CHAPTER- III

MISSIONARY STRATEGIES\(^1\) AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE CUSTOMS, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES\(^2\) OF DEPRESSED CLASS MASSES

This chapter attempts to analyze the methods adopted by missionaries for proselytization and its ramifications pertaining to the social, cultural, and customary life of the religious converts. Conversion is a complex process which cannot be easily defined and delineated as it is directly linked to human existence. The social process or religious change brought about a significant difference in the cultural perceptions and understanding of religious values of converts. The history of the Christian conversion and the social life of the depressed classes, are inextricably linked with each other and the depressed classes found a new scope in relocating their own identity with regard to the rest of the society.

There is a real difference between evangelism in a Christian environment and Christian missions to people of another race, culture and religion. That difference arises from the fact that in one case the aim is a revival of religion, calling upon individuals to an awakening of faith, to deeper devotion, to higher ethical living and to greater loyalty. Here there is no separation of the individual from the society in which he lives or from the religion of the community. In going to other lands the missionary aimed at bringing the Christian gospel to people of another faith. Many of them may be highly religious, and the missionary's task is not that of reviving their faith or deepening their devotion. Thus the missionary was confronted with the

\(^1\) The following is one such strategy of missionaries to reach their end: "In 1823 the progress of the mission was marked by an increase of the number of schools and pupils. The missionaries became so deeply impressed with the value of educational agencies that they resolved to establish a mission college. The immediate objective was the cultivation of Tamil literature which they believed was necessary in order to oppose idolatry successfully." See Royal Gould Wilder, Mission Schools in India of the America Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, D. F. Publication, 1861, p. 287.

\(^2\) Numerous examples of 'superstitious' practices had been notified in mission reports. The following are the specimens: Worship of cows, feeding ants, hospital for animals, offering to Ganga river, human sacrifices and funeral obsequies etc. See J. Murdoch, Indian Year Book, Oxford University Press, 1862, pp. 104-113.
question of the relation of Christianity to other living religions - a question that the evangelist in a Christian community does not face.3

1. Re-action after Conversion

As a result, many converts went through a period of reaction soon after their conversion. Until baptism they had something to look forward to and prepare; for their friends and religious advisers were constantly engaged in watching and helping them, and inspiring them to go forward, and their own feelings were worked up to a high state of spiritual tension. When, however, the ceremony of baptism has taken place the inevitable reaction followed. The converts felt that they had merged with the general body of Christians, and fancied that the missionary friends no longer took personal interest in them except as members of larger congregations under their care. They had to take up some commonplace employment. Meanwhile, they had definitely lost their friends and company of their parents and relatives. Appasamy, a local convert from the Madras region describes the period as “A dangerous period for converts, when the tide of feelings and enthusiasm, which brought them into Christianity, exhausted and there is a strong temptation to take up an attitude of disillusionment and indifference, if not also of positive hostility to those who brought about their conversion.”4

Generally, the people who had become Christians in the southern Tamil Nadu were poor, unable to read, resided in small-scattered villages and hamlets and were exposed to much persecution from their Hindu neighbours. When George Smith, Bishop of Madras, asked his converts to furnish him the principal objection made by the heathen against Christianity, eighteen of their number gave him each a specimen seriatim.

“Objection-

“1. ‘We cannot abandon the religion of our ancestors as false.’

4 A.S. Appasamy Pillai, Fifty Years’ Pilgrimage of a Convert, Church Missionary Society, Madras, 1924, p. 2.
2. 'You need not come and tell us of Christianity. If this were from God Himself He 
would communicate it to us by a direct revelation, and without the intervention of 
human instrumentality.'

3. 'There is one God; but as He has allowed peis-(devils)-to exist, He does not object 
to their being worshiped.'

4. 'The East India Company gives revenues to idol-temples: when they desist, then 
we will desist from idol-worship.'

5. 'Christianity is a good and moral system of religion, and inculcates good precepts 
but we cannot face the persecution of our relatives.'

6. 'There is only one God; but as He has permitted idolatry to enter the world, there 
can be no harm in it.'

7. 'Christianity is a good religion; but it exceeds the power of mankind to fulfil its 
precepts.'

8. 'If God be omnipresent, then, as devils exist, He must be in them also.'

9. 'Christianity abolishes caste.'

10. 'If we become Christians, we are not allowed to give our sons and daughters in 
marrige to heathen: how, then, are they to be married at all?'

11. 'If Christ be God, how could He have suffered?'

12. 'If God be omnipresent, and omnipotent, why did He not prevent Adam’s fall?'

13. 'It is not my fate to embrace Christianity, and therefore I shall not come.'

14. 'If God be everywhere, may I not worship Him in a stone?'

15. 'Towards a city there are several roads; may there not also be several roads- i. e., 
through different religions-towards heaven?'.....'

On the other hand, Robert Caldwell opines that, "After their conversion there began 
changes in their customs, beliefs and practices. Whoever embraced Christianity, put 
away their idols, and converted their temples into Christian churches." The Danish 
missionaries in a letter dated 9 February, 1803 state that: "In Tanjore, whole villages 
with their chiefs had embraced the Christian doctrine, and converted their pagodas 
into Christian churches, after having broken their idols to pieces and buried them deep

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in the ground.” Those who were converted were brought up in idolatry\textsuperscript{6}, and deeply imbued with Hindu notions and habits.\textsuperscript{7}

Missionary societies like the Danish Mission were very active in the coastal villages of Tanjore, the earliest Protestant missionary centre. However, Danish missionaries found it hard to expand their missionary activity on account of their poor financial position, and could not supply men and materials to their established centres. In this hour of critical need, S.P.C.K. established in 1699 in England, came to their rescue by providing sufficient material assistance. Part of the money contributed on this occasion was spent for the benefit of the Tranquebar mission. At this juncture, a German named Jonas Finck, a pious teacher in London, who learnt the art of printing, sailed to India with all the English printing machinery.\textsuperscript{8} He made his proposal to the S.P.C.K., who satisfied with his letters of recommendation, accepted him, and entrusted to his care the press, paper, ink and other packages, together with a remittance in money. Ultimately, this enabled Ziegenbalg to complete his translation of \emph{New Testament} into Tamil on 21 March 1711, which he commenced in the month of October 17, 1708.\textsuperscript{9}

After the printing press was introduced in India and the \emph{New Testament} got translated, missionaries travelled extensively to reach the people and to preach the Gospel\textsuperscript{10}. Ragland of S.P.G. says that, “At our tents there is seldom a day when we have no visitors, often many, and on some occasions, crowds. To them we speak, read, and distribute scripture portions and tracts, as in the villages. Here we have excellent opportunities of speaking to the Hindus.”\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{6} Robert Caldwell, \emph{Records of the Early History of Tinnevelly Missions}, Higginbotham and co., Madras, 1881, pp. 68-70.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 74.
\textsuperscript{8} James Hough, \emph{The History of Christianity in India}, vol. III, \emph{op. cit.}, p. 173. See also Erich Beyreuther, \emph{Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg}, The Christian Literature Society, Madras, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., pp. 174-175.
\textsuperscript{10} The Educational Despatch of 1854 contains the following passage: “The Bible is, we understand, placed in the libraries of the colleges and schools, and pupils are free to consult it. This is as should be; and moreover, we have no desire to prevent or discourage any explanation which the pupils may, of their own free will, ask from their masters on the subject, provided that such information be given out of school hours.” See J. Murdoch, Indian Year Book, \emph{op. cit.}, p. 158.
\textsuperscript{11} \emph{Proceedings of the South Indian Missionary Conference}, Ootacamund, Madras, 1858, pp. 144-145.
Books and tracts in Tamil had been distributed to students. In this regard, missionaries have testified thus: "In some places, these little treatises have been greatly desired by the people themselves perhaps, at first, from curiosity. In others, they received them mostly upon our offering them, and advising them to read and consider them. From our young people in the schools, applications are made of their own accord for religious books to read at home and sometimes to read to their parents also, which shows that their minds are in some measure affected by the truths of Christianity."¹²

