

METHODS OF EVANGELISM AMONG CHINESE MOSLEMS

It is hardly to be wondered at that, during the greater part of the first century of missionary labour in China, the Moslem population was, to a large extent, overlooked. The number of Mohammedans in the country can hardly exceed two and one-half per cent of the total population, and of these by far the larger proportion live in the western provinces: Yunnan, Kansu and Sinkiang. But during the early years there were forces at work that have accumulated to produce the interest in the problem of their evangelization that is now beginning to show itself in missionary circles.

The presence of Mohammedans in China was noted in books written by early missionaries, some of whom seem to have come into contact with them in conversation in guest rooms and mosques. Later on, as missionaries pressed on westwards into Kansu and Yunnan, they found a Moslem population which, while it might be neglected, could hardly be overlooked. Moslem influence was felt throughout the provinces. When Mr. Horobin, of the China Inland Mission, came to a district in the north of Kansu, he was so keenly impressed by the need for special workers that he wrote to Syria asking that a Christian converted from Islam might come as a missionary to Chinese Moslems. This was nearly thirty years ago. Similar appeals have gone out since, to India and to Egypt, but though Moslems from Persia, Afghanistan, and India bring Moslem literature across the deserts and mountains of Central Asia to the Moslems of China, no one who has himself been saved from the shackles of Islam has yet come with the glad tidings of freedom. The day of opportunity is now; for when Christianity and Islam really come to grips in China—which they have

not done hitherto—there will perhaps be closed doors to be opened instead of the doors that now stand flung wide open, but would almost seem to be beginning to creak on their hinges.

Thirty years ago there were missionaries in Kansu who took an active interest in Moslems. Mr. G. W. Hunter (now in Urumchi), lived in the largest Moslem centre of the province for a year or more, and learned some Arabic. He also made wide itinerations in the course of which he passed through Moslem districts. Mr. H. F. Ridley was working on their behalf as well as for Chinese, Tibetans, and aborigines. When the Mohammedan rebellion broke out in 1895, he was able to render aid to a number of Moslem wounded and thus to establish a contact that has been maintained until the present time. This very rebellion served to create a wider interest in Chinese Mohammedans than had existed previously.

Missionaries in various parts of the country have taken an interest in them. Articles about their doctrines and customs have appeared in the *Chinese Recorder* and papers have been read at various conferences on the same subjects. No doubt Mr. Marshall Broomhall's book, "Islam in China," did much to arouse Christians to a sense of responsibility in regard to this people. Recently translations of various Moslem pamphlets have appeared in *THE MOSLEM WORLD* and the *Chinese Recorder*. So interest has increased.

Meanwhile Mr. F. H. Rhodes, working in Yunnan, had done special work for those found there. After some years in the province, his health broke down; but this proved to be the opening of a gate into a larger field of service. For from that time, although living away from them, he has been working for Moslems throughout all China, and missionaries in every part of the country have come to look to him for suitable literature, and for advice, sympathy, and prayer.

Dr. Zwemer's visit in 1917 was of the utmost value in bringing interest to a head. A special committee to

organize work for Moslems was formed to act in conjunction with the China Continuation Committee, with Mr. C. L. Ogilvie as its secretary. (His sudden death has grieved the missionary body throughout China.) This committee is now doing invaluable work in the production of special literature.

So the way is being prepared for the Messengers of the Cross to advance with better equipment than ever before.

We can now turn our attention to the methods of evangelism that are actually in use with a view to the salvation of Chinese Moslems.

1. DIRECT EVANGELISM. In East and Central China, where communities are usually small—consisting of only a few hundreds or even tens of families—special preaching is obviously difficult or impossible. But it has usually been found that a missionary is well received in the mosques, and a considerable amount of work (taken in the aggregate) has been done by visiting them. This is what Mr. Ogilvie frequently did in Peking. The fact that Chinese Moslems are generally very much interested in theology, makes an interesting conversation almost certain on such visits. Occasionally one is made to feel that one's presence is considered objectionable, and in one instance, quite recently, a missionary was hustled from a mosque. But this is the exception at present. No one can foretell what the attitude will be when the strength of Christianity and its vital opposition to Mohammedanism are fully realized.

In China the guest room has often proved a valuable medium for missionary work, and in the case of work among Moslems this is especially the case. With Arabic and Chinese Bibles and a good supply of suitable literature in both languages, also a Koran, much can be done. This kind of work has been done in several parts of China. It appears to be necessary to entertain Moslem guests apart from Chinese; otherwise one cannot get beyond surface etiquette. Reading rooms for Mohammedans have been opened in some places.

A method that has proved of real value in China, has been the sending of suitable literature by post to mosques and so forth. That this method has already had its effects may be judged from the following sentences from the preliminary announcement of a book to be published by Moslems in Tientsin:

"Since the entry of the various religions into our country, we have not had the calamity of religious controversy; for each has followed its own laws, and has not attacked the others. But during recent years the Jesus people have levelled all kinds of criticisms at our religion, even going so far as to send letters to each mosque, trying to get up arguments. . . ."

