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The Greatest Missionary Problem

H. Nau

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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temporaries who retained the Thomist, Scotist, or some other scholastic point of view, the Latin of the *Trivialschule* was entirely adequate.

The impression has been left by some Luther biographers that there had been little religious instruction in the Mansfeld school. As had been mentioned, the German *Fibel* used in the lower division was also a book of religion. Although the materials were in Latin, the subject matter aimed to prepare the pupil to be a good Roman Catholic. In the morning the school was opened with prayer and a song, usually "Veni, Sancte Spiritus" or "Veni, Creator." Occasionally the morning session was varied with a few minutes of prayer and a song. The materials to be memorized by the pupils were selected from hymns, prayers, and versicles commonly used in the Catholic church service. In the second and third groups of the school this memorization resulted in the mastery of a considerable body of the *Plenarium*, a full church manual, as we know from Luther's later reaction when he saw the first Latin Bible. He was surprised that the Bible contained much material not found in the pericopes with which he was familiar. By the time a student graduated from one of these Latin schools, he was well prepared to enter into the spirit of Catholic church services and to participate in the various masses which all required their special liturgies. In brief, this training aimed to train the children into loyal members of the Church.

Valparaiso, Ind.

The Greatest Missionary Problem

By H. NAU

The greatest missionary problem facing the Christian Church of the future is the world of Islam, the Moslem world. While the pagan world is comparatively well stocked with Christian missions and missionaries — comparatively well, we say, because we know only too well that in some parts of the pagan world the missionary occupation is but a skeleton one — the world of Islam has been touched only on its outskirts, its fringes. Yet its 250 million people present, and have presented for a long time, a tremendous challenge to our faith. Though it is true that some Moslem lands were difficult of access and others closed by the temper of their population

and the vagaries of the game of politics, the great mass of Mohammedans has been lying at our door, not indeed begging to be taken in and cared for, but by its helplessness and hopelessness mutely appealing in the strongest possible way for a good Samaritan's service on the part of the Christian Church.

There was a time when Moslem faith was coextensive with Moslem rule. When the Abbasids wrested from the Umayyads, in 750 A. D., the leadership of the Moslem world, they entered into possession of an empire stretching from the Indus to the Atlantic and from the southern shore of the Caspian Sea to the Indian Ocean. It had absorbed the whole of the Persian Empire of the Sassanids and the rich provinces of the Roman Empire on the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The capital had been transferred from Damascus to Bagdad. In North Africa all opposition had crumpled, and even the whole of the peninsula of Spain, with the exception of Asturia, had passed under the Moslem rule. The position of the caliphs, or successors of Mohammed, was in many respects comparable to the Papacy. Endowed at the outset with temporal as well as spiritual power, the holders of the office were gradually divested of the former. Lieutenants and governors made themselves independent; separate states soon began to break the unity of the empire of Islam. But the spiritual ascendancy of the caliphate maintained, to a far higher degree than was witnessed in the similar case of the Papacy, both the union of all Moslem states and the authority of the caliph in politics, international and domestic. It was the destruction of Bagdad by the Mongols that brought the old caliphate of the Abbasids to an end. Resurrected by the Mamelukes of Egypt, it was a shadow, and the holder of the office was a puppet, maintained in a fettered pomp that barely concealed his captivity. Sultans found the presence of a caliph convenient in order to legitimate their claims and procure popular support, but the power of the caliphate was gone. The Ottoman Turks who conquered Egypt in 1517, compelled the last Abbasid, Mutta-wakkil, to resign his claims in their favor. By virtue of this and the possession of the sacred relics of the prophet and the holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, the sultans of Constantinople have claimed for 400 years to be the vicegerents of Allah over all Islam. But the caliphate of Istambul was

more a splendid shadow than a reality. Today even that shadow is passed. In 1922 the National Assembly of Turkey relieved the sultan of all temporal power and retained him only as caliph or spiritual head of Islam. Two years later it also did away with the caliphate. Since that time Islam has neither a representative of its temporal nor spiritual unity. Nationalism has crept into the world of Islam as everywhere and has torn it asunder into Islamic states each of which seeks its own interests.

