

Section 4, Lecture 6. Missions and Missionaries
Robert E. Frykenberg

I. Catholic Missions.

- 1510
A. Earliest arrivals. The earliest European missionaries came after the Portuguese gained control of Goā in 1510. The Dominicans were dominant. They were shocked at the 'heresies' of the indigeneous Nestorian (Syrian) church and attempted conversions to Catholicism. In 1540 the papacy approved Ignatius of Loyola's Jesuits. The Jesuits stressed evangelism, discipline, education, and moral reform.
- 1542
B. Jesuit Francis Xavier (1506-1552). Francis Xavier reached India in 1542 and traveled in different parts of the South, e.g., Tinnevely and Cochin. He made a rough translation of the creed and preached by having his audience memorize the translation. He and the Portuguese at one point aided some low caste fishermen paravans, thereby winning converts. After three years Xavier left for the Far East. In 1560 the Inquisition was established in Goā. There were forced conversions, also conversions through intermarriage and through Catholic upbringing. In 1577 in Cochin, the Jesuits published the first book printed in India.
- 1580
C. Jesuits in the Mughul court (1580-1582). Akbar invited Fathers Ridolfo Aquaviva and Anthony Monseratte to debate with other faiths in Fatḥpūr Sīkrī. The Fathers were warmly received. They built a chapel, translated the scriptures into Persian, and allowed Akbar to attend mass (though he did not take communion). Monseratte accompanied Akbar's expedition to Kabul and left a vivid description of the Mughul army on the move.
- 1605
D. Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656). De Nobili, an Italian Jesuit who arrived in India in 1605, felt that for the Christian mission to succeed it must convert brāhmaṇs. He lived in Madurai where he adopted the sannyāsin robes, hired a brāhmaṇ cook, ate a vegetarian diet, and wore the sacred thread. He learned Sanskrit, Tamil, and Hindū logic, and preached that the Bible was a lost Veda. He translated the Vedic literature into Latin. He established a brāhmaṇ Christian congregation separate from the low-caste paravan congregation. In 1623 a papal bull sanctioned de Nobili's segregation of the Christian castes. De Nobili's brāhmaṇ pretense was eventually discovered, after which only a few brāhmaṇ converts remained.
- 1690s - 1850
E. The French Catholics. French Catholic missionaries worked in French enclaves from the late 17th century on, e.g., Masulipatam, San Thomé (near Madrās) and Pondicherry in South India, Chandernagore in Bengāl. Abbé J. A. Dubois (1770-1848) was a French missionary in South India who learned Tamil, moved with the local population, translated the Pañcatantra into French, and recorded Indian life (cf., Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies). The decline of Portuguese and French political power in Europe was accompanied by the decline of their missionary activity overseas.

II. Protestant Missions.

- A. Early missionary activities in the New World. Early English missionary societies included the Society for the Propagation of Christian

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Knowledge (SPCK) founded in 1699, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) founded in 1701. The goals of these Societies were to provide pastors for the colonies, attract dissenters back to the established church, and to convert Negroes and American Indians. A Boston Society was founded in 1730, and a New York one in 1741.

- B. Danish-Halle mission to India. The first Protestant mission to India started in Danish Tranquebar in 1706. Two Halle-university trained Germans, Henry Plütschau and Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, founded a Lutheran mission under the patronage of the Danish King Frederick IV. The King was concerned for the souls in his trade colonies. Plütschau and Ziegenbalg set up an orphanage and a Tamil school. Ziegenbalg gained respect for Tamil culture and Indian philosophy; he translated texts, set up a printing press, and published hymns using Tamil lyrics. The rapid growth of congregations came mostly from the lower castes. Rev. Christian Friedrich Schwartz (1724-1798) was the most outstanding missionary of the 18th century. He started with the Danish Tranquebar mission, then worked with the English SPCK; in Tanjore he served as regent, British resident, and even ambassador to Tipū Sulṭān. He never married and never returned to Europe. The decline of Halle university in Germany did not prevent a continuation of the Tanjore work by the SPCK, SPG, and Church Missionary Society (CMS). The Danish sites of Tranquebar (South India) and Serampore (Bengāl) continued as missionary bases; they were finally sold to England in 1884.

