

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.

An echo of despair by the Christian Missionaries.

We read the following in *the Moslem World* :—

Nearly half of our foreign missionary force has been lost to the work since the beginning of the world war by death, retirement, or transfer. Of the native leaders probably two-third have met a violent death, while the other one-third, together with the scattered remnant of Christian peoples of Turkey, are vainly knocking at the closed doors of an inhospitable world seeking for a place where they

may merely exist. Nearly every Christian church in Anatolia is closed. The great village-school system which was carefully spread by the missionaries over the country has been completely wiped out. Of the American colleges which were training picked leaders for Christian work, eight have practically ceased to function. Three in coast cities continue their work, but with misgivings as to the future. Of the higher schools, some forty-five in number, less than ten per cent. continue to function. The hospitals, which of all the institutions have suffered the least, are only half of them permitted to minister to the needs of the people.

The Hejaz Railway.

During the war, the railway between Damascus and Medina was blown up in several places, bridges damaged and traffic ended. The question of the restoration of this pilgrim route came up at Lausanne. We learn from the Egyptian press that an agreement has been made for joint control and restoration of the line, as follows :—

"In a declaration dated 27, the Government of Great Britain and France, acting in the name of Syria, Palestine and Transjordan, and in order to give effect to the desire to recognize the religious character of the Hedjaz Railway, declare their willingness to agree to the formation of a Moslem Council to advise upon the upkeep and maintenance of the line. This Council will comprise four Moslem members, nominated by Syria, Palestine, Transjordan and the Hedjaz respectively, and two additional members chosen from the Moslem inhabitants of other countries interested in the pilgrimage. Its seat will be at Medina. All profits from at least, the sections in Syria, Palestine and Transjordan will be applied to the maintenance and general betterment of the whole line, any sums that then remain being applied to the assistance of pilgrims. It is stipulated that the recommendations of the Moslem Council shall not be in opposition to the requirements of the International Sanitary Conventions.

"No mention of Turkey is made in this Declaration, although the dispute really lies between that country and the King of the Hedjaz. We may recall that the line was built by Sultan Abdul Hamid with funds which he collected from all over the Moslem world, for the sole purpose of facilitating

the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. To what extent the arrangement now come to will be affected by any decision taken by Angora with regard to the signing of the Peace Treaty is problematical "

THE LIGHT.

DATED THE 1ST SEPTEMBER 1923.

Usury or Interest

(Communicated.)

II.

(d) THE QURAN ON USURY.

The Holy Quran, after enjoining charity on Muslims, forbids the usury in these words :—

الذين ياكلون الربوا لا يقرمون إلا كما يقرمون
الذي يتخبطه الشيطان من المس *

"They who swallow down usury shall not stand except as one whom the devil has prostrated by his touch does stand." In this verse there are two points to be noted :—(a) The desire to collect riches by usury is compared to the touch of Satan which makes one lie down on ground, *i. e.* makes one unfit to aspire after higher ideals ; and (b) the usurer having become devoid of all sense of sympathy, love and kindness is given up to moral degeneration, which is clearly implied in his 'prostration.' The condemnation and prohibition of usury is plain enough in this verse, yet there is a clearer and stronger verse on the subject :—

يا ايها الذين آمنوا اتقوا الله ذروا ما بقى
من الربوا إن كنتم من المؤمنين * فإن لم تفعلوا فأنذرو
بحرب من الله رسوله وإن تبتم فلكم رؤس أموالكم
لا تظلمون ولا تظلمون * وإن كان ذرعاً فتنظرة
إلى ميسرة وإن نصد قرحير لكم إن كنتم تعلمون *

"O believer act righteously before God and relinquish what remains due from usury if you are believers. But if you do (it) not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle and if you repent then for you is your capital neither you shall make (the debtor) suffer loss nor you shall suffer (it). And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances then (there should be) postponement to (his) ease ; and that you remit (the principal sum) as alms is better for you, if you know." We glean the following from this verse :—(a) The custom of levying usury as prevalent amongst the Arabs

is put an end to so much so that the creditors are ordered to remit even the balance of it. (b) The high standard of morality cannot be attained unless one completely refrains from usury. (c) Usury is a great curse and is described as a war against Allah and his Apostle. (d) How mighty is the power with which the Holy Prophet wanted to extirpate an evil from among those in whom it was deeply rooted !. (e) The strict exhortation to extirpate the custom is unparalleled in its expression which places usury at the head of all evils on account of its extraordinary attractions (f) The Quran is the loudest to strengthen the cause of the poor ; and the Prophet is fearlessly regardless of any opposition from the Arabs in whose blood ran the evil of usury, for procuring an honourable living for the poor.

