

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.

THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY II.

IV Principle—Pilgrimage.

Now we come to the fourth Principle i. e. Pilgrimage; which represents the unique scene of man's Fraternity at the sacred city of Mecca. It is true that in our daily Prayer a prince and a peasant stand shoulder to shoulder, yet the difference of their respective costumes and dresses are still enough to differentiate them. But in the Hajj or Pilgrimage we have to eliminate these differences of society as well, and are entirely brought down to the level of the whole of humanity. The Pilgrims who visit the Holy shrine at Mecca belong

to different climates of the world; they differ in caste and creed; they differ in ranks and grades; they differ in speech and modes of living; but still they are fastened with the unbreakable bond of fraternity and are saturated with the true belief of the Unity of God and equality of man. The display of wealth, of rich costumes and of expensive clothings make distinction in society but the divine wisdom which found the fullest and the last exposition in Islam and which wants to destroy all these conventional distinctions and differences in order to create a universal Brotherhood of man could not allow the same in the levelling atmosphere of Mecca in the days of Pilgrimage. Hence every Pilgrim, no matter what his rank and position has to divest himself of his particular costume before stepping into the Holy precincts of Mecca, and to dress himself in seamless white sheets—the IHRAM. This scene is simply wonderful. Just picture to yourself thousands of men and women belonging to different ranks, and creed of society, clothed in the same garb of humility passing days and nights in the same circumstances before the sight of one God. All distinctions of wealth and position, colour and nationality disappear there. The King and the peasant are alike; one cannot be distinguished from the other. In short, the whole of humanity assumes one uniform aspect before its Maker and the universal Brotherhood of man becomes a living reality.

V Principle—poor rates.

As regards the last and fifth principle of Islam, which has been promulgated by the Holy Quran in the terms of ZAKAT (poor-rates) or SADAQAT (alms); every Muslim is expected to take a stock of his savings every year and to disburse 2½ percent of this as "alms." Charity in Islam takes two different forms; one is optional and the other compulsory, which is also called ZAKAT. When asked what was the ultimate object of ZAKAT, the Holy Prophet is reported to have replied that it was a means whereby the rich had to give something out of their wealth for the help of those who are in need. The Holy Quran has laid down eight different purposes for the expendi-

ture of the ZAKAT money. It says : Alms are only for the poor, the needy, the officials appointed over them ; those whose hearts are made inclined to truth, the ransoming of captives, those in debt, in the way of Allah and the wayfarer.

It is Islam only that has given charity the prestige and form of an institution. Before it, the followers of other religions used to do charitable deeds on their own personal fancies and had no organised form of charity. But the Holy Prophet, whose aim was to systematize the religion and make it a living force in the civilization of mankind, laid down rules and regulations for charity, so that the general welfare of society may be achieved. Here, again, the spirit of Brotherhood is prevailing. The wealthy are required to part with a certain part of their wealth for their fellow-beings ; so that they may become useful members of society. The Western World goes on dreaming of its Utopian socialism, which if carried out into practice will make society devoid of incentive. But Islam being a practical religion, has established a most useful financial institution in the form of ZAKAT which can provide sufficient funds to improve the status of those who are lingering behind in the race of life, leaving at the same time sufficient scope for individual incentive and ingenuity.

There is also one other phase with regard to the Islamic law of charity which should not be ignored. Before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, charity was considered only an individual act of merit ; and therefore it was thought necessary that it should be performed secretly. Jesus Christ, for instance, addresses his disciples in these words :—

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” Matt. VI : 3.

But Islam has made a little modification in it ; and allows the giving of alms openly as well. I think this change has made the teachings of Jesus perfect, as the Holy Prophet came to perfect the law or in the words of Jesus “to Guide us in all truth.” One can easily see what a tremendous amount of good is done to humanity by openly raising the funds of charity. The useful work which is accomplished by the Red Cross Association during the great war would have been a failure, if the rule of secrecy in charity had been observed by the Christians. Nay, the whole system of the Church can come to a standstill if open charity is discontinued. Here again the world at last has been obliged to sit at the feet of Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him).

We have briefly surveyed the five principles of Islam ; and every one can see for himself that the

whole trend of these teachings goes to show that it is a religion which is meant for the whole of humanity. Its articles of Faith, its practical institutions, its ordinance of commission and omission bring this one fact home to us *viz* we all belong to one Great World Family and our duty lies in helping each other. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the religion consists of two things : (1) submission to the will of Allah and (2) service to His Creatures.

