

THE LIGHT.

EDITED BY MUSTAFA KHAN B. A.

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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.

Transmigration.

A seeker after truth writes :—

We the Muslims believe that there is no rebirth; and the dead do not come to the world again. But the Hindus believe in rebirth and thus explain the difference of grades in men. They say that some men are blind, deaf and poor while others are quite healthy, strong and rich. This difference is due to the fact that the wicked are punished and the good are rewarded in this very world for their wickedness and virtue in the previous life. What do you say about it?

Evidently this theory is based upon the assumption that God is *Just*, and hence the difference of social status or the natural gifts in men is due to their previous actions. But the exponents of this doctrine do not pause to think that the punishment and the reward should not be awarded blindly, *i. e.* without explaining to the persons concerned the

actions, for which they are rewarded or punished. It is no justice to punish a man for the sins or crimes of which he is not conscious. A poor man in this world does not know what sins he has committed in the previous life for which he is suffering. Hence his punishment does not serve the purpose of reformation. Again it is against the elementary principles of justice to convict and punish a man without explaining to him for what he is punished.

The fact is that God is not a mere *Judge*; but He is the *Master*. He does whatever He thinks fit, and the human reason is inadequate to understand all the mysteries of nature. It is true that there are some reasons for a man's being blind, or poor etc., but it is not essential that we must always ascertain those reasons. In some cases we can ascertain, in others we cannot. From this, however, it does not follow that it is due to the doctrine of rebirth.

The Khilafat.

In this issue we insert an article from the pen of Maulvi Muhammad Ali, M. A., on the question of the Khilafat which is unfortunately often misunderstood not by non-Muslims only but by many Muslims as well. It has been proved in this article that the Khilafat institution is a national institution; and the Turkish Khilafat "is held by the Turkish nation" and not by an individual of the royal family. The Sultan is a Khalifa simply in the sense that he, being the head of the State, is the emblem of the national Khilafat. We hope that both the Muslims and the non-Muslims will realise this true significance of the Khilafat; and the well known objection of the Christian Missionaries, which has also been put forth in the following lines of the "Church Missionary Review," will no longer be repeated :—

By the arbitrament of war and through the dissensions of his opponents, the Turk at this stage stands forth independent, and demands complete equality in the comity of nations. But this is done,

not by the Commander of the Faithful at Constantinople, whose temporal dignity and authority the Mussulmans of India have made the soul of the Khilafat agitation; it is the work of a Turkish parliament sitting at Angora in Asia Minor. This body has decreed the deposition of the Caliph from his sultanate, leaving him merely a spiritual authority of a very shadowy kind. They have added the threat to try the Caliph as traitor, and he is a fugitive from his country. Is the Turkish Caliphate itself, or only the combination of temporal and spiritual powers in the office, coming to an end? We can but chronicle events as they develop.

Angora and Islam.

We are glad to read the following in the Near East :—

The Angora Government appears to be bent on making a serious effort to propagate Islamism, and has appointed a committee of *Ulema* to consider the subject. At the same time a "Council for Examination of Litigious Questions" has been formed, for the purposes of: (a) defining the position of Islam in relation to modern developments; (b) developing Islamic doctrine, having regard to the necessities of the age; and (c) the promulgation of *Fatwas*, which, it is proposed, shall henceforth be drawn up by the Council in accordance with the doctrines of the four principal Sunni sects. The carrying through of this programme might very well have far-reaching results on the Moslem world, and though we need not expect to see any return of that great wave of fervour that bore the Arabs to Spain and threatened to engulf Europe, we may see a further tightening of the bonds that already bind Moslem lands together. That need not involve any threat to non-Moslem lands; and, indeed, if the Council succeeds with points (a) and (b) of its programme it might bring about better relation—through better understanding—between Moslem and non-Moslem peoples.

THE LIGHT.

Dated the 16th January 1923.

The Controversy on Khilafat.

By Maulvi Mahammad Ali, M.A., LL.B.

That serious misconceptions prevail in the minds of non-Muslims on almost all important questions relating to Islam is a well-known fact, and the misunderstanding on the question of Khilafat in the minds of the Christians who regard it as an institution like the institution of papacy in Christianity, though much to be regretted, is not very surprising. But what is much more regretful is that a somewhat similar misconception prevails in the minds of the Muslims themselves. As I explained in a pamphlet on the "Khilafat in Islam" published in February 1920 when the question of Khilafat was first brought into prominence, the Khilafat in Islam stands in fact for succession to the Holy Prophet, such also being the literal significance of the word which is derived from *Khalafa*

meaning *he came after* or *succeeded another*. Now the Holy Prophet was both a King and a Prophet, and the promise of *Khilafat* meant that temporal rule and spiritual teachership should be continued among the Muslims. But there is an essential difference between the two offices, for while spiritual teachership vests in individuals, kingship vests in the whole nation, and though one individual with supreme authority may in particular be called the *Khalifa*, it is really the whole nation that possesses temporal authority. The Holy Quran speaks of this distinction in plain words when reminding the Israelites of the benefits conferred on them: "Remember the favour of Allah upon you when He raised prophets among you and made you kings" (V: 20). Thus the spiritual teacher is raised among a people while kingship is conferred not on a particular person but on the whole nation.

