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News and Notes

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A Letter from Henry Martyn.

[The following is a copy of a letter from Rev. Henry Martyn to Rev. John Chamberlain, Cutwa. The original was presented to the Henry Martyn School, Lahore, by the late Rev. W. Carey, the grandson of William Carey of Serampore.—Ed.]

Danapoor, December 6, 1806.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE so little to say about myself that I should hardly prevail upon myself to trouble you with a letter, had I not remembered a promise you obtained from me of hearing of my arrival at Danapoor. I found Mr. Creighton out without difficulty, or rather he found me by sending a man to meet me, and with him and his two friends I spent some days very agreeably. Without meeting with any thing remarkable afterwards, I arrived here by the gracious providence of God on the 26th of last month. I was able to distribute but few tracts by the way. Most were afraid, and of those who were willing, the generality refused the tracts when they saw that they were in the Deov Nagree character. Those in the Persian character were universally refused. A few Nagree testaments I was happy to leave in different places.

I find myself here in a sphere so vast that I cry out with unfeigned astonishment *who is sufficient for these things*—and am somewhat dispirited at finding myself at a stand; not knowing what course to take to acquire the language of the people, for the fine language of my Mussulman moonshee is as unintelligible as English to the country people, and I have very limited opportunity of being much with them as I cannot be absent a night from this station without permission from the Commander-in-chief. However these are small difficulties. Our great obstacle is the dominion which Satan has obtained over the hearts of men, and if the time is approaching for God to make them willing by his power, every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill

shall be made low. As yet as far as I can pretend to judge, there is little or no appearance of the natives being a people prepared for the Lord, and yet through the supporting power of God I think I am willing to continue throwing in the net at the Lord's command all the long night of life though the end may be that I shall have caught nothing. I hope and trust that want of success will not damp your spirits. Your labour is with the Lord and your work with your God.

May he be with you in your solitude, and refresh your soul with foretastes of his glory, and whatever you suffer from depression of spirits know that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren which are in the world. John in the desert isle of Patmos could be in the Spirit, on the Lord's day, and at other times too I daresay. So we though deprived of the solace of a Christian friend—are not thereby cut off from the sweet presence of the Lord.

Wishing you all success in the common cause and much divine consolation in your own soul, I conclude by saying that I am your affectionate though unworthy fellow-labourer in the Gospel.

H. MARTYN.

The Henry Martyn School of Islamic Studies, Lahore.

Extension Work, 1937.

FRIENDS of the School will be pleased to hear that again this year we have had six students for the longer course at Lahore. Our available accommodation for both European missionaries and Indian workers has been fully utilized.

In the first week of February Messrs. Subhan and Sweetman will be conducting an Extension Course at Lucknow, under the auspices of the U.P. Christian Council. Immediately afterwards Mr. Subhan proceeds to Bengal for the annual lectures to the students of Bishop's College, Calcutta, and Serampore College.

As previously intimated, it is proposed to conduct two Extension Courses this year, of four weeks' duration each; (1) at MUSSOORIE, 17 May-12 June; and (2) at LANDOUR, 2-28 August. A minimum charge of Rupees Two is made for the Course. The Landour Course will, it is expected, be held at the Community Centre. The Centre for Mussoorie will be announced later.

Attention is again called to the fact that the School now offers a limited number of small scholarships each year to Indian students, men or women, who desire to avail themselves of the instruction given at Lahore in the cold season. The first of such scholarships have been granted this year to two Bengali evangelists, now studying at Lahore. Further particulars regarding these and the Extension Courses may be had from the Principal,

*After 15 April,
at Elcot Lodge,
Landour.*

Rev. L. BEVAN JONES,
*5, Egerton Road,
Lahore.*

Disunity in Islam.

The following quotation from the *Light of Lahore*, dated January 16th, 1937, speaks for itself:—

“It is fraud to teach brotherhood and when a convert has been enticed to give him the sort of Islam we have in our midst to-day. Whenever we hear a convert to Islam waxing eloquent on the brotherhood among Musalmans we feel inwardly ashamed at the hypocrisy of it all. Either this man must be blissfully ignorant of the sectarian wranglings of present-day Islam or he is only playing a part. . . . The fact is there is hardly any love lost between any two sects of Islam. The Sunnis and Shiahs, the Wahabis and Hanafis, the Qadianis and non-Qadianis hate one another as thoroughly as do Roman Catholics and Protestants each other.”

Trends of Thought in Indian Islam.

