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THE
National Mission
AND
Mohammedanism

By
CANON W. H. T. GAIRDNER

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The National Mission and Mohammedanism

BY CANON W. H. T. GAIRDNER

AT a time like this, when the heart of the nation is deeply stirred, and when the Church of Christ is seeking to claim all that is best in the nation for God and for the accomplishment of God's purposes, it is impossible to ignore the question, *What about Mohammedanism?* The question is not impertinent. The National Mission was not merely a call to England to recognise certain internal diseases and to seek their cure; it was a call to a self-surrender to the God of the whole universe and to the knowing and doing of His Will in all its length and breadth. Therefore "nothing human do we deem alien from us," nothing that directly touches the Will of God for humanity, certainly nothing of such towering immensity and human importance as Mohammedanism. And so we say again, *What about Mohammedanism?*

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

What is Christianity? Is England clearer on the answer to this question since the National Mission? Has the stringent appeal of social questions made it appear that Christianity is simply a sort of keen social sense? or, if theology must be included, then simply a belief in some dimly-known Divine Being? No such thing can be imagined. If it were so, then indeed there would be no conceivable relation between the National Mission and Mohammedanism, for every Mohammedan claims to have a keen social sense,

and to believe in a by no means dimly-known Divine Being. But has not the National Mission made it for ever clear that Christianity is not so much that which it shares with other religions or systems of thought as that which it does not share, that which is special and peculiar to itself, its own essence: Immanuel, God *in Christ*? Christ sent, crucified, risen, glorified; God revealed by, through, and in this Christ both then in the days of His flesh and now in the days of the Church, by His Spirit. Have we or has the world any use for a Christianity that is emasculated of any particle of this content? Does not history echo the voice of the New Testament, loudly ratifying that only in these things does the dynamic, the driving power of Christianity, reside; that Christianity without these things is a cipher; or, at most, as salt granules with the saltness, and so the salthood, gone out of them?

We have come, in the National Mission, to lay ourselves wholly at the feet of God. "The Church which is in our house" (England) desires to carry out the Will of our Father in regard to our own land and in regard to His whole world. And He has told us that, howsoever many be His promises or His self-revealings, they are all summed up in His Christ. It is, therefore, equally important that our own land should know this, for then its diseases will be healed; and that the whole world should know it, for then it will be one. Our Father which art in Heaven! When His self-revelation is honoured and hallowed, then will His Kingdom have come and His Will be done.

WHAT IS ISLAM ?

How about Mohammedanism ? (The question insists on recurring.)

It denies Christianity *in toto* : in this sense,

that it denies the essence of the thing; the saltiness of the salt.

It is monotheism without the Christ of God; and therefore without the God of Christ. For, though a certain character called Jesus Christ is mentioned, that character is totally devoid of interest; it is lost in the crowd, overtopped by more dominant personalities, more important messengers; it was not the eternal Beloved; did not institute that feast of the broken bread and the poured out wine; did not for love's sake lay down life; did not shed blood; did not die nor rise again; did not ascend to the right hand of Power, to perpetual intercession and dynamic life for men. Thus the Koran, and thus every Mohammedan book and every Mohammedan believer from the days of the Arabian till to-day.

Speaking dispassionately, then, speaking without cant, honestly and with decency of clear thinking in the light of plain facts, can these two things—that great Assertion and this great Denial—be reconciled? Is the name of our Father which is in Heaven equally hallowed, and His Will equally done, in the solemn assertion and the solemn repudiation of these things?

It cannot be so, and it is not so.

England's new obedience to the Lord and to His Christ, then, demands of the Church which is in her house to order that house through the health-giving power of truth, and also to publish the truth about God's Christ where it is unknown in all our Father's world.

But not where it is categorically denied? That would be a paradoxical conclusion. *Especially* where it is denied: that is the conclusion.

CHRISTIANITY AND MOHAMMEDANISM

Apologists both in Christendom and Islam would have us believe that both systems have come to stay (presumably, therefore, that both are

equally true) and that we should settle down to the thought that the two sister religions should and will pursue their respective tracks in the civilising of humanity.

We are not called on, it is true, to say what may be the purpose of God for Islam in His world to-day, now that it is in being in the midst of the nations. Divine Providence had a task for the Roman Empire even when it was working against the Church of God, and when that Church was silently working to subdue that Empire to Christ. In the same way the Church leaves to Divine Providence to assign to Islam its historic task, while looking forward with clear vision and marching forward with unhesitating feet to the bringing of Islam into the obedience of Christ; when it will not abandon but re-read its own name "Surrender,"* and find that it means "Surrender to Allah *and to His own Messiah.*"

The National Mission inexorably involves all this. Islam on its side is perfectly clear-sighted about these questions. It is working ceaselessly, and we know that every convert won is not only hopelessly lost to the Church of Christ but sets himself immediately into an attitude of considered antagonism, except at coalition public meetings in London, the object of which, however, is *wholly* to advance the interests of Islam. Thus sacred duty and logical inevitableness coincide, as they are always sure to do.

