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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

The Golden Anniversary of Our Mission in India

As we in view of the fifty years which have elapsed since the founding of our mission in India send to our brethren laboring in that field hearty congratulations and assurances of love and esteem, we reprint a little article, evidently written by one of our missionaries, which appeared in the *Gospel Witness*, a journal of which Dr. J. B. Williams of Andhra Christian College, Guntur, is the editor. The article submits succinct information on the development and present status of our work in the Ambur District where our pioneers unfurled our flag half a century ago. The reader must bear in mind that it was written at least half a year ago.

"The churches of the M. E. L. I. M. have in the past months been celebrating the golden jubilee of Lutheran mission work in the valley of the Palar River. It was in January, 1895, that Theodore Naether, having been commissioned by the Missouri Synod, arrived in India and chose Krishnagiri, in the Salem District, as the first station for the work in which the Synod had shown a new interest. Since then the South Travancore field was opened in 1908 and the North Travancore field in 1912. These latter two fields have at present the larger portion of the church membership of this body in India. But since the jubilee celebrations more directly concern the original field it might be of interest to the readers of the *Witness* to see what progress has been made in this area, which has often been likened to the stony ground of our Lord's parable of the Sower.

"With the exception of diaspora work in Madras and Bangalore, a station in the Kolar Gold Fields in Mysore, and a promising field in the Kanarese language area of northwest Coimbatore District, the whole northern field, now called the Ambur District, lies in a valley whose eastern end opens out on the Madras plain and whose western end lies in the Bangalore plateau, about 70 miles long and an average of 15 miles wide. In this valley, through which the Palar River and the main Madras-Bangalore line of the M. & S. M. Railway run, lie the five main stations of the district, from west to east, Krishnagiri, Barugur, Vaniyambadi, Ambur, and Pernambut. The station at Kolar Gold Fields is 36 miles from Pernambut. All other stations are less than 20 miles from each other. It has been the policy of the mission to try and build small compact stations, averaging 100 square miles in area, in which the missionary can keep in close personal contact with all the work and the congregations. Whether this policy is sound as a long-range plan remains to be seen.

"Although we speak of 50 years of work, it would not be an injustice to the early workers of the Church and mission to say that the present work is only about 25 years old. The first World War with its disruption of work and repatriation of many of the German

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missionaries almost brought all work to an end. It was in 1921 that the first large contingent of American missionaries took up the work, and the present period of expansion dates from that year. The following table gives a picture of the Church's progress and its interest in the support of its work.

"Year	Baptized Membership	Contributions
1914 (after 20 years of work)	207	Rs. 103
1924	660	221
1934	2,142	2,399
1944	3,774	6,679

"At no place in the whole field has there been anything like a mass movement. Each convert has been hewn out of the solid rock of Hinduism, individually and painstakingly. This has resulted in a membership which, on the whole, stays close to the Church. It has also resulted in much hardship and persecution, since the family has often been disrupted by the conversion of individuals. Only in recent years has there been a decrease in the persecution and discomforts to which Christians have been subjected by their non-Christian neighbors. With a few exceptions the whole present indigenous Christian community has its roots in the Adi-Dravidian level of society. The complexion of the Church, to some extent, shows the strength and weaknesses of this remarkably hardy and tenacious social group. To have existed at all under its appointed circumstances is an achievement; to have a capacity for spiritual appreciation and growth after such an existence is a miracle of God's grace.

"The congregations, of which there are now 40 in the district, have for fifteen years co-operated through a Delegate Sangha in various enterprises, mission organization, work which has prospered. Twelve and one half per cent of the offerings of each congregation automatically go to the support of 'general' and 'synodical' work. Although most of the congregations still receive substantial grants from the Sangha (ultimately from the Mission) for the support of their work, it has been felt, and events have proved the wisdom of the theory, that every group, no matter how dependent it may itself be on outside aid, should from the very beginning take an active interest in work 'outside the village' and contribute toward its support. At present the constitution of a synod, calling for the full sharing of the churches in the control and responsibility of all the work hitherto managed by the mission, is before the congregation for consideration. It is hoped that before the jubilee year is over, the first steps may be taken at effective reorganization of the now outdated Delegate Sangha into a responsible synod. The principles of this synod are already in operation with satisfactory results.

