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## News and Notes

A Monthly Paper printed for the private use of the  
Members of the Missionaries to Muslims League.

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Series XVIII

No. 6

June, 1930.

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1st June = 3rd Muharram (1st mo.) 1349 A.H.

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### **Elements of Real Value in Islam.**

A paper by the Rev. Laurence E. Browne, M.A., B.D.  
of The Henry Martyn School, Lahore.

**A** FEELING has been growing that we ought to approach other religions in a more friendly way than has been customary. The old way of looking at Islam was to see in it nothing but evil, and deliberately to paint it and its founder in the darkest colours. Are we justified in adopting a different attitude?

There is a Moslem legend about Jesus that one day He and some others passed by a dead dog, and each of them expressed in different ways his disgust at the horrid sight; till Jesus came and said, "How white his teeth are!" While this story is based on the idea that Jesus looks for the good points everywhere, it misses the real attitude of Jesus. Jesus did not pay attention to some one small virtue in the woman accused of sin, and on that account refuse to condemn her for her faults; rather He faced up to the fact of her sin, and He saw the hope of conversion from it. Similarly when He touched the leper, it was not that He ignored the man's leprosy, but He faced up to it as an evil to be cured.

Now the application of this lesson to the subject before us is that we shall do no good by picking out certain good points in Islam and concentrating our attention on them, and refusing to face up to the bad points. If we pretended that in so doing we were gaining a true estimate of Islam we should simply be insincere with ourselves. The dead dog cannot be made beautiful by restricting one's view to his white teeth, nor the sinner righteous by ignoring his sin. Have we then any grounds for adopting a new attitude towards Islam? I think we have.

1. On historical grounds we now know that some of the evils attributed to Islam have been exaggerated. For instance it was formerly believed that Islam was spread by Muslim missionaries who went with the sword in one hand and the Quran in the other, offering their hearers the alternative. As a generalisation this is simply unhistorical. That such forced conversions happened sometimes, especially among people like Hindus who were not "Ahl al-kitab," is certain. But, as Canon Gairdner said (*Reproach of Islam*, p. 99) "Neither the law nor the practice of Islam sanctioned such a thing:— when it has occurred, it has been the work of fanatics, and must be considered exceptional."

2. On historical grounds we cannot be so sure as our predecessors about the character of Muhammad. We have to confess that his character has not yet been satisfactorily explained. If he was not the saint that later Muhammadan legend makes him, he probably was not the utter blackguard that some Christian biographers have made him.

3. It used to be laid as a charge against Islam that it had borrowed many things from Christianity and Judaism. On logical grounds we must admit that this fact does not constitute a weakness in Islam, but rather wisdom in choosing what was good. Christianity did the same in borrowing much from Judaism.

4. We also have to acknowledge that some of the things which Christians have criticized in Islam are also, or have been also, weaknesses in the Christian Church. The materialistic description of heaven in the Quran is mostly based on the teaching current in Muhammad's time in the Syriac speaking Church. The cruelties of Moslem rulers and conquerors can be paralleled from contemporary Christian rulers. The barbarous cruelties of Mongols and Turks can scarcely be attributed to their Islam, for they were cruel and savage before they became Moslem, and the Mongol Hulagu who cruelly devastated Baghdad was nominally a Christian at the time.

5. It was formerly felt that because Islam had rejected Christ as Lord and Saviour there could be no good thing in Islam. There is no justification in Christianity for this view. Christ in bringing to the world the complete revelation of God does not thereby deny the revelation by many portions and in many manners other than in Him.

Although the fulness of God is revealed in Christ, a particular part of the Church at a particular time does not perceive the whole fulness of God. Hence we may be prepared to find in a non-Christian body such as Islam truths which the Church at a particular time and place had not grasped or had forgotten. Thus, for instance, in the early days of Islam Moslems clearly grasped the idea that the religious life was to be lived by people in the world, while most Christians in Asia thought that the religious life could only be properly lived in seclusion from the world.

Of greater value for our present purpose is it to consider what points we, at this date, may learn from Islam.

1. The brotherhood of Islam, though extending only to fellow-Moslems, is a very real thing. Although Christianity teaches a wider brotherhood, and Christ's teaching of our neighbour inculcates a wider and a more intense brotherhood, yet actually our practice of brotherhood towards others, even Christians, is not very real.

2. Islam has practically only two sects, Sunnis and Shi'ites, compared with the many Christian sects. Shia and Sunni in some places show a bitter sectarian spirit, but certainly no worse than the bitterness that in past days marked the relations between the Eastern Christian Churches.

