

Missionaries to Muslims League

News and Notes.

Series V, No. 8.

December, 1916.

INTERCESSION IN THE TRADITIONS

Having, in our last issue, dealt with the subject of Intercession as found in the Qur'an, it may not be out of place to briefly note in our present number the position occupied by that *dogma* in the *Ahādith*, or Traditions. Generally speaking, it may be said that the compilers, and in many cases without doubt the originators, of the Traditions have sought to atone for the lack of any definite Qur'anic pronouncement regarding the intercession of Muhammad at the judgment day by relating long and highly-coloured stories of the great tribunal when Muhammad will stand forth as the all powerful Intercessor with God. These stories are so obviously at variance with many of the clear statements of the Qur'an that missionaries who work among Muslims should seek to learn something of their origin and value. Many a tale of the later traditions has been quoted to Christian missionaries by Muslims as the authoritative teaching of Muhammad, or even as the statement of the Qur'an itself, when lack of knowledge has not unoften left the missionary without an effective reply.

We should never forget that the Islām which passes muster in large parts of the world to-day is the creation of a later age, having little in common with the Islām of the Qur'an, except in its basal doctrine of the Unity of God and the Apostleship of Muhammad. The worship of pirs and saints, the belief in Muhammad's power to work miracles and to intercede at the last day, are based upon the imaginative genius of the later traditionists, and have little, if any, support in the Qur'an itself. So far as the doctrine of Muhammad's intercession is concerned, a close study of the Traditions reveals the fact that they are as contradictory in their teaching on the subject as the Qur'an itself. Generally speaking, however, it may be said that both Bukhāri and Muslim paint Muhammad as the great Intercessor at the judgment day. The following quotations, taken from the *Mishkātū'l-Masābīh*, will help the reader to locate the origin of many of the tales which he has doubtless heard from time to time, from the lips of his Muslim friends.

Passages teaching that Muhammad will intercede

One of the most famous traditions, related by both Muslim and Bukhāri, and more or less familiar to Muslims everywhere, is found in the *Mishkātū'l-Masābīh*, in the *Kitābu'l-Fitān*. This tradition is too long to translate in full, we therefore content ourselves with a synopsis of the story as there given. It is related by Anas that Muhammad said that on the day of resurrection the Muslims will be sad and will say, "Would to God that He had produced one to intercede for us, that we might have been taken from this place in which we are staying, and been delivered from this tribulation and sorrow." Then, the tradition proceeds, these men will go to Adam, and will beg him to intercede for them. But Adam will remember his sins and will say, "Go to Noah the Prophet, who was first sent by God to the infidels on the face of the earth." Then they will go to Noah and beg for his intercession, but he, in turn, will remember his fault, in that he asked for the deliverance of his son, and will say, "Go to Abraham, who is the Friend

of God." Then they will go to Abraham, but he, too, will say, "Verily I am not in this degree, and he will recollect the three falsehoods which he spoke in the world. So he will say, "Go to Moses, who is the servant of God, and to whom God gave the Taurât, and to whom God talked personally." Then they will go to Moses, but he, in turn, will remember the fault he committed in killing a man, and will say, "Go to Jesus, who is God's Servant and His Messenger and the Spirit of God." Then the men will go to Jesus, but He will say, "I am not in that degree, but go to Muhammad, whose faults God has forgiven both first and last." Then, said Muhammad, the Muslims will come to me, and I will ask permission to go into God's court, which will be given, and I will see Almighty God, and will prostrate myself before Him, and He will keep me as long as He wills, and then will say, "Raise up your head, O Muhammad, and say what you wish to say; it will be heard and approved; and ask grace for whoever you like, it will be approved; and ask whatever you want, it will be given." "Then," said Muhammad, "I will raise up my head and praise and glorify my Cherisher. After that I will intercede for them, and God will say, 'Intercede for a particular class.' Then I will come out from the presence and bring that particular class out of hell fire, and will bring them into Paradise. In this way will I do for all the Muslims, so that none but infidels will remain in hell."

