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## News and Notes

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### What are the First Elements of Christianity to be Presented to the Muslim Enquirer?

A PAPER BY REV. L. E. BROWNE,  
of The Henry Martyn School, Lahore.

IN choosing this title for my paper I have deliberately used the words 'first elements' ambiguously, both for the message to be given first in time, and for the most important part of the message.

We might begin our enquiry by asking ourselves several questions:—

- (1) Which elements of Christianity are likely to attract the Muslim enquirer most? and which to repel him?
- (2) Which elements does he need most to supplement or correct his present faith?
- (3) Which elements are most essential to Christianity?

It is conceivable that in attempting to answer these questions we might find that some things which are most essential to Christianity, and which Muslims need most, are also the things which repel him most. If this were indeed the case, it is no wonder that the evangelization of Muslims is a hard task. Many people in the past have held this view, believing that the very thing which repelled him most was what he needed most, and consequently they have felt obliged to force it upon him as a doctor might force a patient to take a nauseous drug because that particular drug was indicated. Let us first of all consider the belief in Jesus Christ as divine, for that is a point which all of us believe to be an essential part of Christianity, and at the same time a point most repellant to Muslims.

Reading the Gospels we learn the method by which Christ taught the disciples, and we find that He adapted His teaching to their ability to understand: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;' 'With many such parables spake He the word unto them as they were able to hear it.' I doubt whether He ever withheld teaching from them simply on the ground that it would have given them a shock. Indeed much of His teaching, as for instance when He denounced the acknowledged religious leaders of the day, or broke the regulations with which they had fenced round the sabbath day, must have come as a great shock to His hearers. The reason for withholding teaching was the obvious one that they were not able to understand it, and would understand His words in some other sense. With regard to Himself it appears to have been late in His ministry before He accepted the title of Messiah, and if we follow the first three Gospels only it appears doubtful whether He ever said plainly that He was God or Son of God, though it is suggested by the voice at His baptism and transfiguration, by the report of the devil's words in the temptation, 'If thou art the Son of God,' by the testimony of demoniacs (Lk. iv. 41), and by the testimony of onlookers at the crucifixion (Mt. xxvii. 43). Does this mean that He did not think of His person as of any significance in Christianity? By no means, for while He did not claim titles for Himself, He continually referred to Himself as occupying a unique position. He assumed that He was in a position to judge aright, 'It was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you . . .,' 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven,' and He assumed that it was He who would be the judge at the last day. There are two incidents which are most instructive for our purpose: one was His answer when the disciples of John the Baptist came to ask whether He was the Messiah. He did not say Yes or No in so many words, but He drew attention to what He was doing, His works of mercy and power. The other incident was His refusal to declare the source of His authority to men who confessed themselves unable to distinguish between good and evil.

Following the guidance thus offered by a study of our Lord's method, I think we may say that there is something much more important and pressing than claiming our Lord's divinity, *viz.*, drawing attention to His character, and from His character proceeding to an appreciation of His uniqueness. If we abstain from speaking to Muslims in the first instance of Christ as the Son of God it is not that we are afraid of shocking them, but that they will suppose us to be claiming something very different from what we mean by the term, something which we ourselves would regard as blasphemous; just as the Jews would have misunderstood our Lord's mission if from the beginning He had announced Himself as Messiah.

I feel that there can be no doubt that the first element of our message, first both in time and in importance, is Christ Himself, His

character and His teaching. There has been a tendency to be side-tracked into by-paths, and to accept the Muslim standard of values: Take for instance the miracles of Christ. To the Muslim miracles are works of power which demonstrate the favour of God to a prophet, and Christian apologists have too often appealed to the miracles of Christ in the same way. But though the New Testament does speak of Christ's miracles as 'mighty works,' the more significant name for them is 'signs': it is not so much the wonder of the works as their nature which is their witness to what Christ is. Being what He was He could not help doing these acts of love and mercy. That He did not do them merely as exhibitions of power is clear from His frequent injunctions to those whom He healed not to talk about it to everyone. If we accept the Muslim standard we may find it hard to prove that the healing of the paralytic was more wonderful than the miraculous eloquence of the Quran. But if we insist on the moral and ethical significance of Christ's miracles they stand in a different category altogether from a literary marvel.

