

## MUSLIM INTERESTS IN PALESTINE

*(Note by Website Editor: This is the text of a booklet of the above title published by The Central Islamic Society, 158 Fleet Street, London E.C.4. The copy used here is in the library of the Berlin Wilmersdorf Mosque of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore. It reports on speeches made during a meeting held in London during the First World War, at which the main speaker was Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall, who later translated the Quran into English. Mr. Pickthall was not yet a declared Muslim, his public declaration of embracing Islam coming later the same year in November 1917. The issue of who should rule Palestine was under vigorous public debate at the time as British-led Allied troops were fighting to capture Palestine and other territories in the Middle East from the centuries-old rule of the Turkish Ottoman empire, which was allied with Germany in the First World War. Near the end of 1917 Palestine was taken by British Allied forces. In November 1917, some five months after the meeting reported in the booklet below, the Balfour Declaration was issued by the British cabinet agreeing to Zionist demands for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.)*

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UNDER the auspices of the Central Islamic Society, which represents Muslims from different parts of the world, a lecture was delivered by Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall on “Muslim Interests in Palestine,” at Caxton Hall, on Saturday, June 9, 1917.

The hall was overcrowded, and the gathering was representative of Muslims of various countries, as well as of a number of Jews, Christians, and persons of other persuasions.

As there has been a great deal of talk lately of creating a Jewish State in Palestine under the suzerainty of a Christian Power, the Muslims came to the meeting to express their sense of resentment at those proposals, and though the educational institutions and universities had not by then closed, and though the summer had thinned the limited Muslim population of the town, the gathering was large, and all those who were present expressed their keenest interest in the subject. Mr. M. H. Ispahani, the President of the Society, was in the chair.

**Shaikh Mushir Hosain Kidwai** of Gadia, Hon. Secretary of the Central Islamic Society, opened the meeting with the following speech:—

Sisters and brothers, ladies and gentlemen,— It is usual for the chairman to introduce the lecturer to the audience, but by the kind permission of our worthy chairman, Mirza Hashim Ispahani, who is also the President of the Society, I have the honour to formally

introduce to you our learned lecturer this afternoon. Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall is, I believe, well known to at least most of you, if not to all of you. He is a well-known publicist, an accomplished author of several books, some of them dealing with the East and including Palestine. He has travelled a good deal, and has visited and seen with his own eyes the sacred places in Palestine. He is the son of the late Rev. Charles Pickthall, Rector of Chillesford, in Suffolk, yet the Central Islamic Society entrusted to him to represent to you and to the British public generally the Muslim interests in the Holy Land. You may well ask Why? and I shall endeavour to answer you. But before that, I will ask you never to forget this one point, whenever you have to consider any matter concerning Islam, that Islam is universal. Over thirteen centuries ago Islam effectually demolished those boundaries of race, country, colour and class which divided man from man. There is no distinction in Islam between an Arab and a Turk, a negro and a white man, an "Abyssinian" slave and a Hedjas Quraish, a denizen of the East and of the West. All the Muslim peoples form one nation. Our Prophet himself repeatedly proclaimed that he was only a man like us. No man under Islam can claim special privilege, and if anybody were to tell you that such-and-such a person has special claims to Muslim reverence, simply because he has descended from such-and-such a king or saint, or even the Prophet himself, please take him to be absolutely ignorant of even the ABC of Islamic principles. Islam even tried to do away with the boundary of creed, and accepted all the prophets and religious reformers that were sent from time to time to mankind in different countries of the world. Islam opened the gate of salvation to everybody who acted aright. The ideal of Islam was to bring the whole of humanity on one common platform under one Universal God, and to tie the whole of mankind in one silken bond of common brotherhood. Now, I know, and can tell you, that Mr. Pickthall believes in one Universal God, that he respects all the prophets, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and even those great teachers who were born in India, China, Persia, Rome, or Greece. Further, I am very glad to be able to tell you that Mr. Pickthall's sympathies are not confined to the people of his own race, country, or colour. And now I ask you which other religion excepting Islam can claim a man with such beliefs and sympathies? Judaism will not claim him, because he is not an Israelite; Christianity will not claim him, because he does not believe in the Trinity nor confine salvation to

those persons only who believe in the blood of Christ. Neither Hinduism, Buddhism, nor Zoroastrianism nor any other religion will claim Mr. Pickthall. Only Islam can claim him. Only Muslims can claim him. And we do claim him — the son of a rector though he is — as our own brother. It was therefore that the Central Islamic Society entrusted to him to represent Muslim interests in Palestine, and I am fully confident that he will do justice to the subject, and deal with it without partiality or bias.

