

ON THE CROSSROADS: PIETIST, ORTHODOX AND ENLIGHTENED VIEWS ON MISSION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Hanco Jürgens

Approaching the Enlightenment

When Immanuel Kant published his 1784 article on the question 'What is Enlightenment?', he could not have foreseen that his answer, more than two centuries after, would become the easiest opt-out for historians who want to define this concept and do not know how. Indeed, whatever the Enlightenment is or has been, we know for sure that Kant's answer on the question was: "Enlightenment is mankind's exit from its self-incurred immaturity."¹ This paper provides a contribution to the continuing discussion on the concept of the Enlightenment, seen from a unexpected angle: the accounts of German missionaries who went to South India to Christianise the Indian people. Traditionally, religion and the project of Enlightenment were seen as contradictory phenomena.² Recent research, however, makes clear how religion and Enlightenment were inextricably connected.

However, the study of Enlightenment is embedded in a strong scholarly tradition; the concept itself has different meanings and is appropriated in different ways, often even to explain mutually contradictory trends.³ In the 1970s historians still regarded the French avant-garde of the eighteenth century – *le siècle des Lumières* – as the

¹ Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" in *Berlinische Monatsschrift* Vol. 4, Berlin: J. E. Biester and F. Gedike, 1784, p. 481.

² The Dutch branch of ISECS, the "Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw", held a conference about Religion and Enlightenment, published as a special issue: Ernestine van der Wall and others, "Religie en Verlichting: harmonie of conflict?" *De Achttiende Eeuw, Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw*, Vol. 32, Amsterdam: APA-Holland Universiteits Pers, 2000.

³ In general: James Schmidt, ed., *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, and for the missionary context, Brian Stanley, "Christian Missions and the

model for European Enlightenment. Since then, enlightenment research has disseminated in various national contexts, and in moderate and radical variants.⁴ Until today, the different approaches to the concept of Enlightenment have too often been the result of the various fields of expertise of the specific scholars and of the various predilections of the specialists, columnists and leaders of opinion.

To clear up these contradictions, I distinguish four different approaches to the concept.⁵ Often Enlightenment is considered as a state of mind, as the relief of a personal inner struggle, as the dawn over the darkness for a human being. This concept of Enlightenment is interpreted as an ongoing process of secularisation of introspection, starting with Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* and leading to Rousseau's *Confessions*. While this form of personal Enlightenment is associated with seventeenth and eighteenth century thought, the roots of it could be found both in classical antiquity and in a long-standing Christian tradition. The device 'Know thyself', inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi, was – and is – the motto of Freemason's lodges, which functioned as disseminators of enlightened ideas. The phrase has been attributed to ancient Greek philosophers as well, like Thales of Milete, Socrates, and Pythagoras. In the Bible, the quest for personal Enlightenment is symbolised by the life of the blind Tobit, who was cured by the ointment made of the gall of a fish put on his eyes, so he could see. The quest for introspection, for self-awareness, fulfilment and realisation, is often found in Pietist autobiographies as well: the redemption of the soul, portrayed as a personal life struggle which, after a growing awareness of sinfulness, passes into a 'rebirth'.⁶ Eighteenth century enlightened thought inherited both from classical and Pietist traditions.

Enlightenment: A Re-evaluation", in Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, Cambridge, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001, esp. p.6.

⁴ Roy S. Porter and Mikulás Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Siegfried Jüttner and Jochen Schlobach, ed., *Europäische Aufklärung(en): Einheit und nationale Vielfalt*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1992.

⁵ For further details, see Hanco Jürgens, "Welke Verlichting? Tijdaanduidingen en plaatsbepalingen van een begrip", *De Achttiende Eeuw*, Vol. 35, Hilversum: Verloren, 2003, pp. 28-53.

⁶ Anne Lagny, "Francke, Madame Guyon, Pascal: drei Arten der *écriture du moi*", in Hartmut Lehmann, Hans-Jürgen Schrader and Heinz Schilling, eds., *Jansenismus, Quietismus, Pietismus*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002, pp.119-135.

A second approach considers Enlightenment as part of a dichotomy: light versus darkness,⁷ thought versus feelings and intuition, reason versus imagination, and the natural versus the super-natural. These dichotomies are embodied, on the one hand, in the divide of Enlightenment versus Romanticism⁸ and, on the other, of Enlightenment versus Counter-Enlightenment.⁹ The German missionaries who went to India also conceptualised this dichotomy; "This land is in darkness,"¹⁰ is how they frequently concluded reports on life in India. For them, it did not mean that Europeans on the other hand were bathing in light. One questions whether any human being was able to live a life according to the high standards of Pietism. Their dichotomic thinking was not divided along geographical but along theological lines: between the children of God and the children of the earth, between the tiny, but righteous minority and the sinful vast majority, wherever they lived, wherever they came from. Pietists hoped that all people would be 'enlightened', meaning, touched by the light of God.

A third approach considers Enlightenment as a step forward in history, often as the beginning of the Project of Modernity. In this way, the concept is comparable with powerful metaphors like Max Weber's *Disenchantment*, Herbert Butterfield's *Scientific revolution* and E.J. Dijksterhuis' *Mechanisation of the world picture*. Often, underneath these metaphors lies a progressive world view, which could easily lead to a Whig-interpretation of history. In his seminal work of great achievement, *Radical Enlightenment*, with its pregnant subtitle, *Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, the British historian Jonathan Israel describes the radical Enlightenment as a single highly integrated intellectual and cultural movement, which "effectively demolished

⁷ Rolf Reichardt, "Light Against Darkness: The Visual Representations of a Central Enlightenment Concept", *Representations*, 61, Berkeley: University of California Press, winter 1998, pp. 95-148.

⁸ Mario Praz, *La Carne, La Morte e il Diavolo nella Letteratura Romantica*, Florence: Sansoni 1988, Introduction; H.J.C. Grierson, "Classical and Romantic: A Point of View", *The Background of English Literature and other collected Essays & Addresses*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1925, pp. 256-290, especially pp. 287-288.

⁹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Proper Study of Mankind*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1997, Jochen Schmidt, (red.), *Aufklärung und Gegenklärung in der europäischen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989, Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment, The French counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

¹⁰ For example: Der Königlich-Dänischen Missionarien aus Ost-Indien eingesandter ausführlichen Berichten (Hallesche Berichte hereafter HB) 8. Continuation, p. 377.

all legitimisation of monarchy, aristocracy, woman's subordination to man, ecclesiastical authority, and slavery, replacing these with the principle of universality, equality, and democracy."¹¹ One may ask if Israel does overstate the importance of the radicals in the period of the Enlightenment. By assuming that the radical Enlightenment decisively paved the way for secularisation and rationalisation, and in this way influenced not only wider history, but arguably, the entire world, Israel overestimates European cultural, economic and military strength. Of course, his statement covers a larger period, when Europeans mastered large parts of the non-European continents. In the eighteenth century, however, large parts of the world remained unknown. In India of the 1750s for example, Europeans were not at all free to travel throughout the sub-continent, since the many indigenous sovereigns controlled almost the whole interior. There was no indication of the coming 'regime changes' in favour of the British. The sphere of European activities was limited to the small colonial surroundings in and around the Portuguese, Dutch, British, French and Danish trading settlements along the coastline. European diplomatic delegations travelled inland to pay their annual tribute to the Indian sovereigns, but these journeys were strictly ceremonial; there was certainly no time left for tourist attractions. The Danish settlers of Tranquebar used to offer their presents to the Rajas of Tanjavur during public festivals, particularly Dasara. They would make an entry into the palace, and lay down the tribute at the Raja's feet. The Raja himself was immensely satisfied by this show of respect.¹² In 1753, the missionary Johann Christian Wiedebrock took part in a delegation of the Danish Captain G. Sivers, which comprised two Naval lieutenants, a secretary, a surgeon, sixty Danish militia and 600 to 700 Tamils, among them many porters and palankeen carriers. In his diary, Wiedebrock complained about his lack of freedom to do any missionary work. He had to move on in his palankeen, as part of the solemn column.¹³ Even later, in the second half of the eighteenth century, when by and large the British expansion in India had taken shape, many parts of the country remained unknown. When in 1778 the British General Thomas Goddard marched with his corps from Calcutta to Bombay, he reported his degrees of longitude to Governor-General Warren Hastings as if he was

¹¹ Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. VI.

¹² Elisabeth Strandberg, *The Modi Documents from Tanjore in Danish collections*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983, pp. 20-21.

