

Christian Missionary Work in India

By P. C. Mozoomdar



INDIA, I maintain, is daily receiving Christ in larger measures. But how much this is because of Christian missionary endeavor it is impossible to say. The whole atmosphere is so saturated with Christian influences, literary, historical, political, and personal, that the underlying spirit infects the whole land. There are two millions and a half of native Christians, and fifteen hundred missionaries of all sects. The Roman Catholic converts are most numerous, only it is to be regretted that the Protestant missionaries hardly recognize them as Christians at all. During the last ten years the increase of percentage in what is called the conversion of the heathen is large and noteworthy. But I do not count all this, though no doubt it has its value, when I say that India daily receives the spirit of Christ. I point to the great millions of unconverted Hindus, the leading castes and classes of thoughtful, educated men, the reformers and torch-bearers of multiform Indian society. These men are steadily imbibing the spirit of Christ, and it is useless to deny that their attitude to the Christian missionary is hostile. Their honor for the character of Jesus is ripening into personal love and spiritual acceptance, but their repugnance to what is known as popular Christian theology is complete. It would be unfair to omit to say, however, that the general respect for the majority of Christian missionaries is genuine, deepest always where the spirit of self-sacrifice is most prominent—otherwise about equally distributed among the representatives of all denominations. If the Christian missionary knew what use to make of this personal appreciation, it would be good for him as well as for those who entertain that feeling; perhaps good also for the interests of the Christian mission. But as nothing short of absolute conversion into dogmatic creed would satisfy the proselytizer, the friendly regard, not seldom mutual, ripens into nothing, and is always superficial, if it does not altogether disappear. In India personal relationship is of the highest religious consequence: rightly used, it might lead to anything; unwisely handled, it soon furnishes the cause of antagonism. The first Protestant missionary who ever came out to this country, Christian Schwartz, a Danish Lutheran, by this power of personal influence became the counselor of the King of Tanjore, the ambassador of the East India Company at Madras, and laid the foundations of the first Protestant Christian community in India. In our own days, great missionaries like Dr. Duff and Dr. Wilson found the secret of their success in the same personal influence; but in later times, I am sorry to find, this source of power among Christian workers is at its lowest ebb. Let the missionary try to spread and deepen his personal magnetism.

I must not be understood to mean that the Christian mission is for this reason devoid of importance. As an educational agency, the missionary body is next only to the Government; in some parts of the country the Government is next to it. In drawing attention to the low condition of the Indian woman the missionary is incessant. He establishes girl schools in far-off provincial villages; his wife visits the women of the Hindu household where even the members of the Zenana Mission would be inadmissible. The German Lutheran missions have civilized great inaccessible tracts of the country, not only preaching to the people the Gospel, but teaching them to bake their bread, to make their writing-paper, and to weave their clothes. The missionary is a philanthropist and a servant of the public. But is it that for which Christian missions are maintained? I would not be sorry if it were so. Nevertheless it is not so. They are to convert India; and in spite of the two million and a half native Christians, in spite of all the glowing reports and cheap engravings

of the paradisaical life of the converted heathen which one admires in the missionary journals, India is as far from receiving popular Christianity as is the planet Mars. Can we find out the causes?

Your excellent people seldom care to make a distinction between Christian theology and the spirit of Christianity. The latter, I take it, was left by Christ, and maintained by the humblest and worthiest of his followers in all ages. The former is the result of the controversies and accidents of the Christian Church, the result of law and logic and metaphysical and ethical speculations in the West. I feel no hesitation in saying that most of the Christian missionaries sent out make their theology the ultimate goal of their work. I do not wish to discuss the truth or otherwise of that theology, but only desire to point out that a man may be very theological without being spiritual, and a man may be very spiritual without being theological. And between the two, in Eastern lands, especially in India, the popular preference will be decidedly for the spiritual man. But who is the spiritual man? One with a profound sense of divine nearness, one with the sweetest dependence upon God, some healthy impulse of self-distrust, and the tenderest sympathy for the weaknesses as well as the sanctities of other people's life. The militancy of the Christian propaganda, boast of it as you may, is its fatal disqualification. The more muscular your aggressiveness, the more determined the resistance it will provoke. The resistance in India is seldom as loud as the attack, and the shouting may attract the least stable elements of society, but that does not signify much in the conversion of the land. Undeniably, Islam was more muscular than the American Board, and whole tracts of country became Mussulman; there are about sixty-six millions of Mussulmans to the two and a half millions of native Christians at the present day; the census reports prove a rapid increase of the Mohammedan population; all this does not admit of doubt. But I ask, What perceptible breach has Islam made in the solid stability of the Hindu religion? After the Great Mogul ceased to rule from the throne of Aurangzeb, Hinduism rose in greater organic strength and unrelenting orthodoxy than when the images of Benares had been desecrated and the wealth of the temples had been robbed. Mere muscular, or financial, or even dogmatic religion cannot make much headway in India. We need spiritual power, and we ask you to send out men who have the largest measure of that power.

