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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 XXVII.

February

1939.

February 1st=10th Dhū'l-Hijja (12th mo.) 1357 A.H.

Report of the Conference of Missionaries to Muslims.

Held in New Delhi 6th and 7th December, 1938.

(Continued from January number).

METHODS OF APPROACH

REV. H. H. RIGGS. *Beirut.*

REV. H. H. Riggs presented a report of an inquiry he had been asked to conduct on behalf of the Near East Christian Council.

The main part of the inquiry centred round two questions:—

1. What special hindrances make work for Moslems less successful than similar efforts for other people?

2. What changes in our methods or line of approach offer hope of better success?

The replies to the questions were very varied. There was no uniformity of opinion expressed, but the inquiry brought forth many practical suggestions.

Emphasis was placed on two special hindrances which seem to account for a lack of success:—

1. Christian teaching does not mean the same to the Moslem as to the Christian. What is divine truth in the mind of the Christian worker, as it reaches the mind of the Moslem listener is a falsehood which he rightly rejects, *e.g.*, Jesus as Son of God, God made flesh, the forgiveness of sin through Christ, God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

2. In the thought of the Moslem a change of religion is primarily a change of group-connection and group loyalty. The solidarity of the Moslem community is a fact to be reckoned with.

Evidence shows that there are thousands of men and women who believe in Christ and are trying to follow Him, but they cannot bring themselves to face the break with their own community. This is not always through fear or unwillingness to face the consequences. Cases have been cited of true believers who have refused to break away because they wished to make Christ known amongst their own people.

Are we right in influencing the Moslem convert to leave his own group and join ours?

In answer to the second question, suggestions were made along two lines:—

1. The way to overcome these hindrances is more devotion, more effort, more prayer, more faith, and above all, more love.

2. We must try to find a way around these obstacles so that we shall not be in the position of attacking Islam frontally, and at its strongest points. This would involve recasting our message and approach to Moslems so that, without relaxing our effort as messengers of Christ, we may win them to Him without directly overcoming the special obstacles described.

The following proposals were submitted for consideration:—

1. To avoid the obstacle of the Moslem antagonism to the main Christian doctrines:—

- (a) A sympathetic understanding of the mind and heart of Moslems is a prime necessity for anyone who would bring to them the message of Jesus Christ.
- (b) Our one effort must be effectively to make known to the Moslem, God as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. We must start with the imperfect knowledge of Jesus that Islam has already provided, and enrich it from the Gospels and from Christian experience until they see Him as He is.
- (c) Doctrinal questions need to be tackled with extreme care.
- (d) Get the inquirer to study the New Testament, and especially the Gospels, as the adequate and original source and authority for the understanding of Jesus. Do not urge him to accept our interpretations.

2. To avoid the obstacles which result from the ancient jealousy between the Christian and Moslem group organisations:—

- (a) We must avoid anything that may be interpreted as clandestine efforts to alienate the inquirer from his own people.
- (b) Many are convinced that the ultimate hope of bringing Christ to the Moslems is to be attained by the development of groups of followers of Jesus who are active in making Him known to others while remaining loyally a part of the social and political groups to which they belong in Islam.
- (c) In encouraging these "secret believers" to go forward in the Christian life without publicly professing themselves as Christians in the sense of separation from the fellowship of their own people, the purpose of such a course would be to

make possible a more effective witness to the power of Christ in their own lives, among their own people. Experience has shown that unless such effective witness develops into a group of such believers, a solitary believer seldom survives.

- (d) This would involve a re-consideration of the use of the term Christian—which in the Near East is associated with a particular group and does not necessarily mean a new way of life—and of the practice of baptism.
- (e) The greatest problem would be that of providing spiritual fellowship and nurture for those believers who remain a part of their Moslem social-political group. This might be solved partly by young missionaries “growing up” amongst Moslem people, and by the indigenous Christians developing such loving and sympathetic relations with their neighbours, that spiritual fellowship would naturally come about.

The Theological Approach.

REV. JENS CHRISTENSEN, *Mardan.*

[The Conference requested Mr. Christensen to send his paper to the *Moslem World Quarterly*. We hope it will be published in full there.]

MR. Christensen explained that by the Theological approach he meant the presentation to the Moslem of the *actual* teaching of the Church as unique in relation to the teaching of Islam. He emphasised the word “actual,” *i.e.*, not as applied to Christian lives.

