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News and Notes

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1st October = 18th Jamadi'ul-Awwal (5th mo.), 1350, A.H.

Islamic Modernism in Egypt.

THANKS to the Rev. Arthur Jeffery of Cairo we have received information about the latest development in Egyptian Islam.

Islam in Egypt is in a strange position: that the world-famous orthodox university of the Azhar should be placed in a city where European influence is strong is bound to result in clashes when the ideas of the modern world, whether Christian or rationalist, filter through into the camp of an orthodoxy stereotyped centuries ago. The late Muhammad Abdu, Rector of the Azhar, was a modernist, but of a very moderate type of modernism compared with the rapidly moving kaleidoscopic changes of Indian Islam. Because of his extreme caution he was able to initiate some reforms in the Azhar. More recently Taha Husain nearly provoked a political crisis of the first magnitude by his book on Pre-Islamic Poetry, which brought some of the results of modern criticism to bear upon Islamic origins. Orthodoxy was saved for the moment by the suppression of the book until it had been expurgated. The latest event is the publication of a new type of commentary on the Quran by Sheikh Muhammad Abu Zaid, in which he breaks loose from all the old commentaries, and attempts to interpret the Quran by itself alone, his only criteria apparently being that miracles do not happen, and that primitive Islam must fit in with modern ideas of propriety—reminding one strongly of a type of rationalist Bible commentary in the middle of last century. To get free from the old orthodox commentaries on the Quran is a distinct step forward; but to ignore the historical surroundings of the Quran is not the way to arrive at its true meaning. Attempted explanations of the tales of the Seven Sleepers and the Valley of the Ants, without reference to the pre-Islamic sources of these stories, which are well-known to Western scholars, do not really further the

pursuit of truth. Christians have learnt to respect truth from whatever source it comes, and are not afraid to consider the studies of serious scholars, whether believers or unbelievers, on Christian origins. When will Muslims do the same? Enormous amounts of serious study of Islamic origins have been undertaken by Western scholars, not all of them by any means out of opposition to Islam. If Muslims believe in the truth of their religion they will eventually pay due regard to such works, adopting the principle of Gamaliel, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God," and remembering also that "Truth is great and stronger than all things." For the moment orthodoxy has triumphed: the book has been prescribed by the Government, and the author inhibited from teaching in the mosques. After all, the book is no more likely to survive than Renan's *Vie de Jesus*, but like that book it is a sign that minds are stirring and will refuse to be shackled by the voice of an obsolete orthodoxy, and in the end victory will rest with the truth.

L. E. B.

Tracts for Muslim Women.

Criticisms and Suggestions concerning this tract should be sent to Mrs. Bevan Jones, 5, Egerton Road, Lahore who can supply spare printed copies of this and the preceding tracts.

3. God has no Partner.

A CHRISTIAN school teacher had come to live near Abdul's Ma's home. One day his wife dropped in to see her, bringing her little son, Joseph. Abdul's Ma, while preparing a *pán* for her visitor remarked, "I am so glad you have come, for I have never seen a Christian before, and I want to ask you a question. Is it really true that you Christians say that the Prophet Isa (on whom be peace) is the Son of God? We believe that it is sin to say such a thing. God has no partner.

To this Joseph's Ma replied, "I am only a woman, and I cannot explain these things very well. Ask Abdul's father to ask my boy's father about it."

Abdul's Ma.—Yes, I shall indeed, but I want you to tell me what you know.

Joseph's Ma.—"Very well, I shall do my best, and I think that if you can once understand this matter you will not be angry." Abdul's mother brought the plate of *pán* and sat down to listen and Abdul and Joseph went off to play together. Then Joseph's Ma began to speak very quietly and simply, and this is what she said:—"Listen, Abdul's Ma, your little Abdul here is the child of both you and his father, is he not? But Jesus the Messiah is not the Son of God in that way. What! Is God a man that He

should have a wife and child? No true Christian ever said such a thing. We do not believe in many gods and goddesses as do the idolaters. God is not like us mortals. Jesus the Messiah Himself told us that **GOD IS SPIRIT.**"

A.—Then why do you say that the Prophet Isa (on whom be peace) is the Son of God?

J.—We Christians have not invented this name. It is written in the *Injil* that God Himself, at the time when Jesus the Messiah left His home and began His public work, spoke from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Lk. 3: 21. Now God Himself gave this name to Jesus the Messiah, therefore instead of being angry when we hear it we must try to understand what it means. We cannot fully understand, because we are mortal men, but we can try. Abdul's Ma, do you not thank God that He gave you a son?

A.—Yes, indeed! I love my little Abdul more than anything else in all the world. He is my only son.

