

# The Bible Student and Teacher

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## Notes Editorial and Critical

A Chicago contemporary has a suggestive skit touching one of the radical defects of this "literary age". Here it is:

"Bindleson says he always weighs his words before he speaks".

"If he does he cheats himself by giving light weight".

An intelligent listener once said of his preacher, that he  
*"Giving Light Weight"* could talk half an hour continuously, uttering beautiful sentences all the time, and yet say *nothing!* This ability—to talk or write without end, and without *thought*—seems to be the supreme aim of a large class of so-called "literary" men. They cheat *themselves* "by giving light weight". Sensible people usually "weigh" the men themselves, and make it convenient to avoid them!

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We have been startled by the latest outbreak of our closest neighbor, Rev. Dr. Hallock, of  
*A Puzzling Utterance* "Christian Work", from whom we are separated only by an inch-board partition with a window in it. Here is the way he flies in the face of the "Four Hundred" with their exalted aspirations:

"It is said that the only obstacle to the marriage between the Duke of the Abruzzi and Miss Katharine Elkins, about which gossip has been so busy during the last fortnight, lies in the fact that Miss Elkins is a Protestant and does not want to be-

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come a Catholic. We would like to see some American girl who, title and man notwithstanding, would refuse to treat her religion as if it were something to be bought and sold".

What is to be thought of such a sentiment uttered in this "advanced" age? How can its utterance be accounted for by our Editor?

Does he feel free to say this because he is not a multi-millionaire? He would probably resent that; for he is just going to Europe for the rich man's "chief end", "a good time and a long vacation", and that, in these hard times, calls for an overplus of this world's goods.

Or is it because he regards the distinctions between the religious creeds as still worth keeping up? That seems quite impossible for any generous soul in this "liberal" age; and Dr. Hallock is known to be a whole-souled man and editor, who ought to have outgrown the old-fashioned, "narrow" notions!

Or is it because he has no marriageable daughter to dispose of in the foreign market to which he is going for a vacation? One seems to be driven back upon that as the only answer that will satisfy the high-class American mind of the present day. Shall we ever again see an "American girl" of the kind he desiderates? With money galore, with brain-cap a vacuum, with life aimless, with religion a sham? "Quoth the raven, Nevermore!"

tures (vv. 39, 46). Here is competent testimony. This is his vindication. The first text, then, was spoken from the view-point of the Jewish civil code.

Some seven or more months pass, and Jesus is again at Jerusalem. The plot to kill him thickens. The Jews, still regarding Him as a contemner of the law of Moses and a blasphemer, hope to get evidence against him through the knotty case of the unchaste woman which they presented (viii. 3-11). And such a fiasco! While doubtless leading her out into the light, he leaves them in the darkness of self-convicted sin (viii. 7-9). Then he says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (v. 12). The Pharisees come back at him with the old charge: "Thou bearest witness of thyself: thy witness is not true" (v. 13). But how changed the situation! Back there He must be legally accredited as the Messiah. Thus accredited, He now presents Himself as the Light of the world, a sure Guide through and

from the moral darkness to the true Life, concerning which office His own declaration can not be otherwise than morally true; and so he says, "Even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true" (v. 14). The second test, then, was spoken from the view-point of moral truthfulness, or veracity; and so it is entirely correct.

The first is true from the standpoint intended, namely, that of court process, or legal evidence; the second is likewise true from the standpoint intended, namely, that of moral truthfulness, or veracity. There is, therefore, not only no contradiction between them, but they are perfectly harmonious.

It may be worth while to add that even in the second case Jesus does not leave himself unsupported, for, four verses farther on, he says, "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (v. 18); thus producing evidence legally valid, even as it is written in their law, "The testimony of two men is true" (v. 17).

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### Matthew the Gospel for Moslems\*

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Why are there four Gospels? As there were four written originally to meet the different minds of Jew, Roman, Greek and Christian, may we not find that today each Gospel has peculiar adaptability to certain peo-

ple? Regarding the Gospels from this point of view, Matthew seems specially fitted for Moslems, and the one most appropriate to put into their hands first. We have found access to them most easily through the Gospel.

\*The writer of this paper was born in Persia of missionary parentage. When the father died, the mother, Mrs. Sarah J. Rhea, returned to this country and ultimately made Lake Forest her home while educating her children; and from Chicago as a center became the inspiration of the missionary forces in the Northwest. Annie after a brilliant record as a student in the Classical Course of Lake Forest Uni-

versity, returned to the land of her birth as the wife of a leading Presbyterian Missionary, Rev. Dr. Wilson, brother of Professor Robert Dick Wilson of Princeton Theological Seminary. Her birth among Moslems, and a life devoted to laboring among them, have given her special qualifications for understanding and setting forth the suitability of Matthew's Gospel for the Mohammedan world.—Editor.

