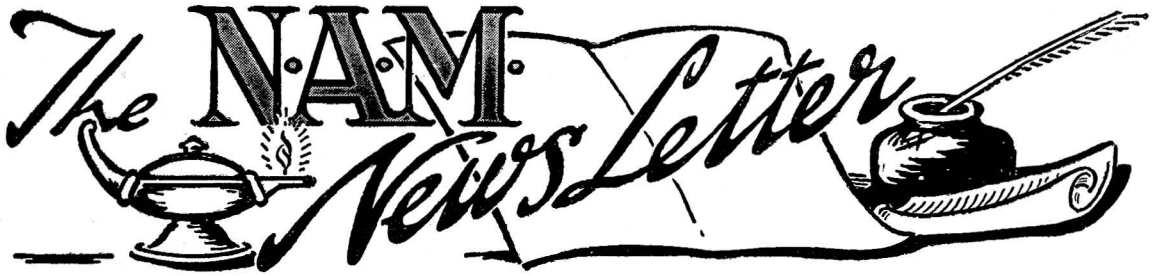


Continuing "NORTH AFRICA"

The N.A.M. News Letter



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ARCH OF MARCUS AURELIUS, TRIPOLI, LIBYA.

The Evangelization of Libya

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY TO YEFREN FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.

By DR. J. A. LILEY, M.C.

Yefren is situated in the Jebel Nefusa hills of Tripolitania. It is seventy-six miles from Tripoli via Zawia and ninety-six via Garian. The Jebel Nefusa range runs from Misurata on the Eastern coast of Tripolitania and in a south-easterly direction to the Tunisian frontier some 100 miles from the Mediterranean. The title "First Missionary Journey to Yefren" was chosen because such

journeys were impossible during the Turkish and Italian domination of Libya. Mr. Dugald Campbell, in association with the National Bible Society of Scotland, went from Tripoli to Murzuk in the Fezzan about 1930 by camel caravan, and distributed Scriptures en route; but he would have crossed the Jebel Nefusa range at a different point. My wife and I spent a summer vacation at Yefren

in 1948, but there was not the same missionary objective as upon this recent occasion. We may well imagine, therefore, that the last evangelistic visit to Yefren must have been by some bishop (in the New Testament sense) at a time prior to the Moslem invasion of the seventh century A.D.

The reason for my own journey was the reception of a letter from a store-keeper at Yefren, stating that he and his wife "wished to be converted to the evangelical religion," and wanted to know what rites would be required. It was evident that they were not well acquainted with the Scriptures, but it was felt that such an enquiry ought to be followed up.

Yefren is a veritable eagle's nest 2,500 feet above sea level and has a fine view over the Gefara plain towards Tunisia. The Romans supplied it with water from springs about three miles away and still known as Ain Rumia. The surrounding hills abound with olive trees, but it was richer still prior to the Moslem invasion and consequent misrule. Only five Italian families now remain in the district.

My recent journey was made in a lorry, furnished with benches (and run by an Arab transport company), which serves as a public bus thrice weekly. It left Tripoli at 10 a.m. on June 3rd filled with a motley collection of some thirty Arab-Berber men and women travelling back from the city with well-filled panniers under the seats. I was the only "Roumi," as they call the Europeans. That naturally led to much questioning. I found that there were three or four readers in the company and my answer to their questions was to offer them an Arabic Gospel. All, however, heard the spoken message—met, alas, by the usual quotation of the Koranic verse: "They did not crucify Him, nor did they kill Him, but one like unto Him." After a while all the Gospels were returned to me, no one being willing to pay the price of twopence-halfpenny.

The route was through Zawia, a market town with one of the few secondary schools for Arab boys in Tripolitania. Here we stayed for half an hour, and some left the bus whilst others took the vacant places. Among them were some school lads going to their mountain homes for the week-end. This gave a fresh opportunity for offering the Gospels, but again there was no sale. However, I felt led to give one away and next day found it was evidently the Lord's leading, for the recipient turned out to be the son of my host's chief assistant, one of the leading Arabs of the district. He told me he had been reading the book given to his son on the bus. May we not pray that even this one copy of God's Word shall bring fruit to His glory?

On our arrival at Yefren my host was already on the square to greet me, and we were soon at his cottage close by, where his young wife was awaiting us with the usual cup of coffee. After the customary greeting and enquiries I got to "business" with a query as to the origin of their desire for Scriptural instruction. The wife's parents have a farm near Garian and the young couple met in the course of business visits to it. During the war she had been a refugee in Sicily in a town where there was a Baptist Church. She made the acquaintance of some of its members, who spoke to her of the idolatrous practices of the Roman Church. What particularly inclined her to accept their views was the recollection that she had bought an image of Jesus, but had been

told it would possess no spiritual value until she had paid an additional five shillings for the priest to bless it!

