

An Illustration from V. S. Azariah

A few months before his consecration as Bishop of Dornakal, Mr Azariah, in a letter to a friend in England, said: 'At this place there is only one family of Christians . . . I was trying to tell the evangelists the new method of training the congregations; and I gave model lessons in this congregation. The man for the first time opened his mouth to pray. He said "Oh Father who art in Heaven, You are our Father, we are Your children. Keep us all well. Heal my rheumatism and my child's boil. Keep us from all wild animals, the bear and the tiger. Forgive us our sins, our quarrels, angry words, all that we have done since morning. Make us good. Bring all the castes to kneel down to You and call You Father." He did not know that he ought to finish it in a set fashion and I thought I would not trouble him with the Greek "Amen". For two months the catechist had tried to teach the Telugu Lord's Prayer, but "it will not come" to him. The young boy was the only one who could proceed unaided up to "Lead us not". We felt greatly encouraged at this result. On the second day his relation, an equally brainless man, joined and offered another beautiful prayer.'

We have here an interesting example of the educational method which I have tried to set forth in the preceding pages.

i. The pupil is put into his proper place in the thought of the educator. The first and sole consideration is his progress. He is not subordinated to his subject, or to any policy. Mr Azariah is not concerned to set forth his subject in any predetermined order. He is not concerned with any desire to create a Christian of any certain type. His sole object is to assist his hearers to learn the meaning of prayer. Consequently in his statement the thought of the learner occupies the first place.

ii. The lesson is based on real knowledge of the people with whom the teacher had to do. It is extremely simple. It is based of course upon true and deep Christian ideas. But in form it is designed rather to lead up to Christian ideas, and to strictly Christian practice, than to enforce the precise observation of these at the moment. Christian

prayer is prayer in the Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. In a sense there can be no Christian prayer till this is known. But the practice of prayer is not postponed until the converts have a large knowledge of Christ. The teacher knows what is in the mind of his hearers. He knows how much he can teach them in this lesson. He is content in this short lesson to base his teaching on that knowledge, and to leave it there for the moment to become familiar to his hearers' minds. Its incompleteness does not trouble him. His knowledge of his hearers is deep enough to enable him to judge how much they can grasp at this lesson, and to enable him to present that lesson in such a way that they do grasp it.

iii. There is a true conception of the end, a real end is attained in that one lesson. This lesson is not simply a preparation for another lesson. It is not merely a part of an education which is to be carried on hereafter. The end is to be attained here and now, and the hearers arrive at it. If the teacher never came near them again, his end, so far as he had gone, would have been attained. So far their education was complete. They could have gone on praying by themselves in the light of this lesson.

iv. Here is development. This lesson prayer is based upon the known nature and history of the learners. We can see an enormous advance made by them. They themselves have developed under this teaching. They have grown. Their minds, their hearts, have opened. They are conscious of powers of which they had before the most dim conception. If they had any conception at all. But this growth arises naturally and harmoniously. There is no sudden break, no beginning as though there had been no past. The men who pray this prayer are the same men who a little while before seemed incapable of any prayer.

v. There is real instruction resulting in knowledge. Knowledge of God, knowledge of the relationship in which the learners stood to Him, knowledge of His nature, of His power, of His willingness to hear prayer, of the proper attitude in which to approach Him, of the need of forgiveness, of the relation of men to their fellow men, all this and much more is strongly apprehended. It is real knowledge, it is significant, it is intimately connected with life and experience.

vi. There is activity. The educands are active throughout. The only test that they have learned the lesson is their capacity to put it into practice. If these people had been put through a verbal examin-

ation on the subject of prayer they would probably have been speechless.¹ Yet there is no question that they had learned the lesson.

vii. There was liberty; external liberty to express themselves as they pleased without interference; internal liberty, the attainment of power to direct their own actions. And with liberty came discipline, self-control, consideration for the needs of others.

viii. There was experiment. There is here an excellent example of the experimental method of education, experiment both on the part of the teacher and of the taught, experiment which enlightened both teacher and taught. There is a note of gratified expectation, if not of joyful surprise, in Mr Azariah's remark that he felt 'greatly encouraged at this result.' And I suspect that if these Telugu outcastes were capable of giving us their version of the story we should find in it a similar note of delight if not of surprise—a certain joyfulness in the sense that the experiment involved in the lesson had succeeded. The result of the lesson was a true experience.

It is noticeable that Mr Azariah contrasts this teaching with the teaching of his catechists—that is, with the common practice of those whom we send out to educate converts. This suggests at once that profound gulf which lies between our accepted missionary method, and true educational principle. There is all the difference in the world between teaching people to say a prayer, or to attend meetings where prayers are said, and this teaching. *This* is religious education.

¹ Amongst illiterate people the best examination for confirmation would probably be to hear the candidates pray extempore and to note their prayers, not to find out whether they were well expressed so much as to discover whether they prayed at all. It should also be inquired carefully whether the candidates were of good reputation.