et loc. cit.*

In this account there are some proper names which Fr. Perumalil studies in detail and identifies. The names of the two kings are, first of all, of great importance. They are Polymius and Astreges, the terminations of which are evidently Latinized or Hellenized. Who were these kings? That part of India was during the first century of the Christian era ruled by kings of the Sātavāhana Dynasty. Different lists of these kings are given in different *Purāṇas*, which are supplemented by coins and inscriptions. Fr. Perumalil finds two names next to each other in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* which are very suggestive. The fifteenth king of the Dynasty is called Patumat, though in the list of the *Mātsya Purāṇa* he is named Puḷomāvi.¹ This seems to be the real name, which is also found in the inscriptions and has become classical in Sātavāhana history. His successor according to the same *Purāṇa* is called Ariṣṭakarman, a name which is found as Ariktavarna in some copies of the *Mātsya Purāṇa*, and as Ariṣṭakarman in the *Bhāgavatha Purāṇa*. These seem to be the two kings mentioned in the account of the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew.

Fr. Perumalil thinks, apparently owing to the respective age of the two brothers, that Ariṣṭakarman—Astreges was the real king, and that his younger brother Puḷomāvi—Polymius was a sort of Viceroy ruling over a province of the Empire on behalf of his brother. But if that were so, how can we explain the fact that Puḷomāvi is always mentioned before his brother Ariṣṭakarman in the Purāṇic lists? I am rather inclined to believe that both brothers were real kings and that the mission of St. Bartholomew played some part in the succession of Ariṣṭakarman after his younger brother. The succession to the throne in India was during that period not always decided in favour of the eldest son. We have several cases of the election of another son on the part of the father to succeed

¹ It had already been suggested half a century ago that Polymius may be Puḷomāvi. Cf. Levy, "Notes sur les Indo-Scythes", *Journal Asiatique*, 1897 (IX), p. 28.

him. Such is the case of Samudra Gupta, of the Gupta family, who was not the eldest son.² Samudra Gupta himself selected Chandra Gupta (II) as his successor against the rights of the eldest son Rāma Gupta.³ In both these cases there was a rising on the part of the eldest son, which was finally subdued by the lawful king.³ In the same way after the death of the great Chālukyan king Pulikeśi-II, his eldest son Chandraditya was superseded by his younger brother Vikramāditya I.⁴

Puḷomāvi in all the Purāṇic lists is mentioned as a king, and so is he referred to in the story of the martyrdom. In fact he is always given a long reign: 36 years in the *Mātsya*, 24 in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. He was therefore the real ruler of the country. Where was his capital? The traditional capital of the Sātavāhanas was Paithan, on the Godavari, now in the Nizam's Dominions. The Apostle must have landed at Kalyān. It was a harbour of considerable importance on the Western Coast. The author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* mentions it as such.⁵ Inscriptions at Junnar and Khaneri Caves commemorate rich traders and goldsmiths of Kalyān.⁶ The temple of Astaruth, where the Apostle lived for some time, must have been at Kalyān itself. The events narrated in the story of the martyrdom must have attracted the attention of king Puḷomāvi the foreigner. The recovery of her health by his daughter was undoubtedly the first invitation to become Bartholomew's disciple.

¹ Allahabad Prasasti of Samudra Gupta, I. 7: Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, p. 11.

² Mathura Inscription of Chandra Gupta II, II. 9-10: *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ Cf. Heras "Two Contraversial Events in the Reign of Samudra Gupta," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, IX, pp. 83-87.

⁴ Fleet "Sanskrit and Old Kanarese Inscriptions," *Indian Antiquary*, VIII, p. 46.

⁵ Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, 53, p. 43.

⁶ Cf. Gopalachari, *Early History of the Andhra Country*, pp. 103-114.

When this became known, the Brahmans undoubtedly rose against him; and mustered round his elder brother, Ariṣṭakarma, taking the opportunity of the spreading discontent, dethroned Puḷomāvi and seated himself on the throne. A brother succeeding a brother was not unknown in the Sātavāhana family. Kanna, the second king of the Dynasty, succeeded his brother Simukha, the founder.¹ The same was to be repeated a few generations after. The 24th king, another Puḷomāvi, the son of Vasīṣṭhi, was succeeded by another son of the same lady.²

This *coup d'état* against the Christian king was followed by a royal order against the Apostle. Bartholomew had to worship the Indian gods or to die. Where was his martyrdom consummated? The story of the martyrdom does not say anything about the place, except that king Astreges ordered his body to be thrown into the sea; which shows that the martyrdom took place near the sea-shore and one naturally thinks of Kalyān itself, which seems to have been the centre of the labours of the Apostle. So rightly thinks Fr. Perumalil. To Kalyān then belongs the great honour of having its soil fertilized by the generous blood of one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

4. The Mission of Kalyān

Fr. Perumalil calculates that the Apostle must have landed at Kalyān in about 55 A.D. and that his martyrdom took place in 62 A.D. But his death was not the death of Christianity in Kalyān. The ex-king Puḷomāvi himself ruled that church as a Bishop. He must have been consecrated by the Apostle himself. St. Bede calls him "King Appollonius" and says also that he ruled over that church for twenty years, and "wrought many miracles in the name of the Lord." Moreover he states that there were a number of

¹ Cf. Bakhe, "Satavahanas and the Contemporary Ksatrapas" *J. B. R. A. S.*, (N. S.) III p. 53.

