

Confidential.

Not to be reproduced without
permission of the Editor.

News and Notes

A Monthly Paper printed for the private use of the
Members of the Missionaries to Muslims League.

Series XXII

September, 1934.

1st September = 21st Jumada 'l-ula (5th mo.), 1352, A.H.

A Muslim Catechism.

BY way of contrast with the Christian doctrine of God which we have tried to describe in recent numbers of *News and Notes*, we give here some extracts from a short confession of faith written by Muhammad b. ash-Shafi'i Fudali, who died in 1821 A.D. He belonged to the Shafi'ite school, and was a teacher of the well-known Rector of the Azhar University Bajuri who died in 1860. His Catechism became one of the well-known text-books at the Azhar. Bajuri wrote a long commentary on it, and it is highly valued to the present day. Fudali based his Catechism on that of Sanusi, who died in 1490 A.D., but included not only the dogmas but also the corresponding proofs. It will be noticed that he repeatedly claims that the doctrines and proofs which he puts forward must be held by every Muslim, and not merely the learned. The outlook is almost entirely intellectual, and, however much the University teacher wished it, it is scarcely possible that the ordinary Muslim could ever have been primed up with such proofs as these. Yet, apart from the proofs, it is probable that many Muslims have been brought up on such dogmas as these, and that they form the background of a great deal of Muslim thought even to the present day. A convenient German translation of Fudali's Catechism was published at Bonn in 1916 by M. Horten in No. 139 of the series of cheap brochures entitled "Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Uebungen." The following extracts are translated from this edition.

Introduction—"Every Muslim must know fifty dogmas, each with its general, or (in addition) its special proofs. For instance, everyone asks, 'What is the proof for the existence of God?' Answer, 'The creatures.' Do the creatures prove the existence of God by their con-

tendency, or by their existence in time (*i.e.*, after not having existed)? If the person who is asked the question does not apply himself to this formal point of view, his proof is general and satisfies the demands of the law. Belief on authority means a man's knowing the fifty dogmas without their general or special proof. Some people, *e.g.*, Ibn al-Arabi and Sanusi think that such a man does not attain to the knowledge of the faith. According to them a man who believes on authority is an unbeliever."

"The understanding of the dogmas presupposes three terms—the necessary, the possible and the impossible. The necessary is that, the non-existence of which is unthinkable and cannot be predicated, *e.g.*, that bodies such as trees and stones occupy space: the understanding cannot assert this fact as non-existent. The impossible is that, the existence of which cannot be thought or predicated by the understanding. If some one tells you, 'This body has neither movement nor rest' your understanding cannot express it, for being simultaneously free from both movement and rest is impossible. The possible is a thing of which the understanding can assert at one time the existence, at another time the non-existence, *e.g.*, the child of Zaid... Existence and non-existence of his child are possible and can be expressed. These three points form the presuppositions for the understanding of the dogmas. The understanding of them is thus a duty for every morally responsible person."

[The substance of the last paragraph is so uninteresting from the religious point of view that most of our readers will probably have hardly had the patience to read it, and yet the ordinary Muslim is told that it is a duty to understand it, and from what follows it will appear that failure to understand it may involve eternal hell-fire.]

"The fifty dogmas consist of 41 statements about God (20 necessary, 20 impossible and 1 possible), and 9 about the Apostle of God (4 necessary, 4 impossible and 1 possible.)"

THE NECESSARY CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD.

1. *Existence*.—"The world consists of bodies, *e.g.*, substances and accidents, *e.g.*, movement, rest, colour. The origin of the world in time is a proof for the existence of God only on this ground that it could not have come into existence of itself without a creator."

"The existence in time of both bodily substances and accidents, which came into being out of not-being, is a proof for the existence of God; for everything that comes into being in time must have an originator working in time. But there is no originator of the world working in time except the one God, by whose side stands no second God. [Note that there is no proof given of this last statement. The unity of God in Islam is an axiom that cannot be proved.] This is the general proof which every Muslim, be he man or woman, must know. This is the teaching of Ibn al-Arabi and Sanusi, who call everyone an unbeliever who does not know this proof."

2. *Eternity*.—"Eternity means that a thing has no first moment of its existence. . . . If God were not eternal—so that He originated in time—He must have had an originator in time. But from this would follow either going round in a circle in the chain of cause and effect, or else an endless series, both of which are impossible. Therefore He is eternal, Q.E.D. This is the general proof for the eternity of God. By understanding it, the Muslim, whose duty it is to believe, loses the fetters of belief on authority; while those who are bound by those fetters fall into the eternal fire of hell according to the teaching of Ibn al-Arabi and Sanusi."