- C. English missionaries in India. The East India Company employed chaplains for its staff. Otherwise it initially barred mission activity from the territories it controlled, since it was concerned lest missionaries offend Hindū or Muslim sensibilities and engender revolt. The early English Baptist missionaries, e.g., William Carey (1761-1834) worked from Danish Serampore. They set up a printing press, stressed English and regional vernacular publications, and helped stimulate Bengālī prose literature. Considerable popular pressure in England led to the Company's 1813 charter revision that permitted missionary activity in the Company's territory. Some Company officers (e.g., Charles Grant) recognized the potential usefulness of missionaries as ideological allies in reforming India. The Church Missionary Society (CMS), an Anglican organization founded in 1799, spread over the entire subcontinent. In the 1820's Bishop Reginald Heber recorded his observations on Indian social life (cf. Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India). In 1859 the historian John Kaye wrote Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative.

- D. Other missionaries in India. After the 1813 charter revision, missionaries arrived in India from America, Scotland, Canada, Germany, and Scandinavia. The missionaries typically practiced comity, i.e. the division of territory to reduce competition and confusion to Indian Christians. Thus the Congregationalists worked in Mahārāshtra, Tamil Nādu, and Ceylon; the Presbyterians in U.P. and Panjāb; the Methodists in U.P. and M.P.; the Baptists in Burma, Orīssā, and Āssām (where there were widespread conversions

Plütschau
Ziegenbalg

1706

Schwartz

1750s

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of Nāgā tribesmen); etc. Converts continued to come typically from tribes or the lower castes. The missions' stress on education and their preference for employing Christians encouraged social mobility. Problems of inter-caste congregations arose; sometimes castes were separated by demarcated seating areas in church buildings; problems arose also in the sharing of communion. Even today widespread Christian caste endogamy continues. Formerly there were 'mass movements' of converts to Christianity in which entire villages or castes became Christian simultaneously. Since the 1920's Gāndhīanism, and since the 1950's neo-Buddhism have captured lower caste mass-movement appeal in states such as Mahārāshtra and Gujārāt.

III. Missions and Indian Identity.

- A. Establishment of models for educational institutions. Christian prestige institutions still remain, e.g., Madrās Christian College, Vellore Medical School, Allāhābād Agricultural Institute, St. Stephen's College in Delhi, and several St. Xavier's colleges.
- B. Contribution to renaissance of vernacular literatures. Missionaries were often the first to set up printing presses, systematize vernacular expressions, compose grammars, and prepare language instruction materials. They encouraged vernacular hymns, tracts, and Bible translations.
- C. Contribution to descriptive records. Missionaries have left valuable accounts of beliefs, customs, and histories of different areas, e.g., Dubois, Heber, the Wisers (see Behind Mud Walls).
- D. Challenge to Hindūism, Islām (directly or indirectly). Many Indian intellectual reformers in the 19th and 20th centuries were stung by, and responded to the challenges of, missionaries, e.g., Vivekānanda once stated, "If all India...takes all the mud that is in the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it against the Western countries, it will not be doing an infinitesimal part of that which you are doing to us."
- E. Contemporary challenge to Indian identity. Typically, perhaps unconsciously, some missionaries have held up Western models and affinities. Some Indians have resented missionaries living in isolation from the mainstream of India, maintaining a gap between their standard of living and the standard of living of those around them, sending their children to hill schools, yet interpreting India to their fellow countrymen. In 1956 the Niyogi Committee report criticized missionaries, particularly evangelists. It saw them as weakening the loyalty of India's citizens and as potential agents for outside governments. The Government of India has restricted the numbers and activities of missionaries. It has debated whether or not the constitutional right to propagate religion should be restricted to Indian citizens but not extended to outsiders. Among Indian Christians there is increasing pressure to turn over church operations, direction, property, and funds to Indians. There is also a tendency to reduce distinctions between Protestant denominations (note United Church movements in North and South India).

