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## News and Notes

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### Present-day Trends in the World of Islam.

THE collapse of the caliphate and the failure of all attempts to revive it would lead the superficial observer to conclude that Pan-Islamism is dead. The policy of the new government in Turkey and the complete secularization of the republic points in the same direction. The Turkish press utters severe judgment on Islam and its Prophet, while one by one the old sanctions and customs of religion are publicly discarded. A few years ago a British official of high standing actually wrote to me: "Islam as we once knew it is dead in Turkey, it is dying in Persia, it has ceased to carry real weight in Egypt, it may survive some generations in Arabia, but the basic truths of Christianity will in the long run even there prevail." Such judgment may be prophetic but it is undoubtedly premature. There are at least three centres to-day that keep alive the pan-islamic idea and are active as never before in defending and propagating the Moslem faith—Mecca, Cairo and Lahore.

Arabia under the able leadership of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saood may not covet the caliphate, but is the fulcrum of agitation for uniting all the Arabic-speaking states of the Near East. The whole peninsula is being rapidly modernized. The camel has had his day. Usages of almost sacrosanct significance are being put aside. In the Kaaba court electric light has been installed, and the men who tended the hundreds of olive oil lamps are no longer needed. Motor cars now carry the pilgrims to the holy cities, and the thousands of camels and their attendant army of camelmen, formerly employed, are not now required. The Hejaz Government is reported to have 300 cars in use.

The diminution in the number of pilgrims is so considerable, that the thousands of Arabs in the sacred cities who lived by serving them are in destitution. Nevertheless, Mecca is the centre from which the press and these returning pilgrims proclaim a renaissance of Islam under politically independent rule with as much modernism as is safe.

There have been radical reforms in the Azhar at Cairo where the Fundamentalists are at war with the Modernists while both are agreed that Islam is the religion of the state and the hope of humanity. Foreign missions are sent out to China, Japan, Spain and America to preach Islam.

A violent wave of religious feeling is passing over Egypt, and over the Islamic world, so violent that nobody knows what the end will be, and several are anxious about its effect on the strong fortress of Islam. It is about the legitimacy of translating the Koran. It began with the Minister of Education, who wished to render Islam a service and to heap further honour upon Egypt in its service of Islam. From the governing body of al-Azhar some supported his idea, others opposed it absolutely. Committees have been formed to work at it, and the rector of the Azhar himself supports it, having written a long letter to the Prime Minister in which, among other things, he says: "A literal translation is not possible to all the Quranic verses, but a translation of the meaning is permissible, only it could not be used in the official prayer, where only the original may be used."

Money is now being raised to aid the Arabs in their defense of Palestine against Jewish immigration. The Cairo press still "breathes out threatening and slaughter" on any and every occasion when they imagine the glory of the Prophet is at stake. The Young Men's Moslem Association is a keen rival of the Y.M.C.A. and itinerant preachers of the Koran vie with Christian colporteurs and evangelists in their zeal and devotion. At the first congress of the Moslems of Europe held at Geneva September 12-15, last year and which received much publicity, Emir Sheikh Arslan presided and the Egyptian delegates were prominent in the discussions.

Indian Islam representing more than seventy-eight million people, has a pan-islamic press especially in English through the two Ahmadiya groups. Those of Qadian and those of Lahore are in disagreement but both broadcast their propaganda from Lahore and London. They publish a dozen newspapers and magazines and although they stand outside of orthodox Islam, their publications are welcomed widely as the best weapons against Christianity. They have "missionaries" in Spain, France, Germany, Java, the West Indies, Borneo and Japan. Their chief aim now is to win over the untouchables and Dr. Ambedkar's name is on the front page with that of Mahatma Gandhi's son who is said to have embraced Islam.

Christian missions in Egypt, Arabia and India are in close touch with all these movements. They are signs of the times that in carrying the Gospel to Moslems anywhere we face the whole front of this rival faith. In Arabia our medical missionaries enjoy the personal friendship of the King and are welcomed into the interior of his vast domain. In Cairo missionaries minister to the blind sheikhs of the Azhar and its students crowd the American University to hear popular lectures on social reform. In Lahore the Henry Martyn

School is training younger missionaries to meet the present situation. The Gospel of Christ in each of these centres is the dynamic of God unto salvation. We can afford to wait, for the Cross has never been defeated.

S. M. ZWEMER,

(Since the above was written it has been confirmed that Mr. Gandhi's son has become a Muslim.—*Editor*).

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### **Alimuddin: the Story of a Moslem Seeker after God.**

**H**ARD and unpromising though the soil of most Moslem hearts appears to be, we yet have reason, every now and then, to thank God and take fresh courage because we are furnished with proof that the Gospel of His grace works with saving power in these hearts also.

Two Moslems were baptized in Bengal several years ago, at the ages of twenty-five and seventy-five respectively. It is, however, of the old man, Alimuddin ("learned in the faith"), now passed to his reward, that we write.

