

# Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability: Religious

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## Religious

(One of the schemes of Dr. Ambedkar is " The Conversion of the Untouchables ". This scheme includes the following chapters:

- (1) Hinduism as a Missionary Religion.
- (2) Christianising the Untouchables.
- (3) The Condition of the Convert.
- (4) The Eternal Verity.

(5) The Untouchables and Their Destiny. From these essays, Sr. Nos. 2 and 3 have been received from Shri S. S. Rege and Sr. No. 1 has been found in our papers under the title ' Caste and Conversion ', which was originally published in the Telagu Samachar Special No. of November 1926. One more typed essay entitled "Away from the Hindus ", which also deals with religious conversion of the Untouchables, has been found and included in this Book. Rest of the titles mentioned in the above scheme have not been found.)

## CHAPTER 1

### AWAY FROM THE HINDUS

A large majority of Untouchables who have reached a capacity to think out their problem believe that one way to solve the problem of the Untouchables is for them to abandon Hinduism and be converted to some other religion. At a Conference of the Mahars held in Bombay on 31st May 1936 a resolution to this effect was unanimously passed. Although the Conference was a Conference of the Mahars<sup>1</sup>, the resolution had the support of a very large body of Untouchables throughout India. No resolution had created such a stir. The Hindu community was shaken to its foundation and curses imprecations and threats were uttered against the Untouchables who were behind this move.

Four principal objections have been urged by the opponents against the conversion of the Untouchables:

- (1) What can the Untouchables gain by conversion? Conversion can make no change in the status of the Untouchables.
- (2) All religions are true, all religions are good. To change religion is a futility.
- (3) The conversion of the Untouchables is political in its nature.
- (4) The conversion of the Untouchables is not genuine as it is not based on faith.

It cannot take much argument to demonstrate that the objections are puerile and inconsequential.

To take the last objection first. History abounds with cases where conversion has taken place without any religious motive. What was the

<sup>1</sup>[\[f1\]](#) The Conference was confined to Mahars because the intention was to test the intensity of feeling communitywise and to take soundings from each community.

The typed pages with Sr. Nos. from 279 to 342 have been found in this script which is titled as Chapter XX under the heading 'Away from the Hindus nature of its conversion of Clovis and his subjects to Christianity? How did Ethelbert and his Kentish subjects become Christians? Was there a religious motive which led them to accept the new religion? Speaking on the nature of conversions to Christianity that had taken place during the middle ages Rev. Reichel says:[\[f2\]](#)

" One after another the nations of Europe are converted to the faith; their conversion is seen always to proceed from above, never from below. Clovis yields to the bishop Remigius and forthwith he is followed by the Baptism of 3,000 Franks. Ethelbert yields to the mission of Augustine and forthwith all Kent follows his example; when his son Eadbald apostatises, the men of Kent apostatise with him. Essex is finally won by the conversion of King Sigebert, who under the influence of another king, Oswy, allows himself to be baptised. Northumberland is temporarily gained by the conversion of its king, Edwin, but falls away as soon as Edwin is dead. It anew accepts the faith, when another king, Oswald, promotes its diffusion. In the conversion of Germany, a bishop, Boniface, plays a prominent part, in close connection with the princes of the country, Charles Martel and Pepin; the latter, in return for his patronage receiving at Soissons the Church's sanction to a violent act of usurpation. Denmark is gained by the conversion of its kings, Herald Krag, Herald Blastand and Canute, Sweden by that of the two Olofs; and Russian, by the conversion of its sovereign, Vladimir. Everywhere Christianity addresses itself first to kings and princes; everywhere the bishops and abbots appear as its only representatives.

Nor was this all, for where a king had once been gained, no obstacle by the Mediaeval missionaries to the immediate indiscriminate baptism of his subjects. Three thousand warriors of Clovis following the example of their king, were at once admitted to the sacred rite; the subjects of Ethelbert were baptised in numbers after the conversion of their prince, without preparation, and with hardly any instruction. The Germans only were less hasty in following the example of others. In Russia, so great was the number of those who crowded to be baptised after the baptism of Vladimir, that the sacrament

had to be administered to hundreds at a time." History records cases where conversion has taken place as a result of compulsion or deceit.

Today religion has become a piece of ancestral property. It passes from father to son so does inheritance. What genuineness is there in such cases of conversion? The conversion of the Untouchables if it did take place would take after full deliberation of the value of religion and the virtue of the different religions. How can such a conversion be said to be not a genuine conversion? On the other hand, it would be the first case in history of genuine conversion. It is therefore difficult to understand why the genuineness of the conversion of the Untouchables should be doubted by anybody.

The third objection is an ill-considered objection. What political gain will accrue to the Untouchables from their conversion has been defined by nobody. If there is a political gain, nobody has proved that it is a direct inducement to conversion.

The opponents of conversion do not even seem to know that a distinction has to be made between a gain being a direct inducement to conversion and its being only an incidental advantage. This distinction cannot be said to be a distinction without a difference. Conversion may result in a political gain to the Untouchables. It is only where a gain is a direct inducement that conversion could be condemned as immoral or criminal. Unless therefore the opponents of conversion prove that the conversion desired by the Untouchables is for political gain and for nothing else their accusation is baseless. If political gain is only an incidental gain then there is nothing criminal in conversion. The fact, however, is that conversion can bring no new political gain to the Untouchables. Under the constitutional law of India every religious community has got the right to separate political safeguards. The Untouchables in their present condition enjoy political rights similar to those which are enjoyed by the Muslims and the Christians. If they change their faith the change is not to bring into existence political rights which did not exist before. If they do not change they will retain the political rights which they have. Political gain has no connection with conversion. The charge is a wild charge made without understanding.

The second objection rests on the premise that all religions teach the same thing. It is from the premise that a conclusion is drawn that since all religions teach the same thing there is no reason to prefer one religion to other. It may be conceded that all religions agree in holding that the meaning of life is to be found in the pursuit of 'good'. Up to this point the validity of the premise may be conceded. But when the premise goes beyond and asserts that because of this there is no reason to prefer one religion to another it becomes a false premise.

Religions may be alike in that they all teach that the meaning of life is to be found in the pursuit of 'good'. But religions are not alike in their answers to the question 'What is good?' In this they certainly differ. One religion holds that brotherhood is good, another caste and untouchability is good.

There is another respect in which all religions are not alike. Besides being an authority

which defines what is good, religion is a motive force for the promotion and spread of the ' good '. Are all religions agreed in the means and methods they advocate for the promotion and spread of good? As pointed out by Prof. Tiele<sup>[f3]</sup>, religion is:

" One of the mightiest motors in the history of mankind, which formed as well as tore asunder nations, united as well as divided empires, which sanctioned the most atrocious and barbarous deeds, the most libinous customs, inspired the most admirable acts of heroism, self renunciation, and devotion, which occasioned the most sanguinary wars, rebellions and persecutions, as well as brought about the freedom, happiness and peace of nations—at one time a partisan of tyranny, at another breaking its chains, now calling into existence and fostering a new and brilliant civilization, then the deadly foe to progress, science and art."

Apart from these oscillations there are permanent differences in the methods of promoting good as they conceive it. Are there not religions which advocate violence ? Are there not religions which advocate nonviolence ? Given these facts how can it be said that all religions are the same and there is no reason to prefer one to the other.

In raising the second objection the Hindu is merely trying to avoid an examination of Hinduism on its merits. It is an extraordinary thing that in the controversy over conversion not a single Hindu has had the courage to challenge the Untouchables to say what is wrong with Hinduism. The Hindu is merely taking shelter under the attitude generated by the science of comparative religion. The science of comparative religion has broken down the arrogant claims of all revealed religions that they alone are true and all others which are not the results of revelation are false. That revelation was too arbitrary, too capricious test to be accepted for distinguishing a true religion from a false was undoubtedly a great service which the science of comparative religion has rendered to the cause of religion. But it must be said to the discredit of that science that it has created the general impression that all religions are good and there is no use and purpose in discriminating them.

The first objection is the only objection which is worthy of serious consideration. The objection proceeds on the assumption that religion is a purely personal matter between man and God. It is supernatural. It has nothing to do with social. The argument is no doubt sensible. But its foundations are quite false. At any rate, it is a one-sided view of religion and that too based on aspects of religion which are purely historical and not fundamental.

To understand the function and purposes of religion it is necessary to separate religion from theology. The primary things in religion are the usages, practices and observances, rites and rituals. Theology is secondary. Its object is merely to nationalize them. As stated by Prof. Robertson Smith :<sup>[f4]</sup>

" Ritual and practical usages were, strictly speaking the sum total of ancient religions. Religion in primitive times was not a system of belief with practical applications; it was a body of fixed traditional practices, to which every member of society conformed as a

matter of courage, Men would not be men if they agreed to do certain things without having a reason for their action; but in ancient religion the reason was not first formulated as a doctrine and then expressed in practice, but conversely, practice preceded doctrinal theory."

Equally necessary it is not to think of religion as though it was super-natural. To overlook the fact that the primary content of religion is social is to make nonsense of religion. The Savage society was concerned with life and the preservation of life and it is these life processes which constitute the substance and source of the religion of the Savage society. So great was the concern of the Savage society for life and the preservation of life that it made them the basis of its religion. So central were the life processes in the religion of the Savage society that every thing which affected them became part of its religion. The ceremonies of the Savage society were not only concerned with the events of birth, attaining of manhood, puberty, marriage, sickness, death and war but they were also concerned with food.

Among the pastoral peoples the flocks and herds are sacred. Among agricultural peoples seedtime and harvest are marked by ceremonies performed with some reference to the growth and the preservation of the crops. Likewise drought, pestilence, and other strange irregular phenomena of nature occasion the performance of ceremonials. As pointed out by Prof. Crawley, the religion of the savage begins and ends with the affirmation and consecration of life.

In life and preservation of life therefore consists the religion of the savage. What is true of the religion of the savage is true of all religions wherever they are found for the simple reason that constitutes the essence of religion. It is true that in the present day society with its theological refinements this essence of religion has become hidden from view and is even forgotten. But that life and the preservation of life constitute the essence of religion even in the present day society is beyond question. This is well illustrated by Prof. Crawley, when speaking of the religious life of man in the present day society he says how:

"man's religion does not enter into his professional or social hours, his scientific or artistic moments; practically its chief claims are settled on one day in the week from which ordinary worldly concerns are excluded. In fact, his life is in two parts; but the moiety with which religion is concerned is the elemental. Serious thinking on ultimate questions of life and death is, roughly speaking, the essence of his Sabbath; add to this the habit of prayer, the giving of thanks at meals, and the subconscious feeling that birth and death, continuation and marriage are rightly solemnized by religion, while business and pleasure may possibly be consecrated, but only metaphorically or by an overflow of religious feeling." Students of the origin and history of religion when they began their study of the Savage society became so much absorbed in the magic, the tabu and totem and the rites and ceremonies connected therewith they found in the Savage society that they not only overlooked the social processes of the savage as the primary

content of religion but they failed even to appreciate the proper function of magic and other supernatural processes. This was a great mistake and has cost all concerned in religion very dearly. For it is responsible for the grave misconception about religion<sup>[5]</sup> which prevails today among most people. Nothing can be a greater error than to explain religion as having arisen in magic or being concerned only in magic for magic sake. It is true that Savage society practises magic, believes in tabu and worships the totem. But it is wrong to suppose that these constitute the religion or form the source of religion. To take such a view is to elevate what is incidental to the position of the principal. The principal thing in the religion of the savage are the elemental facts of human existence such as life, death, birth, marriage, etc., magic, tabu and totem are not the ends. They are only the means. The end is life and the preservation of life. Magic, tabu, etc. are resorted to by the Savage society not for their own sake but to conserve life and to exercise evil influence from doing harm to life. Why should such occasions as harvest and famine be accompanied by religious ceremonies ? Why are magic, tabu and totem of such importance to the savage ? The only answer is that they all affect the preservation of life. The process of life and its preservation form the main purpose. Life and preservation of life is the core and centre of the religion of the Savage society. That today God has taken the place of magic, does not alter the fact that God's place in religion is only as a means for the conservation of life and that the end of religion is the conservation and consecration of social life.

The point to which it is necessary to draw particular attention and to which the foregoing discussion lends full support is that it is an error to look upon religion as a matter which is individual, private and personal. Indeed as will be seen from what follows, religion becomes a source of positive mischief if not danger when it remains individual, private and personal. Equally mistaken is the view that religion is the flowering of special religious instinct inherent in the nature of the individual. The correct view is that religion like language is social for the reason that either is essential for social life and the individual has to have it because without it he cannot participate in the life of the society.

If religion is social in the sense that it primarily concerns society, it would be natural to ask what is the purpose and function of religion.

The best statement regarding the purpose of religion which I have come across is that of Prof. Charles A Ellwood<sup>[6]</sup>. According to him:

" religion projects the essential values of human personality and of human society into the universe as a whole. It inevitably arises as soon as man tries to take valuing attitude toward his universe, no matter how small and mean that universe may appear to him. Like all the distinctive things in human, social and mental life, it of course, rests upon the higher intellectual powers of man. Man is the only religious animal, because through his powers of abstract thought and reasoning, he alone is self-conscious in the full sense of that term. Hence he alone is able to project his values into the universe and

finds necessity of so doing. Given, in other words, the intellectual powers of man, the mind at once seeks to universalise its values as well as its ideas. Just as rationalizing processes give man a world of universal ideas, so religious processes give man a world of universal values. The religious processes are, indeed, nothing but the rationalizing processes at work upon man's impulses and emotions rather than upon his precepts. What the reason does for ideas, religion does, then, for the feelings. It universalizes them; and in universalizing them, it brings them into harmony with the whole of reality."

