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## News and Notes

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

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1st January = 5th Shawwal (10th mo.) 1355.

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### **A New Year's Greeting.**

**T**O all the members of the Missionaries to Muslims League your Secretary sends greeting and the best of good wishes for the coming year. May God prosper your work and give you great joy in it. May this year be one to be remembered with gratitude as a year when God made the crooked places straight, gave power to meet all difficulty, shewed the might of His love in winning men to Himself and deepened our faith in His purpose to redeem the world.

On behalf of all members your Secretary sends messages of love to Canon Goldsmith our aged President, to Rev. John Takle who was the first Secretary of the League, now in retirement in New Zealand, and to all former Secretaries and the Rev. Dr. Zwemer who was one of the prime movers in the inauguration of the League after the Lucknow Conference.

We remember also the Friends of Moslems of China, the League which we regard as a healthy child of our own League. For these and all our friends we offer prayer to God that they may prosper in all things.

With the New Year we set our hands anew to the task to which God has called us and we renew our pledge to keep the bond of our unity in Christian love and fellowship by prayer.

In the earlier days of the League it was the practice to remember the League and its members at the Throne of Grace every Monday morning. We would stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

We offer our thanks once more to Mr. S. F. Robinson, the Superintendent of the Orissa Mission Press for his unostentatious service without which the difficulties of maintaining the League would be greatly enhanced.

J. W. SWEETMAN.

## The Echo of a Controversy.

IF our members who keep their old copies of *News and Notes* will refer to the January number of this bulletin for last year, they will find an article on *Christian Literature and the Character of Muhammad*. This article would leave no doubt in the minds of readers, that we regard it as eminently undesirable that, in the course of our missionary propagandæ, we should use literature which is calculated to wound the susceptibilities of those whom we address and especially is this to be observed in respect to the character of Muhammad. If we desire to win a man to our way of thinking, it is, to say the least bad policy to start by knocking him down. If our method is, constructive rather than destructive, and we show what Christ is, and are true witnesses to Christ in our lives, the Muslim himself will draw the comparison which we wish him to draw. There are signs that this is already being done. Let us make a comparison for ourselves between the picture which is given of Muhammad in the traditions and the articles which are now appearing from the pens of Muslim apologists. What we find is this. There is gradually growing up in Islam a new conception of what a true prophet of God ought to be. The early Islamic writers evidently regarded the prophet as a man to whom ordinary rules did not apply. He had a special rank which entitled him to a certain measure of freedom. Within the bounds of the dispensation committed to him he was without blemish. By the order of God he was not as other men and was even exempted from the laws which he was called to enunciate for other men. The ordinary Muslim might have four wives but the prophet might have more. This point of view has not entirely disappeared but there is far more appreciation of the idea that morality, to be really morality, must be of universal application and that no man can be really exempted from what the consensus of opinion regards as the moral law. What we look for is the deepening of this conception. If this conception is deepened it will be fruitful in many directions. One way in which it will work is in establishing the conviction that there cannot be a double standard for men and women and that a code which gives a man the right to have four wives and withholds the right of a woman to have four husbands can never be the expression of a universal law of right. The growing realisation that a prophet has no exemption is bound up in a yet half-conscious admission of the universal moral law. And who has become the type and expositor of moral perfection? Without doubt our Lord Jesus Christ has, though not yet admittedly. It is the Christian criterion which is at work in the new views of what a prophet of God ought to be. An *a priori* assumption can be observed in modern Islamic apologetics which has its ground in the Christian ideal. Even the attacks which have been made from some quarters on the character of our Lord and Saviour, and on the behaviour of Christians generally or militarist Christendom in particular are all based ultimately on a moral standard derived from Christ Himself.

In a recent number of these notes we referred to an article by the Editor of the *Nigar* of Lucknow in which the modern disgust with the early traditions concerning Muhammed is expressed. Now we have before us the book by Nazir Ahmad which gives us food for thought.

