

Missionaries to Muslims League

News and Notes.

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IDEALISING THE REAL

BY REV. S. M. ZWEMER, D.D.

In all our work for Muslims we need to keep steadily before us the supreme motive, which is also the supreme method, namely, love. When the love of Christ constrains us nothing is difficult, nothing impossible, without it all our plans are frustrated and hopes withered. Personally I have found inspiration and help by reading Paul's great hymn in First Corinthians xiii, and applying it clause by clause to our Muslim brethren. How high is the ideal and how the apostle himself must have struggled in his soul to meet it. In his Epistles we have a clear record of his own changed attitude as regards the Jews in this very connection. The problem of reaching them with the Gospel must have been very similar to that which faces us among Muhammadans. In his earliest letter he speaks of them in these terms:—

"The Jews! They murdered the Lord, murdered Jesus, murdered his prophets before him: they have hounded us, his apostles, from city to city: they are kindling God's displeasure; they are the enemies of all the human race—they are enemies, in that they fain would hinder me from so speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved! In all this they are steadily filling up the measure of their own sins. But God's wrath has overtaken them: it is the beginning of the end."

Five or six years went by. He endured more persecution from this very people, but he also learned to know more deeply the power of the love of Christ; and when he writes to the Romans he has learned the great lesson. No longer is he willing to know the Jews "after the flesh." He has learnt to idealise the real. His love has covered a multitude of sins with the mantle of compassion and sympathy. He says (again we use Arthur S. Way's translation):—

"Truth unfeigned is this—I speak by our Messiah's inspiration, and my own conscience, prompted by the Holy Spirit, appears as witness for me—that bitter sorrow is mine, and anguish that gives my heart no respite. Fain, O fain would I be myself the accused scapegoat, driven from our Messiah's presence, if so I might deliver my brothers, those who are my own flesh and blood—the Jews! For they are the sons of Israel: theirs was the sonship of God, theirs the Glory of the Visible Presence. With them were His covenants made; to them the Law was given. To them was revealed the Temple-ritual, to them the promises. Theirs were the Patriarch-fathers: yes, and, in so far as He is human, theirs is the Messiah. God, who is supreme over all, be blessed evermore for this! Amen."

It is possible for everyone of us to go through the same experience by the same method, and it is the only secret of success. This morning I was reading a little manual of Muslim devotion published in Colombo in Tamil as well as in Arabic. It was the book of prayers of the Naqshabandi Derwishes, and is typical of this kind of literature,

which is everywhere in the hands and on the lips of the common people. Here is a translation of a prayer for pardon:

"I am truly bankrupt, O God. I stand before the door of thy riches. Truly I have great sins, forgive me for thine own sake. Truly I am a stranger, a sinner, a humble slave who has nothing but forgetfulness and disobedience to present to Thee. My sins are as the sand without number. Forgive me and pardon me. Remove my transgression and undertake my cause. Truly my heart is sick, but thou art able to heal it. My condition, O my God, is such that I have no good work. My evil deeds are many and my provision of obedience is small. Speak to the fire of my heart as thou didst in the case of Abraham, 'Be cool, O fire, for my friend!'"

What a beautiful prayer this is for pardon. What heart-aching to realise God's forgiveness, and yet all these petitions are directed to God for the sake of the Arabian Prophet! So near and yet so far is the Muslim heart from Him. When the prodigal was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran out to meet him. Shall we not do the same? I plead for a greater manifestation of love by speech, by message and by the ministry of friendship. Let us learn from Paul to idealise the real, to see the best and seize it as a point of contact for individual soul-winning.

Colombo, June 20.

SYMPOSIUM ON THE USE OF "ISA NABI."

