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News and Notes

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Islam in Africa

(Extracts from *The International Review of Missions*)

(i) By MAURICE DELAFOSSE,

former Governor of French Colonies in Africa.

“AMONG the motives which incline the natives of the Sudan to adopt Islam there is little of a purely religious nature, except in the case of the Native's desire to share in the *baraka* of a marabout, a case which, however, bears more resemblance to paganism than to Moslem orthodoxy. Most frequently the Negroes submit, without fully realizing it, to the attraction of the external prestige which is given to Mohammedans by that dignity of bearing of which I spoke just now. They feel a natural deference for these persons who enjoy the privilege of being able to speak directly to God and who do it in a strange language with gestures whose regularity impresses their childlike curiosity—for these men, otherwise like themselves, who are distinguished from the common herd by a knowledge of mysterious signs translating the word. From this deference to a desire to enter in their turn into this class of superior humanity it is only a step. Self-respect, the desire to rise in the world, are the strongest factors in the Islamization of Negro countries. Consequently, cases are frequently seen of Natives who exercise political power seeking to enhance their importance in the eyes of their subjects by embracing Islam.

“But, owing to an impulse of a similar kind, these chiefs, when they have become Mussalmans, do not at all like to be imitated by the lower orders, since they wish to maintain the distance which separates them from the latter. Most frequently, far from favouring the conversion of their subjects, they try to oppose it, and if it is

accomplished in spite of them they regard it with disfavour. This is why it has been repeatedly observed that in small Native States Islam is only practised by the Sovereign, his children and some of the highest dignitaries, while the king does nothing at all to propagate the new religion among the mass of the population.

"The tolerance of Negro Islam towards indigenous beliefs certainly also contributes to the gaining of proselytes. Some marabouts exact no more from their followers than the profession of the Mussalman faith, pronounced with the lips rather than the heart, and do not even demand the renunciation of the rites of the ancestral worship. They succeed thus in counting a large number of adherents, but one might question whether these adherents deserve to be reckoned as true Mussalmans." (As Dr. Zwemer says in the course of a contribution which he makes to the same issue:—"Islam is itself so animistic that it has failed to uproot pagan practices or to remove the terror of spirits and demon worship. By its pilgrimage rites, its doctrine of jinn, of magic, of amulets and charms, it does indeed find easier access to the mind of the Negro but it demands no great change in his beliefs or practices. Islam and animism live in a very neighbourly fashion on the same street and in the same soul. No definite line marks the border between Moslem and pagan tribes on the map of Africa or in the mind of the African.")

"The two great causes of the expansion of Islam among the Negroes have been and still are, on the one hand, their desire to gain knowledge, and, on the other hand, the favour with which colonial authorities in general regard the Mussalmans. If there were in Africa no other establishments of learning than the Quranic schools, it may be presumed that the whole of Africa would become Mussalman in a more or less short space of time, so imperious is the desire for knowledge, and above all for the power to read and write, among these people who realize their ignorance and suffer from it. But the increasing number of schools of all sorts opened by Europeans interposes a very appreciable obstacle to this stream and offers a serious competition to Mussalman education.

"As for the favour frequently shewn by the European authorities of different nations to the Mussalmans, it has visibly contributed to the multiplication of cases of conversion to Islam, so that we find ourselves faced with this somewhat paradoxical phenomenon, that the progress of Islam is in part attributable to the action of Christian powers. That which the violence of the Mussalman conquerors, preachers of the Holy War, had succeeded in accomplishing only partially and for a time, has been achieved on a much greater scale and in a more permanent fashion by the partiality of certain governors and administrators. It is true that this partiality, if justifiable, is easily explained. Many heads of colonies and commandants of districts, entrusted with the task of maintaining order and of assuring the development of immense areas with very limited means, observing among the Mussal-

mans rudiments of organization which they did not perceive among the pagans, more familiar too with matters Islamic than with the confused and unsurveyed field of Negro African animism, in their delight at finding among the Mussalmans a more advanced culture making easier a mutual comprehension, have leaned upon the Mussalman element and, without realizing it, have shown it a favour so marked that the other element in the population has concluded that it should be to their own interest to enter the privileged class."

(ii) BY DR. W. R. MILLER, M.D.,
of West Africa.

"I have a boy here acting as dresser and dispenser under the Native Administration, in the Native prison under a European doctor. It is an unfeigned joy that he is winning, as a Christian convert, golden opinions from European and Native Moslem rulers. In a letter only this week from the Divisional Officer of the Province, he says, "I wish you could give us fifty more Mu'azus" (the boy's name). He is greatly beloved by the prisoners who suffered badly before. Recently two murderers, caught after a desperate hunt in which they were both badly wounded, were brought bound into prison. In olden days they would have been left by Native Moslem gaolers on the ground, bleeding, thirsty and cold. Moslems told me here of their amazement to see this lad lift them up, treat their wounds, give them water and food, and cover them with blankets. "This to murderers," they said. He had learnt the lessons of first aid and Christian love in the mission school.