#### WHY THE SUBJECT WAS CHOSEN.

There is one more question which can be raised as regards the lecture, and I shall endeavour to meet it — why the present subject was chosen at a time which is rather critical. Everybody knows that the question of the possession of Palestine has two aspects: (1) political, (2) religious. I personally think that from a political point of view — I do not say from a military point of view, because I am not a militarist and do not know military matters at all — the offensive towards Palestine was one of the greatest blunders of the war: a greater blunder than the effort to seize Constantinople for Russia and to court a serious catastrophe. But as politics *per se* are not included in the objects of the Society, I shall not discuss the political aspects of the question, and I trust that those persons who follow me in the discussion will also kindly keep themselves away from going into the details of the political aspect of the problem. This meeting has not been organized to raise any protest against the political outlook. But this meeting has been organized to remove that serious and dangerous ignorance which seems to prevail in this country as regards the Muslim interests in Palestine. The people of this country, even responsible Ministers and public men in this country, are ignorant of almost all affairs concerning Islam and Muslims; and unfortunately the worst part is this, that they do not seem inclined to have that ignorance removed, although that ignorance very often endangers the interests of the British Empire, as it does in the present case. It is the duty of this Society, one of the main objects of the existence of this old and universal Society, to remove the ignorance of the people of this country as regards Islamic affairs, and to safeguard against misrepresentations and misunderstandings. On the question of Muslim interests in Palestine the ignorance seems to be complete and has reached dangerous points. When the Gaza offensive

took place, and seemed for the time being to be successful, all the papers, important and unimportant, came out with leaders, and as if this deadly war had not sufficiently already embittered the feelings between races and races, nations and nations, the papers in this country came forward to introduce religious bitterness also. The offensive was called a holy war, a crusade. *The Times* called it a “new crusade”; another paper, the eighth crusade. One went so far as to call it the last crusade to drive away the infidels from the Holy Land. These leader-writers of English papers do not know, even in the twentieth century of the Christian era, that the word “infidel” cannot be applied to Muslims even by the wildest flight of imagination. We do not worship any saints or saviours, as the majority of Christians do. Our places of worship are free from images, idols, and statues. We have not adopted the pagan Trinitarian belief, and do not worship a man-god, as Christians do. We do not hold communion with our One, Almighty, Omnipresent, Omniscient God through the blood and flesh of any human being, as the Christians do, nor do we seek salvation through another man. We do not believe in any son or daughter of God. And now I leave it to you to say if the word “infidel” can apply more appropriately to us or to the leader-writers themselves. We as Muslims, and the Central Islamic Society as an organized Muslim institution, strongly protest against such insults to our religion. We strongly protest against raising any religious issues in this war. The other day General Smuts — the same General Smuts who ill-treated civilized and highly-cultured Indians in South Africa, the same General Smuts who very recently talked of the “black peril” and expressed his pious opinion that “black men” have no souls — said, with a view to raise religious fanaticism in Russia, that one of the objects of the war was to liberate Christian populations from the Muslim rule. Mr. Balfour, who unfortunately is a philosopher and not a historian, also mentioned about Muslim civilization being foreign to Europe, and therefore deserving of expulsion from that celestial continent. General Smuts is now an Imperialist, so he ought to know that in the British Empire itself there are more non-Christians, more Muslims, as Mr. Khwaja Kamalud-Din points out, than Christians, and that British rule is so much Christian that in India itself thousands of pounds paid by non-Christian taxpayers are spent annually in the up-keep of purely Christian churches and in the high salaries of Christian priests, while not a brass farthing is spent on either Hindu or Muslim places of worship from the

taxes which they pay. Christian rule is more alien to Hindus and Muslims than Muslim rule to Christians. Anybody even with the most elementary knowledge of history knows that Muslim rule has been far longer in Europe than Christian rule in India, Tunis, Tripoli, etc. It can be of no service to the British Empire to introduce in this terrible war religious questions in any form or shape, under any pretence or excuse. The Muslims in the British Empire have kept quiet out of respect to authority and with a view not to embarrass their Government. But Muslims are well known to be very touchy as regards religious questions. They are, after all, human, and may not be able to stand for ever insults and stabs to their religious sentiments. Those persons who try to raise religious issues in this war do no service to the British Empire. Nor can it be a service to the cause of future peace and brotherliness to leave behind unending and bitter religious feuds after the war by replacing the Muslim rule of the Holy Land by either Jewish or Christian.

MUSLIM INTERESTS IN PALESTINE.

Palestine is holier to the Muslims than it is either to the Jews or the Christians. All those memories of the old prophets which are sacred either to the Jews or Christians are also holy to Muslims. But to Muslims the memories of Islam and Muhammad are also holy, although they are not holy either to Jews or Christians. Muslims believe that the ascension of the Holy Prophet took place from the sacred soil of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> They believe that Christ will come again to Palestine to re-guide his mistaken people and permanently establish the glory of Islam.<sup>2</sup> The Holy Quran calls Jerusalem *Bait-ul-haram* and even *Masjid-ul-haram* (the Sacred Mosque). Muslim Arabs and Turks, Indians and Egyptians, all those who have any faith in them, will unitedly claim Palestine to remain always under Muslim rule. So if the Zionistic ambitions of our Jewish brothers must be realized; if they have suffered for the last two thousand years, as Lord Rothschild has said, with that one ambition — suffered, mind, never at the hands of

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<sup>1</sup> *Website Editor's note:* This was not a physical transportation. As Mr. Pickthall says in his speech to follow: "The Prophet was carried by night *in a vision* from the House of God at Mecca to the House of God at Jerusalem" (see page 13).

<sup>2</sup> *Website Editor's note:* This belief, while general, is plainly contradicted by the Quran which teaches that Jesus died after completing his life on earth. Belief in his return conflicts with many important Islamic principles; for example, it clashes with the doctrine that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was the final Prophet.

