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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.

Did Jesus suffer for mankind?

Writing on the suffering of Jesus and his crucifixion our esteemed contemporary the "Epiphany" in its issue of 11th March says:—

"He suffered without recrimination, without resentment and without parade, willingly for the truth's sake, and as we Christians believe for the sake of all mankind."

And again in the same article it observes:

"But we would draw attention to the fact that Jesus never sought to suffer. Suffering was not to Him a method by which He sought to gain advantage over His enemies or extort a boon from them. It was an incident in His chosen path of righteousness."

We can hardly harmonise this view with the cardinal principles of Christianity. If the crucifixion

was simply an INCIDENT, which would have been possibly AVOIDED; where is the justification for the new dispensation of atonement? The Christian theory is that God sent His only son to be crucified with a view to save humanity from the curse of sin. This shows that it was a pre-determined thing; and as such Jesus should have known all about it. He was the first person to grasp it fully that his crucifixion means salvation to mankind. Humanity could that have been saved but with his blood alone, and yet we are told that "he never sought to suffer"; which in other words means he never sought to save humanity. But we are also told that "he suffered for the sake of all mankind." It is indeed a riddle to us.

The most important point, however, in this connection is that Jesus in his teachings never pointed out that he was the Saviour of the world and that mere LIP BELIEF in his blood would save humanity. On the contrary, he always laid stress on ACTIONS. Read his sermon of mount and you will be impressed with one great thought that the author of such a beautiful discourse, which has laid down the golden principle that we have to *work out* our own SALVATION, can never dream of the easy-going doctrines of crucifixion and atonement.

Christian Missionaries in Nishapore.

A correspondent of the "Moslem world," has given a very interesting account of his missionary activities in Nishapore, the famous city of Omar Khayyam, in the course of which he tells us:—

"We were also pleased at the religious toleration that we enjoyed in Nishapore in carrying on our work. Scriptures were sold widely in the bazar, meetings were held in the hospital in which the gospel was fully preached; many of the *Mullahs* of the city came to talk with us about our religion; but there was not the least fanaticism or even opposition displayed.

But the medical work not only protected us against possible opposition in the minds of the thinking men of the city it proved to be one of our powerful apologetics. The fact that a Christian

doctor had the ability to do work which the Muhammadaos could not do; and that the people of America should take enough interest in their religion and the rest of the world to send doctors and ministers to every land as missionaries made a deep impression. When some fault finder would begin to argue for the superiority of Islam, we would sometimes challenge him with the question, Then why do you not collect money and send one of your doctors and one of your *Mullahs* to America to convert us to true religion."

The energetic efforts of the Christian propagandist to spread Christianity throughout the world are surely commendable. But the argument that Islam cannot be a true religion unless it sends out "doctors" and "Mullahs" as missionaries seems to be a queer one. If that is the way of judging the truth of a religion; we would invite the attention of the correspondent to the prototyping spirit of the early Muslims; who went abroad as merchants, not as paid missionaries, and won over hundreds and thousands of people to Islam through their labour of love and force of character.

Here is also a lesson for the Muslims of the day. Their indifference to the propagation of Islam is now used as a weapon against it. They must therefore as true to believers, wash away this blot on the fair name of their religion. The medical men are most suitable persons for the missionary work; and they can make the best use of their profession by utilising in the spread of Islam. The Muslim Mission at Woking (England) is doing very useful work, but England wants more efforts in this direction; we can say from one personal experience that there is a sufficient scope of work for ten such missions in London only.

The Religion of humanity.

Surely the true religion with Allah is Islam and those to whom the Book had been given did not show opposition but after knowledge had come to them out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the Communication of Allah—then surely Allah is quick reckoning (Quran chapter III: 18).

The above quoted verse of the Holy Quran contains a very big claim in these words—"surely the true religion with Allah is Islam." The Muslims believe that the Holy Quran is the word of God, and Islam the last religion of humanity. But unless we substantiate this statement, mere belief is of no avail. It is, therefore, the duty of one who is devoted to the comparative study of Religions to see what are those things in Islam

which can justify its claim to be the only religion for humanity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said that "Islam is based upon five principles; which are known in the Islamic literature as the five fundamentals or five Pillars of Faith. Let us therefore study these principles and find out if they have something to make Islam the universal religion.

I. Principle—the article of Faith

The first principle of Islam is an article of Faith, which consists of two parts and runs thus:— (a) There is no God; but Allah and (b) Mohammad is his apostle. Before I say something about this formula; I must explain one point which is this. The conception of God or Allah in Islam is not of a tribal or national deity; but that of a Universal God who is the cherisher sustainer, the Evolver of the whole universe, which consists of so many worlds. This catholic conception of the Deity has been thus laid down in the very first chapter of the Holy Quran:—

"All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the nations and all the worlds." From these words we can easily judge that the conception of Allah in Islam is as wide as the Universe itself. Whatever the world consists of has emanated from Him; and He is the Lord of all the things—animate and inanimate. Thus in the first part of the Formula, it has been laid down that the whole humanity nay, even the whole Universe, consisting of so many divergent elements is ONE; as it has emanated from and is under ONE PROVIDENCE—Allah.

