

III.

So far as I know, there has been no real persecution of converts in Morocco, in modern times ; for the simple reason that there have been no converts, publicly known as such. During the past twenty-five years we have at different times heard reports of individuals being persecuted, but at no time have such reports been verified. We believe that before the advent of French rule, any person who professed the Christian faith would have suffered the extreme penalty of Mohammedan law. Now that religious liberty is practically assured, we are confident that those who have hitherto been converts secretly, will soon be able quietly to confess before others the Christian faith. This will undoubtedly bring persecution, but it is difficult, at this stage, to say whether it will be severe enough to necessitate such converts getting financial help.

Although French rule has only obtained for little over a year, a great religious change is already apparent. During the recent month of Ramadan, many abstained from fasting, and no attempt was made to punish such unorthodox Moslems. In previous years they would have been severely flogged. In conversation with an official, who is in charge of a wide district, we were assured that he would not allow anyone to be punished for eating in Ramadan, unless those eating purposely did so to provoke trouble. We believe this official's views would be upheld by other officials all over the land.

Recently a young Shareef, in the employ of a Frenchman, openly declared in the presence of the Kadi, that he was not a Moslem, and refused to submit to that official's judgment. While there was no question of conversion in this instance, the ease with which the individual was able to defy the Kadi, because he was in the employment of a European, suggests the likelihood of converts being protected from severe persecution by the interference of the ruling power.

Under the new *régime*, it seems to us that financial help to converts can only be necessary when such a thing as wholesale boycotting takes place. Even then it might be possible to help the convert to obtain employment with some European. Should Moslems still refuse to sell him the necessaries of life, he could easily get them from other sources. We are firmly of the opinion that no effort should be spared to maintain his independence. With the backing of the civil law, we think that only on very rare occasions would such efforts fail. But if a convert is wholly unable to earn his living, because of the attitude of Moslems around him, we as firmly believe it is the duty of those who may have been instrumental in leading him into the light, to stand by him, and help him to the simple necessaries of life. If the convert has been in a position of affluence, his new-found faith will enable him to dispense with many of the comforts he previously enjoyed. But while helping him in this way, no effort should be lost of as soon as possible restoring him to a position of independence. Otherwise, the sturdiness of his Christian character may be sadly impaired.

Turning to the question of assisting women converts, our difficulties are both more numerous and more serious. Only those who know the social life of Moslems can fully appreciate these difficulties. The changes resulting from the new *régime* will not immediately affect home-life for the married woman. In the seclusion of her home, and under the eye of a fanatic husband, how is help to reach her? Even though the ruling power were eager to facilitate such help, it will not lightly dare to ignore the rigid hareem laws. And so the convert in the home might die of starvation, and no help be possible. If the convert be a single woman, attempts to help her to get self-supporting employment are much more difficult than in the case of a man. Even though a genuine convert, it would be courting her downfall to introduce her to a position, in which the ordinary European woman might be quite safe. We shall be glad to learn from other writers how this difficulty has been faced and overcome in lands that have been longer under religious liberty.

As to the question of employing a convert in spiritual work at the outset of his Christian career, we feel sure common sense is sufficient to forbid such a proposal. If the Holy Spirit should lead a young convert to begin such work spontaneously, then we can rest assured that all will be well. He Who leads him into the work will lead him on in it. But for a missionary to ask a young convert from Islam to accept such a position, would be sadly at variance with the inspired advice concerning the "Novice." While our greatest hope of progress lies in the line of native preaching to native, we deprecate the thought of employing them to do so at the outset of their new life. If a convert is eager to preach, or scatter the written Word, let him do so, by all means, but let him earn his own living in his own way while doing so. In this way the genuineness of his desire will be vindicated, his abilities for such work be manifested, and the question of employing him later on be much more easily decided.

Instead of employing young converts in spiritual work immediately, we feel sure that missionaries of long experience will covet every possible opportunity of grounding them in the Word of God. They will feel that probably the grandest part of their life-work will be in helping to prepare native preachers. Such work cannot be undertaken too early, nor too thoroughly done. The outlook in Mohammedan lands has become much more hopeful owing to recent political changes, and if the right native preachers are forthcoming, who can tell what great and glorious spiritual changes may soon be witnessed ?

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