Questions and answers.

M. Muhy-ud-Din Q. 1. What and where are the Heaven and Hell ?

Ans :—As already stated in a previous issue, Heaven and Hell are not the names of particular places. These words only represent the two states of the human soul ; one of perfect happiness and enjoyment and the other of affliction and distress.

Q. 2. What and where is Arash ?

Ans :—Arash means the divine control over the universe. It is not a material thing.

Q. 3. Are there evil spirits in the world ; and do they take the shape of a Creature ?

Ans :—Bad men who make mischief and mislead others are evil spirits. They are spoken of as “ devils ” in the Holy Quran.

Idris :—Q. 1. Why is it that music played on an instrument is prohibited ? Where is the harm if my wife sings on a harmonium to please me ? What does Shariat say about gramophone or military band ?

Ans :—Music generally leads one to sensuality and idolence ; and it is rather difficult to keep *the mean* in such matters. I do not think there is any harm in the occasional use of gramophone or military band.

M. S. A. Khuraishi Q. 1. Can the miracles of (1) shadowlessness of the Holy Prophet's sacred body and (2) the splitting of the moon into two distinct parts be proved from the Holy Quran. ?

Ans :—There is no mention in the Holy Quran of the Holy Prophet's body being shadowless. The splitting of the moon is, however, mentioned. But it may mean the breaking down of the power of Arabs as the moon was their national emblem.

Ghulam Safdar Q. 1. What is Islamic conception of Jinn. ?

Ans :—Literally any thing or being which is invisible to human eye is called a Jinn. In the Holy Quran the word is used for evil spirits i. e. for the beings that invite men to evil as opposed to angels. It is also sometimes used to signify powerful leaders, who do not mix with the people

freely and thus keep themselves hidden from the popular eye.

Q. 2:—What is the difference between SHIAS and SUNNIS? Can they both attain salvation.

Ans:—The chief difference is this. The SUNNIS hold that Abu Baker, Omar, Ussman and Ali were, all true and "*rightly directed*" Caliphs of the Holy Prophet; while the Shias think, that the first three were not; and that Ali was the only right-ful successor to the Prophet.

They can both attain to salvation; provided they do good deeds, as salvation depends upon ACTIONS.

FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE.

THE PENALTY OF APOSTASY IN ISLAM.

"Surely (as for) those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and again disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them in the (right) path."—QUR-AN, IV. 137.

If there existed any doubt as to the penalty of apostasy in Islam, and the fate of the apostate, the above quoted verse dispels it at once. It is clear and definite, leaving no room for discussion, requiring no comment. It speaks of one who embraces Islam and then forsakes it; who becomes a Muslim yet again, and yet again recants and becomes rooted in apostasy, while the latter part of the verse states the punishment which will be meted out to the apostate, which is that Allah will not forgive him, nor will Allah guide him any more in the path of righteousness. The offence of apostasy, like a deadly sin, is to be judged by God alone, and not by human agency. Unfortunately, the role played by the missionary propagandist in Europe in the last century has been largely delegated to the politician, and the orgy of political blunders already perpetrated, with the effect of alienating the Muslim world from British Rule is, by now, an open secret. Everyone knows that it is Phil-hellenism rather than any "dictates of humanity," which threatens the integrity of the Turkish domination. Now that the question of the reconstruction of the Turkish Empire is under consideration by the "Near East" Conference in Paris, the "protection of minorities under the Turk" shibboleth may lead to many issues, of which one may very possibly turn on the penalty erroneously supposed to attach to apostasy in Islam; and a word or two on this subject would seem to be therefore not only advisable, but most necessary.

Muslims take their religion from the Qur-an and from the actions of the Prophet Muhammad, and these latter are only followed by way of

partical explanation of the former. "My words cannot abrogate the words of God; but the words of God can abrogate mine." So says the Noble Prophet.

The sole test of authenticity to be applied to his own words is the Qur-án; and it is to the Qur-án therefore that we must look to discover the penalty for apostasy. The verse I have quoted makes no mention of any actual punishment in a material sense. A return to unbelief after belief is mentioned more than once, and neither death nor any other human punishment is so much as hinted at. In two other, passages the Qur-án treats of apostasy, and in these the very word *Irtitad* has been used, which bears the technical significance of apostasy. One of them is the 54th verse of the fifth chapter, which I quote from Muhammad Ali's translation:—

"O you who believe! *whoever from among you turns back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people,* He shall love them and they shall love Him; lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing."