(e) MUSLIM ATTEMPTS AT THE LEGALIZATION OF USURY.

The human weaknesses are so yielding to the love of accumulating wealth that in spite of the plain prohibition pronounced by the Quran some of the Muslims have made futile attempts to legalize usury. We propose here to deal with these attempts one by one and to examine their absurdity :—

1. The significance of *riba* (ربوا) as occurring in the above verses of the Quran is asserted to be obscure on the ground of twofold conception of the word. The Muslim lawyers mention two kinds of *riba viz:* (a) ربا بالنسيئة and (b) ربا الفضل. The first implies interest charged in case of delay of payment while the second signifies interest levied in a ready transaction in a barter of two things of the same kind. However, the lawyers are unanimous on the point that lending money at fixed rates of interest falls under *riba* and is technically termed the ربا بالنسيئة. The point is not, therefore, that there is scope for the legalization of usury but it is whether the second kind of interest *i. e.* ربا الفضل is included in the Quranic prohibition or not. This prohibition, however, is not at all included in the Quran but finds its source in tradition.

2. The saying attributed to Caliph Umar forms another point of discussion.

وَأَنَّ آخِرَ مَا نَزَّلَتْ آيَةُ الرَّبِّ وَأَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَضَى وَلَمْ يَفْسَرْ لَنَا مِنْ عَوَالِ الرَّبِّ وَالرِّبَا *
والريبة *

"The last what was revealed was the verse relating to *riba* and the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him; died and he did not explain to us, so give up *riba* and doubling." The upholders of usury erroneously infer from this saying that the Prophet had no time to explain what *riba* meant and so they conclude that the word is dubious in significance. But they are altogether mistaken as the following grounds would show:—
(a) The practice of usury was too well-known to require an explanation (b) Although the verse is doubtlessly attributed to the closing period of Prophet's life yet he had ample time to give the version of it since it was after the revelation of the verse that he went on his last pilgrimage to Mecca and there remarked in the course of a sermon. "Beware, all *riba* taken in the days of ignorance is forbidden to you; for you are the principal sums of your money. Wrong not and be not wronged...." Then he said, thrice "Have I declared the message," and the audience correspondingly gave a reply in the affirmative, after which he said "O Lord I bear Thou witness," (c) The inquisitive audience, including Umar himself, would at once have questioned the Prophet, had the word been dubious for them. (d) The traditional mention of principal sum clears all doubts as to the meaning of *riba*. It certainly means usury charged on the principal sum. (e) The Muslim lawyers and the pioneers of Islam are unanimous on this significance of *riba* that it implies fixed rates of interest. (f). There are various other reports which leave no doubt as to the significance of the term 'disputed' and in the light of them the so-called obscurity becomes an idle thought (g). The prohibition of usury in the Quran had long been pronounced before these interdictions were given and not the

slightest doubt rose as to its meaning in the mind of those whose practice of usury was the basis of, so to speak, the Quranic prohibition, or those who were the life-long companions of the Prophet.

Thus it is clear that the interpretation put upon the words of Caliph Umar is absolutely wrong. The reference in his saying is to the verse *الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا* as already quoted. The meaning is that this verse was not abrogated nor was it of a doubtful significance, and therefore there was no need for the Holy Prophet to explain it, so give up all attempts to legalize usury. This is what *reebat* (doubting) means." Cf. *Majma'-i-Bihar-ul-Anwar*, the famous dictionary of traditions.

3. The well-known Sir Syed has also given some arguments in support of the legalization of usury, which will be examined in our next.

(To be Continued)

Correspondence.

MUTA.

Dear Brother,

Referring to your answer to my question about *Muta*, in the Light, dated August 16, 1923, I should like to bring the following to your notice:—

You admit that a Khalifa cannot cancel the orders of God, but you say that *Muta* is not sanctioned by the Quran. Secondly, you say that the Holy Prophet received orders of its prohibition, and hence it was disallowed by Islam. But you are wrong.

