

Missionaries to Muslims League

News and Notes.

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THE FAST RAMAZĀN

Every missionary working among Muslims ought to have a clear idea of the teaching of Islām with regard to the great festival which will, this month, be celebrated throughout the Muhammadan world, and for this reason we reproduce here the article on Ramazān, which is printed in Hughes' well-known *Dictionary of Islām*.

"Ramazān is the ninth month of the Muhammadan year, which is observed as a strict fast from dawn to sunset of each day in the month. The word *ramazān* is derived from *ramz*, "to burn." The month is said to have been so called either because it used (before the change of the calendar) to occur in the hot season, or because the month's fast is supposed to burn away the sins of men. (*Ghiyāsu'l-Luḡah, in loco.*)

"The observance of this month is one of the five pillars of practice in the Muslim religion, and its excellence is much extolled by Muhammad, who said that during Ramazān 'The gates of Paradise are open, and the gates of hell are shut, and the devils are chained by the leg, and only those who observe it will be permitted to enter at the gate of heaven called Raiyan.' (*Mishkāt, Book vii, Chap. I, Pt. I.*)

"The express injunctions regarding the observance of this month are given in the Qur'ān, Surah ii, 179-184:—

"O believers, a fast is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may fear God for certain days. But he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days. And as for those who are able to keep it, and yet break it, the expiation of this shall be the maintenance of a poor man. And he who of his own accord performeth a good work, shall derive good from it, and good shall it be for you to fast if ye know it. As to the month Ramazān in which the Qur'ān was sent down to be man's guidance, and an explanation of that guidance, and of that illumination, as soon as any one of you observeth the moon, let him set about the fast, but he who is sick, or upon a journey, shall fast a like number of other days. God wisheth you ease, but wisheth not your discomfort, and that you fulfil the number of days, and that you glorify God for His guidance, and that you be thankful. And when my servants ask thee concerning me, then will I be nigh to them. I will answer the cry of him that crieth, when he crieth unto me, but let them hearken unto me, and believe in me, that they may proceed aright. You are allowed on the night of the fast to approach your wives, they are your garment and ye are their garment. God knoweth that ye defraud yourselves therein, so He turneth unto you, and forgiveth you. Now, therefore, go in

unto them with full desire for that which God hath ordained for you, and eat and drink until ye can discern a white thread from a black thread by the day-break. Then fast till night, and go not in unto them, but rather pass the time in the mosques. These are the bounds set up by God, therefore come now, hear them. Thus God maketh His signs clear to men, that they may fear Him.'

"From the preceding verses it will be seen that fast does not commence until some Muslim is able to state that he has seen the new moon. If the sky be over-clouded, and the moon cannot be seen, the fast begins upon the completion of thirty days from beginning of the previous month.

"It must be kept by every Muslim, except the sick, the infirm, and pregnant women, or women who are nursing their children. Young children who have not reached the age of puberty are exempt, and also travellers on a journey of more than three days. In the case of a sick person or traveller, the month's fast must be kept as soon as they are able to perform it. This act is called *Qaza*, or expiation.

"The fast is extremely rigorous and mortifying, and when the Ramazān happens to fall in the summer, and the days are long, the prohibition even to drink a drop of water to slake the thirst is a very great hardship. Muhammad speaks of this religious exercise as "easy" (Qur'an, Surah ii, 181), as most probably it was when compared with the ascetic spirit of the times. Sir William Muir (*Life of Mahomet*, Vol. iii, 49) thinks Muhammad did not foresee that, when he changed the Jewish intercalary year for the lunar year, the fast would become a grievous burden instead of an easy one, but Muhammadan lexicographers say the fast was established when the month occurred in the hot season. (See *Ghīyāsu'l-Itqāh*.)

"During the month of Ramazān twenty additional rakahs, or forms of prayer, are repeated after the night prayer. These are called *Tarawih*.

