

Confidential.

News and Notes.

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Members of the Missionaries to Muslims League.

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April 21st—1st Sha'ban 1338, A.H.

Muslim Retrogression.

By REV. W. HOOGER, D.D., MUSSOORIE, INDIA.

I HAVE for a very long time thought that, given a really honest and unprejudiced seeker after the Truth among Muhammadans (only, of course, the difficulty is to find one such), the best way to convince him of the truth of Christianity and the falsehood of the claims of Islām would be to take him steadily through the Bible from Genesis to Apocalypse, pointing out the proofs of a *progress* in revelation as they occur; and then let him go on to the Qur'an and seek there for a continuation of that progress. We know that he will seek it there in vain; nay, that in all subjects he will find there a decided *retrogression* behind the point to which the Bible has brought him, and in some subjects a retrogression behind even the *beginning* of the process of progress in the Bible. This argument touches, of course, only the claim of Islām to be the final religion, and of the Qur'an to be the seal of revelation. But then, this claim belongs to the very essence of the religion. Once get a Muslim to doubt this, and if he be really open-minded, he must, one would think, be soon brought to see and acknowledge the absolute superiority of Christianity.

1. There is one subject, on which at first sight there appears to be no progress, viz., the Nature and Character of God. His Unity and Personality seem to have been as clearly recognized by the faithful in the earliest times as in later; and *nominally* they are acknowledged in Islam. But in it they have been hardened into belief in a solitary Being whose dominant attribute is "will to power." And the essential Holiness of God, which was from the first so revealed that *this* was the most prominent distinction between Jehovah and the gods of the heathen, while in words acknowledged in Islām as one of the attributes of Al Quddus, yet is practically denied by the Muslim doctrine of Predestination. And whereas the idea of God's character is, in the Bible, gradually filled up by the teachings of the Prophets, until in that of Christ it is summed up in the word "Father," and

in that of His Apostles in the word "Love," Islám ignores or rejects all this, and denies with abhorrence that God is our Father.

2. Again, the obligation of *truthfulness* is a clear instance of progress within the Bible. Lying *in general* is not forbidden in the Ten Commandments. False swearing is forbidden, as an insult to God; and false witness *against* one's neighbour is prohibited as an injury to Him; but that is all. As revelation advances, the sin of lying obtains more and more prominence; but even in the Psalms and Prophets and Proverbs it is doubtful whether anything beyond the *harm* it does to others is reprobated. But in the Epistles, "Speak ye truth every one with his neighbour, *for we are members one of another*," and, "Lie not one to another, seeing ye have *put off the old man* with his doings, and have *put on the new man*." What a difference do we see! And at the very end of the Bible, where "he that loveth and maketh a lie," absolutely without any qualification or special application, is excluded from the New Jerusalem, we find the Bible's final, unreserved, condemnation of this sin. Pass on to the Qur'an, and what retrogression we find!

3. Again, take the subject of sexual morality. Cain must have married his sister; and Abraham married his half-sister without a hint of its being wrong; but this is condemned as incest in the Law of Moses. Polygamy is nowhere forbidden in the Old Testament, though many instances must have shown the undesirableness of it, to say the least. Divorce was allowed in the Law of Moses, though under certain restrictions; but the last prophet before John the Baptist says "*I hate* putting away, saith Jehovah the God of Israel." And, needless to say, Christ entirely forbids it, and so does St. Paul; and the former, by plain implication at least, forbids polygamy. In all these matters, coming to Islám with its permission of four wives, its rules of divorce with their disgusting accompaniments, and its complete want of restriction of slave-concubinage, what a fearful retrogression we see!

4. Slavery is allowed in the Law of Moses; though slave traffic was punishable by death, even in that early age. And among the Israelites themselves, even slavery could be only temporary, except by the free wish of the Israelite slave. It is not in so many words abolished in the New Testament; the custom was too deeply rooted in human society for that to be done without Christianity becoming a political movement; but the *principle* of the equality of all men before God, which later was bound to lead to the abolition of the institution, was taught without reserve. And St. Peter's, "Stand up, I myself also am a man," and St. Paul's treatment of Onesimus in his letter to Philemon, sufficiently express this. Has Islám gone beyond this? Nay, it has fallen immensely behind it.