Religion emphasizes, universalizes social values and brings them to the mind of the individual who is required to recognize them in all his acts in order that he may function as an approved member of the society. But the purpose of religion is more than this. It spiritualizes them. As pointed out by Prof. Ellwood :<sup>[f7]</sup>

"Now these mental and social values, with which religion deals, men call 'spiritual'. It is something which emphasizes as we may say, spiritual values, that is, the values connected especially with the personal and social life. It projects these values, as we have seen, into the universal reality. It gives man a social and moral conception of the universe, rather than a merely mechanical one as a theatre of the play of blind, purposeless forces. While religion is not primarily animistic philosophy, as has often been said, nevertheless it does project mind, spirit, life, into all things. Even the most primitive religion did this; for in 'primitive dynamism' there was a feeling of the psychic, in such concepts as *mana* or *manitou*. They were closely connected with persons and proceeded from person, or things which were viewed in an essentially personal way. Religion, therefore, is a belief in the reality of spiritual values, and projects them, as we have said, into the whole universe. All religion—even so-called atheistic religions—emphasizes the spiritual, believes in its dominance, and looks to its ultimate triumph." The function of religion in society is equally clear. According to Prof. Ellwood<sup>1</sup><sup>[f8]</sup> the function of religion: "is to act as an agency of social control, that is, of the group

controlling the life of the individual, for what is believed to be the good of the larger life of the group. Very early, as we have seen, any beliefs and practices which gave expression to personal feelings or values of which the group did not approve were branded as 'black magic' or baleful superstitions; and if this had not been done it is evident that the unity of the life of the group might have become seriously impaired. Thus the almost necessarily social character of religion stands revealed. We cannot have such a thing as purely personal or individual religion which is not at the same time social. For we live a social life and the welfare of the group is, after all, the chief matter of concern." Dealing with the same question in another place, he says<sup>[f9]</sup>:

"the function of religion is the same as the function of Law and Government. It is a means by which society exercises its control over the conduct of the individual in order to maintain the social order. It may not be used consciously as a method of social control over the individual. Nonetheless the fact is that religion acts as a means of social control. As compared to religion, Government and Law are relatively inadequate means

of social control. The control through law and order does not go deep enough to secure the stability of the social order. The religious sanction, on account of its being supernatural has been on the other hand the most effective means of social control, far more effective than law and Government have been or can be. Without the support of religion, law and Government are bound to remain a very inadequate means of social control. Religion is the most powerful force of social gravitation without which it would be impossible to hold the social order in its orbit."

The foregoing discussion, although it was undertaken to show that religion is a social fact, that religion has a specific social purpose and a definite social function it was intended to prove that it was only proper that a person if he was required to accept a religion should have the right to ask how well it has served the purposes which belong to religion. This is the reason why Lord Balfour was justified in putting some very straight-questions to the positivists before he could accept Positivism to be superior to Christianity. He asked in quite trenchant language.

" what has (positivism) to say to the more obscure multitude who are absorbed, and well nigh overwhelmed, in the constant struggle with daily needs and narrow cares; who have but little leisure or inclination to consider the precise role they are called on to play in the great drama of 'humanity' and who might in any case be puzzled to discover its interest or its importance? Can it assure them that there is no human being so insignificant as not to be of infinite worth in the eyes of Him who created the Heavens, or so feeble but that his action may have consequences of infinite moment long after this material system shall have crumbled into nothingness? Does it offer consolation to those who are bereaved, strength to the weak, forgiveness to the sinful, rest to those who are weary and heavy laden?"

The Untouchables can very well ask the protagonists of Hinduism the very questions which Lord Balfour asked the Positivists. Nay the Untouchables can ask many more. They can ask: Does Hinduism recognize their worth as human beings? Does it stand for their equality? Does it extend to them the benefit of liberty ? Does it at least help to forge the bond of fraternity between them and the Hindus? Does it teach the Hindus that the Untouchables are their kindred? Does it say to the Hindus it is a sin to treat the Untouchables as being neither man nor beast ? Does it tell the Hindus to be righteous to the Untouchables ? Does it preach to the Hindus to be just and humane to them ? Does it inculcate upon the Hindus the virtue of being friendly to them ? Does it tell the Hindus to love them, to respect them and to do them no wrong. In fine, does Hinduism universalize the value of life without distinction?

No Hindu can dare to give an affirmative answer to any of these questions? On the contrary the wrongs to which the Untouchables are subjected by the Hindus are acts which are sanctioned by the Hindu religion. They are done in the name of Hinduism and are justified in the name of Hinduism. The spirit and tradition which makes lawful the lawlessness of the Hindus towards the Untouchables is founded and supported by the



teachings of Hinduism. How can the Hindus ask the Untouchables accept Hinduism and stay in Hinduism? Why should the Untouchables adhere to Hinduism which is solely responsible for their degradation? How can the Untouchables stay in Hinduism? Untouchability is the lowest depth to which the degradation of a human being can be carried. To be poor is bad but not so bad as to be an Untouchable. The poor can be proud. The Untouchable cannot be. To be reckoned low is bad but it is not so bad as to be an Untouchable. The low can rise above his status. An Untouchable cannot. To be suffering is bad but not so bad as to be an Untouchable. They shall some day be comforted. An Untouchable cannot hope for this. To have to be meek is bad but it is not so bad as to be an Untouchable. The meek if they do not inherit the earth may at least be strong. The Untouchables cannot hope for that.

In Hinduism there is no hope for the Untouchables. But this is not the only reason why the Untouchables wish to quit Hinduism. There is another reason which makes it imperative for them to quit Hinduism. Untouchability is a part of Hinduism. Even those who for the sake of posing as enlightened reformers deny that untouchability is part of Hinduism are to observe untouchability. For a Hindu to believe in Hinduism does not matter. It enhances his sense of superiority by the reason of this consciousness that there are millions of Untouchables below him. But what does it mean for an Untouchable to say that he believes in Hinduism? It means that he accepts that he is an Untouchable and that he is an Untouchable is the result of Divine dispensation. For Hinduism is divine dispensation. An Untouchable may not cut the throat of a Hindu. But he cannot be expected to give an admission that he is an Untouchable and rightly so. Which Untouchable is there with soul so dead as to give such an admission by adhering to Hinduism. That Hinduism is inconsistent with the self-respect and honour of the Untouchables is the strongest ground which justifies the conversion of the Untouchables to another and nobler faith.

The opponents of conversion are determined not to be satisfied even if the logic of conversion was irrefutable. They will insist upon asking further questions. There is one question which they are always eager to ask largely because they think it is formidable and unanswerable; what will the Untouchables gain materially by changing their faith? The question is not at all formidable. It is simple to answer. It is not the intention of the Untouchables to make conversion an opportunity for economic gain. The Untouchables it is true will not gain wealth by conversion. This is however no loss because while they remain as Hindus they are doomed to be poor. Politically the Untouchables will lose the political rights that are given to the Untouchables. This is, however, no real loss. Because they will be entitled to the benefit of the political rights reserved for the community which they would join through conversion. Politically there is neither gain nor loss. Socially, the Untouchables will gain absolutely and immensely because by conversion the Untouchables will be members of a community whose religion has universalized and equalized all values of life. Such a blessing is unthinkable for them

while they are in the Hindu fold.

The answer is complete. But by reason of its brevity it is not likely to give satisfaction to the opponents of conversion. The Untouchables need three things. First thing they need is to end their social isolation. The second thing they need is to end their inferiority complex. Will conversion meet their needs? The opponents of conversion have a feeling that the supporters of conversion have no case. That is why they keep on raising questions. The case in favour of conversion is stronger than the strongest case. Only one does wish to spend long arguments to prove what is so obvious. But since it is necessary to put an end to all doubt, I am prepared to pursue the matter. Let me take each point separately.

How can they end their social isolation? The one and the only way to end their social isolation is for the Untouchables to establish kinship with and get themselves incorporated into another community which is free from the spirit of caste. The answer is quite simple and yet not many will readily accept its validity. The reason is, very few people realize the value and significance of kinship. Nevertheless its value and significance are very great. Kinship and what it implies has been

described by Prof. Robertson Smith in the following terms<sup>1</sup>[\[f10\]](#):

"A kin was a group of persons whose lives were so bound up together, in what must be called a physical unity, that they could be treated as parts of one common life. The members of one kindred looked on themselves as one living whole, a single animated mass of blood, flesh and bones, of which no member could be touched without all the members suffering."

The matter can be looked at from the point of view both of the individual as well as from that of the group. From the point of the group, kinship calls for a feeling that one is first and foremost a member of the group and not merely an individual. From the point of view of the individual, the advantages of his kinship with the group are no less and no different than those which accrue to a member of the family by reason of his membership of the family. Family life is characterized by parental tenderness. As pointed out by Prof. McDougall [\[f11\]](#):

" From this emotion (parental tenderness) and its impulse to cherish and protect, spring generosity, gratitude, love, pity, true benevolence, and altruistic conduct of every kind; in it they have their main and absolutely essential root, without which they would not be."

Community as distinguished from society is only an enlarged family. As such it is characterised by all the virtues which are found in a family and which have been so well described by Prof. McDougall.

Inside the community there is no discrimination among those who are recognized as kindred bound by kinship. The community recognizes that every one within it is entitled to all the rights equally with others. As Professors Dewey and Tufts have pointed out:

" A State may allow a citizen of another country to own land, to sue in its courts, and

will usually give him a certain amount of protection, but the first-named rights are apt to be limited, and it is only a few years since Chief Justice Taney's dictum stated the existing legal theory of the United States to be that the Negro ' had no rights which the white man was bound to respect'. Even where legal theory does not recognize race or other distinctions, it is often hard in practice for an alien to get justice. In primitive clan or family groups this principle is in full force. Justice is a privilege which falls to a man as belonging to some group—not otherwise. The member of the clan or the household or the village community has a claim, but the Stranger has nothing standing. It may be treated kindly, as a guest, but he cannot demand 'justice' at the hands of any group but his own. In this conception of rights within the group we have the prototype of modern civil law. The dealing of clan with clan is a matter of war or negotiation, not of law; and the clanless man is an 'outlaw' in fact as well as in name."

Kinship makes the community take responsibility for vindicating the wrong done to a member. Blood-flood which objectively appears to be a savage method of avenging a wrong done to a member is subjectively speaking a manifestation of sympathetic resentment by the members of the community for a wrong done to their fellow. This sympathetic resentment is a compound of tender emotion and anger such as those which issue out of parental tenderness when it comes face to face with a wrong done to a child. It is kinship which generates, this sympathetic resentment, this compound of tender emotion and anger. This is by no means a small value to an individual. In the words of Prof. McDougall:

"This intimate alliance between tender emotion and anger is of great importance for the social life of man, and the right understanding of it is fundamental for a true theory of the moral sentiments; for the anger evoked in this way is the germ of all moral indignation and on moral indignation justice and the greater part of public law are in the main founded."

It is kinship which generates generosity and invokes its moral indignation which is necessary to redress a wrong. Kinship is the will to enlist the support of the kindred community to meet the tyrannies and oppressions by the Hindus which today the Untouchables have to bear single-handed and alone. Kinship with another community is the best insurance which the Untouchable can effect against Hindu tyranny and Hindu oppression.

Anyone who takes into account the foregoing exposition of what kinship means and does, should have no difficulty in accepting the proposition that to end their isolation the Untouchables must join another community which does not recognise caste.

Kinship is the antithesis of isolation. For the Untouchables to establish kinship with another community is merely another name for ending their present state of isolation. Their isolation will never end so long as they remain Hindus. As Hindus, their isolation hits them from front as well as from behind. Notwithstanding their being Hindus, they are isolated from the Muslims and the Christians because as Hindus they are aliens to

all—Hindus as well as Non-Hindus. This isolation can end only in one way and in no other way. That way is for the Untouchables to join some non-Hindu community and thereby become its kith and kin.

That this is not a meaningless move will be admitted by all those who know the disadvantages of isolation and the advantages of kinship. What are the consequences of isolation? Isolation means social segregation, social humiliation, social discrimination and social injustice. Isolation means denial of protection, denial of justice, denial of opportunity. Isolation means want of sympathy, want of fellowship and want of consideration. Nay, isolation means positive hatred and antipathy from the Hindus. By having kinship with other community on the other hand, the Untouchables will have within that community equal position, equal protection and equal justice, will be able to draw upon its sympathy, its good-will.

This I venture to say is a complete answer to the question raised by the opponents. It shows what the Untouchables can gain by conversion. It is however desirable to carry the matter further and dispose of another question which has not been raised so far by the opponents of conversion but may be raised. The question is: why is conversion necessary to establish kinship?

The answer to this question will reveal itself if it is borne in mind that there is a difference between a community and a society and between kinship and citizenship.

A community in the strict sense of the word is a body of kindred. A society is a collection of many communities or of different bodies of kindreds. The bond which holds a community together is called kinship while the bond which holds a society together is called citizenship.

