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## News and Notes

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### “New Missionary Dimensions.”

**A**NDER the above title an article has appeared in *Christendom* by Dr. Hugh Vernon White, Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who has recently returned from a tour of the field served by his board. Those who are interested in the evangelization of the Muslim people will find food for thought in what he has written and will probably find themselves in opposition to his findings, though we are glad to see that the question of the relation of the Christian enterprise to the Muslim world has occupied some of his time. We reproduce the passages of greater interest to us as a League.

“A radical departure from proselyting is called for in the relations of Christianity with Moslem peoples. The most impressive and imposing fact that I encountered during a year in the Orient is the fact of Islam. Despite its present moribund condition there is a solidarity in the Moslem world and an imperviousness to missionary propaganda that should cause serious reconsideration of our aim and method. Looked at in the large, the prospects of converting Moslems to Christianity are not at all encouraging. From the days of Raymond Lull, one of the most winsome and devoted of Christian missionaries down to the present time, Christian efforts to evangelise the Moslem have met with signal and consistent failure. The response to such efforts to-day is negligible and there is little likelihood of any marked change in the near future.

“There are many reasons for the solidarity of Islam and its resistance to the Christian missionary approach. It is not sufficient to dismiss the matter by characterizing the Moslem as fanatical or conservative. He may be both on occasion, but even to the casual observer certain more positive and reasonable grounds appear for his attitude to Christianity. The rise of Islam constituted a great

reform, religious, social and moral. It created a whole culture and rendered a great service to a part of the world where decadent paganism, Judaism and Christianity made the need for reform desperate. The modern Moslem knows this and takes a just pride in it. Further he is profoundly convinced that Islam is a distinctly better religion than Christianity and most of his historic contacts with Christianity give considerable justification for this conviction. These contacts have caused him to look upon Christianity as barbarous, idolatrous, polytheistic and morally impotent, and the Christianity that he has known has been all that. Beside it has usually been allied with political powers seeking conquest.

“In the face of the history and the consequent attitude of the Moslem, the direct attempt to make proselytes to any orthodox form of Christianity, Roman or Protestant is useless and can do positive harm unless it is carried on with rare grace, humility and wisdom. As to the old churches with their emphasis on the trinity and their ikons, the Moslem feels towards them about as a modern Protestant would feel toward an attempt to win him to a veneration of relics in a Roman Catholic Church. In matters of ritual and dogma the historic church has little that will ever appeal to the Moslem world and that little is so bound up with elements that are positively repugnant to him that he will never be able to see them without bias.

“But fortunately Christianity does not need to come to Islam in such a guise. And the thing in the Christian Gospel that is vital is none of these elements that he so abominates. That vital essence is the moral content of the Gospel and the relation between God and man that it teaches. The old Christian theologies which Islam has heard bear very remote relation to this ethical and spiritual Christianity. They are symbols but symbols which even for modern Christians need much interpretation and explanation before it can be seen that they really did once have relation to the essential interests of the Christian life. But the person of Christ and His teaching and the work of men whose lives truly express His way of love and service—these constitute not alone the really important thing in Christianity but also the universal language of the human spirit. Here is a Gospel that the Moslem ought to have, and for some time to come it will be a distinct gain if we can have it apart from all connection with the religious beliefs and practices that he has abhorred and apart from any attempt to persuade him to renounce Islam and be baptised into some Protestant sect. The Christian Church ought to quit trying to make proselytes of Muhammadans. It should bring the best works of Christian service to the Moslem world in a spirit of ecclesiastical disinterestedness.

“As to the matter of religious belief there is a great need for open intercourse without propagandist intent between the best interpreters of Christian thought and the leaders of Islam. Especially is there need for this to-day when at least a few Moslem scholars are using

the technique and categories of Western thought and are determined to bring about a thorough reform in Moslem theology. The intellectual and social movements of the modern world are forcing changes in Islam. It is the high responsibility of the Christian Church to present in the most helpful and adequate manner the great conceptions and ideals of the Christian faith.

"Such a programme has its own difficulties and obstacles. It may call for more imagination and faith than the modern church has; for that matter most of the church will probably reject this proposal out of hand. But such a mission goes to the heart of the matter. It goes the whole way of disinterestedness in renouncing the intention to create some special form of Christian Church within Islam. The form that is to be taken by any fellowship which seeks to promote and conserve the truth that comes from Christianity would be left to the people of Islam. Whether such fellowship would be called a Christian Church is not important. But it will be unimportant to have the spirit and teaching of Christ truly understood and faithfully lived within Islam.

"It is an open question whether the church or any very considerable part of it can maintain enthusiasm for such a disinterested mission. If, as has been repeatedly affirmed, missionary zeal can only be developed with a mission that satisfies the ecclesiastical ambition, the dogmatic temper and the desire to win stars for our crowns by making proselytes then this is a proposal that will have little appeal. But there are many missionaries now actually working in the new spirit and they are amongst the finest representatives of the Western Church. There are growing numbers in the churches to whom the logic and objective of such a mission will come as an expression of their own desire. This may be the new kind of Christian mission which many of us have been seeking, the result both of the wisdom born of experience and of a bolder apprehension of the nature of our Christian responsibility to the world."

