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News and Notes

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The Pilgrimage to Mecca.

AT the time of going to press it is still uncertain whether the Shi'a Imam Yahya of Yaman has been killed or not, but it seems certain that he has been defeated at the hands of Ibn Saud, the ruler of Najd and the Hijaz. This victory of Ibn Saud brings him appreciably nearer his goal of being the ruler of all Arabia.

It is of course well-known that the Islam practised by Ibn Saud is of the most primitive type, and that he is strongly against all sorts of innovations from the veneration of saints' tombs to the use of tobacco. He also set his face, as soon as he was the master of the Hijaz, against the way the pilgrims were fleeced and robbed on their pilgrimage to Mecca.

What result is Ibn Saud's policy having, or likely to have, on the Muslim world as a whole? It must be remembered first that Mecca has never been the real spiritual centre of Islam. In the earliest days Madina was such a centre, but it soon ceased to be so, and its place was taken by other cities where learned Muslims gathered together, such as Basra, Baghdad, Bukhara, Ghazna, Cairo and Constantinople. The importance of Mecca lay in the fact that Muslims from all over the world met there, so that the ideas of one part of the Muslim world were conveyed to other parts. Anyone who has read Snouck Hurgronje's book "Mecca" * will know that, at any rate some few years ago when that book was written, the actual practice of Islam in the holy city had sunk to the lowest depths of degradation. The author describes the moral condition of the city as he saw it when he lived there. It is perhaps not surprising that a

* The original German edition is out of print, and very difficult to obtain. Recently half of it was issued in an English dress, but the translation has been so badly done that in places it is almost unintelligible.

community that lived simply by battenning on the pilgrims should enter into a moral decline. No wonder then that the pilgrimage to Mecca should promote a sense of bigotry and fanatical *adhesion to Islam*, but should not be a means of spiritual uplift.

It is not too *much* to say that pilgrims went to Mecca, not for the pleasure of the trip—it was usually associated with considerable hardships—not to learn more about Islam, not to gain further *inspiration* in the service of God, but simply because it was a duty. The only subsidiary motive which entered in was the distinction that a man got in his own land by being called a *haji*, and in some cases the position of importance that that title gave him. One can therefore understand that the pilgrims generally speaking did not trouble about the low standard of Meccan Islam, but rather took their inspiration from fellow-pilgrims from other lands, who like themselves had faced the difficulties and hardships of the journey in order to fulfil their duty.

The religious outlook of Ibn Saud has not helped to make Mecca a religious centre of Islam, for the simple reason that Islam has developed enormously in the course of the centuries, and the primitive type of Islam which Ibn Saud is trying to enforce could never satisfy people living in more civilized countries.

Further, Ibn Saud's attempts to regulate the charges levied on the pilgrims have failed miserably. Government control has meant that every pilgrim is charged on landing at Jidda a fee of £5; and of the fares paid for camels or cars, two-thirds goes to the Government and one-third to the owners of the transport. The decreasing number of pilgrims, no doubt, means that each individual has to pay a larger share in order to satisfy the needs of the Government and the owners of the transport. The latest imposition, which has caused great annoyance, is a charge of eighteen shillings for the pleasure of drinking the water of the holy well of Zam Zam.

The number of pilgrims since the war has varied very considerably from year to year. The contingents from each country have depended largely on the political conditions of the moment. For instance, the contingent from Egypt was adversely affected by the dispute about the conveyance of the holy carpet from Cairo to Mecca. Economic conditions too have had a great effect, for instance one may assume that the decrease in the pilgrims from Java is not altogether unconnected with the slump in rubber. But the general decrease now has become so marked that one begins to feel that it may be due to a waning of the old orthodoxy. An official telegram from Jidda says that the income from the pilgrims in 1933 was only half that of the previous year, and the prospects for 1934 are no brighter. Reports from various countries indicate that the number of pilgrims in 1934 will hardly be more than twenty to twenty-five thousand; while Java, which generally has supplied about one-third of all the pilgrims, is this year sending not more than a thousand.

