Chapter IV

THE SOCIETY AND THE MISSIONARIES

A. The Great Missionary Failure?

The history of the Christian missions in India forms a vast subject of enormous complexity. A study of such a subject would have to embrace two thousand years of India's history; from the early mission of the apostle St. Thomas up to the present time. It would be impossible to say whether the Christian work done in India over the several centuries was a success or a failure. We can only talk about something being a success or a failure in a definite context. For example, the mission of St. Thomas may be seen as a historical success since there are millions of Christians in Kerala today because of his efforts. On the other hand, one could view St. Thomas's mission as having been a failure since his efforts only attracted a small number of adherents originally and by no means did the religion of Christ spread throughout the rest of India. In the early nineteenth century, India was declared open territory for Christian missionary work by an act of the British Parliament. It was only in 1813, that Wilberforce and others managed to convince the Imperial authorities that it was their bounden duty to allow the influence of Christ to permeate throughout all the diverse lands and cultures under the British Crown.

This marked the advent of a world-wide missionary movement that continues in one form or another to this day. Missionaries of
every denomination began to pour into India from that year prop-
pagating their own particular understanding of the Bible and
doing whatever was feasible to get the "heathens" to embrace
the Cross. With an enormous amount of energy, these mission-
aries involved themselves with all aspects of Indian society.
They became linguistic experts in their enthusiasm to translate
the Bible and to propagate Christianity. They developed educa-
tional institutions, built hospitals, established orphanages,
newspapers and churches. They attacked the creed of the
"heathen" whether Hindu, or animist, in any fashion that appeared
to be effective. Their work had, no doubt, an enormous impact
upon Indian society, for it was not long before educated Indians
began to react to the new impetus. The Brahmo Samaj (1828), as
mentioned in Chapter II was an attempt to rationalize Hinduism
within the context of theism. By the second quarter of the
nineteenth century, British rule plus the religious and social
work of the Christian missionaries had begun to seriously dis-
turb the consciences of educated Indians. It was by the third
quarter of the nineteenth century, however, that the effects
of the Western incursion in India were being intensely felt.
Following the mutiny of 1857, India began to modernize very
rapidly. Educated Indians were utilized by the British in
the great task of administering government in India. The key
positions were naturally held by the English bureaucrats them-
selves under the prevailing philosophy of Imperial government
in India. Besides this, the country started industrializing
and there was a major breakthrough in transportation and communication with the development of railways and the growth of newspapers, journals, postal services etc.

The missionaries played a large role in the modernizing of India. They not only established numerous modern institutions, but they disturbed the complacency of orthodox Hinduism by suggesting that its practice was, not only in error from the theological point of view, but also distinctly out of tune with modern progress and thinking. They attacked Hinduism as a religion riddled with superstitions and beliefs that were prevalent in the West only during medieval times. They also tried to demonstrate that theism was a definite progressive step from polytheism.\(^1\) Hinduism was backward, in the missionary's conception, and if India were to become modern the best thing that the "Natives" could do would be to be converted to Christianity, the religion of the modern progressive West. In this way the religion of Christianity and the scientific advancement of the West became somehow united in the minds of the missionaries. The obvious connection was made by them in thinking that Imperial rule in India was part of God's "divine plan" for Christianizing the world. It seems that many of the missionaries felt that theism actually was responsible for the progressive development in the West.\(^2\)

