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## News and Notes

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1st March = 14th Dhu'lqa'da (11th mo.), 1352, A.H.

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### **The New Muslim Republic of Sinkiang.**

**S**INKIANG, or Eastern Turkestan, has been for some seven centuries a province of China, ruled by a Chinese Governor.

For the last two and a half years there have been risings in various parts of this great province against the tyrannies of the Chinese Governors. The reports that are to hand are very confusing, but it appears that the bulk of the population, especially in the south and west, is Muslim, and that there were a number of rebellions under different leaders in different parts. On the whole, it may be regarded as a Muslim rising, and certainly in the first instance the call to rebel seems to have been a call to drive out the unbelievers in the name of Islam. But it is noteworthy that the Tungans, or Chinese Muslims, are not in with the movement, and a thousand of them are besieged in the fort of Kashgar. The news that has come through to India is chiefly concerned with Kashgar, a town some five or six weeks' journey from Chitral in the North-West Frontier Province of India, and we are told that a new government has been established at Kashgar under Khwajah Niaz Haji. This government appears to be a coalition of at least four rival rulers in the western part of the province. It claims to have dominion also over the eastern part of the province. This claim is evidently premature; but if Khwajah Niaz's hopes in this direction are fulfilled his government should be fairly stable, as the old centre of government of the province was Urumtsi (or Tihwa) towards the north-east. Khwajah Niaz himself comes from the district lying to the north of Kashgar. The form of the new government is republican, and a number of names are given as forming a ministry with Khwajah Niaz as President. The Prime Minister has travelled in various foreign

countries, one of the others has been educated in China and Russia, and another is a graduate of a Russian college.

It is interesting to notice that Kashgar was at one time a Christian centre. In the last quarter of the twelfth century it was the seat of a Nestorian Metropolitan, or chief bishop. A century later, in 1278, the great traveller Marco Polo found Christians in Kashgar, Yarkand and Urumtsi.\*

An article in the *North China Daily News*, quoted in the current number of the *Moslem World*, says, "Tihwa is the only Protestant Mission centre for the whole of this territory; there are several isolated Roman Catholic Mission centres." Tihwa (Urumtsi) is a station of the China Inland Mission, and according to the *World Missionary Atlas (1925)* had two missionaries there. The writer of this article appears not to have been aware of the important Swedish Mission at Kashgar and Yarkand, and this is not surprising as there must be very little direct communication between Kashgar and China. At the moment there are staying in India two men from this mission, one a preacher whose father was a Muslim convert from Kashmir and his mother a Turki of Kashgar, the other a teacher of Mongolian type who had been brought up as an orphan by the mission. These two have been sent by the Swedish Mission for further education in India, as the present disturbed condition of the country makes missionary work almost impossible. The following information is gathered (with some uncertainty, owing to the language difficulty) from this Kashgari preacher. The Swedish Mission have a church for Muhammedans at Kashgar Old City (north of the Kashgar River) and one for Chinese at Kashgar New City (south of the river); a church at Yangi Hissar (some fifty miles south of Kashgar); and a church and orphanage for boys and girls at Yarkand. According to our informant the majority of the Christians were brought up as orphans by the mission and thus have not the zeal of converts. After the rebellions had broken out, when non-Muslims were being assaulted, the Swedish Mission recalled two men and five women missionaries, but seven men and nine women missionaries remained to care for the work and to give up their lives if need be. In Kashgar the missionaries were protected in the British Consulate. Many of the rebels wished to send all the missionaries away, seize the hospital and printing press, and spoil the mission station as being an enemy of Islam. Wiser counsels however prevailed, for fear of foreign complications. At Yarkand last April, when the fighting took place there, the missionaries were in great danger, but they stuck to their post and helped the wounded day and night. At that time a Muslim named Abdullah claimed to be king in Yarkand, and he arrested three of the Swedish pastors and would have killed them, but his advisers warned him of the danger of killing foreigners, and he ordered them to be imprisoned.