Muslims, but always by the hands of Christians in every country, England, France, Spain, and Russia, even during the war — then those ambitions can only be realized by the co-operation and under the suzerainty of Muslims. About ten years ago I suggested through the columns of the *Jewish Chronicle* an *entente cordiale* between the Jewish nation and the Muslim nation with that view. The Jewish and Muslim nations are sister nations. Unlike Christians, Jews are not Trinitarians, and so are nearer to Muslims in their beliefs. The Jews can satisfy all their legitimate ambitions under the Muslim Khalifa.

If we compare the treatment meted out to even British citizens from India in British colonies and that of the Jewish emigrants, even from hostile empires and with Zionistic ambitions, in Palestine, we can see how tolerant the Muslim Khalifa has always been to the Jews. No other nation or people of any other creed could be or can be more tolerant than the Ottoman Khalifat has been to the Jews, and it will be grossest, and I am afraid very dangerous, ingratitude for themselves on the part of the Jews to try to wreck the empire of that Khalifa. The Jews can gain much more advantage by allowing it to remain a safe refuge for themselves. Even a Zionist State can never be self-supporting. Even a Zionist State cannot be safe if surrounded by such hostile neighbours, who belong to a fighting race and who profess a virile and vigorous faith.

Neither France nor England is qualified for the protection of the Holy Land, because they lack the all-important qualification — they are not Muslim States, they are not under the Muslim Khalifa.

And now I ask you to attend to the lecture of Mr. Pickthall, which I am sure will not only be interesting but also instructive.

**Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall's Address.**

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,— Palestine is a Holy Land for three religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three religions visit it in pilgrimage. Yet in talking of the future destination of that country I notice that only two are generally mentioned here in England — Judaism and Christianity; and yet Muslims have been the rulers of that country — with the exception of the period when the Crusaders succeeded in occupying it — for some thirteen centuries; and the

native population of the country to-day consists of Muslims, Jews, and Christians, each and all enjoying perfect liberty of conscience, having, and having always had, their own churches, monasteries, shrines, and synagogues. Would that have been the case if Palestine had been ruled for thirteen hundred years by Christians or by Jews? All history goes to prove that it would not.

When Palestine was conquered by the Muslims in the seventh century A.D., the population was all Christian; so far as I can learn from history, there were no Jews there. Jews were jealously excluded from the Holy Places. A large Christian population remained after the Muslim conquest, and remains until this day. But how comes it there are native Jews to-day in Palestine? The answer is that, at different periods, Jews fled for refuge to the Muslim Empire from the persecutions they endured in Christian Europe. Now, what is the cause of this greater religious tolerance of the Muslims as compared with Christians in the past? what is the cause of the survival in the Muslim Empire of many millions of native Christians, at a time when Christians thought it righteous to exterminate all whom they accounted infidels or even heretics? For the explanation we must go back rather a long way. Thirteen hundred years ago in Arabia there lived the most wonderful man the world has ever known — the Prophet Muhammad — who made laws so enlightened — and, as we should say, so modern — that the most advanced of Europe's thinkers are only just beginning to come up with them, and that the Muslims who obeyed them through the centuries are only just beginning to realize their world-significance. Especially in regard to war and conquest. Till Muhammad's time, and among non-Muslim nations for centuries after his time, the mere fact of one race being conquered by another meant that the conquered people forfeited all human rights, and lay entirely at the mercy of the conqueror. Muhammad changed all that. He laid it down as a religious law on all believers that those of the peoples conquered by the Muslims who embraced Islam should be exactly equal with the conquerors in all respects. And what, you will naturally ask, of those who did not embrace Islam? If they agreed to pay an annual tribute for the cost of their defence — for of course they could not be expected to take part in religious warfare, which is the only warfare which the Prophet sanctioned — Jews and Christians, who, as followers, however far astray, of Muslim prophets, were regarded as akin to Muslims, aye,

and idolators as well, as you will find in India, were allowed to live on unmolested in their occupations, and secured full liberty of conscience and complete self-government in all internal affairs of their communities. Even in the heat of war, non-combatants were to be unmolested. Fruit-bearing trees and cornfields were to be respected and no cattle killed except in case of urgent need. Muhammad regarded nations as having the same rights as individuals, and every Muslim so regards them at the present day.

To show you how these laws were put in practice by the Prophet's followers: When Omar ibn el Khattab, the second Khalifa or successor of the Prophet, came personally to receive the submission of the Holy City of Jerusalem, which had been taken by his army, the Christian patriarch of Jerusalem led him to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and he was in the church when the hour for Muslim prayer arrived. The patriarch offered to have a mat spread for him in the church itself, that he might say his prayers there, but Omar refused. "Because," said he, "some ignorant believer in the time to come might take your church and turn it into a mosque because I, the Khalifa, had said my prayers there." He caused his carpet to be spread upon the steps outside the church at a good distance from it, where stands to-day the modest mosque of Omar — the real mosque of Omar, for the splendid shrine so-called by tourists is not a mosque at all, and is of later date.