¹³ HB VII, pp. 1195-1208.

in the middle of the ocean. In the neighbourhood of Kalpi, he arrived in a village without water, which cost the lives of 400 men, suffering from heat and thirst.¹⁴ Given the unacquaintedness of Europeans with the Indian interior, and surely also of Indians with Europe, the Western influence in Asia could easily be overstated.

The fourth approach considers Enlightenment in a historicised, contextualised, and decentralised manner, as an epoch. I do agree with Israel that we should study the Enlightenment as a phenomenon which crossed many borders, that we should emancipate ourselves "from the deadly compulsion to squeeze the Enlightenment, radical and mainstream, into the constricting strait-jacket of 'national history'," ¹⁵ nevertheless it still remains quite a task to understand local contexts, to reconstruct the values, aims and norms of particular groups of people, to understand people's sorrows, their language, conventions, convictions and beliefs. It is appreciable to study these as limited phenomena, bounded in time and space and culture. Therefore, one should not single out social, economic, cultural, literary, linguistic, missionary, church or colonial history. Enlightenment studies traditionally owe a lot to the history of ideas, to social history and, after the linguistic turn, also to the history of representation and discourse.¹⁶ The time has come to cooperate, to see how one could benefit from a variety of approaches and to include contradictory developments to redefine a new integrated picture of what one nowadays calls the Enlightenment.

German Enlightenment critique was not, in the first place, directed against Christianity, but against clerical epistemology, based on dogmas and formularies, instead of religious intuition.¹⁷ It was directed against the current *philosophia aristotelia-scholastica*, which functioned as the metaphysical,

¹⁴ Neuere Geschichte der Evangelischen Missions-Anstalten zu Bekehrung der Heiden in Ostindien (Neue Hallesche Berichte hereafter NHB) part 3, and *The Origin and Authentic Narrative of the Present Maratta War, and also, the late Rohilla War, in 1773 and 1774*, London: J. Almon and J. Debrett, 1781.

¹⁵ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. VII.

¹⁶ See Michael Schaich, "A War of Words? Old and new Perspectives on the Enlightenment", *German Historical Institute London, Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 1, London: GHI, May 2002, 29-56.

¹⁷ It may be considered 'curious' that the longstanding European tradition of anti-clericalism is interpreted so differently in different periods: Peter Dykema and Heiko Oberman, eds., *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Leiden: Brill, 1993, S.J. Barnett, *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests, the Origins of Enlightenment Anticlericalism*, Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999.

logical and scientific underpinning of the prevailing Christian churches. Eighteenth century debates in Germany were not about Christianisation versus secularisation, but about the foundations of knowledge: a controversial debate between those who legitimated their knowledge solely through the *Word* of God, the Bible, and those who legitimated their knowledge through a form of 'natural religion', based on the *Works* of God, on Creation. This seed of dissent stood at the basis of the conflict between the Halle philosopher Christian Wolff and his Pietist antagonist, the theologian Joachim Lange. In his 1721 controversial lecture on the practical philosophy of the Chinese, Wolff implicitly admitted that it was surely possible to coexist in a virtuous society without having any knowledge of the Supreme Being. He claimed that the philosophy of the Chinese was based on nature. While they generally did not have knowledge of the Bible, he stated that their basic principles of wisdom were comparable with his own Christian views.¹⁸ For the Pietists, this was a bridge too far. They could and would not accept Wolff's premise that reason and philosophy could function well as an autarkic rationality apart from Christian theology.¹⁹ Instead, following Colossians 2, 8, they cautioned against philosophy which derived from human traditions and the principles of the sinful world, rather than Christ. The first German Pietist missionary in Southern India, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, wrote how he, in his youth, was offered ample opportunity to learn the true ethics and physics from the Bible, rather than from Seneca or Aristotle. In this, Ziegenbalg followed the line of Francke and Lange. Yet in India, after translating the old Tamil moral texts of Auvaiyar, he concluded that in their lives, the 'heathen' disgraced most Christians. Indeed, he stated that the rules of the 'heathen', written down in moral texts, were inferred just from nature, and therefore lacked the inner Christian conversion of the Old and New Testament. But Auvaiyar's verses show Christians how the Indian people had progressed in their moral thinking by virtue of the natural light.²⁰ Enlightenment could be measured by the value attached to this natural light - *lumen naturale*

¹⁸ Christian Wolff and Michael Albrecht, eds., *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica, Rede über die praktische Philosophie der Chinesen*, Hamburg: Meiner, 1985, pp. 27-37, see also Wencho Li, "Zur Frage der natürlichen Theologie – Leibniz und Christian Wolff", in ibid., on Hans Poser (red.), *Das neueste über China: G. W. Leibnizens 'Novissima Sinica' von 1697: internationales Symposium, Berlin 4. bis 7. Oktober 1997*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000, pp. 320-331.

¹⁹ Walter Sparr, "Philosophie," in Hartmut Lehmann, ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus*, Vol. 4, *Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004, pp. 227-263, esp. p. 249.

²⁰ Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, B. Ziegenbalg's kleinere Schriften, W. Caland, ed., *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam. Afdeling*

- as an autonomous force. The Halle missionaries were sceptical, as could be concluded by the letter which accompanied their survey of the "Iadsur-Wedam" (Yajur-Veda). The missionary-authors of this letter stated "that by reading of the Veda also unschooled would infer the insufficiency of natural religion, and the blindness with which mankind is encompassed in matters divine, when one does not consider the Sun in the sun, or does not see in God's light the light."²¹

Kant's essay on the question of Enlightenment stood at the end of a long-standing controversy, raised earlier by Leibniz and Wolff. His answer to the question as to what the Enlightenment was, has a double meaning. Of course, his essay was meant as an appeal to the King of Prussia, but his main point was not political, but concerned religion: the emergence of humankind from a (former) relation with an arbitrary God who rewards and punishes even though His will is unknowable, towards a reflective relation, in which God is the Good Shepherd, and man takes the main responsibility for his own deeds, and endeavours to live according to natural law. Kant's legacy did not only lie in his well known epistemology and ethics, but also in his redefinition of the relation between God and humankind, not defined by clerical dogmas but mainly through natural religion.²² The rise of the German interest in other disciplines in the second half of the eighteenth century, such as history, anthropology, natural history and the so-called cameralistic sciences, must, in my view, be explained by the outcome of this controversy.

In this article, I will demonstrate how the changed presupposed relation between God and humankind influenced, strengthened and recreated eighteenth-century thought. In section two I will show why and how mission was at stake in the combat between orthodox Lutherans and Pietists. In section three I will discuss the many practical hindrances the missionaries had to overcome to convert the Indian people. Without these contexts, it is difficult to understand the position of the periodical in early modern Germany, which will be discussed in section four. Section five focuses on the way Hinduism is described in the *Hallesche Berichte*. Whereas diaries, letters and compositions published in the *Hallesche*

Letterkunde. Nieuwe reeks, Vol. 29, No. 2, Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1930, pp. 53 and 71.

²¹ HB 4 (1742), p.1184.

²² See Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1793, and also, Immanuel Kant, *Der Streit der Facultäten in drey Abschnitten*, Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1798, Vorrede.

Berichte mostly had the character of eyewitness reports, the focus of the missionary-authors was not, in the first place, on Hindu-texts, but mainly on the visual Hindu-world: rituals, shrines and temples. I will analyse how the missionaries, in their diaries and letters, found similarities and differences in their descriptions of Indian temples and pagodas. In the 1780s, the more enlightened view of India held sway in the periodical. I will give four clues to the change of perspective of the missionaries in India. These clues provide answers to the question how the enlightened view could have found its way among Europeans in India.

Missionary Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment

Not only the radical Enlightenment emerged from a culture of harsh theologico-philosophical polemics, of pamphleteering and of criminalizing 'heterodox' ideas. German Pietists and Orthodox Lutherans, who may be considered as radicals as well, were polemical in their ways of communication.²³ Also Mission was at stake in the ongoing pamphlet wars.²⁴ Mission was not taken for granted at all in early modern Protestant Germany, since the prevailing Lutheran Orthodox Church strongly opposed it. The Orthodox officially rejected early initiatives such as the founding of a Jesus-Loving Society for the advancement of mission among both Christians and 'heathen' by Justinian Ernst baron Von Welz in 1663.²⁵ Not that the Orthodox were against any form of Christianisation, on the contrary; but in the first place, they considered missions not as the task of mankind – real Christianisation lay in God's Hands. When the Halle Pietists finally realised mission in India, there was, outside Prussia, opposition again from representatives of the Orthodox Church, for example, from Johann Georg Neumann, who in 1708 defended his *Dissertatio de Pseudapostolis* at the Saxony University of Wittenberg, centre of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Neumann warned against false prophets, who could do much harm to the Lutheran Church.²⁶

²³ Martin Gierl, *Pietismus und Aufklärung: theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997.

