

THE
FUTURE
OF
CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

BY

MR. JNAN CHANDRA BANERJI, M.A., B.L.

AND

THE REV. J. N. FARQUHAR, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION.

(Read not to contradict and confute,
nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and
discourse, but to weigh and consider.—*Bacon.*)

THIS Tract as stated on the title page is a reprint of three articles written for **The Hindustan Review** by two eminent persons representing Hinduism and Christianity. The articles are the outcome of a liberal education and a dispassionate study of the question. The discussion, if it may be so called, is conducted in a most tolerant and sober manner. The reader be he a Hindu or Christian, will find nothing of the common fanatic spirit in which controversies are conducted even by the so-called educated and advanced sections of different communities. The merits and demerits of both the important systems of thought are discussed and weighed in a true, liberal and scientific spirit.

As the articles in question have given the undersigned much instruction and profit, it is but natural, that he should wish and hope that they may prove of similar value to others. Even a cursory perusal will furnish sufficient intellectual and social food not only to the Hindu and Christian but to Mohammadan and Parsi as well.

The thanks of the Publisher are due to **Mr. Sachchidananda Sinha**, the Editor of *The Hindustan Review*, for giving his kind permission for publishing the articles in a pamphlet form.

LAHORE:
Kucha Sathan.

} MULA MAL, B.A.

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA.

No. I.

MR. JNAN CHANDRA BANERJI, M.A., B.L.

IN the midst of the appalling diminution in the rate of increase of the general population of India disclosed by the census returns for 1901, one fact stands out in striking contrast—the large increase in the Christian section of the population. It has been stated by some authorities that this increase is in all probability due to the growth of the Native Christian element, the addition to the number of Europeans living in India being very small. It is further shown that the rate of increase of the Christian population, amounting to 30 per cent, is twelve times that of the general population, which has increased only at the rate of 2·5 per cent. Without disputing either of these statements, or the accuracy of the returns for the previous decade (1881-91) with which the present returns have to be compared, we may demur to the conclusion which the promoters and supporters of Christian propagandism will be likely to draw from them. A comparatively large increase in a small section of the Indian community like the Native Christians, who form together with the European Civil and Military population, an aggregate of a little over two millions out of a vast total of two hundred and ninety-one millions, even admitting the increase to be due mainly to conversion, will not bring the hope of a Christianised India within measurable distance of realisation. But the thesis that this increase is mainly due to a genuine desire on the part of the non-Christian population of India to be converted to the Christian faith, cannot be maintained. In the first place, it must partly be due to the productiveness of the existing Christian population. The children of Christian parents are Christian because they have been brought up in that faith,

and the question of conversion does not arise in their case. In the second place, a considerable portion of the new converts has been recruited from the ranks of the semi-Hinduised aborigines who are incapable of an intelligent discrimination of the relative merits of the different systems of religion prevailing in India, and for whom any system of religion is better than the utter spiritual darkness in which they are immersed. That the facts are as here stated will be evident from the figures for Assam and the Central Provinces, where the aboriginal population is the largest in Upper India. In Assam, the increase of the Christian population amounts to cent. per cent., and in the Central Provinces, where there has been an actual decrease in the general population, the Christians have increased at the rate of 120 per cent. In the third place, the unprecedented famines which reduced the lower classes of Indians to a state of chronic stravation during the last decade of the last century are responsible for a large number of Native Christian converts. Unless therefore famines be a permanent condition of the country, the last class of recruits cannot be counted upon. Neither will any one be quite so optimistic as to think that the cause of Christianity in India has been substantially strengthened by the inclusion of this flotsam and jutsam of Indian population within its pale. Lastly, some people accept Christianity from motives of personal gain, and these also cannot be reckoned as genuine converts.

There is even less cause for congratulation on the part of the Christian Missionaries and their supporters both at home and in India, if, leaving the question of increase of population aside, we consider the subject from a different standpoint. If, as a writer has pointed out, "the prospects of Christianity in this and every other land depend more on the quality than on the number of its adherents," then he would be a bold prophet who would say that those prospects are very encouraging. Undoubtedly there are, and were, men of great worth among the Native Christians, and India is proud to

claim them as her sons. But if the truth must be told, one is bound to admit that they were the converts of a previous generation, when Western education first made its appearance in this country, and the enthusiasm it created overthrew the mental balance of some of the foremost among those who, like the late Michael Madhusudan Dutta and the Rev. Dr. K. M. Banerjea in Bengal, were the first fruits of that education. The new *Aufklärung* dazzled their eyes by its intense light, and made them blind to the good points of their own religion and society. They accordingly embraced Christianity at the first opportunity, not so much from conviction as from a spirit of protest against all that was indigenous. But the tide has now turned, and educated and high-caste converts have become rare, and may be counted on one's fingers. Judged by this test, therefore, Christian propagandism in India cannot be said to have been a success.

How little has the Christian spirit penetrated into the minds of the low class converts even in enlightened Bengal, may be illustrated by the following well-authenticated anecdote, which is not without its humorous side. In a village in Eastern Bengal, there reside a few Christian cultivators, whose forefathers were *chandals*, i.e., members of the lowest class of Hindu society. Once upon a time, cholera broke out in the village, and many were the ravages committed by that fell epidemic. Thereupon all the wise men of the hamlet put their heads together, and resolved upon celebrating a grand *poojah* for the propitiation of the goddess *olà*, whose wrath they had evidently incurred. Our good friends, the Christians, of course joined in the celebrations, as they were always accustomed to do. Now it so happened that the pastor of the flock was a zealous servant of the Lord, and on the news reaching him, he became well nigh stupefied with surprise. When he had recovered sufficiently from the shock, he made his way with all the haste he could to these unregenerate apostates, for whom he had mentally prepared a crushing homily. On reaching his destination, however, he found his

parishoners quietly at work in their fields, as if nothing particular had happened. When he had delivered his homily, at first they did not seem to understand what he was driving at. At last when they comprehended the drift of his exhortations, with an air of genuine surprise and vexation they exclaimed : "Why, Sir, we *are* Christians, to be sure ; but if we are not allowed to pay homage to our ancestral gods, we shall have none of your Christianity". The curate was evidently not prepared for such a retort, so perceiving the direction in which the wind blew, he beat an immediate retreat, leaving his flock masters of the situation.

This failure of missionary proselytism need not awaken the surprise of those who take the trouble to enquire into its cause. On the contrary, to them it is just what was to be expected. Let us look a little into the character of the Hindu religion from which converts are sought to be recruited. As has been well said by a Hindu thinker of modern times,* "So far as religious beliefs are concerned, Hinduism embraces within its fold all systems of belief and even unbelief, from the extreme agnosticism of the *Nastik's* and *Charvak's* to the popular polytheistic creed of the myriads of Hindu gods and goddesses. The Hindu shastras are, to use a Hindu metaphor, a vast ocean, which, so far as religion is concerned, the votary, like the Hindu gods of old, has only to churn to find the nectar of truth, which is exactly suited to the light that is in him. It is perfectly optional to a Hindu to choose from any one of the different religious creeds with which the shastras abound ; he may choose to have a faith and creed, if he wants a creed, or to do without one. He may be an atheist, a deist, a monotheist, or a polytheist, a believer in the Vedas or Shastras, or a sceptic as regards their authority, and his position as a Hindu cannot be questioned by anybody because of his beliefs and unbeliefs so long as he conforms to social rules. This has been the case with Hinduism in all

* Babu Guru Prasad Sen in his *Introduction to the Study of Hinduism*, Chap. I.

ages.....The Hindu never quarrels with religious beliefs, and he never enquires into the religious beliefs of his neighbours." Examples of this capacious liberalism are not wanting in the past history of the Hindu religion. Sikhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism, all originally promulgated as reforming schisms, were gradually taken back into the bosom of Hinduism from which they broke away for a time, just as Buddha was accepted as the ninth Incarnation of the Hindus, and some of the Mahomedan *Peers* or saints were admitted to a niche in the popular Hindu pantheon. Brahmoism shows the same tendency, for already there are many among the Hindus who hold Brahmo tenets and still do not find it necessary to openly join the Brahmo camp. Their liberal ideas are bound to leaven the views of the less advanced section of the Hindus in the process of time. Hindus in towns now freely dine with Brahmos, and partake of forbidden food, often in the company of their wives and children. Though the hard and fast social rules of the past centuries still predominate in the villages, when the women of the present generation, accustomed to more liberal ways of thought and action, will become *materfamilias*, a further blow will be struck at the root of the already decaying social system of our forefathers. A journey to Japan, Ceylon and Burma no longer involves loss of caste, and in the metropolis of India, we are told, England-returned Bengalees are admitted to the social dinners of their Hindu compeers. The great Kayastha communities of Bengal are already showing signs of a completer social union among themselves, and widow-marriage, though still rare, is no longer looked upon with the horror it once excited. The writer remembers how he was once fairly taken by surprise on hearing a justification of widow-marriage from the mouth of an orthodox Brahma lady. From all this it is clear that Hinduism can readily assimilate whatever is good and reasonable in the Christian or any other faith, and hence it is not necessary for the more advanced men within its pale to

break away from the surroundings in which they have been brought up, and adopt a new religion.

Again, in spite of the superstition of the masses, the Hindus are certainly not more superstitious, or prejudiced than the Christians. The gross, absurd, and childish superstitions which prevailed in Europe so late as the last century, and of which Lecky, Draper and Buckle have given such graphic accounts, would be rejected by the understanding of the meanest of Hindus. Even modern Europe,* specially Spain, Italy, and Russia, is steeped in superstition. In fact, when the question of a candle more or less in the Church can excite a fierce controversy even in Protestant England, superstition may still count upon a long lease of life.† Moreover, though the "superstitious dread of idolatry," to quote the words of Sir John Seely, which characterises a class of Christian missionaries, blinds their eyes to the fact, it must be admitted that the Hindus are not essentially idolatrous. They are tolerant of monotheistic beliefs like Christianity and Mahomedanism, which would be impossible had their faith in an 'One without a second' been obscured by image-worship. In fact, as Sir Edwin Arnold‡ and a few other foreign scholars who know something of the Indians have come to understand, the meanest Hindu peasant, when questioned, will say that all the gods he worships are but manifestations of the same divine spirit which prevades the

* See Marie Corelli's *The Master Christian*.

† The Œcumenical Council which met in the Vatican on December 8, 1869, declared among other things, that (1) God revealed himself to men through the old and the new Testaments and through them alone; (2) God is the author of the decrees of the Council of Trent; (3) Miracles and prophecies are a fact; (4) Christ is the only begotten son of God; (5) Through Him, God has made the Catholic church (and the Catholic church alone) the guardian of his revealed word; (6) The claims of the church are not to be submitted to human reason; (7) Even the legitimate conclusions of Science shall have no validity against the dogmas of the church.

‡ See *India Revisited*, p. 113; and *Ideals of the East*, by Kakasu Okakura, pp. 65-66.

Universe ; he knows, as well as the Vedic Rishis whose faith he has inherited, that 'that which exists is one, although sages call it variously.' The henotheism of the Pauranic stories, which now extol one god and then another as supreme, has also helped him to recognise this truth. The 'song of songs' of the Hindus, the *Bhagavadgita*, proclaims that there are three paths to salvation, the path of faith, the path of unselfish work and the path of knowledge (*i.e.* Reason). Indeed, no religious or philosophic system in the world has placed Knowledge on so high a pedestal as Vedantism. According to it, Knowledge is the only way to salvation, it is the sole weapon by which the soul can cut its way out of the meshes of Nescience (*Avidya*) and reach the goal—absorption in the Universal or the Infinite. Thus there is a place in Hinduism for all—for the masses who are moved by blind faith, for the half-educated, who are shallow thinkers, for the elect, who have drunk deep of the spring of wisdom ; for the workers of the world like Arjuna, for the thinkers, like the Rishis of old, for the devout like Dhruva and Prahlad.