The missionaries, themselves, held conflicting views with regard to the relative state of Christianity in India.
Where some saw success, others saw failure; if optimism prevailed so did pessimism. It was not easy to measure the effects of the Christian "movement" in India objectively; the issues involved were surrounded by a cloud of emotionalism. Probably the strongest indictment of the missionary effort came from Isaac Taylor in his book, "The Great Missionary Failure," which was based upon a report of the Protestant missions in India during the year 1887-88. He quoted General Haig, who was the spokesman for the various missionary societies investigated. The findings of the report were really depressing. For instance, it was found that the "annual increase of native Protestant Christians in India due to the labours of thirty-five Societies was only 19,311 and the increase of Roman Catholics was 51,372, or 60,683 in all." According to his calculations, for every additional Christian there were about 12 additional Moslems and 232 additional heathens. With a sense of total defeat the author concludes that "It would take all the agencies put together sixty-four years to overtake the increase of non-Christian people in a single year." It was noted that in the South, particularly in the Tamil area, the converts came from the lowest strata of society. It was thought that the missionaries otherwise had success with the aboriginal hill tribes, and then mainly in the North-east Hill region. No particular impact was said to have been made on the higher-caste Hindus or Muslims in terms of conversions. The most
promising field for the Catholic and Protestant missions was with these pockets of society which were culturally isolated from the mainstreams of Hindu and Muslim influences; or at least those who were somehow oppressed by these religions. In the report, Christian missionaries were criticized for their failure to adapt themselves to the Indian scene. The Salvation Army, on the other hand, was said to be more successful and had shown far more comprehension of the way in which Indians could be reached. The idea expressed was that the Salvation Army approach was more sympathetic to the psychology of Indians. For instance, "They abstain from the flesh of animals, the slaughter of which is an abomination to the Hindu; they touch no alcohol; their food is a handful of rice and curry, which they beg from day to day from those to whom they minister." Also like the natives, the report goes on to say that they oil their bodies with maize oil, they go bare foot, with turbans to protect them from the sun and "their object is to become natives, to live among the natives exactly as the natives live." The description of the Salvation Army worker was said to be in marked contrast to the lives of most of the missionary's living conditions in India. Taylor observed that the missionaries, on the whole, lived in beautiful bungalows with servants waiting on them hand and foot. He noted that such men "got three hundred pounds a year and a social position which they could get in no other country. In India they became Sahibs, which cut them off at once from any real influence. Another
problem cited which tended to weaken the cause of conversion in India was the internal animosity of the Christian sects. There was little cooperation and much jealousy existing between one church organization and another. Further Isaac Taylor tells us that the missionary expenditure bore little relation to the results; "if one were to divide the funds expended by the missionaries and churches by the number of converts, who seriously embraced Christianity, the cost, in pounds, would be enormous per convert." Besides all of these difficulties, the missionaries themselves were found to be inadequate representatives of Christianity. On the whole, these men were said to be of the inferior sort; "ill educated, narrow and bigotted." The overall theme of the report was that the missionaries should reform their activities in India or give up the dream of converting even a portion of the natives to the Christian faith. These attitudes were well reflected by both Christian and non-Christian delegates to the World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893. A Caylon Buddhist, Mr. D. Dharma, delivered an address which he entitled "Criticism and Discussion on Missionary Methods." He said that only in the last three centuries had attempts been made to propagate the Christian faith in the East, and with unsuccessful results. He indicated that the missionaries would have to construct an entirely different platform if they expected to make progress in the East. As a recommendation for improving the efforts of missionaries, he said, that "You must send men full of unselfishness. They
must have a spirit of self sacrifice, a spirit of charity and
tolerance. We want the lowly and weak and gentle teachings of
Christ, not because we do not have them now, but we want more
of them."11

In another speech delivered at the Parliament of Religions,
Mr. Narasima Charya, a Madras Brahmin, explained to the inter-
national religious convention why Christians despite all efforts
had failed to attract the Indians. He said "that into the
vexed questions as to the benefits the Hindus have derived
from English rule I shall not enter, but the religion which a
conquering nation, with an exasperating consciousness of
superiority, condescendingly offers to the conquered must ever
be disgusting to the recipient, however good it may be."12
Enlightened religious thinking towards the latter part of the
nineteenth century was in favour of more restraint and greater
tolerance amongst all the religious philosophies of the world.
In this sense, the Brahma Samaj and the Theosophical Society,
which were essentially syncretic approaches to the "Truth",
more than represented the intellectual trends of the times.