*Ummahat ul Umma* came to be written in the following way. A challenge was issued by Muslims offering a reward to anyone who could shew from the trustworthy traditions that the character of Muhammad was other than it ought to be. This challenge was taken up by one Akbar Masih, a Unitarian. He published a book using another's name and called *Ummahat ul Mu'minin*. This book consisted of quotations from the trustworthy traditions. Nothing was included which could be regarded as of dubious authority and the compiler made little comment. A great stir was made. Indignation meetings were held in many places but nothing could be done. To have had the book proscribed by order of the court would have been to condemn the traditions but this course was ultimately taken. Sir Syed Ahmad wrote a reply but this was not regarded as acceptable. Then Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, who was a superb writer of Urdu prose, took a reply in hand. This reply was the book we now have before us *Ummahat ul Umma*. But instead of being received with applause, the disapprobation with which this book was received exceeded even that roused by the book to which it was meant as a reply. Pressure was brought to bear upon the author and a *fatwa* pronounced upon him; his book was burned in public and was forthwith withdrawn from publication. One of the gentlemen who writes an introduction to the present edition exclaims at this intolerance. He says he had been taught that the charge of burning the library at Alexandria which was brought against the Muslim conquerors of Egypt, was a fabrication by Christians, and that in reality Islam had always been tolerant, but this act of burning Nazir Ahmad's book had made him think that the former charge might be true.

Now after a quarter of a century the grandson of Nazir Ahmad has had the temerity to republish the book which roused such controversy, but its accessibility to the public has again been banned but this time without the furore of the former occasion. The publisher's object has evidently been to clear the name of his grandfather. He has thought that the former banning was due to the temporary sensitiveness of his community due to the attack by Akbar Masih and that perhaps he could, now that the heat of the controversy had cooled, safely leave *Ummahat ul Umma* to the judgment of his contemporaries.

And at the first glance it was difficult for us to see what it was that had aroused the ire of opponents when the book was first published. Except for a strange phrase, to which however objection does not seem to have been raised, namely, "*Ummahat ul mu'minin ki sari khwahishen paighambar sahib ki shar'i hambistari ke age*

*maghlub thin*” and which struck us as being somewhat objectionable, there was nothing much more in the book than a retelling in popular language of the facts already narrated in the traditions and the standard histories.

What was regarded as objectionable was, however, made quite clear in the appendix to the book which consists of a number of objections contained in a book called *Kashf ul Ghamihi* and the replies thereto by the author of *Ahsan ul Tafasir*.

The criticisms which are here expressed are in a very bitter tone and the writer more than once states that Nazir Ahmad has cut himself off from Islam. The main objection made is to the colloquial language used by Nazir Ahmad.

First the critic draws attention to the fact that the author of *Ummahat ul Umma* when referring to Muhammad says simply “*Paighambar Sahib*” without any other title of respect or the usual invocation of blessings. In reply to this it is said that because the book was a reply to a “*Padri Sahib*” only such terms were used as would be acceptable to him whereas he might have taken exception to the usual formula. This strikes us as rather a lame excuse, and we are sure that the main tendency in Christian literature is to err on the side of conformity to Muslim usage. We have seen a book in which, whenever the names of Muhammad or of the persons whom the Muslims esteem as prophets were mentioned, the sign for the reading of an ejaculatory prayer was written above them and in the rest of the text St. Paul was plain Paul, St. John plain John, and even our Lord was simply Jesus. This is carrying things to an extreme and whenever we feel called upon to use any of the conventional expressions after the name of Muhammad, we should be careful that terms of respect in accord with Christian usage should be given to our Lord and the apostles.

