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## News and Notes

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1st May = 12th Zu'l Hijjah (12th mo.), 1349, A.H.

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### Why did Muhammad Deny the Crucifixion?

To

THE EDITOR, "NEWS AND NOTES."

REFERRING to your article in the April issue might there not be a more simple explanation? Muhammad would hardly know how central the cross was to Christianity. In your section 3 you feel it quite likely that he knew very little about Christianity. We know that the Jews gave him incorrect information about patriarchs and prophets to make fun of him. When he gained strength he smote them hard, and they paid for this ridicule in blood.

Writing from memory I think Professor Margolouth in his "Muhammad" throws light on the question. It was a fixed idea with Muhammad that a prophet must of necessity be successful. He esteemed "Al Masih" a very great and a very successful prophet, but how came such a prophet to be crucified? There must be some mistake, some lying on the part of these confounded Jews. Then he might have come across the obscure heresy referred to in your article. It was just the thing to meet the case. It would make fools of the detested Jews also.

In the desert sands of Arabian Christianity every weed grew.

Waltair, 8-4-31.

(REV.) G. E. BROWN.

## **The Impact of Christianity on Islam in India,**

### **A Brief Review.**

ISLAM occupies a position relative to Christianity not shared by the other world religions, inasmuch as it was subsequent to Christianity and was propagated in spite of, and, in part, as a protest against Christianity. Muhammad had a controversy not only with the Jews but with the Christians, and this controversy is reflected in the pages of the Quran and the earliest Muslim writings. The influence of that controversy has persisted through the centuries, and, as history shows, whenever close contacts are made between followers of the two faiths it is apt to break out afresh.

This has been particularly true in the case of India, the first field of modern missionary operations.

Henry Martyn (1806-1812), the first modern missionary to Muslims, eager though he was to preach the pure Gospel, soon became involved, to his great distress, in certain well-known phases of it. He saw clearly that the New Testament must be done into Urdu, the *lingua franca* of the Muslims of India, and he did not spare himself in bringing that task to completion. He thus placed an instrument of incalculable value in the hands of succeeding generations of missionaries.

But the storm period of the nineteenth century was in the early forties when the vigorous German missionary, Dr. Carl Pfander (transferred from Georgia to C.M.S. Agra, 1835-1866), by his trenchant criticism of Islam and Muhammad, drew to himself in open debate the leading Muslim doctors of North India.

Those prolonged discussions set in motion forces that have, for good or ill, been at work in India ever since. On the one hand, they afforded earnest-minded Muslims unparalleled opportunity to study and understand Christian truth, with the result that some of Pfander's most doughty opponents transferred their allegiance to Christ. On the other hand, they revealed to some of the more educated Muslims the vulnerable points in Islam and drove them to the task of formulating a new apology for their faith.

There followed a period, extending to the close of the century, that will be memorable not only for the output of tracts *for* Islam and *against* Christianity, and vice versa, much of it exceedingly acrimonious, but also for the emergence of new schools of thought among Muslims with new weapons of attack against Christianity.

Prior to 1875 there was waged in those tracts the old battle about the Books and Miracles, and the Christian doctrines of the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and Atonement. But in that year Dr. Imad-ud-Din (1826-1901), one of the converts resulting from the debates with Pfander and himself the author of a quantity of contro-

versial literature, could with much reason assert: "There is little use now in spending our time preparing books of controversy with Islam. Why tread on the body of a fallen foe?"

That, however, was not an exact diagnosis of the situation, for though it was true that certain educated Muslims had abandoned some of the positions hitherto held in the conflict with Christians, they were soon to return to the fray in an attempt to outflank their opponents: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), who founded Aligarh College in a praiseworthy attempt to raise the standard of education among Indian Muslims, was responsible for the emergence of a *new Islam*. He openly declared that current Islam was a corrupt Islam and not the pure Islam of Muhammad's day, and that, in reality, Nature is Islam and Islam, Nature. He laid it down as an axiom that *Reason* is the sole criterion in religious matters and it must be applied as well to the Quran as to the Bible. This was something quite new in Indian Islam, as was also his courageous assertion that the charge, hitherto commonly made by Muslims, that the Bible had been corrupted, could not be substantiated.