"While the Ambur District has been largely an evangelistic field and efforts have been made to build an indigenous Church as a wide base for the superstructure of institutions, the latter has, as usual, outrun the former, and the District is top-heavy. In

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addition to the 31 congregational and village schools there are, in the larger centers, one middle school (Kolar Gold Fields) and four higher elementary schools at Barugur, Vaniyambadi, Pernambut, and Mailpatti. The District high school is located at Ambur, under the able principalship of Mr. S. Immanuel. To it are attached the Girls' Hostel, with 50 boarders, and the Boys' Hostel, with 80 boarders in residence.

"An attempt has been made to meet the need for teachers trained to a Christian Weltanschauung through the two training schools run in connection with the high school, one for the higher elementary grade and the other for the secondary grade. A one-year intensive religious training course is also given to graduates of the Secondary Training School to fit them for congregational and evangelistic work on the catechist level.

"All of the above institutions are co-educational throughout, a course which was adopted about five years ago and which has resulted in a general raising of the level of girls' education. No untoward incidents have resulted from this arrangement, at least no more than may be expected under any circumstances.

"Although all of these institutions enjoy government recognition, they are financed independent of any grant-in-aid. Consequently the subsidy from American sources is very heavy, and the churches view with uneasiness the prospect of supporting unaided the institutions necessary for their life and growth. On the other hand, this policy has undeniably led to a certain freedom of action and independence of attitude in an area where non-Christian inspecting officers are often both ignorant and unappreciative of Christian ideals of education.

"The chief aim of the current jubilee celebrations has been to arouse the interest and active participation of all Christians in the evangelization of the area. It is too early to judge of the results, but indications are many that the aim for the members, 'Each one win one,' and for each congregation to found, through its own evangelistic efforts, a daughter congregation, is being earnestly pursued.

"The war has made the maintenance of a full missionary staff impossible. The normal staff of the district is nine male missionaries, one nurse, and two zenana workers. Rev. Kuolt, who went on furlough in 1940, was not able to return and is now a Navy chaplain on Midway Island; Rev. Schulz was detained in America, but is now expected back shortly. Revs. Manns and Lang are at present in America on regular furloughs, and Revs. Steinhoff and Stevenson, the latter having spent a year in Kodaikanal at the mission hostel there, are leaving shortly. This leaves Revs. Grumm and Kretzmann in Ambur, Bertram in Pernambut, and Naumann in Barugur. Miss Amelia Docter, nurse and zenana worker, was recently invalidated home after an illness of almost four years. Miss Lois Rathke, lately returned from America, has taken charge of the hospital at Ambur, which was recently enlarged to accommodate

40 beds, from Miss Rehwinkel, who is awaiting passage to America after an eight-year term of service.

"The present reduction of the missionary staff has not been without its blessings. Much responsibility has been placed on the shoulders of capable and earnest men, and the churches, young though they are, have not shown themselves lacking in reserves of leadership and initiative. The seven ordained Indian pastors of the district have cheerfully taken on additional work and have largely assumed responsibility for the evangelistic program of the churches. It is hoped that the lessons learned under the pressure of war may not be lost on the mission organization even if peace brings a return of the old days of prosperity and plenty.

"A recent development of the work has been the care of men and women in the services. There are close to 250 of these from the Tamil area of the mission alone. They are served by a monthly letter in the form of a sermonet, written by one of the Indian pastors, by the supply of special prayer books and religious material. A Service Men's Scholarship Fund has been opened, and more than Rs. 500 has been contributed in five months. The interest from this fund is to be used to grant scholarships to needy students. The names of non-Christian young men from the villages in which there are congregations have also been added to the lists. In a number of cases these young men have been won through the material sent them and have requested baptism while on leave to their homes."

A.

Acts of Paul and Thecla

I. Its History

Date

While the ascetic life presented in the Acts of Paul and Thecla seems to point to a later date (Cobern: 160—200 A. D.), the early writers of the Church suggest that it may belong to the first half of the second century. If so, it is the oldest of our N. T. Apocryphal writings (W. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, 1912, pp. 156, 260 n).