Space forbids the adequate discussion of all the points raised in this article. Our general attitude to the whole question is contained in the article in these notes entitled *What are our Plans?* Dr. Bowman of Saharanpur and Dr. Donaldson of Meshed, have both replied to the article in the *Moslem World* of January this year. Dr. Bowman says, "Dr. White has pointed out what we agree to be a confusion in the use of the words 'to convert' and 'to proselytize.' But there is a more fundamental error than this in the use of these words, and into this error he himself falls. That is, the use of both these words interchangeably for the term 'to evangelize.' . . . *Evangelism* is one thing; *proselytism* is quite something else. The former is the simple proclamation of the Gospel message in the faith that the Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, will pierce to the roots of personality and work the will of God in renewal and revivification (Heb. iv. 12). The latter is something that depends on the frailty of

human method, produces its fruit after the human pattern (Matt. xxiii. 15), and is rightly condemned by the peoples of every race among whom it is tried . . . . Now if by 'a radical departure from proselyting' Dr. White could bring himself to mean that evangelism in the New Testament sense of detachment should proceed, while the willy-nilly making of proselytes from Islam ought to cease, then I can assure him that the end he seeks is already achieved in numerous mission fields to-day. I speak out of a wealth of experience of the work that is going forward among the Moslems of North India. . . . There is a goodly band of Indian and missionary workers there . . . proclaiming the Gospel message in a spirit of detachment such as can only spring from a genuine reverence for personality on the one hand and from a lively sense of the fact that the power is all of God, on the other. Their sole aim is to present Christ and Him crucified in the faith that the Word of God, which alone can change the hearts of men, will eventually grip these lives and turn them from darkness unto the Light." We are in hearty agreement with Dr. Bowman. Dr. Donaldson puts a criticism in the mouth of a Muslim who is attracted to Christianity but who has never had the courage to make a definite spiritual decision, and who feels the inadequacy of his present position.

From our experience of the Muslim mentality, we can see little to commend the main point of view of Mr. White's article. Inoculation confers immunity. Through its long history Islam has had frequent inoculations of Christianity and its organism has developed a resistance to the contagion of Christianity. Call that resistance 'fanaticism' or 'conservatism' it makes no difference. Until there comes some deep and drastic disturbance of the whole organism by piercing deeply to the heart of the personal units of which it is composed or, to leave our metaphor, until personal conviction is awakened and the dynamic of the Gospel re-energizes the soul of the Muslim we see little hope of any marked change in Islam of the nature of a re-orientation of its thought and ethic towards Christianity.

Dr. Bowman asks, "What sort of 'disinterestedness' is that which seeks to gain the Moslem by permitting that to go unsaid which may prove repugnant to him?" Would not the Christian be accused by the Muslim of hedging? It is also far too lightly assumed that while theological approach to Islam may be fruitless, the exhibition of the ethic of Christianity will be acceptable. Quite apart from the question of differing theological views, the Muslim antagonism is a root a branch antagonism and extends equally to the Christian ethic as found in the teaching of Christ, as to the dogmas of Christianity. Modernist Islam attacks the Sermon on the Mount on the grounds of its impracticability. It accepts its own system of legalistic ethics as an authoritative system. Exemplification of the Christian ethic may in some cases win admiration and this must be an integral part of the Christian witness. Christianity has succeeded in raising vast numbers of the depressed classes in India to a higher moral standard and Muslims have looked on and even

blessed what one Muslim friend described to the writer of this article as *making men out of animals*. But this process of uplift is not markedly bringing Muslims to Christ but, as another Muslim said, is rather regarded as bringing the depressed classes into "the half way house to Islam."

It is our experience that however much we may be able to exhibit the Christian morale, the Muslim will not suffer theological questions to be shelved and it is because they are so frequently shelved by Christians that the Muslim tends to become more and more confirmed in his views of the superiority of Islam. Often the theological enthusiasm of the Muslim is in strange contrast to a certain rationalizing laicism in reluctant advocates of an attenuated Christianity. If the Christian is content to be silent about the Trinity or to relegate it to oblivion, this will not propitiate the Muslim and make him ready to accept Christian truth. He will continue his triumphant way till he has silenced the Christian on the matter of the authenticity of the New Testament and then invite him to accept Islam. In his dealings with Muhammadans what the Christian needs is not less theology but more and better theology. One of the complaints we have frequently to make is that Christian theology has hardly any time to express itself in relation to the thought world of Islam and some of us are bending our energies to this task. But to impose on ourselves a silence with respect to our theology is not honest and does not do justice to the intellectual travail of Christianity. It will result in our becoming more inarticulate than we already are and place us in an invidious position when confronted with Islam's dogmatic assurance.

