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## News and Notes

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1st May = 16th Muharram (1st mo.), 1353, A.H.

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### The Need for a Restatement of Christian Doctrine.

(The following was the last of a series of four lectures given at the Summer School at Agra in April. The earlier lectures described the failures of the Asiatic Churches in the days of the Caliphate in life, in doctrine, and in polemic, as I have shown at greater length in my book *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*.—L.E.B.)

**Y**OU have heard me speak of the failures in doctrine of the ancient Churches of the East. You will remember that they believed in the same Holy Scriptures that we believe in, and confessed the same Nicene Creed. And yet they failed to understand and to teach true doctrine. The conclusion to be drawn from this startling fact is not that the Scriptures or the Nicene Creed are wrong; but rather that the interpretation of Scripture given in those days was one-sided, and that the Nicene Creed did not touch those points in which they were in error.

I notice that in most of the schemes of Reunion the doctrinal basis includes acceptance of the Scriptures and the Nicene Creed. Personally I do not think that there is at the moment any alternative. Nor does it matter, so long as the uniting Churches are living Churches. For in the last resort the basis of truth is the Holy Spirit active in the hearts of Christians.

But while we can perhaps do without any further official statements of doctrine as tests for orthodoxy, we need, for our own sake and for the sake of those to whom we preach the Gospel, to think out afresh the doctrines we believe in. There are some who wish for a restatement of doctrine because they do not believe certain articles of the creeds. I want to say at once that I am not one of those.

I believe the early Christians were extraordinarily successful in their efforts at creed-making. When you read the story of the party strife of those days, the wire-pulling, and the influence of the civil power, you naturally expect that the result would be appalling. But we can thank God that His Spirit did so inform the minds of the general run of Christians that the creed which has survived as the almost universal creed of Christendom, the so-called Nicene Creed, remains still a monument of the truth of the Gospel.

But when one has said all that, it still remains true that the present age needs something more. One thing that is frequently referred to is that the early Christians had a different philosophy and general outlook from ours, so that our age needs a statement in terms of modern thought. That is true, but at the same time you must remember that, although Greek Fathers used many philosophical terms, the Nicene Creed only contains one single philosophical term "homousios," which signifies that Christ is of one essence with the Father. I shall return later to this important term.

If you recall the fact that, apart from the early baptismal creeds, all the theological creeds arose out of the necessity of contradicting heresies, you will understand why new statements are needed in our time.

It is particularly face to face with Islam that the Church feels the need for restating its doctrine, for the twofold purpose of defending the truth against the false teaching of Islam, and of explaining our doctrine afresh so as to avoid the misunderstandings of it which Islam has exposed.

Take for instance the opening words of the creed—"I believe in one God the Father Almighty." When we see the reluctance of Muslims to attribute a moral character to God, and their reluctance to deny His power to be unjust if He wished to, we feel the necessity of adding the word "holy" in this first sentence of the creed. The early Christians did not feel the necessity of adding the word "holy" here, for all Christians believed it, as an inheritance from the Old Testament. Perhaps the addition of the word "holy" might be sufficient to safeguard the true meaning of the word "almighty." Muslims take it to mean that God can do anything, while we of course always understand that God is limited by His own character, so that for instance He cannot tell a lie. But it is the word "one" in that clause which needs most elucidation, and I do not propose now to go into that fully. I shall only say here that Muslims and Christians do not mean the same thing when they use the word "one" of God. Putting it briefly, the Muslim's belief is a mere mathematical statement, while the Christian's belief has behind it the Hebrew conception of the uniqueness of the all-Holy.

If the first sentence of the creed needs so much thinking about, you can guess that the amount of thought required about the person of Christ is very great. I doubt whether a more perfect philosophical

expression of the relation of Christ to the Father has ever been found than the word "homouosios," "of one essence"; I am inclined to think that it is as true as a philosophical term to-day as it was then; but it is not what we to-day are interested in. What we want to know to-day, and particularly what we want to get Muslims to understand, is that the heavenly Father has the same character as Jesus Christ. For it is perfectly clear that Muslims do not believe in a God whose character is anything like that of Jesus Christ. Yet for us it is the centre of the picture: the whole scheme of redemption depends on the great fact that the heavenly Father may be trusted to behave towards us like Christ. Surely this moral unity of Christ and the Father was the thought uppermost in our Lord's mind when He said, "I and the Father are one." It is true that you cannot have a unity of character without a unity of essence, so that Christ's saying implied a unity of essence with the Father, and therefore the Greeks were right in what they said, but they failed to emphasise the things that matter.

