

The Missionary Review



of the World



Vol. XXXV. No. 3.
Old Series

MARCH, 1912

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New Series

Signs of the Times

THE WAR AND FAMINE IN CHINA



WAR and famine still devastate the Flowery Kingdom, which we may soon begin to call the "Flowery Republic." The provisional republican government demands the abdication of the Manchu rulers as a first condition of peace. The armistice has been broken occasionally by minor hostilities, and the country has been harried by marauding bands of robbers and the rabble.

Missionary work is almost at a standstill, with foreigners recalled to the treaty ports, schools closed, and churches generally in charge only of native workers. The prospect is, however, that with the return of peace even larger opportunities will be given for preaching the Gospel.

Recent cable dispatches indicate that the Manchus have consented to give over the reins of government and to retire on a pension, but the edict is not yet signed. Yuan Shi Kai is mentioned as the first president of the

republic. He insists that any final decision as to the future government must be subject to the popular vote. The revolutionists demand that the capital be removed to Nanking.

The most threatening danger at present is the wide-spread famine, which is causing terrible destitution as a result of the floods last August. The great Hwai River Valley region, measuring about 100 by 300 miles, the neighborhood of Wuhu, on the Yangtse, and the province of Hunan were affected, and famine has followed the waters. Almost three million people are starving. Many are shelterless and nearly unclothed. There are very few charitable institutions, and such destitution as prevails is unheard of in more progressive countries. Many sufferers have lost heart and will not try to help themselves. Bodies of men, women and children are lying on the road, where the starving people had dropt. None cared enough to bury them. A few years ago the majority of these men were successful farmers. The

* The editors seek to preserve accuracy and to manifest the spirit of Christ in the pages of this REVIEW, but do not acknowledge responsibility for opinions expressed, or positions taken by contributors to signed articles in these pages.—EDITORS.

THE CLAIMS OF THE MOSLEM WORLD*

BY ROBERT E. SPEER, NEW YORK



WHAT are some of the considerations on the basis of which we make our appeal to the Christian Church to take a new interest in the task of evangelizing the Moslem world?

In the first place, we are under a peculiar debt to the Mohammedan peoples because their religion is the only one of the great religions of the world which came after Christianity, and which repudiated Christianity. There are great areas of the world which once were Christian but now are Mohammedan. There are peoples which once were Christian but now are Mohammedan. There are church buildings which once were Christian which Christians may not enter to-day. It was a right instinct that lay at the basis of the Crusades, altho the method was wrong; an instinct in Christendom which filled it with a sense of horror and of shame that great areas which had belonged to Christ had been handed over to Islam. We need to recover these areas in our day. In Mohammedism we are dealing with a religion which has reckoned with our religion, or thinks that it has, which has rejected it and usurped its inheritance, and we are called to go out to reclaim that which once belonged to our Lord.

The Moslem Barrier

In the second place, we must deal with Mohammedanism because it has interposed itself as a barrier between two great sections of the world which

ought to have found their nearest approach across the territory which Mohammedanism usurped. Dr. Nitobe, at Columbia University, made allusion to this fact, pointing out that there was no original chasm between the East and West—when the Persians poured over into Europe and when the Europeans poured back into Persia; when ideas flowed to and fro from the East and West. There were great currents of human movements between them until that wall of Mohammedanism arose in the seventh century and the natural roads of intercourse were closed. It is high time that we removed that barrier which has intervened between the East and the West. It is true that commerce passes more easily over the water than over the land; but religion moves from community to community, and Christianity should have gone, and no doubt would have gone, hundreds of years ago eastward overland into Asia if it had not been for the great area which Mohammedanism made an interracial barrier.

