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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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Series XXIV.

March, 1936.

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1st March = 6th Dhu'l-Hijja 1353.

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### The Character we Attribute to God.

How frequently do we feel that the urgent talk confronting us is to lift God's character out of the category in which Islam has placed it—in other words to lead them to know Him and love Him and trust Him in and through Our Lord Jesus Christ. As it is, their attitude of mind is often enough precisely that which George Adam Smith (on Isa., ch. 7) ascribes to the fatalist,

**I**SAIAH, though advocating so absolutely a quiescent belief in God, *is no fatalist*. Now other prophets there have been, insisting just as absolutely as Isaiah upon resignation to God the supreme, and the evident practical effect of their doctrine of the Divine sovereignty has been to make their followers, not shrewd political observers, but blind and apathetic fatalists. The difference between them and Isaiah has lain in the kind of character, which they and he have respectively attributed to the Deity, before exalting Him to the throne of absolute power and resigning themselves to His will. Isaiah, though as disciplined a believer in God's sovereignty and man's duty of obedience as any prophet that ever preached these doctrines, was preserved from the fatalism to which they so often lead by the conviction he had previously received of God's righteousness. Fatalism means resignation to fate, and fate means an omnipotence either without character, or (which is the same thing) of whose character we are ignorant. Fate is God *minus* character, and fatalism is the characterless condition to which belief in such a God reduces man. History presents it to our view amid the most diverse surroundings. The Greek mind, so free and sunny, was bewildered and benumbed by belief in an inscrutable Nemesis. In the East how frequently is a temper of apathy or despair bred in men, to whom God is nothing but a despot! Even within Christianity we have had fanatics, so inordinately possessed with belief in God's sovereignty of election to the exclusion of all Divine truths, as to profess themselves, with impious audacity, willing to be damned for His glory. Such instances are enough to prove to us the extreme danger of making the sovereignty

of God the *first* article of our creed. It is not safe for men to exalt a deity to the throne of the supreme providence, till they are certified of His character. The vision of mere power intoxicates and brutalises, no less when it is hallowed by the name of religion, than when, as in modern materialism, it is blindly interpreted as physical force. Only the people who have first learned to know their Deity intimately in the private matters of life, where heart touches heart, and the delicate arguments of conscience are not overborne by the presence of vast natural forces or the intricate movements of the world's history, can be trusted afterwards to enter these larger theatres of religion, without risk of losing their faith, their sensibility or their conscience.

The whole course of revelation has been bent upon this: to render men familiarly and experimentally acquainted with the character of God, before laying upon them the duty of homage to his creative power or submission to His will. In the Old Testament God is the Friend, the Guide, the Redeemer of men, or ever He is their Monarch and Lawgiver.

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Under the New Testament this also is the method of revelation. What our King desires before He ascends the throne of the world is that the world should know Him; and so He comes down among us to be heard, and seen, and handled of us, that our hearts may learn His heart and know His love, unbewildered by His majesty. And for our part, when we ascribe to our King the glory and dominion, it is as unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood. For the chief thing for individuals, as for nations, is not to believe that God, reigneth so much as to know what kind of God He is who reigneth.

(G. A. Smith, *Isaiah I. pp. 110f, Expositors Bible*).

## In the Valley of Decision.

### An Appeal for Prayer for the Depressed Classes.

**A**LL our Christian friends are aware that within the last few weeks, Dr. Ambedkar, the recognised leader of the depressed classes in India and their representative at the Round Table Conference, startled the whole country by urging these people to forsake Hinduism and embrace some other religion in which they would be permitted to exist on a basis of equality and fraternity. In the interval these so-called 'Harijans' have held several Conferences and have received invitations from leaders of other faiths, notably ISLAM—no definite step has yet been taken.

Preparations are now being made for an All-India Conference, comprising representatives (some thousands in number) of the entire outcastes community, to be held at Lucknow. Spokesmen of other religions are to be invited to state their case before the assembly. After discussion among themselves, the gathering is to make a most momentous decision. It is probably safe to say that a majority of the fifty millions will follow the lead given to them on that day.

