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News and Notes

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Series XX

November, 1932.

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'God Gripped Him!'

THAT is Dr. Zwemer's way of describing the dramatic conversion of a Muslim missionary in South Africa. It is a story that vividly reminds us that we are not alone in this enterprise; the Holy Spirit is at work also. The first "touch", no less than the final "pull", is God's work.

This man, a Turk now over fifty, married to an Arab wife, had for years been dogging the steps of the missionaries in Africa. 'He is a very intelligent man and highly educated . . . speaks many languages. His command of English is excellent.'

'A few months ago he got hold of a native who was converted to Christianity and persuaded him to become a Muhammadan. The lad took his Bible to his new teacher and was going to tear it up, when, moved by a strong impulse, his teacher said: "No, give it to me." He thought it would help him in some of his controversies. He locked it up carefully, and one day later on went to consult it about the birth of our Lord. God almost immediately gripped him, and he went on with that secret reading of that Word behind carefully locked doors, for fear of his wife getting to know what he was about. One day when he went out hurriedly he forgot to lock up the Bible, and his wife, who wanted to discover what he was doing in secret, now found the Bible, and she began also secretly to read it. He did not know anything about this, nor did he know what his wife was doing.

'When later on he felt he could no longer keep silent he told her of his new-found faith, and asked her if she would now want to desert him.

"To his joy his wife confessed herself also a believer, and said she would go anywhere with him." The man and his wife have been baptized and he is going through a course of Bible study in preparation for Christian service.

Truly, God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform !

Lessons from Converts' Experiences.

WITH a view to improving methods for dealing with both enquirers and converts a group of workers in North India have invited frank statements from a number of ex-Muslims of ten or more years' standing.

The replies have been summarised and classified and give much food for thought. We are permitted to share some of these findings with our readers, in the hope that some constructive suggestions will be forthcoming. We invite members to send in their ideas on the subject to Rev. D. E. Alter, Woodstock College, Landour, Mussoorie, N. India.

We quote from the summary :—

Questionnaires were sent to twenty-four individuals. All of these, with one exception, have lived at least ten years as baptized Christians, some of them over thirty years and two or three forty years and more. So that the opinions expressed have the weight of mature consideration and are not the ideas of ones who themselves are not yet established firmly in Christian experience. These twenty-four persons are widely scattered throughout India—from the North-Western Frontier Province, through the Punjab, Central and United Provinces, Bengal and as far as Assam and Burma, so that we have a representative expression of opinion and not that of merely one province

Sixteen, so far, have given more or less complete answers. Almost without exception these all met the appeal of the questionnaire and though speaking plainly and frankly and oftentimes severely censuring both Indian Church and Foreign Mission, yet they maintained the Spirit of Christian Brotherhood and Love, giving replies that are really constructive and helpful and avoiding ones that would be merely controversial and antagonistic. Only one, and he, sad to say, the one of longest standing and greatest previous service, spoke bitterly of Church and Mission. Many of these have evidently given much time with genuine interest and earnest consideration. Here now we would thank them for what they have contributed to the findings of this Conference.

Of the sixteen answering, three are in Government or private employ, the remaining thirteen are employed in various capacities by Churches, Missions or other Christian Societies.

In addition to the personal data as to family, educational qualifications, age, etc., the thirty-five questions asked were divided into four sections. The first section dealt with the experiences of the one questioned, "As an Enquirer"; the second "As a Probationer"; the third "As a new member of the Church" and the fourth "As to his later life."

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Part 1—As An Enquirer.

Of this group of sixteen who responded to the questionnaire it was found that almost all of them had become enquirers before the age of eighteen, several even at the very early age of thirteen or fourteen. Only two were twenty years of age. One of these, the one mentioned above as the exception to the ten-year rule, was past thirty when first interested—a man of mature judgment.

Only two of the whole number report to have been married before conversion and one of these lost his wife because of his conversion. All the others, except the one who omits mention of this point, were unmarried.

