

Confidential.

*Not to be reproduced without
permission of the Editor.*

News and Notes

A Monthly Paper printed for the private use of the
Members of the Missionaries to Muslims League.

Series XXII

November, 1934.

1st November = 22nd Rajab (7th mo.) 1353 A.H.

Reglected Arabia.

THE annual report of the Arabian Mission has come to our notice and it is most gratifying to see that in days of financial stringency, resulting in the cutting down of the staff from home and that recruited on the field, it is possible to strike a note of hope and expectancy. "It has been a good year," says the report; and the baptism of six adults and two children is recorded.

Medical work plays a great part in this Mission. One of the outstanding features of the report is the tour to Riadh in the Nejd of Dr. Dame, Mrs. Dame, Mrs. Van Peurseem, and Nurse Davis with four others, on a medical mission, at the request of King Ibn Saud. This was the first time Occidental women had ever visited Riadh and before leaving, after they had performed 130 operations and treated nearly 3,500 cases, the King asked Dr. Dame to make an annual trip to Nejd, not only to Riadh but to the numerous towns north and north-west as far as Hail.

Workers in India will be pleased to read that Indian nurses have done faithful service at Bahrain.

Of the Muscat and Matrah section of the Mission, it is recorded in modest fashion that Dr. Storm spent six months "in touring and reached Dhufar, thus exploring the southern coast half way to Makallah. That particular trip had in it elements of real danger. From the stand-point of Mission strategy it was the outstanding event of the year."

The magnitude of the task before these devoted pioneers is summed up in a very significant phrase. "Our field stretches far beyond the horizon in every direction." Let us pray for those who work in this Mission at the heart of Islam.

Sufi Thought and Christian Teaching.

AT the Cairo Missionary Conference of 1906, among the suggestions made by Dr. Rouse for the preparation of tracts for Muslims, were the following: to take up the good things in Islam and show how they are perfected in the Gospel, and to explain misconceptions with regard to the Christian religion. With regard to the latter suggestion, we are only too well aware as preachers of the Word to Muslims, that we are not tilling virgin soil. In it weeds have grown in abundance. Our preaching is often met by opposition due to pre-conceptions which are deeply rooted and sometimes from an equally embarrassing acquiescence from uncritical hearers which is no less due to misunderstanding. "Oh yes," they say, "We too believe what you say and no one can excel us in the praise and honour we ascribe to *Hazrat 'Isa*." How often that praise increases our difficulties and strikes a blow at the truth we wish to expound!

How have these misconceptions arisen? How has the picture of Christ in Islam assumed its definiteness? Are there any elements of that picture of real value to us in proclaiming the message? Many attempts have been made to answer these and similar questions and the misconceptions in the Quran have frequently been dealt with; though even here we have to confess that our knowledge of their origin is very limited. It may be possible, for example, to point to the verse which gives the Surah of the Table its name (V. 112), as a confusion of the miracle of the feeding of the multitudes, the discourses of our Lord at the Last Supper and 1. Cor. X. 21; and representing, perhaps, the confused memory of a sermon which brought these together. It may be possible to seek an explanation for the misconception of the Trinity in that passage of the *Gospel of the Hebrews* in which the Holy Spirit is referred to as "Thy mother," but apart from some few such instances it will be admitted that there are many things which remain unexplained, even if we go no further than the Quran.

But outside the Quran there is a vast literature containing references to Christ and Christian teaching, some misleading and the source of still greater misunderstanding and some singularly opposite in application to the exposition of Christian thought. These may be found in collections of stories of the prophets, traditions, Sufi writings and, in great abundance, in the writings of Al Ghazali. Here we find the pearl and the rubble, the true alongside the mean and unworthy.

