

EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN TURKEY

IN THE modern political contact of the Christian with the non-Christian world, the decisive factor has been that of education in its widest sense. The attitude assumed by the different Western Powers as to imparting it to their Oriental and African subjects has varied. Some have offered it freely, and others have only given such teaching as they must, in order to supply subordinate officials for the work of administration. But for a century or more we may say that the relation has been, on the part of the paramount powers that of dispensing such educational benefits as they deemed desirable and useful, while on the part of the subject races the attitude has been that of receiving it, at first unwillingly, but gradually with more and more appreciation of its value. In varying degrees the non-Christian nations have appraised the value of Western education and shown eagerness to acquire it, perceiving that it was this which gave the Western peoples their superiority. The beginning of this century shewed that the one Asiatic nation which had freely and unreservedly set itself to educate the people as a whole, was the one which had proved its fitness to take a recognised place in the world comity of nations. Japan has thus furnished the most effective of object lessons to Asia and also to Africa. The Chinese, the Indian, the Malay, the Persian, the Turk, the Egyptian and the Zulu are trying to realise or to revive a strong national life and grasping more or less the truth that this is possible only for the nation which finds itself by means of a true and effective popular education. For this reason, the elements of the problem of education in non-Christian lands are now demanding a new adjustment. In some places the demand of the people for education is beginning to outpace the supply by the ruling power, and when, after this war, the nations settle down to development under new conditions, we may be sure that the work of

providing education for the non-Christian world will have increased enormously in extent and complexity.

The bearing of all this on the missionary task leaps to the eye. One great differentiating mark of modern missions, as compared with ancient, is the fact that everywhere the missionary has been an educator, not only in religious truth, but in so-called secular knowledge, for he has come to recognise that truth is a whole, being based on the one supreme reality. In the development of modern missions, world knowledge has proved to be not only no hindrance but a positive help to the knowledge of God, and the school is almost everywhere the hand maid which goes before or follows upon missionary effort. But in almost all mission fields the fact is being forced upon us that, however the system of missionary education in any given country may be developed and increased, the demand for Western education on the part of the people themselves is increasing in a far greater ratio, and that it is leaving the missionary supply of education ever further behind. Moreover, the development of national consciousness in the countries of the mission field is tending to produce a demand that education shall be supplied in the form in which the people themselves desire it, and there are signs on their part of impatience with what others, even those better qualified to judge and more able to act, may think best for them. The question now being debated of a conscience clause for State-aided Mission Schools in India is an illustration of this tendency, and it illustrates the fact that missionary education has arrived at a new parting of the ways.* The weighty questions that have to be dealt with cannot be treated from any platform of racial superiority, or even superior knowledge and experience alone. We have learned that the education of the individual child must be based on the rightly interpreted facts of his mental equipment and development. And the education of the nations of lower culture must follow the same line. The task of the missionary is, cordially to take his share in aiding the

* See article by Mr. J. H. Oldham in *International Review of Missions*, January, 1917, pp. 126 ff.

mental and moral development of those who come to him for their equipment in knowledge, while making it his supreme business to impart to them that life in Christ which affords the only sufficient inspiration and control of the powers imparted by the schoolmaster.

These principles have a special application to the work of the educational missionary among Moslems. The arrested development of Islam has nowhere been more clearly evident than in its system of education, based on an effete, mediæval philosophy, overweighted with almost exclusive attention to a sacred language, badly taught to the majority of Moslems who do not speak it, and vitiated by outworn methods which hamper the teacher at every turn. Even in India where, under a Western rule, the Moslem community has had before it the object lesson of a Hindu majority rapidly progressing by its diligence in acquisition of Western education, it needed all the wisdom and tact and energy of Sir Sayyad Ahmad to impress on his fellow Moslems the imperative necessity of acquiring modern knowledge by modern methods. This energetic reformer succeeded to no small extent in infusing the desire for progress into his fellow-religionists, and the Anglo-Mohammedan College at Aligarh is a monument of his activity, though internal dissensions amongst Indian Moslems have prevented it as yet from developing into a Moslem University.

In Turkey for two generations past the need of educational reform has been theoretically recognised by the State, but during this period almost the only effective work in the production of modern teaching has been done by European and American agencies, mainly missionary. One need only instance the great Robert College at Constantinople.

