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News and Notes

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Reform Movements in Indian Islam.

A Paper by Mr. John A. Subhan, B.A.
of The Henry Martyn School, Lahore.

STRICTLY speaking, in orthodox Islam there is no room for reform. The system of doctrine—social, moral, political and religious—is firmly bound up with the dogmas of faith, and the Quran and the Sunnat. The technical term for everything new is *bid'at*, and every *bid'at* is synonymous with heresy. In spite of the strict conservative spirit, since the coming of the British and of the Protestant Mission in India, progressive and reactionary reforms have started to mould Indian Islam. Progressive reform takes its start with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in the middle of the 19th century. He carried on a fearless campaign to reform Muslim Education and to create a change in the political outlook of Indian Muslims. But he was denounced most violently as a renegade and an atheist for his interpretation of Islam through the rationalizing process of investigation.

He claimed that there is nothing in the Quran and tradition which is not rational. The idea of an unseen world of genii and angels, which for 1300 years has occupied a prominent place in the Quran and Hadith, was destroyed. The miracles of the Prophets mentioned in the Quran were explained away, and the Ahadith which spoke of them were arbitrarily and entirely rejected. One example of Sir Syed's method of exegesis will suffice. In the Quran Moses' striking the rock with his staff to supply the Israelites with water in a miraculous way is mentioned in these words, "We revealed unto Moses, when his people asked him for drink, 'Strike with thy staff the rock!' and there gushed forth from it twelve springs." VII, 160. The command to strike is thus translated by Sir Syed Ahmad, "Search the rocky place with thy staff." His method of exegesis is adopted by the Lahore branch of the Ahmadiya movement.

As regards his view of inspiration, he made a great departure from the orthodox teaching. He repudiated the mechanical view of inspiration as held by orthodox Muslims. According to his view, inspiration does not come from above, *i.e.*, from God, but it is given by nature, and thus according to his view it is a special genius or talent.

His whole effort was directed to prove Islam to be a Natural Religion. His watchword was 'Islam is Nature and Nature is Islam.' Hence his followers are called *Nechris*.

Unlike the rest of the Muslims, he did not reject the Christian Scriptures, neither did he regard them to be corrupted or abrogated. He asserted that the Bible was inspired, just as the Quran was, and that the Scriptures were not corrupted by Christians and Jews, and that they were not abrogated by the Quran, and that the Books spoken of in the Quran are the same books of the Bible as exist to-day. He started to write a commentary on the Bible, which he did not live to finish.

The reforms of Sir Syed Ahmad and his interpretations of religion are continued by certain educated Muslims, who call themselves Neo-Motezalites. They are all well-versed in the findings of Orientalists. Their idea is to sweep away the legalistic and dogmatic structure of Islam. A steady advance is being made in the improvement of the community through the growing volume of enlightened public opinion with regard to the outstanding evils of the seclusion of women, the practice of polygamy, divorce, child marriage, fatalism and religious formalism.

In consequence of the reactionary tendency in the Muslim community, a new sect came to be founded, which centres round the person and teaching of the late Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. He began to teach about 1879 and died in 1908. He claimed to be the Promised Messiah, and said that he had come in the spirit and power of Christ, just as John the Baptist is mentioned in Scripture as having come in the spirit and power of Elijah. He asserted that Christ when taken down from the cross was not dead, and that after his crucifixion he fled to Srinagar in Kashmir, where he died, and his tomb is still pointed out in Mohalla Khan Yar.

He claimed for himself that he was:—

Greater than Christ.—"I swear by the Lord.....that the words expressing my dignity revealed from God are far more weighty than the words of the Gospel relating to Jesus. For Jesus, son of Mary, was the last successor of Moses, and I am the last successor of the Prophet who was the noblest of Divine Messengers."

Inheritor of the virtues of all the Prophets.—"I am Adam, I am Noah, I am Abraham, I am Isaac, I am Jacob, I am Ishmael, I am Moses, I am David, I am Jesus, son of Mary, I am Muhammad. God has said of me, 'the Apostle of God in the clothes of all the Prophets.' I have consequently inherited the distinctive quality of every Prophet."

The Krishna of the Hindus.—"I come in the character of Raja Krishna, the greatest *avatar* of the Hindu religion and spiritually I am the same man. One of my revelations on this point is, 'O Krishna, destroyer of the wicked and upholder of the meek, thy praise has been written in the Gita.'"