*Points of Contact With the Moslem Mind*

The opening sentence, "Abraham's son, David's son, Jesus the Messiah's genealogy", arrests their attention. They acknowledge five great prophets, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, and four sacred books, the Tarat or Old Testament, Mazmur or Psalms, Injil or Gospel, and the Koran. Each revelation is supposed to be superior to the preceding and predicted by it.

Matthew is the Gospel of prophecies fulfilled, and to the Moslem mind this appeals as the most convincing of Christ's credentials. To the heathen, no such argument can be made, since they have no knowledge of the Old Testament, and therefore no interest in its prophecies. The Moslem meets us half way. His familiarity with Jesus' name and the general outline of His life, insures his interest in the Gospel; and as he finds details, foretold so long before, marvellously fulfilled, he is impressed.

The Genealogy of the first chapter connects Christ by birth, as well as prophetic succession, with Abraham and David so honored among Moslems. Before the law, there is no question of Jesus' being Joseph's son and heir; as he was born in wedlock. The miraculousness of his birth, as explained by Matthew, both fulfills and contradicts the Koran account. His title in the Koran is "The Spirit of God", as Abraham's is "The Friend of God"; and his is here shown to be born of the Spirit, while the puerile story, that Gabriel blew up Mary's sleeve and so caused his conception, is refuted. To Moslem ideas the prominence of Joseph rather than Mary seems appropriate. Mary is his

espoused wife and under his control; so Gabriel appears to him and tells him what *he* shall name the child.

The visit of the Magi, who, we believe, came from Persia, the ancient land of astrology and still the land of cloudless skies and brilliant stars, seems an argument and a prophecy that the people of that land shall come to worship Him, as David predicted "all kings shall fall down before Him". Even the obscure reference to prophecy—"He shall be called a Nazarene"—seems natural to Persians, who hear the Nestorians, the Christians in their midst, called Nazrani, the Nazarenes.

The doctrine of Christ's divinity is the greatest stumbling-block to Moslems. John and Mark introduce it in their opening sentences and a Moslem is offended at once. Matthew does not refer to it till after the baptism, and the name "Son of God" is not then assumed by Jesus Himself, but given Him from above.

When Christ speaks of Himself it is as the "Son of man"; although Matthew records, and also Mark and Luke, that He claimed the title Lord, as given Him by David—"The Lord said unto my Lord". Matthew cites such minute predictions as the place of His birth, the region of His ministry, "Galilee of the Gentiles", His gentle, merciful character, "He shall not strive, etc.", His speaking in parables, His bearing our griefs, His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, as well as many others in common with the other evangelist; but not a word predicting Mohammed, though Moslems eagerly search for it.

*What Moslems Expect in Jesus*

Jesus as a *prophet*, both teaching for God and predicting the future, is the character which a Moslem expects to find in the Gospel.

His teachings, as recorded by Matthew, are specially fitted for Moslems. The Sermon on the Mount never fails to elicit wonder, praise and assent. His Spiritual interpretation of the commandments touches their consciences to the quick. Reviling is habitual, curses are common talk and imprecations the most natural expression of anger; as, for example, "May thy father burn". They are startled to hear that one using such language is "in danger of hell fire".

The veiled women are proofs that the licentious look is expected and guarded against. Divorce is easy and polygamy is enjoined by their prophet's precept and example. It shocks us to hear them ask, "How many wives had Jesus"? Matthew repeats twice Christ's teaching on the marriage relation, which is consistent with the creation of one man and one woman; we appeal to this to show that Christ's law is in harmony with God's first establishment of the family, while Mohammed's is not. As they read the story of such a life of spotless purity, a vision of the "White Christ" dawns upon them, in contrast to their own sensual prophet.

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are three of the five so called "pillars of Islam". "How many times a day do you pray"? is one of their questions. The simplicity, privacy and personal character of prayer, as enjoined by Christ, impresses them, as compared with their own many repetitions, formal postures and ritual memorized and re-

peated by rote in an unknown tongue. We often ask them, if God can understand Arabic and not Turkish, why they have to use it. Alms-giving and fastings during the month of Ramadan are "ostentations", to be seen of men, and many "eat their fast" secretly; doing the very opposite of what Christ enjoins.

Fatalism, which teaches that what is to be will be, and no human effort can prevent it, is the very basis of Islam. A Moslem is one, as the name means, "resigned" to the will of God; but this stoical submission is a poor substitute for trust in the God Who clothes the lilies and feeds the sparrows and is the Father of His human children.

To cite still another example of the appropriateness of Christ's instructions: They give *salaam* to none but Moslems, and are surprised to find even this mentioned and condemned. Indeed, so striking are these coincidences, that they might say, as a Chinaman did to a missionary, after reading the first chapter of Romans: "You must have written this, since you came to China and knew us".

The Sayids, claiming descent from Mohammed, are literal counterparts of the Pharisees of Christ's time. They boast of their descent, wear a peculiar, distinctive dress, the *green* turban, girdle and slippers, demand deference and support, claim superior holiness and exemption from obligations binding on others, eat widow's houses and make long prayers. Matthew alone gives Christ's Woes against Pharisees.

