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News and Notes

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12th July = New Year's Day (Muharram), 1346, A.H.

Dissenters and Detailers

Muslim Lectures in Mau

THE Annual gatherings of the Ahl-i-hadis and the Hanifis have just been held in Mau, District Azamgarh, U. P. The outstanding features were the great gulf between these two communities and the use of the Bible for their own ends and not as a means of attack on Christianity. The last lectures I attended here were in 1920, as since then I have been in Azamgarh City. The feeling then was very strong against us and the differences among themselves not so marked. One Maulvi stated the other day that there was a more friendly relationship between one of the above sects and the Hindus than between these two sects of Muslims. Recent events have added fuel to the fire. At the last Notified Area elections the Hanifis put up four candidates. The Ahl-i-hadis linked two of their number with two Hindus. These four were elected and feeling was intense. The Hanifis number 7,000 and the Ahl-i-hadis 2,000. No wonder the Hanifis feel their rivals are closer to the Hindus than to them.

Both in listening to lectures and in reading the tracts published by both parties, a Christian finds himself in a whirlpool of word quarrels. Each appeals to tradition which, unlike the Quran, has no limit. The Ahl-i-hadis are, as their name implies, the people of tradition and the Hanifis give way to no one in their respect for every detail of tradition. The Ahl-i-hadis, or as their opponents call them, the Wahhabis, are Puritans and revivalists. Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab, born in A. D. 1691, saw that Islam had departed from its first principles. It warms one's blood to hear a Wahhabi preacher denounce the *taqlid* and assert the right of private judgment. On the other hand are the Hanifis, the *mugallid*, blind followers of the blind. Imam Abu Hanifa (born 700 A. D.) is said to have been such a logician that if he were to assert a wooden pillar was made of gold he would prove it by argument. The differences therefore go deep into principles, but on the surface they are

of ritual. One of the Ahl-i-hadis maulvis stressed the point that they too acknowledged Abu Hanifa, for when dying this Imam pleaded with his followers to follow the Prophet. This, the maulvi declared, the Hanifis had not done but rather had followed a follower of the Prophet.

The differences in ritual mostly concern the method of prayer. Take the question of how to say "Amen." The Ahl-i-hadis declare that it should be loud enough to echo throughout the mosque. This to the Hanifis is quite wrong. It should be whispered. The subject has even come before the courts and Mau Muslims have tried to come to a decision this way. It is certainly a better method than the one of using sticks which was adopted here recently. Another question concerns the position of the hands in the *qiyam*. The Hanifis place the hands low down but the Ahl-i-hadis say they should be put on the breast. In the *sajda* too there is a difference. The Hanifis place their hands straight on the ground while the Ahl-i-hadis first raise them. To such an extreme will tradition carry its slaves. Was it not Al-Ghazzali who said, "A creature gets from his worship only what he comprehends of it."

In the lectures above referred to there were quotations from the Bible put forth as prophecies pointing to their prophet. Quite a lot of time was spent on Deuteronomy xviii 18, but readers of Mizan-ul-Haqq are quite familiar with all these arguments. There was of course not the need in Mau to refute Christian doctrine as our community is small, but on the other hand for the same reason there was no need to use our Bible. I have said that the differences between the Hanifis and Ahl-i-hadis seem more marked now than in 1920. The feeling against us is not so strong. Times of course are different. Mau was a strong centre of the non-co-operators.

One more point. I did not find any of the new trends in Moslem apologetic which Professor Jeffery writes of in his article in *The Moslem World of To-day*. Rather did, as I have said, the Maulvis hunt for Old Testament prophecies, a method which, to quote Professor Jeffery, is out of date. Next year the all-India Ahl-i-hadis Conference will be held here and then let us hope we shall have some breezes from the modern world.

T. C. CARNE.

(An historical sketch of the Wahhabi sect appeared in our issue of May, 1922. Copies may be had from the Secretary at two annas each.)

Islam in South Africa

(From Dr. Zwemer's article in the Moslem World)

ISLAM at the Cape dates back to 1654, when the Dutch East India Company determined to use it as a penal settlement, and as far as can be ascertained all the early prisoners sent from Batavia were Moslems.

In 1713, when the great epidemic of small pox broke out in the settlement, the number of convicts was 570. Two hundred of them died, but the remainder were allowed liberty, marrying women from among the coloured population who accepted Islam, and this community thus became the nucleus of Mohammedanism in South Africa. One exile, moreover, exercised so great an influence...that his grave, adorned with a lofty minaret, has become the centre of pilgrimage for all South Africa.

