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News and Notes

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Series XXIII.

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Thieves and Robbers.

A FRIEND writes to us that he has been troubled by Muslim objectors with regard to the interpretation of John x. 8. Does this mean, says the objector, that all the prophets before our Lord were thieves and robbers? The reply was given, of course, that this refers to false Messiahs who had come before Jesus and claimed to be the deliverers of Israel. But the objectors wished for more information, and with a desire to make available what we believe to be the best statement on the matter we give the following long extract from the article by H. G. Wood in the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* on Animals. (p. 67 ff.)

"Jesus confined His earthly ministry to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel' Mt. 15 : 24. When He sent forth the Twelve on a preaching tour He bade them observe the same limits (Mt. 10 : 6). We need not suppose from this phrase that 'the work of Jesus embraced only the outcasts of Israel. 'The lost sheep of the house of Israel' describes the nation as a whole. The very sight of a Galilaeen crowd touched the heart of Jesus, for they were like worried and scattered sheep that have no shepherd (Mt. 9 : 36, Mk. 6. 34.). In the eyes of Jesus, the spiritual condition of His countrymen agreed with the description of the shepherdless people given in Ezek. 34. More particularly the Jews needed guidance in their national and religious aspirations. They had mistaken alike the character of the coming Messiah and the nature of the coming kingdom. The hope to re-establish by force the throne of David made the people the helpless victims of political agitators like Judas the Gaulonite (Acts 5 : 37) and led at length to the chastisement inflicted on the nation by the Roman power.

The exact interpretation of John 10 is exceedingly difficult, but it may in part be understood, in relation to this view given in Matthew

and Mark of the nation as a shepherdless flock. Jesus speaks of him self as the door of the sheep, through which if a man enters, he shall be saved (vv. 7 : 9). The only hope of salvation for the Jews lay in their realizing through the teaching of Jesus, that God's kingdom was not of this world. Those who offered themselves as leaders before Christ, and who proposed to subdue Rome by arms, were thieves and robbers who came only to steal and destroy (vv 8 : 10). The best comment on these thieves and robbers, and their treatment of those helpless sheep, the house of Israel, is perhaps Josephus' account of the Judas above mentioned :—

'There was one Judas a Gaulonite. . . who, taking with him Sadduc, a Pharisee, became zealous to draw (the people) to a revolt; who both said that this taxation (under Cyrenius) was no better than an introduction of slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty; as if they could procure them happiness and security for what they possessed, and an assured enjoyment of a still greater good, which was that of the honour and glory they would thereby acquire for magnanimity. . . . All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree: one violent war came upon us after another, and we lost our friends who used to alleviate our pains; *there were also very great robberies and murders of our principal men. This was done in pretence of the public welfare but in reality from hopes of gain to themselves*' (Josephus, Antiquities, XVII. i: 1.)

If Barabbas were one of these robbers (cf. John. 18 : 40 with 10, 8), the fact that the Jews chose Barabbas in preference to the Good Shepherd shows the bewilderment of the popular mind, which led Jesus to compare the house of Israel to lost sheep. Jesus further describes Himself as the Good Shepherd in contrast to the hirelings, who care nothing for the sheep (John. 10. 11 & 13.). If the thieves and robbers betoken political agitators like Barabbas and Judas, 'the hirelings' are probably the Pharisees and Sadducees, the shepherds who, in the words of Ezekiel, 'fed themselves and did not feed the sheep.'

The interpretation here suggested is not usually adopted. Godet, for example understands the thieves and robbers to be the Pharisees. The wolf (v. 12) he takes as a further symbol of the same party, the hirelings being the scribes and priests, whom cowardice kept from opposing Pharisæic domination. This latter interpretation fits in well with the context *i.e.*, with chapter 9."

Reference should be made to Acts 5 : 36. The words of Gamaliel as recorded by Luke would make this man to have rebelled about 6 or 7 A.D. Another agitator appeared in the time of Herod. His name was Matthias the son of Margalothous. He is prominent in Josephus (Antiquities XVII. vi. 2).

Notes on Al Ghazali's Psychology.

There are two meanings of *Qalb i.e., Heart*.

1. *Physical*. In the centre of the heart is the cavity (*khatw*) in which is black blood which is the spring of the spirit. But this is only of interest to physicians and belongs to the physical world.

2. *Spiritual*. It is a divine and spiritual refinement (*latifa*), which bears some relation to the physical heart. And this refinement is called the Reality of man (*haqiqat-ul-insan*) and its discerning, knowing, speaking and reproving. It is the heart which is called to account.