From that day onward, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — with many other ancient churches there in Palestine — has been in the possession of the Christians under Muslim rule, except in the time of the Crusading Kingdom, when Latin Christians lorded it in Palestine. The vicissitudes which it underwent were the vicissitudes of the whole country. The buildings were totally destroyed in 1010 by order of the mad Fatemite Caliph, El Hakim bi Amri'llah, whom the Druses to this day worship as incarnate god, but whom the Muslims all regard with horror and disgust. They were rebuilt, as separate chapels, on the various holy sites at present covered by one mass of building; in 1224, the Kharazmians, a fierce Tartar horde, overran Palestine and rifled the church in hope of finding treasure, as they had rifled Muslim shrines and private houses. Harun-er-Rashid, of *Arabian Nights* celebrity, sent to Charlemagne, among other valuable presents, the keys of the Church of the Sepulchre. And the Emperor took advantage of the Caliph's



friendliness to found a house of rest for Christian pilgrims to the south-east of the church. It was during the troubles in the reign of the mad anti-Caliph El Hakim, already referred to, that the Christian pilgrimage was interrupted for a time and pilgrims persecuted. The noise of this in Europe was the cause of the Crusades. But by the time the first Crusade came out, order had been restored and the Christians had again free access to the Holy Places.

Now, I do not want to go into the history of the Crusades. To me it seems a ghastly, shameful history, though for the Christian fanatic it is no doubt sanctified. I will merely point out that the Crusaders were very far from showing the same tolerance which the Muslims had evinced for those who differed from them in religion. They had no mercy on the Muslim population, and they dispossessed and even massacred the Eastern Christians when they took Jerusalem. For them, every Jew was the murderer of Christ and every Muslim an infidel.

To pass to modern times. I happen to know Palestine and the adjacent countries fairly intimately, and I must say that I should regard it as a world-disaster if that country should be taken from the Muslim government. Must even that sacred ground be exploited by the profiteer? Must cinema palaces and cafés-chantants be established in Jerusalem and harlots walk the Via Dolorosa? The Muslims have preserved Jerusalem as a holy city, Palestine as a holy country, with all reverence. Would modern Christians, modern Jews, have done the like? No Christian Power could have kept order at the Holy Places so impartially and calmly as the Muslim Power has done; and for this reason: that among the Christian Churches at Jerusalem there is jealousy and even murderous hate, which has become inextricably mixed with European politics. If you want to have a new and terrible storm-centre for the world, hand over Palestine to any Christian Power. I would point out that all the territories hitherto "released," as it is called, from Muslim rule have become a trouble to the world. Jerusalem is more dangerous in this respect than all the Balkan States, with Greece and Macedonia, put together. The Turks have covered up the shame of Christendom. Do Christians want the Jews to see it in its nakedness? Do they want the Jews to become the guardians of those mad fanatics who wish to tear each other's eyes out round the tomb of Christ? Internationalization here would mean sheer anarchy or else the

despotism of a single Power. It is not the native Christians who are most to blame. Here, as elsewhere, the chief fault is with the Powers of Europe, supporting each her special brand of Christian in the East and stirring up fanaticism. The state of things will be made worse by conquest, rousing ambitions where the population is so mixed. Among the recent Jewish immigrants into Palestine — the Jews of the Zionist movement as distinct from the native Jews — there is an extreme and narrow fanaticism which their enlightened co-religionists in Europe hardly, I think, realize. They hate the Christian and they hate the Muslim; and their supremacy would mean oppression for the other elements of the population. Their avowed intention is to get possession of the Haram esh-Sherif — including the Dome of the Rock (the so-called Mosque of Omar) and the Mosque El Aksa, which is the second Holy Place of El Islam — because it was the site of their Temple. In the Quran it is written that the Jews will never be again an honoured nation till they acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet; which (translated into rationalistic language) means, till they forsake their narrow, racial religious standpoint and adopt the standpoint of humanity. Many of the enlightened Jews of Europe have done this. They do full justice both to Jesus and Muhammad. But not so the Zionist Jewish colonists in Palestine. If the Jews wish to be disgraced in the sight of the world, let them have an independent Jewish State in Palestine at this stage of their development.

The Jews deny both Jesus and Muhammad. The Christians of Palestine deny Muhammad and abhor the Jews. The Muslims, on the other hand, acknowledge Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad as alike true Prophets of the Word of God. They do not hate the Jew or Christian as such, and they have always tolerated those religions in their country. As for the native Jews, as I have called them — those who of old found refuge in the Muslim Empire from the persecutions of the Western Christians — they are to-day pro-Muslim almost to a man. Indeed, the Zionist Jews might have found a welcome in the Muslim Empire, they might have realized their Zion scheme in all essentials, if the wire-pullers of the movement had allowed them to become Ottoman subjects. Naturally, the Government objected to the importation of hundreds of thousands of Russian, Austrian, or German Jews into a province, as an excuse for diplomatic interference, and with the avowed object of detaching that province ultimately from the Muslim

Empire. To the Jews, as pawns of a cruel diplomacy, the Muslims have objected, reasonably; as Jews, never. And the same is true of Christians in the Muslim Empire.