Have you noticed how the Muslim controversy about Christ always fastens on one particular name which is given Him in Holy Scripture, the Son of God? And this one term they attacked, not because of what it meant in the Bible, but because of what Muhammad thought it meant. In an earlier lecture I gave what may be the explanation of the extraordinary Trinity that Muhammad attributed to the Christians—a Father, a Mother and a Son. I have no doubt that Muhammad looked on it as on a par with Arabian polytheism, except of course that Arabian gods had daughters and not sons. My point is that Muhammad was not attacking the Christian doctrine of the Son of God, and Muslims have not attacked it either. What they have attacked is something that no Christian ever believed. Many missionaries in the past have felt that they must use this term because it is scriptural. But there are other terms which are equally scriptural which are very little used: the Word of God; the Image of the invisible God; the Servant of the Lord; Immanuel; the Lamb of God, and many others. I am not pleading for the use of these or any other particular names of Christ, but rather that we should think out what is implied by His many names and try to get that idea across to the Muslims. I have however in the tract "Abdullah" tried the experiment of reintroducing the term "Servant of the Lord," which appears in the Acts of the Apostles and in I Peter, but afterwards slipped out of Christian usage. There are difficulties in the use of the expression "Word of God," for of its two translations "Kalam Ullah" means the Quran, and "Kalimat Ullah" which means Christ is robbed of its meaning by Muslim interpretation. Possibly we might be able to use the term "Immanuel." It has already been used as the motto of a great nation, "Gott mit uns."

One curious thing of the Muhammedan controversy is that a regular subject of attack has been the doctrine of the Trinity, and yet we have no official doctrine of the Trinity. Church of England people

get their ideas of the Trinity from the hymn called *Quicumque Vult*, which is commonly and erroneously known as the creed of St. Athanasius. That hymn was purely Western, and so was never known in the East, and it is rather strongly reminiscent of the Roman legal mind. People do not get very enthusiastic about the *Quicumque Vult*, not because it is not true, but because it is not interesting. I am afraid that sort of teaching about the Trinity, divorced altogether from our experience of God, has reduced the Trinity to what common people call a dogma, by which they mean something which they are taught to believe, but which they have no interest in. Yet there is a faith in the Trinity which is thrilling if only you can get it through to people, a faith for which men would dare to die. Would not men die for their faith that Christ is the way to the Father, and that Christ's death is the story of the Father's love? Would not men die for their faith that the indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of Him who died on the cross, the Spirit of the Father of all? Yes, that is a faith that can thrill men, and behind it, if you take the trouble to look for it, must lie a profound philosophy. But that dogma which passes for a doctrine of the Trinity, which most people take to be a kind of tritheism, is an uninspiring dead thing. There is a little instrument used by smokers to clean out their pipes which is called a "trinity," and there is a brand of lubricating oil which has been on the market several years called "Three in one oil." If people really felt the Trinity as a matter of the heart there would have been such a storm of protest that the manufacturers would have changed the names of those goods. Just imagine the outcry that would arise if for instance a term like "the Bread of Life" was used for commercial purposes. There would be a case for a charge of sacrilege in the courts. But the doctrine of the Three in One is not a live issue to-day. So let us ask ourselves this: What is the doctrine of the Trinity which we are trying to persuade Muslims to accept? Is it a heavy burden, grievous to be borne, which we lay on their shoulders while we ourselves will not move it with our finger? Or is it a thing to live by, and a thing to die for?

