

# World Missionary Conference, 1910

*(To consider Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World)*

## THE HISTORY AND RECORDS OF THE CONFERENCE

TOGETHER WITH  
ADDRESSES DELIVERED AT THE  
EVENING MEETINGS

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# CHANGES IN THE CHARACTER OF THE MISSIONARY PROBLEM

## II. IN MOHAMMEDAN LANDS

BY THE REV. W. H. T. GAIRDNER, CAIRO

*Address delivered in the Assembly Hall on Saturday  
Evening, 18th June*

MR. CHAIRMAN, FATHERS, AND BRETHERN,—The question is not so much, where do we find evidences of the modern movement in Islam to-day? as, where do we not find such evidences?

We are, of course, familiar with the modernist movement which is affecting the middle Moslem realms of Turkey, Egypt, Persia, and India,—all of them countries into which European ideas have found their way, and have produced political and intellectual fermenting, both of which in turn are reacting on religion. But these are not the only countries in Islam that are being modified in some new way by events which, directly or indirectly, have had their origin in the West. In Russia the promulgation of religious liberty on the 17th April 1905 has resulted, as I am informed by a Russian lady who has made a special study of the subject, in the return to Islam of 50,000 forced conformists to the Greek Church; and they have been accompanied or followed by not a few who embraced Islam for the first time. There is no doubt that events like these will stimulate the Mohammedans in Russia in Europe, the Volga districts, Russian Central Asia, and perhaps Siberia itself. For ideas are like electricity; they move fast, especially when the metals of a

railway line conduct them. So that no doubt the Transcaspian railway, which will in time be continued from Russian Turkestan into Chinese Turkestan, will carry ideas with it, and so the historic trade-routes that cross the middle of the heart of the Asiatic continent into China, may soon become nerves organising Moslem Central Asia into a much closer organism than it has been before. Or turn to China; if there is one country in the world the Mohammedans of which might be confidently supposed not to be sensitive to impressions from the outside world, that country is China, for the Chinese Moslems have been the standing example of the most stagnant and unintelligent possible form of Islamism. Yet we hear of the dispatch of a Turk to be the first resident Moslem missionary in China, and more striking still, of thirty Chinese Mohammedan students drinking in Western ideas at a Japanese University, and editing a quarterly magazine for distribution to their fellow-religionists throughout China with the significant title "Moslems, Awake!" Or turn to Malaysia; the modifying influence here is the steamship, which is enabling an ever-increasing number of Javanese, Sumatrans, and other East Indian Moslems to make their pilgrimage to Mecca, with the natural result of welding Islam into a much more compact and unyielding whole throughout Malaysia. Or turn to Arabia itself; the tomb of the Prophet at El Medina resounds to-day to the whistle of a railway train. From Arabia indirectly came the great—you cannot call it modernist—but the great modern or recent movement of El Senussi, the influence of which is being felt right away through the Sudan to Lake Chad and the heathen tribes on the extreme north of the Congo basin. Otherwise the Moslem movement, so fearfully extensive through Africa, is essentially a reaction consequent on the action of European Governments, for the establishment of settled governments all the way from the Nile to the Zambesi has weakened or broken down tribal exclusiveness, and opened up a hundred thoroughfares for the peaceful penetration of Islam; which being so, we shall probably before long see Islam assuming the attitude of the heaven-sent uniter and vindicator of the African race,

reaping most of the harvest sown by the Ethiopianism of to-day.

