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News and Notes

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A Contribution to the Study of Islam.

IN the April issue of the English quarterly, *Visva-Bharati*, published by the Rabindra Nath Tagore School, Mr. C. F. Andrews, in a thoughtful article, seeks to determine the exact relation of Islam, and its contribution, to 'The Body of Humanity.' He feels that the unique and intense ardour which marked this faith in its early stages, and still marks it, awaits adequate explanation. Those who face the facts, he says, admit, as does Dr. Zwemer, that it is by no means a spent force. He goes on to say:—'It is not rationally possible, therefore, if the theory of an organic unity of religion be held, to account for this persistent vitality in Islam except on the assumption that it has some necessary function to perform in the Body of Humanity, which could not be effected in any other way. What is that function? How can we best explain its rational existence?

'I do not think that we can point to any new law of the spiritual life that Islam has discovered for the first time in human history. Behind both Christianity and Hindu—Buddhism, as I have said, there was actually such a discovery. For in both, supreme emphasis was laid upon the principle of *Ahimsa* (non-retaliation) as the essence of all true religion. I cannot see this side of religious truth emphasised in Islam. The Quran, as I read it, does not carry the solution of this great problem of non-retaliation any further forward. Rather, the opposite principle of retaliatory justice appears to gain a fresh approval and conviction.

'I know that we have the remarkable instance of the Prophet's forbearance and magnanimity, when Mecca was entered in triumph after weary years of struggle. But there were clearly political gains of the very highest order to be obtained by such a magnanimous act; and deeds of dire punishment are equally apparent as part of the Prophet's conduct along with such acts of sublime forgiveness. "I believe in retaliation," was the final word to me in an argument which

I had with one of the noblest Musalmans I have ever known; and another said to me, with an emphasis which I can never forget, "My religion *commands* me to take up the sword on certain occasions."

Mr. Andrews residing as he does in India, is obviously concerned with the problem of securing a more satisfactory *modus vivendi* among Muslims and their Hindu neighbours, and inclines to the view that in society, as at present constituted, a thorough-going "non-retaliatory" position is inadequate. Can it be then, he asks, that Islam contributes the compensating balance in human thought and practice? History illustrates the periodic inflow of new forces into society.

'When we regard human existence as a whole, we find that, in those things of the spirit which help forward the progress of mankind, life always makes its advances out of the primitive background by rhythmical tides, like the incoming currents of the sea. Only with difficulty, it gains and establishes each new advance,—here a little and there a little. As we watch the whole progress, we see often what appears for the time being a reversal in the tide of human life. But just when the set-back comes, there arises a new pressure from the vast deep, which urges the waters at some other point even beyond the old position. Each of these new pulsations seem to start from some far-away region in the rear; but each in turn carries forward some laggard portion of the human race.'

Such was the influence of virile Christianity in the decadent Roman Empire and in a later age Islam came in similarly with a new life-giving current.

'We can review the same process afresh,' he says, 'using another illustration. In Biology we learn that there is always needed a continuous renewal of the human body, which goes on simultaneously with the elimination of waste tissue. Only in this way, can vitality be preserved; for the accumulation of waste matter clogs life itself and leads inevitably to decay and death. Even so, with the Body of Humanity, the deadness of each older civilisation needs to be sloughed off, like a skin outworn, if fresh life is to force its way up to the surface. And History reveals that there is no greater purifying and eliminating factor in human affairs than the uprush of a new religious impulse shaking the inner lives of masses of mankind.'

In a summary of the benefits brought by Islam he cites its influence in darkest Africa. 'I will turn to a further aspect of world history, that has not yet received sufficient recognition. In Africa, for over a thousand years, Islam has been the only binding force to hold together society at a stage beyond that of the fighting tribe. The unmitigated horror and abomination of cannibalism, the cruelties of head-hunting and devil worship, the sexual promiscuity and infanticide, which represented in earlier times the daily life of savage tropical Africa, have been wonderfully tempered and subdued by the advent of Islam. Long before the days of European occupation, there were Islamic kingdoms, with a literary language and culture, in the heart of

Central Africa. Their population, numbering many millions, became immeasurably advanced beyond the savage tribes around, who had never embraced Islam.

'It may be truly said, that wherever Islam has penetrated the interior of Africa, with its faith in the essential brotherhood of all believers, it has raised the status and human dignity of those who have confessed it as a living faith. Furthermore, in spite of the immense differences between man and man in Africa, owing to sharp grades of culture, there has been no serious practical breach in the citadel of religious democracy, for which Islam preeminently stands,—no caste barriers, no race exclusion, no colour prejudice.