To return to the Christians. When the Turks took the Church of St. Sophia at Constantinople and converted it into a mosque, the Sultan sent a large part of the treasure of that church — if not all of it — to the monks of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, where I was allowed to see it in May 1909. In addition to the jewels and vestments which the Sepulchre already possessed, it made a treasure valued at considerably more than three million pounds sterling. The Armenian Cathedral at Jerusalem has treasure, I am told, of even greater value. In the year 1900 or 1901, a sub-prior of the Holy Sepulchre stole some forty thousand pounds' worth of this treasure and tried to escape to Europe with it. He was caught at Jaffa by the Turkish customs men, taken back to Jerusalem, and, by the Governor's orders, handed over to his fellow-monks for punishment, although he begged to be dealt with by the Turkish law. The Muslim Government, by the constitution of the realm, he was informed, had no jurisdiction over him.

In the autumn of 1908 and spring of 1909 there were very serious riots in Jerusalem. The congregation of the Orthodox Eastern Church rioted against their own monks of the Sepulchre, and for a curious reason. The Turks and Muslims generally have a great respect for religious foundations. This was well known; and at various times, when the country was in a disordered state and property was insecure, Christians of the Orthodox Communion made over their belongings to the Church of the Sepulchre, on the understanding that the monks should pay the revenue from it to them and their descendants in perpetuity, only deducting a small sum annually for their pains. The congregation of the present day, most of them, can prove that they are the descendants of those men, yet all that property is now the convent's; no money has been paid to the real owners for centuries. Yet — and mark this very curious point — the descendants of those Christians who, more knowing, had in ancient days made over their property to the Mosque El Aksa, as the Muslims did, are still receiving income from such property.

The men who rioted against the monks were not claiming their ancestral property. They knew it was too late to do that. They only

asked the monks to do something for the congregation in the way of education and relief out of their enormous wealth, in great part stolen from the congregation. And the monks, from their great solid fortress, poured vitriol upon the upturned faces of the crowd. The congregation appealed to the Muslim Government, as native Christians always do when they are in real distress, and Shamli Nazim Pasha was appointed arbitrator. He obtained the release of the Patriarch, who, for siding with the congregation, was imprisoned by the monks, and patched up peace for a while. But the troubles broke out afresh; and the monks were supported in their greed by the Russian and Greek Governments. The convent was stormed by the congregation, and then the Turks were able to see to it that the congregation got some part of their requirement. The Muslim Empire could have solved all her internal problems happily if Europe had abstained from hostile interference.

People say the Muslim Empire of late years has been ill-governed. But I think no country in the world has made more progress in the last quarter of a century, and of old it was much better governed and more civilized than Western Europe. The Turkish system seems to Englishmen chaotic; it is, however, well adapted to a region which is inhabited by a great variety of tribes and sects, most of them warlike. Roughly stated, it consists in allowing full self-government to all tribes and communities so long as they behave themselves. Government supervision is directed on the points of contact, and on guarding the settled population of the towns and villages from depredation. For the last fifty years, moreover, there has been a steady growth of order in this system. A friend of mine who is a native of Jerusalem, a man of sixty, tells me that when he was a little boy his parents had a house upon the walls. After the city gates were shut at night, he and a neighbour's boy, for fun, used to let themselves down over the walls in their nightshirts to see how far they could run before they met a robber. He assures me that they seldom had to run more than five hundred yards. Well, such a state of things seems about as remote to the modern dweller in Palestine as do the tales of highwaymen to modern dwellers upon Hounslow Heath. And the change has been made naturally, by the people themselves, without the bitterness and cruelty which always come of foreign interference.

Christian missionaries are in general enemies of El Islam — the greater enemies the less they know about it — yet they, more perhaps than any other sort of people, have been generously treated by the Muslim Government. Three centuries ago the only missionaries in Palestine were the Franciscan friars. There was a terrible epidemic of plague, and the Franciscans distinguished themselves by their charity and self-devotion in the service of the sufferers of all religions. The Muslim Government, in gratitude, decreed that they should have everything they wanted out from Europe duty-free for ever. The edict was so worded — “Frankish missionaries” — as to include all missionaries from the West of Europe; and English Protestant missionaries in Palestine, up to the present war, enjoyed a privilege which they had never earned, and which they accepted arrogantly as their natural right. That is what is called a capitulation.

Now Jerusalem is, as I have said already, the second Holy Place of El Islam, and if the pledges of Mr. Asquith still mean anything, we have his promise as Prime Minister of England that no non-Muslim Power shall interfere with it. According to the Muslim theory, there are in the world two places which from a remote antiquity have been dedicated to the worship of the One True God. One is the Beytu’llah at Mecca; the other the Masjidu’l-haram at Jerusalem. At the time of the coming of Muhammad, the House of God at Mecca had degenerated to a house of idols; the House of God at Jerusalem was a heap of ruins. Muhammad himself purified the House at Mecca of idolatry, and a few years after his death the Muslims, when they took Jerusalem, restored the House at Jerusalem. Besides the Haram esh-Sherif, there is another very famous Muslim sanctuary at Medinat-el-Khalil (Hebron), built over the Cave of Machpelah, where Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, and other prophets of his house lie buried. The Muslim shrines are all about the country. It is indeed a Holy Land for El Islam. It was a country ever present in the Prophet’s thoughts as the country where so many of his predecessors, the sacred messengers of God, had lived and died, had preached and suffered; and particularly as the country of Jesus the son of Mary — Ruhu’llah (the Spirit of God), as Muslims call him — for whom and for his mother the Prophet always had especial love and admiration. The Prophet was carried by night in a vision from the House of God at Mecca to the House of God at Jerusalem, and thence up through the Seven Heavens to the very

