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News and Notes

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Three Months in Egypt

QUSSIONARIES in the Far East who have had the opportunity of spending a little time at this fascinating half-way-house may be glad to revive memories and impressions and even entertain the thought of another visit. But it is particularly for missionaries who have not breathed the Egypt atmosphere that I write.

I acknowledge with much gratitude the opportunity given to me to extend my furlough last year to include two or three months in Cairo in special study of Arabic and Islamics. I was particularly fortunate in arriving at the end of October just in time for a new session of the School of Oriental Studies which is under the direction of Rev. E. E. Elder and Rev. Arthur Jeffery, and a part of the American University under the presidency of Dr. C. R. Watson.

For missionaries, the plan of study is to begin with the colloquial and acquire a working knowledge of it through the first two terms, after which the student is introduced to the classical. A great deal of work is done with Sheikhs through the medium of the colloquial, and students who have had the preliminary work in that are much better able to make headway later on. However, I found that I, with my small knowledge of the classical, could get along alright with students of the third term because individual and group work with the Sheikhs is adequately supplemented by work with English-speaking Effendis and with American or English professors.

Briefly, my course consisted of a group class with a Sheikh for reading of Arabic New Testament, an individual class with a Sheikh for reading of Qur'an (emphasis mainly on pronunciation and intonation), a class with an Effendi in Composition into Arabic, a series of classes in Phonetics by Canon W. H. T. Gairdner, and classes in Grammar and Translation from Arabic by the directors of studies. Besides these must be mentioned special lectures on Fridays by Dr. Samuel Zwemer on Islamic Mysticism, Animism in Islam and the Law

of Apostasy, and by Mr. Jeffery in Historical Criticism of the Qur'an. There were other lectures one would have given much to attend, but one cannot be in two places at once!

I found by careful self-examination that my daily book-work and lectures amounted on the average, for week days only, to six hours only. I should be more ashamed of this but for the fact that one's education in Islamics in Cairo must not omit other important undertakings such as wanderings through the bazars and mosques, visits to the Azhar, * the Arabic Museum (not to be confused with the Egyptian Museum which exists nowadays mainly for the wonders of Tutankhamen rather than for the Missionary to the Moslems) and the important Khedivial Library. Very much, too, may be learnt in mornings spent at Miss Padwick's office where the machinery for a Central Literature Bureau for Mission work among Moslems is being assembled, or by a call at the Nile Mission Press on Mr. Upson. And if, for the bazar wanderings, you can join Dr. Zwemer, more lucky you! I was lucky too in finding among the students of Al Azhar a Bengali school-master and we often got out together sight-seeing, journeying far alike in our excursions as in our discourses!

A mere book knowledge of Islam can never introduce to one the superstition of the ordinary Egyptian or Arab; for that you must stand in the shadow of the Bab Ez-Zuwweleh and see the men, women and little children seek to link their spirits with the spirit of the saint that lurks there as they kiss or lick the grimy door or leave pieces of clothing or hair on the iron nails that stud it. For that you must study the superstitious use of the 99 names in rosary or water-bowl and pick up here and there the extraordinary charms used for immunity from sickness, success in child-labour or exorcisms of evil spirits (according as those evil spirits are Christian or Sudanese or non-sectarian!) For that, explore with due precaution near the Mosque of Sayyida Zeinab at the festival of Zeinab's birthday.

A strangely mixed atmosphere, surely, but one vital to one's appreciation of the various forces in Islam. It is good to have breathed it, even for a brief two and a half months.

Now the problem is to keep up if only for an hour a day the study of the language as well as of the religion at large, for no one could presume to suggest that such a short introduction leads very far. But I would most strongly encourage any missionary who has not halted in Egypt on his return from furlough to make a great effort to do so. The expenses involved are not outrageous, especially when the American University make the liberal offer to missionaries to attend the course at a fee of only £3 per month. The Cairo Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. provide admirable accommodation at £10

* The progressive reforms effected in Al-Azhar Mosque and University by Khaled Mohammed Hassanein Bey took place under our eyes at the close of last year, and I hope that readers will look for more about it in an article by Rev. S. A. Morrison in *The Moslem World*.

per month (practically inclusive) and the fare from Port Said to Cairo is less than £1, second class.

