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News and Notes

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1st November = 13th Rabi-ul Akhir (4th mo.), 1344, A.H.

The Druses.

IT has been customary to think of the French as popular colonists and rulers among Muslim peoples, and it has been claimed that French policy towards Islam has succeeded where British policy has failed. In these days, however, we have the spectacle of the French forces hard pressed in two regions; by the Riffs under Abdul Karim in Morocco, and by the Druses in the Lebanon under one or other of their Sheikhs. We have thought that our readers would like to know more about these Druses, whose origin is connected with Islam, though they are not strictly Muslims. Perhaps one of our members in North Africa will supply us at a future date with a note on Abdul Karim and the Riffs.

We are indebted for the following notes to a little book by Canon Sell, entitled 'The Druses,' issued by the C.L.S. Madras, in "The Islam Series." Members desiring to know more about the history and tenets of these people would do well to secure a copy of Canon Sell's booklet, which only costs about sixpence.

The Druses are connected with the Fatimid Khalifs of Egypt and with the Imamut dogma made familiar to us by the Shiah and the Ismailians. The sect owes much of its vogue to the Khalif Hakim, another Nero in his persecution of the Christians (though he was impartial even in his brutalities) and in the adoration he demanded for himself. Muslims themselves were horrified at his impiety and infidelity in respect of Muslim faith and practice.

Hakim in course of time came under the influence of one, Darazi (hence the name Druse), a leader of a sub-sect of the Ismailians, who encouraged the Khalif in his pretensions to divinity.

Darazi, however, fell into disfavour and was put to death. The Druses hold this to be untrue, though, and say that he was sent away secretly by the Khalif to Syria where, in the year 410 A.H., he won over the inhabitants of the Lebanon to his cause.

When Hakim openly sided with the Darazis the sect grew steadily in numbers and influence. It is remarkable that these people should have continued for well nigh a thousand years to venerate the person of this Khalif, and indeed worship him as a god, though history records him to have been the incarnation of savage cruelty. It is said that his persecutions led to the slaughter of something like 18,000 people!

We proceed to give a few extracts from Canon Sell's booklet which present us with a good idea of some of the beliefs and practices of this sect.

'The Druses believe in the transmigration of the soul. The soul of a Druse after his death passes into the body of another Druse; that of a polytheist into another polytheist. The number of souls is fixed and they neither increase nor diminish as the years roll by. Their appearance in different forms is closely connected with good or evil deeds done in previous life.

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'After the death of Hakim the Druses were bidden not to be discouraged at the delay but to look forward with hope and confidence to his return.

He will come surrounded, as with a veil, by multitudes of holy angels and by a vast host of cherubim. The figure under which he will re-appear is called "the spiritual resurrection form." The signs of his advent will, for the most part, be those to which Muslims look forward as destined to happen before the Day of Judgment.

One special sign of his advent will be the falling of a thunder-bolt on the Kaaba, the destruction of houses in Mecca, and the ruin, through earthquakes, of mosques in Syria. Then the enemies of Ali will be compelled to wear heavy earrings made of lead and to pay a tax. The Jews and Christians will have earrings of iron and their tax will be heavier still. The severest punishment is to be reserved for the apostates, whose earrings will be of glass, which in summer burn like fire, and in winter are as cold as ice. Their head-dress will be made of pig skin.

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'The Druses deny the crucifixion of the true Messiah. They say that Jesus, the son of Mary, was taught by the real Messiah and, on proving disobedient, the Jews were then allowed to rise up against him and to put him to death. When he lay in the grave, the real Messiah hid in the garden and so the news went abroad of the resurrection from the dead.

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'Druse writers had a direct interest in combating the opinions of the Muslims, by whom they were surrounded, and who looked upon their views and opinions with much contempt. So the great point in the teaching of the Druse leaders was to shew that Islam as a religion

had had its day, and was now of no authority at all. On the other hand, the Druses had nothing to fear from the Jews or Christians, who in Muslim lands possessed no power to do them harm and so, much less attention was paid to them and to their systems of religion. Still, Christians are reproached for not living up to the standard of life laid down in the Sermon on the Mount.