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\* See L. E. Browne: *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, pp. 103-4.

and bound. Then the soldiers found in the mission compound two Swedish ladies, a Turki preacher (our informant) and a young Christian teacher aged nineteen. The ladies were threatened with death, but they stood their ground and showed that they were ready to die, and were eventually released unharmed. The young teacher was slain in the presence of the preacher. The latter describes how the young teacher's eyes shone like stars and how joy lit up his face as he knelt and lifted up his hands to heaven, while his murderers first shot at him and then beheaded him. He is the only Christian who has been killed during the rebellion, and the only Christian martyr in the forty years during which the Swedish Mission has been at work. The preacher was threatened with death by strangulation, and was actually hung up on some sort of cross, while Abdullah's brother abused him and argued with him. His tortures apparently lasted four days, and it is a wonder that he survived. Abdullah then intended to send the missionaries away and seize the hospital, but they managed to send word to the British Consul General at Kashgar who wrote to Abdullah warning him against any such action, and telling him to allow the missionaries to open the hospital again. In order to win the Consul's friendship Abdullah agreed, but forbade the missionaries to preach or teach. The missionaries then sent word to the Consul about the preacher, who is a British subject, his father having been a Kashmiri. Eventually on the ground of his nationality he was released. He has given all this information, not for any self-glorification, but asking for prayer on behalf of the missionaries and Christians. He asks for special prayer on behalf of a group of less than ten young Christian men, some in Kashgar and some in Yarkand, who helped the missionaries, and refused to apostatise although living amongst the Muslims.

The future of the Mission will depend to a great extent on the political future of the province. According to the Chinese Consul in Bombay a determined effort will be made by the Chinese Government to re-conquer Sinkiang, but it is extremely doubtful whether the present Chinese Government is strong enough to carry out so large an undertaking. Certainly Chinese suzerainty would be most favourable to the Mission. The alternatives are either the continuance of the new Muslim regime, or conquest by the Soviet Republic. In the former case missionary work would be difficult, and in the latter case impossible, as far as one can see at present.

### **The Gospel of Barnabas Again.**

**A**N Urdu journal has tried to make capital out of the prominence given to Codex Sinaiticus by saying that Tischendorf found bound up with it the Gospel of Barnabas. Our readers will of course know that the Gospel of Barnabas is a late medieval Muslim work. What is really found in the Codex Sinaiticus is the Epistle of Barnabas, written probably in the first century A.D.

### Book Review.

**THE ECLIPSE OF CHRISTIANITY IN ASIA.** (From the time of Muhammad till the 14th century). By Rev. L. E. Browne, of the Henry Martyn School of Islamics, Lahore. Camb. Univ. Press, 200pp., with 2 maps, 10s. 6d. Obtainable in India from Y.M.C.A. Pubg. House, Calcutta, and Punjab Religious Book Socy., Lahore, Rs. 7-14.

The question not infrequently presents itself to the minds of Christians in modern times: How was it that Churches of long standing in North Africa and the Near East suffered practical extinction in the early years of the rise of Islam? Two very different answers are commonly advanced, both of which give the impression of being too facile. The one is heard in uninformed Christian circles where the victorious Muslims are thought to have offered the followers of Christ no alternative but capitulation or decapitation. The other is the explanation of the too-confident Muslim who affirms that Islam is the final truth from God, and so the Christian Church had, of necessity, to be superseded.

That there is, nevertheless, something to be said for both points of view, it is part of the purpose of the book under review to make clear. Undoubtedly there were periods when Christians, just because they were such, were persecuted to the death by their Muslim overlords; and it is no less true, as we now see, that Islam did a positive service to the cause of religion in so far as it was a protest against error in both the faith and the practice of Christians.

But there is much more to be said on this vastly interesting subject, and Mr. Browne has rendered conspicuous service by the light he has thrown on it as the result of his painstaking and scholarly inquiry. By making use of rare sources in Arabic and Latin, as well as the works of orientalisists in French and German, he has made available for the first time in English a brief but comprehensive statement covering the main facts about which we needed more precise information.