Of the sixteen all but three were students when first becoming enquirers, but so far as was stated less than half of these students were in Christian schools; the majority being in Government or non-Christian Schools. Mostly they were in Middle or High School though there were four of college grade. Only one of these four, however, was in a Mission College.

As to the chief cause of attraction to Christianity, the importance of the practical life of Christians and the excellence of the religion of Jesus Christ itself held about equal place with a slight preponderance of influence to that of the personal lives. Two men gave credit rather evenly divided between these influences. As to the Christian lives bearing influence, both Foreign Missionary and Indian Christian had their part.

Nearly all of these men claim that as enquirers they had a good previous knowledge of their old religion, though it is evident that the degree of this knowledge did vary very much in individual cases. Several were sons of religious leaders and had had the old religion well instilled into their minds and practices. Two or three had themselves begun preparation as religious leaders. Two of these had actually assumed the responsibilities of such an office. In fact one, again that one who has been accepted as an exception to the rule, had been for many years a zealous leader in his community; he was head of a religious school and editor of a religious paper. Only one or two confess that they had little knowledge of their former religion.

Though many had been first influenced by other than direct personal contacts yet when they realised their further need of study, with very few exceptions they attached themselves to individual teachers. Most of them went to the most obvious source of such

information—the missionary. Two or three established intimate contacts with devoted Indian Christians. Two give credit to Christian schools in which they read further as the means of their gaining greater knowledge of their new religion. Only two attempted to gain such further knowledge through unaided private study.

After the period of first interest in Christianity, even though in some cases there was yet conflict in their minds as to the relative claims of the old and new religions, still only two seem temporarily to have come to any real doubt or questioning regarding essential points of religion in general—as, for instance, belief in the existence of God and belief in the possible approach of man to God. Even where raised such doubts were quickly dispelled. *One who seemed specially burdened with the conflicting claims of religions expressed deep regret that he allowed these matters to remain undecided for many years rather than coming quickly to a definite conclusion.*

Mostly the points mentioned concerning the superiority of Christianity over their former religions are the same as those which have attracted men from the time when Christ Himself taught with human voice, down through the ages till to-day. They are:—vital relation to a living person rather than a creed; the true Christians' privilege of children rather than the involuntary bondage of slaves; the teaching of forbearance and love, even of passive suffering rather than active persecution; the teaching of social purity and holiness in contrast to that found in former religions; and even more than the teaching, the purity of the character and life of Christ as contrasted with that of other founders of religion; the conception of God as a Father, Who loves and Himself seeks the lost; a conception of the terrible-ness of sin in the sight of a Holy God; the assurance of salvation; brotherhood; truthful living; independence of thought; the value of human personality; Jesus Christ and the Revelation of God

Five of those who answered confessed to long periods of hesitation after the first inclination toward Christianity and before open profession. One says that this hesitation lasted for "eight or nine years, much longer than it should have been allowed to go on until, due to the prolonged state of indecision, there resulted a spirit of moral numbness." Another says for three years; another for one full year.

Nearly all of them felt most keenly the separation from home and families which was usually involved. One had to give up permanently his wife, and another was temporarily separated from his wife and his six children. Most of them too, faced at least some degree of property—disqualifications and other material losses—one or two losing thousands of rupees. Loss of position and their former means of earning a living were awful spectres in their way. Some were timid and dreaded the persecution and physical violence; some shrunk from social ostracism, ridicule and all kinds of indignities.

With courage equal to that of the early Christians facing these

unknown and known dangers, these men all sooner or later yielded to the love of Christ and came forward to openly acknowledge Him as Master. About half the number, before baptism, themselves declared their new belief to their people, some giving them the opportunity to present arguments on the other side, some trying first to win their own family to their new faith. Others kept their intention secret until baptism. One or two kept it from their people even for two or three months after baptism. One during this period of final decision tried to keep it quiet, intending to be in his heart a Christian and outwardly a Muslim. For six months he maintained his double character but finally called together his family and friends and told them, then called together his former followers and by confession before them was separated entirely from his former associates.