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‘A Druse, who marries a Druse wife, should place her on an equality with himself and share with her all his possessions. If a divorce is necessary, on account of some disobedience on the part of the wife, she should give up half of her property; but if her husband has ill-treated her, she takes it all away. It is so also in the case of the man. A divorce cannot be cancelled, and either party may remarry. Marriage with a mother, sister or aunt is forbidden. A man can only marry the daughter of his uncle if she is a Druse, a believer in the Unity. Polygamy is not permitted.

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‘Some attention is paid to education and women are taught to read and write. Their literature is chiefly theological but for a tribe so limited in numbers is comparatively extensive. They guard the manuscripts of their more important works with great jealousy, but many are now to be found in the great European libraries.

As regards mutual help, the Druses were to carry a sword to defend their friends, to watch over them, to meet their wishes, to satisfy their wants, to help the poor and to succour the oppressed. All such good deeds would make the religious profession perfect. They still maintain the ancient custom of hospitality. Their bravery is notorious and the blood feud is still kept up. Absolute submission to the will of the Lord Hakim is enjoined. Should he require a man to slay his own son he must do it, for only unquestioning obedience will be rewarded.

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‘The Druses are very reticent about their beliefs, and in order to avoid danger they may profess, outwardly and in appearance, any dominant religion of the place they may be in. This is a principle known as *taqiya*, and is common to all the Shiah sects. Meanwhile, in the heart must be firmly held the belief in the divine nature of Hakim, which is the fundamental doctrine on which the whole system is based.’

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The poet Browning’s tragedy, ‘The Return of the Druses’ reads like an interesting commentary on the features noted in the concluding paragraph above and is well worth reading at the present juncture. Therein a Christian prince, compelled against his will to admit the long-practised deceit of the Druses, is made to say:—

‘Did the Church ill to institute long since
Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?’

Ecce Homo . . . Arabicus !

IT is extraordinarily difficult for non-Mohammedans to touch the question of the character of the Prophet of Islam. There is the natural disinclination to criticize adversely the actions of one who commands to so wholesale extent the veneration of one-sixth of the human race. There is the immediate resentment felt by Mohammedans whenever such a thing is attempted. And there is the serious governmental intolerance which exists in countries where the government is Mohammedan, which absolutely forbids all such attempts, and proscribes those who make them.

Moreover, the average man says, and most of us cordially incline to agree with him, "After all, *cui bono?*—what is the good of it anyhow?": you only stir up wrath and antagonisms on a matter in which you can never hope to convince. The instinct to defend—defend blindly if you like—one's Hero and Ideal when attacked is too ingrained in human nature. You are therefore really defeating your own object in overtly criticizing the Arabian. Better let Time, and criticism working within Islam, do the work for you." And another will say "Criticism of religious leaders is futile because it is really irrelevant. Truth—even the truth they came to communicate—in no way depends upon this personal character. Why then unnecessarily stir up the fierce passions of men over an **IRRELEVANCE?**" Even Mohammedans sometimes speak thus: as one of them said to the writer, "Grant me the Koran true, and then—let Jesus Christ be a better man than Mohammed?"