Source of Light; and pious Muslims, remembering that grand poetic vision of celestial majesty, think of Jerusalem as the foot of a mystic stairway leading up to the Divine Abode. The early Muslims, in the first days, turned their faces towards Jerusalem in prayer. That Holy Land is dearer to the hearts of the wild, uneducated Muslims of Arabia and North Africa than it is to any Christian here in England, than it is to any Muslim in this room, for education always weakens such attachments. A certain section of the Arabs of Arabia are at present fighting, we are told, in the interests of the Allies against the Muslim Empire. No doubt they have their grievances. But they are Muslims, and fanatic Muslims; and, if Palestine were to be taken from the Muslim Empire, I fancy we should see a striking change in their demeanour.

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The CHAIRMAN asked if any person would like to say anything in opposition, but as nobody stood up he called upon **Rev. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din**, who said:—

When I came here I had no idea that I would be called upon to say anything on the subject so ably dealt with by the learned speaker of the day, but I must bow to the chair. I will emphasize one thing only. The other day we were assured by the Royal message, delivered through the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Viceroy of India, that the inviolability of the Muslim shrines will be preserved. We were also assured through that Royal message that this Royal determination had received countenance from other Allies — France and Russia. Now, we know that Jerusalem and the Holy Places therein are sacred shrines to Muslims, so I cannot understand how the idea of Zionism can go with the promised inviolability of our sacred places. Mr. Pickthall has very rightly said that Jerusalem in its holiness comes next to Mecca. The name Bait-ul-Haram, which means the Sacred House, has been given only to two shrines, one at Mecca, and the other at Jerusalem. A Muslim, when making his pilgrimage to Mecca, is also expected to make the same to Jerusalem. The phrase “Haji-ul-Haramain Sharifain” shows that one has made pilgrimage to two houses, viz. Mecca and Jerusalem. In Muslim parlance, “Bait-ul-Muqaddas” (the Sacred House) is the name given to Jerusalem, so much so that while

Jerusalem is quite a strange word to three-quarters of the Muslims in the world, Bait-ul-Muqaddas is a household word in Muslim lands. All this shows that Jerusalem is included in our Holy Places.

Three great nations have their religious interests in Palestine — Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Is it not our first duty, then, to find out which of these three is best suited to guard the interests of the others? History and respective beliefs of the parties concerned can decide this question. Jews do not believe in Jesus, and can by religion have no veneration for places sacred to Christianity. A Christian has no faith in Islam, and cannot be expected to pay the same respect to Muslim Holy Places as a Muslim would do. The case of a Muslim is quite different. Every holy name of importance in Jerusalem is holy to him. Every prophet that was raised in Jerusalem and in its vicinity is his own prophet. There are various verses in the Quran which support my statement, but I will read here only a part of section 10 of chap. vi.:—

“(84) And this was our argument, which we gave to Abraham against his people... (85) And we gave to him Isaac, and Jacob, each did we guide, and Noah did we guide before, and of his descendants David, and Solomon, and Job, and Joseph, and Moses, and Aaron; ... (86) and Zacharias, and John, and Jesus, and Elias; every one was of the good; (87) and Ishmail, and Elishah, and Jonas, and Lot; ... (88) and from among their fathers, and their descendants, and their brethren, and we chose them and guided them into the right path ... (91) These are they whom God guided, therefore follow their guidance.”

Eighteen prophets are named here, and do they not include every sacred name which has some connection with Palestine? A Muslim is told in the last verse to follow the guidance of all the prophets and respect them as his own, and he has to make no distinction between a prophet and a prophet under the injunction of the Quran (chap. ii. 120).

Think over the names I have stated in the quoted verses. Can you suggest to me any other name whose holy memories have some connection with Palestine and which the Quranic list does not include? A Muslim has to respect them all, and to regard them as his own prophets. Can a Jew entertain the same ideas of veneration for those places which belong to Christians and Muslims, and can a Christian