The common masses of every country *will* be superstitious, and those in India are not likely to forsake their ancestral gods for the sake of the Trinity, the Holy Virgin, the Saints, the angelic and demoniac hierarchy of the Christian church ; nor are the doctrines of immaculate conception, transubstantiation and resurrection likely to appear very reasonable to their minds. These superstitions are everywhere difficult to root out. Even the noblest men, men gifted with an ardent love of truth, like Robert Elsmere in Mrs. Humphry Ward's masterly novel, cannot sacrifice their most cherished beliefs and ideas with which their whole religious life is intimately bound up without an effort which very nearly overthrows their physical and mental balance. "It is so much easier to assume than to prove ; it is so much less painful to believe than to doubt ; there is such a charm

in the repose of prejudice, when no discordant voice jars upon the harmony of belief; there is such a thrilling pang when cherished dreams are shattered and old creeds abandoned, that it is not surprising that men should close their eyes to the unwelcome light." But to those whose reason is strong enough and spirit bold enough to rise above this deadweight of prejudice, Christianity will seem but a half-truth, in which the mind can never rest satisfied. It is easy to see that this remark will be regarded as rank heresy by the ardent Christian missionary, for he is pledged to his doctrine; but let us hope the intelligent and open-minded reader, to whatever creed or persuasion he may belong, will not misunderstand our meaning. As Draper says, "what the advancing intellectual state of the community has received with veneration it begins to doubt, then it offers new interpretations, then subsides into dissent, and ends with a rejection of the whole as a mere fable." Bishop Colenso and others have demonstrated the unauthenticity of the Pentateuch, upon which the Biblical theory of creation and the all-important doctrine of atonement are based. The researches of Strauss, Renan, and scores of other scholars, again have shown the futility of many of the prevalent theories regarding the Bible, and European scientists, philosophers, rationalists, and cultured men in general are coming to recognise that no particular religion can have a special divine sanction. If people, whose judgments must necessarily be affected by the traditions and hereditary influences of nineteen centuries of Christianity, now find it necessary to question its supreme authority, what is the chance of its acceptance by the educated people of India whose judgments are not warped by such considerations? In fact, to not a few of the European scholars and philosophers the Vedic 'pantheism' as it has been called, contains a deeper truth and has been a greater solace than Christianity itself, and judged by the pure light of reason, Vedantism certainly seems to harmonise more fully with the scientific monism

of the present day.* Sir Henry Thompson's forecast of the future may be exaggerated, but it has no doubt an element of truth in it. The religious part of the community, according to him, will be divided into two distinct camps, those who enjoy complete liberty of thought, and those who deny the exercise of reason altogether, and demand implicit obedience to a well-organised hierarchy.† The Indians must not be allowed to exercise their reasoning faculties at all, or if they are, they must not be expected to stop short at half-truths. In fact, not only in India, but all the world over, the *Zeitgeist* of the century finds expression in Rationalism in matters of religion.

But though the Indian people will never be Christians, they have nevertheless not rejected Christ. He is already enshrined in the hearts of the educated Indians as the great exemplar of practical morality. Indeed, it is not too much to say that by rejecting Christianity with all its creeds, theories, dogmas and ritual, they have caught the *spirit* of Christ in a more real sense than would otherwise be the case. According to M. Renan, "the fate of great ideas always is that, in becoming efficient, they enter into impure combinations with facts and become vulgarised; or that they get fixed and fossilised in dogmas, and lose their inspiring power; and finally they are subordinated to the institutions which were at first meant for their support. The idea creates the institution, and the institution crushes the idea." In the same way, the noble spirit of Jesus' teachings, as narrated in the four gospels, suffered not a little from impure combinations with pagan mythologies and secular influences, and manifested itself in feasts, fasts and festivals, image, relic and saint-worship,

* Scholars will note the indirect support which Vedantism receives from recent scientific discoveries, *e. g.*, those regarding the properties of the ultra-atomic particles of radium, and electric response in the living and the non-living. The indestructibility of matter—the Prakriti of Samkhya—was postulated in India long before the era of modern European science dawned.

† The *Fortnightly Review* for March 1902.

pilgrimages and canonisations, persecutions of martyrs and witches, the horrors of the holy wars, and a thousand other atrocities committed in the name of that meek and high-souled Nazarene. The more one enters into the true spirit of Christ, the more will he reject Christianity as it prevails in the world to-day. Hence the Indians have been gainers, not losers, by rejecting Christianity for the sake of Christ.

We read Voltaire, Goethe, Seely, Hume, Mill, Spencer, Darwin, Huxley and Haeckel ; we learn the truths of astronomy, geology and biology ; we know the reply which Laplace gave to the great Napoleon when asked about the place of the creator in his celestial mechanism ; we find that, if the evolutionary theory is to be believed, God may be the author of the iron laws of nature, but then he is as surely their victim ; we come across such passages as the following in the monthly magazines:—" However we argue in favour of a hyperphysical first cause in order to account for the phenomena whose uniformity science reveals to us, our arguments will exhibit man in relation to such a cause merely as a helpless wheel crying out to the clock-winder, merely as a bubble on the wave crying out to the sea";* we recognise in the words of the Bible, that " all things come alike to all: to the righteous, and to the wicked," that " the whole world groaneth and travelleth together in pain until now," and that " the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children"; we are assured that " in the realm of nature, ignorance is punished just as severely as wilful wrong"; and we find ample justification for Tennyson's lines

So careful of the type she seems

So careless of the single life—

and can it be that our souls do not cry out for a solution of those sphinx-riddles which exercised the mind of the old Vedic poet when he exclaimed *Kasmai Devaya j̄tavishā Vidhema—*

* The *Fortnightly Review*, ' Religion and Science,' by W. H. Mallock,—February 1902.

to which god shall we offer our sacrifices—and that seeking for a solution of those riddles, we should rest content with the inconsistencies and untruths with which Christianity is replete? Verily, no. Whether the emergent man of the future “will certainly not believe that there is any *post-mortem* state of rewards and punishments”, whether he will find “the idea of airing his egotisms in God’s presence through prayer or of any such personal intimacy quite absurd”,* or whether “the anxious reconciler of Christianity and science” will, less than twenty years hence, “find himself treated like a child” and “his listeners would be of opinion that his mind, however equipped with learning and accomplishment, lacked a certain faculty, and would try to change the conversation,”† there is no question that a large and growing and highly cultured section of the civilised nations of the world holds such views, and Christianity, and those who preach it, shall have to take account of them; and however much they may disagree with them they will be bound to admit that

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

We have considered above, so far as the limits of space will allow, the claims of the Christian religion upon the Indian, rather the Hindu, mind. We will pass on to consider how far the acts and beliefs of the clerical profession, both in this country and in England, are calculated to draw the Indians towards themselves and the religion to which they owe allegiance. It will be necessary to say some unpleasant truths in this connection, but we shall try not to be needlessly offensive. We shall not attempt to describe the shameful state of European morals in the middle ages under the influence of monasticism and clerical celibacy, for the ideas of the majority of our countrymen regarding Christianity are formed not from the pages of history, but from living examples. It should be clearly understood, therefore, that what we

* *Anticipations*, by H. G. Wells, Chap. IX.

† *The Fortnightly Review*, March 1902, G. S. Street, ‘Twenty years since’.

have to say in this connection relates strictly to the present. The Indian is under all circumstances somewhat indifferent to physical comforts, and his ideal of a preacher is a *Sannyasin*, one who has left the vanity of wordly joys and sorrows, and has no cares for the morrow. Even the ordinary *Guru* (preceptor) and *Purohit* (priest), who, in Hindu society, generally occupy the place of the clergyman in English society, are with a few exceptions, simple in their habits and modes of life. In fact, from the time of the ancient Rishis, the lessons of plain living and high thinking were carefully taught to the *Brahmacharis* (students) and rigidly practised by the *Gurus*, *Pundits*, and *Purohits*, in their daily life. Such being the case, the sight of bishops and archbishops rolling in wealth, living in palaces, and voting in the House of Lords, calls up anything but reverent feelings in the mind of the average Hindu. Nor does the idea of a priestly hierarchy find favour with him. In spite of the existence of numerous "Ladies' Societies, Fancy Needlework Classes, and Decorative Flower Guilds" and we may add, fashionable hospitals and "Homes" in which the Christian clergy are supposed to take an interest, the genuine "enthusiasm of humanity" and Christian charity are conspicuous by their absence among them. They are educated, but like the sermons* of Canon Wealthy, of All Saints', Belgravia, in Hall Caine's novel *The Christian*, there is perhaps more of literary show and external finish than real earnestness in their speeches and writings. The episcopal clergy of England exhort their congregations from the pulpit to join in a war against a petty state and justify it, they read the divine service in the churches to celebrate the marriage of the guilty party in a divorce. In India they betray the same exclusiveness and racial prejudice that permeate the Civil and the

* "His sermon was eloquent and literary, and it was delivered with elocutionary power. There were many references to great writers, painters, and musicians, including a panegyric on Michael Angelo and a quotation from Browning. The sermon concluded with a passage from Dante in the original."—*The Christian*, VI.

Military services, and live on the pay paid out of taxes levied on those who do not accept their religion, and have therefore no interest in maintaining them. The congregations before whom they preach forget on Monday the lessons which they have been taught the day before—instance the cases of assault committed upon defenceless Indians by Anglo-Indians whose Saviour enjoined them to offer the left cheek to those who smote them on the right. All this is repulsive to the Indian idea of what a minister of the Lord should be and should do. One of the noblest of Englishmen of the nineteenth century said "I really fear that most men called Christians, whatever they may profess, whatever they may think they feel, whatever warmth and illumination and love they may claim as their own, yet would go on almost as they do, neither much better nor much worse, if they believed Christianity to be a fable. They venture nothing, they risk, they sacrifice, they abandon nothing on the faith of Christ's word."* Now this may be the exaggerated indignation of an honest and earnest man, but who will deny that there is much truth in this? It is true that this want of religious enthusiasm may be noticed among the Indians also; but if the Christians have no greater zeal to show, how can they expect to make converts? As a tree is judged by its fruit, so is a religion judged by the masses at least, by the sort of men it produces,—specially among those whose profession it is to preach that religion. It is said that the greatest Bengalee of modern times, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, when questioned by some distinguished Anglo-Indian officials as to the real cause of the failure of Christian missions in India, with his usual bold truthfulness replied that the Hindus have many faults, not the least among them being that they always judge of professions by practice, and when the practice does not come up to the standard of the professions, they set little store by them, in spite of the fact that intrinsically those professions

* Cardinal Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, S. v., 'Ventures of Faith.'

may be of high value. Besides, the thousand and one questions which divide the Christians among themselves, and give their sectarian jealousies ample scope for display—questions which to non-Christians cannot but seem to be unimportant and even ridiculous—take away still further from the attractiveness of the Christian religion, and lastly, there are certain missionary tricks for raising funds which are well known to educated Indians, and which it is needless to say, materially alienate their good will towards Christian missions. In order to enlist British sympathy in the work of saving heathen souls, the 'black man' of India is painted much blacker than he actually is by a section of Christian missionaries in England, as many Indian travellers and Anglo-Indian writers have often noticed. This is also admitted by Mr. Charles Booth, who in his recent exhaustive study of the religious influence of London, speaking of the Wesleyans, says "Reports are set in a high key in order to get money... This economy of truth is practised by others also, and exaggeration in order to obtain money is carried still further by some of the undenominational missions." If such misrepresentations are possible in regard to the London poor, about whom Mr. Booth speaks, what splendid scope for the display of missionary imagination may not be found to exist in the case of Indians generally, about whom the average Englishman knows almost as much as the man in the moon?