In our May issue we published a letter from the Rev. W. Goldsack on the use of the title, *Isa Nabi*. We invited letters on the subject, and have received the following:—

The Lord Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India writes:

"The use of this term does not seem to me desirable. I do not think it is a question of recognising frankly the manhood of our blessed Lord so much as of putting Him in a recognised category, or class, of Messengers of God—and that not necessarily the highest, for, while the terms cannot be definitely contrasted, there are aspects in which the *Rasul* stands higher than the *Nabi*. Such connotations need to be borne in mind where it is proposed to employ a term which avowedly is not in ordinary Christian use, but is borrowed from Muhammadan theology with a view to making our message easier and commending it more to them. I feel sure that no Muhammadan would think of speaking of his Prophet simply as *Muhammad Nabi*. The term may be used with honorifics, e.g., *Anhazrat Nabi Arabi*, or the like, but I think other titles—simply *Anhazrat*, or *Muh*:—*Rasul Ullah*, with the formula of blessing—are far commoner, and we ought not to run the risk of suggesting a lower status for our Lord. In any case there is nothing in the New Testament to authorise the term, at any rate as one of ordinary use, and I think fidelity to N. T. usage is our best guide in such questions, whether dealing with Muhammadans or any others. In my own preaching I always used *Hazrat* or, generally, *Khudawand*, and this appears to me the wisest course.

The Rev. Canon Goldsmith, of Madras, writes:—

“With regard to the use of this or any other titles and names used by Muhammadans, I always act on the principle that, as our Urdu accent and pronunciation may be seriously defective, it is most important that our hearers should understand *Whom we are speaking of*, and therefore it is often expedient to use their own expressions. On the same ground I would use the darud ‘*alaihissalam*’ (Peace upon him) out of respect to *their* ideas of honour to any Prophet: but in this latter case it would only be in extreme necessity.

“As ‘*Hazrat*’ is used of *everybody*, it is open to grave objection, if we wish to distinguish our Lord Jesus Christ. *Khudāvand* is the right title for Him, but very naturally raises a protest from most Muhammadan hearers, and therefore (to avoid unnecessary interruption) ‘*Hazrat*’ may be used, when an audience is captious, in order that our address may proceed.

“The Qur’an undoubtedly admits our Lord’s humanity, and we have not to prove it, though there have been heresies that seemed to deny it. Our main difficulty is, therefore, with proving His Divinity, and when they refuse to accept the evidence of our Scriptures, it is indeed hard—except for the fact that they all know we believe it. They deny that His titles ‘*Ruhullah*’ and ‘*Kalimatullah*’ teach His Divinity, and perhaps our only reply is that we consider they do, especially in view of John i, 1, etc., and we must be safe in holding to what God has revealed to us in His Word.”

The Principal of the Henry Martyn (C.M.S.) Divinity School, Calcutta, writes:—

“In my opinion ‘*Isa Masih*,’ and not ‘*Isa Nabi*,’ should be employed. We recognise that *Masih equals prophet plus Priest plus King*, and is therefore comprehensive. We should not think of using the titles, *Jesus the Priest*, or *Jesus the King*; why, then, *Jesus the Prophet*?”

The opinion of the Ex-Maulana, recently baptised:—

“In response to your inquiries regarding the use of *Isa Nabi*, may I be allowed to express my opinion on the subject in a few following lines.

“As salvation depends on believing in *Jesus as the Son of God and Christ*, and not *Jesus as prophet*, my conviction is that we must always represent *Jesus to Muhammadans emphasising His divine nature*. Of course there is no harm in saying that *Jesus is a prophet or the Son of Man*, but our duty is to preach the Gospel. The Gospel is that *Jesus is the Son of God*, and God gave not a ‘*prophet*’ but His only begotten Son (St. John iii, 16).

“We must be very careful not to give up one inch of this, our true doctrine of salvation, to gain the mind of Muhammadans or anybody else. If we give up our true doctrine we make our work all the more difficult.

“Whenever I preach I never use the word ‘*Isa Nabi*’; it is because there is no Gospel in it. I always use the word ‘*Hadrat Isa Masih*.’ I have spoken to several experienced Christian preachers, and find their opinion coincides with mine.

“*NURAL MASIH*” (*Baptismal name*).