He also claimed that he was able to prove the truth of his Messiahship by miracles. The only fact seriously put forward in support of this are certain 'prophecies' which he made. It is said that he predicted the death of no less than 121 persons. One of the victims of his prediction was Pandit Lekh Ram, who was soon after murdered. A similar prediction was made concerning his Christian antagonist Deputy Abdulla Athim. Precautions were taken by Mr. Athim's friends to protect him from possible assassination, and he outlived the time assigned to him.

The 'prophecies' proved so mischievous and dangerous that on 24th February, 1899, the Government of the Punjab issued instructions, ordering him to cease making such predictions.

He also attacked the character of Christ very violently, accusing Him of drunkenness, lack of philanthropy, and several other things.

At the death of his first successor, Hakeem Nuruddin, the community was divided into the parties of Qadian and Lahore. The organisation at Qadian is a crude attempt to copy the episcopacy of the Church of Rome. The present head of the movement, known as the second successor to the Promised Messiah Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, holds the place of Pope in the community, and, with his *Dawat al Tabligh* (i.e., College of Propaganda), his department of Home and Foreign Affairs, and his ministers and secretaries and with Qadian as his Rome, he exercises an absolute authority over his people. All the places in the world wherever the followers of the Mirza are found are divided into circles similar to the diocese of an episcopacy, and every circle has its own Amir or a Bishop, who under the Khalifa at Qadian holds the spiritual jurisdiction over his circle. The main characteristic of the Ahmadiya movement, both of Qadian and Lahore, is their extensive missionary work outside India. These Indian Muslims have spread out a net-work of their propaganda in the chief cities of Europe, America, Africa and Australia.

The Lahore party is called the Anjuman Ishafat-i-Islam, and holds that the Mirza was only a reformer, while the Qadian party emphasises the fact that he must be regarded as a Prophet. Maulvie Muhammad Ali is the head of the Lahore branch. Besides the publication of numerous apologetic and polemical writings, he has produced a complete translation of the Quran in English, with a commentary.

The orthodox Sunni community is also being stirred with local religious, and national movements. The orthodox Theologians are organised under the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind (i.e., The Association of Muslim Theologians in India). Their aim is to safeguard the integrity

of the orthodox system and to warn the community of the innovations of the modern reformers of Islam.

Muslim political interests are safeguarded by the All-India Muslim League, which was organised in 1906, and since then it has functioned through annual meetings and provincial leagues.

Educational interests are served by the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference. It was founded by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1886 to promote Western learning among Muslims.

The propaganda of the Islamic faith is pushed forward by the "Tabligh" societies, the chief among them being, "The Central Jamiat Tablig"—i.e., the Society for the Propagation of Faith—which was founded in 1923 with its head-quarters in Ambala. It is a strong organization of India-wide character.

Khwaja Hasan Nizami of Delhi is at the back of a great missionary movement. He represents popular Islam, combining in himself the quality of an orthodox preacher and a Sufi. His chief method of propaganda, and the one he advocates, is described in one of his pamphlets, *Dai-Islam*—(Muslim missionary). All the Muslims of India are divided, on the basis of their professions, into 12 main classes and 73 sub-classes, and according to an individual's profession or trade a duty is assigned to him to help in the propagation of Islam.

The Anjuman Himayat.—Islam (Association for the defence of Islam), Lahore, with its Islamia College, and Boarding Houses, is another orthodox organization. Besides rendering educational service to the community, it undertakes a variety of duties, such as the refutation of objections to Islam, the care of Muslim orphans, and the employment of preachers.

The interest of Muslim women is served by the All-India Muslim Ladies' Conference. It was organized in 1914, and is doing much to educate Muslim public opinion in regard to the improvement of the condition of women. The problems of polygamy, divorce and purdah are being faced. The meetings are held annually in various centres.

The Wahhabis—the puritans of Islam—known in India by the name of *Ahl-i-Hadith*—(The People of Tradition)—are organized under the All-India *Ahl-i-Hadith* Conference. Religious journals, books and tracts are published, theological schools for the training of preachers are maintained and separate mosques are built. The aim of the movement is said to be to purify Islam of polytheism, innovations, and the customs of the infidels among Muslims.

The Shias of India are organized under the All-India Shia Conference. It was founded in 1907 and aims at the social and educational uplift of the sect.

