

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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.

Dean Inge Speaks Out the Plain Truth.

The name of Dean Inge and his momentous pronouncement in 1917 that Jesus appeared as a prophet and never meant to found a Church of his own, are already too well known. A prominent figure in the Modern Churchmen movement, the Dean continues to exert an immense force on the religious thought of England. Addressing the Oxford Branch of the Churchmen's Union, he made some pertinent observations on the necessity for free, unfettered investigation of religious truths. *The Christian Life* reports him to have said:

Many Churchmen would say the place of the

liberal movement was outside the door. Yet just think what would be the result if all expression of free thought had been stifled within the Church of England. The Church would now be committed to believe that the sun went round the earth; that Heaven was a place which we might reach in an aeroplane when we knew the way; that Hell was a place under our feet, and that, as the mediaeval theologian suggested, volcanic eruptions were caused by over-population in the infernal regions—things which no educated people could or did believe. If these things were so, there would be no room in the Church of England to-day except for fools and liars. Modern Churchmen believed that the Church was called upon to face difficulties and solve them by unfettered inquiry. They did not believe authority or tradition had settled every thing, or that we had only to accept formulae drawn up in the early centuries, but that we must take into account recent developments in philosophy, history, and criticism, and, above all, natural science.

It requires nothing beyond the plainest common sense to see that this exactly ought to be the spirit of an honest quest after truth. But how many, we may ask, are there in the fold of the Church, nay, even among the keepers of the fold themselves, who are prepared to take that view? As the Dean aptly puts it, "outside the door"—that is the general verdict. Surely, little can be expected of a system that has tended to debase the reason of man and enthrall his conscience to such an extent. It may be a surprise to many that what the Dean has discovered in this age of enlightenment was, in essence, proclaimed in the Qur-an thirteen centuries ago, when the globe as a whole was enveloped thick in ignorance and superstition. This is how eloquently the Book puts the Dean's argument in a nutshell:

And when it is said to them, Follow what the Lord has revealed, they say: Nay! we follow what we found our fathers upon. What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way. (Qur-an, ii. 172.)

And when it is said to them, Come to what the Lord has revealed and to the Apostle, they say: That on which We found our fathers is sufficient for us. What! even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way. (v. 104.)

The Month of Fast.

As a rule it is incumbent on

every Muslim of age, male or female, to observe, each year, one full month as the Month of Fast. The lunar month fixed for the purpose is known as *Ramazán*, beginning this year, in this country, on April 19th and ending with May 18th. *Absolute* abstinence from *all* eating, drinking, smoking, and sex-relations, from early dawn (say an hour before sunrise) till sunset—this makes one fast. The night interval between these hours is free from these restrictions. Those, however, physically incapable of undergoing the strain, through age, constant illness, or otherwise, are exempt, but they should feed at least one poor man daily. Those who are on journey or are suffering from a disease can postpone fasting until they are at home, or recovered from ill health, when they have to make up all the fasts thus missed.

THE LIGHT.

Dated the 16th April 1923.

A Christian Critic on the Holy Qur-an.

In a recent issue of the *Epiphany*, Mr. Solomon Ramalingam, has dwelt upon the alleged "contradictions" in the Quran. Like so many hostile critics of Islam, he too has not taken the trouble of thinking over the subject before reducing his observations to writing and putting them before the public. He has mistranslated the verses and thus has himself created a divergence, which he calls "*Contradictions*." His knowledge of the Quran seems to be very little which is always a dangerous thing. We should like to supplement it with a few remarks, pointing out, at the same time his objections and clearing his mis-understandings:—

(1) The verse: "Whoever follows another religion than Islam, that religion shall never be accepted from him and in the next world he shall be among the lost" (Sura Inran, 3, 79,) is *not* contradictory to the verse; "Verily they who believe, and they who follow the Jewish religion, and the Christians and the Sabietes, whoever of these believeth in God and the last day and doeth that which is right, shall have their reward with their Lord: fear shall not come upon them; neither shall they be grieved" (Sura Baqr, 2:59); because, here the words "Whoever believeth in God and last day" tantamount to say 'whoever embraces Islam.' It may be noted that in the very beginning of Sura Baqr five fundamental principles of

Islam are laid down namely: (1) Belief in God, (2) prayer, (3) charity, (4) belief in past scriptures and in the Quran and (5) belief in the Last Day. For brevity's sake the Quran generally mentions the first and the last of these principles as the sign of embracing Islam; and so is the case here.