²⁴ For a list of both defamatory and glorifying pamphlets, see J. Ferd. Fenger, *Geschichte der Trankebarschen Mission, nach den Quellen bearbeitet*, Grimma: Gebhart, 1845, p.98.

²⁵ Werner Raupp, "Justinian Ernst baron von Welz", in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, <http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/w/welz.shtml>; and Werner Raupp, ed., *Mission in Quellentexten: Geschichte der Deutschen evangelischen Mission von der Reformation bis zur Weltmissionskonferenz Edinburgh 1910* Erlangen: Verlag der Evang.-Luth. Mission, 1990, pp. 82-92; see also pp. 13-20 and 64-70.

²⁶ HB 1, pp.62-64.

Before explaining the position of the Pietist, I will try to find an explanation for the near absence of structural and official missionary initiatives in Early Modern Protestant countries. According to the Dutch social and religious historian Peter van Rooden, missions were not an essential part of the early modern Protestant state ideology; they were not of importance for its "religious regime."²⁷ Van Rooden claims that the organisation of the Protestant churches was too weak to persuade the state to support missions. Only hierarchic organisations could initiate mission, such as the Jesuit Order, which was strong enough to stand aloof from the state. However, Van Rooden does not mention the missionary initiative of the Halle Pietists, who were closely related to the Prussian state,²⁸ and therefore could be cited in refutation of his theory. Not only Van Rooden, but many other scholars ignore the fierce theological disputes for or against mission in the Early Modern period.²⁹ The question whether the Orthodox felt the need to do any structural missionary work outside their own country is usually not asked. To answer this question, it is necessary to fall back on Early Modern Bible exegesis. The Orthodox vocation generally was one of *inner* mission, to bring Christ among the Christians. It was considered the task of the sovereign to make this inner mission possible in his country. Orthodox Lutherans assumed that when Jesus advised his apostles to spread the Word of God and teach all nations, this appeal was meant for the Apostles alone, and was definitely not transferable to others. Only the Apostles could strengthen their message by curing the sick and by performing miracles. An even more important argument for the lack of longing for a structural form of *outward* mission in Protestant Germany was that Jesus instructed his Apostles *not* to turn to the land of the gentiles, but to concentrate on the lost sheep of the people of Israel (Matthew 10: 5-6). This instruction was transformed, and applied to the situation in Germany. The poet Erdmann Neumeister wrote in

²⁷ Peter van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes: over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland 1570-1990*, Amsterdam: Bakker, 1996.

²⁸ Thomas Müller-Bahlke, ed., *Gott zur Ehr und zu des Landes Besten, Die Franckeschen Stiftungen und Preußen, Aspekte einer alten Allianz*, Halle (Saale): Verl. der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2001.

²⁹ Confessional historians of mission also ignore the issue, as for example Andrew F. Walls, "The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context", in Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001, p.24, and G.J. Schutte, ed., *Het Indisch Sion, De gereformeerde kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2002.

1722: "In the past they said: go, and teach all nations. Nowadays it is: stay, there where God wants you."³⁰ Of course, the Orthodox exegesis could be explained as a derivative of Reformation policy or as a reaction to the institutions of the Catholic Church, but the exegetic arguments were considered valid for many during the long eighteenth century, also when there was no strong political need for inner mission anymore. As a field of study the way in which theological debates were formative for social praxis, and vice versa, is still open ground.³¹ New religious currents were often legitimated with new exegesis, which as a discipline could – and still can be – seen as a mirror of European culture. Its discussions had consequences for man's world views.

Contrary to the Orthodox, the Pietists considered mission as part of their vitalistic ideology. In principle, their zealous life was arranged to bring about as much as possible for the (Christian) benefit of the people. They established almshouses and orphanages, publishing houses, an institute for the dissemination of the (message of the) Bible, and also, mission among Jews³² and gentiles.³³ The orphanage in Halle was set up like a 'plant garden' from which the Word of God, it was hoped, would disseminate quickly, like a small grain of mustard, throughout the city, the country, and the whole world. The first aim was a revival of devotion and practical Christianity. The Pietist movement was expected to rise from below. As Christ's return to Earth, while not imminent, was expected soon, it was necessary to Christianise as many people as possible before – sooner or later – the final judgment took place. Mission surely also had an apologetic value: A worldwide web of like-minded pious people strengthened the position at home.

³⁰ Quoted in Raupp, ed., *Mission in Quellentexten*, p. 189.

³¹ See Hartmut Lehmann, *Protestantische Weltansichten; Transformationen seit dem 17. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998.

³² Christopher M. Clark, *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728-1941*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

³³ The first years of the mission are particularly well documented; attention on the second half of the eighteenth century is of more recent date. Still worthwhile is the general introduction to the Halle mission: Johannes Ferdinand Fenger, *Geschichte der Trankebarschen Mission*, Grimma: Gebhardt, 1845 (also available in English). Contemporary studies are Anders Nørgaard, *Mission und Obrigkeit, Die Dänisch-hallesche Mission in Tranquebar 1706-1845*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1988; Heike Liebau, *Die Quellen der Dänisch-Halleschen Mission in Tranquebar*

How did the Pietists, in contrast to the Orthodox, explain the necessity of mission? Again, exegesis provided the clue. For the Pietists, Jesus' last words to the Apostles were not only to be interpreted as an appeal to the apostles, but also to themselves. One of the most important fathers of Pietism, Jakob Spener, advocated the idea of universal priesthood. He refuted the argumentation of the Orthodox against mission, particularly by neutralizing the biblical distinction between Jews and gentiles, so that the missionaries could now afford "to turn to the land of the gentiles."³⁴ Curiously, a vision of the Apostle Peter supplied Spener with his argument: Peter fell into a trance and saw in his dream a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and within it all sorts of four-footed animals, reptiles and birds. A voice told him to kill the animals and eat them, but he rejected this since he never ate anything impure or unclean. After the voice had told him three times not to call anything unclean that God had cleansed himself, the sheet was taken back to heaven. Peter understood the meaning of this vision soon after he was brought to the Roman centurion Cornelius: God shows no favouritism but accepts men from every nation (Acts 10: 34). He immediately baptised the 'heathen' Cornelius and his guards. For the Pietists the explanation of this vision was important enough to justify their missionary initiative: after the conversion of Cornelius, Jesus' appeal to preach the Word of God to all creatures was meant not only for Jews, but also for gentiles.³⁵

The Pietists believed in the exclusive importance of the revelation, first given to Adam, later put into words by Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, the missionaries were expected to walk in the footsteps of those whom they considered as their predecessors, the disciples of Jesus. The letters of Paul, the 'Apostle of the gentiles', served as guidelines. The missionaries were expected to walk through the countryside, *per pedes apostolorum*,

in deutschen Archiven: ihre Bedeutung für die Indienforschung, Vol. 2, Arbeitshefte Forschungsschwerpunkt moderner Orient, Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1993; Daniel Jeyaraj, *Inkulturation in Tranquebar: der Beitrag der frühen dänisch-halleschen Mission zum Werden einer indisch-einheimischen Kirche (1706-1730)*, Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1996; Michael Bergunder, ed., *Missionsberichte aus Indien im 18. Jahrhundert. Ihre Bedeutung für die europäische Geistesgeschichte und ihr wissenschaftlicher Quellenwert für die Indienkunde*, Vol. 1, Neue Hallesche Berichte, Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 1999.

³⁴ Philipp Jakob Spener, *Theologische Bedencken und andere briefliche Antworten*, in Erich Beyreuther, ed., *Philipp Jakob Spener Schriften XI.1*, Hildesheim: Olms, 1999, pp. 5-8.

