

Missionaries to Muslims League

News and Notes.

Series V, No. 10.

February, 1917.

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

FROM REV. W. H. GAIRDNER, B.A., C.M.S., CAIRO

At a time like this, when the heart of the nation is deeply stirred, and when the Church of Christ is seeking to claim all that is best for the accomplishment of God's purposes, it is impossible to ignore the question, "What about Muhammadanism?" But first of all

What Is Christianity?

Are we clear on the answer to this question? Has the stringent appeal of social questions made it appear that Christianity is simply a sort of keen social sense? or, if theology must be included, then simply a belief in some dimly-known Divine Being? No such thing can be imagined. If it were so, then indeed there would be no conceivable relation between our mission and Muhammadanism, for every Muhammadan claims to have a keen social sense, and to believe in a by no means dimly-known Divine Being. But do we missionaries make it for ever clear that Christianity is not so much that which it shares with other religions or systems of thought as that which it does *not* share: that which is special and peculiar to itself: its own essence: Immanuel, God *in Christ*. Christ sent, crucified, risen, glorified; God revealed by, through, and in this Christ, both *then* in the days of His flesh, and now in the days of the Church, by His Spirit:—have we or has the world any use for a Christianity that is emasculated of any particle of this content? Does not history echo the voice of the New Testament, loudly ratifying that only in these things does the dynamic, the driving power, of Christianity reside; that Christianity without these things is a cipher; or, at most, as salt granules with the saltness, and so the salt-hood gone out of them?

We desire to carry out the will of our Father in regard to His whole world. And He has told us that howsoever may be His promises or His self-revealings, they are all summed up in His Christ. When His self-revelation is honoured and hallowed, then will His kingdom have come, and His will be done.

What Is Islam?

How about Muhammadanism? (The question insists on recurring.)

It denies Christianity in toto:—in this sense, that it denies the essence of the thing; the saltness of the salt.

• It is monotheism without the Christ of God; and therefore without the God of Christ. For though a certain character, called Jesus Christ, is mentioned, that character is totally devoid of interest; it is lost in the crowd; overtopped by more dominant personalities, more important Messengers; it was not the eternal Beloved; did not institute that feast of the broken bread and the poured-out wine; did not for love's sake lay down life; did not shed blood; did not die nor rise again; did not ascend to the right hand of Power, to perpetual intercession and dynamic life for men. Thus the Koran, and thus every Muhammadan book and every Muhammadan believer from the days of the Arabian till to-day.

Speaking dispassionately then, speaking without cant, honestly and with decency of clear thinking in the light of plain facts, can these two things—that great Assertion and this great Denial—be reconciled? Is the name of our Father which is in Heaven equally hallowed, and His will equally done, in the solemn assertion and the solemn repudiation of these things?

It cannot be so, and it is not so.

Christianity and Muhammadanism

Apologists both in Christendom and Islam would have us believe that equally both systems have come to stay (presumably, therefore, that both are equally true), and that we should settle down to the thought that the two sister-religions should and will pursue their respective tracks in the civilising of humanity.

We are not called on, it is true, to say what may be the purpose of God for Islam in His world to-day, now that it is in being in the midst of the nations. Divine Providence had a task for the Roman Empire even when it was working against the Church of God, and when that Church was silently working to subdue that Empire to Christ. In the same way, the Church leaves to Divine Providence to assign to Islam its historic task, while looking forward with clear vision and marching forward with unhesitating feet to the bringing of Islam into the obedience of Christ; when it will not abandon but re-read its own name,* "Surrender," and find that it means "Surrender to Allah and to His own Messiah." Are we clear about this? Islam on its side is perfectly clear-sighted about these questions. It is working ceaselessly, and we know that every convert won is not only hopelessly lost to the Church of Christ, but sets himself immediately into an attitude of considered antagonism—except at coalition public meetings in London, the object of which, however, is *wholly* to advance the interests of Islam. Thus sacred duty and logical inevitableness coincide, as they are always sure to do.

Will the Task Be Easier?