Consider next the death of Christ on the cross. For us who are trained to sift historical evidence the fact is beyond dispute, and the denial of the Quran, written 600 years after the event, cannot weigh against the contemporary evidence of the New Testament and Tacitus. Our hearers are not accustomed to weighing historical evidence, and it is well to remember that Muhammad himself did not deny Christ's death on historical grounds, but through misunderstanding (either on his part or that of his informants) of the significance of Christ's life and character. That which originally prevented Muhammad from believing in Christ's death on the cross is still the thing that prevents Muslims from believing in it, with the addition of the testimony of the Quran. So that it is of no avail merely to meet their denial with historical evidence if we do not first establish in their minds such a conception of the character of Christ and of God as will prepare them to believe in it. They will then be in a position to see that Christ's death on behalf of men was a natural sequence of the kind of life He lived, and to see that the significance of Calvary is that such a one as Jesus was, died as He died. Thus the redemptive aspect of the death of Christ, which many would say is absolutely central in Christianity, can only be presented after the hearer has first learnt the character of Christ, and then, by understanding His character, has reached the stage of accepting His death on the cross.

From the character of Christ we pass to the character of God. There are, as is well-known, serious defects in the Muslim conception of God: His almightiness is conceived as arbitrariness; there is no clear idea of His holiness, or that the commands He issues to men are in order to bring men into accord with His own character; His mercy is thought of rather in terms of being somewhat easy-going towards sin than as being entirely beneficent in His dealings toward His creatures. (Such a generalization will of course be understood with the limita-

tions which are inseparable from generalizations). The Christian belief in God may be summed up briefly in the words Holiness, Love, Fatherhood. I do not think that these things can be said to be self-evident, nor provable by philosophy. It is instructive to observe their first appearance. The holiness of God was first clearly perceived by Isaiah. I do not know by what stages he reached the idea. He may have meditated on the freedom from sin required of men who approached the sanctuary of God, or on the moral beauty of God's commands to men; but beyond such considerations as these there was a leap of faith before he could come to declare the holiness of God, a leap of faith so remarkable that, to my mind at least, it proves decisively the fact of divine inspiration. The two other ideas, of the Love and Fatherhood of God, are only dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament. We can find traces of the ideas, but only in the germ, and strictly limited in their application. If we are surprised to find them lacking in Islam, or the appreciation of them difficult, it will perhaps help us if we remember how little was known of them by that grand line of Old Testament prophets. With Christ the Love and Fatherhood of God burst into view, and it was not merely His definite teaching on the subject, but His whole attitude towards God, which places God's love and Fatherhood not in the category of theories but of facts.

*(to be concluded)*

## The Christian Message and Islam.

### III.

**I**N this issue we reproduce a summary of the views of the Cairo group who met to discuss the subject of "How to present Christianity to Effendees." The Effendee type will be familiar to our readers in India and other lands.

1. Effendees divide up into many types and our message must be adapted to each group. There are:—
  - (a) The avowedly irreligious. Some of this group scoff at all religion, while others are in quest of a religious experience, which they haven't got.
  - (b) Those who believe, or persuade themselves, that Islam can be reconciled with modern thought, or rather that Islam is itself the basis of modern progress.
  - (c) The eclectics, who profess to believe in all religions, or at least in all monotheistic religions, without necessarily being bound by any particular set of religious beliefs.
  - (d) The semi-educated, who cling to Islam, often without any real knowledge of the Quran or of Moslem literature.

Our message must be adapted to the needs of the group, with which we are dealing, or rather to the needs of the individual, whom we are seeking to win. We should remember that most Effendees know very little about the actual tenets of Islam, even if they do observe its practices.

Nearly all Effendees are deeply impressed by modern thought, and many of them are inclined to overestimate their own understanding of it. In any case, this provides us with a useful line of argument, as we discuss religion in relation to :—

- (a) Ethical problems.
- (b) Social problems.
- (c) Family life.
- (d) The lives of outstanding individuals.

