

CHAPTER 29

CHRISTIANIZING THE UNTOUCHABLES

I. Growth of Christianity in India. II. Time and money spent in Missionary effort. III. Reasons for slow growth.

I

How old is Christianity in India ? What progress has it made among the people of India ? These are questions which no one who is interested in the Untouchables can fail to ask. The two questions are so intimately connected that the endeavour for the spread of Christianity would be hopeless if there were not in India that vast body of untouchables who, by their peculiar circumstances, are most ready to respond to the social message of Christianity.

The following figures will give some idea of the population of Indian Christians as compared with other communities in India according to the Census of 1931.

INDIA AND BURMA

Population by Religion	1891 Census	1921 Census	1931 Census	Increase# Decrease—
Hindu		216,734,586	239,195,140	#10.4
Muslims		68,735,233	77,677,545	#13
Buddhist		11,571,268	12,786,806	#10.5
Sikh		3,238,803	4,335,771	#33.9
Primitive Religions		9,774,611	8,280,347	— 15.3
Christian		4,754,064	6,296,763	#32.5
Jain		1,178,596	1,252,105	# 6.2
Zoroastrian		101,778	109,752	# 7.8
Jews		21,778	24,141	#10.9
Unreturned		18,004	2,860,187
Total	. .	316,128,721	352,818,557	#10.6

It is true that during the 1921 and 1931 Christianity has shown a great increase. From the point of growth Sikhism takes the first place. Christianity comes second and Islam another proselytizing religion comes third. The difference between the first and the second is so small that the second place occupied by Christianity may be taken to be as good as first. Again the difference between the second and the third place occupied by Islam is so enormous that Christians may well be proud of their having greatly outdistanced so serious a rival.

With all this the fact remains that this figure of 6,296,763 is out of a total of 352,818,557. This means that the Christian population in India is about 1.7 p.c. of the total.

II

In how many years and after what expenditure? As to expenditure it is not possible to give any accurate figures. Mr. George Smith in his book on "The Conversion of India" published in 1893 gives statistics which serve to give some idea of the resources spent by Christian Nations for Missionary work in heathen countries. This is what he says:

"We do not take into account their efforts, vigorous and necessary, especially in the lands of Asia and North Africa occupied by the Eastern Churches for whom Americans do much, nor any labours for Christians by Christians of a purer faith and life. Leaving out of account also the many wives of missionaries who are represented statistically in their husbands, Rev. J. Vahl, President of the Danish Missionary Society, gives us these results. We accept them as the most accurately compiled, and as almost too cautiously estimated where estimate is unavoidable. In Turkey and Egypt only work among the Musalmans is reckoned.

	1890	1891
Income (English Money)	£2,412,938	£2,749,340
Missionaries	4,652	5,094
Missionaries unmarried ladies	2,118	2,445
Native Ministers	3,424	3,730
Other Native helpers	36,405	40,438
Communicants	966,856	1,168,560

We abstain from estimating in detail the results for 1892, as they are about to appear, and still less for the year 1893, but experts can do this for themselves. This only we would say, that the number of

native communicants added in those two years has been very large, especially in India. Allowing for that, we should place them now at 1,300,000 which gives a native Christian community of 5,200,000 gathered out of all non-Catholic lands.

Dean Vahl's statistics are drawn from the reports of 304 mission societies and agencies in 1891, beginning with Cromwell's New England Company, for America, in 1649. On the following page the details are summarised from seventeen lands of Reformed Christendom. The amount raised in 1891 by the 160 Mission Churches and Societies of the British Empire was £ 1,659,830 and by the 57 of the United States of America £786,992. Together the two great English speaking peoples spent £2,446,822 on the evangelisation of the non-Christian world. The balance 302,518 was contributed by Germany and Switzerland, Netherlands, Denmark, France, Norway, Sweden, Finland and in Asia."

It is not possible to give any idea of the resources now utilized in the cause because they are not published. But we have sufficient data to know how many years it has taken to produce these 6 millions of converts.

Of the first missionary to India who came and sowed there the seed of Christianity there is no record. It is believed that Christianity in India is of apostolic origin and it is suggested that the apostle Thomas was the founder of it. The apostolic origin of Christianity is only a legend notwithstanding the existence of what is called St. Thomas's Mount near Madras which is said to be the burial place of the Apostle. There is no credible evidence to show that the Gospel was even preached in India during the first Century. There is some evidence to show that in the second century the Gospel had reached the ears of the dwellers on the Southern Indian Coast, among the pearl fishers of Ceylon and the cultivators on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel. This news when brought back by the Egyptian Mariners spread among the Christians of Alexandria. Alexandria was the first to send a Christian Missionary to India, whose name is recorded in history. He was Pantoenus, a Greek stoic who had become a Christian and was appointed by Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria as the principal and sole catechist of the school of the Catechumens, which had been established for the instruction of the heathen in the facts and doctrines of Christianity. At some time between the years 180 and 190 the Bishop of Alexandria received an Appeal from the Christians in India to send them a Missionary and Pantoenus was accordingly sent. How long he was in India, how far inland he travelled and what work he actually did, there is no record to show. All that is known is that he

went back to Alexandria, and took charge of his school and continued to be its principal till 211 A.D.