Always of a devout and inquiring turn of mind, he had, while still quite young, read through the Arabic Quran a number of times. In this and certain devotional books of the Moslems he had been arrested by significant remarks concerning Christ; for, incredible though it may sound, titles and tributes higher than anything accorded to Muhammad are there given to Him. Concluding that Jesus was, in some special way, supremely worthy, Alimuddin formed the extraordinary habit of reciting these tributes in the mosque itself, instead of the usual liturgical prayers.

His longing to secure a Bible and so learn more of this Unique Person, was met one day in dramatic fashion. Happening to mention his wish in the house of a Moslem, formerly a missionary's servant, the latter tossed a copy to him as though glad to be rid of it. Alimuddin received it as a very gift from God. He now began a diligent study of the Scriptures, and the more he read the more convinced he became that in Christ, and not in Muhammad, is God's way of salvation for sinful men.

In his own community he was a well-to-do *taluqdar* (landowner), and yet withal singularly humble in spirit. But, though his home was in a village on the outskirts of Dacca, it was long before he made contact with the missionaries. One day, however, he stopped in a street to listen to the preaching, and something said by one of the speakers—the description fits the Rev. J. D. Morris—was God's word in season, and found lodgment in his heart.

Alimuddin was then well over fifty years of age. And now, Bible in hand, he would debate the claims of Christ with local Moslem leaders. He used to speak of one occasion in particular when, to his consternation, he found assembled at the rendezvous a great crowd of people who were there to support the "doctors of the law." His courage quite failed him, and, to his shame, he crept away without saying a word on behalf of Christ.

Years passed by, and then, overcoming his shyness, he accosted one of the mission's evangelists and was brought by him to the present writer. By this time he had read the Gospels to such good purpose that he could from memory complete many a quotation from the sayings of Jesus. While to us he seemed ready for baptism, he himself, for some reason, hesitated. And then one morning he came with grave face to tell of a dream in which he had seen the Christ. "And now," he said, "I am afraid to die with my faith in Him unconfessed. I have no faith whatsoever in Muhammad. He himself was a sinner. I am a sinner and I want peace, the peace Christ gives, before I die."

At his baptism, which could not now be delayed, he was given for his encouragement the text: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Trouble soon followed, and his foes were they of his own household. His wife, his only son, and the neighbours began to persecute him. *Moulvis* (religious teachers) came, and with cunning assured him that he could maintain his devotion to Christ within the fold of Islam; so why not return and cease to be a cause of grief to them all.

Alimuddin recanted.

It was a distressing experience for Evangelist Peter Sircar and myself to go to the old man's home and get him to face up to what his apostasy must mean to God. We vowed we would pray that God might cause him such pain at the thought of it that he would yet cry out for mercy. Tears were streaming down his cheeks as we left.

He was at length convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, and the day came when he returned to us, but with a grievous burden on his soul. Had he not committed the unpardonable offence? How, then, could God forgive him? Many were the talks we had, for he was not easily persuaded that, great as was his sin, God's grace is greater still. Nevertheless, reassurance and relief did come, and what a happy day it was for all of us! One after another of the deacons of the church pleaded for him in prayer to God that he might enter fully into the joy of forgiveness.

Once again persecution followed, and there was a period during which Alimuddin prepared against the day when he might have to go forth as an exile from his own home. But in the mercy of God that necessity did not arise. He lived down the opposition, and by his transparent goodness and meekness actually won the admiration and esteem of his neighbours.

In place of the old timidity he developed a new concern to pas

on to others the good news of God's salvation through Christ. He came for copies of the Gospel and Christian literature that he might give these away, or read them aloud to others. In his own way he became an evangelist, witnessing fearlessly for Christ among his own people.

Many a time in those last months he would seize one's hand in both of his and, with a rare smile on his dear old face, would exclaim ; "How can I thank you enough for the *ratna* (jewel, *i.e.*, Jesus) you have brought to me!" But it was a case of reaping where others had sown, God's Spirit having quickened the seed.

When God called him home, Peter Sircar wrote: "I am not grieved about his death, because he is now with Jesus, on whose account he had for so long borne reviling, abuse and neglect at the hands of his own people." But in the end those very people were constrained to testify: "He was a most trustworthy and God-fearing man ; we shall never see his like again in this village." It is fitting, therefore, that the epitaph on his tombstone in the village should take the form of a witness to others of his great quest and still greater discovery :

Alimuddin,

A devout and humble seeker after Truth,  
Who, guided by the witness of the Quran,  
Searched the Christian Scriptures and found Jesus,  
The way, the Truth, and the Life.

L. BEVAN JONES.

### The Ahmadis and the Orthodox.

IT is a remarkable thing that though circumcision has been the regular practice among Muslims there is no mention of it in the Quran and very little in the Traditions. It is generally held to be founded on the custom of Muhammad. Abu Hurairah declares that Muhammad said it was one of the observances of the *Fitrat*, which is natural religion. It is widely held that there is no need for converts to submit to the rite. A writer in the *Light* however voices the opinion of Orthodox Islam that "it plays an important part in the life of a Muslim" and that "it is essential for *Taharat* (purification) which is the basic principle of all religious performances." The line which the Ahmadiya has taken in its approach to the depressed classes is that it is not necessary for these possible converts to Islam. The following taken from the editorial of the *Light* should be of interest.