3. The devotion to duty of Moslems. Although the *farz* duties are external things, and therefore do not make the same spiritual demand as spiritual duties, yet the extent to which they are performed is amazing.

Now these things are not merely incidental good points in Islam, but they are elements of real value which are part of the make-up of Islam. They are things which are in accordance with the mind of Christ, and yet are not found in full measure in Christianity. If Moslems, in becoming Christians, bring with them their sense of solidarity, with the recognition of duty to the body corporate which their membership of the body implies, the Christian Church will be greatly enriched.

We have thus travelled two stages: first we recognise that the old-fashioned judgment on Islam was not justified either by history or by logic. Then we find that Islam contains some things of definite value which the Church at the moment lacks. Such an admission makes our attitude towards Islam very different from what it was before.

But if there are good points in Islam which would be of value if brought into the Church, there are presumably many others that Islam has in common with Christianity. Can we by enumerating them get an idea of the value of Islam for Moslems? or of how far Islam is a right guide for those who remain within its fold? No. We can enumerate the good points, but we cannot appraise the value of Islam for its followers without also enumerating its bad points. I have no intention of attempting such an appraisal; but shall merely draw your attention to certain good points which are or have been present in Islam, and my criticisms will be restricted to weaknesses in those good points themselves.

1. You will expect me first to mention the unity of God, and for that reason I do so. But if you will compare this sheer mathematical unity with the monotheism of the Old Testament you will perhaps not regard the Moslem idea of the Unity as of any greater value than the Pantheistic Unity of philosophic Hinduism. The idea underlying Isaiah's ethical monotheism is that Yahweh alone of all the so-called gods was holy, and therefore He alone existed. That linking of character with the unity of God made Isaiah one of the

world's greatest prophets. The idea is completely lacking in Islam from Muhammad down to the present day. There is of course some value in the idea of the sole despotic governance of God, but it needs the balance of the moral perfection of God, or else it leads to fatalism.

2. Closely akin to the despotic unity of God is the prohibition of images, in order that the majesty of God may not be impaired. His greatness is also emphasized by the doctrine that words used to describe Him, such as the 99 names, do not bear their ordinary earthly connotation.

3. The orthodox doctrine of the transcendence of God has pushed Him and the spiritual world far away from intercourse with men. But this is balanced in two ways: (a) For the many the cult of saints brings back the spiritual world into touch with daily life. For us the cult of saints would be reprehensible, because we have a Mediator through whom we approach the Father, and indeed He is not far from us, but for Moslems it supplies a warm living intercourse with the spiritual world which would otherwise be lacking. (b) For the few a real mysticism brings God very close, as may be seen from some of their beautiful mystic poetry:—

“With my Beloved I alone have been,  
When secrets tenderer than evening airs  
Passed, and the vision blest  
Was granted to my prayers,  
That crowned me, else obscure, with endless fame,  
The while amazed between  
His beauty and His majesty  
I stood in silent ecstasy  
Revealing that which o'er my spirit went and came.  
Lo, in His face commingled  
Is every charm and grace;  
The whole of beauty singled  
Into a perfect face  
Beholding Him would cry,  
'There is no God but He,  
And He is the Most High.'”—(*Ibn al-Farid*)

4. The doctrine of heaven and hell, borrowed from Christianity, has been a great incentive to obey the commands of God, and in spite of their fatalism does give them a sense of responsibility for their actions. The more educated Moslems of course take the description of heaven and hell metaphorically.

5. The discipline of the regular prayers and the Fast. In a point in which Christians themselves differ it is unwise to dogmatize. But probably all would admit that for some people at any rate an external religious discipline is desirable and helpful. And the more thoughtful Moslems are able to take the fast and the washings as symbolical of abstinence from sin and the removal of sin.

These are a few of the elements in Islam which must be helpful to the spiritual life of the Moslem. Without depicting the other,

darker, side it is impossible to gain an idea of the effect of Islam as a whole on its followers. But I hope that I have said enough to show that there are points in Islam which are of present value to Moslems, and others which are of permanent value in God's Kingdom. The conclusion that I would draw is that, in dealing with Moslems, we should use great caution lest by our clumsy dealing we quench that smoking flax which is in their hands.

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### Book Review.

**INDIAN ISLAM.** By Murray T. Titus, Ph.D., D.D. Oxford University Press. Pp. 290, xvi. Appendix, Bibliography, Glossary of Islamic Terms, Index. 12s. 6d.