'In the New World, the Christian powers of Portugal and Spain carried out a ruthless massacre, accompanied by a no less ruthless slavery of the aboriginal population. In the end, the primitive peoples were almost blotted out. France and Great Britain were hardly less relentless in their dealings with the Red Indians in the North. The records of the shooting down at sight of the "Black-fellow" in Australia, and the hideous traffic called "black-birding" in Polynesia, are notorious for infamy. They have darkened and defiled the page of human history.

'It is true that slave-raids, such as those which Livingstone witnessed in East Africa, were carried out by Muhammadan dealers. Their cruelty was no less hideous than the things I have mentioned. These cannot be condoned any more than the slave traffic of the Christian merchants of Bristol and Liverpool, which stained with tracks of blood the whole of the West African coast. But even when all this is recorded, it will be seen that wherever Islam has spread among savage tribes, it has not led in the long run to their decrease in numbers. It has not blotted out whole peoples. The inhabitants have remained in virtual possession of the soil, ready to be raised in the scale of civilisation in the future.'

While recognising that much of what Mr. Andrews says is true, we yet feel that he might have differentiated more carefully between the 'Muhammadan dealers' and the 'Christian merchants,' both of whom, admittedly, perpetrated 'hideous things' on the 'Body of Humanity.' He might have said, for it is the fact, that Muhammadan dealers were only following the sanction of the founder of their faith, whereas the Spirit of Christ is entirely opposed to slavery.

Even so, Mr. Andrews is fully aware of that attitude in Islam which is so uncompromising as to make the whole system a serious problem, if not a menace, in modern society. 'The brotherhood which Islam contemplates is always a brotherhood of believers. This relation of Muslims to fellow-believers is separated off by a sharp line of demarcation from the Muslim relation to unbelievers. "Know," said the Prophet, "that every Muslim is a brother of every other. All of you are equal. Ye are all one brotherhood."

'Nothing could be more pronounced than this stress upon the

unity of all believers. Nothing could be more significant than the precise limitation of this unity to believers only. It is here more than anywhere else that I find a difficulty in reconciling Islam, in its present form, with universal religion and universal brotherhood. It would appear as though a certain exclusiveness were involved within the very structure of the Islamic faith.

'It is true that the spirit of brotherhood engendered by Islam not unfrequently oversteps the barriers of formal creeds and overflows to all mankind. The whole Sufi Movement in India has this ideal behind it. Such a true brotherly love I have myself experienced within the homes and hearts of Muslims, who have been more than brothers to me. But the division of human life between Muslims and non-Muslims seems almost fundamental both in Muhammadan law and social obligation. The fact that to-day, in the Twentieth Century, any non-Muslim who ventures openly within the city of Mecca would do so at the peril of his life, makes painfully clear how hard and fast the line is still drawn.

'I am well aware that Christianity has flagrantly denied in action the principle of universal brotherhood which its creed professes. I am also aware that Islam has far more effectively solved the race problem within its own borders than Christendom has done hitherto. Indeed, no apology for the Christian Church is possible as things stand today. The sin committed is against the light, and therefore it is all the greater. "Race" Churches exist, in direct defiance of the will and spirit of the Founder of the Christian Faith. In the Southern States of America and in South Africa the situation has become quite indefensible, and from the humane standpoint quite intolerable. Nevertheless the gulf of religion in Islam between believers and unbelievers is still unbridged, and there seems no way of bridging it except for the whole world to be converted to Islam.' (!)

Musalmani-Bengali.

THE following notes have come to hand from experienced workers among village Muslims in north Bengal.

'Does Mr. Chowdhury suggest that it is a wrong policy to continue to produce literature in Musalmani-Bengali?

'If so, we entirely disagree with him and would like to ask if he has ever been, or is now, engaged in work among Muslims in the villages?

'At the Bogra Conference, Dr. Zwemer mentioned that a similar suggestion had been made to him. The Conference however was unanimously of the opinion that Musalmani-Bengali literature is still greatly needed *in the villages*.

'We are finding that purchasers in the villages, invariably buy M. B. books, and this vernacular appeals to them more, as they contain the religious terms used by themselves.

'We would earnestly request that, before there is any diminution in the number of M. B. books published, the Committee for Work among Muslims in Bengal should get the opinion of both Indian and European workers who are actually engaged in village work, as these will speak, not theoretically, but with a knowledge of the facts as they find them.'