"In our issue of June 1, while reviewing the conversion field in Malabar, we referred to the general dread of circumcision among the Thiyas who were contemplating joining Islam. They had been given to understand that no non-Muslim could become a Muslim until he had been circumcised. At first we laughed the idea away as idle gossip.

We could hardly believe that any Muslim would insist on circumcision as indispensable for the purposes of acceptance of Islam. Islam is a simple creed, meaning belief in unity of God and prophethood of Muhammad. We never imagined any one would seriously make to these the addition of a third proposition—viz., circumcision. On the assurance of some Muslim friends as well as Thiya leaders, however, that it was no joke and the Mullahs subjected even grown-up converts to the operation, Mr. K. L. Gauba in consultation with responsible local leaders issued a statement that circumcision though a recognised Islamic practice and highly advisable on hygienic grounds, was by no means one of the essentials of Islam."

This seems to have become just one more point on which the Ahmadis and the Orthodox are parting company. We can be certain that things are not well in the Muslim camp. The most energetic and modernist Ahmadis are constantly giving evidence of the fact that they are at loggerheads with the rest.

On another page of the same issue of the *Light* reference is made to a Fatwa pronounced against a professor of the *Isha'at-i-Islam* College, Lahore, (an Ahmadi institution) on the ground that according to this teacher the "question of Jesus' death is a moot point." "Although," they say "the Maulana belongs to the Hanafi School of thought, he could not escape the fury of these Mullahs. (i.e., among others the President of the *Jamayat-ul-'Ulema* of Dehli, which is the highest court of the learned orthodox). This view of his was adjudged unorthodox. The *fatwa* declares that Jesus is alive and must bodily descend from heaven some day. This it says is the accepted creed of the *Ahl-i-Sunnat* and whoever does not subscribe to it is a *Mu'hid* (heretic). This should give food for thought to sensible sections of Islam. If this mania for heresy-hunt is allowed to go on without let or hindrance, we are afraid, hardly one sensible Muslim will be able to save his laurels for orthodoxy. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad believes Jesus to be dead. So do Sir Mohamed Iqbal, Mr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali and many enlightened Mussalmans. The famous scholar and thinker of Egypt, Mohamed Abduhu writes in his commentary of the Quran, not only that Jesus is dead, but he goes further and opines that the (Ahmadiyya) view that he came to India and was buried in Kashmir cannot be called out of the range of probability."

"We are strongly of opinion that the Mullahs who issue these *fatwas* are not alone to blame. The enlightened sections who know these absurdities and yet have not the courage to openly condemn them are also guilty of a serious sin of omission in this matter. It is already too late in the day. The solidarity of Islam, the most cherished dream of the prophet, has been shattered to pieces. Nevertheless if the house of Islam is yet to be saved from further dissensions, well-wishers of Islam must move in the matter and do something to put collars on these *Fatwa*-mongering Mullahs."

So says the *Light*, but one might very well hear an orthodox

Mulla responding that it is not the mass of the orthodox which is responsible for the rending of Islam's unity but the innovators who have brought forward their rationalising theories in order to apologise for Islam.

What is most interesting to us, is the prominence which is being given to questions concerning Jesus Christ in all these discussions. May it not be, in the good providence of God, that in this manner Christ may be brought more and more to the attention of the world of Islam? As a very well-informed Muslim said to the writer the other day, "The Ahmadis have got to count on a good deal of credulity before their reinterpretation of plain texts of the Quran will find acceptance." The reference was, of course, to Muhammad Ali's comments on the passages which refer to Jesus in the Quran. The Ahmadis cannot claim that they are the only "sensible section of Islam" and there are many Arabic scholars who would profoundly disagree with Muhammad Ali's "translations."

J. W. S.

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### **Summer Schools, 1937.**

**T**HE Henry Martyn School staff expects to hold summer schools in Mussoorie and Landour next year. As yet the arrangements are simply tentative but the proposal is to have a course in Mussoorie during June, which is thought to be a convenient date for missionaries in the United Provinces, and to have a second course at Landour in August which is a more suitable date for missionaries in the Punjab. It is hoped that missionaries when arranging their holidays for next year will bear these possibilities in mind. As soon as the final arrangements have been made a further notice will be given.

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### **Prayer and Praise.**

In some areas and especially in South India there is a great need for qualified workers both male and female. Let us pray that God will raise up those who will do this important work.

**LET US PRAY** for recent converts that they may stand firm and be endowed with power from on high.

**LET US PRAY** for the students who are to take the special courses at the Henry Martyn School next winter.

**LET US PRAY** that God may give us wisdom and love to deal with those who fall away.

REMEMBERING that our primary task is to bring men and women into saving relationship with Jesus Christ, let us pray that all our activities may be directed to this end.

LET US PRAISE God for the assurance that truth is strong and must prevail.

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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. 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,  
Kenfield, Nainital,  
U.P., India.