The argument has been often advanced that Mohammedanism was not an absolutely dead wall, but was a real channel of communication; that there was a great intellectual light shining in Islam. Any one who has taken the trouble to study the question, even second-hand, as most of us have only been able to do, must accept the judgment set forth in Sell's "Faith of Islam," in which he holds that all the science was Grecian in its foundations; that not one great philosopher who arose was an Arab; that

* Condensed report of an address at a parlor meeting under the auspices of the Nile Mission Press Committee, New York, December 7, 1911.

the men who wrote the greatest treatises in Arabic were without exception Spaniards or Persians; that Islam never produced a great book on science or philosophy whose translation has been demanded; that it never conquered a people with a literature; that it never was a channel of communication between the East and the West. It was an intellectual non-conductor, a massive racial and religious barrier.

Moslem Women and Children

In the third place, we are called to work for the Mohammedan world today, and this ought to appeal to every true instinct in us—because that religion has borne down most heavily upon the weakest and most defenseless classes—upon the women and the children. It is the religion that has done most basely for womankind by its doctrine of polygamy and divorce. A great part of the degradation of womanhood in India is due to Mohammedanism and Buddhism, not to Hinduism at all. The Mohammedan conception of women has degraded woman as she has been degraded by no other religion of the world, and the Mohammedan doctrine of divorce has, of course, poisoned the life of childhood throughout the Mohammedan world, making it impossible for children to grow up in the atmosphere of purity. The great majority of humanity is made up of women and children, and upon these Islam has borne down with heaviest depression.

The Power in Islam

In the fourth place, we are called upon to toil for these Mohammedan peoples because, nevertheless, we have in them a great mass of powerful energy and virility with which to work, that we may take their energy and

power and commit it to the Kingdom of God. I do not refer to moral and intellectual virility. Dr. Cochran, who was born in Persia and spent all his life there as a medical missionary, whose profession brought him into the most intimate relations with all classes of men in Persia, told me that deeply as he regretted to say it, he had to acknowledge that he had almost never met a morally pure Moslem in all northwest Persia. In India the moral tone of Mohammedanism is lower than that of Hinduism. The Mohammedans have never been an intellectual race. They have no idea of history, they study no literature and their ideas are those of twelve hundred years ago. There has been no quickening, intellectual life among them. But, strange as it may seem, there is no nonchristian race of more masculine vitality and power. No one who has traveled through Asia has failed to be impressed by this whenever he has passed through the Mohammedan races. We are called to take possession of this virility for Christ, who needs all that latent power that is waiting to be used in the work of the Kingdom of God in the world.

The Hopelessness of Islam

In the fifth place, we are called to take a deeper interest in this work for Mohammedans because of the utter hopelessness of these peoples under the influence of Islam. There can be no dispute that wherever Mohammedanism has gone it has either found a desert or made one. The greatest waste areas of the world fall within the borders of Islam. Take one after another of the countries that Mohammedanism has dominated; they were prominent and industrious, but the influence of Islam has simply destroyed

industry, civilization, thrift, comfort, plenty and left them in devastation and ruin. We asked men in Persia again and again, fourteen or fifteen years ago, how they accounted for it that the fruits of Islam were so dismal in Moslem lands, while the Christian lands contained all the progress and life of the world. Some of them said: "If you look back you will see that between 1,000 and 1,500 years after the beginning of each religion comes the dark age. Christianity has had its dark age, and now Mohammedanism has its, and our reformation will come just as yours came." Others of them would sadly abandon all such hopes and admit that Christians had the better of it in this world, but that Mohammedans were to have their share in the other; that Christians would pay then for their advantages here, while Mohammedans would enter into the paradise which had been reserved for the faithful. The fact is that those nations are held in a death grip by Islam, and there is no progress for them save as they shake off the evil which Islam has wrought by the perpetuation of the crude social and political ideas of Arabia in the seventh century by placing those ideas in an unalterable book, a book to be the law of man's life forever.

Kinship to Christianity

We owe a great debt to the Mohammedan world because we dare not, feeling the thrill of the life that is guiding us, leave these nations to their death and hopelessness and decay, from which they can never escape save as they escape from their faith, and accept instead of its death, the life of Christ.