² Cf. Gopalachari, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-67.

priests ordained by the Apostle.¹ Some difficulties seem to have arisen among the Kalyāni Christians about a century after, when they sent messengers requesting the Bishop of Alexandria to send them a learned priest to instruct them in the faith. St. Pantaenus was selected for this mission. He arrived in India c. 190 A. D., worked among them for some time and settled some questions or differences existing between the Christians and the Brahmans. He returned to Alexandria, carrying a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which had been brought over to India by St. Bartholomew himself.

In the sixth century Kalyān was visited by Cosmas Indikopleustes, who found there "a Bishop who is appointed from Persia."² This presupposes the existence of a Christian Community at Kalyān.

In the ninth century king Alfred the Great vowed to send some alms to Rome and "also to India to St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew;"³ which vow shows that the news of the existence of the Christians of St. Bartholomew had travelled west as far as England itself.

News of this Christianity was once more communicated to the West by the zealous Dominican P. Jourdain Catalani de Sévérac in the year 1321. He had reached the shores of India from Persia in the company of four Franciscan Friars, three priests, Frey Thomas of Tolentine, Frey James of Padua and Frey Peter of Sienna and one Lay brother, Frey Demetrius of Tiflis. These four Franciscans landed in Thana where they were martyred by the Musulman Governor of the place, a few days later. In the meantime Fr. Jourdain had gone to Broach, where he baptized ninety new converts and then to Sopara where he also baptized thirty-two catechumens. The body of Christians he found in that region were called "Nestorian,"⁴

¹ St. Bede, *op. cit.*, col. 591.

² Cosmas Indikopleustes, *op. cit.*, 3: *ibid.*, col. 170.

³ Thorpe, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, II, p. 66. (London, 1861).

⁴ Cordier, *Les Mercantiles de l'Asie par le Pere Jourdain Catalani de Sévérac*, pp. 19-30 (Paris, 1925).

but may seem to have included Catholics. In point of fact Fr. Jourdain having returned to Europe, Pope John XXII sent him back to India later as Bishop of Columbum (Quilon, in Malabar) and gave him among other documents a letter addressed "to the Catholics of the North and also of the East and in particular to those who are in Cuncatana (Konkan) Gozarat (Gujarat) and Lesser India (Sind and Kathiawar, as far as the account of Fr. Jourdain shows).¹

This is the last piece of information about the Christianity founded by St. Bartholomew in Western India. When the Portuguese arrived in North Konkan in the beginning of the 16th century; apparently there were no Christians there.

But something more must be said about the Apostle's martyrdom.

¹ Mercati, *Monumenta Vaticana veterem diocesim Columbensim (Quilon) et ejusdem primum episcopum Jordanum Cuntalam Ord. Praed. respicientia*, pp. 18-19 (Rome, 1923.)

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THE TWO APOSTLES OF INDIA

BY THE REV. HENRY HERAS, S.J.

PART II—(Concluded)

ST. BARTHOLOMEW IN THE KONKAN

6. The Genuineness of the Account of the Martyrdom

We have not referred to the names of the three gods spoken of in the account of the martyrdom, for their study deserves a special mention. These gods are Astaruth, Becher and Baldad. Fr. Perumail rightly identifies the latter with either Baldad or Balaheva (small Dattatreya, one of the incarnations of Vishnu). The temple of Baldad seems to have been in Paithan.

The second God is Becher. St. Bade says Berith. Fr. Perumail thinks that this name is "the Hellenized form of the Kanarese Bachiran (the one holding the *silla*, the God of war. Skanda." *Bachi* or *barji* in Kannada means *sula* or lance. Among the Tulu speaking people of South Kanara there is also a Saivite God named Belcher.

As to Astaruth (St. Bede writes Astaroth), there cannot be any doubt that this god is Siva having eight forms, Rudra being another name of Siva. *Asthamurti*, the one of eight forms, referring to Siva, is already mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*¹ and later in the dramas of Kalidāsa.² Now the word given in the story of the martyrdom is half Prakrit and half Marathi. In Sanskrit it would be *Astharudra*. The language spoken during the first century A. D. was a Prakrit with a tendency to become the future vernacular of the country, in our case, Marathi. In pure early Prakrit it would be *Attaruth*. In later colloquial Marathi it would be *Astharwl*. We have therefore in this name, let us say, a Marathized form of a Prakrit name.

¹ Vana Parva, 1939.

² In the preface of many of his dramas.

The transitional character of this word is of extraordinary interest, in view of the genuineness of the account of the martyrdom. Only an Indian, or a foreigner who had been living in India for some time, could have employed this word, so true to reality. Who could have been this person, the original writer of the account?

We have fortunately a link between India and Alexandria in those early days, and that is Saint Pantaeus. Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Jerome testify to the mission of Saint Pantaeus to the Indians of the Kalyān region towards the close of the second century. He brought from India to Alexandria the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Evidently the Kalyāni Christians, while handing the manuscript to the Saint, narrated to him the history of that Christianity and the story of the martyrdom of the Apostle. Perhaps they even gave him a written account of these events, possibly written in Aramaic (which was also the language used in the Gospel of St. Matthew), an account which he afterwards translated into Greek. Thus we may qualify the story of the martyrdom as an almost contemporary account.