Little is known of the progress of the Gospel on Indian soil through the third century. But there is this fact worthy of notice. It is this that when the Council of Nicaca was held in 325 A.D. after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine Johannes, one of the Assembled prelates described himself as "Metropolitan of Persian and of the Great India". This fact seems to indicate that there was at that time a Christian Church of some bulk and significance planted on the Indian Coast. On the other hand this probably implied little more than an episcopal claim to what had always, as in the Book of Esther, been considered a province of the Persian Empire.

The scene shifts from Alexandria to Antioch and from the beginning of the third to the end of the fifth century. It is Antioch which took the burden of Christian enterprize upon its own shoulder.

The sixth century was the last peaceful year for Christian propaganda. This seems to mark the end of one epoch. Then followed the rise of the Saracens who carried the Koran and Sword of Mahammad all over Western Asia and Northern Africa, then threatened Europe itself up to Vienna and from Spain into the heart of France. The result was that all the Christian people were distracted and their Missionary effort was held up for several centuries.

The voyage of Vasco de Gama in the year 1497 to India marks the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Christian Missionary effort in India and the most serious and determined effort commenced with the arrival of the great Missionary Francis Xavier in the year 1542. The Portuguese were the first European power in the East and the earliest efforts of modern times in the direction of Christianizing the natives of India were made under their auspices. The conversions effected under the auspices of the Portuguese were of course conversions to the Roman Catholic faith and were carried out by Roman Catholic Missions.

They were not, however, left long without rivals. The Protestants soon came into the field. The earliest Protestant propaganda was that of the Lutherans who established themselves in Tranquebar in 1706 under the patronage of the King of Denmark. The able and devoted Schwartz, who laboured in Trichinopoly and Tanjore throughout the second half of the 18th Century was a member of this mission, which has since, to a great extent, been taken over by the Society for the propagation of the Gospel.

Next came the Baptist Mission under Carey who landed in Calcutta in 1793. Last came the Anglican Church which entered the Missionary

field in 1813 and since then the expansion of Missionary enterprize was rapid and continuous.

Thus Christian propaganda has had therefore a long run in India. It had had four centuries before the rise of the Saracens who caused a break in the Mission Activity. Again after subsidence of the Saracens it has had nearly four centuries. This total of six millions is the fruit gathered in eight centuries. Obviously this is a very depressing result. It depressed Francis Xavier. It even depressed Abbe Dubois who, writing in 1823 some three hundred years after Xavier, declared that to convert Hindus to Christianity was a forlorn hope. He was then criticized by the more optimistic of Christian Missionaries. But the fact remains that at the end of this period there are only about 6 million Christians out of a total population of about 358 millions. This is a very slow growth indeed and the question is, what are the causes of this slow growth.

III

It seems to me that there are three reasons which have impeded the growth of Christianity.

The first of these reasons is the bad morals of the early European settlers in India particularly Englishmen who were sent to India by the East India Company. Of the character of the men who were sent out to India Mr. Kaye, an Appologist of the Company and also of its servants speaks in the following terms in his "Christianity in India":

"Doubtless there were some honest, decent men from the middle classes amongst them But many, it appears from contemporary writers, were Society's hard bargains—youngsters, perhaps, of good family, to which they were a disgrace, and from the bosom of which therefore they were to be cast out, in the hope that there would be no prodigals return from the 'Great Indies'. It was not to be expected that men who had disgraced themselves at home would lead more respectable lives abroad.

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"There were, in truth, no outward motives to preserve morality of conduct, or even decency of demeanour; so from the moment of their landing upon the shore of India, the first settlers cast off all these bonds which had restrained them in their native villages; they regarded themselves as privileged beings—privileged to violate all the obligations of religion and morality and to outrage all the

decencies of life. They who went thither were often desperate adventurers, whom England, in the emphatic language of the Scripture, had spud out; men who sought those golden sands of the East to repair their broken fortunes; to bury in oblivion a sullied name; or to bring, with lawless hand from the weak and unsuspecting, wealth which they had not the character or capacity to obtain by industry at home. They cheated; they gambled; they drank; they revelled in all kinds of debauchery. Associates in vice, linked together by a common bond of rapacity, they still often pursued one another with desperate malice, and, few though they were in numbers, among them there was no fellowship, except a fellowship of crime.”