Various pieces in Tamil had been prepared for circulation by the missionaries which include: selection of scripture passages, compendium of Christian doctrines, exposition of the Lord's prayer, nature and design of baptism, the Lord's Supper; life of the Saviour of the world, being a harmony of the gospels, with extracts from the prophets and epistles, a course of sermons, evangelical meditations, instructions for native school masters and compendium of geography and Tamil syntax. Missionaries continued to devote a considerable part of their time to the revision of the translation¹³ of the scriptures, and to the preparation of various elementary works for schools and religious instruction in the popular idiom of the people with the intention to eradicate idolatry and superstitions.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the impact of their preaching in the beginning was very small.¹⁵

¹² Ibid., p. 146.
¹³ Preparation and distribution of scriptures and tracts, extensively occupied the attention of missionaries in India. According to a missionary: "The work of translation deserves great importance in India from two circumstances. The translation of the native Hindu literature to English would undermine its licentious and idolatrous character. Christian truth and principles have to be explained and illustrated. Hinduism has to be refuted and its customs exposed; our native Christian community needs supplying with suitable books and tracts; and modern infidelity has to be met and vanquished. We receive the most liberal support from the British and Foreign Bible and London Religious Tract Societies, and lay every missionary under the deepest obligation to them, on account of the liberality with which they supply their publications." See Edward Storrow, India and Christian Missions, John Snow, London, 1859, pp. 48-50.
Meanwhile, missionaries in certain pockets of southern Tamil Nadu observed the success of their method\(^\text{16}\) of distributing tracts in the following lines: “We have to record, with great pleasure and gratitude to the redeemer that some of the native Christians in our service, have during the year given sufficient evidence of a change of mind, and a consequent sincere desire and determination to hate every evil way. We wish to see them truly converted. They are still under the spirit of the world. Among the Hindus, the word of God runs, and we humbly trust it will also be glorified. Some of our school masters show some change of character for the better, though their worldly connections do not yet allow them to renounce idolatry altogether. At Tirunelveli, in particular, inquiry about religion has evidently been excited.”\(^\text{17}\)

Even though missionaries used to sing a portion of a poetical tract to collect people, missionaries like Schultze used to take out some of his scholars to sing; “When we had taught the native children to sing, we used to take them with him to preach the country, and would stop in the road when he reached the village and begin a hymn with the children in the European style. The sound of forty voices can be heard to a considerable distance, young and old, men and women, hastened to see what was going on, and in this he may often gathered between two and three hundred people. When the song was finished he prayed, then addressed the assemblage. After this he talked with individuals to see whether his speech had been understood, and though he could not himself talk with all, his pastors mingled with the crowd and talked to the people what they had heard.” Thus the missionaries’ manner of presenting the gospel to the Hindus was to convince them that they are sinners and that nothing they are doing, or can do, is of avail to remove their guilt.

The modes adopted by some missionaries of much experience may be quoted. Reverend I. Stubbins observes that: “We almost invariably commence our preaching

\(^{16}\) The method, which the clergy had hitherto pursued, was, to set before their auditors and scholars the fundamental truths of the gospel in the simplest form. They were also diligent in teaching the children in the presence of their parents, whom they encouraged to attend, hoping by these means to engage their attention also, and gain their confidence. See James Hough, The History of Christianity in India, vol. III, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

opportunity by singing \(^{18}\) a page or so of any of our poetical tracts, the object of which is to attract a congregation, and having collected a few hearers, the speaker commences his address on any subject which may appear most adopted to his audience, sometimes taking as a text a message from the portion he has been singing, sometimes striking portion of scripture. Sometimes he may begin by addressing a few friendly inquiries to any given individual in the congregation.\(^{19}\)

Unquestionably, the strategies followed by the Protestant missions in this endeavour were completely opposed to their Catholic counterparts both in terms of ideology and phenomenology. "The European nations who succeeded the Portuguese in the domain of India," says Hugh Murray, referring to the Danes, Dutch, and English, felt for a long time much less ardent zeal for the diffusion of their own ‘purer faith’ than had animated the Portuguese or the propagation of Catholic observances, and added that the conduct of the English\(^{20}\) in India formed a striking contrast to that zeal, which had certainly distinguished the Catholic nations.\(^{21}\)

2. ‘Religious Neutrality’ and Missionaries’ Response

The history of the Queen’s Proclamation in the year 1858 was very curious. A draft of it was considered and approved by the Cabinet under its head, Lord Derby, and sent to the Queen for signature. But the Queen objected to its spirit and wording, and wrote to Lord Derby, requesting him to “write it himself in his excellent language,” and indicating further the line she wished to be adopted. Another draft was prepared, and submitted in its turn to Her Majesty. This she accepted in substance, but made certain corrections with her own hand. The sentences dealing with the religious question ultimately stood as follows: - “We hold ourselves bound to the Natives of our Indian


\(^{20}\) "The fundamental principle of British rule" said Lord Bentinck is “strict neutrality.” And in obsequious accordance with this rule, “The East India Company refused all missionary passages in their ships either to China or India.” In vain a few individuals endeavoured to gain a surreptitious entrance into this forbidden land. “Two missionaries who landed on the banks of the Hooghly were sent back to Europe forth with in the same ship in which they arrived. In 1812, “The American missionaries, driven to Bombay from Calcutta, were imprisoned. When they escaped in a coasting vessel, they were pursued, retaken and confined to the fort.” As late as 1813 not a single missionary could be allowed to sail out in a British Ship. See T.W.M. Marshall, Christian Missions: Their Agents and Their Results, vol. I, London, 1863, pp. 261-264.

territories the same obligations of duty which bind Us to all our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.

“Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude and solace of religion, We disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our Royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all alike shall enjoy the equal and impartial protection of law; and We do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under Us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects, on pain of our highest pleasure.

“And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge.”22

It may be observed here that the Victoria’s Proclamation had announced, unambiguously, that the British would no longer seek to impose their “Convictions on any of our subjects” and that she would “Strictly charge all those may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any our subjects of our highest displeasure.” She had further declared that, in the “Administration of law, due regard would henceforth be paid to the ancient rights, usages and customs of India.” But, although it was clear that the British intended by this never to repeat the provocations that were seen to have led to the result – explicit government support of missionization, regular usurpation and annexation of ancestral and princely lands, and the introduction of military requirements—it was clear the British rule had little idea what non-interference would really mean.23

However, the attitude of the East India Company towards Christian missions was curiously inconsistent and self contradictory. In South India the local authorities

23 Nicholas B. Dirks, Castes of Mind, op. cit., pp. 148-149.
welcomed the work of the German missionaries employed there. In Bengal, they manifested what looked like venomous hostility. On 7 September, 1808 the Court of Directors sent out their views in a lengthy but dignified Despatch, “We are anxious that it should be distinctly understood that we are very far from being averse to the introduction of Christianity into India, or in different to the benefits which would result from the general diffusions of its doctrines; but we have a fixed and settled opinion that nothing could be more unwise and impolitic, nothing even more likely to frustrate the hopes and endeavours of those who aim at the very object than any imprudent or injudicious attempt to introduce it by means which should alarm their religious prejudices. The paramount power which we now posses in India imposed upon us the necessity to protect the native inhabitants in the free and undisturbed profession of their religious opinions and to take care that they are neither harassed nor irritated by any premature or over-zealous attempts to convert them to Christianity.”24

At a meeting of the C.M.S. held on the 13 April, 1813 various resolutions were passed, of which the seventh was in these terms: “That its society has learnt with pain that Christianity is liable to discouragement, in consequence of native converts having been generally excluded from those official situations in India which are freely bestowed on Hindus and Muslims?”25

“I think the English government in this country”, said Sir John Malidm, “Should never, directly or indirectly, interfere in propagating the Christian religion.” In 1853, a Director of the East India Company, and not the most obscure amongst them, repeats that, “It appears to the absolutely necessary that we should scrupulously avoid all interference with the religion of Hindus.” Lastly, in 1859, Lord Ellenborough advised the House of the Lords: “No measure could be adopted more calculated to tranquilize the minds of ‘natives,’ and to restore to us their confidence, than that of withholding the aid of government from schools with which missionaries are connected.” At the same time, Kinnaird, a member in the House of Commons informed the House that,