One of the objections still raised to Nazir Ahmad's translation of the Quran is that it is too colloquial. Thus it is not surprising that here too the charge is made, and the author has to be defended in his choice of Urdu idioms. An instance is given here. Nazir Ahmad says “If Khadija had lived, the constraint of her service would have been such that the occasion for polygamy would never have arisen. And in comparison with her an Ayesha or even a hundred Ayeshas would have counted for nothing.” The last words of this are *dal nahin galli*, an idiom of which Nazir Ahmad was very fond as may be seen from other books of his. This is, says the objector, going out of the way to depreciate one of the holy mothers. The author of *Ummahat ul Umma* supports his answer to this objection with quotations from the traditions and from Ayesha herself shewing in what esteem Muhammad held Khadija. Another instance of the use of an idiom which was displeasing is “*Fatima ser ki thin aur Ayesha sawa ser hi*” because this is reminiscent of the rivalry of bidding one against the other. Nazir Ahmad also ascribes *ghamand* to 'Ali and use

*triyā charitr* (woman's wiles) with regard to the conduct of Fatima and Ayesha. This latter, the critic says, is pure abuse and there is no doubt that there is a use of this term which would imply much more than Nazir Ahmad meant. We cannot help feeling however that the critic is not so much disturbed by the terms used as by the fact that the intrigues round about the prophet, the quarrel between Fatima and Abu Bakr, and the jealousy between Fatima and Ayesha are clearly narrated by Nazir Ahmad. It is indeed a most unedifying picture. "How" laments the critic, "could it have been possible for those who had come under the influence of the prophet and had the honour of his intimacy, even his wife and his daughter, to behave in the way suggested by the plain blunt speech of Nazir Ahmad?" These are not his actual words but this is the substance of his objection. But alas for the objector, assumptions as to what *ought* to have been have to give place to the stern facts of history, and the author of *Ahsan ul Tafasir* justifies the statements with respect to the schemes of Fatima and Ayesha by appeal to al Bukhari and Muslim. The jealousy of Ayesha and Hafsa which was aroused by Zainab's (?) company being preferred by the prophet is also confirmed by appeal to the traditions and to the Surah 66, though we had always thought that the one whose company was preferred was Mary the Coptic slave.

There is no use in making further references to this sort of thing. The point we wish to emphasise is that again and again in reply to objections it is pointed out that the writer has only repeated the stories found in the traditions. He has not added anything himself and in one place he says that to object to what he has said is to condemn the traditions which are universally accepted in Islam. What Nazir Ahmad did not see was that *unless the traditions are scrapped it is absolutely impossible to rehabilitate Muhammad in the eyes of those whose moral sense has been developed and influenced by Christian truth.* No idealised picture of the home of the prophet and the circle about him is possible with the material which has been regarded as authoritative in Islam until quite recent times. Two possibilities are open to Muslim apologetics: to reject utterly the new system of moral values which is due to the heaven of Christianity, and to forsake the Christ-ideal for the ideal of the Superman, or to jettison the whole bundle of extra-Quranic information about Muhammad and compose an imaginative picture from the scanty materials in the Quran. The quarrel of 'Ali and Abu Bakr and the refusal of the latter to let Fatima have her inheritance as narrated in the *Ummahat al Umma* does not present to us a picture of a community into which a new moral and spiritual power had come through the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad, but rather of a community rent by strife and envy and grasping after political prizes, and even in the very hour of the Prophet's death-sickness quarrelling over the succession and thwarting him in his desire to leave a written testament. We can imagine Muhammad echoing David's words "These Sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me."

Here then in *Ummahat-ul-Umma* we have a *Muslim* document. The work of Akbar Masih which was the occasion of it we have never seen but, as we have stated, that was simply a repetition of what had been found in the traditions. In view of this fact and after a review of all the circumstances in respect to this publication, we come to the conclusion that we can leave the question of the character of Muhammad and his influence on his immediate circle to critics within the Muslim community. We would at the same time point out that if garbled accounts of what the traditions contain are given, and if they are claimed as a source for our knowledge of the life and character of Muhammad, there is no equity in forbidding a Christian to refer to, or quote from the traditions.

