

ART. V.—CHURCH WORK IN INDIA.¹

THE subject of Church Work in India is rather a well-worn subject, and yet it is such a vast one that it is difficult to know how to deal with it in a concise and interesting way. At the Church Congress in 1900, two admirable papers were read on the "Church's Progress in India during the Nineteenth Century," by Bishop Johnson, the late Metropolitan, and Sir C. Elliott, who was recently Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. Probably most of us have read those statements, but if not, they are well worth a careful perusal, and more especially the statement made by Sir C. Elliott.

Now, at first, one is almost appalled at the magnitude of the work before us in India, and it seems terrible to think that at present there are only 2,000,000 Christians out of a population of 300,000,000. But if we look at the rate of increase during the last forty years there is reason for encouragement.

The first general census of India was taken in 1871, and the number of native Christians then returned was 1,270,000. In 1881 the figure had risen to 1,600,000, and in 1891 to a little over 2,000,000, and in 1901 to about 2,500,000. These statistics, taken from the Government census reports, show that in thirty years the native Christians increased by 60 per cent., while the increase of the general population was about 20 per cent. Of course, by far the larger proportion of the native Christians belong to the Roman Catholic and Syrian forms of Christianity, and are mainly the result of conversions made in earlier times. The Church of England now claims 305,917 adherents affiliated to her through the S.P.G. and the C.M.S., and the number of ordained native clergy of the Church of England, which was only 16 in 1850, is now about 300, and they are aided by a large body of about 9,000 lay-workers.

These results, as Sir C. Elliott says, give us cause for earnest and thankful congratulation, for they show how large a blessing has rested on the Church's work; so that Bishop Welldon is justified in asserting that the Church of India is no longer a weak body suing for recognition and even for toleration at the hands of the Government. Although it is less than a century since the constitution of the English Episcopate in India, she has already struck her roots deep and spread her branches wide in the national life.

God has given India to Great Britain, and Great Britain will

¹ A paper read at a Conference.

give India to God. The evangelization of India will be the fulfilment of the responsibility laid upon the spirit and the conscience of the British race. It will come about, as the Bishop truly says, not soon or easily, but by the gradual dissolvent influence of Christian thought upon the traditional beliefs and practices of India. Perhaps one of the most remarkable proofs of this "dissolvent influence" is evident in a very encouraging religious movement in India, known as the *Brahmo Somaj*. When it was first started in 1830 its religion was only a hazy form of monotheism, as inculcated in the Vedas, but gradually this was so influenced by Christianity that the founder of Brahmoism wrote as follows: "The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truths has been that I have found the doctrines of Christianity more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted to the use of rational beings, than any other which have come to my knowledge." The so-called Brahmo theology is now saturated with Christian ideas, and a former Bishop of Bombay was not far wrong when he said that Brahmoism was a half-way house to Christianity. Indeed, it seems in some cases more than this; for another leader of that movement has made this remarkable statement: "If we were not to be false to the teachings of our own forefathers, could we be false to the teachings of that great Prophet of the lost, Christ Jesus and His disciples? They have come, and are changing the face of the country, revolutionizing our manners and institutions, our households, our souls. Jesus has conquered India." And the present leader of what is now called the New Dispensation party has gone even a step further than his predecessor, and has spoken in unmistakeable language of the Atonement as a cardinal doctrine of his belief; and there is now in this movement a prominent development of earnest religion in the strong sense of sin, the need of a regenerate life, and the passionate thirst for God as Saviour and Comforter. No wonder that Brahmoism is claimed as *one of the results of the advent of Christianity in India*; for, in the words of an able missionary writer, the movement is an impressive testimony to the living influence "of Christian ideas, and to the irresistible and growing power of the personality of Christ on the mind and heart of the world."

It is interesting to remember that one of the last things that Professor Max Müller wrote to his Indian friend was an earnest appeal to the Brahmos to cast in their lot with Christians.