We can contrast Islam and Christianity in regard to these different aspects of life. We can shew how Christianity has a message for all peoples and for all ages. We may have, at times, to remove the erroneous impression that Christianity is concerned with "religious" things only, and not with social needs. This is an idea prevalent amongst certain Effendees, as well as amongst Sheikhs. Especially to-day, when men are seeking for an adequate basis for national life, it is important to stress the power of Christianity to meet the needs of a nation. In proof of this, we may cite what Christianity has done for Europe, and America, remembering that the modern Effendee is copying the West in his endeavour to reconstruct society.

While it is useful to approach the Effendee along the lines of his own interests, we should aim, at the same time, at showing him that the human intellect cannot of itself reach ultimate truth in these problems. Furthermore, we should seek to transfer his interests from the intellectual to the spiritual plain, and to convince him that in Christ is to be found a dynamic, which can transform life. After all, the best argument for Christianity is the experience of the true Christian, and the demonstration of this in daily life. What the Effendee needs is just this dynamic, and we can shew forth Christ as the Saviour from temptation and sin. Our best results come from personal work with individuals. We should concentrate on those who have evinced some real desire for spiritual things. This demands from us a sacrifice of time and prayer, which we may find it difficult to make. It also requires supreme tact, a knowledge of psychology, and a willingness to be patient with the ideas (and faults) of the Muslim Effendee. Our chief purpose is to bring the individual face to face with Christ, as revealed in Scripture, in the Church, and in personal experience. We should let him realize what the claims of Christ are. This is best done by inducing him to read sympathetically the Gospel narrative, and by applying the message there found to the problems of life in a modern city.

## Notes

*Evangelism in Persia.*—Bishop Linton has contributed a most readable article, under this title, to the January issue of *The International Review of Missions*. Having illustrated his statement that the watchword to-day in education in Persia is progress, he goes on to speak of the work being done through Christian hospitals and Bible distribution, and says: 'Islam may imitate our educational programme. It may build hospitals, but it can never give the touch of Christ that is—or should be—manifest in a Christian hospital. It cannot, because it has it not to give. That touch is unique; it belongs to Him who came, and lived as He lived, loved as He loved, served as He served, died as He died.'

In regard to Bible distribution he writes: 'Some years ago fifty converts were asked what first led them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nineteen replied that in the first instance their attention had been attracted by reading some portion of the Scriptures, and twenty-two attributed their conversion directly to the Word of God' . . . . Elsewhere the Bishop says: 'The Sermon on the Mount printed separately under the title 'A New Way of Life and Conduct' is proving invaluable in personal work. In Persia, he says, the greatest stress is laid on personal work; it is the personal testimony of Christians that counts most in that land to-day. A humorous touch is introduced into his description of one such evangelist. 'A Christian dervish . . . . travels the length and breadth of the land doing anything that falls to his hand for his living, but with one overmastering purpose in life, *viz.*, to preach the Gospel. He has a pair of most fearsome-looking forceps with which he extracts teeth. There is no danger of his provoking the zealous opposition of rival dentists. He says he has never wanted for food and clothing, and therewith he is eminently content. Not only his method of living, but his way of presenting the message is unique.'

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*Prevailing Prayer.*—"We are out for real definite spiritual conversion, issuing in conduct, and so when we have people who come to us professing to accept Christ we take all the pains we know how, to put it before them that accepting Christ is not just accepting a creed, but that it involves life and conduct, and that it is through the life and conduct of the Christian Church (I am referring to converts from Islam) far more than through missionary effort that their own country is to be won for Christ" . . . "A missionary told me that he was literally besieged from morning to night by enquirers. Many would haunt his house till after mid-night in order to get talks with him . . . . The only thing he could do was to flee from the town and go out into the wilderness . . . He is one of us who are trying out in our work the principle of setting apart 2½ hours a day—one-tenth of your time—for definite close spiritual contact with God . . . . Prayer is much more important than activity. You know everyone of us accepts that and believes it. We have talked about it and given addresses on it, and have said all sorts of things about it, but have not done it. We are trying to do it." From the *News Bulletin* of the Near East Christian Council, December, 1930.

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*A Book of Instruction for Catechumens.*—There is soon to be published a companion booklet to those issued some time ago on Christian Faith and Practice which were prepared for the use of Converts from Islam by Temple Gairdner of Cairo.