The verse speaks of no penalty for the renegades from Islam, but tells by way of prophesy that apostasy will be followed by coming of a better people into the fold of Islam. In Chapter II, the concluding portion of verse 217 speaks thus of apostasy:—

"And whoever of you turns back from his religion, *then he dies while an unbeliever*—these it is whose works shall go for nothing in this world, and the hereafter, and they are the inmates of the fire; therein they shall abide."

I append Sale's translation of the same verse:

"Whoever among you shall turn back from his religion, and die an infidel, their works shall be vain in this world, and the next; they shall be the companions of hell-fire, they shall remain therein for ever."

And Rodwell's version is in nearly the same words. The penalty to the apostate is not death but, in the translation of Rodwell, "their works shall be fruitless in this world and in the next," and in the rendering of Sale, "their works shall be vain in this world and the next." Then comes the punishment in the life after death, "They shall be the companions of hell-fire." I do not find any other mention of apostasy in the Qur-án and certainly nothing to justify the suggestion that death is, or ever was, the penalty of apostasy in Islam. The misconstruction or misinterpretation of Islam seems, unfortunately, to have fallen to the lot of certain Christian writers, and in

their opportunity. Muhammad Ali translates it, "then he dies while an unbeliever"; Sale, "and die an infidel"; and Rodwell, "and die an infidel." But the Christian propagandist has translated it, "he shall be put to death." This is not only a gross misinterpretation on his part, but evinces, if intended sincerely, his utter ignorance of the Arabic language. Sale, whose maligning—Islam—tendencies are well known, could hardly have failed to make much of it if the verse had allowed him the least latitude.

In the days of the Prophet all the reliable records of his life are silent on the subject. There were many apostasies doubtless, but no one was punished, for it is, and has ever been, the watchword of Islam that there shall be "no compulsion in religion (Ch. II. 256). We however, read of the putting to death of the party of 'Ukl in our traditions, who, after professing Islam, feigned that the climate of Medina was insalubrious, and being told to go to the place where the herds of camels belonging to the State were grazed, murdered the keepers and drove the herds along with them. They were charged under the crime of murder and dacoity, for which the punishment of death is provided in Ch. V, 33. This episode has generally been cited by the Qur'anic commentators under the verse which ordains the death penalty for murder and dacoity; and there is no other case which can even be twisted to show that the punishment of death was ever inflicted on apostasy from Islam.

Reference may be made to wrong actions on the part of subsequent followers of Islam who assumed the garb of religion merely to further their political aims; but this is not peculiar to Muslims. Has not the modern politician most infelicitously compared the recent fighting in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem with the Crusades, and gone so far as to hail Salonika as the gate of Christianity? If Christianity is not responsible for the horrors of the Inquisition, before which the horrors of hell fade into insignificance, wrongs done by some few Muslim zealots, if done against the clear teachings of the Qur'an, cannot be put to the account of Islam. The deliberators of the Paris Conference should bear in mind that if this supposed death penalty for apostasy in Islam is to be used as a pretext for tampering with the authority of the Sultan, it will amount to nothing more nor less than an uncalled-for attack on our religion. We take it as an insult and a slur on our religion, and the Phill-hellenists should think twice before they allow the question of apostasy to influence their decision. Let us have no more blunders. We Muslims do believe in freedom of

conscience, and we do denounce the action of a Muslim Government even under which capital punishment is meted against apostasy. The Book which says, "All Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians who believe in God and the last day, and do good works, shall have their reward with their Lord" (Qur'an II. 59)—such cannot allow its followers to look with hatred towards Christian and Jews, no matter if they be so by birth or are renegades from Islam. Islam is the proverbial enemy of idolatry, the sworn foe of polytheism in every form. Yet millions of temples, pagodas and shrines, consecrated to numberless gods, goddesses and demi-gods, teeming with valuable golden and marble images and idols, have survived the most triumphant rule of Islam in India. They still possess the artistic beauty and sublimity of the ancient workmanship and excite the wonder of the modern craftsman. Does not this fact speak highly of that largeness of soul which the holy texts have infused into the notorious breakers of idols? But where are the remains of our art and culture in places which were taken from us by the Christians of Spain?

KHAWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN,

Imam of the Mosque, Woking.

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