I mention this particularly to show what strong ground there is for hope that, if wise and gentle methods are perse-

veringly used, the keen and subtle intellects of the higher classes in India will be won over to Christianity. "The Church comes to them with the Gospel of Christ," says Bishop Weldon, "not as wishing to wound their hearts by bitter attacks upon the faiths that are consecrated to them by the usage of centuries, but as bringing them, at the cost of much suffering and self-denial, and the sacrifice of many lives, the treasure that she holds most dear, and as willing to give it to them if they are willing to accept it. The missionaries have been and are in many parts of India the people's best friends." Nor is there the slightest truth in the supposition that they are the special objects of native dislike. A non-Christian newspaper, the *Indian Spectator*, wrote lately that "the days are long past when the people of India regarded the preaching of a foreign faith as a grievance, and in the case of Christian missions they have even learnt to value them for the wholesome moral influence which they diffuse all around. "We absolutely subscribe," says the writer in this paper, "to Lord Lawrence's opinion that notwithstanding all that the English people have done to benefit India, the missionaries have done more than all other agencies combined."

Now, all this is distinctly encouraging, and when to this you add the great work that is being carried on in the different schools and colleges established by the Church societies, we may look forward with confidence to greater successes. But here there is a need of a word of caution, for there is grave doubt in many minds as to whether there is not much more of the imparting of secular knowledge in these institutions than the inculcating of religious truth. I am afraid it is true, that very little is seen now at all like Dr. Duff's work in Calcutta. In his college of 700 youths he always had several converts every year; but can this be said of our S.P.G. schools and colleges now? And it is remarkable that the Bishop of Madras, who was for several years a missionary of the S.P.G., lately spoke very strongly on this subject in the S.P.G. College at Trichinopoly. He said: "The experiment of divorcing education from religion has been tried for the first time in the Christian world during the last fifty years; it was introduced into India soon after the Mutiny, and in India it has proved and is proving a disastrous failure. It is removing the old landmarks, disintegrating family life, sapping the foundations of society, and bringing the educated classes of India face to face with a moral chaos, in which they will find no fixed principles of moral or social life and no guarantee even of intellectual or material progress. And the great question that must now force itself upon the more thoughtful members of Hindu society is

whether they will carry through this novel and rash experiment in education to the bitter end, or whether they will pause and consider seriously the issue before them, and the necessity of going back to that union of religion and education which has been sanctioned up to this generation by the instinctive judgment of mankind."

These are strong words, and one hopes that they will do good, for they are certainly needed. In the same speech the Bishop said: "I do not think anyone could regard the present state of things in our mission schools and colleges as satisfactory, or as in any degree a solution of the great problem which lies before Indian educationists."

As corroborative of this, I may quote an extract from a paper lately written by Professor Saththianadhan in Madras: "As for English education, we are informed that it has had a more destructive than constructive effect, for having succeeded in destroying the faith in the old gods, it has left no definite creed in its place." A well-known American writer, who travelled recently in India, said: "The best Hindus with whom I came in contact—men cultivated, profound, and clear-seeing—are free-thinkers to a man."

Professor Saththianadhan, however, does not believe altogether in the alarmist view; he admits that there is a great deal of indifference in matters of religion, and that there are certainly sceptical tendencies in New India; but he thinks that these tendencies "are the natural products of the state of transition through which the country is passing."

We hope this may be so; but if so, there is all the more need for care and caution in our missionary schools and colleges. No one would disparage the right use of education: its result must always be manifest, and a striking instance of this came within my own experience in India of a young Brahman on the West Coast converted in a C.M.S. school, and led to this by the right teaching of geography.

But what is really needed in this, and indeed in all missionary work in India, is the establishment of colleges of mission priests in different centres of the mission-field: members of the different colleges living together with a common fund on the same system as the Oxford Mission to Calcutta or the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, receiving no salary, but having all their expenses paid. And it is this kind of work for which the five years' foreign service system, that has lately been established in England, would be (as the Bishop of Madras says) admirably adapted.

The great advantage of this system to Church work in India would be that it would do away with the "*one man*" system which so largely prevails now.