People cross continents to see the pyramids, and it is no wonder. But for us there is more than a sight of the pyramids, in a visit to Cairo. Take your next opportunity of going.

Barisal, E. Bengal.

H. M. ANGUS.

The Strike at Dar ul 'Ulum in Cairo

ANOTHER indication of the ferment which is disturbing Islam from within has recently been observed at Cairo (Feb. 1926).

Dar ul 'Ulum (Hall of Sciences) is the name of the school at which Sheikhs are trained as teachers. It is under the ministry of education. It is a normal college: while the Azhar might be called a seminary, or school of religious training. The Azhar is under the ministry of Auqaf.

The students of this school wished to attend classes dressed, not in the long robe (Galabiyah) and turban (Kaftan) usual for Sheikhs, but in European clothes with tarboosh (Fez). The authorities of the school resisted this, and the students went on strike.

The authorities argue thus: every religion has its special dress. The Copts and others have their clergy. The Sheikhs' costume is recognised everywhere as the dress of a religious man. It conveys respect. It also secures self-respect, and may prevent a student from frequenting places and doing things which young men in western dress do. The students answer: we are not going to teach religion. Why should we adopt the dress of the religious man? When we have finished our training and take up our duties we shall wear European clothes and tarboosh. Then why not now? This dress is unhygienic and objectionable on other grounds. King Fuad himself wears western dress.

We draw attention to this as yet another sign of the revolt against tradition at the very heart of Islam. No doubt the objection of the students is a repercussion of the dress reforms in Turkey. But it is indicative of a steadily growing consciousness that both the theory and practice of Islam have to justify themselves to modern science, history, psychology and logic, and can no longer rest on mere authority.

So far the authorities have been successful in the contention. A number of students have been dismissed, and the oriental dress enforced.

Islam's Answer to Christianity in South Africa

Repercussions after Dr. Zwemer's Visit

THE following information is abstracted from 'Le Journal des Missions' (Organ of the Paris Missionary Society) Oct. 1925, from an article by Rev. Alfred Cassalis.

M. Cassalis says that the facts presented by Dr. Zwemer to the Christian churches were a revelation to missionaries, who had no idea of the progress of the religion in the South African Union. A certain newspaper, 'Les Hommes,' written, edited and published by coloured people, makes remarks on the subject which may be condensed as follows :—

"The whites have been greatly moved by what Dr. Zwemer has told them of the progress of Islam in South Africa. A white newspaper, the *Daily Mail* of Johannesburg, declares that if Islam gains ground among the blacks of the Union, the blacks will, like birds, escape from the hands of the whites and fly off. The writer urges the readers, white men and women, all to become preachers of the religion of Jesus Christ among the blacks, for only by means of Christianity can the white man hope to keep the black under his protection and power. The pressing duty of the hour, says the *Daily Mail*, for all whites is to become preachers of the Gospel, for this preaching will bring profit not only to the missionaries but to all the whites of South Africa."

M. Cassalis here remarks that he has not the article from the *Daily Mail*, so cannot verify the quotations. He goes on to quote another article from the same coloured paper in which the author presents the Moslem reply to the Christians.

"A great battle of words has to-day been joined between Moslems and Christians. The latter have said that Islam is a danger threatening South Africa. The Moslems reply, Islam and Christianity are both equally good and true. But Christianity has been betrayed and debased by the Christians themselves, for their moral conduct is unworthy of Christianity, and at heart they really hate the blacks whom they are evangelising. The whites are governed by laws which are not inspired by the spirit of Jesus Christ. In Islam the dominant principle is brotherhood, unity, charity, and love, which unite all those who accept the teaching of Muhammad. The command which he left is exactly that which Jesus gave to his disciples, love one another; for the greatest of all things is charity.

