

Centenary of the "Lone Star Mission."¹

IN the few days you can spend with us we want, if possible, that you should catch the thrill of this great occasion; that you should sense something of the marvellous way the Spirit of God has been working in India. If we set forth facts and figures, statistics and charts, pictures and reports, it is only that we may make vivid in a concrete way the actual condition of the Telugu Churches to-day.

MASS MOVEMENT.

In any recital of the achievements of the past or in any estimate of the conditions of to-day there is one supremely important fact that must be kept in mind. Too many visitors from the homeland, even some who have come officially, have failed completely to realise this important fact. It is difficult to state this fact briefly and concisely. It takes time to grasp its full significance and varied implications. Stated boldly the fact is this:—The mass movement in the Telugu Mission, the great ingathering of the last sixty years, has taken place from within a group or class of people who, by the religious, social, economic and moral standards and customs of the country, have been relegated to a condition of oppression and servitude, almost impossible to comprehend except by long actual contact with the devilish system itself. I believe it is not too much to say that neither in the jungles of the darkest Africa, among the pagan black men, nor even under the conditions of actual physical slavery itself, can such a state of social, economic, mental and spiritual bondage be found, as has been the lot of the Untouchables of India.

It is not possible, not necessary, at this time to present arguments in support of this statement. It is enough to remind you that under this caste system the outcaste man must not live in the village proper. He must not enter the village temple to worship, his children are denied admittance to the village school and he is not allowed to draw water from the village well. He

¹ Opening Address delivered January 1st, 1936, at the Centennial Celebration, Ongole, South India, which was attended by the President and Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, delegates from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, the Woman's A.B.F.M.S., and representatives of many mission bodies working in India and Burma.

is made to suffer every sort of indignity and abuse; and, should he raise his hand or voice in protest or rebellion, he is unmercifully beaten. Such has been the lot of the Pariah through all these years.

HINDUISM AND HOME RULE.

Mr. Gandhi came to the difficult conclusion that Hinduism would never be fit for home rule until it cleaned the house. It could not demand justice or even its rights from a foreign ruler until it was willing to give both justice and full rights to a very large portion of its own community. Mr. Gandhi soon found that he had taken up a far more unpopular cause than home rule and, unquestionably, he has lost a large number of followers among the more orthodox, who opposed this effort to remove untouchability.

Mr. B. R. Ambedkar, a Doctor of Science and of Philosophy, founder of the Untouchable Classes Welfare League and the acknowledged leader of the depressed classes, being their representative at the Round Table Conferences in London, has recently declared himself as convinced that the outcaste groups will never receive equality of status within Hinduism, and as for himself, he is determined not to die a Hindu. This declaration from such a well-known leader has caused a storm of comment and may result in some further removal of the almost unbearable oppression.

This, however, is the dark side of the picture. It is presented only that the bright side may appear the brighter. This great group before you this morning is the living and visible evidence, together with many thousands more who are in the villages, of the truth of 1 Corinthians i. 27, 28: "God chose the weak things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised did God choose, yea, and the things that are not that He might bring to nought the things that are." It is the manifestation of the power of the Spirit of the Living God at work in the hearts of men, no matter what their condition or inheritance.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

In the 350 or more Baptist Churches in our Mission area there are approximately 112,000² baptised Christians representing a Baptist community of at least 300,000. The statistical report of the Andhra Christian Council shows a Protestant Telugu Christian community of over 880,000, of whom 118,700 have been added in the last three years.

²The Canadian Mission to the Telugus has also a membership of approximately 30,000 and a proportionate Baptist community.

The significant fact is that the bulk of this community is from the outcaste groups. The ingathering from the Sudras is of recent origin and still proportionately small.

The conversion to Christianity has by no means removed all of the outcastes' troubles—in many cases it has for a time only enhanced them. Old customs have had to be given up, such as carrion eating and the beating of tom-toms at the Hindu festivals. The refusal to take their customary and hereditary service of beating the tom-toms has brought much persecution and suffering; but a firm stand from the beginning has again and again brought the Hindus to a recognition of the new status of the outcaste groups and, slowly but surely, the Christians have won from their caste neighbours a new respect and regard.

On the whole, it must be said that Christianity has brought no very great economic change to the mass of the village outcastes.

In some areas much land has been obtained for their use and a growing number are gradually becoming somewhat independent. Far more important than these economic aspects is this important fact, which I want you to remember this morning, namely that God, through the power of His Spirit, is raising up, throughout the Telugu land, a self-respecting, self-supporting and self-governing church of Christ. Old habits, old superstitions, old idolatrous customs are being left off. In place of the old cringeing fear is coming an attitude of manliness and self-respect. Changed lives are witnessing for Christ.