Why Ibn Saud ousted King Hussein.

Mr. Pennings, one of our members in Arabia, in an interesting article on 'The Fall of Mecca' appearing in 'Neglected Arabia', shows King Hussein in another light:

'Ibn Saud, the Sultan of Nejd, had never considered Hussein sufficiently austere and pious. He was also bitterly offended by King Hussein's assumption, in March 1924, of the title of Caliph. The main cause of resentment, however, was his treatment of the pilgrims to the Sacred City. It is one of the special duties of the Caliph to keep open the pilgrim routes and facilitate in every way the carrying out of this important religious ceremony. It was certainly to be expected of the king that he should do so. In point of fact, he did the very opposite. The pilgrims to the Hajj in the summer of 1924 came back with many and grievous complaints. Whole caravans of pilgrims were stopped outside of the sacred places and Hussein was unwilling to pay the money demanded to let them pass. It was charged that he required every pilgrim to pay \$90, two-thirds of which was for the king, and that the price of water had been raised so high by the authorities that many of the pilgrims died of thirst. Also he had failed to carry out the necessary medical arrangements. Besides he got into serious difficulty with the Egyptian Government. No wonder that the pilgrims spread an evil report of him to all corners of the Moslem world. But what made him most detested by the Ikhwan, as these converted Bedouins call themselves, was that he had for some years past forbidden them to carry out this sacred rite, in defiance of one of the very pillars of Islam. The few that had visited Mecca had been subjected to grievous insults.'

The Activity of The Moslem Press in India.

The activity of the Moslem Press, its polyglot character and its increasing use of English as a medium for propaganda is a challenge to the Churches to make a far wider use of Christian Literature and bring it up-to-date.

The Islamic Press is ubiquitous and enterprising; it is well supported and co-operates with the press in other Moslem lands; it puts out not only books and periodicals but wall-texts, chromos, lithographs, "Christmas Cards" for Mohammed's birthday, and "Cheque-books on the Bank of Faith."

Where once the untranslatable sacred language was Arabic, now they publish Allah's Book in "languages understood of the people." We found in India, and at astonishingly low prices, diglot and polyglot editions of the Koran in Arabic with Bengali, Urdu, Gujerati, Marathi,

Malayalam, Tamil, etc., as well as four English versions by Moslems. Three distinct Bengali translations of the Koran now exist. The standard Mohammedan translation in folio edition appeared as a third reprint a few years ago and the publishers told us that 20,000 copies of this third edition are sold every year in Calcutta. In addition there is one, published some twenty-nine years ago anonymously by a Brahmō-Somaj Bengali scholar, and the recent translation by the Rev. Wm. Goldsack. A firm of book-sellers, after cross-questioning, insisted that they were printing no less than ten million copies of one Arabic leaflet (used as an amulet) every year. I have no doubt that Arabic Christian literature would find readers in the chief Moslem centers if an Arabic-speaking colporteur, or one who knew Arabic as well as Urdu, were engaged in this special work. Arabic newspapers are read widely and at least one Arabic paper is published in Calcutta.'

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER.

In the Bulletin of the American C.L.S. for Moslems. Feb. 1925.

Nile Mission Press

Mr. A. T. Upson, General Director of the N.M.P. 37 Sharia Al Manakh, Cairo, sends us the following synopsis of the activities of the Press for the past year :—

No. of Arabic Gospel publications to December.....530.

Lands to which our books go: China, Sumatra, Java, Straits Settlements, Burma, Bengal, Sind, Hyderabad, Afghanistan, Turkestan, Persia, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, East Africa, Uganda, Brazil, Muslims in Argentine, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua, Canada, U.S.A., etc.

Staff in Cairo, doing nothing but write, print, bind and distribute Gospel books: 40 men (wives, children not counted).

Staff of colporteurs in Nile Valley, 10, visiting all the provinces.

Staff of colporteurs in Palestine, 5, covering all the country.

Bookroom (Branch) at Chamber of Commerce, Jerusalem.

Our progress in *Production* :—

In 1914	we had	140	publications
1918	"	280	"
1922	"	380	"
1923	"	420	"
1924	"	450	"
1925	"	530	"

Truly this is a "live-wire" institution.