Verily, we would gladly leave the subject alone, and in our ordinary preaching of the Gospel, whether by tongue or pen, we DO leave the subject alone. But there are weighty answers to the above objections. And the first and gravest of these is what comes to us again and again, from the Defenders and Propagators of Islam in the West, namely the definite invitation, or challenge, to re-examine the character of Mohammed. We are told that it has been misunderstood, that it has been with reckless untruth reviled, not only by ignorant writers in the Middle Ages, but also by modern authors who have claimed to know the original sources. Such words almost compel writers who value their reputation for honesty and truth, to defend the considered words of themselves or others of their school. But more. The defenders and propagators of Islam in the West go far further than this. They advance a position which makes the rehandling of the life and character of the Arabian Prophet by Christians practically inevitable. More and more they urge that the character of Mohammed is **THE HUMAN IDEAL**; in it the highest moral truth is seen; the highest ideal and highest truth **FOR ALL CLIMES AND ALL TIMES**. Men who write and talk thus simply must expect that those who differ from them—by no means all of them Christians by the way—will be content to listen to them in silence. The matter becomes one of grave ethical truth. These men appeal to the Cæsar of impartial enquiry and unto Cæsar must they go. Historians and biographers without any particular religious bias will take the matter up, indeed have taken the matter up, and Mohammedans simply cannot expect to hear from them everything they desire to hear, nothing that they shrink from hearing. If they come out into the rough-and-tumble of the free forum they must take the foul with the fair, and must drop the ultra-sensitiveness which they and the governments display in their lands of Islam.

They must learn, moreover, to report more faithfully what is said. Carlyle's and Bosworth Smith's favourable and enthusiastic estimates of the

Arabian prophet have been quoted scores and hundreds of times. But to print in Arabic what these same men said about the same Arabian on the other side would still make one liable to persecution in most Islamic countries. But this is not playing the game: nor does it show any desire for truth.

And if secular writers must be allowed the free forum, how much more Christian? for the new Mohammedan apologists and propagators touch without scruple, on a point which is to every Christian central and vital: namely that of the PERFECT MANHOOD. It is part of the Christian religion to claim this for Christ. For twenty centuries the claim of ECCE HOMO has been practically conceded, even by the world beyond Christendom. Now, we are told, the ideal picture of the Man is to be transferred from the INJIL to the SIRA, from the Gospel to the Biography of Mohammed. And, as if this challenge were not enough, it is being accompanied by a persistent attempt to belittle that Figure so sublimely portrayed in the New Testament,—sometimes by depreciation, sometimes by patronising, sometimes (on the ground that the Christian book is corrupt and therefore to criticize the false figure of Yasu is in no wise to blaspheme the true figure of Isa) by downright censure or even foul abuse and wicked innuendo. Under these circumstances is it not inevitable, is it not an absolute duty to take up the subject again and to study afresh that other figure to which the world is seriously (?) being asked to transfer its allegiance.

But we want to take it up nobly and in a dignified manner; and with strictly limited scope, namely, what is, according to the records themselves, the truth of the matter?, and, is the character of the Arabian, however noble and praiseworthy, WORTHY OF BEING CREATED INTO THE UNIVERSAL ETHICAL IDEAL FOR HUMANITY? Let us say a word about each of these two aspects.

1. The comments on the life of the Founder of Islam which we think are demanded by truth shall not be our own. They are drawn straight from the records of the Moslem chroniclers themselves. Further, they will not be vague generalities, still less vulgar abuse: they will consist of the citation of specific instances drawn from the said chronicles, (and these we are often told by Mohammedan apologists *are reliable; as one has recently said "The records of the acts and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed himself are exceptionally complete, faithful and correct") This should preclude all attempts to get rid of embarrassing incidents by means of an absolutely ARBITRARY "criticism." We ought not to hear now that a traditionalist like al-Bukhari, an historian like Ibn Hisham, or a favourite biographer like al-Halabi are "incomplete, unfaithful or incorrect," As a matter of fact, the incidents in question are just the sort which the scientific criticism of al-Bukhari, Ibn Hisham, and al-Halabi—and needless to say such a criticism is inevitable—would leave untouched; for they occur in what may be called the prosaic parts of the biography; they are the incidents which are the most complete, sharply defined and easily remembered; and therefore likely to be most faithfully recorded and handed down,—the ordinary historic stuff which, in the life of any man, is least likely to be intentionally or unintentionally twisted. And, besides, what would it now boot to come forward with a feeble, arbitrary, subjective criticism of the sources of these three books? Two (al-Bukhari and al-Halabi) are among the most popular and universal in the Dar al-Islam. The incidents recorded therein have been accepted by the general mind of billions of Mohammed