J.—Yes, I understand. Do I not love my Joseph? Then, when God called Jesus the Messiah His Son, His beloved Son, He meant us to understand that in sending Him into the world He was giving us the most precious gift He could. He meant us to understand how greatly He loved Him. And now another verse from the *Injil* comes to my mind. It is written that the Angel Gabriel said to Jesus' mother, Mariam Bibi, that her child would be holy and would be called the Son of God. (Lk. 1: 35).

A.—I know about Mariam Bibi. I know also that it is written in the Quran Sharif and in the traditions that the Prophet Isa (on whom be peace) was born without a father. I know about the prophets and have learned their names. There was Adam Safi'ullah, and Noah Nabi'u'llah, and Ibrahim Khalil'u'llah, and Isa Ruhu'llah.

J.—Yes, and their names indicate their relationship to God. Do you not think that the name "Ruhu'llah" indicates a very close relationship? To me it is a beautiful name. It is written in the *Injil* that Jesus the Messiah was born by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the Spirit of God dwelt in Him in a special way. You call Him Isa Ruhu'llah, and we call Him Isa Ibn'ullah.

A.—I have always been taught that it is blasphemy to use that name. God has no partner.

J.—Have you never heard anyone when abusing another in anger call him a "Son of Satan?"

A.—Yes, indeed I have. A man who does 'Shaitani' is often called by that name.

J.—Then has Satan a partner?

A.—No, of course not. We don't mean that.

J.—Then, sister, can you not believe that when we call Jesus the Son of God we do not mean that God has a partner? Jesus the Messiah Himself taught that God is One.

A.—Then what do you mean?

J.—I am an unlearned woman. What shall I say? Sister, let us think again what the word "Son" means. A true son is like his father. Do we not say "Like father, like son"? My Joseph is so like his father, not only in looks but in his nature too. He is so good and clever. It is my hope that when he grows up he will be a teacher too.

A.—May God grant your wish! My little Abdul is like his father too.

J.—Then sister, though I have not seen your boy's father, and you have not seen my boy's father, yet we know that they are like their sons. So you see that a son can show others what his father is like. Now tell me, Abdul's Ma; have you ever seen God?

A.—No indeed! Can our human eyes behold God?

J.—How could they? Then do you know what He is like?

A.—I have learned something about Him. He is great. We are taught to speak of Him as Lord (Rabb) and ourselves as His slaves (banda) and our *takbir* is "Allahu Akbar." Our fate is in His hands. To some He is gracious and leads them in the right path, with others He is angry and they go astray.

J.—God is indeed great, we too speak of Him as King, but He wants us to think of Him also as Father, and so He sent Jesus Christ to show us His love. Jesus the Messiah gave to God the beautiful name of Holy Father. He is Holy, He hates sin; and He is the Loving Father, He longs to bring all sinners back into the straight path. God is *great*, God is *holy*, God is *love*. No man has ever seen God, but the Lord Jesus said, "He that has seen me has seen the Father."

A.—What did He mean by that?

J.—He meant that, just as a son can show us what his father is like, so He has shown us what God is like. If you read the *Injil* you will see that Jesus the Messiah was great and holy and loving. He had the nature of God. God spoke to men through His lips, and healed them through His hands. It comforts me to think that just as the Lord Jesus was always seeking to save sinners, so God is ever seeking us. I like to think of God as the perfect Father, and Jesus Christ as the perfect Son who showed us the Father.

A.—That may be. But it is not possible that God should be like a man. Jesus the Messiah ate food and slept. God does not do that.

J.—True sister, but remember that Jesus Christ came not only to show us what *God* is like, but to show us what *man* should be like. He often called Himself *Son of Man*. He told His disciples that He had given them an example. Each day I pray to God that He will help me to be like the Lord Jesus. The Lord had a human body, in that He was like us; but He was separate from sin, and in that He was unlike us, and like God. I too want to be separate from sin.

A.—I too would like to be good. How is it possible?

J.—It is written in the *Injil* that Jesus the Messiah gives to all who receive Him the power to become sons of God, (Jo. 1. 12). I know that this is true. Although I cannot explain all that is meant by the name "Isa Ibn' ullah" yet I know that He is worthy of that name, because He dwells in my heart by His Spirit, and gives me the power to put away hatred and anger and become a child of God. Through faith in Him I learn to love God as my Heavenly Father, and to trust and obey and serve Him.

And now I must take Joseph home. I hope that Abdul's father will allow you to come and see me some day.

The Christian Message and Islam.

A SUMMARY of the discussion in Cairo on the subject "How can we best present the subject of Inspiration to Muslims?"