The railway employee, the small trader and skilled artisan have carried Islam inland from the coast to the Transvaal and Rhodesia With the Indian trader, who is found all over South Nyasaland and Portuguese territory, Islam is steadily gaining ground everywhere. . . . A British official at Fort Johnson (situated at the Southern extremity of Lake Nyasa), who is in close touch with village life, said Islam was undoubtedly and rapidly spreading. Islam south of the Lakes is polyglot, although Arabic is used everywhere in the mosques for worship and taught in the village schools. In the Cape Province Afrikaans and English are chiefly used, although I found, even in a greengrocer's shop on Brée Street, well-thumbed books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. In Natal the Moslems speak Urdu, Gujerati, Tamil, Sindhi or English. The same is true of Portuguese East Africa, although here and for Nyasaland we must add Swahili and Yao. At Tapani I spoke in Arabic to a large village crowd of Moslems, and my interpreter into Yao had never left his home country but acquired Arabic from his father. He understood the simple classical perfectly. In the mosques I generally carried on my conversation in Arabic. Many whom I met had been to Mecca or to Cairo.

Economic and social conditions naturally vary over so wide an area and among people of such mixed origin, yet the trade-mark of Islam is visible everywhere in dress, bearing, customs, salutations and an *esprit de corps* which is unmistakable.

The women generally are still unveiled and have considerable freedom, but in Cape Town the veil has recently been introduced by the ever increasing number of pilgrims returning from Mecca, and these leaders are advocating greater seclusion. Polygamy is practised and publicly defended. Divorce is very common. At Cape Town conditions prevail to which attention has been called in two novels (*The Lure of Islam*, Miss Prowse, London; and *Beware of the Purdah*, Mrs. Olga Peruk, Cape Town). Both books are based on fact and tell how white girls are lured away to marry Malays and Indians.

The subject is referred to in the report of the Archbishop's Missionary Conference (Cape Town, 1924) as follows:—

"It cannot be denied that in the course of years many hundreds, and more particularly of young women, have lapsed from the Christian faith to Mohammedanism. In giving evidence, one experienced worker said she believed that as high a proportion as 50 per cent of the Mohammedan women visited in her district were lapsed Christians, the children of lapsed Christians or born of Christian parents and adopted in childhood by Mohammedans. Adult perversion, as it would appear, commonly begins with immorality as judged from the Christian standpoint, and not with religious conviction."

Testimony of this nature could be multiplied, but the situation is delicate and the Moslem press at Cape Town furiously resents reference to the subject. The books mentioned have been suppressed.

Something might be said on the other side. The Moslem's social consciousness is strengthened and sometimes justly aggravated by the race relations that obtain in South Africa. The native press boldly proclaims its policy to secure the supremacy of the coloured race through Islamic brotherhood. Socially Moslems at the Cape are recognized by the Government as Coloured people distinct from the native Bantus, and there is now a bill before Parliament to put them on the same footing as Europeans. They have the franchise in the Cape but not in the other provinces.

The following Derwish orders exist: Qadariya, Rifaiya, Naqshabandiya, Chistiya and Shathaliya. When one remembers the influence of these orders in the history of Islam and their appeal to the negro mind, by rhythmic dancing, barbaric music and loud ritual, one is not surprised at the strength of Islam.

The situation would not be alarming if the missionary societies on the field were really grappling with it. But this is not the case. Excellent work is being done at Cape Town by a few men and women of the Anglican and the Dutch Reformed Churches, but none have received special training and there is a lamentable dearth of suitable Christian literature.

Islam is regarded as a peril instead of an opportunity, and the native church (which is ignorant of Islam) will continue timid until the missions furnish trained leadership.

The Moslems of South Africa are accessible and live in the midst of Christian communities. They are approachable and responsive to kindness in a remarkable degree. Many of them are strangers in a strange land and hungry for friendship. All of them have felt the galling yoke of race prejudice and race hatreds, but they realize that this is not the spirit of Christianity, for Christ knows no 'colour bar.' To win the Moslems to this allegiance would be a long step forward in the solution of the black and white problem of South Africa.

The Muslim Year

MUHARRAM

WE have thought that it may interest our readers if we publish monthly notes on the Muslim Calendar throughout the year 1345 A.H., which commences on the 12th July.