The second part, deals with the prophet hood of Muhammad (may peace blessings of God be upon him), who is again the Universal prophet; his mission extending to the whole of humanity. It is admitted on all hands that the Holy Prophet was not a tribal or sectarian Prophet, like Moses and Jesus, but he was sent to all mankind; and his teachings were meant for the guidance of humanity at large. It is true that before the advent of the Holy Prophet; divine messengers were sent to every nation, separately and its reason is quite apparent. In the early days of human race, mankind was divided by natural barriers; and the means of communication were almost unknown. The humanity was so to speak in its infancy. Its material progress was circumsented, Its intellectual and spiritual advancement was yet to be accomplished. Hence the religion that was given to different peoples at different times was local and incomplete, only suitable for the circumstances obtaining at certain places at certain times. But the UNITY of God demands that the whole mankind may

be united into ONE homogenous whole ; as the Unity of the Creation in keeping with the oneness of the Great Creator.

The old prophets of Israelites brought the divine message, and elevated a section of people to high morals ; but they could not bind the whole of mankind into one compact of fraternity ; nor could they teach it the whole truth, the complete religion ; as it was not fit for that. It would be very inadvisable for a teacher to dole out the whole store of his knowledge over an infant class. Similarly it was impossible for the early prophets of Israelites to teach the complete religion or communicate the divine message to the whole of mankind when it was in infancy. Their work was therefore limited ; not for any fault of their own ; but for the limited capacity of the people to which they were sent. The Prophet Muhammad, on the contrary, came at the time when the world had advanced sufficiently, when the human intellect had reached its final stage and when the whole world was going to be made into ONE through the easy means of communication. It was at this time that the complete religion for humanity was needed. Accordingly it was revealed to the Holy prophet, who was sent to all mankind. He, therefore, in the very first principle of his Faith, announced that humanity was one ; and thus cemented the brotherly relations between different nations of the world.

It may, however be said, it is only an article of faith, a lip belief or profession, which does not amount much. True ; but Islam does require more lip belief. As a matter of fact the significance of belief in Islam always carries with itself the actual practice. Islam does not only put up theories ; but it invariably carries them into practical life. Therefore the remaining four principles of Faith represent the realization of the first principle along with the respective significances of their own.

II. Principle—Prayer.

The second principle for instance is the Prayer. Every one who has happened to see the muslims in prayer, must have realized that this mode of worship represents a beautiful scene of perfect equality and Brotherhood of man. In the prayer we stand respectfully for the worship of ONE God in whose sight a peer and a peasant are equal ; and hence there is no distinction of rank and file, of high and low at the prayer time. The poorest muslim can stand side by side with the King in the prayer line. Thus the Brotherhood

of man which was established in theory in the first article of Faith is practically realised in Prayer.

III Principle—Fasting.

The third principle of Islam is fasting, and every Muslim is enjoined to fast during the month of Ramazan. It may be asked. What is the use of fasting, which is but another name of starvation ? In reply we will say that in the first place it creates a sort of fellowship with and sympathy for those who actually starve. It is an indisputable fact that there are hundreds and thousands of our fellow men who through adverse circumstances are compelled to starve ; and it is our sacred duty to help them and sympathise with them. But it is a feature of human nature that we cannot realize the suffering of others unless we ourselves go through them. A wealthy man who has never the ill luck of going without his dainty dishes, is not in a position to understand the sad plight of his brothers, who often go without the coarsest food. The first advantage of fasting therefore is that the Muslims become alive to the sufferings of their fellow men, and are thus stimulated to lend them a helping hand. That is why the Holy Prophet and his companions are reported to be exceedingly charitable in the month of Ramazan. The Muslims are expected to give alms more generously in this month than usual ; and it cannot be denied that this practice goes along way to mitigate the suffering of humanity. It has been truly said that Islam has got a levelling effect ; and that is more conspicuous during the fasting month. A King with all his means of subsistence and stores of provisions starves like a poor man ; and is thus brought face to face with the realities of life. From this he can learn a great lesson of sympathy for his subjects.

This is only one phase of fasting. It has got many other advantages as well. For instance, we learn abstinence under the command of God, for a certain specified period of time from those things which are perfectly lawful and obedience to this command makes us doubly fit to give up or abstain from those things which are unlawful. It is in a way a training, a schooling which cultivates in us the habits of abstinence, perseverance, patience and sympathy.

Physically too, Fasting has a wholesome effect on our constitution. It is a thing of common experience that after fasting our health is improved and the Ramazan seems to give a tone to our health. The reason is very simple. Your physical organs, the liver, the stomach etc have taken rest, and have begun to work afresh w/

more vigour and energy. The food you take is properly digested and assimilated to our physique

Those who have some experience in the realm of vision and spiritual flight agree on this that the practice of fasting quickens their spiritual power and they see wonderful visions during the period of fasting. The explanation of this phenomenon is to be found in the fact that by subjection of our physical faculties our spiritual faculties are strengthened and therefore you begin to soar higher and higher in the regions of spirituality. This all-round growth and welfare which is aimed at by fasting is described in the Holy Quran by the Arabic word TATTAQUN, which means "so that you may be careful of your duty." This implies the duty towards our fellow-beings and also duty to ourselves; which lies in keeping our body and soul in a sound state & keeping our various God-given faculties in the right proportion.

It may also be mentioned that fasting is a religious institution which was, according to the Holy Quran, enjoined in the older scriptures as well. And it is a remarkable fact that the Holy Prophet who could not read or write gives this information to the world; which is exactly corroborated by the study of the older scriptures. For instance, in the new Testament we find:—

Then came to him, the disciples of John saying: why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them; but they day will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them; and then shall they fast. Math. x 14—15.

And then again:—

Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of sad countenance. But then when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face. Math VI 16—17.

And we have also:—

Howbeit, this kind goeth not but by prayer and fasting.

From these quotations it is evident that Jesus enjoined fasting upon his followers; but we do not know if his enjoinments are carried out into practice by his so-called followers.

To be (continued).

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