It should not be assumed that the majority of Christian
leaders were pessimistic with regard to the success of mission
work in the East. Many missionaries felt that their work was
slowly producing positive results and under the circumstances
was not at all a failure. They simply assumed that much more
remained to be done before the world would be finally "conquered by the Cross." The nineteenth century was the era of a world evangelization and the fruits of their labour would not be realised for another century or two.\textsuperscript{13} This long range optimistic view was best embodied in a general survey of the progress of the missionaries published in 1882, entitled, "Protestant Missions to the Heathen." The very title of the work suggests clearly that the philosophy of these preachers was not in sympathy with the so-called more enlightened religious thinking that was typical of the spirit of the World Parliament of Religions. The survey was conducted by Dr. In. Christlieb, Professor of Theology at Bonn, who envisioned a future world under the Cross. The survey included the missionary activities throughout the world, but what he had to say about India, which he considered to be the most important geographical area for Christian work, abounds with optimism. Referring to India the survey goes on to say that "Here, as nowhere else, our Missions have concentrated their most numerous and potent forces to storm the citadel of darkness - Hinduism."\textsuperscript{14} Christlieb estimated that there were around the year 1881 about thirty-four missionary societies at work in India. He judged that there existed, at least, two million native Christians of all denominations at the time and that based upon them then present ratio of progress there would soon be ten-millions of Christians within the next fifty years.\textsuperscript{15} The statistics were carried further giving India a grand total of two hundred and fifty millions of Christians by the end of the twentieth century. The survey
noted that "In the Tinnevelly districts of the Church Missionary Society, 11,000 heathens applied in 1878 to Bishop Sargent and the Native Clergy for baptismal instruction; and in the same Tinnevelly districts of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 23,864 similarly applied to Bishop Caldwell. Thus the missions of the English Church in this South-Eastern point of India, in less than a year and a half gained an accession of 28,864 souls." The English Church was cited as being typical of the successes of many other Christian Societies. This phenomenal growth of the Christian population in India was conveniently explained by Christlieb. He recalled the terrible famine, which in 1876-77, devastated Southern India where from five to six millions died of starvation. The Hindu gods were said to be powerless to help the distressed, while the missionaries proved the "absolute superiority" of Christian benevolence over "heathen selfishness;" the glaring contrast according to Christlieb, "between the heartless heathen priests and the missionaries weighing themselves out in the service of the starving people was enough to convince many." The survey also showed that the whole number of native Protestant Christians in India was nearly 600,000. In Bengal and the North-West provinces there amounted to more than 60,000 Christians. Several societies were taking their share of the work, such as the London Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church, the Methodists, the Baptists, the American Presbyterians and others. Each of these societies had extended their influence into the educational
sphere with "great and Beneficient results", according to the report. In the Punjab, the missionaries had not been so successful, but nevertheless, "good progress was being made." The Gospel had also reached Kashmir, the gateway to Tibet, under the supervision of the Church of Scotland and by American and Moravian missionaries. In Rajputana, "which was still but sparsely occupied by the Protestant Missions," efforts were bearing positive results. Christlieb admitted that Bombay and the Central Provinces were still but "partly occupied," and that they had proved to be the most unfruitful of the mission fields of India. The native Christian population in these regions was said to have hardly exceeded 7,000. However, this was greatly contrasted by the results obtained in the Madras Presidency. Southern India was by far the most fruitful field of the Protestant missions. With more than 200,000 Christians and an additional 32,000 in Ceylon, the South represented practically half of the Christian population of India.

Five sixths of all the converts in India belonged to the lower grades of society; that is either to the lower castes or to classes that had no castes. Converted Brahmans could be found throughout India but in microscopic proportion. Christlieb made some interesting observations concerning the Dravidians as opposed to the Aryan culture. He observed that "It is remarkable that these two most fruitful branches of the missionary tree (Madras Presidency and the aboriginal races of India) are
also related linguistically; the former speaking Dravidian languages (Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kol, Santhol), and the latter, in contrast, to them, speaking Aryan languages (Bengali, Hindi, Marathi), which have sprung from Sanskrit, the classical language of Hinduism.\(^{21}\) Hence, Christlieb found that those tribes and classes which were least permeated and bound by heathen culture were, by far, the most accessible to Christianity; while on the other hand, "the proper citadel of Hindu religion and civilization with Benares as its center and with the higher castes and fairer races of India as its defenders still defies the progress of Christianity like a strong fortress, which is indeed invested, but is still far from being taken."\(^{22}\) This did not discourage Christlieb however, as he felt that "the process of undermining is in full operation, and this must lead in time to the fall of the whole system."\(^{23}\)

Caste was felt to be the raison d'être for the continuation of Hinduism in India. It had transcended the power of the heathen faith but still held the people a slave to its rituals and was observed as the essence of the religion itself. The survey found some solace in the realisation that caste was daily losing its influence even upon the popular mind; although it was admitted that the roots were too deeply struck to admit of its being entirely torn up in a short time. Christlieb felt that the "intelligence of the educated classes had already risen above the polytheistic superstition, and the youth of India, in
particular, were being always emancipated from its influences... away, then, with Caste as the chief root of the social evils of India! And the more thoroughly the better, not merely to remove the main hindrance of the Gospel, but for the sake of the moral well-being of the 250 millions of India.\footnote{24} The most important work of the Christian missionaries was considered to be within the field of education. It was felt that both the mission schools and the Government schools were useful in extirpating the mass of heathen prejudices from the minds of the students; but government college education was said to have resulted too often in creating skepticism with regard to religion. Although neutrality in education perhaps appealed to rationalists, it was considered to be dangerous leaving the student dissatisfied and restless.\footnote{25} Christian naturally concluded that what India needed was more Christian schools for the education of the masses. The survey went on to suggest that the Hindus themselves "feel and know that the destruction of their faith is inevitable. The growing unrest which was seizing the masses was explained as the usual case before the destruction of a religion."\footnote{26} The various new societies composed of artificial religious combinations also seemed to point in this direction. Keshub Chandra Sen, of the Brahmo Samaj, was reported to have testified that "we breathe, think, feel, move in a Christian atmosphere, under the influence of Christian education, the whole of native society is awakened, enlightened, reformed. Our hearts have been touched, conquered, subjugated by a superior power, and that power is Christ. Christ rules British India,
but not the British Government."