"A recently converted Moslem 'cattle' Fulani, one of the first of his people to enter the Christian Church by baptism, was saved from death by the heroic action of a woman missionary when poisoned and lying stiff in his house six miles from us. Called in the middle of a dark night, she took what remedies were possible, and on her bicycle in the dark along that lonely native track she stumbled, often falling, until she reached him and saved his life. He said to me just before his baptism, "I understand now, through what she did for me, something of what Christ did in coming down to save." He is now indefatigable in searching out sufferers, human or animal, and has the beginning of a passion for this kind of loving Christian social service. *Through such means Islam will bow to Christ.* We need not despair; in the phrase for ever burnt into our minds by Canon Gairdner's book, "We have the greatest—even if it be our only—asset in the world, *the Spirit of Jesus.*"

"I have no hesitation in saying that, while the evidences may be to the contrary to those who judge with only natural eyes, to those who see beyond there is a certainty that the tide has turned, and that the Kingdom of Christ in Africa—even Moslem Africa—is on the way

to ascendancy. Twelve years ago I translated all Rouse's Tracts for Moslems, though not myself much prepared to use the line of argument or method of exegesis in them. For years we have had piles of them lying in boxes unused. To-day they are selling by the thousand. Quite recently a young teacher in a government school, a Moslem, confessed to the school his conversion and has been baptised: the conviction started from reading these tracts."

Preaching to Muslims Vindicated

SOME OBSERVATIONS BY PASTOR NIELSEN, OF DAMASCUS.

"We do not object to Christians attempting to Christianise Moslems, nor to Moslems trying to convert Christians to admit the superior truth, if they can do so. For we believe that the human mind will always feel impelled to give to others the benefit of what it believes to be good and helpful. Therefore we could not ill-treat the Christian whose desires and efforts are to make Moslems Christians in a way dictated by wisdom and good manners. But we reckon that to use bitterness and deceit and untruth as means to this end is a crime which God does not forgive and with which Christ is not pleased, nor does it commend itself to any noble soul which hates untruth and false dealing in social relations generally or in religious matters particularly." *The Manar*—vol. 24, page 387.

We do not often read in Moslem publications words like those which we have quoted from the *Manar*. On the contrary we generally see extreme annoyance and objection to the evangelization of Moslems by Christians, and evangelization is reckoned to be harmful and wicked, not only in the opinion of irresponsible individuals, but in books and periodicals and formal protests.

This being the case I aim in this tract to explain what Christian preaching really is, and what are its aims, and I suspect that not only Moslems but also some Christians need this explanation, since the latter neglect preaching among Moslems and will not carry it on for various reasons. Our enquiry is not about the facts which they preach, i.e., the preaching itself, in which we should bring proofs of the truth of Christian beliefs—that would be another line of enquiry—but we wish to turn our attention to the quotation we have made from the *Manar*—to the effect that evangelization is an essential part of religion, and that the fair-minded man, Christian or Moslem, will agree to this and will not hate or despise true evangelization which is free from political or selfish motives, for it is but an expression of the preacher's love for his religion and his desire to spread its advantages among his neighbours.

Sometimes a Christian missionary is asked by the Moslem—If you want to preach to non-Christians, why do you not try first to

enlighten your own people—nominal Christians who do not fulfil the demands of Jesus, or why do you not go to the heathen rather than to Moslems who believe in the unity of God? My answer to this is, first, look at those Moslem missionaries in England—they have not chosen to work among ignorant Moslems, for their enlightenment, to teach them to distinguish the kernal of religion from its husk, nor have they gone to the idolators in the middle of Africa or China or in their own country, India, but have chosen to work among “the people of the Book” in the heart of the civilised world. This must be because they hold Islam to be above all other religions and their prophet the seal of all the prophets and a “mercy to the world.” The intention of the Christian missionary is similar, when he comes among Moslems with his call to Christ, as the foundation other than which no man can lay, as the bearer of the name than which there is no other through which we must be saved. It is He who has commanded His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all peoples. If the Christian believes that, how can he leave any people without preaching to them?

The reason why missionaries have been backward in preaching to Moslems has been the political opposition of the government of Turkey and other Moslem countries in the past. If those obstacles are removed the Christian will preach to Moslems as freely as he does to others. Not that all individuals or all peoples are equal in his estimation in regard to their moral level, or the truth of their beliefs, but that his belief in Christ as the one mediator between God and man and his personal experience teach him that the knowledge and civilization and virtues of other religions are insufficient for the achievement of moral perfection and pure love which are demanded by Him who said, “Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.” For that holiness cannot be obtained except by reliance on Him who said also, “No one cometh to the Father but by Me.”

