

Relevance of Christianity in this World

Written by W.J.Pais

Jesus Christ, is at the center of the Christian Faith. He was the culmination of Jewish expectations, which were prophesized by prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah. These were living before the period of the captivity of the Jews by the king of Babylonia, the present day Iraq. About six hundred before the birth of Jesus, this sad period in the history of the Jews brought them great suffering and humiliation. The Persian Kings sent the exiled Jews back to their homes, after defeating the Babylonian kings.

The life of Jesus started in insignificance in Bethlehem. For thirty years he lived in Nazareth, as is reported by the disciples of Jesus. For the last three years of his life, he spent in fulfilling his mission, and taught the Jews, and this came in conflict with the Jewish leaders, who wanted to over throw the Roman yoke, but Jesus did not show interest in their vision. As is prevalent even today, politics lead to decisions, which may seem to be in the national interest, but eventually backfire. Take the case of Serbs who were subjugated first by the Western Roman empire, under the Catholic rule, and then by the Ottoman Empire which was the succesor of the Eastern Roman Empire, who had accepted the Islamic faith. The proselytatization, caused upheaval in society, and the conflicts arising from the same, were the cause of many injustices which were nursed by the subjugated people, which erupted in the recent war in Yugoslavia.

In the same way, the crucifixion of Jesus, was thought to be a way out of the dilemma placed in front of the Jewish leaders, who thought that it would be a better deal to kill him, rather than be terrorized by the Romans. However, Jesus appeared to the disciples three days after his death, and this became a problem to the Jewish priests, and ever since, there was a fissure in Jewish society, where gradually, people turned to the teaching of Jesus, in spite of persecutions.

In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and expelled the Jews who migrated to different parts of the empire, and some landed in India too. It was to tell these Jews, that St. Thomas one of the disciples of Jesus came to the southern part of India, and the Kerala Christians are the descendants of the first converts made by St. Thomas.

The Romans persecuted the Christians, since they refused to accept their religious practices. For three hundred years the persecutions continued, but ended with the conversion of the Roman emperor, Constantine, who made it the state religion.

Though the early Christians were simple and lived lives unobtrusively, the power they inherited as a result of being assimilated into the Roman society, gradually brought evil ways among them. This is always been brought as a reason, why the Catholic Faith is man made. In one way, the Faith binds people of different temperaments, and status, and not everyone lives by the standards set forth by Christ.

Recent events of waywardness among priests is posed as an example of the case of a dilapidated Faith, about to crumble at any moment.

If one thinks, that an association of human beings would last for ever one would be inclined to

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agree with that appraisal. But there is something fundamentally different in Jesus, which one can not pin point easily. In just three years, he turned the society upside down. He chose fishermen, as his first assistants, who were absolutely uneducated, and did not even know to write. He himself, did not write any thing but only taught people by word and example. His actions impressed the people, who started to go after him, and this displeased the Jewish priests, whose following was falling daily.

If one sees the history of the followers of Jesus, and the regions in which it once flourished, they have fallen into desolation, and the center has moved to other regions. In this century, the region is again shifting from America and Europe, to Africa and Asia. This is not the result of manipulation. Events in history have led inevitably to this movement. Christians attribute it to the promise of Jesus, that gates of hell will not prevail against his Church, which means his Community of Believers. He has promised to be with them till the end, and this is not easily understood by its detractors.

The message of Jesus Christ, is called Gospel, or good news, written by the disciples in the first century AD, primarily to prove to fellow Jews, how Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies. In the Christian worship, many of the Hebrew rituals, are still present. In the vestments used, one may see the influence of the regions in which the Church flourished over the centuries.

The message of Christ does not depend on the behavior of the individual followers, who like Judas in the time of Christ, can still betray his cause. It is His intervention in human affairs, which changes the direction and the result is un expected. In the meantime, many whose faith is dependant on false premises, may fall by the side, but Jesus knows their mind and their dilemmas, and his mercy is unfathomable. He said the same of his fellow Jews: "Father forgive them, they do not know what they do";

When we face persecution and opposition, the first human instinct is to fight back, but this was never the way that Christ would have used. In Palestine, when Islam became the official religion, the rulers demolished the sacred relics and churches, and one should not be surprised, if the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, wants to demolish all churches. This has precedents in their history, but even among them better sense prevailed eventually, and people lived in harmony. Thus God can unite, when man wants to divide.