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News and Notes

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

Series XXV.

January, 1937.

1st January = 17th Shawwal (10th mo.) 1355 A.H.

A New Year.

GREETINGS to all members of the Missionaries to Muslims League and prayers for their happiness and success in the year that lies ahead. May God richly answer our prayers one for another.

With New Year good resolutions are apposite though we rather suspect that the one who confines his good resolutions to January the first, is hardly likely to persevere in any he makes. However that may be, here is a good resolution which we would commend: I will seek a new member for the M.M.L.

Another matter which we would commend especially to our members outside India, is the desirability of subscriptions being paid promptly. It may come as a shock to some members when we say that quite recently for a little paper like this £50 of bad debts had to be wiped off. When we have no other resources but the subscriptions which our members give, it becomes double important that we should be most meticulous in remitting our subscriptions when they fall due. To our members in India this number will be sent out V.P.P.

The Editor.

Trends of Thought in Indian Islam.

PASSING over the communal, political and sectarian problems which are occupying the mind of Indian Islam to-day let us come to the modernizing and polemical tendencies and activities which represent a missionary religion's urgent need and desire to adjust itself to a new world of thought. The forces of secularism and rationalism have not been without their disruptive influence on the

youth of Islam and complaints are frequent that young men are lax in the discharge of religious duties. Indeed we have seen it alleged that the ranks even of the champions of Islam are not free from those who are lax in saying the five daily prayers and in paying the poor-tax. It would seem that there are many who, while accepting the religious character of the community, are yet far more concerned about the community than about religion. The real object of worship of many Muslims is Islam rather than Allah. Sir Muhammad Iqbal's *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* is largely socio-political. Even the new book which has come from the pen of Maulana Muhammad 'Ali gives us food for thought when we find in its 760 pages only 33 given to the doctrine of God and 88 to Marriage. It seems surprising to a spectator to see that a religion which has been organized for centuries on social and legal lines, determined in the first instance by a perfect divinely-given code, should in the fourteenth century of its existence still be so concerned with statements and expositions of social matters, while, at the same time, it is at pains to eke out its shallow theology by resorting to lexicons, till one wonders whether Lane is an inspired authority preferable to Baidhawi and Jalalain! Iqbal's *Six Lectures* is undoubtedly the best book we have seen on its subject but when he comes to the reconstruction of the conception of God, he has to be content with three texts of the Quran, one of which is so obscure that by interpretation in allegorical fashion one might make it mean almost anything, from the Trinity to Persian "Light-philosophy", unless one prefers, as the author does, to read into it modern scientific theories about light.

Iqbal's great concern, however, is that the door of *Ijtihad* should be open. Explaining modern forces for reform, he says that Sayyad Jamal-ud-Din Afghani was the teacher and inspirer of Mufti Muhammad Abduhu and Zaghl-ul-Pasha. The *Mullas*, or orthodox teachers, had grown conservative and would not allow any freedom of *Ijtihad*. The first efforts of the reformers and the Wahhabis was to secure such freedom. They prepared the ground for Zaghl-ul-Pasha in Egypt, Mustafa Kamal Pasha in Turkey and Raza Shah in Persia. These men in Iqbal's opinion were not influenced in their reconstructive work by alien cultures but were simply exercising their right to reinterpret Islam. Kamal is not anti-Muslim. He is a true Muslim. The only snag is that he has substituted the Swiss Code with its rules of inheritance. Taking them seriatim, Iqbal explains away the issue of the Quran in a Turkish dress, prayers in the Turkish tongue, abolition of polygamy and the Caliphate, and he asserts that the Turkish *Ijtihad* on the Caliphate is supported by Ibn Khaldun.

This reminds us of something which was said in the *Light* on February 24th last. "An interpreter, according to all authorities, is not guilty of heresy, however wrong that interpretation may be." With such a principle to start from, is it any wonder that the mind of Islam should be in chaos? But after all, this expression of opinion is only an

extreme assertion of the longing of Islam to break from the iron hand of tradition. Will Islam be able to do it and still remain Islam? The modern school apparently thinks so. The inertia of Islam has been due to a static conception of its character. Hope for the future lies in a new dynamic conception along the lines of Bergson. A principle of movement and change must be admitted along the lines of the philosophy of history contained in Ibn Khaldun whose conception is of "infinite importance because of the implication that history, as a continuous movement in time, is a genuinely creative movement and not a movement whose path is already determined. This principle of movement in Islam is *Ijtihad*."