Not only in politics the decay of the caliphate became manifest; in religion also its supremacy was assailed. The unity of Islam, less than 20 years after Mohammed's death, had been rent by the schism of Sunnah and Shiah. The former was the name adopted by the orthodox party, the latter the title which they applied to their opponents. The Shiites believed in the divine Imamship, leadership, of Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed and the fourth caliph after him. In consequence they rejected all the other caliphs and declared their succession illegitimate. The Shiite doctrine contains numerous elements repugnant to a Sunni, elements which may be regarded as gnostic survivals perhaps, but certainly borrowed from non-Semitic sources. Many held the Mutazalite opinion which denied the fundamental proposition that the Koran is eternal and uncreated. They were noted for the number of their feasts and pilgrimages and for the veneration with which they practically worshiped Ali and his descendants. In course of time numerous sects grew out of the Shiah, perhaps the most famous being the Ismailiyah, the Fatimids, the Druses of the Lebanon, the Assassins, and in modern times, the Babi and Bahai sects in Persia. Shiite doctrines have found fertile soil also in India and the more eastern provinces of Islam. On the whole it may be said roughly that the Turks are Sunnis, the Persians Shiites. To-day the great bulk of Mohammedans is following the Sunnah, while the Shiites number 15 to 17 millions of the 250 millions of Mohammedans.

Another element which at times greatly disturbed and shattered the spiritual unity of Islam is Sufism, the mystic element of Islam. The dry husks of the Koran and the orthodox tradition could not forever satisfy the restless heart within man. *Suf* in Arabic means wool and was applied to the

woolen garments of the Christian hermits who were living in the desert, far away from the humdrum of the busy daily life of the crowds in the cities and hamlets and by a life of self-denial and contemplation sought rest for the restless souls within them. Soon we find a similar current in Islam: Sufis, men and women who lived either in solitary isolation or in conventual life, imitating the Christian monks, depending upon alms of the pious, and practicing bodily and mental exercises to bring themselves closer to the godhead than dry Sunnism could ever get them. Out of this movement have grown the numberless dervish orders, the howling dervishes, the dancing dervishes, who either live under a head in convents and monasteries or without restraint by anyone roam over the whole world of Islam and dance to singing and music to bring on fits of ecstasy. The great Moslem Sufi Al-Ghazali succeeded in having Sufism recognized as an orthodox part of the Sunnah. Hence we find these dervish orders not only in Shiite communities, but especially also where Sunnis prevail. Mohammed had prophesied that after him 72 sects would come into being of which eventually only one would survive. Until now this prophecy has been fulfilled in so far as not only 72, but many more sects have sprung up in Islam; and instead of diminishing, their number seems to be increasing.

Yet, in spite of the fact that Islam is split into numerous sects and political unity has disappeared before Western influence, nationalism, and egotism, there still prevails a remarkable solidarity in Islam, a solidarity which in India goes even so far as to transcend all boundaries of race, language, and country. The short creed which even a moron can remember, the total absence of race distinction, the pilgrimage to Mecca, the distinctive garb and certain observances, punctiliously practiced throughout the world of Islam, mold it into a homogeneous mass over against the outside world. The whole Moslem world seems to be cemented together into one unbreakable slab. This becomes noticeable especially when Moslem minorities appeal to the world of Islam against some foreign government which is supposed to infringe on the religious liberties of their fellow believers. Promptly there arises in the whole Mohammedan world a hue and cry of real or pretended horror. And the Christian powers, intimidated by it, are willing to grant favors to Islam which

THE GREATEST MISSIONARY PROBLEM

261

offend against all rules of fair play and neutrality in religion and would not be shown to any other faith. Witness at the present time the Jewish plea to Britain to permit 100,000 Jews to enter Palestine and the resulting outcry in the Arabic and Moslem world.

And even the dream of a great Moslem empire has not died out. Just recently we read in a daily paper that the prime minister of Egypt, the Moslem Brethren, and the Arabic League have called on Great Britain to withdraw from Egypt in order that there may again come into being a great Islamic state from Morocco to Malaya. Pan-Islamism has again revived and is dreaming its perennial dream of Moslem rule where Moslem faith prevails, of a revival in the 20th century of the 7th century Islam, with ideas and principles and laws drawn up originally for the guidance of a primitive desert society.

Moslem lands may be grouped into three classes, lands where Islam is dominant, lands of pagan civilization where Islam has been modified by contact with cultured paganism, and the border marches of Islam in Africa, Malaysia, etc. To the first group belong northern Africa, Arabia, Turkey, Persia, Central Asia together with Afghanistan. Into most of these lands Islam was introduced during the first century of its existence, from 632 to 750 A. D. Here the Christian churches were either completely destroyed, as, for instance, in North Africa or were placed under heavy tribute and oppression, as in Egypt and Syria. Thus there still exists today in Egypt the Coptic Church of about one million members; and in Syria are still extant the different branches of the Syrian Church; and remnants of the Nestorian Church survive in Iraq. But everywhere the heavy hand of Moslem government and fanaticism has suppressed even the desire to propagate the faith. These churches do not preach their faith to Moslems and even almost fear to admit a Moslem convert to their flock. In these lands there is no liberty to confess Christ, and the life of each convert from Islam is in daily jeopardy. Yet educational, medical, and literary work for Moslems has proved possible where it has been tried, and even evangelistic work has met with some success.