Another circumstance about this god Astaruth confirms the genuineness of the account. The apostle upon arriving in India is said to have been living in the temple of Astaruth. How could he live in the temple of a Hindu god?, a sceptical reader may ask. One who knows the ancient Indian hospitality and is acquainted with the character and size of ancient Hindu temples (now still existing in Khajuraho, Bhuvaneswara, Puri and especially in South India) may understand very well how it was that the Apostle lived in the temple of Astaruth. Within the precincts of the temple, under the shelter of their *mandapas*, or even under the vault of the sky as a safe canopy, ancient Hindu temples welcome visitors, travellers, pilgrims, beggars, who might spend there the whole day and rest peacefully at night. (The writer of these lines himself once spent a delightfully cool night in the temple of Sri Narasimha, in the village of Hasi,

(Belgaum Dt.). This circumstance of the account of the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew is a colourful note of local character which could not easily be invented. St. Bede says definitely that the Apostle remained in the temple as a pilgrim.

The gods mentioned in the account are Śiva, his son Skanda or Subrahmanya, and Viṣṇu. Though there were many and crowded monasteries of Buddhist monks in the country in those times, as the caves of Pittalkhora, Karla, Kanheri, Elephanta, Ajanta, Nasik and many others prove, (one monastery was in Kalyān itself), both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism flourished all over the country. There still exists a collection of erotic poems attributed to King Hāla, the successor, and probably the son of Ariṣṭakarma, and therefore fully contemporary with the Apostle, which is of purely Śaivite character. It is entitled *Saptaśatakam* and has been published by the German scholar Weber. In the opening and closing verses, Paṣupati (Śiva) and Gauri (Pārvatī) are adored by the author. That the worship of Skanda (Śiva's son), was also common, the names of three kings of the Dynasty in the *Mātsya Purāna* fully prove: they are Skandhas tambhi (5th), Skandasavāti (11th), and Sivaskanda (26th).

As for the cult of Viṣṇu, the above mentioned *Saptaśatakam* informs us that Hari (Viṣṇu) and Trivikrama (an incarnation of Viṣṇu) are superior to other gods.

PART III

ST. THOMAS IN MALABAR

1. The Cause of the Change of Field of St. Thomas's Labours.

The Apostle Thomas apparently did not leave the Parthian kingdom during the lifetime of Goncophares. We know of a few coins of another king named Abdagases, who styles himself "the nephew of

Gondophares."¹ The rule of the latter may have lasted till the year 60 A. D., and Abdagases succeeded him. In the apocryphal book *De Transitu Mariae*, which belongs to the fourth century, St. Thomas is introduced speaking of the nephew of king Gondophares who was named Labdanus.² Mons. Silvain Lévy identifies this Labdanus with Abdagases in whose coins he is styled *Ghandaphara-bi-rātā-putrasa*, "of the son of Gondophares's brother."³ We do not know of any other definite name in the line of the Parthian rulers of northern India. What was the cause of their end?

During the first half of the first century A. D. the Kushānas, a semi-barbarous tribe of Central Asia, pushed by the Chinese tribe of the Yue-chi, had already settled south of the Hindu Kush range. Their first Indian King, Kujala Kadphises, had fully succeeded the last Greek King of Kabul, Hermaios, after having reigned in friendship and alliance with him for some years.⁴ His successor Vima Kadphises crossed the Khyber Pass and fell upon the fertile kingdom of the Pahlavas (as the Parthians are called in Sanskrit literature.) This must have taken place round 70 A. D. The Parthians had to retreat before the new invaders.

It was on this occasion that the Parthians for the first time met another dynasty with whom they were to wage a long struggle. Those were the Śatavāhanas, the rulers of Central and Western India, under whom St. Bartholomew had preached the Gospel and died. Bhūmake, the Parthian Satrap, wrested Saurāstra from the Śatavāhanas, though his son Nahāpana lost all those territories while fighting with the Śatavāhana King Gautamipūtra Śrī-Sātakarṇi, "who destroyed the Sakas (Scythians), Yavanas (Greeks) and Pahlavas (Parthians),.....who rooted out

¹ Whitehead, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 153-154.

² He is supposed to have been reigning from 20 A. D.

³ Tischendorf, *Apocalypsis Apocrypha*, p. 101.

⁴ Lévy, "Note sur les Indo-Scythes" *Journal Asiatique*, 1897 (IX), p. 35 and note 4.

⁵ See their joint coins in Morgan, *Manuel de Numismatique Orientale*, p. 363.

the Khakharāta race (Kṣaharātas, Bhūmake's family); who restored the glory of the Śatavāhana family."¹

A new adversary of the Śatavāhanas in Central India was the Satrap Chaṣṭana, the founder of the Kṣatrapas, whose family was not so easily uprooted by the Śatavāhanas. The Kṣatrapa dynasty has always been styled 'Saka'.² Yet Saka is on many occasions taken by Sanskrit authors as including Scythians and Parthians. Chaṣṭana seems to be a Sanskritized form of Tīastanes, the name that Ptolemy gives to this king.³ Now Tīastanes is a purely Parthian name. The Kṣhatrapa Dynasty is evidently a Parthian Dynasty. Their coins are all marked, on the reverse, with the symbols of the sun and the moon (crescent), which are always found on the coins of the Parthian Arsacid kings of Persia from the time of Mithridates III.⁴ There is not a single Kṣhatrapa coin without those symbols. The fact that in some of their early coins a Greek inscription is engraved round the portrait of the king and that the Brāhmī inscription has some characters that resemble the Kharoṣṭhī script,⁵ clearly shows their connection with the north-western territories, where only these two scripts were used.