IX. HISTORY OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TO HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

We will look here at Christian encounters with Hinduism and Buddhism during the modern mission movement.

1. The Pre-Modern Era: Westerners as Guests (1700-1800):

1.1 Era of exploration. The West sent diplomats and traders to new lands, and set up trade stations.

1.2 Missionaries, such as Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, came as guest to local kings. They had functional roles such as religious teachers, printers, educators. They were not identified with colonial rule which had not yet been set up, though they were associated with the West.

Missionaries were often culturally and religiously sensitive. They studied Hinduism and Buddhism, and dialogued with Hindus and Buddhists.

2. The Modern Era: Westerners as Parents (1750-1950):

2.1 Western business and colonial expansion.

- Westerners assumed the superiority of western 'civilization'.
- they formed 'benevolent nation states', uniting India which had been divided into different kingdoms. In doing so they exported western bureaucratic organization systems.

2. Characteristics of modernity.

- there is one system of truth which is acultural, historical and universal. This led to an either/or approach to truth. There are absolutes that can be known.
- knowledge should be objective and based on experience and reason. Absolutes can be known fully and accurately.

2.3. Goals—a better world.

- superiority of science seemed self-evident.
- superiority of western civilization led to conquest, and enlightenment projects.
- superiority of Christianity was assumed because of its concern for all humanity.

2.4 Methods of spreading modernity.

- introduce literacy, education, medicine and the Christian doctrines.
- confront cognitive error through polemics. Use proof and reason to convert people.

2.5 Attitude.

- the common attitude of westerners was that they were superior, and that they had the

‘white man’s burden’ of teaching natives how to be civilized.

3. Missions in the Modern Era:

- 3.1 Stressed Christianity as one universal system of truth, acultural and historical.
- 3.2 The goal was not only to Christianize, but also to Civilize and Commericalize the people.
Note: Commericalize was introduced by David Livingston as a means to undermine slavery, which he saw first hand and hated. Consequently most missions planted churches, started schools and literacy programs, and built hospitals. Due, in part, to the Supernatural/Natural dualism in0 the mind of the missionaries, the results were mixed. Many people accepted modern science, but rejected Christianity
- 3.3 The view of other religions was one of radical rejection of Hinduism and Buddhism as pagan religions. The means of conversion were often confrontational and argumentation. There were notable exceptions, such as Silas Fox and E. S. Jones.
- 3.4 The basic approach was noncontextualization, and radical displacement of old customs by western Christian ways.
- 3.5 The missionaries imported the West’s tendency to build big institutions. Schools, hospitals, and churches were organized as institutions, whose organization was largely foreign to South Asia. This became a problem when these were turned over to native churches which did not have the financial resources to run them, and did not understand the bureaucratic organization principles in which they were built.
- 3.6 While the missionaries loved the people and made great sacrifices, too often they perceived as being arrogant and superior, and as ‘parents’ trying to teach children.

4. The Post-Modern Era (1950 –):

- 4.1 Collapse of colonialism and modernity:
 - the western empires, built over 200 years, largely collapsed in 20 years after World War II. Over sixty new nation states were formed in a short period of time.
 - due to a deep encounter with other religions and philosophies, there was a loss of faith in reason as the foundation for truth. This occurred first in religion, and later in medicine, and science itself.
 - globalization through rapid communication and travel made the world increasingly one but also increasingly confronted by pluralism and resurgent localisms.
 - in India there is a resurgence of Neo-Hinduism and Neo-Buddhism as fundamentalist reactions to the global pressures. Increasingly these have expressed themselves by becoming involved in politics through the starting of religiously based parties.

4.2 Characteristics of post-modernity:

- deconstructionism attacked all universals and meta-narratives, and all exclusive claims to truth, and branded these as power plays through the hermeneutics of suspicion.
- localisms, such as cultures, religions and nations, are affirmed
- subjective experience is valued over reason. Personal experience is seen as self-authenticating.
- instrumentalism, pragmatism and relativism are the new epistemological foundations.
- the goal is peaceful coexistence. The top value is tolerance, and dialogue as learning from one another, not sharing personal convictions in order to convert others.