With the educational and political progress of the Indians, a spirit of nationality is developing among them, which will do much to check the progress of Christianity in India. One of the collateral effects of the growth of this spirit is the stimulus which it has given to the national literatures of India, and to the mother of all Indian literatures, Sanskrit. The consequence is that people are now studying their own Shastras, a revival of Hinduism has taken place, and organisations have been formed which, like the Arya Samaj of Northern India, have taken to missionary work. The first glamour of western enlightenment has passed away.

and the Indians are no longer blinded by its dazzling brilliancy. Thanks to the efforts of European, notably German, scholars, they have learnt to revere the Vedas as the oldest recorded attempt made by the human mind to solve the mystery of the unseen, and out of the Upanishads, Smritis, Srutis, and Itihasas they have constructed a practical code of morals for the guidance of life. If "love for the Ethical ideal, and the desire to realise that ideal in life" be the essence of religion, they need not go beyond their own Shastras for it. And if faith be necessary for the satisfaction of the emotional nature of man, there is also plenty of material for the cultivation of that virtue in the Puranas and Itihasas, and in the worship of a personal God or gods which they advocate. And finally, if philosophic speculation is wanted for higher minds, that, too, is to be found in the fullest measure in the Vedantic philosophy before which, according to Cousin, European philosophy is "constrained to bend the knee," and "the idealism of reason as set forth by the Greek philosophers" appears in the words of Schlegel, "like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noonday sun."

But we must not be ungratefull to the missionaries; to whom we owe so much. The missionaries of the various religious societies, as distinguished from the clergymen of the established church, have done much for us, and we must recognise the fact, and award them their fullest meed of praise. To a Bengalee, Carey and Marshman are never-to-be-forgotten names, which will last as long as the Bengali language lasts, for they are the fathers of Bengali prose. All over India, the missionaries are taking a most important share in training the young through the various missionary colleges. In fact, they count among their number some of the most prominent educationists of the day, In times of drought and famine, they carry food and clothing to the sick, and nurse and tend them. In our fights against oppression, they alone among Anglo-Indians come to our assistance. The name of the late Rev. Long is enshrined in

every Bengali heart for the noble part he took in the agitation against indigo planters. And the majority of the missionaries sympathise with our political aspirations, as expressed through our Congresses and Conferences. All this forms a record of which the missionaries may well be proud.

And though Christianity has not gained a solid footing in India, it must be admitted that judged by a higher standard than what we have applied before, it has *not* been a failure. It has given us Christ, and taught us noble moral and spiritual lessons which we have discovered anew in our own scriptures, and thereby satisfied our self-love and made them our very own. It has awakened a new spirit of enquiry in the drooping Hindu mind. It has made Hinduism conscious of its greatness. It has held up to view the baneful effects of certain soul-degrading customs which used to prevail, and prevail still, in Hindu society. In short, it has quickened it with a new life, the full fruition of which is not yet. Let not the missionaries, therefore, retire from the service of humanity which they have undertaken in India, and which, after all, is the true service of God. Let them finish the consecrated task which they were the first to set hands on, and work the more zealously because there are many more labourers in the vineyard of the Lord now—'not fanatically, nor yet pharisaically, as if they themselves had nothing to learn,' but with energy and discrimination, and the high glory of having restored India to the proud position she once occupied in the scale of nations will be theirs.



THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA.

No. II.

A REPLY.

THE REV. J. N. FARQUHAR, M. A.

I must apologize for writing at such a late date a reply to Mr. Banerjea's article on the 'Future of Christianity in India' in the December number of *The Hindustan Review*. The fact is that the article had already been in print for some time, before it was brought to my notice. But late though I am, I believe the question is of such general public interest, that it will be better to write now than not at all. Mr. Banerjea has given us a bright and most readable discussion of a most important problem. He has expressed, I believe, the opinion of the average Hindu at the present moment on this great question, and he has shewn considerable acuteness in the statement of his convictions. But, unless I am greatly mistaken, he has vastly understated the evidence. Christian though I am, I believe, I could make out a much stronger case than he has done for the ultimate triumph of Hinduism in India.

Consider the gigantic strength of this ancient faith as it stands within its seemingly impregnable fortress of caste. Think of the slow sure growth of this vast tree, the immovable stability its gnarled trunk shows to-day, and the myriad branches it has thrown out through this great continent. Think of the power Hinduism has shewn to adapt itself to new circumstances, its unequalled elasticity and all-embracing comprehensiveness, and the amazing way in which it has drawn back into itself sects that had once won independence. How many fierce shocks has it withstood! How many furi-

ous tempests has it weathered ! It had not yet completed its vast task of subduing the aboriginal tribes of nothern India to Brahmanical sway, when Buddhism arose ; yet in spite of Asoka and his missionaries and of the labours of countless kings and myriads of monks, Hinduism won the day. Then Jainism rose to great influence in the west and south and dominated the land for a time. But that too had to yield to this seemingly unconquerable power. Mohammedanism vanquished the country politically, and succeeded in drawing thousands of Hindus to itself by various means ; yet in spite of its lofty monotheism and its many other points of advantage, it utterly failed to vanquish the ancient religion. And since then, how many reformers have started new sects, which have threatened to devour the mother from which they sprang ; and yet all have fallen back one by one into her irresistible embrace. Christianity will conquer India ? What nonsense ! Christianity has been here since the second century at least ; it has had its own community on the Malabar coast ever since : if it was to conquer, why did it not conquer long ago ? It gave its stories to decorate the youth of Krishna and to add interest to the Puranas, and took its place among the other faiths at the court of Akbar ; yet it has never been anything but a poor, weak exotic in the clime of Hinduism. How can the foreign religion, which refuses to make the slightest compromise, which will recognize no rival, and will acknowledge nothing outside its own Scriptures as authoritative,—how will it ever even seriously disturb the peace of the ancient autochthonous faith of India with its limitless receptivity and its perfect toleration ? Think of the love and pride which Hinduism inspries in the hearts of the millions of India ; recall its literature, its temples, its ceremonies, its gods ; remember that there is scarcely a spot from north to south, or from east to west, that is not hallowed by its sacred memories ; realize the fact that from it has sprung the whole social system of the Hindu people, that it is inter-

twined with every fibre of national, social and family life ; then put beside it this western church with its few wretched converts, drawn over, consciously or unconsciously, by the overmastering force of the superior wealth, civilization and education of the conqueror, and tell me which of the two is destined to dominate the future life of India ! Surely, every one must recognize that this poor, weak sprout, so daintily tended and carefully sheltered to-day by the missionaries, will be inevitably and irretrievably blasted, when the first wild storm arises in the politics of India.

Some such statement might very well be put forward to prove that the Christianization of India is a mad dream ; and every one who knows the history of India will acknowledge that the facts about Hinduism are very little, if at all, overstrained in the above paragraphs. Yet we would fain ask the readers of this magazine to suspend their judgement. One half of the evidence has been given, but the other half has not been so much as mentioned. Let us see what the facts are on the Christian side.

Mr. Banerjea's paper was called out by the comments made by Christians on the Census returns for 1901 ; and what he tried to do was to show that the great increase which these returns shew had taken place in the Christian population of India during the decade 1891-1901 was not likely to continue indefinitely. Now, we may first of all point out that the facts are more startling than Mr. Banerjea seems to think them. Christianity has been in India since the second century ; Catholic Missionaries have been here since the sixteenth century, and Protestant Missionaries since the beginning of the eighteenth ; that is all very true ; but there is no mistaking the fact that a new force began to make itself apparent in the nineteenth century. It is no isolated and incidental phenomenon that the latest Census returns show : as Messrs. Risley and Gait point out in their first volume, there has been great and continuous increase

for thirty years at least. The following are the percentages given:—

From 1871-1881	Christians increased	22'0	per cent.
„ 1881-1891	„ „	33'9	„
„ 1891-1901	„ „	30'8	„

Taking the thirty years as one period, the increase is 113'8 per cent. Further as they point out also, these figures include the European, Eurasian and Syrian communities. If these were eliminated, the rate of increase would be still higher. Another point which is not noted in the Census Report is this, that the Protestant Churches have grown much more rapidly during these thirty years than the Roman Catholic Church. The great bulk of the increase in the number of Christians in India during these years is due to the conversion of Hindus and others to Protestant Christianity; that is absolutely plain from the Census tables.

Yet, though the great increase which the last Census has brought so prominently before us is no mere temporary leap due to a momentary and accidental combination of forces as Mr. Banerjea would have us believe, but a continuous and progressive movement due to forces which Hindus would do well to get to understand. Yet we freely acknowledge that such a set of figures extending over a paltry thirty or fifty years provides no argument which a thinking man would for a moment accept as good ground for believing that Christianity will ultimately conquer Hinduism. If that were all we had to put forward as ground for our confidence, we should be foolish men indeed if we expected to be able to make others share our confidence. But this is far from being the chief ground of our reliance: it is the whole character and history of Christianity in the world that we rely upon; and these figures are to us eloquent only because they are parallel with phenomena which have accompanied the life of Christianity wherever and whenever it has been healthy.

What we wish to do, then, in this article is to make Hindus realize the historical characteristics of Christianity as an aggressive religion. We shall bring forward the evidence under three main heads.

I. THE POSITION OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORLD TO-DAY.

Christianity is already the religion of one-third of the population of this earth. It already stands supreme. No religion has ever had so many adherents; no other religion approaches it in numbers. Equally noticeable is the remarkable speed with which it spread throughout the nineteenth century. In 1800, when the population of the world was in round numbers 1,000 millions, there were 200 millions of Christians; i.e. about one-fifth of the whole population of the world. To-day the population of the world is estimated at 1,544 millions, and the number of Christians is 534 millions; that is more than one third of the whole. Perhaps a table will make these facts more vividly clear:—

	POPULATION OF THE WORLD.	CHRISTIANS.	PERCENTAGE.
1800 ...	1,000 millions	... 200 millions	20 per cent.
1900 ...	1,544 „	... 535 „	34 „

What will the percentage be in 2000 A. D. ?

Equally striking is the fact that this growth has been in every part of the world, one might say in every nation of the world, in some places less, in others more, yet everywhere; so that Christianity has proved itself capable of adaptation to every race of mankind. From Greenland to Terra Del Feugo, from Manchuria and Japan to the islands of the South Pacific, from Madagacar to Morocco, in Asia, Africa, America and Australasia, the Cross has been going steadily forward. No other religion has ever possessed this capacity in the same degree. Buddhism and Mohammedanism have displayed wonderful powers of expansion, but they can shew

nothing comparable to the world-wide increase of the Christian faith. In all this there is indicated, in the clearest way possible, a mighty tendency within Christianity to become the universal religion of the world. For it is spreading not only in savage and semi-savage lands, but in the face of the greatest non-Christian civilizations of the world. It is leaping forward in China and in Japan, as well as in India. The increase in the number of Christians in India during the decade 1891-1901 is not an isolated phenomenon, but is part of a world-wide movement. To explain it in India is not sufficient: we want an explanation for the forward march of this faith in every land.

II. THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity sprang from the open grave of a crucified man. Christ was a Jew, a carpenter. He spent three years in active public life, and then was seized by His fellow-countrymen, handed over to the Romans, and put to death with every circumstance of hatred and shame. What religion ever had such an unpromising start? Yet the faith in His name spread in His native land after His death much more rapidly than before; and not only there, but leaped to other lands, and speedily filled the Roman empire with the name of the crucified. Thirty-five years after His death, the Roman historian Tacitus tells us "an immense multitude" of Christians were put to death in Rome itself with the grossest barbararity. In spite of its most unpromising start, in spite of the most violent opposition on the part of the ancient race, religions of Europe, Asia Minor and Africa, and in spite of the persistent persecution of the imperial power of Rome itself, Christianity conquered, and became the religion of the west.

Indians are accustomed to belittle the philosophic and religious thought of Greece in comparison with India. I have heard Indians say, "The Greeks were idolators; they

had no religion worth speaking of." This no doubt is no extreme opinion ; yet most Hindus have got the idea that there is little in Greek philosophy or Religion worth comparing with Hinduism. Now it is quite true that the Upanishads possess certain speculative and devotional qualities scarcely reached by any production of the Greek mind, yet, in every other respect, Greek thought is the more incisive, convincing and pervasive. One fact alone ought to suffice to bring this home to the mind of present-day Indians, namely this, that western education is in temper and method purely Greek. Its contents and its spirit are largely Christian, but the form of its thought and the lines of its scientific investigation are altogethor Hellenic. The fact that this western education has completely supplanted the ancient Hindu system, and that every cultured Indian wishes to see it much further extended in India, is final proof, if proof were needed, of the potency and value of Greek thought. Nor is this peculiar pontency confined to the purely intellectual sphere, to mathematics and logic, to natural science and psychology ; it has proved very penetrative and vigorous in the moral and spiritual region as well ; the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles, the odes of Pindar and the dialogues of Plato have played almost as great a part in their own way as the syllogism of Aristotle or the theorem of Euclid. This will not seem strange to any one who realizes that Greece dominates the world not only in educational method but in all the fine arts as well. The Hindu will in course of time come to see how much the modern world owes to Hellas.

