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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 XXVI.

May

1938.

May 1st = 30th Safar (2nd mo.) 1357 A.H.

The Character of Christian Literature (2)

DEAR MR. SWEETMAN,

WHEN I saw the letter from Rev. W. N. Wysham in a recent batch sent from Cairo, I intended to write a bit on the subject directly to the C.L.C., but now that you have reproduced the letter in *News and Notes* I will send my comments on to you, if you care to publish them.

I quite understand that Mr. Wysham is tired of apologetical defensive controversial literature. The controversialists defensive attitude expresses itself in the style, the method, the wording and the aim: *i.e.*, in trying to establish his own position instead of casting light on the position of the non-Christian.

However, I am sure that my difference with Mr. Wysham goes deeper than method, it is theological. First comes this astounding assertion: *the soul is naturally Christian*. When did the Christian Church make that bracing discovery? Does it come from the Westminster or any other Creed? From St. Paul? Augustine? Luther? Calvin? Indubitably the soul is naturally *religious*. One of the functions of the natural sinful soul of man is religion. For the great masses it expresses itself in the acceptance of the religion of the community as handed down in the traditions of the fathers. For the few it becomes creative effort. Both are a genuine function of the natural soul. The idea of trying to get in back of a man's religion at the man himself presupposes that his religion has no organic relation to the soul but is like a mask that needs to be lifted in order to recognize the person underneath. I wonder what Mr. Wysham would say to anyone that spoke of *his* religion in that manner!

Islam has its roots deep in the souls of millions of people, and, whether they like it or not, whether they jeer at praying men or are themselves praying, it directs and forms their lives from birth to death. Even psychologically speaking it is impossible to lift religion off the soul of a man like you would a mask from his face.

It is only when a new conception of truth works its way into the soul of a Muslim and there withers Islam at its roots that something radical will happen. And certainly no amount of sun shiny Sunday School stories will have that effect on the roots of Islam. Only something *radically* different will produce that radical change. And how that something which is radically different is to reach his soul without a clash, I do not know.

Another statement: "If a Moslem becomes a Christian he must one 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."

From this statement it would appear that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a mathematical enigma that need not be attempted before simple arithmetic has been left behind and the student is working out algebraic puzzles! However, from the concluding part of the sentence it appears not to be so, for how is a man to see what sin is apart from that which culminated at Golgotha—religious people destroying Christ? And how can he conceive of himself as a sinner without the conviction coming from the Holy Spirit? And how can he understand God is love without John 3: 16—that speaks of the *Son* being sent? And what is the "*unique* beauty" of Christ, if not this alone: that He did the will of the Father, took the form of a servant and was obedient unto death? How can any of these things mean what the Church universal always has insisted they mean without it forcing us back to a peculiar conception of the Godhead—that which we call the Holy Trinity?

And is it not rather hard on the poor convert that *he* has "to work out for himself a satisfactory idea of the Trinity?" Why not let him accept the statement of the Church's belief—*e.g.*, in the creed? Why promote individualism on this point? If we expect him to accept the meaning of the Incarnation, the meaning of the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ as accepted by the Church Universal, why not let him accept the teaching of the Church regarding the Trinity? Possibly because many a missionary fights so shy of theology that he himself does not know what it is all about. How many missionaries working in Muslim countries are able to say that they have read what the theology of the Church has to say on the subject and that they themselves have reached a clear conception of and acceptance of the doctrine—or dogma—of the Holy Trinity? Is it not possible that one reason why we often hate polemical literature is that we are in deep water, and every effort to touch bottom only results in a mouthful of dirty salt water?

The Rev. Mr. Wysham wants us to "concentrate our literary output on making Christ known to sinful men." Agreed. Let us stop our output of printed matter on subjects of hygiene, culture, uplift,

sanitation, virtue, health and a thousand other things, and stick to our job: making *Christ* known. But the pity of it is, that this is *not* what Mr. Wysham means. He wants to make Christ known to sinful men and still avoid controversy. Christ could not avoid controversy, neither could the Apostles nor the Church Fathers. As a matter of fact, our permanent body of Christian Theology is the product of a clash with other systems of thought. Christ is the condemnation of both the fanatical and the nominal, the religious and the irreligious Moslem, or other person. And how *we* should avoid controversy I could not see.