Chaṣṭana's grandson, Rudradāman I, seems to have extended his dominions, as he assumed the title of Mahākṣhatrapa and contracted a family alliance with Gautamipūtra himself. Rudradāman's daughter was married to Vāsiṣṭhipūtra Śrī Puḷamāvi, Gautamipūtra's son.⁶ Yet this family connection did not prevent the war between the Sakas and the Pahlavas on the one side and the Śatavāhanas on the other. The Gīrnar

¹ Senart, "The Inscriptions in the Caves of Nasik," *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, p. 61.

² Allahabad Prasasti of Samudra Gupta, *op. cit.*, III, p. 8, Bāna, *Harsa-Carita* (ed. Cowell-Thomas), p. 194.

³ Ptolemy, VII, J, 63.

⁴ Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins of Parthia*, pl. XIII, No. 13 and ff.

⁵ Rapson, *Catalogue of Coins of the Anāhra Dynasty*, p. 72.

⁶ Kanheri Inscription, *Indian Antiquary*, XII, p. 273; Bühler, *A. S. W. I.*, V, p. 78, pl. LI. II.

inscription of Rudradāman refers to the war between these two nations. Rudradāman "twice in fair fight completely defeated Śatakarni, the lord of Dakṣiṇāpatha, but, on account of the nearness of their connection, did not destroy him."¹ These reverses naturally reduced the kingdom of Puḷomāvi, while adding to the kingdom of Rudradāman. We do not know of more contests between the Śatavāhana and the Kshatrapa armies; but, after the third successor of Puḷomāvi, the Śatavāhanas seem to have lost all the central and western territories of their dominions, as the coins of the last three kings are found in the Godāvāri District only.² At the same time, a branch of the family, some of whose members bear the title Viḷvāyakura, ruled independently from Kolhāpur,³ while some of their Cuṭu Viceroy's struck coins and were called Mahārajas at Banavāsi.⁴ This shows that the west had been cut off from the east. What was the power that had divided the Śatavāhana southern possessions and practically confined the last Śatavāhanas to the Godāvāri and Kistna Districts?

At the same time during the reign of Rudradāman, we find his Viceroy in Saurāstra (Kathiawar), Suviśaka, denominated "the Pahlava," who rebuilt the great Sudārsana lake near the Gīrmar at Jūnāgadh, "for the benefit of the inhabitants of the towns and country."⁵ This seems to be one of the ancestors of the Pallavas of Kāñḇi, who "ruled the kings residing in the nine continents, together with the ploughmen."⁶ Another of their ancestors is called "Koṅkanika"⁷ of the Koṅkan, *i. e.* one who settled in the Koṅkan.

¹ *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, p. 47.

² Rapson, *op. cit.*, p. xlii.

³ Smith, *E. H. I.*, p. 231.

⁴ *Indian Antiquary*, XIV, p. 331.

⁵ Junāgadh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman: *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, pp. 45-49.

⁶ Bahur Plates of Nripātungavarman, *Epigraphia Indica*, XVIII, p. 13. Cf. Heras, "The Origin of the Pallavas," *Journal of the University of Bombay*, IV (1936), p. II-12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

This brief study shows how a great number of Pahlava noblemen of the North-Western Kingdom migrated to Saurāstra and Koṅkan, pushed by the enemies first, and allured by the fertile lands of South India afterwards. This migration will help us to understand the journey of St. Thomas to South India.

2. The Journey of St. Thomas to Malabar

Dr. Farquhar, in a second paper about St. Thomas in Malabar,¹ is of opinion that the Apostle embarked at the mouths of the Indus for Socotra and Malabar. Yet *The Acts of Judas Thomas* say quite definitely that when he left the kingdom of Gondophares he left driving in a cart or chariot.² Had he had to embark at Pattala, he would have sailed down the Indus. The circumstances moreover led him to go by land. *The Acts* do not say the name of the kingdom to which he went in this second mission. In point of fact, very likely he did not know himself where he was actually going. He was following on the wake of his great protectors, the Parthians; and since the latter proceeded first very likely to Muthra, where we find a Parthian Satrap named Rājūla ruling,³ and then to Malwa and Saurāstra (Kathiawar) and finally to Koṅkan, Thomas followed them always announcing to all the good tidings of the Gospel.

And it so happened during this journey down South that, on reaching Koṅkan, he found there numerous Jews and also a numerous Christian community ruled by an Indian Bishop named Puḷomāvi. His joy must have been immense. He heard from them the account of the beginning of that Church, the labours of St. Bartholomew, his martyrdom only some eight years before; and even he inspected and read, shedding tears of devotion and love, the old copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, his colleague, which he perhaps had not

¹ Farquhar, "The Apostle Thomas in South India," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, XI (1927), pp. 29-50.

