

Confidential.

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News and Notes

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The Necessity of Linguistic Efficiency.

WHATEVER may hold good in other parts of Asia, it is not generally true in India, as it is in England, that approximation to a standard pronunciation of speech is an index of social standing. The lack of a standard of pronunciation and vocabulary and even of grammar is a great difficulty to missionaries beginning their language study, especially combined, as it often is with not very competent teachers, with considerable dogmatism as to what should or should not be regarded as correct. But amongst Muslims, especially in Hindustan proper, correctness of grammar and pronunciation have considerable social value. It is certain that it is much easier for a missionary to gain credit for having a good general education, if he succeeds in speaking Urdu in a way acceptable to Mohammedans. Mohammedans in general do not expect any but those of their own faith, even amongst Indians, to speak Urdu well, and it is a pleasant surprise to them when they find a foreigner speaking intelligibly and in a good style. Linguistic efficiency is perhaps more important in working amongst Mohammedans than amongst any other class in India.

Appreciation of the thought of another people depends on learning their language so as to be able to think in it, and to compose and speak without translation. Translation Urdu has its value. It enables us to communicate with Indians, and to express our thoughts. It does not enable us to express *their* thoughts, nor to think things in the way in which they think them. I am myself always a trifle surprised when some missionary of experience, not actually engaged in translating or adapting an English book for use, asks me, "How would you say so-and-so in Urdu?"

If that is often one's feeling, then there is something lacking in one's language attainments. I shall never forget a Frenchman's saying to me, when I was stumblingly bewailing my inability to speak French,

though I could read it, "*Pour parler en francais il faut penser en francais.*" (To speak in French one must think in French). A whole philosophy of linguistics was contained in that sentence. You will never be able to make your evangelistic speeches and your conversation properly convey the Gospel message until you think the language you are speaking.

Correctness of pronunciation is essential. The first step is to learn that there are hardly any sounds in a foreign tongue the same as those of one's own. For example, I believe that in Urdu the only sounds always exactly like those in standard English are m, b and hard g. Many of the others are only a little different, but they are different. The second step is to find out the standard position for the tongue. For example in speaking English the tongue normally is in the place from which it goes most easily to the position in which t, d, i, n, j, ch, etc., are pronounced; in Urdu it is normally in the position from which it goes most easily to pronounce the dental letters. This it is that produces in Indians speaking English otherwise correctly a pronunciation unpleasant and foreign to English ears. The converse is true of English people speaking Urdu, or *mutatis mutandis* any other foreign language.

When this correctness of the individual letter and of general tone is acquired, the battle is still only half won. The tone in the sentence has also to be learnt, the general ups and downs of pitch, the lighter stress of an Indian language. There are languages dependent on tone for their very meaning. Two experienced Chinese missionaries assured an audience in my presence that, in saying the Lord's Prayer in Chinese, by wrong tones it was quite easy to make the first clause mean 'I have left my trousers in the field.' But to some extent every language is a tone language, for on one's tone depend the niceties of meaning.

I am assuming that correct grammar and idiom are also being learnt. In order of importance for understanding and being understood come first pronunciation, second idiom, third grammar. Many educated speakers of their own language are never misunderstood in conversation, but they often make mistakes in grammar. Their pronunciation, where wrong, is wrong in a native way. Their idiom is never at fault, often much less so than that of better educated people that are nevertheless under-educated.

Vocabulary is important. We must know the words in use amongst Muslims for religious and other notions, and we must be able to pronounce them, and use them idiomatically. How can we expect our message to win a ready hearing if we are unable, as many Europeans and Americans easily may be, to pronounce words such as Allah and Quran? It is a humbling experience after years of work in India to find, as one continues from time to time to find, that one has not expressed one's thoughts so as to be understood. Secondly, one must learn how to give to the hearer the Christian meaning of a word

used both by Mohammedans and Christians, such as *tauba*, or to remove the misunderstanding latent in a Christian phrase, such as "Son of God." To do this needs a delicate appreciation of two sets of meanings.

It is probably not advisable often to refer in public addresses unless it be by way of reply, to the Quran or Traditions; but it is of the utmost importance to have as complete an appreciation of the type of piety and the background of thought built up in the Mohammedan mind by his religious books and the atmosphere in which he has been brought up and lives. It enables the evangelist to anticipate objections and often, of course not always, to put his message so as to be acceptable, while to ignore these may lead one to speak so as to arouse great and entirely unnecessary opposition. Much of this power depends on linguistic attainments.