The means of acquiring citizenship in a society are quite different from the means of acquiring kinship in a community. Citizenship is acquired by what is called naturalization. The condition precedent for citizenship is the acceptance of political allegiance to the State. The conditions precedent for acquiring kinship are quite different. At one stage in evolution of man the condition precedent for adoption into the kindred was unity of blood. For the kindred is a body of persons who conceive themselves as spring from one ancestor and as having in their veins one blood. It does not matter whether each group has actually and in fact spring from a single ancestor. As a matter of fact, a group did admit a stranger into the kindred though he did not spring from the same ancestor. It is interesting to note that there was a rule that if a stranger intermarried with a group for seven generations, he became a member of the kindred. The point is that, fiction though it be, admission into the kindred required as a condition precedent unity of blood.

At a later stage of Man's Evolution, common religion in place of unity of blood became a condition precedent to kinship. In this connection it is necessary to bear in mind the important fact pointed out by Prof. Robertson Smith<sup>[12]</sup> that in a community the social body is made not of men only, but of gods and men and therefore any stranger who

wants to enter a community and forge the bond of kinship can do so only by accepting the God or Gods of the community. The Statement in the Old Testament such as those of Naomi to Ruth saying: " Thy sister is gone back into her people and unto her gods " and Ruth's reply "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God " or the calling of the Mobites the sons and daughters of Chemosh are all evidences which show that the bond of kinship in a community is the consequence of their allegiance to a common religion. Without common religion there can be no kinship.

Where people are waiting to find faults in the argument in favour of conversion it is better to leave no ground for fault-finders to create doubt or misunderstanding. It might therefore be well to explain how and in what manner religion is able to forge the bond of kinship. The answer is simple. It does it through eating and drinking together.<sup>[f13]</sup> The Hindus in defending their caste system ridicule the plea for interdining. They ask: What is there in inter-dining? The answer from a sociological point of view is that is everything in it. Kinship is a social covenant of brotherhood. Like all covenants it required to be signed, sealed and delivered before it can become binding. The mode of signing, sealing and delivery is the mode prescribed by religion and that mode is the participation in a sacrificial meal. As said by Prof. Smith<sup>[f14]</sup>:

" What is the ultimate nature of the fellowship which is constituted or declared when men eat and drink together? In our complicated society fellowship has many types and many degrees; men may be united by bonds of duty and honour for certain purposes, and stand quite apart in all other things. Even in ancient times—for example, in the Old Testament—we find the sacrament of a common meal introduced to seal engagements of various kinds. But in every case the engagement is absolute and inviolable; it constitutes what in the language of ethics is called a duty of perfect obligation. Now in the most primitive society there is only one kind of fellowship which is absolute and inviolable. To the primitive man all other men fall under two classes, those to whom his life is sacred and those to whom it is not sacred. The former are his fellows; the latter are strangers and potential foemen, with whom it is absurd to think of forming any inviolable tie unless they are first brought into the circle within which each man's life is sacred to all his comrades." If for the Untouchables mere citizenship is not enough to put an end to their isolation and the troubles which ensue therefrom, if kinship is the only cure then there is no other way except to embrace the religion of the community whose kinship they seek.

The argument so far advanced was directed to show how conversion can end the problem of the isolation of the Untouchables. There remain two other questions to be considered. One is, will conversion remove their inferiority complex? One cannot of course dogmatize. But one can have no hesitation in answering the question in the affirmative. The inferiority complex of the Untouchables is the result of their isolation, discrimination and the unfriendliness of the social environment. It is these which have created a feeling of helplessness which are responsible for the inferiority complex which

cost him the power of self-assertion.

Can religion alter this psychology of the Untouchables? The psychologists are of opinion that religion can effect this cure provided it is a religion of the right type; provided that the religion approaches the individual not as a degraded worthless outcastes but as a fellow human being; provided religion gives him an atmosphere in which he will find that there are possibilities for feeling himself the equal of every other human being there is no reason why conversion to such a religion by the Untouchables should not remove their age-long pessimism which is responsible for their inferiority complex. As pointed out by Prof. Ellwood :[\[15\]](#)

"Religion is primarily a valuing attitude, universalizing the will and the emotions, rather than the ideas of man. It thus harmonizes men, on the side of will and emotion, with his world. Hence, it is the fee of pessimism and despair. It encourages hope, and gives confidence in the battle of life, to the savage as well as to the civilized man. It does so, as we have said, because it braces vital feeling; and psychologists tell us that the reason why it braces vital feeling is because it is an adaptive process in which all of the lower centres of life are brought to reinforce the higher centres. The universalization of values means, in other words, in psycho-physical terms, that the lower nerve centres pour their energies into the higher nerve centres, thus harmonizing and bringing to a maximum of vital efficiency life on its inner side. It is thus that religion taps new levels of energy, for meeting the crisis of life, while at the same time it brings about a deeper harmony between the inner and the outer."

Will conversion raise the general social status of the Untouchables? It is difficult to see how there can be two opinions on this question. The oft-quoted answer given by Shakespeare to the question what is in a name hardly shows sufficient understanding of the problem of a name. A rose called by another name would smell as sweet would be true if names served no purpose and if people instead of depending upon names took the trouble of examining each case and formed their opinions and attitudes about it on the basis of their examination. Unfortunately, names serve a very important purpose. They play a great part in social economy. Names are symbols. Each name represents association of certain ideas and notions about a certain object. It is a label. From the label people know what it is. It saves them the trouble of examining each case individually and determine for themselves whether the ideas and notions commonly associated with the object are true. People in society have to deal with so many objects that it would be impossible for them to examine each case. They must go by the name that is why all advertisers are keen in finding a good name. If the name is not attractive the article does not go down with the people.

The name 'Untouchable' is a bad name. It repels, forbids, and stinks. The social attitude of the Hindu towards the Untouchable is determined by the very name ' Untouchable '. There is a fixed attitude towards 'Untouchables' which is determined by the stink which is imbedded in the name ' Untouchable '. People have no mind to go into

the individual merits of each Untouchable no matter how meritorious he is. All untouchables realize this. There is a general attempt to call themselves by some name other than the 'Untouchables'. The Chamars call themselves Ravidas or Jatavas. The Doms call themselves Shilpakars. The Pariahs call themselves Adi-Dravidas, the Madigas call themselves Arundhatyas, the Mahars call themselves Chokhamela or Somavamshi and the Bhangis call themselves Balmikis. All of them if away from their localities would call themselves Christians.

The Untouchables know that if they call themselves Untouchables they will at once draw the Hindu out and expose themselves to his wrath and his prejudice. That is why they give themselves other names which may be likened to the process of undergoing protective discolouration.

It is not seldom that this discolouration completely fails to serve its purpose. For to be a Hindu is for Hindus not an ultimate social category. The ultimate social category is caste, nay sub-caste if there is a sub-caste. When the Hindus meet ' May I know who are you ' is a question sure to be asked. To this question ' I am a Hindu ' will not be a satisfactory answer. It will certainly not be accepted as a final answer. The inquiry is bound to be further pursued. The answer

' Hindu ' is bound to be followed by another; ' What caste ?'. The answer to that is bound to be followed by question: " What subcaste?" It is only when the questioner reaches the ultimate social category which is either caste or sub-caste that he will stop his questionings.

The Untouchable who adopts the new name is a protective discolouration finds that the new name does not help and that in the course of relentless questionings he is, so to say, run down to earth and made to disclose that he is an Untouchable. The concealment makes him the victim of greater anger than his original voluntary disclosure would have done.

From this discussion two things are clear. One is that the low status of the Untouchables is bound upon with a stinking name. Unless the name is changed there is no possibility of a rise in their social status. The other is that a change of name within Hinduism will not do. The Hindu will not fail to penetrate through such a name and make the Untouchable and confer himself as an Untouchable. The name matters and matters a great deal. For, the name can make a revolution in the status of the Untouchables. But the name must be the name of a community outside Hinduism and beyond its power of spoliation and degradation. Such name can be the property of the Untouchable only if they undergo religious conversion. A conversion by change of name within Hinduism is a clandestine conversion which can be of no avail.

This discussion on conversion may appear to be somewhat airy. It is bound to be so. It cannot become material unless it is known which religion the Untouchables choose to accept. For what particular advantage would flow from conversion would depend upon the religion selected and the social position of the followers of that religion. One religion

may give them all the three benefits, another only two and a third may result in conferring upon them only one of the advantages of conversion. What religion the Untouchables should choose is not the subject matter of this Chapter. The subject matter of this Chapter is whether conversion can solve the problem of untouchability. The answer to that question is emphatically in the affirmative.

The force of the argument, of course, rests on a view of religion which is somewhat different from the ordinary view according to which religion is concerned with man's relation to God and all that it means. According to this view religion exists not for the saving of souls but for the preservation of society and the welfare of the individual. It is only those who accept the former view of religion that find it difficult to understand how conversion can solve the problem of untouchability. Those who accept the view of religion adopted in this Chapter will have no difficulty in accepting the soundness of the conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2

### CASTE AND CONVERSION'

The instinct of self-preservation is responsible for the present upheaval in the Hindu Community. There was a time when the elite of the society had no fear about its preservation. Their argument was that the Hindu community was one of the oldest communities that has withstood the onslaught of many adverse forces and therefore there must be some native strength and stamina in its culture and civilization as to make it survive. They were therefore firm in their belief that their community was destined ever to survive. Recent events seem to have shaken this belief. In the Hindu-Muslim riots that have taken place all over the country in recent times it has been found that a small band of Muslims can beat the Hindus and beat them badly. The elite of the Hindus are therefore reflecting afresh upon the question whether such a kind of survival in the struggle for existence is of any value. The proud Hindu who always harped upon the fact of survival as a proof of his fitness to survive never stopped to think that survival was of many types and not all are of equal value. One can survive by marching against the enemy and conquering him. Or one can survive by beating a retreat and hiding oneself in a position of safety. In either case there would be survival. But certainly the value of the two survivals is measures apart. What is important is not the fact of survival but the plane of survival? Survive the Hindus may, but whether as free men or slaves is the issue. But the matter seems so hopeless that granting that they manage to survive as slaves it does not seem to be altogether certain that they can survive as *Hindus*. For they are not only beaten by the Muslims in the *physical struggle* but they seem also to be beaten in the *cultural struggle*. There is in recent days a regular campaign conducted vigorously by the Muslims for the spread of Islamic culture, and by their conversion



movement, it is alleged, they have made vast additions to their numerical strength by winning over members of the Hindu faith. Fortunately for the Muslims there is a large mass of non-descript population numbering about seven crores which is classed as Hindus but which has no particular affinity to the ' Originally published in the 'Telugu Samachar Special Number', Nov. 1926.

Hindu faith and whose position is made so intolerable by that faith that they can be easily induced to embrace Islam. Some of these are going over to Islam and yet more may go.

This is sufficient to cause alarm among the elite of the Hindus. If with a superiority of numbers the Hindus are unable to face the Muslims what would be their fate if their following was depleted by conversions to Islam? The Hindus feel that they must save their people from being lost to them and their culture. Herein lies the origin of the *Shudhi Movement* or the movement to reclaim people to the Hindu faith.

Some people of the orthodox type are opposed to this movement on the ground that Hindu religion was never a proselytising religion and that Hindu must be so by birth. There is something to be said in favour of this view. From the commencement of time to which memory or tradition can reach back, proselytism has never been the practising creed of the Hindu faith. Prof. Max Muller, the great German Savant and Oriental Scholar in an address delivered by him in the name of the Westminster Abbey on the 3rd of December 1873 Day of Intercession for Missions, emphatically declared that the Hindu Religion was a non-missionary religion. The orthodoxy which refuses to believe in expediency may therefore feel well grounded in its opposition to Shudhi, as a practice directly opposed to the most fundamental tenets of the Hindu faith. But there are other authorities of equally good repute to support the promoters of the Shudhi movement, for it is their opinion that the Hindu Religion has been and can be a missionary religion. Prof. Jolly in an article ' *DIE AUSBREITUNG DER INDISCHEN FULTUR*', gives a graphic description of the means and methods adopted by the ancient Hindu Rulers and Priests to spread the Hindu Religion among the aborigines of the country. The late Sir Alfred Lyall who wrote in reply to Prof. Max Muller also sought to prove that the Hindu religion was a missionary religion. The probability of the case seems to be .definitely in favour of Jolly and Lyall. For unless we suppose that the Hindu Religion did in some degree do the work of proselytization, it is not possible to account for its spread over a vast continent and inhabited by diverse races which were in possession of a distinct culture of their own. Besides, the prevalence of certain *YAJNAS* and *YAGA S* cannot be explained except on the hypothesis that there were ceremonies for the Shudhi of the *Vratya*. We may therefore safely conclude that in ancient times the Hindu religion was a missionary religion. But that owing to some reason it ceased to be so long back in its historical course.

The question that I wish to consider is why did the Hindu religion cease to be a missionary religion. There may be various explanations for this, and I propose to offer

my own explanation for what it is worth Aristotle has said that man is a social being. Whatever be the cogency of the reasons of Aristotle in support of his statement this much is true that it is impossible for any one to begin life as an individualist in the sense of radically separating himself from his social fellows. The social bond is established and rooted in the very growth of self-consciousness. Each individual's apprehension of his own personal self and its interest involves the recognition of others and their interests; and his pursuit of one type of purposes, generous or selfish, is in so far the pursuit of the other also. The social relation is in all cases intrinsic to the life, interests, and purposes of the individual; he feels and apprehends the vitality of social relations in all the situations of his life. In short, life without society is no more possible for him than it is for a fish out of water.

