

THE REFORM OF MISSIONARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

By THE BISHOP OF MADRAS

I

THE main lines of our present policy of missionary education in India were laid down by Dr Duff in his great educational work in Calcutta seventy years ago. At that time the Indian Christian community was a small body, and in North India was largely composed of small, struggling congregations of poor people dependent on the missionaries for support. Dr Duff conceived the bold idea of first capturing the higher castes in Calcutta by English education combined with definite Christian teaching, and then using the converts from the higher castes to evangelize the lower castes in the villages. At first this policy seemed likely to meet with success. Dr Duff's educational work shook Hinduism in Calcutta to its foundations. A certain number of young men from the leading Hindu families became Christians and Hindu society was seriously alarmed. But in spite of this initial success and of a certain measure of success in after years, the experience of the last fifty years has shown that the ideas which inspired Dr Duff's work were in the main fallacious. Though high schools and colleges after his model have been established all over India and much energy and ability have been thrown into them, comparatively few converts have been made. It is not from these classes or as a result of this work that the Church has been built up during the last half century. Christianity is not, as Dr Duff anticipated, first capturing the well-to-do and educated classes of the towns and cities and then permeating down to the poor and uneducated

classes in the villages ; on the contrary it is capturing the poor and uneducated classes in the villages and through them is revealing its power to the classes above. If we may venture to prophesy from what we now see taking place before our eyes, the Christian Church will gradually rise from the bottom of society to the top, instead of beginning at the top and descending to the bottom. What happened in the first century in the Roman empire is happening to-day in the Indian empire ; God is choosing the weak things to confound the strong and the unlearned to confound the wise. It does not follow, however, that the work of Dr Duff and his followers was in its own day a mistake or that it has not been fruitful in good and useful results. On the contrary it has produced a small, select body of educated converts who have done valuable work for the Church ; it has spread among the educated classes a knowledge of the Bible and a profound respect for the human life and character of our Lord : it has helped to set before the educated Hindus and Mohammedans a high standard of morality : it has created a spirit of friendliness on the part of large numbers of Hindus and Mohammedans towards their Christian teachers. As a preparatory work under the conditions which prevailed during the last half of the nineteenth century it was admirable. But at the same time we ought now frankly to recognize the fact that it is not to this work that we must look for the building up of the Church in India and that the rapid development of the work among the outcastes in the villages, with all its wonderful possibilities, has brought about a state of things which necessitates a reconsideration and, as I believe, a drastic reform of our educational policy. The Church is sweeping into its net vast numbers of the outcastes and aborigines in the villages in all parts of India. These great mass movements among the outcastes have often been described during the last ten years and they have given rise to a literature of their own. I need only quote now two of the resolutions unanimously passed at the

National Conference held in Calcutta under the presidency of Dr Mott at the end of 1912 as summing up the general experience of all the Protestant missionary societies in India with reference to them.

These mass movements, if properly dealt with, will be of untold value to the cause of Christ in India. The work among these classes is dealing a powerful blow at the caste spirit, which in some parts of the Church has had so fatal an influence in paralyzing its missionary spirit, and also is a great witness to that law of God's kingdom by which He chooses the weak to confound the strong, and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are. It is a remarkable fact that wherever in the village districts the work among the depressed classes has been most successful, there the caste people have been most ready to hear and accept the message of the Gospel. It is noticeable, too, that no part of the Church's work in India excites more concern and emulation among many sections of the educated classes. This in itself is a strong testimony to the influence of this work as a witness to the true nature and power of Christianity.

The task before us is gigantic. We desire to impress upon the Church in India and at home the imperative need of grappling with it in earnest. To gather in this harvest, and to train and educate the converts, demand a far stronger and more widespread effort than has yet been made.

These resolutions are sufficient proof of the wonderful opportunity that these movements are opening out to the Church, the urgency of the crisis they are creating and the imperative necessity of grappling earnestly with the great and difficult problems which they present to us.

But since those resolutions were passed the movements have grown in strength and the urgency of the crisis has become far more acute. An excellent pamphlet written by Bishop Warne of the Methodist Episcopal Church in North India entitled *India's Mass Movement*,¹ a pamphlet which ought to be widely read by all people interested in the conversion of India, gives some very striking and significant statistics with reference to the progress of their own missions in India during the year 1915. He states that there were :

Baptized by his Church in India last year	. 35,000
Turned away by his Church in India last year	40,000
Waiting inquirers who have waited in vain	. 150,000

¹ See Bibliography No. 267. IRM, 1916 (April), p. 348.