In each of these cases when they did make their stand the anticipated troubles came upon them but, as summed up by one, there were none that could be avoided. With a number of them, however, the acuteness of such sacrifices was temporary. Several won again, on a new and Christian basis, association with their families and former friends. Some later were reinstated in their property rights. The bitterest edge of persecution and ridicule wore away. Several, however, never regained the temporal losses and have had to readjust their whole life and contacts—yet they counted the loss but gain to have found Christ.

With the close of this first section, the review of life as an enquirer, many suggestions directly in line with the purpose of this survey are offered. One, who now speaks from an honourable position, says: "I would warn a convert against too prolonged a state of suspense and indecision as it may engender sin through sheer weakness of will power, which accompanies a state of unnecessarily prolonged indecision." Nearly all stress the necessity of really true and firm faith before making a profession, then "Nothing can take them away from Him." Boldness and readiness to face difficulties is urged, together with strong advice against secrecy. As one said: "We are not committing theft but doing something noble. Why should we be afraid of any one? God is sure to bless us. He has blessed me in my experience."

One pleads that a kind of help be given for this time such as he himself was denied—sympathy, prayer and Christian association. He had found particularly hard the loneliness and wordly shame of his new life. A final testimony to conclude this section is: "Steady life, courageous efforts, unshaking faith and above all the glory of the Cross and the fellowship with the Saviour helped me to overcome all these difficulties."

Christian Tracts and Quranic Verses.

A PAST student of the Henry Martyn School, himself a convert from Islam and now working in Madras, raises the interesting question: Should we prefix verses from the Quran, *in the original Arabic*, to our tracts for Muslims?

He has found that Muslims raise strong objections to this practice and get very angry about it. What seems to have happened is this: Because the tracts are the work of Christians for use among Muslims, the ignorant passionately tear them up and throw them to the ground incensed at the sight of the headlines from the Quran. Then follows further trouble—these tracts are inevitably trodden under foot, and in unreasoning anger the Muslims still further denounce the Christians for having used this means to get the Muslim to defile the sacred verses!

Our friend points out that such pamphlets not only fail to win the attention of the crowd, but become a cause of bitterness and excitement, so that they are in no mood to listen to the message. He concludes with a cogency of argument that should impress us: "What help do we expect from the Quran when it is dead against the Divinity of Christ? Can we find a thing in a place where it never existed?"

We invite the opinions of our readers on this subject—a live one in some places, if not everywhere.

Notes.

Rev. Barakat Ullah's "Nur-ul-Huda."—This book had a thorough and reliable review in our last issue, and will, we hope, induce members to secure copies for themselves and their Indian assistants. But the price is less than we advertised. Vol. 1 (144 pp.) is 6 as.; Vol. 2 (184 pp.) is 8 as. Copies may be procured either from the Publisher: Mr. F. M. Najmuddin, Anwar Manzil, Sanda Road, Lahore; or from the Panjab Religious Book Society, Anarkali, Lahore.

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Tracts for Women.—Members will be interested to learn that an enquiry has come to hand from Turkey asking for spare copies of the five tracts so far published and requesting permission to translate them if they are considered suitable by the workers there.

Plans are being made to issue five more in this series; the next one due to appear is on *Salat (namaz)* and we trust it will be printed shortly.

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Mubtadion ka Qaida.—We have received from Miss Chapman, Z.B.M.M., Sholapur City, copies of an eight-page Urdu reader for the *mubtadi*, or beginner. It really is the simplest form of 'reader' that one could well imagine. The type is large and the words well-spaced. Like the other *Qaidas* this has a coloured cover in stiffer paper. There is even a picture of a child in the posture of prayer. All for the sum of One Pice (Lucknow Pubg. House). But what shall we say of the story? It is told well enough, with that gentle repetition suited to the pupil. Yet it speaks of a man who, contrary to the King's order fails to bring his gold to God, and so the furnace was kindled "and he was burnt up."