The hope of Islam, apart from actual conversion to Christianity, is in spiritual reform in the direction of accepting religious and moral ideas from Christianity. Those who believe in this possibility will not regret the decreased popularity of the pilgrimage, which only supports bigotry and the old dead orthodoxy. But the cutting off of the main source of income of the Hijaz may produce an economic crisis, and political troubles with the surrounding countries. On the other hand, it is probable that if Ibn Saud becomes the ruler of Yaman he will welcome the American help to develop the agricultural resources of the country which Iman Yahya refused. The return to prosperity of what was once known as Arabia Felix may help to solve the economic problems of Ibn Saud.

The Holy One of Israel:

THE distinctive character of the modern study of the Old Testament is that it looks to see a development of religious ideas as time went on. So long as the five books of the Pentateuch were considered to have arisen as a whole as the work of one man it was impossible to trace any development. The composite character of the Pentateuch, first mooted a century and a half ago, and since that time made the subject of the most searching enquiry which has been devoted to any books in the world except the four Gospels, has opened up the Old Testament to us as the record of God's revelation of Himself to Israel over a period of about a thousand years.

In this article it is not proposed to deal with the many aspects of God's revelation to Israel, but only with the development of the doctrine of His unity. It may be that this article will be read by some who are unwilling to accept the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch. Such readers will be unable to agree with the stages of the revelation here set forth, but at any rate they will find themselves in agreement with the statement of the last and highest stage of the Old Testament doctrine of the unity.

For our purpose it is not necessary to go back earlier than the time of Moses. There we see the Children of Israel entering into a solemn covenant with Yahweh that He will be their God and they will be His people. There is no suggestion that He is the only existing God, and even the first of the "Ten Words" only claims Him as the God of Israel: "I am Yahweh, *thy* God. ...Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." It is natural to suppose that during the days of the wanderings in the wilderness the Israelites were not tempted to pay heed to any other deities; for among the semitic tribes generally polytheism only resulted when tribes, each worshipping its own God, dwelt in the same place (as *e.g.*, at Mecca) or coalesced into one (as *e.g.*, in ancient Babylonia). When, however, the Israelites settled in Canaan, their loyalty to Yahweh alone was put to the test. There is

evidence in plenty that they not only believed the local *baalim* of the Canaanites, and the Gods like Chemosh and Molech of surrounding tribes, to be really existing beings, but on occasion worshipped them. The sect of the Rechabites is extremely instructive as to the belief in the *baalim*. The Rechabites, out of loyalty to Yahweh, would not worship the *baalim*, but because they believed that the *baalim* existed and owned the land they would not sow seed or plant vineyards or build houses (Jer. xxxv.). On one occasion it seems as if the Israelites fled in battle for fear of the God of Moab who had been propitiated by the awful sacrifice of the king's son (2 Kings iii. 27). At another time there was a serious danger of the worship of the Tyrian Baal superseding Yahweh-worship. We read of numerous attempts of religious leaders to root out the worship of the *baalim* in the high places; and the story of how Elijah extirpated the worship of the Tyrian Baal is the most dramatic story in the Bible. The scorn poured by Elijah on Baal is significant: the nature of the activities in which he says Baal is engaged are such as to throw discredit upon him, or even to suggest his non-existence—"peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened." It is by the activities of Baal and of Yahweh that their reality must be judged.

