

## APPENDIX I

### WHAT IS ISLAM?

[The following is a very brief account of Islam, and some of its teaching. For further details please write to the IMAM of the Mosque, Woking.]

**ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF PEACE.**—The word "Islam" literally means: (1) Peace; (2) the way to achieve peace; (3) submission; as submission to another's will is the safest course to establish peace. The word in its religious sense signifies complete submission to the Will of God.

**OBJECT OF THE RELIGION.**—Islam provides its followers with the perfect code whereby they may work out what is noble and good in man, and thus maintain peace between man and man.

**THE PROPHETS OF ISLAM.**—Muhammad, popularly known as the Prophet of Islam, was, however, the last Prophet of the Faith. Muslims, i.e. the followers of Islam, accept all such of the world's prophets, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as revealed the Will of God for the guidance of humanity.

**THE QUR-ÁN.**—The Gospel of the Muslim is the Qur-án. Muslims believe in the Divine origin of every other sacred book, but, inasmuch as all such previous revelations have become corrupted through human interpolation, the Qur-án, the last Book of God, came as a recapitulation of the former Gospels.

**ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM.**—These are seven in number: belief in (1) Allah; (2) angels; (3) books from God; (4) messengers from God; (5) the hereafter; (6) the measurement of good and evil; (7) resurrection after death.

The life after death, according to Islamic teaching, is not a new life, but only a continuance of this life, bringing its hidden realities into light. It is a life of unlimited progress; those who qualify themselves in this life for the progress will enter into Paradise, which is another name for the said progressive life after death, and those who get their faculties stunted

by their misdeeds in this life will be the denizens of hell—a life incapable of appreciating heavenly bliss, and of torment—in order to get themselves purged of all impurities and thus to become fit for the life in heaven. The state after death is an image of the spiritual state, in this life.

The sixth article of faith has been confused by some with what is popularly known as Fatalism. A Muslim neither believes in Fatalism nor Predestination; he believes in Pre-measurement. Everything created by God is for good in the given use and under the given circumstances. Its abuse is evil and suffering.

**PILLARS OF ISLAM.**—These are five in number: (1) declaration of faith in the Oneness of God, and in the Divine Messengership of Muhammad; (2) prayer; (3) fasting; (4) almsgiving; (5) pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine of Mecca.

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.**—The Muslims worship one God—the Almighty, the All-knowing, the All-just, the Cherisher of all the Worlds, the Friend, the Guide, the Helper. There is none like Him. He has no partner. He is neither begotten nor has He begotten any son or daughter. He is Indivisible in Person. He is the Light of the heaven and the earth, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Glorious, the Magnificent, the Beautiful, the Eternal, the Infinite, the First and the Last.

**FAITH AND ACTION.**—Faith without action is a dead letter. Faith is of itself insufficient, unless translated into action. A Muslim believes in his own personal accountability for his actions in this life and in the hereafter. Each must bear his own burden, and none can expiate for another's sin.

**ETHICS IN ISLAM.**—"Imbue yourself with Divine attributes," says the noble Prophet. God is the prototype of man, and His attributes form the basis of Muslim ethics. Righteousness in Islam consists in leading a life in complete harmony with the Divine attributes. To act otherwise is sin.

**CAPABILITIES OF MAN IN ISLAM.**—The Muslim believes in the inherent sinlessness of man's nature which, made of the goodliest fibre, is capable of unlimited progress, setting him above the angels and leading him to the border of Divinity.

**THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN ISLAM.**—Men and women come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and they have been equipped with equal capability for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainment. Islam places man and woman under like obligations, the one to the other.

**EQUALITY OF MANKIND AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF ISLAM.**—Islam is the religion of the Unity of God and the equality of mankind. Lineage, riches and family honours are accidental things; virtue and the service of humanity are the matters of real merit. Distinctions of colour, race and creed are unknown in the ranks of Islam. All mankind is of one family, and Islam has succeeded in welding the black and the white into one fraternal whole.

