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## News and Notes

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### **The Muslim Attitude to Jesus Christ.**

IN the course of an article on our message to Muslims, published in our issue for May, 1930, we had occasion to say: 'The Muslim is prepared to give the highest praise to Jesus for what He said and did and suffered, so long as it is claimed for Him that He was no more than man, but once he is asked to accept all this of one said to be Divine, he thinks the character a deplorable one—a sorry God.' There is much said in this strain in Khwajah Kamal-ud-din's life of Muhammad, 'The Ideal Prophet.'

We propose to illustrate this and similar Muslim attitude from a number of books which we can recommend as likely to prove useful to members of the League.

#### THE MUSLIM RESEMBLES THE JEW

A recent theological writer, speaking of the impact and influence of Christian ideas on the minds of Jews, say, in the city of New York, ventures to express the hope that such Judaism may gradually become more and more Christian in temper, but goes on to say: "Yet it is felt that the one thing Jews will *never* do is to allow their devotion to centre itself in loyalty to the figure of the Nazarene. They will do any thing but that. What they find good in Christian teaching they will acknowledge to be good.....many of them will even acknowledge the essential preciousness of the teaching of Jesus Christ; but they will claim that they value Him not as the founder of a new tradition but as one of their own prophets.....But the one thing that utterly alienates them and renders the hope of a further *rapprochement* impossible is the proposal of anything like 'Christocentricity'—anything like a comprehensive focussing of religious loyalty on the one figure of the Christ. That, precisely, is the *skandalon*, the stone of

stumbling, the rock of offence. Tell us, they will say, what ideals of life and beliefs about God your Christianity stands for, and perhaps we can accept them almost as they stand. But to say that Christianity is nothing but personal devotion to Jesus Christ—that is to set the traditional stumbling-block right before our feet, and to state your faith in the one way that we can never make our own.

“There is here, surely, a living problem, and it is a problem which is not confined to the case of the Jews. It emerges in largely the same form in our Christian contacts with Islam which, though treasuring the memory both of Moses and of Jesus, yet centres its traditional loyalty in the figure of Muhammad. It emerges also in the experience of many of the missionaries who work among modern Hindus...the suggestion that they should substitute personal loyalty to Jesus Christ...causes difficulty.”

This writer then asks the pertinent question: ‘Is it then our Christian duty to cease to focus our religious life upon the figure of our Lord, and to make our Christianity stand rather for a body of principles that may be detached from a historical and personal context which has proved a *skandalon* to so many of our human brothers?’ To this he replies with an emphatic negative. (Baillie, *The place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, p. 70 ff. T. & T. Clark. 1929.

#### MUHAMMAD, NOT JESUS, A MODEL FOR MEN

In his most readable book, ‘A Faith for the World’ (U.C.M.E. London, 1929) Rev. W. Paton, who at every opportunity relates his theme to the claims of Islam and the need of Muslims, deals in one place (p. 85 ff) with the Christian claim that Christ is Lord of all. He is speaking of that basis, which was both taught and exemplified by Christ, of “a willingness to suffer to the uttermost to overcome sin, and of an unconquerable belief in the power of love.” Of this he says ‘it is not the kind of ethic the boast of which is that it is practical and adapted to the weakness and passions of men.’

But this is one of those things that the Muslim is unable or unwilling to understand. Though acknowledging, as we saw incidentally last month, that Christ’s life of absolute non-resistance to evil is the Christian ideal he nevertheless looks upon it as weakness. Muhammad *fought* his enemies if for no other reason to teach them a lesson and to get them to desist from persecuting Muslims. The attitude to these two ideals is reflected in a remark which a young Muslim made to Mr. Paton: “Jesus takes away the right of self-defence.”

Mr. Paton quotes also that other criticism now commonly made by Muslims against Christ, that He was unmarried; the implication being that He thus lacks something necessary to the guidance of those facing certain of life’s difficulties. Mr. Paton deals effectively with this objection. ‘It is clear that this is an argument against any ‘universal’ moral teacher at all, for it can equally well be argued that a married prophet like Muhammad would be unable to

comprehend the problems of the celibate, a statesman (like Moses or Isaiah) unable to say anything to the peasant life of the world, and indeed that a universal morality could only proceed from someone who had both experienced, *and not experienced*, every possible experience. Which is absurd.'