Author

Tertullian says (*Of Baptism*, XVII, written about 200 A. D.): "But if the writings which wrongly go under Paul's name claim Thecla's example as a license for a woman's teaching and baptizing, let them know that in Asia the presbyter who composed that writing, as if he were augmenting Paul's fame from his own store, after being convicted and confessing that he had done it from the love of Paul, was removed from his office."

Manuscripts

Tischendorf had three codices of high age, from the tenth and eleventh centuries, from which he made a recension.

"In 1896 Dr. Reinhardt procured at Akmim a papyrus codex which turned out to be the Acts of Paul" (5:236).

Reputation

II. Its Contents

In spite of Tertullian's condemnation the book was enormously popular in the early Christian Church; its story was widely published as a tract; it was quoted by a long line of Latin and Greek Fathers. Thecla became one of the most famous of all Greek saints; Justinian built a church in her honor. It was "a book so highly reputed in the ancient Church that many in the fourth century supposed that it ought to have a place in the New Testament" (5:236-7). Davies says the story "lived because the people would not let it die. The book, then, can be taken as a fair expression of the common thought of that age" (1:335).

Possible Elements of Truth

The Church Fathers seem to assume unanimously that the story rests on fact. Its incidents are referred to as authentic and with approval. Jerome condemns the book, but calls Thecla a virgin saint. Gregory Nazianzen says that the monastery at Seleucia bears her name. Ambrose thought Thecla deserved to be ranked with the Virgin Mary. Harnack says (*Mission and Expansion*, II: 73): "It is unlikely that the romancer simply invented this figure [Thecla]. There must really have been a girl converted by Paul at Iconium whose name was Thecla and who took an active part in the Christian mission" (1). W. Ramsay (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, 1912, p.380) declares it to be a genuine first-century story which later scribes touched up. Queen Tryphena seems to have been a real person, and the description of the amphitheater is realistic. The existence and martyrdom of Thecla have been corroborated by a first-century inscription set up in remembrance "of the martyr Thecla" recently found in the Church of St. Menas in N. Cyprus (*Am. Journal of Archaeology*, 1915, page 489).

At Philippi, Paul "receives from the Corinthians a letter reporting that two false teachers, Simon and Cleobius, are disturbing the church, and writes to them the letter which is received as genuine in many ancient Syrian and Armenian churches" (5:237-8).

The description of Paul has a ring of authenticity: "He saw Paul coming, a man small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, well built, with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed, full of grace. For sometimes he seemed like a man and sometimes he had the countenance of an angel" (3:107; 6:79).

This is not Raphael's commanding figure, as Morton points out. It is so unflattering and unlike the ideal which might be expected after a lapse of time that it may be a genuine picture handed down by those who had seen him. The description fits the Apostle's own words, "who in presence am base among you. . . His bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:1, 10). Paul's words are more than an Oriental disparagement, such as: "Deign not to enter my miserable hovel." The public

rates Paul lower than Barnabas (Acts 14:12). It is difficult, on the other hand, to understand how Claudius Lysias could have mistaken Paul for a bold Egyptian agitator, leading a crowd and promising them supernatural wonders (Acts 21:38).

The Story (2:487—492)

Thecla, a seventeen-year-old girl, fascinated by Paul's teaching of self-control and celibacy, refuses to marry Thamyris, a chief of her home city of Iconium, to whom she is engaged. Demas and Ermogenes, two hypocritical followers of Paul, advise Thamyris: Bring Paul before the governor on the charge of spreading the new teaching of the Christians; the governor will destroy Paul, and then Thecla will marry you. Thamyris, with public officers and a great crowd, brings Paul before the governor, but on the charge: He turns virgins against marriage. Paul is put in prison.

At night Thecla bribes the gatekeeper with her bracelets and the jailer with her silver mirror and comes to Paul, sits at his feet, and hears "the great things of God." She is found there, and the governor is informed. Paul and Thecla are ordered before the governor. The crowd cries, "He is a magician! Away with him!" Eventually Paul is scourged.