This rapid preliminary survey assures us, then, that even from the view-point of a modern movement, the Mohammedan problem is practically co-extensive with the whole world of Islam. And may I not, in this great Conference, make yet one more preliminary remark. This problem of Islam is one which we simply cannot overlook—not even in the face of the indescribably urgent situations facing us in the Far East. And this, first, because Islam is at our doors; from the far-flung North African coast it fronts Europe, actually touching it, so to speak, at either end of the Mediterranean,—at the Pillars of Hercules and at Constantinople. And secondly, because it is a central problem also. Think of that enormous central block of solid Mohammedanism from Northern Africa into Western and Central Asia! Like an immovable wedge, it keeps the Christian West from the pagan or heathen East; and I would have you recollect, Fathers and Brethren, that even were our Japanese, our Korean and Manchurian, our Chinese, our Indian problems solved, their present crises happily met and surmounted, and a Christian Far East added to the Catholic Church, that great central unsympathetic, alien, and hostile wedge would cut Eastern and Western Christendom absolutely in half, keeping the twain apart, insulating them from each other, and exhibiting to God and man not merely a seam, but a rent, from top to bottom, in the seamless robe of the great Catholic Church,—of a humanity wholly, but for Islam, won for Christ. Truly, then, we cannot postpone the problem of Islam. It is a problem of to-day, as we have seen. Let the same “to-day,” then, be the day of solution and salvation.

My task and privilege then this evening is to seek to unfold to you, representatives of the Church militant in all the earth, the situation as it is to-day, in view of the modern or modernist movements within Islam; our object being unitedly to take measures, to the utmost extent of the resources at our disposal, by which the situation thus realised may be met. And this last sentence reminds us that “the resources at our disposal” is a phrase capable of two interpretations, and that

in our consultation this evening both must be kept in our minds. In the narrow sense, those resources are utterly insufficient to meet the situation to-day, though they could doubtless be more wisely disposed, more economically distributed, more richly used. But at our disposal also are the resources of the living God, and this thought will keep us reminded during this session also of the root lesson of this Conference, that only a new realisation of the meaning of a living God will avail us to accomplish or even continue our superhuman task.

There is not time to indicate more than the foci where the particular crisis of to-day are centred. Fathers and brethren, our motto must be *Verbum Sapientibus!* In this hall, and on this subject, I must and may emphasize each of these two words.

Beginning, then, with the Ottoman Empire, we find a movement which can broadly be described as one towards freedom, political first and then intellectual. Ultimately a double movement of this nature must react on religion slowly but surely. The inner attitude of the young Turks themselves to religious toleration is probably an advanced one. The very fact that Christianity and Christians have been to such a large extent at the bottom of their movement must produce far-reaching and important consequences. Already in many parts of the Turkish Empire, notably Syria, the liberty of the press is making very great advances. Already some leaders of Islamic thought are disposed to query the whole elaborate fabric of Islam as historically evolved and elaborated, and to go back to the Koran, into which some of them read as much Christianity as they are able. Are not these facts a call to the Societies at work in the Ottoman Empire to stand by and to strengthen their work so as to be ready to take advantage of the expanding situation? May not the day for reaping the fruit of the marvellous endurance of the Armenian martyrs be nigh? It must come, as sure as there is a just God in Heaven!

The following steps, then, seem incumbent: first, to strengthen the already splendidly successful work done for and amongst the several Eastern Churches in the Ottoman

Empire, whether Anglican or non-Anglican. Secondly, to occupy the unoccupied districts through the Societies contiguous to them—these districts are mentioned in the Report of Commission I. Thirdly, to place literary work on a stronger and surer footing. (I will return to this point in a moment.) Fourthly, to put wise, continuous, and courageous pressure upon the Government to make full religious equality and liberty an actual fact in the Empire. Fifthly, to make a wise and courageous advance in direct work for Moslems. In an informal conference lately held in Beyrout, which I had the privilege of attending, one heard witness after witness dwelling on the extent to which such direct work is already being done, and the far greater extent to which, in the opinion of all, it might be now done. At the end of the day that informal conference expressed its opinion, with this Edinburgh Conference specially in view, as follows:—