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the ‘natives’ of India, interpreting the Queen’s Proclamation to “abstain from all interference” with their religion as a rebuke to those who had done so, and urged upon the local government, “that the missionaries were acting contrary to the Queen’s Proclamation by staying in India, and that therefore it was their duty to drive them away at once.”26

Earlier on, missionaries were of the opinion that, “In a country like India, where the creeds of the rulers and the ruled are diametrically opposite, where so many circumstances of pledges and treaties exist to complicate the matter, we may expect the difficulty to be greater in proportion. For reasons like these, we do not presume to dogmatize as to the precise duty of our rulers. Appreciating their difficulties, we do not expect impossibilities. We are far from judging all. We have no wish to take up old scores and reproach them with conduct, which they repudiate. We give them credit. Despite some things, which we may think capable of amendment, we firmly believe that, there is no other government under the sun which would act toward the Hindus as a part so just and favourable.”27

Missionaries were of the opinion that, “The attitude of the Government was avowedly one of religious neutrality. Sometimes this was defended as though it were identical with religious toleration. But the two things are widely different. Neutrality may or may not be tolerant. Of course, it professes to be so, but in practice it may sometimes show a good deal of intolerance. On the other hand, toleration does not necessarily imply neutrality. The strongest advocate of a particular religion may extend the widest toleration to the votaries of other religions. The contention of Christian side in the controversy was that Government neutrality was in fact one sided, and that it had failed in its desired effect upon the Indian people.”28

A wide range of activities, in which missions found themselves necessarily in contact with the government, are found in the educational, medical, industrial, and other philanthropic works of missionaries. A report of the World Missionary Conference

says that, "Both the government and the church continued to be interested in the welfare of the people; and finding themselves working in the same field, at the same task, with the same methods, they have had to come to some kind of working arrangement. Co-operation in philanthropic work is specially exemplified in what is now universally acknowledged as an important branch of missionary effort." In its scathing attack on the part of religion the report opines that, "The state deliberately holds itself aloof from the encouragement of any religious propaganda, and promises fair and impartial treatment to men of all faiths. Its officers are forbidden to use their official position for the encouragement of any particular religion. Considering that the ultimate control is in the hands of the country which is professedly Christian, and the actual administration is in the hands of men of the same faith, the principle of religious neutrality may seem to be a throwing away of advantage to which the faith of a ruling race is entitled, or even a denial of the right and duty of the Christian men who happen to be officials to advance and encourage the spread of gospel which they know to have been the richest blessing not only of themselves individually but of their nation... how, then, can the state tie its own hands and those of its officers?"  

Missionaries further argued: "Neutrality is a word sometimes used, but often abused. Rightly understood and carried out, it is all that we desire. But nothing will ever make us believe that positive discouragement of Christianity or positive partiality for Hinduism is neutrality. Nothing will ever make us believe that censure of what Christian officers do in their private capacity is neutrality. It is nothing but treacherous hostility. Justice means justice for Christ as well as for idols, justice for truth as well as for error, justice for Europeans and Hindus. We have very little fear of Hindus suffering oppression either in property or religion at the hand of their present rulers. The danger is the other way. It is notorious that the universal disposition in our government is to favour the Hindu. His opponent is nearly always looked upon with suspicion. It is honourable it should be so. Hardly any other government would expose itself to such a charge. But so it is. This may be kindness, generosity or anything else; but no rule or law. Is it justice? It is not neutrality. When the rich

plaintiff brings a just suit against a poor defendant, pity may pronounce, “not guilty,” but to call this justice would be mockery. Now what we ask is not mock but real impartiality. Let us have neutrality, as rigid as may be; but do not give us something else under a false name. Do not set out with the idea that, one must be right and the other wrong, that every Englishman is an oppressor and every Hindu a martyr for truth, and then insult us by professions of neutral impartiality. When infanticide, suttee and religious murders on the banks of the Ganges were made penal, what became neutrality then? When government teachers try to make converts from Veda-Vyasa to Bacon and Newton, where is neutrality then? It may be said that, such practices are abolished and such systems of philosophy taught with no regard to any religious considerations, but simply in the interest of truth and humanity. But this makes no difference. It only shows that truth and humanity are as much opposed to Hinduism as the Bible. Government does in one respect what missionaries do in the other. The articles of faith and practice uprooted by government are as sacred, as authoritative, as highly reverenced among Hindus, as any assailed by us. Well it is that, Hinduism is so repugnant to reason and nature, as to force even partiality in to hostility. Again we say, “Let us have neutrality, fair and open. Truth needs no vantage ground, from which to crush its enemies. Give it a fair field, and victory is sure.”

3. Memorandum to the Queen Elizabeth

The Vice-Patron, President, Vice-Presidents, and supporters of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East presented a memorandum to the Queen Elizabeth. It runs thus: “.... Your Memorialists humbly venture to bring under your Majesty’s consideration some things in the system of government hitherto pursued in your Majesty’s territories in the East Indies, which, as they conceive, have been at variance with the duty of Christian rulers.

“The Government of India has professed to occupy a position of neutrality between the Christian and false religions. Such profession, as your Memorialists believes,

dishonours the truth of God, practically discourages the progress of Christianity, and is inimical to the social welfare of the Natives....

"Your Memorialists also humbly submit that neutrality has not been, and cannot be, practically maintained by a Christian Government in the midst of Hindu and Mohammedan institutions....

"Your Memorialists would therefore humbly beseech your Majesty to have it declared to the public authorities in the East Indies:

"1. That the existing policy will be no longer professed or maintained; but that, as it is belief of your Majesty and of this Christian nation that the adoption of Christian religion, upon an intelligent conviction of its truth, will be an incalculable benefits to the Natives of India, the countenance and aid of Government will be given to any legitimate measures for bringing that religion under their notice and investigation....

"2. That any connexion which may still subsist between the Indian Government and the revenues or ceremonies of the Mohammedan, Hindu, or other false religions, shall at once cease and determine...."\[31

It is, however, to be said here that on the whole, the relations between officials, European and Indian and missionaries were harmonious and friendly. The high character and noble work of the civil service were always recognized by the missionaries. Indeed, missionaries themselves had frequently occupied official positions as honorary magistrates, members and chairmen of municipalities, members of Legislative Councils, etc., to the advantage of the government, and to the credit of their own missions. On the other hand missionaries were very cautious about the 'neutrality' policy of the government. The missionaries observed that: "The government control is growing, and is likely to grow more strict and exigent; and missionaries are awake to the necessity of preventing their institutions from being secularized."\[32

Meanwhile, the general answers of missionaries to the question of the possibility of mission work under neutrality were remarkable. The missionaries were of the opinion that, "We are glad to co-operate with the government in this field where they have a common interest, the government aid has helped them to extend their work, and that they have been left free in their religious teaching. Even where they have been inclined to chafe under government restriction, they have felt that the alternative was between Christian work under certain limitations, and government work which is in principle non-religious, and may in effect become anti-religious. They have had no hesitation in accepting the former alternative."

Thus the vast majority of missionaries approved of the principle of religious neutrality of the colonial government. Missionaries opine that, "Whatever temporary advantage may seem to accrue to Christianity from the restraints imposed on the official acts of government and its officers is far more than compensated by the disentanglement of religion from politics, of the Christian church from the temporary ascendancy of any nation. The church of India will be purer and stronger because its members are not the favourites and protégés of the British government; its warfare will end the sooner in real victory because its weapons are spiritual." In addition, explaining the nature of relationship between the government and missions, missionaries were of the opinion that: "Let our rulers look upon missionaries, not with suspicion, but as their best friends. We are mediators between the government and the people. We are never backward in removing misrepresentations and going as far as the utmost limits of truth in our rulers' defence. All their friends are our friends. All their enemies are our enemies. We are proud of the same country, inherit the same glorious history, and rally round the same throne. Next to being Christians, we rejoice that we are Britons. While our rulers care for the temporal, we are anxious for the spiritual good of the Hindus."