“All this was against the new comer; and so, whilst the depraved met with no inducement to reform the pure but rarely escaped corruption. Whether they were there initiated, or perpetrated in destructive error, equally may they be regarded as the victims of circumstance

How bad were the morals and behaviour of the early Christians can be gathered from the following instances quoted by Mr. Kaye.

“The Deputy-Governor of Bombay was in 1669 charged as under :

That he hath on the Sabbath day hindered the performance of public duty to God Almighty at the accustomed hour, continuing in drinking of health; detaining others with him against their wills; and whilst he drank, in false devotions upon his knees, a health devoted to the Union, in the time appointed for the service belonging to the Lord’s day, the unhappy sequel showed it to be but the projection of a further disunion.

“That to the great scandal of the inhabitants of the island, of all the neighbours round about, both popists and others that are idolators, in dishonour of the sobriety of the Protestant religion, he hath made frequent and heavy drinking meetings, continuing some times till two or three of the clock in the morning, to the neglecting of the service of God in the morning prayers, and the service of the Company in the meantime had stood still while he slept, thus perverting and converting to an ill private use, those refreshment intended for the factory in general.”

On these charges he was found guilty.

In the factories of the East India Company there was enough of internecine strife and the factors of the Company committed scandalous outrages in general defiance both of the laws of God and the decencies of man. They fought grievously among themselves; blows following words; and the highest persons in the settlement settling an example of pugnacity with their inferiors under the potent influence of drink.

The report of the following incident is extracted from the records of the Company's factory at Surat¹:

"We send your honours our consultation books from the 21st of August 1695 to 31st December 1696, in which does appear a conspiracy against the President's life, and a design to murder the guards, because he would have opposed it. How far Messrs. Vauxe and Upphill were concerned, we leave to your honours to judge by this and depositions before mentioned. There is strong presumption that it was intended first that the President should be stabbed and it was prevented much through the vigilance of Ephraim Bendall; when hopes of that failed by the guards being doubled, it seems poison was agreed on, as by the deposition of Edmund clerk and all bound to secrecy upon an horrid imprecation of damnation to the discoverer, whom the rest were to fall upon and cut off."

In the same document is recorded the complaint of Mr. Charles Peachey against the President of the Council at Surat—

"I have received from you (i.e. the President) two cuts on my head, the one very long and deep, the other a slight thing in comparison to that. Then a great blow on my left arm, which has enflamed the shoulder, and deprived me (at present), of the use of that limb; on my right side a blow on my ribs just beneath the pap, which is a stoppage to my breath, and makes me incapable of helping myself; on my left hip another, nothing inferior to the first; but above all a cut on the brow of my eye."

Such was the state of morality among the early English Settlers who came down to India. It is enough to observe that these settlers managed to work through the first eighty years of the seventeenth century without building a Church. Things did not improve in the 18th Century. Of the state of morality among Englishmen in India during the 18th Century this is what Mr. Kaye has to say—

"Of the state of Anglo Indian Society during the protracted Administration of Warren Hastings, nothing indeed can be said in praise those who ought to have set good example, did grievous wrong to Christianity by the lawlessness of their lives Hastings took another man's wife with his consent; Francis did the same without it It was scarcely to be expected that, with such examples before them, the less prominent members of society would be conspicuous for morality and decorum. In truth, it must be acknowledged that the Christianity of the English in India was, at this time, in a sadly depressed state. Men drank hard and gamed high, concubinage with the women of the country was the rule

¹ Quoted by Kaye, Christianity in India, p. 106.

rather than the exception. It was no uncommon thing for English gentlemen to keep populous zenanas. There was no dearth of exciting amusement in those days. Balls, masquerades, races and theatrical entertainments, enlivened the settlements, especially in the cold weather; and the mild excitement of duelling varied the pleasures of the season. Men lived, for the most part, short lives and were resolute that they should be merry ones."

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The drunkenness, indeed, was general and obtrusive. It was one of the besetting infirmities—the fashionable vices—of the period..... At the large Presidency towns—especially at Calcutta—public entertainments were not frequent. Ball suppers, in those days, were little less than orgies. Dancing was impossible after them, and fighting commonly took its place. If a public party went off without a duel or two, it was a circumstance as rare as it was happy. There was a famous club in those days, called Selby's Club, at which the gentlemen of Calcutta were wont to drink as high as they gamed, and which some times saw drunken bets of 1,000 gold mohurs laid about the merest trifles. Card parties often sat all through the night, and if the night chanced to be a Saturday, all through the next day.