³⁵ In 1776 this argument was used in the *Hallesche Berichte* as an apology for mission in India, with a cross-reference to Spener's work, NHB 1, p. XIII.

while spreading the Word of the Gospel among the Indian people. This was called “the diligent outgoing” among the gentiles. In their missionary work, the missionaries were to display diligence, devotion and a living, practical Christianity, subordinating themselves to become instruments of God’s will. The experience of a personal revelation, a rebirth, ensured a strong belief in God at heart. It was this spark, a sudden divine inspiration, which they hoped to pass on to the Indian people. The attitude of the missionaries in India should be determined not by a controversial spirit but by the charitable desire to win the souls of the Indian people. According to their methods of religious instruction, the *methodus proponendi et colloquendi*, of preaching and of catechesis – also called homiletics, an important subdiscipline of rhetoric³⁶ – it was expected of the missionaries not to argue about the right or wrong of their religion, not to enter an intellectual dispute, but to win souls by the heart, to get down directly to the very root, to bring back any discussion with the indigenous people to the causes of ‘rack and ruin’, to the sinfulness of their lives, to their ‘heathen blindness’, after which a disclosure of God’s truth would take place as a matter of course. In theory, the path of the missionaries unfolded itself.

Cultural Differences

In practice, it was almost impossible for the missionaries to fulfil their duties on the spot in the way expected. In India, they had to face many difficulties. Firstly, they could not walk freely through the country as was expected by their German patrons. The area where they met the Indian people (the so-called “contact zone”³⁷), was, in the 1750s, restricted to the Danish, British and Dutch factories along the South Indian Coromandel Coast. The Indian Rajas, Nawabs and Nizams did not tolerate any activities of the Protestant missionaries in their territories. Secondly, the missionaries had a hard time catching the ear of the Indian people for their message. Most inhabitants had difficulties in understanding the Good News, and if they did, they often had problems holding onto the promise of being faithful to one God. In line with South Indian Bhakti devotion, it was not considered a problem to accept the Christian God, next to the Hindu gods, but it was considered

³⁶ Joachim Dyck und Jutta Sandstede, *Quellenbibliographie zur Rhetorik, Homiletik und Epistolographie des 18. Jahrhunderts im deutschsprachigen Raum I-III*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996.

³⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes, Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992.

a big problem to exclusively obey the one and only Christian God.³⁸ The missionaries faced particular difficulties in bringing their message to representatives of higher circles in Indian society, since they had strict rules of purity. The risk of being outcast remained extremely high; the families of the converts did not usually accept their conversion.

To succeed, the missionaries had to study thoroughly the customs and habits of the Indian people. The first missionary in Tranquebar, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg in particular, worked hard not only to master Tamil, but also to understand Hinduism. Although his two studies on Hinduism were not published during his lifetime, they are today highly valued. Also, together with a colleague, he set up a correspondence with Brahmins and Saivites about the Indian customs, as the apostle Paul did with the Romans and other nations.³⁹ And they translated into Tamil and Telugu Christian booklets containing parts of the Gospels and work such as Johannes Arndt’s edifying *Small Paradise Garden*, which could be handed out in the streets.⁴⁰

The settlement of the Pietist missionaries in their missionary posts brought awareness of the many cultural differences to be overcome. In principle, the Pietist missionaries were not very willing to accommodate Indian customs, to incorporate Indian rituals in their own religious practice, as the famous Jesuit missionary Roberto Nobili did. As much as possible, Protestant missionaries kept up their own habits. The missionaries must have known that their dressing in the colour of sorrow (black) and their powdered wig, made of the hair of others, would lead to misconceptions in the Indian people. But they seemed to stick to this tradition. Before he left Halle, the missionary Christian Schwartz even bought two new wigs, the last one on credit for four rix-dollars, which he paid back when he was in India.⁴¹ In the 1718 *Lettres Édifiantes*, the Jesuit Father Le Caron was disturbed by the conduct of the first Pietist

³⁸ See the chapter on Christian saints and gurus in the poligar country, in Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 379-419.

³⁹ Jeyaraj, *Inkulturation in Tranquebar*, and Will Sweetman, “The prehistory of Orientalism: colonialism and the textual basis for Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg’s account of Hinduism”, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2004, pp. 12-38.

⁴⁰ Johann Arndt, *Paradies Gärtlein, voller christlicher Tugenden*, Magdeburg: Schmidt, 1612.

⁴¹ Jeyaraj, *Inkulturation in Tranquebar*, p. 305, W. Germann, *Missionar Christian Friedrich Schwartz, Sein Leben und Wirken aus Briefen des Halleschen Missionsarchivs*, Erlangen: Deichert, 1870, p. 26.

missionary, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, who disregarded Indian custom when he drank wine while preaching in the field:

Perhaps he did not know how the Indian people shun wine and all drinks that heat the head. Hence, in the middle of his sermon, when he was parched with thirst, he took a small bottle of wine out of his bag, emptied it halfway, and gave the rest of it to his companions. The Brahmans were infuriated by his act, which offended one of their customs. They were disgruntled, left him in the lurch, and brought him into such a bad reputation, that he felt necessary to return, with wife and child, to his plant school.⁴²

Of course, the statement of the Catholic Le Caron was partial, but he raised a touchy point. One of the most important Christian 'rites', the Holy Communion, remained difficult to understand for Hindus: drinking wine was already considered a sin, but presenting the wine as the blood of Christ was surely against Hindu rules of cleanliness. The missionaries needed to be very aware of caste customs. It was less difficult for the missionaries to approach the untouchables, but when these people were converted, it usually meant that members of higher castes stayed away. It remained problematic to hold services for "Parreier" (untouchables) and "Suttirer" (Sudras) in one room. From 1727 onwards, services were held in separate rooms, as the floor plan of the new Bethlehem Church outside Tranquebar indicated. The missionaries used two different chalices for the Holy Communion, a practice that ended in 1778 when the Directors of the Halle orphanage got notice of it.⁴³ To manage these problems, the missionaries set up schools and provided jobs for the inhabitants of the mission post, so they could monitor them closely. Also in their schools and at their workrooms they had to operate carefully and be alert to cultural differences, differences that must have affected their ideas on humankind. In this sense, mission, which originally was initiated with a purpose to strengthen the position of Pietists, was also a potential weakness for those who held on to the sound doctrines of Pietism. The many difficulties which the missionaries had to overcome

⁴² Père le Caron, "Brief, Patris le Caron, Der Gesellschaft Jesu Missionarii, Geschrieben zu Pondichery, den 15. Octobris 1718", in Joseph Stöcklein, *Allerhand so lehr- als geist-reiche Brief, Schriften und Reis-Beschreibungen, welche von denen Missionariis der Gesellschaft Jesu aus beyden Indien, und andern ueber Meer gelegenen Laendern in Europa angelangt seynd: jetzt zum erstenmal theils aus handschriftlichen Urkunden, theils aus denen franzoesischen Lettres edifiantes verteutscht und zusammen getragen* 7, No. 181, Augsburg: Veith, 1726, p. 110.

⁴³ Germann, *Missionar Christian Friedrich Schwartz*, p. 265.

must have influenced Pietist thought. Critics questioned whether it made sense for the missionaries to go out into the streets so often to preach the works of Providence while the people of India were not acquainted with European culture, nor with the geography of the Christian world.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a change of missionary policy took place. The more Enlightened missionaries were very aware of the practical obstacles they had to overcome. Enforced by the British colonial expansion in the second half of the century, they wanted to uplift and conciliate the Indian people through education, through a more active social policy, and by involving the Indian people in their scholarly research. It was not necessarily sparks which pass from heart to heart, but most significantly education, science, and civilisation, that could bring about Christianity in India. The missionaries Christian Samuel John (1747-1813) and Johann Peter Rottler (1749-1836) were actively involved in collecting data, organizing the mass of information, and producing a new coherent body of knowledge in the style of Linnaeus and Buffon. Their scholarly activities appealed to a wide audience, also outside the missionary world. In their missionary work too they must have been more successful than is often suggested. The total number of baptised Lutherans in India grew exponentially from circa 13,197 in 1767 to 34,970 in 1806.⁴⁴ These figures do not at all support the idea of a crisis at the turn of the century, as suggested by many authors.⁴⁵

However, as a reaction to the French Revolution, the wind changed again. As a precursor to an early nineteenth-century revival of Pietism, missionaries were expected to focus again on mission, and mission alone. Soon after, the enlightened missionaries John and Rottler were forgotten. They were regarded as way too secular for the newly awakened Protestants, but for the more secular scholars, who identified themselves with the Enlightenment, they were not secular enough.

⁴⁴ The records are incomplete, so it is difficult to give exact numbers, see Julius Richter, *Indische Missionsgeschichte*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1924, p. 137; Stephen Neill counted even more converts: 36,970, Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India, 1707-1858*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 56.