(Continued from January number)

WE can sympathize with the writer in his desire for a purer faith, but we would point out that the attitude “I don’t like it, therefore I must expunge it,” is not a principle of sound exegesis. Historical documents must be accepted for what they are worth and history cannot be expurgated by a subjective test. There can be no tampering with documents however inconvenient they may be unless the study of earlier historical documents warrants the revision. Expurgation may entirely alter the character of a book. An entire break with traditional interpretation would lead to all sorts of reconstructions which would be mutually destructive and end in chaos. In the absence of material to serve for the revision of the Traditions it might be necessary to give them up altogether and then much that throws light on the meaning of the Quran would have to be rejected. Another dilemma is that if the traditions are forfeited, the *Sunnat*, on which Islamic practice is founded to a remarkable degree, would also have to go. Although Sir Muhammad Iqbal seems even to contemplate the possibility of this, for he says in respect to the *Hadith* in their relation to Islamic law, “If modern Liberalism considers it safer not to make any indiscriminate use of them as a source of law, it will only be following one of the greatest exponents of Muhammadan law in Sunni Islam,” *i.e.* Abu Hanifa.

In the course of the modern attempts to reinterpret Islam in harmony with modern thought there is a tendency to make a distinction between what is permissible and what is enjoined in the Quran. For instance it is said that polygamy is permitted under certain conditions. Maulana Muhammad Ali in his commentary on the Quran at Surah 4. v. 3 which he translates “And if you fear that you cannot act

equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four etc." makes this comment, "This passage permits polygamy under certain circumstances: it does not enjoin it nor even permit it unconditionally." Whether this makes the case better for Islam must be considered very doubtful, especially as the condition expressed in the Quran is one which only the person concerned can judge to be fulfilled and a man who had a desire for a number of wives would not find much difficulty in considering himself qualified for the "permission." But to show how indeterminate the principles of the new interpretation are, we give a quotation from the *Light* of March 16th this year. This paper is the organ of the Lahore branch of the Ahmadiyya of which Maulana Muhammad 'Ali is the spiritual head. "In our comments on Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal's statement in our issue for February 1st we expressed our disagreement with the Allama's (i.e., Iqbal's) view that 'the Amir of a Muslim State has the power to revoke the permissions of the law if he is convinced that they tend to cause social corruption.' Attempts have been made to defend this view by drawing a line of distinction between an 'injunction' and a 'permission.' Polygamy, it is contended, is only a 'permission' not an 'injunction' and hence it could be revoked by the head of a Muslim State. We confess we fail to see the nice distinction between a 'permission' and an 'injunction.' To us both are the decrees of God and equally binding on a Muslim and no power on earth can revoke what has been definitely decreed by God. Hazrat Umar preached that large dowries should not be settled on wives. On this a woman got up and read a verse of the Quran which 'permitted' large dowries. 'Who are you to withhold from us,' she said, 'what God gives us?' Umar bowed to the authority of the Quran and even complimented the woman on her knowledge, saying, 'Women of Medina have better knowledge of the law of Islam than Umar.' This clearly shows two things. Firstly that a Quranic 'permission' has as much the force of law as a Quranic 'injunction' and secondly, that the Amir has no authority to overrule the Quran in the matter of such 'permissions.'"

Questions relating to the status of women are to the fore in the course of the new interpretation of Islam and there is much conflict of opinion. Deoband, the orthodox centre passes a resolution condemning the United Provinces Legislative Council's decision regarding compulsory education for girls and in the Punjab there is an agitation for degree classes for girls. With regard to the question of polygamy some say that it is not permitted in Islam! Others say it is permitted *only* in time of war. Others again say it is permitted when there is no issue and others that it is *only* permitted when there is equality of treatment of the several wives. In this last connection a leader which appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore on January 3rd, 1936, is interesting. "Polygamy may be recognized by the religions or the customs of the East but it does not find recognition in the inter-

pretation which the authorities have decided to put on the electoral rules under the new Indian constitution. Doubts it is understood arose recently about the interpretation of the rule which enfranchises a wife on the strength of her husband's property." Under this rule the wife of a man who was a voter under the old constitution is entitled to vote under the new constitution. The rule enfranchises 376,000 women. "The question then arose, 'What about a man with more than one wife?' The rule is now that only the first wife will be entitled to vote." Because Islam enjoins equivalent rights for each wife, what will be the practical result? Some may say that this revokes the 'permissions' of the Quran because it makes it impossible for the rule of equivalent treatment to obtain when a man has a number of wives, and where a man has already a number of wives then how can the Quranic injunction of equality be observed? It is by such illustrations that we gather how difficult the task of the modernist in Islam must be.

