

Padroado - Propaganda Conflict in Tamilnadu

Introduction

Jesus' life itself was very much politically involved. Two important milestones of his life were his birth and his death. These incidents were deeply intertwined in politics. At his birth, when the three wise men had come from the East and had enquired about the new-born king of the Jews, political fear had entered into the nerve-system of Herod, the king of Judea, at the coming of a king in the person of Jesus. The result of the fear of Herod was the brutal massacre of the innocent infants of the Judean Province of the Roman Empire. Jesus, having been a sign of the rise and fall of many, had posed challenges to three categories of people¹, the Priests, the Scribes, and the Elders, regarding dryness of the old Law and ever green new law of love. At the end of his life the Sanhedrin could not find any fault with him in any points with regard to matters of religion. So the only way they had envisaged was to involve Jesus into politics. Standing before Pilate, Jesus was accused of claiming to be the king of the Jews. The post factum of that move had been the political murder of Jesus on the Cross, a Roman mode of punishment and death. When the God of the Christians was drawn to political arena (at least from the point of view of the religious leaders of the time) the Church may not hesitate to follow suit!

The survival of Christianity in the first three centuries of the Christian era was stupendous despite the opposition

1. Lk. 9:22; 20:1; 22:66; Acts 4:5,23; 6:12. cfr. I. H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Exeter, 1979 (1978), pp. 848-849. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke*, New York, 1983, pp. 1274, 1466. The Sanhedrin comprised of these three groups.

from the super-power of the time, the Roman empire. The Church solely depended on Christ for her life and growth. There emerged a political conflict between Constantine the Great and Maxentius and ended in war in 312 AD. According to Eusebius of Caesarea,² Constantine trusted in the God of the Christians and Maxentius had his faith in the arts of sorcery. Constantine vowed to the new God that if he would win over his enemy in the battle he would worship him and would make Christianity the State religion. The sole motive of the emperor had been nothing but political!

Religion and Politics

The edict of Milan in 313 AD³ had inevitably interwoven politics - the Roman Empire, and religion - Christianity. From then on, the pages of the history of the Church demonstrate that the Church had been dependent on political powers for her survival and growth. And politics was all the more depending on the Church for blessing, moral support and survival. In this background we need to look into the Portuguese Padroado.

The Spanish and the Portuguese kings, with a view to expanding their domains and trade, wanted their political endeavour to have a moral approval from the religious leader, the pope. Due to the difficult situation to shoulder the responsibility of spreading Christianity, the pope took advantage of the opportunity and blessed the kings and thrust the obligation on the crowns to evangelize the

2. Cfr. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *The History of the Church*, IX. 9, PHILIP SCHAFF (ed), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991 (1890), p. 363.
3. The Edict of Milan was only a token of toleration. Christianity was not made the sole religion of the Roman Empire. Cfr. K.C. LATOURETTE, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, New York, 1975, p. 92.

lands of their conquests and of their discoveries. On June 18, 1452, Pope Nicholas V, by his two bulls, "*Dum diversus*" and "*Divino amore*", made a covenant which was called Padroado⁴. The content of the Padroado was that the crown of Portugal might freely trade with any country of its discovery. But the same power had the duty of founding and erecting churches, monasteries and helping in other efforts of ecclesiastical matters such as controlling the dioceses and meeting the financial liabilities⁵. The Western countries were entrusted with Spain and the Eastern countries were with Portugal⁶. The general agreement as to the rights and duties are as follows:

Portugal would exercise control over the dioceses, this included keeping a watch on the finances provided for this purpose by the crown. The king of Portugal would present to the Holy See, within a certain period, the prelates destined for these dioceses. The king would present to the bishops not only the canons of their cathedrals but also the parish priests, and all others receiving salaries from the royal provision. Where such nominations were accepted by ecclesiastical authority, the Padroado involved in return the responsibility of the crown to preserve and maintain the various dioceses and the persons by whom they were served, and to care for the propagation of faith⁷.

