

Confidential.

News and Notes.

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

Series VIII.

No. 18.

October, 1920.

Oct. 1st = 18th Muharram (1st mo.)

Oct. 14th = 1st Safar, 1339, A.H.

Baptisms in Arabia.

THERE have been two baptisms of Muslims in Arabia recently. The first was a young Persian woman, the wife of a Chaldean Christian. This man had turned Muslim under stress of circumstances a few years previously and had received her as a reward. He afterwards renounced Islam and taught his wife the Bible. He taught her so much and so well that she accepted its message and became a Christian. Her knowledge, faith and zeal seemed sufficient to justify her baptism.

It was on Easter Sunday that the second was baptized. He also was a Persian, and was a *sayyid*. He first came to us over two years ago with a request that he be baptized. For four years he had been seeking the truth. Neither the Shi'î nor Babi faith gave him what he longed for. A copy of Genesis started him inquiring about the Jewish religion. Then he secured the Gospel of John. It gave him immediate satisfaction and convinced him that he should become a Christian. For two years he associated with us, increasing in knowledge and was always zealous, in spite of hardships. An attack was made upon him recently in the bazaar, and his watch chain was broken and stolen. The issue was fortunate, for the shaikh who heard the complaint took occasion to announce that there was to be no religious intolerance in the town, and that, so long as a man behaved himself, it did not matter whether he was a Christian, Jew or Muslim. He ordered that the chain be restored.

This religious freedom is splendid, but it does not remove all the danger that faces one who would openly change his faith. The Shi'î judge in the town publicly proclaimed that it was justifiable to kill

the apostate Persian just mentioned, but there was no relative present to feel the disgrace and become responsible for the deed. So it seems that it is not a matter of life and death for a stranger to become a Christian in a town of Arabia.

On the other hand, there was an Arab who became a believer four or five years ago. Recently it was noticed that he associated with us very frequently. This was reported to his father. The father, who was an ardent Muslim, was made to feel his responsibility and became so worked up that a few months ago he made a murderous attack upon his son. A crowd gathered and before them all the son made a clear declaration that he had become a Christian. Some in the crowd said that it was his own affair and he was allowed to go, and he left the town. He will probably be baptized before the end of the year.

This incident seems to show that a Muslim cannot live as a Christian in his home town in Arabia. It also encourages us to believe that secret believers, of whom we know quite a few, may be expected to stand when they are brought to the test.

May the Lord be praised for the encouragement these three people give and may He be glorified in the prayers offered on their behalf.

E. E. C.

Impressions of Islam.

BY L. J. EGERTON SMITH, S.C.F.

I AM convinced that no man can know Islam who has not lived among men as well as books. During four years' campaigning out East, chiefly in lands under the domination of the Turk, the latter have been little available, but human material has been abundant. My impressions are gathered from wanderings amongst mosques and men during many off-duty hours, and although these have been in an enemy country, more often than not off the beaten track, it is something to record that only once have I been treated with anything other than perfect courtesy..... But the exception amply proves the rule. Islam indicates a tremendous sense of superiority. The Mussulman stands at a vast remove from the "infidel." He belongs to an aristocratic religious caste, by virtue of which he can afford to treat others with an easy indulgence or regard them with a fanatical hatred. He is dignity personified or malignity incarnate, as the case may require. Those who know him in the second phase only know one side of him. He is a survival of those grim days of mediæval barbarism when cruelty and lust mingled with the pomp and circumstance of knightly chivalry, when Christendom, too, was a militant faith and conversion by the sword was regarded as a commendable method of saving the unbeliever

from the eternal fires. This duality in his temperament—I speak of the Turk—accounts for the conflicting impressions which prevail.

I meet people who have resided many years in Turkish lands, and they are either his intense admirers or his bitterest foes. Religious bigotry, whether under Crescent or Cross, must of necessity produce these extremes. One could hardly expect the protagonist of Armenia to have a good word for the followers of Islam. And let it be clearly understood that Moslem rule over Christian lands cannot be tolerated; yet it should not be overlooked “that the Armenians are not the innocent lambs that some people would have us suppose”—I quote Lord Curzon. But at worship the Moslem is great. He is intensely earnest. His whole soul is in his task. For it is a task. He is supremely indifferent to all lesser concerns. I know nothing more impressive than a mosque during the time of worship—nothing more humbling. Men, everywhere men, rich and poor, abasing themselves before the great God. And the words “Allah Akbar,” oft repeated, send a thrill through the soul as the mighty crowd in a moment of tense silence prostrates itself to the earth. There is no music; only the chanting of the muezzin (?imám), thin and clear, resonating under the mighty dome. No pictures, nor images; no altar. Just the host facing Meccawards. It is a service of silent prayer, and men, with shoes removed and feet and hands washed clean, moving stage by stage, reverently, near the Mihrab. Always I go when I have opportunity, and always with the sense of intrusion. And yet one can offer no higher testimony than this, that it is easy to pray in such an atmosphere. I have worshipped Christ at such a time, and found nothing incongruous in the act. Amid the tawdry glitter of the modern Greek Church I confess I have never found such aid to devotion, but where the Mussulman worships, where the soul depends upon no adventitious aids in its approach to God, I have many times found sanctuary.—*Contributed to “The Baptist Times.”*