Another tradition, related by Malik, is to the effect that Muhammad said, "Gabriel came to me and gave me an option to bring half my sects into Paradise or to intercede for the whole. So I chose to have grace asked for the whole. Then my intercession is confirmed for everyone who dies and does not associate anything with God."

In the *Mishkâtul-Masâbih*, in the *Kitâb Fadâil Syedu'l-Mursalîn*, there is another tradition from Anas that Muhammad said, "I am the beloved of God, and, without boasting, I shall be the bearer of the standard of praise on the day of resurrection, and under it will be Adam and all the Prophets besides, and I shall be the first intercessor, and the first whose intercession will be approved on the day of resurrection, and I am the first who will ask for the door of Paradise to be opened, and God will open it and enter me into it, accompanied by the poor Muslims."

Anas also records a saying of the Prophet that, "I will intercede for those who shall have committed great sins."

Passages which suggest that Muhammad will not intercede

There is a remarkable tradition handed down by Abu Hurairah and quoted in the *Mishkâtul-Masâbih*, in the *Kitâbu'l-Riqâq*, which runs thus, "O tribe of Quraish, redeem yourselves from the fire by faith, for verily I am not able to obtain anything from God for you."

In another tradition in the same chapter Muhammad is related to have said, "O Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, ask what money you want of me, for verily I cannot obtain anything for you from God."

In yet another tradition, related by both Muslim and Bukhâri, it is stated that after Muhammad had asked for and obtained permission to intercede for all in whose heart there was a single atom of faith, he once again approached the Almighty with the petition, "O my Cherisher, permit me to intercede for him who shall have but repeated the words, 'There is no God but God.'" God is then reported to have replied as follows, "It is not your business to ask grace for him who shall have said, 'There is no God but God,' but I swear by my glory and greatness, verily I shall bring out of the fire him who shall have said it."

Passages which teach that all the Prophets will intercede

In the *Kitâbu'l-Fitân* there is a tradition related by Abu Saïd, and attested by both Muslim and Bukhâri, that Muhammad said, "A bridge will be placed over hell, and intercession will take place, and the Prophets will

say for their sects, 'O Lord, pass these over the bridge in safety, that they may not fall into the fire.'"

Another tradition in the same book runs thus, "Three classes will intercede on the day of resurrection: first the prophets, then the learned, and then the martyrs."

Muslims will intercede for one another

Another tradition, which at one sweep does away with any pre-eminence Muhammad may be supposed to possess, announces that Muhammadans indiscriminately, who have been released from the fire, will, in turn, intercede for their fellows still remaining there. This Tradition is found in the *Kitābu'l-Fitān*, and is attested by both Muslim and Bukhāri. It runs as follows, "Then some believers will be redeemed (from the fire), and some will have their skins wounded and scratched, after which they will be let go. And some will be thrown in pieces into hell, until when the Muslims are set free that shall have fallen into the fire, I swear by God, they will intercede with God for their brothers remaining in the fire, like as one man asks his right of another. They will say, 'O our Cherisher, they used to say prayers with us, and keep fast and pilgrimage.' Then will it be said to them, 'Bring out those you know to be good.' And great numbers will be brought out."

Yet another Tradition is to the effect that Muhammad said, "Verily there are some of my sects who will intercede for multitudes, some of them for the progeny of one man, and some of them for from ten to forty, and some for one man, till, in this way, all my sects will enter Paradise."

These Traditions are instructive, for they show that the intercession of Muhammad as there related does not avail to secure his followers from entering the fire of hell. At most he is credited with the power to secure, by his intercession, their release from their purgatorial sufferings. It need scarcely be pointed out how little comfort or peace such a doctrine can bring to the man who is convicted of sin. There are not wanting traditions, it is true, which seem to indicate that some, at least, of Muhammad's followers will be saved from entering the fire owing to his intercession, but the well-known tradition (which, let it be remembered, is also found in the Qur'ān itself) that "All must enter the fire" seems to limit Muhammad's alleged intercession to the task of procuring their release from the torments of the fire.

