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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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April 1st = 29th Muharram (1st mo.) 1357 A.H.

The Character of Christian Literature.

WE reproduce hereafter a letter from Rev. W. N. Wysham of Teheran which was sent to the Central Literature Committee

We should be glad if our readers would give us their opinions on the matter. What do we really think about controversial literature? Are we, generally speaking, adopting the defensive? Can we best "build up a new conception of Christ and Christianity" by books such as Mr. Wysham mentions towards the end or rather than, say, a book on the Incarnation?

"As I have thought over the literature situation in the field of our Committee's work and what I might do as chairman to help, I have been wondering if it might not be well to urge those responsible for publication in our various areas that, so far as possible, publications during the next two years strike a positive note for Jesus Christ. In other words, I wonder if the time has not come for us to cease being on the defensive and plan an offensive for Christ along literature lines.

"This suggestion, which perhaps will be clearer as I proceed, is born directly out of my experience here in Iran. I realize that in many ways Iran is far less fanatical than most Arabic-speaking Moslem lands and that, therefore, a plan of campaign successful here may be too premature for other areas. For this reason, I make my suggestions with great diffidence, and if you and others who know "the heart of Islam" so much better than I know those lands, feel that what seems like criticism on my part is poorly informed and unfair, I know that you will pardon me. Yet I am driven by my experience at least to open up the subject for discussion, and if my suggestions are impracticable for other areas, I gladly yield to superior wisdom.

"As I have for years carefully read your bulletins of publications either circulated or proposed in the various areas, I have been

struck by the large proportion of them which represent a defence of Christianity or a reply to attacks from those whom we too often call our "opponents." We circulate, at least among ourselves, long lists of answers to questions about the Bible and Christian doctrine. Some of these questions are sincere, but far too many are framed only to show the cleverness of the interrogator. We write defences of such difficult doctrines as the Trinity (one of these in your last batch of material). In your letter of May 27 you say: "We think that the time has come to provide answers to the Ahmadiyyeh propaganda." A good deal of material discusses Moslem theology, such as "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam," "The Meaning of the Word 'Spirit' in the Koran," etc. There is much distaste expressed in our circles for the old-fashioned controversy, as exemplified by Pfander, and we are told to deal very gently with weaknesses in Islam for fear of arousing antagonism, but much of our output is controversy just the same, and defensive controversy at that. Pfander at least had the advantage of a magnificent invasion of the "enemy's" country, and his superb attack is, after a century, still, in my opinion, the best thing to let a Moslem read after he is convinced of Christianity and needs to burn his bridges behind him. Our apologetic, by contrast, too often must seem to Moslems to be merely apologetical.

"Now I should like to see all of us try abandoning controversy in every form for a definite period of time and concentrate our literary output on making Christ known to sinful, needy men in Moslem lands. Let us look under the Moslem, the Ahmadiyya, the Baha'i, to the soul itself and remember that the soul is naturally Christian. I do not mean, of course, that we should cease as missionaries to study Islam or to keep in touch with new movements in that religion or out from it, or that we should not be aware of what Moslems are saying about us. But this, I feel, should be background, and in the foreground should be the presentation of Christ and His Good News, without apology and without spending time on the unimportant and the extremely abstruse points. If a Moslem becomes a Christian, he must some day work out for himself a satisfactory idea of the Trinity, but that is one of the "higher courses" in the school of Christ and long before he needs to see what sin is, that he is a sinner, that God is love, that He sent His Son to us to live a life of unique beauty and die a death of redeeming power. We should proclaim the mystery of the Incarnation with all its wonder and appeal to the hungry heart of man, and follow that up with all the examples we can find to show the effect of that life, death and resurrection in individuals and in society. Let us forget for a while that we are dealing with orthodox or heretical Moslems, except for background and technique, and pour out Christian, not anti-Moslem, books and tracts.

"I believe that this type of literature will reach the man who is ready for new truth. God of course can perform miracles, but it is very rarely that the seed takes root in the heart of a man who is a

fanatical Moslem and desires to argue about religion, seeking for weaknesses in Christianity and thinking up clever questions for us to answer. Here in Iran our opportunity is with the vast number who are only nominal Moslems. A sentence from the annual report of one of our missionaries shows how numerous these are. "Thousands go out to greet the Shah, the evening hour of prayer arrives, and the two or three who go aside to pray are jeered by those who look on." Among those jeering onlookers there are hundreds who are unhappy at heart, and these are sure to be touched by the winsomeness of Christ if they can be led to know Him. But if I approach them as Moslems, when many know little or nothing about that religion and are openly scoffers at all religion, I miss my opportunity. Islam is dead here, but I realize that it is still very much alive in other areas. However, is not our best opportunity, even in staunch Moslem lands, among those whose minds have been opened to new truths from the West, who must have secret doubts about much in Islam, and whom the acids of modernism have made restless and unhappy in their old milieu? Surely for them the matchless life and saving power of Christ will have appeal if we can present Him to them through the printed page.