There are two very clear characteristics of all that has come to our notice, namely, propaganda and defence. Even the most conservative seem to justify their opposition to change by their zeal for defence. The *Ahl-i-Hadith* consider that the slavish following of the four schools of jurisprudence handicaps the defence of Islam in the modern world. The *Ahl-i-Quran* reject the Traditions for similar reasons. The Muslim League with its emphasis on Muslim solidarity, the sensitiveness to the rights of the Muslim community behind the communal strife with regard to Shahidganj, the earnest endeavour of the poet-philosopher Sir Muhammad Iqbal to encourage self-respect in young Muslims (a frequent theme in his poetry) his anxiety to bring Islam into line with the spirit of change and development in the West and to prove that Islam has in it the principles which will enable it to adapt itself to a new age, all point in the same direction. The attack he has made on the Ahmadiyya, afraid lest it might mean disintegration of Islam, the Ahmadiyya movement itself—a purely propagandist movement as we see it—many and various and sometimes even contradictory schools of thought and policy, all are animated by a spirit of loyalty to the community. Men plunge headlong into controversy for the honour of Islam. Often their zeal outruns their knowledge and they hardly see where they are being carried by their enthusiasm. No one will worry much about other things if a defender has zeal for Islam. In the *Light* of December 16th where some remarks are made about a certain propagandist, we have an illustration of this. "We knew that his Association was a thing more in the printed notepaper of that association than a genuine over-board (sic) affair. Many a friend even accused us of suppressing the truth. Our sole justification was what Hazrat Ayesha said about Hassan. We know he is a good propagandist and an energetic worker. He has been doing propaganda work on behalf of Islam and so we considered it uncharitable to strain at his weaknesses." In reply to Sir Muhammad Iqbal the leader of the Ahmadiyya points to the record of its

missionary work. In effect it is said "We are the most active missionary agency in Islam. Why stab us in the back while we are engaged in this work. Let our work speak for us. Our zeal for strengthening this Society should not be a cause of complaint to any Muslim, in view of the fact that we are a vigorous missionary organization." What is not always seen is that in the intensity of zeal, a position may be taken up which cannot be ultimately justified and which may, for a temporary advantage, become at some later time an embarrassment to fundamental Islam, or at least a source of perplexity to the conservative masses.

A correspondent writing to the *Light* voices the opinion of many orthodox when he says that circumcision "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 Editor considers the matter important enough for an editorial and says: "We could hardly believe that any Muslim would insist on circumcision as indispensable for the purpose of acceptance of Islam."

As a proof of how Islam in India as a whole is taking to heart its missionary task, it may be noted that in the Depressed Classes' Conference at Lucknow in May, no less than seven Muslim missionary organizations were represented, Shiah, Sunni, Qadiani and Ahmadi. But here *vis a vis* their opponents points of difference did not emerge and an unreal unity remained to be the ground of mutual congratulation. So long as the all important requirement of loyalty to the community is observed and verbal concord preserved this is all that is asked. The Unity of God may be interpreted as monotheism or as the wildest pantheism and both interpretations will be tolerated. Requirements may be whittled down to such a bare minimum that Islam in its practice may achieve a nominal unity but it will be barren indeed, and even as its *via negativa* banishes the Deity into obscure remoteness, so must its devotees' suppression of their private convictions result in only an apparent harmony within which are all the elements of ultimate disintegration.

People who are fearful for their self-respect are not infrequently betrayed into extravagances which expose their weaknesses. The present-day Muslim propagandist would seek to stimulate self-respect by references to the past glories of Islam. This is quite legitimate and there is much of which Muslims may be rightly proud but when Islam's past greatness is brought into the most inappropriate context and is entirely irrelevant to the theme under discussion one wonders whether the writers have become conscious of the weakness of the case they have set out to prove and are seeking to distract the attention of the reader from this weakness. When exposition fails the golden rule seems to be: Extol the glories of Islam. In a similar manner when keenly sensitive of the decline of Islam, self-respect is sought in referring to the past and conclusions are drawn from the glory of a past age which are not warranted by the present state of Islam. Islam †