Given this fact it follows that before a society can make converts, it must see to it that its constitution provides for aliens being made its members and allowed to participate in its social life. It must be used to make no difference between individuals born in it and individuals brought into it. It must be open to receive him in the one case as in the other and allow him to enter into its life and thus make it possible for him to live and thrive as a member of that society. If there is no such provision on conversion of an alien the question would at once arise where to place the convert. If there is no place for the convert there can be no invitation for conversion nor can there be an acceptance of it.

Is there any place in the Hindu society for a convert to the Hindu faith? Now the organisation of the Hindu society is characterized by the existence of castes. Each caste is endogamous and lives by antogony. In other words it only allows individuals born in it to its membership and does not allow any one from outside being brought into it. The Hindu Society being a federation of castes and each caste being self-enclosed there is no place for the convert for no caste will admit him. The answer to the question why the Hindu Religion ceased to be a missionary religion is to be found in the fact that it developed the caste system. Caste is incompatible with conversion. So long as mass conversion was possible, the Hindu Society could convert for the converts were large enough to form a new caste which could provide the elements of a social life from among themselves. But when mass conversions were no more and only individual converts could be had, the Hindu Religion had necessarily to cease to be missionary for its social organisation could make no room for the incoming convert.

I have not propounded this question as to why the Hindu Religion ceased to be missionary simply to find an opportunity for obtaining credit for originality of thought by offering a novel explanation. I have propounded the question and given an answer to it because I feel that both have a very important bearing upon the Shudhi movement. Much as I sympathise with the promoters of that movement, I must say that they have not analysed the difficulties in the way of the success of their movement. The motive behind the Shudhi movement is to increase the strength of the Hindu Society by increasing its numbers. Now a society is strong not because its numbers are great but

because it is solid in its mass. Instances are not wanting where a solid organised band of fanatics have routed a large army of disorganised crusaders. Even in the Hindu-Muslim riots it has been proved that the Hindus are beaten not only where they are weak in numbers, but they are beaten by the Muslims even where the Hindus preponderate. The case of Moplahs is in point. This alone ought to show that the Hindus suffer not from want of numbers but from want of solidarity. To increase solidarity of the Hindu Society one must tackle the forces which have brought about its disintegration. My fear is that mere Shudhi, instead of integrating the Hindu Society, will cause greater disintegration and will annoy the Muslim Community without any gain to the Hindus. In a society composed of castes, Shudhi brings in a person who can find no home and who is therefore bound to lead an isolated and separate existence with no attachment or loyalty to any one in particular. Even if Shudhi were to bring into the Hindu fold a mass like the Malkana catch of Shradhanand, it will only add one more caste to the existing number. Now the greater the castes the greater the isolation and the greater the weakness of the Hindu society. If the Hindu society desires to survive it must think not of adding to its numbers but increasing its solidarity and that means the abolition of caste. The abolition of castes is the real Sanghatan of the Hindus and when Sanghatan is achieved by the abolishing of castes, Shudhi will be unnecessary and if practised, will be gainful of real strength. With the castes in existence, it is impossible and if practised would be harmful to the real Sanghatan and solidarity of the Hindus. But somehow the most revolutionary and ardent reformer of the Hindu society shies at the idea of abolition of the caste and advocates such puerile measures as the reconversion of the converted Hindu, the changing of the diet and the starting of Akhadas. Some day it will dawn upon the Hindus that they cannot save their society and also preserve their caste. It is to be hoped that that day is not far off.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **CHRISTIANIZING THE UNTOUCHABLES**

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

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 enterprise 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 Apologist 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 idolaters, 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 Surat [\[f.16\]](#) :

"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 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.

\* \* \*

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. [\[f.17\]](#)

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 over burdened 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. Kaye [\[f.18\]](#)"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 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 afresh 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, [\[f.19\]](#)

" 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 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. Sleeman [\[f.20\]](#)

" 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 extraordinary that Krishna did to amuse the milkmaids, or to satisfy some sceptics of his day, and relate it with all the naivete imaginable."

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 Jewish 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 subtle 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. Thorndyke [\[f.21\]](#) a great authority on Psychology says—"That a man 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.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CONDITION OF THE CONVERT

- I. Gandhi and his opposition to Christianity.
- II. Christianity and social service.
- III. Christianity and Paganism.
- IV. Christianity and the spirit of the Convert.
- V. Christian Community and its social standing.

#### I

In 1928, there was held a meeting of the International Fellowship, a body devoted to promoting fellow feeling among persons of different faiths. It was attended by Christian missionaries as well as by Hindus and Moslems. Mr. Gandhi was also present. At this meeting the question was raised as to how far the fellowship could remain true to its ideal, if those who belonged to it wished to convert others to their own faith. In the debate that followed, Mr. Gandhi spoke. His friend Mr. C. F. Andrews, writes concerning the discussion as follows: [\[f.22\]](#)

" At the back of this question, there was a definite challenge to the whole Christian Missionary position in India. Missionaries of a liberal type of mind had been finding great joy in the Fellowship ... Then came Mahatma Gandhi's declaration. He stated that in doing so, or in joining the Fellowship, if there was the slightest wish, or even the slightest thought at the back of the mind, to influence, or convert, any other member of the Fellowship, then the spirit of the movement could be destroyed. Any one who had such

a wish ought to leave the Fellowship ".

On being further questioned by Christian Missionaries "Whether if they possessed the greatest treasure in the World, they would be wrong in wishing to share if, Mr. Gandhi was quick to rebuff their presumption. Mr. Andrews says—"he was adamant". "Even the idea of such a desire was wrong ", he said emphatically; " and he would not move from that position at all".

Mr. Gandhi's opposition to Christian conversion is by now quite well known. And since 1936 he has become quite a virulent adversary of all missionary propaganda. He particularly objects to the missionaries spreading the Christian Gospel among the Untouchables. His antagonism to Christian Missions and the conversion of Untouchables to Christianity is based on certain propositions which have been enunciated by him in quite unmistakable terms. I think the following four propositions may be taken to sum up his position. I give them in his own words. He says:

1. " My position is that all religions are fundamentally equal. We must have the same innate respect for all religions as we have for our own. Mind you, not mutual toleration but equal respect." [\[f.23\]](#)

II. " All I want them (the Missionaries) to do is to live Christian lives, not to annotate them. [\[f.24\]](#)Let your lives speak to us. The blind who do not see the rose, perceive its fragrance. That is the secret of the Gospel of the rose. But the Gospel that Jesus preached is more subtle and fragrant than the Gospel of the rose. If the rose needs no agents, much less does the Gospel of Christ need agents". [\[f.25\]](#)As to the work of the Christian Missions he says:

III. "The social work of the missions is undertaken not for its own sake, but as an aid to the salvation of those who receive social service. [\[f.26\]](#) . . . . While you give medical help, you expect the reward in the shape of your patients becoming Christians." [\[f.27\]](#) As to the Untouchables he says—

IV. " I do maintain . . . . that the vast masses of Harijans and for that matter of Indian humanity, cannot understand the presentation of Christianity, and that, generally speaking, conversion, wherever it has taken place, has not been a spiritual act in any sense of the term. They are conversions of convenience. [\[f.28\]](#) They (the Harijans) can no more distinguish between the relative merits (words omitted?) than can a cow. Harijans have no mind, no intelligence, no sense of difference between God and no-God." [\[f.29\]](#)

Gandhi advises the Christian Missions in the following somewhat offensive terms as to what would be proper for them to do. He says—

"If Christian Missions will sincerely play the game..... they must withdraw from the indecent competition to convert the Harijans.....

" Just..... forget that you have come to a country of heathens and (to) think that they are as much in search of God as you are; just ..... feel that you are not going there to give your spiritual goods to them, but that you will share worldly goods of which you

have a good stock. You will then do your work without mental reservation and thereby you will share your spiritual treasures. The knowledge that you have this mental reservation, i.e. you are expecting a man to be a convert in return for service, creates a barrier between you and me."

" The history of India would have been written differently if the Christians had come to India to live their lives in our midst and permeate ours with their aroma, if there was any. "2 This hostility of Mr. Gandhi to Christian Missions and their work is of very recent origin. I do not know if it can be traced beyond the Yeola Decision.

It is as recent as it is strange. I do not know of any declaration made by Mr. Gandhi expressing in such clear and determined manner opposition to the conversion of the Untouchables to Islam. The Muslims have made no secret of their plan to convert the Untouchables. The plan was given out openly from the Congress platform by the late Maulana Mohomed Ali when he presided over the annual session of the Congress held at Coconada in 1923. In his Presidential address the Maulana pointed out in clear terms that:

"The quarrels (between Hindus and Musalmans) about *Alams* and *pipal* trees and musical processions are truly childish; but there is one question which can easily furnish a ground for complaint of unfriendly action if communal activities are not amicably adjusted. This is the question of the conversion of the suppressed classes, if Hindu Society does not speedily absorb them. The Christian missionary is already busy and no one quarrels with him. But the moment some Muslim missionary society is organized for the same purpose there is every likelihood of an outcry in the Hindu press. It has been suggested to me by an influential and wealthy gentleman who is able to organize a (Muslim) missionary society on a large scale for the conversion of the suppressed classes, that it should be possible to reach a settlement with leading Hindu gentlemen and divide the country into separate areas where Hindu and Muslim missionaries could respectively work, each community preparing for each year, or longer unit of time, if necessary, an estimate of the numbers it is prepared to absorb, or convert. These estimates would, of course, be based on the number of workers and funds each had to spare, and tested by the actual figures of the previous period. In this way each community would be free to do the work of absorption and conversion, or rather of reform, without chances of collision with one another".

Nothing can be more explicit than this. Nothing can be more businesslike and nothing can be more materialistic than this pronouncement from the Congress platform. But I am not aware that Mr. Gandhi has ever condemned it in the way in which he now condemns the endeavour of Christian Missions to convert the Untouchables. Nobody from Gandhi's camp protested against this outrageous suggestion. Probably they could not because the Congress Hindus believed that it was their duty to help the Musalmans to fulfil what they regarded as their religious duty, and that conversion is a religious duty with the Musalman nobody can deny. At any rate the Hindu leaders of Congress, as

stated by George Joseph in 1920, held "that it was the religious duty of the Hindus to help Muslims in the maintenance of the Turkish Khilafat over the Arabs in the Jazirut-al-Arab because Muslim theologians and political leaders assured us that it was their religious duty. It went against the grain because it meant the maintenance of a foreign Government over Arabs; but Hindus had to stomach it because it was urged on them as part of the religious duty of the Hindus [f.30]. If this is true why should Gandhi not help the Christians to carry on conversion because conversion is also a fulfilment of their religious duty.

Why there should be a different measuring rod today because it is the Christians that are involved is more than one can understand. Mr. George Joseph was well within bounds when he said:

" The only difference is that there are 75 millions of Muslims and there are only 6 millions of Christians. It may be worth-while making peace with Muslims because they can make themselves a thorn in the side of Nationalism: Christians do not count, because they are small in numbers."

That Mr. Gandhi is guided by such factors as the relative strength of the Musalmans and Christians, their relative importance in Indian politics, is evident from the terms he uses in condemning what he calls " propaganda by villification ". When such a propaganda emanates from Christian missionaries he uses the following, language to condemn it. (*Quotation is not there in the MS.—Ed.*).

On the other hand when he comes out against a propaganda emanating from the Muslim all that he says-. [f.31]

" It is tragic to see that religion is dragged down to the low level of crude materialism to lure people into mission which the most cherished sentiments of millions of human beings are trodden under foot.

" I hope that the pamphlet has no support from thoughtful Musalmans who should read it to realize the mischief such pamphlets can create.

" My correspondent asks me how to deal with the menace. One remedy I have applied, viz, to bring hereby the villifying propaganda to the notice of the responsible Muslim world. He himself can claim the attention of the local Musalman leaders to the publication. The second and the most important thing to do is purification from within. So long as the position of untouchability remains in the Hindu body it will be liable to attacks from outside. It will be proof against such attacks only when a solid and impregnable wall of purification is erected in the shape of complete removal of untouchability."

The ferocity of the former and the timidity and softness of the latter are obvious enough. Surely Gandhi must be regarded as an astute " respecter of persons ".

But apart from this difference in his attitude towards Muslim and Christian propaganda, have Mr. Gandhi's arguments against Christian Missions, which I have summarized above, any validity ? They are just clever. There is nothing profound about

them. They are the desperate arguments of a man who is driven to wall. Mr. Gandhi starts out by making a distinction between equal tolerance and equal respect. The phrase "equal respect " is a new phrase. What distinction he wants to make thereby is difficult to recognize. But the new phraseology is not without significance. The old phrase "equal tolerance" indicated the possibility of error. " Equal respect " on the other hand postulates that all religions are equally true and equally valuable. If I have understood him correctly then his premise is utterly fallacious, both logically as well as historically. Assuming the aim of religion is to reach God— which I do not think it is— and religion is the road to reach him, it cannot be said that every road is sure to lead to God. Nor can it be said that every road, though it may ultimately lead to God, is the right road. It may be that (all existing religions are false and) the perfect religion is still to be revealed. But the fact is that religions are not all true and therefore the adherents of one faith have a right, indeed a duty, to tell their erring friends what they conceive to be the truth. That Untouchables are no better than a cow is a statement which only an ignoramus, or an arrogant person, can venture to make. It is arrant nonsense. Mr. Gandhi dares to make it because he has come to regard himself as so great a man that the ignorant masses will not question his declarations and the dishonest intelligentsia will uphold him in whatever he says. Strangest part of his argument lies in wishing to share the material things the Christian Missions can provide. He is prepared to share their spiritual treasures provided the Missionaries invite him to share their material treasures "without obligation".\* (What he minds is an exchange.) It is difficult to understand why Mr. Gandhi argues that services rendered by the Missionaries are baits or temptations, and that the conversions are therefore conversions of convenience. Why is it not possible to believe that these services by Missionaries indicate that service to suffering humanity is for Christians an essential requirement of their religion ? Would that be a wrong view of the process by which a person is drawn towards Christianity? Only a prejudiced mind would say. Yes.