"More by instinctive reaction to a need than by premeditated design, our literature production in Iran in the last few years has been of this type. Much of it is ostensibly for Christians, but hundreds of Moslems read these books, too, and the effect on them is greater because they do not feel that they are reading direct propaganda. As I glance over the list of our more recent books and tracts I find Dr. Stanley Jones' "The Might of Sacrificial Love," a moving explanation of the cross of Christ; "Faith in God in the 20th Century," written for puzzled men, not for Moslems, and presenting Christ in attractive garb; "A Gentleman in Prison," the story of the converted Japanese murderer; "The Christian Home," a description of what has been called "the nearest thing to heaven on earth," "The Life of Sadhu Sundar Singh." In preparation are a sparkling "Life of Paul," and sketches of Kagawa and St. Francis, also "The Goodly Heritage," a series of discussions of the great virtues, crammed full of fascinating illustrations from Christian history and biography. It may be that one of these alone will seldom be the means of converting a reader, but as hundreds of copies find non-Christian readers throughout the country, they are certain to build up a new conception of Christ and Christianity which will pave the way for later conviction and confession. I cannot forget the remark of the government censor who wished to reject two of the books mentioned above but could put his finger on no definite statement against Islam: "The trouble with these books is that every one who reads them wants to be a Christian."

"I realize, as I said before, that conditions differ in other lands. Religious derelicts are doubtless fewer and the circulation of what is known as Christian literature among even nominal Moslems may be

difficult. But I am satisfied that the best defence is an attack and that the positive message of Christ can, in one way or another, be brought more to bear on the unsatisfied millions of the Moslem world. I wish that each member of our Committee would make the motto of his endeavours for the next two years an adaptation of Paul's great call to advance: "One thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind of Moslem fanaticism and embarrassing attacks upon our faith, I press on towards the goal of persuading men and women in Moslem lands to accept the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.""

Henry Martyn School of Islamics.

PLEASE note that the address of the Henry Martyn School of Islamics is no longer Lahore but Lal Tibba, Landour, Mussoorie, U. P. The School has taken its leave of Lahore where it has been situated for eight years and asks for prayer for this new venture.

What do you think?

THERE are two married Moslem who say they are eager to become Christians. The preacher believes in their sincerity. He has advised them not to declare themselves Christians in their own homes because of the rabid nature of their people and in order that they may get away with their wives and children.

Question 1. Would you advise me to encourage this plan of procedure or would you urge the man to be baptized and suffer the consequences?

Question 2. Do you encourage Moslem married men to wait till their wives are ready to become Christians too or do you encourage them to be baptized as soon as they are ready?"

Book Reviews.

CHRISTIANITY EXPLAINED TO MUSLIMS, L. Bevan Jones B.A., B.D.,
Principal of the Henry Martyn School, Y. M. C. A., Calcutta
i-xv 225 pp. Rs. 3.

Rev. L. Bevan Jones, Principal of the Henry Martyn School of Islamics, Lahore presents under the above title an expansion of lectures delivered to the students of the Henry Martyn School during the past eight years.

The book is primarily concerned to give guidance to those who seek a sympathetic approach to Muslims in regard to the matters about which there is difference of opinion between Muslims and Christians and especially with the purpose of bringing the Muslim to appreciate the positive, saving value of the Christian evangel.

For some time it has been felt that St. Clair Tisdall's *Muhammadan Objections to Christianity* was out of date and that its form left a good deal to be desired. Since Tisdall wrote there has been a new school of Muslim apologetic viz., the Ahmadiya. This school has from the first been strongly anti-Christian and has even advanced arguments against Christianity which have brought it very often into conflict with orthodox Islam. Particularly has this been the case in respect to the character of Christ.

It is with this new Muslim apologetic and attack that the writer is most concerned and he presents what will be of great value to the working missionary who hears common objections raised by Ahmadi opponents. The material he finds here will always be in a conciliatory tone. Bludgeoning one's opponent into submission in the old-time manner has no place here.

What will be found particularly valuable is that the actual objections are presented in the words of the objectors. Sometimes one finds that hypothetical objections are dealt with in controversial books and these are framed in such a way as to leave the one who has to reply, opportunity for smart repartee. In *Christianity Explained to Muslims*, there is none of this cheap display of smartness. The various problems presented are treated with respect for the opinions of the opponents and yet there is no compromise.

It may be open to question as to whether Christianity can ever be presented without "offence", but it can be presented without offensiveness and the author avoids the latter even while he has to present such matters as the "offence" of the Cross of Christ and the Incarnation.

The subjects dealt with are as follows: The Authenticity of the Scriptures, Revelation and Inspiration, The Person of Jesus Christ. The Doctrine of the Trinity, The Historicity of the Crucifixion, How Christ Saves, The Virgin Birth, Christ's Miracles, The Character of Christ, The Resurrection.

We would heartily commend this book as a great advance on the line in which St. Clair Tisdall was a pioneer, though his work is in the background still. Rev. L. Bevan Jones' book is more than a revision however. We would also commend *Christianity Explained to Muslims* as a valuable contribution to the clearer understanding of the matters at issue and as a handbook for the evangelist and preacher.