The booklet is so dainty and is, otherwise, so much the kind needed that we regret the opportunity was not used to tell a happier and more helpful story.

On the inside of the back cover *S. John 14: 6b.* is misquoted: Jesus did not say, "no one cometh unto God (Khudá) but by me."

The other *Qaidas* contain such excellent material that we are sorry to have to criticise this one; but we want the best, don't we?

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A Break-away from Islam.—A member writes; "We are in touch with a most interesting piece of work in a Muhammadan village near —. About seventeen homes with a community of 127 persons have broken away from Islam and, in the last census, declared themselves as Christians. This work opened up during Miss A—'s time. We spent a couple of days in close contact with the people last week and I was deeply impressed by the opportunity. They are now talking about erecting a place of worship."

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Jerusalem, the Holy City.—When Maulana Shaukat Ali, the surviving "Big Brother" of India, was in the Near East he disclosed incidentally that he viewed Jerusalem in quite a different light from Cairo. "It must not be forgotten," he said in an interview, "that Jerusalem is a sacred city to all Muslims and to everybody else, and it must be kept sacred. Why, there are ever cinemas and drinking bars in the Holy City!"

"Are you," he was asked, "totally against cinemas and drinking?"

"No! No! Not at all," he replied with a deep chuckle. "I am a sinner, I go to cinemas. I like to have a drink. Why, even here, in Cairo, as you heard, I am going to a theatre. But I don't want these things in Palestine." (Reported in *The Egyptian Gazette*, Cairo)

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Dr. Zwemer's visit to Great Britain.—Dr. and Mrs. Zwemer had, needless to say, a very strenuous time during their visit in the Spring to Great Britain. The May meetings of at least fifteen notable Societies were addressed. The two largest meetings (out of a total of over seventy) as regards numbers, were those of the C.M.S. in the Albert Hall, when 9,000 were present. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided. Bishop Linton of Persia and the Doctor were the speakers. Dr. Zwemer speaks very happily of the reception given to him by all sections of the Church. "The question of my ordination was never raised and I was happy to preach in their pulpits and follow the regulations of the Anglican Church. We are certainly drawing nearer together."

The Moslem World, October, 1932.

A Mirror of the World of Islam from Madagascar to Burma.

IT would be difficult to find a common religious denominator for such diverse geographical units as Palestine, Persia, Madagascar, Hadramaut, China, Turkey and Burma, except in the present-day extent or spread of Islam. All of these lands are reflected in the mirror of the October issue of the **MOSLEM WORLD QUARTERLY**, completing Volume XXII.

The editorial is by Professor Duncan B. Macdonald of Hartford. He discusses the *Essence of Christian Missions*. Are the missionaries of the future to be missionaries of Christ or missionaries of the Christian civilization of the West? Do they go out to proclaim to the world the unique and divine fact of the Incarnation, or to carry to the non-Christian world the benefits, educational, medical and humanitarian that grew up as a result of the Christian faith? The reply is a masterly apologetic for evangelical Christian Missions.

Professor Charles D. Matthews contributes a study on the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and shows that the Moslem contention that the location is sacred to them also, as the place whence Muhammad ascended to heaven, is historically and archaeologically without foundation.

Two able articles on the Moslems of India, and their attitude to constitutional and social reform, are by Mrs. Elizabeth C. Hume and Dr. Murray T. Titus.

The third international Islamic Conference held at Jerusalem is described by Alfred Neilsen and reveals the lack of unity and of leadership in the world of Islam.

Three little-known areas of the Moslem world find a place in this number. The Dutch Consul-General at Jiddah, Mr. D. Van der Meulen, tells of a journey in Hadramaut; Mr. John Walker lifts the veil of ignorance regarding the more than 600,000 Moslems in Madagascar; and the Rev. A. C. Hanna describes the social and intellectual movements among the 500,000 Mohammedans of Burma. All of these areas and populations are practically "unoccupied fields."

CURRENT TOPICS AND BOOK REVIEWS.

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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;—

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