5. Missions in the Post Modern Era:

- 5.1 Dismantling missions: there is a move for missions to close down, and for the missionary to “go home.” This is largely in reaction to the colonial nature of old missions. 1
- 5.2 Indigenization: there is a move to transfer ownership of the large mission institutions to the native churches, who can hardly afford or know how to run them. The result has often been court fights over property, problems of unaccounted funds, and questions of styles of church leadership.
- 5.3 Theologically local theologies have emerged, often focusing on issues such as liberation of the oppressed, and material well being for Christians on earth.
- 5.4 In inter-religious relationships there has been a stress on inclusivism and pluralism, and a need to recognize truth and salvation in all religions. Conversion and claims of exclusivism are rejected as colonial arrogance and power attempts to control the situation. The method advocated is dialogue in order to learn and be transformed, not to convert others.
- 5.5 The social sciences enter the picture through the Church Growth Movement, and other mission models that study contexts and let the contexts shape the questions and interpretation of the texts.
- 5.6 Signs and wonders, and power encounter become dominant themes in the spread of the gospel.

6. The Post-Post Modern Era (2000 —):

- 6.1 This takes the critiques of modernism by post-modernism seriously, but goes beyond post-modernism to offer a new understanding of history, humanity and truth. It is based on a critical realist epistemology that combines objective truth with subjective perception, cognitive with affective and evaluative understandings, and the limited nature of human knowledge. It affirms diversity but stresses the underlying unity of humanity, and the need to deal with felt needs but to move to real ultimate needs.

- 6.2 The method stressed in this era is bearing authentic witness to what we know. We are not God's lawyers, but his witnesses. In bearing witness we empower the people by giving them additional information on which they can act. To force them to accept our views is colonial. To withhold information that might help them is also colonial, for we make the decision to act on it, not they.
- 6.3 We must stress the spiritual dimension of the Gospel, and not reduce it to materialism, formulas and a better life on earth. We must come as spiritual people, not as administrators, doctors, teachers and activists.
- 6.4 We must go to ordinary people, not only to the intellectuals and elite. We must deal with 'folk religion,' and not only with 'formal religion.'
- 6.5 We must work towards new, less institutionalized forms of ministry. The new churches struggle with institutions turned over to them. Some they maintained with government aid, but now the government is dictating what can be taught and who can be hired. Meanwhile, the church is dependent on foreign funds to run many of its programs. This dependency has sapped its vision and hindered its growth. We need to work out new forms of global partnership in which the church worldwide helps local churches in their outreach and ministries.
- 6.6 We need to contextualize ecclesiology and leadership styles. We are still exporting western forms of bureaucratic organization. We need to focus on people, not programs. We need to encourage nonformal forms of education, and local forms of medical care. We need to help churches develop self-sustaining forms of pastors and evangelists. We need to help form new communities of faith for converts who leave strong religious communities, and now find themselves alone. We can also encourage large religious gatherings as celebrations of unity and faith.

X. EVANGELISM AMONG HINDUS

Adapted from Dr. Theodore Srinivasagam

1. Hindrances to Hindus following Christ:

There are several hindrances for Hindus accepting Christ, and following Him. A few of these are given below.

1.1 Hindrances emanating from theological issues:

- 1.11 The need for **salvation**--Hindus say, "We are not sinners, only ignorant."
- 1.12 The Christian claim of the **uniqueness** of Jesus Christ, and a call to leave other gods and goddesses.
- 1.13 The call to **conversion** and separation leading to changing one's faith, religion, way of life and community.
- 1.14 Fear of the **wrath of their gods** (especially their community gods) if these are forsaken.