Some years ago a notable encounter took place between a Christian and a Muslim in the Panjab, in which each party was confined to the simple reading of his Scriptures on the subject under discussion. If we could but persuade inquiring Muslims to take the Bible and the Qur'ān, aye and with all their boasted Traditions thrown in, and compare their teaching on the subject of Intercession, we cannot but think that they would see, as perhaps they had never done before, the infinite distance which separates Muhammad from the One who "is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

W. G.

THE MUSLIM VERNACULAR PRESS IN BENGAL

There are two ways of learning what Muslims are thinking. One is to mix freely with them and hear what they are saying, and the other is to read their papers and see what they are writing. We wish that members of our League who are working in Egypt, China, Burma, the Panjab and Madras would, without waiting to be personally solicited, send us brief statements of current Muhammadan thought in their respective areas. We are sure that such a series of letters would afford a most instructive view of Muhammadan plans and aspirations, and would help us not a little in our preparation for

presenting the Gospel to them. We propose in this article to indicate briefly the principal features of current vernacular Muslim journalism in Bengal.

The leading vernacular Muslim paper in Bengal is the monthly *Al Islām*. This is a well-edited, illustrated journal of seventy pages, printed on good paper, and, for the most part, contributed to by men of good education. One of its declared objects is to expose the machinations of deceitful missionaries, and its principal object is to hold up Islām as the one hope for sinful men. A brief *résumé* of the contents of the last number, just to hand, will give the reader a very fair idea of what educated Muslims are thinking and saying in this part of the great harvest field.

The place of honour is given to an article, which is to be continued in successive numbers, on "The History of the Canon of the Christian Scriptures." The article, which needless to say is an attack on the authenticity and integrity of the canonical scriptures, is prefaced with a list of seventy apocryphal books! and promises to extend over several numbers.

The next article is entitled, "The Muslims of China." These good folk are stated to number 70,000,000! The article in question consists of a glowing panegyric of the Muslims of China, which would make the Chinese members of our League rub their eyes. We are told that in Pekin alone there are 28 mosques and 17 madrasahs. The *shariat* is observed in a way that puts the rest of the Muslim world to shame. The seclusion of females is rigidly enforced; the fast is universally kept; and the pilgrimage is made by so many that the number of Chinese *hijris* is "beyond imagination."

This is followed by an article entitled, "The Ancient Library of Alexandria," and is taken up with a refutation of the charges which have been made against Omar in connection with the destruction of that priceless collection of books. We have no space to deal with this long article. It must suffice to say that in the course of the article the following authors are quoted:—Sale, Gibbon, Muir, Butler, Draper, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Another article, one of a series, deals with the question of Islām's treatment of subject races, and, like the preceding one, is an apologetic. Its object is to show that Islām, in its treatment of the *Zimmis* and other subject communities, is one of the most tolerant and at the same time considerate masters the world has ever seen!

Yet another article seeks the glorification of Islām by proving to the author's satisfaction that Muslims were the inventors of printing.

The same number of *Al Islām* contains the fourteenth contribution to a serial life of Muhammad which is running through the paper. Needless to say, this biography is largely an attempt to whitewash the prophet and to present him as the model man. The author defends Muhammad's polygamy by a reference to the polygamy of the O. T. Prophets, and makes frequent reference to the attacks of European writers, whom he tries to answer.

Yet another article is headed "The Decay of Literature in Islām," and the author contrasts Baghdad, in the period of its greatest literary activity, with the position in the Muslim world to-day.

The literary style of most of these articles is decidedly good, and not a few of the articles are liberally sprinkled over with Arabic quotations.