Her fiancé also being disgusted with Romish practices, they had only a civil marriage a year ago in Tripoli. The man knew of the Mission house, having lived near the Suk el Harrara (the street in which it is situated) in his youth. They are expecting their first-born in September or October and wanted to know what we could do for a Christian baptism of the babe as, according to the Roman Church, they are living in sin!

I explained to them that, in my view, until there is definite rejection of Christ, babes are covered by the precious blood of Christ, but that we do ask parents to present their children to the Lord in order to receive His blessing and the prayers of the Church. I explained, too, that New Testament baptism is on confession of faith, proved by the story of the Ethiopian eunuch and that of Cornelius, on whom came the Holy Ghost before baptism.

After the preliminary talk my host and I went to call on the Police Superintendent, whom I had met in 1948. We were received most kindly and there ensued a long talk on the Berber tribes which inhabit the western half of the Jebel Nefusa and who are linked to the Twareg of the Sahara. The chief centre for this link is Giado, a lovely hill village, thirty miles west of Yefren, and, according to the Superintendent, in a unique position for evangelising some 30,000 Berbers, besides being an outpost for regions beyond. If some warm-hearted young missionary could hear this call, one of the two or three deserted ex-Italian Government houses could be obtained and repaired at comparatively small cost, while the British administer the country. After that, what will be the outcome?

There are remains of Christian churches in several places in this area, and the Berbers openly say: "It **was** a church, now it is a mosque." Officials are unanimous in saying that the Berbers (who correspond in their Berber language, but write it in Arabic characters) are far more intelligent than the average Arab. There is, therefore, much speculation as to the future status of the Berbers when the Libyan administration comes into being. The racial rivalry of the centuries has never died out. It flared up at the time of the Italian occupation in 1911-1912 and during the subsequent first World War. The Berbers favoured the Italians and helped them to seize the mountains. This greatly incensed the Arab tribes around Garian, who were surrounded by the encircling movement. When the Italian troops were withdrawn in 1915-1916 the Arabs had their revenge, but the Berbers came into their own again when the Italians re-occupied the mountains in 1922.

I had sent by post to my host and his wife two Italian Testaments, but I brought with me two Italian Bibles. How moving it was to see the wife handle with great tenderness a Bible which she had never before possessed for herself!

The evening was spent in more Bible study, including such Old Testament passages as Genesis 3 and Isaiah 53. I spent the night at the home of the Superintendent of the Electricity Works, another seeker after the Truth. The next day, Sunday, further visits were paid to officials and others and Arabic Scriptures were given to leading

members of the official staff. Among the people met were two men from Tripoli, returning that evening, who kindly offered me a place in their car. We left at 5.30 p.m. and three hours later I reached home.

Thus ended a memorable experience, with an urgent request to revisit Yefren later on. Meanwhile we can pray for the Holy Spirit's enlightenment as the Italian Bibles and Arabic portions left behind in the mountain village are read.

Wedding of Dr. Farnham St. John and Dr. Janet Thompson



Dr. & Mrs. Farnham St. John

It is with special pleasure that we report the marriage, at Emmanuel Church, Northwood, Middlesex, on August 26th, of Dr. Farnham St. John and Dr. Janet Thompson, daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. A. G. Thompson, former missionaries of the C.I.M. in Western China.

"Dr. Janet" was educated at Clarendon School, studied medicine at Edinburgh University from 1943 to 1949, worked subsequently with the Edinburgh Medical Mission, and was filling the post of House Surgeon at Chase Farm Hospital, Enfield, when she applied as a missionary candidate to the N.A.M.

We are naturally delighted that Dr. Farnham is taking back with him to the Tulloch Memorial Hospital one who is so admirably qualified to be his partner in a sphere of Christian service where it is particularly true that "two are better than one." May the rich blessing of the Lord be upon their every future step and undertaking!

Congratulations

During Dr. Farnham St. John's period in the homeland on furlough, his place at the Tangier Hospital has been taken, as friends will remem-

ber, by his younger brother, Dr. John St. John, who, with his wife, has been living on the Mission compound.

We congratulate them most heartily upon the birth of their daughter, Hazel Ruth, who arrived on July 17th. Both mother and little one are making splendid progress.

The Cost of Confession

Many and varied are the surprises yielded by the "Bethesda" letter box. The seasonal greeting card, with its sincere scribbled message from Sunday School scholar or Bible Class member, is among the pleasant variety. Recently, however, a note read: ". . . Jesus Christ is in the grave—his blood has flowed—we spit upon him." You are undoubtedly as shocked as we are, but we feel you should share this with us; it will enable you to pray more intelligently. You see, this is not merely an expression of the never-changing fanatical attitude of the Jews among whom we live—it was signed by "the Jewish boys," boys of between eight and thirteen years of age, most, if not all of whom, have passed through or still attend our Sunday School.

