

The Hindu Organ.

"Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached."

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The Hindu Organ.

JAFNA, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1928.

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT IN CEYLON.

THE FINAL REPORT OF THE SELECT Committee of the Legislative Council which was published in our issue of the 3rd instant deserves the careful study and consideration of the public. No institution can better promote local patriotism and public spirit; and can give to the people a wider scope to exercise direct and immediate voice in matters that vitally concern their daily life than a village or a town committee. In the past history of the Island under Sinhalese or Tamil rulers the village institutions filled a large and a useful place in the social, political and economic life of the people. We owe to these institutions the preservation of the independence, and integrity of the Buddhistic or Hindu culture. They outlived all political changes that have taken place in the past.

"The village communities," says Sir Charles Metcalfe: "are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution..... but the village community remains the same. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, has, I conceive contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the peoples of India, through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."

Even under the rule of the Portuguese and the Dutch they retained their vitality and influence. They only fell into desuetude under the crushing weight of the British centralisation. The attempt to revive the village institutions in the sixties of the last century was only half-hearted. The popular element under the old ordinance was reduced to a shadow by reason of the superimposition of official authority over them. The amendment of the old ordinance effected by No. 9 of 1924, no doubt, brought about the much desired change by granting the Village Committees right to elect their own Chairmen. But there were very serious defects in the ordinance itself which fettered the smooth and efficient working of the Village Committees and called for their removal.

The local organisations which function today are many and of a varied type. The District Board and the Provincial Road Committees constituted under Ordinance No. 10 of 1861, the Local and Sanitary Boards constituted under Ordinances of 13 of 1898 and 18 of 1892 respectively are semi-official bodies. The popular element can exercise little or no influence in the administration of matters that come under their purview. The Municipal Councils, too, are under the thumb of the official control. The Village Councils and Urban Councils are the only local bodies that enjoy an effective measure of popular control. These local bodies with the exception of Urban Councils do not have at present provincial or central organisations to co-ordinate and supervise their work. They were all working in isolation.

According to the recommendation of the Select Committee these semi-official organisations cease to exist and their work will be allotted to Village Committees, Town Committees, Urban Councils and District Boards. Their recommendations regarding the constitution of Village Committees should be considered good. But in regard to Town Committees the Report does not go far enough. The Special Commissioners have taken a more liberal view of the constitution of the Town Committees than the members of the Council. The Select Committee reports that the nominated members should not exceed one third of the elected members. The nominated members include official members too. The Commissioners are precise in this matter. They are of opinion that if official members are appointed to Town Committees they should remain there as advisers without the right to vote on any matter that may come before them.

Open Letter to Mr. J. M. Hensman

A REJOINDER VIII.

Sir, Your letter which appeared in the "Morning Star" of the 17th August is divided into two parts. The 1st part is an attack on Hinduism. In launching this attack begotten of your ignorance of it you are asserting that Hinduism cannot stand the ordeal of historical criticism if it is applied to it. The issue to be decided is not the vulnerability or the invulnerability of the Hindu religion but that of Christianity. It is the latter religion that is being tested for your edification in the crucible of scientific and historical criticism. Your religion stands or falls with the historic revelation of your God in Jesus of Nazareth. It stands or falls with its sufficiency for all time. It stands or falls with the unquosness of the personality and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. If the claims made on his behalf are untenable, if the special revelation in Jesus is a moonshine and is contrary to the light of reason and common sense and to the facts of the religious experience of mankind, then the orthodox evangelic Christianity of which you come forward as the champion crumbles to pieces. I am glad that you recognise in a way the collapse of this Christianity under the fire of historical criticism. It is a poor consolation to you to imagine that Hinduism will share a worse fate under such criticism. This is neither the time or the occasion to demonstrate to you the invulnerability of the Hindu religion. You are a person who has not understood the fundamentals of neither Hinduism nor as a matter of fact of any religion. I should not press on to the 2nd part of your letter without enlightening you at least on one central fact of the Hindu religion which though a digression I cannot nevertheless help doing.

Hinduism is not a religion which stakes its existence on the historicity of any particular individual or of a special revelation or on the acceptance of dogmas propounded and passed by majorities in ecclesiastical councils. It is a religion which invites allegiance of mankind not to individuals but to spiritual virtues and principles discovered in the region of religious experience by a host of sages and saints who have as it were seen God face to face. This is the bad rock of the Hindu religion which neither canons of historical criticism nor any chemical, physiological or psychological analysis nor any method of deductive or inductive of reasoning can destroy. The god of Hinduism is not an "absentee God" ever idle since the first Sabbath sitting outside the world and seeing it go" but a God "closer than breath and nearer than hands and feet." His relationship to the world is thus set forth in the following lines of Skandapurana:

என்றதுமென்னெயென்வெறிமணிபரவமென்ன, என்றதுமேதுகான்நமடி. மென்சகலாமைதன்நம், நன்றதுவரியசேநிதானைவுகமென்கு, முன்னொடுமுமுமுகியொருமையார் பரவுமென்றே.