The present controversy with regard to the temporal authority of the Khilafat is really due to this misconception which is prevailing in the minds of the vast majority of the Muslims, including even many of the theologians. The Turkish nation in which the Khilafat vests at present has yielded to this prevailing misconception by making the *Khalifa* occupy the position which the Pope occupies in the Roman Catholic world. That the leaders of the Turkish nation realize the true significance of Khilafat seems to be quite clear from the explanation given by Ismet Pasha:

"Now how does it follow that we have left Khilafat without any material support? Turkey has the Khilafat, and the Khilafat is vested in the Turkish nation."

And again :—

"You have proved by your active encouragement, and by your approval of our humble custody of the Khilafat of Islam, that we are worthy of being the trustees of this sacred institution. The Turkish nation is proud of this humble yet noble service. This is our conviction that the Khilafat attributes remain unalienated in the Turkish nation."

That is the true position of the Khilafat. The Khilafat is held by the Turkish nation, not by a particular Sultan. If the Sultan has any connection with the Khilafat, it is as the head of the Turkish State. A particular person is called the *Khalifa*, not because he holds any spiritual authority, but because he is the emblem of the sovereignty of a nation. Essentially it is the nation that holds the Khilafat, as

against spiritual teachership which office is held by an individual. Occasionally there may be a temporal head of the nation who may also be a spiritual teacher as in the case of the first four Khalifas and Umar II but such examples are very rare in history. The Muslims are making a grave mistake by mixing up the two offices, the result of which is that the Turks have been compelled to elect a nominal Khalifa who without possessing any spiritual eminence is supposed to be the spiritual head of the Muslim world. If the Muslims do not recognise the position which has been so ably explained by Ismet Pasha, *viz.*, that the Khalifat is vested in the Turkish nation and that that authority can only be exercised constitutionally, they would make the Islamic Khalifat stand on the same basis as the institution of papacy in Christianity, and instead of helping the cause of the Khalifat, they would deal a blow at the very roots of that institution. They should recognise the Turkish nation as the holder of the Khalifat and look to their spiritual teachers for spiritual guidance. It is against all Divine laws that spiritual greatness should be limited to a particular family, and to suppose that the Sultan by his election as the head of the Turkish State, even though he may possess a certain degree of temporal power, becomes the spiritual head of the Muslim world, is the gravest of errors which will ultimately make people lose all faith in the very institution of the Khalifat. The situation in clear words is this that temporal Khalifat vests in the Turkish nation and the Muslims need not lay much stress upon the relations between the Sultan and the Turkish nation, and as regards spiritual Khalifat, it is to the great divine teachers that they must look and not to a particular ruling family.

Correspondence.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE.

Mianwali.

17th December 1922.

Dear Sir,

I have been sent a copy of the "Light" dated 1st November 1922 and my attention has been drawn to the letter regarding Joseph's genealogy. A careful reading of both Gospels will show that neither says that Jesus was the son of Joseph.

My reply in short would be simply :
"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth

life." The authenticity of the Bible cannot be questioned on the letter, but by its spirit, but perhaps a few ideas might help your correspondent to understand the many serious discrepancies in the letter and in parts in the spirit of the Bible. This particular discrepancy is quite in the letter and not in the spirit and may be due to aliases or faulty tables of rival claimants supported by the respective disciples, discrepancies of tradition or other such like human imperfections.

First. The Bible does not claim to be the dictated word of God as the Quran does, but it is a library of many books written by many men, who lived over a long period of years. These men were inspired by God and their writings are their interpretations of the inspiration, and are thus biassed and limited by the prejudices and ability of the writer and the language at his disposal. The Old Testament is the result of inspiration in the minds of Historians and great National and religious Reformers. The Gospels are the inspired memoirs of the life of Jesus Christ written by disciples many years after Jesus had risen. The Epistles are inspired letters from Elders of the Early Church to Christian communities cautioning and exhorting them and incidentally telling us what doctrines were held by the Early Church. The Bible as a whole gives us a history of the working out of God's purpose of redemption of mankind by the progressive manifestation of Himself to man leading up to and including Jesus Christ, recorded by imperfect hands guided by imperfect minds. Then the question must be asked how can one know what is truth and what is imperfect and what is false? Are there any tests or standards? Yes, there are many. I give a few below.

