

## LITERATURE FOR TURKISH MOSLEMS

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One must be content with an approximate answer to the question of the number who, if they could read, would use the Osmanlı Turkish. I should put the number before the War at ten million. This includes Albanians and other European Moslems and at least a million Christians.

My estimate of the number of literates is higher than that generally given. Ten per cent I believe a moderate estimate. Fifty years ago, in Marsovan, Mrs. Herrick received calls from hundreds of Turkish women, and was surprised to find so many of them able to read and eager to receive copies of selected scripture texts printed in very large type on single sheets, 16 x 12 inches.

Coming to a second and most important question, viz., the Christian literature actually available for Moslems in Turkey, I face a real embarrassment. With the exception of two volumes by Dr. Pfander and one each by Dr. Koelle and Rev. R. H. Weakley and a scientific volume by Dr. H. O. Dwight the list is that of books prepared by me and issued between the years 1865 and 1911. Since the last date several little books of homilies have been issued. A larger number of my books in Turkish in the Armenian character have been issued and some of these have indirectly received the attention of Turks. It is impossible for me to tell what has been done and to indicate the principles, the aims, also the governmental limitations under which the work has been done, more clearly than by giving the list of my books, with explanations relative to their preparation and issue.

Before this is done, special attention is invited to the latest translation of the Bible into Turkish and the record of the circulation of Scripture in that language the last forty years.

The work of the Committee appointed by the two

great Bible societies to newly translate and prepare for circulation the Bible in Turkish, both in Osmanli and Armenian characters (subsequently in Greek characters also) began in June, 1873 and ended May 28th, 1878. Subsequent revisions in the interest of simplicity of language and unification of texts took three more years of work of the present writer, the sole survivor of the twelve men, seven of them natives of the country, who had a share, greater or less, in the translation and revision.

The Bible societies have printed 15,000 copies of the Bible in Osmanli Turkish; about three times that number of copies of the New Testament and at least 100,000 copies of Bible "portions." These portions have been the four Gospels, printed separately, the Psalms and the books of Job and Proverbs, the latter becoming especially popular with the Turks. A conservative statement of the circulation of Scripture among Turks and other Turkish speaking Moslems based on official reports, would give an average of 4000 volumes a year for the forty years, at least 100,000 of the 160,000 being sold to the readers. One thing is certain—speaking generally and emphatically—the knowledge that living Moslems in Turkey have gained of Christian literature has been gained chiefly from the reading of the Christian sacred Scriptures.

Turning now to efforts that have been made by the Publication Department of the American Missions in Turkey to form, upon the basis of the Bible, the beginning of a general Christian literature for Turks we give the following details.

In the year 1865 there were issued by the Constantinople Mission Press:

1. "A Commentary on Matthew and Mark" (of 400 pages) which had very limited sale. The part covering the Sermon on the Mount was circulated *gratis* somewhat widely.

2. The same year a first book for teaching children was issued (63 pages), and in the course of ten years many editions were issued (6300 copies in all). The

book became the model for many useful books prepared by Turks.

3. In 1868 a little book of 110 pages on "The Belief and Worship of Protestants" was issued. This book was enlarged and issued in 1885 a book of 224 pages.

4. A sketch of the Life of Lincoln (40 pp.) was issued in 1872 and widely circulated.

5. A booklet, "Thoughts on Education," (32 pp.) was printed for me by Tewfik abd ul Zia in 1883.

6. In 1885 "Natural Theology" (220 pp.) was printed and had a considerable sale.

After 1885 until 1908 it was impossible to print Christian literature in Osmanli Turkish.

7. A book on "Christian Manliness," pretty thoroughly emasculated of everything distinctively Christian and with little "manliness," passed the censors and was printed in 1898 over the protest of one of them that "the book smells of Christianity all through."

8 & 9. During this period (1895-1908) a Physical Geography and an Astronomy were published.

10. In 1909 the hymn book of more than 300 hymns, previously circulating in Turkish in the Armenian character, was issued in Osmanli.

11 and 12. Booklets on Matthew 5, 6, 7 and on I Corinthians 13 were issued.

13. "The Dawn of Liberty" (80 pp.) was published in 1910.

14. "The Unique Person of Jesus Christ and His Relation to Mankind" (273 pp.) was my last work issued in 1911. It was an effort to present our Lord Jesus Christ to Moslems in a way to win their attention. Such a book could not have been issued before 1908.

On the greater problem of disiderata and present urgent needs I think we should expect and prepare for greatly increased opportunities for direct Christian work for Moslems using the Osmanli Turkish in the very near future. The Press will have two functions to meet (a) To foster the great educational movement (b) To issue and circulate evangelistic literature in large volume.

For schools and for Sunday schools a large amount of literature will be required and will be prepared as fast as men and funds are ready for the work.

Uncontroversial evangelistic literature, translated and adapted, should be issued in considerable variety. Narratives and stories should find place. One little tract which I translated and issued in 1910 is a good model. The title of the tract was "The Man Who Died for Me." Short biographical sketches will be found popular and useful.

There is no doubt that the door will soon be thrown wide open for work on this line far beyond our present readiness to enter it.

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