But there are signs that the great war is creating a new situation, and the indications of activity in this direction deserve the most serious attention of the missionary body at large, if we would hold ourselves in readiness to cope with the tasks that the new movement for education will assuredly bring in the Near East. The abolition of the capitulations, that is, the treaties which gave foreigners

in Turkey the right of appeal to representatives of their own nationalities, instead of to the Turkish tribunals, is likely to be the starting-point of a new era in respect of education, as well as of other matters. Meanwhile the subjects of the Entente powers have no access to Turkey, but Herr Schulrat Eberhard, the principal of a German Training College, who has made a thorough study of education in the Turkish Empire, gives a clear and presumably trustworthy view of what is actually happening in the way of educational reform in the Ottoman State in a pamphlet entitled *Bildungswesen und Schulreform in der neuen Türkei* (Education and Reform of Schools in Modern Turkey). The writer is well disposed towards Christian missions, as is shewn by the fact that the substance of his pamphlet appeared in the *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin* (published by the Basel Missionary Society) for July and August 1916.

Herr Schulrat Eberhard begins by referring to the heterogeneous composition of the Turkish Empire; the cleavage between the Arab and the Turk, and between the Christian and the Moslem, and asks whether a modernisation of Turkish Islam is possible without Christianisation. He thinks it may be, if the old bad methods and faulty ideals are put aside and right lines are followed. The Moslem ideal of education, more especially in Turkey, has developed under the rule of a despotic government. Its basis is formal book-learning. A tradition says that "the ink of the scholar is not less valuable than the blood of the martyr" (that title being of course given to the soldier of Islam who dies in battle for the faith). Education is absolutely under the rule of the teachers and the tradition of Islam which, up to the present, have prevented anything like a free development. To a certain extent it may have been spiritualised by mysticism, but that influence has not developed sound principles or methods.

The golden age of Turkish education dates from 1451-1566, that is, from the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation in Europe. The opening of this period is marked by the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, and the reign of Sulaiman the Magnificent. But,

while the sparks of Greek learning lighted fires of progress in all directions in the West, when its teachers were scattered from Constantinople, the secular triumph of Islam set a seal upon the arrested and even reactionary development of its scholarship. Nothing that was produced during this golden age helped the progress of science and discovery, or of philosophy and morals, and little enough was of value for literature. The Shaikhul Islam was then, as now, not only supreme pontiff, but also Minister of Education, as well as Chief Justice. He decided equally what was to be taught to the educated youth of the Empire and how the law was to be administered for the people at large. Education was patronised by the State, and the Madrasa (school) was the gate to office, but it led nowhere else; and the gradual decay of the Turkish Empire till the middle of the nineteenth century was but the outward sign of an inner barrenness and lack of progressive knowledge. At length, in 1846, under the pressure of contact with the Western powers, which regarded Turkey as "the sick man of Europe," the Porte issued an Irada, or decree, embodying a comprehensive scheme of education. Not that the supremacy of the Shaikhul Islam and of the Ulamā (divines) under him was done away with, but a Ministry of Education was appointed with Directors and Inspectors galore. The schools were divided into lower, middle, and upper; the lower, or people's school being given a primary and a secondary department. The middle schools were divided into what we might call modern and grammar schools. The high schools included technical institutions, normal colleges, and the University of Constantinople. The elementary schools were to make provision for non-Christians, as well as for Moslems. In the middle schools uniform was worn by the boys and French methods prevailed. But almost all this reform and organisation was on paper. In 1913-1914 the 3,526 elementary schools had less than a quarter of a million boys and girls, in the proportion of five boys to one girl. Private schools, of which a good number would be missionary, had 125,000 boys and 61,000 girls. The middle schools were repre-

sented by 11 grammar schools with 6,200 pupils, and 69 modern schools with 10,600 pupils. Private schools of the middle grade are said to have had 12,600 children. The higher, or university education, numbered 6,677 students of whom 839 were normal students, 2,842 law students and 1,212 literary students.