Why does it so seldom occur in the missionary reports to state what spiritual or moral progress is observable in the vast community of native Christians? I have great esteem for men like the late Rev. Narain Scheshadrai, or Babu Kalicharan Baunerjea, and one or two others whom I could name. But what becomes of the rank and file of the two millions and a half? what reforms do they originate? what labors do they carry on? what advance do they make in the confidence of the great Hindu society? what contributions do they offer to the great world of Christian thought? Yet, truth to speak, I do not have the heart to blame these men. They learn what has been taught them; they preach the doctrines that are prescribed for them; they imitate the ways of life that are laid before them; and thus they live and die more as figures and ciphers in a statistical table than as living souls clothed in flesh and blood. I am grieved at the deplorable misdirection of their energy, for which the Christian missionary, and he alone, is responsible. In an occasional fit of disappointment, one is apt to quote the Scotch professor who, in defining untruth, said there were three species of that unwholesome article: "1. Black lies. 2. White lies. 3. Statistics." It is the spirit of Christ's life that we demand in India: charity, temperance, wisdom, holiness; but they cram us with the sawdust of theology, and rule us with the iron rod of ecclesiasticism. The legal, logical, historical

apparatus of popular Christianity sucks away the very sources of Oriental imaginativeness and sympathy, and turns men into theological automata.

A certain amiable bishop of Calcutta, once speaking before the University of Cambridge to young men who intended to come out as missionaries to India, advised them to study the "philosophy of the Unconditioned." His Lordship seemed permeated with the idea that the Hindus, being reputed as a race of subtle metaphysicians, could not be tackled successfully except in the paths of the Unconditioned. We do not know how many Hindus have been caught in these lonely regions, but we do know that if the learned members of the Cambridge and Oxford missions had broader philosophical culture and deeper sympathy with the traditions of Hindu thought, they would not need to wander into the fogs of the Unconditioned, but could easily secure a better hearing than now from the thoughtful classes of the Indian community. What is the use of mincing matters? The feeling is that we in India need a different order of men as Christian missionaries. The English soldier in India is the finest soldier, the English civil servant is the finest in the race of officials, and the English missionary should be the finest specimen of Christian thinker and speaker. He should have the power, perhaps one ought to call it the genius, of discovering the universal principles of Christianity and embodying them in national ideals.

One signal service which the Christian missionaries did to India was the introduction of the printing-press. Carey, Ward, and Marshman, "the three consecrated cobblers," as Jeffrey called them, were the pioneers of Christian literature in Bengal. They had to settle in Danish territory, because the English authorities would not permit them to abide in Calcutta. They were called the Serampore missionaries. About 1794 they established at Serampore a printing-machine, and at once took in hand the translation of the Bible in the vernacular. Theirs was the first typefoundry, theirs was the first Bengalee newspaper, theirs the first dictionary in English and Bengalee, and from them flowed a steady stream of evangelical literature which well-nigh flooded the Hindu society of the time. That literary activity has now infected the whole country, and no Indian province does so much publishing work as Bengal. The credit of originating such literary vitality is due, above all, to the fathers and representatives of the Baptist Mission. To the growing native Christian community, then a handful, the vernacular Bible and the storm of tracts and leaflets must have been of the greatest service. They were not only strengthened in their knowledge of Christian doctrines, Christian principles, and the history of their faith, but they received a general education which but few of them possessed when they entered the missionary fold.

But if you ask me what religious service all this did to the literary Hindu public, my answer would be that the Christian vernacular literature, in Bengal at all events, is the most serious stumbling-block to the spread of the religion of Christ. Not that the Bible is a disagreeable book, not that thoughtful Hindus are disinclined to the study of foreign religions, not that the Christian missionaries are a race of persecuted innocents, but because the translation of the Bible is so atrociously bad, and the language so utterly outlandish. Now, the vernaculars of such progressive races as the Mahrattas and Bengalees are being perpetually refined and broadened. A thorough revival of letters has taken place during the last half-century. To the endless resources of the Sanskrit classics, now studied in the universities, the endless and increasing resources of English literature are daily added, and the double culture results in the grace and improvement of the vernaculars which already exercise a mighty influence in every kind of national unity. Strange that the Christian vernacular literature has neither part nor lot in this new power. The old prehistoric jargon in which the Methuselahs of Protestant missions embodied their raw Calvinism with the aid of a few subservient native pundits is still the current coin of the missionary market, and people in general feel that they are debauched when they touch it. The missionaries are all English-speaking people; they have a