Once a very lively hope was entertained that the existing ancient churches might be revived from their petrified and

ossified state into which they have sunk during the centuries of Moslem occupation and then might be charged with the duty to bring Christ to their Moslem compatriots. In Egypt the attempt was made to instill new life into the dead bones of the Coptic Church by a reformation of the clergy of that Church. It proved a tedious and vain attempt. The next effort was made upon the laity of that Church, but it soon was found that no progress could be made as long as the awakened laity remained under the care of a corrupt and moribund clergy. Hence the time of separation soon came, and thus there has grown up, for instance, in Egypt, a Presbyterian Church of 15,000 to 20,000 members, recruited in the main from the Coptic Church. Similar efforts with the Syrian and Nestorian Churches in Syria and Iraq have proved abortive, and attempts at reviving the old Abyssinian Church, consisting of about three million members in the heart of Africa, seem to meet with the same sad result. What a wonderful thing it would be if the Holy Spirit once more were poured out upon these churches and they became cities built upon high mountains from which the light of the Gospel could shine into the surrounding Moslem and pagan countries! The Nestorians once were the missionaries par excellence who filled the whole of Central Asia with the sound of the Gospel and carried it victoriously from Bagdad to Peking, China. But, alas, the pall and stupor of Islam has fallen upon the lands over which the Nestorians carried the banner of Christ, and very small efforts have been made by the Christian Church in these latter days to reclaim these lands for Christ and His Church. Thus in Persia an indigenous Christian Church of from 2,000 to 3,000 members, again under Presbyterian tutelage, has grown up, and to its credit it must be said that it is imbued with missionary zeal. There are Christian missionaries in all of the countries mentioned with the exception of Afghanistan and Central Russia. The Soviets keep them out from Central Asia, and political rivalry between Russia and Great Britain bars them from Afghanistan. In North Africa — Tripolis, Lybia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco — we find here and there a solitary missionary or lady of some faith mission holding the fort, hoping against hope that the years will bring more help. No sustained effort is being made to confess Christ as the only Savior to the millions of Moslems

in these lands. The Catholic White Fathers have occupied the most important places, but they confess that they do not preach the Gospel to the Mohammedans. By their deeds of kindness and charity, by their helpfulness and sympathy, they want to prepare the ground for their religion, which, in part, is very attractive and, in part, very repulsive to the Moslem.

India and China are the lands where Islam came in contact with cultured paganism, won a considerable following, and was somewhat modified. Hence the millions of Moslems in India are more accessible and have greater religious and social liberty than those of any other land. Therefore no part of the world offers a greater, a more urgent, a more neglected, and a more hopeful field for evangelizing Mohammedans than India. According to the latest information India has a Moslem population of close to 90 millions. This is a larger number of Mohammedans than are found in all Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine together. And this Indian Islam is largely an unoccupied field in spite of the fact that mission work is carried on in India since the days of Ziegenbalg, who arrived in Tranquebar in 1706. Take, for instance, large areas of Bengal with 27½ million Moslems, or the neglected Mophlahs or Mapillas, as we used to call them, in Cochin and Malabar, not to mention the Pathans on the border of Afghanistan and in Baluchistan. The writer still remembers the years he spent as missionary in Travancore. North of us, in Malabar, the Basel Mission has been working in the Malayalim language territory for more than one hundred years surrounded by these Mophlahs, who also speak Malayalim. This mission has done a splendid work among the Malayalim-speaking Hindus but has had neither eye nor ear for the Mohammedans, who have been neglected by Christian missions to such an extent that when Dr. Zwemer visited Malabar in 1928, he found that the only piece of literature for Mohammedans which he could find was a Malayalim Gospel of Luke in Arabic characters.

Or think of our own field in India. We have been working there now for more than 50 years. Round about us, in the Madras Presidency, are living between three and four million Mohammedans. Some of the important towns we occupy have about 50 per cent of their inhabitants devoted to the

religion of Islam. Although it is true that in the course of their work our missionaries have not intentionally passed by the Mohammedans, but have told them the Word of God in Tamil, as the occasion demanded, yet, with the exception of a short-lived attempt, we, too, have not felt any special urge to bring Christ to the followers of Islam. No determined and sustained effort has been made to work definitely for the conversion of Mohammedans. Yet the millions of Moslems in India are more easily accessible than those of any other land. There is a remarkable freedom of speech and of the press under British rule, and converts have the protection of the India Government. The dreadful Moslem law of apostasy can no longer be applied under the Indian Government. There is an open door here as long as Great Britain is master in India. When that is no longer the case, and it seems the British hold is fast slipping, no one knows what Indian nationalists will do.

