

Mission and Missionaries

II

Christian missionaries in the Punjab have encountered communities belonging to every type of religion which is found not only on the vast area of our Indian Empire, but throughout the world. Christianity has, on its part, exerted its power, it has put forth its strength by a variety of means. During the last forty years that the Punjab has been under British rule, the various denominations and sects have one by one entered upon this mission-field; they have parcelled it out amongst themselves; every one of them has ploughed and tilled his plot in a manner peculiar to itself, and with instruments of its own manufacture. The American Presbyterian Board, the United Presbyterians, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church, the Church of England by its two great societies, and by several smaller organisations, the Roman Catholic Church, the London Board of Missions, Independents, Baptists, Methodists and Moravians have preached, taught and written their respective tenets, and, above all, those central doctrines which they hold in common.

The various agencies have, with few exceptions, kept within the bounds which they had drawn for themselves. Division of labour has led missionaries, even whole societies, to devote their strength to work amongst the devotees of one single religion or sect. The Moravian missionaries have held their station, surrounded by snowy peaks and lying at the foot of a large monastery, for over thirty years amongst the Buddhists of Kyelang. A chain of stations has been drawn along the north-western frontier, extending from Quetta to Peshawar, in order that from them Christian influences might be brought

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to bear on Beluch and Afghan tribes, whose faith is perhaps best illustrated by the burning desert plains, and bare rocks, amidst which they dwell. The capital of the Sikh religion has been occupied for upwards of thirty-five years by the agency of a society belonging to the Church of England. That modified Mohammedanism, which has accepted the stamp of Hindu cast, has been reached, both at Lahore and Delhi, by Christian preachers, schoolmasters and writers. That pure and original Hinduism, which was driven into the refuge of the mountains by the Mohammedan invaders, has come into contact with Christianity at some of its centres, at Kangra for instance, and Chamba. The low cast people, both the nomads and those that have settled down to menial work, have been preached to by itinerant catechists; they have been taught in schools, and gathered into congregations. They are being organised as churches.

Every one of the religions which we adduced as examples of their kind have come in contact, or rather into collision with Christianity. And in every case almost different weapons and instruments have been used.

Moravians have, perhaps, by their willingness to spend their lives in Arctic snow and cold—cut off for seven months in the year from the world—by their patient endurance of hardships, by their gentle sympathy, by love and kindness, set an example of self-sacrifice, which compares with Buddhist self-abnegation, as in logic a positive thesis compares with its negative.

Characteristic are the tactics which have been employed by the missionaries to the Mohammedans. We do not merely refer to translations, in the first instance, of certain books of

the Old Testament, such as the book of Job, the Psalms, the Minor Prophets or the Prophet Ezekiel, which are more than any other portion of the Bible allied in spirit to the earlier *Suras* of the Koran. The literary productions generally have been fashioned as much as possible upon Eastern models. Hymns have been turned into *ghazels*, theological treatises into tracts entitled "The Even Balance," "The Mirror of Truth," "The Pearl of Light," etc., such as the "faithful" are ready to accept from their *moulvies*; and sermons have been converted into *khutbas*, such as the devout congregation assembled on Friday in the mosque listens to with excitement amounting to frenzy. Such "trifles" as food and dress, and the cut of the beard have not been neglected by experienced missionaries in their intercourse with Mohammedans. The best illustrations to our argument are perhaps furnished by the guest-house in Peshawar, where the missionary receives and entertains all visitors, however great or poor, with a kind of lordly hospitality, which is essentially Oriental—and by the church, which is built—*mirabile dictu*—in the midst of that most fanatical town. Regarding that church, nothing further need be said here, except that it might pass for some mosque, the seat of Arabic learning, were it not built in the shape of a cross.