"Devout Muslims seclude themselves for some time during this month, and abstain from all worldly conversation, engaging themselves in the reading of the Qur'an. This seclusion is called *Itikāf*. Muhammad is said to have usually observed this custom in the last ten days of Ramazān. The *Lailatu'l-Qadr*, or the "night of power," is said by Muhammad to be either on the twenty-first, twenty-third, twenty-fifth, twenty-seventh, or twenty-ninth of the month of Ramazān. The exact date of this solemn night has not been discovered by any but the Prophet himself, and some of the Companions, although the learned doctors believe it to be on the twenty-seventh of this night. Muhammad says in the Qur'an (Suratu'l-Qadr) 'Verily we have caused it (the Qur'an) to descend on the night of power, and who shall teach thee what the night of power is? The night of power excelleth a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Spirit by permission of their Lord in every matter. And all is peace till the breaking of the morn.'

"By these verses the Commentator Husain understands that on this night the Qur'an came down entire in one volume to the lowest heaven, from whence it was revealed by Gabriel in portions, as the occasion required. The excellencies of this night are said to be innumerable, and it is believed that during it the whole animal and vegetable kingdom bow in humble adoration to the Almighty, and the waters of the sea become sweet in a moment of time. This night is frequently confounded with the *Shab-i-Barāt*, but even the Qur'an itself is not quite clear on the subject, for in Surah xlv, I, it reads, 'By this clear book. See, on a blessed night have we sent it down, for we would warn mankind, on the night when all things are disposed in wisdom.' From which it appears that 'the blessed night' or the *Lailatu'l-mubārakah*, is both the night of record and the night upon which the Qur'an came down from heaven, although the one is the twenty-seventh of Ramazān, and the other the fifteenth of Shabān.

M. Geiger identifies the Ramazān with the fast of the tenth (Leviticus xxiii, 27), but it is probable that the fast of the tenth is identical with the 'Ashurā, not only because the Hebrew Asūr 'ten' is retained in the title of that Muhammadan fast, but also because there is a Jewish tradition that creation began upon the Jewish fast of the tenth, which coincides with the Muhammadan day 'Ashurā being regarded as the day of creation. Moreover the Jewish Asūr and the Muslim Ashurā are both fasts and days of affliction. It is more probable that Muhammad got his idea of a thirty days' fast from the Christian Lent. The observance of Lent in the Eastern Church was exceedingly strict, both with regard to the nights as well as the days of that season of abstinence, but Muhammad entirely relaxed the rules with regard to the night, and from sunset until the dawn of day the Muslim is permitted to indulge in any lawful pleasures, and to feast with his friends. Consequently large dinner parties are usual in the nights of the Ramazān amongst the better classes. This would be what Muhammad meant when he said, 'God would make the fast an ease, and not a difficulty,' for notwithstanding its rigour in the daytime, it must be an easier observance than the strict fast observed during Lent by the Eastern Christians of Muhammad's day.

"The following sayings of Muhammad regarding the fast of Ramazān are found in the Traditions (see *Mishkat, Kitabu's Saum*):—'The difference between our fast and that of the People of the Book (i.e., Jews and Christians) is eating only before the first dawn of day (and not afterwards).'

'Keep not the fast till you see the new moon, and if the moon be hidden from you by clouds, count the days.' And in one Tradition it is thus: 'A month is twenty-nine nights, then keep not the fast until you see the new moon, which, if she be hid from you by clouds, then complete thirty days.'

'When the darkness of the night advances from the west, and the day departs from the east, and the sun sets, then the keeper of the fast may begin to eat.'

'There are eight doors in Paradise, and one is called Raiyan, by which only the keepers of the fast shall enter.'

'When the month Ramazān arrives the doors of heaven are opened.' (In another Tradition it is said that the doors of Paradise are opened) and the doors of hell are shut, and the devils are chained. (In one Tradition it is said, the doors of God's mercy are opened.)

'The person who fasts in the month of Ramazān on account of belief in God and in obedience to His command, shall be pardoned of all his past sins, and the person who says the night prayers of the Ramazān shall be pardoned all his past sins, and the person who says the prayers on the *Lailatu'l-Qadr* with faith and the hope of reward shall be pardoned all his past sins.'

'If a keeper of fast does not abandon lying, God cares not about his leaving off eating and drinking.'

'There are many keepers of fast who gain nothing by fasting but thirst, and there are many risers up at night and performers of prayers who gain nothing by their rising but wakefulness.'

