

THE MOHAMMEDAN CONFERENCE AT PEKING: 1916

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A CONFERENCE took place in Peking on January 6th of this year, composed of some three hundred or more Ahungs from the northern provinces. They met for the purpose of considering their condition and the setting forth of some plan by which their society might be made to flourish. Their action at this time is undoubtedly due to the effect of efforts made in various places to reach Moslems with the Gospel.

I have myself been able to circulate a great many books both in Arabic and Chinese in Peking, and as the leaders of Islam in China are to a large extent in Peking, it is quite likely that these books have been read and that the readers are taking steps to withstand Christian influence.

In reading the report the reader will make due allowance for Moslem exaggerations. The publications referred to near the end have reference to a monthly magazine which will be printed shortly.

This move of theirs is something that had to come sooner or later. Without any active Christian efforts put forth to reach them, the Moslems insist that they and the Christians are one, but as soon as steps are taken to show that they are not one, opposition is sure to follow.

The report was published in very high-class Wen li (not in Arabic), and I have endeavoured to translate it as literally as possible:—

“ If religion is not true it cannot stand, and if it has no principles it cannot be propagated. Although our society is well established and has spread abroad, yet if we do not take steps to spread the truth and keep our

methods up to date, even though our glory may be great just now, it will only be temporary.

The present is a time of discussion and investigation ; if one does not go forward, he must go backward. No matter how great and glorious may be the truth, nor how deep and broad the principles, it is not easy for any system of thought or any society to become great and flourishing in a short time, nor to be free from the tendency to deteriorate and decay.

We Mohammedans have been careful to observe all Moslem customs, and we certainly have truth and principles. From the departure of our Most Holy One from earth one thousand and some hundred years ago, we have depended upon the ability of his eminent followers. May the true Lord guide and help ! Our religion long ago permeated all lands ; our co-religionists have long since gone everywhere. In China the number of our believers has run up into the millions [the figures used imply any number from fifty to one hundred million] and the relations between them have been of the happiest. They have been loyal to the true doctrine, have fulfilled all their obligations and attended to their duties. They have been of great service to the government. They have contributed greatly to the betterment of society. Who is there that does not respect us ? Is not our prosperity great ? But from the end of the Manchu dynasty to date there has been a falling off generally on the part of all the Chinese in the observance of customs. Our society has also been affected so that Mohammedans have withdrawn into themselves and had little to do with outsiders. We have been busy looking at our own good points and have paid no attention to others. We have been negligent in the discharge of our duties and have stood on one side disregarding the success or failure of our work. This state of the case has continued to the present. The danger is now clear to us all.

From without, our enemies (other societies or churches) have taken up arms against us and are continually searching for an opportunity to send us harmful books. From within, blind and foolish disciples have lost the real spirit of Islam and simply observe the outward forms, and

have even suggested the changing of our religion. We have noticed that among our fellow-Mohammedans those who understand the Lord (Mohammed) and regard him as holy, who practise self-denial, attend faithfully to worship, and study the sacred lessons, are very few in number. The reason for all these failures is that the truth has been hid and our principles have been kept dark.

We must withstand those who would hurt us from without and awaken the sleepy and ignorant in our midst, and cause all disciples to understand Islam, practise self-denial, and do their duty. We shall not be doing our duty, if we do not cause the truth to be spread abroad and make the principles of our faith known to all. The responsibility rests upon us all and we cannot escape it.

The purpose of this conference of the "Pure and True Society" is to gather together the well-known Ahungs (Mullahs), sages, philosophers, men of experience, *et al.*, at a given place for the sake of discussing the important as well as difficult points in our doctrine, and explaining them for the benefit of all. We intend to devote ourselves exclusively to religious matters, avoiding all political questions. Furthermore, we intend to prepare and publish literature on the doctrines of Islam, as a guide. The aim of the publications will be the spreading of the truth, the setting forth of the advantages of Islam, the extending of the principles and the preaching of Mohammedan customs. These publications will appear shortly, and if they are used, we shall see our society grow, and its good points will be manifest to all. Everyone will be glad to hear the doctrine, and also to lend a hand. Then we shall all rejoice and our religion will prosper greatly.

The proposers of this forward movement are the Ahungs and elders of the mosques at Niu Chieh and Chiao Tzu hu t'ung, Peking, and the supporters are all the other Ahungs of Peking and the representatives from the eighteen provinces.

Regulations of the Mohammedan Conference.

