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News and Notes

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Series XVIII

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Islam—The Moral Bankrupt.

(Specially Contributed)

THOSE who have had experiences similar to the following will need no convincing of the spiritual powerlessness of Islam. Her inability to help moral derelicts and her indifference to moral issues, her weakness as a spiritual and ethical force in the community, and her hatred of the Redeeming Christ are illustrated in the story of H.'s conversion, below. And yet, to be fair, I wonder if H. had gone to some of our Christian Churches or Societies whether they would have been able to point him to Christ, the power of God and the Wisdom of God.

In the latter part of 1928 a young son of a wealthy Moslem landowner, whom we have designated by H., left his village and came to one of the large provincial capitals of India to work in a Government office. He secured his position largely through the influence of the man in charge of that particular section, who was a relative through marriage. All his fellow-clerks were Moslems and the head-clerk boasted that no one but Moslems would ever work in the office under him. This relative of H.'s was a resident of the city where he had come and so he went and lived in his home. Here he learned to drink and in a very short time became a slave to the habit. He wasted a great deal of money, became a frequenter of houses of ill-fame, indulged in other destructive habits quite openly in company with many others of his co-religionists and gave himself to all kinds of worldly pleasures. He saw that his health was being affected and once or twice he came to the office drunk, and was warned that he had better be careful or he would lose his job. His Moslem friends

advised him to pull in the reins, from no moral compunctions, but for fear of losing his job, and jobs are hard to get in India. He admitted the need of checking his mad rush and tried with all his will power to do so. But drink had him. His most determined efforts were useless.

In despair he thought of turning to Allah as his only hope. He went to the religious leaders of the Sunni sect to which he belonged and at their advice became a faithful attendant at prayers and a performer of their religious rites. But this effected no change. Then the Pirs and Murshids were suggested and he became a disciple of one and then another and always his request was, "Please show me how to find Allah." He was told to follow their directions and he did, but he found no Divine Power to help him. He consulted the religious leaders of his people self-seeking and desirous of selling their influence with Allah

and he found that God lasted for some time and was the expression of God's love, but it ended in complete failure. Thoroughly discouraged and despaired of ever finding God or being saved from destruction, shortly after this an English Lady Missionary came across him in the street as he passed her. He asked her what she thought of him. She said it was intended to lead him to criticize Christians, Europeans, the Government, and Islam, but she said, "If you look at men you will stumble. Do not look at God." This answer was very surprising to him.

With a great deal of experience with Moslem religious leaders and they all said "Look at us. Do what we say. Honor us. Then you'll find Allah." But here was one of the proud English who did not even bother to defend herself or her country or religion from his criticisms but was telling him to "Look to God." He became very much interested, and asked for an appointment so that he could talk with her. She was not in the habit of working with men and sent him to talk to me. Of course I knew nothing of his case and he was extremely guarded in what he said to me, simply saying that he came as a Moslem but wanted to know what there was in Christianity.

I am sure that the Spirit guided me as I told him of a God who loved and sought us, and pressed home to him as best I could that his need as well as that of every human being was not the need of a God who was a law-giver and an executioner, but One who could love and save. He did not need the fear of an Allah but faith in a Father's love. His heart was ready for the message and he believed. It was my first and only experience of seeing a Moslem melt into tears the first time I presented to him God's love for the sinner, the message of the cross. We prayed together and then I explained something of the true meaning and method of communion with the Father.

Two days later he came back and burst into my office very happy, too happy. I thought I detected drink on his breath and his manner confirmed my fear. But how gracious God had been to him!

"I come to you to-day as a Christian," was his announcement as he invited himself to a seat near me. "Two days ago I came as a Moslem but now I come as a Christian."

I smiled to myself but the Lord rebuked me for my doubt later.

"Yes," he continued, "God heard my prayer in the name of Jesus and gave me an answer that I had been seeking in vain from Allah."

He did not tell me what the answer was, but seemed thoroughly jubilant over the experience. I suspected him of drinking, but could not be certain. So I told him in the course of the conversation of the experiences of two or three of my friends whom God had wonderfully saved from the power of drink. He was much surprised that Christians should condemn drinking (a common misconception in the East). He asked me if I thought it was wrong to drink. I explained the purpose of the body as the temple of God's Spirit and the sin of harming that temple through liquor or any other way. He went home very thoughtful, after we had had prayer together.