Which reminds us of yet another argument against the example of Christ which is being reproduced in different parts of India. We quote it as it appears in "*The Muslim Catechism*" Part I by Md. Manzur Ilahi, a member of the Ahmadiyya community in Lahore. The pupil is asked whether Muhammad is "a model for men in every branch of life." The reply given is in the affirmative and proceeds: 'The person who did not subdue his enemies, nor had wife and children, cannot be a model of forgiveness and coupled life. Men require a model for every branch of life and they cannot find such a model except in the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Jesus never vanquished His enemies, nor had He wife or children, therefore, it is useless to take Him as a model of forgiveness or married life.'

#### CONCERNING CHRIST'S MIRACLES

In his book "Muhammad and Christ," Maulana Muhammad Ali, President of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman, Lahore, tries to prove that in all places where Jesus is reported to have worked miracles, even in those where He is said to have healed the sick, the statements are not to be taken literally. Christ, he says, used the language of symbol; indeed it was His too-free use of symbolical language that gave rise to the idea that He ever worked miracles of healing. Those whom He healed, the writer urges, would surely have become His disciples and yet we know that His declared followers were few in number.

It is remarkable that a man of his education can be so blind to the plain implication of the Gospel narratives. One thinks immediately of the solitary leper who returned to give thanks to God, *because healed*. Were the nine ingrates any the less cleansed of their leprosy?

It is refreshing to find a thinker and guide of the standing of Principal D. S. Cairns of Aberdeen returning to 'a re-examination of the miracles of Jesus.' (*The Faith that Rebels*. S. C. M. 260 pp. 5s.). He shows that scientists have now outstripped theologians in this matter, that they no longer look upon the universe as a closed system, and indicates that that new support is forthcoming for the miracles of Jesus. We strongly recommend this book to members who are meeting the new Muslim objections to Christ's miracles.

In a fine passage Dr. Cairns deals with the evidence for the Resurrection, which of course Muslims deny since they deny the Crucifixion.

"What became of the body of Jesus? We are told that no doubt somehow it was lost. Is it then so easy for a human body to get lost at any time? How it could get lost in the tempest of love and hate of the Jerusalem of that day, it passes the wit of man

to determine. Was there no Antigone among all these women to stand by and remember the place of the body of the Lord? Is it likely that Mary was less loyal to her Son than the Greek maiden to her brother? Was there no Sadducee or Pharisee with sufficient foresight and vigilance to destroy the early faith at its birth by producing the body? Is that like what we know of Caiaphas?"

#### A DYING LEGACY

The late Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, of Qadian, in his attacks on the Christian faith was shrewd enough to observe that Christianity is founded upon Christ Himself and that belief in His death on the Cross and subsequent resurrection is of the essence of the faith. Peculiar interest attaches, therefore, to what we might call the dying legacy of this determined foe of Christianity. Here is a translation from the Urdu of his last request to his followers :

"Listen, my friends, to my last injunction. I tell you a secret. Remember it well that you may upset all the arguments which the Christians put forward. Prove to them that in reality Christ, the Son of Mary, is for ever dead. Through the victory to be gained by this argument you will be able to wipe the Christian religion off the face of the earth. There is no necessity for you to waste your precious time in other wearisome wrangles. Just concentrate upon the death of Christ, the Son of Mary, and by the use of powerful arguments reduce the Christians to silence. On the day that you succeed in proving that Christ joined the ranks of the dead and imprint this fact on the minds of Christians, you will know that the Christian religion has made its exit from the world."

This 'last injunction' helps to explain the surprisingly bitter spirit of many of the Ahmadiyyas of our time. The Mirza's influence is far-reaching, as can be shown from the way in which his arguments are used by present leaders among the Ahmadiyyas. For instance, fourteen reasons put forward by him in his writings to prove that Jesus did not die on the cross are taken over wholesale by Maulana Muhammad Ali in his Commentary on Sura IV. 157. (See his note, 645). Some of these 'reasons' are directly opposed to the clear statement of the Gospel narratives, or to their meaning; nor does the Mirza hesitate to quote only part of a verse, since the whole of it would not suit his argument.