The reasons for relating it to the physical heart are often perplexing, for its relation to that is as the relation of accidents to substances, or qualities to things qualified, or the worker to his tool or the dweller to his dwelling. But we are not concerned with this aspect of the matter which belongs to the Sciences of Revelation (*'Ulum-ul-mukashata*) but only in so far as this affects Sciences of Practice (*'Ulum-ul-mu'amala*). The solution of the matter depends on the solution of the mystery of Spirit (*Ruh*) about which the Prophet has given no decision. It therefore behoves no one else to open his lips on the matter. So the object here is to describe only qualities and states of heart and not the nature of the heart in itself. This is not necessary for *'Ilm-ul-mu'amala*.

There are two meanings of *Ruh i.e., Spirit*.

1. Spirit is a refinement of which the fount or spring is the *Qalb* or the cavity of the heart and which by means of the arteries is diffused into the bodily members. And its diffusion in the body and its imparting life and sense to the organs is as a lamp set in a house and giving light on all sides and illuminating wherever its light penetrates. So Spirit is like the lamp and Life like the light. And Spirit, moving in the invisible parts and permeating the body, is as a lamp passing through a house. This is the meaning in the physician's use, to wit, Spirit is a subtle vapour which receives maturity (?) from the warmth of the heart. We do not use the word in this meaning with which physicians who heal the body are concerned. The Physicians of Religion who cure the heart because they bring it near to the Lord of the Worlds do not use this meaning.

2. Spirit is the intellectual refinement in man which seeks for causal connections. And this is the significance which has already been explained in the second meaning of *Qalb*. This is also the meaning in the text *Ur-ruku min amari rabbi* 'The spirit (comes) at my Lord's command'. And this is such a wonderful divine thing that in the understanding of its essential nature or reality the reason and intelligence are often confounded.

Two meanings of *Nafs i.e., Soul*, are important for our purpose.

1. *Nafs* is that in man which comprises the irascible and concupiscent powers. This meaning is often used by Sufis. They consi-

der the *Nafs* to be that in which the guilty qualities of man are gathered. And on this account they say that the *nafs* should be fought and broken in (as a horse is) according to the tradition which says, "Thy greatest enemy is the *nafs* which is between thy sides (in thy breast)." (This is the appetitive soul).

2. It is a divine refinement. And by this should be understood man in himself and the *Nafs-ul-insan* (Soul of Man) and the *Dhat-ul-insan* (Essence of Man). It is qualified by different adjectives according to its several states. Thus when its restlessness ceases and it is established in obedience by the constant frustration of lusts, it is called *Nafs-ul-Mutama'ina*, the tranquillized soul, as we find in Surah 89 : 27 "O Thou comforted soul ! return unto thy Lord, well pleased and pleasing Him." *Nafs* in its first meaning is not considered as returning to God but rather as estranging from Him. It is associated with Satan. When its tranquillity is not perfect but it keeps checking the Carnal Soul (*Nafs-ush-shahwaniya*) and taking objection to it, it is called *Nafs-ul-lawwama*, the rebuking soul, because, finding its possessor falling short in the matter of divine service, it reproaches him. This also is found in the Quran (Sur. 75 : 2.) "Nor need I swear by the rebuking soul."

When it does not check the Carnal Soul but becomes obedient to the dictates of lust and the promptings of the Devil, it is called *Nafs-ul-ammara*, the concupiscent soul, as in the story of Joseph, Sur. 12 : 53. "For I hold not myself excused, because the soul is very urgent to evil." It is also possible that *ammara bi'lsu*, urging to evil, indicates *nafs* in its first meaning which is very evil. In its second meaning it is very good for in this latter it is the essence and reality of man which apprehends the mystic knowledge of God and other conceptions. (From the *Ihya'-ulumud-din*, Cairo A.H. 1346 pp. 3-4).

Latifa, translated here refinement, is difficult to translate. It is commonly used to mean a witticism, a subtle point, a rarity. If it were translated 'faculty' some of the original meaning would be lost. It should be noted also that the root of this word is sometimes used in reference to the divine grace and there *may* be some slight hint of this in Ghazali's use of it.