(*To be Concluded.*)

Notes on the Muslim Calendar.

REV. AHMAD SHAH.

Muharram,

the first month of the Muslim year.

FROM the historical and religious point of view Muharram is a very sacred and honoured month. Fasting on the 9th and 10th day of this month is counted a very meritorious service. Ibn-i-Abbas records the tradition that when Mohammed came to Medina, and noticed the Israelites observing the 10th of Muharram as a fasting day, he enquired of them its purpose. They informed him that the Almighty had rescued them from their enemies on that special day, and that Moses had fasted in

grateful commemoration of the day. To this Mohammed said that he was better entitled to appreciate the Mosaic law than the Jews. Consequently he fasted, and enjoined the Mohammedans to fast on that day.

Many excellences are mentioned in the Hadis pertaining to Yom-i-Ashora. This is the identical day on which the "Yazidis," after famishing, starving, and torturing themselves in the fields of Karbala, martyred the Imám Husain and the family of Ahl-i-Bait. It ought to be incumbent on every Muslim to venerate this day, and instead of wasting it in idle games and extravagant superfluities, try to grieve at the recollection of the afflictions and persecutions of the Imám, and follow in his footsteps, by emulating his patience and perseverance, asceticism and piety, religious zeal and self-sacrifice, and be even prepared to lay down their lives, sacrifice their wealth, children and families in the interests of their community.

The following practices during the first ten days of this month are all forbidden according to Muslim injunctions:—

Making "Tazias" (models of shrines); mourning and beating the breast; enjoying the Id festivities; decorating the *Sabils* and the *Bazars*; for women to wander about aimlessly in the streets; making an offering to the Tazia; breaking bangles; to neglect the use of antimony and dentifrice; sleeping on an upturned bed; wearing gaudy clothes; borrowing money to offer the "Fatiha" for a Tazia; hearing from liars and rogues the elegies on the death of the Imám, and getting such traditions recited, as would reflect on the dignity of the Ahl-i-Bait. The poverty of the Muslims of to-day necessitates that in the place of *sharbat*, sweets, etc., money and clothes be procured and given in alms. These charitable gifts in money and clothes should only be distributed to those who are really poor and to *Faqirs* who, on account of their impoverishment and helplessness, are really deserving of this. Exorbitant sums are lavished recklessly on making Tazias, on decorations, and free drinks. If instead, all this money could be spent on the education of orphans and widows, the Muslim community would receive the blessing of peoples most needing help.

* * * * *

Safar, the second month.

The Arabs used to think this month portentous of evil, and that it augured no good if any work were started in it. Mohammed denounced all these superstitions, and condemned and contradicted in detail all these whims and fancies of foolish folk. The verses of the Hadis relevant to Safar explicitly prove that there is no such thing attaching to this month as inauspiciousness and ill luck. It is, therefore, sad to see that even educated Mohammedans of to-day believe in omens, and that they too look upon Safar as an unlucky month, just as the people of the dark ages did. They do not commence any new work till the 13th of Safar. On this day, some Muslims distribute boiled wheat and gram.

It is a strange fact that the Deccan Mohammedans observe the last Thursday of Safar as a gala day, a kind of red-letter day. It is because they persist in the delusion that Mohammed recovered from sickness on this day, but this is unmitigated nonsense.

The Background for Social Service.

BY D. J. FLEMING.

(In "Religious Education in India.")