We venture to reproduce in full the fourteenth 'reason' as it appears in Md. Ali's commentary (*in loc. cit.*) because it is an argument which the Ahmadiyyas are very given to using at the present time.

'(14) Jesus Christ prayed the whole night before his arrest to be saved from the accursed death on the cross, and he also asked his disciples to pray for him, and it is the Divine law that the prayers of a righteous man in distress and affliction are always accepted. He seems to have even received a promise from his Master (*sic*) to be saved, and it was to this promise that he referred when he cried out

on the cross \* : " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? "—Heb. 5 : 7 making the matter still more clear, for there it is plainly stated that the prayer of Jesus was accepted : " When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. " 1

Neither the Mirza nor this disciple of his seems to have cared to read or remember that the writer to the Hebrews has already referred to, and constantly has in the mind, the death of Christ : cf. 2 : 9, and so *must* mean something other than they have made his words at 5 : 7 imply. Nor do they care to see that the supreme note of the supplications offered in Gethsemane " with strong crying and tears, " and with sweat like " great drops of blood " was, " not my will, but Thine be done "—that *that* part of His prayer *was* answered, that *God's* will was fulfilled, and that the other part of His prayer, though ' heard, ' was *not* answered in that He ' drank the cup ' which He had prayed might pass, or, as the phrase of the writer to the Hebrews has it, He " tasted death " for every man.

## The Christian Message and Islam.

*A summary of the discussion in Cairo on the subject of Newspaper Evangelism.*

1. The History of the Effort—Originated in Japan by Rev. Petries and worked with great success in that country. In 1913 attempt made in Cairo by insertion in the *Muqattam* of advertisement type of notice—" Is Christianity True ?—Literature supplied on receipt of P.T.5, etc. ". Eighty-six replies received to this first effort. Lack of money and the War put a stop to the work, however.

2. The Field Open to this Effort—In Cairo alone there are nearly 700 daily, weekly and monthly periodicals issued, and a dozen of these have a large Arabic circulation outside Egypt,—proved *e.g.*, by publicity given in the whole Muslim area to the Jerusalem Conference (of 1928).

3. The Methods possible in this Effort:—(a) The advertising of Bibles and books for sale. (b) The advertising of Christian meetings—subject and speaker, etc. (c) The publishing of articles on the Social Message of Christianity, *e.g.*, the evils of the drug habit, etc. All these, provided money is available, are comparatively easy to accomplish, but to publish articles containing the heart of the Christian message, namely the Cross, in Muslim papers is at present almost impossible. It was suggested, however, that if a persistent

\* The Ahmadiyyas admit that Jesus was actually nailed to the cross, but deny that He died thereon. *Ed.—N. & N.*

effort was made along the line of (c) in a year or so prejudice would be dispelled and more direct messages accepted.

The expenses of Newspaper Evangelism should not be considered as great when it is taken into account the number of people reached and compared with the cost of printing and distributing Christian books, magazines and tracts.

The dangers in using Muslim papers for the work were noted, mainly that of so having to "water down" the truth in the early days to ensure articles being published, that the effort becomes permanently non-evangelistic. It was pointed out that already *Muslim* authors are writing good moral articles notably in the "*Siyasa*" weekly magazine.

Dr. Wilder read a letter from Mr. S. A. Morrison, emphasising the benefits of this method of Evangelism but noting that the crux of the problem is whether we can persuade editors to accept our articles either free or at a reasonable charge. The letter contained definite suggestions as to the formation of a group of Christian Egyptians and missionaries who would undertake to keep in touch with the current topics appearing in the Arabic newspapers—compose suitable articles dealing with these, or replying to statements upon them, in the form of a letter to the editor. A friendly meeting with the leading editors and journalists, say once a quarter, was also suggested. It was estimated that all the work, providing also for an honorarium for an organizing Secretary (Egyptian), would be covered by L. E. 200 a year.

Bearing on the question of inserting notices of Christian services and speakers in the Arabic Press it was pointed out that it is now the custom to publish a list of the leading speakers in the Cairo Mosque on Fridays, the subjects of their discussions also being given.