1.2 Hindrances pertaining to Christian Community:

- 1.21 The many denominations and divisions in the church are a great hindrance. So too the many litigations among Christians.
- 1.22 Nominal Christianity in the church confuses Hindus because they often mistake nominal Christianity as the genuine one, and so reject it.
- 1.23 Worship of idols and veneration of saints by the Roman Catholic Church gives the impression that Christianity is not very different from Hinduism.
- 1.24 Most Hindus identify Christianity with western culture because of the western Christian way of worship, the use of western songs and music, and the way Christian festivals such as Christmas are celebrated with eating, drinking and dancing. Also the mannerisms in preaching, psychological techniques used in evangelistic meetings, dependence on western theology and literature, and architecture used in church buildings are foreign to India.
- 1.25 Many Hindus view the church as being rich and receiving funds from the west. So conversion to Christianity is construed as being due to financial inducements.
- 1.26 There are several misconceptions in the minds of Hindus about Christians. Some of them are:
 - they are not patriotic,
 - they have lost their culture and are westernized which is considered bad,
 - they come from lower castes,
 - they eat meat including beef,
 - and they are considered bad and immoral in some parts of India.

1.3 Hindrances pertaining to socio-cultural issues.

Hindus live in close knit communities and caste groups. While many would like to break down these barriers, they are afraid to do so, owing to social pressures. Some hindrances that spring from these issues are as follows:

- 1.31 They fear being ostracized from their community and caste groups, and labeled as betrayers.
- 1.32 They believe that only lower caste people become Christians, and so fear mixing with them.
- 1.33 They are afraid of being labeled unpatriotic.
- 1.34 Marriage prospects and employment opportunities in the community are less if they become Christian. [Some men are willing to become Christians to marry a Christian woman, but many question whether such conversions are genuine]

1.4 Hindrances pertaining to economic issues:

- 1.41 Hindus fear being cut off from claims to family property.
- 1.42 They fear the loss of government concessions and jobs offered to untouchables.
[Note: the government does not consider Christians to be untouchables, even though they are converted out of untouchable castes]

2. Approaches to Reaching Hindus.

2.1 Religious aspects.

A theology that is consistent with the bible and at the same time that can be understood by the Hindu mind longing for peace and bliss needs to be developed.

2.11 General approaches to reaching Hindus.

2.111 **Use of words:** One should fully appreciate that words such as God, trinity, world, human, sin, salvation, rebirth, and incarnation have entirely different meanings and connotations to Hindus. So when using these terms one should explain what the Biblical view is of these. Take the example of 'sin'. For many Hindus there is no such thing as sin; for others it means committing crimes such as murder or adultery; for still others it is going against one's conscience; and for still others it is going against the wishes of their family, caste or community.

2.112 **Use of bridges:** One should look for bridges between the Christian faith and Hinduism, just as Paul did in Athens. Some of these are as follows:

- there is a lot of wisdom in Hindu Scriptures. One can use sections or quotations from them, such as from the Rig Veda, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, either to clarify or reinforce a truth.
- using of certain terms such as 'Trinity.' The Hindus can grasp this easily as there are similar concepts in Hinduism such as Trimurthi (Brahma, Vishnu, Siva as one). Or we can use terms like *sat-chit-anand*. However, we must be fully aware that 'Trinity' is very different from Trimurthi, and so on.
- Hindu respect for Scripture should be fully used. Quoting from the Bible, reading it, and having bible studies has a profound influence on Hindus.
- while the concept of *avatar* (appearances of gods to destroy evil dowers) is ingrained in Hinduism and can be used to explain the incarnation, it should be

done so cautiously, for the two concepts are very different.

2.12 Approach to specific groups of Hindus:

Because Hinduism varies a great deal, no one approach will be satisfactory in reaching them all. So, before evangelism of Hindus is attempted, one should get to know the beliefs and practices of the particular group to whom we are witnessing, and then devise a suitable strategy to reach them.

As intellectual Hindus are concerned about God, humans, the soul and so on, we should not only understand the various schools of thought in philosophical Hinduism, but also be clear of the biblical teaching and then present the Gospel to them along these lines.

