

Missionaries to Muslims League

News and Notes.

Series V, No. 6.

October, 1916.

WHAT SHALL WE ASK MUSLIMS TO READ?

I fancy few of the members of our League have been so constantly engaged in the Muslim controversy as I, and while I do not regret what I have done, and while I believe controversy with Muslims will continue, yet I believe we have come to a place where we should adopt a different policy in our efforts to win Muslims to Christ. This policy, if we may use the term, should apply to all classes of our Indian hearers. It is not anything new, but on the contrary it is very old. It is that of depending more upon the power of the word of God than upon human interpretations of that word. We are often asked: "What book would you recommend to a Muhammadan reader?" Would you give him Pfander's *Mizan-ul-Haqq*, or his *Tariq ul Hayat*, or Safdar Ali's *Niaz Nama*, or Dr. Imaduddin's *Pahqiq ul Iman*, or his *Tanqid ul Quran*, or Forman's *Teg o Sipar i Iswi*, or Rana Chandra's *Ijaz i Quran*? What one book would you place in his hands? In answer to this question I would say that while all these books have a place, the one book to be given is the Bible: if not a whole Bible, the New Testament, the *Injil*, and if not the whole New Testament, the *Gospel of Matthew*. Do not be troubled by the genealogy in the beginning. The genealogy is interesting to a Muslim. It contains a long list of holy men, many of whom are known to Muslims. It tells of the virgin birth of Jesus, and leads on to His words and works. It attests the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. It presents man as a sinful being, needing a Divine Saviour. It presents Jesus Christ as the only Saviour.

Now is it not the almost universal experience of missionaries in Muslim lands, that their inquirers have been first impressed by reading or hearing the word of God? Is it not true that few, if any, attribute their interest in Christianity to hearing or reading controversial books? Just now there is universal interest among Muslims in the reading of, at least portions, of the Scriptures: the Psalms, Proverbs, Matthew, and Revelation. Just now, too, the Muslim world is in a state of unrest. Shall we not turn from controversy on the claims of Muhammad and the Quran, and urge the reading of the Christian Scriptures? Could we not have Bible Study Classes for Muslims, especially in the towns and cities where there are readers? Some of these classes should be taught in English. All controversy or debate should be excluded. The one thought should be to learn the teaching of the word as to man's need and God's way of life. If every member of the League should begin now to *sell and give* portions of the Scriptures to as many Muslims as possible, and at the same time organize Bible classes, what a wonderful work could be done towards evangelizing the Muslims of India. Shall we not begin *now*?

E. M. WHEBBY.

BIBLE CLASSES FOR MUSLIM STUDENTS

The Editor of *News and Notes* has pressed us to put down a few suggestions on "Bible Classes for Muslim Students." We cannot claim to write as specialists. But a few questions that have compelled some measure of thought in the midst of general missionary activity may perhaps be set down, not by way of a direct contribution to the solution of the problem proposed to us, as in the hope of evoking suggestions, based on experience, from those who have given time and thought to work among Muhammadans of the student class. The value of the course adopted in response to the Editor's urgent plea will depend, not on what is now written, but on what is to follow from other pens in later issues of our "Notes."

The students primarily in view will be found in the senior classes of our high schools or in our colleges, or perhaps in hostels under Mission supervision. They will, therefore, be classed as literate in English in a greater or less degree. The classes will presumably be conducted in English.

We note the following questions:—

1. *What is the general attitude of Muhammadan students to our Bible classes?*

Is there among them any marked readiness to attend? Are they hostile and suspicious? Or are they merely indifferent?

We write from an up-country station in E. Bengal. From the point of view of the missionary bent on buying up his opportunity, the increase in the number of Muhammadan students reading in high schools and colleges is very significant. It is just possible that we have not been sufficiently aware of the fact of this steady increase or of its importance both in regard to the resultant reaction on Muslim society and belief, and in respect to the spread of the Gospel. In this connexion the figures given by the Rev. L. Bevan Jones, in the July issue of *The Muslim World*, are worthy of careful note.

And what do these young Muhammadans think? Is the case foreclosed against Christianity? Do their studies weaken the grip of their traditional beliefs? Does any weakening in their loyalty to Islam cause them to inquire into the claims of Christ? Or does orthodoxy give place to indifference?