This is an occasion fraught with immense possibilities—the very magnitude of it staggers the mind—“multitudes, *multitudes* in the valley of decision”. Is this the dawn of a ‘Day of the Lord’?

In any case, we write under a sense of Divine constraint to urge upon all who read this intimation to give themselves to most earnest prayer, for:—

- (1) the chosen Indian Christian who is to plead the cause of Christ on that day;
- (2) those who are to be associated with him in preparation for that day;
- (3) Dr. Ambedkar himself; and the Chairman and Secretary of the Conference;
- (4) the masses, that they may see the supreme issue to be spiritual, not political;
- (5) the entire church of Christ in India—that the Spirit of God may impart new life to her at this time.

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### **A Harijan to his Muslim Friend.**

**F**ROM the press we learn that Islam is making a bid to gain the depressed classes. Appeals for men and money have gone out to enable missionary work to be done. The brotherhood in Islam is being advanced as an incentive for them to embrace that religion and in some cases a contrast is being pointed out between the colour prejudice shewn in Europe and the absence of such prejudice in Islam. With these facts in mind we have put together a few simple questions which suggest themselves as appropriate as from an enquiring member of the depressed classes.

You offer us brotherhood. What is this brotherhood you offer? Is it based on believe in a common human brotherhood? Do you not offer me brotherhood *if* I accept your faith and enmity if I do not? If I have misunderstood, will you explain to me the communal strife in Lahore and other places and the terrible experiences through which many of us went at the time of the Moplah rising? You say the Christian brotherhood is not so good as yours but we have not found the Christians engaged in communal strife in India. While we remained Harijans we have been helped in education and at times of famine by Christians. If I became a Muslim would I be involved in communal strife? I need a time of peace and quiet so that I may better my state.

You would have us become one in religion with you. Should we therefore have to pray in Arabic? We are simple men and the learning of these difficult prayers would be a great trouble to some of us and when we had learned, would this satisfy our hearts? Perhaps you would try to teach this great mass of fifty millions. Could you do it? And have you done it for the millions who have in the

time of the Muslim rule become Muslims? It is a long time since these became Muslims but we have Muslim neighbours who do not know the prayers and is it not true that of the great religions of India, Islam has the greatest proportion of illiterates?

The name of Father is a beautiful one and you would forbid us to use it for God. It would be a pity if we could not use it. We understand what it means but we would have some difficulty in understanding your Arabic names for God.

Our women have been free and we are poor. They have helped us in the fields. Some of them love the free open-air life. Some of you say that we should shut up our women in seclusion. Would this be a good thing for them or for us men?

You have been in India a very long time. Have you opened schools to help us in education? Many of us owe our education to Christian mission schools. When we have been ill the hospitals we have attended have been Government or Christian. A Christian government has acknowledged our political rights. The midwives who come to help our *dais* are Christians. Is not this better than putting women into purdah?

You tell us you have a new way and a new law. We have old laws and old ways and many of them we would like to change. But custom is strong and old habits are not easily changed. What power can you offer us so that we may change our ways?

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### Books for Enquirers.

We give herewith a list of books which have been found useful for enquirers who can read English.

**Patterson Smyth** : People's Life of Christ

**Maltby** : The Significance of Jesus.

**Russell** : For Sinners Only.

#### **Epworth Press Publications :**

1. *Manuals of Fellowship* : The Forgiveness of Sins,  
The Christian Way of Life,  
They shall see God.
2. *Watchwords of Methodism* : Salvation by Faith,  
Discipleship,  
The New Birth.
3. *Fellowship of the Kingdom* : Coming to Christ in Modern  
Days,  
The Presence of Jesus,  
The Cross of Jesus.

(These three series are short pamphlets and are very useful when it is not practicable to lend bigger and more costly books).

