

A Spiritual Clinic in an Arab Hospital

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ARABIA is a difficult field, and results so far have been very small. Thirty years of hard work with practically no visible success tends to dry up the missionary's soul and produce a sort of apathy. He comes to doubt whether it makes much difference how he does his work or how many are reached by the Gospel. The results seem to be zero in either case. The Medical Missionary feels this especially, for he is overwhelmed with medical work which is most gratefully appreciated. It is not easy to keep evangelistic zeal steadily up to two hundred and twelve degrees, when results from such effort seem nil, while the results of medical work are obvious and the call for such work is overwhelming.

Another difficulty is perhaps even more serious. There being so little evidence of spiritual results to serve as a guide for further effort, the missionary to the Moslem Arab is without chart or compass, as to methods. How shall the Mohammedan mind be approached? What way of presenting the Gospel is most likely to gain an entrance into his heart? What are the most fruitful forms of work? How important these questions are, those know who struggle to answer them. Christ wants these Arabs reached. How is it to be done?

The Medical Missionary has spent many years in learning how to attack physical problems very similar to this spiritual task. His medical school did not give him a diploma until it decided that he had gained some conception of how to study a puzzling case, assemble the evidence, and on the basis of careful analysis institute suitable treatment. It would seem not impossible that some of the methods used by the physician for the diseased in body, might be useful also in work for the diseased in soul.

The first thing in the physician's study of a case is to learn, as completely as possible, the past history of the patient, the type he represents, his occupation, where he has lived, and the special strains and diseases from which he has suffered. Then the physician tries to get a very careful and thorough account of the present disease from the day of its first manifestations. Finally the patient is examined with great care and on the basis of all this information obtained, a course of treatment is started, the patient's reaction to treatment is noted, and such changes are made as seem to promise better results. Almost the most important point of all is the keeping of a careful record of all these things so that the doctor need not depend on his impressions and his memory but shall have a reliable

record to which he can refer whenever he wishes to consider further this case or similar cases. It is on the basis of these records that progress is made in the treatment of disease. Results of different treatments can be compared, the better adopted.

Why should the children of this world be wiser in their methods than the children of Light? After thought and prayer, a plan was worked out in the hospital at Bahrein, the object of which is more adequate study of evangelistic methods and results among the men and women patients. The plan was modeled after the medical procedure. We first find out where a man comes from, and to what type of Islam he belongs, whether he has had any contact with Christianity, and whether he has been associated with Christians. With the Arabs that we meet in Bahrein, a brief series of negatives answers most of the questions regarding contact with Christians and knowledge of Christianity. The effort to ascertain what type of Mohammedanism each patient represents is more interesting, and the information gained is more valuable. There is a great difference between the Sunnis and the Shiahhs, and between the desert Wahabees and the comparatively luxurious townsmen. In addition an effort is made to ascertain the spiritual condition of the individual, and to gain some idea of his mental processes.

When it comes to the actual presentation of the Gospel, as has been said, there is no chart or compass. In one sense there never can be. The prayerful following of God's guidance will always be the supreme requisite. However, the careful study of the individual is not thereby rendered superfluous, nor is the careful study of the type useless.

We have been greatly helped by keeping records of each presentation of the Gospel and the man's reaction to it. This record has made it possible to compare results from different methods of procedure and at the end of a year to draw some conclusions as to the aspect of Christ's teaching which finds the most ready entrance into Moslem hearts. The hospital is the ideal place for such a study for there the most hostile Arab will at least listen with courteous attention. The Doctor is the man who must do the work, or at least must do some of it, for it is he above every one else who enjoys the patients' confidence and love. If he sets the example similar work on the part of others will be well accepted by the patients.

This plan has now been followed for three years in Bahrein hospital, and some tentative conclusions have been reached, which are subject to revision, but which are interesting and helpful.

In the first place it is surprising to find how little personal work the medical missionary may do and still deceive himself into thinking that he does a great deal. I remember a man at home who, before he tithed his income, supposed himself to be very generous. Careful accounts for a year showed his gifts to total three dollars

and seventy-five cents. Then in shame he began to tithe. The medical missionary is likely to deceive himself in somewhat the same way, as to his personal evangelistic work among the patients. With records in black and white self-deception is not so easy.

We are beginning to gain some clear idea of how to approach the Arab mind. We tried what might be termed the chronological presentation of Christ's teachings and life. We attempted a sort of theological or dogmatic systematization. We arranged the parables and used them as the basis of a presentation of the Gospel. None of these or of the other presentations that were tried appeared to be especially suited to the mind of the men we work with, except one. The mystical aspect of the Gospel seemed to have a real entrance into many hearts. This came as a considerable surprise, for nothing could be more unmystical and mechanical than orthodox Moslem theology or than common Moslem thought as we see it around us. Possibly for this very reason, the Gospel presented from this angle, satisfies a real thirst.

We have come to one other conclusion. The average stay of a patient in the Mason Memorial Hospital is about two weeks. Formerly we tried to go over the whole field of Christ's teachings as adequately as possible in that time. We have now quite a different policy. Some parable or teaching is selected that contains in it the Gospel in miniature, as far as that is possible, and we go over the same ground every day with the patient, for the whole two weeks of his stay. The parable of the Good Shepherd seems especially suited to this use, as is Christ's teaching about abiding in Him as the Vine. The understanding and the appreciation of the message are very surprising as compared with the results when more ground is covered. The beauty and the power of the Gospel seem to impinge on the man's soul when intensive work is done with a single parable.

In these ways we are trying to do a little more efficiently, the one per cent that is given us to do, in seeking the salvation of the Arab, trusting that in His own time God will add to it, the ninety-nine per cent that He only can do, and will glorify His name in raising up the Church of Christ in Arabia.

The World's Christian Students at Peking

The Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation, Tsing

Hua College, April 4 to 9, 1922

BY ROBERT P. WILDER

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TO understand the full significance of this great gathering and the reasons for the special program of the Conference it is necessary to know conditions in China to-day. The students of that land are passing through a crisis, owing especially to two important movements:

1. The New Thought Movement is leading students to question everything. According to its principles nothing should be believed unless it can stand the test of the scientific method. This movement is strongly democratic and insists upon social reform. It also emphasizes the importance of thoroughness and has no respect for traditions unless they meet the needs of to-day.

2. The Anti-Christian Movement, which started about three months ago, has been working against the World's Student Christian Federation. The reasons given are that Christianity is a foreign religion, that it is political, that it is a superstition, that it is an oppressor of mankind, that it is an ally of capitalism and that it is a dying religion in Europe and America. The World War which centered in Europe has affected Chinese students greatly, leading them to doubt the necessity and efficacy of Christianity. Moreover during the past year two eminent scholars from Great Britain and America have visited China and have not supported Christianity—in fact one has by his life as well as lips advocated free-love and opposed the teachings of Christ.

Into this atmosphere of doubt and opposition came 126 student Christian delegates from thirty-three different lands. Among them men like Prof. Karl Heim and ex-chancellor Dr. Georg Michaelis of Germany, Prof. Jean Monnier and M. Paul Monet of France. To the foreign delegations were added 648 from China.

Whereas in the early years of the Federation's history movements in non-Christian lands were often represented by workers from Christian lands who were laboring among the students of those countries, at this conference the various movements sent as delegates sons and daughters of the soil; e. g. of the twenty-four Japanese delegates only two were non-Japanese. Of the nine from India all but three were Indians, of the six representing Korea only one was a foreigner, of the nine from Russia and Siberia all but one were citizens of these lands and all of the twelve representing the Philippine Islands were Filipinos.