

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.

Human Sacrifice.

The Times Bulawayo (South Africa) correspondent gives the following thrilling account of a recent human sacrifice by a native tribe of South Rhodesia to propitiate the "rain spirit":

The elders of the Mtawara tribe, alarmed at the drought and the poor crops, consulted the rain doctor, and decided on what they claim to be the never-failing expedient of human sacrifice by burning. The lot fell on a native who, it is alleged, had been intimate with another native's wife. It was discovered that the intended victim was the son of the rain doctor, who, however, proceeded with the sacrifice. The struggling man was bound and burnt alive. Directly life was extinct, heavy rains began.

The celebrations of the success of the sacrifice were interrupted by the arrival of the police. The elated tribe, not aware of having done wrong, showed

the police the charred remains of the victim and told them of previous occasions on which similar sacrifices had been equally successful, the last one mentioned being in 1917. They assert that the "rain spirit," whose name is Mwari, lives in their district, which they therefore wished to be included in the Rhodesian Native Reserves. The local paramount chief is said to remember seventy-two natives who had been burnt as rain sacrifices.

A barbarity of the most ghastly type at which the conscience of our civilized age must shudder!

Home-made Christianity.

We understand the committee formed for the revision of the Prayer Book, in order to bring it up to modern requirements, have proposed the introduction of some new prayers—one for industrial peace, one for election time, one for troubled conscience, one for good weather. Besides, six of the Ten Commandments have been shortened. And what is the process by which these revisions and additions are to become part and parcel of Christianity? They have to pass through the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy, the House of Laity, and finally to receive parliamentary sanctions, when they will attain full-fledged religious sanctity. This is how Christianity is coined! Manufactured in the human mint, it is stamped with Divine authority. Such has been its history all along. A thing of human origin, it has failed to stand the test of time and experience, and has, of necessity, had to change form from time to time, to readjust itself to changed conditions. Is it fair—nay, honest—to thrust such man-spun stuff on humanity as a revealed system?

Bible for the Blind.

The Bible Society, we understand, has taken steps to issue the Bible in embossed characters in about thirty-eight different languages, for the use of the blind. The attempt, in so far as it implies consideration of the blind, is, beyond question, deserving of commendation. Will it not induce the Muslims to issue the Quran in different languages?

THE LIGHT.

Dated the 1st April 1923.

Was Jesus Divine?

(Communicated.)

Man-made creeds and theologies never stand the test of time. Kings and councils abrogate old laws and make new ones, which again in their turn are repealed to make room for still newer ones, and so the process goes on. Similar is the case with man-made religions. Ever new formularies and new forms of worship are created, which prove inadequate to the next generation, and are thrown into the melting pot. They lack Divine authorship and Divine guidance, and are, at best, but experiments. The most notable example of these man-made religions is what goes under the name of Christianity.

Those who have any acquaintance with the history of this religion, from the time Jesus disappeared from the scene of Palestine upto the present, will appreciate better the truth of the above remarks. Jesus brought no new religion and left none behind him, except the same old Jewish faith, while the real authors of Christianity were the Greeks of Alexandria, who had never seen or heard Jesus Christ. Differences were bound to occur, because nobody knew what Jesus, the prophet of God, had taught. During the first three centuries Christianity was divided into several sects. I have often attempted to study this subject, to draw up a list of the various sects which contended for mastery in the first three centuries, and to note down their points of difference, to know just what were the principles which distinguished one from the other. I must frankly admit that so far I have been unable to undo the tangle. There seems to be an utter confusion prevailing, with *not a single fixed principle of faith being accepted by all Christians*. There is, however, one matter of controversy that stands above all others—the nature of Christ. Was he one quarter divine, one half divine, three quarters divine? How much of Jesus was divine and how much human? Freedom of thought and speech under non-Christian rule would have sooner or later settled the question. But unfortunately Christianity became a political power in the fourth century, and the voice of controversy was hushed in fire and blood. From that time right on to the close of the 18th century 'fire and sword' have determined all questions of faith in Christian lands.

But modern age has brought freedom. Churches have lost their power. Modern sciences have not only shaken but demolished the citadel of Christianity. Its most cherished doctrines have been blown into pieces. That was done in the last century, mostly by those who were outside the Church. But the twentieth century has put tongues in the mouths of those as well, who are inside the Church, the official guardians and mouthpieces of Christianity, and pastors, priests and ministers are crying at the top of their voices that the basic dogmas of Christianity are not true.