Afterwards he told me that he went home and confessed to the Lord all his sin and wretched misery and pleaded with Him for deliverance. I saw him a little while later and he was utterly changed. Drink and vice and evil habits were all gone. "The surprising thing to me" he said, "is that not only has the desire for drink gone, but I actually loathe it and despise those pleasures which I once loved." What a marvellous Saviour we have!

Naturally such a radical change could not be hidden. His office fellows wished to know what had happened. He would not join them in their old pleasures and habits. They chaffed him about how soon he would rejoin them. But they soon saw that it was something final. Pressed for an explanation, he said that God had delivered him in His mercy. Many were glad and congratulated him, but none suspected him of ever having become a Christian. But his experience had been too vivid to be able to conceal it and before very long it was known that he had become a Kafir.

Immediately the attitude of all his relatives and acquaintances changed. They urged him to return to Islam. Could not understand why he had become a Christian unless it were that he had succeeded in getting more money from the Christians. So they offered to double the amount of money he had been spending. "We'll give you all the money you can spend" they said. "Drink and gamble and visit the houses of ill-fame to your heart's content—, but do not become a Christian and disgrace us." All bribes and arguments failed to move him.

Then followed the usual economic struggle and the young man was faced with the prospect of getting on with a very little salary, and in a moment of extreme fear and anxiety his former associates and relatives approached him and offered to let him live with them as a Christian, if only he would not witness in public and would have as little as possible to do with the hated Nazarenes. He went with them and we have not had a chance to see him since. But we are persuaded that the Good Shepherd will guard His own. Join us in prayer that He may keep and rescue this sheep of His.

I am reminded of what G. A., another Moslem convert said to me one day in a burst of indignation after he had been insulted and mistreated by his former friends. "A man can be the vilest criminal, and the veriest rake, and yet be a Moslem in good standing. Neither the Maulvies nor the Pirs care about his moral degradation. But let him become a Christian and the whole community weeps and howls its horror, and henceforth regards him as an out-caste."

This judgment is true. Islam has great social and community power and to some extent that power is exercised for restraining evil. But as far as Moral and Spiritual Dynamic is concerned Islam, as I have met it in India, is a barren wilderness. In what mighty contrast stands the Cross, "Towering o'er the wrecks of time," foolishness to the Hindu, a stumbling block to the Moslem, but to him that believes, whether Hindu or Moslem, the mighty power of God unto salvation.

A Purely Persian Church.

WHEN Bishop Linton was consecrated as Bishop in Persia, this situation (that the Armenian Church was not attempting to evangelize the Moslems) created a serious problem for him, and he decided to create a Purely Persian Church from Islam, and to treat the Armenians as guests of that Church with all the spiritual privileges it had to offer. This meant a reversal of the old standing policy adopted by many missions, and a new departure in Church development.

Isfahan had been a stronghold of Islam. For years missionary work was not allowed in the city. Gradually opposition was overcome and hospitals and schools commenced. Converts were baptized and a Church formed. It was small, but it was Persian. The converts at a very early stage felt a call to evangelize their Moslem brethren, and from the Church there radiated out a spiritual life and activity which added year by year new converts to the community. To day the baptismal register shows that over three hundred Moslems have been admitted to the Church, a notable achievement in so strong a Moslem centre. But what is more remarkable is the fact that the