காணனுகிந்தானேகருணையாலெவைபுகியாயருயிருமுதமேவியனைத்தையயிமற்றிற்றும்பூரணமுதலவன்.

To realise this God, to know him in the regions of pure consciousness beyond the veil of thoughts beyond the limitations of objective knowledge is the supreme end of existence. To know Him is to enter into the centre of Life which is God Himself.

பாக்கினைக் கட்டித் தாயினுஞ் சாஸ்பரிந்தரி பாகியே னுடைய னனைனை யருக்கியுன்னொளி பெருக்கியுலம்பிவா னுன்ற மாய தேளினைசொகரித்த புறப்புறத் திரிந்த செவ்வென சிவபெருமானே யானனைத் தொடர்ந்து சிவசெனப் பிகுத்தேன் என்செயுந் தருளுவ தினியே.

There anything more sublime and beautiful than this expression of the realisation of God in the heart of the human soul nor is it easy to find such godly experiences as are found in any religious literature with its dogmas and certitudes as passages of understanding. Christianity with its intolerable burden of dogmas has failed to realise this truth during the last 19 centuries. Even though some of its exponents realise the force of religious experience as a test of religion yet they cannot shake up their mind to admit it for fear of losing those doctrines which have fanned the flame of religious animosity throughout Christendom in all its epochs. It is high time for Christianity to give up the doctrines of exclusive salvation, of eternal punishment of the uniqueness of Jesus and of the finality of the ecclesiastical or Biblical authority and to sit at the feet of Hinduism and learn the harmony and unity of religions by entering under its guidance into the region of religious experience which neither the allegiance to Hebrew traditions nor the assimilation or absorption of the Greek culture has succeeded in teaching the followers hitherto. Historical criticism of which you feel so nervous has a useful purpose to serve. It is only by such criticism that your religion can be driven to take up an attitude of humility and teachableness for its own good. The second portion of your letter begins with vituperation both of the writer of the letter and some of the scholars whom he has cited in support of his case. You are aware of the common saying that a person who has

a bad case to support always abuses his opponent. You appear to belong to this class. Truth is truth, no matter what its source may be.

எப்பொருள் யார் யார் வாய்க் கேட்டிருமல்பொருண், மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்பதறிவு.

I invite you to consider the wisdom contained in the couplet of Saini Thiruvalluvar. Truth does not become untruth because it is uttered by rationalists. Rationalists are men who have done great service to Europe in good many matters. It is they who restored to Europe the sense of truth, destroyed for several centuries by ecclesiastical mendacity. It is they who brought home to the Church the lessons of humanity which it has forgotten in perpetrating those barbarities on innocent men and women. It is they who abolished the horrors of judicial torture "in almost every country," says a historian, "the abolition of torture was at last effected by a movement which the Church opposed and by men whom she had cursed."

But the writers whom I have cited are not all rationalists. Some of them are Christians; some are Unitarians, while others are Jews. The late Dr. James Martineau and Rev. Travers Herford are Unitarians; Dr. F. F. C. Schweitzer and Dr. Montefiore are Christians; Gerard Friedlander and Dr. Montefiore are Jews. With the exception of Dr. Martineau they are all in the lead of the living. No amount of vituperation can tarnish their reputation in the field of Biblical research. The perfectness of your Jesus is now a thing of the past. Neither emphatic declarations, nor empty denunciations, nor piteous cries and sobes can restore to Jesus of Nazareth the perfectness which he has forfeited at the bar of history, Biblical scholarship and of comparative religion.

You say that Mr. Lecky from whose works I have taken two extracts is against me. Your hasty anxiety to pick up holes in my letter has betrayed you to imagine things which I have never said. I never stated that I had on Mr. Lecky's opinion. In fact I said in my letter No. 5 that Mr. Lecky is a historian not unfriendly to the Christians. I took those extracts from Mr. Lecky as it contains good summary of certain historical events and facts associated with your Church. If you have borne in mind that there is a distinction between fact and opinion you would never have rushed to such hasty conclusions.

You say that you have opinions of scientists and philosophers to support your contention. I am very glad to hear that. You parade to me the names of three, viz. Lord Kelvin, J. S. Mill and T. H. Huxley. I don't copy their pre-eminence in the field of scientific and philosophic knowledge. But Biblical Scholarship was not their forte. I will show you now that even a Christian like Lord Kelvin would not support your blind orthodoxy. Lord Kelvin was a mathematician and a physicist. Did you ever try to ascertain from his writings how far the Bible's theory of creation and the age of the earth are consistent with his mathematical theory of the origin and the age of the earth? Did you try to ascertain from his writings how far his conclusions about the Solar system are consistent with Joshua's stopping the course of the sun for a couple of hours in order that he might complete the massacre of the innocents.