1. While *orthodox* Muslims hold to a belief in divine revelation, the more modern *effendee*, who is largely agnostic, denies the necessity of any form of revelation. To such we must first bring proofs of the need of a fuller revelation than anything Nature provides for us. We must show that man's moral and spiritual being can only be satisfied by a moral and spiritual revelation of God.

2. Once the fact of revelation has been accepted the Muslim can be reminded that the Quran itself admits the inspiration of the *Injil*. But this almost invariably leads to the accusation that the Law and the Gospel have been altered by Jews and Christians respectively. It is well, therefore, that the Christian worker be furnished with the historical evidence which proves that both the Old Testament and the New Testament, as we have them to-day, are as nearly as possible the actual original documents.

3. Another common objection raised by Muslims is that the Arabic versions of the Bible are translations, and that no translation can faithfully represent the meaning of the original text. This question will be met by an appeal, in every case, to the Hebrew and Greek texts.

4. When a Muslim first approaches the Bible he brings with him the Quranic conception of Inspiration, which is purely mechanical. It is probably best not to disturb this conception, but to allow him gradually to understand and appreciate our Christian doctrine of Inspiration.

5. Many members of the group were, however, convinced that before long the Muslim would ask what the Christian belief about Inspiration actually is, and that it would be necessary then to explain it to him. One or two, on the other hand, held that it was better to decline to discuss the subject until the Muslim was spiritually prepared to receive it, or, if a discussion was inevitable, to confine oneself to the fact of Inspiration, leaving out the questions of manner and degrees of Inspiration.

6. Many believed that, sooner or later, Muslims must be shown that the Quranic conception of Inspiration is unsatisfactory; we can then point out that:

- (a) Many statements in the Quran concern events in the life of Muhammad and therefore have no place in the "Tablet," which (they believe) was one of the things first created.

- (b) The Quran, like everything else, falls within the compass of divine knowledge, and therefore it has no pre-eminence over other things.
- (c) If the Quran is eternal there is no place for a doctrine of abrogation of verses.
- (d) There is the problem of various readings in the Quranic text.
- (e) Portions apparently have been omitted from what is now accepted by Muslims as the true text of the Quran.

7. When, however, it comes to explaining to Muslims what Christians mean by Inspiration, it was evident that different persons would put forward different explanations, according to their particular beliefs on the subject. Some upheld verbal Inspiration of both the Old and the New Testaments. Others emphasized the importance of Progressive Revelation. All were agreed that the fact of human co-operation in the writing of the sacred books must be stressed. Several members of the group expressed an earnest desire to secure agreement amongst Christians about their teaching to Muslims on this subject of Inspiration. Such agreement, however, seemed impossible of attainment. The Church had declared its belief in Inspiration, but it had never insisted on any definition of Inspiration.

8. Many believed that the ultimate choice for the Muslim rests between an acceptance of the Quran or the Bible, and that this means nothing less than the acceptance of the whole Bible as the Word of God. Objection was made to this way of stating the Christian position, as it was felt that the supreme emphasis should be laid upon the acceptance of Christ, and that the value of the written word lay in its pointing to the Incarnate Word.

9. For this reason, some felt that arguments with Muslims about Inspiration might easily be premature, as only those who are "re-born" in Christ are spiritually able to understand the Scriptures, and that therefore the Muslim should be encouraged to study first the life and person of Christ, leaving these other questions to be considered later.

A CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE TO THE LEADER OF THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT OF QADIAN, AND ITS RESULT.

THE Rev. Barakat Ullah, a C.M.S. missionary, at Fatehgarh Churian, Punjab, sent an open letter on May 12th, 1931, challenging Mian Bashir Uddin Mahmud Ahmad, the present successor to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, for a discussion such as was held in 1893 between the Mirza Sahib and Abdulla Athim, a Christian Extra-Assistant Commissioner at Amritsar. The subject of the discussion was to be Christ's death on the cross, in the first place because the Mirza Sahib had staked the truth of his claim to Messiahship on this point (see *Badr*, an Ahmadiyya organ, of 19 July, 1906), and secondly, because of his last injunction to his followers to prove that in reality Christ, the son of Mary, is for ever dead (see *Izala*, p. 129, and compare *News and Notes*, July 1931, p. 54).

All the vernacular Christian papers, and some orthodox Muslim journals, either published the Rev. Barakat Ullah's challenge in full, or mentioned its important points, but it was ignored by all the Ahmadiyyas, till the orthodox Muslims and the Christians by their clamour forced the Qadianis to take notice of it. The Ahmadiyya organ *Al Faisal* in the issue

of May 23, 1931, replied to the challenge, saying that as it was below the dignity of Mian Bashir Uddin to meet the Rev. S. M. Paul in a debate, the Qadianis should be allowed to choose their own debater. Mian Sahib, their leader, could deign to discuss in a public debate only with the Pope.