The author at the outset lifts the veil for us to witness the deplorable spectacle of Christian factions—Melkite, Nestorian, Jacobite—at war with each other in unseemly doctrinal squabbles. This is something that is fundamental to a right understanding of the problem set us by the too easy Muslim conquest, and we meet with its disastrous and far-reaching consequences again and again in these pages. Differences of view frequently led to persecution and exile, and frankly it is not to be wondered at that whole communities of wretched Christians welcomed the protection (and even the faith) of their Muslim conquerors in preference to merely nominal fellowship with sections of the Church that hated them.

On the other hand, wranglings of this nature were not calculated to commend either the faith or the practice of Christians to Muslims.

The truth is that notwithstanding the efforts of the Nestorians, in particular, to spread Christianity by sending missions to the Turks and the Chinese, the Church as a whole had lost much of its spiritual force and evangelical fervour. It is a striking comment on her lack of foresight that she neglected the opportunity to make the Bible the first book in Arabic. Rather, the monastic ideal of life was so prevalent that Muslims appear to have concluded that Christ was a great ascetic, and that asceticism was of the essence of Christianity. Nor was the widespread veneration of images likely to present the Christians in any better light.

In the field of religious debate miracles were cited by Christians as proof of the truth of their religion, it being openly confessed that "Christianity was incapable of intellectual proof." Small wonder that Muslims took this admission as proof of the falsity of Christianity. The Scriptures, with their prophecies regarding Christ, assumed the place of central importance at the expense of a life of godliness and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was not long, therefore, before the Muslims became busy searching the Bible for predictions concerning Muhammad and in attributing to him all manner of miracles. And the Muslims held the Christians to the discussion of just such subjects as these.

In the matter of social status the position of Christians was fairly tolerable—they were a *melet*, a protected subject people paying the poll-tax—though they often brought trouble on themselves by their factions and intrigues. Occasionally, however, callous Muslim rulers made their lives miserable by the imposition of humiliating conditions.

From their conflict with the Turks at the time of the Crusades the Christians came out badly. Mr. Browne makes it clear that all this mistaken zeal had disastrous results. Already Christ had been misrepresented to Muslims and misunderstood by them, but this so-called holy war was "a complete denial of Christ." In his treatment of the period covered by the Mongol invasions the writer stresses the fact that the idea gained ground among both Christians and Mongols that worldly success (such as attended the Muslim arms) was a mark of Divine favour, and that it was for this reason that hosts of Mongols eventually embraced Islam. But it is surely an overstatement to say, as he does in his concluding summary, that mainly in consequence of the pressure of this idea "it needed no preaching of Islam, or threat of the sword, to turn the allegiance of the Christians." The truth would rather seem to be that a variety of causes contributed to such defection, and that, as these very pages show, the quite natural longing to escape from civil disabilities, persecution and the fear of death at the hands of hostile Christians or powerful Muslims, proved a powerful incentive.

The book is exceptionally well documented and includes a four-page bibliography. The narrative is illuminated by frequent quotations which are conveniently set out in distinctive type.

L. B. J.

## But Why Disciples Fast Not?

FROM time to time Muslims raise the question why Christians do not fast as Muslims do, and they obviously assume as a rule that fasting is unknown amongst Christians. A few tracts dealing with this question have been written, but none are really satisfactory because they do not take account of all the varieties of thought and practice on the subject amongst Christians. A full consideration of the principles behind fasting would include the questions of asceticism, self-denial, almsgiving, temperance and moderation in bodily enjoyments, and obedience to authority; and the effect of all these things not only on the body and soul of the one who practises them, but also on other people; while an account of the actual practice of Christians would include the observance of Lent and other stated fasts such as Good Friday or all Fridays, fasting before receiving Holy Communion, self-denial weeks, private and individual fasting or abstinence in connexion with grief or in connexion with some special object of prayer. It is very good for us all to learn, not only about other people's views, but also about those practices which they find helpful in the spiritual life. For this reason, as well as in order to try to get at the principles behind Christian practice so as to form the background of a tract for Muslims, we invite our readers to give us briefly the principles and practice of fasting as they or their denomination understand it, and we should be glad if such notes could be sent in as soon as possible. By way of starting the Symposium, Fr. Hawker of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta has kindly given us the following note.