J. W. S.

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### "The Quranic Heaven."

**U**NDER this title there appears a letter in the *Light* in which the writer objects to the *Epiphany* for not accepting the possibility that the Quranic references to heaven are simply an allegory. He quotes Matthew 19: 29 and says "This clearly shews that the Christian Paradise is not free from "entirely sensual delights"; for those who renounced a single wife here will get a hundred wives." We had occasion to point out some time ago that a passage like this occurs in *Ihya-ul-'Ulum* by Al Ghazali and Jerome mentions this childish idea in his comment on the passage. In addition the writer of this letter refers to the passage in Rev. 21: 9, which contains the words "the Lamb's wife." He concludes his letter by saying these words were used in a spiritual sense and asks why this cannot apply to similar verses in the Quran. The reply is very easy. Christianity has never interpreted these in the literal sense as far as we know, but the standard commentators on the passages in the Quran have with one accord adopted a literal interpretation, and have even gone beyond what the Quran says and in the traditions have put explanations in the mouth of Muhammad which could not be interpreted in anything else but a literal sense. We quote the following from Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*.

"Were proof needed, to show that the prophet taught a real and literal interpretation of the sensual delights of the abodes of bliss, a tradition of high authority is found in the *Sahih Muslim* (p. 379) *vide also Mishkat*, book xxv, ch. 13, in which the prophet goes to some trouble to explain the sanitary laws of the heavenly kingdom, in the most literal manner possible."

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## Enquiries.

**D**OES anyone know of a man and his wife who would be prepared to work in the South, the man to be in charge of a book-room and the wife to do zanana work? If so will they please communicate with the editor? From time to time such enquiries come to us and if the editor has information of men or women who might be employed it is possible that he might be able to put them in touch with those who have openings for workers.

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It is well-known that the change of religion by either a man or a woman is in Muslim law a ground for the nullification of marriage but it is not clear whether such a nullification takes place *ipso facto* or whether the aggrieved husband or wife has to take steps to obtain divorce, or make a declaration before a Qazi, or, if he does not want the marriage to be annulled, whether the husband can retain his hold on his wife if she becomes a Christian. Can anyone enlighten us on this matter? A case has arisen where it seems that the husband is taking just this attitude while he is not prepared to allow his wife to practise or profess her religion. We have also heard that it is not an unknown thing for a woman to seek baptism in order that she might be divorced when all other means have failed her. This, if it is true, would mean that she is *ipso facto* divorced on changing her religion.

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## Praise and Prayer.

*Lord God, our day is short, and our desire to do good so strong, that we would fain, before we go to our fathers, gather the harvest before the seed we have sown has had time to grow. The more we desire good and hate evil, the more we ourselves pass out of darkness, the more we wish, by some quick change, the world should be made good, and the Kingdom of God should come. We vex ourselves with the unrighteousness of the world, and, like children, wonder that the seeds come not up more quickly. . . . Teach us how patient Thou art. Teach us that in better times the Spirit of God shall be more fully manifest. Teach us in all things to trust Thy mercy which endureth for ever.—G. DAWSON.*

LET US THANK God for restored order in Lahore and pray that the present bitter communal feeling may give place to a better spirit.

LET US PRAY that the time may come when this land shall know the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

LET US PRAY for the Spirit of Love in the Church, that we being all constrained by the Love of Christ may be the bearers of a Gospel the seal of whose truth is on our own lives.

LET US PRAY not that God should make our tasks easy but that He should give us strength for hard tasks.

LET US PRAY for the God's guidance in the arrangements which are being made for the Henry Martyn School's extension work next year.

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### NEW MEMBER.

Rev. A. G. Shorrocks

Twickenham, England.

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### NOTICE.

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. 0d.)

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. J. W. Sweetman,  
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5, Egerton Road,  
Lahore, Panjab, India.





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