

Lucerne Switzerland

Rev. W. H. Belden

Sept 21. 1887

Dear Bro.

All health of some members of my ^{family} & my own need of change & rest have necessitated my absence from Syria this summer & therefore it is that your letter has only at this time reached me.

Your proposed plan is one which I rejoice in with my whole heart. Such meetings will increase the interest of Christians at home in Missionary work & by their ^{the} prayers thus enlisted with new earnestness will draw down a blessing upon the whole Mission field. Christians in America, on their knees praying, fight a large part of the battles of the Lord carried on around the globe.

We hail such gatherings as timely re-inforcements, we take courage in view of your prayers, we shall pray for you & in unison with you, we expect blessed results to follow.

You ask for facts for publication of cases of spontaneous applications of Moslems & others for religious instruction in Syria.

Such cases have occurred ~~in the case of~~ of Moslems seeking light & avowing an interest in Christianity but they are few, those coming to us ^{on such an errand} trust to us, not to reveal any thing respecting them, as such revelations would draw certain ruin upon their heads. The Turkish Government is intensely jealous now of Protestant encroachment upon Mohammedanism & a known inquirer about the Gospel from among the Moslems would be marked for destruction in some secret way.

An Englishman who has been travelling among the Bedouin Arabs & those residing in Eastern Arabia, stated in a recent visit to Beirut that a Moslem whom he met in his travels ~~st~~ avowed himself a Christian & said that his conversion was due to the fact, that ^{while} ~~he~~ living in Mecca

& having employment in the library of the great mosque there, ^{he} found one day on an upper shelf a copy of the Bible. He read in it, was greatly interested in it & finally was convinced by it that Christianity was the only true faith.

Then he showed the book to the Imam of the mosque & told him his views. This man was greatly displeased with him & took away the Bible from him. For his safety he was compelled to leave Mecca ~~Bagdad~~ & live in the neighborhood of Bussorah. There he received one day a letter from the old Imam in Mecca, saying that he was feeble & near to death, that he had read the Bible & thought that perhaps after all, it was true & Christ was the one ~~proph~~ prophet of God & Saviour.

The members of our Churches in Syria come mostly from pupils from the various nominal Christian sects, who are educated in our schools & colleges & brought gradually to the light.

We have had many requests from villages & individuals for religious teachers & schools, but I am sorry to say that for the most part such applications are made with a view to the secular advantages resulting from education, or a result of oppression from their clergy, & not from a longing after light & salvation. God has overruled these secular movements for the entrance of the Gospel into many places in Syria. Applications are made, more than the means at our disposal will warrant us to accept, to open schools now in various parts of Lebanon & the regions North & South, ^{in the neighborhood} in the regions of Tripoli & Sidon. Rarely do we accede to such appeals but that some of those who thought only to learn the pathway of science find the way to heaven.

If only religious liberty were granted to Syria we doubt not that the Alacc-donian cry would ring from many lips now sealed by fear.

With your prayers for the outpouring of the Spirit, pray also for liberty of conscience in Syria that the stifled cry may find utterance & that the Bible may be studied & Christ professed without danger of banishment or death.

With the best wishes

Truly Yr friend, W. W. Eckley,