### SYMPOSIUM ON FASTING. No. 1.

From very early days the Historic Church has linked fasting with prayer and almsgiving as a normal part of every Christian's life, and made rules about it. All Fridays of the year, and the forty days of Lent, were to be marked by some kind of abstinence; and in addition, Holy Communion, the greater festivals, and the four seasons of the year when ordinations were held, were all to be preceded by fasting. The degree of severity varied. On some days it was enough to abstain from meat (a real privation when modern alternatives were not procurable), but the normal fast day meant one proper meal and two snacks. Special days like Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and often all the Fridays in Lent, were kept by abstinence from all food until midday, 3 p.m., or sunset. In modern times, when all life moves faster, and men require all their strength to do their work, the rules of fasting have been relaxed, and in the plains of India even the Roman Church requires only abstinence from meat (as a reminder) on most of the fast days, and the full fast only about six special days in the year. But this is supplemented by private rules of self-denial in other ways, at least during Lent. Some people suspect all rules and regulations; but fasting is a thing which is specially liable to be forgotten without definite rules, and equally liable to call attention and

give rise to pride unless accepted as a normal thing for everybody and done in simple obedience. If the value of fasting is asked, the Church answers:—

- (a) To express sorrow for one's sins and the sins of the world (compare Joel ii : 12-16 etc.)
- (b) To make the body a better instrument of the spirit, and so of Christ (cp I Cor. ix : 27 etc.)
- (c) To increase one's devotion and spirituality (cp. St. Mark ix : 29). And of course all three things are for love of our Lord.

G. W. HAWKER.

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### News Items.

**I**T appears from a Palestinian newspaper that the date of the new moon is now accepted from the calculations of the Helwan observatory near Cairo, instead of waiting until the moon is actually seen. Shi'a Muslims have always calculated it astronomically, which is an indication of their Iraqi origin, Iraq being the most ancient home of astronomy.

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**Y**EMEN, the Arabian province north of Aden, is coming forward in civilization. About three years ago they issued their first postage stamps. Now they have entered into a treaty with Ibn Sa'ud, and the negotiations were carried on by wireless.

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### Back Numbers of the Moslem World.

**O**WING to the kindness of friends who have seen our requests for back numbers of the *Moslem World*, the Henry Martyn School has now got a complete set from the beginning with the exception of two numbers, those for April, 1915, and January, 1919. We should be extremely grateful if readers who have old numbers would look through them and see if either of these two are among them and let us have them. In this way a complete set of this important quarterly will be available for reference for all students of the Henry Martyn School in Lahore.

The Newman School of Missions, Jerusalem, would also be grateful for the *Moslem World* of October, 1915, to complete their set.

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### Thanksgiving and Prayer.

**T**HANKSGIVING that the way has at last been found to start a Converts' Home in Lahore, and that some part of the cost of the property has already been given or promised. Prayer that the remainder of the money may be quickly raised, and that such arrangements may be made that enquirers and converts may have every spiritual opportunity and a friendly atmosphere in which to live during the difficult period of their new life.

Prayer for the two Christians from Kashgar now in India for training, and for the missionaries and Christians in Kashgar and Yarkand.

That many missionaries, pastors and other Christians may set themselves to the task of caring for Muslim enquirers and teaching them with love and patience.

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### Notice.

The Rev. L. E. Browne is temporarily editing *News and Notes*. Matters of interest to members of the Missionaries to Muslims League, items of news, and requests for prayer and praise, should be addressed to Rev. L. E. Browne, 30, Mozang Road, Lahore, India.

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).

Rev. L. E. Browne,  
30, Mozang Road,  
Lahore,  
India.