For the general psychology of the passages above note the trichotomy of Paul in his use of body, soul and spirit. Of Paul's use of the word 'body' in 1 Cor. vi. 12-18 Johannes Weiss says that it 'almost means personality'. Compare this with what is said of the heart in its second meaning above. Cf. also Anderson Scott's *Christianity according to St. Paul* p. 208f. "It is clear that (the Greek word for) members in Col. iii. 1-8, is used not literally of the members or limbs of the body but metaphorically. As our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount said, "If thine eye be evil," referring to the evil disposition which employs the eye as its instrument, so Paul says, "Slay your member which belong to the earth, using the word to signify those dispositions or inclinations of the mind or will which use

the body as instruments of the personality. He is thinking of 'members' and 'body' not so much in their physical connotation as in their function of—giving expression to the personality."

J. W. S.

Apostacy in Muslim Law.

The following are two extracts from *Muhammadan Jurisprudence* by Abdur Rahim, Barrister-at-Law, Judge of the High Court, Madras.

IF a minor apostatizes the law will take cognizance of his apostacy, which is an act of choice indicating exercise of judgment.

Spiritual consequences of such an act must necessarily follow, and in their wake its legal results as well, even though they may be of the nature of penalties and disabilities. But an infant apostate is not liable to the sentence of death, because of mere apostacy, but because of the possibility of an apostate waging war against the Muslim State as is shown by the fact that a female apostate is not sentenced to death. A Muslim infant who has apostatized will not be sentenced to death, even if he persists in his apostacy after attaining majority, because there is a difference of opinion among the learned on the question whether an infant's faith in Islam is recognised by the law, and whether he can at all be guilty of apostacy, the rule being that whenever a doubt intervenes capital punishment is not to be enforced.

If a non-Muslim infant's wife embraces Islam, the Qadi, on his attaining majority, will offer him the option of adopting the faith and if he refuses, his wife will be separated from him, because it would be a hardship to a Muslim woman to live as the wife of an infidel.

The test of majority is the attainment of puberty, the minimum age for which in a male is twelve years and in a female nine years and the maximum in the case of both is fifteen years." p. 244.

"Apostacy or change of faith from Islam to infidelity places the apostate outside the protection of law. The law, however, by way of indulgence gives the apostate a certain *locus poenitentiae*. For instance he will be first asked to conform to the Faith and, if he entertains any doubt, efforts must be made to remove it by argument. He will be given the option of three days to re-embrace the Faith, before the sentence is passed on him. But since by the very act of apostacy a man loses the protection of law, if even before the chance of re-embracing the Faith has been given to him, a Muslim kills an apostate, it will be considered an improper act, but he would incur no penalty of the law. So long as the sentence has not been passed on an apostate, he will be allowed, according to the two disciples, to retain possession of his property but according to Abu Hanifa, it passes to his heirs at the instant of apostacy." p. 253.

Correspondence.

A Problem for Zenana Workers.

Miss F. Wakefield writes from Kendal, England, with regard to the problem which was presented in our May number as follows :

“**Q**UENE has thought and prayed so much with reference to your question : Should we leave them in their homes to witness and, when they can, to bring up their children to know Christ? That this is not universally considered to be disloyalty to our Lord is abundantly evident. On laying down your question I picked up the *Life of Faith* of April 24th, 1935, at page 406 and read, “No one is to be baptised until we can be sure of friends who will support the workers.” This from such a veteran as Rev. C. W. Posnett! Any disapproval one may feel to “non-economic” church-building is relevant to our point.

There is, I understand, a rather general feeling among Gentiles that Hebrew Christians should not be baptised until they have some prospect of being self-supporting after baptism. Perhaps my statement sounds too sweeping. Within the last five years about five Bedawin from the Judæan desert are believed to have died trusting in Christ. Of these, three (*i.e.* all the men) were unbaptised. They lived among their own families and tribes, or in Bethlehem but are supposed to have witnessed before their families during life and at their death. It would be helpful to know whether readers of *News and Notes* can suggest any feasible way for these nomads to have joined the visible church.

It seems that the Friends (Quakers) and Salvation Army do not observe ritual sacraments.

In each of the above instances, as in the mission field generally, the evangelistic agent was foreign. Should we Britons care to join a foreign church or be examined for baptism by foreigners? We should surely doubt their ability to understand us, and their judgment in baptising and shepherding us.