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To scoff at the Greeks as idolators is peculiarly inept. The Hindu to-day is only echoing a common Greek reflection, when he says, " We do not worship idols : we think of the Divine Being when we bow before the image." It may be safely said that only the most ignorant savages can have ever identified the image with the god : indeed that identification is scientifically distinguished from ordinary image-worship as

fetishism. The Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans always spoke of their gods as quite distinct from their images : and each of these great nations had its monotheistic philosophy which the educated man brought forward when charged with the worship of many gods. Yet these are the very nations against which the Old Testament pours forth its thundering condemnations of polytheism and idolatry. They were polytheists and idolators in precisely the same sense as modern Hindus are.

Thus if we say that the ancient Greeks, while differing from the Hindus, were on the whole their equals in the higher activities of the human spirit, we shall certainly not be guilty of exaggeration. Then, when the Roman, with his practical genius, his legal mind and his governmental experience, had taken the religion, the thought and the culture of the Hellenic world under his protection, the result was a political organization of iron strength, inspired with the loftiest ideas which the human mind had thus far reached. Against Christianity this organization used its full strength, and displayed all the riches of its vast inheritance from the past. Every feeling that is natural to the conqueror and to the philosopher, face to face with a vanquished and unspeculative race, arose in the mind of cultured Greeks and Romans, when Jewish preachers presented the crucified Messiah to them. Imagine all the pride and self-confidence of the ruling Englishman in India united with the self-conscious superiority of the philosophic Brahman, and you will have something like what the educated Roman felt when confronted with Paul and his story of the crucified. Nor must we limit our thought to these alone. The Egyptian had history behind him to which the histories of Greece and Rome were but brief modern stories ; and while his religion, with its idolatry, quackery and filth, had in some respects fallen as low as the worst forms of Hinduism have ever fallen, yet in its higher aspects and in its literature it was a noble faith, quite sufficient to stir its devotees to patriotic

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resistance to an alien system. These were the most vital elements in the life of the West at the time, but there were, besides, numerous other races whose traditions and culture led them to fight Christianity to the uttermost.

It is also of importance to realize that in form and spirit Hinduism is on a level with the ancient religions of Greece, Rome, Egypt and the rest. In all books on the science of religions they are classed together as national polytheisms. The characteristic features of such a faith may be briefly stated. In each case it was the traditional religion of a nation which had risen to a considerable place in history, and was proud of its life and its culture. The gods were formed into some sort of monarchical system, there being usually one or a triad recognized as supreme. Only those born of the blood were allowed to share in the proud privilege of the worship of the national gods: and such worship was not only a religious privilege, but also a political duty: a man was bound to conform; otherwise he was a bad citizen. These religious privileges were closely intertwined with social privilege and duty. Only those who belonged to the sacred blood could eat with each other or intermarry: such was the original idea. In some cases the community within which these restrictions were maintained was a narrow one, such as a clan; in other cases it was wide, extending to the whole nation. Orthodoxy consisted, not in belief, but in submission to the social order of the community and in participation in the rites of religion. In most cases belief was altogether free. Men might openly laugh, as Cicero did, at the superstitions of their religion; yet, if they conformed to rule and custom, they were good citizens and religious men. In the loftier of those religions, e.g. those of Babylonia, Egypt and Greece, we find speculative systems which addressed themselves to the many cultured men who failed to find satisfaction for their spiritual instincts in the ritual and social ceremonial of the popular faith. Those who have not studied the subject

had better look into some manual of the science of religion, or the relevant chapters in Benjamin Kidd's *Western Civilization*. Thus the foe which Christianity has to meet to-day in India belongs to the same general class as those which it met and vanquished so long ago. Hinduism is in some respects the most perfect specimen of the class ; for in none of the others was the social system ever so elaborately developed as it is in Hindu caste. In this particular point it is a more formidable foe than any ancient faith ; yet, to counter-balance that advantage, it has nothing to correspond to the omnipotent Roman state, which took the paganism of Europe under its protection and used all its strength to destroy Christianity.

Let Hindus, therefore, realize that Christianity met and conquered in the early centuries an enemy quite as great as Hinduism, an enemy, too, in many respects similar to Hinduism. The fact that it overcame in its weakness the greatest race religions of the West creates a presumption that in its strength it will conquer the race religion of India.

III. THE CHARACTER OF THE STRUGGLE.

I have tried to shew above that in its essential features Hinduism is a religion of the same class as the mighty faiths of the West which Christianity conquered in its youth. But it may be still more impressive, if we shew that the struggle which is at present in progress in India between Christianity and Hinduism is in its leading features practically identical with the struggle which the Roman empire witnessed during the first four centuries of our era. The correspondence is so close as to be startling ; and we trust the readers of this pamphlet will look into the matter with care. Nor is that all. In the teaching of Christ, as it stands in the Gospels, we have numerous prophecies of the way in which His teaching will be received in the world ; and I am sure every careful reader will be deeply interested to find how clearly the main

features of the history of our faith were foreseen by our Master. Here then we take up one by one the outstanding features of the struggle:—

(1) FIERCE OPPOSITION ON THE PART OF THE OLD FAITH.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the life of Christ is this, that He was constantly in conflict with the official leaders of the Jews, and that before He had completed the third year of His activity as a preacher, they seized Him and got the Roman Governor to crucify Him. Judaism opposed Christianity from the very outset.

Quite as noticeable is the fact that He warned His disciples again and again that they would be hated, slandered, persecuted, put to death. These prophecies and warnings are found on His lips from the beginning to the end, in the Beatitudes themselves, in His instructions when He sent the Apostles out to preach, at the great crisis at Caesarea Philippi, and in His last consolatory utterances:—

“Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”. Matt., 5, 11.

“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake”. Mtt., 10, 22.

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it”. Mark, 68, 34-35.

“They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God”. John, 16, 2.

How fully these prophecies were fulfilled in one way or another in the case of the Apostles themselves, I need remind no one who has read the New Testament. The Jews from the first opposed Christianity by every means in their power, and from them more than from others Christ's immediate disciples suffered. But so early as 64 A. D., under the emperor Nero, the Roman fury burst forth on the infant Church in a tempest of blood, fire and every form of torture. Thereafter at irregular intervals for two centuries and a half, the Roman Government exerted all its strength to put down Christianity by violent persecution. But what it is of most

consequence for us to realize is this, that while was fitful, there was the bitterest and most persistent opposition offered to the new-faith continuously, from the very begining down through the centuries, and that it did not cease even when Constantine gave the Church a great place in the empire. Men hated Christianity violently; spoke against it; wrote against it; worked against it. Lucian made it the butt of his ridicule; Celsus wrote a most elaborate treatise to prove it a false and worthless system: and Porphyry the Neo-Platonist devoted a great work in fifteen books to the same end. One has only to look into the literature of those centuries to see how vehemently those who were leaders in politics, in society and in literature, hated the Church and her teaching, and with what relish they condemned the Christian preacher and all his ways, when they deigned to mention him at all. Prof. Ramsay in *The Church and the Roman Empire*, p. 352, thus sums up popular feeling against Christians:—

“The combination of so many and various faults, combined with the power given them by their close union, and the fear which mingled with and embittered the general hatred, rendered them pre-eminently the object of Popular duty; it seemed absurd to apply to such people any ordinary judicial process. Hence the Flavian proscription, which treated them like brigands, met with general approval. One cry alone was adequate to the case—*Christianos ad leones* (i.e., the Christians to the lions!)”

Thus the opposition of Hinduism to Christianity to-day so far from dispiriting the Christian or making him doubt the final triumph of his faith, is one of the greatest encouragements possible. Everything that Mrs. Besant, the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, or any other Hindu individual or society, can do in opposing the progress of our faith is simply another fulfilment of our Master's prophecy, is simply another proof that we are working along the right lines. The bitter persecution which every faithful convert from Hinduism has to undergo to-day only strengthens his faith in the Master for whose sake he suffers; he is in the sacred succession, condemned, slandered, tormented, as Christ, the apostles and the martyrs were.

(2) EXTREME CONTEMPT FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The fury of hatred, fear and opposition with which the peoples of the ancient world met Christianity was most curiously mixed with *contempt*.

Christ Himself was "despised and rejected of men": the Jewish leaders expressed their scorn for Him in many a biting phrase:—

"A friend of publicans and sinners"; "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?" "He casts out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." "Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees?" They considered the cross the only fitting death for such an one; and they stood round Him as He hung there, and jeered at Him.

Christ also foresaw that his followers would be despised, and would in consequence be tempted to desert His cause, Consequently He warned them that they would have to endure shame for His sake:—

"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation, the son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his father with the holy angels." Mark, 8, 38.

Paul sums up the experience of the apostolic band in the following vivid words:—

"For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men.

..... We are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now." 1 Corinthians, 4, 9, and 13.

The scorn which Christian teaching excited is pithily expressed by Paul in the words, "We preach Christ crucified unto Jews a stumbling block and unto Gentiles foolishness"; and in many other passages in the New Testament the disdain which was heaped on the ordinary Christian of those days is vividly reflected.

Nor was this experience confined to the Apostolic age. For centuries the leaders of Greek and Roman society felt and shewed the most unmingled contempt for Christianity. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius dismiss it with a scornful phrase. Sometimes this contempt found expression in such language as Celsus used, when he suggested that the Gospel was only for "simpletons and low-born people and block-heads and slaves and womenkind and children"; but more often it led them to altogether ignore Christians and Christianity. Gibbon, speaking of the great writers of the first and second centuries, says:—

"Their language or their silence equally discover their contempt for the growing sect, which in their time had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians considered them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning." *Decline and fall*, chap. XV.

Compare Lecky's reflections :—

"That the greatest religious change in the history of mankind should have taken place under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians, who were profoundly conscious of the decomposition around them; that all these writers should have utterly failed to predict the issue of the movement they were observing and that during the space of three centuries they should have treated as contemptible an agency which all men must now admit to have been, for good or evil, the most powerful moral lever that has ever been applied to the affairs of men, are facts well worthy of meditation in every period of religious transition." *History of European Morals*, Vol. i, p. 359.

Writing on the same subject, Benjamin Kidd says :—

"So ignorant were men of the nature of the physiological laws to which the social organism is subject, that the intellectual classes were altogether unconscious; both of the nature and of the destiny of the movement which was unfolding itself underneath their eyes. They were either actively hostile or passively contemptuous". *Social Evolution*, P. 124.

How much of this contempt do we see in modern India! It is present as an undertone in a large part of Mr. Banerjea's article, and one seldom reads a Hindu criticism of Christianity and seldom hears a Hindu discuss Christianity without being deeply conscious of the same unlimited scorn. To the Hindu, doubtless the contempt seems only natural in his lofty appreciation of his own religion. Let him realise that to the

Greeks and the Romans Christianity seemed quite as contemptible at it seems to him, and that history has shewn their contempt to have been the offspring of ignorance and blindness.

(3) STEADY INCREASE OF THE CHURCH.

While Christ foresaw in the clearest way possible the persecution and contempt to which His followers would be subjected, He consistently prophesied that His Kingdom would steadily increase. His teaching was a living organism, which was destined to grow and spread, until it should cover the whole earth :—

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field : which indeed is less than all seeds ; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof”. Matt., 13, 31-32.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened”. Matt. 13, 33.

“Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her”. Matt., 26, 13.

At the end of each great section of the *Acts of the Apostles* there occurs a sort of chorus or refrain* rejoicing in the growth and progress of the Church ; and Paul† was deeply impressed with the same phenomenon.