All these arguments of Mr. Gandhi are brought forth to prevent Christian Missionaries from converting the Untouchables. No body will deny to Mr. Gandhi the right to save the Untouchables for Hinduism. But in that case he should have frankly told Missions " Stop your work, we want now to save the Untouchables, and ourselves. Give us a chance! "It is a pity that he should not have adopted this honest mode of dealing with the menace of the Missionaries. Whatever anybody may say I have no doubt, all the Untouchables, whether they are converts or not, will agree that Mr. Gandhi has been grossly unjust to Christian Missions. For centuries Christian Missions have provided for them a shelter, if not a refuge.

This attitude of Mr. Gandhi need not deter either the missionaries or the Untouchables. Christianity has come to stay in India and, unless the Hindus in their zeal for nationalism misuse their political, social and economic power to suppress it, will live and grow in numbers and influence for good.

## II

What Christianity has achieved in India therefore becomes a proper subject for examination from the points of view both of Christian Missions and of the Untouchables.

That Christian Missions have been endeavouring to provide the *corpus sanum* for the people of India and to create the *Mens Sana* among those who have entered the fold is undeniable. It would be difficult in this place to describe all the activities carried on by Christian Missions in India. The work done by the Missionaries falls under five heads: (1) among children, (2) among young men, (3) among the masses, (4) among women and (5) among the sick.

The work done is vast. The following figures will give an idea of the scale on which the work for education and relieving sickness is being carried on.

### 1. 1. CHRISTIAN MEDICAL WORK [\[f.32\]](#)

1	Hospitals	
2	Dispensaries	
3	Sanatoriums	
4	Leper Homes	
5	Medical Schools	
6	Number of Hospital ds	
7	Number of Sanatorium Beds	
8	Doctors, Foreign	
9	Doctors, National	
10	Nurses, Foreign	
11	Nurses, National	
12	Student Nurses	
13	Operations, Major	
14	Obstretrics, Total	
15	In—Patients	
16	Out—Patients	

### II. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION [\[f.33\]](#)



1	Elementary Schools
2	Secondary Schools
3	Colleges

What have the Hindus to show as against this? Historically speaking, service to humanity is quite foreign to Hinduism and to Hindus. The Hindu religion consists primarily, of rituals and observances. It is a religion of temples. Love of man has no place in it. And without love of man how can service to man be inspired ? This is well reflected in the purposes and objects for which Hindu charities are given. Very few people, even in India, know the extent to which caste determines the scope and objects of charities provided by the Hindus. It is difficult to get full and precise facts relating to Hindu Charities. However, data collected several years ago, in the City of Bombay, throws a flood of light on the subject. (*Data not typed in the MS.*)

That caste can influence doctors in the ministrations to the sick was a charge made among certain doctors in Bombay in 1918 during the influenza epidemic.

Comparatively speaking, the achievements of Christian Missions in the field of social service are very great. Of that no one except a determined opponent of every thing Christian can have any doubt. Admitting these great services, one may raise two questions. Are these services required for the needs of the Indian Christian Community? Are there any needs of the Indian Christian Community which have not been attended to by Missions?

It is necessary to bear in mind that Indian Christians are drawn chiefly from the Untouchables and, to a much less extent, from low ranking Shudra castes. The Social Services of Missions must, therefore, be judged in the light of the needs of these classes. What are those needs?

The services rendered by the Missions in the fields of education and medical relief are beyond the ken of the Indian Christians. They go mostly to benefit the high caste Hindus. The Indian Christians are either too poor or too devoid of ambition to undertake

the pursuit of higher education. High schools, colleges and hostels maintained by the Missions are, therefore, so much misplaced and misapplied expenditure from the point of view of the uplift of Indian Christians. In the same way much of the medical aid provided by the Missions goes to the Caste Hindus. This is especially the case with regard to hospitals.

I know many missionaries realize this. None the less this expenditure is being incurred from year to year. The object of these services is no doubt to provide occasion for contact between Christian Missionaries and high caste Hindus. I think it is time the Missionaries realized that the pursuit of the Caste Hindus in the hope of converting them to Christianity is a vain pursuit which is sure to end in complete failure. Mr. Winslow, I think, is correct when he concludes his survey of the attitude of the intelligentsia of India towards Christianity by saying: " Whilst the work of Duff and the Serampore Missionaries resulted in some notable conversions and it seemed for a time as though English education were going to lead to many and rapid accessions to the Christian Church from amongst those who received it, a reaction soon set in and the movement died down. Its place was taken by the Theistic Samajes, and in particular by the Brahma Samaj in Bengal, which enabled those Hindus who through the influence of Western thought had become dissatisfied with idolatry and caste to surrender these without forfeiting entirely their place within the Hindu system. For many years Christian missionaries hoped and believed that the Brahma Samaj would prove a half-way house to Christianity and that many of its members would in course of time become dissatisfied with an intermediate position and accept the Christian Faith, but this hope has in the main been disappointed, though a few notable converts have come from the rank of the Samajes. ....

\* \* \* \* \*

What then, does the educated Indian of today, more particularly the Brahman, think of Christ? It is perhaps foolish to try to generalize..... Yet there are certain broad features in the picture which may be safely described ..... There is a wide-spread acceptance of the main principles of Christ's teaching, particularly of His ethical teaching. It would be generally conceded that the Sermon on the Mount, while not necessarily containing any thing which might not be paralleled from other sources, is unsurpassable as a directory for human conduct ..... Side by side with this widespread acceptance of Christ's teaching goes a very general reverence for His life and character .....

On the other hand, the claim that Christ was, and is, in a *unique* sense divine is not one which the majority of Hindus, even of those deeply attracted by His life, would be prepared to accept ..... (They) would set Him side by side with (their) own great Prophet, the Buddha. But the Christian claim that He, and He only, is God Incarnate, and that salvation is to be won through faith in Him, and Him alone, (they) reject as exclusive and narrow ..... Thus the Christian claim to possess the one way of salvation arouses in India an almost instinctive repugnance. .... The characteristic religious attitude of the

educated Hindu to day (is) still, whilst he greatly reverences Christ, and accepts the main principles of His teaching, he is quite content to remain a Hindu."

I have no doubt that this correctly sums up the position. If this is so then the money and energy spent by the Christian Missions on education and medical relief is misapplied and do not help the Indian Christians.

The Indian Christians need two things. The first thing they want is the safeguarding of their civil liberties. The second thing they want is ways and means for their economic uplift. I cannot stop to discuss these needs in all their details. All I wish to point out is that this is a great desideratum in the social work the Christian Missions are doing in India.

While what has been accomplished by Christian Missionaries in the field of education and medical aid is very notable and praise worthy there still remains one question to be answered. What has Christianity achieved in the way of changing the mentality of the Convert ? Has the Untouchable convert risen to the status of the touchable? Have the touchable and untouchable converts discarded caste? Have they ceased to worship their old pagan gods and to adhere to their old pagan superstitions? These are far-reaching questions. They must be answered and Christianity in India must stand or fall by the answers it can give to these questions.

The following extracts taken from the memorandum submitted by the Christian Depressed Classes of South India to the Simon Commission throw a flood of light on the position of the Untouchables who have gone into the Christian fold so far as the question of caste is concerned.

" We are by religion Christians, both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Of the total population of Indian Christians of the Presidency the converts from the Depressed Classes form about sixty per cent. When the Christian religion was preached in our lands, we, the Pallas, Pariahs, Malas, Madigas, etc., embraced Christianity. But others of our stock and origin were not converted and they are known to be the Hindu Depressed classes, being all Hindus or adherants to the Hindus in religion. In spite, however, of our Christian religion which teaches us fundamental truths the equality of man and man before God, the necessity of charity and love for neighbours and mutual sympathy and forbearance, we, the large number of Depressed class converts remain in the same social condition as the Hindu Depressed Classes. Through the operation of several factors, the more important of them being the strong caste retaining Hindu mentality of the converts to Christianity, and the indifference, powerlessness and apathy of the Missionaries, we remain today what we were before we became Christians—Untouchables—degraded by the laws of social position obtaining in the land, rejected by caste Christians, despised by Caste Hindus and excluded by our own Hindu Depressed Class brethren.

"The small proportion of the Christians of South India, whose representatives are found in the Legislative Council, say, in Madras, are caste Christians, a term which

sounds a contradiction, but which, unfortunately, is the correct and accepted description of high caste converts from Hinduism, who retain all the rigour and exclusiveness of caste. Particularly in the Mofussil parts and the villages, they who ought to be our fellow Christians follow all the orthodox severity and unreason of caste exclusion; they damn us as " Panchamas or Pariahs " and ignore our Christian claims and in the fulness of their affluence, power, prestige and position exclude us poorer Christians from society, ..... Frequent outbursts of anti-Panchama activity are the scandal of the South Indian Christian life, and the least attempt on our part to better our lot, forward our progress and assert our elementary rights call down the wrath and fury of every man—official and non-official—Christian or Hindu, who claims a foolish superiority of birth. Denying the very foundations of Christianity, contrary to all love and charity and brotherhood, our "fellow-Christians" treat us even in the Churches as Untouchables and Unapproachables, and relegate us to separate accommodation removed from their precincts and barricade their portions by means of iron rails and walls and fencings. There are several such churches.

"In the matter of reception of sacraments, a most ridiculous segregation is practised to avoid pollution; our claims to educate our children and train them for life are ruthlessly denied and through sheer prejudice our children are denied access to schools, convents, hostels, boarding houses, or if admitted, are assigned an ignominious separate accommodation. Tracing his descent from high caste Hindu progenitors the caste Christian looks for social status and position and finds favour in the eyes of his fellow caste-men, the Hindus. He treats the Depressed Class Christians in the same way as the Hindu Depressed Classes are treated by the Hindu Caste people". What is stated here in general terms may be made concrete by reference to the two following incidents. (*Incidents not mentioned in the MS.*— Ed.).

This is a terrible indictment. It is a relief to know that it does not apply to all parts of India nor does it apply to all denominations of Christians. The picture is more true of the Catholics than of the Protestants. It is more true of Southern India than it is of the Northern or even Central India. But the fact remains that Christianity has not succeeded in dissolving the feeling of caste from among the converts to Christianity. The distinction between touchables and untouchables may be confined to a corner. The Church School may be open to all. Still there is no gainsaying the fact that caste governs the life of the Christians as much as it does the life of the Hindus. There are Brahmin Christians and Non-Brahmin Christians. Among Non-Brahmin Christians there are Maratha Christians, Mahar Christians, Mang Christians and Bhangi Christians. Similarly in the South there are Pariah Christians, Malla Christians and Madiga Christians. They would not intermarry, they would not inter-dine. They are as much caste ridden as the Hindus are.

There is another thing which shows that Christianity has not been effective in wiping paganism out of the converts. Almost all the converts retain the Hindu forms of worship and believe in Hindu superstition. A convert to Christianity will be found to worship his

family Gods and also the Hindu gods such as Rama, Krishna, Shankar, Vishnu, etc. A convert to Christianity will be found to go on a pilgrimage to places which are sacred to the Hindus. He will go to Pandharpur, and make offerings to Vithoba. He will go to Jejuri and sacrifice a goat to the blood-thirsty god, Khandoba. On the Ganesh Chaturthi he will refuse to see the moon, on a day of eclipse he will go to the sea and bathe—superstitions observed by the Hindus. It is notorious that the Christians observe the social practices of the Hindus in the matter of births, deaths and marriages. I say nothing about the prevalence of the Hindu social practices among the Christians. In as much as these social practices have no religious significance it matters very little what they are. But the same cannot be said of religious observances. They are incompatible with Christian belief and Christian way of life. The question is why has Christianity not been able to stamp them out?

The answer is that the Christian Missionaries although they have been eager to convert persons to Christianity have never put up a determined fight to uproot paganism from the Convert. Indeed they have tolerated it.

The retention by the Converts to Christianity of Paganism is primarily the legacy of the Jesuit Missions which were the earliest to enter the field in modern times. The attitude of the Catholic mission towards paganism has come down from the outlook and the ways and means adopted by the Madura Mission. This Mission was founded by an Italian Jesuit Father Robert de Nobili. He came to India in 1608. Having learned of the failure of Francis Xavier he worked out a new plan. He decided to follow the footsteps of the Apostle Paul who observed that he must bring all things to all men that he might save some. Fortified with this belief he went to the Court of Ferumal Naik King of Madura and founded the famous Madura Mission. The way he started is graphically told by Dr. J. N. Ogilvie in his 'Apostles of India ' in the following passage:

" Through Madura there ran one day a striking piece of news. It was told how a strange ascetic from some far land had arrived, drawn to the holy city by its great repute, and that he had taken up his abode in the Brahman quarter of the city. Soon visitors flocked to the house of the holy man to see what they should see, but only to find that the Brahman's servants would not permit their entrance. 'The master,' they said, 'is meditating upon God. He may not be disturbed.' This merely helped to whet the people's desire and increase the fame of the recluse. The privacy was relaxed, and daily audiences were granted to a privileged few.