*Complacently contrasting the historicity of the Islamic records with the cloudy dubiousness of the Christian Gospels.

ans for over a thousand years,—moulding their thoughts and ideals into a public opinion that is absolutely perdurable and permanent. For a millenium the universal conscience of Islam has approved the things chronicled in these books, has found in them nothing to censure but on the contrary everything to esteem and admire. From the viewpoint therefore of "*Mohammed as Moral Ideal*" these incidents are all of equal importance, and for a Mohammedan to raise at this time of day the question of the historical actuality of this or that incident is to commit an absolute irrelevance. Apart from all which, as already said, the question will be raised by Mohammedans in virtue of any genuine critical apparatus possessed by them. The fact is that it *only can be and only is* raised a priori, by those who, when they find themselves among Christians and in a Christian atmosphere, wince at many things in the *SIRA* which have not caused, and which do not cause, so much as one qualm in a truly Mohammedan environment. Such 'historical' scruples are therefore simply a convincing tribute to the moral and spiritual superiority of the *Catholic-Christian ideal*, and to the serious and felt defectiveness of the Catholic-Islamic one. We welcome them as a sign that truth will surely conquer; but all the same we take leave to show that they are unjustified.

2. Every educated man, every fair man, every ethical student, agrees that the day has gone by for coarse indiscriminate abuse of the Arabian Prophet, and blushes for many of the performances of Christian apologists up to the middle of the nineteenth century. The labours of many orientalisists, some of them purely secular, others admittedly Christian, have put the matter in a clearer light; and the true lineaments of the Arabian have now practically emerged. It is difficult to say whether the lineaments are less like the monster created by the Middle Ages than the boudoir saint evolved by Mohammedans when they desire to impress Christendom. In truth, they are like neither: just as a photograph by a competent photographer to-day is nothing like the infamous daguerrotypes of the past, nor the touched-up absurdities turned out by the photographic artist, who anxious to please, is liberal with his paintbrush-work on the negative. In regard to Christian writers on Islam and its founder we strongly maintain that they have been faithful to truth and fact. They have not gone beyond the records, and their criticisms have been "fair comment," not libel. Nay, we maintain that very often you must go for sympathy and understanding to the Christian rather than to the secular biographer: to a Muir rather than to a Sprenger or a Caetani. The secular writers are too worldly, often too scornful: they miss the mark by trying to treat in a purely secular way things which were *fundamentally* spiritual and religious. The Christian writers make no such mistake. The Mekka portions of Muir's biography are broader than the Mohammedan biographies themselves. And this gives such writers the right, as it gave Muir the right to treat gravely the moral questions that inevitably arise when the Medina period is reached.

Again, we are fully aware of the importance of the question of RELATIVITY in this connexion. If we were simply studying the life of an Arabian of the 7th. century our verdict might well be nearly all praise: for blame would be, on the principle of historical relativity, reduced to a minimum. No mere man can be expected to rise more than a certain amount above his time and environment and people. Mohammed did in many ways rise above them: and for this we are among his admirers, and the praise of Christian and Missionary writers have been freely blended with that of secular, and Mohammedan writers. But we are not allowed

by Modern Islam to limit our studies thus. Mohammed must be compared with Christ! with the absolute ideal! Well then, we are bound to point to things which suited Arabia of the 7th century not too badly, but which inevitably look repulsive and blackened exposed to the brightness of the absolute ideal. Nevertheless, in so doing, we maintain we are being true to our self-imposed limitations. We are NOT trying to depict a bad man; we are not being mere *advocati diaboli*—mere detractors for the sake of detraction; we are simply showing that to the "ECCE HOMO!" of the neo-Moslem apologist must be added the word "ARABICUS," that's to say, if we are directed to see in Mohammed the best that SEVENTH CENTURY ARABIA could produce; to judge him relatively to the violence and coarseness of those days, their contemptuous indifference to bloodshedding and loot, their low estimate of woman;—then we are found praising with those who praise, admiring with those that admire, and condoning the violence and coarseness which it will indeed not be possible to pass over, but which may very largely be attributed to the primitive environment in the character of the man.