The universal breaking up caused by this war will assuredly bring new opportunities and many increased facilities. Yet, the difficulties of the task of bringing Islam into the obedience of God's Christ will be as

* Al'islām = Surrender.

great as ever they were. The new opportunities will not lessen the spiritual and intrinsic difficulties; they will simply make possible new approaches. To the great Assertion the great Denial will still bring the great Refusal; for here we are dealing with spiritual, not political, facts. Nothing, again, is to be hoped from internal reform—the spread of a sort of Protestant Reformation—in Islam; for, as a matter of fact, it is by precisely these educated persons and reformers that anti-Christian religious movements are fostered and Islamic propagation movements initiated. The more tradition is given up, the greater will be the prominence given to the Koran. And this “shortening of the lines” and surrender of very easily assaulted positions may, in truth, only prove a strength to Islam.

The One Hope

Therefore, not in anything human whatsoever must hope be put for the task of achieving the apparently impossible; neither might nor power—political; nor gold nor silver—material; nor new possibilities of successful argumentation—philosophical; but

“O Israel, hope in *the Lord*, from this time forth and for ever more.”

In the Lord, the Lord's Christ, the Spirit of Jesus (these three are one).

PEACE, PERFECT PEACE

As I take up the work of the League again, it is with gratitude to God that He has spared me to do something more for the evangelisation of the Muslim world. I feel deeply indebted, as all the members will do, to the Revs. H. A. Walter and W. Goldsack for all the time, thought and work which they have given to the interests of the League during the past two years.

Just now we would experience in a very real sense the peace which Christ alone can give. The tumultuous state of the world is very disquieting and one wonders what the end will be. Missionaries, in common with others, have had to face sacrifice and suffering, and many hearts are bruised and crushed. At such a time we crave the hourly presence of the Christ, whose heartening message is—“My Peace I give unto you.”

And what of our work? There is perhaps no Christian service in the East which tends so much to the contentious as that among Muslims. We are apt to strive. Faithful and exacting labour is necessary; controversy cannot always be avoided, but with Christ as the unseen Comrade at our side and the Holy Spirit indwelling our hearts there are powers mighty enough without our striving.

The Prospects are Bright

Are there not signs of progress being made in connection with the work? Some years back it was the extraordinary thing to read

stories of converts from Islam, but now the missionary magazines have often inspiring accounts of those who have faced bitter persecution in their determined stand as followers of the Saviour, and these must be only the striking cases among a large company. It strengthens our peace, based upon a confidence in the wonder-working Saviour.

Then the shock of revived heresies in the Indian Muslim world should be assurance enough to the Christian worker that the impact of Christian Missions upon Islam is being felt more than we imagine. Muslims with modern education are not satisfied with things as they are. Many of them are fast becoming enamoured of the Qadiani hotchpotch of errors, which attempts to make Christianity look absurd, but in doing so denies also the corroborative evidence in Islam itself:

To me it is hopeful that these people in their attacks are facing some of the essential doctrines of our faith. Kamal-ud-Din is supposed to be a missionary of Islam in London, yet every issue of his magazine, the *Islamic Review*, has teaching in violent opposition to that of the Quran, and there is evidence of an anxiety to rake up worn-out rationalistic arguments against the universality of sin and the Deity of our Lord.

A Feverish Desire to Save Muhammad

In the meetings of the Islamia Anjuman, held in Bengal, much activity is displayed in distributing Mussulmani Bengali books, written by Maulvies, dealing with such subjects as "Is Jesus sinless?" and "The Doctrine of the Atonement." Then it is interesting to scan last year's file of *The Epiphany*, the Calcutta Christian paper which does so much in the way of answering the difficulties of the student community. In this paper Muslims of the modern type often reveal their inmost thought. By their letters it is evident that they have ransacked all Islamic literature within their reach in a desperate attempt to save Muhammad to Islam as a sure pleader on their behalf on the Day of Doom.

Surely, when the thoughtful men of Islam are so concerned about such fundamentals as the universality of Sin, the Sinlessness, Atoning Sacrifice and Intercessory Power of Jesus, then we may well take heart and press forward in prayer, believing that the Holy Spirit is working through faithful souls who know that God has called them to win the Muslim world for the Redeemer.

J. TAKLE.

"HOW CHRIST WON MY HEART"

A RESUME, BY REV. H. A. WALTER, M.A.