This was the reaction to the Baptism of a Jewish young lady at "Bethesda" on Whit Sunday. She came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as her own personal Saviour and Messiah some years ago under the ministry of the Church Mission to the Jews. Her baptism had been arranged to take place on Easter Sunday, but owing to agitation caused by the Rabbis, she was beaten, her life was threatened and she was locked in her home in order to prevent her attendance—and this after years of persecution. Thank God, all attempts to make her renounce her faith, under all kinds of threats, failed. Enquiry revealed that her freedom was assured by Tunisian law, in face of which the cruel Rabbinic law is powerless. Faced with these facts, her people disowned her and ejected her from home minus her belongings. (A few days ago her mother asked her to return home, and this she has done on the condition that she enjoys complete freedom of belief.) It was indeed a day of victory when, on Whit Sunday, our brethren Fife and Stalley, of the N.A.M. Home Council, administered the Word, and Rev. I. Dunbar, of the C.M.J., and I baptised our sister and one of the young men of the Assembly.

The baptism was announced in every Jewish Synagogue in the town and the Rabbis tried to discourage parents from letting their children come under Evangelical influence. Feeling ran high in the Jewish homes around here and our

Bible Class girls were forbidden to come, but, thank God, some have since returned. M——'s baptism has had a profound effect upon them and life is becoming more difficult for those whose light is not hidden. The boys in the Jewish homes have more authority than the mothers, so that you can quite appreciate that the writers of the note we received are making things very difficult for their sisters. Please continue in prayer with us for the believers and also that their testimonies may challenge their persecutors.

—From the Rev. & Mrs. P. Patching, Tunis.

Finance

A missionary-hearted Church in the North of England is taking the wholly commendable step of undertaking the full support of its two N.A.M. representatives for a trial period of one year. Here is an object-lesson of the faith of a Church and the faithfulness of God being simultaneously on trial; and we have no doubt as to the issue. What an example to emulate!

The provisions of a recent legacy make it possible for yet a third worker to relieve the Mission of the need for support from the General Fund.

In spite of such easement, however, our income during July (often a "lean" month) was only sufficient to cover "first expenses"; there was not enough in hand to send anything from the General Fund for workers depending for maintenance upon this channel. However, a very generous friend, whose identity is quite unknown at Headquarters (but who is well known in Heaven!) graciously made it possible to 'send portions unto them for whom nothing was prepared.' We are deeply grateful.

Christian Education in Kabylia

To us here in Azazza, "Christian Education" means regular teaching of Christian doctrine and principles to Moslem children. It was remarkable that at our special meeting at Christmas the whole of the programme was executed by such children, mostly girls.

Two years ago the French school here opened its doors to Moslem girls, and a tremendous change has taken place in their outlook on life. The first difference seems to be in their manner of dress—very often a "beret" replaces a head handkerchief, and a dress of normal length takes the place of the ankle-length dress worn in native villages. And windows seem to have opened into their souls, for they have now an outlook which simply did not

exist a few years ago—their faces, their gestures, their speech, their reactions all prove this.

Each Thursday, the day the children do not have to go to school, we have a gathering which lasts from 1.30 to 4 p.m. First of all, memorisation of portions of the Scriptures and hymns, then a Bible lesson given with the aid of a "sand tray" or "flannelgraph," followed by a period of recreation, during which, little by little, they learn the value of discipline, as well as the joys of winning (or even losing) a match. The closing period is devoted to manual instruction—sewing, knitting, etc.

—From Mrs. S. Arthur, Azazza, Algeria.

A Thrilling Story

Those who know that lovable personality, Dr. John L. Goldstein, will share our delight that his autobiography has recently been published by the Mildmay Mission to the Jews. It bears the title "All the Doors were Opened," and is a striking, moving account of a missionary among Jews whom God has led into many European countries in quest of "lost sheep of the house of Israel."

What is of particular interest to friends of the N.A.M. is the fact that at one period during his fifty-eight years of loving service Dr. Goldstein laboured at the Tulloch Memorial Hospital, where he had the heart-break, in April, 1914, of seeing his colleague, Dr. Wilson, a voluntary nurse, Miss Hodgson, and two other nurses succumb to typhus. Dr. Goldstein himself was brought to the verge of collapse, and later left Morocco, never to return.

This remarkable volume is modestly priced at 2/6 (postage extra) and is obtainable from the M.M.J., Central Hall, Philpot Street, London, E.1.

OUR VALEDICTORY MEETINGS

We give a warm invitation to our friends residing in or near London to have fellowship with us at our Annual Meetings to be held once more, GOD willing, at the Livingstone Hall (near St. James's Park Underground Station) on Thursday, September 21st, at 3 (for Prayer), 3-30 and 6-30 p.m.

Missionaries on furlough will take part at both afternoon and evening gatherings; and the closing message of the day will be brought by the Rev. John A. Caiger.