The governor asks her, "Why don't you marry Thamyris?" When she refuses to answer, she is condemned to be burned in order to frighten the women taught by Paul. In the theater the fagots, put around her, do not touch her. The ground rumbles; and water and hail put out the fire.

Thecla, again free, comes to Paul in a cave.

Thecla. I shall cut my hair and follow you wherever you may go.

Paul. I am afraid another temptation may come on you, worse than the first, and that you will not withstand it.

Thecla. Only give me the seal in Christ, and temptation shall not touch me.

Paul. Thecla, wait with patience, and you will receive the water.

On the street of Antioch, Alexander, the Syriach, embraces Thecla. She tears his cloak, pulls off his crown, and makes him a laughingstock. Alexander has the governor condemn her to the wild beasts. On the first day, bearing the inscription "Sacriligious," she is bound on a fierce lioness, but the lioness licks her feet.

Queen Tryphena takes her into her home to replace her daughter who has died. She persuades Thecla to pray for her dead daughter. And she weeps that "so great a beauty was to be cast unto the beasts."

On the second day, some of the people who see her in the arena cry, "Away with this sacriligious person!" Others, "Cruel sight! Evil sentence!" A lioness runs up to her and lies down. This lioness tears a bear and a lion, who come toward Thecla, in

pieces, but the lioness, too, is killed; and the women weep at the sight.

Thecla baptizes herself in a ditch of water in the arena. The seals in the water, which might devour her, are killed by lightning.

Other wild beasts are brought in. (Some women throw in sweet-smelling herbs and perfumes.) The animals do not touch her. Alexander persuades the governor to let him bind her to his terrible bulls, which are burned by red-hot irons to make them furious. As they rush about, the flames burn the ropes and free her.

Queen Tryphena has fainted. The crowd declares, "Queen Tryphena is dead!" And Alexander, fearing Caesar will destroy the whole city because of the death of Tryphena, begs that Thecla be released.

The governor. What is there about you that none of the wild beasts touch you?

Thecla. Because I believe in the Son of God.

The governor releases her. Thecla reports her baptism to Paul. In Iconium she is told that Thamyris has died. And she tries to win her mother to the faith.

For seventy-two years she lives on herbs and water in a cave in Seleucia, teaching the Word of God. The sick, before they reach her door, are healed; by her many cures the doctors lose their trade. They give gold to drunken young men to seduce her. She prays; and a rock opens to receive her.

Then she goes to Rome. There she dies at the age of ninety. "She is buried about two or three stadia from the tomb of her master Paul."

The Baptized Lion

"Quite recently interest in the Acts of Paul has been revived by the publication in 1936 of a papyrus in the Hamburger Staats- und Universitaets-Bibliothek, containing hitherto unknown episodes from the work. Of special interest is the story of Paul and the Baptized Lion, which was previously known only from the references found in Tertullian, *de baptismo*, XVII; Jerome, *de viris illustribus*, VII; Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, III, 29; Nicephorus, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 25" (2:106). A translation of the incident follows:

When the chief huntsman [the man in charge of the exhibition of wild beasts] had sat down, he ordered that a lion, caught only a little before this and very fierce, be sent out to him. . . . And a great wonder happened . . . for the lion looked around, showed himself entirely, and came running and lay down by the legs of Paul like a well-trained lamb and like his slave. And when he had stopped praying, he, as though he had awakened from dreams, spoke to Paul with a human voice, "Grace be with you."

Paul wasn't frightened, but said, "Grace be with you, lion," and he laid his hand on him. And the whole crowd shouted, "Away with the wizard, away with the sorcerer."

But the lion looked at Paul, and Paul at the lion. And Paul thought this was the lion which had come and been baptized (λουσόμενος). And borne along by faith, Paul said, "Lion, are you the one I baptized?" (ἔλουσα).

And the lion answered Paul, "Yes."

Paul spoke to him a second time, "And how were you caught?"

And the lion spoke with a voice, "Just as you were, Paul" (2:110-1).