As the distances to be traversed, especially in Sinkiang and Kansu, mean that visits can, at present, only be paid to most centres at long intervals, if at all, it will be readily understood that the post office has great possibilities as an aid to missionary work in those districts. Other advantages of this method will suggest themselves to all who have had experience among Moslems.

In larger centres more definite preaching is possible. In Yunnan a preaching shop was opened on certain days in a Moslem quarter, when there was preaching and book-selling especially for Mohammedans. Coming to Kansu and Sinkiang: the latter province should rightly be called "far away," and the term is constantly applied, with less reason, to Kansu. In one large Moslem centre, it is hoped to secure premises and fit them up for medical and evangelistic work within a few years. But what is urgently needed in these two provinces at present, is itineration to prepare the ground for more settled work, and to bring the Gospel to those who will otherwise not hear it for years to come. A short account of a trip taken by Dr. King, of the Borden Memorial Hospital, Lanchow, and the writer, may serve to illustrate the kind of work done. Journeys in Sinkiang, made by Messrs. Hunter, Mather, and others are somewhat similar, but on a much larger scale and under far more trying circumstances.

The itineration (including a stay of a fortnight) at Hochow lasted a month, from late January to late February of this year. We rode on horseback (one horse being a mule!) and had a donkey to carry extra clothing, books, an acetylene lamp, etc. (The lamp is mentioned as being a bit of a method in itself. It has been found that the crowd collecting to see a lantern show is sometimes restive and usually talkative. A plain acetylene light gathers an audience that is generally quiet and attentive.) On the first and second days, we passed westward from Lanchow, capital of Kansu, through country inhabited chiefly by Chinese and aborigines, giving away tracts in the villages and towns through which we passed. When we came to a Moslem food-shop or met a Moslem traveler, we gave away special tracts. On the third day, we came through country that has seldom or never been traversed by a Protestant missionary, to a market town which, with the surrounding country, is largely peopled by Moslems (two-thirds of the population are Mohammedans). Here we stayed a whole day. After visiting one of the mosques, we preached on the street, and sold a number of books. The new Arabic-Chinese diglot of Matthew was very popular. For the evening, we announced that there would be preaching when the acetylene lamps would be lighted. As soon as it began to get dark, our inn was fairly besieged; little boys climbed on the roof and a crowd banged at the front door. For the sake of the innkeeper, we preached on the street and, in spite of the cold, had a good audience all the time. The next day's journey took us mostly through aborigine country, but in the evening we crossed the ice on the Yellow River and were in the district inhabited by Salars—a tribe of immigrants from somewhere round Samarkand who have been in Western Kansu for several hundreds of years. We found them to be poor and ignorant, so that our tracts were of little avail. Those from Kashgar did not seem to be understood, although the Salars' own language is a kind of Turki. Preaching is what is needed and we were

unable to stay in the district. So all we could do was to leave some Arabic literature with various *Ahungs* (Mullahs). These people are far too untouched by the Gospel to have much idea of opposition to it yet. The next day's journey brought us through mountainous country inhabited entirely by Salars, in which every village and hamlet seemed to have its mosque, to the little border town of Hsunhwa which is in the centre of the Salar country. Its population consists of about sixty per cent Chinese and forty per cent Mohammedans, so we received a number of Moslem guests, including several Salars in our inn, preached on the street, and sold and distributed literature. Returning eastward we passed through country inhabited for the first half day by Salars, further on by Tibetans, and finally by Chinese and "Chinese Moslems," over a pass of some 13,000 feet, arriving in Hochow on the third day. This is the largest and most important Moslem centre in Kansu. We rented rooms in an inn in the suburb, which is the Moslem part, and is far busier than the city itself. The city is almost entirely Chinese. The doctor saw patients during the day, and performed several operations. In the evenings we gave lectures on the Scriptures, the "Six Great Prophets" (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, JESUS), and two medical lectures—eleven in all. It was necessary, on account of the smallness of our quarters, to issue tickets for these lectures. On the second evening we noticed several *Ahungs* listening keenly. They wanted to argue. But we decided against it. The subject of the third evening was a ticklish one—"The Scriptures"—and on the fourth evening our little room (a disused shop at the end of the inn-yard) was crammed, and there was a big crowd at the door demanding to come in. They had the inn doors off their sockets three times before we managed to persuade them to go home. Those in the room had evidently come prepared to get up a disturbance; the lecture ended in a storm, and discussion was demanded. Then whatever the Moslem gentleman who represented their side said, was

loudly cheered and whatever the Christian might say, he was jeered at and finally howled down. The rumor of the affair came to the ears of the district magistrate, and he sent round to beg us not to proceed with the lectures. The police and the highest Moslem official also seem to have given orders to their underlings not to allow the foreigners to be molested. It so happened that the next lecture was to be a medical one, so there would be no likelihood of argument. We finally decided that it must be given as promised, but it was delivered on the street, so that at least the innkeeper's premises would be safe! The evening passed off quietly, so the magistrate seemed less nervous. (It is no easy thing to be a Chinese magistrate in a Moslem centre like Hochow. So we were able to continue the lectures on the street. Everything turned out well; our lamp did not blow out and in spite of snow on a couple of evenings we had larger audiences than we could possibly have had in the inn. The only untoward incident was the withdrawal of some premises that had been rented for missionary work.