This principle of movement must be applied to the law of Islam. Iqbal quotes from Horten to the effect that the spirit of Islam is boundless. "With the exception of atheistic ideas alone it has assimilated all the attainable ideas of surrounding peoples and given them its own peculiar direction of development." Iqbal then goes on to say "I have no doubt that a deeper study of the enormous legal literature of Islam is sure to rid the modern critic of the superficial opinion that the law of Islam is stationary and incapable of development. Unfortunately the conservative Muslim public of this country is not yet quite ready for a critical discussion of '*Fiqh*' which, if undertaken, is likely to displease most people and raise sectarian controversies." And again, "The Ulema of Islam claim finality for the popular schools of Muhammedan Law But since things have changed and the world of Islam is to-day confronted and affected by new forces set free by the extraordinary development of human thought in all its directions, I see no reason why this attitude should be maintained any longer. Did the founders of our schools ever claim finality for their reasoning and interpretations? Never." The fundamental inconsistency here is that it is claimed that Islam *of itself* has within itself the principle of movement and then it is admitted that the inertia of Islam is giving way under the impact of forces *outside* Islam. It is also very difficult to reconcile the disclaimer of any influence from alien cultures on events in Turkey, Egypt and Persia with the last quotation we have made.

Now-a-days we have a new way of expressing Islam's view of the sanctity of the *saiit accompli*. When the Turks seized the Caliphate the jurists were at a non-plus because their theory was that the Caliphate should be in the family of the Quraish. But Islamic opportunism and "respect for the logic of facts" led Muslims, as I think Prof. Macdonald puts it, to say "They have it; they are able to keep it; *let* them keep it." That was the old method; but now that the Turks have *abolished* the Caliphate, what shall we say? Let us put the old case for compromise in another way, as Sir Muhummad Iqbal does. "The birth of Islam . . . *is the birth of the inductive intellect*. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot

forever be kept in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness, man must finally be thrown back *on his own resources*." But how can there be such a system as Islam at all, if all that is left to man is to proceed by way of trial and experiment? And how do we reconcile the words which Iqbal uses towards the end of his *Six Lectures* with man's being left to his own resources, "The Muslim is in possession of . . . ultimate ideas on the basis of revelation . . . there can be no further revelation binding on man . . . Let the Musalman of to-day appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam." But revelation implies that man is *not* left to his own resources. To come, however, to Iqbal's concrete example, "The Turks argue that in our political thinking we must be guided by our past political experience which points unmistakably to the fact that the universal Imamate (Caliphate) has failed in practice . . . Abu Bakr Baqilani dropped the condition of *Qurshiyat* (*i.e.*, belonging to the tribe of Quraish) in the Khalifa in view of the facts of experience . . . Ibn Khaldun who personally believed in the condition . . . argued much in the same way. Since the power of the Quraish, he says, is gone there is no alternative but to accept the most powerful man as *imam* in the country where he happens to be powerful." It is not our task to write a critique of Sir Muhammad Iqbal's interesting lectures but we would point out that if the logic of facts drives a man to compromise with principles, it may end in his discarding religion and, in the case of a Muslim, in his discarding Islam, for the same man who argued that in Islam prophecy came to realize the need for its own abolition. Might at last be constrained to argue that in Islam religion came to realize the need for *its* abolition.

Another matter which occupies the attention of the reinterpreters of Islam is the relation of Islam to race. In his *Six Lectures*, Sir Muhammad Iqbal writes "Liberalism has a tendency to act as a force of disintegration which appears to be working in modern Islam with greater force than ever and may ultimately wipe off the broad human outlook which the Islamic people have imbibed from their religion." How reconcile the universalism of Islam with the new nationalism due to the liberals? Bowing again to the logic of facts, Iqbal, in his pamphlet *Islam and Ahmadism*, says "Islam looks askance at Nature's race-building plans and creates by means of its peculiar institution outlook which would counteract the race-building forces of nature. Yet it cannot be said that Islam is totally opposed to race. Its history shows that in social reform it relies mainly on its scheme for gradual deracialization and proceeds on the lines of least resistance . . . Considering the mightiness of the problem of race, and the amount of time which the deracialization of mankind must necessarily take, the attitude of Islam towards the problem of race, *i.e.*, stooping to conquer without itself becoming a race-making factor is the only rational and workable

