THE MOSLEM WORLD

VOL. XI

OCTOBER, 1921

No. 4

EDITORIAL

THE SWORD OR THE CROSS

"The cross cannot be defeated," said Louis Massignon when he spoke at Paris as to present conditions in the Near East: of hope deferred, and plans thwarted, of the famine-stricken exiled, martyred Christians; of political intrigues due to selfish ambition and un-Christian policies on the part of nations called Christian. "The cross cannot be defeated, because it itself was defeat." Long have I pondered on this mystical utterance, which sums up the history of missions in a sentence and sets forth the deepest distinction between Islam and Christianity historically considered. The Cross was apparently vanquished by the sword of Islam in its wide and rapid spread throughout the Near East. Churches became mosques, Christians apostates to Islam, literature and architecture bowed to the genius of Mohammed and his successors, the Crescent displaced the Cross. But was it defeated, or does faith triumph over hope deferred? Christ is a conqueror whose victories have always been won through loss and humiliation and suffering. He invites His followers to take up their cross as He took up His, and follow Him first to their Calvary, and then to their crown. The way of the Cross is the path of wisdom and of life. There can

be no victory without it. Christ's battle flag, like that of Sigurd the Norseman, while it insures victory to those who follow it, often brings death to those who carry it. The Cross of Christ is the primal, the supreme, the central, the universal, the eternal symbol of Christianity. Christ's messengers are messengers of the Cross and all it signifies, or they are not His messengers at all. "We preach Christ Crucified." That is the good news which Paul says he delivered "first of all." It was his message and it was his passion—"I am crucified with Christ," "I die daily." One of the martyr missionaries of Fukien, R. W. Stewart, said, "The measure of your *agonia* will be the measure of your success." Xavier before setting forth on his great mission caught a vision of all the suffering, ignominy and persecution before him, but exclaimed, "Yet more, O Lord, yet more."

In the impending, inevitable spiritual conflict with Islam, we may perhaps expect less outward persecution of the convert to Christianity, but there will always be insidious opposition and sore secret trial for those who desert the camp of so subtle a foe. Western politics and statesmanship have never shown such timidity, such super-dread of offending any religion as in the case of Islam. This too is an ominous sign on the future horizon. Therefore we do not put our trust in politics. They are uncertain at best, and whatever may prove the final adjustment of the present "Muddle—East," neither our hopes nor our dread lie in that direction. Our hope is in the Cross. Our dread is that we should seek to escape it. The Crusaders denied the Cross by taking up the sword. "It is at this point," says Kirby Page, "that the sword and the Cross differ. The sword, even used defensively, means the attempt to kill the guilty for the sake of the innocent. The Cross symbolizes the willingness of the innocent to die for the guilty."¹ The sword can only produce brutality, the Cross tenderness; the sword destroys human life, the Cross gives it priceless value; the sword deadens con-

¹*The Sword or the Cross*, Christian Century Press.

science, the Cross awakens it; the sword ends in hatred, the Cross in love; he that takes up the sword perishes by it, he that takes up the Cross inherits eternal life. In winning Moslem lands for Christ, the call is for men and women who will today follow the way of the Cross with the same courage and abandon with which the soldier yesterday served his country. At the Smyrna Student Conference this year we heard Turks, Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks sing in Christian unison, "The Son of God goes forth to war" It was the harbinger of a new day—that day when the Cross shall be lifted up in every pulpit where now the wooden sword in the hands of the Imam is the ever recurring Friday symbol of conquest.

The sword or the Cross; self-assertion or self-denial; might or meekness; carnal weapons and methods or crucifixion. The friends of God, the real friends of humanity, do not hesitate in their choice. Out of weakness they are made strong, baffled they still prevail. Because they share the humiliation of the Cross they too cannot be defeated. They too, as John Cordelier puts it, "are for Christ's sake wounded in the hands that work for Him, in the feet that journey to Him, in the heart that asks only strength to love Him; as He too is wounded in His ceaseless working for us, His tireless coming to us, His ineffable desire towards us. We share the marks of His passion and He ours."

The print of the nails and the mark of the spear are still the supreme evidence of Christ's resurrection power and deity and the test of our discipleship. The call is for men and women who will *now* offer for this sacrificial service. The old coat-of-arms of Tiflis, the great Moslem center in the Caucasus, is a staff of wood held by two hands. The Cross is on the upper end, while below is the half-moon. One hand holds the Cross upright and the other is endeavoring to uplift the half-moon. Is this not typical of the present situation?

S. M. ZWEMER.