The following approaches are useful for specific groups of Hindus:

2.121 Philosophical Hinduism: Today this consists largely of *Vedanta*. This kind of Hinduism is attractive to intellectuals. It derives its philosophical systems from the Vedas and Upanishads. Because the soul of God and humans are in union, no savior is needed. There are three main schools of thought in this area:

- *Advaita*: The best proponent of this was Sankara (788-820 a.d.). This is the philosophy of non-dualism. God and humans are not different, but one.

- *Vishistadvaita*: The best proponent of this was Ramanuja (1017-1137 a.d.). This is the philosophy of modified dualism. God and humans are separate, but share one soul.

- *Dvaita*: The best proponent of this was Madhava (1199-1278 a.d.). This is a philosophy of dualism. There is a clear distinction between God and humans, with the former being superior. There is some evidence of Christian influence on this philosophical system.

2.122 Bhakti Hinduism: Most Hindus are in some degree followers of *bhakti* or salvation through devotion to a god. It is important to realize that this form of Hinduism is closest to Christianity, and so there are many bridges. Yet it also possesses some of the greatest problems because of its doctrine that all gods are one, and that each person should have the right to choose their own god [*ishta devata*].

2.123 Popular Hinduism: This is based on traditions, temple cults, worship of idols, fear of spirits, magic, exorcisms, and so on. Adherents are devoted to certain gods and goddesses who bring prosperity and protection to them. They also worship and do rituals to appease them. Here fear is a common emotion.

Because this type of Hinduism is extremely varied, the presentation of the Gospel has to be made specific to the needs of each group of followers of a certain god or goddess. To those afraid of their deities, the message that 'God is love' has a powerful attraction. Emphasizing the moral character of God, and highlighting the positive aspects of the Christian faith which are negative to Hinduism also helps. Popular Hinduism is mixed with spirit worship, and preaching the power of God who can deliver them from the power of evil spirits has a positive

influence.

- 2.124 **Tribal Religions:** Tribes throughout India practice a great variety of religions, some influenced in varying degrees by Hinduism. Central to most is the fear of spirits, magic, worship of animals, plants and totems, and divination. Worship is to appease the spirits, and gain protection and prosperity. The Gospel should be presented to them as the deliverance of God from their fear of the evil spirits. Furthermore, most tribals are exploited, and the message of the love and justice of God is attractive.
- 2.125 **Mystic Hinduism:** There are many gurus of Hinduism with varied emphases. Some stress meditation and yoga. Others claim supernatural powers of healing, performing miracles, foretelling the future, etc. Thousands follow such gurus. When presenting Christ to followers of this type of Hinduism, the emphasis should be on meditation, in the Christian way, on the God who can heal and perform miracles, and on the Holy Spirit.
- 2.126 **Secular Hindus:** There are a growing number of nominal and secular Hindus who may be materialist, and who accept any religious practice, or are indifferent to religious practices. The reality of God and the non-permanence of the material world should be emphasized in preaching the biblical message.
- 2.17 **Hindu Sects and Cults:** There are various sects in Hinduism such as Shaktiism, Tantrism, Hanuman worship, Kali worship in Bengal, Venkateswara in A.P., Murugan in Tamilnadu and Swami Ayyappa in Kerala. We need to understand their teachings in order to present the Gospel to them.
- 2.18 **Militant Hinduism:** In recent years various Hindu reform movements are giving rise to militant Hindus opposed to the spread of other faiths among the Hindu population. They are involved in propagating Hinduism and reconverting people of other faiths, including nominal Christians, back to Hinduism. Such movements include the Arya Samaj, Rama Krishna Mission, Vivekananda Kendra, Hari Krishna, and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sang (RSS). A number of these have joined to form the Vishwa Hindu Parishad which opposes the spread of Islam and Christianity. We must remove their apprehensions about Christianity and present to them the God of love and forgiveness.
- 2.13 Hindu concepts that can be used in presenting Christianity:
- 2.131 **Karma and the cycle of rebirths (*samsara*):** Jesus Christ, because of his death on the cross, has taken the penalty of our sins and so delivered us from the cycle of rebirths and *karma*.
- 2.132 **Peace or *shanti*:** We can obtain peace with God through Jesus Christ. At core,

Hinduism is a search for peace.