4. Cfr. S. NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginning to AD 1707*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 111.

5. Ibid. pp. 112-113.

6. S. NEILL. op cit. p. 111.

7. Ibid pp. 112-113.

With this note of authority, the Portuguese fleet of Vasco da Gama reached India. Though the duty of the crown was to preach the Good News and establish the Catholic Church, the ulterior motive was economic and political gain. As these men pitched their tent at Cochin and Goa, they moved to the Pearl Fishery Coast for the trade.

Padroado in India

The Portuguese fleet headed by Vasco da Gama with two priests made a historical journey to India in 1498. While one priest died during the voyage itself the fate of the other is not known. Whenever the Portuguese fleet travelled to India some priests used to accompany it⁸. Though the purpose of their trip was to make trade and extend the territory of their kingdom they had the responsibility of spreading Christianity in India. There was a difference between Portugal and other European countries. Countries such as The Netherlands, Denmark, France and England worked through the trade companies but for Portugal the trade was handled solely by the king. Goa became the centre of their entire operation, having administration, military and naval base. As Portugal had grounded itself in India, a new phase of the Church developed in India. The number of the Christians increased very much in the Indian soil. In 1533 Pope Clement VII planned to erect an independent diocese in India but before the execution of the plan he passed away. His successor, Pope Paul III by a Bull "*Aequum Reptamus*" of Nov. 3, 1534 bifurcated India and named Goa as the See of India. Goa became the first Padroado diocese in India⁹.

8. Ibid. p. 90.

9. Cfr. H. C. PERUMALIL and E. R. HAMBYE (eds), *Christianity in India*, Allepey, 1972, pp. 50-51.

Mylapore

The Portuguese had Mylapore and Nagapattinam on the Coromandel Coast for their trade. People of these places were also attracted towards Christianity. At Mylapore, the tomb of St. Thomas was an important place for Christianity. The missionaries made it a point to visit the tomb of St. Thomas. St. Francis Xavier too visited the place to pray to St. Thomas. Mylapore was made a diocese in 1606.

The Pearl Fishery Coast

The Paravas, the coastal people, engaged themselves in pearl fishing. Unfortunately, despite the hard labour put in by the Paravas in fishing pearls, the whole profit went to the Muslims who had employed them. In 1535, there arose a quarrel between the Muslim community and the Parava community due to the misbehaviour of a certain Muslim towards a Parava woman. This isolated event developed into a community affair and conflict. The Paravas refused to go for pearl-fishing. In retaliation to this, the Muslims, being a moneyed community, forbade them even to catch fish for their livelihood. The Paravas were in a desperate situation. At this moment the Portuguese merchants came to the Pearl Fishery Coast to trade. There they encountered the affected Parava community which had explained their sad plight to these Portuguese traders. The traders promised protection of the Paravas from the Muslims provided they would become Christians. The social insecurity urged the Paravas to go forward to receive baptisms. There was no real religious conviction to become Christians except the social consciousness and convenience to liberate themselves from the clutches of the Muslims. Hence fifteen headmen of the Paravas went to Cochin to be baptized. The Portuguese were not satisfied with the smallness of the number. They demanded more people for baptism. Therefore another seventy

headmen moved to Cochin to receive baptism. After this the Portuguese fleet came to the Pearl Fishery Coast to protect the Paravas.

The Portuguese proved that their main motive was economic benefits. Hence the Portuguese government demanded from the people of the Pearl Fishery Coast 75000 "Panams" (Rupees) per year for protecting them from the Muslims. It was a huge amount for the Parava people as they were under economic dependence on the Muslims. The intervention of the vicar general of Goa to reduce the amount to 25000 "panams" was not fruitful. The Portuguese compromised for 60000 "panams". In the beginning the assurance to protect the Paravas from the Muslims was mainly due to religious motive i.e. to convert more people to Christianity. But as days went by, the Padroado shifted their focus to economic benefits. That was why the crown of Portugal demanded remuneration for having protected the Paravas from the Muslims.