During the League year of 1915-16 a number of brief "human documents" were published in *News and Notes*, in which Muslim converts to Christianity gave the main facts that led them to the costly renunciation of their inherited faith and cherished family ties, involved in the acceptance of Christ. The Secretary of the League has asked

me to summarize the instructive points, contained in these spiritual records, which may be of service to us all in our glorious common task of leading the followers of Muhammad into the light of the full revelation of the truth as it is in Jesus. There are six of these articles and two other accounts of conversions from Islam which I have included in the summary, making eight in all. They represent all parts of India and various ages and professions, although it is significant that a majority were Maulvies of mature years who had had exceptional opportunity to study Islam and to know and practice its privileges to the full. Furthermore, all but one of the eight are now in active Christian missionary service. One is reminded of Dr. Wherry's statement, in *Christianity and Islam in India and the Far East*, that there were, at that writing, more than two hundred Christian workers, in North India alone, who had formerly been Muslims. I find that statement, easily verifiable and quite conservative, meets with incredulity at home, where the general opinion seems to be that all the converts to Christianity in India are from among the Hindus and out-castes. In view of the difficulty and paucity of conversions from Islam in Turkey, Persia, and Egypt, it ought to make us, who are at work in India, even more faithful and joyful in pressing our great advantage at the very point of Islam's farthest advance.

Value of the Scriptures

The first principle that stands forth in reading these confessions is the primary importance of the use of the Christian Scriptures in dealing with these people who have so highly exalted their own scriptures, and in whose eyes we are to some extent respected as "People of the Book." The Scriptures carry their own vindication, and enforce their own truth. One Mulla was first interested in Christianity through stumbling upon a copy of the Bible in a Muhammadan mosque, the reading of which led him to seek out a Christian magistrate whom he knew. This friend in turn passed him on to the missionaries, by whom he was ultimately won to Christ. The Maulvi of a Muslim regiment was handed a Bible by a missionary in Arabia who had time to give him only the briefest verbal introduction to its contents. Nevertheless, the Bible was read and awakened such interest in the Maulvi's mind that at the first opportunity he sought out other missionaries in Bombay, and by them was in time baptized. Another first heard the Bible stories as a boy in Sunday school, and the impression they made on his sensitive mind and heart never left him. Still another traced the origin of the influences leading to his conversion to the mission school compulsory Bible period, ten years before he finally confessed Christ openly. The Bible reading and exposition in a mission hospital was the means of grace used by the Spirit to lead one of the others into the Kingdom. In two instances the early study of the Quran, with its thought-provoking references to the prophet, *Isa*, exerted an appreciable influence in the later decision to read the New Testament in order to learn what the Christians believed about the prophet so highly honoured by Muhammad.

Comparing the Bible and Quran

In nearly every case a comparison of the Quran and the Bible was a prominent factor in the ultimate conversion, which suggests that in our work with Muslims after bringing them face to face with the Christian Scriptures it is often wise to send them back to the Quran to find for themselves what nourishment for the soul is there, to compare with the rich spiritual food contained in the New Testament. The Bible reading Muslim who does not know his own book at first-hand may always cherish a secret belief that there must be as good, perhaps better, teaching to be found there, if the same degree of application is used to discover it. I may say that these records further confirm me in my own belief that so valuable is this comparative study that we make no mistake in endeavouring to lead a young Muslim, who does not really know the Quran, and is perhaps intolerant of all religious books, to read his own scriptures patiently, and try to sift the chaff from the wheat, letting him see that we ourselves realize and rejoice that there is some wheat there. Our Muslim friend is then in a more satisfactory frame of mind in which to study with us, sympathetically, intelligently and conclusively, the vastly superior spiritual teachings of the Old and New Testament.

When we enquire what it was in the Scriptures which appealed to the Muslims in these cases, we see how the comparison accomplished its work, and the very weakness of Islam pointed the way to the strength of Christianity. One of them was irresistably attracted to Christ because of the absence in Him of ambition for worldly goods and selfish achievements, and because He lived out His teachings in His own daily life. The contrast in the case of Muhammad is obvious. Another was first captivated by the meekness of Jesus ; another by His sinless character. The nature and efficacy of Jesus' intercession, as opposed to that of Muhammad in post-quranic Islam, deeply impressed one who also realized on how much more vital a knowledge of human nature was based the salvation proclaimed by Jesus as the free gift of God.