Church from its inception began to witness to the Gospel. Spiritual life developed, and the Church learned the power of prayer. I attended a prayer-meeting where most of those present were Moslem converts. They took part freely, and were winning their way by intercession through the many difficulties that faced them. During holiday periods evangelistic campaigns were organized, and a large number of Church members gave their time definitely to witnessing to Moslems of their new-found faith. Some undertook house-to-house visitation, some preached, others sold copies of the Scriptures. This was no easy task, for these messengers of the Gospel were no paid agents of a missionary society, but men and women who earned their daily bread in Isfahan. They had to bear the reproach of Christ in their witness and they had to meet the Moslems in their ordinary work day by day. From information given to me I gathered that most of the houses in Isfahan had copies of the Scriptures, and that they were being widely read by Moslems. It is significant too that the first men to be ordained in the young Church were Persian Moslem converts. The emphasis of Church life in committee, services, meetings and witness was upon Moslem evangelism, and the Church was being taught that it existed to serve the country and to extend the Kingdom of God. No question arose as to whether Moslems ever are converted, because the members themselves were converts. Difficulties as to the reality of a professing convert were solved, because the converts had a way of their own of testing a man's sincerity. The old feud between Eastern Churches and Moslems was eliminated, because the control of Church affairs was in the hands of converts. Race difficulties did not arise because they all belonged to the Persian people, and while they readily admitted others among them as guests, they preserved their national identity and were able to claim that they were a Persian Church.

Rev. Wilson Cash, in *The Moslem World*—January, 1930.

The Late Head of the Qadiani Ahmadiyyas.

THE death is reported to have taken place (towards the end of May) of Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, the late Khalifa of the Qadian section of the Ahmadiyyas. He was apparently only 40 years of age at the time of his death, having been a semi-invalid like his father, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the movement. The question of his successor will surely prove a matter of supreme concern to his followers in view of the controversy occasioned by his own presumptuous claims when he entered into the succession in 1914. On the death of the founder in 1908 the movement passed into the hands of his first disciple, Hakim Nur-ud-Din, who was duly elected head, and came to be known as *Khalifat-ul-Masih* (Successor of the *Messiah*, one of the Mirza's titles).

The son who has just died was therefore the second Khalifa. He came to the leadership at a time when the entire Muslim community in India was roused to a pitch of intense excitement over the Government's attempt to remove a portion of a mosque in Cawnpore in order to straighten out a road. A prominent member of the community, since well-known as Khwajah Kamal-ud-Din, the head of the Muslim Mission in Woking, England, acting contrary to the advice of the founder of the movement, became very outspoken in his protests against the action of Government. He was taken to task for encroaching into politics by the late Bashir-ud-Din, who was then Editor of the Qadian vernacular paper *Alfasl*. Bashir-ud-Din was felt by many to be assuming undue authority for his opinions on the strength of his close relation to the founder. Eventually two parties were formed as the result of a serious split in the ranks of the original community. Despite the protests of the Khwajah Kamal-ud-Din party that the founder had never intended that a *Khalifa* should be appointed, Mirza Bashir-ud-Din was elected head. The offended party formed a new Anjuman, with headquarters in Lahore, called the Anjuman-Isha'at-i-Islam and, in the absence of the Khwajah in England, placed Maulvie Muhammad Ali, at its head. The latter has produced an ornate edition of the Quran, with translation and commentary in English, published at Woking.

The original (Qadiani) party now began to declare that the founder should be considered as one of the prophets, and so further incensed the seceders who protested that Muhammad was 'the last of the prophets, and the seal of the prophets.'

The Qadianis went further; they pronounced those Muslims who would not accept the founder as a prophet to be *Kafirs*, and refused to worship with them. While the Lahore party minimize the differences between the Ahmadiyya community and orthodox Islam, the Qadian party regard them as of fundamental importance.

The late Khalifa had not the same influence and force of character as his father though he is said to have strongly resembled him in appearance, in his sedentary habits and in his readiness and cleverness in controversy. He seems, however, to have shown at times a more amenable spirit than his father towards the followers of other religions. The Editor of *The Light* in a note on the death of Mirza Bashir-ud-Din says: "The fact that we had certain doctrinal differences with him, never blinded us to the personal qualities of the distinguished deceased, with which he was in no small measure gifted. His zeal for his ideals, his consummate skill as a leader and organiser of men and above all his personal magnetism which inspired his followers with wonderful devotion were qualities which even those who did not see eye to eye with him, could not but acknowledge and admire."

Those desiring authoritative information about the Ahmadiyyas of both sections will be well advised to secure a copy of 'The Ahmadiyya Movement' by the late H. A. Walter, of Lahore, from The Association Press, 5, Russell St., Calcutta. (pp. 185. Cloth cover Rs. 3. Paper, Rs. 2.)