But I understood, when having finished the article, how the way of presenting Christ without controversy was to be found, namely by presenting *NOT* Christ but biographies of people we admire and look up to. I consider this not only a poor defective substitute but definitely unfair to Christ, and a method that would be disdained in any other field of knowledge. If a man wanted to propagate Darwin's theory of evolution he would not go to the records of the "monkey trial" in Tennessee and get his material there. If a man wanted to acquaint people with Abraham Lincoln, he would not write a biography of a school boy who had Abraham Lincoln as his ideal. Or, to bring the matter closer home, if a man wished to acquaint a person with Muhammed he would not present Mahmud of Ghazni or any other Muslim leader!

Another point: to use an example from the article. We take the calendar of Roman Catholic saints and pick out St. Francis. Now some may be very attracted by his way of doing things. Personally, I wonder if the people who propagate his story would not be very upset if he came incognito to their drawing-rooms and asked permission to have tea with them. Be that as it may, the vital question is: was his *faith* that which we as Protestants recognize as true faith? Have Luther, Melancthon and Calvin all lived in vain? Have we not yet learned that asceticism is a product of the East, of heathenism, introduced surreptitiously into the Church? Why did he create an Order? What did the vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience mean? Why should I accept a man as a reproduction of Christ whose faith and teachings were apparently more heathen than Christian, just because he preached to birds, kissed the lepers whom he loathed and in general was idiosyncratic?

Very well, some other "Saint" may be more in accordance with my taste, and if I want to use his life as an interpretation of Christ, who is to prohibit others from interpreting Christ according to the Dominican Friars in their capacity of inquisitors? Who is to say that the Crusaders, covered as they were with Crosses, were not exhibiting the true spirit of Christ?

Mr. Wysham's theological position is false. If our literary output should be an effort to make "Christ" known, then why not let these other people rest in their graves and make *Christ* known? We

have information enough at the sources, and Christ is Christ no matter what we think of St. Francis, the Inquisitors, Kagawa or any other person, even "A Gentleman in Prison."

Mr. Wysham maintains that books like those mentioned "are certain to build up a new conception of Christ and Christianity which will pave the way for later conviction and confession." I would say they will pave the way for later disillusionment and hopeless despair. Walter H. Page said that the closer you get to big men the smaller they are, and that could also be said of the religious man: the closer you get to him the more his Pharisaism appears. Having gotten your inquirer to look at men, he may at first be attracted, but the time comes when he sees nothing of these excellencies in himself (as he had hoped) nor in his nearest neighbours nor in the great mass of really honest Christians. He then gets the feeling—like an overwhelming portion of the youth of the West—that he has been deceived, that somebody has pulled his leg. And if there does not happen to be a John the Baptist present, who has sense enough to say: Behold the Lamb of God, he won't even think of looking there but go off in despair.

I say: Let us have an output of literature to make Christ known—not done up in attractive garb, as a great personality etc., etc., but as the Lamb of God, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in all eternity, as the revelation of God and not as an ethical standard, as the sacrifice predestined before the world was, not as an example for human sacrifice. Let the whole missionary enterprise say with Thomas: My Lord and my God—and mean it and know *why* and *how*? *That* I would call making Christ known. It would be a "stumbling block" and "foolishness"; it would be cutting through all polite virtues of mankind as unimportant and all "religious" aspirations as sinful; it would be condemning all lack of virtue and nominalism in religion; it would be God's thought in contradistinction to man's thought. It would be light shining in darkness, it would be proclamation of God, not a side-show of human piety or human impiety.

Yes! Let us make *Christ* known to sinful man, and let us avoid making sinful man known to sinful man as though it were identical with making Christ known.

Sincerely yours,
JENS CHRISTENSEN.

The Reading-room as an Evangelistic Agency.