[Horten's note: This doctrine that everyone is bound as far as possible to instruct himself in his faith—under the risk of falling into the sin of unbelief—and that he must therefore know also the separate proofs for the main doctrines of his faith, is to-day (after Bajuri and Muhammad Abduh) generally current. On this requirement rests the eager study of dogmatics in present-day Islam, which is reckoned as more essential and more important than the study of fine points of Islamic law.]

3. *Everlastingness*.—"The third characteristic which is necessary to God is everlastingness, *i.e.*, the absence of a last moment of existence. . . . If the Godhead had not endless existence of necessity, so that He was liable to non-existence, then He must be denied existence from eternity in the past. This cannot be attributed to Him, as has already been shown. This is the general proof for the everlastingness of God, which everyone must know. In the same way he must know every dogma according to its contents and its general proof. If he instructs himself only in one single dogma and its proof, without getting to know the others and their proofs, he does not satisfy his duty of faith."

4. *Diversity*.—"The fourth characteristic which is necessary to God is diversity from temporal things, *i.e.*, created things. God is generically different from every creature, *e.g.*, man, spirit, angel, etc. Consequently one cannot attribute to God the characteristics of temporal things, *e.g.*, going, sitting, external members. Thus God does not possess the latter, such as mouth, eyes, ears, etc. God is different in respect to all expressions of length, breadth, smallness, compactness. May He be exalted above all characteristics of the creatures!"

"If God were like a temporal thing in any one point, then must He Himself also be temporal; for what is said of one of two similar things is true also of the other. [An absolutely unwarranted assumption, *e.g.*, two triangles may be alike in being isosceles but different in angles and size]. But the origin of God in time is impossible, for eternity belongs to Him of necessity. But if the origin of God in time is denied, His diversity from things which originate in time is asserted. Consequently between God and temporal things there is no sort of similarity in any point whatsoever. [This conclusion not only cuts at the root of all moral character in God, but makes it impossible to know

anything whatever about Him. For anyone who holds this doctrine there is no sense in which he can say that God is good] This is the general proof, the knowledge of which is a religious duty of the Muslim as explained above."

5. *Self-existence*.—God exists in and through Himself. He is not caused by something else, nor is He an accident attached to something else as substance.

6. *Unity*.—"The sixth characteristic, which of necessity belongs to God, is the unity in being (substance), characteristics and activities, *i.e.*, the absence of numerical multiplicity. To say that God is one in His substance means (1) His substance is not made up of parts, and (2) in the sphere of being or possible being there is no substance like the divine substance. . . . To say that God is one in characteristics means (1) God has not two characteristics which are alike in name and contents, *e.g.*, two almightinesses, two omnisciences, or free-wills. [Compare the statement of the *Quicumque Vult*, 'So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty; and yet they are not three almighties but one almighty,'] and (2) no thing other than God has a characteristic similar to that of God. [Contrast "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xix. 2 etc.) and "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke vi. 36)] . . . To say that God is one in activities means that no creature has an activity (of its own), for God is the creator of the activities of creatures, *e.g.*, prophets, angels and others. Events like the death or wounding of a person, if *e.g.*, they befall a holy man, come even in this case from the creative activity of God."

"The universe possesses in fact existence, as can be proved by observation. It follows that God is one, Q.E.D. [A paragraph has preceded attempting to prove that the universe cannot have two Gods because an effect cannot have two causes. This of course is no proof, because the universe may consist of a number of effects. The Greeks came to believe in the unity of God, not from the existence of the universe, but from its harmony]. The existence of the world is therefore a proof for the unity of God, and that no second God opposes Him in any activity. Further God does not use an agent or instrument in any activity. He is the Independent, in the absolute sense. From this proof it is seen further that no thing other than God can produce any effect, *e.g.*, the fire in burning, the knife in cutting, and the food in satisfying man. Rather it is God who creates the burning in the object which the fire has seized, and exactly at the moment when the fire seizes it. So it is God who creates the cutting in the object which the knife touches, and exactly at the moment of touching. Similarly it is God who creates satiation when man takes food, or the quenching of his thirst when he drinks. Thus he who believes that fire by reason of its nature produces burning, and that water by reason of its nature produces quenching of thirst, is, according to the consensus of the

Muslim community, an unbeliever. Further, he who believes that the fire produces burning by a special power which God has created in it, is a deceiver and hypocrite because he has not grasped the real sense of the unity of God."