To this extent at least the debates in Agra and in subsequent Christian literature had borne fruit. Needless to say, the orthodox doctors of Islam were horrified at such teaching and denounced Sir Syed as an infidel.

Yet another movement which can only be adequately explained as a further reaction to the storm raised by Pfander, was the appearance in the Punjab of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1839-1908). This man, by claiming to be both the promised Messiah and the Mahdi expected by the Muslims; by interpreting the Quran to suit his own ends; and by his unsparing attacks on Christianity, soon came to be recognized as the head of an entirely new school in Indian Islam. But he over-reached himself. His claim to be himself a prophet had so incensed some of his most notable followers that, later in 1914, they broke away and formed another party. A common feature, however, characterises these two branches, whose tenets in many respects cut right across orthodox Islam, and that is a more pronouncedly anti-Christian spirit than anything hitherto shown by the Muslims of India. The character of Christ, till recently held in very high esteem by Muslims, has become the object of malicious attack. In fact it is abundantly clear that the Mirza conceived the situation created by Christian criticism to be so desperate that he resorted to the writings of Western sceptics in order to find new weapons of counter-attack against the preachers of the Gospel.

Thus, in the attempt to rehabilitate Muhammad and Islam after the damaging criticism to which both had been subjected, it has become part of the deliberate policy of these two sections of the Ahmadiyyas (as they are called) to seek to lower the prestige of Christ. In spite of the witness of the Quran itself and the prevailing belief of orthodox Muslims, his miracles are explained away, His teaching is declared

to be impracticable, and He Himself is charged with sin. His supernatural birth is denied, while His death in a natural manner is affirmed. But since He did not die on the cross there was no atonement and no resurrection, and so, in the words of one of them, 'the preaching of the Christian missionary is vain.'

This is the position at the present time and these views are being constantly disseminated through the very active and extensive press of the Ahmadiyyas. It would seem that, in great bitterness of spirit, they have determined that what Muhammad cannot be, Christ shall not be.

Even so their leaders must be given the credit for having discerned that the supreme issue lies between the founders of the two faiths. It is not now so much a question of this or that Book, nor of this or that creed, but of Christ or Muhammad. If proof of this were needed it could easily be furnished in the form of biographies which eulogise Muhammad at the expense of Christ. Muhammad is "The Ideal Prophet," and 'The Holy Prophet.' All that man can desire or need is to be found in him. *But* for this purpose certain Traditions about him, which have been current among Muslims for about a thousand years and which reveal in him unlovely and unworthy features, are rejected as spurious, or otherwise explained, or else boldly retained as contributing, though maybe contrary to expectation, qualities essential in the ideal prophet. Such drastic treatment of this source for much of the material of the biography of Muhammad is undoubtedly due to the fact that Christian writers in India by calling attention to grave defects in the traditional character of Muhammad have created a new conscience in the matter among Muslims.

In other words, it is being assiduously proclaimed that to be Christlike is *not* the highest ideal for man, but to be like Muhammad; that the principles of Christianity tend to reduce man to impotence, whereas Islam makes for virility, self-reliance and independence. For example, one of the most advanced thinkers among Indian Muslims asserts that the negation of self (or, as we might say, 'self-denial') is a doctrine invented by the subject races of mankind in order that by this means they may sap and weaken the character of their rulers.

Part of the declared purpose of these two groups, whose numbers, though certainly increasing, still constitute but a small minority of the total Muslim community in India, is through their propaganda work in Christendom to cripple the missionary enterprise of the Churches. To quote one of their leaders:—"Europe and America, the two continents that are at the back of the great movement of Christianity against Islam, are hopelessly ignorant of Islam and they are directing this movement under the false impression created by the Christian missionary. If we could only spread Islamic literature in these countries.....we would be able not only to arrest the growth of the missionary movement but to deal it a death-blow at the very centre of its vitality." It is through the efforts of these groups that the mosques in London, Paris, Berlin and elsewhere, have been erected.