THE Reading-room in Mardan has been open now about ten years. It is in a central position in the bazar where four roads meet. Although called a Reading-room, it is strictly speaking a large verandah we use. On one side we have local papers, Hindu

and Muslim, as well as two or three Christian, and the English daily paper. The men who come here to read we do not approach at all for discussion about religion. We do not use the papers as a fly on a hook in our effort to reach men. Our object is just to break down the isolation that such a shop otherwise might be in for. Directly in back of the table we have a large show case full of a variety of Christian literature. On the other side of the verandah we have a large table on which about forty different titles in Pushtu are spread out. Here the man in charge sits, and here conversations are carried on. Of course it is in the open, and hundreds of people, month in and month out, stop to listen. We keep a register where we record the following: (1) The names and numbers of books given out, (2) Whether the recipients return or not, (3) Where they live, (4) The number of conversations daily, (5) The number of men taking part, (6) The subject, (7) Whether new or returned, (8) Where from? (9) The purpose of the visitor (to inquire, to argue, to revile etc., etc.), and (10) the approximate number of men listening.

At the end of the year this register is of great value. It tells us what people want to read, and talk about. It shows us where our books are going, it gives us an idea of what parts of our district are most awake and interested. It tells us if we are reaching mostly people who come more than once or mostly new people. Our average number of conversations is with about 1,700 men a year, half of whom have come more than once and half new. About 4,000 to 5,000 books and tracts go out to about 1,000 villages yearly. All the different aspects of life and work of Christ are by far the most usual subjects for conversations and for books taken. The one side of the district is far better represented than the other, and the hill people, from across the borders are some of our most regular and frequent visitors.

If it is anyone we know well or someone that has come from a great distance we give him tea, otherwise we have had to cut down our hospitality on account of financial difficulties.

I would say that the most difficult part of running such a Reading-room is getting a man who is fully trained and capable. We have been very fortunate in getting a Pathan Christian, who once was a Mullah, and who is thoroughly acquainted with both the Koran and the Bible. I would think more harm than good could be done by an untrained man or one not able to handle delicate and difficult situations. Our Reading-room is open all day from 9 till 6 in the summer and from 10 to 5 in the winter. The man, when not otherwise engaged is either versifying literature to be printed or studying so his time is well used.

In the last ten years we have printed—with the kind help of the C.L.M.S. almost two million pages of Christian literature in Pushtu, which is stocked in the Reading-room and sold *en gross* to other Missions as well as our own. Besides this Pushtu, we have Urdu, Punjabi, Persian and Arabic and also some Gurmukhi and Hindi

We find the town people like Urdu, the village people Pushtu and the people from across the border Pushtu or Persian.

(Some of our members must have had practical experience of the Reading-room as an evangelistic agency and we would welcome an account of their experience or methods.—*Ed.*)

Ordination of a Pathan Minister.

FOR the Danish Pathan Mission, working in Mardan, North West Frontier Province near the border of Afghanistan. Sunday the 3rd of April, 1938, became a remarkable day as well in the history of the Mission as in that of the young congregation.

Mr. Taib, a Pathan and a former Muhammedan Mullah was consecrated to the priesthood by the Right Rev. Bishop Sandegren of the Swedish Lutheran Church in South India. Bishop Sandegren had very kindly taken the trouble of making the long journey from the South for the sake of this ordination. Besides the Mission's own minister Rev. J. Christensen, two Anglican ministers, Rev. J. Lawrence, Nowshera, and Rev. Samsun Khan, Peshawar were able to take part in the solemnity.

The Queens Own Corps of Guides has a beautiful little Church which the congregation has been permitted to use once a month for service and celebration of Holy Communion. Here the ceremony took place and it became a solemn festival. When the Church bell had ceased calling and while the organ prelude was being played the Bishop and the priests with Mr. Taib in their midst walked in procession with mitre, crozier, the ordination certificate, stola and chasuble around the Church into the main entrance and up to the altar, which was beautifully decorated with white Mardan-roses. Mr. Taib then stood in front of the altar and after prayer and a hymn the Bishop put on his mitre and with Rev. J. Christensen as interpreter he spoke to the candidate from Jer. I: 7-8. After the Bishop's address the priests read for the candidate different verses from the Holy Scriptures and then he confessed the Creed and made the clerical vow. Then he knelt and the Bishop pronounced the words of consecration in Pushtu. During the laying on of hands the Bishop and the priests said the Lord's Prayer. While the congregation sang a hymn written for the occasion the candidate received a certificate and was robed. When the hymn had finished Rev. J. Christensen read a greeting which the committee representing the Danish Pathan Mission in Denmark had sent the congregation. After the apostolic greeting the Home Board expressed their thankfulness and as a visual proof donated Rs. 4,000 to the building of the congregation's own Church, for which the ground already is bought. Then the Rev. Taib preached. His text was that of the day: Luk. i: 50 "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He made a sharp distinction between the fear which