7. *Almightiness.*

8. *Free-will.*—"Almightiness and will are two real characteristics attached to the substance of God. If the veil were taken away from us we could see them both. Both are related only to the possible; not to the impossible, *e.g.*, a second God; nor to the necessary, *e.g.*, the substance and characteristics of God (otherwise these things could be created by God). It is folly to assert that God has the power to give Himself a Son, because almightiness has not the impossible as its object, and for God to have a Son is impossible."

[For God to have a Son is regarded as impossible simply because it is so written in the Quran, and therefore needs no proof. There is no suggestion of the real limitation to the almightiness of God, that He can do no evil, because Islam has no conception of the holiness of God].

9. *Omniscience.*

10. *Life.*

11. *Hearing.*

12. *Seeing.*

13. *Word.*—"The thirteenth of the characteristics of God is the Word. It is an eternal characteristic attached to the substance of God, [Contrast the statement of the Nicene creed that the Word is of one substance with the Father] which does not consist of consonants or vowels, and is free from temporal sequence, declination or indeclinability of word forms as contrasted with the speech of temporal subjects (men). By the term Word of God, which must be attributed to Him, one understands not the words of the Quran, which were revealed to the prophet; for these originated in time, whereas that characteristic of the Word, which is attached to the substance of God, is eternal. . . . The contents of the Quranic words correspond to what that eternal characteristic utters if the veil were removed from our spiritual eyes and we could perceive the divine Word. . . . Both the eternal characteristic of God and the words of the holy book are indeed called Quran and Word of God; yet the material words of the holy book are created and written down in heaven on the preserved tablet." [This is an attempt to make a compromise in the ancient controversy as to whether the Quran was created or uncreated].

14-20. *Being almighty. Having free-will. Being omniscient. Being living. Being hearing. Being seeing. Being speaking.* [These appear to differ from almightiness, etc., only by verbal jugglery].

THE IMPOSSIBLE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD.

21-40. The opposites of the first twenty dogmas, *e.g.*, God cannot be non-existent,

THE POSSIBLE CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD.

41. "Everyone on whom the duty of belief lies must believe that it is possible for God to create good and evil. He can also create the true faith (Islam) in Zaid, and unbelief in Umar, knowledge in the one, and ignorance in the other. Everyone who is bound to believe must also hold it as true that things, both good and evil, depend upon the decree and predestination of God."

"If any of these activities (the creating of something possible) were necessary for God, then the possible would be changed into a necessary; and if any of these activities were impossible for God, then the possible would be changed into an impossible—both of which are impossibilities. Therefrom thou knowest that for God nothing is necessary. The liberal theologians contradict this by their doctrine that God must bring good to pass for men, so that God has a duty to give man requisite nourishment. This, however, is untrue and a lie against God."

Symposium on Fasting.

No. 8. By the Editor.

We have now had a number of representative views on the subject of fasting; and it would seem worth while to try to bring out the principles underlying the various opinions and practices of Christians in the matter.

The practice of Christ Himself was not markedly ascetic, otherwise it would have been impossible for His enemies to make the gibe that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber; and He Himself actually contrasted His manner of life with that of John the Baptist. At the same time there were occasions of fasting in His life, notably the great fast in the wilderness, and probably others connected with His periods of retirement for prayer. As regards His teaching on the subject, it cannot truly be said that He enjoined fasting: rather He assumed that under certain circumstances His disciples would fast. His injunction that fasting should be done in secret must be taken in the same sense as the similar injunction with regard to prayer, *i.e.*, He was attacking the display of religiosity, and was no more condemning the regulated fasts of the congregation than their services of common prayer.

Individual Christians have fasted (1) in grief or anxiety, (2) by way of expressing penitence for sin, (3) in connexion with earnest prayer for some particular object, (4) in the attempt to overcome sin, in particular sins of the flesh, (5) in order to save money to feed the poor, or devote to other good works, (6) in the belief that it is meritorious to afflict the body, and that only so can the soul truly develop.

The fasts observed by the whole community of Christians, and ordered by authority, may also be divided under these same headings, but it is not so easy to make the distinction as the same fast may be observed by different persons for different motives. Roughly speaking we may say that the fasts ordered for Good Friday and all Fridays come mainly under the headings (1) and (2). Fasts ordered on occasion of national calamity will come under (2) or (3). The fast before the ordination of clergy, under (3).