After allowance has been made for the general preponderance of Hindu over Muhammadan students, our own experience is that the Muhammadans are somewhat less ready to attend our classes than are the Hindus. Yet there have been exceptions. For some months, both in 1913 and 1914, we were able to carry on a class of 8 or 10 Muhammadans drawn from the college hostel. In this case both time and place of meeting were altogether convenient. But probably a special reason is to be found in the fact that, living and studying together, they were able to persist as a body where as units they would have lost interest and broken away.

With the opening of the new college session in July notices of our Bible Classes were well circulated and personal invitations given. Out of 35 who have begun to attend we have registered the names of six Muhammadans. This is up to our average. There may be, indeed, more enrolled later on, now that the Fast is ended. But we look to the Hindu students to be the more stable element in our classes.

2. *Is it desirable—and if so, has it been found practicable—to conduct classes exclusively for Muhammadan students?*

We have had classes exclusively for Muhammadans; but this has been not by design but by accident. The paucity of Muhammadan students and the missionary's lack of time and special fitness have been partial reasons for conducting joint classes. But it is a matter worth discussing, how far we can do our best work by combining Hindu and Muhammadan students in one and the same class. We have known occasions when the mutual criticism of

Muhammadan and Hindu has made some Christian truth stand out with more vivid satisfyingness. We confess, however, that we have never given adequate thought to the necessity or wisdom of conducting Bible Classes exclusively for Muhammadans. The Editor's suggestion seems to take it for granted that there are such classes. How far have missionaries followed this practice and with what result? Of course no one can think of making the Bible class the substitute for personal dealing. It is the ante-room: behind it lies the privacy of individual talk. In that more inward stage, if not before, lies the need for differentiated treatment as between Hindu and Muhammadan.

3. Such specialised classes would seem to demand distinct fitness for handling the Muhammadan problem. *Are steps being taken to equip men for this specialised work?*

The writer has for years felt that in all districts where there is a large Muhammadan community one member of the existing staff, if numbers permit, or a new worker who has acquired general experience, should be designated in a peculiar, if not in an exclusive, sense, for work among Muhammadans. The educational wakening, together with the propagandist zeal among the Muhammadans, seems to point us in this direction.

4. *What method should be adopted in conducting Bible Classes for Muhammadans?*

To what extent can the O. T. be given a more prominent place in our approach to our Muhammadan pupils than in our appeal to Hindus? Which of the Gospels is preferred as an introduction? Has any one of the Epistles a special appeal to Muhammadans? Has any missionary worked over the Gospels or the Epistles, or both, for a selected course of readings that shall be specially appropriate for Muhammadans? We think of such an outline as was given us by the Y.M.C.A. in 1913 for studying "The Social Teachings of Jesus."

We presume that one difficulty in regard to Bible classes, which are purely voluntary in principle and have no safeguard or sanction as being inwardly connected with some institution, is the fact that few students continue long enough to receive an adequate impression of the life of Christ as a whole.

For ourselves we always aim at introducing our student to the Life of Christ by the gateway of the Sermon on the Mount. This epitome is full of corrective and tonic elements, lays strong emphasis on the practical moralities, and is so insistent in its presentation of a "choose ye this day," that we delight to pass to a study of the life of Christ by this gateway. So many students collect in their class rooms a stock of ill-digested maxims, with which they seek to solve some of the deepest questions of life. The penetrating austerity of the Sermon on the Mount tends to expose their shallowness.

5. *What place is allowed for controversy?*

Criticism or questionings cannot be shirked. Our own practice is to begin with a frank statement that we are prepared for questions, but that our main purpose is the study of the Bible. There is no reason why we should make our lesson-hour a time for disseminating objections or raising difficulties. Experience shows what passages suggest objections, and in our exposition we can, by a careful anticipation, meet a protest that is never put audibly in class. At the same time, by reserving ten minutes at the end of each lesson for questions relevant to the matter just discussed or of broader concern, something is done to keep desultory controversy in check.

6. *To what extent can Bible Class work be supplemented by personal visitation or personal dealing with the students on their own ground?*

Our own experience shows that great care has to be exercised in this respect. Too close and persistent attention is soon suspected, and something in the nature of a scare results. Has anyone else any experience to report on this head?