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Honourable marriage was the exceptional state The Court of Directors of the East India Company were engaged in the good work of reforming the morals of their settlements; and thinking that the means of forming respectable marriages would be an important auxiliary, they sent out not only a supply of the raw material of soldiers' wives, but some better articles also, in the shape of what they called gentle women, for the use of such of their merchants and factors as might be matrimonially inclined. The venture, however, was not a successful one. The few who married made out indifferent wives, whilst they who did not marry,—and the demand was by no means brisk,—were, to say the least of it, in an equivocal position. For a time they were supported at the public expense, but they received only sufficient to keep them from starving, and so it happened naturally enough that the poor creatures betook themselves to vicious courses, and sold such charms as they had, if only to purchase strong drink, to which they became immoderately addicted, with the wages of their prostitution.

The scandal soon became open and notorious; and the President and Council at Surat wrote to the Deputy Governor and Council at Bombay, saying: "Whereas you give us notice that some of the women are grown scandalous to our native religion and Government, we require you in the Honourable Company's name to give them all fair warning that they do apply themselves to a more sober and Christian conversation: otherwise the sentence is that they shall be deprived totally of their liberty to go abroad, and fed with bread and water, till they are embarked on board ship for England."¹

How bad were the morals and behaviour of the early Christians can be gathered from the three following instances which are taken from contemporary records.

Captain Williamson in his 'Indian Vade Mecum' published about the year 1809 says—

"I have known various instances of two ladies being conjointly domesticated, and one of an elderly military character who solaced himself with no less than *sixteen* of all sorts and sizes. Being interrogated by a friend as to what he did with such a member, "Oh", replied he, 'I give them little rice, and let them run about'. This same gentleman when paying his addresses to an elegant young woman lately arrived from Europe, but who was informed by the lady at whose house she was residing, of the state of affairs, the description closed with 'Pray, my dear, how should you like to share a sixteenth of Major?'"

Such was the disorderliness and immorality among Englishmen in India. No wonder that the Indians marvelled whether the British acknowledged any God and believed in any system of morality. When asked what he thought of Christianity and Christians an Indian is reported to have said in his broken English—"Christian religion, devil religion; Christian much drunk; Christian much do wrong; much beat, much abuse others"—and who can say that this judgment was contrary to facts?

It is true that England herself was not at the relevant time overburdened with morality. The English people at home were but little distinguished for the purity of their lives and there was a small chance of British virtue dwarfed and dwindled at home, expending on foreign soil. As observed by Mr. Kaye² "The courtly licentiousness of the Restoration had polluted the whole land. The stamp of Whitehall was upon the currency of our daily lives; and it went out upon our adventurers in the Company's ships, and was not, we may be sure, to be easily effaced in a heathen land". Whatever be the excuse for this immorality of Englishmen in the 17th and 18th Century the fact

¹ Kaye, Christianity in India, p. 106. ² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

remains that it was enough to bring Christianity into disrepute, and make its spread extremely difficult.

The second impediment in the progress of Christianity in India was the struggle between the Catholic and Non-catholic Missions for supremacy in the field of proselytization.

The entry of the Catholic Church in the field of the spread of Christianity in India began in the year 1541 with the arrival of Francis Xavier. He was the first Missionary of the new Society of Jesus formed to support the authority of the Pope. Before the Catholic Church entered this field there existed in India particularly in the South a large Christian population which belonged to the Syrian Church. These Syrian Christians, long seated on the coast of Malabar, traced their paternity to the Apostle Thomas, who it is said "went through Syria and Cilicia conforming the Churches". They looked to Syria as their spiritual home. They acknowledged the supremacy of the Patriarch of Babylon. Of Rome and the Pope they knew nothing. During the rise of the Papacy, the Mahomedan power, which had overrun the intervening countries, had closed the gates of India against the nations of the West. This had saved the Syrian Churches in India from the Roman Catholic Church. As to the question whether the Christianity of the Catholic Church was the true form of Christianity or whether the Christianity of the Syrian Church was the true form I am not concerned here. But the facts remain that the Portuguese who represented the Catholic Church in India were scandalized at the appearance of the Syrian Churches which they declared to be heathen temples scarcely disguised. The Syrian Christians shrank with dismay from the defiling touch of the Roman Catholics of Portugal and proclaimed themselves Christians and not idolators. The other is that the Malabar Christians had never been subject to Roman supremacy and never subscribed to the Roman doctrine.

The elements of a conflict between the two Churches were thus present and the inquisition only gave an occasion for the conflagration.

The inquisitors of Goa discovered that they were heretics and like a wolf on the fold, down came the delegates of the Pope upon the Syrian Churches. How great was the conflict is told by Mr. Kaye in his volume already referred to.