The covenant on Mount Sinai had an increasing significance, the more the Israelites of later generations thought of it. Their God was a God who kept His plighted word. He was a God of character and a God of truth. From the earliest times Yahweh was conceived of as having an interest in morals: the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, one of the oldest narratives of the Pentateuch, represents Him as interfering with a foreign people, not on account of any wrong done to His own people, Lot or Abraham, but on account of their evil lives. It is not too much to say that what distinguished the ancient Hebrews from other races was their attempt to combine morality with religion. It was this emphasis on morals which made them worthy to receive the revelations of the prophets, and thus to become the nation fitted above all others to receive the Incarnate Lord. When Amos declared the vengeance of Yahweh on the surrounding nations for their disregard of the dictates of common humanity he was a true successor of the author of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The most significant event in the religious history of Israel was the vision of Isaiah in the temple in the year that king Uzziah died (Isai. vi). The date is important, for in the fifty-second year of Uzziah, one year before his death, Pekah conspired against his master and ascended the throne of the Northern Kingdom, only to be led away captive by the king of Assyria. It was under the gloom of that event, followed quickly by the complete destruction of the Northern Kingdom, and presaging the eventual fate of Judah also, that Isaiah sat when the great revelation came to him. As the world reckoned, Yahweh was being proved to be powerless. His two nations, Israel and Judah, were small and weak, and were already falling a prey to mightier

nations, the worshippers presumably of mightier Gods. It was at that moment, when the logic of hard material facts pointed to the utter feebleness of Yahweh, that Isaiah saw Him high and lifted up, and heard the song which declared that the whole earth was full of His glory. The vision itself told the secret, for the same seraphic voices which spoke of His glory declared His utter holiness. And lest the word 'holiness' should be suspected of having merely its earlier ritualistic amoral meaning, there is the final scene of Isaiah needing to receive atonement for his sins before he could abide in the presence of the All-holy. It was in a line with the old Israelite tradition of Yahweh's faithfulness, and His interest in morality, that Isaiah saw in Him the perfection of holiness. And simultaneously Isaiah saw in Yahweh the uniqueness of the only God. The holiness and the uniqueness of God had blossomed together.

It is rarely that the words of prophets are understood and accepted by their followers. But this two-fold truth was accepted by Israel. The uniqueness of Yahweh, not merely in number but in character, became a national possession of the Jews; and that precious truth held Judah together as a holy nation through the Babylonian captivity, whereas the Northern Israelites, who had not attained to that truth, failed to maintain their identity in their exile in Assyria.

Second Isaiah, writing towards the end of the Babylonian captivity, declared explicitly what lay implicit in the first Isaiah, that the other so-called Gods were non-existent, unable to do good or to do evil, themselves nothing and their works nothing (Isai. xli.23): "Beside me there is no God" (Isai. xlii.6). (Perhaps one ought to warn those unacquainted with Hebrew that the expression "The Holy One of Israel," though used constantly and appropriately for the only God, does not in itself contain a statement of the unity, the word 'one' being only an addition in the English).

It is a striking fact that, in spite of their failure in many respects to rise to their spiritual opportunities, the Jews never wavered in their belief in the unity and the holiness of God. The coupling of these two thoughts together as complementary parts of one whole is called "ethical monotheism." It differs as much from the barren monotheism of Islam as a living tree from a dead one. In ethical monotheism lay the germ which developed into Christian monotheism.

Spiritual Experiences.

A MUSLIM enquirer now under instruction was in the habit of attending church services regularly, and one day was present at the Holy Communion, and, not knowing the rules, followed the others up to the altar rails and received the Communion. He had a very real experience of the presence of God, which decided him finally

that day to become a Christian. Apparently he had not been given any instruction about the Holy Communion up to that time, and had not been led to expect any such experience of the presence of God.

Telling this story to a friend, we were told the following; some years ago a Brahman enquirer asked if he might receive Communion. According to the rules of the church which he was attending there was no obstacle to anyone who professed to love the Lord Jesus. Consequently he was given permission, although not yet baptised. As he knelt at the rail he felt himself forced to the great decision, so he opened his shirt and tore off his sacred thread, and then held out his hands to receive the Communion.

We should be very glad to hear from our readers of any such unique spiritual experiences of converts.

Another kind of news which we would welcome from our readers is about new types of difficulty or objection raised by enquirers. It would be interesting at the same time to know what answer was given, and whether it satisfied the enquirer: but the main thing is to know the new kinds of difficulty that are emerging, so that we may be prepared for them.