III. Its Apocryphal Characteristics

Weak Gospel Content

This story is no rival of any chapter in Acts. It differs from the inspired record as legend differs from history, as man differs from Jesus. It does not aim to bring anything essentially new; it leans on the New Testament for its thoughts; and its reproduction of New Testament truths has the marks of a weak theologian.

The Gospel appears in isolated spots. Paul says, "Hope in God, and He will deliver you; hope in Christ, and He will give you forgiveness of sins" (5:109). But there is a thinning of this Gospel to a general belief in the existence of God: "He saves through holy men preaching that you repent and believe (that God is one) and Jesus Christ is one and another does not exist" (3:107). The presentation of justification is strikingly un-Pauline. Paul says, "Listen, O Proconsul: A living God, a God of retributions, a jealous God, a God in need of nothing, consulting for the salvation of men, has sent me that I may reclaim them from all pleasure and from death, that they may not sin" (6:83-4).

Post-Pauline Origin

Thecla calls Paul "O Father" (6:87). She makes "the sign of the cross" (6:86). "And her holy commemoration is on the twenty-fourth of the month of September" (6:98). The presentation of celibacy is a later writer's stretching of Pauline thoughts to artificial and incorrect proportions.

The fictitious shaping of the story likely arose in the mind of a genial storyteller; it does not seem to be the work of a willful falsifier.

Asceticism

Paul states his purpose: "The living God . . . has sent me that I may reclaim them from all pleasure" (6:83). He preaches "the Word of God about self-control": "Blessed are they that have wives as not having them. . . . Blessed are the bodies of virgins . . . for the Word of the Father shall become to them a work of salvation against the day of His Son, and they shall have rest forever and ever" (6:79-80). Virginity is almost essential for salvation. We see here the Encratite and Montanistic tendencies of the age. Thecla places marriage to her betrothed and the assault of Alexander in one class: "God . . . who didst not give

me up to Thamyris, who didst not give me up to Alexander," she prays (6:97).

There is in this asceticism a compensative emphasis on sex which is extracanonical in its taste: Alexander's ardent embraces, the praise of her nude body in the arena, "the privy parts of the bulls" (6:91), and the final effort of the young men to seduce her.

Other Errors

Paul's enemies fail to bring any just accusation against Paul in the New Testament. But in the Apocrypha just charges are brought against the teaching and life of Christians; perhaps God meant to mark these writings in this way so that even the simple could conclude: "This is not the Word of God." In the Gospel of Thomas even the Child Jesus in anger kills his playmate who drains his pools of water and another who bumps against Him; and the parents of the dead children bring to Joseph a just accusation against Jesus. The same apocryphal mark is to be seen in the accusation which heathen people bring against Paul: "He deprives young men of wives, and maidens of husbands, saying, 'There is for you a resurrection in no other way unless you remain chaste'" (6:82). Paul had induced Thecla to break her promise of marriage to Thamyris.

It is thought best to postpone Baptism until shortly before death. "Paul said, 'Thecla, wait with patience, and thou shalt receive the water'" (6:87). When she expected her death in the arena, "she turned and saw a ditch full of water and said, 'Now is the time to wash myself.' And she threw herself in, saying, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I am baptized on my last day'" (6:91).

Queen Tryphena's "daughter Falconilla had died and said to her in a dream, 'Mother, thou shalt have this stranger Thecla in my place, in order that she may pray concerning me and that I may be transferred to the place of the just'" (6:89). And Thecla, "nothing hesitating, lifted up her voice and said: 'God most high, grant to this woman according to her wish that her daughter Falconilla may live forever'" (2:490).

We can see here how a church which found its criterion of truth in men developed a Roman Catholic system of doctrine.

Davies asserts, "The author is not accurate in his geography, and he is inaccurate in his political history" (1:335). There are several instances of psychological errors, growing in one soil with the others:

Paul is duped by hypocrites: "His fellow travelers were Demas and Ermogenes, full of hypocrisy; and they were importunate with Paul as if they loved him. But Paul, looking only to the goodness of Christ, did them no harm, but loved them exceedingly so that he made the oracles of the Lord sweet to them in the teaching both of the birth and the resurrection of the Beloved" (6:78). When Alexander tries to buy Thecla from Paul, Paul denies her: "I know not the woman whom thou speakest of, nor

is she mine" (6:88). Other women who see her in the arena cry out in sympathy; but "her mother cried out saying, 'Burn the wicked' (wretch)" (6:88, 85).