The unbroken progress of Christianity in Europe in the face of continuous opposition and in spite of the violent persecutions set on foot from time to time by the Empire, is one of the most remarkable things in history, The Christians of those days were well aware of what was happening, and constantly pointed to it as the work of God. The following is from an apology for Christianity written about 140 A. D. :—

“Dost thou not see them thrown to wild beasts, that so they may deny the Lord, and yet not overcome ? Dost thou not see that the more of them are punished, just so many others abound ?” *Ad Diognetum*, 7.

* Act, 6,4 ; 9, 31 ; 12,24 ; 16,5 ; 19,29.

† Colossians, 1,6.

The following is from Tertullians's *Apology*, written about 198 A. D.

"Your cruelty, even the most exquisite, is of no avail against us, It is rather that which is our hire ; it draws converts to us. We grow by being mown down. The blood of Christians is the seed of the Church."

Take now a modern instance. In 1818 the London Missionary Society began work in Madagascar ; in 1830 the New Testament in Malagasy was printed ; in 1831 twenty-eight converts were baptized ; and during the following years the Church grew and flourished. But in 1835 the Queen of Madagascar swore she would stop these things by the shedding of blood. The Missionaries were driven out, and for twenty-six years thereafter a violent persecution raged. In the midst of it, in 1849, the Queen said " I have killed some : I have made some slaves till death ; I have put some in long and heavy fetters ; and still you continue praying. How is it that you cannot give up that ?" At length in 1891 the Queen died, and the new ruler granted toleration, Here is the historian's comment on the whole :—

" During twenty-six years of persecution, more than ten thousand people had been sentenced to various penalties, and of these it is believed that two hundred suffered death ; and yet at the end of this long period, taking all the country over, the Christians were probably twenty times as numerous as they were at the beginning". Horne, *Story of the L. M. S.*, pp. 356—7.

We have no public persecution in India, but there is abundance of opposition everywhere. Yet the church grows.

(4) A VERY LARGE PROPORTION OF THE CONVERTS FROM THE LOWER CLASSES.

Mr. Banerjea has used this fact to make light of the growth of Christianity in India, talking of the semi-Hinduized aborigines as the "flotsam and jetsam" of the population. This is a constant characteristic of our faith, and one of which we are greatly proud. For Christianity wins those people, that it may raise them. Think of what the ancestors or the people of Britain were before Christianity found them.

See what has been done during the past century among the cannibals of the South Seas, No other religion has ever exhibited the power of raising the fallen and the degraded that Christianity possesses.

Most of the followers of Jesus in His own days were from the lower classes. Consider these words :—

“The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees and they said unto them, “Why did ye not bring him? The officers answered, “Never man so spake”. The Pharisees therefore answered them, “Are ye also led astray? Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed”. Jhon, 7,46-49.

Is not Mr. Banerjea’s scorn for the flotsam and jetsam of India parallel to the contempt of the chief priests and the Pharisees for the *am ha-aretz*, the people of the land, who knew not the intricacies of their traditional law?

But not only did Christ gather round Himself large numbers of the common people; He saw that this would be a constant characteristic of His Church. Consider these very significant words from the parable of the Great Supper :—

“Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled”. *Luke*, 14,21-23.

The prophecy was fulfilled in the Church of the Apostolic age, as we can see from Paul’s words :—

“For behold your calling, brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” *1 Cor.*, I, 62.

The same was true later on, when the great struggle was at its height in the Roman Empire. There were so many people of the lower orders in the Church that, as Gibbon points out, the enemies of Christianity were wont to say that the new sect was almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace, of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women, of beggars and slaves. Doubtless there is exaggeration in these charges; yet they would have never been made, had there not been considerable ground for them.

In speaking contemptuously of the way in which Christianity gets hold of the lower orders in India, Mr. Banerjea has simply supplied another proof that in India our faith is producing precisely the same results that it produced in the Roman world so long ago.

(5) STEADY DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIAN IDEAS.

While the struggle between Paganism and Christianity was in progress. Christian ideas were steadily diffused among the population, and that in various ways.

(a) First there is the slow unobserved infiltration of Christian ideas into the general population from Christian preaching, Christian literature and the influence of individual Christians. Christ's parable of the Leaven quoted above best describes the patient certainty of this slow process of inoculation. From the very nature of the process it cannot be observed : there is only the result to prove that it has taken place ; and, by the time that has appeared, people have forgotten the source of the truth they now acknowledge.

In the Roman world Christian ideas became early diffused among the educated classes, as may be seen from a study of the literature and the laws of these centuries, but most of all from this, that, while the Christians were yet a small minority of the population, they wielded such an influence that Constantine thought it politic to give the Church a definite place in the empire.

In India to-day the influence of Christian thought is omnipresent. Listen to Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsees, Buddhists, Brahmans in public meetings, and read their papers: Christ's words are constantly used, and the main principles of His teaching are accepted as axiomatic. Every thinking man now calls aloud for philanthropy in the Christian sense, for the uplifting of women, and for the universalization of education. The innate dignity of the human being is not merely a religious but a political maxim in our midst. Mr. Banerjea rejoices in the impunity with which educated

Hindus in the large towns now break caste rules about food, failing to realize that what he glories in is clear evidence that Christian ideas are already sapping the very foundations of Hinduism ; for if caste give way, Hinduism as a system is lost. We may also call attention to the fact that the practice of Bible-reading is steadily growing among educated Hindus. How many hundreds of thoughtful men who never dream of becoming Christians, who do not even have any intercourse with Missionaries, read the Bible privately ! Hence unlimited diffusion of Christian ideas. But we need bring forward no further proofs, Mr. Banerjea's praise of Christ as " the great exemplar of practical morality " is quite sufficient to enable any one to realise that Christian thought is being rapidly assimilated in India at the present day.

(b) Christian ideas found wide diffusion also in ancient times by means of the numerous sects which were formed—like whirling eddies between contrary currents—in consequence of the collision of Christianity with the ancient faiths, especially in the various Gnostic sects, the Marcionites, and the various Judæo-Christian bodies which came into being in Syria and Asia Minor.

The modern analogues to these are the Brahma Samaj in its various branches, the Prarthana Samaj, the Dev Samaj, the Arya Samaj and that extraordinary Christian-Mohammedan hybrid in Qadian in the Punjab. All these, consciously or unconsciously, have absorbed and are spreading Christian ideas.

(c) Christian methods were adopted as well as Christian Ideas. " It is too often forgotten ", says Renan in his *Marcus Anrelius*, " that the second century had a veritable Pagan preaching similar to that of Christianity, and in many respects in accord with the latter ". Equally instructive is the case of Maximin and Julian, who, perceiving the power that existed in the organization of the Christian Church,

conceived the idea of rejuvenating Paganism by copying the Christian hierarchy.

The Hindu revival with commendable consistency copies missionary methods in all its work. The Central Hindu College, Benares, is in every detail a Hindu copy of a Mission College. Most of the societies formed for the defence of Hinduism use not only missionary methods but missionary phraseology. "Missionaries" have been sent out, "Missions" established, "Prayer Meetings" held, "Young Men's *Hindu Associations*" formed, "*Gita* Classes" conducted, "Inquirers" interviewed, "Tracts" distributed. If Missionaries set up some new and vigorous piece of work, we are sure to see a letter in the papers suggesting that Hindus should do the same. The Bible Society has for many years presented copies of the Scriptures to those who pass University Examinations in India : some Hindus of Madras have got out a little Hindu manual to distribute in the same way. The Aryas of Lahore and the Hindus of Madras have both begun to copy the missionary plan of a Scripture examination for prizes. A little volume has appeared, consisting of verses from the *Gita* and the *Bhagavat Purana* in English, and entitled *the Imitation of Srikrishna!* Single Gospels are sold all over India in the vernacular at a pice each : a Bengali translation of the *Gita* is now sold in the streets of Calcutta at the same price.

In the case of the modern Theistic sects of India the copying is still more potent. The very idea of congregational worship was taken over from Christianity : indeed the Brahma service is simply a modification of the service in a Protestant church. The *Slokasangraha* is read instead of the Bible ; there are the prayers, the hymns and the sermon. The organization of the local samaj ; the minister himself ; his preaching tours ; his title, Reverend : all this is purely Christian.

Does not all this evidence make the vitality and the pervasiveness of Christianity stand out clear? In how

many ways and by how many channels are its thoughts being worked into the life of India!

(d) Lastly there is the attempt made by opposing religions to defeat Christianity by swallowing the more attractive parts of its doctrine. Christ foresaw this also, and gave clear warning of the futility of the procedure. When a religion absorbs Christian teaching, it draws into itself a force which will in time lead to its own dissolution. But apart from that consideration, it is clear that such an attempt to stay the progress of the new faith leads immediately to the wider diffusion of its ideas. Here are Christ's words :—

“ And no man putteth a piece of undressed cloth upon an old garment ; for that which should fill it up taketh from the garment and a worse rent is made. Neither do men Put new wine into old wine-skins, else the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins perish ; but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins and both are preserved”.
Matt. 9, 16-17.

These words mean that an old religion will find it impossible to patch holes in its worn-out system with pieces of Christian truth, for the new element will only shew more clearly how rotten the old is : and that to attempt to absorb the rich new wine of Christian teaching, while retaining the worn-out forms of an old faith, can only result in the destruction of the old forms by the new revolutionary element poured into them.

The plan, nevertheless, was tried in the Roman Empire. It may be traced most clearly in the case of Neo-Platonism, which, especially in its later days, appropriated large Christian elements. The founder of the school, Ammonius Saccas, like Mrs. Besant, began life as a Christian.

That this plan is being tried in India is evident to all observers, and Mr. Banerjea himself confesses to it quite frankly : “ Hinduism can readily assimilate whatever is good and reasonable in the Christian or any other faith” (p, 5)* So Hinduism is steadily doing the work of Christianity by absorbing and popularizing Christian ideas.

* This pamphlet—Publisher.

(6) A GREAT TENDENCY TO PRAISE CHRIST.

Mr. Banerjea has a great many things to say in favour of Christ and a great deal to say against Christianity, all unwitting that he is repeating precisely what the old enemies of Christianity said before the fall of European paganism. We here put some of Mr. Banerjea's sayings over against a couple of sentences from Harnack's *History of Dogma* :—

Harnack, I, 348-354

*Banerjea, (p. 9)**

“ Individual Neoplatonists since the time of Ammелиus employed Christian sayings as oracles and testified very highly to Christ.” “ Prophyry's work against the Christians is not directed against Christ or what he regarded as the teaching of Christ, but against the Christians of his day, and against the sacred books which, according to Porphyry, were written by impostors and ignorant people.”

“ Christ the great exemplar of practical morality.”

“ The more one enters into the true spirit of Christ, the more will he reject Christianity as it prevails in the world to-day. Hence the Indians have been gainers, not losers, by rejecting Christianity for the sake of Christ.”

How many modern Hindus and Brahmos are, in their religious beliefs, like Alexander Severus, Emperor of Rome, from 222 to 235 A. D., in whose Lararium (i.e., Thakur Ghar) stood images of Apollonius of Tyana, Christ, Abraham, and Orpheus side by side.

(7) A REVIVAL OF THE OLD FAITH.

Wherever Christianity attacks an older religion, that religion always experiences a powerful revival, unless it be altogether rotten. The parallelism between the Roman Empire of the early Christian centuries and the India of to-day

* This pamphlet—Publisher.

in this matter is very startling. Let readers consult any good manual of Church history, and they will see for themselves. The facts we shall now lay before the readers of this magazine are almost all taken from Harnack's *History of Dogma*. We here place side by side again a few of his sentences and a few from Mr. Banerjea's article :—

Harnack, l. 116-117.

“After the national religion and the religious sense generally in cultured circles had been all but lost in the age of Cicero and Augustus, there is noticeable in the Græco-Roman world from the beginning of the second century a revival of religious feeling which embraced all classes of society, and appears, especially from the middle of that century, to have increased from decennium to decennium. Parallel with it went the not altogether unsuccessful attempt to restore the old national worship, religious usages, oracles, etc.”

*Banerjea, (p. 14, 16)**

“A revival of Hinduism has taken place.”