The Rev. Canon Hooper, reviser of the Hindi Bible, and author of *Sin and Salvation*, writes:—

“ I heartily agree with Mr. Goldsack in advocating the retention of the title ‘Nabi’ (and also ‘Paighambar’) in speaking to Muslims of our Lord. Only we often find it necessary to add a denial of His being ‘Maliz Nabi.’ And I agree, even more strongly than Mr. Goldsack seems to do, in deprecating the use of the perverted (or inverted) form of His personal name, Isa, except where it is necessary in order to show whom one is speaking of. But I am surprised that he even mentioned as an alternative to this the almost-as-much-corrupted form of that name, which the weakness of the Greek language compelled it to adopt. There can be no doubt whatever that our Lord was called by His Jewish contemporaries what the High Priest of the Restoration is called in Ezra and Nehemiah, *viz.*, *YESHU*; and *this* is the form which I *always* use in speaking of Him in Hindustani (only dropping the ‘*ain*’ in company which would not appreciate it). And it seems to me that this the only form of that blessed name which we have any right, as a rule, to use.”

The Rev. J. I. Hasler, B.A., of the B.M.S., Bankipur, writes:—

“The article which Mr. Goldsack has written on this point is characterized by his usual thoroughness and lucidity, and to my mind present ample reasons for the use of this term in dealing with Muslims, not however as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. It is on a par with the ordinary Muhammadan designation of our Lord as ‘Hazrat Isa.’ In bazaar preaching or individual religious conversation it is essential to find out some common ground upon which your audience and you may meet, and make that the base of operations, as it were. The use of either ‘Isa Nabi’ or ‘Hazrat Isa’ suggests at once to their mind the person of whom you are talking: it is the name which they are accustomed to apply to Him, and expresses the grade of dignity and rank of honour which they assign to Him. The Christian goes further, it is true, than this, but he can start here, and by starting here he is not likely to engender feelings of bigotry or hostility in his hearers’ minds at the very outset of his remarks. Indeed, he will be more likely to retain their attention as he advances further. At any rate, he will not excite controversy from the very beginning of his preaching. Nicodemus came to Christ with this creed only, that He was a teacher come from God. He apparently learned, ere he left Christ, that He was the only begotten Son of the Father, and Giver of Life to the world.”

DR. ZWEMER'S VISIT

Dr. Zwemer has been and gone. He literally raced through India. On the morning, June 15th, he arrived in Calcutta by the Panjab mail, and in the evening left by the Madras mail to connect with the China steamer at Colombo on the 20th.

About twenty Christian workers met in the afternoon at the home of Mr. Paul, the National Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., and those who had never met the Doctor before were struck with his force of character and his amazing knowledge and outlook and insight into all that pertains to the Islāmic world.

His address was an interpretation of what he expects this war will do for missions to Muslims. He is hopeful for the opening up of long-closed territory and of the readiness of the Muslim heart to receive every missionary who will go to them in the spirit of sympathy and friendliness, but he is fearful lest the Allies may hinder the entry of the Gospel into Muslim lands, as Britain has done in Nigeria. Much prayer is needed that the Christian world be ready at the close of the war to extend to the Turks and other Muslims, whose hearts will be sore indeed, the spirit of brotherliness, also that our rulers be inclined to give missions their rightful place in the re-constitution of territories and governments.

We gladly welcome the article specially written by the Doctor for this issue of *News and Notes*.

Dr. Zwemer's visit to India has revived our memory of the Lucknow Conference, when the problem of evangelising the Muslim world was considered in all its bearings. If any of our members or other Christian workers have not seen the privately-printed report of that Conference, entitled *Lucknow, 1911*, we would advise them to secure a copy from the C. L. S., Madras. It has 293 pages of most useful information for the worker among Muslims. Dr. Zwemer says: "I have been reading it again, and I am surprised how much good material it contains.