7. *To what extent is literature, dealing with Islamic problems, welcomed by Muhammadan students?*

It seems clear that a good deal of anti-Christian literature reaches their hands. They are kept well informed of the fruits of the Muslim propaganda in England. To what extent has Christian literature been found useful as an ally in Bible class work? Is the average booklet in English dealing with a Muslim topic readily intelligible to the ordinary student?

8. *Have there been cases of conversion among Muhammadan students directly traceable to Bible Class work?*

For ourselves we have no such case to report. Perhaps others can give one or more interesting and encouraging experiences of this kind.

Of the importance of the question raised by the Editor there can be no doubt. Perhaps an interchange of experiences and suggestions may be with profit to all.

H. S.

NOTES

The Nile Mission Press

Every missionary working among Muslims is interested in the Nile Mission Press, that splendid institution at Cairo, which, under the blessing of God, is doing so much to spread the knowledge of salvation throughout the whole Muhammadan world. The story of the origin of the press, as told in the annual report for the year 1915-1916, contains words which should be taken to heart by every one of us, leading to the determination to do more for the circulation of Christian literature amongst the Muslims.

"Several Missionaries in Egypt," we read, "began to lay to heart the chief cause of the conversion of Moslems to Christianity, to ask themselves why so few conversions were known, and to enquire what could be done. It was found that nearly every Moslem convert referred to the reading of some tract or book as the first thing that opened his eyes to the need, and that led him to Christ." The result was the establishment of the Nile Mission Press, an organisation founded on interdenominational lines, and having the various missions in Egypt represented on its Publication Committee, and an Executive Committee in England, with J. L. Oliver, Esq., as Secretary.

The last annual report of the Press speaks of wonderful blessing and progress, in spite of many adverse circumstances brought about by the war. Not only has the income of the society increased, surely in itself a wonderful cause for thanksgiving to God, but the sales for the year show an increase of almost 30,000 copies, representing an increase of 29 per cent. on last year's total, and of 8 per cent. on the previous best.

Under the able superintendence of Mr. Upson, a staff of 54 men, composed of Egyptians, Syrians, and at least one converted Jew, are producing Christian literature, not only for Egypt, and in Arabic, but in several other languages as well. The books so produced are being sent to the farthest limits of the Muhammadan world, and in Algiers, Morocco, Nigeria, Uganda, East Africa, Cape Colony, Russia, Turkestan, India, Persia, and China these life-giving messengers are finding their way to Muslim hearts.

The superintendence of the press is ably supported by an English manager, Mr. H. J. Weaver, and the annual report contains a striking illustration of the energy and resource of those two devoted men. We give the paragraph entire as it stands in the report:—

"The Y.M.C.A. were in a difficulty a month or so ago. They had planned a special campaign really to win the men (European troops in Egypt) for Christ, an effort which resulted in many hundreds coming to a decision. But only a few days beforehand they discovered that there were no hymn

books available, not even for the pianists. They came to us to help them in their difficulty, and we did something never attempted in Egypt before, at any rate. Of course there was no music type available, but by having zinc blocks very carefully made from the rough print of old hymn books, we produced in one week 15,000 copies of a 44-page book, and the troops all had music books for the service." No wonder the work of the press is increasing by leaps and bounds under the superintendence of such men!

On the editorial side the work of publication has been greatly strengthened by the advent of Dr. Zwemer, who has left his distant post in the Persian Gulf in order to devote his unique gifts to the direct work of producing literature for Muslims. It is largely owing to his efforts that the press to-day is housed in its own magnificent premises, instead of in the unsuitable hired quarters of a few years ago.

We bespeak the earnest prayers of our members for the Nile Mission Press and all connected with it, that its work may redound to the glory of God and the salvation of Muslims.

The Use of the Veil in Egypt

We take the following from *Blessed be Egypt*, the quarterly official organ of the Nile Mission Press:—"Some time ago there was an open debate in the *Ahram* (Pyramids) concerning the emancipation of Moslem women, in which was discussed the *pros* and *cons* of the 'Veiling of Women.' Both the veiling and the unveiling parties have agreed to one important principle, *viz.*, that it is necessary to educate the Moslem woman, and treat her as a respected companion of the man, the guardian of his house and children, and the main factor in the development of the entire nation. The more this idea gains ground (and we are astonished at the rapidity with which it is gaining ground) the greater will be the demand for more and more aggressive work for women all over this land of Egypt. Such a discussion in a Moslem paper, and by Moslems, has a great significance to those of us who have been deeply impressed with the needs of women in these Moslem lands, and acts as a probe, daring us to plan largely for the extension of this work, so as to enter the many doors flung open to us."