THE MOSLEM EAST

The National Mission was raised up by God, we believe, not only because this war inevitably brings in a new era for England, but also for the world. And not least for Islam. After the war centres of gravity will be found shifted, old landmarks removed, old loyalties transferred, new doors open, new paths traced out. When Turkey loses her grip over her subject-peoples,

* *Al islam* = "surrender."

and, through the loss of the Caliphate, loses also the confidence of Sunni Moslems everywhere, profound changes must occur, both political and, what is even more important, mental. To meet these changed attitudes, whatever they be, we must be ready with the message of our God.

If Turkey becomes once more simply the land of the Turks, the tyrannising attitude which has been its idea of Imperialism may well disappear, and men's souls be left free to hear and to choose. A new era for missions in Turkey proper would then open.

How much more, then, in Arabistan—Turkey's Arabic-speaking provinces, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Arabia? Beyond question in all these countries, and especially the two first-named, results of the patient sowing of the past will appear, and flourish in the fresh air of a truer liberty. In Arabia powerful new thought-currents are being set up in the very regions formerly least accessible to change, and, though we do not know how these may ultimately set, we must be ready for the opportunity whatever it is.

Egypt. If Egypt loses the last remnant of hope in any imaginary diversion from without—as, for example, her present revived hope for Turkey and her new delusion of an Islamophil or Islamofied Germany—she will obtain an internal equilibrium and steadiness to which she has long been a stranger. And in this way some of the most considerable hindrances to the Gospel will be removed, for in Egypt Mohammedan antipathies are always intimately bound up with revived political hopes however illusory. For this inner tranquillity the Church must be ready.

Other changes equally well-marked are inevitably going on along the North African coast, as far as Morocco, formerly so impervious to any wooer from Europe. Our prayers should be that France, for whom this war is spontaneously

creating a National Mission, will, through Christian Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, realise her *Christian* mission throughout her whole dominions.

And the same may be said in regard to Russia and her vast Islamic possessions. No one can give Christ to Islam in the Russias except Russia. It would be sheer pride and stupidity, not humble faith, for English-speaking Christians to feel that whatever is not done by them will probably not be done. The energy saved from such a paralysing thought should be put into prayer for Christ's Church in Russia, Christ's Church in France, and in other lands gifted with opportunity, that *their* National Missions of Repentance and Hope will issue in the bringing of the peoples in their obedience into the obedience of the Lord's Christ.

AFRICA—CHRISTIAN OR MOHAMMEDAN ?

With regard to Negro Africa, it is perhaps more to the point to re-realise old facts than to look around for new ones. The old facts are these :—

1. The Islamising of Africans can never be other than a misfortune and a danger ; and for this reason, that it accents and gives permanent body to the natural anti-white (and so anti-Christian) tendencies of the black races. For much of this feeling the white man has no doubt to thank himself. But much of it was and is the result of profound and inevitable physical and cultural causes. Such a handicap is a severe enough one in all conscience. But when Islam gets the lever into its possession the handicap is made permanent, and the possibilities become at once more serious.

2. Nevertheless, this Islamising process always tends to go on ; whether through Indian influence south of the Zambesi, or through Arab influence in the central parts, or through

Egyptian influence in the Eastern Sudan, or through Senussi and trading influence in the Western, the process is going on.

3. The only thing that can arrest this process, and does arrest it, is the creation of Christian African nations. Who can calculate what the fact of Uganda has meant in the automatic arrest of Islam in northern Bantu Africa? And the same applies to a lesser extent to regions where a powerful Christian mission is in being, as for example on the Niger, in Nyasaland, and in Bechuanaland. Even politicians—even politicians in South Africa—are beginning, from their own angle of vision, to perceive that the only racial programme for Black Africa is its Christianisation.

Prevention is better than cure. The National Mission must make itself felt through the length and breadth of Negro Africa. Our Repentance will be Africa's Hope.

WILL THE TASK BE EASIER ?

The difficulties of the task of bringing Islam into the obedience of God's Christ are as great as ever they were. The new opportunities will not lessen the spiritual and intrinsic difficulties: they will simply make possible new approaches. To the great Assertion the great Denial will still bring the great Refusal: for here we are dealing with spiritual not political facts. Nothing, again, is to be hoped from internal reform—the spread of a sort of Protestant Reformation—in Islam; for, as a matter of fact, it is by precisely these educated persons and reformers that anti-Christian religious movements are fostered and Islamic propagation movements initiated. The more tradition is given up, the greater will be the prominence given to the Koran. And this "shortening of the lines" and surrender of very easily assaulted positions may, in truth, only prove a strength to Islam.

THE ONE HOPE

Therefore not in anything human whatsoever must hope be put for the task of achieving the apparently impossible ; neither might nor power—political ; nor gold nor silver—material ; nor new possibilities of successful argumentation—philosophical ; but

“ O Israel, hope in *the Lord* from this time forth and for evermore.”

In the Lord, the Lord's Christ, the Spirit of Jesus (these Three are One).

This is what the National Mission means for our country in relation to Mohammedanism.

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