Mr. S. A. Morrison sent a message to the group meeting, informing them that he had recently received a gift of L. E. 100 towards an effort in newspaper evangelism, and he hoped that another gift might follow.

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### **A Muslim Testimony to Christian Missions.**

**T**HE following editorial comment appeared in *The Light*, the weekly organ of the Ahmadiyyas of Lahore, on May 24th, 1931, under the heading, "Mahatmaji's Ban on Conversion."

"According to the *Guardian* of Calcutta, the Indian Christians of Tinnevely adopted the following resolutions concerning Mahatma Gandhi's ban on proselytization:

'Considering the position of Mahatma Gandhi in the political life of India to-day, the Indian Christians of Palamcottah view with disappointment and alarm the statement that he is reported to have made that if missionaries engage themselves in proselytizing work, he would

ask them to withdraw, and respectfully request him to allay their anxiety by squarely withdrawing the said statement and also assure them that he will work for the securing of such safeguards in the new constitution as would guarantee to all religionists their right to practise and preach their faith, in whatsoever manner they choose, so long as they do not resort to force or compulsion in doing so, and they further respectfully submit that if this is not done it will shake their present faith in his leadership and the new freedom of our Motherland.'

It is very painful for us whenever we find ourselves called upon to subject a statement of Mahatmaji, to whom India owes so much, to adverse criticism. But we can see no justification for the attitude adopted by the apostle of love and non-violence in putting a ban on conversions by Christian missionaries—not even after his explanation. Whatever the method the Christian missionary employs, the method of medical relief, education or monetary help, it must in all fairness be recognised that in taking under his protection a "depressed" class Hindu, shunned and despised by the caste Hindus, he is doing a great humanitarian and hence religious work, by enabling that poor down-trodden "image of God" to come into his own. He elevates him to a level of human dignity from a sub-human, even sub-animal lot to which Hinduism has condemned him from times immemorial. It may sound "nationalistic," it may be "patriotic" to stand for one's own religion. But it is to our mind "nationalism" or "patriotism" run riot, and we fail to see any difference between such "nationalism" and fanaticism. Hinduism says, "Put molten lead into the ears of that cur of an untouchable for hearing a word from the sacred Vedas." The Christian missionary picks that very "cur" up, hugs him to his bosom, gives him education, a family, home and a standing in society. Rather than feel grateful for such noble service rendered to our fellowmen in India, Mahatmaji alone may be capable of conceiving in his own peculiar way of thinking that these missionaries who bring light and cheer to so many man-forsaken souls are, in fact, so many undesirable persons and must be asked to withdraw."

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## For Praise and Prayer.

**PRAISE** for the confession of faith in Christ by baptism of a Muslim student of good family in North India—he first heard of Christ at a Y.M.C.A. branch, where he attended Bible classes. He has taken this step notwithstanding 'severe persecutions.' Members are asked to join in prayer on his behalf.

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**A MEMBER** in North India requests special prayer for two educated Muslim men with whom he has made contacts. (1) An advocate in the law-courts who cannot credit that Islam teaches that the apostate from Islam should be put to death. He has been given a copy of Dr. Zwemer's, booklet, *The Law of Apostacy in Islam*. (2) A Muslim graduate, a postman, who has been given to read a book entitled "What think ye of Christ."

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**A REQUEST.**

Our little paper could be made much more interesting if members would only make more use of the opportunity to send us news of their work and requests, like the above, for insertion.

**NEW MEMBERS.**

Miss A. Robbins,	M. E. Mission,	Cawnpore, U.P.
Rev. R. T. Meeker,	A. P. Mission,	Kasganj, U.P.
Miss D. Searle,		Edgehill, Landour.
Mrs. J. Milne, M.D.,	S. C. M.	Edgehill, Landour.
Miss J. Jeffrey,		Edgehill, Landour.
Mrs. Mason Vaugh,	A. P. Mission,	Agricultural Institute, Allahabad.
Miss B. Van Vranken,	Zafarabad,	Jaunpur, U. P.

Our total membership is now 396.

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, Egerton Road,  
Lahore,  
Punjab, India.