Another Muslim Bengali periodical is the weekly *Muhammadi*. This, like *Al Islām*, is closely connected with the Islam Mission, and it contains regular references to the work of the mission, as well as publishes lists of subscriptions to that organisation. *Muhammadi* is violently anti-Christian, and divides its diatribes pretty evenly between the Christian missionaries and the Qadiani sect, which has recently been showing renewed activity in Bengal. We translate an editorial note on the latest anti-Christian booklet published by the Muslim Mission. It runs as follows:—"Atonement—We desire to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of a book published by the Muslim Mission, entitled *Atonement*. The foundations of Christianity are based upon the fanciful doctrine that Jesus Christ gave his life upon the cross as an atonement for the sins of all Christians. The writer (of *Atonement*), Maulvi Muzaf-

far Uddin, a preacher of the Mission, has by various irrefragable proofs reduced this foundation to powder. The printing and paper are good, and the book, containing 56 pages, is sold for six pice (1½d.). May this book be found in every Muslim home. It will be found an infallible means for exposing Christian perfidy."

Quite a large amount of space has recently been given to the work of the Qadiani missionaries, who are making their presence felt in various parts of Bengal. Khawaja Kamaluddin, of the Woking mosque, would not be exactly flattered at the following description of his sect, which recently appeared in an editorial of the *Muhammadi*:—"It should be specially remembered that the Qadiani sect is not a branch or sect of Islām. It is an entirely new religion, with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as its prophet. According to the opinion of this sect 400,000,000 Muslims have strayed from the path of religion. As a matter of fact the religion of this sect is quite opposed to Islām."

Muhammadi is a newspaper, and contains not a little news of current events, but the requirements of the censor make it impossible for the editor to speak his mind on such subjects as the Arabian revolt. His comments on the great war are, for the same reason, of little value as an indication of the trend of Muslim thought.

Christian workers in Bengal will find *Muhammadi* an excellent medium for becoming acquainted with the transactions of the various provincial Muslim Leagues, as well as for keeping in touch with the question of Muhammadan education in the Province. A very considerable amount of space is devoted to this latter subject.

W. G.

MUHAMMADAN FRIDAY PRAYERS IN LONDON

Friday worship takes place at a private residence (39, Upper Bedford Place). I judged that it would start at noon, but on arrival found that the hour had recently been changed to 1 p.m. Accordingly I returned to the house at that time, and was taken to a drawing room on the first floor round which chairs had been placed, while the centre was prepared by the placing of large white cloths over the carpet for the use of ordinary worshippers, a special embroidered prayer rug being reserved at one end for the leader. Some 15 orientals, chiefly Indians, were seated on the chairs engaged in conversation when I entered the room, and my next neighbour was a Panjabi Muhammadan, who had just graduated at Cambridge University. The air was redolent of the odour of sandal wood, and apparently some had been burned there previously as a sort of incense. After a little while one of the Indian gentlemen present, removing his boots, stood and gave the call for prayer, and two or three of those present joined him in devotion, while the others continued their conversation in subdued tones. Meanwhile five ladies entered the room. After these preliminary individual prayers, an address was given in English, setting forth the rightful attitude of the true Muslim (a) to God's creation around, animate and inanimate; (b) to his own kin; (c) to his fellow-countrymen; (d) to his fellow-believers; (e) to humanity in general, and specially to the poor. Frequent quotations were given from the Qur'ān in the original. The lecture was an earnest plea for charity and largeheartedness, not merely to those with whom one was linked by bonds of race or creed, but to those who occupied an inferior position or belonged to an alien faith. It was claimed that the Muslim teaching on these points tended to equalize more the conditions of wealth and poverty than was usually the case in the West, and prevent an excessive superabundance on the one hand and semi-starvation on the other. An instance was also given of an individual, presumably a Western, who had attained an efficient position for himself, yet selfishly refrained from helping his less

fortunate sister. It was claimed, too, that where the faith of Islām was properly practised there were no institutions such as the workhouses of England, with their attendant stigma. On the conclusion of this address all the men present, and two English lady converts to Islām, formed lines and joined in the public prayers recited in Arabic by one of those present, an Egyptian gentleman, who acted as Imān. He was not the same individual as the preacher. The two lady worshippers took up a position behind the men. The remaining ladies and I kept our seats.