The new work will be Part I of that set, and is really a series of studies in the Life of Christ designed for Muslim inquirers. This, too, was planned by Temple Gairdner, one of the lessons, indeed, comes from his pen, but Miss Padwick has taken up and completed the task he left. We have been privileged to see the first draft and can say *with confidence* that when at last it issues from the press, it will come as a boon to many who are called upon, from time to time, to direct the study of earnest inquirers who are sufficiently educated to be able to read the Scriptures for themselves.

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*List of Members of the League.*—We have sufficient funds in hand to be able to issue another list of the present members of the League, and we propose to follow the line taken previously and group the members together territorially, distributing the whole number under thirty days, so that the booklet may be used also as a Prayer Cycle. The list may be ready for despatch with the March issue.

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*Urdu Qaidas (primers) for Zananas Women.*—We have received copies of four simple Urdu primers prepared by Miss Chapman, Z.B.M.M. Sholapur, Bombay Presidency, for teaching women in zananas to read by the Story Method. The language is extremely simple, the type bold, the covers of stiff paper in different colours. It is the story told 'simply, as to a little child.'

No. 1, tells of the Woman of Samaria; No. 2, of the three young men in Daniel; No. 3, of the Paralytic borne by four; No. 4, of how Jesus gives 'Rest' to those who came to Him. They are published by the Bombay Book and Tract Society, Poona, at  $\frac{1}{2}$  anna each, but may be had from Miss Chapman. We are not surprised to learn that the books are having a ready sale.

## The Moslem World Quarterly, January, 1931.

**Lights and Shadows in the World of Islam.**

A BEAUTIFUL frontispiece introduces the reader to the twenty-first volume of the Moslem World Quarterly. The editor recalls the past twenty years, and Professor D. S. Margoliouth, D.D., of Oxford, contributes an editorial note addressed to the British reader, on the importance of the Quarterly to the man on the street, who should be interested in the why and wherefore of political movements in the Near East.

For all these years the Moslem World has been an open forum and a common platform for the investigation and study of Islam from the Christian stand-point. Its aim to represent no faction nor fraction of the church has been fulfilled. The number before us is cosmopolitan. It does not seek controversy nor surrender truth to compromise. While interpreting Islam in its varied aspects, the magazine always points out the true solution of the problem of Islam, namely, evangelism.

In this number, for example, the Reverend Cady H. Allen of Persia tells of Conditions for Baptism, and Gertrud Ven Massenbach describes the difficulties of evangelism among women in Nubia, the Land of Shadows.

Mrs. Marjorie Ward Alter tells of the remarkable conversion of an Indian Fakir, who seems to have been led to Christ through the hospitality of a missionary's home.

A window into the daily life of modern Egypt is opened by Mr. John Walker in his description of the superstitions of Folk-Medicine. There is an Open Letter from an Indian-Moslem, Hafiz G. Sarwar, which contains frank criticism of the Quarterly. The letter appeared in a Moslem magazine, and reveals the working of the mind of educated Mohammedan readers.

Other articles deal with the Panthays of Yunnan, China, tell of an interview of the Patriarch Timothy with the Caliph Al Mahdi, and discuss Sufi Mysticism and the question whether Muhammad borrowed from the apocryphal book, called the Slavonic Enoch.

The current topics are of unusual interest. They include an account of Islam in British Guiana and a note on the Saracen occupation of Switzerland in the tenth century. The Book Reviews and the Survey of Periodicals indicate an increased interest in the study of Islam.

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## M. M. LEAGUE.

### Financial Statement, 1930.

<i>Receipts.</i>	Rs. A. P.	<i>Expenditure.</i>	Rs. A. P.
Balance from 1929	298 13 0	Printers Bills	704 3 0
Members Subs. and		Postages	45 13 6
Donations	903 3 3	Office Sundries	20 2 6
			770 3 0
		Balance brought forward	431 13 3
	Rs. 1202 0 3		Rs. 1202 0 3

*Audited and found correct—*

W. H. BAPTIST,  
16-1-31.

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 Hony. Secretary:—

Rev. L. Bevan Jones,  
5, Egerton Road,  
Lahore,  
Punjab, India.

**NOTE NEW ADDRESS** 