Female education under State supervision has made some progress, and there is undoubtedly a feminist movement in Turkey which is doing its best to develop schools for girls. For instance, a National Girls' School was opened in October 1913, in a suburb of Constantinople, and the "Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Turkish Women" is endeavouring to promote domestic teaching, side by side with literary.*

The expenditure on education in 1908 is given as £400,000; in 1913 it was £1,000,000. The figures make one realise how slender the provision has remained since the middle of the nineteenth century; but also how the necessity of increasing it is realised by the Turkish authorities; and this apparently more since war began.

According to Herr Eberhard, the State system of education has swallowed up the purely Moslem schools; but there are schools in Turkey for various non-Turkish nationalities. Amongst these, the Armenians lead the way in education, both of boys and girls. Notwithstanding the massacres of 1894-1896, 818 "Gregorian" schools outside the capital in 1901-1902 contained 60,313 boys and 22,380 girls under 1,597 men and 556 women teachers and the revolutions of 1908 for a time gave them an impulse; but what their condition must be now, since the Turco-German Jihād of 1915 may be imagined. The Greeks in 1905-1906 had 1,496 schools with 119,690 pupils. In almost every Greek settlement of over 500 persons in Turkey a school was maintained by the people. In fact it was largely the educational progress made by the Christian populations, together with the influence of Western educational missions that stimulated the Ottoman State to set on foot its own system of education.

* See the article on "The Feminist Movement in Turkey," by Miss E. D. Ellis and Miss F. Palmer in the *Contemporary Review*, June 1914, pp. 857 ff.

The foreign schools have been a very influential element in Turkish education, both by example and by the extent of their work. Shortly before the outbreak of the war they stood thus:

	Schools	Pupils
France,	530	54,000
England,	126	10,000
Russia,	105	12,000
Italy,	67	5,000
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Total	828	81,000
All of which are now closed		
	Schools	Pupils
America,	273	18,000
Germany,	23	3,000
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Grand total of Foreign schools	1,124	102,000

The great majority of these schools were, of course, for the benefit of the Christian populations of Turkey. The author does not mention any figures which show what fraction of Moslems attended them, but he holds that they constituted a national danger to the Ottoman Empire, and were mainly subservient to foreign political interests, except of course in the case of the German schools. Hence Turkey did well to abolish the capitulations which placed foreigners under the jurisdiction of their own consuls and to throw herself into the arms of her own powerful and disinterested friend.

The new laws of December 1914, regarding institutions and of September 1915, for schools place all foreign hospitals, schools and other settlements under Government supervision. The teaching of Turkish is made obligatory; exercise of religious influence on those of other faiths is forbidden. Unsanctioned schools are abolished at two months' notice and new schools of foreign character may only be established for a foreign population.

What a task is hereby imposed on the Turkish authorities who, in addition to the crying need for progress on their own ground, have to provide substitutes for such a

mass of foreign teachers, is obvious. Herr Eberhard clearly enough indicates the difficulties that lie in their path, chiefly the inveterate tendency to begin from the top, and make a great show in the higher education, while neglecting the spade work of the elementary schools. He points out, too, that many economic and political reforms must go on side by side with it, if educational progress is to be sound; but he also believes that "the German bearer of culture will be able to understand the enigmatic soul of the East and hand in hand with the ancient teaching and tradition of the Orient, to develop a modern oriental civilisation." He hopes that the resistance of passive inertia to the Prussian-Pestalozzian ideal of popular education will be overcome by the faculty of sympathy and organizing ability of the German school mission and that the words of a writer of the early nineteenth century will be realised: "The stranger coming to Prussia, whoever he might be, realised that the life-breath of the bureaucracy rested upon the people, as once the spirit hovered on the face of the waters."

This view of the psychology of a worthy Prussian educationist is illuminating. But the practical problem at present for the missionary is to consider how he is to face the new intellectual developments of the nations. Japan is not an enemy, but a valued friend, and yet in Chosen (Corea) she has given ten years' notice to Christian Missions (mostly American) that, with a view to developing a sense of Japanese nationality among the people of Chosen, all religious instruction in State recognised schools must cease. Re-discussion of the conscience clause in state aided schools in India presents the same problem in another form. The missionary to Moslems, to Buddhists and to Hindus will have to think hard, and pray hard, that he may be able to solve it on the basis of faithfulness to his call from God, with due adjustment to the varying forms of new life among the nations.

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London.