**PERSONAL JUDGMENT.**—Islam encourages the exercise of personal judgment and respects difference of opinion, which, according to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, is a blessing of God.

**KNOWLEDGE.**—The pursuit of knowledge is a duty in Islam, and it is the acquisition of knowledge that makes men superior to angels.

**SANCTITY OF LABOUR.**—Every labour which enables man to live honestly is respected. Idleness is deemed a sin.

**CHARITY.**—All the faculties of man have been given to him as a trust from God, for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. It is a man's duty to live for others, and his charities must be applied without any distinction of persons. Charity in Islam brings man nearer to God. Charity and the giving of alms have been made obligatory, and every person who possesses property above a certain limit has to pay a tax, levied on the rich for the benefit of the poor.

## APPENDIX II

There is one Eastern custom which has often been pushed to the front and used as a sort of bugbear to frighten women. I refer to Polygamy. As a matter of fact, very few Muhammadans have more than one wife, and no one in any Western country need be in the least alarmed lest the introduction of Islam as a recognized religion should alter the laws there obtaining. It is not my intention to go into the question of whether polygamy might or might not be beneficial in certain instances, though it would be easy to show that its establishment might give rise to an enormous amount of extra trouble and annoyance in, say, England.

Polygamy, practised in the East from the earliest times, is pointed to by over-zealous, but unscrupulous traducers as a "Muhammadan institution." As we know, and as the

Christian missionaries also know, it is nothing of the kind. Muhammad broke up the idols, abolished infanticide, and effected innumerable improvements in the midst of heathenish surroundings in a country sunk in all the darkness of pagan idolatry, and *amongst his good works he placed restrictions on existing polygamy by limiting the number of wives a man might have in certain circumstances.* I think we should lose no opportunity of pointing out that, by regulating the marriage customs which then existed, the Holy Prophet was paving the way to higher ideals respecting morality. It was not to be expected that an Eastern custom of the most ancient date could be abolished all at once, but a great improvement was effected.

In this respect the Qur-án takes a decided step in advance of both the Old and New Testament, in neither of which, so far as I can remember, is there any limit placed to the number of wives a man may have except in the case of a bishop, who is expected to be the husband of one wife; though whether he is to be limited to one or compelled to have one does not appear to be clearly defined.

#### THE PROGRESS OF ISLAM.

In the matter of progress Islam stands alone; and Muhammad is the only one amongst all the Prophets who lived to see the complete success of his mission—the establishment of his great religion. Everyone who knows history is aware that no other Prophet—neither Jesus nor Moses, for example—left the world in possession of an established religion which they came to preach. Their religions were kept alive and spread abroad by others who came after them and mixed ancient and erroneous beliefs with their Creeds in order to make them popular with the masses of the people.

It is well known to our adverse critics that the progress of Islam has been both marvellous and unique on account of its beauty, rationality, and simplicity, and yet they do not hesitate to say that our Faith has been spread by the sword! As Muhammad was compelled in self-defence to fight many battles, they twist the truth in justification of their charges. Before I come to those charges I should like to bring home to my non-Muslim brethren a great Islamic truth that has characterized all our activities in the spread of Islam. No

*compulsion in religion.* Muhammad acted upon this principle and history cannot lay its fingers on a single instance where conversion to the Muslim Faith was secured by the sword during his lifetime. In his hour of greatest trial, when the whole of Arabia was at his feet, the Christians of Najaran, in Yemen, under the leadership of the Patriarch, came to Muhammad and received certain concessions, and no attempt was made to force them into Islam. The following appear amongst the concessions: "There shall be no interference with their Faith or observances; nor any change in their rights or privileges; no Bishop shall be removed from his bishopric; nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his priesthood, and they shall continue to enjoy everything great and small as heretofore; no image or cross shall be destroyed; no tithes shall be levied from them nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops." Similar concessions were made by the Prophet to the followers of Zoroaster in Persia. This noble example was followed by his successors Abu Bekr, Omar, Usman and Ali, and wherever Muslim rule went the Muslim Kings did the same. To-day Dr. Mingana has brought to light a charter given by an Abassid Caliph in the twelfth century of the Christian era—or five hundred years after the Prophet—giving similar concessions to the Christians.