The conservatism of Islam is indicated even in the Calendar, for in this 20th century the strictly Muslim year still consists of twelve lunar months, without any intercalation to make it correspond with the course of the sun. Hence the Muslims' New Year's Day falls every year about eleven days earlier than in the preceding year. A recent correspondent to the *Statesman*, Calcutta, therefore, who bespoke the sympathy of the general public for Indian Muslims during the Ramdhan fast because that month always falls in the hottest part of the year, was obviously nodding!

Muharram is the name of the first month in the Calendar. It is, as the word implies a sacred month, (literally 'forbidden') inasmuch as certain things are unlawful (*haram*) during the month. In particular, it is not lawful for Muslims to fight during this month except when they proceed to attack those "who join other gods to God" (Quran IX 36.)

Muharram is considered a most auspicious month, for Muhammad is related to have said: "Whosoever shall fast on Thursday, Friday and Saturday in this month shall be removed from hell-fire a distance of seven hundred years' journey; and he who shall keep awake the first night of this month shall be forgiven all the sins of the past year; and he who shall fast the whole of the first day, shall be kept from sin for the next two years" (Quoted by T. P. Hughes, Dictionary of Islam. Art: *Month*.)

It is said that when Muhammad came to Madina he noticed the Jews keeping the 10th of Muharram as a day of fasting. In reply to his enquiry as to the reason, he was informed that God had rescued the Israelites from their enemies on that day and that Moses had accordingly fasted on that day in grateful recognition of God's mercies. Muhammad rejoined that he was better entitled to appreciate the law of Moses than the Jews, and forthwith enjoined all Muslims to fast on this day.

Ashura (as the 10th day is called) has also other significance amongst the Sunnis who commemorate it as the day on which Adam and Eve, heaven and hell, the pen, fate, life and death were created.

The name *Muharram*, however, stands for very much more, as the reader is aware. The first ten days of the month are specially sacred in the eyes of all Shiahs who therein commemorate the martyrdoms of Hasan and Husain, the sons of Fatimah the Prophet's daughter, by Ali, and it was on this very tenth day (*Ashura*) that the hated followers of Yazid (whose name is execrated) cruelly martyred Husain and his family on the plains of Karbala. Full accounts of the Muharram celebrations may be read in Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, in Sell's 'The faith of Islam,' or in Mrs. Mir Hassan Ali's 'Observations on the Mussalmans.' Some of the words said to have been used by the dying Husain, and as such treasured by all Shiahs, may be quoted here to show the extent to which the emotions of the followers of Ali are stirred annually as they rehearse the drama.

"I voluntarily die of thirst to obtain a crown of glory from God. I die parched and offer myself a sacrifice for the sins of my people, that they should be saved from the wrath to come."

"I would offer my soul not once or twice, but a thousand times, for the salvation of thy people (O Muhammad!)"

"I pray thee, in the Day of Judgment, forgive, O merciful Lord, the sins of my grandfather's people." (from Pelly's *Miracle Play*)

Unfortunately for the general peace, along with a commemoration of the martyrs there is often such unrestrained abuse by the Shiah of the first three Khalifas, as being usurpers in the place of Ali, that Sunnis are hard put to to bear it with patience. The breach between Sunnis and Shiah is, in consequence, very pronounced, and the former, emphasizing the sacred nature of the month, have declared such acts as the following to be "forbidden": the making of *tazias* (models of the Karbala shrines); mourning and beating the breast; making offerings to the *tazias*; wearing gaudy clothes, etc.

It not infrequently happens in parts of North India that the police have to intervene at the time of Muharram processions to prevent a breach of the peace between adherents of the two sects.

In Praise of Salat

THOSE who are acquainted with popular Muslim religious books are aware how threats, on the one hand, and extravagant promises on the other, are freely employed with a view to keeping the simple-minded in the path of Islam. Doubtless much of this kind of writing is to be found in every Muslim land and owes its origin to the voluminous Hadith.

We have thought it might be of interest if we reproduced a few lines from a popular treatise called *Mufid-ul-Islam* which has a great vogue in Bengal. The book is written in that awful hybrid tongue which for want of a better designation goes by the name of *Mussalmani-Bengali*.

The passage is in praise of the stated prayers. After observing that those who neglect *namaz* are worse than dogs, and that pigs would not wish to be seen in their company (if *that* has not convinced the negligent the following ought to!), the manual proceeds to assign the value of prayer offered in an assembly.