NOTES

The Muslim Mission at Woking

The *Islamic Review*, the organ of the Qadiani sect of Muslims, published at Woking, England, has been recently printing on its front page portraits of prominent British converts to Islām. The number for April last contains a full-page portrait of "Captain Albert Armstrong MacLaughlin, son of the late Rev. Alexander MacLaughlin," together with the usual declaration, in heavy type, of his acceptance of Islām.

It would be interesting to learn how much such men really know of Islām, and how far they are acquainted with the real teachings of the Qur'ān. If the travesty of Islām served up in the pages of the *Islamic Review* is any index to the kind of teaching given at Woking, one does not wonder that a few gullible souls are led away by the specious eloquence of the Lahore Barrister-preacher, Khwaja Kamal Ud Din, B.A.

The methods of the Woking propagandists are, to say the least, curious. Intending converts to the "easy way" are invited to join apparently without any examination of their motives or the extent of their knowledge. It would appear that they may even join without a personal interview with the Maulvi or his helpers, for the following invitation appears in a recent number of the *Islamic Review* :—

"The Brotherhood, being universal, is open to all, and anybody who would like to join it can either attend the Friday prayers at 12-45 p.m., at 38, Upper Bedford Place, London, W.C., on any Friday, or Sunday services held at 3-15 p.m., at the Woking mosque, or send a written declaration to the Imam of the mosque, Woking, Surrey, who will always be glad to answer any inquiries."

Work for Muslim Girls in Bangalore

We have received a copy of the twenty-ninth local annual report of the Church of England Zenana Mission at Bangalore and Mysore, and note with much pleasure a determined, and by no means unsuccessful, effort to reach the Muhammadans of those places. In Bangalore, for example, we learn that three day-schools for Muhammadan girls, with an average daily attendance of 78, are regularly carried on. In these schools the Gospel is regularly taught, and the missionary in charge writes that "It is good to hear from some of the mothers that they come home and tell them the Bible stories that they have learned." The ladies in charge of this work are contemplating the opening of a training-school for female teachers, and are hoping for a Government grant for the purpose. "This may mean further development in the future in the way of providing a hostel for Muhammadan women teachers who come for training. Their eagerness to be trained is shown by the fact that when the Inspector-General of Education in Mysore allowed four scholarships to be offered to Muhammadan women teachers of the Mysore Province, more than seventeen applications were sent in."

The work, however, is not without opposition, and persistent attempts are made to entice away Muhammadan girls from the Mission school to a rival "Islāmiya School."

An orphanage with 51 children also offers a unique field for service amongst Muslims, and we read that, "Four girls have been sent to us from another mission to learn Hindustani, in order that when they are older they may take up work amongst Moslems. One girl left us for this purpose in June, and is now helping in a day-school for Muslim girls in Guntur. We have several Moslem girls as boarders who go back to their homes for the holidays. It is for these girls one would ask special prayer. It is a tremendous opportunity to have them living in this Christian school; perhaps only those who have worked amongst Moslem women in their homes can realize how great."

A Curious Experience

One of our members, the Rev. W. E. French, B.Sc., writes thus to the *Monthly Letter* of the B.M.S. :

"On Monday I went to the prize distribution of the local Muhammadan M. E. School. On the programme was an item 'An English Prayer,' and

I was flabbergasted to hear a Muhammadan boy stand up and recite a poem of which I give two verses:—

Lord I am Thine, entirely Thine,
Purchased and saved by blood divine,
With full consent Thine I would be,
And own Thy sovereign right in me.

Here at that Cross where flows the blood
That bought my guilty soul for God
Thee my own Master do I call,
And consecrate to Thee my all.

It was very strange to hear such words coming from a Muhammadan's lips, and very difficult to understand the mental condition of the head-master, a very orthodox Muslim, who allowed such a poem to be recited. He cannot have understood it. All the Muhammadan big wigs of the town were present, and applauded the poem in a dignified manner. The magistrate, a good Presbyterian, was in the chair, and he winked me a mighty wink when he heard these words repeated."