The first Syrian prelate who was brought into antagonism with Rome, expiated his want of courage and sincerity in the dungeons of the Inquisition. The second shared the same fate. A third, whose sufferings are more worth of commiseration, died after much trial and tribulation in his diocese, denying the Pope's supremacy to the last. The churches were now without a Bishop, at a time when they more

than ever needed prelatical countenance and support; for Rome was about to put forth a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm. Don Alexis de Menezes was appointed Archbishop of Goa. It was his mission less to make new converts than to reduce old ones to subjection; and he flung himself into the work of persecution with an amount of zeal and heroism that must have greatly endeared him to Rome. Impatient of the slow success of his agents, he determined to take the staff into his own hand. Moving down to the South, with an imposing military force, he summoned the Syrian Churches to submit themselves to his authority. The Churches were under an Archdeacon, who, sensible of the danger that impended over them, determined to temporize, but at the same time to show that he was prepared to resist. He waited on the Archbishop. An escort of three thousand resolute men who accompanied him on his visit to Menezes, were with difficulty restrained, on the first slight and delusive sign of violence, from rushing on their opponents and proving their burning zeal in defence of their religion. It was not a time for Menezes to push the claims of the Romish Church. But no fear of resistance could divert him from his purpose; and he openly denounced the Patriarch of Babylon as a pestilent schismatic, and declared it a heresy to acknowledge his supremacy. He then issued a decree forbidding all persons to acknowledge any other supremacy than that of the Roman Pontiff, or to make any mention of the Syrian Patriarch in the services of their Church; and, this done, he publicly excommunicated the acknowledged head of the Syrian Churches, and called upon the startled Archdeacon to sign the writ of excommunication. Frightened and confused, the wretched man put his name to the apostate document; and it was publicly affixed to the gates of the church.

This intolerable insult on the one hand—this wretched compromise on the other—roused the fury of the people against the Archbishop, and against their own ecclesiastical chief. Hard was the task before him, when the latter went forth to appease the excited multitude. They would have made one desperate effort to sweep the Portuguese intruders from their polluted shores; but the Archdeacon pleaded with them for forbearance; apologised for his own weakness; urged that dissimulation would be more serviceable than revenge; promised, in spite of what he had done, to defend their religion; and exhorted them to be firm in their resistance of Papal aggression. With a shout of assent, they swore that they would never bow their necks to the yoke, and prepared themselves for the continuance of the struggle.

But Menezes was a man of too many resources to be worsted in such a conflict. His energy and perseverance were irresistible; his craft was

too deep to fathom. When one weapon of attack failed, he tried another. Fraud took the place of violence; money took the place of arms. He bribed those whom he could not bully, and appealed to the imaginations of men when he could not work upon their fears. And, little by little, he succeeded. First one Church fell, and then another. Dangers and difficulties beset them. Often had he to encounter violent resistance, and often did he beat it down. When the strength of the Syrian Christians was too great for him, he called in the aid of the native princes. The unhappy Archdeacon, weary of resistance and threatened with excommunication, at last made submission to the Roman Prelate. Menezes issued a decree for a synod; and, on the 20th June 1599, the Churches assembled at Diamper. The first session passed quietly over, but not without much secret murmuring. The second, at which the decrees were read, was interrupted at that trying point of the ceremony where, having enunciated the Confession of Faith, the Archbishop renounced and anathematized the Patriarch of Babylon. The discontent of the Syrians here broke out openly; they protested against the necessity of a confession of Faith, and urged that such a confession would imply that they were not Christians before the assembling of the Synod. But Menezes allayed their apprehensions and removed their doubts, by publicly making the confession in the name of himself and the Eastern Churches. One of the Syrian priests, who acted as interpreter, then read the confession in the Malabar language, and the assembled multitude repeated it after him, word for word, on their knees. And so the Syrian Christians bowed their necks to the yoke of Rome.

Resolute to improve the advantages he had gained, Menezes did not suffer himself to subside into inactivity, and to bask in the sunshine of his past triumphs. Whether it was religious zeal or temporal ambition that moved him, he did not relax from his labours; but feeling that it was not enough to place the yoke upon the neck of the Syrian Christians, he endeavoured, by all means, to keep it there. The Churches yielded sullen submission; but there were quick-witted, keen-sighted men among them, who, as the seventeenth century began to dawn upon the world, looked hopefully into the future, feeling assured that they could discern even then unmistakable evidences of the waning glories of the Portuguese in the East. There was hope then for the Syrian churches. The persecutions of Menezes were very grievous—for he separated priests from their wives; excommunicated, on trifling grounds, members of the churches; and destroyed all the old Syriac records which contained proofs of the early purity of their faith.