"The American Language"

The *Christian Guardian* explains how a way has been found to continue American mission schools in the Turkish Empire during the war, in the following note:—"A ban was placed on the language of all the belligerents, and French, Russian, Japanese, and English became forbidden tongues. Of course this affected United States schools, and United States citizens in Turkey, and the United States ambassador protested most vigorously. However, a Turkish firman had been issued, and could not be recalled, being like the laws of the Medes and Persians. But, to please the United States ambassador, another firman was issued, giving full permission to all and sundry for the use of 'The American language.' And the folks concerned very quickly acquired this new tongue, and were safe from official interference. Great is diplomacy."

France's Gratitude

From the *Missionary Review of the World* we learn that the French Government has laid two bills before parliament, providing for measures to be adopted in order to show the gratitude of France for the loyalty of her subjects in North Africa.

One of the bills provides for the creation at Mecca and in Medina of two large caravanserais, bought or erected at the expense of the French Government, where pilgrims from Northern Africa may obtain shelter free.

The second bill provides for the addition to the inter-ministerial commission for Muslim affairs at Paris of Muslim councillors, thus allowing natives to be represented at the seat of the central power.

American Missions in Turkey

Recent reports from Turkey draw a sad picture of the condition of the country, especially on the Asiatic side. From the *Missionary Review of the World* we learn that the American Board has received a cable from the *chargé d'affaires* at Constantinople, urging that all the missionaries in the interior of Asia Minor be withdrawn on account of increasingly tumultuous conditions. The missionaries still in Asia Minor number no less than one hundred and twelve, and they have been advised to consult with Treasurer Peet at Constantinople and the United States ambassador, as to the wisdom of their remaining at their posts.

Matters in Armenia are improving with the advent of the Russians, and the American Board expects the male missionaries to return to Van at an early date. They will travel *via* Russia and the Caucasus, and, for some time to come, will be occupied mainly in relief work.

The same paper is responsible for the statement that a company of eight missionaries from Eastern Turkey, desiring to leave for home, have been detained at Beirut since January 1st, the Turkish government refusing to allow the United States battleship, Des Moines, to take them off.

The Martyr Spirit of Armenia

The *Record of Christian Work* prints the following letter from an Armenian now in Asia Minor:—"God can still shut the mouths of lions. Do you realise that He has truly done this during many years? We now understand how great a miracle it is that our nation should have survived so many years in the midst of a people like the Turks. Into what demons can men change themselves! I fear they are planning to kill some of us, to starve others, to drive the rest into the desert. So I have little hope of seeing you again in this world. But do not doubt that I will do all possible to encourage others to die bravely, and may God aid me to die as a Christian. May this land see that if we can not live longer as men, we can die as men. And may many die as men of God. May the Lord pardon this (Muhammadan) people their sin. They sin through ignorance. May the Armenians by their death be able to show forth the life of Jesus, since they cannot render testimony with their lives. May we soon see many Moslems become followers of Christ. And may this war soon end, that the Moslems may be saved from their cruelty. For day by day they become more demoniac, and their character is degraded by the tortures which they impose on their victims. Our expectation is in God, out of love to Moslem no less than to Armenian. May He soon manifest Himself."

Bible Classes For Muslim Students

We publish on another page a thoughtful and suggestive article from the pen of the Rev. H. Sutton, M.A., on the very important subject of Bible classes for Muslim students. There must be many of our members who have at some time or other conducted such classes, and we should welcome further contributions to the discussion of this most important phase of mission work.

The Muhammadan Year

On October 29 will commence the Muhammadan month, Muharram, and with it the Muhammadan new year. The word Muharram means "that which is forbidden," and the month is said to be so called because in it, even in pre-Islamic times, all war was held to be unlawful. According to the *Dictionary of Islam* it is considered to be a most auspicious month, and Muhammad is related to have said that "whosoever shall fast on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of this month shall be removed from hell fire a distance of seven hundred years journey, and he who shall keep awake the first night of this month shall be forgiven all the sins of the past year, and he who shall fast the whole of the first day shall be kept from sin for the next two years."