attitude . . . It is clear that if the Ata Turk is inspired by Pan-Turanianism he is going not so much against the spirit of Islam as against the spirit of the times. And if he is a believer in the absoluteness of races, he is sure to be defeated by the spirit of modern times which is wholly in keeping with the spirit of Islam. Personally, however I do not think that the Ata Turk is inspired by Pan-Turanianism, as I believe his Pan-Turanianism is only a political retort to Pan-Slavonism, or Pan-Germanism or Pan-Anglo-Saxonism. Nationalism comes into conflict with Islam only when it begins to play the role of a political concept and claims to be a principle of human solidarity demanding that Islam should recede into the background . . . and cease to be a living factor in the national life." The obvious comment on this is that we cannot understand what is meant by Kamal Pasha's opposition being rather to the spirit of the times than to the spirit of Islam, when the spirit of the times "is wholly in keeping with the spirit of Islam."

Advocates of the reinterpretation of Islam are constantly referring to the Muslim's enslavement to the past and in the *Muslim Review*, a monthly journal in English, dated June 1933, there is an interesting article by Professor Salim. In this he argues for modern commentaries on the Quran and compares the sad plight of Muslim exegesis with the wealth of commentaries on the Bible. Under the influence of traditionalism, Muslims "ceased to study the Quran independently. To do so was heresy and heterodoxy." . . . "They ceased to make use of their common sense; they lost their power of discretion, their right of private judgment and finally all trace of an enlightened nation, for no fault of their own, except through the evil influence of the slave-mentality, this refusal to do something, not done previously by the Ulama of the second and third century Hijra." They also ceased to exercise their critical faculties with regard to the reported sayings of Muhammad. "All inquiry regarding the sources and all criticism regarding the contents and the reporters of the traditions came to be looked upon as heresy and irreligion . . . Muslims do feel that it is derogatory to the status of a Prophet to tell lies; but neither can they purge Bukhari (a standard collection of traditions about Muhammad) of such traditions, nor can they bring out a new collection according to the modern standards of truth and piety. Shias, Aryas and Christians draw the well-known contingent of their objections from these very 'authentic traditions' and Muslims in their heart of hearts feel that these traditions are untrustworthy; but they dare not expunge them from the canonical books of traditions." The writer then proceeds to say that when such opinions are voiced, the critic is asked "Are you wiser than Bukhari that you dare to differ from him?" "How is it that nobody during the last seven hundred years ever differed from them on any point." The Christian might reply to that last question that it is only now that the impact of Christian teaching has created a new conscience with regard to these matters that Muslims have seen the necessity for expunging from the records certain unacceptable traditions.

(to be continued).

J. W. S.

“Why Callest Thou me Good?”

SUCH was the rejoinder of Jesus, according to Mark and Luke, to the rich young ruler who ran up to him with the question; ‘Good Master! what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ Jesus replied: ‘Why callest thou me ‘good’? none is good save one, God.” This reply has frequently presented difficulty, and there are Muslims who say that it is tantamount to a denial of sinlessness.

Matthew himself evidently experienced some embarrassment at Mark’s version of the conversation, and by his way of putting it (“Why askest thou me concerning that which is good” R.V.) leaves the impression that he is trying to smooth away what he felt to be a real difficulty. At any rate, his wording escapes a possible implication of the Marcan phrase, *viz.*, that Jesus is carefully discriminating between Himself and God.

It should be said that the Revisers are quite right in adhering to the reading they follow in Matthew, because it has the best support, *e.g.*, the oldest Greek Mss., as well as the ancient Syriac and Latin versions. The A.V. reading, placed by the Revisers in the margin, is evidently an attempt of harmonists to displace Matthew’s wording by bringing all three gospels into line.

If we could be certain that Matthew’s phrasing was due to the cause suggested, then equally surely we might say that he quite missed the point of our Lord’s rejoinder, as, indeed, others have done since. For, in the first place, the word emphasised in the Greek is the adjective *good*, not the pronoun *me*.

As a result of this misunderstanding two opposite explanations have, commonly, been advanced as to what Jesus intended the ruler to infer from his words:

(1) That, therefore, He is God; *i.e.*, that he should not be addressed as ‘good’ until His Divinity has been recognised.

