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## News and Notes

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11th August = 1st Safar (2nd mo.), 1345, A.H.

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### **Conservatism and Modernism in Islam.**

DIVERSE VIEWS ON TRANSLATING THE QURAN.

THAT there still exists a pronounced aversion on the part of the old school to translating the Quran into foreign languages is made clear in an interesting article in *The Moslem World* for April. We have there the substance of an article in a Cairo paper contributed by a Muslim who was formerly Wakil of the Jami'al-Azhar. The writer bases his argument on what he claims to be the only possible reply to the following question: 'Can we confidently rely upon preserving a due balance of meaning in the case of the Holy Quran when we want to change one expression for another in the sacred text itself, however much we may strive to preserve this balance of meaning?' He says the answer of Muslims in every age has been an emphatic negative. He then proceeds to declare (though, apparently, quite unconscious of the fact that the ground of his argument is shifted from one of 'ability' to 'permissibility'): 'no man, however learned he may be as a scholar of the Arabic language, may change one word for another in the order in which it is set down in the Holy Quran, even though the two words may be exactly synonymous.' He cites, as an instance of what he means, the use by Mary of *walad* (son, in III, 42) and *ghulam* (boy, in XIX, 20).

Now for his *a fortiori* statement. 'If this kind of change of one expression for another in the language itself of the Holy Quran is forbidden by all Muslims, how much more strictly forbidden is such a change as would be implied by the transference of all the words of the sacred text from the Arabic language into any foreign language?'

He then opens out in a tirade against modernists. 'Why should we hesitate to describe those persons who make this demand for a translation of the Holy Quran into foreign languages as a band of

heretics of this age, the age of innovation and transition? Do those persons who venture to spread among Islamic peoples, here and there, English translations, really feel sure that they will be able to draw a clear line between Arabic Islam and English Islam?

'Is not this Quran the abiding remnant of the Islamic community, after the great war has torn asunder the countries of Islam? after the Turkish republic has demolished the throne of the exalted Khalifate, and thrown aside the chief capital of Islam, just as a corpse is thrown into a grave? Do these persons, who are smitten with such a fever of novelty and transition, in their passion against the Holy Quran in the garb of Arabic, really wish to see another battle-ground for the Islamic community, when they find in the Turkish republic a Turkish Quran, and in the English colonies an English Quran, and in the colonies of other governments a French, or Italian, or Spanish, or Dutch Quran, which the translators will have to correct and revise, when they recognize a need for correction and revision, as is the case with the *Tauret* and the *Injil*?'

Yes, that is the issue, and the battle is set. There is no escaping the conflict. And yet any one with a particle of feeling cannot but sympathize with members of the old school in Islam for whom in truth, *the only bond left*, to-day, is the Arabic Quran.

We miss this note of understanding and sympathy in the rejoinder of the spokesman of one group of the modern school, (the *Ahmadiyahs*), who, in a recent issue of *The Light* (Lahore), characterizes the above utterances as an 'insult to the Quran.'

"Don't you insult the Quran, please!", let us say bluntly to this great theologian and through him to the legion of *mullas* who have degenerated Islam into a bundle of lifeless dogmas, rituals and ceremonials. If it is heresy to understand and fathom the profound wisdom treasured in the pages of the Holy Quran, if it is heresy to imbibe the message of life and light contained therein, we would far rather be the foremost of heretics than the dull, mechanical *mulla*, with brain stuffed with words but with heart devoid of all spark of life?

"What after all is the good of the Quranic revelation? Is it at all intended to serve any useful purpose in the scheme of man's life? Or is it merely to be wrapped up in silk and satin and given a place of honour on a shelf high up against the wall, to be taken down only to be piously kissed and reverently replaced there? Or is it just to be crammed and recited, and that is enough to put us in the good books of God? Or again, is it to work as a charm to cure diseases or to win the affection of the beloved? Downright insult we say, all these notions, to a book out of which flowed the streams of life and light which led to the illumination and rejuvenation of a dead, dark and dismal world!" Again this vigorous writer says: "It is indeed an insult to the book of light and wisdom meant for head and heart, to restrict it to tongue and throat."

Here again we observe a tendency, the ultimate issues of which cannot, we think, be apparent to this eloquent advocate of translations of the Quran. Much more than a mere study, in one's mother tongue, of this hitherto carefully preserved Quran will be the inevitable outcome of this innovation, in the future. There will be *discovery*; there will be *comparison*; there will be the development of *the critical faculty*. For this promise we thank God, and for these results we should pray. The Bible has been submitted to these tests and has surmounted them. Like tests applied to the Quran can only bring disillusionment.

