

Missionaries to Muslims League

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POPULAR ISLAM

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

We who would gain a correct knowledge of Muhammadanism, as it is professed and believed by the masses, from the Qur'an only, would make as great a mistake as to learn the religion of Mexico from the New Testament, or the Hinduism of Benares from the Vedas. Long since the emphasis has been put upon tradition, and the common people are groaning under the yoke of all the accretions and additions made to the religion of Islám since the days of the Prophet by theologians and mystics and interpreters of the Faith. I have recently been interested to learn what is the best selling book among Muslims next to the Qur'an, and I find that one of the most popular manuals, continually reprinted in new editions and having a large sale, is a little book on Creation, Heaven and Hell, entitled *Dakaik-el-Ahbar*. I was assured by booksellers in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, and even in the small bookshops kept by Muslims in the Persian Gulf, that this was one of the best sellers, and I have in my possession editions in Arabic, Urdu, and Persian, as well as one interlinear edition both Arabic and Persian.

It will interest those who are helping to solve the Muslim problem to know what people read and think, and the following translation of Chapter I of this book gives an idea of the mass of superstition and incredible puerilities which must be removed from the mind of the average Muslim before he is ready to receive the Gospel. Some of the chapters in the book are untranslatable because of their indecent descriptions of Muhammad's paradise and the horrible tortures of the damned. And to think that this is the fireside literature of Muslims to-day!

In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God the Lord of the worlds, and prayers upon His apostle Muhammad and his family and companions, all of them.

Chapter I. "On the Creation of the Light of Muhammad, upon whom be God's prayers and peace.

"It is truly related that God Most High created a tree which had four branches, and He called it the Tree of Certainty. After this He created the light of Múhammad, upon whom be prayers and peace, in

a curtain of white pearl, whose likeness is like unto the likeness of a peacock, and He placed the same upon this tree. Then God uttered praises to it for the space of seventy thousand years. After this He created the mirror of modesty, and placed it immediately in front of the tree, and the peacock gazed into it and saw his form most beautiful, and was ashamed of himself before God, and fell down to worship five times. Consequently these five acts of worship became incumbent upon all Muslims at the appointed time daily. And when Muhammad looked upon God in the glory of that night, he perspired with shame, and God Most High created from the perspiration of his head, the angels; and from the perspiration of his face God created the throne, and the tablet and the pen, and the sun and the moon and the great curtain and the stars, and whatever else is found in heaven. And from the perspiration of his breast God created the prophets and apostles and martyrs, and learned men and the pious. And from the perspiration of his eyebrows He created believers, both men and women; and from the perspiration of his ears He created the spirit of the Jews, and the Christians and the Fire-worshippers, and such like. From the perspiration of his feet He created the earth from east to west, and everything that is in it. Then God commanded the Light of Muhammad (upon whom be prayers and peace), "Look thou before thee." And the Light of Muhammad gazing before him saw in front of him a light, and behind him a light, and on his right hand a light, and on his left hand a light, and these were Abu Bakr and Omar and Othman and Ali, with all of whom may God be blessed. Then He looked upon that light and created other spirits, and they exclaimed, "There is no God but God, Muhammad is God's Apostle!" Then God created a candle of red carnelian, translucent, and God created the image of Muhammad (upon whom be prayers and peace) as his image would be in the world, and placed it in this candle, erect in the attitude of prayer. Then all the spirits passed around the Light of Muhammad, upon whom be prayers and peace, and glorified him and shouted, "Hallelujah!" for the space of about a hundred thousand years. Then God commanded all the spirits to look at Muhammad.

"There were those who saw his head, and they became Khalifas and Sultans among God's creatures; and there were those who saw his face, and they became rulers. And there were those who saw his eyes, and they became preservers of the Word of God; and there were those who saw his ears, and they became hearers; and there were those who saw his cheeks, and they became marvellously beautiful and wise. There were those who saw his beard, and they became fighters in the faith of God; there were those who saw his forehead, and they became valiant for truth; and there were those who saw his knees, and they became worshippers. And there were those who did not look at him, and they became barbarians and savages and other kind of unbelievers. And there were those that looked and did not see him, and they became Jews and Christians and Fire-worshippers, and other kinds of infidels.

“ Know further that God Most High created prayer in the image of the name of Ahmed, upon whom be prayers and peace, for the standing position in prayer is like unto the *aliph*, and the bowing position is like unto the *ha*, and the prostrate position is like unto the *mim*, and the sitting posture is like unto the *dal*. And God also created man after the image of the name of Muhammad, for his head is round like an *aliph*, and his two hands are like *ha*, and his belly is like a *mim*, and his two legs are like two *dals*. And no one of the infidels will remain in the image of Muhammad; but God will change them into the image of swine, and He is the most knowing and wise.”

