

Confidential.

## News and Notes.

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### "A DISOBEDIENT BELIEVER."

The "disobedient believer" seems to be a speciality of Moslem theology. Probably the theology provided the definition with the view of meeting a great and evident lack in the classification of Moslems; no doubt there has been action and re-action between the living facts and the theology.

In any case, to-day the theological recognition tends to multiply and encourage the great number of living specimens of "disobedient believers," and the missionary finds himself often confronted with this recognised class as one of the greatest obstacles to any sense of the gravity of sin or its danger, or to any true repentance. He meets it thus in discussion. The Moslem speaker enumerates the obligatory religious duties required by God: prayer, the fast of Ramadan, abstention from eating pork or drinking wine, &c. The missionary objects that there are many Moslems who habitually neglect or disobey these commands; also mentioning other common moral failings among them, such as lying, petty thieving, &c. What about these? The Moslem responds, quite unconcerned, that such a one is a "disobedient believer"—by no means one to be disowned, or to be ashamed of. He will certainly enter heaven by Mohammed's intercession. At the most, if the missionary insists on his unfitness for heaven, the admission is made that he will undergo punishment first—a sort of Purgatory. To the Moslem speaker and the other hearers, this is final, and if he or they are conscious of any shortcomings, they thus persuade themselves that they are still infinitely superior to the unbeliever (Jew or Christian) in their present standing and privileges before God, and in their prospect for eternity; and that, although "the unbeliever" may be far better morally, and far stricter in his religious observances. Hence, with little or no compunction, they can continue in their way and make no effort to reform; the recital of a few phrases from time to time, or at the moment of death, being sufficient to put all right.

The same idea appears in the frequent quotation of a passage which describes Mohammed's following as being "a sinful people," adding, "God is merciful;" *i.e.*, it matters little that they continue sinful, for God's mercy will the more abound. How different from the apostle's argument in Rom. vi. 1, 2? In Isaiah i. 4, Israel is described as a "sinful nation," but there follows a call to repentance and a threat of punishment. The "sinful nation" is hateful to God. In face of such Moslem statements, and the consequent attitude of those who make them, one feels that these are indeed devices of Satan to blind men and hold them in bondage. The missionary, certainly, does not accept the Moslem's conclusion as satisfactory; he tries to show that disobedience, and a true, saving belief, are utterly opposed to each other, and that though a true believer may be disobedient in certain things, and at times, such disobedience is most serious, and calls for speedy and true repentance; for wilful and habitual disobedience will have most sad and terrible consequences, and if persisted in proves that there is no true faith. But by experience, Christ's messenger knows that his words will not shake the Moslem's complacency, unless the power of God's Spirit accompany them. Let us all in England, or on the Mission Front, be persistent in prayer, that the Spirit's power may bring down these "refuges of lies."

While we pray for and pity these deluded folk, do we not need to learn from them and examine ourselves? Christian theology does not recognise and tolerate the "disobedient believer," as does the Moslem theology, but is not the person himself found among us? Is not the germ in our own hearts? Are we not sometimes conscious, not only of living below the true standard of Christ's perfect law of love (not a very limited law of externals, as is the Moslem one), but also of being content—of wishing to remain there—yet all the time counting ourselves much better than the "outsider," though he might put us to shame in some respects? To what is due the lack of labourers in God's harvest field, and the lack of interest at home in the work of world-wide evangelisation? Is it not that the "disobedient believers" are numerous at home?—that they are disobedient to the Master's clear command? Is it not that many are like the Moslems who almost break the missionary's heart, in that they *know* that they are disobedient, yet will not make any effort, will not give up their own way and cross their own likings in order to obey? Have none of us been glad to hear any reasoning which tends to make little of our shortcoming? The Moslem's disobedience may be in respect of glaring sins, or

trivial customs, while ours lies in a different sphere, of neglect of self-sacrifice and spiritual service; but we sin against infinitely greater light, and the evil root is the same in us as in them. May we be saved ourselves from wilful disobedience to the commands of our Lord and Saviour!

*Kairouan.*

E. E. SHORT.

(From *North Africa*).

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### BOOK REVIEWS.

The Nile Mission Press continues to send out a never-ending stream of literature for Arabic-speaking peoples, both Christian and Muslim. This literature is not restricted to small tracts, but not unoften takes the form of substantial volumes which make a very real contribution to Arabic Christian literature.

Two recently-issued books are typical, and illustrate very forcibly the splendid work being done at the Nile Mission Press.

The first is a substantial volume of nearly 250 pages entitled "A Handbook to the Bible." The book is all that, but it is more; for it contains much that is usually found only in the pages of a text-book on Christian Evidences. In its eight chapters it leads from a review of the insufficiency of natural religion to a consideration of the necessity and fact of Divine Revelation. The claims of the Bible to be a revelation from God are enforced, and various objections urged by Muslims and unbelievers in a revealed religion are met and answered.

