

ARTICLE IX.

NOTES.

**WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS OF THE WEST DO FOR THE
MUSLIM RACES OF TURKEY?**

WHAT American missionaries are doing for the Christian races of the Ottoman empire is well known. Their evangelistic work has developed into churches which are becoming self-supporting and self-propagating, a sure pledge of permanence. Their work of education through schools, once wholly eleemosynary, now shows a total under instruction of twenty-four thousand, while their higher schools and colleges, for both sexes, are filled to overflowing with pay pupils, and the graduates of these institutions are preachers, teachers, physicians, and business men, leaders in society and in affairs; and that quite as much in the Gregorian Armenian, and "Orthodox" Greek communities, from which they come and to which they return, as among the Protestants.

Upon the foundation of the Bible, which the great Bible Societies send forth, in many languages, in numerous editions, one hundred thousand volumes a year, the Publication Department at Constantinople builds up a Christian literature, periodical and permanent. Theirs is the only fountain of wholesome reading of more than ephemeral value. Their average yearly output has been ten million pages.

In recent years hospital and dispensary work has been greatly and most successfully extended, while the emergency work of relief in times of famine, pestilence, and other calamities, sometimes employs well-nigh the whole missionary force, and wonderfully extends the normal influence of the Christianity represented by such philanthropic enterprise. All these lines of work are in evidence and on record, known to observing Christians everywhere.

At present, at least three-fourths of the populations directly under the control of the Ottoman Power are Muslim in religion,—Turks, Arabs, Koords, Circassians, Albanians, and others. What can Christians of the West do for these races? This is no new question. It was asked two generations ago. It is, it has always been, an urgent question. We must confess that there has been much groping for a practical answer.

For missionaries working among the adherents of another religion than their own, it is necessary not only to become thoroughly acquainted with that religion, but also to come into sympathy with that religious sentiment which is everywhere found; and this sympathy will become deeper and more yearning where the religious spirit has become stifled or atrophied by the blind guides, who have undertaken to direct, and by the baleful narcotics which have attempted to satisfy, religious aspiration.

Whatever may be true concerning other Oriental religions, no charge of vagueness can be made against the religion of Islam. Here we find a clearly defined creed, a theology largely Jewish, a theology which asserts the unity, and also every natural and moral attribute, of God. The name of the religion, Islam, is exactly translated by the word "Surrender," which means the surrender of the human to the divine will. This is a doctrine of practical significance and value in the lives of Mohammedans.

Islam has also a sharply defined cultus consisting of five required duties; viz. 1st. The formula "*La illah illa Allah, weh Mohammed ressul Ullah,*" which every faithful Muslim repeats at least five times each day. 2d. Formal worship, exactly prescribed, both as to the words and the attitudes to be adopted. This is not *prayer*, for which there is a different word. 3d. Fasting, i. e., a month of fasting by day, coupled with unlimited feasting by night. The 4th and 5th duties are Alms and the Meccan pilgrimage.

Islam has also an ethical code. This differs from the ethical code of Christianity in three respects. 1st. It does not require absolute truthfulness, but permits, rather it commends and

commands deception, to any degree, toward those of other faiths. 2d. It requires mercy in general, but excepts aliens and enemies, as its whole historic record abundantly shows. 3d. In respect of social purity and chastity, while the requirement of Christianity is the domination of the sense by the spirit, Islam concedes large license to the demands of the sense.

Have we of the West a benevolent mission to devotees of Islam?

Let us recall, and in deep sorrow take note of, the fact that, until, in recent years, they have come in contact with evangelical Christianity, what Muslim peoples, from the beginning, *could* know of Christians and Christianity has been wholly lacking in winning power. Neither the Christianity nor the Christian life of Arabia or of Syria, in the seventh century, when Islam appeared, nor that of the Oriental churches in modern times, has been fitted, either to convince a Muslim of the deeper truth and more commanding spiritual claim of Christianity, or to win his assent to the Christianity illustrated in the lives of the Christians among whom he lives.

Moreover, intelligent Muslims—and there are many of them—are just as familiar as we are with the history of the Christianity of medieval Europe,—its devastating wars, its merciless cruelties, its colossal selfishness, its ecclesiastical tribunal, called in caustic irony the Holy Inquisition, its crusades into Muslim and into Christian lands, its expulsion of the Moors and the Jews, its stupendous hierarchical assumptions, its simony, its hypocrisy, its deep moral corruption.

Now if we ask the Turk,—in his native character no truculent barbarian, but a very human man, let us remember,—“What can we do for you?” need we be surprised if he replies, “We want nothing to do with your religion”? Let us accept it in all humility, but with more enduring courage, that it is a longer and more difficult road than is generally supposed along which we must lead men of Oriental races and of alien creeds to Christ, the Living Way.

Now let us see what the observing, fair-minded Turk of

to-day, when free to speak his mind, does say to us. Listen.