This completes the first chapter. The second chapter treats of the creation of Adam, and the next of the creation of the angels, and the following chapters deal with the angel of death, the torment of the grave, the character of Satan, the resurrection, the two angels that examine the dead at the grave, while the remainder of the book is largely given to a detailed description of the torments of hell and the delights of paradise. It is remarkable that a book so full of superstition, and dealing almost exclusively with eschatology rather than ethics, should be so much in demand among Muslims, and represent popular Islám to-day. It surely indicates the line of preaching that should be followed by the Christian missionary to reach the hearts of the people. Those who are all their life-time subject to the cruel bondage of tradition and fear of death need the message of hope and life in Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World, the Firstborn of all Creatures, and whose glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, seems to have been deliberately caricatured in later Muslim writings.

LEAGUE CHANGES

MEMBERS, PLEASE NOTE!

1. A New President.—Rather we should say, “Our first president.” The Committee have voted in favour of electing the Right Rev. the Metropolitan president of the League. His interest in work among Muslims is well known. As one of the Committee wrote, “He has always been a leading evangelist to Islám.”

2. A New Secretary.—On July 8th we had such a severe earthquake shock in Brahmanbaria, that some of the mission buildings, including our own home, have been destroyed and will have to be rebuilt at once. This will entail much extra work, and necessitate my handing over the League secretaryship to another.

The Committee have been unanimous in electing the Rev. H. J. Lane-Smith, M.A., of Nasik, Bombay, to the position, and he has agreed to take up the work.

Please note the new address, and support the new Secretary with contributions for *News and Notes*, and by sending the annual subscription, which is now due.

J. TAKLE.

CAREY AND WORK AMONG MUSLIMS

William Carey, in his journal, dated January 19th, 1794, describes his approach to a company of Muhammadans. The entry shows how very little the controversy has changed since his day.

"This day, as every Sabbath since we have been in the country, we went among the natives. For these three last Lord's Days we have discoursed to a pretty large congregation at Manicktullo bazaar or market; for we have just the same business done here on that day as any other. Our congregation consisted principally of Muhammadans, and has increased every Lord's Day. They are very inquisitive, and we have addressed them upon the subject of the Gospel with the greatest freedom, and in the following manner. A burial place, with a consecrated tomb, where offerings are daily made to the spirit of the departed person was near; some inquiries about the reason of their offerings were made, which led on to questions on their part; and then the Gospel and the Qur'án insensibly became the subject of conversation.

"They alleged the divine original of the Qur'án; we enquired, 'Have you ever seen or read it?' The universal answer was 'No.' But to-day a man came who pretended to have seen it. We asked him if he knew the beginning of every chapter, for the chapters all begin with these words: In the name of God, gracious and merciful; but he said no, for it was written in Arabic, and no one could understand it. The question now was, 'Then how can you obey it?' and 'wherefore are you Muhammadans?' To this they could not reply. They said, and so says the Qur'án, that the Qur'án was sent to confirm the words of Scripture. We insisted that the Bible said, 'Whosoever shall add to or diminish from the Word of God, shall be under the curse of God; but the Qur'án was written after the Bible, and pretends to divine authority: therefore, if the Gospel be true, Muhammad must be accursed, and the Qur'án of no authority; and if the Bible be not true, the Qur'án cannot, for that, you say, was to confirm it. They answered that the Jews and Christians had corrupted the Bible, which was the reason why God made the revelation to Muhammad. We answered, 'Then how could the Qur'án come to confirm it?' If it was corrupted, it needed correction, not confirmation. Being driven to the last shift, they said, 'Muhammad was the friend of God, but Esu (Isa), by whom they mean Jesus, was the spirit of God'; to which our Munshi shrewdly replied, 'Then which would you think highest, your friend or your soul or spirit?' All this they bore with great good temper; but what effect it may have time must determine. Many more things were said to recommend the Gospel, and the way of life by Christ, and as night came on we left them."

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The following Sunday, January 26th, Carey has the following entry: "Went to visit our congregation of natives again; they gave very great attention, and all the Mussulmans present (except the keeper of the consecrated place, and one or two fakirs) acknowledged that the offerings made to the *Pir*, or soul of the dead man whose tomb was consecrated, were made without any command, either in the Qur'án or elsewhere. The person who acted as priest, or keeper of the place, was so ashamed when we told him that all the offerings were made to himself, that he went away confounded with the laughter of the people. Their inquisitiveness and numbers increase; I wish that we might see some fruit of our labours, and doubt not but we shall soon have some reason to rejoice in the salvation of God."