“(1) That direct evangelistic work among Moslems, which has been going on quietly for several decades in Syria and Palestine, is more than ever possible to-day, whether by means of visiting, conversation, the production and careful distribution of Christian literature, Bible circulation, medical missions, and boys’ and girls’ schools. (2) That the promulgation of the Constitution has already, in the more enlightened centres, made this direct evangelistic work easier, and will, we trust, as the constitutional principle of religious equality becomes better understood by the people, make it increasingly so. And, on the other hand, we are face to face with a Mohammedan educational and religious revival which makes necessary this missionary advance if the prestige gained in the past is to be preserved and increased. (3) For which reasons it is certain that the time has come for a wisely planned and carefully conducted and intensely earnest forward move in work among Moslems in Syria and Palestine, and the attention of all the Societies already working in the field is to be directed towards immediately making that forward move.”

Fathers and brethren, *Verbum Sapientibus!*

Passing to Egypt, where the larger measure of civil freedom makes the possibilities of direct Moslem work practically unlimited, we find that Cairo is still to-day the intellectual centre of Islam. It has been so ever since the decay of Bagdad under the Abbasides. It is therefore at this point

that it is proper to emphasise another critically necessary line of advance which the Christian Church must make without delay. I mean an advance in the quality and quantity of the scholarship of those who work among Moslems all over the world, and especially in those parts where the enlightenment is going on. There are two main lines along which this increased study must be directed, and Moslem Cairo stands for both: the first is the old traditional theology and philosophy, represented by the University of El Azhar; and the second is the modernist movement, which more or less touches every young Moslem who receives an education after the Western model, and which consists, as I have said, in an attempt to get behind the actual historical evolution of Islamism, and to re-think out a new policy, a new theology, a new philosophy, and a new society, upon the basis of the Koran, unsupplemented by all tradition whatever. This movement, which is strongly represented in India, has also a firm footing in Cairo, where the well-known Sheikh Mohammed Abdu lectured and gained disciples. One of these disciples, the editor of the Cairo review, *El Manar*, is the man who at this moment is busying himself about founding a missionary college for Turks in Constantinople, the graduates of which shall go forth to teach the principles of this new Islam, specially in the further East! Whereby you may see that this new Islam aims at spreading and propagating. Now both these lines of intellectual activity imply a force of scholar missionaries, more numerous and many degrees more learned than at present exists. For even though the learning of traditional Islam be supposed to be on the decline—and the supposition remains to be proved, though it is hardly questionable that El Azhar is a decaying institution, and its influence abroad a mere shadow of what it was—yet that traditional learning is still the learning that underlies the life of the enormous masses of Mohammedans all over the world, masses whose very *vis inertiae* will always be a formidable and potent thing. That traditional learning, then, demands students as much as ever it did, and those same students must add to their programme the task of watching, studying, and meeting this Neo-Islam

with its several almost contradictory aspects. I do not know where that study can be fully carried on, except somewhere in the Arabic-speaking world; and that somewhere, beyond all dispute, can only be Cairo. Therefore it seems to many of us that a school of Arabic study must be quietly founded and carried on there—a school which shall be at the service of missionaries from every part of the Moslem world. I say this without prejudice to schemes of Oriental Colleges and courses in the home lands, schemes which will certainly have their place, but will not, I believe, be more than supplementary or complementary to what I am indicating. At Cairo, then, this school can only be started and maintained, Gentlemen, by your Societies taking thought—if not anxious thought, still thought—and that immediately. *Verbum Sapientibus!*

Moving East from Egypt, we come to Arabia, the Cradle of Islam. Besieged as it is by Moslem countries where modernist actions and re-actions are taking place, ought it not to be more effectively besieged by us? I would call your attention first, to the recommendations of Commission I., that ten important points along the coast should be occupied with medical missions, like so many encircling light-centres; secondly, to the reminder recently given by Mr. Garland, the Jewish missionary, that Islam may yet be reached by the Jews of greater Arabia, if we remember “to the Jews first”; thirdly, to the following words of Dr. Young of Aden:—

“I think the Church should seize the present opportunity of entering the open door of Arabia, and specially should it try to start a large united mission in Mecca or Medina. It may seem Utopian even to dream of starting a mission in Mecca or Medina, but until an effort has been made no one can tell whether or not it will be successful. At any rate an attempt should be made to begin work in Jidda (the port of Mecca) and a properly equipped hospital established there would do much to teach the pilgrims the meaning of Christian love.” Dr. Zwemer told me yesterday that he considered Jidda even more important—it is certainly more practicable—than Mecca.