Notes.

A Primer of Islam. The need has been felt for some up-to-date manual on Islam to be put into the hands of Indian Christians in training for work as pastors, evangelists, teachers, Bible-women, colporteurs etc. There have been and are still such handbooks in some of the vernaculars,

but these hardly meet the need of to-day. The Henry Martyn School, at the request of the N.C.C. Committee on work among Muslims, is undertaking the preparation of such a text-book in English, with a view to making it available for translation into those vernaculars used by the Muslims of India. It is hoped that it will be completed before the end of the year.

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Courses of Study at the H.M.S. The suggestion has been made (and we are prepared seriously to consider it,) that, whereas some missionaries cannot get sufficient leave from their stations to attend the winter terms of the Henry Martyn School, in Lahore, they could and would gladly come for a two months' course at some hill station, since that would merely involve a short extension of their annual holiday. Mission Boards will surely agree to such extension of leave. We, writing from Dalhousie, see the feasibility of such a proposal in a place like this, perhaps the most attractive holiday resort in the North India hills. The arrangement can easily be made on the side of the teaching staff, but, in order to reserve accommodation for possible students for the course, we should need to know in advance how many are likely to come. The dates would probably be about 15th May—15th July. We shall welcome any enquiries about such a course for that period in 1931.

We sincerely hope that *Indian Christian Workers*, of the status of pastors and evangelists, will seek to take advantage of the courses of study arranged by the Henry Martyn School, for these workers constitute a vital factor in the evangelization of the Muslims of India. Such as come would need to have a working knowledge of either English or Urdu. We imagine that superintending missionaries will agree that it is highly desirable that some of their evangelists should have Urdu as a second language, in which to converse with Muslims. This they could acquire in Lahore while up for a course of study. We could arrange for their accommodation. The cost of living would range from something like Rs. 15 to Rs. 30 per month, according to the student's mode of living.

In regard to *Extension Courses in the Provinces*, It would seem that a short course, from the Tuesday of one week to the Friday of the following week, is the most practicable. Such a course has been agreed upon for Jubbulpore this year and is to be held from Tuesday, 13th August—Friday, 22nd August. Arrangements are in the hands of Rev. F. E. Livengood, Damoh, C.P.

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Wanted.—One of our members is anxious to secure a copy of Hughes' Dictionary of Islam. Perhaps someone retiring from the field has one to sell. If they communicate with us, naming a price, we shall be glad to pass on the information.

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The Best Friend in Oriya.—By an oversight we omitted last month to include Oriya in the list of languages into which *The Best Friend* has been translated,

For Praise and Prayer.

PRAISE for the conversion of two Muslim young men in a District of East Bengal. Let us also pray that they may be kept faithful.

PRAISE that an evangelist has been found for the special effort among Muslims in the Bangalore District.

PRAISE that a bi-weekly discussion group for Muslim students has recently developed into a weekly Bible class. (Bangalore).

PRAY for Dr. Van Peursen's meetings for Muslims in the last week of July. (Bangalore).

PRAY for the young man, the subject of the leading article in this issue, that his faith fail not.

NEW MEMBERS.

Rev. J. M. Bierma,	Disc. Miss.	Rath, U. P.
Mrs. F. M. Perrill,	M. E. M.	Lucknow.
Miss I. A. Farmer,	M. E. M.	Aligarh, U. P.
Miss M. H. Bobb,	M. E. M.	Aligarh. U. P.
Miss D. Speer,	Isa. Thob. Coll.	Lucknow.
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Rev. J. W. Sweetman,	W. M. M. S.	Akbarpur, U. P.
Rev. H. E. D. Ashford,	United Ch. of Canada,	Mission House, Dhar, C. I.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members or remittance of subscription, etc., should be sent to the Superintendent, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, India, and *not* to the Secretary of the League. The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.).

Matters of interest to members of the League, items of news and requests for prayer should be sent (if possible, early in the month) to the Hony. Secretary:—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,
Address till 15th September,
Norwood, Dalhousie,
Punjab, India.