There is also a new attitude toward the Gospel message. The bold testimony of converts from Islam — 16,000 in Bengal alone — is having its effect. Dr. Zwemer tells of a member of the royal family of Afghanistan banished from his native land and now a professor of Arabic in a Christian college; of another Afghan, a graduate of an English university, who in his recent book on comparative religion, *Lights of Asia*, gives remarkable testimony to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Public confession and baptism are becoming possible nearly everywhere. The Bible is eagerly read, and the questions Moslems now raise regarding its contents prove that they are earnest students of the Word.

Islam is the fourth religion of China, ranking next to Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. It has penetrated to all its provinces. It is more than a thousand years ago since it was introduced into China. The first Mohammedan settlers were 4,000 soldiers dispatched by the Caliph Ja'afer in 755 A. D., who came to the assistance of the Chinese emperor, assailed by his own commander in chief. The total Moslem population in China is still a matter of conjecture. No official census has been taken. The most reliable estimates speak of eight to ten millions. They are found chiefly in the far Northwest, in Zzechwan, Kansu, and Tsinghai Provinces; also in Yunnan, Shensi, Chihli, and Honan; in the remaining

provinces their numbers are smaller, but there are important cities with a large Mohammedan population, such as Peiping, Kaifung, Sian, Chengtu, Yunnan-fu, Kweilin, Nanking, Tientsin, Hankow, and Canton. In Peiping there are 36 mosques. Chinese Moslems are eager for Arabic literature. Their Ahungs, religious leaders, carry on Arabic correspondence with Cairo and Beirut, and there is an association of Islam in China which has written "progress" on its banner and has many branches.

As we gather from a report of Dr. Zwemer in the *Cross Above the Crescent*, the Moslems in China form a great closed friendly society in which one helps the other. The clan idea of their community life, emphasized by certain sanitary customs and by abstinence from pork, alcohol, opium, and ancestor worship, offers so many advantages that to break away from the group would be a social loss. They are a peculiar people to their Chinese neighbors. They are orthodox Sunnis of the school of Hanafi. In the Northwest there is some Shia influence through Persian literature. The China Inland Mission, started by Hudson Taylor, has done splendid pioneer work for many years in inland places and by individual workers among Moslems. This mission is still leading the field. A Swedish Lutheran mission has been working in far-away Chinese Turkestan, in Kashagar, Hancheng, Yangi-Hessar, and Yardand, under very trying circumstances. Some other missions have also undertaken similar work and are nobly sharing in both quest and conquest in this hard field. Many more workers are needed.

The border marches of Islam are in West and Central Africa and Malaysia, where we have to do with masses of newly converted tribes on the pagan front and often find it hard to tell just where paganism ceases and Islam begins. Those who profess Islam still worship their fetishes and cling to many heathen superstitions. Here we are face to face with one of the greatest possibilities of the Christian Church. A few significant facts of Islam in northern Nigeria are here submitted. The women never go veiled. The prescribed hours of prayer are often neglected. Demon dances are held. Beer is brewed for Moslem festivals. The Mohammedan chief carries out hereditary pagan rites as part of his duty to the community. The Koran is used sometimes

as a sort of fetish, and mysterious power is attributed to a writing board on which the name of Allah is written. Ink washed off some suitable passage of the Koran written on a tablet is used as medicine. Pagans and Moslems come in constant contact. The pagan who leaves his village finds it convenient to adopt the Moslem garb and mode of life. He can carry on to some extent his pagan practices and yet be recognized as a Moslem if he repeats the prescribed formulas. From the missionary point of view the primitive Moslem community in less advanced districts is more open to the Christian preaching than the pagan. The crudely Moslem type of community welcomes a preacher who comes in the name of God, and it can be very quickly won to give friendly attention to the Gospel message. Professedly it reverences a *malam* (scholar). There is a great field and a profitable one for the Christian scholar among these friendly simple-minded Moslems.

A similar situation we face in Malaysia. Java is thoroughly Islamized, but Islam sits very lightly upon the Javanese, and underneath a thin layer of Islam is still the old animism. From Borneo came a special call before the war for more workers among the heathen who are not yet Mohammedans, but in imminent danger of becoming such through the influence of the Mohammedan Malays by whom they are surrounded.

But what shall we say of those lands where Mohammedan rule has never been challenged, where vast areas are without a missionary, where the Cross has never yet met the challenge of the Crescent? Surely, if anywhere in the world, here there is an opportunity for special efforts. Here is a great challenge to the Christian Church that by its faith and prayer she may call forth laborers into this harvest. The very danger, the loneliness and hardships, far from being a deterrent, should act as an inducement to dare great things for the Lord, who, in turn, surely will do great things through those who dare and venture. When will the call into the difficult mission fields be answered as readily as that into the comparatively easy ones?

Greensboro, N. C.