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 24.
4. Protestant Encounters with Hinduism

The East India Company to some extent managed to curtail the all-pervasive influence of mission activities in the Indian sub-continent. However, missionaries on the contrary, apart from evangelization, focused much of their human resources in printing\textsuperscript{36} and publishing pamphlets, books and so on. In due course, missionaries’ observation and understanding of a wide range of issues pertaining to their adopted regions, attracted the attention of both lower and intermediary sections of India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular.

Hayden, a British historian argues that: “Missionaries were some of the most influential actors in colonial India. Yet they only began working recently in relation to larger British influence in the subcontinent. Originally banned from the territories of the East India Company for fears of upsetting Indian religious sensibilities, they were allowed to operate after 1843 in parallel with a rising Utilitarianism and evangelist fervour in Britain and within particular Company circles; the later often blurred the distinctions between ‘moral improvement,’ civilization and Christianity. Missionaries were influential in the debate over sati and the subsequent outlaw of its practice. Protestant encounters with Hinduism and Islam were defined by the rhetoric of ‘heathen’ and ‘unbelievers,’ as missionaries derided the ‘idolatry’ of Hinduism and ‘bigotry’ of Islam.”\textsuperscript{37}

The common people’s general practices were seriously studied by the missionaries and they tried to show the variety of their religious practices and their faith. Incidents of correcting the native people by showing their futility of their religious observance

\textsuperscript{36} The Americans alone had thirty one printing presses in Madras and its neighbourhood. They distributed thirty thousand tracts in 1850s. In fact, they had already printed about thirty four million pages, and until 1858, more than three hundred million, or one million volumes, in Madras alone. The Tamil version was equally successful compared to other languages. “The translation is really pitiful,” says a Protestant clergyman. On the other hand, a Protestant clergyman generously confesses, that some of the Catholic missionaries were the best Tamil scholars of their age, surpassing even the most learned ‘natives.’ “The mere distribution of Bibles,” said Dr. Middleton, “the first Protestant Bishop in India, will produce very little effect in promoting Christianity among the natives.” Charles Oakley, Governor of Madras, added that, the-ship-loads of Bible transmitted to India are in a danger of being moth-eaten before they can be used to any salutary purpose.” See D. Dennis Hudson, Protestant Origins, op. cit., pp. 13-17.

were in plenty. Writing about the nature and course of Hindu religion in northern India, missionaries were of the opinion that: “Hinduism recognizes 330 millions of gods; of course, the names of such a multiple are unknown. Of these, about thirty are now popularly worshipped. There is not one of them to whom is attributed a noble, blameless, virtuous character; most of them have a reputation which would exclude any man or woman from decent society. In Shastras their actions like, deceit, war, cruelty, anger, seduction and impurity are recorded. Missionaries also noted that, “Hinduism is not based on any great moral principles, nor does it exact moral obedience. In the Shastras there are good moral lessons and long drawn ethical speculations but, they are not an essential part of Hinduism. Its requirements are social and ceremonial only. A Hindu may hold that all moral distinctions are imaginary, and act out his theory in practice. He may be a perjurer, an adulterer, a thief; he may oppress the poor, and neglect his family, yet he comes not beneath the anathema or curse of Hinduism, and may still have the reputations of a religious man.”

Another group of missionaries were of the opinion that: “Our main attention does not care to be associated with the somewhat disreputable dwellers within its borders. It is a religion that, because of its long recorded history, because of the profundity of the speculations of its ancient sages, and because of the power that these ideas still exercise over the lives of multitudes in this land, demands to be treated with complete respect and is not afraid at times to claim to be possessed of a higher truths than any of its rivals. This religion is to be seen in India in the form at once of an elaborately organized system of ceremonial, a subtle and profound philosophy, and an incentive to devotion which is powerful to move the hearts of men. This is the religion that especially challenges our attention in India and it is this Hinduism that we wish first to survey from without as she stands among her rivals proud, self-assertive, and not any longer apologetic.”

38 Edward Storrow, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
39 Ibid., pp. 17-19.
On the other hand, Robert Caldwell, a missionary-cum Bishop of the S.P.G. in Tirunelveli region observes that: “The Tinnevelly (Tirunelveli) missions are different from many other missions. The aborigines of this country, the Nadars, are as free as any of the four or rather two castes of Hindus, yet, are not as the other free-people are enslaved by the Brahmanical creed; they have their superstitions and idolatries, but there is nothing which binds them, in such a manner to the pagoda worship and an ancient and nearly defined priesthood, as the poor Sudras are bound.\(^{41}\) The inferences from this I need not enlarge upon. I shall only make the general observations, that they are found in much greater number to apply to the Christian teacher than (any) other natives. All really converted Christians, I think must be the same; so I also think, that among the Christian Shanars (Nadars) there are not a few, who really deserve this name. The majority of them, however, appear to promise more than they afterwards find themselves able to keep. And in the same manner as they without much difficulty give their names to be enlisted under the banner of Christ, they again on slight temptations easily became traitors to the same cause. Hence, these people must be watched in a particular manner; it is not sufficient to assemble them only on the Sabbaths to worship their maker. If they are scattered about in various directions, it becomes necessary to employ a catechist for the whole purpose of going daily about to different places and to visit the different people exhorting them and praying with them, otherwise there is as instances show, a great temptation to them to relapse to Heathenism.\(^{42}\)

Although missionaries wanted Christian conversion to affect their socio-economic status, they wanted first to see some visible changes in the traditional, cultural and religious behaviour, which they perceived as inconsistent with the teachings of Christ. While habits that were held to be contrary to the faith such as lying, quarrelling, cheating, as well as drinking, smoking, idol worship, and irregular marriages were expected to be given up, Christian behaviour such as observation of the Sabbath and ten commandments, attending all the divine services and regular study of scripture were demanded of the converts. The converts had to demonstrate a permanent change

\(^{41}\) Robert Caldwell, Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Mission, op. cit., p. 287.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., pp. 287-289.
in their life style to convince the native pastor or the missionary that they were practising Christians.\(^{43}\)

Mentioning the conditioning of recently converted Christians Caldwell says, "They were brought up in idolatry or demonolatry deeply imbued with heathen notions and habits, profoundly ignorant of the most rudimental facts in history and morals."\(^{44}\) Julius Richter argues that: "It is an animism whose characteristic features present considerable variety in the religious beliefs of the Pariahs and other depressed classes especially in South India, above all amongst the Tamils, the Telugus and the Malayalis. Here too, the numberless spirits and demons are pre-eminently malevolent, such as Amman that is Mother, amongst whom we find the Muthaar Amman, the goddess of small pox, Maariumman, the mother of death, Kali were more or less pre-historic Dravidian village-deities. The fact of the matter is that these deities are still being worshipped by those tribes which have had little contact with Hindu civilization."\(^{45}\)

Missionaries' endeavour to find fault with the gullible masses was rampant. Early missionaries like Ziegenbalg and Plutschau had not come to Tranquebar to serve the Europeans or to study India but they had come to address 'Pagans and 'Moors' with the Protestant message,\(^{46}\) and were the first Europeans sent to India for that purpose. The various trading companies of Protestant Europe had long employed chaplains for their personal use in the colonies. In Tranquebar, the Danes possessed their own Lutheran church with two pastors. Yet, no Malabarians belonged to their


\(^{44}\) Robert Caldwell, Lectures on Tinnevelly Missions, *op. cit.*, p. 74.