Other important sections deal with the argument from prophecy and miracles. The evidential results of modern archaeological discovery are touched upon, and then follow valuable chapters on the effects of the Bible in the world, the history of its compilation, its present divisions, and its inspiration. The book closes with an excellent discussion of the main purpose of the revelation of God as given to us in the Bible.

This excellent volume should have a wide circulation, and might well be used as a text-book in the theological colleges of Egypt.

The second book to which we would call attention is one on Soul-winning. This is essentially a book for Christians. The author has modestly omitted his name from the title-page, but the writer of these notes happens to know something of the earnest prayer and hard work which the talented Superintendent of the Nile Mission Press—himself an earnest soul-winner—has put into this splendid book.

The book consists of eleven chapters dealing with various aspects of the greatest work entrusted by God to man. Thus, we have chapters on the call to soul-winning, the need and opportunity, needed qualifications of the worker, methods of work, personal work, and a fruitful study of the methods employed by our Lord Himself. Then follow illuminating sections on the special difficulties which confront the worker who takes his message to Muslim or Jew. Other chapters enforce the need for wisdom and tact, or point out special methods which may be employed as auxiliaries in this divine service, such as personal correspondence through the post, or the Sunday School and the Y. M. C. A.

This splendid book fittingly closes with an earnest plea for intercessory prayer. It deserves the widest circulation in those countries where Arabic is spoken, for who can say how much its study by Christian people might mean for the spread of the Kingdom of God, not only amongst Jews and Muslims, but amongst nominal Christians.

W. GOLDSACK.

**The Church Missionary Review** contains a review of a book, by James L. Barton, called "The Christian Approach to Islam." The writer of this review highly commends the book to students of the problem of bringing the Gospel to Muslims. I am sorry I have not been able to see the book myself, and I can only give a few of the points which the above-mentioned reviewer makes about it. The object of the book is thus stated:— "We are now seeking from the world of Islamic history, belief, and experience, that which will aid us in making a successful approach to the great heart of Islam." Dr. Barton makes suggestions, in part III of his book, as to the best methods of giving Muslims a true view of our Lord and of the Christian Faith. He recommends missionaries to avoid using alcoholic wine in administering the Lord's Supper to Muhammadan converts. He also thinks that churches should be built in oriental style, not in occidental, and that no pictures or statues should be placed in them. No doubt all missionaries who have had to do with Muslims would agree with the latter suggestion, and up to a certain point with the former one as well. The reviewer points out several misconceptions in the book, as, for instance, the statement that the "submission" of Islam means the son's filial submission to his father's will, whereas it really means much more the hopeless "submission" of a slave (like that of a corpse in the hands of the washers of the dead, as Muslim

authorities say.) Or, the suggestion that missionaries are in the habit of approaching Muslim enquirers with the doctrine of the Trinity first of all. As we know, missionaries never intrude that doctrine on the notice of a Muslim, but on the other hand the Muslim always brings up the subject himself, as he regards it as the most vulnerable point in Christianity.

If any reader of *News and Notes* has this book, perhaps he will be good enough to give us his thoughts about it.

(H. J. L. S.)

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## NOTES.

### KANSU, CHINA.

The Rev. Mark E. Botham, one of our members in China, sends the following message:—"A few months ago a very well known Muhammadan, a military official of considerable influence, named Ma An-liang, died at Hochow, the metropolis of Muhammadanism in N. W. China. He was a man of great power and cruelty, and the leading *military* Muslim in the province. During his later years, he was friendly in his relations to both the "old" and "new" sects of Islam (in China), and managed to keep the peace. Now there is no one to take his place, so we are wondering what is going to happen in the near future. The two leading Muslims in the province now are Ma Shan-ren, ("Shan-rén" is not a name but a title literally meaning good man; this man has even been called Ma Sheng-ren = holy man or sage, which is the title of Muhammad!) who is the chief religious leader, and Ma Fu-siang, the leading military official.

Although not directly resulting from the death of Ma An-liang, there has been and is considerable disturbance in Muslim circles.

A well-known General, who belongs to the "new" sect, allowed a number of his soldiers to attack and loot the Tibetan monastery at Labrang—two days' journey S. W. from Hochow. Missionaries working among Tibetans are hoping to take advantage of the disturbance that has resulted to bring the Gospel in a more satisfactory way to Tibetans in that long-closed place! The affair itself has made a big stir in Muslim and Tibetan circles.