We owe a special debt to this Mohammedan world because it is so akin

in its religious faith, in some respects, and in others so alien to our Christian inheritance. We have so much in common on the one hand—our clean, strong monotheistic faith. They, too, have an uncompromising faith in one God. They hold with us that Jesus Christ was the only sinless prophet. We have that great point in common with them. They admit that alone of all their prophets, Mohammed not excepted, Christ was the sinless one. They admit our Christian scriptures as sacred books, but they believe that what we call Christian scriptures are corrupted. Historic criticism fights on our side in this matter. All this antagonism to the Christian scriptures on that ground must die away. We have these great points in common.

On the other hand, think how deep the divergences are. They have no perfect moral code. The Koran can not endure the light of day as a book of ethical principles and ideals. In the second place, in spite of their faith Mohammed is not an ideal; he did not claim to be their ethical ideal; he never said of himself what our Lord said of Himself: "Which of you convinces me of sin?" They have no pure, moral code embodied in a person and they have no living, abiding power by which that moral code is to be incorporated in the lives of weak and sinful men.

We are called to share with them the faith that has done for us everything and that can do everything also for them.

We owe a great debt to this Mohammedan world because of the tremendous changes that are shaking it in our time. The unity of Mohammedanism has often been held up to

us as a reproach, but Mohammed held that Mohammedanism was to be superior in the matter of disunion, also to all other religions. As a matter of fact, however, we never have been divided in Christianity as Mohammedanism is divided to-day. Persia is full of sects and it is often stated that there is not an orthodox Mohammedan in the land. Mohammedanism is one of the most perilous and fragile of religions when at last dissolving forces and influences are brought to bear on it. A religion of ideas can stand a great deal, whereas a statutory religion such as Mohammedanism can not admit any light and can only anticipate collapse when new ideas beat upon it and new influences divide and undermine it. It is without any power of adaptation.

The Mohammedan world is confronting the approach of a fearful religious collapse. It will be a terrible thing if that collapse comes without sufficient preparation therefor on the part of the Christian Church, with a message to lay hold of the Moslem mind when the old institutions finally break down beyond all possibility of recovery.

Christianity—False and True

Most of all, we owe a great debt to Mohammedanism because my statement made at the beginning was not entirely true. I said we were under a special obligation to a religion which had in its initial program repudiated Christianity. But what was the kind of Christianity that it repudiated? It was a false kind. The religion, with which Mohammed collided 1,200 years ago, was not a true religion and deserved to be overthrown. It was not the Christian faith as we understand it, but a re-

ligion which died away before the impact of Islam because Islam had some qualities superior to those which that religion had. What was the Christian faith that Mohammed repudiated 1,200 years ago? It was a travesty of the Christian religion. Because the Christian faith they denied was a Christian faith in name and not Christianity, we are bound by 1,200 years of obligation to give to the Mohammedan world a Christian faith that is real and true, and to offer Mohammedans the opportunity to undo their judgment of 1,200 years by accepting the true light and the true faith in place of the false representation of Christ which alone was offered in the name of Christianity twelve centuries ago.

Wonderful Opportunities

We stand before wonderful opportunities to-day in northern Africa, where the animistic peoples are waiting for a faith that meets the needs of human souls and will take Islam, which is pressing in upon them, if we do not offer them the Christian faith; in Egypt, in Turkey, shaken down to the foundations, in Persia and in other lands where doors are now open and no barrier is interposed to making Christ known. What shall we say to our Lord if we miss these opportunities and deliver over to Islam in the twentieth century more Christian territories or more lives that belong to Him, to whom we are to bring not those lives only but the 230,000,000 people, who by the very earnestness and devotion of their loyalty to Mohammed and his faith have shown that they are the material out of which may be made the true and loyal followers of our Lord and Savior?