Missionaries, who were more sensitive to the changes that were taking place in India during the nineteenth century took what might be described as the "middle of the road" view of the role of Christianity in India. Attitudes of compromises were envisioned by the more liberal Christian leaders. They did not visualize Christian work in India as a battle between the heathen and Christ. At the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, the Reverend A.A. Hume of the American Congregationalist Church, in his address, admitted that missionaries make mistakes. They were not as Christ-like as they ought to be. Further, he suggested that anyone who could help the missionaries to be more humble and more wise deserved the gratitude of the missionaries. Discussing the relations between missionaries and non-Christians, he said, "we ought to study their books more deeply, more intelligently, more constantly. We ought to associate with them in order to know their inmost thoughts, their feelings and their aspirations better than we do. Further, when we see truth anywhere, we ought cordially and gladly to recognize it as from the Father of Light; and it is jealousy of God if we think that half-truth or some measure of truth is to be a hindrance to our work." Hume believed that the missionaries should approach religious experience, whether in the West or East, with tolerant appreciation of the universal qualities found within them. He admonished the Christian
Evangelists that even "Our Divine Master exercised a restraint in regard to what he believed to be true when he saw that men were not in a position to accept it... it is sometimes better to teach less than what you believe to be the whole truth, when you have reason to know that the statements, as you want to put them, instead of bringing men to the essential Christ, to the heart of Christianity, drive them away from it." Hume was not alone, there were other distinguished leaders of various churches who embraced the liberal approach in missionary thinking. An outstanding example of the by-product of the sympathetic view was in the person of C.F. Andrews, who identified strongly with Indian aspirations and Indian political sentiments in the early twentieth century.

The Christian leadership, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then was not unanimous as to the effects of Christian work upon the Indians. In no sense, it may be concluded, was India on the verge of being converted into a Christian people. If anything, appreciable numbers of conversions were limited to certain geographical areas and certain strata of Indian society. The impact of missionary work upon India was nevertheless immense. The "spirit" of Christianity combined with Western-styled education created a challenge for a number of upper-caste Indians, who felt that it was necessary to justify the validity of their own faiths, particularly Hinduism, before Western criticism. This helped bring about
the religious and cultural revivalism that marked the early stages of Indian's developing sense of modern nationalism. In this way the Christian "movement" affected the upper castes and particularly the rising new English-educated classes immensurably. The missionaries allied themselves with the Imperial power structure, plying their influence when possible and receiving material aid in terms of funds for building allowances and education. This, however, was not an automatic process between the missionaries and the government, for it should be realized that many of the Government of India bureaucrats hesitated to assist missionaries as they were convinced that it was better for imperial policy not to interfere with the religious sentiments of the Crown's Indian subjects. If the missionaries resisted the rising associations and societies, which propagated indigenous religious revivalism, it was partly because they felt that revivalism meant turning the hands of the clock backwards and the total negation of modern progress and, by implication, British rule. They failed to see that regeneration of India was the result of a synthesizing process and that much of Western thinking, including Christian values, was part of that synthesis. Not being satisfied with having influenced the development of modernity in India, the missionaries wanted to reshape all of Indian society along their own lines of thinking. This was of course resisted firmly by the Theosophists and others. The missionaries generally viewed Hinduism as a retarding force in India's development towards modernity. They
did not envision that another religion could foster modernizing along similar lines. The new religious sanghas, associations and societies took full advantage of the missionary myopia and did much to discredit their work. With the rise of Indian Nationalism, the influence of the missionaries steadily decreased, while societies such as the Theosophical Society were able to throw up a number of significant national leaders such as Annie Besant, P.K. Talang, Sir Subramania Iyer, George Arundale and H.P. Wadia just to name a few. Most of the missionaries, who identified strongly with imperial interests gradually faded into the background, fearing the inevitable day of the Empire's demise in India.