² James, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

³ *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, p. 141.

read as yet. On his own part he spoke to them about the Christians he had left in Northern India, about the devotion of Gondophares and his brother, and about Bishop Xanthippus. Thomas undoubtedly remained in the Konkan with the Christians for some time, and he would have remained with them for ever, but for the fact that the love of Jesus urged him to go elsewhere to reveal Him to the people "that sat in darkness."

The numerous Jews whom he met in the cities of the Konkan, specially in Kaŷyān, Thāna and Chaul, the majority of them merchants, doubtlessly spoke to him of another Jewish community living in South India, in Malabar, whose remnants still survive in the State of Cochin. He felt then compelled to go to them. The Christians of the Konkan had already their own Bishop; Thomas was not needed there, so he made arrangements with his friends the merchants, and after blessing the brethren in the name of the Lord, he sailed, probably from Kaŷyān, for his new destination.

3. The Mission of Malabar

In *The Acts of Judas Thomas* there is not the least indication about the new Mission field of the Apostle. We learn only that he went to another kingdom evidently within India. Now, in India there is no other country that claims to have had Thomas as the founder of its Church, but Malabar. In Malabar there is a very ancient tradition concerning the mission of St. Thomas, a tradition whose proofs are the Christians themselves whom we find there at least in the fourth century A. D., without having any other document giving us a different information about the origin of that Church. This tradition exists in Malabar from the beginning of the 4th century, for among the Bishops who signed the acts of the Council of Nicaea there were three from the East who must have known the history of the Malabarian Church. Such were Altalaka, Bishop of Edessa, Jacob, Bishop of Nisibis, and John, the Persian, who signed as presiding over

"the churches of the whole of Persia and Great India." The latter in particular must have been acquainted with all the affairs of the Church of Malabar, for we know of Bishops going from Persia to rule that Church. Late in the 3rd century, one Daud or David, Bishop of Bussorah on the Persian Gulf, resigned this bishopric to proceed to India.¹ Philostorgius in his *Ecclesiastica Historia* also mentioned one Bishop named "Theophilus Indus", who seems to have been a real Indian by birth.² Now the question of the apostolic origin of the Church of Malabar must have been spoken of among the Fathers of the Council, for no Ecclesiastical writer who speaks of St. Thomas after this date, excepting two Rufinus and Socrates, mention Parthia any more as the field of St. Thomas's labours: all say that he preached the Gospel in India: St. Gaudentius, Bishop of Brescia (end of 4th century), St. Paulinus of Nola,³ St. John Chrysostom,⁴ St. Bede the Venerable⁵ and many Martyrologies.⁶ The fact that the mission of St. Thomas in Malabar was communicated to the west through the Fathers of Nicaea disposes of the opinion that the Christians of Malabar were the converts made by Thomas Cana. This Nestorian merchant may have visited Malabar during the fourth century.⁷ We conceive it possible that after some centuries a confusion might have arisen between St. Thomas, the Apostle, and Thomas Cana but that confusion could never arise in the very fourth century, a few years after the beginning of that Church.⁸

Moreover Habbān, the royal merchant of Gondophares, very likely spoke to Thomas about the Jews

¹ Cf. Farquhar, *op. cit.*; p. 41.

² *Patrologia Orientalis*, IV, pp. 292-293.

³ Phocius Patriarcha, *Bibliotheca*, XL: Migne, P. G. L., LIII, col. 547.

⁴ Sermo XVII: Migne, P. L., XX, col. 962-963.

⁵ Migne, P. L. LXI, col. 514.

⁶ *Quod Christus sit Deus*: Migne P. G., XLVIII, col. 822.

⁷ *Opera Omnia*, III, col. 485 (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1638).

⁸ Cf. Medlicott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, pp. 48-65. (London, 1905).

⁹ Cf. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*. p. 61 (London, 1937).

of Konkan before his departure from Taxila; and the latter informed him about their brethren of Malabar. Knowing therefore the practice of the Apostles to preach first to the Jews, one must acknowledge that Thomas could not follow any other route, first to the Konkan and finally to Malabar, for there were no other Jewish communities in India, as far as we know. Consequently for the rest of our study we shall follow the Malabar tradition. We are in particular lucky to possess a piece of written tradition, composed in the first instance by a priest named Thomas Malikayil, reported to have been himself a disciple of St. Thomas. The original poem, for the account was in verse, was written in a very archaic language. At a later period the document was written anew in more modern Malayalam, with many Sanskrit words, and introducing later legends, which evidently were not in the original. One of these legends refers to the king Chola Perumal of the Tamilnādu; it is a repetition of the story of Gondophares of *The Acts of Judas Thomas*, which suits the interpolator marvellously to introduce the late Mylapore tradition. This account is also known to the Hindus who at times sing it at the entrance of Catholic houses in Malabar, to receive a few coins in compensation.¹

The first piece of information we find in this tradition is that Thomas arrived at Malabar by sea. That is the reason why we have said that he sailed very likely from Kalyan. Did he go directly to Malabar? Some Malabar traditions say that he was coming from the island of Socotra, at the entrance of the Red Sea.² Perhaps Thomas could not find any ship going straight to Malabar from the Konkan. He consequently went to Socotra by one of the ships bound for Egypt. Once there, he would wait till a new ship coming from Egypt would proceed to Muziris, the busiest harbour of Malabar during that period. Thomas most likely spent three or four months there waiting

¹ Rocca, "La Leggenda di S. Tomaso Apostolo", *Orientalia Christiana* (Rome), XXXII, No. 89 (1938), pp. 169-170.