Mian Bashir Uddin compared with the Pope.

Mr. E. D. M. Shafi, Manager of the *Ukhuwwat*, Lahore, met this suggestion, first by pointing out that the Protestants who have challenged him have no Pope, and secondly by demanding the ground on which he considered himself on an equal footing with the Pope of Rome; some of the points of comparison being as follows:—

(1) Was it on educational qualifications? He should let us know his University degrees, to compare with those of the Pope.

(2) Was it on religious education? He should inform us of his qualifications at least in the sacred languages of Islam and Christianity.

(3) Was it is piety, holiness and spirituality? Then he should meet first the *Muhábila* party. (N.B. The *Muhábila* party is a group of the Ahmadiyyas who have broken off from the Qadian party on the ground of the alleged bad character and immorality of the present head, and since then have successfully challenged him to refute their charges against his character).

(4) Was it in the matter of worldly power? The Pope is an independent king of his State, while Mian Bashir Uddin is nothing more than a subject of the British Government.

(5) Was it the numerical strength of his followers? The Pope's followers amount to 32 crores, besides another 50 crores who respect him for his dignity.

(6) The Pope is regarded as infallible by his followers. Does he consider himself infallible? His father would not have claimed such a title for himself.

(7) His father, the Mirza Sahib, never made such conditions; in fact he did not consider it beneath his dignity to discuss matters in an open debate with Abdulla Athim, a layman.

A Trick of the Qadianis.

When such pressure was brought upon the head of the Qadian Movement, their organ *Al Fasal* began to publish letters alleged to have been written by Muslims of other sects, and by certain Christians, supporting the Ahmadiyya point of view that it should not be a condition of the discussion that Mian Bashir Uddin should be asked to stand as debater. Letters of a similar type were also received by the Rev. S. M. Paul and the Rev. Barakat Ullah. One of these letters, which was made much of by the Ahmadiyya papers, was alleged to come from Labbhu, a Subedar of the Salvation Army at Gurudaspur. A similar letter, bearing the same name, was also received by the Rev. Barakat Ullah. As a result of enquiry, the Subedar was found to be an illiterate man who declared himself to be ignorant of the whole affair, and denied ever having written, or caused to be written a letter to the Rev. Barakat Ullah or to any member of the Qadian party. The Secretary of the Qadian Movement who was responsible for the publication of the alleged letter from the Subedar was challenged several times to prove the letter to be genuine and to contradict the findings of the enquiry, but the challenge has been ignored.

A Further Disclosure.

A further disclosure was made accidentally when a letter meant for the Secretary of the Ahmadiyya Movement was received by the Rev. Barakat Ullah, containing the following statement, "According to your

order, false letters have been sent to the Rev. Barakat Ullah, and many others are being written." Evidently the envelopes got exchanged, and the letter meant for the Rev. Barakat Ullah must have gone to the Secretary of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The wide circulation of the letter in various non-Muslim papers has made the position of the Secretary of the Qadiani Movement very awkward.

The Present Situation.

The Rev. S. M. Paul and the Rev. Barakat Ullah have both yielded, agreeing to the point raised by the Ahmadiyyas, and are willing to meet any debater that the Qadianis would like to choose, provided he be deputed as their representative, whose victory or defeat will be their victory or defeat. Even this modification remains unaccepted by the leaders of the Ahmadiyya Movement at Qadian.

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN IN PREACHING TO MUSLIMS ABOUT CHRIST?

THE Scriptures begin very gently, and leads us on to Christ as to a man, and then to one who is Lord over all creatures, and after that to one who is God. So do I enter delightfully, and learn to know God. But the philosophers and doctors have insisted on beginning from above; and so they have become fools. We must begin from below, and after that come upwards."—*Luther*.

CAN YOU EMPLOY HIM?

A YOUNG Muslim convert, hailing from the N. W. F. Prov., India, aged 26, athletic, good-looking, with considerable education and trained as a compounder is 'out of work' *somewhere* in the Federated Malay States. The missionary in touch with him, Rev. J. J. Kingham, Methodist Episcopal Mission, Ipoh, F. M. States, would be glad to know of any one able to employ him.

Special prayer is requested for the work of the new session at the Henry Martyn School, Lahore. We are to have an Indian Evangelist, a convert of 12 years' standing, for a six months' course of training. We are also to have a new recruit (a lady) for the session, and hope to have for a short term an American missionary and his wife, and a new C.M.S. man.

NEW MEMBER.

Miss E. Rasmussen, Danish Mission, Mardan, N.W.F.P.
(Our membership is now 401.)

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,
5, Egerlon Road,
Lahore,
Punjab, India.