The missionary to Mohammedans must be a reader, a constant reader, first of all of the Bible and that largely in the language he is working in, secondly, of books written by Muslims, thirdly, of books written to meet their objections. To soak one's mind in the language of the people one works amongst, in their ideas and thoughts, is essential.

Here are some ideals, perhaps never fully attainable, but never to be relinquished. (To avoid periphrasis, let me assume that one is to work in Urdu). (i) To pronounce Urdu so that an Indian not seeing one will mistake one for an Indian; (ii) To be able to converse with a well-educated gentleman on any subject as easily as in one's own language; (iii) To be able to adapt one's vocabulary to uneducated people, and in general to the stratum of society one is in, as one can in one's mother tongue; (iv) To employ terms of politeness just as polite Indians do, say *ap* and *tum* to the right sort of people. One is apt to be sometimes too brusque. Sometimes too ceremonious; (v) To write letters, both as to handwriting and vocabulary, as educated Muslims do. In short to be as nearly Indian as possible in the Indian's own tongue.

But in addition to this, it is advisable for the missionary to Muslims to learn also Persian and Arabic. Would that we all had the time to do it! Arabic is a language greatly revered by Mohammedans, and missionaries that know it well, especially if they learn to pronounce it as Muslims do, have a great initial advantage in their presentation of the Gospel. Muslims, though backward in education, have a traditional reverence for learning, but with them learning means really, in the main, Arabic, and in India, Persian. Much Islamic learning is unobtainable except through the medium of Arabic and Persian; for a considerable number of the most important books have not been translated into occidental languages. Even when they have been translated, quotation and reference when addressing Mohammedans must be from and to an oriental edition.

It is true that no linguistic ability or other learning can be a

substitute for the grace of God, and there is a danger of one's supposing that learning will enable one to be a successful missionary. It will not, at least not by itself. But its absence may, by itself, make one an unsuccessful missionary, and this is especially true of linguistic learning.

One final word. Never be easy-going with yourself in using Urdu, or whatever language you work in. There is a sort of feeling, probably a legacy from schooldays, that extreme accuracy in a munshi's or senior missionary's fetish, and there is a tendency only to be on one's guard against slips when one is in public. It is true that easy speech is not laboriously careful; but correct, easy speech is the result of years of care and pains. Look at Sutcliffe playing cricket. It all looks the most natural thing in the world, but we know that it is the result of extreme art, and of natural ability too to be sure, but of natural ability trained with the most careful attention to detail.

W. M.

A Practical Religion.

WE have recently read a compilation of sermons called *If I were a preacher* and in it there is one by Joseph Collins which so reproduces the argument of modernist Muslims that Christian teaching is not practical, that our interest was at once won. The writer starts first with a confession of the burden of the sense of sin and goes on to express his craving for a religion which sets before its adherents some attainable standard whereby this sense of falling short will cease to trouble him. This is a craving which is native to humanity. Man would like to think he is achieving, and even at the expense of a lowered aim would like to consider himself as earning his way with God. W. N. Clarke in his *Ideal of Jesus* concedes that ethical life can be conducted in this manner and that it is compatible with a good deal of moral earnestness in the desire to be acceptable to God. But if a human standard is substituted for the divine ideal it is true one may thereby have something compassable but it will not be a worthy substitute for the Christian way. That which beckons onward and onward will be forfeited. The Christian religion presents an ideal and a standard which is divine rather than human. It is inspirational rather than legalistic.

An inspirational religion is practical in the highest degree because it is dynamic; a religion of laws well within the compass of the average man is not practical in the higher reaches of man's nature. Testimony is borne to this in the histories of the great religions when mystics and prophets seek a higher path and a Jeremiah seeks the law written in the heart rather than the law on tablets. A legal religion is a soporific and not a dynamic. It will create Pharisees rather than saints. Ultimately it stultifies itself. Its adherents have attained, and

nothing further awaits them to minister to the adventurous and restless life of the spirit.

Such a religion may be sought as an opiate to lull the sense of sin fast asleep but according to the Christian, this is not the goal. The Holy Spirit comes that he may convince of sin and

They who fain would serve Thee best.