- Fosdick** : The Meaning of Prayer.  
**Gray** : The Christian Adventure.  
**Gray** : Finding God.  
**Kagawa** : Jesus and Religion.  
**A Kempis** : The Imitation of Christ.  
**Augustine** : Confessions.  
**Mott** : The Secret Prayer Life.  
**Robinson** : St. Mark.  
**Micklem** : The Galilean.  
**Gordon** : Quiet Talks on Prayer,  
 Quiet Talks on Power.  
**Drummond** : Greatest Thing in the World.  
**Weatherhead** : Jesus and Ourselves,  
 The Transforming Friendship.  
**The Best Friend.**  
**Gairdner and Padwick** : Book of Instruction for Catechumens.  
**Mackintosh** : Person of Jesus Christ.  
**Welsh, R. E.** : In Relief of Doubt.  
**Robinson, C. H.** : Studies in the Character of Christ,  
**Jeremy Taylor** : Holy Living.

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### Notes.

*It is good to know* that extensive use is being made of the *B.M.S. Series Tracts for Women* and the *Henry Martyn School Papers*, a series of Tracts for thoughtful Muslim Readers. We know that the *Tracts for Women* are now to be had in Arabic (in Syria), Urdu, Bengali, Telugu. Likewise requests have been received for them from as far afield as Morocco and for the *Henry Martyn School Papers* from Persia. Requests have been made for the translation of the latter into Malay and Malayalam. A friend writes to say that she finds the *Tracts for Women* "just fine", especially the one "*God has no Partner.*"

Of the Bengali rhymed version of "*Praise be to God*" another of the tracts for women, a worker writes, "Praise be to God for the tract '*Praise be to God!*' It has solved my problem of memory work in schools. Why didn't we think of it twenty-five years ago? Answers to catechism questions must be drawn out by the teacher. Memory texts result in a disconnected collection. How are the children to repeat them when there is no one to wind them up? This tract is a *self-starter!* Once memorised, the record will revolve in the pupil's mind when no teacher is there. I find that even little tots are picking it up from the older ones . . . By a process of selection and omission it can be adapted to all sorts and sizes."

### Christian and Muslim Ethics.

"**O**F Muhammadanism it may still more unequivocally be said that it is founded upon a doctrine of inequality. It is, indeed, universalistic inasmuch as it recognises no distinctions of race, and has abolished such distinctions in practice more completely than is unfortunately the case with large numbers of professing Christians. But it does not recognise the duty of brotherhood towards men of all creeds. The Koran requires idolaters to be slain, and the Mussulman to be treated as intrinsically the superior of Jew or of Christian. That doctrine of Intolerance which was only introduced into Christianity by malign influence of St. Augustine, is included in the original and fundamental title deeds of Muhammadanism. That religion recognises a limited polygamy and an unlimited concubinage. It proclaims the essential and enormous inferiority of women. It avowedly bases morality upon the arbitrary will of God. And the plenary inspiration which the Koran claims for itself creates a serious and probably insurmountable obstacle to any development of the Religion which shall practically emancipate it from these limitations. It is inconceivable that any man who really believes in the essential principles of Christian morality should regard it as a matter of indifference to a people or to an individual whether they accept the morality of the New Testament or that of the Koran. Expressions of sentimental sympathy with Muhammadanism generally come from people who do not seriously profess to accept the most characteristic elements of Christian morality. Anti-religious writers have, for instance, sometimes represented Mahammadanism as the least objectionable of all religions precisely on account of its indulgence to human frailty in the matter of sexual relations: while those who look at Religion chiefly from a political point of view often regard Muhammadan missions with more favour than Christian just because they avowedly treat Muhammadanism as an inferior religion suitable for inferior races, and one useful to their rulers on account of the support which it affords to arbitrary and anti-democratic systems of government." H. RASHDALL, *Conscience and Christ* pp.259ff.

### A Muslim Woman who became a Christian.

**M**Y home was in the South of India and I belonged to a Sunni family. I was brought up strictly to observe every religious duty. I was devout, prayed five times a day, observed the fast, gave alms and served my husband faithfully. In spite of living according to the Muhammadan idea of what a Muslim woman should be, I felt a strange unrest of mind and wondered how I could attain peace.