As an illustration of the way in which false ideas have arisen, the following has come to our notice. In the Cairo printed edition of the *Ihya' ulim ud-din* of Al Ghazali (Vol. 3. p. 117) a story is told of our Lord where the hundredfold reward mentioned in Matthew xix. 29 is interpreted in the Muslim fashion as consisting in the sensual pleasures of Paradise. The application of this in the story is such as to offend our deepest Christian sensibilities, and we wonder how even a Muslim could conceive such incongruities. But when we turn to the

comment on this passage in Al Ghazali contained in Miguel Asin's *Agrapha et Logia Domini Jesu apud Moslemicos Scriptores, asceticos praesertim, usitata*, we find that Jerome in commenting on the passage of this Gospel says, "Ut qui unam (mulierem) pro Domino dimiserit centum recipiat in futuro." Doubtless the aim of Jerome was to commend celibacy but what a wounding in the house of our friend! What if past errors, perpetuated in Islam are now rising to condemn us! We cannot always be held guiltless of loose speech and careless thinking which have resulted in misunderstanding. But as we become more acquainted with these misconceptions, we shall be more and more inclined to examine ourselves and to weigh carefully the words we use lest we, whose mission it is to guide men into the truth, may not lead some poor soul astray. In addition to this we shall have laid the foundation for fulfilling the second of Dr. Rouse's suggestions; namely, that which refers to the removal of misunderstandings. For to do this we must strike as deeply to the root as we can, for these weeds have gone very deep.

But let us turn to the other suggestion. It may be that some will consider that there is nothing in the Muslim literature which can assist us in our preaching. It is true that if our preaching consists of nothing but tags quoted from poets of a Sufi tendency, then we shall not be able to do much more that confirm Muslims in a regard for their own mystics. But those who have tasted the Water of Life and drawn from the Treasury of Grace will not be content with the wine of the Sufi nor the pearls of Rumi or Hafiz. It is a principle of Logic, however, that the credibility or incredibility of an assertion made to us—apart from the person who makes the assertion—is decided by us according to the relation of the alleged fact to our existing knowledge or habit of thought. In other words, if we are to give effective testimony, we must link our message to something which is more or less familiar to our hearer. We must find the common factor. Now we find that these same tags are on the lips of many of our hearers. Sometimes we do not recognise them but practically every one of us has heard reference to the breath of Jesus (*dam-i' Isa*). Even those Muslims who belong to no regular school of Sufism have yet a fondness for the *Ghazal* which may or may not bear a mystical interpretation. It is even regarded as the fitting thing for a male adult to become a *murid* to some *pir* and though this is, in many cases, only nominal, in others it means some initiation into Sufi thought. So here we have a means of contact and a vocabulary which is understood by most educated Muslims. Can we shape this to our own use? Let us consider one or two points wherein we may. We wish to bring home the longing of man to be freed from worldliness and to encourage the thought that God has set eternity in our heart. The words of Hafiz come to mind:

Muzhda-i-wasl-i-tu ku k'az sar-i-jan bar khizam
Ta'ir-i-ouds-am. wa az dam-i-iahan bar khizam.

"Where is the good news of union with Thee, that I may rise with my whole heart. I am a bird of Paradise and will soar from the snare of the world." We wish to indicate that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Here Maulana Rum says :

Dida-i-bayad shah shinas: Ta shinasad Shah ra dar har libas.

"To know the King in every guise

One needs king-recognising eyes"

Or we may turn to the Urdu *Ghazal* of Atash,

Dida-i-Ya'qub se dekka jo 'alam ki taraf

Yusuf is bazar men har su nazar aya mujhe.

"When I looked at the world with the eyes of Jacob

Joseph appeared to me in every nook and corner of the bazar," when we wish to proclaim the truth that to the opened eyes of faith and love the presence of the Beloved is always to be discerned.

But apart from detached instances such as these, in general we may say that *Tasawwuf* represents practically the sole attempt in Islam to break from the thought of the barren transcendence of God which is characteristic of Orthodox Islam. Provided the Christian missionary can guard against the incipient—or in some cases the complete and manifest pantheism of the Sufis, here he may find a means of countering that undue transcendence which is driving many Muslims into agnosticism. Christian teaching strikes the happy mean between pantheism and the conception of the utter otherness of God. As Pfeleiderer has well said in *Religion und Religionen* "Christianity sought to combine from the beginning the immanence and the transcendence of God . . . On the one hand it says 'Thy Kingdom come,' and on the other hand there was a conviction, present from the beginning, that the Kingdom of God is now here, internally, within us, in the form of righteousness, joy and peace wrought by the Divine Spirit in the heart. (Rom. xiv. 7 and Luke xvii. 21). Here, God is the supermundane Lord who guides history towards the purpose of His coming Kingdom and who will destroy all His foes on the judgment day: while there Christian faith in salvation holds the union and reconciliation of the human and the Divine to be a completed fact in the humanisation of the Son of God and as a permanent presence, existing through the indwelling of the Divine Spirit in the hearts of God's children and in the congregation of the faithful whom he consecrated as the temple of God."