A notable fact about the present day organizations of Indian Islam is, that though the different organizations are working independently of each other, yet in resisting the power of the Gospel they are one. Never have the different forces in the different sects of

Islam worked in so close a unity for the glory of Muhammad and in blaspheming the religion of Christ as have all these during the last six or seven years. They may quarrel among themselves on dogmatic points, or on points of theology and on points of politics, but in facing Christianity they stand as one. Indian Muslims, comprising one-fifth of all the Muslims in the world, embracing at one and the same time old Islam and the new, the erring and sinful Muhammad of the Quran and an ideal and sinless Muhammad with Christian features, Quranic ethics lower than that of the Jews and lofty moral principles derived from Christianity; Sunnis, Shias, Wahhabis, Ahmadiyas and Nehrís, all stand as one in preaching their common creed: 'There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Apostle,' and in opposing the Gospel of Christ. Instances are not wanting of persons of different sects co-operating in the cause of Islam. The Muslim Peer, Lord Headley, went as an inquirer to Syed Amir Ali, a leading Shia, and when he expressed his desire to embrace Islam, Amir Ali sent him to Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, an Ahmadi. Imagine a Roman Catholic priest sending an inquirer to a Methodist for baptism! Islam with its many sects and many divisions stands to-day united as a missionary religion. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din has written a pamphlet, "There is no sect in Islam," and he has tried to show that on the basis of their common creed and the five foundations the entire Muslim world is one. Their centre of unity is a common creed, a common book, a common prophet, common practices of prayer, fasting, alms and pilgrimage.

They speak of themselves in terms of that great geographical unity, one stretch of land from Lagos to Shanghai.

The significance of these movements is ably expressed by Dr. Titus in his scholarly book, "Indian Islam." (Reviewed in June issue).

"Here (in India) we find the newest and most aggressive forms of propaganda against Christianity which have ever originated, and from here a world-wide programme of Muslim Foreign Missions is being maintained and financed. This, after all, is the logical issue of the spirit and teaching of Islam under the influence of modern conditions. It is one of the forms of adjustment which have been forced upon the Muslims of India, who are struggling for the defence and maintenance of their Faith in the face of the most disturbing and challenging conditions that the world has ever known. The end no one can foresee. . . ." Moreover, "One cannot help concluding that Islam in India to-day is better organized, better educated, more progressive, more reasonable and tolerant in its attitude towards its neighbour than ever before in its history."

[A CORRECTION.—We regret that in our July issue we committed the indiscretion of crediting a Muslim periodical's account of the death of Mirza Bashir-ud-Din of Qadian. It was a false rumour. As the above paper indicates he is still very much alive!—*Ed.*]

An Educated Muslim

ON

THE CAUSE OF DECADENCE IN ISLAM.

We commend for their candour and courage the following extracts from an address given to Muslim students in Assam by a Muslim barrister who is a Cambridge graduate. Here are sentiments that will move us all to deep sympathy.

THE malady, we are convinced, is more inner than outer, mental than physical.....It is the lack of the *will-to-live* which like the moth-worm is eating into the vitals of the body-politic of Islam, hence the all-round blight and withering in the garden of Islam. If we are backward in education, if we are poor, if we are in bondage, it is all due to this central cause. We lack this dynamic force, the force of an irresistible *will-to-live*.....It is this inner warmth, the *will-to-live* that is needed to quicken us to life."

Yet immediately afterwards the writer makes the following amazing statement: speaking of the average Muslim's implicit belief in *kismet*, he says—"A poisonous notion such as this, which has unfortunately sunk deep unto the consciousness of the average Musalman, is enough to stifle the voice of all ambition and, for the matter of that, chill the warmth of life.....Indifference, listlessness, lassitude, deterioration, decay—— these are so many inevitable steps once you get into this *kismet* frame of mind. The crying need of the day, therefore, is to disabuse the minds of our youth of such false notions and kindle in their bosoms the fire of ambition. They must understand that they are the architects of their own destiny and that no God can be so unjust and cruel as to have put the chains of *kismet* on them.

"Other-worldiness" is another dangerous mood.....in a Musalman. The Mullah has actually taught him that this worldly life is only a trial, and that those who get the good things here are in reality in the bad books of God. Those who are wretched, poor, oppressed and down-trodden are the favourites of God and will have His palaces of pearls and *houris* in the life to come.....With such an obsession interest in this life is bound to flag.'

'Needless to add both these notions are unIslamic. Man, according to the Quran, is a free agent. It is for him to choose between right and wrong and thereby to make or mar his destiny.'

Conversions to Islam.

PROMINENCE is given in a recent issue of *The Light* (Lahore) to a letter appealing for funds in aid of an Islamic charitable institution in South India, 'that attends to the needs of new converts to Islam, especially in performing their circumcision ceremony, and in providing them with accommodation, food, etc. This is the Maunat-ul-Islam Sabha of Ponani in Kerala, which claims to be the only one of its kind in India, since it very frequently receives new converts from such distant parts as Ceylon, Rangoon, Singapore, Madras, Bombay, Poona, Calcutta, etc.

