

**MISSIONS IN INDIA. THE
RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION OF
UNBELIEVERS, 7 LETTERS**

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Missions in India. The religious education of unbelievers, 7 letters by Henry Douglas

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HENRY DOUGLAS

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THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF
UNBELIEVERS.

Missions in India.

THE
Religious Education of Unbelievers.

SEVEN LETTERS

BY THE LATE

RIGHT REV. HENRY DOUGLAS, D.D.,
BISHOP OF BOMBAY.

WITH PREFACE

BY THE REV. E. S. TALBOT, M.A.,
Warden of Keble College, Oxford.



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PREFACE.

A LAYMAN, whose published writing has proved his ability and right to deal with the subject,¹ has asked me to set a few words of Preface at the head of these letters.² I am not qualified to do this by familiarity with the subject: and the name of the author of the letters would seem to make it almost needless that it should be done, were it not that their publication without comment might be construed into a hostile attack upon the working of Societies who have earned undying honour by their bold and patient pioneering in the Indian Mission field. It is well, therefore, that some one should extract and replace at the head of the letters the Bishop's own words (p. 5.): "If we criticize, we criticize in sympathy, and because we heartily desire the object which they have in view:" and on his behalf should beg even those whose own methods of work are touched by his frank and outspoken criticism to say whether every page of the following letters does not prove that the motive which prompts them is as far as possible from being one of a polemical kind. The danger which he apprehends to certain great principles of

¹ See a pamphlet entitled *Missions in India*, by Lieut.-General Tremenhare, C.B., London, Henry S. King and Co., 1876.

² Published originally, without the Bishop's name, in a Church periodical at Calcutta in 1872.

faith and reverence, and, in a less degree, the injury to the work of Missions which their violation must entail, wholly occupy his mind. If the letters are written in controversy, it is controversy of that wholesome and lawful kind which consists in the calm and solemn appeal for an investigation, or a re-investigation, of the bearing which acknowledged principles of Christian faith have upon a particular branch of the Church's practical and administrative work. To my own mind the Bishop's argument commends itself as entirely conclusive. But if it were to be proved that he was mistaken, a discussion of such a character on a subject of such importance cannot fail to be a gain: it cannot fail to quicken in all who follow it, or take part in it on either side, that sense of the vital connection between the work before us and the faith in which it is to be done, which the most devoted worker, in the midst of the detail and routine of work, finds it hard to preserve.

I have said thus much in regard to the object with which these letters were written by the Bishop and are now published. I should like to add a word about the effect which the arguments here urged ought to have upon the estimate formed of the past history of Christian Missions. For they constitute a grave case undoubtedly against a large side of the work of those Missions. And therefore their publication touches us all. And it would be futile to hope that the blame, whatever it be, which has been incurred in any department of that work will not in great measure attach itself to the whole cause. No exact distinctions between the work of the Church and that of the Societies within her, or between one group of Christians and another, can prevent this from being so at least in the sight of men, but probably to some

extent in the sight of God also. The common Faith, the Church, all its members, these all will bear the reproach of the errors of Christian work by whomsoever committed, and their strength will be proportionately weakened. I should hold it foolish to take any part in such a publication as these letters, and not to regard oneself as taking thereby the attitude of confession at least as much as that of criticism. And therefore I am the more anxious, while confessing Christian mistakes, to point out the witness which these very mistakes bear indirectly to the greatness of Christian work. We may own that there have been faults—even grave faults—in the Church's work, yet there is something of nobility even in her faults. She has erred; but so to err is only given to what is noble. The large-mindedness which has confidently assumed that the spread of knowledge must ultimately minister to the witness of Christ: the large-heartedness which has lavished this education on Christians and heathens without asking questions: the patience to work for the future without visible present result with which our missionaries have gone on year after year, maintaining these mixed schools with a merely nominal amount of encouragement in the shape of conversions among their scholars, and with which during all that time, diverting to these schools large sums which a "narrow-minded" view of the Church's work would certainly have insisted on spending upon purely "religious" machinery,—surely these are qualities which, rightly guided, may accomplish great things; surely they are qualities which ought specially to conciliate the respect and sympathy of Englishmen.

It must be our prayer that God would enable our Church to employ these qualities in the future for His glory with

maturer strength and wisdom, and with a fuller organisation, in which the various gifts of her many members, and of the differing schools within her pale, may be combined by the Lord the Spirit from whom they come into the wealth and power of a many-sided and harmonious work.

Is it not at least a lawful and pious hope that for such a result the prayers of him who, out of his zeal and care for the cause of his Master, wrote these words on earth, are continually offered in Paradise, and heard?