But *Circulation* is the "acid test" of literature; are we moving with the time? See :—

In 1922	we distributed	120,000	books and tracts
1923	"	160,000	" "
But in 1924	"	340,000	" "

" Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Notes

Our veteran friend Dr. E. M. Wherry, himself a life member of the M. M. League, writes to us from 759 Ridgeway avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A: 'Though absent in body I feel that I am still with you. By correspondence and study of the work as reported in various ways and especially in 'News and Notes,' of which I have a complete file, and withal by prayer and intercession, I keep fairly abreast with you in my interest and love of the work.'

'I am delighted to hear of the increasing interest in the work of the League. Dr. Zwemer's work has been wonderful and I rejoice in it. We worked together for two conferences, Cairo and Lucknow, and I look back upon those days as among the great things of my life.'

Members may remember that some ten years ago Dr. Wherry had in view a revised two-volume edition of his valuable "Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran." In reply to enquiries made by us concerning this he says, 'Alas, the war made publication impossible then and the high cost of paper and printing make it difficult now. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* However, Mr. Gordon Logan of the Egypt General Mission is trying to arouse interest in this project. With my kind regards to the members of the League.'

* * * * *

A retired member in North India writes:—'It seems to me...that the Moslem religion will be demolished by disintegration from within itself. The Khilafat, one of its strongholds, has been practically smashed up by Kemal Pasha; then the Ahmadiya sect comes into the field with a leader who appears as in associate with, or even rival of, Muhammad. Apparently the Amir of Afghanistan considered him a rival when he had some Ahmadiyas stoned to death. The subjoined cutting from a recent issue of 'The Pioneer' shows the setting in of still further disintegration by Ibn Saud.

'Abdulla Yamani, the guide of the Memon pilgrims to Mecca, interviewed at the end of April, referred to the great hardships in Mecca, where he said the supplies were short, with the result that the citizens are leaving the city for other countries. Sugar was sold at the amazing rate of 30 guineas per bag, rice at Rs. 150 per bag, and wheat at Rs. 120 per bag. A can of oil weighing only two seers (5lbs.) cost as much as Rs. 4-8 annas. Only 100 men of Ibn Saud were now guarding Mecca, the population of which was daily dwindling down, owing to the warfare in its vicinity. Most of the eminent citizens had been done to death by Ibn Saud when he first attacked. The Wahabis were now enforcing their religious rites, with the result that only the Azan was recited, and no *maulud* was allowed to be read in the holy places of worship. Many of the domes in the holy places had also been demolished by Ibn Saud.'

* * * * *

Dr. Zwemer at the May meetings in England spoke in some places on "God's Great Love for Mohammedans." He stated that the issue was very clear between Islam and Christianity, but Christians could outlive, out-think, and outlove the Moslems. It was hard to learn that God loved Mohammedans. When Abraham had turned Ishmael out, Jehovah had heard the cry of the lad. God loved the Moslems because there were so many of them; the Moslem boys and girls holding hands could encircle the world twice. God loved them because they were yet a great way off; again, because they had kept His first command, "The Lord is one God." A

Mohammedan had come to Christ through reading the Koran, which taught that all were sinful, but Jesus was sinless. The Koran challenged Christianity: it said, "Verily you shall find among Christians those who are next in love to you." God loved the Moslems because He had left a witness in their book and their rites. He loved them because He went to meet them sending missionaries with the Gospel. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians Paul said of Christ, "Neither can the Head say to the feet I have no need of thee." Christ needed human agents to run His errands. When Dr. Zwemer visited Java the Moslem press announced his arrival and added, "We must be on our guard lest more Mohammedans become Christians." There had been no time when the Mohammedan world was more ready to receive the message of reconciliation. The point was that the Church, in its attitude to Moslems, too often resembled the elder brother of the parable rather than the father. We were challenged with the Moslems in our fields, and asked if we could outlive, outthink, and outlove them. Self-sacrificial obedience was needed to the command "that ye love even as I have loved you."

* * * * *

Wanted—an Evangelist.—One of our members, Rev. Gustaf Westmo, of the Swedish Alliance Mission, Dhulia, West Khandesh, Bombay Presidency, urgently requires an Evangelist who can speak Urdu, for his work among Muslims. He will be very grateful if any members of the League, in Urdu-speaking areas, knowing of a suitable man will communicate with him on the subject. Here is an opportunity to help, of which we trust some member will take prompt advantage.

DEATH OF A MEMBER.

We report with grief the death, from enteric on 26th May, of Miss E. B. Ovenshire, of the M. E. Mission, Raipur, C.P. 'She had only been in India two and a half years, but had endeared herself to all.'

NEW MEMBER.

451. Rev. H. C. Duncan. Scot. Miss. Darjeeling, Bengal.

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.

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