\(^{46}\) The process of categorising different varieties of practice intensified in the second half of the 19th century as large numbers of depressed class people converted to Christianity. Even though, these converts were taught to be particularly attached to superstitions, missionaries' co-ordinated their efforts to establish firm categories for discriminating among religious, superstitious, customary, and caste-based practices. Missionary conferences made one declaration after another to distinguish between those customs that were harmful and those that were harmless to Christian faith. See Selvaraj and Corine G. Dempsey, *Popular Christianity in India*, State University of New York Press, 2002, p. 194.
congregation, nor apparently did any Eurasians. However, no ‘Pagans’ or Moors’ had yet voluntarily bought baptism from Protestants.\(^{47}\)

In his monograph *Detailed Description of Malabarrian Heathenism*, Ziegenbalg explained four types of religious practices. The first two types are ‘Disciplined Behaviour’ (Carya) and ‘Liturgical Ceremony’ (Kriya); they focus on the rites of the temples and images. The third type is ‘Unified Consciousness’ (yoga), it seeks to unite body with mind with an art of ‘Visualization’ (Dhyana), often in the context of temples, images and liturgies. The fourth type is ‘Esoteric Knowledge’ (Jnana), devotees achieve it by renouncing all sites, temples and images as ‘Falsehood’ (Mithya) or ‘Delusion’ (Maya) when compared with ‘the Absolute’ (Paraparan).\(^{48}\)

Missionaries often tried to expose the inner contradiction that prevailed in the local practice and finally how they did win the locals by explaining their illogical practices to them, thereby leading them to the knowledge of Christ. In his tract entitled “The Manners and Customs of Native Christians and the Rules and Regulations of European Missionaries”, Muthaiah Pillai, a native convert-cum writer wrote that a variety of practices identified by missionaries as objectionable included: “The public announcement of puberty of girls, the smearing of cow dung in houses, the painting of designs in doorways for auspicious occasions, the manner of washing with water after excretion and of brushing the teeth; the practice of daily bathing, of bathing in the river, of taking oil baths on Saturdays and Wednesdays, and of washing one’s cloths for the sake of purity, chewing betel, showing reverence towards others by offering items such as sandalwood, flowers, and betel etc., using words in the plural to show respect and writing titles along with one’s own name.”\(^{49}\)

Pettit, an Anglican missionary scholar in his tract “The Mirror of Custom,” observes that, “We must walk according to custom.” The importance of regularity is illustrated by a series of examples. It is shown what confusion and misery would arise if the sun sometimes rose in the north, sometimes in the south; if sometimes it went half away


\(^{48}\) Ibid., pp. 17-18.

across the heavens and then stopped; if bullocks should adopt the habits of Tigers.” On the other hand, the attention of the reader is directed towards another example. He asked if Hindus should refuse to make use of railway because their ancestors had nothing of the kind; if a man should reject wealth because his forefathers were poor. It is shown that intimate objects and the lower animals must observe certain fixed lens but that man is provided with reasons to enable him to divide his conduct. If a custom is good, it should be observed, if bad, it ought to be relinquished.”

It is admitted that ‘superstitious’ and ‘absurd’ customs were influencing the newly converted people. Recourse to Hindu practices and demon sacrifices in times of calamity and affliction was tempting many Christians. Even though people were well educated, they were attached to some superstitious beliefs. The people believed that before the animal is sacrificed, sacred ashes are put on the head of the animal (victim), which must immediately shake them off otherwise it must be rejected as unacceptable to the Pei (demon) and an other victim must be brought. Sometimes water was used instead of ashes, and it was a very rare occurrence indeed that the victim does not perform his part of the ceremony.

Sargeant, a missionary from the C.M.S. explains such an incident and its impact: “A young man, when he was a little boy, before embracing Christianity, his grandfather had fixed upon a particular day for offering a sacrifice to his household Pei (demon) and invited several of his near relations. The victim, named Raam (name of a cow), which had been bred for the special occasion was brought in. At the appointed time ashes were put upon its hand, but it made no movement. Again and again they were applied, but still the Raam stood un-moved. It was put by for a while, and again brought forward, but still to no effect. They then tried water, but this was also unsuccessful. Again they made another trial but with the same effect. Then the old man, greatly distressed and agitated, rose up, laid his hand upon the head of the Raam and with a trembling voice said, ‘Henceforth, I renounce such a Pei (demon) as my

50 John Murdoch, op. cit., p. 175.
51 C.F. Pascoe, op.cit., p. 553.
52 Madras Church Missionary Record, No. 1, XXXI, March, 1864, pp. 109-110.
As a result, his entire family forsook their idols and beliefs attached to it. Finally they placed themselves under Christian instruction.\(^{53}\)

Missionaries' pejorative criticism was not only confined to the Hindu temples,\(^ {54}\) Hindu beliefs and the edifice of Hinduism, but was also against Brahmins, the chief protagonists of the Hindu religion.

Richard Lovett in his *History of the London Missionary Society* argues that: "Temple is a picture of Hindu society, of the heart of Hindu life. Hindu society is guarded by high, thick, strong wall of caste. In the temple of Hindu society there are gods, many formed after their own desires—pride, race, selfishness, and superstitions, deceit, subtle philosophy, and asceticism, idolatry with all its proud and foolish ceremonials. If this were tarnished, if the evil were all taken away, the idols abolished, if the pure light of god's truth, the treasures of love were brought in, if Christ were here, if god reigned supreme, what a beauteous temple this would be!." He also observes that, "There are still multituds of orthodox Hindus who possess full faith in the gods, imbued with a pantheistic philosophy, always engaged in religious ritual, learned in the Vedas, verses from which are ever flowing from their lips; they are almost unapproachable, their manner says, 'Come not near to me, for I am holier than you: they speak of themselves as like the beautiful lotus flower growing out of the mud in the lake, but uncultivated. These men are found all over the country, and they have greater influence."\(^ {55}\)

Charles Theophelus Edwald Rhenius, a C.M.S. missionary, explains the prevalence of a strong faith among the Brahmins. It was April 11, 1837 at Pavanasam, a hamlet, near Western Ghats, 35km away from Tirunelveli, where he recorded the following event: "Soon after midnight, there began to be heard, trumpets, announcing them a great day of ablution was at hand. Before sunrise, I found large crowds of people washing in the river, or walking on the road to it. I stood at one group and asked what the matter was? They said they had come to bathe in this famous river. 'And why?"

\(^{53}\) Ibid., pp. 109-110.


\(^{55}\) Ibid., pp. 309-310.
Have you not a river or well in your village?'—Yes; 'but here a great many people come together, and so we have come also'. 'You have had here in former years; have your sins been thereby washed away?' 'Who can say? Who has seen the sins flow away? Is said that they are thus removed?—'If so, you must be conscious of a change, and on returning to your employment you must be holy people, without evil thoughts and desire and will not lie, cheat, and so forth; but I believe that, sin as you came, you returned home too; so that this bathing cleansed only your bodies, and not your souls.' It is not so: 'True, true; it is all mere stories—But how, then is the sin to be purified?'—I informed them of the fountain of purification, Jesus Christ, and read them a tract.56

The practice of preaching gospel through the missionary slogan viz., “Salvation to all” became prominent in the writings of missionaries. Finding the country in so many directions shut against missionaries and desirous of diffusing the message of salvation everywhere, in 1710, Ziegenbalg addressed a circular letter to the Hindus of Malabar region, in which he represented the perils of idolatry, entreated them to flee from it, and invited them to enter the way of salvation by faith in Jesus.57

5. East India Company and Temple Administration

Even though missionary societies followed the policy of ‘mutual co-existence’ with the colonial government in many ways, missionaries were not willing to accept the so-called religious neutrality of the government. In the view of the missionaries, the Company was seen as a major culprit who went on to promote pagan worship and preserve their culture even at the expense of foregoing the spread of fundamental Christian principles.

It was in this context, the year 1793 was considered as crucial for both the Company and missionaries. According to the central perception of missionaries the English government in India began publicly to patronize the idolatries of the country and some of them talked and behaved more like Hindus than Christians. Against such backgrounds, missionaries argued that: “From the beginning of the nineteenth century


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we can trace a most lamentable departure from principle a departure which became more serious and every decade passed by, and which led to the Company on the one hand into an unbounded favouritism towards the native religion, and on the other into an unjust slighting of Christianity.

