

News and Notes

A Monthly Paper printed for the private use of the Members of the Missionaries to Muslims League.

Series XIV

No. 6

June, 1926.

13th June = 1st Zu'l-Hijjah (12th mo.), 1344, A.H.

Conversions to Islam

HERE are those who express incredulity when it is claimed that steady accretions are being made to the ranks of Islam through conversion. Such people appear to hold that the sufficient explanation for increase in numbers is to be found in the normal birth-rate among Muslims.

We have been studying the facts with regard to the Muslim population of the province of Bengal, whose number (Dr. Zwemer reminds us) equals the combined populations of Arabia, Persia and Egypt. The census figures for Muslims in this province covering the past 20 years are nothing if not impressive :

1901	1911	1921
21,947,980	24,237,228	25,486,124

The Muslims at the present time outnumber the Hindus of the province by no less than $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions. In 1881 Hindus contributed 4,882 and Muslims 4,967 to every 10,000 of the population. In the 1921 census Hindus had dropped to 4,372 and Muslims had increased to 5,355 in every 10,000.

The explanations put forward by the officer in charge of the last census for this preponderance of the Muslims are noteworthy if not always convincing.

"The change" he says "has not been produced by conversion, for instances of conversion are few and far between, nor mainly by the greater fecundity shown by Muslims." The increase of Muslims over Hindus, he maintains, "has been due in the main, to the accident that Muslims are numerically superior in the healthier and more progressive parts of the province (viz. East Bengal), while the Hindus have a majority in the parts that have suffered the severest disabilities of the last 50 years."

Elsewhere he says—"Conversions to the faith of Islam are now-a-days few or none, but the faith has been kept keenly alive..."

Again, "The fecundity of the Muslim population in East Bengal and in the healthier parts of North Bengal, is very great indeed."

.....It is natural to expect greater fecundity among them than among the generality of Hindus"....." In East Bengal migration has little or no effect upon the progress, *and conversions none at all.*" (The italics are ours.)

One wonders whether the census officer ever reads the vernacular papers, for we had been noticing in one, a Bengali weekly which has a very considerable circulation in the province, that scarcely a week passes in which there is not reported one or more "conversions" to Islam. Accordingly we had the pages of this one paper carefully scrutinized over a period of 22 weeks, with the following results :

Total reported conversions 43
From the Hindu community (20 men 8 women) 28
From the Indian Christian community (5 men 4 women) 9
From European community (3 men 3 women) 6

Of the Europeans one was said to be a missionary bearing the name of Rev. K. Edwards. (Does any one know of him?)

Of the Indian Christians one was said to be a Christian preacher, named Mullick.

Of three of the women reported to be converts from Hinduism, the following account was inserted at the time :

"On Friday 27 June at 2 p.m. at——in the district of Barisal, three prostitutes (*sic!*) named Ka, Kha, Ga, were, of their own free will, admitted into the faith of Islam at the hands of Hafiz, A.B.C. They have been given the names of Alif, Be, Pe. On the next day they were given in marriage to the following "gentlemen" living in the neighbourhood"

"Conversion" forsooth! If this be conversion then perhaps the census officer is entitled to more credit than we gave him!

We are not able to verify all these figures but there is presumption in their favour, as we shall indicate below. This much we may say, that if we take them as a basis for calculation then the Muslims of Bengal are gaining 100 "converts" a year, and no census officer were he acquainted with these claims could possibly write them down as negligible. Suppose on the other hand that the Christian forces at work in Bengal could report an equal number of accessions annually from the ranks of Islam, why, it would stir the hearts of our fellow-labourers from the Phillipines to Fez, to say nothing of the terrific excitement it would cause in the Muslim ranks!

Of some of these 'conversions' we had first-hand evidence here in Dacca. In the case of four people whose names appear below we happen to know that poverty was the root cause of the transfer. The inducements and promises held out by local Muslims were sufficient to carry them over. It is a sad reflection that when the Christian Church will not, on principle, maintain the thriftless on the dole system, just then attractive offers can be made by Muslims who make no secret that

they have funds for this very purpose. Could anything we ourselves might say constitute a more glaring exposure of the whole miserable business than the closing sentences of the letter we reproduce below ?