⁴⁵ Lately by Hermann Wellenreuther, "Pietismus und Mission. Vom 17. bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts", Hartmut Lehmann, ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus*, Vol. 4, p. 171.

Spiritual Lessons in Pietist Texts

Pietists hoped to find more in a book than just some figures; they expected that, while reading, a bit of inspiration would flow into their minds, which could serve as salutary salt. According to the German philosopher-hermit Hans-Georg Gadamer, the Pietists did not consider texts just as historical documents, but as the exemplification of religious devotion. The reading of these texts had a beneficial effect in a spiritual sense. Pietists appropriated these texts; they compared the written experience with experiences in their own lives. They read topical issues, which told something about their own lives and destiny. Dependent on time and space for spiritual motives, one read these texts differently, and applied them to one's own use.⁴⁶ There existed a certain reciprocity between missionary authors and readers of these texts. While reading about the missionaries' experiences, the readers were strengthened in their belief, and prayed for the benefit of the 'heathen'. These prayers would bring the mission itself a step further, and the readers would be rewarded afterwards.⁴⁷ Readers could also donate to the mission, for which they would be mentioned and thanked in the periodical. Often, their small dedications, or devout poems and prayers, were published as well. In the preface to the twenty-first edition Gotthilf August Francke prescribed how one should read the diaries and letters of the missionaries, which appeared in the *Hallesche Berichte*: "All who take a glimpse of these accounts should not read them as just another recent history, a pure curiosity, or a pastime, but should see in them above all the creations of the Lord and the work of His hands."⁴⁸ Illustrative is the given cross-reference to Isaiah 5:12, which could be read as a warning. Also, the information on the Other in the *Hallesche Berichte* should not be read apart from its missionary context. But before understanding the missionary-authors' images of the Other, one should first unravel the authors Selves. While, clearly, the missionaries themselves differed in style and opinion – they were not a uniform body – I will concentrate here on some distinguishing features.

In many aspects, the periodical had an apologetic character. The missionaries themselves seemed to defend their work in the first place towards their patrons in Halle, who were responsible for publishing their work, and surely also towards the Danish Crown, towards the East India

⁴⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965, pp. 290-295, esp. p. 292.

⁴⁷ See for example: HB 2, p. XXIV.

⁴⁸ Gotthilf August Francke, 'Vorrede', 21^e Continuation, HB 2, 1729, p. xxiv.

Companies and to their British patron, the Anglo-Saxon Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. They testified about their doings also to a large readership, and last but not least, to God. The apologetic character of the periodical is discernible in several ways. First, the language of the missionaries was in all aspects marked by their religious background. The idiom of the authors was often driven by the idea of awakening, of a *transgressio ad coelum*. One finds in their language of Canaan⁴⁹ dualities of heaven and earth, life and death, body and soul, health and disease, poor and rich. It is fulfilled by the veiled wish to realise the Kingdom of Heaven on earth: it does not want to be earthly, but it is not heavenly either. One should understand some denominations of the Indian people in the *Hallesche Berichte* only in this way. India was often wishfully called a "vineyard", but also a "desert". The Indians were accused of "heathen blindness" and of having an "earthly sense" ("Irdischer Sinn"). The *pandarams*, pilgrims, mendicants and priests were often called "stomach papists" ("Bauchpaffe"), to indicate that their appetite for food seemed to have been more important than "spiritual food".⁵⁰

Second, the authors often presented their experiences as lessons to be learned. As in many other travel accounts, one often finds topical spiritual lessons in the narrative of the missionary-authors: the traveller faces many difficulties on the way, overcomes them in the end, and returns home safely.⁵¹ The hand of Providence guides him all along his way. In this way, travel was seen as a test of their moral rectitude, as an attempt to find the narrow path that leads to spiritual purification, the gate through which a true Christian life may be attained, "and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). This is the way one can read the diary of Christian Wilhelm Gericke (1742-1803), written during his exceptionally long journey from Europe to Asia, in the course of

⁴⁹ Term coined by Hans-Jürgen Schrader, "Die Sprache Canaan. Pietistische Sonderterminologie und Spezialsemantik als Auftrag der Forschung," in Hartmut Lehmann, ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus*, Vol. 4, pp. 404-427.

⁵⁰ Curiously, these notions matched very well the findings of August Langen, *Der Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954. See also Schrader, "Die Sprache Canaan," p. 407.

⁵¹ Jill Bepler, "The traveller-author and his role in seventeenth-century German travel accounts", in Zweder von Martels, ed., *Travel fact and travel fiction: studies on fiction, literary tradition, scholarly discovery and observation in travel writing*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994, pp. 184-185 and Wolfgang Neuber, "Zur Gattungspoetik des Reiseberichts. Skizze einer historischen Grundlegung im Horizont von Rhetorik und Topik", in Peter J. Brenner, ed., *Der Reisebericht: die Entwicklung einer Gattung in der deutschen Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989, p. 57.

which he endured a great deal of privation.⁵² In the Indian Ocean the ship veered from its course because of stormy weather.⁵³ Near the coast of Madras, in sight of safe haven, a storm crippled the ship, which then drifted rudderless. Only by prayer and with his strong faith in Providence the missionary was able to withstand these hardships - so he wrote.

A laudatory and dismissive review appeared of the travel account, which was published separately as well. The positive review illustrates that knowledge of Biblical narratives is necessary to contextualise the judgments which Protestant missionaries referred to in their diaries. Here, Gericke's book was declared to be, literally, a "message from the Kingdom of God." The impressed reviewer compared the author's tale of his sea voyage, including his courage in facing this grave situation, to the journey of the Apostle Paul, who was shipwrecked on his way to Rome and saved near the shore of Malta.⁵⁴ Like Paul in Rome, Gericke could, after enduring such distress, spread the word of God in India with much greater confidence. Paul's ways served as a directive, as a line of action for Gericke's missionary work. The second review, however, is very critical. According to its likewise anonymous author, the Pietist school was out of date in Germany, but was regenerated half-heartedly in South India by missionaries who only tried to convert Catholic Indians, Jews, and people from the lowest ranks. Opposite to his devastating image of the missionaries' activities, the reviewer extolled the learned Brahmin, who seemed to have had a better idea of God than the Christians, who came to India to convert them: "and in his Vedas, this [the Brahman, HJ] has also created by far more pure, elevated, and dignified concepts of the divinity, so that the humble, childish, unworthy notions, which we bring over from Europe, could

⁵² His diary is published in the *Hallesche Berichte* and also appeared as a separate edition: Christian Wilhem Gericke, *Herrn Missionarii Gerickens merkwürdige Seereise von London nach Ceylon und Cudalur in den Jahren 1766 und 1767*, Halle: Verlag des Waisenhauses, 1773.

⁵³ During bad weather Gericke described heaven as a "black sheet"; later, when the weather was improving, as a "ripping sheet", which must be understood as a cross reference to Peter's vision.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, 'Seereise nach Indien', *Bunzlauische Monatschrift zum Nutzen und Vergnügen*, Bunzlau: Waisenhaus, 1774, Vol. 1, pp. 304-311.

[hardly] please him."⁵⁵ The two reviews of Gericke's book represented the different world-views at the crossroads of the 1770s.

Finally, one could discern spiritual motives in the way the missionary authors portrayed the Other. Indeed, the two studies of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg are highly valued today, but they were not published during his lifetime.⁵⁶ Not only Francke denied the use of introducing Hindu wisdom in Europe; Ziegenbalg himself seemed to have not been in favour of publishing translated Hindu texts: "When the learned in Europe would read it, they will find out a lot of rare and unheard things. I was willing to Germanise it, but simultaneously I doubted if this was wise, whereas for many this would cause a lot of useless speculations, and would keep them off from necessary matters."⁵⁷

Nevertheless, much information on Indian culture came through in the *Hallesche Berichte*, for example, with the translation of correspondence with Brahmins and Saivas about the habits and customs of the Tamil people, known as the *Malabarian Correspondence*.⁵⁸ Also outside the periodical, the knowledge of the missionaries also seeped out through channels other than the periodical. In 1724 the French Huguenot Mathurin Veyssière La Croze wrote a history of India from the arrival of St. Thomas to the settlement of the Pietist missionaries, and made use of Ziegenbalg's unpublished *Genealogy of the Malabarian Gods*.⁵⁹

When Gotthilf Francke, the son of the founder of the Orphanage, took over the general editorship of the *Hallesche Berichte* he was favourably disposed towards paying attention to "side issues", considered peripheral

⁵⁵ *Herrn Missionarii Gerickens merkwürdige Seereise von London nach Ceylon und Cudalur, in den Jahren 1766 und 1767*, in *Auserlesene Bibliothek der neuesten deutschen Litteratur*, Vol. 6, Lemgo: Meyersche Buchhandlung, 1774, pp. 46-50, esp. p. 48.