I pass to the subject of the atonement. Here I have less need to speak, for the fact of the atonement has always been held as vital by Christians. As a fact vitally affecting us it stands out prominently in the Nicene Creed: "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven . . . and was crucified also for us." That is a noble statement of the fact of the atonement, magnificent in its simplicity, simple enough for any child to understand, free from any attempt to explain the mystery of it. There has never been any official explanation of it, but the best minds in all ages have wrestled to understand it. We will continue wrestling with it, but we have no cause to complain of the efforts of those who have gone before us. Above all, however, do not let us present the Muslims with some crude half-baked theory of the atonement, instead of the atonement itself as a living experience.

Now I come to speak of the Church. But oh! I am afraid to

speak of the Church ; because you will say to me, "You are an episcopalian ; you are a high churchman, or a low churchman." Isn't it dreadful ? Here is a thing which the universal creed confesses, "the one holy catholic and apostolic Church," and the moment I begin to speak about it there springs up into my mind and yours the memory of controversies, persecutions and wars. But I do not want controversy or quarrel ; I want to know the Body of Christ. That thrills me—the Body of my Lord. I want to be free from the passions that have stirred men to tear one another, to tear the Church in pieces. Can we not get down beneath the passions to the still waters below ? Is there no message for Muslims in what St. Paul called the Body of Christ ? Are our party factions making us hold back something vital from the Muslims ? There is need here it seems for some deep and humble thinking.

And so I could go on through the whole *gamut* of Christian doctrine. But these examples are enough. We have a faith once for all delivered, which is not a form of words, but a Person ; and every fresh generation has to try anew to understand and know that One. But the duty that lies on us is a very special one, for we have to make up for the neglect of centuries. For centuries long the story of Christ has been told all wrong by the Muslims, His character and His ways have been misunderstood ; and Christians have done little, pitifully little, to correct it. The missionaries of course realised the outstanding errors in Islam, but for the most part till quite recent times there has been no thorough-going attempt to get down to the great underlying issues, such as the differences in the idea of inspiration in the two religions, the differences in the conception of God, His character and His unity, and in the conception of man, his status and his ultimate goal.

It is Islam that compels us to undertake this review of our faith ; and who shall say that it was not for this purpose that God allowed Islam to rise that grace might abound more exceedingly ?

## **Symposium on Fasting.**

No. 4. By the Rev. J. J. Lucas.

**W**HAT do the Scriptures teach concerning fasting ? First, that there are times when every Christian should fast. In Matt. iv we are told "that Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and when He had fasted for forty days and nights He was an hungered." This teaches that the Holy Spirit takes us apart to prepare us by prayer and fasting for the temptation which we are to be led into. If Christ needed special preparation for the assaults of the devil, how much more do we His disciples and followers ?

Second, our fasting should be in secret, and so far as possible

not known to anyone. In Matt. vi we are told that Jesus taught His disciples the way to fast, "but thou, when thou *fastest*, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father *which is in secret*, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Third, in Matt. ix Jesus answered the question of the disciples of John the Baptist, "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 so long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast," which means, does it not, that when some great sorrow comes to the disciples, such as the bridegroom taken from the bride, she cannot but fast and pray. And so too, how can there be hunger for food when some loved one is in danger or temptation? And does not the Holy Spirit then bring to remembrance the promise, "this kind goeth not forth but by prayer," and is it not by a kind of prayer that closes the door and heeds no call for food? And so too, when the flock committed to us is in peril, the flock in the family or in the Church, the holy brotherhood of which we are members, the peril so great that it is as though the devils were issuing out of hell to drag them away from the fold, as did the Prince of them to seize Simon Peter, how can the heart, trembling with anxiety and anguish, turn to food? Paul fasted those first three days when he prayed for himself, "What must I do, I, the murderer of Stephen, I the blasphemer, I making havoc of the Church of Christ, what must I do?" That was the kind of prayer with fasting three days which brought forgiveness and peace, the scales falling from his eyes, without and within. And years later the prayer of Paul for his brethren according to the flesh could only have come out of a heart so longing for the Holy Spirit to convict them of the sin of unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, that he could call only the Holy Spirit to witness to his prayer, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix 1-3).