As is well known, the first ten days of this month are observed by the Shiāhs in commemoration of the "Martyrdom" of Husain, the grandson of Muhammad. For a detailed account of this festival the reader is referred to the January number of this paper for the current year.

The Mubarram is not a Sunni festival, yet in India many ignorant Sunnis may be seen taking part in it. The tenth of the month, however, is observed by Sunni Muhammadans as a voluntary fast day. The author of the *Dictionary of Islām* says it is observed as the day "on which God created Adam and Eve, heaven and hell, the tablet of decrees, the pen, life and death"; but the *Mishkāt ul-Masābih*, in the chapter on fasting, contains the following account of the origin of the fast of *Ashura*:—"His highness arrived at Medina, and found a Jew keeping fast on the day *Ashura* (i.e., on the tenth of the month), and he said to him, 'What fast is this which you are keeping?' The Jew said, 'This is a great fast. God redeemed Moses and his tribe on this day, and drowned Pharaoh and his tribe, then Moses kept fast on account of gratitude for this benefit, and we keep fast as following him.' Then the prophet said, 'We are more worthy of, and nearer to, Moses than you.' And the prophet kept fast on the day *Ashura*, and ordered the companions to fast on this day." All authorities are agreed, however, that when the fast Ramadān, was fixed this fast was made optional. In Bengal this fast is little observed, and our own experience is that it is quite unknown amongst the masses of Muhammadans.

Lecture Notes

We are sending out with this number the printed synopsis of two lectures which were recently delivered in Calcutta to a gathering of Christian workers. The treatment of the subjects dealt with was necessarily far from exhaustive; but it is hoped that these notes may stimulate further enquiry along the lines suggested. For example, the witness of inscriptions in the catacombs of Rome, the use of the sign of the cross from the earliest times, and the undoubted celebration of the Lord's supper in the primitive Church, can not easily be explained away on the Muslim hypothesis that the doctrine of the atonement was a development of later times.

An Apology

We owe an apology to some of our foreign subscribers, whose papers, through an unfortunate error in this country, were sent out insufficiently stamped. We greatly regret this mistake, and will refund the amounts paid for excess postage to any who will notify us of the sums thus expended.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

Praise

Members will remember the article by Mrs. Mead, which appeared in the May number of this paper, entitled "The Last shall be First," and the request for prayer that was made at that time for the youth Abdul, that he might be won back to faith in Christ. We now give praise to God for answered prayer in the baptism of Abdul. From letters received, it appears that he soon repented of his momentary weakness in doubting Christ's power to save, and forthwith began to declare in his own home his faith in Christ. Persecution at once began, but at length a Maulvi, who had exhausted his powers of argument in the vain endeavour to destroy Abdul's faith, plainly told the young man's brothers that it was clear he had determined to become a Christian, and that it was useless to persecute him further. Then, wonder of wonders—and oh, what a rebuke to our little faith—those same brothers sent Abdul back to the mission school to continue his studies as a Christian! Said

he, as he opened his heart to Dr. Mead, "You need have no fear. Even though the sun should rise in the west, my faith will never falter more." Let us give thanks to God for this glorious victory.

Prayer

"A young Moslem widow of good family, one of our zenana pupils here, tried to come to us lately to declare her faith in the Lord Jesus, but was caught and taken back, and this has caused the house where she stays to be closed to us. Will you all help us by prayer for this secret believer, that the Lord would open the way for her to come out, and also that closed doors may be re-opened, if it be His will."

L. FALLON, JAUNPUR.

Let us pray unceasingly for our missionary brethren in places of extreme peril and difficulty in the Turkish empire; that they may be preserved from bodily injury, and that their ministry of love, to Turk and Armenian alike, may be blessed to the furtherance of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

Special prayer is asked for a Young Muslim convert in Dacca, the capital of East Bengal. This young man is the son of an influential Muhammadan, and only united persistent prayer will enable him to triumph over the many difficulties which confront him.

NEW MEMBERS

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|------|-----------------------|-----|-----|----------------------------|
| 216. | REV. R. H. COURTENAY | ... | ... | 11, Merchant St., Rangoon. |
| 217. | REV. W. A. RICE, M.A. | ... | ... | Isfahan, Persia. |

Annual Subscription to the League is Rs. 2-8-0 (3s. 4d.). Members are requested to send news and requests for prayer to

Jessore, Bengal.

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