Just now there is a disagreement between the "old" and the "new" sects of Muslims throughout the province. It has been my privilege to talk with a missionary who has lately visited Hochow, and he says that Muslims are listening in an extraordinary way to the Gospel, on account of this quarrel among themselves. On one occasion some who had been listening to a gospel address were heard conversing about what they had just heard. One of them said, "If it were not for those *pigs* who are our leaders, we would join the Christians." A Kansu Muslim would usually consider it a sin to use

the word "pig," so you can imagine that these men must have felt pretty strongly to abuse their leaders by such a term! Some of the "Tunghsiang Hueihuei" (Muslims of Mongol stock living east of Hochow) have expressed a desire for a Christian mission to be opened among them. There are political and sectarian reasons, no doubt. But there is a willingness to listen to the Gospel that there was not before. I have myself been invited to visit a district inhabited by Salars—Turki Muslims—west of Hochow, by several of the natives.

It is hoped to start some special work for Muslims in Hochow and that district this autumn, both medical and evangelistic. I would ask for prayer for those of us who hope to go. The time is full of promise, and there is no less danger than in the starting of any work, perhaps more than usual."

### AFGHANISTAN.

The following cutting from *The Pioneer* of May 25th has been sent us:—"...Afghanistan is now the only country where men are prevented by means of the sword from expressing their religious beliefs, and, as your Honour must be aware, two of our men were murdered at Cabul for this very reason, and many have been punished with imprisonment. Perhaps the day of reckoning has drawn near, and the time has come when tyranny should disappear...We believe that religious freedom must accompany the British people wherever they go, and hope that whatever may be the decision as to the future fate of Afghanistan due provision will be made to establish complete religious freedom in the land. Therefore...because we see that as a result of this war...an opening will be made for the spread of the truth, we pray that God may...grant victory to the British Government." The foregoing is part of a letter sent by Mr. M. B. Mahmud Ahmad of Qadian to H. E. The Lieut. Governor of the Panjab.

### LAHERIA SERAI.

**Muhammadan Girls' School.**—It is with great difficulty this school has been run, for there has been much opposition. Certain children would cease to come for a day or two, and, on enquiring the reason, I would be told that in the mosque on the previous Friday the maulvie had forbidden the parents to send their girls to us.. There is another difficulty. The parents are very poor, most of them being of the weaver class, and they often want the children for work in the homes. However, some have come through quite nicely, and can now read and write well. We have had good reports both times the school was inspected...At the close of last year there was a pathetic incident. One of the bigger girls was taken ill with influenza. She heard that

an examination was to take place, and her great regret was that she could not be present. The day I called, her mother and grandmother told me how frequently she kept mentioning this, and she was anxious too to get her Christmas prize. . . . . The next day when I went to school the teacher met me with a very sad face and said that the little girl had passed away. Later on we heard news that gladdened us. Before she died she had asked a relative, our eldest pupil, to repeat the verses of Scripture which they learnt at school. She repeated the first verse on the sheet, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." As soon as this was said the little one went home. We have no doubt she went to Him Whose Name she last heard on earth. . . . . As members of the M. M. L. have prayed for this school, I thought you might be interested to hear about this child, and others too may be encouraged to go on praying and working.

B. S. BREARLEY, Z. B. & M. M.

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### HYDERABAD, DECCAN.

"The Osmania University College, Hyderabad (Deccan) was opened on Thursday (i.e., Aug. 28th.) Several of the State officials were present, and Moulvi Abdur Rahman Khan, Sadr-us-Sadr (Vice Chancellor) of the University delivered the inaugural address in Urdu, and Mr. A. Hydari read His Exalted Highness' *Farman* wishing the University prosperity.

*Times of India*, 3-9-19.

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### SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER.

1. Mr. Botham asks for prayer for the new situation in the province of Kansu, China, and especially for divine help and blessing on the new effort which is about to be made in that province. *See Notes.*

2. Miss Brearley asks for special prayer for the school for Muhammaçan Girls at Laheria Serai, Behar. *See Notes.*

3. Miss Davidson of Peshawar asks for prayer for Afghanistan. She says, 'the war is over now, and the country no nearer being opened. But, as you know, there is to be another conference in February, and who knows what it may mean for that country? Prayer does make a difference, even in politics, and the hearts of kings are in His Hand.' The quotation from *The Pioneer* speaks of 'the spread of the truth.' That, in a sense

somewhat different from that intended, is what we are looking and praying for. Let us pray earnestly at this time for this, putting a big capital letter to TRUTH. See Notes.

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**NEW MEMBERS.**

Trygstad, Rev. G. M. Lutheran United M. Fancheng, Hupeh,  
China.  
Jones, Miss E. F. Amer. Free Meth. M. Kihsien, Honan.  
China.  
Thompson, Capt. W. J. C. M. S. London (but going back to  
Persia next year).

*The Annual Subscription to the League is Rs. 2-8-0 (about 4/3 English) News and requests for Prayer should be sent as early in the month as possible to the Hon. Secretary :*

**Rev. H. J. Lane Smith,**

*Church Mission House,*

*Girgaum,*

*Bombay.*