As for the Moslem who says that preaching is unnecessary, to him I say, “Why are you more angry with the Christian missionary than with the silent Christian? It is clear that both are equally believers in Christ as the Saviour of the whole world and the greatest of all the prophets. What objection is there to a man acting according to his belief and making an effort to bring others into that faith? Do you not rather blame the man who conceals his belief in his heart and does not act on it? Perhaps you say I am not angry at his preaching about his religion (though I think him mistaken) but I am angry at his unjust and cruel attacks on other religions. I should answer, I am in entire agreement with you about the duty of rejecting all lying calumnies and other unjust attacks. The true missionary, indeed every true Christian, will strive to prevent this, whether Christians or Moslems attempt it, for he approves only methods of gentleness and love especially in the affairs of religion.

That does not mean complacency with other men’s opinions,

involving untruth and concealment of his own opinion. While he holds firmly to his religion and to the preaching of it he can still respect every sincere man whom he meets even if that man's view is directly opposed to his own. It cannot be considered calumny if he is asked his opinion about another man's religion and in reply gives the reason why he cannot accept that religion. It is intolerable that a believer should refuse to listen to a man who does not accept his religion, while he himself wishes to commend it to others. Why should that be considered calumny and hatred? Can he not praise certain parts of a religion even if he is not convinced of its complete truth? The sincere man ought to seek by all means to mark every merit which he sees in others, no less than those he misses or what he does not approve. The above agrees with the remark of a certain saint when he was commenting on one of the ten commandments, (Thou shalt not bear false witness), He said, "this means not only to tell no lies, but to give everything its best, not its worst interpretation." Thus every man, Christian or Moslem, ought to examine everything and speak of everything in the spirit of humanity and love.

The Arabic Reference Quran

WE have received from the compiler, Dr. Frances Wakefield, a copy of the first portion of a work upon which her heart has been set for several years—the first nine Suras of the Quran, (i.e., about one-third of the whole) arranged with a view to a comparative study along with the Bible. "It is designed to greatly simplify the study of the Quran by making it possible to see quickly what is, or is not, contained in it. Also to show what is, or is not, stated in the Bible about the subjects mentioned in the Quran." As such it ought to be welcomed by all those missionaries whose knowledge of Arabic is sufficient to enable them to read the Arabic Quran with profit, for the book is entirely in Arabic.

But Dr. Wakefield has a further, very practical object in view. "If you find any who know the Quran and are feeling after truth beyond it, consider whether the loan of a Bible and a *Reference Quran* would be the best help you can give him."

We think that rare scholar the late Dr. Hooper, of the C.M.S., in India, would have rejoiced over this work. Writing for our paper in 1920 on "Muslim Retrogression," he said, "I have for a very long time thought that given a really honest and unprejudiced seeker after Truth among Muslims, the best way to convince him of the truth of Christianity and the falsehood of the claims of Islam would be to take him steadily through the Bible..... pointing out the proofs of a *progress* in revelation as they occur; and then let him go on to the Quran and seek there for a continuation of that progress. We know that he will seek it there in vain; nay, but in all subjects he will find there a decided *retrogression* behind the point to which the Bible has brought him, and in some subjects a retrogression behind even the *beginning* of the process of progress in the Bible."

The arrangement of this work is quite simple. The Arabic text occupies the top half of the page, with numerals interspersed which refer to a scheme of *references* arranged below. These latter are compiled in two

columns: (a) cross references to the *Quran* itself, and (b) parallel references cited in the *Taurat* and *Injil*.

The book has the very appearance of a Muslim publication, with orthodox flap cover, measures 8" x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", has 228 pages and costs P.T. 20. *i.e.*, about 5 shillings English. The whole thing reflects great credit on the Nile Mission Press, who have undertaken the printing. Orders may be posted there to Dr. F. Wakefield, 37 Sharia Al Manakh, Cairo.

New Tracts for Muslims in Urdu

MEMBERS will recall that, as a direct result of the deliberations at the Jerusalem Conference in April 1924, Mr. Upson, of the Nile Mission Press, made available for workers in all lands the English text of some of the most effective literature in circulation in the Arabic language. These he collected together in one volume under the title, "*What God hath used.*" The Committee on Literature for Muslims of the N.C.C. (India) decided to re-produce a number of these in Urdu.

We notified our readers, in N. & N. for June, of the issue of a few items by the Punjab Religious Tract and Book Society, Anarkali, Lahore. Here are six more, all from "*What God hath used*" :

TRACTS.

16 pp. at one pice each

The New Horizon (Naya Asman).

