

THE LIGHT.

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Correspondence of literary nature may be addressed to the editor. Short articles, letters and questions will also be welcome. Non-Muslims are also invited to send questions to be answered.

NOTES.

A NEW RELIGION.

That Christianity has failed to exercise any influence on the structure of humanity is an established fact. As a religion it has died a natural death, and there is little hope of its revival. That is why the thinking men of Europe are crying in despair:—

"Never has there been a more insistent call for the great leader of thought than to day. The Church has not produced him—will literature do so?" Some times the same cry of despair assumes somewhat hopeful and positive form in the words of S. P. R. Mais:—

"We are waiting for a Messiah, a new revival, a new religion, the time is ripe and poor humanity's arms are lifted up in prayer. Lord I believe; help Thou my disbelief. May we tell the seekers after truth that the Messiah came and passed away, but the Christians have not accepted him as the Jews did not accept the Messiah of Nazareth."

Assuredly the time is ripe now, and we hope that the civilized world will be able to find the "New Religion" it is crying for in the natural religion of Islam.

TRINITY AND HUMAN INTELLIGENCE.

Mr. Charles Dawbarn, while discussing the difficulties of the missionary's task in Africa, has, perhaps unconsciously, passed a very unpleasant verdict against Christianity. He says:—

Perchance, also, a greater simplicity is needed in addressing the gospel to a primitive people. Thoughtful observers, both lay and clerical, have told me of the inroads made by Islam in the wavering hearts of the black races. And the reason, I find, is the greater adaptability of the Moslem faith. Polygamy is no bar to Mahomet's Paradise. The native intelligence is assailed by the sublime perplexities of the Trinity and the Incarnation. The doctrine of vicarious sacrifice requires something more than earnestness to make clear to a child-like people. A real talent for exposition and zeal in acquiring the vernacular, as well as the native point of view, are essentials.

If we divest this passage of the unnecessary use of adjectives which represent only the subjectiveness of the writer and are used to defend and whitewash the dogmas of Christianity, it is an outspoken confession of the fact that Christianity is beyond human intelligence and lacks adaptability to human nature. We cannot agree with the writer that it is only "the native" intelligence that is "assailed" by the Trinity, because we see that the most civilized intelligence also revolts against it. It is, however, interesting to know that the perplexities of Trinity are "sublime," and we hope that no other perplexity in the world will usurp this epithet of Trinity.

THE CONQUERING CRESCENT.

The following passage, in which an Indian priest of the Church of England has dealt with the spiritual conquest of Islam in India in comparison with Christianity, will be read with great interest:—

But there is another and a much more serious kind of disunion within the visible body of the Church, and this constitutes the greatest hindrance to its Missionary work. In the case of India, two great Missionary religions have been brought to it from outside, Christianity and Islam. By the time that Aurang Zeb, the last of the great Mogul Emperors, died (in 1707), almost one-third of India had become Moslem, as a result of five hundred years of the Moslem conquest. Christian Missions to North India started about two hundred years ago, whereas in the south of India Christianity dates from very early times; yet, so far, the number of Indian Christians hardly exceeds one per cent. of the total population. Moreover, a vast proportion of the Christian community and almost all recent additions to it have come from what are known as the Depressed, or the Untouchable, classes of India. The present influx into the Church is almost entirely a social rather than a spiritual movement, and conversions from among the better and educated classes practically ceased some time ago.

THE LIVING RELIGION.

II.

characteristics of Islam which have made it so attractive and beautiful are many; but for the sake of brevity I shall touch on only four points here:—

In the first place, Islam has got a complete code of life, a true expression of human nature and gives detailed instructions for every walk of society. The Holy Quran deals with all the important principles pertaining to civilization. It is a guide for both the rich and the poor, the high and the low. It is meant for humanity at large and therefore it has laid down express rules for all the branches of human activities. It is a source of inspiration to the peasant living in a poor hut, and also to the king residing in a stately palace. Like the rays of the sun the showers of the rain it does not make any distinctions. Naturally such a book must win the reverence of all who know about it.

In the second place, Islam has established the equality of man in the world. The gospel of brotherhood of man, which was ushered by Jesus Christ but left undone was realized and accomplished at the hands of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and blessings of God be upon him. Islam does not recognise any differences of caste and creed. It does not believe in the geographical limits and therefore the unnatural and the man made boundaries of nationalities are not known to it. It stands for the whole of humanity. The equality of man is the cardinal principle of Islam; and hence there is no priest craft no caste system and no classification of society. The rapid and the vast spread of Islam has always been a problem to the Western writers, who have generally ascribed it to the political ascendancy of the Muslims and also to the forcible conversion. But this is absolutely wrong. The real cause of such a rapid progress is to be found in the simple teachings of Islam which go straight to the hearts of the people and especially in the principle of the universal brotherhood of man, which it has enforced. The down trodden races of the Hindus, were easily won over to Islam when they saw that the new religion gave them equal status in society. That is why the conversion in the rural parts of India has been the greatest. The Hindus had a very rigid system of classification in society which was extremely disgusting to the "low caste." Islam came and brought with it the equality of man. Those who were sick of the caste system readily adopted this new religion; and became the "brethren in Faith."