For years we have been awaiting such a book; for months we have been anticipating this one. The inadequacy of previous attempts to gather into one volume facts about and interpretations of Islam in India is proverbial; one could point to no single comprehensive work which was not largely descriptive or political in its outlook. Dr. Titus' book is more historical than descriptive—more comprehensive than exhaustive of any one phase of Indian Islam. So it is almost encyclopædic—a reference book of no mean proportions. The table of contents presents an amazingly full outline of the field. Any one of the chapters could stand by itself and be a complete whole.

Sometimes we are given to wondering whether or not there are such things as 'facts' about Islam—particularly Indian Islam. Dr. Titus confesses this very difficulty several times. He expresses hesitation as to 'what testimony is the most reliable, and what conclusions would be most just and fair.' Again, in such an apparently simple matter as census reports, he feels that the Shiah doctrine of 'taqiya' is responsible for inaccuracy, rendering such reports unreliable. Perhaps the only quarrel we could possibly pick with Dr. Titus—and Muslims will undoubtedly raise it—is in the selection of material for which there is some contradictory evidence. But the author has chosen a difficult job, and has rendered a very commendable account of himself.

To begin with the Appendix—more vital to a book than to the human body. We always begin by reading the Appendices. Here it fairly bulges with facts—interesting and necessary facts, culled from numbers of sources. First there are those of historical interest; then those of general import; then notes on the Muslim Press and Festivities, and finally some Provincial statistics.

The Bibliography follows; it is full, with material given in relation to the chapters of the book, and is very helpful. The Glossary of Islamic Terms is a welcome bit. A mere knowledge of this part of the book would open the way surprisingly into the confidence of Muslims one meets.

The body of the book is heavily documented—almost a compilation, and almost too condensed to be interesting. Space will not allow discussion of the subject-matter—the Table of Contents alone occupies four pages of the book. As an indication of the topics discussed, there follows a list of the chapter headings: The Religious Objective of the Muslim Conquerors; The Methods of the Conquerors; Peaceful Penetration (Muslim traders and

missionaries); Organization of the Sunni Community; Shiaks and Mahdawis; Religious Orders; Saint-Worship; Islam in its Hindu Environment; Modern Movements: Reactionary and Progressive. The New Muslim Apologetic and Polemic. In the discussions of these chapters, Dr. Titus takes for granted something of a background of general knowledge of Islam, the mystics, etc., and attacks immediately his particularly Indian problem.

INDIAN ISLAM aims at an objective and unbiased point of view. It is an attempt to understand and interpret. It is therefore of especial value to those whose culture is non-Islamic. India to-day faces serious problems of community relationships. If she is to be a nation, there must be a clear-cut inter-communal sympathy. So anything which can in some measure create this understanding, is of infinite value. We believe this book is as successful an attempt at an objective point of view and a fair interpretation as one could wish.

But Dr. Titus is after all—and above all—a missionary; and though this book is not at all propagandist, a man's absorbing life-purpose cannot but peep through the crevasses of his writing. Instead of detracting from the worth of the volume, it makes it doubly valuable to the Christian who would seek to know and appreciate his Muslim neighbor. Here he looks through the eyes of a sympathetic Christian scholar at the aspirations, the achievements, the failures and the needs of those about whom the average Christian in India knows so distressingly little.

One is tempted to wish that the material of the book had been expanded somewhat, even into a second volume, if necessary, with enough literary padding (perhaps already the Muslim will say that quite enough historical imagination has been employed!) so that the human throb of the drama of it all could have been more colourfully presented. For drama it is—the moving story of the impact of one civilization on another; the reactions and adjustments to this impact; attempts at absorption, at conversion, at compromise, and at fusion; the decadence and renaissance of Islam; the balance of the present—drama there is, and aplenty.

Dr. Titus finishes his book with a note of challenge we cannot but hope will be accepted. 'The problem for the Muslim as for the Christian investigator, is to apply the same honest and fearless methods to the study of Muhammed and his revelation as have been applied to Jesus and the Bible.....The day for that will surely come, and when it does come another period in the development of Islam will have arrived.'