Far from adumbrating a new plan to avoid the 'proselyting' of Muslims, Dr. White is only making explicit that defeatist attitude which has for some time cast its shadow over missionary policy. The time has come indeed for new recommendations with regard to our witness to Islam but those can never include the facile adoption of the dogmatic unitarianism of Islam as the basis of a Christian infiltration of that religion. We plead for a deeper and clearer conception of what Islam really is, doctrinally, morally, culturally, a juster appreciation of the relations of Islam and Christianity in history and the very substantial interchange of thought between the two, a clearer apprehension of what we have to offer to Islam—the *power* of God unto salvation. We do not plead for skilled controversialists but for well-informed advocates with clear, positive, unfaltering evangelism. We too, would summon the Christian Church to a discipline and an adventure, calling for more Christlike behaviour and in addition a travail of thought and spiritual preparation to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ with acceptance.

J. W. S.

### Bible and Quran.

The following letter in *The Light* of April 1st, 1937, should be of interest to readers.

**D**EAR Sir :—I have been a regular subscriber for your paper for the last two or three years, and have been one of your most interested readers. The purpose of this letter, however, is not to over-emphasize the awfully good effect it has produced on me, but to point out to you, one tremendous drawback which prevents it being called an ideal paper in the cause of Islam.

You will agree with me that the power of repetition is a great thing, and from my personal experience in the European Schools that I have been to, I may frankly conclude, that it is solely by repeating one thing—that of encouraging one to read the Bible—that the Protestant clergy has been able to keep the Christian foot-hold firm in India. In fact, I have actually felt this power of repetition myself.

Before I was sent to a Boarding School which, incidentally, was a European institution, I had received a fairly good grounding in Islamic precepts and instructions. But since the time I entered as a boarder and was made a member of the Scripture Union, I began to believe in some of those impracticable things in the Bible which Islam is fighting against so vehemently.

The Scripture Union is a body of those people who take to the reading of the Bible daily. It is worked by some missionaries of the Church of England as far as my knowledge goes in the matter, and the primary aim of the Union is to bind the Christian soul to his Bible. Each member who joins this Union obtains a card by paying two annas, and in the card are assigned some readings from various parts of the Bible, which are to be studied carefully every day. In this way the enthusiastic Bible reader is able to finish the book in three or four years, and have a very good knowledge of it. In this way the young enthusiast is more and more convinced of the truth of the Bible and eventually turns so prejudiced as to turn a deaf ear to the preachings of all other castes and creeds.

It is not with a view to denounce this system in any way that I make a special mention of it. Rather the object is to illustrate to you the beauty of its working. I have been wondering why the Muslims have not made such a Union of their own, and made each individual of the Islamic fold more fond of the Holy Quran. You will agree with me that the stability of a religion depends on the strict adherence to and a perfect knowledge of its religious books by its individual followers. If such is the case, I think it would be perfectly advisable if you publish a set of readings from the Holy Quran in our weekly journal, or better still, and for the convenience of all the people at large, draw a list of readings to be studied throughout the year and sell it to the people at a reasonable price. You would, for instance,

divide the Quran up into three sections one section to be done in each year, and the easiest portions of the Quran being studied first. This would enable the Muslims to live a really Islamic life and enable them to love the Quran more and more. I have a translation of the Holy Quran published by your institution and written by Maulana Mohammad Ali, and believe me, it is very often an effort for me to study it with the same zeal and ardour as I would expect to do by following a systematic course. The very idea that I am going to finish the Quran from the beginning to end with all footnotes and details seems to be a job sometimes.

But if you could draw out a system on the lines detailed above, I have a confident hope that not only I, but also many of my co-religionists would be able to master the Holy Quran. It would be a relief to much of our spiritual starvation.

Hoping you will give a kind consideration to all that I have written and anticipating your speedy action.

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### Causation.

“THE question may be asked: If God is the ultimate cause then why should there be causal connection in the ordered succession of events? The answer lies in the correct understanding of the nature of causation. Nothing causes anything. Antecedents have consequents. God alone is the efficient cause, but ignorant people have misunderstood and wrongly applied the word power. As to the ordered succession of events, let it be understood that the two events are conjoined like the relation between the condition and the thing conditioned. . . . There is a divine purpose which links antecedents to consequents and manifesting itself in the existing ordered succession of events without the least break or irregularity. . . . It may further be objected that if God is the efficient cause how account for attribution of actions to men in Scripture? Is it to be understood that there are two causes of one event? My answer is that the word cause is not properly understood. . . . God is the cause of actions as He alone has creative power and efficiency. At the same time man is the cause of actions as he is the source of the manifestation of ordered succession of events. In the former we have real causal connection and in the latter a relation of antecedent to consequent.”

*Al Ghazali.*

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### Prayer.

LET US REMEMBER our fellow-members and pray that God may increase the numbers of those who are interested in the objects of our League.

LET US PRAY that the co-operative work represented by the Henry Martyn School may be put on a sound basis and the necessary financial help for the continuance of the School may be assured.

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**NOTICE.**

Please note the Editor's change of address.

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,  
Lal Tiba, Landour,  
Mussoorie, U.P., India.