B. Was Theosophy anti-Christian?

In the early years of the Theosophical Society's development there existed some controversy, even among its own members, as to the truth of the Society's attitude towards Christianity. The concern became greater over the years as the make-up of the Society shifted steadily towards those who claimed to be Christians. The Society's initial success was first in India, but by the turn of the twentieth century the Theosophical Society was very much a world organization with branches in dozens of countries, most of which were Christian. Today the Theosophical Society, at the international level, is composed mainly of Christian members. Of course, in India, the Society consists mostly of non-Christian members and still has the
largest number of members for any one single country. To understand Olcott and Blavatsky's attitude towards Christianity and particularly the missionaries in India during the late nineteenth century, one has to look into the philosophical background of Theosophy itself. It should be recalled that Blavatsky had spent her life in opposition to the Christian Churches by studying occultism and attempting to vindicate the practice of magic; ideas which were abhorrent to orthodox Christian leaders. Madame Blavatsky was very fond of pointing out the negative aspects of Roman Catholicism's history. In her "Isis Unveiled," "Secret Doctrine" and numerous other sources she referred to the great Inquisitions that took place in Europe as late as the seventeenth century, by an overzealous clergy who wanted to maintain their narrow dogmatic interpretations of the truth at the cost of tens of thousands of human lives by the most insidious forms of physical torture. 33 Actually the Theosophical Society was not anti-Christian but anti-clerical. 34 In defense of Theosophy's attitude towards Christianity, Mrs. Besant said that the teachings of Christ were very much a part of the Ancient Wisdom and that Theosophy rather than being anti-Christian gave it new inspiration and a new strength. 35 The Theosophist feels that the teachings of Christ were distorted by the early Church for selfish reasons and that authorities within the Roman Catholic Church upheld the amateric interpretation of Christianity. 36 Christ, to the Theosophist, was a "normal" human being who understood the Ancient Wisdom
and applied occult laws including the use of magic. He did not perform miracles, nor should he be considered as the son of God in any literal sense. Anyone who through self-purification and spiritualization may be able to become the "Christ." Christ, therefore, is a principle to Theosophist and it is believed that a man called Jesus demonstrated "Christ-like" qualities. Theosophists have an esoteric understanding of Christianity. For example, they maintain that "Jesus is no "divine" person at his birth, but driven upwards by his highly spiritualized soul, and gains the crown of Christhood, even to the extent of being thought worthy of occupying the seat at the right hand of the Father."\(^\text{37}\) Theosophists believe that mysticism teaches the salvation of the soul and they refer to the "mystic soul-saving Christ-doctrines" which are seen running like a fundamental law through all the religions. Further, Christian mysticism holds up Jesus "as the symbolical representation of our soul, whose progress and ultimate aim is prefigured by its divine exemplar." In his birth, baptism, temptation, passion, death and burial, we can trace symbolically the various stations in our soul's journey towards the spiritual light, while his resurrection and ascension indicate the final stages towards the complete union with the Father.\(^\text{38}\) There is no reason here to go into depth concerning Theosophist's teachings of Esoteric Christianity, but suffice to say that the Society adopted the Liberal Catholic Church, in 1916, which was structurally similar to the Roman
As far as missionary work went in India, the "natives" were only exposed to the ordinary missionary Christianity, which in its esoteric zeal to make everyone a "believer" dismissed every other religion thus creating a strong resentment towards Christianity. The Theosophists took the view that the work of the missions was a failure in the sense that there was no chance that they would ever succeed in Christianizing India. They felt, however, that the missionary was detrimental to the well-being of the educated classes because missionary schools and religious propaganda tended to make Indians apologetic or ashamed of their national religion. It was admitted that the missionaries had done a laudable job in the cause of education "the fruits of which we are now reaping," but it was realized by Theosophists that because the missionaries were not successful in converting educated Hindus to Christianity in any large numbers that they were in the process of changing their emphasis to converting large numbers of casteless members of Hindu society and to slowly withdraw from establishing educational institutions. This new shift that came about in the last quarter of the nineteenth century left the missionary without any saving graces in the eyes of Hindus who were able to appreciate the educational work but not interested in having masses of low caste and hill-tribals converted to Christianity.
Probably the Hindus feared most of all the possible social, economic and political results of such a policy. Also it meant that Indians themselves would have to quickly establish numerous educational institutions, as there would be a decrease in mission schools.

