

Correspondence

We have received the following letter from Dr. Julian Carlile, who began work last year at Tangier in North Africa, "a land barely touched with the Gospel and with a people desperately poor and starving physically and spiritually"

IT is amazing how little is known about this work in England or America. Seeing we are only six hours away from home by air and only three or four days overland journey in a fast car, it seems strange that this work and the peoples should be regarded as if it were as distant as China! North Africa is a country much neglected by the Church and a place where, just at the moment, it would seem as if a unique opportunity is beginning to present itself, a chance to spread the Gospel and to found a proper Church, to make a great advance in the war for human souls, and we want to make an appeal to each person who reads this letter to consider seriously whether they will go to some trouble in first praying for this land, and second in being prepared should the occasion arise to ask others to pray for the work, and to make more widely known both the country, the people and the work which has been done and still goes on to win them for Christ.

There has never been a really widespread revival out here: from time to time individual missionaries have had a little harvest: from time to time outstanding individuals have been converted. Over a period of years the Church *has* grown in numbers: further, there have been many saintly Christians from Europe and America who *have* done wonderful works. But the kingdom of the wicked one is still standing remarkably solid: his goods are mostly safe, and only here and there have a few small holes been made in the massive defences of his property. He stands with his hands on his hips and laughs at us and our efforts. His agents have little difficulty in chasing away all but the boldest, and the most holy and sanctified native Christians form the foundations of his spiritual treasure house. The people under his grip are more hard to win and when won harder to instruct than any other people almost. And yet having written that last sentence the Holy Spirit just says, "Nonsense". No people are *more* difficult than any other. (They are all apart from God's grace quite impossible!) But you see the thing we want to try and get across is this: the time is getting on and God is patiently working His purposes out, and it is going to be the old, old story: will the Church rally round and do its stuff and pray and work for North Africa, just as two generations ago it prayed and worked for the rest of this continent and for China and India, and still does to-day? Will a miracle happen as it did when, so we heard, millions of Christians all over the world prayed for London before Billy Graham set sail? As it did when Luther set out to turn Europe back to God? As when England, after two hundred years of confused religious strife and apathy, was revived under Wesley and his contemporaries? Or will North Africa be the place where God failed because His Church let Him down?

I say this remembering that this is the very country where it happened before: nearly fifteen hundred years ago after an epoch of great triumphs by the Church of God, all traces of Christianity were removed

for the sole reason (according to some authorities) that the Christians didn't really bother about or pray for the masses of people among whom they lived. They left them alone, to argue about this and that : Church forms, heresy, internal disputes and so forth. The scriptures were never (so I believe) translated into the local tongue or made available to the vast bulk of the heathen population. So the time came when it was all swept away, lock, stock and Bible. Now to-day that could easily happen to the tiny and often half-hearted Church of North Africa. The Islamic world is very powerful and from a human point of view there could be nothing more hopeless or stupid than trying to make converts in such an area. This has been even used as an argument by people who don't want their friends to waste their time on work which produces no results. Many Christians have left this field utterly discouraged by the impossibility of getting anywhere at all : they couldn't make contacts even enough to learn the language properly. But . . .

The big thing is this, and honestly, we can only say what we believe : there is an atmosphere of God being about to do something, and quite soon. Perhaps this year, perhaps next year, perhaps not for several years : perhaps not for ten years. But if you were out here it would be easier for you to understand. The first thing is that as we said last time, the number of individual converts has gone up progressively in the last three years or so. Secondly, in spite of a lot of troubles and political upheavals, the actual amount of opposition to the Gospel seems steadily to have diminished. Of course we are speaking of Tangier, which is a fair-sized city and perhaps this is not everywhere the same. But this is definitely true among the women. Then there is the removal of French and soon we hope, Spanish, controls from the country of Morocco. (Not Algeria.) This is, of course, considered by some to be a disadvantage, but actually our most reliable informants say that as long as missionaries are able and willing to offer practical help to the new nation, they will be welcome. Probably this will mean a period when opportunities for medical work and social services of other kinds will increase for a definite period and then decrease as the country becomes more self supporting. (Please note there is not a single teaching hospital in Morocco.)

But though these things are all right in themselves, they probably are not as important as the other thing, which is that, if our sources of information are as reliable as we believe them to be, there is year by year a steady drift by youth away from Islam, away from the conservatism of the centuries, helped always and increasingly by two things : the vital need for western techniques and training (this is really hardly begun) and because of the deepening effect of western notions and materialistic attitudes. Thus the battle is, it would seem, being under God's hands gradually brought out into the open : we believe the time may come when the problem will be not " If I accept Christ, will it mean death or separation from my family almost certainly ? " but rather, " If I accept Christ I will be cut off perhaps from my family and friends, and there may be a risk of suffering and death as well, but I shall not be alone and others have gone the same way before : there is a Church which has stood up for itself and shown

me that not everything which is threatened always comes to pass ; in fact the picture is one of choosing between genuine alternatives and not facing inevitable disaster, glorious though that may be for those whom the Lord calls to it." We do not want to imply by this that we hope for a mitigation of the traditional hostility of Islam : but there is no doubt from all that others have told us that while Islam stands supreme in the minds of a nation as the only religion, as the truth, as the official religion, as the natural and correct thing for a man to believe in, and Christianity as a small and ridiculous band of hated foreigners, there will not be a revival. It cannot come until the Lord works so that a number of really sanctified natives are prepared to band together and become His witnesses against all comers ; not just an individual here and an individual there, but numbers large enough to count. You can see the sense of this. God may honour the work of a man greatly, but a revival is the result of many catching a glimpse of the face of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost falling on them in power.

Now as we see it, to recapitulate, God who is the mover of all things, can move circumstances and change the face of nature and the thinking of a nation in wonderful ways in order to prepare the way for the Gospel : but the Gospel depends on individuals also yielding themselves to Him for complete service and if necessary, sacrifice. The first part of the bargain looks as if it were coming to pass : God has changed things, and the old difficulties which brought people to such a state of hopelessness about the whole work are beginning, we believe to pass away. But the second part of the bargain depends on human wills : and we don't know any other way to alter them except by prayer. We would not ask you to pray for something which honestly we felt was rather a long shot, and about which we felt serious doubts : it would be easier to ask you to concentrate prayer on us and our immediate problems. But when we thought about writing this we could not get away from the fact that our work is not just a local one, but concerns the whole nation.

So we ask you whether you will help not us but our Moroccan friends by praying for them as a nation and where we can supply information, as individuals. We ask you if you feel strongly enough about it, to go further and encourage local prayer meetings to remember North Africa and Morocco more and more : if there was any chance ever of starting a special prayer group to meet and labour for this field alone it would be tremendous. But there is one thing more than the rest which is easy to do and costs nothing except one's reputation as a non-enthusiast (how unpopular to be an enthusiast) and that is just to be an unpaid (except in Heaven) publicity agent for revival among the Moors.

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JULIAN CARLILE.