“It (i.e. Christianity) has given us Christ, and taught us noble moral and spiritual lessons, which we have discovered anew in our own scriptures, and thereby satisfied our self-love and made them our very own. It has awakened a new spirit of enquiry in the drooping Hindu mind. It has made Hinduism conscious of its greatness. It has held up to view the baneful effects of certain soul-degrading customs which used to prevail, and prevail still, in Hindu society. In short, it has quickened it with a new life, the full fruition of which is not yet.”

The revival thus corresponds in general : let us now turn to the details. In the Roman empire, as in India to-day, the old religion in its reaction from Christianity shewed (*a*) a strong disposition to monotheism ; and precisely the same argument which Hindus use to-day and which Mr. Banerjea

* This pamphlet—Publisher.

puts for us in the words, "the Hindu peasant, when questioned, will say that all the gods he worships are but manifestations of the same Divine Spirit which pervades the universe," was commonly used in ancient times. Every apologist for Hinduism to-day labours to prove that it is as seriously monotheistic as Christianity; and so did many an apologist of Greek and Roman polytheism. Another point which Harnack mentions in this, that (*b*) the connection between morality and religion became more and more emphasized; and very careful observer will at once acknowledge that Hindus do their uttermost to-day to set forward the best moral elements in their sacred books, and allow the liturgical, the ritualistic and the legalistic elements to fall into the background. Take another point: "In many circles," says Harnack, (*c*) "an incarnate ideal in the present or past was sought, which might be worshipped as a revealer of God and as God, and which might be an example of life and an assurance of religious hope." How strikingly similar is the extraordinary outburst of Krishna-worship which India has witnessed during the last twenty years! Krishna is supposed to take the place of Christ, and the *Gita* the place of the Gospels. Philosophic thinkers, on the other hand, were inclined to speak rather of (*d*) men, in whose spirit God dwells, rising up to be gods on earth, just as our Brahmo friends have their doctrine of human incarnations in contrast with the Vaishnava and Christian conceptions. Lastly (*e*) one of the most noteworthy elements of the revival in Roman times was the appearance of Neo-Platonism, which sought to gather and sum up all the best elements in the old faiths, and to weld them into a consistent whole. But that is such an important movement that it must be dealt with separately.

(8) A PHILOSOPHIC REORGANIZATION OF THE OLD FAITH.

At the beginning of third century there appeared in Alexandria a great new philosophic movement, called Neo-Platonism, which for several centuries drew within itself a

large number of the finest minds, and which proved a very powerful enemy to Christianity. The following brief sketch of the system is almost altogether composed of sentences taken from Rainy's *Ancient Catholic church*, pp. 146-156, and Harnack's article on Neo-Platonism in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, republished at the end of the first volume of his *History of Dogma*.

(a) Neo-Platonism claims to be not only the absolute *philosophy* completing all systems, but, at the same time, the absolute *religion*, confirming and explaining all earlier religions. A rehabilitation of all ancient religions is aimed at; each is to continue in its traditional form, but, at the same time, each is to share in the religious temper and the religious knowledge which Neo-Platonism has attained. Christianity too might have been accorded a place among the other faiths, only its arrogant claim to be the only true and universal religion led to its being proscribed as the worst of enemies.

(b) While using philosophy freely, Neo-Platonism put religion above philosophy, and recognized that true knowledge of God could not be got from reasoning. God was above human reason and could not be reached by it. He was super-rational, and knowledge of him must come by revelation. So Neo-Platonism built its system on ancient oracles and myths: these were not to be allegorized or explained away; they were regarded as the proper material and the sure foundation of philosophy.

(c) Neo-Platonism is dynamical Pantheism. Everything that has being is directly or indirectly a production of the "One." In this "One" everything so far as it has being, is Divine, and God is all in all. But that which is derived is not like the Original Essence itself: the law of decreasing perfection prevails in the derived. The first emanation of the Original Essence is the *Nous*, the mind; from *Nous* the *Psyche* or Soul of the Universe is derived. The One, the *Nous*,

and the Psyche constitute the Neo-Platonic Trinity. The Psyche begets the world of Phenomena.

(*d*) Human souls, sunk in the material world, have been ensnared by the sensuous, and have allowed themselves to be ruled by desire. Conversion, therefore, is needed ; and this is possible, for freedom is not lost. The Soul must return to its Source by means of an ascetic discipline, passing up through the civic, the purifying and the deifying virtues, until at last through meditation it loses itself in a state of intense concentration, in mute contemplation and complete forgetfulness of all things, and sees God.

(*e*) In its later forms Neo-Platonism strove above all things to defend the old Greek and Oriental religions against the formidable attacks of Christianity. In order to justify superstition and the ancient cults, philosophy in Iamblichus becomes a theurgic, mysteriosophy, spiritualism. Now appear that series of "Philosophers," in whose case one is frequently unable to decide whether they are deceivers or deceived, "dedepti deceptores," as Augustine says. A mysterious mysticism of numbers plays a great role. That which is absurd and mechanical is surrounded with the halo of the sacramental ; myths are proved by pious fancies and pietistic considerations with a spiritual sound ; miracles, even the most foolish, are believed in and are performed.

No one who knows India to-day can fail to be struck with the close similarity there is between this ancient system and present-day Theosophy. It would be interesting to take up some Theosophic manual, and see how many points actually correspond. The modern system does not yet deserve the honour of being compared with that grand old school of thought ; yet it is, for all that, the first sketch of what we are destined to see in India, *viz.*, a genuine philosophic attempt to built out of Hinduism a strong system to withstand the inrush of Christianity.

* * * *

Each of these points, which I have brought forward as characteristic of the fierce struggle between Paganism and Christianity in the Roman world and in India to-day, may have little meaning to the modern Hindu when taken by itself; but I venture to think that no thoughtful man can consider them as a group without having this borne in his mind with overmastering force, that *Christianity is working in India to-day in precisely the same way as it worked in the Roman Empire.* The similarity is so striking in details, both on the Christian and the opposite side, that one is driven to confess that we have here a repetition of the old struggle on new soil.

Now, were we to lay before some impartial biologist the history of Hinduism on the one hand, and the history of Christianity on the other, asking him to realize as fully as possible the immeasurable strength of the one, and the extraordinary activity and pervasiveness of the other, with all the striking details which we have brought out in the preceding paragraphs, and were we to ask him what the result of the struggle in India is likely to be, what would be his answer? Would he not say, "It is impossible to forecast with certainty how the struggle will end, for these two gigantic foes have never met in fair field before; yet Christianity has proved itself an organization of such unparalleled vitality and of such invincible aggressiveness in the past, and in circumstances so exceedingly similar to those we now see around us in India, that, from the point of biology, I am inclined to think that the younger faith is likely to gradually weaken Hinduism and finally supplant it. The similarity of the phenomena as observed in the Roman world and visible in India to-day almost compels us to this conclusion."

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# THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA.

No. III.

LAST WORDS.

MR. JNAN CHANDRA BANERJI, M.A., B.L.

THE July number of the *Hindustan Review* contains a reply from the pen of Mr. Farquhar to my article on 'The Future of Christianity in India' published in December last in the same Review. Since my humble contribution on the subject has called forth a rejoinder from so well-known an authority, I deem it necessary to say a few words in elucidation and defence of my position, and in doing so I shall try to examine, so far as my capacity will permit, the correctness of the facts stated by the learned missionary and educationist, as well as the inference which he seeks to draw from them. But before I begin, I must thank Mr. Farquhar for the calm, dispassionate and sympathetic tone which he maintains throughout the article—an attitude which other missionaries might do worse than imitate.

Mr. Farquhar has not touched upon the real merits of the case for or against Christianity, but has treated us instead to a historical disquisition on the manner in which Christianity gained a foothold in pagan Rome and Greece, and premising that the conditions of those societies were similar to those of modern India, he draws the inference that there is a great likelihood of Christianity triumphing in India, just as it did in Rome and Greece.

There is something noble in this attempt of a sincere believer to prove, by unconsciously reading history in a way most suitable for the purpose of his demonstration, that the religion which has been the solace of his life, and the ultimate success of which has been predicted by a person whom he has learnt to regard as divine, will in time be the Universal religion of the world, and we can well conceive



the pang which his heart is likely to feel, if the contrary is sought to be established. But when many of Mr. Farquhar's foremost contrymen have shewn the way, I need hardly apologise for following in their footsteps.

Mr. Farquhar begins by analysing the Census Returns in order to show the steady increase in the number of native Christians. But to quote his own words, "one half of the evidence has been given, while the other half has not been so much as mentioned." A careful study of the relevant portion of the Report of the Census of India, 1901 (Vol. I, pp. 387-92) brings out the following general features, striking in their significance. Converts are recruited mostly from the aborigines who are outside the pale of Hinduism and to a much lesser extent from the lowest classes of the Hindus, 'whom Hinduism regards as degraded.' The conversions are chiefly due to prudential considerations on the part of the convertes, and especially to famine. The converts generally retain their superstitions, caste-distinctions, and ritual. Lastly, in the words of the Census Commissioner Mr. Gait. 'cases of backsliding are by no means rare.'

Mr. Farquhar says: "The great bulk of the increase in the number of Christians in India during these years is due to the conversion of Hindus and others to Protestant Christianity: that is absolutely plain from the census tables." And further, this increase 'is no mere temporary leap,' but is 'a continuous and progressive movement.' Let the reader test the correctness of this conclusion in the light of the following extracts from the latest Census Reports for India and Bengal (Vol. I, pp. 387-92; Vol. VI, pp. 160-65) Speaking of Bengal (which occupies the second place in India in respect of its Christian population, Madras standing first), Mr. Gait says; "The converts from the ranks of Hinduism are very few in number, and even these do not usually come from the higher strata of Hindu society." In regard to Madras, Mr. Francis says: there is, in every district, a

limit to the number (*i.e.*, the aborigines and low-caste Hindus) to whom the advantages of espousing Christianity appeal .....it is improbable that in the next decade it (the rate of increase) will keep at the level which it has hitherto on the whole maintained." Mr. Enthoven says of Bombay and Baroda: "The secret of many of the conversions is to be sought more in the relations which the missionary bodies have been able to establish with the famine waifs in their orphanages than in any general movement in the adult members of non-Christian communities towards accepting the revelation of the gospel", while Mr. Burn of the United Provinces laments that 'a considerable number [of the converts] disappear or are struck off,' and says in effect that the conversion in many cases is merely nominal.

Mr. Farquhar then goes on to say that Christianity is now numerically the strongest religion in the world, and he seeks to prove it by comparing the present number of Christians—which he fixes at 535 millions—with the whole population of the world. The population of the world is, however, under the present imperfect conditions, incapable of being ascertained with any degree of accuracy, and these figures are therefore bound to be very far from reliable. The prevalent theory hitherto has been that Buddhism counted the greatest number of followers, and I find that MaxMuller, in his *Chips from a German Workshop* (Vol. I, p. 214), written many years ago, puts the followers of Buddha at 450 millions—a number which must have considerably augmented by this time. Unless, therefore, Mr. Farquhar can procure the correct figures for China and other Buddhistic countries, and compare them with those for the Christian countries of the globe, his statement on this point will remain absolutely unconvincing.

Mr. Farquhar next affirms that Christianity is leaping forward in China and Japan. But Mr. J. A. MacCulloch in a very well-informed article in the *Guardian*, discussing the

prospects of Christianity among the Japanese, has recently said: "to Christianity as a religion they are probably indifferent"; and as appears from a letter published in the *New Century Path* (quoted in the *Indian Mirror*, supplement, July 24, 1904) at a recent Presbyterian Assembly a missionary from Japan announced that "the Japanese are not becoming Christians in proportion to their population and to the evangelistic work done for them," the reason being that instead of believing in the innate depravity of the human character—the archstone of the Christian faith—the Japanese believe in its innate perfection. Should this really be the cause of the failure of Christianity in Japan, the failure is certainly well-deserved, for the Christian theory of the sinfulness of man, has, by depriving him of his self-respect and self-confidence, long acted as a drag on the wheel of human progress. The Christians in Japan number in all about ten thousand, and in the opinion of the candid missionary referred to above, Japan will in future inculcate the countries over which she might have an influence with the great ethical and religious spirits of Buddhism and Shintoism.