A Desert Sandstorm (Badbagula).

8 pp. at 4 as. per 100, or Rs. 2 per 1000

The Robe of Al-Rashid (Al-Rashid ki Poshak).

4 pp. at 2 as. per 100 or Re. 1 per 1000

The Wonderful Pathway (Ajib Rasta).

The Field of Good Intentions (Nek Niyyati ka Khet).

The Search for the Strongest (Sabse Taqatwar ki Talash).

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We append short notes on two of the Urdu publications advertised in our June issue :

'*Masihi Aqida aur Zindagi*' or the Christian Faith and Life, by the Rev. W. H. T. Gairdner of Cairo. 44. pp. As. 2.

A book of instruction for catechumens. The groundwork is the Nicene Creed, with the following subjects grafted, so to speak, on to it, at the places and in the order afforded by the thought sequence of the Creed :

The Creation of the World, The Creation and Fall of Man, The Preparation for Christ, Christ's Teaching of the Kingdom, Christ's Atonement, Man's Forgiveness.

The need of a systematic hand-book of lessons in the Christian doctrine and life, specially for catechumens in Muhammadan lands has long and often been keenly felt and we hope that these 'helps' will prove valuable for the Christian grounding of all converts from non-Christian religions. Canon Gairdner has taken great care to make these lessons suitable for use by those working in connection with other denominations.

'Ikhlil-ul-Injil,' or The Crown of the Gospel, 108 pp. As. 2.

Composed of Christ's own words specially arranged for use among Muslims. Covers the following topics: Christ's Authority, the Lord's Prayer, Repentance, Swearing, Faith, Fasting, Sowing, the Spirit of God, Sin, Neighbours, Cleanliness, the Fig Tree, the Lost Sheep, Stumbling-blocks, Marriage, Judgment, the Good Shepherd, the Comforter, the Real Tree, the Glory of God, the Risen Christ, Christ's Witnesses.

Missionaries working among Indian Muslims will find this book very helpful.

Orders for any of the above should be sent to the P.R.B.S., Anarkali, Lahore.

The Muslim Year

Rabiul Akhir.

THE sanctity of this month is primarily due to the special observance of the 11th of the month, a custom prevalent in all Muslim countries.

The day is dedicated to the honoured name of Abdul Qádir Jiláni, preacher and Sufi, founder of the Qádirí Order, and known as the "*Sultan of the Saints*." He was born in 1077, and died in 1166.

In some places in India the singing of songs on this day has become an established custom, but, for the most part, Muslims, after offering the *Fatiha* over their food and sweetmeats seek to transfer the benefit to the soul of the Saint.

Notes

Wanted—a Biblewoman. Mrs. Merriweather, one of our members, working at Salyamangalam, via Erode, South India, needs a middle-aged Hindustani-speaking Bible-woman (preferably a South India woman) to help her in her work among Moslem women. If any of our lady members in South India know of such a woman will they please communicate with Mrs. Merriweather without delay.

* * * * *

Should a convert change his name? We imagine that a variety of answers might be given to this question, and since it is one that must exercise the minds of many from time to time, we invite members to discuss it in our pages. We know converts who have so changed their name that it might be thought that they come of Hindu parents, while on the other hand there are several well-known members of this League whose name proclaims the fact that they were once Muslims. What good reasons can be shown for changing or retaining the old name?

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Ahmadiyas at Hong Kong. Mr. Isaac Mason, our representative in China, who has done such valuable work for the C.I.S. in that land, writes to say: "Some Ahmadiya Muslims at Hong Kong have recently sent me two pamphlets in Chinese—translations—one of them being the Preface to Muhammad Ali's translation of the Quran, the other one of the Working pamphlets—very polemical. I am glad to have them."

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The Best Friend. A special edition of this Life of Christ, for Muslim readers with a slender knowledge of English, has been prepared in a sage green limp cover with the title in gilt lettering at six annas (sixpence). Containing as it does six of Copping's beautiful pictures it makes a very acceptable gift to Muslim friends at Christmas. Copies of this edition can be obtained from the Secretary of the League. Postage extra.

For Prayer

PRAYER is asked for an Anglo-Indian, formerly a resident of Calcutta, who some years ago, under the influence of a moulvie, forsook his people and his faith and embraced Islam. Recently he has been led to see his great mistake and now desires to come back and if possible bring his wife (a Pathan) with him.

NEW MEMBERS

267. Mr. George Malcolm Abbottabad, N.W.F. Prov.
 472. Rev. G. H. Reynolds, B.M.S. Agra, U.P.

The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.) 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.*



Edited and published by Rev. L. Bevan Jones, Dacca, Bengal, and printed at the Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, by Rev. R. J. Grundy, Superintendent.