Is the solution of the problem the springing up of indigenous churches native ingenious to the soil and soul from and among which they were quickened to eternal life, the very life of God which cannot die or wane? When indigenous churches are responsible for inquirers and converts, I do not think the problem of baptism will be so out-facing. We have created false, *i.e.* foreign, values—have sown exotic seed which is proving ill-adapted to non-European soil. It has grieved me that a Muhammadan from Kano who believed and confessed Christ before the world war, has not yet been baptised. This, although he is a language teacher to missionaries! Were the Christian Church truly indigenous, I think he would be baptised and looked after by it. Another very important side is that God may call some to baptism who refuse, in which case the evil consequences of disobedience would follow as in other cases of disobedience.”

Some Inconsistencies in Muslim Polemic.

Not infrequently a strange situation arises in controversy with Muslims. On the one hand the Muslim stands firm on the Quran and will not for one moment admit that his authority has any need of support or proof by reason or by appeal to any external authority, and on the other hand, he makes impossible claims on his Christian opponent for proof from external sources for the facts of the Gospel. It also sometimes happens that in our desire to be impartial we are forced to take the ground which our opponent chooses for us.

An example of this is the comment made by a Muslim on the story of the Virgin Birth. "Christian writers speak of the reticence with which this matter is treated in the Gospel story and decline to argue about it themselves but this is only a trick to get over the difficulty of proving the Gospel story *from a reliable source.*" The implication will at once be noted. The Gospel story cannot of course be regarded as a reliable source. Now what possible reliable source outside the little circle home of Nazareth or the close intimates of Jesus and His mother could there be for such an event as the Virgin Birth? Indeed apart from the mother herself what possible evidence could there be for this as an historical fact? Other evidence could only be as to whether contemporaries regarded the evidence presented to them as trustworthy and such contemporaries would not be detached observers but confidants who had sufficient knowledge of the moral character of the persons involved. Thus when our Muslim friend asks for some reliable evidence outside he frequently asks for what can not in the nature of the case be given him.

The inconsistency in the position taken up by the Muslim will be apparent. He expects from his opponent what he is not willing to submit to himself. But there is a still more flagrant inconsistency here because the objector *believes in the Quran and does not really disbelieve that it teaches the Virgin Birth of Christ.*

Another illustration of this strange inconsistency is to be found in a comment on the question of the historicity of Christ. "The civilised world ignored Jesus and his crucifixion altogether and even did not refer to his sect for about a century or so after that event so much so that even the reference in Tacitus' Annals has been suspected!"

Now our objector believes that Jesus was an historical person. So what is the point of this remark? If he as a Muslim believes that Jesus was a real person he must see that the silence of pagans with regard to Him is of no real importance. It is a strange view of history to expect that people will refer in detail to events or persons in whom they have absolutely no interest just so that later they may be hailed as impartial witnesses with the "scientific mind."

We would next draw attention to the strange inconsistency of the Muslim in regard to the Gospel according to St. John. This book

is "not a true record of the saying of Jesus" . . . "Full of theological quibbles." . . . "By an unknown person who slyly suggests that he was a beloved disciple of Jesus." . . . "No one would think after reading it that it is a record of an old man's memories. It is clearly a polemic, a carefully constructed piece of doctrinal argumentation," . . . "Not historical," etc. The same one who uses these words draws attention to the prophecy of the Paraclete in the same Gospel and regards it as a prophecy of the coming of Muhammad. Could inconsistency go further than this?

Our readers will have noticed the frequent reference which is made to books of the Rationalist Press Association by Muslims when seeking to raise difficulties for Christians. Renan is a great favourite and we remember how frequently Gibbon and modern anti-religious writers, the Ahmadis and Qadianis are much given to this. It is a strange spectacle.

The conclusion we come to when we consider some of these matters is that Islam at the present day is hard put to it to find some consistent line of attack and defence and one can hazard a prophecy that some lines of argument which are being adopted at the present time are boomerangs which return and wound the user.

Prayer and Praise.

LET us pray and praise God for a Muslim girl who is leaving kindred and friends to follow Christ.

LET us pray for the Christian friends of this girl that special guidance and wisdom may be theirs in a difficult time.

LET us pray for the missionary societies at home who are finding it very difficult to avoid retrenchment.

LET us pray that pride may not hinder the surrender of men to Christ.

LET us pray for a young Moslem in a Province from which very few converts have come. He has declared himself a Christian but is being closely watched lest he slip away for baptism.

Notice.

Please note the Editor's change of address

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 Secretary of the League. The annual subscription to the League is Rs. 2-0-0 (English 3s. od.)

Matters of interest to members of the League, items of news and requests for prayer should be sent (if possible, early in the month) to the Hony. Secretary :—

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