expresses itself in the Jews', Mussalmans' and Christians' relation to God. In the case of the two former it shows itself in an attempt at keeping the law whereby the two conceptions: reward and punishment are introduced. This involves a business relationship with God, where man is balancing between these two possibilities and is trying to keep the balance down on the right side. When man has experienced the hopelessness of these attempts it can lead to fatalism as we find it in Islam. Contrary to this the Christian fear of God is acceptance of the means and ways which God has prepared. By believing in Jesus Christ and by receiving Him the true fear of God is shown.

After the sermon the Holy Communion was celebrated. Then the Bishop said the benediction in Pushtu, and in procession Bishop and Priests left the Church.

It is the first time a person has taken holy orders in the Frontier Province and in the Pushtu language. The few Pathan ministers the Anglican Church hitherto has ordained have been consecrated in Lahore and in the Urdu language. Rev. Samsun Khan drew our attention to the fact that the English Book of Common Prayer as translated into Pushtu does not contain the ritual for the ordination to priesthood. With a smile he remarked that it seemed as if the translators doubted whether this ever would be necessary. The ritual here being used is that of the Swedish Lutheran Church which has been translated into Pushtu. One of the ministers remarked afterwards, we are writing history to-day and so it was. And we are hoping that this new chapter which begins here may be written to the glory of God and for the blessing of the congregation and a witness to Muslims round about.

Majesty of Christ in Islam.

The following is taken from the Hyderabad Bulletin, dated February 11th, 1938.

A meeting was convened on Thursday evening by Mr. J. A. Joshua at his residence in Esamiah Bazaars, Hyderabad. The Hon'ble Nawab Mirza Yar Jung Bahadur presided. Hazrat Qibla Maulana Syed Mahomed Pashah Hussaini, Vaiz of the Mecca Masjid delivered an address in Urdu, emphasising the majesty of Christ's life in Islam. The Hon'ble Nawab Mirza Yar Jung Bahadur referred to the advisability of Christians and Muslims living as brethren. An acrostic composed by Mr. M. R. Reddy was read. Mr. Nalbally entertained those present with Hindusthani music, and refreshments were served to the guests.

When we read these and similar notices we would fain ask the question: Is the Christ whom the Muslims reverence the Christ of the New Testament or some idol which they have set up in His place?

Prayer and Praise.

LET US REMEMBER before God the work of the Church in the North West Frontier Province.

LET US PRAY for the work of the Henry Martyn School in its session beginning on May 1st in new conditions.

New Member.

Miss D. M. Johnson

M.M.S.

Fyzabad.

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,
Elcot Lodge,
Landour,
Mussoorie,
U. P., India.



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June

1938.

June 1st = 2nd Rabi'-uth-thani (4th mo.) 1357 A.H.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal.

The following is the report on the death of Sir Muhammad Iqbal
in the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the well-known Scholar and Poet, died at his
residence on Mayo Road, Lahore, on Thursday
April 21st at the age of 61.

His health had been indifferent for three or four years and he had
completely retired from public life, in which, at one time, he
filled a most conspicuous position. He suffered from cardiac
asthma, which became aggravated about three months ago. The
malady took a grave turn at about four o'clock on Thursday morning,
and Sir Muhammad breathed his last at 5-30 a.m. Besides his devoted
servant, who has tended him all these years, there were at his bedside
when he died three of his close friends.

Although he knew that he had not long to live, he did not give
up his literary activities altogether. Only a few days before his death
he engaged the services of a man to work at his dictation on the
manuscript of a book which he was writing. That book, which was on
the Holy Quran, is unfinished.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal was confined to bed during the last few
weeks. On Wednesday night he was quite cheerful and talked at length
with Baron von Veltheim, an old friend from Germany. They discussed
philosophy and politics until about midnight; then the visitor left
and Sir Muhammad Iqbal went to sleep. He woke up at about 2 a.m.
and complained of a swelling in his left leg. Soon after he developed
symptoms of nausea, but he remained collected. In fact, up to the
very end his mind was alert and he made philosophical observations
which showed his mental strength and serenity.