Matthew also records at length (in

the tenth chapter) Christ's commission to the apostles, applicable and practical today. When Mr. Labaree was murdered last year by an enemy who tracked his steps, an old woman

said: "Where was God, when that lamb fell among wolves"? We were reminded of Christ's words—"I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves".

### *The Parables and the Oriental Mind*

Christ's parables are all of great interest to Persians, who still speak in parables, and whose customs correspond so identically to those of Christ's time that they need no commentary to explain them. Those peculiar to Matthew are of special interest to Persians, for example, "the Pearl of Great Price". Persia is the Land of Pearls. The Shah has countless pearls in his treasure house from the famous pearl fisheries of the Gulf. "A Hid Treasure" found in a field is not infrequent. When the foundations of our Tabriz Girl's School were being dug, a pot of coins was discovered. The parable of the "Laborers in the Vineyard" appeals to those who live in the Land of the Vine. Persia may also be called the Land of Debt, and many an Unmerciful Servant" is loaning to others, while himself a debtor to his Lord.

The parables of "the Tares", "the Drag-Net" and "The Sheep and

Goats", all teaching the separation of the good from the bad, contrast with Mohammed's teaching of this separation, not on account of character and deeds, but only on account of creed. The second son in the parable of the "two Sons" must really be a Persian. It sounds so like them to say "I go, Sir". They even say "I went", in answer to a call, and then fail to appear.

The wedding customs of Christ's parables may be seen in Persia today. Lavish preparations are made to feed a multitude, the wedding procession is at night, festive with lights and the music of fife and drum, poor and rich sit down together at the feast, and to the poor it is the one occasion when they can eat to their fill. To the Persian no more attractive symbol could be used of God's great invitation and the fullness of joy in Heaven.

### *Prediction and Miracle, Expected.*

But the Moslem expects also to find Jesus a prophet foretelling the future; and Mathew, in the twenty-fourth chapter, gives the longest passage of prophecy found in any of the Gospels.

Especially do Christ's prophecies of His own death strike the Moslem mind as remarkable. Matthew records these four times.

His course throughout His life is shown to be consistent and direct;

and in this respect in such striking contrast to Mohammed's changes of policy. His name is given before His birth, as meaning Savior; He claims at the Last Supper that His blood "is shed for many for the remission of sins". The cross is His goal, and He walks with His face "steadfastly" toward it. His death thus foreseen is seen to be the supreme fulfilment of His mission, not as a disastrous ending from which God delivered Him,

as the Koran states, translating Him to Heaven and substituting another in His place. One might almost think that Satan suggested this explanation to Mohammed, as He did to Peter, in order to hide the atonement.

The lack of propitiation for the sins of men and of salvation from sin is the greatest lack in Mohammedanism. We present Jesus Christ to them, not only as a prophet, but also as meeting their need for a Savior.

Miracles are not claimed by Mohammed, but Moslems admit that Jesus worked miracles. Matthew records twenty miracles of the thirty-five found in the Gospels. The repetition of these by the different Evangelists confirms their authenticity. Thus work and words testify together: "Never man spake like this man"; "No man, can do these miracles, except God be with him". A young Sayid exclaimed after reading the

Gospel, "No one can compare with Jesus Christ".

Matthew is also the Gospel of Christ's Kingship. His claim to the world as His Kingdom and every creature as His subject is astounding to Moslem ears. They often say, "Each nation has its own prophet, we follow ours, you yours". We tell them Christ is theirs as much as ours, and bids His followers "Go and teach all nations". His revelation is harmonious with all that preceded it and complete in itself. He neither abrogated God's law nor abdicated in favor of a successor; but His last words were "I am with you always even unto the end of the world". Matthew gives four prophecies of his Universal Triumph, when "all the tribes of the earth shall see Him coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory".

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### "The Beliefs of Unbelief"\*—Some Notes on Dr. Fitchett's Book

The author of the book that bears this title is the editor of "The Southern Cross", the great Methodist organ in Australasia, published at Melbourne and Sidney. We had occasion some time since, to print some of the strong utterances of Dr. Fitchett in the Conference called at Melbourne to protest against the Radical Criticism and the New Theology. What was then printed was sufficient

to mark him as one of the great leaders in his denomination in that New World.

In his book just published, it is the purpose of the author to set in clearer light the great verities of the Christian Faith: God, Christ and the Bible, by placing, in contrast with the true Faith, *the incredible things that its denial requires one to believe*. In the course of his argument he sets over against the positive side, the alternatives to the Faith. Here are some of the points that are made, and hints thrown out.

\*"Studies in the Alternatives to Faith". W. H. Fitchett, B.A., LL.D. New York: Eaton & Mains; Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham. Price, \$1.25 net.