"But is there any love or charity in the laws which the white Christians have imposed on the black Christians whom they themselves have evangelised? The Christianity which the whites wish to impose on the blacks is precisely that incomplete Christianity which does not agree with the commands and wishes of Jesus Christ. If the white Christians wish to introduce their religion successfully among the

blacks, the moment has come for them to examine their own consciences and to alter their course. Let them return to the Christianity which Jesus himself taught and lived and not teach a Christianity which is spurious, loveless and full of a bad spirit of hate, which respects persons, and sets up such a colour-bar that every black pastor is kept under the supervision and control of white pastors even if he is their superior in faith and piety.

“Let the coloured men reflect, choose the good and reject the bad. Let them put no trust in those who claim to lift high the Cross of Jesus, while they do not walk in his steps themselves. Let them distrust their profession, for their life is not in harmony with the Scriptures, where we are told very forcibly that for those who follow Jesus there is no distinction of race or colour-bar.”

M. Cassalis comments: ‘We must admit that we are touched by our adversary’s blade! Of course it would be possible to reply to this criticism by another, and to say that Islam’s claim to be the religion of love is an exaggeration. . . . But there is some justice in the reproach that it is so difficult to distinguish between the teaching of Christ and official Christianity. We are mute and timid witnesses, perhaps in some sense accomplices of that civilisation which subordinates justice and charity to commercial interests. . . . The Moslem reply deserves attention. We, the missionaries of all societies in South Africa, have always deplored the colour-bar, though we have been allowed no voice in the matter. Justice is beginning to be done to us, however, when it is discovered that the only way to avoid a conflict between the black race and the white is to help the missionaries to develop their work of christianisation and education.

“But nothing will do any good, not even the multiplication by ten or twenty of the missionary force or the missionary budget . . . unless men of the white race and the governments which they have organised and imposed on the blacks come to a juster conception of their duty toward the (so-called) inferior races, and let the spirit of Jesus penetrate first their legislation, then their personal attitude toward these coloured people whom we, the missionaries, have learned to love and respect, and for whom Christ died.”

REMEMBER!

No agency can penetrate Islam so deeply, abide so persistently, witness so daringly, and influence so irresistibly as the printed page!

Unmasked for Publicity

IT is only natural that Muslims in India and elsewhere should exhibit a certain amount of excitement, even resentment, at the published reports of the proceedings of the Missionary Council of the Church Assembly (in England), and other similar bodies which are addressing themselves to the task of evangelizing the Muslim world with a zeal that has been confessedly lacking hitherto.

We can never be sure in these days how much of our proceedings or addresses may be reproduced in the public press, and statements made in semi-private assemblies which are quite inoffensive in themselves may be so quoted in the press as to give them an almost sinister meaning.

This kind of publicity is fast becoming the order of the day and we must reckon with it seriously. It will have its beneficial effect if it induces us to refuse to be a party to any statements that are likely to give unnecessary pain; for the rest, so long as we are actuated by a Christlike yearning for the highest spiritual welfare of our Muslim neighbours we have nothing to fear.

In our March issue we reproduced a letter from a London Muslim to the columns of the Calcutta weekly *The Mussalman*. We publish below part of a letter to the same paper, which appeared in a recent issue over the signature of a Muslim from Burdwan, Bengal, which he entitled: "World call to the Quran." It is well at times to see ourselves as others see us!

Sir,—A recent Reuter message from London throws a flood of light on the character of the general Christian attitude towards the Muslim world which has surprised the champions of the Church with its progressive condition.

'They [the Commissioners appointed by the Missionary Council of the Church Assembly] indicate', says the message, 'the need of and opportunity for, evangelistic work among Muslims.....'; while another message from the same source informs us that the report (which is entitled 'World call to the Church') of the said Commissioners 'dealing with the Muslim world says that the interpretation of the Christian message to Muslims is vital to world peace and the safety of Christendom, and cannot be postponed.' Now it is obvious that the chief purpose of Christendom is to engulf the Muslim world; the said Commissioners have recommended that a sum of £20,000 be collected in order 'to train experts [presumably on the lines of Messrs. Zwemer, Mingana, & Co] and staff for missions in Trans-Jordania, the Sudan, North Nigeria, Singapore, Persia and possibly Madagascar,' and India is by no means exempted.