The irreparable barbarism of this last act was not to be forgotten or forgiven; but, in the midst of all other sufferings, there was consolation in the thought, that this tyranny was but for a time. "Sixty years of servitude and hypocrisy," writes Gibbon, "were patiently endured, but as soon as the Portuguese empire was shaken by the courage and industry of the Dutch, the Nestorians asserted with vigour and effect the religion of their fathers. The Jesuits were incapable of defending the power they had abused. The arms of forty thousand Christians were pointed against their falling tyrants; and the Indian Archdeacon assumed the character of Bishop till a fresh supply of Episcopal gifts and Syriac missionaries could be obtained from the Patriarch of Babylon". Such briefly narrated, were the results of the oppression of Menezes. In the course of six months that ambitious and unscrupulous prelate reduced the Syrian church to bondage, and for sixty years they wore the galling chains of Rome. But Menezes trusted in his own strength; he came as an earthly conqueror, and his reliance was on the arm of temporal authority. "His example," writes Mr. Hough, "should be regarded as a beacon to warn future Christian missionaries from the rock on which he foundered. Without faith and godliness nothing can ensure a church's prosperity. Failing in these, the prelate's designs, magnificent as they were deemed, soon came to nothing; and it deserves special remark, as an instructive interposition of Divine Providence, that the decline of the Portuguese interest in India commenced at the very period when he flattered himself that he had laid the foundation of its permanency."

There was no such open conflict between the Catholic Church and the Protestant Missionaries. There was however sufficient rivalry between them to prevent cooperation and conceited activity the lack of which also prevented a rapid growth of Christianity.

The third reason which is responsible for the slow growth of Christianity was the wrong approach made by the Christian Missionaries in charge of Christian propaganda. The early Christian Missionary started his campaign by inviting public disputations with learned Brahmins on the comparative merits of the Christian and the Hindu religions. This was a strange way of going about his task. But there was a plan behind it. The Christian Missionary felt that his task of converting the masses would be easy of achievement if he succeeded in converting the Brahmin and the higher classes of Hindus. For they and the Brahmins held sway over the masses. And the easiest way of converting the Brahmin was to defeat in disputation and to show him that his religion was an error. The Christian Missionary wanted to get at the Brahmin. Nothing can explain why the Missionaries started so

many schools, colleges, hospitals etc., except this namely the Christian Missionary wanted to establish a contact with the Brahmin. That the Christian Missionary has been deceived is now realized by many. The Brahmin and the higher classes have taken full advantage of the institutions maintained by the Christian Missions. But hardly any one of them has given any thought to the religion which brought these institutions into existence.

There is nothing strange in this. The pursuit of the Brahmin and the higher classes of Hindus by the Christian Missionaries was doomed to fail. There would be no common ground for the disputation between Hinduism and Christianity and where there is a common ground the Hindu could always beat the Christian.

That there could be no common ground for disputation between Hindus and Christians is due to the fact that the two have a totally different attitude to the relations of theology to philosophy. As has been well observed by Mr. Burn,¹

“The Educated Hindu, when he considers religious questions, refuses to separate theology from philosophy and demands what shall appear to him a reasonable cosmogony. It has been shown in dealing with Hinduism that its prevailing tendency is pantheistic, and although for at least two thousand years sects have constantly been forming which asserted the duality of God and Spirit, there has always been a tendency to relapse into pantheism, and to regard the present world as an illusion produced by *Maya*. The average Christian however gets on with very little philosophy and regards that as a rule as more speculative than essential to his religious beliefs. The methods of thought which a man has been brought up to regard, inevitably affect the conclusions at which he arrives, and it appears to me that this forms one of the reasons why to the majority of educated Hindus the idea of accepting Christianity is incredible. To take a single concrete example, the ordinary educated Hindu laughs at the belief that God created the Universe out of nothing. He may believe in a creation, but he also postulates the necessity for both a material cause, *matter* and an efficient cause, the *creator*. Where his belief is purely pantheistic, he also has no regard for historical evidences. A further difficulty on a fundamental point is caused by the belief in transmigration, which is based on the idea that a man must work out his own salvation and thus conflicts entirely with the belief in Divine atonement.”

Thus the Hindu speaks in terms of philosophy and the Christian speaks in terms of theology. There is thus no common ground for evaluation, or commendation or condemnation. In so far as both have

¹ Census of India, 1901 Vol. XVI, N. W. Pandbudh. Report Part I, p. 98.

theology the Christians with their God and Jesus as his son and the Hindus with their God and his Avatars, the superiority of one over the other, depends upon the miracles performed by them. In this the Hindu theology can beat the Christian theology is obvious enough and just as absence of philosophy in Christianity is responsible for its failure to attract the Brahmin and the Educated Hindu. Similarly the abundance of miracles in Hindu theology was enough to make Christian theology pale off in comparison. Father Gregory a Roman Catholic priest seems to have realized this difficulty and as his view is interesting as well as instructive I give below the quotations from Col. Sleeman's book in which it is recorded. Says Col. Sleeman¹.