high-souled contempt for the language and literature of other nations; the patronage they extend to the vernaculars is enough condescension to an inferior people. If the translations and tracts which they are good enough to issue are not liked by those people, why, it is so much the worse for the people themselves: they have ceased to understand their mother tongue! It is difficult to convince these unreasonable proselytizers that they must learn to talk as the people themselves talk before they can hope to make their ideas intelligible. I have repeatedly urged the re-translation of the Bible, always receiving virtually the same answer: It is impossible to render an infallible book into foreign idiom. I ask whether liberal Christians in America and England cannot organize something to give India decent vernacular editions, if not of the whole Bible, at least of some parts of it both in the Old Testament and the New. There is no denying that the Christian missionaries are a painstaking body, and if they could only be made to see their duty in the matter they would do it. I take it that people at home will show it to them better than we can hope to do here.

The theological formalism spoken of before, upon which the missionary bodies insist so much, spreads from opinion and sentiment to manners and personal habits on the part of their converts. It is said that the Englishman will eat no ham but his Yorkshire ham, no cheese but his Cheddar and Stilton cheese. He would rather starve than thrive upon foreign commodities. But is that any reason why native Christians should be encouraged to eat cheese and ham, and, what is worse, drink detestable English liquors? The great complaint against the Christian missionary has been for a long time that he denationalizes our people. It always creates a sore feeling that as soon as a man changes his forefathers' creed he changes the forefathers' manners and usages also; he dresses and diets and behaves himself as if he were something of a European. He sometimes goes the length even of engrafting an English name to his own family name, and buds forth into a freshness of being which causes an equal confusion among Europeans and Indians alike. I repeat, this is no fault of the convert himself, but, directly or indirectly, the doing of his missionary guardian. The fact is that the zealous evangelist not only regards the religion of this country as heathenish and bad, but regards also the very modes of life, the very names of the people, as more or less heathenish and bad. He wants to make a clean sweep of everything he finds here, and transform his spiritual progeny into an entirely new edition of human nature. He forgets that no nation on the face of the globe is more conservative of its social customs than the Hindus, and any one who cuts away the bond of those common customs cuts away the whole connection between himself and his parent society. Such isolation means the death of every great cause.

I recommend, therefore, that native Christians be typical Hindus in everything but their religion. How does it happen that other non-Hindu communities, like the Sikhs, the Kabir-Panthis, and various Vaishnabite and Tantric sects, are included within the fold of all-embracing Hindu society, and why is it that native Christians alone are rigidly excluded? The reason is, they exclude themselves; they are denationalized and alienated by a foreign training. In China the missionary is obliged to don the mandarin costume and cultivate the pigtail; that is perhaps because China is a free country and India is not; but a similar spirit of concession would help the cause of Christianity all over the East. Perhaps it ought to be acknowledged here that a few eminent native Christians are alive to the shortcoming here pointed out, and have banded themselves to resist the stream of foreign tendency; but they do this rather as a protest against missionary teaching, and thus help to bear out the truth of our criticism.

Another serious matter in Christian missionary work is the internal discord between European missionaries and the most intelligent of the native Christians. In a caste-ridden country like India, the spirit of Christian brotherhood ought to be the most prominent attraction of the new

faith. But what is the fact? Not only do denominational hatreds between Catholic and Protestant, between High-Church and Dissenter, between the Salvation Army and all the rest, serve as an object-lesson to injure Christianity, but the relations between the missionaries themselves and those they have converted are anything but exemplary. The first charge commonly made is the social inequality between the white and black members of the Christian Church. Mr. Joygobind Shome, the editor of the Bengal "Christian Herald," the organ of the native Christian community in the province, himself a native Christian of long standing, speaking before the Calcutta Missionary Conference in 1893, thus comments: "It must be confessed that there is little or nothing of the Christian brotherhood exhibited in this country to attract the non-Christian into the Church of Christ." He points out how different orders of native Christians decline to sit together at a common meal, and then says: "The English or American Christians do not show a better example. One seldom sees English and Indian Christians joining each other at the social dinner. The tea-party is the utmost goal now at which the Indian and European Christians meet socially, but so far as the dinner-party is concerned, the Indian Christian is excluded from it about as rigidly as the Sudra is excluded by the high-caste Brahmin." It is rather amusing to find out in Mr. Shome's statement that the Indian missionary, on his own part, is treated about equally ill by the great English official. Canon Taylor relates the story of a butler who refused to serve at the table of an English civil officer because he had invited to dinner an Indian missionary, who, in the butler's opinion, was not sufficiently high in the social scale. Mr. Shome thus winds up: "The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are two grand doctrines, no doubt, but if we descend from grand Christian dogmas to the modern Christian life as a whole, do we not find written on it 'Ichabod,' the glory is departed!" The native Christian worker complains of the inequality of pay between himself and his English colleague, and instances are not unknown of promising men having left the field with a sore heart for that reason. We are told: "Intermarriages between English Christians and Indian Christians have occasionally taken place, but the Englishman or Englishwoman who has married an Indian has been invariably cut off from all social intercourse with his or her own race for this offense. If there were real brotherhood between an English Christian and an Indian Christian, I should expect a better state of things."