Allowing for an over sanguine estimate these statistics show that if the Methodist Episcopal missions had been sufficiently equipped with an adequate staff of trained Indian teachers, catechists and ministers, and with an adequate body of American missionaries to superintend them, it would have been perfectly possible for them to have received as catechumens about 200,000 people during the year 1915. And the Methodist Episcopal Church does not represent one-tenth of the whole Protestant missionary force in India.

The report of the work of the Wesleyan Church in the single district of Nizamabad in the Hyderabad State for 1915, given in an article in *The Foreign Field* for June 1916, tells very much the same story on a smaller scale and shows that the conditions under which the Methodist Episcopal missions are working are by no means exceptional. The report says :

The whole countryside seems to be turning to Christ. Within eight months nearly 2000 people have been received into the Church and the end is not in view yet; as many more are sure to come within the next four months. . . . Four thousand people in our thirty villages is the harvest we are assured of. But the Holy One of Israel is not to be limited. It is abundantly evident that we are face to face with a Pentecost here such as the two Anglican missionary societies had when in South India during one year they received 19,000, and a noble, well-nigh independent church is the result.

It is necessary continually to insist on the fact that these movements are growing in strength, because there is a widespread notion among the churches at home that they are merely ephemeral and in a short time are likely to die away. This is an utterly false and mischievous idea and ought to be put away once and for all. It is responsible for a great deal of the failure of the various churches to deal with these great movements adequately and effectively during the past twenty years. We must face the fact that these movements have come to stay and that what is now a movement will probably in a few years become an avalanche. But setting aside for the moment future

possibilities let us face the situation with which the Protestant missions have now to deal. The government census of 1911 gives the number of Indian Christians as 3,574,770, of whom 1,806,862 were Roman Catholics and Romo-Syrians, 1,452,746 were Protestants and 315,162 were Syrians not in communion with Rome. The average rate of increase of the Indian Christians as a whole during the last thirty years, according to the reports of the government census, has been just over 33 per cent each ten years, or about $3\frac{1}{3}$ per cent each year. This would give an annual increase of over 107,000 during the last five years. We may safely reckon, therefore, that there are at present just over 4,000,000 Indian Christians and, as the Protestant Christians taken alone have increased each decade at the rate of about 50 per cent, we may estimate that about 1,800,000 of the Indian Christians are Protestants. Now, according to the government census of 1911 83 per cent of the total Indian Christian population was then illiterate. Separate figures are not given to show the exact percentage of illiteracy in the different churches: but, assuming that the Protestants are rather better educated than the Roman Catholics, it must still be true that at least 75 per cent of the Protestants, that is 1,350,000 out of 1,800,000, can neither read nor write. And it must be remembered that we are adding to this mass of ignorant people at least 60,000 illiterates every year. I need not spend time in proving the grave dangers of an illiterate church in India. It would be a prey to superstition and division and would never rise much above the low moral level of the class from which it has sprung. The only alternative to education would be a dominant priesthood, and I do not imagine that any of my readers would be willing to accept this alternative. And apart from the danger to the church itself, an ignorant and illiterate church will never be able to play the great part that the Indian church ought to play in the conversion and regeneration of India. If we gather the outcastes into the church and then elevate them by

education and Christian teaching, they will be a powerful witness for Christ and their conversion will be a sure stepping-stone to the conversion of the caste people above them. On the other hand if we leave them in their ignorance they will prove a fatal barrier to the progress of Christianity.

The question of the education of the Indian Christians, therefore, is one of the most important and most urgent questions of the day in our missionary work in India. It is already heavily in arrears and the arrears are being piled up at an alarming rate year by year. The conclusion that I draw from these facts is that we ought to recast our educational policy and give it a new objective. It was originally framed in Dr Duff's day mainly with a view to the education and conversion of Hindus and Mohammedans, it ought to be remodelled now mainly with a view to the thorough education of the Christians. I do not say that this ought to be its only object, but I do say emphatically that it ought to be its main object, and I fully believe that by making our educational system better adapted to the training of Christians we shall also best fit it to do the subsidiary work of educating and converting non-Christians. I will state briefly the main changes that I think are needed in the immediate future.

- (a) In the first place we need a very large increase in our village schools. I have not been able to obtain complete statistics with reference to all the educational work of all the missions working in India, but I know that all the missions with which I am acquainted are seriously defective in the supply of primary schools for the education of their Christian children in the villages.
- (b) Then we need a much larger number of trained teachers for primary schools and many more training schools for the training of teachers. A large number of missions have no training schools at all, others have badly equipped training schools

and very few have training schools thoroughly well equipped and efficiently managed.