Here in India they have their very active centres for the training of preachers and missionaries. Through their press they solicit and secure funds for this purpose and for their propaganda work throughout India and in Western countries. One of the aims of a certain Muslim Missionary Society in India is thus set forth: "To work for the conversion of the 80 millions of the depressed classes of India is the chief aim of the workers."

On the other hand, an indirect but none the less noteworthy result of the new apologetic and polemic of these Ahmadiyyas is a violent split in the ranks of Indian Muslims. The vast majority of them do not hold by these views and denounce the innovators as infidels. The progressives in turn pour the utmost scorn on the old type of religious receptor. Thus conservatism and radicalism are at grips in a momentous struggle.

The Christian missionary cannot but be an interested spectator. Both sides excite his sympathy. The conservatives, while hampered by ignorance and bigotry, still retain much of a genuinely religious spirit and, withal, reverence for the name of Christ. On the other hand, the radicals, though often exhibiting a spirit alien to true religion and bitterly anti-Christian, are shaking off old fetters, promoting education, and initiating reforms.

The spread of education among Muslims is responsible for the fact that both the Quran and the Bible are being more widely read. It is indicative of the changes that are taking place that translations of the Quran are now available in *eleven* of the vernaculars of India. The immediate result of thus giving Muslims their sacred book in languages they can understand may conceivably be a revival of Islam. The need of something of the kind is certainly felt, for one repeatedly hears the lament that true religion is dying out among Muslims.

We, however, welcome the opportunity these translations offer to the Muslims to become more closely acquainted with the contents of their book, for, with the present steady growth in the number of those who are reading the Bible, it will become increasingly possible for them to compare and contrast the two. We can await the issue of honest investigation with confidence.

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### **The Christian Message and Islam.**

A summary of the discussion in Cairo on the subject of "The points in favour of and against *evangelistic meetings* for Muslims."

- i. Evangelistic meetings for Muslims may be one of three kinds:—
  - I. Controversial meetings, in which Islam is exposed, and comparisons are drawn between Christianity and Islam.
  - II. Lectures dealing with ethical and social subjects, but with an evangelistic aim.
  - III. Direct preaching of the Word.

2. All were agreed that, as a rule, the first kind are unprofitable, though it was pointed out that the element of controversy more often than not comes from the Muslim audience, rather than from the Christian speaker, and that such meetings have occasionally borne fruit, though chiefly not from the controversy itself, but from the Christian spirit shown by the speaker.
3. The second kind are useful, as they attract Muslims to our meetings, but in themselves they are *not sufficient*, and there is always the danger lest the evangelistic object be put into the background.
4. About the value of the third kind of meeting there was a considerable variety of opinion. It was pointed out that such meetings:—
  - I. Enable the Christian evangelist to make the acquaintance of numbers of Muslims, whom he would otherwise never reach.
  - II. Lead to personal work *amongst individuals*.
  - III. Give the evangelist an opportunity to deal systematically and fully with some particular aspect of Christianity.
  - IV. Make clear to Muslims what Christian worship, prayer and praise really are, thus removing many false impressions from their minds.
5. On the other hand, it was equally clear that:—
  - I. Many Muslims are prepared to meet an evangelist privately for personal talks and Bible study, who are afraid to be seen at public meetings.
  - II. Such meetings are liable to constant interruptions and disturbances.
  - III. It is impossible to deal, at such meetings, with some of the deepest truths of Christianity without rousing bitter opposition.
  - IV. Muslims like to make capital out of the disturbances which such meetings occasion and thus to *decry our work and methods*, and so cause government interference.
  - V. There is always the danger of such meetings degenerating into a merely intellectual contest, between the champions of Islam and the champions of Christianity.
6. Nevertheless, some felt that despite government opposition and the hatred of the people, we should follow the example of St. Peter and St. Paul and preach the Word boldly in public, whatever might be the consequences to ourselves. Christ foretold opposition to His disciples, and St. Paul was always experiencing it. We need more courage, a more uncompromising attitude.
7. Others, however, were convinced that large meetings were not the best method of evangelism, at the present time, not because there is fear of government opposition or public hostility, but

because such meetings do not achieve their main object. They frequently alienate Muslims rather than win them, and the same teaching can be imparted to the Muslim far better in a private talk than in a public meeting. Whatever may have been true in the past, or will be true in the future, this is the day of personal work.