More Converts in Dacca—an Appeal.

TO THE EDITOR, "THE MUSSALMAN."

SIR,—A few days ago a religious association known as the "Anjuman-i-Ishaat-i-Islam" was established at Dacca. Though it is not yet a couple of years old, yet it has accomplished wonderful things. The idea of starting such an association was suggested by the conversion of our old friend Moulvi Md. Serajul Islam, B.A., formerly Babu Ansuprokas Das Gupta, B.A., into Islam. Since then he has been actively preaching Islam, not only in his lectures delivered here and there, but also through his writings, the most notable of which is a little pamphlet called "Why I accepted Islam?" He lent active support to this Anjuman and the whole association is now a success. The wonderful success scored by the Anjuman clearly shows that the "Suddhi" movement has totally failed here. During the last few months the Anjuman has converted half a dozen gentlemen and three ladies into Islam. They are :—

- (i) Kalipada Banerjea, (now Md. Abdullah).
- (ii) Mr. Mullik, a Christian missionary, (now Fazlur Rahman).
- (iii) Mr. Rochel, (now Moulvi Abdur Rashid).
- (iv) Ramlal, (now Habibulla).
- (v) Soroj Kumar, (now Md. Serajuddin).
- (vi) Mr. Alfred Gomez, (Motiul Islam).

There are a few more. Among the ladies there are :—

- (i) Mrs. Mullik.
- (ii) Mrs. Rochel.
- (iii) Mrs. Dale.
- (iv) Miss Rochel.

The Anjuman expects to make some more converts very soon.

The Mussalmans of Dacca have now realised that if there be only co-operation among Mussalmans and a bit of activity they can make thousands of such converts. There are some who are of opinion that if the Anjuman can continue its activities and if it can be based on a sound financial basis, there will be many converts within a few years.

The Anjuman requires help from the generous public. Any contribution, however small, may be sent to the

Secretary,
ANJUMAN-I-ISHAAT ISLAM.
"Peace" office, Ramna, Dacca.
BADURUDDIN AHMED, B.A.,
Bankshall, Dacca.

Dacca }
17-8-25. }

Dreams

from a recent article in "Neglected Arabia,"

BY MRS. H. A. BILKERT.

A SHORT time ago a young Arab came to the home of a missionary and asked for instruction in the Christian religion. No questions were asked but in a few days he gave the following reason for his coming :

"I had a dream," he said, "and in it I was traveling along a very crowded highway. And as I was pushed and jostled by the throng, I saw on one side of the road a large green field. It was enclosed by a wall, but as I passed the gate I looked in and saw a group of people centered about one man who was talking to them. They were all contented and happy looking, and I began to long to join them. But the crowd pushed me the more and some knowing my desire forbade me. The man in the centre of the happy group saw me, however, and he himself came to the gate and took me in. I wakened then and knew surely that I had seen Christ and that He meant for me to learn of Him and follow Him."

We of the West who think we have discovered the psychology of dreams are not apt to consider them as an influencing factor in our lives. Not so with the Easterner. An inheritor of the faith of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, he still listens for the voice of God in his dreams. In them God speaks directly to him. To the Arab the *unseen* is very real and very near. Only a thin veil separates it from his vision. And at times this veil is rent and the believer sees and hears the world of the unseen. Thus it is that every Arab respects and reverences the voice of his dreams as the voice of God. Their prophet gave as his authority the commands given to him in his visions, and he is related to have said, "A good dream is of God's favour and a bad dream is of the devil." Again he is quoted as saying, "Good dreams are one of the parts of Prophecy." Missionaries who have made a study of the means of conversions in eastern lands have found that dreams have often played an important part.

* * * * *

Another lad who had been receiving instruction and had become convinced of the truth definitely confessed Christ because of a dream. He had been staying away from the Sunday services because of his fear of men. This was shortly after he had recovered from a severe sickness. In his dream Christ appeared to him and said, "I have given you health and now I ask of you mercy." To the lad this meant only one thing—that Christ who had healed him asked him to be obedient and thankful by confessing him before men. From that hour on he grew in grace and never hesitated to acknowledge his belief in his Master.