The Propagation of Faith

The condition of the Church in the 17th century was that the Popes of this time were keen to make arrangements to have the evangelization done by directly sending missionaries to territories including the areas controlled by the Portuguese Padroado. On January 22, 1622 Pope Gregory XIV laid a foundation stone for the Congregation of Faith which is ordinarily known as Propaganda¹⁰. The inability of the Portuguese Padroado to accomplish the mission of christianizing the countries was the main reason to have the formation of the Propaganda. In this context it is good to see a few of the factors which caused the Padroado become inactive.

10. PERUMALIL & HAMBYE, op cit. p. 102. Pope Gregory XV in his Bull "*Inscrutable*" of July 22, 1622 set up the Congregation of the *Propaganda Fide*. Ibid. p. 152.

1. The financial crisis in Portugal did not permit the Padroado to support the missions and missionary activities. If this was the case with the areas already under the Portuguese power, we need not speak of the new areas of mission works.

2. Regarding India, the advent of the other European powers, such as England, Holland and Denmark, which were protestant, hindered Portugal from an effective mission work. It was due to the restrictions imposed on Portugal by the other powers.

The political situation in Portugal also radically turned antireligious. Therefore the mission centres were neglected. There was a dichotomy in the relationship between the Holy See and the crown of Portugal. Portugal laid a lot of restrictions to the Pope in the mission territories. Even for a visit of the Pope to any place which was under the patronage of Portugal the Pope had to require the permission of the crown. In 1833 the Padroado broke away with the Holy See. In 1834 the Portuguese government suppressed the religious orders throughout the empire. Due to this the schools and education suffered very much. The Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda severely warned the Portuguese king that he must either fulfil his duties to evangelize the areas under his control or relinquish his rights of the Padroado.

In this situation, Pope Gregory XVI created two vicariates apostolic, Calcutta and Madras in 1834, and two more in 1836, Ceylon and Pondicherry, in the territories that were under the Padroado for a long time. The Padroado was against the move of the Propaganda since this action brought about the total abolition of the Padroado outside the Padroado territories. Pope Gregory XVI set up a three member committee to study the issue of the erection of vicariates apostolic and their impact on the Padroado. The committee reported affirmatively to the papal move. So on

April 24, 1838, the Pope issued a Brief "*Multa Praeclare*". According to this, the non-Portuguese territory of Mylapore diocese would go to the vicariate apostolic of Madras. The committee members were ignorant of the fact that the archbishop of Goa was exercising his jurisdiction outside the Padroado territory.¹¹

The Brief added fuel to the fire. The Padroado did not accept the Brief because without the royal approval the papal Brief was not accepted as valid. The papal Brief considered the Padroado as a privilege although earlier it had recognized the Padroado's right as a "*Jus Patronatus*". So the battle was engaged between the Padroado and the Propaganda. The Propaganda declared the followers of Padroado as dissidents or schismatics, while the Padroado considered the Propaganda as an insolent intruder. From then on the main mission of both the Propaganda and the Padroado was not in building up of the Church but in marking their territories respectively. The interesting part was that both were not motivated to convert the Indians to Catholicism but they were trying to convert Catholics to Catholicism of a sectarian kind: the Padroado catholics or the Propaganda catholics!

Pope Pius IX succeeded Gregory XVI. In 1834, Jeronimo da Mata of Macau, the Padroado bishop, happened to pass through Bombay on his way to Goa. He was requested by the people to administer Orders to the seminarians and he did ordain them. This event angered Hartmann, the Propaganda bishop of Bombay. The ecclesiastical climate was further complicated for bishop Hartmann. The parishioners of St. Michael's, the Propaganda parish, were instigated by the Padroado priests, Frs. Jose de Mello and Gabriel da Silva, the assistant, and wanted to join the Padroado church.

11. Cfr. H. C. PERUMALIL and E. R. HAMBYE (ed), op. cit. p. 155-157.

Bishop Hartmann intervened and stopped the process of voting the resolution to join the Padroado. Hartmann deputed his secretary Fr. Ignatius Persico to Rome to explain the matter to the Pope and demanded three points for action by the Pope.