the patron of learning because there *was* a University at Cordova and in spite of the terrible illiteracy which characterizes the masses of Islam to-day. Are men who write like this about Islam the best friends of Islam? Are they not in danger of presenting to the minds of young Islam the materials for a most depressing comparison, which is likely to lead to the conclusion that Islam has failed. When a writer can make an appeal to the depressed classes only on the grounds that Muhammad brought a golden age to Arabia, might not his hearer reply, "Your golden age is in the past and we look for one in the future. Give us proof that you are capable *now* of founding the golden age; and meanwhile, we prefer British India to Arabia and so do you?" Perhaps the gravest danger in Islam and the greatest obstacle to any progress within the community is the refusal to face facts and the tendency to go on living in an atmosphere of make-believe. In this atmosphere sober men can bring themselves to believe almost anything. Thus the Editor of the *International Review of Missions* is quoted in the *Light* (February 16th, 1936) "Islam is an extraordinary definite religion and has produced a definite moral type . . . one of the fruits of Islam has been that stubborn durable patience which comes of the submission to the absolute will of Allah." On this the writer of the article comments, "The quotation coming as it does from the pen of a hostile Christian missionary must serve as an eye-opener to the critics of Islam. Only a highly ethical religion like Islam could win such a glowing tribute from one whose Mission it is to misrepresent it in other respects!" Of the same type but more reprehensible is the following from the *Light* (May 8th, 1936) "The churchman is licensed to indulge in 'unrighteousness, if it commends the righteousness of God' (Rom. 3; 5, 7)." Another instance which is rather amusing is a series of articles in a vernacular paper *Faran* on "*Muslim Rule in Switzerland*."

Similarly, evidence for the wish being farther to the thought is found in the numerous articles on the status of women in Islam. In last year's August number of the *Islamic Review* the very learned Maulana Sulaiman Nadwi has the first of a series of articles on *Heroic deeds of Muslim Women*. Starting with the stirring deeds of Augustina Saragossa and Joan of Arc, he writes, "Our history abounds in scores of such gallant actions on the part of Muslim women, *but of the detail we know little or nothing*." He then proceeds to ransack literature for the sparse references to Muslim heroines whose names are hardly known to the vast majority of Muslims, apparently unconscious of the extraordinary contrast he presents between them and the women whose names are a household word in Christendom. A far better case could be made for Islam if its defenders fought polygamy, purdah and inequalities between the sexes than by re-writing history. *The history which Islam needs to rewrite is the history of the present-day*. We commend this view to our Muslim friends in all sincerity.

When we consider the propagandist and defensive literature with regard to the Prophet Muhammad, we have further evidence of extreme sensitiveness. There must be thousands of atheistical books on sale in India in which Almighty God is spoken of in terms which rouse indignation but seldom do we hear a protest about such books, but if an unfortunate sentence occurs with regard to the Prophet, a storm of indignation is roused.

In the Legislative Assembly on March 27th, a question was asked by Sir Muhammad Yaqub with regard to a picture of Muhammad which had appeared in *Every Woman's Magazine* and an offensive article which had appeared in another English journal. He said that he wanted the Secretary of State to be informed of Muslim feeling and of the necessity for stopping such publications and pictures, by bringing pressure to bear on the English press and press associations in England. Sir Henry Craik replied, "The Secretary of State has already taken action in the matter. On the article being brought to his notice, he wrote to the editor of the paper in question, drawing his attention to the objectionable features in it. He has further issued a circular to all British editors through their professional associations, calling their attention to the offensiveness of such articles to Muslim feeling and warning them of the main points to be avoided when writing any articles on Islam. The Associations have conveyed this warning to their members."

In view of these facts it will perhaps be a matter of surprize to Christians that there are at the present time numerous books attacking the Lord Jesus Christ procurable in India. Let us see what some of them contain. "Mary was dedicated to the Temple so that she might remain forever in the service of the Holy Place and remain unmarried all her days. But when it became plain that she was six or seven months pregnant, the leaders of the nation married her to a man named Joseph, a carpenter and she went to his house and after a month or two her son was born." *Chashma-i-Masih* (the Christian Fount), pp. 17 and 18. "We cannot even admit that such an evil-minded, overbearing and enemy of the righteous could be called a gentleman let alone a prophet." *Anjam-i-Atham* (the End of Atham), page 5. "See how extremely pure and chaste his family was. Three of his grandmothers were adulteresses and harlots whose blood came out in his blood." (Comment in Appendix to *Anjam i-Atham*, page 7). "He had the confirmed habit of using bad language and giving abuse and to some extent had the habit of speaking lies." (*ibid*, page 5). These are the products of Qadian. Orthodox Muslims are at one with Christians in considering them obnoxious. They wonder why the Government has not suppressed them. Might not we also ask, Why?

J. W. S.