(The foregoing exceedingly valuable statement has been issued to committee members by the Preliminary Co-ordinating Committee on Christian Literature for Moslems, the Editorial Secretaries of which are Canon Gairdner and Miss Padwick and is reproduced here for the guidance of members of the M. M. L.)

Notes

Mr. Goldsack's Arabic-Bengali Quran.—The Christian Tract Society, 23 Chowringhee Road, Calcutta, is now in charge of the entire stock of this work upon which Mr. Goldsack expended so much time and study. It is published in 30 parts, at 3 as. a part. The Society carries a heavy stock of all the parts save number one, which is completely sold out. The purpose of this note is to discover whether missionaries in Bengal have any considerable stock of the First Part. An edition of 2,000 copies was probably issued and it seems likely that some dozens are still somewhere in hand *unsold*. The Bengal Provincial Sub-Committee on Work among Muslims has been asked to advise the Tract Society in respect of this work. It will materially help that Committee to know what copies of Part I are available. Will members in Bengal who read this kindly address replies to the Secretary of the League, who is also Convener of the Sub-Committee?

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A lady member working in Hyderabad City, Deccan, writes to say that the 'opportunities in Hyderabad are greater than ever. The homes are open and women, many of them very orthodox, are intensely interested in Christianity. There is a great longing among the older women to have their girls educated. Our great problem to-day is how to answer the many invitations that come to us, as competent Bible-women able to teach and fitted by education and training are so difficult to find.' Our correspondent was still on furlough when she wrote, and added; 'I find a tremendous change in regard to Mohammedan work among the people at home. Dr. Zwemer has done much to arouse interest and in helping to show the great need there is of workers in all Mohammedan lands.'

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Planting the Standard in Kohat.—Miss Davidson, formerly of Peshawar City, has transferred her abode to Kohat City. She covets the prayers of the members of the League. "A friend is joining me next month (October). It is pretty hard here; there has never been any mission here before and there is a good deal of opposition, but if God has led us here then it must mean ultimate victory."

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An Indian brother working in Calcutta, writes, 'I am in touch with several Bengali Muslim young men—three of them are well educated. One is now living with me and has decided to become a Christian. Please pray for them that they may become true converts. I feel very much the need of a Bible School and Home for Muslim converts (young men). Will you kindly pray that God may lay it on the hearts of His children to start one?'

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New Tracts for Muslims.—It should have been stated in last month's issue that the *Urdu Khutbas* noted therein are obtainable from the Methodist Publishing House, Lucknow. We give further details *re* the new tracts in *Bengali* published by the Tract Society, 23 Chowringhee, Calcutta:—The tract called "Najat" is in *pooyar* style and is a revision of an old favourite. The 3 tracts on the teaching of Jesus are in prose and comprise selections from the Sermon on the Mount, taken from the new 'Life of Jesus' for Muslim readers prepared by the Secretary of the M.M.L. and done into Bengali with a moderate admixture of Islamic terms by a recent convert from Islam. All these tracts are intended for free distribution. We trust a very liberal use will be made of them.

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For Praise and Prayer.

PRAISE for the day of opportunity in Hyderabad, Deccan, and prayer that the need for suitable workers may soon be met.

PRAISE for the opening up of work in Kohat City and prayer for God's guidance and blessing to rest upon His lonely servants there.

PRAY for the young men enquirers in Calcutta, with special reference to the need felt for some kind of institution for men converts.

NEW MEMBER.

198. Dr. Gladys Webster, C.M.S. Multan, India.

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The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s.). The Secretary will be glad to send spare copies of this issue to addresses mentioned by members, with a view to securing new subscribers. News and requests for prayer will always be welcome and should be sent early in the month to the Hon. Secretary:—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,
Baptist Mission,
Dacca, Bengal, India.