"Seated cross legged on a settee the Sanyasi was found by his visitors, conforming in every thing to Brahman usage. Over his shoulder hung the sacred cord of five threads, three of gold to symbolise the Trinity, and two of silver representing the body and soul of our Lord, and from the cord was suspended a small cross. Conversation revealed the Sanyasi's learning, and observation and keen inquiry certified to this frugal and holy life. One meal a day, consisting of a little rice and milk and acid vegetables, was all his food. Soon not only ordinary Brahmins came to see him, but nobles also; and a great bound

in his reputation took place when, on being invited to the palace by the King, the Sanyasi declined the invitation lest on going forth the purity of his soul should be sullied by his eyes lighting upon a woman! Never was a holier saint seen in Madura. Where the life bore such testimony to his holiness, how could his teaching be other than true ! His statement that he was a " Roman Brahman" of the highest caste was accepted, and to remove any possible doubts that might linger, an ancient discoloured parchment was produced, which showed how the "Brahmans of Rome" had sprung direct from the god Brahma, and were the noblest born of all his issues. To the genuineness of the document the Sanyasi solemnly swore, and with open minds the people listened to his teaching.

" Book after book was written by the able and daring writer, in which he grafted a modified Christian doctrine on the Hindu stem. Most notable of all such efforts was the forging of a "Fifth Veda" to complete and crown the four Vedas received by Brahmans as direct revelations from heaven. It was an amazing piece of daring as bold and hazardous as it would be for a Hindu to forge for Christian use a fifth Gospel. Yet the forgery held its place for one hundred and fifty years."

" Brahman disciples were soon freely won; baptisms became fairly numerous, though the identity of the rite with the baptism administered by earlier European Missionaries was disguised; and so far as outward tokens went, the new Missionary method was proving a success. Without a doubt progress was greatly facilitated by the highly significant concessions that were made to Hinduism, especially in connection with Caste. According to de Nobili, caste had little signification. To him it was in the main a social observance, and so regarding it he saw no reason for compelling his converts to break with their caste fellowship or observances. His converts retained the ' Shendi ' or tuft of hair which marked the caste Hindu, they wore a sacred cord indistinguishable from that of their Hindu neighbours, and they bore an oval caste mark on their brow, the paste composing or being made of the ashes of sandalwood instead of as formerly of the ashes of cow dung.

" For forty years de Nobili lived his life: a life of daily hardship, sacrifice and voluntary humiliation, such as has seldom been paralleled. On February 16, 1656, he died, having reached his eightieth year. Nearly one hundred thousand converts have been attributed to him, directly or indirectly, and allowing for much exaggeration their number must have been very great.

"In 1673, John de Britto, belonging to one of the noblest families of Portugal, sailed for India. He is now a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. William Robinson of the London Missionary Society and belonging to our own day said of him, "" His eminence as a disciple, intrepid, selfless and enduring in all great qualities that add to the vigour of the Christian life, is assured.

" He and the Christian converts, after the disruption of the Kingdom of Madura and the establishment of petty Kingdoms, were mercilessly persecuted.

" Yet in spite of all that enemies could do, the worker went steadily on with his accepted duty, and wherever he journeyed the same tale of success was told. To the power of the message was added the charm of the messenger, and his converts were numbered by thousands. When by his hands a prince of Marava, Tadia Tevar, was baptized, measures were quickly taken to secure de Britto's death. He was mercilessly done to death on February 4, 1693.

" Father Joseph Beschi, an Italian priest and successor to de Britto, reached India in 1707. Beschi adhered to the policy of the " Roman Brahmins," but in his missionary practice differed considerably from his predecessors. De Nobili, so long as it had been possible, acted the part of a devout recluse, a holy Guru; de Britto had been chiefly the wandering Sanyasi, the holy pilgrim and in their personal life both had practised the greatest asceticism and simplicity. But Father Beschi followed a new line. If Hinduism had its ascetics, it had also its high priests, who lived in luxurious comfort, and whose outward surroundings were marked by pomp and circumstance. This was the line chosen by Beschi by magnificence he would dazzle the people. When he travelled it was a costly palanquin. In advance went an attendant bearing an umbrella of purple silk, at each side ran servants with gorgeous fans of peacock's feathers, and in the palanquin, upon a splendid tiger skin and clad in rich and picturesque robes, reclined the mighty Guru! But Beschi was no empty headed poseur. His method was adopted with a full understanding of the people and with many it worked well. Nor does his fame rest on these extravagances; it is based upon his wonderful scholarship. A born linguist he attained so complete a mastery over Tamil that he became the ablest Tamil scholar of his time. No native scholar was his equal. " High " Tamil as well as " Low ", the Tamil of the scholarly Brahman as well as the colloquial language of the people, were equally familiar to Beschi. Dictionaries, grammars, works of poetry and treatises in prose issued from his busy pen, and they are read and valued to the present day. When first issued they delighted the native world of Southern India. So charmed with his learning was Chanda Sahib, the Nabob of Vellore, that he appointed him to high office in the State, and for his support presented him with four villages in the Trichinopoly district, which brought in a revenue of 12,000 rupees. All this fame and material prosperity Beschi loyally used for the furtherance of the Mission. Its palmiest days were in his time, and its rapid decline, leading to its ultimate collapse, dates from about the period of Father Beschi's death, which occurred in 1742." These Madura Missionaries, in their anxiety to present Christianity to the convert free from any Western customs that might give offence had tolerated among their converts several Hindu Customs as concessions to the converts. Among these concessions were the retention of the sacred thread and the mark on the forehead; the marrying of children before they attained puberty; the refusal of the sacraments to females at certain times, bathing as a ceremonial purification, and other points; and the refusal to marry and dine outside caste. These were called the "Malbar Rites". They were abrogated on 12th September 1744, by the Bull *Omnium*

*sollicitudinum* issued [\[f.34\]](#) By Pope Benedict XIV and since then every Roman Catholic Missionary is required to take an oath to obey this Bull. All the same the tradition remained that pagan ways and pagan beliefs were not incompatible with Christian faith.

It is no doubt true that a great obstacle in the way of the Missionaries in the 16th Century was not only the evil example shown by bad Europeans but also the dislike with which European customs were viewed by Hindus and Musalman alike. A wicked European of course caused Scandal, but a devout European, who ate beef and drank spirits, offended against Brahmanical and Mohammadan tenets and shocked native prejudices. Thus Christianity was despised as the religion of the ' Feringis ' as Europeans were contemptuously termed. To have cleansed the Christian Missionaries of these impurities and infirmities was very necessary and not only justifiable but commendable. But it was quite shameful and sinful for these Jesuit Missionaries in their zeal for conversion to have gone to the length they did namely, not to mind what the convert thought and did and how he lived so long as he was ready to be baptized, acknowledge Jesus as his saviour and call himself a Christian.

What was the attitude of the Luthern Mission which came into the field soon after the Madura Mission to this great question. Swartz the greatest missionary in India who by his piety became the peace maker between warring kings was not a protagonist of the view adopted by the Madura Mission. But did he believe that Caste and Christianity were two incompatible things and that a true Christian could not believe in Caste much less could he make it a plan of his life ? Whatever was his view of the question he certainly did not carry on a campaign in support of it.

What about the Protestant Missions? What attitude did they take towards this question? They have first of all an excuse on their side to plead if they wish to. That they came late on the scene. So far as history goes there is truth behind the assertion that they were prevented from joining the field until 1813. This is due entirely to the attitude taken by the East India Company towards Mission work in their territories in India.

The attitude of all the European powers who went to India were in the beginning of their career greatly fired with an enthusiasm for the conversion of the Indians to the Christian Faith.

Speaking of the Portuguese they were of course the most resolute in their propagation for Christianity and suppression of paganism. Albuquerque suppressed Suti within Portuguese India in 1510 and anticipated William Bentick by fully three hundred years. As soon as Francis Xavier called out in despair the aid of John III of Portugal for forcible conversion it was given. In the Dutch East Indies the Dutch Government which was a protestant power, similar enthusiasm was displayed and strong, if not drastic, measures were adopted. The principle of state aid for Christian propaganda was accepted in Ceylon right from 1643 when the Dutch occupied that island. The erection of temples



and pagan pilgrimages were forbidden, Government appointments were reserved for Christians and non-attendance at religious schools treated as state offence. By 1685, 3,20,000 Cinhalese had yielded to these methods. The same religious fervour was shown by the East India Company. In 1614, a young Indian had been brought to London by the Captain of the Company's ship. The Company educated him at its own expense 'to be an instrument in converting some of his nation'. His baptism was performed at Poplar. The Lord Mayor of London and the Directors of the Company attended the baptism. King James I chose for him the name of Peter and the priest who baptised him presented him to the Audience as 'the first fruit of India'. In 1617 there took place in Surat the conversion of a Mahomedan. Thus the career of the Company began with conversions at both ends. In 1657 the Directors applied to the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford for a Chaplain 'the Company having resolved to endeavour the advance and spreading of the Gospel in India'. In 1698 the Company very readily accepted a clause in her Charter which required the Company's Chaplains 'should apply themselves to learn the languages of the countries, the better to enable them to instruct the Gentoos, who should be the servants of the Company or their agents, in the Protestant religion'.

Suddenly after 1698 the attitude of the Company seems to have undergone a significant though gradual change. While the Portugal and the Dutch Governments were going on with top speed the East India Company was slowing down. In the very year the Company seems to have been of two minds on this question. While it accepted an obligation to train its chaplains in vernaculars of India so as to make them potent instruments of propaganda it allowed a prayer to be drawn up for the Company which said 'that, we adorning the Gospel of our Saviour in all things, these Indian natives among whom we dwell, beholding our good works, may be won over'. This prayer continued to be offered, certainly till 1750. A close scrutiny of the wording of the prayer suggests if it does not avow the complete abandonment of the original idea of active proselytising. This attitude of the Company soon became a matter of controversy. Friends of conversion were waiting for an opportunity to force the Company to give up this attitude. The Regulating Act of 1773 and Pitt's East India Act had put an end to a 'State disguised as a Merchant' and brought the Company the chartered agent of Parliament to carry on the Government of the Indian Territories. It was provided under the Act that the charter of the Company should be only for 20 years and should be renewed thereafter. The year 1793 was of immense importance since the revision of the charter of the Company was to fall due in that year.

To those who favoured the diffusion of Christian knowledge the task seemed quite easy. Wilberforce, who was in charge of the matter had secured the support of important persons in Parliament. He had obtained Archbishop Moore's blessing, and still more important he had won a promise of support from the minister in charge of the East India Company's Charter Bill. As a preliminary to the passing of this Bill matters to be

incorporated in the charter were put in the form of resolutions to be passed by the House of Commons. One of the resolutions passed ran as follows:

"That it was the peculiar and bounden duty of the British Legislature to promote, by all just and prudent means, the interest and happiness of the inhabitants of the British Dominions in India; and that for these ends such measures ought to be adopted as may generally tend to their advancement in useful knowledge and to their religious and more improvement."

" Be it therefore further enacted, that the said Court of Directors shall be and are hereby empowered and required to appoint and send out, from time to time, a sufficient number of fit and proper persons for carrying into effect the purposes aforesaid, by acting as schoolmasters, missionaries, or otherwise every such person, before he is so appointed or sent out, having produced to the said Court of Directors, a satisfactory testimonial or certificate from the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Bishop of London for the time being, or from the Society in London for the promotion of Christian Knowledge, or from the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge, of his sufficiency for these purposes.

And be it further enacted, that the said Court of Directors are hereby empowered and required to give directions to the governments of the respective presidencies in India, to settle the destination and to provide for the necessary and decent maintenance of the persons to be sent out as aforesaid; and also to direct the said governments to consider of and adopt such other measures according to their discretion, as may appear to them most conducive to the ends aforesaid. " I It was largely due to the support of Dundas that the House accepted the resolution without demur. Wilberforce was deeply moved. 'The hand of Providence', he wrote in his journal, 'was never more visible than in his East Indian Affair,' This confidence was premature. Because, on the third reading of the Bill, the clause was struck out with the consent of Dundas. Wilberforce wrote his friend Gisborne " My clauses thrown out..... Dundas most false and double....."

This change of front was brought about by the Directors of the East India Company. The East India trade was a monopoly of the Company and no Englishman could enter the territories of the East India Company in India without license from the Directors of the Company and any Englishman found in the territories of the Company without a license was liable to be deported. The Company did not take long to realize what the effect of the new clause would be. It knew that the clause would require them to open the gates of India to the flood of the Missionaries and their propaganda. Should the Missionaries be allowed a free hand, was the question of the hour. As was natural this became a subject of a most interesting, instructive and bitter controversy and those who care to know it in its details may usefully refer to the pages of the Edinborough Review and the . . . . . of the day.

There were three parties to this controversy. There were the Directors of the East India Company whose primary interest was to protect its shareholders who were

clamouring for dividends. The second party to the controversy was the English Middle Class which was living on the East India trade and whose sons were finding new avenues for lucrative careers in the territories. Thirdly there was the Church Missionary Society formed in the year. .... for the purpose of spreading the Christian faith. The interests of the first two coincided. They were for the maintenance of the Empire and therefore wanted peace and tranquility. The third did care for peace but was keen on the substitution of Indian superstition by the Christian faith. The first made a powerful combination and obliged all the forces against the third. The result was that they triumphed and the Church Missionary Society lost. The arguments advanced by the controversialist on the triumphant side are of course the most important and the most instructive part of the controversy.