- (c) Then, again, we need a larger body of educational experts trained in the most up-to-date methods of primary education to direct and manage our whole system of village education. At present we aim at just barely satisfying the requirements of government with a view to drawing government grants: but it must be frankly said that the government have never yet seriously taken in hand the subject of village education in India. When they do so, they will not rest content with the standards and methods now in vogue in our village mission schools.
- (d) And lastly, we ought only to maintain the schools and colleges that are needed for the education of the Christians and to ensure that each institution has a complete staff of Christian teachers and a Christian tone and atmosphere. At the present moment we have a large number of schools and colleges that are not needed for the education of Christians, and in a considerable number of the schools and colleges which are useful for Christians the number of Christian students is so small and the proportion of Hindu teachers or professors so large that the atmosphere of the school or college is Hindu rather than Christian. This is bad both for the Christian and the non-Christian students. It prevents both classes from feeling the full power of Christian faith and life. What, I think, is needed is a large reduction in the number of our high schools and colleges and a far more intensive Christian life and a higher standard of secular education in those which we maintain.

I will take a concrete case to illustrate the policy of co-operation that I advocate. There are in the Tamil

country of the Madras Presidency six first grade and two second grade colleges for men, all affiliated to the Madras University. The largest of these is the Christian College at Madras. It contains about a hundred and twenty Christian and about seven hundred non-Christian students. About half the professors are Christians and the other half Hindus. In the other colleges the proportion of Christian to non-Christian students is smaller and I think also the proportion of Christian to non-Christian professors. I have not before me exact statistics on the latter point, but I feel sure that I am right in saying that none of these colleges has anything like a complete Christian staff. In all these colleges, therefore, though the Bible is regularly taught and the Christian influences are strong, still in the main the general atmosphere of each college is Hindu rather than Christian.

The only way to secure a college with a really Christian atmosphere in this area would be to concentrate all our efforts on the Christian College at Madras, and instead of these six colleges to have one college with about 250 Christian students, a complete staff of Christian professors, including about twenty Europeans and Americans, and only about 400 non-Christian students. The atmosphere of the college would then be Christian not Hindu, it would be more strongly manned and better supplied with funds and equipment, and so more efficient from an educational point of view, than any of our colleges can be under the present system; the Christian students would be better cared for and a far more intensive Christian influence would be brought to bear upon the non-Christian students. The college might also be a strong centre of Christian activity in the city of Madras. The professors could take a leading part, not only in educational matters but also in municipal business and social reform. Both professors and students might take up the work of social service and put themselves at the head of all movements for improving the condition of the poorer classes in the city. In this way the Christian

influence of the college would make itself felt far beyond the lecture rooms and the college students.

If this scheme of concentration were to come within the range of practical politics I should propose that the college should acquire a large piece of land on the outskirts of Madras close to the South Indian railway and that each denomination should be allowed to establish its own hostel for its own Christian students. There would also be one or more hostels for non-Christian students; and it might be desirable to allow hostels to be built for Christian students attending the Medical College, the Law College and the Engineering College in Madras, in order to create a large and strong centre of Christian life and to secure the best possible moral and religious influence for the whole body of Christian students. There would be a central library and reading room and recreation rooms for all the hostels, and a common hall where religious services and meetings of all kinds would be held; but each hostel would have its own chapel for its own denominational services. Playing grounds of all kinds for cricket, football and tennis would be liberally provided. The institution should be planned from the first on a large scale, so that it would form the germ of a residential university within the non-residential university of Madras. Its object would be to provide a college education and a corporate life of a superior and more efficient type than anything that at present exists in South India. The reproach levelled at the majority of our missionary colleges now is that from an educational point of view they are inefficient, and as time goes on and the standard of education rises and the demands of the mass movements make larger and larger calls on the resources of the missionary societies, it is more than probable that this reproach will be justified. It will then become a serious disadvantage to the Christian community that it is compelled to receive its education at inferior colleges or to do without Christian teaching and influence. It would be far better, from this point of view alone, to combine

our forces and have one thoroughly well-equipped college in Madras rather than to have five or six poorly equipped colleges scattered over the presidency.

I have outlined this scheme only as an illustration of the way in which the policy I am advocating would work in the matter of missionary colleges and to show the drastic changes to which such a policy would lead. I am not putting it forward as a carefully thought-out scheme. But I feel sure that our educational work would gain enormously in power and efficiency if we could apply this policy of co-operation to our whole system of higher education and aim at intensive Christian influence in a few institutions rather than at a wide diffusion of it over a large area. The newly established Christian College for Women in Madras has set us a good lead with its strong Christian staff and intensive Christian life. It is at present only in its infancy, but it has at any rate lived long enough to demonstrate the possibility and the benefits of the more excellent way of co-operation.

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