* * * * *

It is worthy of our interest, to say the least, that dreams can be the determining factor in the character and lives of those among whom we work. We do not understand them and not always do we credit them. But we can accept them as they are. If the Arab hears in them the voice of God let us also be not deaf.

Aden

(i) The late Dr. John C. Young.

A FRIEND who first came into touch with Dr. Young about forty-eight years ago, tells (in *The Christian*) of how the latter was present at an open-air service in the Cowcaddens, Glasgow, and being influenced proceeded afterwards with the crowd to the gospel hall where he gave his heart to Christ.

That night changed the whole future of the young man's life. When his apprenticeship was completed he proceeded to London, and while there received his call to missionary service at a meeting in the interest of the London Missionary Society. The same night he offered himself for the mission field, but was told he could not be accepted without further training and education. Returning to his home in Scotland, he entered Glasgow University, where in due course he graduated both in arts and medicine, and also attended the classes in the Free Church College. He proved his indomitable pluck and perseverance by meeting the expenses of his university classes by teaching in his spare time, and, to save money, was accustomed to walk some fourteen miles each day between his home and the university.

When the Hon. Ion Keith Falconer died, in 1887, after a very brief missionary career at Aden, Dr. John C. Young offered to go out and fill the breach. His offer was gladly accepted, and there, in one of the most trying climates in the world, he lived and laboured until his home-call, faithfully preaching and teaching the Gospel of the Grace of God to a people whose hearts seem peculiarly closed and hardened against its message. He performed many thousands of surgical operations, and carried on an extensive and far-reaching medical mission. His fame spread throughout Arabia, and many came long journeys to benefit by the skill of this "Servant of God," as they gladly acknowledged him to be.

* * * * *

(ii) Present Interest in the Gospel.

Rev. Carl Rasmussen now at Aden, thus describes some aspects of the work there in a letter to Dr. Zwemer:

"Three years ago we started a regular Sunday morning Arabic service in the centre of the town. It was with great fear that we made the beginning, not knowing how the Mohammedans would like to have the Gospel preached in their midst every Sunday. However, after much prayer we made the venture and I must confess that this work has given us far more joy and encouragement than I am able to tell. To begin with our audiences numbered seven only and these were all personal acquaintances. Since then the numbers have steadily increased until now we have

an average congregation of about sixty every Sunday. Just think of it, all these sons of Arabia—there are no daughters present except sometimes a very small one—sitting listening to the Gospel of Peace and Salvation in Christ Jesus. On last Christmas day our church hall was simply packed, many people standing outside the doors and windows. People of all classes had come to listen to our Christmas message. It was a grand sight to see leading men sitting with an open Bible in their hands following the reading attentively and later on listening to the simple exposition. We had an equally large attendance on Good Friday. We are looking forward with much expectation to the day when we, by the grace of God, shall be permitted to lay the foundation stone of the Church and reclaim to the honour and glory of our Master that consecrated ground which was lost here in Aden some hundreds of years ago, when the Christian Church was actually swept away. We will not cease before we have won. Our church hall is already too small. We ask your prayers for divine guidance in all our endeavours to establish the Church and advance the Kingdom of Christ here in Aden."

Christian Council of Bengal and Assam Report of Committee on Work among Muslims, 1925-6.

The following report was presented at the recent
meeting of the Council in Calcutta.

THIS Committee proceeded to deal with the matters embodied in Resolution xii of the Proceedings of the last meeting of the Council.

A. School for the Study of Islamics.—It has been ascertained that the **B.M.S. Home Committee** favour the proposal to establish a School of Islamics at Dacca or elsewhere. But, as that Committee points out, the question really resolves itself into one of co-operation with other missions.

Your Committee therefore desires to make the following observations :

1. If Dacca were to be selected as the centre for such a School, accommodation of a suitable nature could be made available annually for a limited period from about the middle of April to the middle of June.
2. Missions sending candidates for training would be required to meet expenses connected with their travelling, food, etc.
3. The assistance of two or three experienced workers from other missions would be required to deliver courses of lectures, all of which would be given in Bengali. The out-of-pocket expenses of these lecturers also would have to be met.

4. It is not proposed to make any charge for the course of s^t udy.

This Committee therefore has agreed to recommend to the Council that we ask their respective missions to set free Messrs. D. K. Badshah and D. A. Chowdhury for this purpose, as the need arises.