The Quran says:—

فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً

This sanctions *Muta*; accordingly in the *Tafsir-i-Gharib-ul-Tanzil*, Vol. I. Page 421, line 7, *Nizam-i-Naishapuri* says:—

"Imran bin Haseen said that *Ayat* *فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ* was revealed in the Quran, and no *Ayat* to cancel the former one was revealed. The Prophet allowed us to practise *Muta*, and we did it in his (the Prophet's) time, and the Prophet for ever gave no orders for its prohibition. After his death a person (UMAR) did whatever he liked according to his own opinion."

From the above it is clear that God as well as the Holy Prophet allowed *Muta*. A person Umar by name cancelled according to his own opinion. Let the person, if you like be called the Khalifa, but, sir, you admit that a Khalifa cannot cancel the orders of God and of the Prophet. What would you do now? I hope you know well the punishment in store for one who after the death of the Prophet made Halal (حلال) Haram (حرام) and *vice versa*.

Brotherly Yours,
MALIK GULZAR KAYANI,
(Student Islamia College, Peshawar),
Khyber Manzel,
PESHAWAR CITY, N.-W.F.P.

(The verse you quote does *not* sanction *Muta*. It means that you should give the dowries to women whom you profit by marrying. Where is the permission for *Muta*. The words of the Quran غير مسانحين *i. e.* "not committing fornication," strike at the very root of the wrong notion lurking in your mind.

The authority of the "Tafsir" you quote is questionable because it seems to be the opinion of a writer who thinks *Muta* lawful. You also admit Umar as Khalifa, and it is plain enough that he could not go against the orders of Allah and the Holy Prophet. Besides, there is hardly any difference between fornication and *Muta*.

Ed. Light.)

Questions and Answers.

Mr. Inamullah Shah :—

Q. 1. In what way did the Promised Messiah resemble Jesus?

A. In more than one way *i. e.* in his mode of speech and style of writing, in his temperament, and chiefly in the work which was entrusted to him. He was raised to rectify the followers of Jesus, and that gave him the title of Messiah as he himself says :—

چون مرا نور ہے تو کے مسیحی دانہ اند
مصلحت را ابن مریم نام من بنهاد اند
Q. 2. Kindly quote the report or reports in which the Holy Prophet has ordered Muslims to

help the Promised Messiah.

A. I am afraid all the reports cannot be quoted here. However I quote one :—

من ادرك منكم عيسى ابن مريم فليقره مني السلام

i. e. Anyone who finds the Jesus son of Mary say my salaam to him

Q. 3. Kindly quote the report which says that Promised Messiah will appear in village Qadian.

A. The report under reference has got the word كدعه which much resembles Qadian.

Mr. Mohd. Said :—

Q. 1. Do you believe that earth is an oblate spheroid?

A. Yes; Islam is not the enemy of scientific research. As a matter of fact the Arabic word كروي means a round thing.

Q. 2. It is true that earth revolves round the sun; that the sun is millions of times larger than the earth and do you believe in solar system?

A. Yes; Islam, is not against these facts and those of your "religious dignatories" who object to these things, are mistaken.

Q. 3. (a) Who was Solomon, a king, and a prophet? (b) Is it true that in his times birds and animals could talk?

A. (a) Yes, a king-prophet. (b) The Quran says he talked with نمل which is the name of a tribe and not ants as is generally understood.

Q. 4. (a) Which of the four Imams has greatest number of followers?

(b) Which of them was known first.

A. (a) Imam Abu Hanifa I believe.

(b) Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik were contemporaries; and appeared prior to the remaining two Imams.

Q. 5. Is it permissible to marry a cousin?

A. The term cousin is very loose in English and is applied to various relations. It will be well to quote here the Quranic verse on the subject :— Forbidden to you are mothers, and your daughters, your sisters, and your paternal aunts and brothers' daughters and sisters' daughters and your mother that have sucked you and your foster sisters and mothers of your wives and your step-daughters who are in your guardianship born of your wives to whom you have gone in but if you have not gone into them there is no blame on you (in marrying them) and the wives of your sons, who are of your own loins and that you have two sisters together 4: 23.

Q. 6. What was the religion of the Egyptians before the birth of our Prophet; and what is it now?

A. They were Christians; and now there are Muslims and Christians in Egypt. The original Christians of Egypt are called Copts.