² Farquhar, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

for a vessel. He would not have been idle all that time. He preached Christ to the natives, and apparently made many converts; for there is evidence from 354 A.D. that many inhabitants of the island were then Christians.¹ St. Francis Xavier landed there on his way to India and says that

"The people are Christian in name rather than in reality, wonderfully ignorant and rude; they cannot read or write. They have consequently no records of any kind. Still they pride themselves on being Christians. They have churches, crosses, and lamps. Each village has its Caciz, who answers to the Parish Priest. These Caciz know no more of reading or writing than the rest; they have not even any books, and only know a few prayers by heart. They go to their churches four times a day—at midnight, at daybreak, in the afternoon, and in the evening. They use no bells; but wooden rattles, such as we use during Holy Week, serve to call the people together. Not even the Caciz themselves understand the prayers which they recite: which are in a foreign language (I think Chaldean). They render special honours to the Apostle St. Thomas, claiming to be descendants of the Christians begotten to Jesus Christ by that Apostle in these countries."²

From the early days of June the Egyptian ships going to Malabar would call at Socotra. Thomas would sail in one of them during winter, for the account of the priest Thomas says that the Apostle arrived in the month of Dhau,³ that is the latter half of December and first half of January. The tradition also tells us that he first landed in the island of Malankara at the entrance of the estuary,⁴ and thence he passed to Muziris, called by the natives Kodungallur, within a distance of two miles. Muziris, situated in the kingdom of Cerobothra (Keralaputra), according to the *Periplus*, "abounds in ships sent there

¹ Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastica Historia*, according to the outline given by Phoebus, *Bibliotheca*, XL, Migne, P. G. L., LXXV, col. 486.

² Coleridge, *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier*, I, pp. 117-118.

³ Rocca, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁴ Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, p. 13.

with cargoes from Arabia, and by the Greeks."¹ This city was called by the Portuguese Cranganore, and is situated on the Ponnāni river, north of Cochin, and united with the backwaters of Cochin.²

The Apostle would as usual start his work with the Jews. In a busy harbour like that of Muziris there would be many Jewish merchants. That many of these Jews became Christians is acknowledged in the Malabar tradition.³ But he worked also among the Hindus, even those of high caste. The same tradition is unanimous in testifying to his success among the Nambudhiri Brahmans,⁴ as is also confirmed by some customs of the Christians⁵ and even by ethnological research.⁶ The account of the priest Thomas Malikayil informs us that three thousand Hindus were converted forthwith, among them the royal family. The king received at baptism the name of Andrew. One of his nephews, known as Kepa Kollam, was ordained priest and became the companion of the Apostle.⁷ The law of Christ is always called by Malikayil "The Way," or "the Way of the Son of God."⁸ Thomas himself is styled "the guru of the Way of Mercy."⁹

St. Thomas must have followed the same system of preaching as in Northern India. He was a *sunyāsi*. His master had told them before his crucifixion:—

¹ Schoff, *op. cit.*, 54, p. 44.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 205-208.

³ Placid, *The Syrian Church of Malabar*, p. 4, (Changanacherry, 1938); Rocca, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁴ Panjikaran, *The Syrian Church in Malabar*, pp. 5-8. (Trichinopoly, 1914); Nagam Aiyā, *Travancore State Manual*, II, pp. 122-123. (Trivandrum, 1906).

⁵ Panjikaran, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7. Job, *The Syrian Church of Malabar*, (Changanacherry, 1938); Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Aethiography of the Syrian Christians*, pp. 50 ff.

⁶ Placid, *De Fœntibus Juris Ecclesiastici, Syro-Malankarensium* p. 14 (Vatican, 1937).

⁷ Rocca, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁹ *Ibid.*

"And going, preach, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have you received, freely give. Do not possess gold nor silver, nor money in your purses: nor scrip for your journey, nor two tunics, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the workman is worthy of his food. And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence. And when you come into the house, salute it, saying: 'Peace be to this house.' And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it; but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return to you.'"

What language did St. Thomas use in his preaching? Malayalam, was totally different from the tongues spoken in Konkan and in the North-west of India. St. John Chrysostom says that the Apostle or Apostles who preached in India had the gift of tongues, received from the Holy Ghost.¹ This was only the repetition, or, we should say, continuation of the gift received on Pentecost day, when the Jews and proselytes, coming from all the parts of the earth, or hearing the Apostles said to each other: "Behold are not all these, that speak Galileans? And how have we heard, every man, our own tongue wherein we were born?"²

Thus Thomas won many souls to Christ. The Malabar tradition is unanimous in saying that he founded seven Churches, or groups of Christians, in the following places from north to south.

1. *Pallūr*, in the Ponnani Taluk, the southernmost taluk of British Malabar, Malikayil's account says that he was there for a year and baptized 1,050 persons.³

2. *Kodungallur* (Cranganore).