Before sailing for China, the Doctor wrote:—

"Here in Colombo I have been studying the literature question. I find to my surprise that the Muslim press is very active and is publishing in Tamil-Arabic a considerable quantity of Sufi literature. All the Muslims of Ceylon seem to be Sunni, and most of them belong to two of the Derwish Orders. What is interesting is that they have a complete Qur'ān commentary in Tamil printed in Bombay and sold here. I have had a delightful conference with some of the leaders and have introduced to them our League. Many, who are deeply interested, are praying with us for the Muslims.

"THE DISINTEGRATION OF ISLAM"

BY DR. ZWEMER.

"The stars from their courses are fighting against Sisera, and the future is dark for those who believe that Islām is the hope of the world." Thus writes Dr. Zwemer in his new book, *The Disintegration of Islam*. On all sides there are evidences of decay in Islām, and in all Muslim writings, whether by Egyptian, Persian or Indian authors, there is the same note of despair.

In this book of 231 pages, which contains lectures delivered in the interest of Missions at the Princeton Theological Seminary in October, 1915, Dr. Zwemer presents to his readers a wealth of quotation from Muslim sources proving conclusively his thesis.

In the first chapter we are shown "The Dead Weight of Tradition," a subject baffling to the mission worker, but still more troubling to the average Muslim, especially he who lives where *Pax Britannica* holds sway. The author says:

"It is impossible to understand or to interpret the character of Muslim tradition without realizing two things. First, that this mass of so-called learning touches every article of the Muslim faith and practice, deals with every detail of home-life, trade, politics, war, jurisprudence; that it is, in fact, an encyclopedic of correct conduct and right opinion on every possible subject. In this respect Muslim tradition is like the Jewish Talmud. Again it must be remembered that, because of the character of Muhammad and still more because of that of his companions, and the emphasis laid upon slavery, polygamy, concubinage, and divorce as privileges for believers, Muslim tradition is in part unutterably vile in its character."

The author shows how traditionalism lays a dead hand on the social life, education and general progress of all Muslim lands.

A revolt against this type of Islám began early, and in the second chapter the author deals with "The Revolt and Its Failure." It has proceeded along three lines. (1) Attempts to spiritualize the doctrines of Islám (Sufism) in which Al Ghazali is the outstanding and most influential example. "Ghazali revolted against the literalism and Phariseism of tradition, and although he did not abandon the foundations of Islám, he yet sought in the superstructure to interpret creed and ritual on spiritual lines."

(2) Attempts to rid Islám of excrescences and thus minimize the weight of tradition. Wahabiism illustrates this. But "Wahabiism is a strong argument that Islám, even when reformed to its original purity, has no power to save a people."

(3) Syncretism (new wine into old bottles) by the establishment of new sects, such as Babism, Bahaism, and the Ahmadiya movement. This might be called Muslim eclecticism.

"One cannot read the pages of these mystics or study the rise of these new sects without finding in them the cry of prodigals who are yet a great way off."

Chap. III, "The Political Collapse," is a striking piece of writing, and is full of interest in view of the war. Morocco, Persia, Tripoli, Egypt, the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, all pass in review, and all point to the collapse of Pan-Islámism, and the failure of the *jihad* exposes the effete character of the Turkish Khalifate.

Chap. IV deals with "The New Islám." It tells of the intellectual awakening of the Muslim world, and the dissatisfaction it has brought about. In nearly all Muslim lands there are now powerful parties of reform, demanding education on more modern lines, the checking of polygamy and slavery, and the abandoning of the veil. And these reform forces have seen the value of the press.

"It is in the Muslim press that we can best study the conflict which began only a few decades ago, and is still going on ever more fiercely between the old and the new schools of thought. When the new Islām used the press as a propagating agency, the old Islām was compelled to use it in self-defence, with the result that nothing is more interesting to the missionary than to study the thought of the people as reflected in the press."

The author tells us that for the five or ten per cent. of the people in Muslim lands who can read, there is a total of 455 *daily* Arabic newspapers and 239 journals. He also tells us that for some time past the political and patriotic poetry has been hopelessly pessimistic. To quote:

"I see the Standard of the Faith reversed by the hands of the infidels!
A thousand times, alas! May my pen break! Mosque and Mihrab
I see obliterated under the feet of the Christians!"