The attitude of Theosophy towards historical Christianity was thought to be one of "thorough-going antagonism" according to an observer who wrote for the "Madras Mail" in 1883. The writer says that "In every lecture this is as clear as noon day." He also noted that Olcott disavowed all intentions of opposing Christianity while at Batacamund, "But it is to be observed that during his recent tour he posed before thousands of natives as an enemy of Christianity, and the Theosophists advertise themselves as ageney for the sale of Unanswerable anti-Christian publications." In 1886, Alice Gordon, an Anglo-Indian Theosophist, wrote an article entitled "Missions in India," which created quite a sensation in missionary circles. She said that Anglo-Indians are often reproached by their religious friends at home, for their indifference to or discouragement of missionary work in India. Mrs. Gordon went on to say that there may be good reasons for this attitude on the part of Britishers, who had spent often the majority of their lives in India. She said that "In the first place the men sent out are usually utterly ignorant of the history of India except perhaps its most recent phases, and what is still worse they know nothing of (even if
capable of comprehending) the Hindu religion and philosophy. The result is that with a narrow dogmatic creed, an inability to see any good outside of it combined with their ignorance of Hindu philosophy, they render themselves offensive and contemptible in the eyes of educated natives." Mrs. Gordon also explained the dynamics of how Anglo-Indians developed their disinterest in the proselytizing of Christianity in India. She said that "I came out to India orthodox, believing very much in missionaries, and fully in sympathy with the home societies. I have been going through a course of unpleasant surprises and disillusionments ever since I met many who are even more indignant than myself to see money spent in such an unsatisfactory way." She then wondered how the money had been spent by the missionaries suggesting that it couldn't have been on the heathen as so few converts had been gained. Finally she acknowledges that some missionaries were earnest but they ought to dispel their illusions of converting the "natives". In so doing, "It would require a heroism, scarcely to be expected in ordinary men, to acknowledge their failure, publish their defeat, and retire from the profession; so they fall into the worn groove, and those who are too honest to falsify statements sent home find plausible excuses for the small number of converts." Shortly following Mrs. Gordon's article, the Reverend Mr. Scott, published a rebuttal in the "Pioneer," intending to pulverize the Theosophical Society, by saying that it was "an ignorant attempt to discredit missions."
Madame Blavatsky, more than any other Theosophist attacked the Christian missionaries in India. In Chapter II, it was mentioned that Blavatsky felt that the main contribution of the missionaries to India was the Mutiny of 1857. She also criticized the missionaries by saying that they "drain the poor of the West to convert heathens." She basically felt that the principle work of the Theosophical Society was to "save Hindus from exoteric Brahmanism and Christian missionaries." Olcott in his speeches used to attack Christianity both religiously and socially. At one lecture he gave, he said, "Christendom has as fine a moral code as one could wish, but she shows her real principles in her Armstrong whiskey distilleries, her opium ships, sophisticated merchandise, prurient amusements, licentious habits and political dishonesty. Christendom is morally rotten and spiritually paralyzed."

At the Sixth Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, in December of 1881, Olcott stated that "In three years the T.S. has taken in not only lay Brahmans of highest caste but renowned Pandits," as opposed to the missionaries, who "after a century of labour in India, and the expenditure of millions of money have converted so few caste Brahmans." In an open letter to Bishop of Madras, Olcott complained that "You have circulated misleading pamphlets and wickedly false stories about us; have tried to make every timid Christian shun our company, to influence officials more bigoted than prudent to use pressure upon their native subordinates to keep them out of our Society,"
to bar us from higher official favour—all this and worse the
Christian party in India has done to T.S. Brougham." He
warned the Bishop that if the slancerous remarks continued
that they would meet in court. C. Jinarajadasa, who became
the third president of the Theosophical Society noted in a
speech in 1933 that the attitude of Theosophy towards Chris-
tianity in the early days of the Society's development was
distorted. He referred to one of the three principle objects
of the Society as stated originally, was "to oppose the
materialism of science and every form of dogmatic theology,
especially the Christian, which the chiefs of the Society
regard as particularly pernicious."
He also more or less
apologetically commented that "It is a curious element in the
history of the Society that from the beginning there has been
a kind of animus against Christianity." The Theosophists
maintained that the morality of the average heathen was far
higher than that of the Christian. Blavatsky said that "The
picture of social morals that one finds in the journals of
every Christian country would so much shock the Hindu mind.
For as bad as India may have become in these degenerate days,
the average morality is better." The Theosophists also felt
that it was galling that the Christian "movement" was supported
by the taxes of Hindus and Mahomedans and that the Government
gave financial support to the missions. This was considered
to be in violation of Queen Victoria's Proclamation of religious
neutrality by Theosophists. Just as the missionaries had
mixed feelings concerning the work of the missions in India, many Theosophists had mixed feelings about their position in relation to Christianity. In 1894, the Aryan T.S. of New York addressed the problem. Alex Fullerton wanted to reverse the tendency of Theosophists to deplore Christianity. He tried to find some common ground upon which the Western Theosophist could relate to Christianity without the stigma of "rancorous hatred of Christianity."60 He said that he believed that the treatment of Theosophy towards Christianity "is the outcome of ignorance."61 These and other efforts such as the establishment of the Liberal Catholic Church caused Theosophy to mellow in its approach towards Christianity. By the early twentieth century, no Theosophists were writing scathing attacks upon the clergy or the missionaries. In India, of course, the missionary question had subsided by then and the Theosophical Society was more desirous of maintaining peaceful relations with all other religious bodies.