Turning to Mesopotamia, may I remind the Conference



of the enormous importance that region is going to have in the future when the Bagdad railway scheme and Sir William Willcock's irrigation scheme have been worked out? Is it not vital that the Church should initiate work there on a totally different scale than exists at present?

After Mesopotamia, Persia. The ferment in that country is not a call to retreat or stand still, but to go forward (a thing which is everywhere true where the minds of men are at last feeling the need of something they have not got). The Bakhtiari Chiefs who carried through the recent *coup d'état* and became the *de facto* governors of Teheran, were, before they came into this startling prominence, the firm friends of the C.M.S. missionaries. Does not this one fact make it crucially important to strengthen and reinforce those working for the gospel in that land, the importance of which as dividing Sunni Islam is so great? The opportunity was greater a few years ago than it is to-day. Is it to slip entirely?

In India we have the same phenomena noted in Egypt, constituting the same call. We have the same enormous mass of popular Sunni Islam, and to a still greater extent a modernist movement, which has never yet been adequately dealt with. In addition to all this we have the serious intelligence of some millions of outcastes in Bengal or the Punjab, who before very long must be claimed by either Islam or Hinduism if the Christian Church does not gather them to herself. Is not the latter fact a call to the Church immediately to do this vital work of taking preservative measures? In this case, by how many thousand times is prevention better and easier than cure! For the rest the Report of Commission I. registers the impression that in India Moslem Missions have been sadly neglected. Hardly any men are set apart for this work in S. India, and nowhere I believe, in India as elsewhere, is the proper training being given to men who are to engage in modern work, and who have now not only to study traditional Islam but the modernist movement and literature that have their source and spring at Aligarh.

In the East Indies we have already mentioned the new activity consequent on increased facilities for travel and

inter-communication. Our Dutch and German brethren are doing a magnificent work here both in winning Moslems and in preventing the Islamising of non-Moslems. All this great Conference can do is to encourage them to make even greater exertions in the name of the Lord! In particular, may we not pray that they and we may be enabled to strengthen our hold on Borneo, that great island in which but little is being done, and which, I am informed by the Rev. G. Allan, S.P.G. missionary there, is full of fanatical and very influential Malaysian Moslems. It is a marvel that the Dyaks and other aborigines have not been Islamised, such being the circumstances. It seems that we owe their present escape to their unparalleled relish for pork! But that is not a satisfactory thing for us to rely on, and with this Malaysian environment the danger is imminent. Even in the case of the enormous island of New Guinea, hitherto as far as I know unaffected by Islam, we may well let fall the appeal in passing to hasten its evangelisation, lest, if we tarry, it too become as Java and as Sumatra.

In China until recently the problem of Islam has hardly been even studied, much less worked at. We have read in the Report the significant message of young Chinese Moslems studying at Tokio, "Moslems, awake!" Is not the translation of this simply, "Christians, awake?" It is, in fact, a sharp admonition to us that the *laissez faire* attitude of the past must now cease. The Report advises the focusing of Christian effort on certain known strategic centres and the setting apart of men for the purpose. It adds: "Such workers would need a knowledge of both Chinese and Arabic." This is only one more indication of the necessity of having an Arabic Seminary at some centre like Cairo.