THREE great faiths underlie joyful and triumphant social service. I. *Faith that world-wide brotherly social order is possible.* Of recent years a world-consciousness has been rapidly developed. More and more are people able to grasp the whole globe in imagination with some measure of insight into what is needed to bring in a better order. Seeing this world-need, some join in a campaign to abolish disease the world around. They see how one great foundation is working in forty different countries to abolish hook-worm. They hear how Panama was changed from a fevered zone to a place where people can live with safety. They see an Indian village, where a Christian doctor has been living, forming a health island in the midst of surrounding plague. They believe that the average length of life in India need not be twenty-one when it is forty-four in the United States; and that one out of four babies do not need to die in Bengal. They have faith that disease can be conquered, and are ready to do their bit in the front where God has placed them, in the effort to give to all their heritage of health.

Others enlist in a campaign to abolish poverty. They realize that in many places on this planet people are being driven, as in a forced march, to get their daily bread; that all the joy of life is taken away by the pressure to keep body and soul together. But with an understanding of the world's resources they believe that it is not necessary that any should live below a certain subsistence level. There is enough for all if selfishness and greed and exploitation can be reduced, and if men will only attack their problems with intelligence and with hope.

Others enlist in the campaign to abolish ignorance. It is estimated that one billion people on this globe do not know how to read and write, and yet no one really believes that they should live and die without the pleasure and the help that comes from literacy. We hear of the new phonetic script in China which substitutes a limited alphabet for the thousands of ideographs that had to be memorized in the old system, and which promises great advance in literacy for that great land within the next ten years. We see what Japan has done since 1870, with its 98 per cent of literacy.

II. *Faith in God, as one who is ever working toward this perfected world order.* The social worker will often be discouraged, or will quail before immense obstacles that are in the way of progress unless he has faith in divine resource and purpose. If one believes that God himself is striving for a better social order, and that with him are resources of love and power that we have never fathomed, one is immensely strengthened. Such religious faith brings a deep sense of companionship, and a deep confidence in the sure result. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It raises one's small efforts out of the trivial, and gives the sense that what one does has eternal worth because linked up with the divine purpose for the world. All this steadies a worker as he faces what, without this faith, would seem like insuperable odds.

III. *Faith in man as meant to share with God in creativity.* We have been told that we are to be perfect as God is perfect, that like Him we should be holy, righteous, and loving. But we do not so often have that

faith that man should, like God, be marked by creativity. And yet God means us to be like Him in this respect, as well. When a stream of water is turned back by an engineer from flowing uselessly into the sea, and is sent through a tunnel in a mountain to irrigate the plains on the other side, this is man's sharing in creativity.....When a doctor traces the cause of beri-beri to the use of polished rice, he has worked with God for a new health generalization for the world. We ought to expect that God through His indwelling Spirit will lead us to ideas which no one else has ever thought, and to plans and methods which have never before been used, and that God means us to share with Him as much power as He can trust us with.

Where can we get these three convictions? Where can we strengthen our faith in them until we go out with transforming power? I know of but one source. It was Jesus who burned with a passion for the world-wide, brotherly, social order, and who saw this Kingdom of God as a vivid reality. It is from Him we catch the steadfast faith in a Father whose loving purpose toward the world is sure.

NOTES.

WORK FOR MOSLEMS IN CHINA:—The special Committee on Work for Moslems, appointed by the China Continuation Committee, has been pressing forward in its work successfully. The Rt. Rev. H. J. Molony, D.D., of the Church Missionary Society, Bishop in the province of Chekiang, has succeeded to the chairmanship of the committee, and brings to this work not only his zealous evangelistic spirit but much experience in work for Moslems gained in India.

A group of Chinese converts from Islam and missionaries working among Moslems have been organized as a committee to review all the Chinese manuscripts which it is proposed to publish, assuring that only publications of real value will be published. This should inspire confidence in the work of the Committee in China on the part of all the supporters of the A. C. L. S. M.

During the past year the Committee has begun the publication of its books and tracts specially prepared for Chinese Moslems. A tract, "God in Islam," by Rev. W. Goldsack, which has previously done much good in India, was the first publication of this Committee. At about the same time, the Committee issued a pamphlet in English and Chinese giving the Moslem terms current in China, in order to help the missionaries to learn a vocabulary which would enable them to reach the Moslems effectively. "Sweet First Fruits," "Christ in Islam," besides quite a long list of smaller tracts are now complete in manuscript and will be printed immediately. The hearty co-operation of Chinese and foreign missionaries, with Chinese authorship predominant, is setting a high standard of literary excellence for the Committee's work.

During the past summer special conferences for missionaries to the Chinese Moslems were held in Kuling, Kikungshan and Chefoo. A series of papers were specially prepared for discussion by the Rev. F. H. Rhodes, who, for many years, has been emphasizing the duty to evangelize Chinese Moslems. These conferences have been fruitful in following up the work done by Dr. Zwemer two years ago.