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Fuller, in his *Brief Narrative of the Baptist Mission*, tells how, in 1807, "an event occurred which filled the friends of the mission with deep concern, and furnished its adversaries with a momentary triumph. A tract which had been printed in Bengali, and which in that language contained nothing offensive, was put into the hands of a native to be translated into Persic. The translation being

finished, it was, through the pressure of business, inadvertently printed without being first inspected by the missionaries. It proved, unhappily, that the translator had introduced several strong epithets calling Muhammad a tyrant, etc., which it alleged would irritate his followers; and though no such effect had been produced, yet a copy of it being conveyed to a person in office under Government, it was taken up in a serious manner. . . . Mr. Carey, on learning particulars, would have made an apology, and corrected whatever was improper. But before he had time to do this, proceedings were commenced, which, had they been carried into execution, must have been not only ruinous to the mission, but greatly injurious to the cause of Christianity in India." The Governor-General accepted an explanation submitted to him by the missionaries, but "they were required in future not to print any tracts without first submitting the copy to the inspection of Government."

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In a list of converts of Carey's time we find the name of his first convert from Islâm. His baptism took place on July 4th, 1802. His name was "Peroo," and fifteenth on the list of Bengali converts connected with the Baptist community. No. 20 on the list is also a convert from Islâm, named "Boodoyesah," who resided at Jessore, and was baptised on January 22, 1803. His brother, "Tazoo," followed him on April 3rd.

MEMBERS' QUERIES

"Should we not in our preaching give more credit to the Muslim idea that God is one, and almighty and holy? Do you know any book or article that will help me on the subject of Allah?"

Answer.—1. At first sight there is something attractive in the Muslim message of the divine unity. But the fact grows upon one increasingly that the Muslim idea is a very bald one, and Allah in His loneliness is a very pathetic figure. Coulson Kernahan, in one of his daring booklets, tells of a man who dreamt of "the Lonely God." The man had enjoyed the closest bonds of fellowship and love with a wife and child, but he was horrified to find that God had no such joy of love and communion.

Many a Unitarian has wakened from a similar dream and found such a God impossible. A lonely God could not be moral, nor could His nature be love. Love requires an object; morality presumes relationship. Some one has said, "Difficult as it is to construe the nature of God in terms of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, it is a great deal more difficult to think of a lonely, self-contained, impassive Being existing in isolation from all eternity. It is far easier to think that all the relationships that make human life valuable are prefigured in God, that within the unity of His Being is contained an inexhaustible variety. God is able to express Himself in the Eternal Son, to return to Himself in the Eternal Spirit."

2. True, the Qur'an has many a reference to God as being almighty, but not in the Christian sense. Rather we are to understand the term as covering every physical possibility, except the act of begetting, with small reference to the moral. In fact, "for He

is almighty" is always the talisman; it clinches many a doubtful argument concerning the supposed actions of deity. Muhammad often found it difficult to give extempore answers to the sceptical questions of his people concerning his doctrines and doings. His plan then was to put off till the morrow what he could not do that day, and in the meantime the needed revelation came to clear away all doubts. This was most convenient for the prophet, but most damaging to the character of Allah.

Here is an illustration from the Qur'an of what I mean. A supposed revelation came as follows—"Whatever verse we shall abrogate or cause thee to forget, we will bring a better than it, or one like unto it" (II, 105). Muhammad would argue Allah is almighty and therefore can change His mind and alter His revelations to suit any circumstance.

3. As to Allah being holy, I cannot do better than quote the scholarly opinion of Dr. D. B. Macdonald, of Hartford, who says that Allah is referred to twice in the Qur'an as the Holy King (*al-malik al-Kuddus*, lix, 23; lxii, 1 only). "*Kuddus* alone is reckoned as one of the names; but it occurs only in combination with king; what idea Muhammad associated with it is quite obscure, perhaps only of separateness."

This quotation is taken from the most compact and striking article we have ever read on the subject of Allah. It appears in *The Encyclopædia of Islâm*.
J. T.

THE MINARET !

BY REV. H. E. E. HAYES.

It may interest friends to know something of the minaret, or spire of the Muslim mosque. The word is taken from an Arabic one, the root meaning of which is "light." The word "manarah" actually means "light-bearer," and was used to describe the ancient lighthouse that stood on the island of Pharos, near Alexandria, when the Muslims captured the city in 649 A.D.

Many of the minarets of Egypt, especially in the villages, closely resemble a lighthouse, and it is believed that the shape or style of architecture is due to the influence the appearance of the wonderful old Pharos lighthouse had upon the wild Arabian soldiers long ago.