5. In the knowledge, or belief, of the condition of men after death, one must acknowledge that Islám goes far beyond the general point of view in the Old Testament. By making belief in the Resurrection a cardinal doctrine of its religion, it has advanced even beyond what the Jews attained to (we need not here inquire how) in the interval between the two covenants;

for they did not hold it universally, whereas no one can be a true Muslim who denies it. Yet here also, Islám dropped far behind the *Christian* revelation, which it pretends to supersede. For not only is the final resurrection not so much taught as a dogma in the New Testament, as based on the historical fact of Christ's own resurrection; but the further, and absolutely new, revelation of the spiritual, glorified, resurrection body is made. In *both* these respects how far is Islám behind the Gospel! On the one hand, Muhammad had no solid, irrefragable *proof* of the resurrection to offer; on the other, in his teaching it is only a return to the same psychic body, with the old sensual instincts; the only difference being that, in the case of believers, these instincts can be indulged *ad lib.*

6. We recognize progress even in the New Testament. Our Lord stated clearly that the revelation of the Paraclete, whom He would send from heaven, would be a distinct advance beyond what He had been able to teach on earth. We must therefore contrast Islám, not only with the latter, but pre-eminently with the full and final revelation of the Spirit, which we have in the Acts and Epistles. It is superiority to *this*, above all, which any subsequent religion must prove itself to have. And when we thus try Islám, what manifest and terrible decadence and inferiority does it show! Instead of the spiritual, the carnal again; instead of the internal, the external once more; instead of Love, Law re-asserted; instead of "one sacrifice for sins for ever," the old, unsatisfying story of salvation by works! To believe in Islám is to believe that God, having patiently through many centuries built up an edifice for man's benefit, and put the head-stone on it, has deliberately reduced it to a partial ruin again.

A 'Life of Jesus' for Muslims.

SOME VIEWS ON MR. SUTTON'S SUGGESTIONS.

Our President Dr. E. M. Wherry, writes:—

The Gospel of St. Matthew is, in my opinion, the best story of Christ to be first placed in the hands of the Muslim reader. The Muslim is a Gentile Jew and like the Jew can appreciate even the genealogical table with which Matthew introduces his Gospel. This table serves as a connecting link binding the Old Testament to the New. This Gospel further points to prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures foretelling the advent of the Messiah. It gives a most interesting account of His miracles and parables, the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and of His coming in judgment. The account of His crucifixion, death and resurrection, all so full of His Divine claims, and the final triumph of His Kingdom, is most impressive.

The Muslim believes in an Inspired Book and is most likely to be rightly instructed by an inspired account of His life.

The following are some of the popular lives of Christ now available:—

In Bengali—

(1) *Prabhu Jishu Krista*, by Rev. A. Sterne, 1894.

- (2) *Jishur Jibani*, by H. C. Raha, 1890.
 (3) Do. (Stalker) translated by Raha.
 (4) *Krishta Ke?* Rev. J. Vaughan.

In Hindi—

A dozen Lives of Christ written for various classes—none specially for Muslims.

In Urdu—

- (1) *Haytáu'l Masih*, by Rev. Tálibuddin, B.A.
 (2) *Tawarikhul Masih*, by Rev. Dr. Imáduddin.
 (3) *Yisú Masih ká Ahwál*, by Mr. Carre Tucker, written in the words of Scripture.
 (4) *Zindá Masih aur Anájil i Arba*, (Dale's Living Christ and the Four Gospels) by Rev. Tálibuddin, B.A.
 (5) *Hayát i Najátdihina*, by Miss L. Marston.

I hope Mr. Hedley Sutton will prepare a book such as he outlines, and publish in English.'

Mr. Takle, our first Secretary, writes:—

"An attempt was made some years ago to meet a need in this direction by publishing a Mussalmani-Bengali edition of *Ananda Káhini* (i.e. 'Glad Tidings'). It was an arrangement of the actual words of the *Injil*, and, if I remember rightly, had a note on the cover to the effect that the book contained extracts from the *Injil*. This spoiled its sale, for the Muslims suggested that we had mutilated the Bible.

A 'Life of Jesus' written in a style attractive to Muslim readers would be something more acceptable. I have been wondering whether, for Bengal, we could bring out something of the same style, size and type as the Mussalman-Bengali *Puthie*, which is so popular and is sold in every bazaar and village at a cheap rate. I do not propose that we should use the same ill-spelt, ungrammatical doggerel, but we might use some prose, and some poetry with a like rhythm to that to which the people are used."

Miss Salmoná, Jagadhri, Punjab, writes of the need she finds of some such 'Life' in Persian Urdu, simpler than the gospels, that would convey to the girls in our schools, who can read, an adequate idea of the life and work of Jesus. I sincerely hope our League, with all the care and skill it can bring to bear, will see this matter through.'

Members in North India using Urdu literature will be able to say whether any of the Urdu 'Lives' quoted by Dr. Wherry in his list above, answer the requirements of the 'Life' advocated by Mr. Sutton last month; it should be mentioned here, however, that what Dr. Wherry says of the 'Lives' in Hindi is equally true of those he cites in Bengali, not one of them is specially for Muslims. Furthermore, the first he mentions is priced at 8as., (2) and (4) are 4as. each, and the style is so old-fashioned that these books have next to no sale nowadays. (3) is out of print.

Notes on the Muslim Calendar.