Are conscious most of wrong within.

This is a characteristic note of Christianity. It does not destroy the sense of sin but intensifies it and thereby does not cast man into despair but gives him hope of constant progress. Despair of self without God it does indeed stimulate, but revives the soul again with the vision of an ideal which is also conceived as the purpose of God and the goal of man.

Of a religion solely and purely practical, the question might be asked: for what age is it practical? A religion which is centrally inspirational, idealistic and dynamic, transcends the bounds of time. It is like life which is sustained in vastly varied environments, ages of strife and peace, climates hot and cold. Creative life reveals itself in a different shape in each corner of the universe. "The Christian experience is not precisely the same to any two persons, but it is alike to all in being an experience of salvation. Accordingly it is full of vitality. God's forgiveness of sins is in it. God himself is in it, the Father. Sense of new life is in it, exhilarating. New love of goodness is in it, transforming. Love is in it, clearing the heart and sustaining all good endeavour. Hope is in it, for this life and that which is to come. It opens out everywhere into the infinite and eternal, and the joy of God belongs to it. This incomparable quality varies in all possible degrees because of human weakness or limitation, but by its nature the life that constitutes Christianity has the vigour of newness, the strength of confidence, the glow of joy, the sense of being the best life that can be."

Christianity requires *being* as well as doing. It fails of its purpose when it does not recreate men.

Referring again to the little volume we mentioned at the beginning, another preacher would direct our attention to the story of Jesus and the rich young man who had kept all the commandments from his youth up and still felt there was something lacking. There is the answer to Mr. Joseph Collins. Oman in his *Grace and Personality* says, "A dull and prudent commonsense, so long as its rather bleared eyes see in us neither gross self-indulgence nor obvious sophistry, may approve, but, even to true moral insight emancipated from conventionality, the soul is lost which sees no visions and dreams no dreams of life's measureless possibilities. We are left in the distressful situation of being only moral while we walk by rule, while yet we know—the more certainly as our morality is really moral and not merely respectable—that no rule can show us the highest way. A righteousness which is by the law cannot escape being negative and

self-righteous, with the result that, in a merely moral frame, the spirit cannot, in self-forgetfulness, respond like a harp with many strings, to life's varied moods."

J. W. S.

Notes from the Press.

IN the October number of the *Nigar* of Lucknow there is a remarkable article attacking the Muslim University of Deoband.

Apparently the Editor has found something in the periodical of this centre of traditional learning which has hurt his modernist susceptibilities. The argument is with reference to a well-known tradition of the Prophet which deals with his domestic affairs. The tradition is not one which we care to quote. It is given on the authority of Anas and relates to certain conjugal matters. The traditionalists of Deoband consider that Muhammad was given extraordinary physical powers and seek to establish his continence by proving that while he had nine wives he might have permitted himself many more. The Editor of the *Nigar* says that it is upon just such traditions that Christians and Aryas attack the character of Muhammad and that while Islam clings to the traditions they cannot complain if these are used by the opponents of Islam. The article is very outspoken and we have little doubt that if a similar article appeared from the pen of a Christian or an Arya, it would arouse a tremendous amount of angry feeling.

Some time ago the Editor of the *Nigar* aroused the ire of the orthodox, and a large and influential meeting of representative Muslims was called which excommunicated him. We hear that he retracted what he had then said but has since offended again. We wonder what action will be taken against him this time, if any.

In this connection we are told that the late Maulvi Nazir Ahmad left at his death an unpublished book dealing with the domestic life of Muhammad. His friends prevailed on him not to publish it but recently a relative has had the temerity to do so. It was on sale only for a short time and on earnest protests from Muslims it now has been withdrawn. Maulvi Nazir Ahmad was a prolific writer of stories designed for the edification of Muslims. Perhaps his most well-known book is *Taubat-un-Nasuh*. *Banat-un-Na'sh* and *Mirat-ul'Urus* are stories of domestic life; and he wrote against polygamy in his *Muhsanal* or *Fasana-i-Mubtila*. His books reveal his reforming tendency.