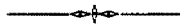
Everyone heartily admires such devoted work as that of Mr. Rivington in the Canarese country, working alone there for twenty-three years, and of Mr. Margoschis in the Tinnevely Diocese, and of Mr. Blake at Tanjore; but in the event of their removal, who can immediately take their places, or carry on their work with the same efficiency? And one is thankful to hear that the Bishop of Madras is already taking steps to establish two colleges of mission priests in his diocese, and undoubtedly, if they are successful, others will be formed, and would be most useful in supplying help when sudden vacancies occur. My friend Bishop Morley, writing about his diocese of Tinnevely last year, said: "The great want, as elsewhere, is devoted men and women. At present there are only four S.P.G. missionaries, and for some months there was only one in my diocese: two were away on furlough, suffering from overwork."

There is one other subject to which I should like to refer—viz., the increase of the number of native clergy in India. Sir C. Elliott urged this strongly in his speech at the Church Congress, and he mentioned the remarkable fact that when Schwartz's assistant, Satyanathan, was ordained in Tanjore in 1790, he preached a sermon which was so remarkable that the S.P.C.K., in printing it, expressed a hope that native suffragan Bishops might soon be appointed in India. Well, more than a century has passed since then, and yet there is no native suffragan Bishop yet, and, as Sir C. Elliott says, "the hesitation and reluctance to make such an appointment are natural and intelligible." Anyone who has been in contact with the native clergy in India can well understand this hesitation and reluctance on the part of the English Bishops in India; for though many of the native clergy are in many ways admirable men, yet as a rule they lack firmness and independence, and many of them think too much of emoluments and position. Not long before I left India, a retired S.P.G. missionary told me that native S.P.G. priests who came to see him talked a great deal about their salaries and the amount of land and house property they had acquired by them; and a shrewd old Brahman once said to him sarcastically: "It pays well to become a native padre!" Many think it was a mistake to have granted such a high rate of payment to the native clergy, for it put a strong temptation in their way, and checked the true spirit of self-sacrifice. Before concluding, may I venture, as a commissary of one of the Bishops in India, to ask for sympathy with and interest in the *Indian Church Aid Association*. It was founded in 1880, but has lately been gathering much more force and vigour under the presidency of Bishop Johnson. Its

object is, first, to enable the Bishops of the Province of India and Ceylon to provide the ministrations of the Church for our fellow-countrymen scattered throughout that vast portion of the British Empire; and, secondly, to help to establish the large and increasing body of native members of our Church, who greatly need our support, especially as it is through them that the non-Christian mass may best be brought to the knowledge of the truth. Of course, funds are greatly needed for all the different objects connected with this association. The other day, at a meeting of the Council at the Church House, it was lamentable to hear the poor sum of £140 being doled out to the different dioceses in the huge Province of India and Ceylon. And we shall be doing a good work if we turn the attention of anyone interested in the Church's work in India to the efforts of the Indian Church Aid Association; and I may mention that an *Indian Church Magazine* is now published quarterly, which gives very interesting information about Church work in India.

Looking back over the past century, we should indeed be thankful for the success which God has given to all the Church's efforts in India, and we may look forward into this century "in fullest faith and hope that the progress will be more rapid and the success more complete"; only let us bear in mind our Lord's caution, that in this dispensation the Gospel is to be preached in all lands *for a witness*, and that we are not to expect national conversions until the Jews have first turned to the Lord; and then Zechariah's prophecy "about many people and strong nations" (chap. viii.) will be fulfilled. Meantime, let us wait patiently, and pray for God's blessing on the Church's work in India and in all lands, and do all we can to support and further it.

WALTER WACE.



ART. VI.—"THE AGE OF THE FATHERS": BEING
CHAPTERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH
DURING THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES.¹

THE ground covered in these volumes is almost exactly the same as that traversed by Dr. Bright in his earliest work, "The History of the Church from A.D. 313 to A.D. 451." But the treatment is very different. That book was written for

¹ By the late William Bright, D.D., Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Oxford. In two volumes. Vol. i., pp. x, 543; ii., pp. 597. London: Longmans, 1893. Price 28s.