We are told of how certain Muhammadans are teaching a compromise between Islām and Christianity, and how these urge a crusade to win over to Islām the Hindu untouchables and hill tribes.

"Yet our review of the New Islām and its future may well conclude by reminding ourselves of the scientific fact that hybrids *do not propagate*, and by pointing out in the words of Tertullian that men do not generally care to die for the compromises made between the faith of the church and the philosophies of the heathen world!"

"Present-Day Attitude Toward Christ and Christianity" is the title of the last chapter. The quotations from newspapers of both old and new Islām show that Muhammadans are very sensitive concerning all the defects of Islām that have been exposed as trenchantly by Muslims as by Christian missionaries, hence the desperate efforts to quote every European who has in any way written or said anything which may appear derogatory to our Bible or faith. Of course, the main attack is always against the facts of the Cross and the Trinity.

The present attitude of educated Muslims toward Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour is twofold.

"On the one hand, although this attitude is utterly opposed to the spirit and teaching of the Qur'an itself, there are bitter and blasphemous attacks on the supernatural character of Jesus and His sinlessness. On the other hand, there is unexpected and outspoken testimony to His moral greatness and the effect of His teaching and life in transforming character."

In summing up, Dr. Zwemer says:—"Without underestimating the new anti-Christian attitude . . . the whole situation is hopeful to the last degree. The light is breaking everywhere. There never was so much friendliness; such willingness to discuss the question at issue; such a large attendance of Muslims at Christian schools, hospitals, public meetings, and even preaching services as there is to-day." So many are "adrift, and the Gospel alone can give them new anchorage. *They are hungry for the friendship that does not patronize and the love that can forgive. They have lost faith in the old Islām and reach out to new ideals in ethics. Who can satisfy them but Christ? This is our supreme opportunity. If we can win these leaders of Muslim thought now 'Reformed Islām will be Islām no longer,' but an open door into Christianity.*" The book is published by Revell.

MALAYSIA

The agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society at Singapore sends some interesting information concerning work among Muslims. Mr. Tisdall is a brother of Dr. St. Clair Tisdall, the famous writer on Islâm. He says:—

“There is no work being done amongst the Malays at all with the exception of what the ladies are doing in Malacca, and the work done by the colporteurs of the British and Foreign Bible Society. I personally am very anxious to get a regular Mission to Malays started, and with this object in view have written several times for the *Moslem World* and the *Missionary Review of the World*, in addition to this I brought the matter up at the Mott Conference, and have taken every other step I could think of, but so far without success.

“Almost every Mission here has at one time done some work among Muslims, some have made converts many years ago, but all have found that the Mission staff was too small to deal with the numerous Indian and Chinese converts, and the consequence has in every case been that the workers among Muslims have had to be withdrawn and put to work amongst the Indians or the Chinese.

“To my mind this will always happen if a Mission undertakes both heathen and Muslim work, and this is the reason why I want to start a new Mission exclusively to the Muslim Malays.

“In Sumatra, till recently, there were no missionaries to the Malays. Of course, the Rhenish Mission in Battak land converted Battaks who had become Muslims, but they were not Malays, but recently the 7th Day Adventists are working amongst Malays, I hear.

“In Java there are, as you know, large Dutch Missions with many Javanese converts.

“I am now working on a book about the Malays, which I hope, if I can get it printed, will interest people in them enough to start a Mission as soon as the war is over.

“I have made a special point of trying to reach Malays everywhere with the Scriptures during the past nine years. In Sumatra, where it was at first difficult to sell a Gospel, the colporteurs are now asked for the New Testament or the Old Testament, and the Malays are ready to listen when the colporteur speaks about Christ.

“Of course the Malays are Muslims in name only, and know little or nothing about their own religion. The problem here is quite different from that in India, Persia, or Turkey, and therefore I fully believe that this would prove one of the weakest spots in the Muslim world if we could only tackle it properly.

“ELIAS, E. G. TISDALL.”

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Brahmanbaria, Bengal.

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