To the argument that the propaganda in favour of the Christian faith should begin at once, that it was wrong to hold that the truth though sacred should be doled out in such a way and in such bits as to avoid all risk, the reply given by Sydney Smith was a stunning reply. This is what he said:

"When we consider for how many centuries after Christ, Providence allowed the greater part of mankind to live and die without any possibility of their attaining to the knowledge of the sacred truths by any human exertion, we must be satisfied that the rapid and speedy conversion of the whole world forms no part of the scheme of its Almighty Governor, and that it can give no offence in His eyes if we do not desert our domestic duties and expose the lives and worldly happiness of multitudes of our fellow country men to hazard in our attempt to their conversion."

\* \* \*

"The Directors would be doing their duty neither to the shareholders nor the British Nation if they allowed 'itinerant tinkers to preach the natives into insurrection..... The natives must be taught a better religion at a time and in a manner that will not inspire them with a passion for political change.' .... Our duties to our families and country are set before us by God Himself. We are not at liberty to desert them in order to give a remote chance of conferring greater benefits on strangers at a distance." It is arguments such as those which prevailed with Parliament and led to the rejection of the Clause in 1793. Wilberforce twitted members of Parliament by reminding them with, their Christianity was not a religion of convenience but it was a religion established by law. But as has been well pointed out, "for the major portion of those 'counted ' .in the eighteenth century the religion accepted by the State and Society as a convenience was something to be used with fact and discretion at home. There was no need to diffuse it recklessly abroad. The general atmosphere, as has often been pointed out, was remarkably like that of Augustan Rome. To the statesman, thinking imperially, all religions were equally useful, each in its proper place." [\[f.35\]](#)

The attempt to open the door to the Missionaries failed and the Missionary was shut

out from India till 1813. Not only was he shut out but the Company's Government kept a strict vigil upon the activities of such stray missionaries who contrived to go to India without their license.

In 1793 Dr. Carey went as an interloper without license. As he was not allowed to enter Calcutta being without license, he made Serampore, 14 miles away from Calcutta as his base of operation. Serampore was a Danish settlement and the Danes had placed no restrictions on missionaries or mission propaganda. On the contrary the Governor of Serampore actively helped them. Carey and his Mission was always suspect in the eyes of the Company's Government. In 1798 the Serampore Mission decided to engage four missionaries who arrived in the year 1800. They went to reside in the Danish settlement of Serampore. As a matter of fact the Governor General had nothing to do with them. But the unconcealed residence of those unlicensed enthusiasts was too much for the Company's Governor General and Lord Wellesley wrote to the Governor of Serampore, "Would His Excellency see to the expulsion of these interlopers who might at any moment violate the territories of the British East India Company ", to which the Danish Governor replied that he would do nothing of the kind [\[f.36\]](#) . Similar action was taken in 1806 when Captain Wickes brought two more Missionaries in the ' *Crieterion* ' which anchored off Calcutta. Sir George Barlow was then the Governor General. He took a most extra-ordinary action to prevent the landing of these two missionaries. He ordered that the Captain be not given his clearance papers unless he agreed to take back the two missionaries. Although they had gone to live in Serampore and were in fact under the protection of the Danish Crown. This was not only a more unreasonable attitude towards missionaries but it was also an attitude which could not but be regarded as hostile [\[f.37\]](#).

The Vellore Mutiny among Indian Soldiers which took place in 1806 was quite erroneously attributed to missionary propaganda and Sir George Barlow in a panicky condition proceeded to put the following restrictions on the activities of the Serampore Missionaries:

1. The Missionaries remain at Serampore.
2. They must not preach openly in the bazar.
3. Native converts might preach provided they are not sent forth as emissaries from Serampore. The vehemence with which the Government of Bengal came down upon the Serampore Mission in 1807 for issuing a tract on Islam in which quite inadvertently the prophet Mahomed was called an imposter also furnishes further evidence of the attitude of hostility which Government of the Company bore towards the Missionaries.

The Government of Bengal refused to be satisfied with the apologies of Dr. Carey and insisted upon the transfer of the Press from Serampore to Calcutta in order that Government may be in a better position to control the literature issued therefrom. The news caused dismay for it meant the disruption of the mission. As usual, the Governor of the Danish settlement came to their rescue and told the frightened Serampore

Missionaries that he would fight their battle if the Government of Bengal forcibly removed the Press to Calcutta. Subsequently matters were settled and the order was withdrawn<sup>3</sup>. But the fact remains that the Government of the Company was not a friend of the Missionaries.

So much for the excuse which they can legitimately plead. But what attitude did they take when they were allowed after 1813 to operate in the field ? Did they take the line that caste must go from the thought and life of the Convert? The earliest pronouncement of a Protestant Missionary does not warrant an affirmative answer.

Missionaries intolerating caste : Dr. Heyne in 1814 wrote: Missionaries, in many instances, have fallen into a mistake of a very injurious nature to their rapid or even ultimate success. In converting a Hindu to Christianity, they oblige him to adopt a line of conduct by which he loses his caste; this, in India is considered such a disgrace. that it must present a powerful obstacle to conversion. But the political division of the Hindus is no part of their religious tenets, though it has been so mistaken by the most enlightened. In giving to the Hindus the Christian religion, allow them to retain their caste, and they could be found to embrace it without reluctance, and in considerable numbers." [\[f.38\]](#)

But I do not wish to judge the attitude of the Protestant Missions to so important a question from so stray a pronouncement of a solitary individual. There is evidence to show that the Protestant Missions were once early in their career called upon to make up their mind on this important issue so that it can be said that the view maintained by the Protestant Mission is a considered view. The time when this issue was discussed seriously was the time when Rev. Heber was appointed the Bishop of Calcutta. He assumed his duties in the year 1823. During his episcopate he toured extensively in the whole of India and in Ceylon. In the course of his tour, he became aware of the sharp conflict of opinion among Protestant Missionaries to the question of toleration of caste among converts. He decided to resolve this difference. How he went about the business is told in the words of Mr. Kaye who has succinctly narrated it:

"There was strife, therefore, among the missionaries, which Heber was anxious to allay. The question had been brought before him, before he quitted Bengal. He had there sought to arm himself with all the information that he could obtain, respecting not only the practice of the earlier Protestant missionaries, but the true nature of the institution of Caste. There was then in Bishop's College a Christian convert, known as Christian David. He had been a pupil of Schwartz; and was truly a remarkable man. No less distinguished for his intelligence than for his piety, he was regarded by the good Bishop as the one of all others to whom he might most expediency refer for the solution of his doubts. Heber drew up, therefore, a series of questions, which he submitted to the native Christian, and received from him a series of replies, stated not only in excellent English, but with a force and precision which could not be easily surpassed.

" First, with regard to .the nature of Caste, it was declared by Christian David, that it

was, among the natives of Southern India, "purely a worldly idea"-- "not connected in their minds with any notion of true or false religion," that the native converts, drawn from the higher castes, were disinclined to intercourse with low-caste proselytes, not on religious or superstitious grounds, but simply for social reasons; that there were certain distinctions between high-caste and low-caste persons not by any means ideal, and that these distinctions were not to be gilded over merely by the acquisition of worldly wealth. He specially set forth that low-caste people indulged habitually in an unseemly mode of speech—frequently using coarse or indecent expressions very revolting to the feelings of high-caste men; and that they were altogether less decorous and self respectful in their way of life. Learning, he said, might elevate them; and if a Pariah became learned he was called a pundit, and respected by the Church; and then his brother converts would associate with him, but still they would not "from worldly fear or pride" eat with him from the same dish. From the days of Ziegenbalg downwards they had been wont to sit at Church in two separate divisions, and had communicated separately at the Lord's table, drinking out of the same cup, but the high-caste converts drinking first. As a proof, however, that these were regarded as merely worldly distinctions, Christian David said that high-caste and low-caste, among the Christian congregations of the South, were buried in a common burial ground, and took part promiscuously in the funeral ceremonies, "as if with the consciousness, contrary to the heathen nations, that death levelled all distinctions."

"Rather by mild remonstrance and persuasion than by the enactment of any stringent rules, which might have proved great obstructions to Christianity, the elder missionaries had sought to mitigate the evil; and Christian David declared that under the ministration of Schwartz the evil had considerably diminished. But Mr. Rhenius, of the Church Missionary Society, a truly conscientious and devout Christian, had taken other views of the duties of Christian teachers, and had gained over to his opinions the younger missionaries in the South; so that they agreed, as I have said, among themselves, to make the total repudiation of Caste, even in its mere social aspect, an essential condition of admittance to the Christian Church; and they had, moreover, spoken and preached against the elder missionaries—even the most venerated of their predecessors—denouncing them as "corrupters of the Gospel" for having permitted such things to soil the purity of Christianity.

Of all this Christian David spoke with profound regret. His own opinions were naturally inclined towards the doctrine and the practice of his old master Christian Schwartz. The mild interference and affectionate advice of the Bishop might, he thought, dispose the hearts of the younger missionaries towards greater toleration and forbearance.

"Very earnestly and very conscientiously did Heber revolve this important subject in his mind. It is in accordance with all that we know of the character of the man, that he should have inclined towards the more conciliatory practices of the elder missionaries. But he deferred any final decision, until the opportunity should arrive for the collection of

further information and the delivery of a sounder and fuller judgment on the spot. When, therefore, he visited the Southern Presidency, he wrote letters of inquiry to some of the principal missionaries and instituted a select committee of the Christian Knowledge Society for the purpose of making further investigation into the subject. From one letter written to the Rev. D. Schrievogel, though little more than a series of questions, the bent of his opinions may be derived. It appeared to him, after much deliberate consideration, that Caste, as represented to exist among the Christian converts on the Coast was in reality an institution differing little in its essential features from the social exclusiveness prevailing in Christian countries. Is there no such thing, he asked himself, as Caste in Europe? Is there no such thing as Caste in America? Do not the high and the low sit apart in our English churches? Do not our well-dressed high-caste folks go up first to the altar to communicate? Do high and low sit down to meat together—do their children attend the same schools? Are there no Pariahs amongst us? In other civilized countries, is there not a prevailing sense of Caste, apart from all associations of worldly distinction? Does not the Spanish hidalgo wear his Caste bravely beneath his threadbare cloak? Is the wealthiest mulatto fit companion for the poorest white? It may be called blood, or anything else in another; but in its essential features the one thing differs but little from the other. It is an intelligible and appreciable Christian principle that all men in the sight of God are equal. But it is equally certain that all are not equal in the sight of Man; and it is a fair presumption that God never intended them to be equal. Social distinctions exist every where; and if, argued the Bishop, the distinctions which exist among the converts on the Southern coast are merely social distinctions, why should we endanger the success of our efforts by endeavouring to enforce a law of equality, which is maintained among no other classes of men?

" In this wise thought Bishop Heber. He had said from the first, that if he could be of any service to the Christian cause in India, it would be as a moderator—that by a conciliatory course, smoothing down the asperities of the over-zealship, he might hope to do much good as the chief missionary; and now he believed that it was his duty to cast in the weight of his authority upon the side of those who had resolved not to pour too much of new wine into the old bottles."

This view was more forcefully expressed by another Protestant Missionary Rev. Robert Noble who came out to India in 1841 and was in charge of the Church of England Mission Work in Masulipatam made it a rule to exclude Pariahs, leather workers and scavengers from his school. Defending himself against the charge of introducing caste in the Christian fold he defended himself in the following terms: " The humblest and most pious Christian parents in England would not allow their sons, much less their daughters, to be educated with their footmen, with their cooks and their scullery maids. Perhaps I was punished oftener by my pious father for stealing away to play with the boys of the village than on any other account; while in the best ordered Christian family I have ever seen, the children were not allowed to converse with the

servants or to descend the second step of the stairs into the kitchen. My father would not have allowed us to mix with the cook's or stable boy's children; nor can I see it right to require of Brahmins that before we will teach them the Gospel, they must sit down on the same form with the pariah and the sweeper. The requirement is to me unreasonable and unchristian."

It is true that many wise and devout Christians since Heber's time believed that he was altogether wrong; and that Bishop Wilson at a later period reversed his decision emphatically pronouncing against all toleration for the inequities of caste on the ground that it was an ingrained part of Hindu religion. But the fact remained not only the official but also the general view of the Protest Missions [\[f.39\]](#) in India regarding the place of caste in Indian Christianity.

Thus all Missionaries agreed that Christianity should be made easy in order that it may spread among India. On this point there seems to be difference of kind among Catholics, Lutherans or Protestants. Such difference as exists is one of degree. If there exists Caste and other forms among Christian converts it is the result of this policy — policy of making Christianity easy. In adopting this policy the Missionaries never thought that some day, somebody would ask them 'What good is Christianity for a Hindu if it does not do away with his Caste'. They misunderstood their mission and thought that making a person Christian was the same thing as making him a follower of Christ.