The fasts on the vigils of holy days, under (2) or (3). Those who observe the fast of Lent probably for the most part have in mind the objects (4) and (5). Such times as "Self-denial Week" are observed with (5) in view. The extreme asceticism of hermits and monks in olden days must in many cases be placed under the heading (6).

To criticise the actions of others is easy, so long as one regards one's own practice as ideal. But as soon as one realises the great variety of possible Christian experience, it becomes exceedingly difficult to criticise in the name of Christ. The only one of these motives for fasting which I feel ought to be condemned is (6), for our bodies were given us for the service of our souls. Our attitude towards our bodies should not be that of afflicting or maltreating the body, but rather that of the athlete who trains his body for a great effort. The athlete in training may find it necessary to abstain from certain foods or drinks, but to eat plenty of good nourishing food. The belief in asceticism for its own sake is a delusion. It has been tried by Christians; it has been tried by Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and others, and its failure to lead to holiness of life is evident.

Fasting in grief and anxiety, and in connexion with earnest prayer and sorrow for sin, is so obvious and natural that comment is scarcely necessary. It is as natural as holding one's breath when one is in a fright. It is the obvious thing spoken of by Christ, "then they will fast in those days." That the Church should ordain days and periods for fasting of this kind seems a right and proper thing, so long as the fast is always made the servant of the prayers that are offered. The danger of formal fasting is similar to that of formal prayers. There are probably few people who attend a service of public worship and join with heart and soul in every word of prayer that is offered; they should therefore not be too ready to criticise the formality that is apt to creep into the practice of common fasting.

Many people have believed that fasting is a means of overcoming sin, particularly sins of the flesh. It can certainly be said that without prayer fasting is useless to this end. Probably the modern psychologist would say that it is better in such cases to eat the food set before one without question, so as not to keep reminding oneself of the demands of the body. But this is clearly a matter to be decided by experience, and not one involving any religious principle.

There is one further motive for fasting that has not been mentioned. There must be many people, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, who keep the appointed fasts simply out of obedience to authority without any further reason. It is probable that for the majority of Muslims the observance of Ramadan comes under the same heading of obedience to authority. The virtue of such observance is the virtue of loyalty to the whole body. If, as one of our correspondents has suggested, we ought to use the Muslim fast as a means of approach, surely the parallel to Ramadan in Christianity is to be found, not so much in any of the various kinds of fasting that I have described, as in the loyalty to the Body of Christ which should find expression in every detail of the life of the Kingdom.

Review.

"Thinking Missions with Christ" by Dr. S. M. Zwemer. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. paper \$1.00, cloth \$1.50.

Dr. Zwemer's new book is mainly a rejoinder to the "Laymen's Appraisal of Foreign Missions," and a very powerful rejoinder indeed. With arguments based on our faith in Christ, and not on any of theologies, Dr Zwemer shews up the faithlessness of those whose idea of handing on the torch of light is to pour a little of our oil into the dimly burning lamps of the non-Christians, and at the same time to take in exchange some of their oil for our own almost equally dimly burning lamps.

It is a popular book. It makes no display of learning. Even in departments where modern knowledge would seem to add much weight to the argument—for instance in the field of Old Testament study—Dr. Zwemer is intentionally silent. He is attacking those whose intellectualism has dimmed their spiritual vision, and he meets them by the power of the spirit, by the sort of proof that can be appreciated by every soul, learned or simple.

From this it will be seen that Dr. Zwemer does not here deal with missionary problems, the best methods of carrying out the work, or with the intellectual problems of those who are attempting to state the faith for non-Christians, but solely with the fundamental question whether missions, as we understand them, should exist. For instance, he very rightly shows that schemes of social uplift cannot be a substitute for missionary work. He just mentions, without developing, the theme that social uplift is a natural consequence of missionary work and a fruit of the Christian life.

One of the most interesting sections deals with some of our well-known hymns, and shews from them the true Christian spirit and the motive for evangelism. This is particularly valuable because hymns reflect, much more than theological writings, the feelings of the heart of Christians. It is not surprising that he devotes a whole chapter to Bishop Heber's most famous hymn, which, following Dr. Eugene Stock, he calls the greatest of hymns, "From Greenland's icy mountains."

Notice.

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. J. W. Sweetman, Ram Katora, Benares, who will edit the October and following numbers.

Any notification of change of address, names of new members or remittance of subscription, etc., should be sent to the Superintendent, Orissa Mission Press, Cuttack, India, and not to the Editor. The annual subscription to the League, including *News and Notes*, is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3 shillings).