⁵⁶ W. Germann, preface to his edition of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, *Genealogie der malabarischen Götter*, Madras: Wilhelm Germann, 1867, p. vii; Daniel Jeyaraj, *Bartholomäus Ziegenbalgs Genealogie der malabarischen Götter, Edition der Originalfassung von 1713*, Halle: Franckesche Stiftungen, 2003, p. 316, see also Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India, 1707-1858*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 32-33 and 435.

⁵⁷ HB 3, 752.

⁵⁸ Johann Ernst Gründler and Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, *Die Malabarische Korrespondenz. Tamilische Briefe an deutsche Missionare. Eine Auswahl*, ed. Kurt Liebau, Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1998.

⁵⁹ Sweetman, "The prehistory of Orientalism", pp. 12-38.

matters, which were not directly linked to mission. He hoped that the learned would also read the periodical and would enjoy the curiosities and learn from Tamil and the Portuguese language as it was used in South India, and also from the Tamils' "principiis Physicis, Arithmeticis und Astronomicis."⁶⁰ He hoped that those who would be interested in these curiosities would also indirectly experience the spiritual sense of it, without having searched for it, and he advised those who were not interested in the curious observations to just skip these.⁶¹ Indeed, in the period between 1725 and 1740, relatively much attention was paid to these "side issues".⁶² In the fourth volume of the *Hallesche Berichte* a discussion even appeared on the Vedas: *Main content of the Iadsur-Wedam, one of the four codes of the Brahmins*.⁶³ The maximum number of illustrations, maps of Tranquebar, the mission post, drawings of people and of nature, were published in this period; after 1740 this kind of publication became rare.

Images of Temples and Pagodas

To analyse cultural translations,⁶⁴ it is important to include the modes of transmission: the dissemination of knowledge through unpublished and published texts, the value of this knowledge and the way in which it was received. Therefore, I won't discuss here the body of knowledge which existed among the missionaries in India, but how the German readership in the second half of the eighteenth century got acquainted with their knowledge, while reading the *Hallesche Berichte*. In their descriptions, mainly, the focus of the missionary-authors was not on Hindu texts but on the visual Hindu world of rituals, shrines and temples. On the basis of perceptions of Indian temples and pagodas, I will show how, on the one hand, they widened the gap between

⁶⁰ G.A. Francke, "Vorrede", 24^e Cont. *HB* 2, pp. II.

⁶¹ G.A. Francke, "Vorrede", 25^e Cont., *HB* 3, p. III, *ibid*, 29^e Cont., *HB* 3, p. I, and also A.H. Francke, "Vorrede", 21^e Cont. *HB* 2, p. IV.

⁶² Gotthilf August became editor of the *Hallesche Berichte* in 1725; after his father died in 1727 he took over the direction of the orphanage.

⁶³ Nikolaus Dal, and others, *Haupt-Inhalt des Iadsur-Wedam, eines von den vier Gesetz-Büchern der Brahmaner*, *HB* 4, 1742, pp. 1251-1294, see also pp. 1182-1185; Michael Bergunder, "Die Darstellung des Hinduismus in den Halleschen Berichten", in *ibid*, p. 113. On the linguistic research of Walther and Sartorius, see Mohanavelu, *German Tamilology*, pp. 79-85.

⁶⁴ Term used by Joan-Pau Rubiés, who wrote the impressive *Travel and ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European eyes, 1250-1625*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. XIV.

themselves and the Others, and how, on the other hand, they tried to reduce the differences. Temples and pagodas particularly marked the landscape of South India. In these multi-functional places of worship, people lived, lodged, gathered, prayed, and rested. Also, in some of these, people held court. On first sight, one gets the impression that the missionaries could not find the right words to describe these buildings, simply because it was hardly possible to refer to classical examples in Europe. Often, they hesitated to elaborate on the beauty of these places, and they expressed their disapproval of the splendour, which was used "to dishonour the one and eternal God."⁶⁵ Particularly the large temple complexes such as Chidambaram and Sri Rangam, were described critically as centres of paganism. Often a positive remark was accompanied by a condemnation. In 1755, the missionary Kiernander was positive when he wrote about the exterior of the main temple of Chidambaram, which looked regal to him: "It is true, this building is in itself one of the most marvellous monuments of antiquity, which one hardly finds in Europe." However, he also remarked that the time had come, that God punished the "spiritual prostitution", which happened to take place in these buildings for centuries. Kiernander witnessed how the Brahmins of Chidambaram were insulted easily by the French army, which was stationed on the temple terrain. The French used the untouchables to desecrate the temple campus. They prepared beef for the soldiers inside the enclosure, which was reason enough for annoyance. When the Brahmins of Chidambaram put the slightest obstacle in the way of the French commanders, the untouchables were ordered to parade over the whole terrain, also in those places, which were supposed to be exclusively accessible to Brahmins. When the Brahmins refused to open the temple doors, they were punished lightly. A Brahmin was nudged with a shoe, another one slapped in the face or stroked with a stick. One of the Brahmins was stretched on a frame and lashed because he refused to draw water from a well. However, at the end of his elaboration, the missionary prays, apparently approvingly: "Who does not see here the guiding hand of God. Yes, holy and righteous are you, oh Lord, you are not living in handmade temples, how costly they are. You just watch the poor, and those, with a broken spirit. Jes. 66, 1.2."⁶⁶

The well-informed missionaries even toyed with fantasies of getting rid of the places of worship and of using them for "better" purposes.

⁶⁵ For example, *HB* 7, p. 774.

⁶⁶ *HB* 7, pp. 1708-1752.

In 1757, Kohlhoff expressed the idea of penetrating the holy temple of Sri Rangam *par force*. According to this missionary, the French army, encamped at Sri Rangam as well, could be rewarded handsomely - he knew that the most important statue of the honoured god "Kasturi Rōnga Najager" (Ragunathaswami) was ostentatious; the eyes were made of valuable diamonds. But he also knew the reason why the French army did not commit this act of violence: for "Staatsraison". Since they adhere to their idols, all the "nations" would rise in revolt against the French. In his view it was not easy to get the devil out of the place. When he surveyed the complex, he stated that Satan had his mighty fortresses there, and sighed wistfully: "Oh Lord, save your honour, and let the works of the Devil be destroyed here as well!"⁶⁷ Of course, this could just be a prayer, referring to the day of the Last Judgement, but the vision of destroying the works of the devil could some day become reality. In 1768, the missionaries Hüttemann and Gericke welcomed the Dutch policy in Jaffna forbidding the building of new temples. The order of a learned administrator to tear down a newly-built pagoda particularly met with approval. They wrote in their diary: "Blessed must be a government, which so well used its power to the honour of God."⁶⁸ The history of these sacred places seemed not to be of interest to the missionaries.

The apostolic missionaries expressed their astonishment at the size of the temples, and asked themselves what kind of machinery was used to build them, but they rejected the explanations of the Indian people about their origins. When Gericke encountered the house of a hermit, a "heathen Jeremiah", on a hill, he asked the people there how it could have been possible to build a whole house out of four large stones. In response to their answer - that in past times giants lived there, and these giants could carry the stones from one place to another - he complained: "In my fatherland I often heard talking about giants; now I heard that the Indians do it as well."⁶⁹ According to another legend, a pagoda was built after an unusually large snake was seen on the spot. The missionary-author complained that in India the animals in the field had risen to become divinities, but the people had degenerated: they made themselves less significant than cattle.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ HB 8, pp. 463-464.

⁶⁸ NHB 1, p. 141.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 384.

⁷⁰ HB 8, p. 638.

Usually the missionaries did not enlarge on reliefs and statues, which were abundantly present on the temple campuses. Probably they did not regard it as their task to inform the German readership on this point. An exception, Kiernander praised the symbolic language of the images in the temple at Chidambaram: "one needs a whole book for an extensive portrayal of these images and of their hieroglyphic significance." But his remark was not related to the symbolic language itself. When a missionary did discuss this language, his verdict could be devastating. The missionary Christian Schwartz wrote in a letter how "the most scandalous deeds of their idols are portrayed in sculptures and aggravating paintings, which does sink the poor people fully in their depth of lust. One sees the result of this devilish education too clearly: body and soul will be demolished, and many thousands feel this failure in a vulnerable way."⁷¹ We should see this kind of condemnation in the context of the critical attitude of the Pietists in general, in India as well as in Europe. Their condemnation of Indian religious life might not be so surprising when one realises that they condemned their rivals at home in a comparable way. Also, one should keep in mind the goal of the missionaries who came to India: to bring about a substantial cultural change in society.