The most scandalous form, as the missionaries saw it, under which this universal support of Indian idolatry made its appearance was the pilgrim tax. The English took possession of Orissa in 1803, the dusky blue god of Puri Jagannath (Lord of the World). Soon an order from London reimposed and levied tax on behalf of the Company. The pilgrim tax was taken by the Mohammadans too when they were rulers of the land. Lord Wellesley, who was the Governor-General at that time refused to execute the order but in 1806, his successor, Bartow, placed all the temple property at Puri under British management and levied the pilgrim tax relentlessly. The government undertook in return to maintain the temple buildings to pay the priests, and to provide for the regular celebration of the temple worship. In the first year their net profits amounted to over £1, 35,000. In addition to Puri was, Gaya, in Bihar, a famous and holy place since the days of Buddha, and one which since the Brahmanical restoration had become almost as famous a shrine for the Hindus as for the Buddhists and offered a new source of income to the British East India Company. The success of the taxes of these two famous shrines induced the Company to introduce the ‘heathen’ pilgrim tax at yet other shrines and temples at Allahabad, Tirupati, Kashipur, Sarkara, Sambal and Hawa. The net income from this pilgrim tax amounted on the average to £75,000 and upwards per annum.

Wilson in his article ‘Papers on the Countenance and Support of Idolatry and Superstitions by the Government of Madras’ demanded the government to withdraw

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58 Slowly and steadily missionaries started intensifying their allegation that the British East India Company began to involve itself in repairing and renovating the Hindu temples since the government placed the temples under the care and patronage of the state. James Hough opined that, “With all this attention to the superstitious ‘natives’ no respect was paid to the Christian principles of their own servants. Civilians were commanded willing or unwilling to present offerings with their own hands to the dumb idols of the country. This monstrous infatuation, though manifested at the other presidencies, prevailed with greatest determination at Madras, the principal seat of missionary exertion.” See Julius Richter, The History of Mission, op. cit., p. 179.

59 Ibid., p. 185.

60 Ibid., pp. 185-186.
all its support and encouragement to idolatry and total abstinence by government from all interference.\(^{61}\)

In spite of constant criticism\(^{62}\) from the missionaries of the Company and its involvement in temple administration, the government had openly declared itself a ‘patron’ of idol worship, Hindu temples and their architectural systems. Richard observes that, “There are to be seen in many parts of India very old and elaborately carved Hindu temples. The most sacred of them are surrounded with a high wall to guard them and many of them have high towers. The humorous priests have a personal interest in maintaining the sacredness of the buildings and they guard their preserves with jealous care. I have at different times made friends who have authority in the temples and gained entrance. Having crossed the high threshold of a temple we come to an open courtyard, in which may be seen men sitting about, talking, reading and few bathing at the sacred well. Past the courtyard are numerous shrines, palkis in which the gods are taken in procession, songs, bells, lamps, drums, many signs of religious ceremonial, and the paraphernalia of worship; further on is “the holy of holies”, in which is placed the image of the god, a distinct peep of which is all that a stranger can be privileged to gain. The whole place and its surroundings are consecrated. As I walk around and come out from the precincts of the temple, I feel an involuntary sign of sadness. The place is called an abode of god. Many idols are there.” In Kanjeevaram, (Kanchipuram) to the south-west of Madras, the famous temple of Siva, one of the most beautiful structures in the Tamil country, had fallen into decay. Julius argues that: “There upon, an English official induced the Company to restore the temple, at no small cost in order to incite the natives to the exercise of virtue. In addition, the Christian official himself offered a sacrifice to the temple and to its god, which for years afterwards was preserved and exhibited as a curiosity.”\(^{63}\)

In due course, the government had openly declared itself a patron of idol-worship. The management of the property of one temple after another was taken over by the

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Company. Its officials were then responsible for everything; the construction of new idol carts, new idols, the appointment and remuneration of the Brahmins, painters, musicians, rice boilers, watchmen and others who received their pay from English officials. At one time in 1858, long after the fight against this entire system had been commenced, 8292 idols and temples in Madras Presidency received annually £870,780, in the Bombay Presidency 26,689 temples and idols received £898,393 and in the total area of the Company’s jurisdiction £1,719,986 were annually spent in the support of idolatry. 64

Over a period of time, few missionary societies began to study and synchronize the relationship between temples and government in terms of the economic aspects. In the beginning of the early nineteenth century, a pamphlet published in Calcutta, has presented the following income and expenditure of the various presidencies upon idolatry. The extensive prevalence of the idolatry till 1850s and the support afforded to it in the Madras Presidency is observable. 65 The value used in this table is the pound.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bengal and Agra</th>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Annual Surplus</th>
<th>Annual Deficit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>40,56,286</td>
<td>38,82,573</td>
<td>1,73,714</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>40,339</td>
<td>66,850</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45,58,592</td>
<td>41,83,093</td>
<td>4,02,010</td>
<td>26,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deduct deficit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26,511</td>
<td>3,75,499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to a missionary report, which was published in the early 1830s, in Tirunelveli alone there were 2783 Shiva, Vishnu, and other temples; forty-two of which are celebrated for their peculiar sanctity and there were 9799 petty koils (minor temples) of male and female deities making up 14,851 places of idolatrous worship. These were erected by various dynasties or private munificence. The total charge of these establishments upon the public account was about £30,000 per annum. In this regard, C.T.E. Rhenius wrote in December 1831 that, "The East Indian Company by

64 Ibid., pp. 186-187.
65 James Peggs, op. cit., p. 29.
the order of government gives £40,000 to perform a certain ceremony in the idol temple of Tinnevelly.

When idolatry was at its peak, Lord Gleneg, a son of Charles Grant, determined in the year 1833 to commit himself to a decisive course of action and to strike at the very roots of the Company’s connection with Indian idolatry. In this regard he enacted a law of the seven clauses. Many missionary societies came out with their own innovative ideas to condemn this idolatrous practice.

The following statement from a modern missionary work entitled “British India in Relation to the Decline of Hinduism and the Progress of Christianity” by the Reverend W. Campbell is peculiarly remarkable: “Taking a mission tour, through the Salem province, we came to a town called Paulgode (Palakad). A splendid temple over shadows, hundreds of Brahmins, maintaining them in idleness and sin. After the gospel was fully and faithfully declared among the people, and in the neighbourhood of the pagoda, there arose a Brahmin to reply. "Who are you, said he, “that comes here to find fault with our religion? What may be your name? Is not this temple supported by the British Government? The Brahmins, the priests, the dancing women, and all the attendants, do they not receive their monthly allowance from the public treasury? The endowments, the internal economy, the times of worship and the celebrations of the festivals, are they not all under the superintendence of the collector? Do not European ladies and gentleman make presents to the lord? Why! It was only the other day that a battalion of sepoy was passing this road, and the cholera was among them the commanding officer gave them fifty rupees to purchase sheep and to present a sacrifice to Kali (a Goddess) and when they were offering these sheep, to propitiate the goddess, that commanding officer himself, came and bowed down himself to the image! Who then are you that come here to scandalize our divinities?" "What answer can be made to such statement as these? Nay: who can we justify ourselves, and support our declaration, without condemning the government and denouncing its inconsistency!” concludes the author. See James Peggs, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

Interference of British functionaries in the interior management of the native temples, in the customs, habits and religious proceedings of the priests shall cease. Pilgrim tax shall be everywhere abolished. Fines and offerings shall no longer be considered as source of revenue by the British Government. No servants of the East India Company shall hereafter be engaged in the collection in cash or in kind. No servants of that East India Company shall hereafter get any emolument. All matters relating to their temples be left to themselves. To form and keep up a police force with a view to maintain peace and security of the pilgrims and worshippers. See Julius Richter, The History of Missions in India, 1908, pp. 189-190.