European agents have been unable, in the climate of the Trans-Indus desert, to adopt entirely the native mode of living. They have built themselves houses with lofty rooms and verandahs. But, for all that, the remark of the high Indian official, that the missionary appeared to natives as a charitable gentleman who lived in a comfortable house, drove his wife and children in a pony-carriage, and kept an excellent cheap school, is a somewhat incomplete statement. For there have not been wanting men, Europeans and natives, who have literally carried out the apostolical injunctions, who have wandered in native dress "without money in their wallets or shoes on their feet," under an Indian sun, through arid wastes, partaking of the simple hospitality the villagers could offer, and, where that was refused, finding shelter under trees or in ruins. Some like Gordon, who fell whilst endeavouring to rescue the wounded from a battle-field, have left a memory which Mohammedans venerate as that of saints.

The great body of educated natives in large towns like Lahore, Amritsar, Peshawar, Moulton and Delhi, have been brought under missionary influence in two ways. They have been taught in schools, they have been intellectually nourished on books that represent the science of Western Christianity.

The educational system, which has been developed by the missionary agencies, leaves little to be desired as regards completeness. The primary schools with their three years of elementary teaching, the middle and the high schools, which prepare their pupils for matriculation, the college at Delhi, which is affiliated with the university at Lahore, are so many different parts of one great machinery. Their influence is not confined to the large towns, schools are scattered all over the district. Not a large school which has not got a feeder in a number of elementary schools; not a large station which has not got its out-stations. There is not a missionary resident in the district who has not supplied the villages all round with schools. Such establishments do not cost him much. The master draws 7%. a year. The building is a good-sized mud but with wooden rafters; on the floor there squat some forty little urchins, with naked legs, a string round their waist, and a red turban on their close shaven heads. The children learn their multiplication table; they spell through their Persian primer; but their daily instruction begins or ends with readings from the Sermon on the Mount. There must not be forgotten the zenana schools, the girls' schools of various degrees which have been called into existence by the different societies for female education, in Julandhar, Amritsar, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and which, managed by European ladies, have exerted an influence which it is impossible to measure or to gauge.

As powerful as the schools, as far reaching in its effect; is the literary work done by missionaries. It includes every genre of literature appropriate to the native mind. From the large depot at Lahore there has gone forth every kind of book and tract and paper and leaflet. Translations of passages, chapters and books of the Bible, of children's and boys' stories, of school books, of scientific and historical, and especially

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theological works. Original controversial treatises have all issued from this press; they have been sold in the bazars, introduced into the schools or given away in private houses. The Hindustani language has taken its share in the work of translation and original production, which is being carried on throughout the mission field of the world.

Again analogies from the early history of the church offer themselves to our mind. The books written by apologists, in defence of the new-born religion, at Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria, eighteen centuries ago, might be adapted, with slight verbal alterations, as pastoral letters to the small Christian congregations "of the diaspora" in the Punjab, as sermons to be delivered in the bazar of Amritsar, as an "apologia pro vita sua" to be offered to Brahmins or native rulers. And may we not regard the strong likeness which this mission-field of today bears to that of the early church, as an argument which justifies us in adducing it as a type and an example of the kind of activity that has prevailed and still prevails throughout the world?

The *medical* work of the missions has not yet been as completely organised as the scholastic and literary. Yet it is efficient in its way. The stations in proportion to their size and importance, in town and district, have been supplied with establishments, ranging from the dispensary—where the hospital assistant on 8/. a year doles out every morning to a crowd of sick and poor, pills and drugs and febrifuges—to the well-furnished hospitals at Srinuggur or Chamba, where the surgeon, perhaps an Edinburgh M.D. and gold medallist, together with his qualified assistants, obtains an experience which might excite the envy of his colleagues in England.

It cannot be said that *technical and industrial education* has been neglected. There are industrial schools under native managements in Hoshyarpore, where the pupils are taught spinning, weaving, tent and carpet making, and carpentry of various kinds. There are work. shops, like those in Lahore, which give young men a training invaluable for all practical work connected with railways. Attempts have been made by a Presbyterian missionary, for instance, in the Kulu Valley, to teach boys how to manage a farm-yard, to rear poultry, to till the ground. Moreover, there exist settlements, like the one in Clarkabad, on ground rented from Government, where converts gathered into one village are learning to manage their own affairs; they constitute a small Christian polity in the midst of a heathen land.

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