C. The Missionary Attack upon the Society

The missionaries in India considered the Theosophical Society to be more of an inconvenience than anything else. Like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Hindu Tract Society, the Prarthana Society, the Freethought Movement and numerous others, the missionaries thought these associations to be an unhealthy trend in India's moral development. They were confident that the teachings of Christ would win out. Mr. S.Y. Thomas,
in an article written in the "Christian College Magazine," felt that the work of the Hindu Tract Society and the Theosophical Society might in the long run do some good work for Indian Society. He regretted that "nobody knows and nobody cares" to learn from the English translations of Hindu books. He also said that "This is why the absurdities of a Russian woman and the dreams of an American Colonial attract natives." The missionaries never ignored an opportunity to discredit the Theosophical Society, especially in the Madras Presidency, where the Society had its greatest influence and where missionary work was the most fruitful. There were several booklets published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by Christian organizations, which attempted to destroy Theosophy's growing popularity. One such book published by the Christian Literature Society in 1894 was called "The Theosophic Craze: Its History, the Great Mahatma Boss; How Mrs. Besant was hoodwinked and disposed; Its attempted Revival of the Exposed Superstitions of the Middle Ages."

The book criticizes the Society for creating further prejudices amongst Indians with regard to Western practical training and scientific education. The Theosophists in their attempt to gain popularity were said to have flattered the Hindus and depreacted Western culture. This was said to foster "Eastern exclusiveness," which could only retard the good progress made within educated circles. But the most serious
charge levelled against the Theosophists was that basically they wanted "the re-establishment of the belief in magic and witchcraft, and the dethronement of intelligence, and the restoration of the old dominion of superstition over the human mind. The effort to revive the belief in magic and the terror of sorcery is a conspiracy against the intelligence of the age." There attempts to "bolster up the boldeerda with pseudo-oriental learning which will not bear for one moment the test of scholarly criticism" was seen as disgusting and harmful in the book. An article appearing in "The Lucknow Witness" in 1881, regretted that the Theosophical Society began its career in India "by setting forth the most untruthful charges against missionaries and by exhibiting such a rabid hatred of Christianity." To the minds of missionaries this made the Society's professions of brotherhood ridiculous. They concluded by saying that "we shall not be surprised to hear that they have left the shores of India not to return; Meanwhile the Church is triumphant and on to victory."

A Roman Catholic organ, "Sophia," from Karachi, suggested that the best way to handle the Theosophists was to create a central mission with missionaries traveling from it to all parts of the country and to confront the false teachings of "Pantheism, Theosophy and other anti-theistic religions and held public discussions with them." The article noted that the Protestants had failed miserably. In January and March of
1892, Father A.P. Clarke, a prominent English Jesuit, published a series of articles on "Theosophy, its Teachings, Marvels, and True Character" in Catholic magazine called "The Month." These articles were based upon two sermons against Theosophy delivered at Manchester in September. Father Clarke said that "Theosophy opens the door to vice - that it has not sufficient sanction for virtue, that it will very soon abolish all virtues of the world - it teaches doctrines subservive to all belief and all true morality - that are no less than simple savagery and that it is dangerous and detestable." Theosophy at times was a thorn in the side of the missionary effort in South India. In 1883, the Bishop of Madras and others discussed what strategy should be employed to contain the influence of Theosophy. At the Madras Clerical Conference, held in October of 1883, it was considered "whether it was desirable to take any special steps at the present time, for countering Col. Olcott's teaching." It was noted that many Hindus were attracted by the teachings of Theosophists and that the "the minds of even some Christians were shaken by it - and urged the desirability of endeavouring to expose its errors." They decided not to take any specific action for the moment as it was agreed that in Bombay the Colonel had been left alone and his mission failed there. The Theosophists rejoined that no special steps were taken because, "unable to crush the Theosophical vineyard, they console themselves with the idea that its grapes are sour." The missionaries tried other tactics to discredit the Society. For example, they would often post signs at halls where Theosophic lectures
were to be given; to discourage people from attending they circulated pamphlets criticizing Theosophists and Theosophy.