Someone had given my father a Bible. He had read a good deal of it and I came to know some time afterwards that he had been convinced of its truth as he read, but dare not make open confession and so remained outwardly a Muslim.

There was one religious duty I had not performed and I thought that when I had fulfilled that, perhaps my mind would be at rest. I spoke to my father about my wish to make the pilgrimage and urged him to take me, but to my astonishment, although he could easily have done so, he dissuaded me saying it would be waste of time and money and I should get no benefit. Holding out his Bible he said, "Daughter read this, here is comfort for you." So I began to read the Bible with him, but secretly, and there were many things written there which my father said he could not explain. Yet we continued to read it together when he had opportunity and one night when I retired to rest, feeling unusually troubled, I rose and prayed, "O God, I believe in you, show me the true way and I will walk in it." After that I felt a little comforted.

Of material things I had all I needed, a good home and a very easy life, good food, a kind husband and children but I was not really happy for I was in distress as to whether God would grant salvation to me a woman because the Muslim is very uncertain whether a woman will be acceptable to Allah. The Muslim man is certain of salvation if he follows the prophet but not the Muslim woman.

So at last I summoned up courage to tell my husband that I was most unhappy, that I wished to leave him and search for salvation, for I felt I must have some certainty about it. He was naturally astonished, especially when I suggested I should leave him and find another wife for him, if he would only permit it. At first he demurred. I could see he was troubled and I dared not tell of my Bible reading and that I want to know more about it. Though he would not hear of my leaving him, I did not give up hope, and in the meantime I found another wife for him, and, he seeing how unhappy I was, agreed to marry her.

The opportunity to leave him came when my mother took ill. He gave his permission. It was a long journey and I travelled in a closed conveyance. When I arrived they told me she had died of plague and had been buried at once. My father too had left home and no one seemed to know where he had gone. A few days afterwards he sent me a message to say he had gone to see the missionary who had given him the Bible, and that he wanted me to come to him at the first opportunity.

Though I wanted to set off at once I was afraid of my eldest brother who would have sent me back to my husband. I waited and said nothing, thinking that if I could only get to my father I would be able to read more of the Book. One day my eldest brother left the house to attend the court and knowing he would be away for perhaps the whole day, I left the house with a younger brother's aid and came to my father. It was not known where I was for some time and I stayed with him and we read the Bible together. I looked after his house and his food. He was at heart a follower of Jesus but dare not yet avow himself a Christian but he allowed the missionary to come and teach me. I too was near to accepting Christ when something happened which put me off for a while.

The missionary asked me one day if I would help her in teaching a class of little Hindu girls to read. Although I was willing to teach, I was not willing to teach children of the Chamar caste and I shrank from having anything to do with low caste Hindus. I said to my teacher; "I have come so far, and left my husband to find salvation and you have helped and taught me much, and now you ask me to teach low caste children."

She was testing me though I did not know it, but after some time and some more persuasion I agreed to teach the children.

At this time I made open confession and was baptised. They wanted me to be baptised too but I had heard that Christians were obliged to eat the flesh of swine. The thought of that was hateful and so I hesitated, though I was quite ready to accept Christ. I thought matters over and decided that now I knew more of the Christian faith I would go back home to my husband and teach them now that I had peace in my heart. How little did I realise how impossible it would be to be a Christian and remain in my husband's house. I little realised the persecution I would have to undergo had I been allowed to return. I realised it all afterwards when at last I agreed to be baptised and the fact became known to my people. They were very angry and surrounded the house so that I had to be sent away secretly to some other Christians who taught more about my new faith. Eventually I was sent to the North of India where I began to teach the Muslim women in the Zanas.

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### NOTICE.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members 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. od.)

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,  
Henry Martyn School,  
5, Egerton Road,  
Lahore, Panjab, India.