It was in August 1921, at Cambridge, England, that the Rev. Dr. Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, and the Rev. H. D. A. Major, Principal of Ripon Hall, at theological College at Oxford, made those famous utterances which created such a storm in the English Press. The daily newspapers characterised their utterances as a "bombshell to Christianity." They said, in effect, that Jesus was not God, that some of his prophecies did not come out true. They denied his miraculous birth and his miraculous powers, and characterised him as ignorant of the authorship of biblical books, and as superstitious as others of his age. It is a fundamental article of Christian faith that Christ rose from the dead. Indeed, if he did not arise from the dead, the doctrine of atonement is naturally false, and Christianity goes to the wall. Rev. Major denies the physical resurrection of Christ.

It will be of interest to my readers to know that in Christianity nobody has any right of freedom of thought and speech in matters of religion. When Christianity was in power, non-Christians were not allowed to exist in Christian lands. Those who refused to become Christians were put to the sword straight away, while those Christians who differed from the Church in any matters of faith, howsoever unimportant, were tortured and killed or burnt alive. The day of these penalties has passed, but the form still exists. A Christian minister dare not think for himself. If he does, he stands the charge of heresy, and the accused is punished, disgraced and thrown out of the ministry. An accusation of heresy was laid against Rev. Major, because he denied the resurrection of Jesus in body. I have read his defence. He offers no abstract arguments. He simply shows from former records how the belief originated, and how Christians have always differed in it. For instance, the Rusalites, a modern American sect,

who call themselves International Bible Students Association, do not believe that Christ rose from the dead, and this may safely be taken as the current belief among all advanced Christians. In this connection I wrote to Rev. Major and invited him to a friendly discussion on the question of resurrection. He acknowledged my letter, promised to write again at length, but did not; perhaps, he forgot. But the revolt against the dogmas of Christianity is not limited to the European Countries. It is widespread in the United States of America too, although not to the same extent, due to many causes, the main cause being that not less than 90% people have never read the Bible or any part of it. The average American is ignorant of its contents. It is only occasionally that a really intelligent and capable man of strong moral character with an independence of spirit finds himself in the Church, and more often than not, such persons are dangerous for the peace of the Church to which they belong.

Such a one is the Rev. Dr. Percy Stickney Grant, Rector of the Church of Ascension in New York City. Sunday before the last, he jugged his congregation out of the slumberous atmosphere which is characteristic of every Church by declaring that Christ was not God and did not have the power of God! Such an awful utterance could not fail to draw the wrath of authorities upon the speaker. His bishop (Dr. William T. Manning) directed him either to recant or resign or stand trial on a charge of heresy. The Rector has refused to recant or to resign. He has elected to be tried for heresy, "in order that a question of doctrine might be determined." In other words, it will be a test case, in which the question of the divinity of Christ will be determined. It is too early to say at this stage whether and when the trial will take place. The Rector is backed up by a strong body of clergy who all deny the Godhood of Jesus.

The Rector's reply to the bishop deserves notice :—

"I cannot love God with my mind and at the same time believe that the laws of nature were ever violated; for the simple reason that God himself has taught me, as he is teaching all our sons and daughters in every modern university of the western world today, that these laws are immutable throughout eternity.

"It is not in the remotest degree that I question His power. It is simply a

matter of evidence. If you reply that in the gospel miracles laws of which we have no knowledge were set in operation I must answer that in such cases the alleged events ceased to be miracles.

"Not an Iota of Evidence."

"Should your hypothetical contention turn out to be true in fact, with all the lovers of the truth I would rejoice in such fresh revelation. But of this there is as yet not a scintilla of evidence.

"In the 'miracles' of healing many of the laws employed by Christ have to-day been made known to us, but we thereby realize clearly that such works are not contrary to but in accordance with law."

As to Christ walking on the surface of the water, Dr. Grant said:

"All books of the New Testament tell us that he had a true human body and lived a real human life. That human body weighed let us say, 150 pounds. Am I helped either in my own inner life or in my preaching to others by affirming that such a body, in utter defiance of the law of gravitation, walked upon water as upon a solid floor? Were I to state that this is a literal fact, might I not justly be charged with denying the true humanity of our Lord? And I am very sure that Jesus of Nazareth did nothing in his life for the purpose of creating wonder. Indeed, he definitely refused the request for a sign of this character."