- 2.133 **Bliss:** Being in communion with God is bliss and this can be had through Jesus Christ.
- 2.134 **Holiness:** Hindus respect ‘holy people’ which is evident by external marks such as simple life-style, worship, asceticism, suffering, peacefulness, and so on. The Christian message can be a powerful tool to a call to true holiness in Christ.
- 2.135 **Love:** To the majority of Hindus who are afraid of their gods, the message of a God of love is a powerful attraction.
- 2.136 **Immortality or *amrita*:** This has a powerful attraction to common people who have little interest in becoming a part of the one cosmic spirit.
- 2.137 **Salvation or *mukti*:** This, too, has a great appeal to common folk.
- 2.14 Christian concepts that can be emphasized: There are several Christian concepts that are important in presenting the Gospel to Hindus:
- 2.141 **Creation:** The creation of the world by God in an orderly way--a creation that obeys the laws set by the Creator (there is no theology of creation in Hinduism).
- 2.142 **Scriptures:** We need to present the Scriptures as historical facts (in Hinduism all scriptures are myth or other-worldly stories).
- 2.143 **Jesus:** We need to present Jesus as a historical person with a recorded genealogy.
- 2.144 **Peace:** God offers us peace through Christ.
- 2.145 **Salvation:** This is a gift of God because of God’s grace to us.
- 2.146 **Sacrifice:** Jesus is our once-for-all sacrifice for our sins.
- 2.147 **Forgiveness:** We can have assurance of forgiveness of sins.
- 2.2 Social and Cultural Aspects:
The social and cultural aspects of following Christ should be explained to inquirers. Some are listed below:
- 2.21 In becoming a Christian one is not denationalized in India. Many Indians are Christians and good Indians.

2.22 The constitution and law of India does not prohibit conversion, and permits the practice and propagation of Christianity and other religions.

2.23 One can still be a member of his/her community even after conversion, and be actively involved in the life of the community.

2.24 Christianity is not a western religion. Jesus was an Asian living with an Asian way of life. One does not have to adopt a foreign culture to become a Christian.

2.3 Economic aspects:

Economic aspects of following Christ should be explained to seekers and new converts.

2.31 Financial and other aid should never be promise to seekers.

2.32 The likely loss of economic benefits from the government should be pointed out to seekers from lower castes.

2.33 Faith in God to meet their material needs should be emphasized and case histories given as examples to seekers.

2.4 Dangers to avoid:

2.41 Theological issues:

- do not excessively use Hindu terminology that would lead Hindus to feel better informed and content with Hinduism.
- do not criticize anything that is treated as a curse in Hinduism (such as caste) as there are several Hindu reform movements fighting against them.
- do not use too tender a method of presenting the Gospel as the people may take the concepts of judgment, sin and wrath of God too lightly.
- do not criticize Hindu worship or symbols.

2.42 Community issues:

- do not discourage seekers and new believers from following their own language, music, drama, and customs so long as these do not contradict Scriptures.
- do not discourage new believers from taking leadership in local congregations.

2.43 Economic issues:

- do not give material inducements to seekers.
- do not make new believers dependent on you for material benefits.
- do not flout your wealth in front of seekers.

3. Methods that can be used to make Christ relevant to Hindus.

Before starting evangelism of Hindus in an area, groups likely to respond to the Gospel should be identified. These may be caste groups, age groups or professional groups. Sometimes only women, or only men are responsive. Then select direct and indirect methods to witness to them.

3.1 Direct methods: Direct methods vary from place to place, and community to community.

- preaching in the open air, as well as in homes.
- one-to-one and group Bible studies.
- producing and distributing literature relevant to the group.
- showing Christian films.
- using culturally relevant music, cassettes and music groups.
- having culturally relevant radio and T.V. evangelism.
- large open air meetings, especially in urban areas.
- bhajans, songs, acting sequences, dramas.
- Christian reading rooms, game facilities and gathering places.
- praying for God's healing.
- using dialogue leading to the proclamation of the Gospel.
- repeated visits and explanations of the Gospel to the same families and communities.
- concentrating on family units rather than individuals. Normally we should not baptize one spouse. Rather wait until they come as a couple.
- retreats, special meetings for seekers.
- use revived churches as centers for evangelism and church planting.