Refreshments were provided in an adjoining chamber, and I was asked to remain, but had not time by reason of another engagement. I had mentioned at the outset that I was a missionary visitor, but that made no difference to the cordiality of my reception.

J. IRELAND HASLER.

BIBLE CLASSES FOR MUSLIM STUDENTS

We have received two or three interesting communications on the important subject of Bible classes for Muslim students. The Rev. Canon M. G. Goldsmith, B.A., writes from Madras as follows:—

"I regret I feel so unfitted to make any contribution to this very important subject, though I do not think Madras is exceptionally difficult. We have our Harris School with its 350 Muslim students, and we are thankful that the Scripture classes in the school curriculum are attended with regularity, and that many students listen thoughtfully. There are always a few who are ready to discuss, but discussion is not encouraged. The historical parts of the Old Testament, and the Gospels and Acts in the New Testament, are the passages taught.

"We have no 'Bible Classes,' i.e., distinct from school classes, nor Sunday school. Attempts in these directions have never succeeded. Probably there would be more hope of success had Harris School contained more Hindu students. As it is, there is a good deal of suspicion and fear of Christian influence, though we are thankful that our seven Christian masters seem trusted and esteemed by their pupils, and have considerable opportunities for exercising Christian influence. In the more than fifty years' existence of Harris School, there has been, as yet, no case of a conversion, either of present or past students. But we by no means think that it has been a real failure, for abundant evidence is seen of prejudice broken down and kindly feelings created.

"Every opportunity is taken of maintaining the authenticity and integrity of Holy Scripture.

"Our frequent open air preachings, carried on daily in prominent public places, are a constant testimony to what our deliberate purpose is.

"Dr. Wherry has reasons for preferring St. Matthew's Gospel, but personally I put forward St. John's, for I have noticed, in many instances recd ed of conversion, how often it is St. John's Gospel that has especially been used for bringing Muslims to Christ.

"In other Madras schools and colleges there is an admixture of Hindus with Muslim students, and sometimes this arrangement enables both religions to be better discussed and compared, for Christianity to shine forth. But we, too, look and pray for great results.

"N.B.—We generally avoid, especially in public, all allusion to Muhammad, and so would not recommend comparisons."

Mrs. M. N. Armstrong writes from Rangoon of a remarkable work which is carried on there for Indian immigrants, many of whom are Muslims. The plan so successfully tried there, of gathering a Bible class by means of open-

air meetings, might well be tried elsewhere. Mrs. Armstrong writes as follows :—

"We tried to start a Bible School, for those educated in Government schools who had had no chance to study the Bible. We tried to reach them by open-air work, and thence calling them in to study. I enclose a leaflet giving an account of the beginning of our work in 1911. We have kept on the same course for over five years. Twenty-two have been baptized, of whom thirteen were Muhammadans and six Hindus, who have been formed into a 'North India' Church. We have many churches among South Indians, Telugus and Tamils, but only this one for Urdu-speaking natives. Elias and his wife are among the Muslims baptized."

In the interesting leaflet referred to in the extract just quoted, it is stated that "a special feature of the (open air) work has been the reading aloud of passages of scripture. These have been listened to with interest, and have emphasised the preaching that preceded it." And the report concludes, "Since then the work has gone steadily forward, and we have now the names of thirty-four Hindustanees who are reading the Bible and enquiring after the truth."

BOOK REVIEWS

Bible Lessons for Use in Zenanas and Women's Classes; Christian Literature Society, Madras.

Illiterate and undeveloped adults! What multitudes of them we find in Muhammadan zenanas! How to make such women partakers of our riches in Jesus Christ is a problem ever present with us. As a practical help in the solution of this problem we welcome a little book by Mrs. Edith M. Annett, under the title *Bible Lessons for Use in Zenanas and Women's Classes*.

