

CURRENT OPINION

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The Rising Power of Islam

FOLLOWING the Great War has come something almost as great, tho few realize it. That thing is what Lothrop Stoddard calls "the new world of Islam." Mr. Stoddard has written a book on the subject which is attracting international attention. It appears at a time when the Near East Conference of Allied Foreign Ministers in Paris has virtually rewritten the Treaty of Sèvres to the advantage of Turkey, and when riots in India and Egypt, guerilla warfare in northern Africa and outbreaks in Syria are all being traced to Mohammedan influence. The recent appeal of the Government of India to London in behalf of Turkey was also, of course, inspired by Islam, and, taken together, these signs would seem to justify Mr. Stoddard's statement: "The entire world of Islam is to-day in profound ferment. From Morocco to China and from Turkestan to the Congo, the 250,000,000 followers of the Prophet Mohammed are stirring to new



"LET ME IN THERE AGAIN, OR--!"

—Pease in Newark News.

ideas, new impulses, new aspirations. A gigantic transformation is taking place whose results must affect all mankind."

Mr. Stoddard, in an earlier book, "The Rising Tide of Color," tried to show that the ascendancy of the white race is threatened by the colored races. He is concerned, now, with the ascendancy of a religion that imposes on its devotees a governmental and social code. It may be that he is an alarmist when he speaks of a possible "crisis which within ten years will bring war between Christian Europe and Moslem nations," but his writings are quoted by President Harding and by Lord Northcliffe, and the latter, after a trip round the world, is at pains to make clear that Islam is a core of unrest in three of the five "trouble centers of the world"—Japan, China, India, Egypt, Palestine.

Islam

Mohammedanism is younger by 600 years than any of the great religions of the world. Its dawn was bright, and it flowered in a Saracenic civilization in which the ancient cultures of Greece, Rome and Persia were revitalized by Arab vigor. This period gave way to one in which the Turk introduced a hard, narrow, ferocious spirit into the center of Islam, and was followed by a Reformation which Mr. Stoddard likens to the Protestant Reformation. Abd-el-Wahab was the Martin Luther of this Reformation. His movement was crushed, but his spirit lived on and helped to inspire the Bab movement in Persia and that veiled but very powerful Senussi fraternity in the North of Africa which has been called the spiritual heart of Islam to-day.

The new Islam—in India, Egypt, Persia, the former Ottoman Empire—is a strangely contradictory faith. It mingles autocracy with democracy, and oscillates between proposals to restore the ancient faith and to incorporate the latest results of Occidental civilization. It is still, however, a missionary religion, and it fully appreciates the post-office, the railroad and other modern methods of rapidly interchanging ideas. It is also, to an extent which the average Christian hardly appreciates, unified. A Moslem can feel himself a “national” citizen of any Islamic country, and cherishes a fraternal feeling for all who share his faith.

The victors in the Great War who imagined that they were solving the Moslem problem by driving the Turk out of Europe were only aggravating that problem, as Mr. Stoddard sees it. They failed to take into account the unity of Mohammedans. As a result, the Moslem world was rewelded and revitalized as it had not been in centuries, and the ears of every Mohammedan were opened to propaganda for the freeing of every Moslem country now in tutelage or bondage to a European power.

Bolshevism was quick to take advantage of the opportunity, and Lenin's emissaries were soon working among the Mohammedans. There were startling developments and many converts made in Turkey, Persia, India, Afghanistan and the farther Orient. It almost seemed, Mr. Stoddard says, as if the reckless shortsightedness of Entente policy was driving into Lenin's arms multitudes who, under other conditions, would have avoided him.

For most Mohammedans are nationalists, not internationalists; are religious, not irreligious; believe in private property, and look to the Sultan as to a Pope. When the noted Bolshevik leader Zinoviev spoke before the “Congress of Eastern Peoples” called by the Soviet Government at Baku in the autumn of 1920, he endeavored to eradicate the religious beliefs and national loyalties of his hearers by preaching

the class-war.

Bolshevism was a nine-days' wonder to the Mohammedan world, but as yet no real merging of the two has taken place. There is still time, Mr. Stoddard says, to forestall both a Bolshevist peril and the possibility of a war between Christian and Moslem nations. He goes on:

"I predict increasing ferment and unrest throughout all Islam; a continued awakening to self-consciousness; an increasing dislike for Western domination.

"The result must inevitably be the diminution of white control in Asia and Africa.

"The vital question is whether shaking off white control will come with or without a cataclysm. The cataclysm may come. It will come if England and France pursue a shortsighted policy and by repressive measures drive liberal Mohammedans into the ranks of the extremists.

"I hope to see the cataclysm avoided by the adoption of a policy of gradual diminution of white control."

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