The report says that *evangelistic work among Muslims is vital to the safety of Christendom*. These words naturally lead us to believe that the Commissioners have been alarmed at the successful activities of the Working Muslim Mission in England and their headquarters in Lahore which, in spite of the deplorable—nay, reprehensible—callousness of the Muslims, are rendering immense services to the Muslim world, one of which is their valuable publications dealing with the true basis of Islam. Moreover, most Christian missionaries seem to be afraid of even the slow

progress of Islam which is being made all the world over, particularly in the central and western parts of Africa. But whatever be the case, these missionaries are up and doing in preparing to crush Islam. Now, if we have a firm belief in our faith, we should in no time engage ourselves in defending and promulgating Islam without any ulterior political motive. From our point of view, which is opposed to that of the Commissioners, it seems that it would benefit Muslims as a community and Indians as a nation, and would help us in establishing world peace.....

Punjab is in many ways alive to this vital cause. But where is Bengal with a bigger number of soldiers who profess to be Muslims? Do they not want Islam? If they do, why be backward in propagating it? Let some of them rally round the banner of Islam with a forceful "World call to the Qur-an" at heart, and let others help them in every possible way. Our primary duty lies in sincerely conveying the true message of Islam to others, and not with the desire of victimizing hundreds and thousands of converts; whether a man, imbued with Islamic ideas, formally accepts Islam or not (though we should think he ought to) is a matter which concerns his own moral courage and sense of duty.....

Prepare yourselves and strive hard for the heavy task before you. 'And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upperhand if you are believers.' (The Holy Qur-an, III. 138.)"

Our File

Do you need a Hindustani assistant? Rev. Judson T. Perkins (one of our members) of the Methodist Church, Hyderabad, Deccan, reports that he is in touch with a young man of 30, a recent convert from Islam, who is undergoing much suffering on account of his faith. He would be glad to hear of any one who can get him work, as it is not safe for him to remain in that part of the country. He comes of a good family in North India and has read up to the Matriculation. His wife who is a Christian has also received moderate education. The young man will be glad to accept a post anywhere for say Rs. 20 to Rs. 30.

If you think you can help this harassed follower of Christ, please apply without delay to Mr. Perkins who will furnish any further information.

* * * * *

Dr. Zwemer's Tour in Persia.—Dr. and Mrs. Zwemer expect to leave Cairo during the first week in May, travelling overland via Jerusalem to Baghdad, thence into Persia for a three months' tour through the principal centres. They may be addressed between May 11th and August 10th c/o. Rev. J. D. Payne, American Mission, Teheran, Persia. During September 14-21 they are to be at the International Conference on the Christian Mission in Africa to be held at Le Zoute, Belgium: thence they proceed to America for deputation work and missionary lectures. They ask for a special place in our prayers as they undertake this long and difficult tour in Persia.

Referring to a forthcoming article by Dr. D. B. Macdonald for the *Moslem World*, entitled "The Value of the Bible in work for Moslems" Dr. Zwemer quotes Dr. Macdonald as saying in a covering letter: 'I wonder if the reason for our apparent lack of success is not a slump in what used to

be called Gospel preaching and teaching; a sliding over into simple humanitarianism and educational and medical work?"

* * * * *

Rev. John Takle, the Founder of our League, sends his warmest greetings to members from his place of retirement in New Zealand (34 Jacobs Street, St. Albans, Christchurch.) He reports a gradual improvement in health, and says that he is finding openings for work, having conducted no less than 38 services and delivered 12 lectures during 1925. But he adds, "my heart is in Bengal."

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A member writing from Mesopotamia speaks of a very welcome interest that is being shown in the Christian message by some inquirers in her station. "Two men have been coming for instruction all of last year and have lately begun to confess Christ openly in our prayer meeting. They are looking forward to baptism in the near future." Apparently the recent sad and heavy loss of three converts has led to a growing interest on the part of others.

Your prayers are asked for these inquirers and for those engaged in trying to win them for Christ.

NEW MEMBER

31 V. M. Habibakhsh, Esq. Y.M.C.A. Calcutta.

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:—

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