"We are watching your work among us, and we see, first, your schools. These, in the ability, the noble impartiality, the pure morality, that characterize their administration, challenge our admiration and our imitation, and attract our youth.

"Again, we recognize the purity and the exceptional value of the moral, educational, and scientific issues of your press. You care nothing for rumors or sensation in your news columns, but tell the truth. We say of your *Messenger*, 'It never laughs, and it never lies.'

"The heart of our people has been deeply touched by the treatment some of us have received in your hospitals, kind and self-forgetful beyond any care we ever received elsewhere or even dreamed of.

"We have also noted, as we have sometimes shared in, the benefit of your efforts to relieve suffering in times of distress, efforts limited by no conditions of race or religion. We like this evidence of philanthropic enterprise, with no ulterior or selfish designs upon our country."

Turks often speak to us in just this way. What shall be our answer to such a welcome as this? Shall we say, "We are missionaries of the Christian religion, and of the Protestant branch of the Christian church, and our sole errand is to convince you of the falsity of your ancestral faith, and to win you to faith in Christ"? Shall we say that? For one I hold that Christianity, and Christianity alone, deserves to be called a missionary religion, because it alone confers spiritual blessings upon men, with no expectation of personal or national gain to those who are its heralds. But for this very reason, viz, because it is purely and unqualifiedly beneficent, the representatives of Christianity in the East, as soon as they gain a correct conception of the conditions under which they live and work, learn that the way to reach Muslim peoples is not by religious discussion, but by winning them, through living a Christlike life before their eyes, and by bestowing upon them those blessings which they crave at our hands.

Christ healed the sick. We can do that, in these days, with

unrivaled success. Christ taught, in very simple language, that God is not only a sovereign, but our Father. Islam has not this doctrine in its creed: but how the human heart everywhere responds to this evangel. The response may be in a form different from that we looked for.

I once asked an Arab Koord, a dear friend of mine, who was led to believe in Christ by careful reading of the Bible, with the guidance of a deacon of the evangelical church in Mosul, just what it was that finally led him to accept the Christian faith, expecting him to point to some of those words of the Gospels which I knew had deeply impressed him. He replied, "It was a comparison of Islamic tradition concerning Solomon with the Old Testament narrative"!

Western science is a powerful uplifting lever to the Oriental mind. "I am reading your book on Natural Theology for the fifth time," said the governor of an interior city to me some time ago. "You have done our people a most valuable service," said a high officer of state to the translator of a standard book of Physical Geography. When the manuscript of my Natural Theology in Osmanly Turkish was before the board of censors, some years ago, all approved except one white-turbaned Turk. "What do you object to in the book?" they asked him. "To nothing in the book," he replied, "but one of us ought to have written it." And several years later a little book of very high moral tone entitled "Christian Manliness," was toned down as to distinctively *Christian* instruction, and offered for publication with the title "Manliness." Again a member of the Ulema objected. "We see nothing to object to in this," his colleagues said. "Yes," he replied, "it smells of Christianity all through."

To the insane desire of many to thrust the Turk, bag and baggage, not only out of Europe, but off the surface of this planet, let our answer be, "We will, please God, win the Turk to trust us, and, in all friendliness, invite him to share the blessings Christian civilization has conferred upon us." Suppose the Turk were every whit as bad as some represent; is not then the call more urgent and compelling, for us to go to

him, in deeper and more loving sympathy, with our hands full of our choicest, richest gifts?

We do open our schools to him. We receive him, when sick, into our hospitals. We offer him, through our press, the ripest and choicest things of our own language. Then let us be both patient and hopeful while we wait for his acceptance of what we offer.

Let us give a Muslim what he feels the need of and will be grateful for, and then let God, by his providence and Spirit, and through the winning power of a practical Christianity, accomplish all that for which we pray. Let us not forget our Lord's words, "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation," and let us work unanxious about any public heralding of the results of our labor.

For my own part, hoping for a few more years of service in the land where the greater part of my life has been spent, I will be well content to work along the lines of my department of effort, so soon as the needed additional funds are in hand, to prepare and issue books that tell of God's heaven and of the wonders of his earth; books that inculcate and illustrate those high ideals of moral teaching, of noble living, those sterling elements of character which find their exemplification in the true followers of the Man of Nazareth and of Calvary. In this way our work through the press will join on to the work of the Christian philanthropist, the teacher, the physician. So doing, we shall illustrate Christlieb's words, "The Christian is the world's Bible"; or these words of Whittier,

"Our dear Lord's best interpreters
Are faithful human souls;
The gospel of a life like theirs,
Is more than creeds or scrolls."

And shall we not assuredly believe that all we hope and pray for will follow in God's good time? If we are patient enough, faithful enough, prayerful enough; *if we show that we really care*,—we shall prove, in our relation to other races of men, the significance of our Lord's words, "Ye are my witnesses." *That* testimony, in its purity and in its fullness, is the one want of the Oriental world.

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