This, however, is quite untenable. Jesus was not in the habit of demanding such recognition within the small circle of his immediate disciples, how then should he require it of a stranger?

(2) That, therefore, He is not good. There is even less ground for suggesting this, seeing that his entire life, in word and action, is proof to the contrary.

Rather, the narrative indicates that Jesus is anxious to correct this ruler’s ideas as to what constitutes ‘goodness.’ For, even if it be admitted that the man was sincere, it is apparent that he had not given due thought to the import of the words he used.

Christ’s rejoinder is not merely a declining of the man’s too-glib tribute, but a challenge to him to contemplate the absolute Goodness, an attribute of God Himself and then measure himself and the righteousness He professes by that supreme standard. Let him think what Goodness means to God and then think out what it must mean to call Jesus “good”. Goodness, in its fullest sense, is not human at all, but an attribute of God alone.

So that there is, here, no disavowal of goodness on the part of our Lord, though it might well be that, in keeping with the part He chose for his life on earth, we have in this remark an illustration of the fact that "He did not count it a prize to be thought of as on an equality with God."

The conclusion is clear. Only when due consideration has been given to the essential meaning of Goodness, and its bearing on the fact of Christ, is a man in a position to give to Him the praise that is his due. And even then, praise alone is not enough. Christ asks for and expects our allegiance also. It was in this that the ruler signally failed. Like many Muslims, he found it easy to praise Christ, but when faced with the obligation to follow Him, he turned away unwilling to make the sacrifice.

L. B. J.

How a Muslim paper regards the recent crisis.

THE following is an extract from the *Light* of Lahore, dated December 16th.

"If there is one thing more which the whole of this episode brought into so conspicuous a relief, it is the wonderful sense of discipline and self-restraint of the British nation. It was a regular tug-of-war between the Cabinet and the King and a struggle like this is any other country, especially in the East, would have led to bloodshed and revolution. In India it would have been a God-sent opportunity to freely indulge in mutual mud-slinging. But in Britain there has been not one untoward expression or unkindly word uttered on either side in a situation so tense and so delicate. The King's abdication is no common event. It paled the whole world politics into insignificance for the time being. The storm, however, came and just blew over the head of the British nation, leaving it as if nothing had happened. Herein lies the secret of its world empire. It loved the King with all its heart almost to the point of adoration. But the country was above the King. All parties, all shades of thought and feeling, joined hands to see that the storm does not shake the country. And even the sacrifice of a king so dear was not considered too much for that.

Is there no moral in this dignified unity of front on the part of the British nation to the Muslims of India who jump at one another's throats for petty personal or sectional interests? What Maulana Abdul Kalam said of Mullas, (*viz.*, that the beasts of the woods can live together in peace in the same den but not two Mullas in the same niche in a mosque) is true of every sphere of Muslim life in India. For petty things the larger interests of Islam are thrown to the winds and when the mud-slinging starts, no vituperation is considered too strong for the rival party. Is this the way to the restoration of a Greater Islam? This is the royal road to slavery and degradation which we so richly deserve!

Prayer and Praise.

*"New Year met me somewhat sad :
Old Year leaves me tired,
Stripped of favourite things I had,
Baulked of much desired :
Yet farther on my road to-day
God willing, farther on my way."*

CHRISTINA ROSETTI.

Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LET US PRAISE God for all the opportunities for service vouchsafed to us during the past year, for victories won in His Name, for gathered experience which gives us added confidence in our work for Him.

LET US PRAISE God for the lessons He has taught us by our failures and for the unfailing comfort which has been given to us when we have been downcast.

LET US PRAISE God that the best is yet to be.

LET US PRAY that during the coming year our fellowship may be more real and our consecration to our task more complete.

LET US PRAY for those who this year will set out by faith not knowing whither they go but drawn by the irresistible love of our Saviour.

LET US PRAY that throughout the Church of Christ in this land and in every land the Holy Spirit may do his work of revival and inspiration so that the Gospel's glad sound may be heard in all the Muslim world.

New Members.

Miss K. Culshaw, B.A.	M.M.S.	Lahore.
Rev. E. Evans, B.A.	B.M.S.	Lahore.
Rev. H. E. Baikie, M.A.	C. of S.M.	Jaipur.

NOTICE.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members or remittance of subscriptions 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 Honorary Secretary :—

Rev. J. W. Sweetman,
30, Mozang Road,
Lahore.

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