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### Baqr-Id.

(Sa. 'Idu'l-Azha: 'Idu Baihām)

**T**HE 'Id was celebrated throughout India on the 22nd June. The *Statesman*, Calcutta, in its issue of that date published the following extraordinary declaration over the signature of Salah-uddin Khuda Bukhsh, the author of *Essays Indian and Islamic*.

'Baqr'Id! What a carnival of blood! What a revelry of sacrificial rites! Surely, surely, the great God—the loving and merciful God—cares not now, if He ever did in ages past, for those streams of blood, or the inexpressible sufferings of those groaning victims! Atonement! No longer need we atone for our sins by sacrifices; for God and man alike have changed with the changing wheels of time. No atonement, in sooth, can be of any worth which involves pain or suffering to the least of sentient beings. The only real atonement is one that takes place in one's own heart—a change in *our attitude towards life*. The religion of the future will discard crude and cruel methods of atonement. It will look back with pitying contempt upon the days when sacrifice was always the sacrifice of something, of some one, *other than one's self!* It will inculcate atonement by repentance of the heart and mind; for does not true repentance cleanse the body, purify the mind, and carry the penitent nearer and nearer to the supreme goal to which humanity is painfully but surely moving—the spiritual perfection of man?'

S. KHUDA BUKHSH.

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### Notes on First Year Experiences among Muslims.

**A** MEMBER of our League in Syria has written down some of his thoughts and experiences after living among Muslims for twelve months. We reproduce some portions from his notes as they will doubtless interest other members.

'Last year I had a certain fear of Muslims and never felt quite at home in the streets. Although I still experience something of this . . . yet on the whole I have come to have a feeling of being more at home among them, so that there is not so great a barrier of mutual fear and mistrust. I am not sure, however, if this barrier can ever be broken down entirely, except with some individuals who become Christians, since there is really a gap between us. Christians (here), even young men who have had friendships with Muslims since childhood, say they rarely, if ever, get to a really firm basis of friendship. For instance, one young man who has scores of friends among Muslims, says he does not know a single one who would risk his life by taking him into his house if a real massacre of Christians should be started.

Speaking of his joy in friendship with the children he says: 'I have been very delighted to find their open-faced frankness, and likeness to children at home. . . . I feel there is really little vital difference between them and children in any Christian country except that these are much less cleanly and almost totally untrained. This leads one to ask, when do they change into the narrow-eyed, sensual, fanatical Muslims of the orthodox type? The answer is, when they have been turned out as a finished product of the Islamic factory. In other words they are not born Muslims but made into Muslims, since the raw material in the beginning is much like the raw material which at home is made into Christian men and women.'

Illustrating the tendency on the part of Muslims to become more tolerant he remarks: 'We Christians sometimes become impatient at the intolerance of Muslims toward us, but when we compare the modern toleration to that of the past we see that there has been great progress. We do not realize also that Islam has been equally intolerant within itself. For instance our *Mufti* used to borrow certain Sufi books from his Arabic teacher, and hide them in his inner clothing on the way home, lest they be discovered. Now these same books are offered for sale in all bookshops. . . . Not only Christians but the various sects of north Syria, such as the Nasairiyeh and Ismaeliyeh, are beginning to suffer tolerance at the hands of Muslims, so that they are now able to buy the Quran and are being encouraged to keep the ritual of Islam. However, there is still so much violent intolerance that anyone would be presenting a false impression who would picture Islam in Syria as an open door for Christian propaganda.'

Referring to the growing tendency to travel he has an amusing reference to the way in which the automobile is replacing the camel. 'When we first came here there was only one garage, a combination caravanserai and garage, so that camels and Fords went in and out by the same door. Now there are eight garages where the camel is taboo, and if he tried to enter he would probably be met by a Ford coming buzzing out at a great speed, filled with six or eight Arabs setting off for some village, or for Aleppo or Damascus.'

## The Muslim Year.

(SAFAR)

**S**AFAR, the second month, is supposed to derive its name from *safir*, "empty," either because in it the Arabs went forth to war and left their houses empty, or, because they left those whom they attacked, empty! According to some writers, it was so named from *sufar*, "yellowness," because when it was first so called it was autumn, when the leaves bore a yellowish tint. It was held to be the most unlucky and inauspicious month in the whole year, for in it, it is said, Adam was turned out of Eden. It was during this month that the prophet was taken ill, but his partial recovery took place on the last Wednesday (Hughes, Dict. of Islam)

The Arabs, thinking this month to be portentous of evil, forbore to start any work in it. It is said that even to-day some educated Muslims, believing the month to be inauspicious, refrain from beginning any new work till the 13th. On this day some Muslims distribute boiled wheat and grain. We hear that the Muslims of the Deccan observe the day on which Muhammad is supposed to have recovered from his illness, as a gala day.