With this in view, compare the words of Massignon on Mansur al Hallaj's teaching. "Before all things, before the creation, before his knowledge of the creation, God in His unity way holding ineffable converse with Himself and contemplating the splendour of His essence in itself. That pure simplicity of His self-admiration is Love. Then God desired to project out of Himself His supreme joy, that Love in solitude, that He might behold it and speak to it." That reminds us of Raymond Lull's defence of the Trinity, and

certainly of that great saying of Plato "He was good and so he desired to impart Himself."

But Hallaj is not alone in this. Many a passage from Hafiz could be quoted, did space permit and in the *Masnawi* of Jalal-ud-din Rumi (Book V. line 2185ff. of Nicholson's edition), we find words which we could hardly expect to come from the pen of a Muslim with regard to the Love which caused the Universe to be. Strained and warped some of these may be but that is only to be expected from those who have sought without the Light of Lights. Whom they seek, if haply they may find Him, *we* can declare in the Father whose most wondrous name is Love.

These are but by way of illustration and in introduction to what may be, for those who will carry the study further, a mine of information, revealing errors which need to be rectified and thoughts which need to be amplified by the glorious Gospel of our blessed Redeemer. The Founder of the *M.M.L.*, the Rev. John Takle (now in retirement in New Zealand, and retaining that interest in the work of his prime, the fruits of which are still seen in his gracious pleading to our Muslim brethren, contained in *Sirat-ul-Mustaqim*) recently wrote to a friend that he thought a study of Christ in the mystics of Islam would be fruitful. We sincerely concur and, from time to time as opportunity offers, will report the results of our search to the readers of these notes.

J. W. S.

An Interesting Experiment.

WE learn of an interesting experiment being made by one of our members, who, on returning from furlough to this country, decided to give more time to the nurture of enquirers and converts. Every morning he gives instruction for about an hour and a half. This class has revealed to him the need for systematic training. He says, "They all pitifully need teaching that is connected and continuous for a period, in order that they may get a perspective. It is extraordinary, how little they grasp from 'reading the Bible.' All these lads are local Muslims except one who is a Christian orphan, and I am keeping them all in touch with their homes. One convert lives at his home! I can see them growing mentally and spiritually—they took about four months to germinate!! What will the flower be? Well, I can see them holding an intelligent witness and living a life in which the Christian conscience has a place. It's an experiment. It may grow. It is striking how little men missionaries are doing for the enquirer. Too much preaching and too little teaching!"

This ought to be of great interest to our readers. We can vouch for it, that what our brother has realised, others are realising too. A group of missionaries of the Methodist Missionary Society of

England have recently worked together to produce a book which attempts to give a bird's eye view of the whole of Scripture within a reasonable compass, so that the perspective which is lacking may be gained. Their work is however largely for Christian workers and catechists. For consecutive work we have found the book for catechumens by Miss Padwick and Dr. Gairdner invaluable.

Summer School, Benares.

IN April of this year the U.P. Christian Council decided to ask the Henry Martyn School of Islamics to arrange, if possible, extension courses or summer schools at Allahabad, Benares, and Lucknow about the end of September or the first week in October.

It proved impossible to arrange for more than one and it was decided to hold it at Benares from September 17th to 23rd. Rev. J. A. Subhan was to come from Lahore, and to be assisted by Revs. J. W. Sweetman and F. S. Briggs. Unfortunately only a short time before the summer school was to open, word came that illness made it impossible for Mr. Subhan to fulfil his promise. It was decided, however, to carry out our intention so far as we could, and to ask Rev. M. H. Ansari to take the place of Mr. Subhan. This, in spite of the short notice, he very kindly did.

The promoters of the course have every hope that those who attended it found it beneficial. Some of them told us that they did, and some of the questions they asked showed that they were keenly and intelligently interested in the presentation of the Gospel to Muslims.

The school opened with a devotional meeting conducted by Mr. Sweetman on September 17th. For the rest of the week three lectures a day were delivered. Mr. Ansari dealt chiefly with the Muslim view of the Quran etc. Mr. Sweetman with the presentation of the great Christian truths to Muslims, and Mr. Briggs with the Muslim views of the Bible, the Person of Christ, etc.