'The introduction, spread and development of Islam in India forms one of the most interesting scenes in the whole world drama of Islam. Torn with internal divisions of sect and caste, and modified by the influence of Indian environment, the Muslim community is none the less conscious of its underlying unifying principle. An account of the processes which contributed to the formation of this diversity in unity has been sketched. With this picture before us, and in spite of all the weakness that division and communalism breed, one cannot help concluding that Islam in India to-day is better organized, better educated, more progressive, more reasonable and tolerant in its attitude toward its neighbours than ever before in its history. But the future glory of Islam in India will consist in the extent to which it truly exemplifies the spirit of toleration, peace, brotherhood, and the uplift of woman, which, its apologists of the present day assert, represent the true Islam.'

We cannot close this inadequate review without a word of congratulation to the Wesleyan Press at Mysore, who have printed the book for the Oxford Press, and have done an excellent piece of work.

It is to be hoped that INDIAN ISLAM, will receive the welcome it deserves—and more, that it may be the instrument in the hand of God to change the present midnight of Christian suspicion and ignorance of the Muslim to a dawn of more complete understanding.

M. S. PITT.

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### Various Matters.

One result of the uncompromising attitude of the orthodox Hindus to the untouchables is reported from Nasik, in Western India, where, in view of unbending opposition to their claim to be allowed to enter Hindu temples, seven of the untouchables have become Muslims. About 40 others have expressed a desire to do the same, but have been persuaded by their leaders not to give up Hinduism at present, as they hope that there may still be a change in the attitude of the orthodox section of the Hindus.

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Dr. Garfield Williams of Llandaff Cathedral, South Wales, is reported to have delivered a striking address at the Cardiff United Missionary Conference, on "The Message of the Jerusalem International Missionary Conference."

He said that while Christ met the need of the whole world, the Church was not meeting it. The crushing of Mahomedanism or Hinduism by materialistic civilisation was damnable—and he used the adjective in its theological sense. It was simply hopeless replacing these ancient religions and traditions merely by the ethics of Jesus apart from experience; they had to give them the vital religious life in place of the ancient faiths.

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One of our younger and very keen members writes to say; "I am pondering three tracts:—

- (1) On the difference between Muslim and Christian worship,
- (2) A collection of suitable prayers for converts' use, with a skeleton form of worship,
- (3) Some hints to catechists on how to guide a convert's prayer life."

Many of us must have, at some time or other, felt the need of suitable prayers a for *nau-murid*. We shall be glad to receive and pass on any suggestions that our readers care to send in.

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**THE BEST FRIEND.** This 'first reader' in the Life of Jesus, specially prepared for Muslim readers, deserves to have a word said on its behalf after a long interval! It was first of all prepared in simple modern English. Ten thousand copies were printed a little over four years ago,

The C.L.S., Madras (P.O. Box 501), who hold the stock, report that well over half have been sold. It is priced at two annas plain, four annas illustrated (with six of Copping's coloured pictures), and, in duceen covers, illustrated, six annas. A discount is allowed on quantities. Have you made its acquaintance yet?

But the English version was prepared mainly with vernacular translations of it in view, and to-day we rejoice to report that it is to be had for one or two annas in the following languages of India: Urdu, Bengali,

Hindi, Sindhi, Gujerati, Pashtu and Tamil. But the Version which wins the prize easily is the *Pashtu*—it is in the *puthi* style beloved of Muslims. It is said that in the Frontier Province they take hold of it eagerly, saying, 'Why this is one of *our* books!'

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*The Moslem World for April* contains, among other good things, a timely and scholarly paper on 'The Sinlessness of Jesus' by one of the leading theologians in England to-day—Principal A. E. Garvie, D.D. of New College, Hampstead, London.

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## The Henry Martyn School, Lahore.

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### Session 1930-31.

Lectures will be given on the following subjects:—

**By the Principal.**

*The History of Islam in India.*  
 Aspects of the Muslim Controversy in India.  
 Muslim Objections to Christianity—the new polemic.  
 Modern Movements, progressive and reactionary.  
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**By Rev. L. E. Browne.**

Muhammad.  
 The Expansion of Islam.  
 Development of Islamic Doctrine.  
 Islam and Christianity in contact through the centuries.  
 A Comparative Study of Doctrine, Christian and Islamic.

**By Mr. J. A. Subhan.**

The Quran.  
 The Traditions in Islam.  
 The Faith and Practice of Muslims.  
 Muslim Sects and Religious Orders.  
 Mysticism and Saint-Worship.

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Any notification of change of address, names of new members or remittance of subscription, etc., should be sent to the Superintendent, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, India, and *not* to the Secretary of the League. The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.).

Matters of interest to members of the League, items of news and requests for prayer should be sent (if possible, early in the month) to the Editor.—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,  
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