“Father Gregory, the Roman Catholic priest, dined with us one evening, and Major Godby took occasion to ask him at table, ‘What progress our religion was making among the people’ ?

“Progress” ? said he, “why, what progress can we ever hope to make among a people who, the moment we begin to talk to them about the miracles performed by Christ, begin to tell us of those infinitely more wonderful performed by Krishna, who lifted a mountain upon his little finger, as an umbrella, to defend his shepherdesses at Govardhan from a shower of rain.

“The Hindoos never doubt any part of the miracles and prophecies of our scripture—they believe every word of them and the only thing that surprises them is that they should be so much less wonderful than those of their own scriptures, in which also they implicitly believe. Men who believe that the histories of the wars and amours of Ram and Krishna, two of the incarnations of Vishnu, were written some fifty thousand years before these wars and amours actually took place upon the earth, would of course easily believe in the fulfilment of any prophecy that might be related to them out of any other book; and, as to miracles, there is absolutely nothing too extraordinary for their belief. If a Christian of respectability were to tell a Hindoo that, to satisfy some scruples of the Corinthians, St. Paul had brought the sun and moon down upon the earth, and made them rebound off again into their places, like tennis balls, without the slightest injury to any of the three planets (sic), I do not think he would feel the slightest doubt of the truth of it; but he would immediately be put in mind of something still more extra-ordinary that Krishna did to amuse the milkmaids, or to satisfy some sceptics of his day, and relate it with all the naivete imaginable.”

¹ Rambles and Recollections Vol. 1, Ch. 53. p. 407.

As events in India have shown this was a wrong approach. It was certainly just the opposite to the one adopted by Jesus and his disciples. Gibbon has given a description of the growth of Christianity in Rome which shows from what end Christ and his disciples began. This is what he says—

“From this impartial, though imperfect, survey of the process of Christianity, it may, perhaps seem probable that the number of its proselytes has been excessively magnified by fear on one side and by devotion on the other. According to the irreproachable testimony of Origen, the proportion of the faithful was very inconsiderable when compared with the multitude of an unbelieving world; but, as we are left without any distinct information, it is impossible to determine, and it is difficult even to conjecture, the real numbers of the primitive Christians. The most favourable calculation, however, that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross before the important conversion of Constantine. But their habits of faith, of zeal, and of union seemed to multiply their numbers; and the same causes which contributed to their future increase served to render their actual strength more apparent and more formidable.

“Such is the constitution of civil society that, whilst a few persons are distinguished by riches, by honours, and by knowledge, the body of the people is condemned to obscurity, ignorance and poverty. The Christian religion, which addressed itself to the whole human race, must consequently collect a far greater number of proselytes from the lower than from the superior ranks of life. This innocent and natural circumstance has been improved into a very odious imputation, which seems to be less strenuously denied by the apologists than it is urged by the adversaries of the faith; that the new sect of Christians was almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace, of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women, of beggars and slaves; the last of whom might sometimes introduce the missionaries into the rich and noble families to which they belonged. These obscure teachers (such was the charge of malice and infidelity) are as mute in public as they are loquacious and dogmatical in private. Whilst they cautiously avoid the dangerous encounter of philosophers, they mingle with the rude and illiterate crowd, and insinuate themselves into those minds, whom their age, their sex, or their education has the best disposed to receive the impression of superstitious terrors.

“This favourable picture, though not devoid of a faint resemblance, betrays, by its dark colouring and distorted features, the pencil of an enemy. As the humble faith of Christ diffused itself through the world, it was embraced by several persons who derived some consequences from the advantages of nature or fortune. Aristides, who presented an eloquent apology to the emperor Hadrian, was an Athenian philosopher. Justin Martyr had sought divine knowledge in the schools of Zeno, or Aristotle, of Pythagoras, and of Plato, before he fortunately was accosted by the old men, or rather the angel, who turned his attention to the study of the Jewist prophets. Clemens of Alexandria had acquired much various reading in the Greek, and Tertullian in the Latin language; Julius Africanus and Origen possessed a very considerable share of the learning of their times; and, although the style of Cyprian is very different from that of Lactantius, we might almost discover that both those writers had been public teachers of rhetoric. Even the study of philosophy was at length introduced among the Christians, but it was not always productive of the most salutary effects; knowledge was as often the parent of heresy as of devotion, and the description which was designed for the followers of Artemon may, with equal propriety, be applied to the various sects that resisted the successors of the apostles. ‘They presume to alter the holy scriptures, to abandon the ancient rule of faith, and to form their opinion according to the subtile precepts of logic. The science of the church is neglected for the study of geometry, and they lose sight of Heaven while they are employed in measuring the earth. Euclid is perpetually in their hands. Aristotle and Theophrastus are the objects of their admiration; and they express an uncommon reverence for the works of Galen. Their errors are derived from the abuse of the arts and sciences of the infidels, and they corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel by the refinements of human reason.’