"But," says Dr. Mingana, "could an English King, a Dutch Queen, or a French President write in the twentieth century a more tolerant charter of their numerous Muslim subjects?"

It will be interesting to quote from the letter of the Nestorian Patriarch to the Bishop of Merve:—

"The Arabs, to whom God has given at this time the government of the world, do not persecute the Christian religion, but favour it, honour our priests and the Saints of the Lord, and confer benefits on churches and monasteries."

This has been the attitude of Islam to non-Muslims. It reminds me of the well-known charge against Islam, coming from the zealous Christian missionaries, that wherever Muslims went they proposed three alternatives to the conquered people:—

- (1) Acceptation of Islam.
- (2) Payment of Poll-tax.
- (3) Penalty.

Every government brings its subjects under taxation, and anyone not paying the tax must suffer for disobedience. Under Muslim rule a Muslim has to pay certain taxes and render certain services; he has to pay the tithe and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of his net annual profit. He comes under the conscription and has to provide military costs when there is war.

Islam has always been beneficent to its non-Muslim subjects; it exempts them from the said taxes and the military contribution, and in lieu of this asks them to pay a very small "Poll-tax." Failure to comply brought its penalty, and possibly the extreme penalty in time of war.

Could there be more humane treatment of conquered countries? But our over-zealous critics distort facts as regards this and many other matters.

I would like to say a word as to the battles of the Prophet. For full thirteen years the Muslims were subjected to relentless persecutions in Mecca. The Prophet and his followers fled for life to Medina, which is over 150 miles from Mecca, but the enemy would not leave them alone in their refuge. They came to attack them within a year, and the first three great battles were fought in the very locality which will show whether the Prophet was an assailant or defendant. The first battle took place at Badr, a place about 120 miles from Mecca and 30 miles from Medina; the second battle took place at Ohad, 12 miles from Medina; and the third was the siege of Medina by the enemy from Mecca. Does not this seem to indicate that the Holy Prophet was on the defensive throughout?

This brought forth a state of war in the whole country, and the offensive and defensive was taken on both sides till ultimately Muhammad was victorious and entered Mecca a conqueror who obtained a bloodless victory and earned the admiration of the whole world by his magnanimous and magnificent example when he freely forgave the 10,000 foes who were entirely at his mercy.

In the last few years of his life the Prophet sent his envoys to Persia and Syria, the latter country being then under Christian rule. The object of this visit was to invite these countries to adopt Islam in these words: "Ye people of the Book, come to terms which are equitable between yourselves and ourselves, and these terms are that we should not worship other than Allah and should not associate other gods

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with Him. If you accept, we are one ; if not, we have given you the message and God is our witness." This peaceful message only aroused opposition, and the envoy was insulted and ill-treated, some of the party being killed. This event was followed by preparation for a Christian invasion of Arabia. The Holy Prophet prepared for defence, and when his army reached the border he passed away, but the defence was carried on after his death.

The breaking out of hostilities to which I allude resulted in the subjugation of Syria and Egypt. In the days of Omar, the second Caliph, the Persian armies invaded Muslim lands and this led to a series of engagements, and on each occasion Omar used to say: " God created a wall of fire between us and the Persian hosts so that the enemy may not trouble us." This seems to show how averse he was to wage war. Persia was conquered in Omar's days and Islam reached to the borders of India within the next few centuries. It was in the time of Subaktin, the King of the Jhazni, the then capital of Afghanistan, that Jaipal, the Indian King, invaded Afghanistan and defeated the Muslim armies, taking possession of a portion of Afghan territory. In retaliation Mahmud, the son of Subaktin, invaded India, and a portion of India then passed under Muslim rule. Ultimately the whole country came under the same domination but, be it said to the credit of Islam, there was never any attempt to force the religion on the conquered people.

This shows clearly that the maxim " Let there be no compulsion in religion " has been carried into effect.