It is stated that this institution was established in 1900, was recognised by the Government of India in 1903, and has, since its inception, registered no less than 15,403 converts, an average per annum of about 500. The appeal is based on the fact that their funds are not sufficient to meet the cost of the care of these converts upon the institution expends, on the average, Rs. 15 per head.

The appeal concludes in this singular manner :

'It is believed that the rules laid down in the Quran and Hadith are so far to be relied on since God and the Holy Prophet have promised a reward of 700 times and sometimes more to a donor of a single pie as charity in the cause of religion. It is the duty of every Musalman to help the Muslim Mission in the absence of the *Bait-ul-mal* and Muslim Raj, and as such it should be feared that all our actions have to be answered for in the right manner to-morrow in the other world.'

Islam in Africa.

IT is time a halt was called to the persistent talk of Islamic progress in Africa, and its frequent comparison to a prairie fire sweeping all before it. As far as active propaganda and aggressive efforts on the part of Islam to win converts, and of success obtained in concerned, I have no personal knowledge, though I have travelled through the greater part of Africa. (He mentions having travelled in Senegal, Mauretania, French Soudan and Niger Colony, Colonie due Chad and the Cubangin-Chari (including Nigeria).

'I have known some professing Christian coastmen going for trade purposes to Moslem centres such as Abecher in Onadai, Kano in Nigeria, Coomassie and Timbuctoo, and wearing Moslem robes to present persecution in business, and to help trade. I have known Moslems, Moors, Arabs, Wolofs, and many Soudanese of different tribes, who have been definitely converted as the result of reading the Scriptures, the testimony of missionaries, or of a wandering witness of Jesus Christ. I have yet to learn *bona-fide* instances of the Koran replacing the Bible in any part of Africa or of Mohammed winning the faith and affection of many pagan or Christian Africans.

'The day of Moslem progress and advance is past. Its earlier trails were trails of blood—I have seen these—its chief commerce was slaves, and its advent has ever been marked with lessons of lust and license to sin. These have been its main attractions to pagan peoples, or weak Christians.

'Timbuctoo, once the centre and seat of learning and strict adherence to the Koran, is to-day a hot-bed of drunkenness, vice in every form, and is fast becoming a city of ignorance and Islamic indifference. So I found in a dozen other, once famous, cities of the Niger.'

(Mr. Dugald Campbell in *The Moslem World*.)

Notes.

Literature for Muslims in India.—Notice is hereby given to all who are interested in Christian literature for Muslims in India, that the Committee for this purpose appointed by the N.C.C. will hold its next meeting in Lahore during October. Will the secretaries in charge of this branch of literature in the different language areas of India send in any applications they may have for grants-in-aid before 1st October, to

Rev. M. T. Titus, D.D., Methodist Episcopal Mission, Budaun, United Provinces.

* * * * *
Hindustani Convention, Bangalore.—There is to be held, probably during the third week of October, a Hindustani Convention in Bangalore. Our prayers are asked for the arrangements for this meeting and that the Conference may prove of real benefit to converts and missionaries alike, as well as a testimony to the local Muslims.

* * * * *
Meat from Animal Sacrifices.—A humble Indian Christian has asked us whether it would be wrong or unwise to partake, at the invitation of a Muslim friend, of food containing meat that comes from an animal sacrificed at the time of *Id-us-Zuha*. We shall be glad to know the views of some of our members who are themselves converts from Islam.

—:O:—

For Prayer.

PRAY 'for two Muslim girls (Shia') who have passed through our Mission School in the city and have now gone for further study to a training school. One of these girls would confess herself a Christian, but hesitates to do so during the life-time of her parents, who are old.' (India).

PRAY for the Hindustani Convention to be held in Bangalore during October.

PRAY for the Trans-Jhelum Conference of Workers, Indian and foreign, to be held at Abbottabad from 13th—17th September.

—:O:—

NEW MEMBERS

Rev. G. B. Ogden,	A.P.M.	Fatehpur, U.P.
Rev. A. A. Parker,	M.E.Ch.	Jubbulpore, India.
Rev. A. E. Selwood,	B.M.S.	Dacca.
Rev. L. J. Adkins,	Amer. Mission,	Aleppo, Syria.
Rev. J. H. Munro,	Wes. Chaplain,	Lahore.

[We have been obliged to 'axe' no less than 65 defaulting members from our Foreign List. Ed.]

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 25th September,
 Norwood, Dalhousie,
 Punjab, India.