We experience truth in our lives and may try to show it to others, thus setting up ourselves as object lessons. Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Therefore if the missionary set himself up as an example, he is really saying, “He that hath seen me, hath seen God.” We cannot be an example but we can point to Jesus. We cannot through our lives prove John 3: 16. It is not a matter of being better than anyone else. The Pharisee was a better man than the Publican and thanked God for it. We and the Moslems are the same fellow-sinners needing salvation. We can preach that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved, but we cannot live it.

We may try to show the workability of Christianity by applying it to special conditions. Most applications are hazy, because they are not interpretations of the mind of Jesus Christ, but of the author of some book. That makes Christianity a philosophy.

Christianity deals with sin. We grapple with our sin in the presence of Christ. I cannot grapple with yours. We cannot grapple with the Moslem's. If we do, we do it from the outside, and prevent

him from getting into the presence of God. We thus confuse ourselves with the Holy Spirit.

We say we must get round theological difficulties and simply give the Moslem the Gospel to read about Jesus Christ. That does not work. The teaching of the Church was not complete at the ascension of Christ. All the elements necessary were there, but they were not completely understood. Why have we more than the four Gospels? Why were they not sufficient? Why the Epistles? Why Pentecost? Therefore if we ask the Moslem to read the Gospels, we do not give him enough. The apostles did not realise the universality of the Gospel for a long time. We may be able to give the Gospels to an Australian Bushman and get him to a point of knowing Christ, but the Moslem already says he knows Jesus. He is very muddled but he has got a lot of knowledge.

The teaching of the Church is *unique* not only with regard to eschatology, the Virgin Birth, and doctrines in general, but with regard to prayer and all things. Moslem prayer and Christian prayer are poles apart. If it is not the work of the Holy Spirit it is not unique. Prayer is a universal urge. Christian prayer must be unique. But we do not use it to prove anything, and we cannot show it off to anyone.

When presenting Christian truth in relation to Islam, we must be so clear as to what the Moslem means by using a certain word, that we must never be accused of presenting Christian truth in such a way that they think we mean the same. Contraposition, not juxtaposition.

Do we want to make contacts? The Moslem's desire for discussion gives an open door twenty-four hours in the day. It is the message of the Master that we have to give. We must give it no matter how the Moslem reacts. It may hurt me to see him suffer. But I cannot help that.

We must not fall into sentimentalism. Christianity demands the whole person, the head, the heart and the will. We must not touch just the Moslem's heart. Christ must have his head as well, and his will.

The Church and the Convert.

REV. D. A. CHOWDHURY, CALCUTTA.

THERE are over 25 million Muslims in Bengal, more than one-third the Muslim population of India.

56% are Muslims, 43% Hindus, and 1% for the rest. Around Calcutta 70% are Muslims. In some districts the percentage is as high as 90.

Group movements began a hundred years ago among the Muslims in certain districts. Whole villages became Christian. The movement was arrested for various reasons, but converts still kept coming. The proportion of Muslim converts in the Bengal Church is not negligible. Many are men of high standing. But many villages have gone back to Islam.

One cause of unsatisfactoriness is the fact that converts have not been sent back to their home and family to win them. Mr. Chowdhury himself when baptised was sent off to Calcutta, 500 miles away from his home. Why? Through fear that the mission bungalow would be burnt. It had been burnt once. It might have been done again. That would have been Rs. 10,000 loss. But what about his own loss? It took ten years to convince his relatives that he had benefitted by becoming a Christian. Where the convert remained with his family the results were unthinkable. One such brought a hundred families.

Another cause is that the Bengali Church is not evangelistic, and has not been sending out apostles for preaching. Therefore the task of the missionary to-day is to raise up leaders in the church.

Again, missionaries have led lives in isolation from the people. They cannot win the confidence and friendship of the people without entering into their lives and living amongst them. The mission bungalow is often the greatest barrier.

Recently the Bengal Christian Council got together a team to go to 15 Moslem villages in Bengal. In this team were two Moslem converts. Most of the Moslems were friendly and desired to know more about Christ. The witness of one Moslem convert, who was a native of the place, moved many. One prominent Moslem said he was ready for baptism, but he is going to win some of his family first.

Bengal is an open door, but it may not remain so always.

Points from the Discussion.

Bishop Thompson, Iran.

To win the Moslem and get near to him, we must get on real Christian ground. It is not a case of getting round obstacles. We have never yet had our frontal attack.

There are four steps in the approach :—

1. Presentation of Christian truth—not an attack.
2. Explanation. We must explain our situation, partly because of our own faults, partly because of the Moslem's own false estimate of Jesus Christ. We must eradicate that false estimate. A poster was published with Jesus Christ in among a number of prophets. We must change the position of Jesus Christ to the centre of thought.