3. *Parūr*, in the State of Cochin. Of the two churches existing there, the one of Vadakkan Parur (northern Pazur) seems, according to tradition, that founded by St. Thomas.

4. *Kottamangalam*, 20 miles S. E. of Cochin. He was there for one year and baptized 1,600 persons.⁴

¹ *Math.*, X, 7-13.

² St. John Chrysostom, *Quod Christus sit Deus*: Migne, P. G., XLVIII, col. 822.

³ *Acts*, II, 7-8. Cf. 9-17.

⁴ Rocca, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

5. *Chiyal*, one of the easternmost Syrian-Christian settlements, on the road to the famous temple of Churimala, in a dense hilly jungle inhabited by wild beasts. This is the only one of the seven churches traditionally founded by St. Thomas which is not situated on the coast or within a short distance of it. It is now in ruins. St. Thomas is said to have been here for one year and have baptized 1,100 persons.¹

6. *Nirānam*, 30 miles south of Kottamañgalam. A priest named Simon built a Church here by order of the Apostle.² The priest Thomas Malikayil was also a native of this place.³

7. *Kollam* (Quilon), a well known city of the Travancore State. The Apostle was here for one year and baptized 1,400 people.⁴ In the 14th century Frey Jourdain Catalani de Sévérac, O. P., was appointed Bishop of this place. In this city and others of the surroundings Benjamin of Tudela found but a handful of Jews.⁵ At present there are no descendants of the Christians of St. Thomas at Quilon. All belong to the Latin Rite.

The story of Thomas Malikayil speaks of some other towns where the Apostle made numerous converts of *Kottakayal* where he was for one year and baptized 1,770 persons⁶ of *Malayatur*, where he stayed for two months and had 220 baptisms⁷ and of *Truckpaleshwaram*, where he resided for one year and baptised 1,200 persons.⁸

In all these places St. Thomas erected crosses, the most beautiful one being that of Pällūr.⁹ The Christians of Truckpaleshwaram happened to desecrate the cross, we do not know how. The Apostle in a second visit cursed them for their fault and ordered the cross to be transferred to Nirānam. Yet he had

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁵ *The Travels of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela in Komroff, Controversaries of Marco Polo*, p. 310 (New York, 1928).

⁶ Rocca, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172. We have given all these figures, though we acknowledge they are not much trustworthy. Figures are always increased by popular tradition.

⁹ *pm. Ibid.*, p. 174.

the consolation of baptizing 200 more persons, and two prominent people of the place were ordained priests.¹ To all these converts the Apostle administered the sacrament of Confirmation in a second visit. The account of Thomas Malikayil says that he gave them "the coming of the Spirit":

Such a numerous Christian community, spread in a vast track along the coast and even in the interior, required some pastors. The Malabar tradition informs us that Thomas ordained two presbyters.² The word *presbyter* in the Apostolic Age did not mean priest exclusively. *Presbyter* in Greek means elder or "an old man", not merely in age but also in prudence and wisdom. Hence the Apostles use the word indiscriminately in reference to priests and to Bishops. St. John calls himself "a presbyter".³ St. Peter also acknowledges himself to be a co-presbyter of other presbyters.⁴ Again St. Paul calls the Bishops presbyters.⁵ When St. Thomas ordained these two ministers calling them "*presbyteroi*," he ordained them real Bishops, as two priests for such a vast community would not have been enough. In fact Thomas Malikayil says that he left seven priests in each village.⁶ Moreover he had to leave the hierarchy constituted in Malabar before his death, just as he had done in Northern India before his departure; just as St. Bartholomew did in Kalyān before his martyrdom. The account of Thomas Malikayil mentions these two new Bishops, as such, and calls them by their names; Kepas or Peter and Paulo. They belonged to the royal family, as they were nephews of king Andrew, and are surnamed Perumal.⁷ This document moreover

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³ Farquhar, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴ *II John*, I, 1; *III John*, I, 1.

⁵ *I Pet.*, V, 1.

⁶ *Tit.*, I, 5-7.

⁷ Rocca, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁸ Rocca, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-179.

explains how the ordination was performed in the case of Peter.—

"And putting his own garment on Peter, (a disciple who never abandoned him) and placing his hands upon his (Peter's) head, he committed the care of his faithful unto him and explained to them they should receive him in his own place."¹

The names of the families from which the two Bishops were ordained have been transmitted, traditionally, surrounded by a nimbus of veneration, a fact inexplicable, if those two members had been raised to the priesthood only; for there are still other families which claim to have had priests in Malabar without interruption from the time of the Apostle.² Those two families have an outstanding status over all the rest; they were named Sankurikel (now Sankarapurikel) and Pakolomattam (now Palomattam).³

No document tells us where these two first Bishops were constituted, but we may reasonably draw some conclusions from the geographical position of the seven churches. Since they extended along the coast from north to south, it was but natural that one of the Bishops should have been ruling the Christians of the north and the other those of the south. For the latter, Kollam (Quilon) seems to have been the proper see, as it was a city of importance, having the whole southernmost coast of India as territory for further expansion. When John XXII appointed Frey Jourdain Catalani de Sévérac Bishop of Quilon, it might perhaps have been in consequence of a tradition about the antiquity of the see of Quilon of which he had heard. Otherwise the selection of the place is inexplicable.