To gather out and apply to our own lives the prayers of our Lord and the prayers recorded in the New Testament which we may well believe were within the closed doors, with no desire for food, would fill a long chapter. And is not this kind of prayer, at times, the supreme need of every follower of Christ, for himself or for his household or for the flock of Christ? There is only one Teacher of such prayer, and He also leads us in it, "for we know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. viii 26-27).

## The Unity of God and the Atomic Theory.

**T**HERE is a close similarity between the Muslim doctrine of the unity of God and Dalton's chemical theory of indivisible atoms of matter. Those of us who were brought up on Dalton's theory know how nice and simple it was to conceive of atoms as small hard lumps, something like marbles, which could not be divided because no knife was sharp enough, and could not be smashed because they were too hard. The fact that they were indivisible saved us from the trouble of trying to conceive what they were like inside. There were however two properties about atoms which had to be accepted, one that these small hard lumps of each kind of element were of a definite weight (or mass), and the second that each atom was provided with a definite number of claws with which it could cling on to other atoms. Even if Mme. Curie had not discovered radium atoms in the process of disintegrating, it is probable that Dalton's theory would have had to be abandoned eventually in order to account for "valency," for it did seem very unreasonable, when you had simplified your atom into a ball of perfect smoothness and hardness, to complicate it again by providing it with claws.

We are usually told that Dalton's theory satisfied chemists for a hundred years and made possible the vast chemical discoveries of the nineteenth century; and it is easy to conclude from this statement that the theory of atoms as small hard indivisible lumps was a fruitful and profitable idea. The real truth is that what made the great discoveries possible were the theories of atomic weights and valencies, and the latter, as we have seen, are inconsistent with the marble-like atom. By itself the theory of hard indivisible atoms is particularly barren.

So also is the Muslim doctrine of the unity of God. In later articles it will be shown that the Jewish and Christian doctrines of the Unity have a content quite different from that of Islam. The unity of God in Islam is a mere mathematical statement, and when you have raised one finger to express your belief in the unity, you have said all there is to say about it. Just as it was inconsistent to think of marble-like atoms being provided with claws to hook them on to other atoms, so it is inconsistent to find any characteristics whatever in God if He is regarded first and last as an undifferentiated unity. To deny God all qualities is near to Atheism, and in the history of Islamic theology there have been endless battles in the attempt to say something about God without impairing His unity. Even the possibility of His having any relations whatever with His creatures, or indeed doing anything at all, is excluded by the doctrine of an absolute undifferentiated unity. In fact, the only activity which can be conceived of for such a unity is what is expressed in the first half of Newton's First Law of Motion: "Every body continues in a state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line." The exception which forms the second half of that Law, "unless it be impelled by impressed force to change that state," is obviously inapplicable to the Most High.

There are a number of would-be intellectual young people in the West who adopt Islam because they find the doctrine of God in Islam so simple and clear. It would be good advice to tell them to go away for three months and study the Atomic Theory, and then come again.

### The Quran in Hindi.

WE are glad to hear that the Rev. Ahmad Shah has been able to arrange with a Muhammadan publisher to publish his Hindi translation of the Quran. It is hoped that the book will be ready by September 15th of this year. The price will be Rs. 3-12-0 plus postage, but special concessions will be made to Christians as follows:—

(1) Those who subscribe for it in advance will get it post free for Rs. 2-4-0.

(2) Those who subscribe Re. 1/- only in advance will get it for Rs. 2-4-0 plus postage.

(3) Those who register their names in advance, but send no subscription in advance, will get it for Rs. 3/- plus postage.

This offer is limited to 300 copies. Application should be made before June 10th, and should be addressed to the Rev. Ahmad Shah, Nur Manzil, P.O. Rajpur, Dehra Dun District, U.P.

### Prayer.

For a Muslim of Bengal, baptized on April 14th, that he may stand firm against the efforts of his Muslim friends to make him recant; and that he may bring some of them to Christ.

### Notice.

The Rev. L. E. Browne is temporarily editing *News and Notes*. Matters of interest to members of the Missionaries to Muslims League, items of news, and requests for prayer and praise, should be addressed to Rev. L. E. Browne, 30, Mozang Road, Lahore, India.

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