“Nor can it be affirmed with truth that the advantages of birth and fortune were always separated from the profession of Christianity. Several Roman citizens were brought before the tribunal of Pliny, and he soon discovered that a great number of persons of every order of men in Bithynia had deserted the religion of their ancestors. His unsuspected testimony may, in this instance, obtain more credit than the bold challenge of Tertullian, when he addresses himself to the fears as well as to the humanity of the proconsul of Africa, by assuring him. that, if he persists in his cruel intentions, he must decimate Carthage, and that he will find among the guilty many persons of his own rank, senators and matrons of

noblest extraction, and the friends or relations of his most intimate friends. It appears, however, that about forty years afterwards the emperor Valerian was persuaded of the truth of this assertion, since in one of his rescripts he evidently supposes that senators, Roman knights, and ladies of quality were engaged in the Christian sect. The church still continued to increase its outward splendour as it lost its internal purity; and in the reign of Diocletian the palace, the courts of justice, and even the army concealed a multitude of Christians who endeavoured to reconcile the interests of the present with those of a future life.

And yet these exceptions are either too few in number, or too recent in time, entirely to remove the imputation of ignorance and obscurity which has been so arrogantly cast on the first proselytes of Christianity. Instead of employing in our defence the fictions of later ages, it will be more prudent to convert the occasion of scandal into a subject of edification. Our serious thoughts will suggest to us that the apostles themselves were chosen by providence among the fishermen of Galilee, and that the lower we depress the temporal condition of the first Christians, the more reason we shall find to admire their merit and success. It is incumbent on us diligently to remember that the kingdom of heaven was promised to the poor in spirit, and that minds afflicted by calamity and the contempt of mankind cheerfully listen to the divine promise of future happiness; while, on the contrary, the fortunate are satisfied with the possession of this world; and the wise abuse in doubt and dispute their vain superiority of reason and knowledge.”

Similarly Hallam in his ‘History of the Middle Ages’ speaks of the class from which the early Christians were drawn.

The reason why Christianity became the religion of all citizens of Rome i.e. of the higher classes as well was because of two extraneous reasons. The first reason was the making of Christianity state religion which meant the proscribing every other religion. The second reason was the change in the law of inheritance by the Roman Emperors after they became converts to Christianity a preferential right to inherit the property of the parents over a child which had remained pagan.

This only shows that the people to whom Christianity made a natural appeal were the poorer classes and it is among them that Christianity first spread without the help of law or other extraneous advantage.

The early Christian Missionary began by reversing this natural order of things. I call it natural because it befits human psychology. Prof. Thorndyke¹ a great authority on Psychology says—“*That* a man

¹ Psychology, Vol. 1.

thinks is a biological fact. But *What* he thinks is a sociological fact". This profound observation, the early Christian Missionary absolutely overlooked. Every kind of thought is not agreeable to every person. This is evident from the fact that capitalism appeals to the rich and does not appeal to the poor. On the contrary socialism appeals to the poor but does not appeal to the rich. This is because there is a very intimate connection between the interests of a man and the thoughts which have an adverse effect on his interests. He will not give them any quarters in his mind. Applying this analysis of the working of the human mind it is clear that the Brahmin and the higher classes could never be receptive to the Christian doctrine. It preaches brotherhood of man and when applied leads to equality of man. Now the interests of the Brahmin and the higher classes is to maintain the system of Chaturvarna—which is a system based upon inequality and which in the scale gives them a higher rank, greater opportunity to dominate and exploit the others. How can they be expected to accept Christianity? It means a surrender of their power and prestige. To have pursued them has been a vain effort and if the pursuit had been continued I am sure there would have been no Christians in India at all. The number of Christians we see in India today is due to the fact that some Christian Missionaries saw the futility of this. If they had not realized this error and started to win over the lower classes, there would have been no Christians in India at all. Even today hundreds and thousands of high caste Hindus take advantage of Christian schools, Christian colleges and Christian hospitals. How many of those who reap these benefits become Christian? Every one of them takes the benefit and runs away and does not even stop to consider what must be the merits of a religion which renders so much service to humanity.