B. Islamic Subjects on Conference Programmes.—In the matter of securing a place on Conference Programmes for a consideration of subjects related to Islam, the Committee is glad to report that opportunities

were found for such discussion both at the Darjeeling Convention and at the Bengal Christian Conference. The Australasian Missions report that they have agreed to devote one session to the subject at their convention this year.

C. Literature for Muslims.—It has become abundantly clear during the year that this committee must address itself in all seriousness to the matter of providing more suitable literature for the Muslims of this Province.

The Committee has become involved in this matter in quite unexpected ways.

1. The Secretary of the Tract Society, Calcutta, which carries practically all the available literature of this nature, forwarded to us an urgent request for the preparation of 4 tracts, either revised or new, for immediate publication. Eventually one of their older tracts was revised and in part rewritten, and three new ones prepared. These have since been printed and are now in circulation.

2. Strong protest by Muslims appeared in the press against certain statements used in two or three of the tracts and books published by the same Tract Society. It was pointed out at the time in letters to the press that the publications referred to were either out of stock or very old and in one case at any rate the Committee of the Tract Society agreed to withdraw the book from circulation.

The Committee has therefore been compelled to face the urgent need for a *programme of advance* in the matter of such literature. It has accordingly agreed to recommend to this Council that Messrs. D. A. Chowdhury and M. Moses be associated with the present Convener in an examination of all the existing books and tracts; and that they make recommendations (i) with regard to the reprinting or revision of such as are suitable; and (ii) concerning the preparation of new literature.

The English MS. of the "Best Friend" (a Life of Jesus approved by the N.C.C.) has been made over to Mr. D. A. Chowdhury to translate into simple chaste Bengali, with a slight admixture of Islamic terms. Mr. Chowdhury hopes to complete the translation by the end of June.

D. Survey.—The N.C.C. has called for a Survey of the present position of Islam in British India and of missionary activity in the evangelisation of Muslims. The information is now being collected through the assistance of the various Provincial Councils.

L. BEVAN JONES.

RESOLVED (i) To ask the authorities concerned for the loan of the services of the Rev. L. Bevan Jones, Messrs. D. K. Badshah, and D. A. Chowdhury, for a period of one month each year as lecturers in connection with the proposed School of Islamics to be conducted at Dacca or elsewhere.

(ii) That the following constitute a special Literature Committee for the revision and preparation of suitable Bengali literature for Muslims. Revs. H. W. Cover, M. Moses, Dr. Amir Hussain, Mr. D. A. Chowdhury and the Convener of the Committee on work among Muslims.

(iii) That as the task of stimulating the production of literature, for work among Muslims, pertains to this Committee, its recommendations need not pass through the Literature Committee.

The following were elected to serve on the Committee for the ensuing year:

Work among Muslims.—Rev. L. Bevan Jones, Convener; Miss Lees, Miss Hilda McLean, Mr. D. K. Badshah, Mr. D. A. Chowdhury, Rev. H. W. Cover, Dr. A. Hussain, Rev. M. Moses, Rev. W. H. Soule.

More Literature for Muslims in Urdu

WE are glad to call the attention of our readers to several recent publications in Urdu by the Punjab Religious Tract and Book Society, Anarkali, Lahore, to whom all orders should be sent.

Booklets.

1. *'Alamgir Mazhab* (The Universal Religion). A reply by the late Rev. P. Kewal Singh to "The Sources of Christianity" by Kamal-ud-Din. 135 pp. 6 as.
2. *Aklil-ul-Injil* (The Crown of the Gospel). The sayings of Jesus arranged under various subject headings in a form suitable for Muslim readers, by Rev. M. T. Titus. 103 pp. 2 as.
3. *Masihi 'Aqida Aur Zindagi* (The Christian Faith and Life). By Canon Gairdner, translated by Canon Ali Baksh. 34 pp. 2 as.
4. *Shari'at Irtdad* (The Law of Apostasy in Islam). By Dr. Zwemer, translated by Canon Ali Baksh. 30 pp. 2 as.

Tracts.