In the third place, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God

be upon him) who was the last exponent of Islam is a historical personage. The events of his life are handed down to us with perfect accuracy; while the names and the lives of the previous prophets are shrouded in mystery. Take for instance the case of Jesus Christ. He lived only 600 years before the Holy Prophet. But we are unable to find a connected account of his life. The very scanty information which we can gather from the gospels is open to criticism; and if we place confidence in it, even then it is too short to be of any great use to us because it is not eventful. Jesus lived a single life; and therefore could not be an exemplar in the various walks of human life. The lives of the Hindu gods or Rishis are perhaps still more obscure. But the case of the Holy Prophet is different. He lived for 63 years; and during this period, he passed through various stages of life. He was an orphan, a merchant, a traveller, a husband, a father, a soldier, a general and an Emperor. We find an authentic and most reliable account of his life. Muslim historians have depicted every phase of the Prophet's life so vividly that it can serve the purpose of a light for every one in the dreary path of the world. He is, therefore, the true and living exemplar for humanity, because his life can still inspire us with hope and strength.

In the fourth place, Islam believes that every man has got the capacity of approaching God direct without any intermediary. Allah is the Creator of every thing, of every man and, therefore, He has got a direct relation with every one of us. He is eternal and unchangeable; and therefore He speaks to his chosen servants in these days too, as he spoke in old times. In a word, Islam believes in the continuity of the divine revelation. But other religions are at variance with Islam on this point. Hindus, for instance, hold that God only spoke once when He revealed Vedas at the dawn of the world; and since then He is silent. Christians too think that God has not spoken since the advent of Jesus or his immediate followers. But Islam believes in a living God, and holds that He speaks in all times. There have been so many Muslim saints and religious reformers who have claimed to be in communication with God and hence the truth of the Islamic principle is established.

MUSTAFA KHAN.

ISLAM AND THE WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

The Christian writers of the present day often commit a very common fallacy in making a comparison of Christianity with Islam. They ascribe the material advancement in the recent times of the Christian countries to the dogmas of Christianity, and the

political stagnation of the Muslims to Islam and its teachings. But any thinking man will at once perceive the fallacy which lies at the very root of it. The past history of Christendom is enough to expose the weakness of this fallacious argument. During the middle ages, the whole of Europe was in the abyss of lethargy and ignorance, in spite of her being Christian. If Christianity has played any part whatsoever in the modern civilization of Europe, why did it not achieve any thing in the dark ages; when the people were perhaps more spirited Christians and the churches were thronged with worshippers. It is a curious fact that the progress in civilization and the decay in the Church have invariably gone hand in hand. Today the Church is getting hearse by crying that people have lost faith, they have given up Christianity; they do not attend churches, and so forth; and yet the world is progressing by leaps and bounds, while in the dark ages of Europe when the Church enjoyed the highest power, not only spiritual but temporal as well, all the Christian countries were in a state of horrible degradation.

But the case of Islam is quite different. From the very beginning it has been the great champion of science and learning; and its past history bears ample testimony to the indisputable fact that the Muslim kings have rendered great service to promote culture and learning. It is admitted even by European writers that Europe's present civilization is due, to a great extent, to the Islamic influence. During the reign of Abbasis, hundreds of books were translated from Latin and Greek; and the Muslim rulers of this dynasty were famous for their love of knowledge. Some of the names of different branches of Science and Art that flourished during the Muslim rule have still got the impress of the Arabic origin. *Algebra* for instance retains up to now, the Arabic name, and proves that this branch of mathematics owes its origin to Islam.

Despite these indisputable facts, it is curious to find that a writer in the *New Statesman* has got the audacity to say that "Muhammadan people are the best equipped among the enemies of what we should call the European civilization; and the most inclined among the backward nations to fight with fierceness against progress. But as this ascertainment was giving a direct lie to history, the writer has been constrained to admit in the same breath that—

- (i) Islam took over the progress role. It covered and published some of the

Greek works of science which *Christian Panatism had relegated to oblivion.*

- (ii) It stimulated new expression in architecture, in fabric of the loom, in ceramics, literature, music, sport, names and horticulture; it encouraged exploration of the new barbarians or isolated countries from Madagascar to new Guinea, China and Tartary.

Its influence on Europe at the time of crusades led almost as a consequence to the European renaissance in the arts in Science and in industries (italics are mine).

It is strange indeed that in the face of these clear admissions and historical facts, the writer arrives at the queer conclusion that Muslims are the Greatest enemies of civilization. If history can serve the purpose of education, if we can learn the future from the past (and most assuredly it is one of the chief functions of history to give us an insight into the future), then we cannot but infer from the past annals of the Muslims, that they can never be a stumbling block in the path of the world's progress.

MUSLIM RULE IN INDIA.