The lessons are contained in eight sections, as follows:

Stories revealing God, 4 lessons; Jesus the Son of God, 5 lessons; Jesus and Women, 5 lessons; The Death of Christ, 4 lessons; Stories of Sin and its Punishment, 3 lessons; Conversions, 3 lessons; Good People, 2 lessons; The Future Life, 4 lessons.

Each of these 30 lessons is most carefully, though not exhaustively, dealt with. Helps are given for the teachers' private study, the aim of the lesson is clearly stated, and then follows the lesson outline.

The book is fresh and suggestive throughout. We notice this first in the choice of lessons. For instance, in the first section we have the following stories:—

1. "The son who ran away," the aim of the lesson being "To show the great love of God the Father."
2. "In the Beginning," Aim: "To show the great power of God the Creator."
3. "The Story of Hannah and Samuel." Aim: "To show that God answers prayer."
4. "The Story of the Widow's Oil." Aim: "To show God's care for the poor and needy."

It will, of course, occur to all that such lessons as the last two need careful handling. The position might be safeguarded by giving a little emphasis to the words "Like as a father," in referring to Ps. 103: 13 (see p. 12), inasmuch as a wise and loving father knows both how to give and how to deny.

We particularly appreciate the three sections on the Life of Jesus. We wish that all our pupils might have the Gospel presented to them in this simple and telling way.

It is a happy thought to use the story of Ruth as an introduction to the section on Conversions. Would it not be well to give Lydia also a place here?

Mrs. Annett has not written expressly for Muhammadan women; indeed, it is evident at times that she has thought particularly of the needs of Hindu

women. Yet the lessons are no less valuable for workers among Muhammadans. We should like to see a Bengali translation of the book in the hands of every thoughtful Bible-woman working among her illiterate sisters in Bengal. In the meantime, many zenana missionaries will be glad to take this course of lessons in Bible-women's preparation classes, and some of its suggestions many of us will be glad to use in our own direct work in the zenanas.

C. WILLIAMS.

NOTES

The Muhammadan Year

On December 27 will commence the Muhammadan month *Rabi'ul-Awwal*, the third of the Muhammadan year. The 12th day of this month is the day on which Muhammad died, though, as the months of the Muhammadan year are lunar, it so happens that in the year 632 A.D., the date of the Prophet's death, *Rabi'ul-Awwal* fell in June.

A Letter from China

The following extract is taken from a private letter written by one of our members whose field is in west China, 1,500 miles from the coast:—

"In my Muhammadan work here I have come across some very interesting people. There is an inn over in their section where people, travelling merchants from all over Central Asia, stop when in Chengtu. They are a jolly lot, and I often step in to talk with them for ten minutes. I usually give them a tract or an Arabic Gospel. The other day, to my great surprise, I found a man who said he came from Kashmir. On this trip he is from Kashkar, but his home is in Kashmir. He says he has been in Lahore and also in Bombay. He is a most genial fellow and so quiet and modest. He can speak but very little Chinese, so we do not get along very fast in our conversations.

"I found a Chinese Muhammadan the other day, who says he really is a believer in Christ, but because of his old father, and I am afraid more because of his fear of persecution, he has never made any confession. He says that his wife, too, believes, and that every night they read the Bible and pray. I had a good talk with him, and he certainly knows the Bible, I mean especially the New Testament. Not long after he came into our prayer meeting one night. I shall try to keep in touch with him, and through him try to reach others. I am hoping that he can bring some of his friends to a Bible class."

Finance

We should be grateful if the very large number of subscriptions due for the current year could reach us during the next fortnight. The permanent Secretary of the League, the Rev. J. Takle, has returned to his field, and we do not wish to hand over to him the accounts of the League with the present debt of eighty rupees.

We should be glad, too, if members would kindly remember to notify us of change of address. This is not always done.

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,
Acting Hon. Sec., M. M. League.