As we write we have before us *The Light* of March 8th and its article which betrays much ignorance on the recently published Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Doctrine in the Church of

England. The article is headed "Islamization of Christianity" and it takes out scraps from the Report on such doctrines as Original Sin, the Virgin Birth and the Inerrancy of the Bible, rejoicing that Christianity is approximating more to the "correct Islamic position." The Editor of *The Light* and many thoughtful Muslims will find much that is instructive on these matters in Rev. L. Bevan Jones' book, notwithstanding the fact that it is written specially for the use of Christian workers and we have no doubt that it will often be placed in the hands of Muslims who are enquiring about those things which are more certainly believed amongst us, and will not fail to profit them.

J. W. S.

THE QUR'AN, translated with a critical rearrangement of the Surahs, by Richard Bell, D.D. T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh—the first of two volumes, comprising Surahs i—xxiv, 355 pp. 12 s. 6d.

Dr. Bell, lecturer in Arabic at Edinburgh University and author of *The Origin of Islam in its Christian environment*, here presents the first part of the results of a critical study of the Qur'an at which he has been working for the past twelve years. It is a task for the expert with a very competent knowledge of the original Arabic, and even then a most difficult task, inasmuch as "there is as yet no critical edition of the text available."

The main quest of the author (who evidently believes that Muhammad himself wrote the Qur'an) has been "to understand the deliverances of Muhammad afresh, as far as possible in their historical setting, and therefore to get behind the traditional interpretation." He pays tribute to the "great care" with which the redactors of the Qur'an must have done their work, and says that only rarely has he adopted emendations suggested by other scholars in the field, because in many cases "study of the passage has shown that the text is to be accepted as it stands and the difficulty removed by other methods."

It is not possible in a brief review to indicate precisely the scheme used by Dr. Bell in presenting the results of his study in this English translation (the Arabic text does not appear), but it grows out of his attempt to "unravel the composition of the separate Surahs." He retains these in their usual order, only rearranging their contents wherever it seemed necessary to remove confusion, such as is normally caused in ancient manuscripts through corrections, interlinear additions, marginal notes; etc. While following Fluegel's numbering of the verses, he has sometimes changed the verse divisions "in accordance with older divisions shown by the occurrence of internal rhymes within the present verses."

The peculiar setting of the printing is meant to indicate his rearrangements. Thus we often have two, and occasionally three, columns to the page—that on the left is taken to be the earlier form of the verse, that on the right a later substitution for it. By way of illustrating his method we reproduce his setting for the well-known passage, Surah iv (Nisa) 156. The original wording is taken to be:

"And for their saying : 'We killed the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah'—though they did not certainly kill him. Nay, Allah raised him up to Himself."

Whereas the extended refutation, with which readers of Rodwell and Palmer are familiar, is represented in a right-hand column as a later substitution, viz :

"though they did not kill him, and did not crucify him, but he was counterfeited for them ; verily those who have gone different ways in regard to him are in doubt about him ; they have no (revealed) knowledge of him and only follow opinion ; Allah is sublime, wise."

Each Surah opens with an explanatory synopsis of the contents and there are headings to sub-divisions, etc., nevertheless we share the author's regret that, owing to cost of printing, from his vast accumulation of notes the barest minimum appear here as foot-notes.

Obviously, the next thing is to secure an Arabic text, with full critical apparatus, and that is a piece of work, as the author reminds us, now being prepared by Dr. Jeffery, of Cairo. But if Dr. Bell's work be thought by Muslims to be revolutionary, what will be said of the other ?

L. BEVAN JONES.

Prayer and Praise.

O Lord, if only my will may remain right and firm towards Thee, do with me whatsoever it sha'l please Thee. For it cannot be anything but good, whatsoever Thou shalt do with me. If it be Thy will I should be in darkness be Thou blessed ; and if it be Thy will I should be in light, be Thou again blessed. If Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed ; and If Thou wilt have me afflicted, be Thou ever equally blessed.—THOMAS A KEMPIS.

Let us pray for a convert newly baptised that he may find friends in the Church who will stand by him.

Let us pray that we may have courage in all our work and that we may love the truth, so that in every task we may scorn to falter or to compromise.

NOTICE.

Our present number of *News and Notes* is for both March and April because we have taken the liberty of printing in March the full list of members of the Missionaries to Muslims League as used to be done. We hope that this will meet with the approval of all our friends who did not write in response to our request for their opinion on the matter.

Some misunderstanding seems to have arisen with regard to the annual subscription to the Missionaries to Muslims League. For

example, a new member joins in the middle of the year and then in the following January he receives the *News and Notes* per V. P. P. He wonders why this should be. The reason is that really all subscriptions date from the first month of the year and are not primarily for *News and Notes* but for the League. If any member in future joins in the middle of the year we shall do our best to let him have the back numbers of *News and Notes* for that same year. It will be quite understood that in a simple organization like ours it would greatly complicate matters if we were collecting subscriptions at many different times of the year. We have no officers but simply a Secretary-editor and our good friend the printer,

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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,
Elcott Lodge,
Landoure,
Mussoori,
U. P., India