A.F. Lacnoix, one of the missionaries followed a different strategy. He says that: “We begin by making a few inequities” into the circumstances of the people, their trades, prospect of harvest, and other topics of this description, in which we are sure they will be interested. After this entering into conversation, we gradually draw their attention to more important matters, leading them to rise from things temporal to things spiritual, and in this manner we have an opportunity of declaring the way of salvation fully to an alternative and interested audience. Experience has shown that this is the best way to obtain a fair hearing of the gospel. If on the contrary, we were to begin by attacking the superstitions of the ‘natives,’ or abruptly to declare the mysteries of redemption, we should be sure to depart their prejudices against us, or at least fill them with stupid wonderment at the strange things we told them. The fact is that, in order to speak with effect to the poor benighted idolaters, they must be led to the subject gently and gradually and in the simplest manner possible. To accomplish this, a thorough acquaintance not only with the language of the country is required, but also an intimate knowledge of native habits and feelings. See John Murdoch, Indian Missionary Manual, op. cit., p. 154.
On 11 October, 1836 the Bishop of Madras formally protested against the government's involvement in such 'idolatrous practices' including: protecting pilgrimage sites, forcing thousands of poor, defenceless people to leave their homes and even the cost of their lives, to pull great temple at the time of festivals. Similarly, Bishop Daniel Comic of Madras was publicly rebuked and General Peregrine Maitland, the commander-in-chief, returned to London where he launched the Anti-Idolatry League.\footnote{71}

Since the anti-idolatry wave among missionary circles was gaining momentum day by day, initiatives taken as part of this endeavour by Lord Glenelg were seriously debated and discussed by the Directors of the Board of Control in England. His seven Clauses in this direction indeed were seriously looked in to. However, according to customary form of procedure, this Bill of Lord Glenelg had to be submitted for the approval to the Directors of the Board of Control and to the Court of Directors. Meanwhile, a new Dispatch was sent to India, which practically repealed the law of 1833. In consequence of this repeal an Anglo-Indian judge, Nelson, resigned his office, which in turn compelled the Court of Directors, in 1840, to reconsider and recognise the main lines of Glenelg's Law of 1833. As a result of which, the official connection of East India Company with the idol-worship was gradually broken off. The pilgrim taxes ceased to be levied. The temples were restored to the Brahmans.\footnote{72}

At the monthly meeting of the committee, on the 9\textsuperscript{th} instant, the following Memorial to the Court of Directors of the East India Company was adopted, in reference to the pilgrim tax in India and to the connexion, in other respects, of the Government with the idolatrous rites and superstitions of the 'natives.' The memorial runs thus:-

\begin{enumerate}
\item "That the interference of British Functionaries in the interior management of Native Temples, in the customs, habits and religious proceedings of their Priests and Attendants, in the arrangement of their ceremonies, rites, and festivals, and generally, in the conduct of their interior economy, shall cease.
\end{enumerate}

\footnote{72} D. Julius Richter, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 190-191.
2. That the pilgrim tax shall everywhere be abolished.

3. That fines and offerings shall no longer be considered as sources of revenue by the British Government, and they shall no longer be collected or received by the Servants of the Company.

4. That no Servant of the Company shall thereafter be engaged in the collection or management or custody, of moneys, in the nature of fines and offerings however obtained, or whether furnished in cash or in kind.

5. That no Servant of the Company shall hereafter derive any emolument from the above mentioned or any similar sources.

6. That in all matters, relating to their Temples, their worship, their festivals, their religious practices, and their ceremonial observances, the Natives be left entirely to themselves.

7. That in every case in which it has been found necessary to form and keep up a public force, especially with a view to the peace and security of the Pilgrims or the Worshippers such police shall hereafter be maintained out of the general revenue of the country.73

It was during this time that idolatry, a cultural practice started losing its eminence among rural folks. Robert Caldwell, a missionary of the S.P.G. mentioned that: "The devil worship began to decline after 1850s owing to the extensions of Christianity to the nook and corner of the Tamil society. In March 1844 the Bishop of Madras reported that ninety six villagers in the district had come forward, unsolicited, and by the example of a purer life among their converted countrymen, had utterly abolished their idols and begged to be placed under Christian teaching."74 Despite persecutions, for the most part, group conversions in small numbers continued to take place among the depressed class masses of the southern Tamil Nadu75. In 1886 at Manalkundu in

73 Church Missionary Register, September, 1837, pp. 61-62.
75 The native priest Pichamuthu reported that in 1886, twenty families from the weaver community converted to Christianity. They willingly surrendered their temple to the mission. It was pulled down and the idols were carried to mission bungalow at Nazareth. However, Yesuadian, another missionary goes on to complain that it was very difficult to correct their behaviour that was inconsistent with the demands of the gospel. He wrote that, "As they soon grow irregular in attending the church service, they contract irregular marriages at their pleasure and join in 'Demon' (spirit) sacrifices and they care very little for the education of their children. We thought it undesirable to add such unsatisfactory people on our lists and we have to strike off a few people.

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the eastern part of Tirunelveli district hundred families of weaving background placed themselves under Christian instruction and consented to the destruction of their temple and construction of a church on its site.\textsuperscript{76}

It was noticed that in some villages the anti-idolatry sentiment among depressed classes struck deep root, even before the implementation of the Law of 1833 (Glenelg’s Law). There were signs of people having renounced idolatry and placed themselves under Christian teaching during the time of Ringletaube, a missionary of the L.M.S. After remaining some time at Palayamkottai, Ringletaube\textsuperscript{77} proceeded to Cochin, where he was received kindly by Colonel Macaulay, the British Resident, who promised him to get permission from the Dewan to erect a chapel in the Travancore territory. Thus, the East India Company officials’ patronage towards Christianity started taking a new turn and had a new vigour.\textsuperscript{78} It is also to be noted here that in Tirunelveli alone nearly forty three thousand people had been induced by missionaries to abandon their idols or their devils in 1840s.\textsuperscript{80}

James Hough, the Company’s chaplain at Palayamkottai, and Robert Caldwell thus claim that the devil worship began to decline after 1850s. In March 1844, the Bishop

\begin{itemize}
  \item The interest of colonial officials in such missions’ educational programmes was not necessarily religious. It was both paternalistic and imperialistic. They understood that the education imparted by the missionaries was effective not only in ‘civilizing’ the ‘natives’ but also in making them ‘peaceful and loyal subjects.’ So the position of the government was thus compromised by the delegation of all educational and the philanthropic works to the Christian mission because the latter would undertake such works more cheaply and effectively than the government could. See Lal Dena, Christian Mission and Colonialism, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 40-45.
  \item The Reverend James Hough, a chaplain in the Palayamkottai, went to talks of two Christian villages of Nazareth and Mudalur, south eastern villages of Tirunelveli. He notes that: “The two Christian villages named above Nazareth and Mudalur consist entirely of Protestant Christians. There is neither an idol nor a heathen temple anywhere to be seen, while the stillness that prevailed, contrasted with the heathen abodes, seemed to invest these favoured spots with a degree of sanctity and made me forget for the moment that they were in the midst of a pagan land. In one part, a considerable company of women sat under the shade of coconut trees, spinning cotton and singing Lutheran hymns to the motion of their wheels. See “\textit{Lives of Missionaries}” published under the direction of the Committee of General Literature and Education, appointed by Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, London, 1856.
  \item Robert Caldwell, \textit{Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions.}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 56.
\end{itemize}
of Madras reported that a considerable number of people from depressed class back ground abolished their idols and placed themselves under Christianity.

The people who turned to the new faith viz. Christianity were mostly Nadars or Shanars and Pariahs. To keep them intact missionaries established churches for worship in every village. In addition, converts were bestowed with schools in their own villages for ‘Christian’ education of their children. It is in this context, that Nadars’ attempt to make use of the opportunity of converting to Christianity abandoning their idolatrous practices opened up a new vista to become Christians first and to enjoy the ‘advantages’ of becoming Christians next.