From China through to Central Asia, Turkestan, and Russia is an historic route. From what I learn from three first-rate informants, the thing of paramount importance to pray for is the revival of the Greek Church, and the according to other forms of Christianity a more complete freedom to be and to work. The Greek Church has the means and the men had she the vision and the passion, yet I am informed of two small Greek Church missions among the

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189,000 Moslems of Siberia in the Tomsk and Obolsk districts, and of the conversion of three Moslems in Siberia in 1908. A small harvest, truly, yet it shows that the task is no impossibility. We know of the great evangelistic work done by the Greek Church in Japan. Why should not the word of the Lord yet come to that Church to do a similar work wherever Moslems are found in the Russian Empire? May it be that, at the next Decennial Conference, Greek Church delegates and Roman Church delegates will be found sitting here with us and rehearsing to us the mighty acts of the Holy Spirit at their hands in Asiatic Islam?

Lastly, Africa. I need not say one word to you, fathers and brethren, to tell you of the crisis in which practically all Africa is involved between the religions of Christ and Mohammed. The thing is notorious, and this Conference at least is well aware of its seriousness. The two main causes are, first, the influence of the Senussi movement, which has radiated from the North-East Sahara, and is felt, I believe, wherever Islam is advancing between the 10th and 5th degrees of latitude North; and secondly, the influence of traders, who, taking advantage of the security given by the various British, French, or German occupations, carry Islam everywhere. This applies generally to East Africa and the Central and Western parts of the Sudan.

How can these things be dealt with?

In regard to the first, Dr. Kumm in his recent journey across Africa and along the Moslem fringe, everywhere found tribes on the Shari River and North Congo streams up to the 5th parallel in process of being Islamised; and he found that the impetus was coming from the Senussi movement. The Senussi monasteries and not El Azhar are the true fountain head of North African Mohammedan extension, and Senussism, though utterly anti-modernist, is nevertheless not orthodox. No Senussite could study at El Azhar, that home of an unmilitant orthodoxy. The only contribution El Azhar makes to Central or West African Islam is the vague prestige of its name, and a certain amount of consolidating influence exerted by the few Azharite graduates who find their way back to Hausaland and other parts of

the Western Sudan. As Pastor Würz writes, the blow at the heart of the extensionist movement in the Central region would be a work carried on in the Senussi centres of the Sahara. This seems impossible. He adds: "What can we do in this matter but pray and wait?" This then is what it is the duty of the Church to do. And then there is that advancing fringe—from the Shari River to the Bahr-el-Arab. A Christian traveller has now been across that fringe. Is not that fact a challenge to your Churches and Societies, fathers and brethren, to advance along the path thus indicated, eastward from the Cameroons and Nigeria, westward from the missions on the Upper Nile? And before leaving this aspect of the subject let me point out the importance of praying down the French opposition to non-Roman effort in all its vast African Islamic Empire.

Turning from the Central Sudan to the Western, I should like to quote some words of Pastor Würz of Basel, who has devoted so much attention to the subject. "For the moment," he says, "North Nigeria seems to me the most important point. The countries round Lake Chad, on the British or German side, may be second. If French territory were open to the Gospel some great centre further west might be of the same importance." So far Pastor Würz; and here I wish I could quote to you the whole of an important letter, written last New Year's Day by Mr. T. E. Alvarez, Secretary of the C.M.S. North Nigerian mission. You would see how completely it endorses the words, "For the moment North Nigeria seems the most important point." He points out the enormous work that might be done there to-day, both preventive and direct; how essential it is that it should be done at once in view of the rapidly approaching linking up of the Lower Niger, Hausaland, and Calabar by railways. May I remind you also yet once more of Dr. Miller's appeal for forty educationists or evangelists for Hausaland, that the Hausa nation may lead the way in stopping the Mohammedan rush? Fathers and brethren, I fall back earnestly upon my motto, *verbum sapientibus!*

I return to Pastor Würz: "There is almost no unity in African missions. Look at the west coast. A score of

separate starts from a score of separate points on the west. No attempt at unity as far as I am aware. I wish for this reason that all West African missions might make a vigorous attempt to work among Moslems. This would give them an obviously common task at least. Islam might link us together; this done it would be time to try to settle on an intelligent common plan of operations. But we are far from that yet."