Symposium on Fasting.

No. 5.

BY THE LATE REV. I. W. CHARLTON.

(The problem of fasting being a part of the wider question of asceticism we make no apology for including in our symposium the following extract from a letter to a missionary in the Nadia District of Bengal, which has appeared in the *Calcutta Diocesan Record*.—*Editor*).

“**O**UR chief difficulty in starting a Brotherhood in Nadia will always be the sacredness of the ‘family’ tie in the Bengali conscience. This obligation to the family is a far stronger thing than their admiration of asceticism. I believe I fairly combed out Nadia in my search for volunteers for some sort of preaching Friars, but the answer was *always* the same—they were ready to deny themselves but *not* at the expense of dependent relations—everyone wanted an allowance for the young brother’s education or sister’s school fees or the finance of the homestead, etc., etc. And the chief reason why the people at large did not appreciate poor old M.’s example was, I believe, because his asceticism did not seem to lead to anything and left his old parents, etc., impoverished. Asceticism for asceticism’s sake will not accomplish anything, and does not seem to have the backing of Christianity. You will have to try to present your ‘Asram’ as necessary for the accomplishment of something which could not otherwise have been done! That’s the difficulty!”

Book Review.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ARABIC QURAN, by Dr. F. H. Foster of Oberlin, U.S.A. Published by S.P.C.K., London.

May I call attention to this valuable little book? In my books *The Teaching of the Quran*, and *Selections from the Quran*, I endeavoured to give an outline view of Quranic theology with classified references, as a corrective to the Neo-muslim idealisation of the Prophet and his book, in a form suitable for English reading students. Dr. Foster has now provided an exposition of this fundamental subject for the Arabic reading student, selecting the main ideas and terms of the Quran for analysis and comparison on the basis of the Arabic roots, so as to trace the development of the mind of Muhammad from within. In doing this Dr. Foster follows the stages of development outlined by Noeldeke and accepted by Sell in his *Historical Development of the Quran*. Of course there are points on which the student may differ from Dr. Foster's interpretations. For instance, in the title *rabbul alamin*, *rabb* is rightly emphasised as meaning 'Lord,' not 'Nourisher' as pretended by Ahmadiyya expositors; but *alamin* is not noticed as implying a claim to be Allah's messenger for all mankind. Or again, in a lucid discussion of the claim of the Quran to literary pre-eminence, the fact is not brought out that this could only be made by Muhammad on a basis of crass ignorance of previous Scriptures, and that it could only be built into the structure of Muslim theology by a persistent and colossal ignorance of the Hebrew and Greek languages and the Scriptures written in them. Similarly, in considering the ethics of the Quran, a clear and impartial view is given of its strength and weakness, but the point is omitted that all along the line, where the progress from Old to New Testament is evident, the movement from New Testament to Quranic ethics is that of retrogression. However, Dr. Foster is not writing to lay down paragraphs in a text-book, but to promote research and understanding; and I know of no manual which does it better in so small a space.

H. U. WEITBRECHT STANTON.

We are glad to give advance notice of a new book by Dr. S. M. Zwemer, entitled *Thinking Missions with Christ*. It is to be published at \$ 1.00 by the Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., U.S.A.

Postscript.

Later telegrams show that the report of the death of Imam Yahya of Yaman was false. Since the first article in this number was written the following particulars of the pilgrims to Mecca this year have been received. The numbers were as follows: Indians, 9,815;

Egyptians, 4,170; Javanese, 3,188; Syrians, 2,316; Algerians, 1,915; Sudanese, 1,322; Aden, 450; East Africa, 163; total, 23,339. The term "Javanese" includes not only Java, but also other parts of the East Indies, especially the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, which partly accounts for the discrepancy between the number given here and the forecast of 1,000 from Java. It is noteworthy that there is no mention of any pilgrims from Turkey.

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).

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