- I. Purpose. The purpose of the Conference is to spread the doctrine, to promote co-operation, to unify our customs and laws, to make known the advantages of our religion, and to plan ways and means by which we may grow stronger as a religious body.
- II. Name. The name shall be "The Conference of the Pure and True Society."
- III. Scope. The scope of the Conference is very clearly marked out. Our work is with religion, and we have not the slightest relation to nor interest in politics.
- IV. Responsibility. In order to carry out the purpose of the conference, we have the following responsibilities :—
 - (a) To prepare treatises in order to enlighten the members of our own society ;
 - (b) To translate our important scriptures (Koran not mentioned particularly) in order to make our doctrine known ;
 - (c) To improve our grammar schools and method of teaching in order to strengthen and establish our people ;
 - (d) To establish and improve normal schools in order to develop teachers ;
 - (e) To emphasise the importance of lectures for the purpose of exhorting the people, and also to add to their knowledge.
- V. Membership in the conference. All members of the Mohammedan Society have the right to attend with the following qualifications :—
 - (a) Authorised delegates with power to vote—all teachers and Ahungs.
 - (b) Honorary delegates—respected and worthy laymen.
- VI. Method of Procedure. The Conference will be held in Peking, and all societies must send their representatives to that place. This Conference will have final authority. In order to accelerate business and help discussion, there will be a Committee of Business and a Committee of Discussion.

VII. Officers. The Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Committee of Business shall be located in Peking. This committee shall consist of ten persons, all of whom are to be selected from Peking Mohammedans.

The Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Committee of Discussion shall be located in Peking. This committee shall consist of twenty persons, ten of whom shall be from Peking, and ten from other important centres.

All officers are to be selected from the Conference, but the chairman and vice-chairman of the Committee of Discussion must be elected by authorised delegates only.

External affairs are in the hands of the Committee of Business, and internal affairs are in the hands of the Committee of Discussion. Any other important matters that arise can be handled as the occasion warrants.

VIII. Time of meeting. There shall be four kinds of meetings : meeting of officers, regular meeting, great council and special meeting.

(a) Meeting of officers—twice a month.

(b) Regular meeting—once a month, at which all officers in Peking must be present.

(c) Great council—twice a year, at which all officers must be present if possible, but those who live far away and cannot attend are excused. Upon conclusion of the Conference a report of the proceedings will be sent to all such.

(d) Special meeting—time uncertain.

If some important question arises, the officers shall immediately gather together and decide what sort of a meeting should be held, who should be allowed to attend, etc.

IX. Great Council. It is most important that a Council should be held for the purpose of discussing matters. The method of procedure shall be as follows :—

(a) Each delegate is allowed to present business.

- (b) The subjects for discussion and the order of those subjects shall be decided by the Committee of Discussion.
 - (c) When specially important matters are presented, a notice bearing the names of all the officers shall be sent to the regularly authorised members, inviting them to consider the matter and reply by mail. Such matters are also to be examined and afterwards presented for discussion by the Committee of Discussion.
 - (d) All members of the council shall have the privilege of discussing.
 - (e) Decisions shall be made by prominent Ahungs from among the authorised members.
 - (f) After the decision is announced, it shall be circulated widely.
 - (g) Regarding matters that have to do with customs and doctrine, special care shall be taken to circulate the decisions so that all the adherents of Islam may know.
- X. Finances. The expenses of the Conference shall be borne by the delegates.

The Conference has prepared these regulations roughly in outline, so that temporarily they may be used where needed. Where there are errors they can be changed or corrected as desired.

Subject matter of the treatises or articles on Islam.

- I. Introduction. The writers accept full responsibility for the contents.
- II. Explanations of the Koran (Heavenly Classic)—Co-operative authorship. Selections will be made from books which have already been translated into Chinese.
- III. Words of Mohammed (the Most Holy One). By Wang Hao Jan.
- IV. Most important Moslem laws. Wang Ching Chai.
- V. Islam customs. By Li Yün t'ing.
- VI. Moslem hygiene. Wang Ching Chai.

- VII. Life of Mohammed (the Most Holy One). Chang Tzu Wen.
- VIII. History of the Saints (Holy Ones). Wang Ching Chai.
- IX. Outline of Mohammedanism. Ma Ch'un I.
- X. Current thought—limited to religion. Sun Sheng Wu. The co-operation of all is desired in this matter, and Mr. Sun will gladly use information sent to him.
- XI. Church affairs—in Peking, in the eighteen provinces of China and in foreign countries. Sun Sheng Wu. Information sent to him will be used.
- XII. Open Forum. Co-operative authorship or editorship.
- XIII. Letters. Selections from letters received.
- XIV. Quotations.
- XV. Question box. Co-operative authorship or editorship.

The business office of the Conference is in the mosque at Chiao Tzu hu t'ung, outside the Shun Chih gate. Telephone 3254 South exchange.

Committee: Chang Te Ch'un.
Wang Jui Lan.
An Chen.
Li Tsung Ch'ing.

All who have any business will kindly present it to the committee at the above place."

The above is the translation of their programme and the outline of their plan.

CHARLES L. OGILVIE.

Peking.