The main point, however, was the divinity of Jesus, which the Rev. Dr. Grant denies. There is one argument in his reply which is so true that I must state it here. The gospels say that Christ prayed to God. Dr. Grant asks, "If he possessed the power of God, could he have prayed to God? Is it not unthinkable that God can pray to God? Yet this is the most unthinkable thing which the best of Christians believe and ask others to believe! The dawn, however, is coming, and people are beginning to realise the absurdity of Christian dogmas.

Questions and Answers.

Mr. Muhammad Ali Effandi :—

Q. 7. (a) Was our Holy Prophet a smoker; and (b) is smoking permissible?

A (a) No; (b) although smoking does not come under the category of prohibited things; yet it should be, as far as possible, avoided.

Q. 8. Is drinking permissible?

A. No; do you, living in 20th century can fancy that such abominable thing can be permissible, while

the civilized countries of Europe and America are thinking to legalise its prohibition. It is *the* triumph of Islam that the world after a long experience has yielded to the verdict of the Quran.

Q. 9. Is it true that in the last days of the world a kind of human being (Yajuj and Majuj) will appear?

A. Yes; they are two different peoples, *Gog* and *Magog*.

Q. 10. What is the difference between a *Wahabi* and a *Sunni*?

A. Please see answer to the question No. 6; in the last issue "Wahabi" is only another name rather nickname of Ahl-i-Hadis.

Q. 11. What is your opinion about the Holy Prophet; was he the last prophet? Prove it?

A. Yes; he is the last of the prophets; because the law he gave us is final.

Mr. Ishaq Ali :—

Q. 1. What kind of ground is most suitable and pleasing to God according to Islam for burying the dead?

A. It is not always a matter of choice; but generally speaking graves should be in a strong solid soil to ensure the safe custody of the dead body.

Q. 2. There is a Hindu friend who recites Darood sharif daily; can he be called a Muslim.

A. This shows that he believes in the Holy Prophet. He may be a Muslim at heart. But why does he not declare it?

Q. 3. If a Muslim has not said his prayers for a number of years what should he do to atone for them?

A. He should make a solemn pledge not to neglect the prayer in future and should give some alms.

Q. 4. Please explain your statement to the effect that when a dead body is burnt its particles fly in the air and make it impure; as every one knows that organic substances are burnt to carbonic gas and water and thus rendered harmless because they are used by plants as their food.

A. Yes, organic substances when totally burnt affect the purity of air to some extent and if they are partially burnt the effect is worse. It is quite another thing that trees use the carbonic gas. It is not a wise plan to produce a certain effect and then to adopt or rely on measures which may undo it.

Mr. Mahboob Ali Khan :—

Q. 1. In time of plague epidemic is it allowed for a Muslim either to get himself inoculated or quit the affected area? Please support your answer with authority and reasons.

A. Yes; rather it is the duty of a Muslim to adopt all preventive measures. Hazrat Umar, in the days of the pestilence ordered his troops to leave the affected area; and the Holy Qur-an says :—"Do not put your hands into death."

Mr. Ke. Ke. P. Mahta :—

Q. 1. How can you say that the Quran is the best religious book in the world?

A. It is a fact that no other heavenly book has wrought such a wonderful reformation in the world as the Holy Quran.

Q. 2. It is said the Zoroaster wrote many religious works which were destroyed by Alexander the Great. Had these been not destroyed they would have surpassed the Quran.

A. It is only supposition or allegation wanting proof. The Quran on the other hand is a living miracle. I dwelt on this point in my article, the miracles of the Holy Prophet, to which you refer. Kindly read that article carefully and you will, I hope realise, the unique features of the Qur-an.

Mr. Abdul Majid :—

Q. 1. Is God both *Just* and *Forgiving* at one and the same time?

A. God is *Master* and not a mere *Judge*. Therefore, He is not guilty of injustice if He forgives His servants or creatures. Man cannot claim justice from God; because justice demands equality while the relation of God to a man is that of master to his servant. The divine law of requittal is of course, characterised by mercy and forgiveness.

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