(2) "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Sura Baqr. 2: 25) is decidedly an everlasting rule, and the words "Kill idolators wheresoever you shall find them" (9: 4) pertain only to particular idolators who took up arms against Islam to extirpate it. The Holy Prophet was never aggressive for religion. He only defended Islam to realize the liberty of thought, embodied in these words "Let there be no compulsion in religion." Hence there is no contradiction.

(3) Surely "Wine is an abomination and the work of Satan" (5: 9); and the verse: "Among the fruits you have palm and wine from which you get wine and healthful nourishment (16:69)" is not contradictory to this. The fruit is good, it is man who makes it into intoxicant. It does not mean that intoxicants are allowed. It should also be noted that intoxicants are not altogether devoid of good. Sometimes they are used as a medicine.

(4) This item of the correspondent's criticism on the Quran is very amusing. As the "Quran is in the plain Arabic language" (16:105) in his opinion, it "needs no interpretation," and hence the words "None knoweth its interpretation, but God" (3:5) are contradictory to the previous verse. Is not the Bible in plain English language; and yet there are so many commentaries on it. The statement that none knoweth its interpretation is with regard to the allegorical portions of the Quran as distinguished from the "decisive" verses, which are the "bases of the Book." Moreover the correct rendering of the verse is "None knoweth its interpretation but God, and those who are well versed in knowledge." Thus it is not God only who knows its interpretation.

(5) The verse 49:22 which has been translated by the correspondent as "O Prophet, we allow thee thy wives.....and a believing woman if she gives herself unto the Prophet in case the Prophet desireth to take her wife" appears contradictory to the verse (52:22), which entirely forbids the Prophet from taking another wife; because the translation is *not* correct. The correct translation of 49:22 is "O Prophet, we will allow thee,

thy wives.....and a believing woman who gave herself to the Prophet while he desired to marry her" *i.e.* without dowery. It does not follow that this verse sanctions for the future other wives for the Prophet. It related to the past, and the only privilege mentioned here is the taking of a woman without assigning any dowery. The Arabic word translated as "in case" is not here conditional showing futurity; but it relates what has already happened; and hence there is no contradiction in these two verses.

(6) Similarly, the so called "contradiction" of Sura Alqadr which says "Therein descend the angels and the Spirit by permission of their Lord for every matter" with the verse of Sura Hadid. "No accident happeneth in the earth nor in your opinions, but the same was entered in the book" is due to a misunderstanding. The "book" in the latter verse signifies the Divine Knowledge; and if we accept the view that the decrees are executed on Lail-ul-Qadr as interpreted by the correspondent; even then there is no contradiction. But the correct meaning is that angels descend therein for every matter *with peace i.e.* that night is specially full of blessings for the virtuous. Lail-ul-Qadr has got however a deep or significance as well; and it also means the time of a Divine Messenger during which the angels descend and the dead nations are revived

(7) "Christ is no more than a mortal" (Madiya 79) and, still he is an Apostle of God and *His Word* and a Spirit proceeding from Him. (Nisa, 16:9). The expression "Word of God" or "His Spirit" should not be misunderstood as contradictory to "no more than a mortal." EVERY CREATION OF GOD IS SPOKEN OF AS THE WORD OF GOD IN THE QURAN. Jesus is certainly الله (ج) *i.e.* revelation from God; because (1) he received revelation from Him and (2) he appeared in accordance with the word of God in old Scriptures. These things do not make him anything more than a mortal.

(8) The correspondent translates Sura Nisa, 4:156 thus:—

"They slew him (Jesus) not, neither crucified him, but he was represented by one in his likeness."

This translation is absolutely *wrong*. The correct translation is:—

"And they did not kill him nor did

they crucify him but he was likened (to one crucified) for them."

It was Jesus who was nailed to the cross but he was *not crucified i.e.* he did not die on the cross. He was taken down from it while he was still alive. He was thus himself likened to one crucified and not any one else; as there is no mention of any other persons being represented in his likeness. If the correspondent takes the trouble of reading the Gospel carefully, he will, we hope, come to the same conclusion that Jesus did not breathe his last on the cross. We should like to bring the following points to his notice:—

(1) Jesus remained on the cross for a few hours only, and death on the cross of those days was tardy.

(2) The two men crucified with Jesus were still alive; and Jesus must have been alive by that time.

(3) The legs of these two criminals were broken; but not of Jesus.

(4) His side being pierced blood and water came out, which is a sure sign of life.