3.2 Indirect methods:

3.21 Church and worship:

- congregational worship is absent in Hinduism and attracts many Hindus. So interested Hindus should be taken along to worship services.
- sitting and praying in groups attracts Hindus.
- remove shoes on entering a church and sit on mats. This makes the Hindus feel more comfortable, and is a general sign of worship.
- use locally composed songs set to local music using local instruments.
- the church architecture should conform to the local setting.

3.22 Home and family:

- invite Hindu friends to Christian homes, especially to family functions such as weddings, festivals, etc. This helps break down barriers of misinformation.
- care for Hindu neighbors and help them in times of need.
- be a helpful member in the community. This gives opportunities to witness.

3.23 Social concern:

- concern for the poor, needy, sick and helping meet human needs helps people see the love of Christ.
- projects undertaken in the name of Christ to help people become self-reliant brings good will.
- medical work, both hospital and community, is very effective.
- where illiteracy is high, literacy classes, schools and hostels for children have made a great impact.

Finally, it must be realized that in spite of all our knowledge about Hinduism and techniques to reach Hindus, it is prevailing prayer for our Hindu neighbors, a consistent Christian life style, and dependence on the Holy Spirit that will bring these people into the Kingdom of God.

XI. CHRISTIANITY AND CASTE

There has been much debate about a Christian response to caste. Behind this are several fundamental questions.

1. Caste is a Social System:

1.1 Its nature as a social system:

- exclusive membership: each person belongs to only one group.
- exhaustive membership: every person belongs to a group.
- groups are ranked: based on purity and pollution.
- groups are closed: entered by ascription through birth, and gotten from one's parents.
- relationships between groups are defined by the caste system that regulates roles and relationships between castes.
- relationships in the caste system are based on complementarity, rather than competition.
- the caste system has been very stable over long periods of time, and so provides security and makes life possible in difficult circumstances.

1.2 Its effect on Christianity:

- prevents individuals from converting due to social pressures.
- converts have no communities, and so often have no corporate identities.
- western missionaries are usually individualistically oriented, and call for personal conversions. They often misunderstand the dynamic of group conversions in corporate oriented societies.

2. Caste as a Religious System:

2.1 Nature:

- Caste is based on the Hindu concept of purity and pollution.
- Caste is based on the Hindu concept of hierarchy, and the intrinsic inequality of humans.
- If caste dies, Hinduism [*sanatana dharma*] dies (Gandhi).

2.2 Its effect on Christianity:

- converts are often forced to worship family and caste gods, and take part in household rites and Hindu festivals, even though they have the right to worship their own personal god.
- converts perpetuate caste and concepts of religious pollution and hierarchy in the church.
- castes divide churches, and now divide denominations.

3. Christian Responses to the Caste System:

3.1 Reject caste:

- short run: conversion largely among low castes—high caste stay away. Long run: the

- upward mobility of low caste converts leads to conversions among the high castes.
- difficulty to get individual converts, so encourage multi-individual conversions in castes.
 - stress the Christians as a new community or *jati* in the Spirit, breaking down all caste barriers.

3.2 Acceptance of caste:

- short run: probably more high caste converts, possibly fewer untouchable converts.
- caste becomes a part of the church, and undermines the fundamental message of the Gospel of the unity of the body of Christ, and the breaking down of the walls that divide humans on earth.
- post-conversion teaching to reject caste has been largely ineffective.

4. Modernity and Caste:

- 4.1 Modernity is beginning to undermine the caste system in the public sphere, but little in the private spheres of life, such as marriages and religious rituals.
- 4.2 Modernity and secularism are freeing people to convert more freely, but this also means that nominal Christians are leaving the church.