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|----------------|--------|----|-------------|----|-------|------|-----------|
| Morning prayer | equals | 20 | pilgrimages | to | Mecca | with | Adam |
| Noon | " | " | 40 | " | " | " | Abraham. |
| Afternoon | " | " | 60 | " | " | " | Jonah. |
| Sunset | " | " | 80 | " | " | " | Jesus. |
| Night | " | " | 100 | " | " | " | Moses. |
| Friday | " | " | 1,000 | " | " | " | Muhammad. |

Echoes from the Muslim World

ARABIA—*Ibn Saud* lays down the law. With much better hope of securing and maintaining the good will of all Muslims than did his forbears a century ago, Ibn Saud took care to state beforehand the conditions under which he will allow the faithful to visit the tomb of the Prophet. These conditions are three, and the Egyptian Government duly announced her acceptance of the same:

Firstly, that visits must be very simple. The faithful should not

touch the tomb in the hope of drawing a blessing from on high. Secondly, though not used as a drug in the time of the Prophet tobacco is now considered injurious to health and is therefore banned. Thirdly, Islamic doctors have always reproved all forms of amusement and distraction, for example, dancing and tambourine playing, therefore music is prohibited in the holy places.

* * * * *

Egypt—*The Khilafat Congress at Cairo.* About the middle of May the thoughts of devout Muslims everywhere turned with anxiety and expectation to the deliberations of the Khilafat Congress in Cairo. The findings of that Congress are one more proof of the distraction and disruption which prevail throughout the Muslim World. It had to be confessed to the assembled representatives that, in the present state of Islam, it was not possible to re-establish the Khilafat along the lines laid down in the Quran. It was pointed out that since the Muslims of the world are divided under several dominions and different nationalities and subject to varying government policies, a solution compatible with the interest of all was exceedingly difficult to find. A further difficulty lay in the fact that there is at present no proper body vested with sufficient authority to undertake the nomination of a Khalif. It was decided that the Executive Committee of the Congress should function in Cairo as a sort of "Continuation Committee."

Book Reviews

The Call from Africa. One of a series of Reports entitled "The World Call to the Church," pp. 160. Price 2s. 6d., published by the Missionary Council of the Church Assembly. This book is an attempt to envisage the whole of the facts and then to estimate the share of the task that falls to the Church of England. The earlier part of the book with its picture of Africa's need will make the widest appeal. Three times the size of Europe, a population density less than one sixth of Europe yet in the Lower Nile Region denser than Belgium, having less than twenty cities with a population of 100,000, it possesses grave difficulties of every type in an acute degree. There is the race problem; the spread of Islam in all routes that control the interior; the problem of the Asiatic immigrant; new industrial problems created by the European who has unfortunately too generally regarded the African as a great reservoir of cheap labour. For all these disintegrating influences there is only one remedy, that offered by the Church of Christ. The book makes a very powerful appeal.

The Call from the Moslem World. pp. 100. Price 2s. 6d. This book, also published by the Missionary Council of the Church Assembly, makes one seriously think. Simply and earnestly written, it shows the serious challenge of Islam to Christendom to-day. Is it not a shock to read that Islam is to-day, as always in the past, winning larger numbers from the Church of Christ than she has ever lost to it? Before the war Egypt was losing annually 200 Copt Christians and now the number is greater, while in Abyssinia during the last century 200,000 Christians have become Moslems. There are two great movements in Islam now, one Nationalist headed by Turkey which puts patriotism before religion and as such is a disintegrating influence; while the other, headed by the Wahhabis is reactionary and orthodox. Islam is shown entrenched in "Bible Lands," also as a constant

threat to infant churches in Asia and Africa, yet itself falling to pieces, while the new nationalism that has arisen is fiercely anti-Western and anti-Christian. Few missionaries are definitely assigned to Moslem work. In India, of 5,000 missionaries, scarcely 100 of them are specializing on this work, and in several places once flourishing work amongst Moslems has lapsed.

G. N. GIBSON.

THE BEST FRIEND

(The Life of Christ in simple English for Muslim readers)

OF the first edition of 10,000 it was arranged to have 1,000 illustrated with six of Copping's beautiful pictures. The C. L. S. Madras now report that they have already sold out of the illustrated copies. However it has been possible to use another set of Copping's pictures and orders have been given to illustrate a further 2,500 copies. Orders for the plain edition (two annas), or illustrated (four annas) should be sent to the C. L. S., P. O. Box 501, Park Town, Madras, who offer a discount of 25 p.c. for quantities. Copies in a pretty art cover at six annas (or 6d.) plus postage may be had from the Secretary of the League.

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