All these, and such other facts, prove that Christian missionary work in India ought to be carried on somewhat on different lines. That the work is good I have never doubted; I have always said we cannot get along without the missionaries. Criticism of a good work is at no time a pleasant duty, but that the good work might be done better is the only motive which induces me to say things which perhaps will cause some pain to men whom I really respect. Deal with the subject as I may, I cannot hide from myself the obstinate conviction that Christian missionaries can never hope to do their work as they should until they admit into their sympathy and confidence prominent Hindus, men who perhaps are outside their denominational limits, but who, in their hearts, wish them well. Their co-operation should be sought, but, above all, a greater nearness should be sought with the spirit of Him who said: "Those who are not against us are for us."



The New York "Evangelist" has started a novel and interesting "plébiscite" on the best Sunday-school books. Every one familiar with this literature and with Sunday-school needs is invited to send to that paper before June 30 a list which, in the reader's opinion, constitutes the "100 best Sunday-school books for children between the ages of twelve and seventeen." Blank forms are mailed on application to the paper at its office, 33 Union Square, New York. It is hoped that this "plébiscite" will do much to winnow the wheat from the chaff in Sunday-school literature, and that it will enlist the interest and co-operation of pastors, superintendents, librarians, and "reading committees" all over the country.

The Overproduction of Educated Men

By Prof. George H. Schodde

The old saying that a little learning is a dangerous thing must seemingly be changed to read that a good deal of learning is also a dangerous thing. At any rate, in our day and date there has sprung up a semi-social problem that is as unique as it is difficult of solution. It is the overproduction of technically educated men. Especially on the Continent, the supply of men in all the leading professions is vastly in excess of the demand. The problem of a "learned proletariat" is, in Germany and elsewhere, causing almost as much trouble as is the social and economic proletariat. On the face of matters it looks odd that ignorant Russia and enlightened Germany should agree on one policy on educational matters, namely, the desirability of reducing the number of students in attendance at the universities. Yet here, as is often the case when two persons do the same thing, it is not the same. Russia is afraid of education; Germany sees that there is danger in having too many men educated for the higher walks and stations in life whose services cannot be utilized by the State and by society. Years ago Prince Bismarck in Parliament uttered words of warning against a "rabble of college graduates." Matters have become a good deal more serious since in the Fatherland, and the state of affairs has called forth careful discussions from the pens of such statisticians and authorities on social problems as Dr. R. Bünger, Professor Conrad, of Halle, and Professor Lexis, of Göttingen.

The plain fact in the case is that the professions, one and all, in Germany and in some other countries, notably Greece and Denmark, are more than overcrowded. A German graduate who has spent his nine years at the gymnasium or college, and his four or five years at the university, must generally wait years before he can secure even a modest position. Even in the department of theology, which has been the least crowded, young candidates by the score are compelled to teach country schools for years before an opening can be found for them. In law and medicine things are much worse. The increase in the number of university students during the last decade has been vastly in excess of the increase of the population. For several years the Government has been systematically at work in Germany trying to reduce the number of students. To a certain degree it has succeeded. Three years ago the high-water mark was reached in an enrollment of a little more than 30,000. Now it has receded to 28,053, and, as the slight reduction is reported each term, the official and other papers openly acknowledge their pleasure at this. These data can be best understood when it is remembered that the German university does not occupy the grade held by the American college or "university," but that held by such post-graduate courses as those of our theological seminaries, medical colleges, law institutions, and other technical faculties. Students of this grade in Germany average 57 to every 100,000 inhabitants, or fully two or three times as many as the country naturally needs.

To make matters worse, it must also be remembered that the education given at the German universities is exceedingly technical, preparing a man for only the one chosen calling of his life. The famous schools make excellent specialists, the best produced in the world, but not a set of men who can adapt themselves to the various ups and downs of life if they cannot be utilized in their own particular fields. As a result, Germany is full of finely educated men, who have given their best years and their means to prepare themselves for useful careers in their chosen profession, and who find, at the end of their course, that they are not wanted and not needed. It often is a source of surprise that so many educated Germans find their way into the ranks of the Socialists and other classes discontented with the State and with society. The problem of a "learned proletariat" amply explains this phenomenon. Quite naturally do such disappointed men throw the blame for their failure on the State which has in a thousand ways encouraged the cause of higher