In the example of perceptions of Indian temple complexes we have seen how the missionaries distanced themselves from the use to which these buildings were put. In the case of other buildings, however, the missionaries, on the contrary, presented / highlighted only similarities, not the differences. Again, the example of the multi-functional places of worship could explain my point. While travelling, the missionaries often stayed in the many *cittarams*, small places to stay along the road, or in *mandapams*, the forecourts of temples. The German missionaries called these places consequently, "*Ruhehaus*", rest house (in English: choultry). Many of them were found along the pilgrim route to Rameswaram. Often the missionaries reported about the mission talk they had in these houses with other passers-by. But they hardly reported on the religious use of these buildings. On the contrary, they consistently called all *cittarams* and *mandapams* 'rest houses', even when they were situated in the big temple complexes, where one could find, in their words, "hundred-" or "thousand-legged rest houses," a temple hall supported by a hundred or

⁷¹ NHB 1, p. 263, also published as C. Schwartz, "Auszug eines Schreibens des Mißionarii Swaz an einen Freund in London, aus Tiruchinapally vom 28ten Oct. 1768", in *Hannoversches Magazin* 8, Hannover: Schlüter, 26-1-1770, pp. 118-119.

a thousand columns. In 1793, the missionaries Gericke and Pätzold both answered the question of a friend of the mission about what these houses were. Both restricted themselves to external descriptions. Gericke wrote back that many of these houses, particularly those built from hewn stone, had a front roof which rested on pillars. More of them, in many different variations, had wings, and could be seen as three rest houses in one. Near all the rest houses, one would find a well or a pond.⁷² The thing Gericke did not mention was that he was describing a typical three-partitioned South Indian temple. Pätzold did not mention the religious function of these places: "One finds the rest houses often every 2000 steps, they are just destined for travellers, usually built out of stone, many are very spacious, and also have a pretty look. When it becomes too hot, when it rains heavily, when the night comes, or when one wants to change or to sleep, everyone can go in." Pätzold appropriated the rest houses to his own use when he perceived them as "non equipped inns":

The trouble is that one finds nothing in these places, but an open empty building, which is usually filled with many travellers, who are taking rest or stay over for the night. Therefore, every traveller should take with him anything he needs from home. One should keep palankeen carriers and porters, who carry on their heads, backs and shoulders tables, chairs, pans, cups, plates, spoons, knives, bread, butter, beds, wax-candles and candlesticks, meat and all other sorts of food and household goods.⁷³

The reason why the missionaries did not elaborate on the religious purpose of these pagan buildings was probably that they used them themselves to rest in and to stay overnight. It was not in their interest to alert the confirmed 'friends of the mission' in Europe.

Very different were the descriptions of the temples by the enlightened missionaries John and Rottler. They had their reservations as well, but they elaborated on the scenery and discussed much more of what they saw and what they did in and around the sacred places. Rottler did not have any problem in calling a 'rest house' a 'mandapam', and in describing the statues in these mandapams as well. Contrary to some of his predecessors, he expressed the wish to obey the rules in these temples and not go further than was allowed. He described how the Brahmins sat aside and prayed their formulas.⁷⁴ When John visited Chidambaram, he

⁷² NHB 4, p. 843.

⁷³ NHB 4, p. 846.

⁷⁴ NHB 4, p. 1084.

was immediately surrounded by Brahmins who wanted to show him their sites. John was impressed by the beauty of these temples, but the lack of symmetry and the dark and narrow rooms were not to his liking. Like other missionaries, he preserved the European standards of architecture: symmetry and spatiality. Where he saw pillars placed in the form of a *quincunx* (the five on a die), placed in the direction of the avenues, he remarked that the Tamils showed here at least some sense of order, which was elsewhere hardly seen, as one could experience in their streets and gardens.

John and Rottler appropriated the temples and pagodas as part of the Indian cultural heritage. They were both interested in the mythological images on the temples. At the seven pagodas of Mahabalipuram John discovered texts which were unknown to him. With much difficulty, he tried to copy these texts, which even the Brahmins of the temple could not decipher. Two Brahmins offered some explanations to the missionary, but he concluded that they told two different stories, and that they must not have understood it themselves. Rottler attempted to read the subscriptions of the sculptures himself. Both John and Rottler perceived holy places from a novel perspective, viewing temple complexes historically, and taking into account the factor of time. They wrote how many stones lay around, and how many statues were partly finished, or fully decayed. Rottler wrote of the disorderly stone masses at Sri Rangam which seemed to indicate that one of the buildings was not yet finished. But the building could also have suffered from the ravages of time or war, and one does not think of repairing such antiquities. Unlike some of his predecessors, he seemed to regret that.⁷⁵ John introduced a linear and progressive time concept, seen from a European point of view, which had important consequences for the Indian present. While visiting the Adhisapurishvarar temple in Thiruvotriyur, he complained about the abundance of figures of "idols, men, elephants, lions, tigers, apes, peacocks, hawks, snakes, lizards and many other quadruped, representing flying and crawling animals." According to the missionary the eye becomes saturated, and it is difficult to pay attention to one after the other. And when one does that, the works are not commendable anymore. This held for all pagodas: "One sees, since ancient times, that the South Indian people are in their childhood, pleased with child's play and parti-colouredness. Compared to the ancient times, their new works

⁷⁵ NHB 4, p. 892.

of art are coarser than the old ones. This is caused particularly by the decrease of wealth."⁷⁶

This was an important turning point. While in Sri Rangam, Kohlhoff had perceived the very fortresses of Satan, which were to be penetrated by force. John's experience at Thiruvotriyur was not of malign forces; to him the temple complex was reflective rather of an early stage of human development - childhood - and betrayed a lack of taste which could only be prevented by educating, uplifting and civilizing the Indian people. In practice, due to difficult circumstances, the missionary work of Kohlhoff and John was not so divergent as it seems to be on first sight, but ideologically, they lived in two different worlds.

Towards a New Conception of India

Theologians in the early modern period distinguished mission among Christians, mission among the Jews and mission among the heathen. They also distinguished between an active mission among the heathen on the one hand and, on the other, a passive form of Christianisation through education, by bringing medical care and uplifting the people first. This last form of Christianisation was first practiced in the Dutch East Indies, particularly in Ceylon.⁷⁷ Later, it became the practice of the Halle missionaries as well. As I have shown, the history of the Halle missions could be studied on a micro level, but should be analysed within a wider context as part of world history as well. The mutual influences on the developments in both Europe and India of the 'regular' and the 'secular' world should be integrated to create a new picture of missions.

On this larger scale, there are four important clues to understanding the change of interest, horizon and focus of the missionaries John and Rottler. First, the theological Enlightenment paved the way for new forms of understanding of the outside world. Second, due to the changes within the public sphere, the missionaries themselves took part in debates on the use of mission. New thoughts on mission might have been the result of these discussions as well. Thirdly, due to the military successes of the British East India Company, the missionaries could literally broaden their view by travelling more freely through the inland parts of India. Growing interest in the natural history, culture and habits of India was

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 183.

⁷⁷ Jurrien van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as schoolmaster, Dutch education in Ceylon, 1690-1975*, Groningen: Wolters Noordhoff, 1978.

not only seen among missionaries; it was widely shared by servants of the different East India Companies, who had big gaps in their knowledge of the people of India. Lastly, following the Enlightened religious revival, the missionaries had to adjust to the renewed practical circumstances in India. A new missionary ideology took shape. These developments should not be studied as four separate clues but as connected factors, which influenced their thoughts and writings thoroughly.

Part of the explanation for the growing German interest in India from the 1750s onwards is found in the theological Enlightenment, particularly in the 'neological' quest for a historical reconstruction of the world of the Bible.⁷⁸ Many theologians, above all the Göttingen professor Johann David Michaelis, supported travel, exploration, and observation to underpin biblical history. To protect Christianity against growing criticism, neologians actively connected their belief in the Bible and the church doctrines with scholarly knowledge based on reason and on religious experience. This paved the way for Enlightened research in India. Whereas the apostolic missionaries did not in the first place consider it their task to unveil the secrets of God's creation in India, John saw this as one of his main duties. In a letter to a Berlin professor he wrote that it was his aim to bring about both religion and enlightenment in India.⁷⁹ By involving Indians in his scholarly work he hoped to win their souls as well. By sending the results to Europe, he hoped to engage more friends of the mission overseas.