C. Theosophy, Christianity and Nationalism

There exists a relationship between the religious work of the Christian missionaries, and the work of the Theosophists in India. This relationship becomes clear when placed in the context of the growth and development of Indian nationalism in the late nineteenth century. It may be argued, as indeed it has been, that the Christian missionaries were a major contributing force in bringing about the development of modern nationalism in India. Theosophists were very fond of suggesting that they had done much more than the missionaries in fostering the spirit of nationalism in India. In fact, the Theosophists judged the impact of the Christian missionaries upon Indian society from a very limited point of view. They failed to see that the missions had already accomplished the task of challenging Indian culture to account for itself in the eyes of the Western world. The missionaries thoroughly attacked the customs, beliefs and institutions of Hinduism, thus bringing about a reaction among educated Hindus to either make reforms or to defend intellectually their religion. Hence, this laid the ground work for reforming agencies such as the Theosophical Society. By the late nineteenth century, the missionaries had more or less become a spent force in India as the intellectual climate had changed and nationalism took on new dimensions.
Educated Indians found that the missionaries had become a hindrance to the country's interests and therefore began to aggressively attack them. The missionaries, who were in the early nineteenth century a radical force for social and religious reform, were seen by the end of the century as conservative and intellectually ineffectual. Western-styled education, the work of the Orientalists and the mushroom growth of indigenous reforming activities in India left the missionaries far behind. Theosophy stepped in at the right moment and therefore was able to develop rapidly within the context of the nationalist mentality of that era. The Theosophical Society performed two important tasks: one, it defended enthusiastically Hindu religion and Indian culture in context of Western civilization, and two, it offered leadership to educated Indians for further development along nationalistic lines. Like all reform movements, once limited objectives are realized the movement's influence goes into decline. The Theosophical Society suffered the same fate as the Christian "movement" in India. Theosophy reached its peak with Mrs. Besant's Home Rule Movement in the second decade of the twentieth century. Thus the Society could not easily cope with the accelerating pace of the nationalistic spirit in India.

Around the turn of the century the Reverend I.A. Bharrock gave a lecture at St. George's Cathedral, Madras, entitled "Can Hinduism Be Revived?" In that lecture he criticized the
Theosophical Society and in particular the work of Mrs. Besant. He said, "In the North we see various Samajas, and in the South we have what is called Theosophy. All such Associations are more or less halfway houses between Hinduism and Christianity. The teaching that is given by the leaders of these Societies is very largely Christian. Christianity is read into their lectures to such an extent that a Christian missionary might deliver many of them if he only substituted "Jesus Christ" for "Sri Krishna" and the "Four Gospels" for the "Bhagavad Gita." As the missionaries felt the pinch of Theosophic propaganda they began to publish a variety of books on their interpretation of the new movement. In 1919, a book entitled "From Theosophy to Christian Faith" was published by E.R. McMullin. This small book was addressed mainly to Theosophists and persons who had recently become interested in the teachings of Madame Blavatsky. The author, a former Theosophist, left the movement and returned to the Catholic Faith. She discussed Theosophical ideas and concluded that the Society had fostered no fresh thinking and contributed little to the body of man's knowledge; besides this, she felt that Theosophic thinking represented a type of subtle brainwashing therefore destroying the critical faculties of the mind. Another interesting book published was "Theosophy and Christian Thought" by W.S. Urquart, a professor of philosophy at the Scottish Churches College, Calcutta. The aim of this book was to show that "what was best in Theosophy had really been borrowed from Christianity." This again was
an attempt to demonstrate that compared to the Christian reli-
gion Theosophy was a shallow experience and not worth entering
into.

In return, the Theosophists aided in discrediting the
missionaries by characterizing them as basically anti-national.
As the intensity of the nationalistic spirit increased among
educated Indians, the missionaries defensively aligned them-
selves with Imperial interests in India. The Theosophists
perceived the delicate position that the missionaries were in
and exploited every means to belittle their image. Of course,
with the turn of the twentieth century, Indian Christians be-
came increasingly concerned about their position within the
context of Indian nationalism. They began to question foreign
leadership within the churches and expressed a desire to Indianize
the missions. This was resisted by many of the foreign missiona-
ries, at first, but slowly it became obvious that the Indianiza-
tion of the leadership within the churches was the best way to
ensure further development of the Christian "movement" in India.78

J.N. Farquhar, C.F. Andrews and others were amongst the more
liberal Western missionaries, who made sincere attempts to
understand the rapidly shifting social, religious, and political
mentality of educated Indians in the late nineteenth century.

Theosophy, like other reforming agencies which forged
new identity associations for educated Indians, followed many