Plagiaristic Use of the Scriptures

The statements of Demas and Ermogenes sound like a preacher's commentary on 2 Tim. 2:17-18: "We shall teach thee that the resurrection of which this man speaks has taken place, because it has taken place in the children which we have; and we rose again when we came to the knowledge of the true God" (6:83).

"For three days and three nights Thecla does not rise from the window, neither to eat nor to drink" (6:81). Cp. Acts 9:9. The proconsul says to Paul, "They bring no small charges against thee." And Paul lifted up his voice, saying, "Since I am this day examined as to what I teach," etc. (6:83). Cp. Acts 4:9. "The proconsul, having heard, ordered Paul to be bound and sent to prison, 'until,' said he, 'I, being at leisure, shall hear him more attentively'" (6:84). Cp. Acts 24:25. "The proconsul gladly heard Paul" (6:85). Cp. Mark 6:20. "Paul was fasting . . . in a new tomb" (6:86). Cp. Matt. 27:60. Paul says, "You have no power over me, except over my body, but my soul you cannot kill" (3:107). Cp. John 19:11; Matt. 10:28. Paul and Thecla "had five loaves" (6:87). Cp. Matt. 14:17. Persons cleansed from evil spirits are "glorifying God, who had given such grace to the virgin Thecla" (6:96). Cp. Matt. 9:8. Thecla tells the governor, "I have believed in the Son of God in whom He is well pleased" (6:92). Cp. Matt. 3:17.

A liturgical echo of 1 Pet. 4:11 and similar doxologies are found in the final statements, "Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom be glory and strength forever and ever" (6:95), and "the Father of Christ, whose glory is forever and ever. Amen" (3:109).

Much of the New Testament was, therefore, in the training and thinking of the author(s) of this document. The adoption of these elements also is a testimony for the high respect with which the New Testament writings were regarded.

Multiplication of the Miraculous

The temple of Apollo at Sidon, in which Paul is imprisoned, miraculously collapses, but Paul escapes. The lion speaks to Paul. Paul is delivered from the lions (3:111).

Thecla "saw the Lord sitting in the likeness of Paul. . . . And though a great fire was blazing, it did not touch her; for God, having compassion upon her, made an underground rumbling, and a cloud overshadowed them from above, full of water and hail; and all that was in the cavity of it was poured out, so that many were in danger of death. And the fire was put out and Thecla saved." (6:86.) "The lioness, having run up to her feet, lay down. . . . And a bear ran upon her; but the lioness, meeting the bear, tore her in pieces" (6:90). "The seals, having seen the glare of the

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fire of lightning, floated about dead. And there was round her, as she was naked, a cloud of fire; so that neither could the wild beasts touch her, nor could she be seen naked. . . . All the wild beasts that had been thrown in, as if they had been withheld by sleep, did not touch her" (6:91). When bound on the bulls, "the burning flame consumed the ropes, and she was as if she had not been bound" (6:91). "Cures were done by her. All the city, therefore, and country round, having known this, brought their sick to the mountain; and before they came near the door, they were speedily released from whatever disease they were afflicted by; and the unclean spirits went out shrieking, and all received their own health" (6:96). "There came a voice out of the heaven, 'Fear not, Thecla, my true servant, for I am with thee.' . . . And the blessed Thecla . . . saw the rock opened as far as to allow a man to enter, and the rock was straightway shut together, so that not even the joining appeared" (6:97-8).

These miracles seem to be cut loose from their Scriptural function. There is little struggling for them in prayer; there is little awareness that God's will and thoughts are superior to our will and thoughts. They come with the ease of a writer pushing a button of his imagination to flash them on the screen. They decorate a tale. They serve as a thickening to impress the senses and to overcome the thinness of essential Christian truth.

The Church Fathers did not permit fictions that were current in the Church to infect their own veracity as teachers. "No Church Father of the second century claims to have worked miracles, although some of them freely report miracles" (1:336).

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