As regards the see of the north, there is a constant tradition in the Church of Malabar that it

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175, v. 229.

² Rocca, *op. cit.*, p. 175, Panjikaran, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5. Cf. Job, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

was Cranganore. After the famous Synod of Uday-perūr (Diamper), Fr. Francisco Ros, S.J., was made Bishop of Angamali, a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Goa. Mgr. Ros at once understood the disregard shown to the Church of Malabar by overlooking the ancient rights of the Apostolic Church of Cranganore. He exposed the whole matter to the Holy See, and the title of Archbishop of Cranganore was finally restored to him to the great joy of all his flock.¹

St. Thomas did not change the architecture of the Christian Churches from the ordinary style of the Hindu temples. In old Palayūr (now Chowghat for Chapakatt) when the Nambudhrii Brahmans of the place became Christians, their very old temple was consecrated for Christian worship.² This Indian style of the Churches continued till the Portuguese landed in Malabar. Fr. Vincente de Lagos, a Franciscan, "was displeased at the sight of the Christian Churches so closely resembling the heathen pagodas"³.

4. The Martyrdom

The second part of *The Acts* is the account of the martyrdom of the Apostle, prefaced by some legendary events without any historical merit. The information given about the martyrdom itself is of little value.

First of all there is nothing definite about the place where the martyrdom occurred. It was in the dominions of king Mazdai, a Syriac rendering of a name, which originally might have been *Mahadeva*, a name or title applicable to many historical kings, and which as such is totally useless for the identification of the kingdom.

The Acts say that the Apostle was killed by order of the said king. This circumstance does not tally with

¹ Cf. Heras, "The Syrian Christians of Malabar", *The Examiner, Bombay*, 1938, pp. 170-171, 187-188.

² Panjikaran *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³ Hough, *Christianity in India*, I, p. 246 (London, 1839).

the account of the martyrdom as given by the Malabar tradition, according to which he was assassinated in a popular riot promoted by Brahmans¹. This tradition seems much more reliable, especially because it agrees with an old Syriac MS. which also states that some Brahmans killed him².

As to how the Martyrdom was consummated, both *The Acts* and the Malabar tradition testify that the Apostle was transfixed by a lance (though *The Acts* mention four lances). The Nestorian³ and Monophysite⁴ liturgies also speak of one lance, as well as Assemani.⁵

The day of the martyrdom has in the west been supposed to be the 21st of December; but all the churches of the East, together with that of Malabar, celebrate the martyrdom on the 3rd of July. This date seems more probable. Some have said this was the date of the translation of the body; but the liturgical feast of the 3rd of July is immemorably called among the Syrian Christians of Malabar *Duharana*, which never means "translation", but "commemoration"⁶.

In this Office, on the sixth day after the feast of the Apostle, the Syrian priests say that "he was a very old man" at the time of his martyrdom⁷. We cannot, it is true, accept the dates given by the Malabar tradition for the arrival and the death of the Apostle, for the simple reason that such dates do not come traditionally from the days when those

¹ Rocea, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

² Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, p. 152.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 24, 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, IV, p. 33.

⁶ Bernard, *A Brief Sketch of the History of the St. Thomas Christians* pp. 2-3 (Trichinopoly, 1924).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

events took place. The Christian era was not employed till about the year 525 A. D., and this could not have been known in Malabar till much later, perhaps till the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. In any case, a calculation would then have been required, and oral tradition does not make calculations. Besides dates transmitted by such tradition are never considered reliable.

Yet the liturgical statement about the age of the Apostle seems most trustworthy. We have been following the steps of the Apostle since we met him at Alexandria, possibly in the year 48 A. D. Supposing that he was about 29 or 30 at the time of the death of our Saviour, and making the necessary correction in the calculation of the Christian era¹, he would then be 48 or 49. When he left the Gûdnaphar kingdom about twenty years later, he would be about 68 or 69. His labours in Malabar would require at least five or six years more. Hence we may well suppose that he was between 70 and 80 at the time of his glorious end.

CONCLUSION

The history of the missions of the two Apostles of Jesus Christ in India shows that towards the close of the first century, c. 80 A. D., there were four bishoprics in India. The oldest was probably at Tarsus; the bishopric of Kalyan was founded very likely shortly after and was the oldest episcopal see established in South India. Yet the most glorious of these missions is undoubtedly the third, the mission of Malabar, the results of which have never died out. The traditional account of St. Thomas's mission in that part of the country is of extraordinary interest owing to the memory of the rites used by the Apostle for

¹ The monk Dionysius Exiguus when calculating the date of the birth of Our Lord, committed a mistake of at least four years in excess. Thus Jesus Christ was born four years before the Christian era.

the ordination of Bishops, which are in substantial agreement with the ritual followed in the west during the Apostolic Age.

Rome is rightly proud of having heard the preaching of the two Apostles of Christ, Peter and Paul, and of having witnessed their testimony to Christ and his doctrine by the shedding of their blood. The same glory has befallen India. Christianity is in India as old as in the West, and the sowers of the seed of the Gospel were two Apostles of Christ, Thomas and Bartholomew, who did fertilise that seed with their generous blood.

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