1. Bishop Jeromico da Mata of Macau be excommunicated and if it was not possible at least be suspended.
2. No concordat be accorded till Portugal relinquish its Padroado in the East.
3. The priests who would refuse to obey the Propaganda bishop would be considered schismatics¹².

Before these demands reached the Pope, Pius IX had already on June 29, 1853 published his Brief '*Probe Nostris*'. This Brief condemned bishop Jeromico da Mata for his ordination in Bombay and for instigating the priests of Bombay against the Propaganda. This amounted to a schismatic move. Pius IX seemed to be in haste to condemn bishop Jeromica da Mata of Macau for officiating the ordination. Jeromica however, was with the right intention, and being innocent, conducted the ordination ceremony. In fact, since the archdiocese of Goa was not affected by the Brief "*Multa Praeclare*", the Bombay region *de jure* belonged to Goa.

Added to the above factors the Padroado was not able to concentrate on the interior areas. Hence there arose a need to ignore the restrictions and to take steps to undertake missionary activities. Pope Leo XIII wanted to establish a hierarchy in India. In 1886 there were Propaganda dioceses erected. Mylapore diocese had been existing from 1606 under the Padroado care. Madras archdiocese was erected in 1886. In the same year the Coimbatore vicariate of the

12. Ibid. p. 161.

Pondicherry diocese till 1854 was elevated to a diocese. Pondicherry was raised to the status of a diocese. Thiruchirapally too was created as a diocese.

The erection of the archdiocese of Madras in 1886, while there was a Padroado diocese existing in Mylapore from 1606 is a clear sign of the inner conflict between the Padroado and the Propaganda. In 1950 the Padroado handed over the Mylapore diocese to the Propaganda. In 1952 a portion of the Madras diocese was bifurcated and a new diocese, Vellore, was erected. Mylapore had to part with certain areas and another new diocese, Tanjore, was created in the same year. Having amalgamated Madras and Mylapore the new archdiocese has been named as Madras-Mylapore archdiocese.

The standing monuments of the conflict are the parishes of Manappad and Sippikulam-Vaipparu of the diocese of Tuticorin. There are two churches and two priests appointed to look after the spiritual needs of the parish. There is no other element, such as caste and language, which has played its role in the division. This was solely because of the conflict between the Padroado and the Propaganda.

A Suggestive Note

Christianity in Tamilnadu engages herself in the fields of education, health care of the community, socio-cultural concerns, economic programmes to the down-trodden, preaching and working for the freedom of the oppressed and the marginalised and above all inculcating the Christian values. The political powers and governments are very much satisfied with the services rendered by the Christian Church in all these areas. Even though Christianity here has involved in many spheres of life of the people in Tamilnadu, it is high time that she gets engaged in politics.

1. Where ever it is feasible for the clergy to stand for election, the Church may happily allow the priests and the religious. In Kottar diocese, there had been many Parish Priests who were the Presidents of the Panchayat Boards.

2. Unite all the Christians under one banner based on Christian values and principles.

3. Encourage and support the lay people to involve directly in politics.

4. Christians must join hands with the political parties who are prepared to respect the principles of Christianity and enter into the decision-making-process of the ruling party. Christian representatives in the State Assembly and Parliament will surely make a difference in the planning for the future.

Conclusion

No one can deny the fact of the interdependency of both politics and religion. The Church depended on the Crown for its survival and growth. And politics all the more relied on the Church for its life and success. In this background the Padroado was reached between the Church and the Crown. While appreciating the good done by the Portuguese Padroado for the Church in general and India in particular, we have to admit that the primary motive of the Crown was to have political and economic gain. Their earnestness to serve the Church depended on the consequent economico-political advantages. This trend began to reach its height in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Whatever might be the drawbacks in the mission of the Padroado, we can not but appreciate the remarkable services done by it in the planting of the Church in India.