Where the Moslem communities are small, it would perhaps be hardly fair in the face of chronic shortage of workers and immense opportunities in general missionary work, to expect missionaries to give whole time to work among them. A general knowledge of Mohammedanism, an open ear for terms, and sympathetic patience would equip any missionary to visit mosques, entertain Moslem guests and distribute special literature, without much interfering with his ordinary work. And this is how work has been done in most instances so far. But when one comes to the northwestern and southwestern provinces, one cannot but feel it to be imperative, if this work is to be done properly, that several *missionaries be set aside specially* for it. In Sian, the capital of the province of Shensi, where there is a fairly large Moslem community, Mrs. Thor, of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, erected premises on the edge of the Mohammedan quarters intending to give her life to work there.

But her Lord had some higher service for her, and took her away almost before her work commenced. In Kansu there are now four missionaries actively interested, and two whose aim it is to give whole time to the evangelization of Moslems. The work is in its beginnings; there is much to be learned, and there is a distressing shortage of workers to carry on the ordinary work. But in not too long a time, it will surely be possible to get more definitely on to the job.

2. MEDICAL WORK. In reference to this method one is unable to speak of any province but Kansu. In other provinces there have been Moslem patients treated in mission hospitals, but no definite information to hand. In Lanchow there is a hospital, erected in memory of William Borden. As it is the only one in the province with a fully trained medical staff, it will be realized that it is impossible to limit it to the treatment of Moslem patients. But special arrangements are made for such. There is a guest room fitted for their reception, and a special block of buildings for inpatients, which is kept "clean." No lard or anything else "unclean" is used.

In a province like Kansu, itinerant medical work has an important place, and much has been done. Medicine has been dispensed and operations performed in various places where there is a Moslem population. In such work it has been found advisable to make a stay of at least a month if at all possible, in the centre visited. Moslems have proved more willing to accept surgical treatment than have Chinese.

Among the Salars and in the Hochow District, there are a number of lepers, many or most of whom are Mohammedans or Tibetans. A general offer has been made when opportunity has offered, to house such in the Borden Hospital.

In turning from this subject, one might add that, but for the medical work done, such a stay as that, described above, in Hochow would almost certainly have been exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

3. EDUCATIONAL WORK. It can hardly be said that there is any educational work done by missionaries with a special view to reaching Chinese Moslems, unless it be in Kashgar. But in Shantung, Szechuan and other provinces there are some Moslem children who attend mission schools. Even in one centre in one of those provinces in which Moslem influence is stronger, there is one Moslem boy in a Christian school. This may seem hardly worthy of mention. But in those provinces where the number of ex-Moslem Christians could be counted on the fingers of one hand, every step counts for something.

4. LITERATURE. When Mr. Marshall Broomhall wrote "Islam in China" he could only hear of three Christian tracts specially for Chinese Moslems. We are now far better equipped in this direction. There are fourteen booklets, eleven parable stories, several tracts and some Scripture portions in Chinese; some of these use a number of Chinese-Moslem terms. There are also, besides the Arabic Scriptures, an Arabic Chinese diglot of Matthew; Genesis, First Samuel, the Four Gospels and Bible History in Turki; and Mark in Qazaq-Turki. In Turki there are also two hymnbooks, two booklets, six tracts, and three educational books, besides three books to assist in the learning of the Turki language.

The preparation of literature for Chinese Moslems is a distinct problem. Until the present time the percentage of illiteracy among them has been very high. Most Moslem boys (I speak with certainty for Kansu only) learn the Arabic alphabet, but very few gain sufficient knowledge of the language to be of any practical value. Now special schools are being opened on all hands for the teaching of Chinese Moslems, but this is a very recent development. Beyond this problem of illiteracy, there lies a further one. As soon as one speaks to Moslems of religious subjects, one finds that there is a large vocabulary of terms, often very different from those decided upon by the Christian Church. These are of two kinds: Expressions coined or adopted from ordinary Chinese,

and more or less Chinese-ized Arabic and Persian words. The Committee on Work for Moslems under the China Continuation Committee has issued a list of a number of terms used in books by Moslems. But there are many expressions used by *Ahungs* in their "explanations" of the Koran—expressions of both the kinds noted above—that are very generally used by Moslems, that we have not yet got hold of. However, almost each book that has been published has had a better selection of Moslem terms than its predecessors, and we can look forward to the time when there will be books essentially and vitally Christian and yet thoroughly understood by and appealing to Chinese Moslems.

Nearly all this literature consists of translations. But there are a few original booklets, and we hope for more, that will more exactly meet the needs of Chinese Moslems, than even the present translations—excellent and highly appreciated by those in touch with Moslems as they are.

Best of all literature is the Bible; to it we look as our great foundation rock which stands out in splendid contrast to the superficial repetitions of the Koran.

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