Are these closing words not indeed a challenge? In this hall are representatives of the Churches or Societies working in West Africa. Were it not glorious if one result of this Conference should be that that which seemed to that writer to be so far should suddenly, at this time, take place and come about? Here is a work for the International Board for promoting local co-operation, which we all so earnestly hope will be born from this Conference.

And last, East Africa from British East Africa right down to the Zambesi. The clear call, is, first, to hasten on with the evangelisation of the tribes threatened by Islam, and specially the most influential of them. Thank God for churches like those in Uganda and Livingstonia. It is sometimes said that such churches will be as islands in a sea of Islam, as lodges in a garden of cucumbers. But let us not be enslaved by dreary metaphors. Let us rather say that such churches will be centres of life, and heat, and light, serving and saving the Islamic peoples round them, if Islam is really to fill up the spaces round them. But is Islam to do this? "Christians, awake!"

So much for prevention. But the direct work should not for a moment be neglected, and that for five excellent and weighty reasons advanced by Pastor Würz, which I would there were time to quote. And there is much to encourage the prosecution of this type of work. For example, I have it on the very best authority, that "according to the observation of a senior missionary who has been on the spot thirty-four years, the actual power of the Moslems in German East Africa has decreased. In slaving days the power of strong individuals was exercised over all the coast tribes. This is almost entirely broken, very much through the influence of

missions." I hear, moreover, that the German Government is alive to the danger that the triumph of Islam would infallibly mean, and wishes to keep Islam out and encourage missions. Would that British administrators in Nigeria and elsewhere saw this point equally clearly! Mr. Chairman, is this Conference to pass without an official representation being made to the British Government as to its Moslem policy in East and West Africa? We have in our President one who has stood before kings, and even prime ministers, and not been ashamed. Might we not ask that he should voice us before a Secretary for Foreign Affairs?

Can then we sum up the appeal to the Church and to this Conference which the situation in East Africa constitutes? It is done for us in a weighty communication that has reached me from Bishop Peel, one of God's responsible chief-ministers in that part. Here are his four points—

(1) "That a Christian Government should never let the Christian religion be regarded as one of many, but as the one religion it can recognise as paramount. While showing no partiality in courts or administration, a Christian Government should make all the people feel it values most for rule and office in all branches the persons who have the spiritual education of the Christian religion, and will use such in preference where it can. The Germans are doing this."

Are not these words a challenge to this great Conference to bring this point of view in some earnest, definite way before the three Governments interested in East African administration?

(2) "To occupy strongly every strategic base or centre (in the Islamised part of East Africa) in order to hold it in check."

This requires in the east coast the same consistent co-operation which we have been desiderating in the west.

(3) "To offer sound education from lowest to highest in chosen places, with Bible teaching open to all, but not compulsory. Only thus can the sons of many a Mohammedan be kept in touch with Christian teachers and under evangelistic influences. The alternative is looking on while rival Moslem schools spring up, draw away the few Moslem pupils from the Mission schools, and educate powerful antagonists to all that is Christian."

Friends, our survey is over. We have only been talking about work of immediate critical and strategic importance, and lo, even this has appeared (has it not?) to involve impossibilities, to involve making calls upon the Church for which we know perfectly well she has no present resources. But once more this word brings us up sharp. Is not the primary, nay, the entire object of this Conference to make us believe and feel and know that the resources of the Church are not what she is ready to produce at this moment, but what she has in God and in the Spirit of His Christ? And now, therefore, Lord, what wait we for? Our Hope is in Thee! So we pray: while in our ears ring that question and that answer which come antiphonally in perhaps the greatest of the Epistles of the great St. Paul—

“Who is sufficient for these things?”

And the antiphone—

“Our sufficiency is of God.”