(5) Even the Jews were not certain of his death, because the chief priests and Paresees came to Pilate saying "Command that Sepulchre be made sure.....so that last error shall be worst than first." The "first" error clearly refers to his being taken down before his death. In short, Jesus did not die on the cross and his words quoted in the Quran "The day I shall be raised to life" refer only to his being raised on the Day of Judgment with all other men and do not "confirm" the so called "resurrection of Jesus."

The writer has also referred to the abrogation theory in his article, and has made much of it to support his findings. But perhaps he is not aware of the fact that the Muslim theologians of the day do not admit that any verse of the Quran is abrogated by the other. The very fact that the Quran does not make any mention of it and the learned among the Muslims do not concur on the verse or verses which are said to be "abrogated" is a sufficient testimony to the absurdity of this theory. The Christian missionaries are always too fond to criticise the Quran; but the pity is that while labouring at finding out "contradictions" in the Quran, they entirely forget the "revised" editions of the Holy Bible which is an open confession that the Bible has undergone changes.

Islam and its Prayer.

Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! glory be to Thee! save us then from the chastisement of the fire.—THE HOLY QURAN, iii. 190.

ISLAM—"with submission" as its literal meaning is—demands absolute obedience to Divine Control and implicit resignation to His Will; in other words, complete devotion to God; which means absolute divorcement from anything besides Him.

To wean a mind engrossed in worldly concerns from its average occupation is not an easy task; for it must needs pass through various psychological stages before such a change can be accomplished. Complete devotion demands complete subordination of heart and soul to the object of our devotion. It means; disowning our own entity and merging it into that of the Other; prostrating our own will before the will of our Beloved, before we can attain to this stage of devotion. But we cannot do that unless our hearts are fully inclined in that direction. If our hands are engaged in other things, how can our hearts fully incline to one object? It means, therefore, that we must, as it were, fold our hands and refrain from every other thing—for every other thing must tend to distract us from our one object. This stage can be attained only when we have determined to renounce all other things, and wash our hands of them.

Consider the mentality that is engrossed in worldly concerns—can it divorce itself from them by lip-service, by the recitation of prayer and formula, and cut itself clear from its ordinary occupations and elevate it to that stage of devotion which means complete divorcement from the former things? It needs the regular inuring of the mind to a consistent course of discipline. If certain physical postures and specified physical movements go a long way to create different conditions of mind, then the form of Muslim prayer has been framed on the principle of this psychological phenomenon.

Questions and Answers.

Mr. Iqbal Ullah Khan :—

Q. 1. If a Hindu greets a Muslim with Assalamu Alaikum! how should the latter reply, and what should we think of the former?

A. I am afraid you are talking of things which are only imaginary. Well, if a Hindu does greet you in this way, which I am sure will never happen you are expected to return the greeting. This mode of greeting however is special for the Muslims. No change of religion is supposed to be based on the words of greeting.

Q. 2. Can the words عليه السلام be used with the names of non-prophets?

A. Yes; why not, we say امام حسين عليه السلام and in the prayer we read :—

السلام علينا وعلى عباد الله الصالحين

Q. 3. (a) What was the age of the Promised Messiah? (b) Was it according to revelations?

A. (a) About 75, (b) yes.

Q. 4. Is it true that the hidden meanings of the Quran are disclosed according to times?

A. Yes; there is a perfect analogy between the work of God, the Nature and the word of God, the Holy Quran. As in nature, the hidden properties of the natural elements are discovered by and by through research and advance of knowledge, so the meanings of the Quran are revealed according to the requirements of humanity.

Q. 5. Is there any detailed life of the Promised Messiah.

A. No; there are short sketches of his life: both in English and Urdu.

Mr. Munir-ud-Din :—

Q. 1. Was the Holy Prophet omniscient?

A. No.

Q. 2. Why is it permissible to eat fish without slaughtering it?

A. Fish has not got blood; therefore there is no need to slaughter it.

Q. 3. Is it permissible to see theatre or cinema?

A. Yes, provided you want to get a lesson from the play. "Actions are to be judged according to motives" says the Holy Prophet.

Saith Adam Ismail :—

Q. 1. (a) Is it lawful to say "Fateah" over graves (b) Does it benefit the dead.

A. (a) Yes; there is no harm in visiting graves and praying for the dead there. But graves should not be made object of worship. (b) Yes, prayers are beneficial for the dead.

Mr. Ahmad Alijawi :—

Q. 1. Did Jesus claim to be the son of God.

A. No.

Q. 2. Is it true that Jesus was crucified, and he rose from the dead.

A. Jesus was nailed to the cross but did not die on it. He was taken down in a state of swoon, and was properly tended after it. So he recovered. This has been wrongly interpreted by the Christians as his rising from the dead.