A. L. WARNSHUIS.

MUSLIM STUDENTS AND THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES—Through the generosity of the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, copies of (a) The Four Gospels and Acts, (b) the New Testament and Psalms, and (c) the complete Bible are distributed annually in different centres in India to young men who have been successful in the (a) Matriculation, (b) Intermediate and (c) Degree examinations of the various Universities. Once again it has fallen to us to arrange for the local distribution, but never has the number of applicants been so high, viz. 600. Of these it is deeply interesting to note that no less than 93 were Muslims, 34 of them being graduates. The Calcutta University has this year, for the first time in its history, set "Selections from the Bible," prepared in book form by the Principal of a Christian College, as a text book in English for the intermediate and final examinations. We have opened classes for the study of these selections and have 20 to 30 pupils in each of the Junior and Senior sections. There are Muslims in both the classes.

* * * * *

WELFARE WORK IN CAWNPORE.—Social work is being begun in some parts of India. A big boot and shoe factory in Cawnpore with four thousand employees, has permitted the appointment of a missionary and his wife as welfare workers. Practically all the people employed are illiterate. They must be taught to keep flies from swarming on the baby's mouth, to send the children to school at least a few hours a day and to find amusement in something more elevating than the nautch. Large numbers of them live in the small villages adjacent to the city. One advantage, indeed, is the fact that nine hundred are living in a model self-governing village, where it is vastly easier to begin work. After the lower castes have been taken care of, the work must be extended to the higher caste Hindus and Mohammedans, of whom there are many in the factory, holding responsible positions.

* * * * *

A MEMBER WRITES.—I had the joy of seeing the Mohammedan young man, about whom I wrote asking for prayer, baptized last Sunday, and he seems to be growing spiritually. (see N. and N. Jan., page 74, No. 7.) We also have recently had a young police officer, a Mohammedan, baptized. I feel that a great work can be done by these young men, and pray that we may see many more coming out definitely for the Master.

* * * * *

THE BENGALI QURAN.—Many of the M. M. League members at work in Bengal are waiting for information about the remaining parts of Mr. Goldsack's Bengali Qurán. We are glad to be able to say that the whole work is completed at least. We both rejoice with Mr. Goldsack and congratulate him on seeing his long-cherished project accomplished. The work is in 30 parts, at three annas a part, and can now be had, bound in three separate volumes, of the publishers, 41, Lower Circular Road, Calcutta.

Those who know it, and have hitherto subscribed to it, will be glad to secure the remaining parts. To those who have not yet seen this work we would urge the purchase of Part I before it is sold out. It is a good sample of the rest. It combines a critical commentary on the text, something quite new for the Bengali Muslim.

Missionaries working among Muslims in Bengal will do well to read through these volumes with their Bengali evangelists, or at least give the latter the opportunity to read them for themselves.

* * * * *

MEMBERS are once again earnestly requested to make sure that their copies of N. and N. come to hand regularly. In the event of permanent change in location on the field, or departure for furlough, care should be taken either to arrange to have the paper readdressed, or to send the new address to the Secretary. Similarly, return from furlough should be intimated whenever necessary.

For Praise and Prayer.

1. Let us praise Almighty God for the joy He has granted to our brethren in Arabia in the matter of the converts recently baptized (p. 141 f.), also making request for the latter in our prayers, that they may be strong in the Lord.
2. Let us praise God for the growing number of Muslim students in India who are willing to receive the Bible, and to read and study it. (p. 147.)
3. Let us give thanks to God for the baptism of the young Muslim for whom we prayed, and for the police officer recently baptized. (p. 147.)
4. Let us pray for an educated and responsible Mohammedan gentleman in Bengal who, while expressing his belief in Christ, yet hesitates to make open confession through fear of the persecution from wife and friends which he feels must follow such a step.
5. Prayer is asked for five ex-Muslim converts at T.M. in Chihli Province, North China. Four of these have already received baptism and all need our prayers as they openly confess Christ from day to day.

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Miss Latham, late of C.M.S., Agra, left India this year on account of ill health. After considerable difficulty in securing a passage, she reached Sydney on May 12th. She entered a hospital immediately but passed to the Higher Service on May 28th.

The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-8-0 (about 5s. od. English). News and requests for prayer should be sent by the tenth of each month to the Hon. Secretary :

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,
Baptist Mission,
Dacca, Bengal.