3. Example. This is important but it is not the only way. We cannot exemplify Jesus Christ, but we can, so far as in us lies, show the meaning of love and of the Cross.

4. Invitation. There must be the challenge of Jesus Christ but it must be a spiritual challenge. Only by our own example can we show that we are not making an attack, but giving an invitation. We must show the Moslem the possibility of a new life. Jesus Christ does meet our moral and spiritual needs.

Methods are local things. There is no royal road. Various factors come in, e.g. Government, religious opposition. Our very limitations may be the real means of our expression of the meaning of the Cross.

A Moslem convert said, "You have not emphasised the point where Islam is more easy to approach than other religions. e.g.

- (a) Moslems are People of a Book.
- (b) Tabligh, propagation of the faith.
- (c) Their sense of fellowship.

In our Church we have group fellowships that include non-Christians. We can get further in our appeal in smaller groups. Individual teaching and friendship play a great part.

In the villages there are groups of men and women going out to do evangelistic work. These are growing up all round the main centres.

The building up of the Church is all-important. The Church may be likened to the spear head on the shaft. We may spend a long time building up the shaft, i.e., permeating the country with Christian ideas, but that is useless without the spear head, i.e., the Church. Only this can witness to the Moslems around. A Moslem cannot witness to his own people without the fellowship of the Church.

How the Church is to be built up :—

1. Intensive—to help men to understand what Christian fellowship means.
2. Development of the meaning of worship.
3. Importance of moral values. Christianity must show in conduct. It is amazing how many can separate Christian faith from conduct.
4. Growth in real leadership. Spirit of evangelism. Groups with this evangelistic spirit are growing up. That is the hope.

Mr. S. A. Morrison, Cairo,

Where would it be possible for a Moslem to witness in his own group? The problem is not baptism, but whether he would be allowed to remain in his own community.

What we want is not a new conception of the convert, but of the Church. How can we make a place in the Church for Moslem converts? How can the Church retain its connection with all that is good in the community around? There is also the question of the

church's relation with the older churches. The newer churches have not sought the help of the older churches in evangelism as they might have done.

Rev. J. A. Subhan, India.

He had been a convert for 27 years, but did not know a single instance of a Moslem who had declared himself Christian, and stayed in his own community. If the transfer of allegiance is complete, he is bound to come out. He *must* decide.

Rev. J. K. Birge, Turkey.

The problem is how to conserve the groups of Christian believers till the time when open confession is possible. The groups of people who are becoming increasingly Christian are first, family groups. Then there are groups who do not call themselves Christian, but are followers of Jesus, and have witnessed before other Moslems, and caused some to change their lives. Others are turning increasingly to find their inspiration in Jesus.

Rev. A. Nielson, Jerusalem.

There is now a revival of the Arab religion for political reasons. Ramzan was stricter than ever. No radio was allowed, and nothing foreign. Islam is getting stronger than before the war.

The church is looked on as a foreign body, Missions must work through the indigenous church and not as isolated units. The Church must be strengthened and become a witness-bearing body. The growth of the Christian Church is not due to apostles, martyrs, and apologetics, but to the witness of every individual Christian.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT, 1938.

RECEIPT.				EXPENDITURE.			
	RS.	A.	P.		RS.	A.	P.
Balance from 1937 ...	38	4	0	Printing...	247	1	0
Subscription for 1938.	386	13	0	Postages	162	0	3
V.P. from Rev. J.				Balance in hand on			
Christensen	2	3	0	December, 1938 ...	18	2	9
	<u>Rs. 427</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>Rs. 427</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>

Examined and found correct,

(MISS) A. N. THOMPSON,

MRS. A. P. LAZARUS.

January 7, 1939.

BOOK NOTICE.

The Golden Milestone. Reminiscences of Pioneer Days Fifty Years Ago in Arabia. By Samuel M. Zwemer and James Cantine. Revell Company, New York. \$ 1.50.

PRAISE AND PRAYER.

The Board of Foreign Missions, Reformed Church in America, is celebrating the "Golden Milestone" of their Mission in Arabia. Special Anniversary Services are to be held on February 26th.

Let us thank God for all that has been accomplished in Arabia during these fifty years, and pray for His special blessing on the Golden Jubilee Celebrations.

NEW MEMBER.

Rev. H. Spencer

M.M.S.

Hyderabad, Dn.

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 :—

Miss K. Greenfield,
Methodist Mission,
Medak, Nizam's Dominions.
(Till the end of February.)