8. Others, again, felt that rather than give up evangelistic meetings, we should endeavour to improve them.
9. All were unanimous in their conviction that large meetings can never produce lasting results, unless they are followed up by tireless personal work.

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### Notes.

*Discussion group in Jerusalem.*—Whilst we are reproducing, month by month, notes on group discussions that took place in Cairo a year ago on the Christian message, it is interesting to know that folk in Jerusalem have recently followed Cairo's example, adapting their syllabus to the conditions in Syria and Palestine. The Druses, Bahais and (of course!) Ahmadiyyas are some of the types they meet.

Two items from the report of the Jerusalem discussions will be of special interest to our readers.

1. In presenting Christianity to the modern-minded and agnost Muslim it was stressed that every effort should be made to get the Muslim to focus his attention on Christ, not on religion, creed, dogma, etc. Other things are defective and fail, but not Christ. They stressed, too, the value of stating to such how one's own needs, problems and difficulties are fully met by the living Christ.

2. Apparently there was a lively discussion on the principle that should underlie *medical* work among Muslims. Should such work be used as a 'means' for preaching the Gospel, or rather be just a real expression in itself of the Spirit of the Master? Marked differences of opinion on this point were revealed when it had reference to preaching to patients in the mission hospitals.

*'Friends of Moslems'—China.*—We are glad to see from the *Quarterly News Letter* of this name that former members of the M. M. League forming the nucleus of a new branch have expanded into a flourishing "Society of Friends of the Moslems of China." The quarterly is published by Mrs. C. L. Pickens (nee Zwemer) and the Treasurer is our old friend Mr. Isaac Mason of the C. L. S., Shanghai. The Society is now in its fifth year of existence. We do not lament for a moment the 'defection' of former M. M. League members in China to this Society! Such is a most naturable development. May it grow steadily in strength and influence in the service of Christ among Muslims.

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## Review.

*Islam for Beginners.*—M. T. Titus, Ph.D., D.D. author of *Indian Islam*. In the Series 'The Chaterhouse Program of Religious Education.' 52 pages. Price six annas. Methodist Publishing House, Lucknow and Madras.

This little book, as its title intimates, is strictly for 'beginners' and as such it gives in tabloid form the salient facts about Islam. Dr. Titus, whose valuable work on 'Indian Islam' has been reviewed in these pages, requires no introduction to members of the M. M. League. He undertook to prepare this little handbook to meet the needs of "Indian Christian students of high school and college age," and he has done the job well. The usefulness of the volume is definitely increased by a short bibliography, and a list of suggestions for study groups. Special features are a section on modern movements in Islam and appendices containing a list of Feast and Fast days, and an eight page glossary of Islamic terms.

*The Moslem World Quarterly for April, 1931*, contains a long and careful study of the present conditions among the Muslims of India, by Dr. Kraemer, of Java, who recently spent some months in India. He goes into the causes and results of the present day tension between Hindus and Muslims, and pronounces Islam to be 'in a state of confusion and transition.' Dr. W. G. Shellabear, of Hartford, answers a recent attack by an Indian Muslim on the reliability of Sale's translation of the Quran; Rev. W. G. Greenslade contributes a valuable paper on early Christianity in South Arabia, and Professor Lootfy Levonian points out that our approach to Islam should not be by way of destruction, but by the fulfilment of what is best in this religion. Dr. Zwemer, the Editor, writes on 'The Sword of Mohammed and Ali, illustrating his sketch by a beautifully coloured reproduction of a Chinese picture of the Sword.

*Agents in India.*—Association Press, 5, Russell Street, Calcutta. Rs. 6-0-0 per annum.

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## FOR PRAYER

PRAY for the students at the Henry Martyn School course in Dalhousie during May and June.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members of 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, Egerton Road,  
Lahore,  
Punjab, India.