Let us consider as fundamental that God is true and every man a liar and that God is Love as Father. He is a Person and an Energy. First, all that is in unison with the above ideas is truth. All that is not is imperfect. All that is contrary is false. Regarding the imperfect we must try to understand the writer and consider his character and the general outlook on religion of his people and the people of surrounding nations and allow for his bias and prejudices. Then in as much his writings are higher than the conceptions of this time and are reconcilable to the above ideas, he is responding to God's inspirations. The rest will be tradition or historic or immaterial.

Let us take as God's purpose that

He created man in order to win his free adoring love, *i. e.* the work of redemption will not be complete until men live again in perfect harmony with God and with each other. This surely can be possible if we really become like Jesus Christ, (the Truth).

Then again Christianity is not a philosophy to be discussed, or a problem to be solved, but a Person to be loved and a life to be lived. Thus, before passing a verdict on Christianity or the authenticity of the Bible, it is necessary to go beyond the teaching to the person of Jesus Christ and study Him (His character, mind, emotions, and desires, etc.). For it is only in knowing Him that one can really love Him. It is only in loving Him that one can be really convinced that He is very God indeed and surrendering all to Him, lose one's life to this world and to live to Him, (the Life) and grow like Him.

Lastly. The Bible must be read with prayer for Light, with an open mind and an unflinching desire for Truth, for it is God alone, Who can bear witness to His own words and they will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of His Spirit.

(The first two paragraphs of your letter only re-echo the idea of our correspondent *viz* the Bible is not the word of God, and should not be treated as such. We derive the meaning or sense or to use your word the "spirit" from the words before us, and if the accuracy or authenticity of letter is not guaranteed, we cannot understand how one can be sure as to what the author really meant. As regards your "fundamental" that "every man is liar," I will simply say, that it is a disgrace to humanity to think like that. Man is created "after the image of God" and is endowed with vast capabilities to make infinite progress.

If "Christianity is not a philosophy to be discussed," it tantamounts to say that we should not try to understand the doctrines of Christianity. Such a religion then is hardly fit for rational beings. Ed. L.)

Questions and Answers.

Mr. Abdul Hamid :—

Q. 1. (a) After how many years will the day of Judgment (Qiyamat) come?

(b) What is its last sign?

A. No one can exactly tell that, but it is quite clear that its signs such as the appearance of Dajjal

(anti-Christ) and that of the Promised Messiah etc., have come to pass.

Q. 2. When will Imam Mahdi and Khar-i-Dajjal (the ass of anti-Christ) will come to this world; and how will people recognise them?

A. The Imam Mahdi has already appeared in the person of the late Mirza Ghulam Ahmad; and the ass of the anti-Christ is a sort of conveyance, the description of which as given in the reports of the Holy Prophet, shows that it is the railway. For instance we are told that it will run very swiftly, that it will be about 70 yards long, and that it will walk with the power of fire and water. Now all these things are found in the locomotive Engine and Railway.

The people always recognise things by signs; and so they have recognised them in the present age.

Q. 3. Where is Abu Hanifa now, is he dead?

A. Yes, he is dead.

Q. 4. Does the earth revolve round the sun or the sun round the earth? Give proof.

A. The earth goes round the sun. For further details will you kindly consult any book on natural Geography which can be had from every where.

Q. 5. Are the Stars, Sun, Moon, the angels of God?

A. Broadly speaking angels are the divine agents or the various properties of things; in this sense the different functions which the Moon and the Sun perform can be called angels.

Q. 6. How does solar or lunar eclipse happen? Explain it fully.

A. Please consult any Geography.

Q. 7. Will the image worshippers go to heaven?

A. No.

Q. 8. What religion is approved by God?

A. Islam; the Quran says :—Certainly the (true) religion with Allah is Islam.

Q. 9. Define Heaven and Hell.

A. These are two different states of soul, one of perfect happiness (Heaven); and the other of torment (Hell).

Q. 10. Can such a man go to paradise who does not say prayer and does not fast?

A. Yes possibly; God can forgive such sins.

Q. 11. Does Islam allow the practice of bowing or prostrating before any one?

A. No; we must prostrate and bow down before God only.

Q. 12. If the Muslims stop the cow sacrifice, will it do any harm to the religion?

A. No harm; except the remote possibility of associating some sort of sanctity to the cow in the long run, as the Hindu have done. It is not essential that we must sacrifice a cow.

Q. 13. Does Islam allow music?

A. Yes; but too much of every thing is bad.