But historians tell us that the idea of a tower in connection with a mosque was suggested by an ancient tower still standing in Mesopotamia. This building is similar to the towers, or "Zikkurats," erected by the ancient Babylonians near the temples of their gods, which were supposed to have their tops in heaven, and which usually carried on the summit a shrine or home for their god.

Behind the ideas which led to the erection of these lofty towers there seems to have been a forgotten conception of a God, high and

exalted. A conception distorted and all but lost because of human frailty and sin. A very curious and perhaps significant fact is that the ancient pagan tower in Samarra is now used as a minaret. And the summit, where once the ancient priest invoked his god, is now the platform whence the Muslim Muezzin calls the "faithful" to prayer. The summit is reached by means of a spiral ascent constructed outside the mass of stone. All other minarets are ascended by means of a spiral staircase inside the tower.

The minaret is looked upon as being a "link with heaven," an idea conveyed in the ancient Babylonian word for "tower." What an interesting object lesson the minaret becomes in the light of these facts; and yet how sad one cannot but feel when one knows of the baseness of Islámic religion! The minaret—the "light-bearer"—a link with heaven. The place whence men are called to prayer.

May God, in His good time, make the minarets of Islám real "lighthouses" of the Kingdom of Heaven, whence shall sound the invitation to prayer in the Name of Him who is the Light of the World and the Way of Eternal Life—the only *eternal* link between earth and heaven.—*Egypt G. Mission News.*

FROM FAR AND NEAR

We have received a letter from Mr. Rhodes, of China. He says, "We have a day of prayer arranged for the Muslims in China. The date is October 16th, 1918. [It would be a good thing for all our members to join with our brethren in China on that day.—*Sec.*] We hope it will lead to increased blessing. Thanks for all you have done for China in *News and Notes*. Your debtors we are. China is in a bad way politically! Rival parties and strong factions are doing irreparable damage to China's prestige, material assets, and social life. Some Chinese leaders are at last coming to see that overthrowing empires and establishing republics will never touch rotten foundations. Only the crucified and risen Saviour can help China.

"It was a great pleasure to meet Dr. Zwemer in Shanghai for a few days in June. Dr. Zwemer, both in Committee and in other meetings, was kept busy and the Muslim work was greatly helped through his presence and counsel."

Mr. Rhodes says that members of the League travelling *via* China and the Pacific to the U.S.A., should try and stay over for a few days. From Hongkong and Shanghai it is possible to see Muslim interests without any waste of time. Beforehand the China Continuation Committee, 5, Quinsan Gardens, Shanghai, should be advised, if possible.

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New Literature.—Some of our members have been busy preparing "copy" for the Press. The Rev. W. Goldsack is writing another of his popular "In Islám" series. It will deal with "Tradition in Islám." He found the Azhar at Cairo most useful in preparation. The Rev. H. A. Walter has written a book on the Ahmadiyahs of Qadian. It will soon be out of the Press. He is also collaborating with Prof. Siraj-ud-Din in the writing of a book on Indian Sufism. Mr. Takle's English book for Muslims, entitled *Sirat'ul Mustaqim*, is being brought out in Urdu.

BOOK REVIEW

The Holy Spirit, the Christian Dynamic.—We gladly welcome this new book published by the C.L.S. It has 450 pages packed full of thought on power for the Christian worker engaged in Christian service among Hindus. It is issued “under the deep conviction that in the dynamical truth of the Holy Spirit lies the entire future of Christianity in India.” The author, the Rev. J. F. Edwards, seems to have left no phase of the subject unexplained, and his treatment of the Holy Spirit in His relation to Inspiration, Incarnation, Redemption, Sanctification, Prayer and Service, from an Indian missionary standpoint, is fresh and very satisfying. The price of the book is Rs. 3.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

“Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers against the spiritual hosts of wickedness.”—Eph. vi, 12.

Pray for all workers engaged in preparing, printing and distributing literature for Muslims.

Pray for the heads of Theological Colleges in India and China, that they may enthuse their students with a great desire for the salvation of the Muslims.

Pray that many of the young soldiers at present at the front in Palestine and Mesopotamia, may become after the war reinforcements for our mission fields.

Pray for the Church in India : that she may prayerfully and gladly enter upon her divinely-appointed service among the Muslims of India.

NEW MEMBERS

259.	MISS SELMAN	A. Bap. F.M.	Akidu, Kistna
260.	J. J. McCONNELL, Esq.	Y.M.C.A.	Hyderabad
261.	MISS WERTHMULLER	C.M.S.	Dera Ismail Khan
262.	RT. REV. BISHOP W. C. WHITE, D.D.	Canadian Church Mission	Kaifeng, Honan, China

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H. J. LANE-SMITH,
Hon. Sec., M.M. League.