

CHAPTER 30

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 :¹

“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 it’, 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”.

¹ “The Basis of Inter-Religious Fellowship” by C. F. Andrews in “The Young Men of India, Burma and Ceylon.” June 1928, Vol. XI, No. 6.

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 :

- I. "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."¹
- II. "All I want them (the Missionaries) to do is to live Christian lives, not to annotate them.² 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".³

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.⁴..... While you give medical help, you expect the reward in the shape of your patients becoming Christians."⁵

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.⁶ 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."⁷

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

¹ Harijan, 1936, p. 330. ² Harijan, 1936, p. 353. ³ Harijan, April 1937. p. 86. ⁴ Harijan for 1937, p. 137. ⁵ Harijan, 18th July 1936, p. 178. ⁶ Harijan for 1936, pp. 140-41. ⁷ Harijan for 1936, p. 360.

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 Hindus¹. 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 vilification". 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 :²

"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.

¹ Harijan, 8th February 1936, p. 415.

² Harijan, August 8, 1936.

"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 "respector 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.

I. CHRISTIAN MEDICAL WORK¹

1.	Hospitals	..	256
2.	Dispensaries	..	250
3.	Sanatoriums	..	10
4.	Leper Homes	..	38
5.	Medical Schools	..	3
6.	Number of Hospital Beds	..	12,000
7.	Number of Sanatorium Beds	..	755
8.	Doctors, Foreign	..	350
9.	Doctors, National	..	390
10.	Nurses, Foreign	..	300
11.	Nurses, National	..	900
12.	Student Nurses	..	1,800
13.	Operations, Major	..	44,000
14.	Obstretics, Total	..	32,000
15.	In—Patients	..	285,000
16.	Out—Patients	..	2,600,000

II. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION²

	Institutions	Students
1. Elementary Schools	13,330	611,730
2. Secondary Schools	302	67,229
3. Colleges	31	11,162
4. Theological Colleges and Training Schools	25	556
5. Bible Training Schools	74	2,855
6. Teacher Training Schools	63	3,153

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.*)

¹ In India, Burma and Ceylon.

² In India.

That caste can influence doctors in the ministration 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 Brahmo 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 Brahmo 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.

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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 praiseworthy 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 adherents 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 Brahmins 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 Brahmans," 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* issued¹ 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

¹Krishna District Manual, p. 282.

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, an 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."

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....."