share with the Muslim the respect which the latter cherishes for places hallowed by his traditions and religion? Read the whole of your sacred Scriptures, and point out to me a single verse or a sentence in the whole writing which inculcates such broad-minded respect for the prophets and spiritual teachers of other religions. I would quote another verse from the Quran which enjoins upon a Muslim to accept, not only the prophets of the House of Jacob as his own teachers, but also to accept and believe in the message of every great spiritual leader in any corner of the world who stood in the name of God to give Divine messages to his people, without having regard to the particular denomination or creed he belonged to. True Muslims, according to ii. 4 of the Quran, are those “who believe in that which has been revealed to you (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before you.” This verse lays down the broad basis of faith in all the prophets of the world, and the recognition of truth in all religions is a distinctive characteristic of a Muslim’s faith. Every prophet of the world is his prophet, who can command from him the same homage which he has to pay to his own prophet. I would therefore appeal to your common sense, ladies and gentlemen, and ask you which of the three nations concerned is best qualified to have the guardianship of their religious interests in Palestine. In fact, Christian and Jewish religious interests are those of a Muslim, but can those interests which are peculiar to a Muslim be styled as Christian and Jewish interests? Muslim, therefore, is the best guardian of Christian and Jewish holy places. I would go further, and say that the interests of the holy places of every religion in the world are only safe in a Muslim hand. Has he not been enjoined in the Quran even to shed his blood in order to protect the holy places of other religions, in these words?— “Those who have been driven forth from their homes, wrongfully, only because they say ‘Our Lord is the God.’ And if God had not repelled some men by others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of God is ever commemorated, would surely have been destroyed,” etc. (xxii. 41). A church, a cloister, a synagogue, an oratory, and a mosque have equal right on a Muslim for their protection, and mark the liberality of the Quran in mentioning the mosque last of all. Can any one show in any religious book a similar injunction on its votaries to guard the places of worship of other religions? And these are not mere theories; they have been actualized by us, and history bears testimony to what I say here. Is not Islam the proverbial enemy of idolatry, and notorious killer of all



sorts of polytheistic tendencies?— 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 successful rule of Islam. They still possess the artistic beauty and sublimity of the ancient workmanship, and excite the wonder of moderns. Does not this fact speak highly of that largeness of soul which the text I have quoted infused in the notorious breakers of idols? But where are the remains of our art and culture and our places of worship in lands which were taken from us by Christians? Who is responsible for the absolute destruction and total disappearance of those colossal landmarks of science, religion, and art which existed in Cordova, Toledo, and Grenada? Where are the sacred mosques of Sicily and of Malta? I myself have been to Jerusalem, and what I saw there led me to think that Muslim broad-mindedness in its actual shape, which found its exhibition in every corner of Jerusalem, could not be too much exaggerated. Every place of note in the Old Testament has been preserved and protected with the same care which a Muslim holy place would demand from us. I leave it to you, friends, to find out for yourselves which of these nations has got best claims to the custody and care of these places. We want a Muslim mind; we are not concerned with nationalities. Create a Muslim heart in you, and then your ideas will become liberal and generous. May I tell you what a Muslim has to believe? The Quran tells me to say to you: “Say (O Muhammad), we (Muslims) believe in God and that which has been sent down to thee, and that which has been sent down to Abraham, to Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which was given to Moses, and Jesus, and that which was given to all the prophets from their Lord; no difference do we make in any of them, and to God we are resigned” (ii. 120).

This is the Muslim faith, a faith which every liberal-minded person should believe, and I hope you all do so.

There is another aspect of the question. What is Zionism after all, especially in the religious sense of the word? Are they going to restore the holy shrine of Solomon to its original form? If the Jews have been waiting for Zionism, and have suffered so many persecutions for the last two thousand years, would Zionism count much if it meant Jewish settlement in Palestine without restoration of the holy shrine? Those

who have visited Jerusalem can easily understand that Zionism in this sense would entail all those disasters which have been alluded to by Mr. Pickthall. The great Temple of Solomon at present is below the surface of the ground, with a large and splendid mosque over it, which was built by Abdul Malik. Does not restoration of the Temple of Solomon mean demolishing the mosque and its appurtenances?

**Mr. Charles Schleich** said: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,— I do not think that I can add much to what has been said by Mr. Pickthall and Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, but there is one side of this question to which I would call your attention. That is, that, firstly, Muslims have had possession of Palestine for thirteen centuries; secondly, Jews have been out of Palestine for nearly two thousand years. When we understand that most of the nations ruling in Europe now have only been in possession of their respective countries for about nine or ten centuries, it is a matter of wonderment why it should be sought to displace a nation which has been in a country for thirteen centuries. I can only say that it is religious fanaticism, fanned and kept alive during the centuries simply because Palestine is Muslim. Now, as to Zionism, I would like to say a few words on this topic, because I am a member of the Jewish race. One hears a good deal about Zionism now, but to my mind, as one who has lived and still lives among Jews, all this talk is merely the exploitation by certain nations for their own benefit of a movement which has little hold over the average Jew. True, there are Zionists in England, but every one must admit that for the last few years the movement has been in a state of stagnation. From time to time frantic efforts have been made to advance it, but all to no avail. The reason of this is not far to seek. In countries where Jews are persecuted Zionism makes progress, but only as an opening for those who wish to escape persecution; but in England, where the Jews have full official liberty, although anti-Semitism is not dead by a long way, Zionism, asking the Jew to forsake business and become a tiller of the soil in Palestine, makes its appeal to deaf ears. The Jew is the most material of materialists. Through years of persecution, having been locked up in Ghettos and forbidden to take part in any manufacture, the Jew had to fall back on money-lending and money-changing. Can you wonder that after a few centuries his mind had become sordid? Now that Russia is giving full liberty to Jews, Zionism will make a further decline. The Jew will not be an agriculturist, and as there is room for