The Value of the Christian Life

Only second in importance to the study of Jesus' teaching and character in the New Testament comes the witness to the same in present-day Christian lives, in "the Gospel according to you." In the case of one of these Muslims, who had long been acquainted with the main facts of the life of Christ and had used them only as the butt of ridicule and abuse, an experience of the forgiving love of Christ as shown in the life of a missionary led him to a new and, that time, open-minded study of Christ's life, in order to find for himself the source of this, to him, altogether unique manifestation of love. A second writer couples with his early appreciation of the meekness of Christ, as given in the Bible records, the impression made upon him by actually meeting with that characteristic in the lives of two Christian teachers in the Mission school which he attended. Whether specifically mentioned or not, it is certain that in all of these cases, and indeed

in practically all conversions to Christ everywhere, the living witness of the Spirit in Christ-filled lives is an indispensable concomitant of the testimony to His power contained in the Scriptures. And usually it is in particular the incomparable, undiscourageable *love* of the Christian, the love that believes all things, and endures all things, and will never let go, that finally "breaks every barrier down" and brings conviction and confession.

The Element of Prayer

Along with the witness of the Scriptures and of living Christian character there is a large element of prayer involved in every conversion. The prayer of Christian friends is always emphasized, rightly, but perhaps we do not think enough of the importance of getting our Muslim friends to pray for themselves *as Muslims*. This is especially stressed in the experience of one of these converts, who feels that his prayers, faithfully performed in Muslim times and ways through ten long years of enquiry and spiritual struggle, held him to the quest and finally brought him through to the light. Let us thankfully admit that in the Muslim belief in the necessity and efficacy of prayer, however incomplete in its conception and often wholly formal in its practice, there is opened to us, and to the Holy Spirit who moves in answer to believing prayer, a favourable avenue along which conviction of the truth of Christ may be brought home directly to the seeking heart.

An interesting fact to be noted in passing, in practically all these cases, is the length of time that elapsed between the beginning and the completion of the task of bringing these souls into the Kingdom.

"Let no one think that sudden, in a minute,

All is accomplished and the work is done.

Though with thine earliest dawn thou should'st begin it

Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun." (Myer's *St. Paul*.)

In most cases the process occupied several years and the agencies entering in, to bring it to completion, were many. Paul planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase. A chance sentence let fall by a preacher or teacher, a tract or chapter in some Christian book perused many years before, was recognized at last to have set in motion currents of thought and enquiry which finally resulted in conversion. And what is even more striking is the fact that in nearly every one of these instances there was a period of hesitation, of wavering, perhaps even of actual recanting, between the first conviction and the final establishment in Christian truth and service. Sometimes the delay resulted happily in the convert coming into the Kingdom, at last, bringing his wife and family, or other friends, with him—the fruit of the sharing of his problems and probings and illuminations. Whether the delay was desirable or not in some cases, its prevalence in so many of those who were brought through must encourage us at times when the progress of enquirers seems so slow, and results appear so scanty, after years of labour. Ours must be not only "the patience of unanswered prayer," but the patience born of the assurance that he who began the good work will perfect it until the

day of Jesus Christ. We are not responsible for the harvest but only for the sowing of the seeds, and we can be sure that if watered by our prayers, the seeds are germinating in these hidden hearts and will, in God's good time, bring forth fruit unto eternal life. In conclusion, I should like to give once more the summing up, by one of the original contributors, Prof. Siraj-ud-Din, of the lessons that he believed were to be learned from his particular experience, as follows:—

(1) The value of getting hold of the youth at the right and impressionable age.

(2) The value of prayer in all religious quest.

(3) Faithfulness in the teaching of the Word of God, and the value of the Bible period in schools and colleges.

(4) The importance of persuasion, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, to an enquirer to come out, and the dangers of procrastinating.

(5) The value of educational missions, provided the missionary motive and policy holds the first place in the whole scheme as well as in the details of the work.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

“Wait on the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage.”—Psa. 27: 14.

Pray for the movement amongst Muhammadans in the Jessore District, Bengal: that the missionaries there may be able to win over a multitude to the cause of Christ.

Pray for an educated Maulvie at Brahmanbaria, who cannot keep away from the Mission House and Christian Services, yet clings to the honour shown him by the Muslim villagers.

NOTES

“Lord Headley Fined”

This is the heading of a notice which appeared in the *Statesman* the other day. It appears that the principal convert of the Muslim Mission in England had to answer before the magistrate in Tower Bridge Police Court a charge of being drunk and disorderly. The evidence showed other misbehaviour. He was fined ten shillings. He gave notice of appeal.

Prayer Cycle

It has been decided not to issue this for 1917.

The Annual Subscription to the League is Rs. 2-8-0 (3s. 4d.) Members are requested to send news and requests for prayer to

Brahmanbaria, Bengal.

JOHN TAKLE,
Hon. Sec., M. M., League.