6. Missionaries on Hindu Leaders

Even though the missionaries’ earlier encounter with Hinduism was based mainly on its beliefs and practices, and customs etc., there was a remarkable change in their approach towards Hindu reformers in the early twentieth century. The Anglican missionaries observed that: “The religious situation in India in its relations with other religions, and more particularly in its relation with Christianity, is difficult at any time to estimate and to define. This is difficult at any time for the reason that Hinduism is itself and has always been so ill defined, so amorphous. And this is particularly difficult at the present time because Hinduism appears, more than at any other time in its long history, to be undergoing a process of change and reconstruction which

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82 Edayankudi is situated in the extreme south of Tirunelveli district of that name, signifying the shepherds’ dwelling, extending fifteen miles along the coast and two to six inland. The population in 1844 numbered 27,000, the majority being cultivators of palmrya and poorer and more ignorant than the inhabitants of northern districts. There were few high-caste Hindus among them and not one Brahmin. It was at the beginning of the present century that a movement commenced which might have issued in the eradication of idolatry and the establishment of Christianity. The inhabitants of many villages placed themselves under Christian instruction and considerable number were baptized by Gericke and Sathianathan. The Madras Church Committee in 1893 had recorded their belief that, “The moral tone of the native Christians community is being gradually raised, and that the spiritual life of the Christians of Tirunelveli will bear comparison with any body of Christians of the same standing in the church whether in ancient or modern times.” However, it should also to be noted here that there existed many evils inside the Church including the endless network of family connections and the isolation, envious competition and insubordination. Meanwhile in Tirunelveli alone forty three thousand people had been induced by missionaries to abandon their idols or their devils, to place themselves under Christian instructions in the 1840s. See C. F. Pascoe, op. cit., p. 539; Robert Caldwell’s Lectures on Tinnevelly Mission, op. cit., p. 56.

83 C.F. Pascoe, op. cit., p. 532.

84 The people who put out their idols in Tamil region were drawn mainly from Nadar community primarily for their physical and other material means.
renders the whole religious system and organization more ambiguous than ever in its central principles and more uncertain than ever in its boundaries."  

In regard to Hindu reformers, missionaries were of the opinion that: "That was in 1915. In the years since then much has happened in India, as elsewhere, that has profoundly modified men's outlook. The reform movement within Hinduism has not ceased to exist, but they and the whole of religion that includes them within itself have suffered a change which is unmistakable and significant. This change may perhaps, best be indicated by saying that in the earlier period the life and movement with Hinduism if he may be said to have been within Hinduism can be taken as represented by Mr. Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade, the outstanding figure in social reform a generation ago, while to-day we should rather have to choose a President of Maha Sabha, Pandit Madan Mohan Malavia or Dr. Moonje, or Mr. M. C. Kelker. The former claimed to be true to the Bhagavat Dharma, Hinduism purified and transformed that he laboured to create. To the latter the chief concern, we may say, is not the reformation of the religion, but its establishment in power and prestige. The Hindu Maha Sabha aims not at purging Hinduism of its grossness but by reinforcing its waning energies and equipping itself to resist its rivals and establish its unquestioned supremacy in the land."  

Missionaries not only observed the nature of the twentieth century Hinduism but also its 'alteration' in greater length. The missionaries state that: "The power of Hinduism, its numbers, its prestige, its solidarity - these are the chief concerns, we may affirm, of the Maha Sabha, and its concerned mood at the present time of Hinduism and of Hindus. The chief result is the establishment, with all its desolating consequences, of the spirit of communalism in the land. The consequences from this are sufficiently indicated by a statement submitted by Dr. S. K. Datta to the National Christian Council in November 1926, to the effect that between August 1923 and July 1926, 74 communal riots took place resulting in the death of 258 persons and serious injuries to 

86 Ibid., p. 6.
2811 more. Thus the Hindu religion has supplied the battle-cry in these conflicts and has spread the flame of pride and jealousy and hate which is now burning in so many bosoms. The change in the spirit of Hinduism that has accordingly come about in the last few years, a change from quiescence to aggression, from an attitude of apology to one of self assertion, has had an unmistakable effect upon the whole missionary situation.87

Commenting upon the policies of modern day Hinduism missionaries observe that, "The widespread pride in Hinduism and the adoption of the religion as the banner of national movement almost invariably result in a slowing down of the activities of reform within Hinduism itself, as well as in an increased suspicion of the missionary activities of Christianity. The motive behind religious activity is not now-as it had been in the case of the old reformers-to make the people better: it is to make the nation stronger. Even Babu Govinda Das, courageous as he shows himself in his Hinduism in his assaults upon 'false nationalism' and its vanity, and in his outspoken condemnation of evils, has as his aim the desire to 're-vitalize' his people, to strengthen the sense of national solidarity and national self respect. Still to that end he desires 'to cleanse it of all the degenerate tissue and toxic stuff that has gathered therein'. Others would call in some doubtful allies to the aid of Hinduism. Ever since the days of Swami Vivekananda it has been felt by many Hindus that the traditional Hindu ideal of inaction must be abandoned if India is to advance and take her place among the nations."88

7. From Antiquarianism to Round Table

The missionaries' 'interest' in understanding the history of Hinduism had different perspectives and plans. One of their objectives to study Hinduism was to see it as embodied in living men and women, in their conduct and character, in their aspiration and attainment. The important thing to know was how the personalities of men and women were being 'moulded' by this ancient system. Missionaries explain that: "The desire to get away from mere antiquarianism in our estimate of Hinduism, to make the

87 Ibid., pp. 4-9.
88 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
study of its ancient documents secondary to the study of what it is creating now in human life and experience, is one of the objectives of missionary approach of the present time. Formerly the missionaries were satisfied to look at consequences from the religion such as are written large across the land in the oppression of the outcastes, in idolatry and superstition, in priestly arrogance and impure legend and to say: That is Hinduism. We want now to pierce deeper, and it is because of the desire to make a Hindu inquiry-room where Hindu and Christian alike lay bare their hearts. The aim of this room would be to make ‘Round Table’ to ask each man to tell what religion is meaning to him in experience.”\footnote{Ibid., pp. 17-18.} However, this ‘innovative’ approach to ask the Hindus to discover for themselves the springs of life within their religion did not attract the attention of the depressed class masses nor did it make an impact on the higher sections of Hindu society.

It may be argued here that, the missionaries’ pejorative criticism of the edifice of Hinduism, of Hindu temples does not seem to have to have succeeded. Their attempt to effect some changes in traditional, cultural and religious behaviour through popularizing the teachings of Christ did not give them their desired results. This is partly due to the missionaries’ misinformed knowledge which led them to misinterpret the culture of the people of India and especially on contentious issues of morality and culture. Thus understanding ‘native’ culture in the local perspective continued to elude the missionaries.

Further, the necessity of production of gospel tracts in vernacular languages as part of their religious programmes and for the purpose of popular use had its problems. A scripture, translated imperfectly in a language will not help the semi-literate and illiterate masses to comprehend the central message of any faith. Lamenting the continued failure of Protestant missions, an historian of British India declared without hesitation that: “Translation and distribution of scriptures are one of the chief objectives of missionaries. Their attempt to translate the whole of the scriptures into the most difficult languages with which they were most imperfectly
acquainted..." Another scholar comments on: "The barbarous version with which auxiliaries’ attempt on the part of English missionaries to convert India is a waste of time, patience and money."  

The missionary strategy to create the Christianity of the Western order did not really take place. But they were partially successful in imparting knowledge about Christ and converting a mini section of the Hindu society to the Christian fold. The Christianity which they established in India was a kind of synthesis of Indo-European cultural values and behaviours. In their endeavour to create a community of believers they had to compromise on many of the fundamental Christian values and cultural practices. Almost all the Catholic and Protestant missions failed to fully understand the bed rock of Indian caste system from which the Indian Christianity has not so far come out. The caste system had struck such a deep roots in the social fabric of Indian Christianity that it transcending the order of hierarchy and caste affiliation appears difficult. The attempt to Indianise Christianity met with a serious jolt in regard to its fundamental tenets and principles. The newly converted depressed caste groups of people were able to get some concessions but were not able to come out of the stigmatized caste hierarchy. In fact it could be said that the caste system, instead of losing its relevance, seemed to have gained new power, privilege and fixity in the age of colonialism and missionary evangelism.