RESULT OF MASS MOVEMENT.

In hundreds of hamlets stealing, lying, drinking and general inefficiency are giving way to honesty, sobriety and dependability. Two brief quotations from J. W. Pickett's remarkable survey of the Christian Mass Movement in India will illustrate this point. He says:

"In many villages where the conversion of groups of untouchables led to severe persecution, because it was foreseen that they would no longer be content with their bondage, public sentiment has become reconciled to their deliverance and has accepted as masons, carpenters, tailors, farmers, even as teachers and ministers of religion, men who were previously condemned to work only as sweepers, leather workers or coolies."

Again, we find this testimony of an old Sudra leader:

"When the people of these villages see the Christian preachers and teachers and know what wise and good men they are, and then look at the degraded and ignorant outcastes of their villages, they say a religion that can take outcastes and make

them like these men of God should be good for Sudras and everybody."

In our Baptist group we find nearly 2,000 school teachers. With the exception of about 300, all these teachers are working in the village schools situated in the outcaste pallems (villages). These hundreds of young men and women have been educated in the boarding schools of our Mission stations. Having passed the eighth standard and, more frequently of late, the high school, they take two years of normal training, after which they return as teachers to their villages. They become not only the school teachers, but also the religious and spiritual guides of the little community. All honour and credit is due to these hundreds of faithful young people who, in the midst of poverty, dirt and disease, are fighting against the ignorance and superstition and antagonism of an Indian village.

Together with these teachers there are about 750 evangelistic workers, pastors, preachers and Bible women, who faithfully, and I believe heroically, are day by day striving to lead their people into the fuller life in Christ—many of these in the self-support fields, living and working amid social conditions which can only drag them and their people down, with little mental or spiritual stimulus, bearing much abuse and opposition, yet faithfully preaching the Gospel and leading their people in Christian development and growth.

These earnest workers are building in hundreds of villages the Church of Christ—a Church which is constantly growing stronger and more stable and more influential. It is these humble men and women who, together with the thousands of simple but faithful Christians, are keeping the light of the Gospel shining in countless outcaste hamlets. Too often in recounting the fruits of Christianity we forget this great host of teachers and preachers in the villages.

In many of the larger villages and in the towns, second and third generation Christians in increasing numbers are entering into the social and economic life of the community. Government schools as well as our own schools are being staffed with Christian teachers. Many young men and also women are graduated from college, some with post-graduate degrees, and taking their places as professors in high schools, training schools and colleges.

The lines of work being entered into by many others are rapidly increasing in their variety and importance. The list includes doctors, nurses, compounders, educational officers and school inspectors, tahsildars, revenue inspectors, forest guards and rangers; police constables and officers, Public Works Department inspectors; overseers and engineers, lawyers, railway

employees such as signal officers, ticket inspectors and station masters. This by no means exhausts the list, but gives some idea of the fields opening to those who are able to enter.

INCREASED INFLUENCE.

In many places more and more are taking up some business line as shoemaking, carpentry and tailoring. Others are opening shops as merchants or becoming agents for various lines such as automobiles, selling petrol and managing bus routes. This socially and economically independent group is growing daily and is making its influence felt in every large centre.

We, the missionaries of the American Baptist Telugu Mission, present to you to-day the fruit of one hundred years. Look into the faces massed before you and out into the grass-thatched, cactus-rimmed outcaste hamlets of a thousand villages, and see what God hath wrought. Listen in the quiet of evening twilight and you will hear the murmur of prayer and evensong ascending with the blue smoke from the hearth-fires of countless Christian homes.

W. J. LONGLEY.

DERBY.—At the Friar Gate Presbyterian Church, Ferdinando Shaw was minister from 1698 till 1745, and he kept a model register of baptisms. Once he had the privilege of baptizing a believer (probably by sprinkling), and he recorded that on 27th October, 1716, he baptized Sarah, daughter of Job Kinton, aged about 23 years, who, being born of Baptist parents at Burton-on-Trent, had not been baptized in her infancy. In the spring of 1690, David Crosley had found this church at Derby, and had been sadly disappointed in his hope of worship with them. The next Sunday he was at Lichfield, where he found Particular Baptists, differing as widely from the Presbyterians as Saul from Demas. But of Burton-on-Trent he has no word.