You are referring me to a statement of John Stuart Mill. I regret that you don't give me the reference to the work or the occasion where it was expressed by him. In my opinion it is probable that he may have made that statement in the course of his Recital address at St. Andrew's University. Mr. J. S. Mill was a free thinker. Free thinkers were never regarded with any favour in the older English or Scottish Universities. His election as the Rector of St. Andrew's University was a public recognition of his valuable contribution to knowledge and to the public life of Great Britain. He was addressing a body of Christian students. He would not abuse the trust reposed in him by asking the younger minds to follow Buddha or Mahomed, or his own Guru, Jeremy Bentham. But nobody will blame him for asking the students to follow the founder of their religion. If Sir Herbert Stanley has been invited to preside over prize giving of a Buddhist institution and if he has asked the Buddhist boys to follow the precepts of their religion, does it follow that he had become an acquirer and an adorer of the Buddhist religion.

You are also referring to Thomas Henry Huxley, I greatly sympathise with you in your appeal to Huxley for support. Huxley is a man of Science. He is a master of literary expressions and of condensed sarcasm. No man more effectively exposed the Christian professions as the late Mr. Huxley. Did you read, Sir, Mr. Huxley's Science and Hebrew Tradition or his work entitled Science and Christian Tradition? In the latter work did you read the Chapter on Gadarene Demons? I wish that you note in that chapter the sentences: "Everything that I know of Psychology..... everything that I know of Anthropology..... everything that I know of Pathology..... This is a quotation from memory. I refer you to that book. I can tell you, Sir, that it is the candid opinion of Mr. Huxley that Jesus is a wonder-maker and an excretist of the first rank.

Continued up.

Co-Operation in the North.

CENTRAL BANK TO BE FORMED.

A public lecture was delivered at Vaddukkai on August 30th at 6.30 p. m. by the Joint Registrar Mr. W. K. H. Campbell on "Co-operation" and the Honourable Mr. W. Duraiswamy presided on that occasion and introducing the speaker said that Co-operation in the North is growing by leaps and bounds owing to the characteristics of Mr. Campbell and his assistant Mr. W. P. A. Cooke. Further he spoke of the traditions of the Cooke family with Agriculture and had great pleasure in introducing the speaker for the evening.

The other meeting was held at the Central College on Friday the 31st ultimo. Presided over by Mr. J. D. Brown, Government Agent Northern Provinces. Mr. Campbell's speeches which covered the same ground at both the meetings are summarised as follows:—

Co-operation, he said, was making itself felt in Ceylon. It was a movement of great possibilities for improving the economic conditions of a country. Co-operation was a democratic movement. Co-operation aimed not at giving something ready made to the people but to make them do things for themselves.

THE PRIMARY SOCIETY.

He hoped that everybody realised the general policy and control of individual societies. The first link in the chain was the primary society in the villages. At the stage of its inception official support was necessary. Before long that stage would be passed. Societies would group themselves into Unions and carry on. To finance the Societies he hoped in the near future to see a Co-operative Bank springing up. The greatest defect at present was that the Societies were depending entirely on Government help. The Government had just gone through a series of good years. The Government had much money and did not know what to do with it. Things were, however, taking a different turn. When the Government cash box became empty the first money to be withdrawn would be the loans given to Co-operative Credit Societies. If the Government withdrew its help they had no financial organization of their own to help themselves. He wished that the Co-operative Societies could be in a position to snap their fingers at Government about money. He was quite certain that it could be done. In India they had succeeded in doing it. Two and a half years ago the Societies in India got through a Central Bank 217 millions of rupees. It was difficult to realise that.

MONEY-LENDER'S GRIP.

Mr. Campbell proceeded to a detailed discussion of the organization and working of a Co-operative Society. The cultivator in Ceylon was in need of not only instruction in scientific agriculture but he needed to be saved from the grip of the money-lender who absorbed the greater share of the cultivator's profits.

Co-operative societies must come to his aid and if they are to be financially sound they must have a Central Bank which would lend only to the societies with unlimited liability. Unlike commercial banks the business was not complicated. A commercial bank might fail but not a co-operative bank. Such investments were real gilt-edged securities. With regard to rate of interest, that the bank could offer to depositors, it was a detail to be worked out by the Committee of management. The bank of course did not exist to make huge profits, neither was it a philanthropic concern.

Continued.

Next man to whom you make the appeal is Napoleon Bonaparte. I give you more particulars about Napoleons confession. Your quotation is taken from an alleged confession said to have been made by Napoleon at St. Helena in the last days of his life. Time and again the genuineness and authenticity of these confessions have been challenged. Notwithstanding this fact these confessions running to a few octavo pages have been embodied in many books on Christian evidence. Even if they are genuine they were made by a person at a time when his intellectual powers were impaired not only by solitary confinement in a lonely and desolate island but also by the rankling sense of injustice which he bore, the European nations have perpetrated against him.

Lastly you are referring to Prof. Stokes. You rely here for your information to the Bishop of London. The initial of the Professor is not given. If Prof. Stokes is identical with the late Sir George Stokes, then the Bishop is referring to a person who died about twenty years ago to disprove the growing unbelief of the people of the present day in Europe in the truth of Christianity. The remaining portions of your letter of the 17th ultimo will be dealt with in my next letter.

Yours etc., A STUDENT OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

J. Hoos, 4-9-28.