The total number attending the school was twenty-five. The average attendance per lecture was fifteen. When it is remembered that many, in fact most, of those attending the course had their usual duties to perform, in addition to turning up at lectures, this average seems very satisfactory.

At the end of the course, on Sunday, September 23rd, most of those who had attended it joined in the morning service at the Cantonment Methodist Church, conducted by Rev. W. Machin, and partook of Holy Communion before dispersing to their several stations.

F. S. BRIGGS.

The Moslem World for October, 1934.

The Atonement and the Moslem Mind.

OF old there used to be wordy battles with Moslems over such a factual matter as the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. To-day an increasing number of intellectual Moslems accept the fact and are trying to interpret it. An Editorial in this issue of the MOSLEM WORLD (with a coloured frontispiece of a Gospel poster from China) gives evidence of this. Other articles also tell of this changed attitude.

In addition the Rev. J. J. Cooksey describes the situation in North Africa and the implication of the struggle there between East and West, a translation is given of one of the earliest Christian apologies by John of Damascus and also an account of the strength and weakness of Nestorian Missions by Prof. Sten Bugge of Shekow, China.

Dr. Dwight M. Donaldson, writing on Modern Persian Law, shews how freedom and nationalism progress under the present constitutional government. Other noteworthy articles are Muhammed and Previous Messenger by Prof. Richard Bell of Edinburgh, the Moslem Minority of Bulgaria by Irwin T. Sanders, and a very practical article on Financing Religious Literature by Rev. Paul Erdman of Beirut.

Finally there is a unique Calendar of Moslem-Christian dates, book reviews and current topics, the Survey of Periodicals and Index for the year. Note the address. 156, Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. The price is 50 cents a copy or 2 dollars a year.

Correspondence.

THE Rev. Dr. Ahmad Shah writes, that the Muslim publisher of the second edition of his Hindi Quran, objected to the inclusion of some of the footnotes in the book and refused to publish till they were eliminated. So the book will be published by the Pratap Press of Cawnpore and will be ready for delivery on December 15th, 1934. The published price is Rs. 3-12-0 but those who send in advance can have a copy for Rs. 2-8-0 and postage. Only 500 copies are being published; so missionaries and Christian libraries would do well to order soon and take advantage of the above concession.

The Rev. B. M. Mow of Bulsar writes, that plans are being made to hold the fifth Hindustani Convention for Western and Southern India, at Bulsar (Surat District), at Divali time November 7-11. This Convention was inaugurated by Rev. H. J. Lane Smith in 1927 and has been a blessing to those interested in work among Muslims. It is hoped there will be a good attendance and that others unable to attend will remember the Convention in their prayers.

(We regret that Dr. Ahmad Shah's first intimation and Mr. Mow's reached us too late for inclusion in the October number).

In reply to a question about the religious occupation of women, printed in recent numbers, several have written that the work referred to will be the teaching of the Quran by women to women in purdah.

Requests for Prayer.

WE are pledged to pray for one another. We cannot do so definitely and particularly unless we know what each other is doing. Are you having difficulties? Let us share them with you. Are you being encouraged by sincere interest or actual decision for Christ? Encourage *us* by telling us about it.

PRAYER is asked on behalf of the Khojas of Karachi, two of whom have become Christians this year. Let us pray that our brethren engaged in work among them may be enabled to take advantage of the opportunities which present themselves.

PRAYER is asked for a Muslim Zamindar who is prepared to receive baptism himself, but who is trying to convince his wife of the truth of Christianity before he receives it, so that both may receive it together.

LET us pray for a recent convert who, before her baptism, was *purdah-nishin* and has now gone to receive instruction at a Christian School taking with her two children.

LET us pray for a young man, a student in one of the Universities, who is receiving instruction before baptism, that he may enter into a true spiritual experience.

Appeal for New Home

MR. Bevan Jones takes this opportunity to thank all those members of the League (in India) who have responded so promptly and so generously to his appeal for help in raising funds for the new Bible Training Centre for enquirers and converts, which it is expected will be opened shortly in Lahore. The amount sent in to date is Rs. 149-12-0.

Notice.

Matters of interest to members of the Missionaries to Muslims League, items of news, requests for prayer and praise, should be addressed to Rev. J. W. Sweetman, Ram Katora, Benares.

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 Editor. The annual subscription to the League, including *News and Notes*, is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3 shillings).