The second clue is to be found in the changes within the public sphere. Due to the many studies authored by missionaries, the knowledge of non-Christian civilisations increased in the eighteenth century. Simultaneously, the European public came to realise that the missionaries themselves had to overcome many hindrances to fulfil their vocation. It became clear that, despite great efforts, Hindus, Buddhists, and, even more so, Muslims, would not convert en masse to Christianity in a short time. Both experiences - the increase of knowledge of indigenous cultures, and the awareness of the strong footing of other religions in

⁷⁸ Carl Andresen, ed., *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte* 3, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1884, pp. 125-133.

⁷⁹ "Meine Absicht, als Missionarius, ist nicht nur, Religion und Aufklärung unter den hiesigen Nation zu verbreiten, sondern auch die herrlichen Werke des mächtigen weisen und so guten Schöpfers nach allen Kräften mit bekannt machen zu helfen." C. S. John, "Einige Nachrichten von Trankenbar auf der Küste Koromandel. Aus einem Briefe von dem Missionarius Hr. John an Hr. Doktor Bloch in Berlin", in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, Vol. 20, Berlin: J. E. Biester and F. Gedike, 1792, p. 592.

Asia - influenced Europe's world-view irrevocably. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, of all East and South Asian countries, China was the main interest of European scholars; at the end of the century India was the most discussed. Since India became part of a public debate, the missionaries had to react. The many new publications about India resulted in a sharper image, which was discussed in many ways. Instead of harsh pamphleteering, open criticism and exchanging arguments were typical as new forms of communication in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ The many reviews, published letters, comments, and discussions on the necessity of mission and on the quality of the *Hallesche Berichte* gave an impetus to scholarly debate, in which the missionaries themselves became involved. Since the 1770s, the editors of the *Hallesche Berichte* had also been open to criticism. In their editorials, they answered critical reviews published in Friedrich Nicolai's *Common German Library*.⁸¹ In their diaries and letters, the authors were ready to criticise others, particularly those who had, in the eyes of the missionaries, a too rosy picture of Indian society.

One of the most prominent critics of mission was Johann Gottfried Herder, who was convinced that India incorporated the three virtues of life - purity, moderation, and movement. In his *Ideas*, he stated that the Indian breathed voluptuousness and swam in a lake full of sweet dreams.⁸² Like the French Indologist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron and the British politician Sir Edmund Burke, Herder vehemently criticised the British policy of expansion. Like them, Herder was convinced that Western values could only be introduced in a natural way and on a friendly basis. Social change should take place naturally, in modern terms, evolutionarily not revolutionarily, and convictions should not be imposed by force, but chosen by heart. In his feigned discussion between an Asian and a European on the use of the German-Danish mission, he let the Asian say to his disputant: "When your religion is good, the

⁸⁰ Kurt Röttgers, "Kritik", in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* 3, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982, pp. 651-675.

⁸¹ For example: W., review of the 98th-106th edition of *HB* 9, in Friedrich Nicolai (red.), *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek. Anhang*. 1/12. Bd., Berlin: Nicolai, 1771, pp. 90-91, and B., review of the 107th and 108th edition of *HB* 9 and 1st-3rd edition of the *NHB* 1, in Friedrich Nicolai (red.), *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek. Anhang*. Vol. 13./24, Berlin: Nicolai, 1777, p. 141.

⁸² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Vol. 1, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1965, p. 286.

people will come to you, and you don't need to look up for them."⁸³ As a Lutheran pastor, in a milder form, Herder might have shared the objections against mission expressed at the beginning of the eighteenth century by the Orthodox.

The third clue to understanding changes in perceptions of the German missionaries is to be found in the British expansion in India in the second half of the eighteenth century. Along with this expansion, possibilities for travel gradually grew, although restrictions were still set by the European and Indian sovereigns. British expansion resulted in other forms of contact with the Indian people. Within the limits of their abilities and feasibilities, the missionaries took the opportunities to spread their wings more freely. Particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century, missionaries fulfilled many roles as mediators, interpreters, even diplomats of the British and the Danish companies. The changed balance of power is reflected in the *Hallesche Berichte*. The well-represented position of the Danish royal house in the periodical, diminished. After 1760, the dedication to a member of the royal family was left out, and the letters from the missionaries to members of the Danish royal family, which were traditionally published, appeared more and more irregularly. Also, when the periodical received a new name in 1770, the words "Royal Danish" were not included in the title any more. The missionaries could enlarge their work area only in the wake of the British. Besides Tranquebar, missionary stations were founded in those coastal cities which were controlled by the English East India Company: Madras (1728), Cuddalore (1737) and Calcutta (1758). And after the decisive battle of Wandiwash in 1760 in which the French were defeated, new inland missionary stations were founded: Tiruchirappalli (1767) and Tanjavur (1776). The missionaries who worked in these towns were financially supported by the Anglo-Saxon Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The change of interest among Europeans might be explained by the changed horizon as well. Particularly among East India Company servants, there was a growing interest in the natural history of India and in the habits and customs of the India people. To govern so many, the East India Company had to gather information about the Indian tax and law systems, about the social relations, languages and religion.⁸⁴ Therefore, the company stimulated research, as for example, was done

⁸³ Ibid, "Propaganda", *Adrastea*, Vol. 3, Leipzig: Hartknoch, 1802, pp. 190-191.

⁸⁴ See C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information, Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

by the members of the famous Asiatic Society of Bengal, of which John became an honorary member. With their studies, the missionaries John and Rottler became part of this Euro-Indian Enlightened world.

The last clue is to be seen as a result of both innovative religious ideas in Europe and the wish to overcome practical hindrances in India. The theological Enlightenment in Germany not only cleared the way for more research on the plant and animal kingdoms, but also brought a disapproval of the prevailing anthropology, overshadowed by the doctrine of original sin and of a pernicious human nature. A new, hopeful perception of humankind emerged, with a strong belief in the affects of possible individual development, and of social, moral, and intellectual civilisation. John's idea that the Indians were in their childhood, provided him with an argument to direct his efforts towards education. However, he was willing to gain more in-depth knowledge of India; his belief in a possible uplift of the Indian people, in line with his own ideas, could be explained as a form of negation of their contemporaneous identity. The enlightened missionary impulse was only of short duration. Caused by the polarisation at the turn of the century, it became problematic to consider mission and Enlightenment as two sides of the same coin. Still, at the turn of the century, the Halle missionaries formed a bridgehead between eighteenth century apostolic missionary ideals and nineteenth century missionary awakening. On the one hand, John and Rottler had disassociated themselves from a former strict apostolic mission and searched for new ways in changed circumstances. On the other hand, among the Lutheran Orthodox, the prevailing dogmatic arguments against mission were withering away like autumn leaves. This paved the way for new missionary initiatives.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN MISSION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Andreas Feldtkeller

Frames of Reference

The arrival of the first two missionaries to Tranquebar in 1706 marks the starting point of modern Protestant mission; against widespread tendencies to tell the story of mission as if it were a story taking place mainly in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to remember that Protestant mission is that old. But if we take as our frame of reference a general history of religious missions, then a development starting three hundred years ago is a very young one; it covers only one-eighth of the whole period in which religious missions have taken place. But even that is, by far, not the widest historical frame of reference relevant as a context to modern Protestant mission. Among all the forms and patterns of how religion is transmitted between human communities and individuals, the one we may describe by the word "mission" is the youngest one:

- Since the dawn of humanity, or at least since there has been historical evidence of religion in the history of humankind (some 100,000 years), religion has been handed down within the community from one generation to the next. The earliest evidence for religious practices are the remains of funerals, which are, in a prominent way, expressions of religious practice that depend on transmission from generation to generation. Every young generation learns the method from their elders – and then one day have to bury their own parents or other elderly relatives.
- From at least 30,000 years ago there is evidence that specific cultural expressions of religion have been exchanged between human communities in processes of transculturation, for which we may assume that the receiving group had an opportunity to observe religious expressions of another group (through migration, trade etc.) and copied what made sense to them. For example, female figurines of the late