little else in Palestine, I can only say that the danger of Palestine leaving Muslim control is not to be found among the Jews. Rather search among those nations which are talking so much about Zionism at the present moment. If the Holy Land should ever pass out of Muslim hands to one of the European nations, I imagine that there will be bound to be trouble if, say, a Catholic country obtains it. Islam being such a tolerant religion, it is natural that its followers should govern a place where is situated the central locality of a religion split up into such a multitude of widely divergent sects as Christianity is. Search history and you will find that, whereas Islam has always been most tolerant to other religions, Christianity has surpassed all others in the ferocity of its persecutions of Jews and Muslims. Immediately Islam left Spain, a period of the wildest excesses of religious persecution set in. So terribly were the Jews treated that even the Pope himself was moved to send ships to Spain to remove some of the members of this unfortunate race from the clutches of the Inquisition. It is characteristic of how Christians treat Jews that we find that the Jews went not to Italy, but to Muslim Turkey (applause). Go to Salonica now and you will find Jews whose language is a dialect of old Castilian. It is when I survey history and find Islam ever tolerant to all races and creeds that for the peace of the world I most emphatically say: *Keep Palestine Muslim.*

**Mr. Arthur Field** said: Though unable to speak from the religious standpoint, I am profoundly impressed by the importance to the world of Muslim claims, spiritual and secular. As both seem to me of importance, I must trench on the political ground, which the promoters of this meeting have wisely avoided. First, however, about the religious claim of Islam. I heard with approbation that, as Palestine was preponderatingly a Muslim land, it should — due account being taken of the veneration shown for centuries to Christian and Hebrew objects of worship — remain in the control of a Muslim government. Is there not a Caliphate established at Stamboul for centuries, and ruling Palestine for centuries in the name of Islam? If, as Zionists appear to think, Zion has to be “under the protection” of an organized nation, who can offer a better claim than the present rulers, at once European and Asiatic?

Turning to the present position of Zionism, which one of the speakers regarded as dead, or at least negligible, I cannot share that view. Among the five or six groups of Zionists which have established or are forming colonies in Palestine, there are not only the orthodox, who would restore the Temple and the sacrifices, exclude the profane, etc., but Socialist colonists, some of whom have expressed views startling even to Socialists. Some of them frankly declare that they propose to fight and oust the “silly orthodox settlers.” These gentlemen speak with contempt and hatred of the Arab labourers, but propose to make use of them to work up a labour insurrection against the orthodox colonists. There are among the colonists doubtless many peaceful and sincere enthusiasts, who desire nothing better than to earn a living — with or without assistance — and who have no enmity with Arab or with Turk. There are, however, many who hope for success as the camp-followers of an invading army, and others who hope to exploit Arab labourers — men, women, and children. It is not the blessings only of Western progress that are to be carried to Palestine by such messengers of greed and strife. By every criterion of human justice, and on the basis of national right and the mutual interests of East and West, I deplore a movement which must transplant and extend the worst features of our civilization and very few of its best. As to the countenance extended to this scheme by political Europe, it does not surprise me; for I see in it an additional attempt to partition and destroy an Islamic empire — thus seeking, even though vainly, to liquidate the war losses of the West by the further enslavement of the East.

**Mr. Hashim Ispahani** (the Chairman) said that he was convinced that the impression left in the minds of the people present by the facts of history as described in the various speeches which they had heard was that the Muslims, since the peaceful surrender of Jerusalem to them during the seventh century, had acted as the guardians of places that were holy not only to themselves but to the Jews and Christians, and that they had, so far as circumstances permitted, been most impartial in allowing equal facilities to all Christian and Jewish sects to visit and worship at the various shrines. Now that the question of a Jewish occupation of Palestine was being discussed, it was well to remember the outstanding feature of this community, by quoting an instance from Islamic traditions, that when Moses was leading the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land, the twelve tribes refused to

follow each other through the Red Sea. No persuasion by Moses would move them from their fixed resolve to have a separate path through the sea. By the miraculous working of his rod Moses divided the sea into twelve channels, through which each tribe of the Israelites passed respectively. Without wishing to refer to the disputes during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, he would wish to point out that this feature of Jewish character is even to-day prominent. They seemingly cannot unite even on a question which gives them the hope of the promised long-awaited-for Zion. Lord Rothschild advocates one idea, Lord Swaythling another, and so forth. In addition to this, we see that the Jews as a community are more than conservative, as instanced by the fact that even if a princess wishes to enter their congregation, after considerable hesitation they may allow her to become one of their faith, as a concession, not a right, and even that on very rare and special occasions only. Whereas Islam is not only more tolerant, but universal in its influence. The prophet Muhammad, on the surrender of Mecca to him, spoke to the inhabitants of the town, who were the aristocracy of Arabia, in words to the following effect: "The most righteous amongst you is the nearest and dearest to God, irrespective of whether he be an Abyssinian slave or a Quraish patrician."

Would it not therefore be a piece of injustice to an all-tolerant community like Muslim to take away the guardianship of sacred places from their hands and give them up to the Jewish community, who, to say the least of it, have never been tolerant? Would it not be an injustice to religion itself?

After a short speech from Mr. Malik Feroz Khan,<sup>3</sup> thanking the lecturer, the chairman, and the audience, the meeting closed.

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<sup>3</sup> *Website Editor's Note:* Malik Feroz Khan Noon (d. 1970) was a statesman and politician in post-independence Pakistan, serving as Prime Minister in 1957–58. Before independence he had served as the High Commissioner of India in the U.K. from 1936 to 1941.