It would be interesting to learn through members of the League how far the influence of such superstitions prevail to-day.

## C. L. S. Books on Islam.

### I

An increasing number of mission workers in all lands are feeling the need of acquainting themselves with the outlines of Muslim faith and history. Happily for them their need has been anticipated by the Christian Literature Society for India which has published, during recent years, over 60 booklets on various aspects of the subject.

These publications are the fruit of sound scholarship and are well worth the small price charged. Canon Sell, whose name adds lustre to the series, contributes over 20 himself. The writers have in view, mainly, two classes of readers—the busy missionary with none too much time for study, and the educated Muslim.

We propose to issue notes on these books in a series of articles. All the books are issued in paper covers, unless otherwise stated. The numbers appearing within brackets after the specification of each book shows the present stock at the Christian Literature Society headquarters, P. O. Box 501, Park Town, Madras. An asterisk (\*) indicates that the book is offered at half the price quoted here.

### A. Muhammad and His Successors.

"The Islamic conception of a vast Muslim republic must be regarded "in the nature of a constitutional ideal . . . which has . . . been sup-  
"planted by despotic kingly governments." Sir Abdul Rahim.

1. *Life of Muhammad*. Sell. pp. 250 1-6-0: cloth 1-14-0 (1470).

2. *Muhammad in Islam*. Goldsack. pp. 128. 8 as. (425).

Present-day Muslim apologists for Muhammad often charge European biographers with inaccuracy and prejudice. Both of our authors, however, have made a point of quoting freely from the original Islamic

sources. Sell's work is quite the best brief statement on the subject available. It is marked by an impartial spirit, a feature unfortunately sometimes absent in Goldsack's sketch, packed though the latter is with a wealth of valuable detail.

3. *The Four Rightly-Guided Khalifas*. Sell pp. 70. 4 as. (600).

The critical nature of the task bequeathed by Muhammad is well brought out in these clear-cut portraits of his immediate successors, each of proved loyalty to himself. We see how the dreaded disruption in the ranks of Islam was made inevitable by the unworthiness of 'Uthman and the vacillation of 'Ali.

4. *The Umayyad and Abbasid Khalifates*. Sell. pp. 122. 8 as. (465).

Old Arab tribal jealousies now broke out with great fierceness and the most influential group, the Umayyads, usurped the Khalifate and maintained it at Damascus for close on 100 years. As their power declined another section, the Abbasids, came to the front and ruled from Baghdad for 500 years. It is a period of dark intrigue and cruel murders and finally of unwise alliance, in time of need, with foreign powers. The final break-up came with the sack of Baghdad by Mongol hordes in 1258.

5. *The Mamluks in Egypt*. Sell. pp. 60. \* 4 as. (80).

Those hordes came to have a sinister influence in Islam and in this sketch we are told of the descendants of Turkish and Circassian slaves (*mamluks*) who, uncontrolled by the central power, rose to the position of independent Sultans in Egypt. With the exception of a few who patronized art, their history is a long record of misrule and crime extending from 1260-1517, in which year Egypt became a province of the Ottoman Empire.

6. *The Ottoman Turks*. Sell. pp. 146. 10 as. (300).

Our author, in a highly interesting narrative, tells the story of the Ottoman Empire from the time of its foundation in 1295 to the outbreak of the European War. The Turks, first used as mercenaries at Baghdad, rose to prominence by sheer force of character and in turn usurped the supreme position in Islam. The tale of intrigue, cruelty, and bloodshed, seemingly inseparable from Islamic rule, is continued here to an appalling degree. The Balkans were kept for centuries in a state of unrest but from 1566 decay set in, and the Khalifas, no longer fired by martial zeal, became, for the most part, a set of degenerate men only saved from utter ruin by their competent viziers.

7. *The Twelve Shiah Imams*. Sell. pp. 70. 10 as. (370).

The Shiah view as to the true successors of Muhammad here receives detailed treatment. Subsequent to the contention that the "divine right" had passed from the prophet to Ali and thence to Ali's descendants, the theory of a succession of Imams (spiritual guides) came to be established. Thus nine Imams, each distrusted by the ruling Khalifa, succeeded Ali and his two sons. It is recorded of each that he was pious, endured persecution and died by poisoning! The twelfth suddenly disappeared at the age of seventy and it is believed that he will come again as the Imam Al Mahdi.