And here we may remark in passing that the allegiance which the western nations, regarded as the most highly civilized, owe to Christianity does not prove, as many Christians would have us believe, that western civilization is the outcome of Christianity. I shall let the historian Lecky speak here:—"Few men who are not either priests or monks would not have preferred to live in the best days of the Athenian or the Roman republics, in the age of Augustus or in the age of the Antonines, rather than in any period that elapsed between the triumph of Christianity and the fourteenth century..... the influence of theology having for centuries numbed and paralysed the whole intellect of Christian Europe; the revival, which forms the starting point of our modern civilization, was mainly due to the fact that two spheres of intellect still remained uncontrolled by the sceptre of Catholicism. The pagan literature of antiquity, and the Mahomedan schools of

science, were the chief agencies in resuscitating the dormant energies of Christendom."\* Thus it will be seen that the whole impetus of modern western civilization came from paganism and Mahomedanism.

Before taking leave of the first division of Mr. Farquhar's article—the position of Christianity in the world to-day—we would ask the fair-minded reader to consider what is the influence which Christianity *actually* exercises in the world now. In the field of politics, it has admittedly no place. The white man is very loath to be relieved of his burden, and the very natural and laudable attempt of the yellow nations to preserve themselves from extinction is openly and shamelessly denounced as the Yellow Peril, which to non-Christians, appears very much like blaming a man for defending his iron-safe from aggressors who want to break it open. Self interest is the only principle which governs the politics of the world, and Christianity has no part or lot in it. In the domestic life of the European nations, again, we see that the upper classes avowedly scoff and jeer at religion, because it is the fashion, and they are too careless of higher concerns and too much bent on self-seeking to think seriously of Christianity. The masses are indifferent, out of sheer bitterness at their own position, which though nominally equal to that of the highest in the land, is in reality one of great misery. Besides, intellectually they are too low, and they have too much to do to meet their daily wants, to think of such things. The only ideals which touch their feelings and occasionally rouse them from their torpidity are Trades Unionism and Socialism.

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\* Referring to the conspiracy of silence which long prevailed among Europeans in regard to their scientific obligations to the Mahomedans, Draper (*History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, Vol. II, chapter XVI, pp. 40-41) says: "I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Mahomedans. Surely they cannot be much longer hidden. Injustic founded on religious rancour and national conceit cannot be perpetuated for ever.....The Arab has left his intellectual impress on Europe, as, before long, Christendom will have to confess; he has indelibly written it on the heavens, as any one may see who reads the names of the stars on a common celestial globe."

Commenting on Mr. Charles Booth's 'Religious Influences of London,' F.H.S. in the *Review of Reviews* for April 1903 says : " Yet what is the upshot of Mr. Booth's investigations, carried on for 17 years, in this capital and concentration of British Christendom? Simply this, that so far as connection with religious organisations is concerned, the great mass of people has no religion judged by conventional tests. London is an overwhelmingly godless city.....The absence of London working classes as a body from public worship—that is the black fact certified by these volumes on religion. ' Whatever religion there is, exists among the middle classes, but it is also from the same classes that the atheists, agnostics, positivists, rationalists and freethinkers—men generally of high intellectual eminence—arise. One of the foremost of modern European thinkers and writers, Count Leo Tolstoy, declares : " One part—most of the women—remain as superstitious as they were six hundred years ago, but without that Christian spirit which formerly permeated their lives ; the other part, which knows the catechism by heart, are absolute atheists. And all this is consciously brought about by the clergy. 'But this applies to Russia' is what western Europeans—Catholics and Protestants—will say. But I think the same, if not worse, is happening in Catholicism, with its prohibition of the gospels, and its Notre-dames ; in Protestantism, with its holy idleness on Sabbath day, and its bibliolatry ; I think, in one form or another, it is the same throughout the quasi-Christian world." Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*, Zola's *Truth*, and other novels which deal with contemporary religious problems show to what deplorable extent superstition still prevails in Europe, and Hall Cain's *The Eternal City* exposes in vivid colours the tragic make-shifts to which the once arbiter of the destinies of Catholic Europe is compelled to resort in order to maintain his temporal power. Indeed, the eldest daughter of the supreme Catholic Church—France—is in imminent danger of secession, and she has closed her schools against the teaching of religious

sects, their pernicious influence having been fully brought out during the notorious Dreyfus trial. The commendable tolerance of the most advanced of Teutonic nations in religious matters is itself a sign, to those who can read it, of its apathy and indifference. Tolerance means the growth of intellectual freedom, and is foreign to religious enthusiasm. Lecky deplures the decay of noble enthusiasms as the inevitable result of the rise of rationalism, and he points to the remarkable fact that those who secede from Catholicism do not seek spiritual consolation in the Protestant faith, but in the views and opinions of rationalists. The reason is plain. If blind faith is once cast aside, and a man is started on the path of intellectual enquiry, he cannot rest satisfied with half truths. I have myself heard thoughtful missionaries deploring the indifference of Hindus in general to the truths of Christianity. To the toleration of the Hindus, they preferred active opposition, since opposition betrays an awakening interest. The newspapers sometimes ago published an account of the Pope's alarm at the remarkable progress of the Japanese as manifested in the present Russo-Japanese war. For once the papal instinct was right—he had reason to be alarmed; for the noble self-sacrificing heroism, the devotion to duty, the culture, the chivalry, the humanity, which the Japanese, without any active belief in a paradise after death, have exhibited, form a noble contrast to the savagery and bestiality of the allied armies in Peking not very long ago, and this vivid object-lesson, by shewing how little Christianity has in reality influenced the lives of the western nations, has further undermined the faith of the 'pagan' world in all that Christianity lays claim to. In short, to a student of contemporary movements of the west in social, political and religious matters, it is idle to assert that the bounds of Christianity are widening instead of contracting, as is really the case.

To turn now to a consideration of the second division of Mr. Farquhar's article,—the early history of Christianity.

On this subject Mr. Farquhar's account seems to me rather one-sided. In order to prove the power of Christianity to break down antagonistic faiths, he places Greek philosophy on a par with ancient Hindu philosophy. It would be out of place to enter here upon a lengthy discussion as to the relative merits of both, but I need not tell Mr. Farquhar that modern European philosophers have recognised the superiority of Indian to Greek thought, as I tried to prove by quotations in my previous article. Speaking of Buddhism, which is a product of Indian thought, Draper says: "The philosophical ability displayed in the latter (Buddhism) is very great; indeed, it may be doubted whether Europe has produced its metaphysical equivalent." The old Indian philosophers knew more about the soul than Greek, mediæval or modern philosophers" says Max Muller. Charles Morris, in his book on the Aryan Race, says of India: "There we find a connected and definite system of philosophy.....developing into a manly vigour of reasoning that has not been surpassed in the region of metaphysical thought." Mr. R. C. Dutt, in his *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, comparing ancient Hindus with ancient Greeks, says: "In departments of knowledge which depend upon reflection more than on observation, the Hindus remain unrivalled.....Kapil's philosophy is modern philosophy and has no parallel in Greece." "We on the contrary now send the Brahmans, English clergymen and evangelical linen-weavers to set them right out of sympathy and to show that they were created out of nothing and right thankfully to rejoice in the fact. *But it is just the same as if we fired a bullet against a cliff. In India, our religion will never take root.\** The ancient wisdom of the human race will not be dispersed by what happened in Galilee. On the contrary Indian philosophy streams back to Europe and will produce a fundamental change in our knowledge and thought." Such is the opinion of Schopenhauer, whom MaxMuller calls

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\* The italics are mine.—Writer.

one of the clearest sighted of men. The following lines of the same philosopher are well-known : " In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death." Paul Denssen regards Vedanta as the strongest support of pure morality and the greatest consolation in the sufferings of life and death, and exhorts Indians to keep to it. In the opinion of Colebrooke and prof. MacDonell, Greek thought was probably derived from Indian through Persia. The above will, I trust, make it abundantly clear to every impartial mind that the thought with which early Christianity had to deal was very different from Indian thought. Indeed, in subtlety of reasoning and intellectual perspicacity the Hindus are even now regarded by many Europeans to be without superiors.

In all his argumets, Mr. Farquhar loses sight of one most important fact. Similitudes and parallelisms are good for purposes of exposition up to a certain limit, but it is their defect that they are often mistaken for realities, and substituted for proofs. Thus in attempting to demonstrate the similarity between ancient Greek and modern Indian thought Mr. Farquhar forgets the great gulf of ages which separates the two and makes an exact or a nearly exact reproduction of the same conditions physically impossible. By a pure accident, viz., that of being born nineteen centuries later, the Indians of to-day are far richer in wisdom than the ancient Greeks, inasmuch as they have become the inheritors of the accumulated knowledge of all these centuries, one of which alone, the nineteenth, as Mr. Wallace has shewn, surpasses all the others together in the new light it has brought into the world. The geocentric theory of the Universe has been knocked on the head by astronomy, *pace* so great an authority as Mr. Wallace; the biblical cosmogony has had its death-blow from geology and anthropology; and the science of evolution has given the quietus to that theological doctrine so dear to the heart of the pious Christian—special



creation. Leibnitz has said that "Newton had robbed the Deity of some of his most excellent attributes," and Newton was not born when Rome was converted. A cheap press, cheap literature, and the present wonderful facilities of locomotion, which make organisation so much less difficult and diffusion of knowledge so easy, were totally unknown. The historical method of biblical criticism was not even dreamt of. The whole science of comparative religion, which makes us realise that no religion is either perfect or absolutely bad, is a growth of recent times. If the minds of men are widened with the process of the suns, then it is absurd to lay stress on the similarity of ancient with modern society, for the similarity is bound to be more apparent than real; and 'the process of the suns' has brought us so far forward that it would be idle to sigh for the innocent times long gone by, when men were less exacting in their proofs, and had fewer opportunities of picking out the grain from the chaff.

The political condition of the people has also changed somewhat in these nineteen centuries. We read in history of Emperors and Kings, who were converted to Christianity through their wives—one of the causes of the success of the early Christian missionaries is the hold which they had over the female section of the population—and straightway whole nations over which they ruled were converted. Such phenomenal conversions in the gross are no longer possible now-a-days, except in autocratic and semi-barbarous countries like Madagascar, to which Mr. Farquhar alludes. The conscience of the people does not now lie in the pocket of their sovereign, and the harvest is necessarily not so large.

Mr. Farquhar speaks of 'the omnipotent Roman state, and 'a political organisation of iron strength,' and the 'violent persecution' of Christianity in Rome. But what are the facts? I shall quote them from Lecky's *History of European Morals* (Vol. I, Chap. III)—a book from which Mr. Farquhar himself has made extracts. In Rome at the time we are

speaking of, "the widest tolerance was granted to the religions of conquered nations.....It is probable that in no other period of the history of the world was speculative freedom so perfect as in the Roman Empire." The reasons for the hatred of Christianity were more political than religious. The general peace of the Church was very infrequently broken, and the persecutions were confined to definite local areas. Reviewing the history of Christian persecution up to A.D. 249, Lecky says "there was, with the very doubtful exception of the Neronian persecution, no single attempt made to suppress Christianity throughout the empire.....there was at no time that continuous, organised and universal persecution [*e.g.* the murder of Hypatia and the Inquisition] by which, in later periods, ecclesiastical tribunals have again and again suppressed opinions repugnant to their own; and there was no part of the Empire in which whole generations did not pass away absolutely undisturbed.....If Christianity was not formally authorised, it was generally acquiesced in, and during a great part of the time we have reviewed, its Professors appear to have found no obstacles to their preferment in the court or in the army. The Emperors were for the most part indifferent or favourable to them. The priests in the Pagan society had but little influence, and do not appear to have taken any prominent part in the persecution till near the time of Diocletian.....In a word, the church proselytised in a society in which toleration was the rule, and at a time when municipal, provincial and personal independence had reached the highest point [*i.e.*, in other words, 'the political organisation of iron strength' had become disorganised], when the ruling classes were for the most part indifferent to religious opinions, and when an unprecedented concourse of influences facilitated its progress." The causes of the success of Christianity have been thus summed up by the same authority. "By the beauty of its moral precepts, by the systematic skill with which it governed the imaginations and habits of its worshippers, by the strong religious motives to which it could appeal, by its