BY REV. AHMAD SHAH, HAMIRPUR, N. INDIA.

Sha'bán.

MOHAMMAD has said that 'the month of Sha'bán especially belongs to me.' Many excellences have been recorded in connection with fasting in this month; in particular, fasting on the 15th of Sha'bán (known as Shab-i-Barát)* is the time when God confers food, length of days and health on His creatures. The *Hadis* mentions that at this time the Almighty Lord accepts the penitence of His sinful servants. But the adulterers, the proud 'swells' who wear their trousers long enough to reach their ankles, who presume to believe that they oblige God by giving ransom (*sidqa*), and all the corrupted profligates, are debarred from availing themselves of the aforementioned privileges. Mighty rewards have been promised to the observer of the 15th of Sha'bán. But 'it is a pity,' says a Muslim writer, 'that this very sacred night which ought to be spent in repentance, saying of extra prayers and worship, is wasted in the indulgence of the farce of crackers, fireworks, etc. Thus millions of rupees of the impoverished Muslims are being offered at the altar of fire, owing to the childish passion for fireworks, and thus not only a golden opportunity for obtaining the forgiveness of sins is lost, but even the list of sins grows bulkier and bulkier. Would to God that the Muslims, instead of incurring physical, economic and social injuries, would, harbouring the fear of God in their hearts, prudently refrain from expending their money and time in such wasteful trifles. Muslim parents must remember that giving in to the obstinacy of their children and giving them money for fireworks is absolutely improper and sinful.'

The same writer adds:—'To indulge in the pleasures and gala dresses of the Id and Bakrid on the 15th of Sha'bán is unnecessary. Of course there is no harm in feeding the needy if one can afford it, provided, however, that the custom be not thought as binding, and the expenses be not defrayed by a loan.' About the *Fatiha* recited over the *Shabrat Halva*, says the same writer, 'People have invented many quixotic beliefs, which are utterly groundless and often positively heretical, because as true Muslims they must not hold any belief which is not vindicated and justified by the Holy Law.'

* NOTE.—*Shab-i-Barát* this year will correspond to our Tuesday night of May 4th.—Ed.

A Special Request.

TO THE EDITOR

NILE MISSION PRESS,

'NEWS AND NOTES.'

CAIRO.

Dear Fellow-Member of Prayer-League,

I AM venturing to send out a personal appeal to my missionary friends to aid me by very special PRAYER for an important matter.

My wife and I hope to leave Cairo about the first of April, leaving our only son in Egypt. Dr. Zwemer has a very large appeal for money to be launched in U. S. A., and it seems to be my lot to aid in getting *workers*, by means of lectures. From the time of arrival in England to the end of April Mr. Oliver (Secretary N. M. P.) and I may be able to visit Cambridge. After that, possibly Edinburgh and Glasgow. I would like to go to Durham, and also to some Theological Colleges.

We shall be needing one or two literary helpers, to write in classical Arabic, but also other workers. All should be (a) *Sound*, (b) *Keen*, (c) *Capable*.

Perhaps you could help me, in addition to your own private prayer, by interesting those who can pray, perhaps by inserting in some paper a short notice of our work at the Nile Mission Press. As you know we have published 300 Evangelical books and tracts, and I have edited most of them. They have gone to 30 or 40 lands from S. America to China. The Nile Mission Press is at the "Hub of the Wheel" for the whole "Moslem World."

With grateful thanks ;

Yours in Christ's Service,

ARTHUR T. UPSON.

Those who founded the Nile Mission Press 15 years ago, did so from a clear realization that God had signally blessed and would continue to bless, the printed page in the hands of seekers after Truth.

If growth is a fair criterion their venture of faith has been abundantly justified. The published statistics alone are eloquent. In 1905-6 they printed, in all, nearly 3 million pages of evangelical literature. By 1918-19 the figure had reached nearly 20 million. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, for the second time in fifteen years, they are faced with the necessity of extending their premises. Some idea of the number and variety of their publications may be had by perusing the N. M. P. Guide for 1919, a copy of which will be sent on request by the Manager, 37 Sharia al Manakh, Cairo. Amongst the books recently translated and published by them—all in Arabic—are Dr. Carnegie Simpson's 'The Fact of Christ;' Col. Turton's 'Truth of Christianity;' Mr. Takle's 'The Straight Path' and 'Ghulam Jabbar's Renunciation' by Mr. Goldsack.

As the work develops, the need for more literary and other workers naturally grows. Let us assure Mr. Upson, therefore, as he goes on this special mission to England that we shall follow him with our prayers.—Ed.

NOTES.