The Situation in Egypt

There are various indications that the situation in Egypt is much more critical than the public press is allowed to suggest. The quarterly report of the Nile Mission Press is eloquent of this in the bare announcement that the book, *My Pilgrimage to Mecca*, is now available for workers abroad. The book, for the present, cannot be placed in the hands of the colporteurs in Egypt, because "times are hard, and we must be careful." The same report announces that "the *Mizan Al Haqq* will be on sale from our export department about April or May." Workers in India may well give thanks to God for the great and wide door which is open to them in that land for the preaching of the Gospel to Muhammadans.

The sensitiveness of the British Government with regard to the position in Egypt is also reflected in the recent passport restrictions, issued by the Indian Government and published in the public press in India to the effect that:

"All persons desiring to enter Egypt, whether Neutral, Allied or British subjects, and irrespective of sex, should apply to the nearest British Consul or passport authority in time to permit the application, which will be transmitted to Egypt for approval, to arrive there 14 days before the proposed date of departure from India. Urgent applications may be made by telegraph. Only applications from *bona fide* residents of Egypt, or from those, irrespective of sex, who can prove urgent necessity for a journey to Egypt, will be considered."

The Dutch Government and Missions

From the *International Review of Missions* we learn that the attitude of the Government towards Christian missions in the Dutch colonies has recently been a living issue in the political life of Holland. The late government was charged by its opponents with arousing Muslim fanaticism by showing too much favour to mission work, and the new administration, which came into office in 1913, resolved to adopt a policy of more marked neutrality. Its programme included a provision that Christian schools receiving government aid must exempt from religious instruction scholars whose parents have conscientious objections to their receiving it. This proposal aroused strong opposition in some missionary circles, but other leaders of Dutch missionary work took the view that frank acceptance of the wishes of the government would not destroy the Christian character and influence of missionary schools, while it would have the great advantage of removing

once and for all the question of missionary work in the Colonies from the sphere of political controversy, and avert the danger of a movement in favour of the entire exclusion of religious teaching from aided schools. They exerted themselves to find a formula which would form a basis of agreement, and were successful in framing a proposal which was approved by all the Dutch missionary societies, with one exception, and which was accepted by the Minister for the Colonies. In other respects the new government has shown itself not unfriendly to missions.

We sincerely hope that the rumour, which is gaining currency in this country (India), that the Indian Government contemplates bringing in some such conscience clause for operation in all aided schools, is without foundation.

Muslim Activity in the Dutch East Indies

From the *International Review of Missions* we learn that the increasing success of missionary effort in the Dutch East Indies has given rise to a vigorous reactionary movement among the Muhammadans. An attempt is being made to win converts from the heathen and to start schools and philanthropic enterprises in imitation of Christian missions. An orthodox Muslim monthly paper, the *Medan Moestimin*, printed in Javanese and Malay, has been started to counteract the influence of Christianity and the disintegrating effects of Western thought.

The Muhammadan Year

On July 3rd will commence the Muhammadan month Ramazān, which is the ninth of the Muhammadan year, and the occasion of the well-known annual fast which is observed by Muslims all over the world. An interesting and informative account of this great festival of the Muslim world is given elsewhere.

On August 2nd will commence the Muhammadan month Shawwāl, which is the tenth of the Muhammadan year. This month is made famous by the fact that on the first day of the month the great festival of breaking the fast known as the *Idu'l-Fitr* takes place. This festival has other names, such as the *Idu Ramazān*, *Idu's-Saddqah* (Feast of Alms) and the *Idu's-Saghir* (the minor festival). It is essentially a festival of rejoicing, and stands second only to the *Bakr Id* in importance. It commences as soon as the month's fast in Ramazān is over, and is characterised by feasting and alms-giving. "See," said Muhammad, in establishing the festival, "that ye give plenty to the poor this day, so that they need not to go about and beg." Canon Sell, in his *The Faith of Islam*, states that the alms distributed on this day can only be given to Muslims. After the distribution of alms it is customary to proceed to the Mosques, or, in imitation of the prophet when establishing the festival, to some open space outside the city, where two rakats of prayer are recited and a *khatba*, or sermon, is delivered by the leader. This completes the religious part of the festival. The rest of the day is usually given up to feasting and enjoyment.