admirable ecclesiastical organisation, and it must be added, *by its unsparing use of the arm of power*, Christianity soon eclipsed or destroyed all other sects." We will take up these causes one by one, beginning from the last. Fortunately for the progress of the world, Christianity can no longer use its power unsparingly, for the disastrous result of such use lies recorded in the epithet—dark—which has been given by common consent to the period of its absolute ascendancy. The 'admirable ecclesiastical organisation' is breaking up on all sides, as we have tried to show in an earlier part of this article, not more so by the increasing number of heretics within its fold than by internal dissensions of the most violent description. Besides it is opposed in India by a subtle, indefinable, all-pervasive, wonderfully receptive religion that has outlasted the attack of centuries. The power which the early Christians wielded was due to the proverbial enthusiasm of its new converts, and the secret of the success of the missionaries of the first two centuries lay in their fanatical zeal. The blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the Church, for it is a well known psychological fact that opposition puts enthusiasts on their mettle and stimulates them into violent activity. But modern missionaries are, as a class, more level-headed and sober, and to none-Christians their 'mission' appears to be much less religious than commercial or political. On the whole, but for their political interference, they are regarded as a harmless class enough, and by spreading education and helping the people in their need, they occasionally do some amount of substantial good. "Christianity opened out to its votaries eternal happiness, while all beyond its pale were doomed to an eternity of torture.....It struck alike the coarsest chords of hope and fear, and the finest chords of compassion and love." These are 'strong religious motives to which Christianity could appeal.' But alas! Christianity is not the only religion which can supply these mixed motives of good and evil. Pouranick Hinduism furnishes them in abundance. To a world thirsting for

pleasure, dragged down by slavery, eagerly responsive to the miraculous, incapable of understanding the noble if somewhat stern ethics of stoicism, Christianity gave hopes of joy everlasting, the equality of man, wonders and prodigies in abundance, and a religion of love and charity understood of all, and by these means 'governed the imaginations and habits of its worshippers.' Can it be said that all these conditions obtain in modern Hindu society, or supposing they do, that Hinduism in all its diversified forms is not fully capable of catering to its wants? And lastly, as to the beauty of the moral precepts of Christianity. The study of comparative religion has proved that there is not a single moral precept in the teachings of Jesus which had not its counterpart in Buddhistic ethics; and these striking resemblances have led European scholars of note to hold that Christianity was in all probability derived from the great religion of Goutama. Besides, will any one dare to maintain that the pristine purity of Christian ethics has remained unsullied even after its passage through the vicissitudes of nineteen centuries? What of the relic, saint and image worship, the feasts, fasts and festivals borrowed from pagan Rome? Christians may boast of the conquests of Christianity, but it is well to remind them that just as captive Greece held victorious Rome in its intellectual bondage, so conquered Paganism held victorious Christianity in its spiritual thralldom. The Egyptian deities reappeared in the Alexandrine doctrine which is held by the majority of Protestants, and say what they may, strikes at the root of their vaunted monotheism. It is curious to reflect that those very Christian missionaries who pooh-pooh the attempts of conservative Hindus to explain away the inconsistencies of the Hindu religion, should themselves resort to transcendental metaphysical discussions in order to bring the obvious absurdities of Christianity into line with the more enlightened ideas of modern times. But there is such a thing as common sense, by which alone ordinary people must be expected to judge the merits of a religious doctrine foreign to their own.

Of the morality of some of the Christian dogmas, I will let Mr. Farquhar's countrymen themselves speak. Referring to the Augustinian doctrine of the damnation of unbaptised infants and the calvinistic doctrine of reprobation, Lecky says "of these doctrines it is not too much to say, that in the form in which they have been stated, they surpass in atrocity any tenets that have ever been admitted into any Pagan creed..... such teaching is in fact simply dæmonism and dæmonism in its most extreme form." Speaking of the Christianity of the gospels, J. S. Mill says: "The recognition, for example, of the object of highest worship, in a being who could make a Hell, and who could create countless generations of human beings with the certain fore-knowledge that he was creating them for this fate.—Is there any moral enormity which may not be justified by imitation of such a Deity? And is it possible to adore such a one without a frightful distortion of the standard of right and wrong? Any other of the outrages to the most ordinary justice and humanity involved in the common Christian conception of the moral character of God, sinks into insignificance besides this dreadful idealisation of wickedness." That after this 'Christian morals' should be held up as allurements to conversion is strange indeed. I do not deny that a great deal of the teachings of Christ, the sermon on the mount for instance, is very noble. What I maintain is that noble precepts of that kind abound also in Hindu religious literature; and it has been acknowledged in the latest census report (Vol. I, p. 363) that "the code of morality of the ordinary Hindu is much the same as that of most civilised nations"—so that there is no call for him to accept Christianity.

Finally, we must take note of a fact to which Mr. Farquhar has also referred—the unique caste-system of India. True, among the most intelligent classes it is showing signs of decrepitude, but in a conservative country like India it will take ages for the whole nation to break through its bonds, and by that time many things may happen.

Mr. Farquhar refers to my contempt of the low class Christian converts as akin to that which prevailed in ancient Rome, and draws such consolation as he can from the recognition of this similarity. But may I remind him that while the contempt towards Christianity was shown by anti-Christians alone in the Roman Empire, and the Christian sects were strongly united in their opposition to them, the conditions now are very much different? The greatest outburst of scorn towards some of the doctrines and practices of Christianity comes from among the most advanced men in the Christian nations, in other words, the attack is not delivered from without only, but also from within, thus proving in an unmistakable way that Christianity as a universal religion is doomed. And is my contempt unjustified? Speaking from my personal experience of some of the low class converts of Eastern Bengal, I may say that they deserve it. They are in no way superior to the lower classes of Hindu society; on the contrary the consciousness that they are outcasts from society gives them a peculiar hang-dog look, and by depriving them of their self-respect, makes them grow like what they seem. As to the converts of southern India—the Andrews, Gomezes and Davids of Madras and elsewhere—I have read in a book written by an Anglo-Indian who lived in their midst, that as domestic servants in European households they become the greatest liars and pilferers in the world. These converts are treated everywhere by the Hindus with unmitigated scorn. Neither can they boast of having produced any great men like some of the Christian Fathers. In southern India, where they are numerically the strongest, caste-system even among them is the strictest, thus showing how little influence they exercise upon their neighbours. Will the Christianisation of India be brought about by such as these? Of high class converts, who alone might influence Hindu society, every one knows that the crop is growing beautifully less every year, in spite of the persistent attempt of zealous missionaries to augment their number.

In antagonism to the steady increase of the church—of which, in view of the unreliable nature of the statistics for certain countries, the operation of extraneous and accidental causes not quite apparent on the surface, the prolificacy of the Christians themselves, and the backsliding of many of the converts, I am not at all convinced—may be set down the steady infiltration of liberal ideas, the meetings of bodies like the Parliament of Religions, the growth of rationalism, and the divisions in the church itself. As I have dealt with these points in their proper places, I content myself by simply enumerating them here.

Mr. Farquhar alludes to the steady diffusion of Christian ideas and the copying of missionary methods of organization by the Hindus. He mentions universal education, female emancipation, and philanthropy as 'Christian' ideas. I do not see that there is anything peculiarly Christian in them. The degrading view of marriage and the sexual relation held by the early Christian monks, the conception of Eve as the mother of Evil, had anything but an elevating effect on the position of women. The virtue of chastity and the dignity of motherhood reached their highest development in Rome long before the birth of Jesus Christ. In education, the beneficial effect of Christianity was still less felt. "Outside the monastic institutions," says Draper, "no attempt at intellectual advancement was made; indeed, so far as the laity were concerned, the influence of the church was directed to an opposite result, for the maxim universally received was that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." In fact progress in education in Europe was due to the Moors of Spain and the Renaissance. Ideas of charity and benevolence nowhere attained a higher grandeur than in Buddhistic India. I think Mr. Farquhar has been singularly unfortunate in the choice of his illustrations. It is one of the bye-products of theological training that it sets the mind in a narrow groove, and tries to connect everything good and true with its own peculiar doctrines. Those ideas which Mr. Farquhar calls

essentially Christian, are the common heritage of this rationalistic and utilitarian age, and are due to the general progress of civilisation, to which, as we have shewn above, Christianity has contributed very little. The imitation of missionary methods of organisation is not the same as imitation of missionary dogmas and theories. As the latter do not even follow from the former, I see nothing in such imitation to raise the hopes of Christians like Mr. Farquhar. Japan furnishes a good illustration in point. 'Protection through imitation' is her motto, and though she has imitated European methods to the extent that will suit her purposes, it is well known that she has not thereby lost her nationality or vitality.

"Every apologist for Hinduism to-day labours to prove that it is as seriously monotheistic as Christianity" says Mr. Farquhar. The following extract from Mr. Burn's notes (quoted in the Census Report, Vol. I, p. 363) will show that not only apologists for Hinduism, but others also, prove the same. "The general result of my enquiries is that the great majority of Hindus have a firm belief in one Supreme God called Bhagawan, Parmeswar, Iswar, or Narain. Mr. Baillie made some enquiries which showed that this involved a clear idea of a single personal God, but I am inclined to think that this is not limited to the more intelligent, but is distinctly characteristic of Hindus as a whole."

The other points of similarity between the attitude of the ancient Romans and the modern Hindus mentioned by Mr. Farquhar, are a great tendency to praise Christ, and a revival and philosophic reorganisation of the old faith. Mr. Farquhar will not, I hope, argue that the logical consequence of such a revival and philosophic reorganisation of one religion is the acceptance of another with which it happens to come in contact. His argument, as I understand it, is that since such a revival and reorganisation were followed in ancient Rome by its conversion, a similar result is *likely* to happen also in India. This argument, based on analogy, would be sound if



there were a repetition in India of the same conditions that prevailed in Rome at the time of its dissolution. But as I have tried to show above, such a repetition is in reality impossible. Besides, it should be noted that Mr. Farquhar would hardly have regarded this argument as convincing if he did not believe with his whole heart in the ultimate triumph of Christianity. The whole force of his argument lies in that belief, and as we are unable to share it, *protanto* his argument loses its force to us.

If from the educated Hindu's tendency to praise Christ Mr. Farquhar is led to hope that the Hindu will ultimately accept Christ in the sense in which Christians have accepted him, I can only say that he is sadly mistaken. Let us meet the facts squarely in the face, and analyse what this praise of Christ by a Hindu amounts to. For one thing, it proves his tolerance, his catholicity, his reasonableness, and his utter want of blind faith. Had he been otherwise, he would in his bigotry either have remained an orthodox Hindu, or become an out and out Christian. That he is led by no enthusiasm in the matter, is, or ought to be, the most discouraging fact about him in the eyes of a thoughtful Christian. The educated Hindu admires Christ, just as he admires Buddha, Mohomed, Chaitanya, Confucius, i.e., as a hero or master-man, and not as the specially appointed son of God. Mr. Farquhar himself refers to the Buddhistic attack on Hinduism. And what has that led to? Buddha has simply been absorbed as one of the Avatars of popular Hindu mythology, and the great Buddhistic impact has left no more durable impress on the broad bosom of Hinduism. What reason has the Christian to hope for better favours in regard to his own Christ? The philosophic Hindu, whether he follows the absolute idealism of the Vedanta or the dual materialism of the Sankhya, is as far above the biblical conception of the godhead as the Christian is above the polytheism of pagan mythology. To him Christianity is a superstition. The educated middle

classes whose philosophic reflections have not led them so far are satisfied with the monotheism of the Bramhos or the eclecticism of the *Geeta*, while those who are less educated worship the ideals of love and power as personified in the Pauranick gods and goddesses ; and the attitude of these, as of the masses of the people, towards Christianity is one of absolute indifference. The methods which the missionaries follow to win them over are not always quite fair and above board, as cases which crop up occassionally in our law courts show clearly enough. And yet, the successes are such as, to a Hindu at any rate, scarcely justify the confident hope that is entertained by cultured men like Mr. Farquhar in the ultimate religious conquest of India by Christianity.

THE END