- (a) 8 pp. at 4 as. per 100 or Rs. 2 per 1,000:
 Khutbas (reprinted). No. 1. Prophecy and the Beni Israel.
 No. 2. The Mother of Jesus. No. 6. Death and Resurrection.
 Three tracts by K. Feroze Khan:
 The Atonement, Parts I & II. Jesus, the Revelation of God.
- (b) 4 pp. at 2 as. per 100 or Re. 1 per 1,000:
 The Quran's Testimony to Christ—by John Abdullah.
- (c) 2 pp. at 1 anna per 100 or 8 as. per 1,000;
 Selected from "What God Hath Used." (N.M.P.)
 Am I my Brother's Keeper? Who is Christ? A Dead Prophet or
 a Living One. Adam's Sin. The Noble Victim. Purity. 'Aqi-
 qa. Moths and Butterflies (for Girls).

Notes

A Member in North India writes.—"We are in the midst of the Hanifi annual lectures. The Wahhabis have had theirs. These two parties are as far removed from each other as the Hindus and Mahommedans (who have been rioting) in Calcutta. Easter week they had a fight and it is only our 'Satanic' Government that keeps them from flying at each other's throats."

* * * * *

A Y.M.C.A. Secretary in North India says.—"We had one hundred different men enrolled in seven Bible classes last winter, an average of 42 per week for 12 weeks. Of these over 30 were non-Christian, about equally divided between Muslims and Hindus. One class made up of Government College men entirely were all Muslims except for one or two others, and met with a Christian Professor as leader! Unheard of before. Several enquirers (Muslims) have been enrolled."

* * * * *

Mirat-ul Haramain. An account in Arabic of the Hajj expedition to Mecca and Medina and the transport of the Mahmal (or covering for the Kaaba) from Egypt to its destination, with descriptions of the places and

persons and ceremonies en route and many statistical details and 364 valuable and interesting photographs and maps. By Lewa: Ibrahim Rifaat Pasha, Emir-ul Hajj in the years 1903, 1904, 1908.

Published in 2 vols. 514 pp. and 395 pp. Cairo 1925.

This recent work will be welcomed by all students and followers of Islam who can read Arabic; it is on sale in India at Messrs. D. B. Taraporevala's, 190 Hornby Road, Fort, Bombay, at Rs. 18 for the two volumes—or from the author Helmieh El-gedida 4, Cairo, Egypt, at £ E. 1.

* * * * *

A Manual on Religious Orders.—In connection with the survey now being conducted throughout India, search for information with regard to Religious Orders in Bengal led to the discovery of a manual in Mussalmani-Bengali which is replete with the teaching of the Murshid to his disciple. It is a book of some 100 pages, entitled *Irshade Murshid*. Your Secretary can supply a few copies at 8 annas post free.

* * * * *

The Gospel of Matthew in Bengali rhymed couplet.—Workers in Bengal may have noticed on p. 18 of the new Catalogue of the Calcutta Tract Society, an item "Matthew (in Musalmani-Bengali)". This is a piece of work done years ago by H. C. Raha. It was published for the C.V.E.S. in 1878 and consists of 135 pages in the *pojar* style affected by the Muslims of East Bengal, and printed in the large generous type loved by villagers. We shall be doing a service to the Society by helping them to clear their remaining stock of 70 copies. It only costs two annas. A book of the same size could not be produced to-day at less than 8 annas.

* * * * *

A gift to the Circulating Library.—We acknowledge with thanks a copy of "The Moslem World of To-day" sent in by Rev. G. N. Gibson for the use of members of the Islamic Studies Lending Library. We would remind members that the subscription to the Library is one Rupee only per annum and is open to those resident in British India.

NEW MEMBER.

428. Rev. F. E. Livengood. Disciples of Christ. Pendra Rd. C.I.

The annual subscription to the League is only Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.). The Secretary will be glad to send spare copies of this issue to addresses mentioned by members, with a view to securing new subscribers. News and requests for prayer will always be welcome and should be sent early in the month to the Hon. Secretary.—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones.

Baptist Mission,

Dacca, Bengal, India.

Edited and published by Rev. L. Bevan Jones, Dacca, Bengal, and printed at the Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, by Rev. R. J. Grundy, Superintendent.