8. *The Khalifate agitation in India*. By "A student of history." pp. 76. 8 as. (500).

This booklet, comprising a series of press articles, sets out to shew that ignorant and unscrupulous use has been made of the Khalifate question by agitators in India. After a brief historical sketch of the Khalifate, the author deals with a number of important subjects inseparable therefrom, e.g. the Holy Places, Jihad, etc. The identity of the author is only thinly veiled by his *nom de plume*.

**B. Muslim Conquest and Expansion.**

"One hundred years after Muhammad's death his followers were "masters of an Empire greater than Rome at the zenith of her power."

Zwemer.

1. *Ghaswas and Sariyas*. Sell. pp. 90. 6 as. (380).

2. *The Battles of Badr and Uhud*. Sell. pp. 69. 4 as. (195).

So much has been said in defence of Muhammad's use of the sword that it is well that we should know the facts about the wars he waged. The more notable battles are collected in the first volume under two heads; *ghaswas*, expeditions led out by Muhammad; *sariyas*, those sent out under the command of others. It is made quite clear that, at the outset, under pressure of want, the Muslims were ordered to capture Meccan caravans. Reprisals and further raids followed as a matter of course. Two outstanding battles receive special treatment. Badr, a victory for Muhammad and a turning point in his career; Uhud, a serious defeat, in which Muhammad himself was severely wounded.

3. *Muslim Conquests in North Africa*. Sell. (out of print)

4. *Muslim Conquests in Spain*. Sell. pp. 138. 10 as. (525).

5. *Muslims in China*. Sell. pp. 34. 3 as. (400).

Here is a most interesting account of the Muslim kingdom maintained in Spain with varying fortunes for nearly 900 years, under Sultans, and finally Khalifas, who were practically independent of the Khalifa proper. One often reads of the splendour of those days in Spain, but we are here shewn how that glory was marred by violent sectarian quarrels among Muslims with the usual intrigue and consequent bloodshed. History, as we have seen, is indeed eloquent of the fact that among Muslims there is no real brotherhood.

Islam in China, according to the author, has had its chance and failed. It is a curious story of compromise on the part of proud Islam in the land of an absolute autocrat, with the result that Chinese Muslims have cultivated a humble and more tolerant spirit than has been common among the followers of Muhammad in other eastern lands.

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## Notes

*An Ambassador for Christ at 78.*—Many members will recall the baptism of an aged Muslim in Bengal when he was past 75 years of age, and remember that subsequently he was prevailed upon to say *tauba*. However, he persisted in studying his Bible and so for two years he was virtually a prisoner in his own home, and then made plans to run away if necessary. Eventually the opposition of his people died down and he came back to us heart-broken at his lapse. The Church took him back in love and tenderness and it was a great day when he joined us at the Communion table. There has been no necessity to remove him to a place of safety. The old man's joy and peace in Christ have increased amazingly during recent months. And his very courage is a challenge to the rest of us. Muslim neighbours now visit his home and he preaches Christ, as only Saviour, to them. Truly God has blessed us in leading him to the feet of Christ.

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*To whom it may concern in Bengal.*—We have pleasure in announcing that some copies (six in all) of the rare Part One of Goldsack's Arabic-Bengali Quran, with commentary, have been placed at the disposal

of the Calcutta Christian Tract Society, 41, Lower Circular Road. The Society is prepared to supply these on the clear understanding that the 30 parts must be purchased outright. The Society needs a sum of over Rs. 400 to enable it to reprint 500 copies of Part I.

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*Back numbers of "The Moslem World."* Rev. H. M. Angus, Baptist Mission, Barisal, Bengal, will be glad to know if any one can supply him with the following issues of *The Moslem World* quarterly:

1917, July and October: 1914, January: 1917, October: 1918, Jan. Apr. July: 1919, Jan. Oct.: 1922, October:

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## For Praise and Prayer

**PRAISE** for the rare spirit of devotion to Christ of the aged convert in Bengal, and prayer that God will protect him and use him as he commends his new-found Saviour to his Muslim neighbours.

**PRAYER** is asked for a recent convert in North India, ("whose conversion to Jesus Christ is wonderful") that he be fully delivered from his people and the way opened for him to complete his studies.

**PRAYER** is asked for several young men in Calcutta who are being prepared for baptism, and that a way be found to provide a 'converts' home' for such.

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## NEW MEMBERS

275.	Rev. N. Desai,	M.E.M.	Gulbarga, Deccan.
309.	Mrs. C. W. Ruth,		Indianapolis, U.S.A.

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*The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. 6d.). 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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