V

Let us take the second part of the question. Has Christianity been able to save the convert from the sufferings and the ignominy which is the misfortune of every one who is born an untouchable? Can an untouchable after his conversion to Christianity take water from a public well? Are his children admitted to a public school? Can he enter a hotel or tavern which was not open to him? Can he enter a shop and buy things from inside? Will a barber shave him? Will a washerman wash his clothes? Can he travel in a bus? Will he be admitted in Public offices without compunction? Will he be allowed to live in the touchable quarters of the village? Will the Hindus take water from him? Will they dine with him? Will not the Hindu take a bath if he touches him? I am sure the answer to every one of these questions must be in the negative. In other words conversion has not brought about any change in the social status of the untouchable convert. To the general mass of the Hindus the untouchable remains an untouchable even though he becomes a Christian.

The question is, why has Christianity not succeeded in raising the status of the untouchable convert? What are the reasons for this failure? I am not sure that my reasons will be accepted by all those who are interested in the problem. But I will state them for what they are worth. To understand and appreciate what I am going to say I must begin by pointing out that a change in the social status of the convert can be the



result of a two-fold change. There must be a change in the attitude of the Hindus. Secondly there must be a change in the mentality of the convert. Status is a dual matter, a matter *inter se* between two persons and unless both move from their old position there can be no change. What has been done by those who are in charge of Christian endeavour to make the parties move on? A consideration of this question will enable us to understand why Christianity has failed to raise the status of the untouchable convert.

Let us consider the question in parts. What has Christianity done to make the Hindus move on? I find they have done nothing. They seem to be depending upon an idea doing the miracle. The faith in an idea doing the work has been well expressed by the late Duke of Argyle when he said:

" There is no method of reform so powerful as this. If alongside any false or corrupt belief, or any vicious or cruel system, we place *one incompatible idea*,—then without any noise of controversy or clash of battle, those beliefs and customs will wave an idea. It was thus that Christianity, without one single word of direct attack, killed off one of the greatest and most universal curses of the pagan world,—the ever deepening curse of slavery." [\[f.40\]](#)

Whatever may be the importance of an idea, I am sure, history does not bear out the conclusion of the Duke of Argyle. It is debatable question whether the end of slavery in the Roman Empire was due to the influence of Christianity. It is beyond doubt that serfdom continued in Europe although Christianity was an established institution for several hundred years. It is an incontrovertible fact that Christianity was not enough to end the slavery of the Negroes in the United States. A civil war was necessary to give the Negro the freedom which was denied to him by the Christians.

The dependence of those in charge of Christian endeavour upon planting of an idea and leaving it to work a miracle is therefore one of the reasons why the untouchable has remained an untouchable notwithstanding his Christian faith.

Let me take the other part of the question. Does Christianity inspire the untouchable to move on? I am constrained to say that (it)does not. So far as I am able to see, Christian preaching to the untouchable is less centered on 'practical' reforms and more centered around the development of Christian social attitudes. Christians who desire the conversion of the untouchables insist on regarding Christianity as purely " spiritual ". To teach that Christians have an obligation to love others is no doubt very valuable. But to stop there and argue that spiritual life expressed in a social attitude is quite unrelated to material life and Christians can have nothing to do with it, is in my judgment to preach an empty doctrine. What is the use of a daily exhortation to a wrong doer to be good and just if the exhortation is not followed by action to make the wrong doer just and good. The Christian Missionaries have never thought that it was their duty to *act* and get the injustice that pursues the untouchables even after his conversion to Christianity removed. That Missions should be so inactive in the matter of the social emancipation

of the untouchable is of course a very sad thing. But far more painful is the inaction of the untouchable Who becomes a convert to Christianity. It is the saddest thing. He continues to suffer from the Hindus the same disabilities which were his lot before conversion. It is an extraordinary thing that the movement for the redress of wrongs is carried on by the untouchables who have not become converts to Christianity. I have never noticed the untouchable Christians meeting in Conferences for the redress of their social wrongs. That they have grievances is beyond question. That there are many who are educated enough to lead them in their struggle is also well known. Why is it then there has been no movement for the redress of their wrongs?

I see three reasons why the Christian untouchables have failed to raise a movement.

The first reason is to be found in the complete absence of desire on the part of the educated among the Christians to take up the cause of the community and fight for it. This is due in my judgment to the fact that within the Christian Community the educated class and the mass has no kinship. The Christian Community is a composite community. In some places it is divided into touchables and untouchables. In all places it is divided into high class and low class. The educated class is largely drawn from the touchable or the higher class. This educated class being detached from the lower or the untouchable class of Christians is not charged with the wants, the pains, cravings, desires, aspirations of the latter and does not care for their interest. The untouchable Christians are therefore leaderless and therefore unable to mobilize for the redress of their wrongs.

The second reason why there is no movement among the untouchable Christians is due to certain faults in the mental make-up of the convert. The mental make-up of the untouchable Christian is characterized by a complete absence of any urge to break his bonds. What is the reason for this absence of any urge in the untouchable Christian ? It seems to me that there are two reasons which account for this. One reason is to be found in the antecedent of the untouchable who becomes a Christian. An untouchable becomes a Christian for some advantage or he becomes a Christian because he *likes* the teaching of the Bible. But the case is very rare of an untouchable becoming a Christian because of a positive discontent or dislike of the Hindu religious teachings. The result is that Christianity becomes only an addendum to his old faith. It does not become a substitute for his old faith. He cherishes both and observes them on occasions appropriate to each.

The second reason for the absence of any urge is due I am afraid to the teachings of the Christian Church. The Christian Church teaches that the fall of man is due to his original Sin and the reason why one must become Christian is because in Christianity there is promise of forgiveness of sins. Whatever may be the theological and evangelistic basis of this doctrine there is no doubt that from a sociological point of view it is a doctrine which is fraught with disaster. This Christian teaching is a direct challenge to sociology which holds that the fall of man is due to an unpropitious

environment and not to the sins of man. There is no question that the sociological view is the correct view and the Christian dogma only misleads man. It sets him on a wrong trail. This is exactly what has happened with the untouchable Christians. Instead of being taught that his fall is due to a wrong social and religious environment and that for his improvement he must attack that environment he is told that his fall is due to his sin.

The consequence is that the untouchable convert instead of being energized to conquer his environment contents himself with the belief that there is no use struggling, for the simple reason that his fall is due to the sin committed not by him but by some remote ancestor of his called Adam. When he was a Hindu his fall was due to his Karma. When he becomes a Christian he learns that his fall is due to the sins of his ancestor. In either case there is no escape for him. One may well ask whether conversion is a birth of a new life and a condemnation to the old.

## VI

Does the Indian Christian Community count in India? What importance, what influence does it have in settling the affairs of the country. It ought to have importance and influence both in the country and society. It is undoubtedly the most educated and enlightened community in India. Not only the percentage of literacy among Indian Christians is relatively larger than in many other communities in India but the University Graduate, Doctors, lawyers are far in excess than can be found in communities which are vastly superior to them in number. Not only the men are educated but also women are educated. With all this light and learning the Christians as a community, it must be said, counts for very little—if at all—in the affairs of India. There may be difference of opinion on this. But this is the conclusion I have arrived at after as close and as impartial a study as I have been able to make. My opponent might say that I am mistaken or that I am misrepresenting. But I take comfort in the fact that there are some Indian Christians who share my view and also my regret. Here are two letters which I take from *Young India*.

The first is from an Indian Christian to Mr. Gandhi and published in the *Young India*, August 25, 1921. This is what he says:

" I am sorry to say that you do not take us Indian Christians as the people of India, as I have seen many times *Young India* mentioning Mussalmans, Hindus, Sikhs, etc., but omitting the Christians.

" I should like you to believe that we Indian Christians are also people of India, and take much interest in India's own affairs." The following is the comment made by Mr. Gandhi on this letter. He says:

" I assure the correspondent and other Indian Christians that noncooperation is no respecter of creeds or races. It invites and admits all to its fold. Many Indian Christians have contributed to the Tilak Swaraj Fund. There are some noted Indian Christians as

non-cooperators in the front rank. There is constant mention of Musalmans and Hindus, as they have hitherto regarded one another as enemies. Similarly there always has been some cause when any race has been specially mentioned in these columns." Apart from the question whether it is true that many Indian Christians have contributed to the Tilak Swaraj Fund and whether it is true or not that noted Christians were front rank non-cooperators, the answer given by Mr. Gandhi to the main question of the correspondent is incorrect if not misleading. If Musalmans are mentioned only because they regard the Hindus as their enemies why were Sikhs mentioned? Surely they did not regard the Hindus as their enemies. Why were they mentioned? The Sikhs were not only mentioned but were treated as an important party without whose active cooperation it was felt that the struggle for Swaraj could not be carried on. And be it remembered that the cooperation given by the Sikhs was not given unconditionally. As is well known the Sikhs had put down two conditions in return for their cooperation [f.41]. One condition was that in designing a national flag for India the Sikh colour which they said was black should find a place in it. Their second demand was that they should be guaranteed by the Congress representation in the legislature. It is thus clear that Sikhs were not mentioned but placated. But the Christians were not even mentioned. Now there are only two explanations for not mentioning the Indian Christians. Either they were with the Congress in the struggle for Swaraj or that they were not worth mentioning as being too insignificant. That they were not with the Congress in this struggle for Swaraj cannot be gainsaid. The following letter written by an Indian Christian written to the Editor of the *Indian Social Reformer* and reproduced in the *Young India* expresses the attitude of the Indian Christians to Swaraj:

" We have positive evidence to show that as early as the second century of Christian era there were Christian settlements in India. Such being the case, Christians in India can claim to have existed in India some centuries earlier than the very birth of Islam. How comes it then that the Indian Christian born and bred on the soil of India and of ancestry purely Indian, has not learnt to cherish the ancient history of this country, its culture and to look upon its people, however different in their religious persuasions, as his bone and of his flesh ? Whence is it that unlike him Hindu or Mahomedan fellow citizen he has not watched for, aspired to and eagerly welcomed every stage that adds a cubit to the cultural, social or political statute of his motherland. Why is it that *Vande Mataram* is a national outpouring of the Hindus and Mahomedans only and till now ignored by the Indian Christian?

Again how comes it that both Hindus and Mahomedans regard the Indian Christian sentiment towards their aspirations as lukeworm if not positively hostile and conversely why is it that the ever-growing height of the national spirit in India makes the Indian Christian feel dwarfed and helpless and suspicious of his security in the future." [f.42]

Notwithstanding Mr. George Joseph, K. T. Paul, and Dr. S. K. Datta there is no doubt that the Indian Christian Community far from taking active part in the struggle for Swaraj

was really afraid of it and that this letter depicts truly the prevailing attitude of the Indian Christians. The reason why the Indian Christians were not mentioned along with the Musalmans and the Sikhs is therefore clear. "The omission to mention them is certainly not due to their being friends of Swaraj. The only conclusion that one can draw for such a omission is that they did not count. It is a sad thing that so enlightened a community should have no importance and no influence in the affairs of the country.

What can be the reasons for such a position? The most obvious reason is of course the smallness of its numbers. The weight of its numbers is too small to make its existence felt as a force in public life as can be the case with the Musalmans or with the Depressed Classes. But this cannot wholly account for their insignificance. There must be other factors to account for this. I see two.

One is this. The Indian Christians are living in sheltered waters. They are, at any rate, a large majority of them are living in the laps of the missionaries. For their education, for their medical care, for religious ministrations and for most of their petty needs they do not look to Government. They look to the Missions. If they were dependent upon Government they would be required to mobilize, to agitate, educate, and organize their masses for effective political action. For without such organization no Government would care to attend to their needs and their requirements. They are not in the current and not being in the current they care not for public life, and therefore no recognized place in the public.

The second reason is that the Indian Christian is a disjointed—it is a better word than the word disunited—Community. All that it has in common is a common source of inspiration. Barring this one thing which they have in common everything else tends to keep them apart. Indian Christians like all other Indians are divided by race, by language and by caste. Their religion has not been a sufficiently strong unifying force as to make difference of language, race and caste as though they were mere distinctions. On the contrary their religion which is their only cement is infected with denominational differences. The result is that the Indian Christians are too disjointed to have a common aim, to have a common mind and to put a common endeavour. To an Indian Christian from Tamil, a Hindu from Tamil is much nearer than an Indian Christian from the Punjab; An Indian Christian from U.P. feels greater kinship for a Hindu from U.P. than he does for an Indian Christian from say Maharashtra. In short, the term Indian Christian is just a statistical phrase. There is no community feeling behind this phrase. Indian Christians are not bound together by what is consciousness of kind which is the test of the existence of a community.

I do not know what Indian Christians will think of what I have said of the weaknesses which infect their life. One thing I can say. It is this—I am deeply interested in Indian Christians because a large majority of them are drawn from the untouchable classes. My comments are those of a friend. They are not the strictures of an adversary. I have drawn attention to their weaknesses because I want them to be strong and I want them

to be strong because I see great dangers for them ahead. They have to reckon with the scarcely veiled hostility of Mr. Gandhi to Christianity taking its roots in the Indian Social structure. But they have also to reckon with militant Hinduism masquerading as Indian Nationalism. What this militant Hinduism will do to Christians and Christianity can be seen from what happened at Brindaban very recently. If newspaper reports are true [\[f.43\]](#) a crowd of mild Hinduism quietly went and burned down the Mission buildings in Brindaban and warned the missionary that if he rebuilt it they would come and burn it down again?! This may be the solitary instance of misguided patriots or this may be just a piece of what the Hindus are planning to get rid of Christians and Christianity. If it is the shadow of events to come then Indian Christians must be prepared to meet them. How can they do that except by removing the weaknesses I have referred to? Let all Indian Christians ponder.