The writer has made another curious statement in regard to the Muslim rule in India and has depicted it as a period of seven hundred years of "appalling misery, much depopulation, massacre, plundering, persecution and unrest." I think the writer ought to have revised his manuscript before its publication. He has committed a historical blunder of immense magnitude, in remarking that for seven hundred years India has been subject to a tyrannical government. He should have known the simple fact, that the reigns of Akbar the Great and his immediate successors have been looked upon as periods of great prosperity and of good government even by the hostile critics of Islam. Akbar, the first great Moghal Emperor was so popular among the Indians that the proud Rajput Rulers of Rajputana, who claimed their descent from the sun and the moon readily agreed to give daughters in marriage to the emperor; and these matrimonial relations with the ruling princes of India consolidated the Moghal Empire.

SECESSION WITH THE PAST.

The chief grievance to of the writer against Islam, however, is the "Secession with the past which it produces." This grievance I think, should be more prominent in regard to Christianity of the present day which has put up very curious dogma, quite inconsistent

with the past history of the human race. It has attributed such qualities to Jesus Christ which cannot be borne out by any ecclesiastical history of the past. St. Paul gave quite a new turn to the teachings of Jesus who was originally a Jew and his teachings a branch of Judaism. But who does not know that the christianity of the modern times has produced a split with Judaism and has given the gospel of Jews a new phase of which he never dreamt in his life.

MUSTAFA KHAN.

DID REPORTED MORALITY OF THE BIBLICAL JESUS IMPROVE WORLD MORALS.

Much can be said on both sides of the subject. One fails to make any definite opinion as to the character of one who presents irreconcilable contrast in his precepts and actions. Unfortunately such is the case of Jesus as reported in the synoptic records.

If utterance of few moral precepts unattended with their being translated into action in the very life of their preacher can give claim of a moral teacher to its utterer, every time and country can safely claim to produce thousands with importance like that of the hero in the evangelic records.

Besides such utterances are not necessarily index of a genuine heart. Surroundings environments and often maintenance of position bring to the lips of many an average people some beautiful and sublime thoughts. We should not therefore, be influenced by such preachings, no matter, if they come even from men of very highly reported sanctity and importance. Action and only action can be a safe criterion to judge the claims of a moral teacher.

With these remarks in view we approach Jesus of the Bible.

With all the idealistic and dreaming nature of his preaching Jesus can force respect and admiration even from the stony breast of an atheist for all what he says in the sermon on the mount. But unfortunately, our estimation of his life, when we read it in some events mentioned of him leads us to cherish a different opinion.

He had his enemies in the ranks of pharisees and scribes, but he never made a happy choice of words whenever he spoke to them vipers and sons of serpents, swine and dogs are not expressions which can be fit in the mouth of him who is reported to be the author of such noble and sublime ideas contained in some of the verses in the sermon on the mount.

If it is agreed on all hands, that mere expressions of fine ideas and tender feelings

are not the whole morality; but its scope is wide enough to include all that which leads to the betterment and utility of human life. Jesus of the Bible, then, cannot be safely classed in the list of moral teachers.

Either what we read of him is an untrue account of his life, as some of the best commentators hold or certain events narrated of him cannot be taken to help world morality.

Take his very first miracle of conversion of a pure harmless thing like water into wine which even in his own time was the curse of his own nation. Self indulgence and luxury were the characteristics of his age. Jews and gentiles both were addicted to this evil and if wines and fermented liquors have always been chief agents of self-indulgence, one fails to appreciate the significance of this first miracle in the improvement of the thorn, and the present ethics of the world. Symbolism-ridden people in the moments of the frenzied admiration may see some universal glorification in the miracle but drinks have been a curse to humanity from every point of view. The event though clothed in the graceful covering of miracle cannot exonerate him from the responsibilities of encouraging the use of this liquid poison, one phase of every day occurrence of which is the dissolution of that marriage bond which the gospel declares as indissoluble. (For ready reference I would ask the readers to peruse page 9 of the "I. D. T." Lucknow 10th January 1922.) There is no doubt that Jesus sanctioned the use of fermented wine only in conformity with his own habits. "There was" says Dr. C. Geikie D. D. in his "Hours with the Bible Volume II published in London 1896" "no such neglect of the persons as many of his contemporaries thought identical with holiness. He did not require ascetic restrictions at table,..... For we find him permitting the use of wine, bread and honey, and of fish, flesh and fowl..... Jesus exposed himself to the charge of indulgence, because he never practised even such intermittent austerities as done by the pharisees of his time."—(to be continued.)
S.M. YUSAF KHAN, Shahbad Bhoor, Bariely

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. *Question*—Ram Niwas—How do the Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified?
Answers—Jesus Christ was certainly nailed to the cross; but he did not die on it. The narrative of the crucifixion in the Gospels goes to prove that Jesus did not die on the cross and the Holy Quran has also passed the same verdict that he was not crucified but died natural death.

2. *Question*—What is religion—
Answers—Religion is the collective name for those divine laws which deal with man's duty to God and to man.