Maulana Muhammed 'Ali is at some pains in the *Light* to elaborate his contention against Sir Muhammad Iqbal who would like to see all Qadianis and Ahmadis declared outside the pale of Islam. In doing so he tries to prove that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad whom the present Qadianis regard as a prophet did not use the name for himself except in a metaphorical manner. Just now Islam seems to be in anything but a spirit of unity. The Ahrars, the Qadianis, the Ahmadis,

the party of Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the shepherdless Protestants over the affair of Shahidganj in Lahore bear witness to this, and now comes the voice from Lucknow to add to the confusion.

In the *Review of Religions* (Qadiani) we are hardly surprised to find the Apostle of the Superman, Nietzsche, quoted with approval. Hitherto much of the criticism of Christianity has been a perverted application of Christian criteria. In the search for an opposing ideal to the Christian ideal it would not be surprising if Muhammad were set forth as the superman on Nietzsche's pattern.

The Moslem World for October

The Twenty-fifth Volume of an Encyclopedia on Islam.

The October issue of THE MOSLEM WORLD completes its twenty-fifth year of publication, and contains the announcement of a complete analytical Index to all the wealth of material published during a quarter of a century, in which great disintegrating and constructive forces have worked in Moslem lands. These forces are still at work, and no one can study international problems of our day and the unrest in Africa and Asia without regard to the important factor of Islam.

The present number covers as wide a geographic field as usual, the Near East Palestine, Arabia, North Africa, Bulgaria, Ethiopia and China.

The writers include Professor Duncan MacDonald, who describes the Essential Unity of Mysticism in Islam and Christianity; the Rev. J. Christy Wilson, D.D., who tells of the new approach to Moslems in Persia; and the President of the American College at Teheran, who writes under the startling title, Constructive Revolutions in Iran, showing what missions have accomplished for social and economic reforms.

In commemoration of the eighth centennial of the great Jewish Philosopher, Maimonides, Professor Gehman of the Princeton Theological Seminary sketches the story of his remarkable life and his contacts with Islam.

Other important articles deal with the Arab Nationalist Movement in the Near East, and Some Old Turkish documents, illustrative of conditions that will never return.

Book Reviews are of unusual number and variety, while Current Topics discussed and the Survey of Current Periodicals cover the world of Islam, from Morocco to the Philippines.

The Moslem World can be ordered through the Association Press, 5, Russell St., Calcutta, or obtained direct from 156, Fifth Avenue, New York.

The Quran and the Bible.

THE Rev. 'Ali Bakhsh of Lahore has published the first part of a commentary on the Quran in Urdu, called *Tafsir-i-Quran*. In this interesting references are made to the Scriptures which the writer holds throw light on the meaning of many obscure passages. With regard to this we may refer to his comment on the words in Surah 53, verse 50 where he considers the word usually translated "Sirius" is really an Arabicised form of the Hebrew word for the "Remnant which should be saved" in the prophecy of Isaiah. This fits in with the context.

Another interesting feature of this book is the adoption of Nazir Ahmad's order of the Surahs in preference to Rodwell's. On pages 4 to 6, a comparative table is given, shewing; the order usually found, that according to Jalal-ud-Din Siyuti, Noldeke's order, Sir William Muir's and Nazir Ahmad's.

There are a number of misprints and on page 71 a quotation from the Epistle to the Hebrews is given as coming from the "Tauret." The first part deals with eighty-six Surahs and costs only one rupee. It can be obtained from the author at 53, Gawalmandi, Lahore.

Prayer and Praise.

LET US PRAISE God for evidences of dissatisfaction with a religion which is less than Christian in its moral ideal.

LET US PRAISE God for that power unto salvation which is the central message of the Gospel and let us pray that our evangelism may not sink into a mere desire for victory in argument but be kept on the high level of an offer of the abounding, saving grace of God.

LET US PRAY for converts whose lives have been threatened that they may rejoice in the great confidence they have in God and that their dear ones know the sustaining comfort of Christ and have the faith which lifts the weight of anxiety from the heart.

LET US PRAY for the extension work and the evangelistic meetings to be held at Karachi in November.

LET US PRAY for guidance for those who are now making arrangements for Summer Schools in connection with the Henry Martyn School for next hot weather.

NOTICE.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members or remittance of subscription, etc., should be sent to the Superintendent, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, India, and *not* to the Secretary of the League. The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.)

Matters of interest to members of the League, items of news and requests for prayer should be sent (if possible, early in the month) to the Hony. Secretary :—

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