THE STATE OF MUSLIM FEELING IN INDIA.—It is the simple truth to say that we in India during these days of March do not know quite whither the angry feelings of the Muslims are going to lead them. With an abruptness that is little short of astonishing, their cry has changed from bitter reproach of Great Britain for her alleged breach of faith with Turkey, to an angry clamour that the Christians are out on a crusade against Islâm. A section of their press, at any rate, has seized with avidity upon statements by peer, prelate and parson in England, into which such intention might be read, and is making most unfair use of them. We deeply deplore, both the unwisdom and misguided zeal of leaders in Britain whose language undoubtedly has implied that there is on foot a contest between the Cross and the Crescent, as well as the unscrupulous methods employed in consequence by press and platform in India to rouse the passions of illiterate and bigoted men who can by no means judge of the matter for themselves.

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'FORWARD!' IN EGYPT.—Apparently in Egypt also there are those who are firmly convinced that simpler language is needed in book and pamphlet if the *common people* are to grasp the precious truths our Scriptures contain.

Members will be interested too, in the opening of the *book depôt and reading room* referred to below. We have taken the liberty of quoting from "Egypt General Mission News," first issue, 1920.

"In spite of the unrest and political upheaval, doors are open all around, and more Scriptures are being sold and given away in this district and throughout Egypt, than ever before. The getting of the Word to the people is of the utmost importance, and we are very grateful to the Bible Societies for making this possible. We feel strongly that the common people must have the Scriptures in their own simple language, and to this end some of us have been translating parts of the Bible, but the pressure of other work has prevented a great deal being done.

To help to bring more people into touch with the Word we have secured a house, in the main street of the town, and opened the large room on the ground floor as a book depôt and reading room. We hope to get some of the better class people, who are difficult to reach, to come in and have coffee, and be at liberty to read the various books we are stocking it with, and then lead them on to The Greatest Book of all. We are trying to furnish it and make it a comfortable inviting-looking place to turn in to.

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WOMAN IN 'NEGLECTED ARABIA.'—We culled the following lines from the quarterly pamphlet of 'The Arabian Mission' working on the Persian Gulf. The writer, Mrs. Bilkert, is as good as a member of our League because her husband is actually one! She says:—

"The rules and customs of the Moslem home are a blight upon the things that might be most sacred and beautiful. A beautiful woman sits in the house of a wealthy Sheikh, and as best she knows serves her lord and master. But she too admits, "I am his sixth wife and God knows how long he will keep me." A sweet little girl who would go wild with delight if you gave her a doll, tells you, "Yes, I was married three months ago. I didn't want to be married but my father and mother arranged for it. I don't live at home any more, but in my husband's home. I used to go out and play lots but now I can't, my husband won't allow me to go." An old man of sixty marries a young girl and she becomes the mother of sickly, puny children. A woman is made the butt of jest and ridicule from her

friends and partner-wives and finally divorced because she is childless. No wonder the women marvel at the way the missionaries live, and say, "You are different, your husbands love you and respect you." No wonder they cannot understand our common meals, our evenings spent in each other's company, our walks and good times together. And they will never find the answer to their longings in Islām.

And yet we are told, Islām has done more to raise the status of women than any other religion !

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THE OLD TESTAMENT IN ENGLISH BY JEWS.—We are informed that the Jews have published in Philadelphia, U. S. A., a new English version of the Old Testament translated by themselves (Routledge, 5s/-). It would be interesting to know whether a Muslim would be more willing to read a Jewish translation than the version in use by the Christians, with which he so readily finds fault.

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MYSTICISM AND DARWESH ORDERS.—The work commenced by our late lamented brother, Howard Walter of Lahore, on Mysticism in Islām has been taken in hand by the Rev. M. T. Titus of the Methodist Episcopal Mission, Moradabad, India. Any members who have useful information to give along the lines of Mr. Walter's questionnaire are asked to send it to Mr. Titus, who will be glad of all the help he can get in this direction.

Topics for Prayer.

1. Let us all pray most earnestly at this time for the Muslims of the world, more especially for those in India, that Almighty God will, in His great mercy, visit them, and comfort them, and lead them to know His will for them.
2. Pray that Almighty God will abundantly bless the mission in England of Messrs. Oliver and A. T. Upson of the Nile Mission Press in their efforts to procure more workers for the growing enterprise in Cairo.

NEW MEMBERS.

173. MILLER, REV. W. MCE., A. P. Mission, Meshed, Persia.
 15. TAYLOR, DR. JOHN C., R. P. Mission, Rurki, India.

DEATH OF MEMBERS.

Rev. G. P. TAYLOR, D.D., on 21st February, at Ahmedabad, for 42 years a missionary of the Irish Presbyterian Church in Gujerat.
 Rev. R. H. PHAIR, C. M. S., Anuradhapura, Ceylon.

The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-8-0 (about 6s. English). News and requests for prayer should be sent as early as possible each month to the Hon. Secretary—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,
 Baptist Mission,
 Dacca, Bengal.

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