The Calcutta Muhammadan Ladies' Association

From the Calcutta press we learn of the establishment of a "Muhammadan Ladies' Association" in that city, which already numbers some ninety members. The objects of this association are stated to be, "To promote unity, social intercourse, and friendly feelings among Muhammadan ladies resident in Calcutta, by providing them with a common meeting-ground, to better the condition of Moslem women in general by eradication of pernicious social customs, and by diffusing proper and useful knowledge, and to establish

and conduct an industrial school for poor and needy Muhammadan women with a view to qualify them to earn their own livelihood."

The meetings, we are told, open with readings from the Qur'ān and prayers, and papers on "The Benefits of Education for Women," and similar subjects, are read and discussed.

A Moslem Graduates' Association

We also hear of the formation of a "Moslem Graduates' Association" for Bengal. The Editor of the Calcutta *Habib Matin*, in commenting on this fact, urges upon the members the duty of giving themselves up "to do mission work, like their fellow-students in English and American universities."

Some Points for Ramazan Addresses

1. The utter misconception of the meaning and purpose of fasting which is exhibited in the strict observance of the fast during the day, coupled with the utmost licence and excess at night. Muslims in India will usually acknowledge that they spend more on food in the month Ramazān than in any other month of the year!!

2. The utter and complete divorce between religion and morality which is seen in the Muslim observance of the fast, coupled with a continuance in the sins of lying, cheating and impurity.

3. The impossibility of Muslims keeping the fast during the four-month day of an arctic summer; which fact strongly suggests a human origin for the Qur'ānic law.

4. An exposition of the true Fast. (Is. Iviii, 8-9.)

PRAISE AND PRAYER

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down."—Heb. xi, 30.

Praise and Prayer

For believing women in Muhammadan homes who are praying for the conversion of their husbands, some of whom are reading the Bible.

Prayer

For the return of a woman, baptized with her husband, but who has gone back to her Muhammadan relatives and refuses to leave.

(A. G. S., ALLAHABAD.)

For Muslim girl boarders in the Church of England Zenana Mission Schools at Bangalore.

That the Lord will send a worker to join Mrs. Thor in making Christ known to the Moslems in SIAM, SHENSI.

Prayer is asked for a Mr. Ma, an ex-military Moslem official. He and his wife appear to be sincere inquirers. Cursed by his father whenever he mentions Christ, or mentions attending services, and persecuted by his friends, will League friends join in prayer that he and his wife may have the

courage granted to enable them to make an open confession. (J. M. YARD, CHENGTU, SZECHWAN).

Prayer is asked for a Moslem Chinese scholar, by name Mr. Lee, an able teacher, in whom several missionaries are interested. "A hard case, but not too hard for the Lord!" He confesses that after an extensive knowledge of Moslems, Romanists, Buddhists, etc., he finds that "the Christian lives the highest life." He appears to believe more than he cares to admit. (J. BROCK, CHOWKOW, HONAN.)

Prayer is requested for a work in Peking, which aims to reach the hearts of some of the Chinese Moslems, by visits, and through specially prepared papers, seeking to lead them to study the Bible. Prayer is also asked for the preparation of special tracts. (E. W. THWING, PEKING, CHIHLI.)

Prayer is asked that the proposed and very desirable visit of Dr. Zwemer to China, may, if the Lord will, become possible in the near future. And prayer is also asked that some of the Chinese Mullahs who have been touched by the Gospel may be delivered from the bonds that are keeping them from Christ. (One such Mullah recited part of the Kor'ān "to save himself from being taken in the missionary's net": "the Atonement had been put plainly before him, and he was much moved, but hastily put it down to Satanic influence," wrote a South China missionary). May some of these Mullahs be prepared to accept Christ. (F. H. RHODES, CHEFOO, SHANTUNG.)

NEW MEMBERS

209	THE REV. M. T. TITUS, B.A.	Bijnor, North India.
210	MR. M. E. BOTHAM	Lanchow, Kansu, China.
211	MR. J. BROCK	Chowkiakow, Honan, China.
212	THE REV. E. W. THWING	Peking, China.

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Jessore, Bengal.

W. GOLDSACK,
Hon. Sec., M. M. League.