

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

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THE HOLY QUR-ÂN

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Service, Sermon and Lectures every Sunday at the Mosque, Woking,
at 3.15 p.m.

NOTES

The Thought of God.

After the outspoken confession by the Dean of Carlisle that "Jesus did not claim divinity for himself," that he "was in the fullest sense a man, and that he had not merely a human body but a human soul, intellect and will," upon which we commented in our last issue, it is very interesting to read the following passages in the *Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook* :

1. But the chief lack in Islam is in its thought of God. It is here that Christ is needed, and the great thing, the all-important gift, which Christianity has to give to Islam is Christ as an interpreter and as an incarnation of the holy love of God. To bring this out, John xiv. may be read. This great word will show what it is that Islam has not known. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

2. Are Christians bold enough in their reading of God in terms of Jesus Christ? If they are, Islam is a sharp challenge. It is a warning to Christendom by its very existence. For the Church to live is Christ; its only strength lies in the thoroughness with which it dares to believe that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

"The element in the Gospel which possesses the greatest power of appeal to Mohammedans is the union between the mercy and the justice of God, as shown in the Cross of Christ."

We should like to say in reply that before our Christian friends think to bring home the divinity of Christ to Muslims, in which Islam "lacks," they ought to care for the "lost sheep of Jesus," as charity should begin at home; and especially when it is sorely needed. The responsible ministers of the Catholic Church are now frankly contradicting the divinity of Jesus; and if "for the Church to live is Christ," it should try hard to keep its body and soul together at this juncture.

As regards the Muslims, they are the worshippers of one God, and no amount of clerical sophistry can win over the heart of a true believer to the dogmas

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of Christianity. We revere Jesus as a great prophet, but do not worship him. The more the world will get enlightened the clearer it will become that there is no God but one God.

Polygamy to Save England.

The other day a special representative of *Lloyd's Sunday News* came to the Mosque, and had a long conversation on the question of polygamy. We quote the report of this interesting interview from the columns of the said paper :

With its crescent-topped turret just showing above the trees that guard the banking of the railway track at Woking, Surrey, is a Mahommedan mosque.

What, some will ask, is this thing doing in England, the home of Richard of the Lion Heart ?

Very frankly the Imam, Mustafa Khan, when called upon by *Lloyd's Sunday News*, supplied the solution to the riddle.

"Every child born into this world," he said, "is born a Moslem. That is to say, Nature has implanted in him the religion which says there is a Supreme Being who is the source of all life, and 'Him I adore.' That is the religion of Nature, and Islam is Nature's religion coded in the Qur-án by Mahomet the Prophet of God in accordance with Divine Revelation. Therefore, as Mahomet's mission was not to Arabia alone, but to the whole of humanity, we are here in England to bring its people back to Nature and the worship of Nature's God.

TO EVERY WOMAN A HUSBAND.

"Our chief work is the removal of misunderstandings. For instance, it is urged against us that we reject Jesus Christ ; that, in fact, Islam is anti-Christ. It is not. We accept Christ as a teacher, as a prophet, as we accept Moses ; but we say that Mahomet was the last of God's prophets to whom He revealed finally the laws for the redemption of humanity ; that there will be no more prophets, though there may be revelations to individuals whose souls reach out very closely to God."

"Presuming these misunderstandings removed, how are you going to overcome the prevailing sentiment in this country against polygamy ?"

"Sentiment must go under when faced by fact. England is to-day in the position of Mahomet after the battle of Ohod, and it can only make good the ravages of war by the adoption of polygamy. By the promulgation of his decree, on the warrant of a Divine Revelation, Mahomet restored the natural growth of the population decimated by war.

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"You have to-day one million women for whom there are no husbands. Every woman is entitled to a husband and to have children. How are you going to provide them with either if you do not adopt polygamy?"

"By polygamy alone can the English race be replenished; in no other way can England's otherwise certain decay be arrested. Without soldiers you cannot go on; you must inevitably sink.

THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.

"Of course, polygamy is quite practicable. I have never heard of any friction in Moslem homes where two, or even three, wives were kept."

"Do they not quarrel over who is the cook, the washer-woman, the parlourmaid, the lady of the house?"

"Now you are putting conundrums to me. I have, I may tell you, only one wife myself, as is the case with most Moslems. No; that does not prove that the thing has broken down in practice because of the female tendency to quarrel over the household management. In any case, such quarrels are of easy adjustment. The husband can quite well have separate houses for his wives."

"Why should not a wife have three husbands?"

"Oh, no, no; man is the breadwinner and the head of the home. Nature has placed limitations on woman that forbid any other arrangement."

The Problem of Surplus Women.

The Times, in its issue of August 25th, has undoubtedly touched on what is probably the most important aspect of the recent census figures, which show a tremendous surplus of women over men. Although the figures have only confirmed a fact which has long been known to everybody. But it is most unfortunate that the question of the huge disparity between men and women in this country has not yet been studied from a practical point of view. Emigration has been so far thought the only solution of the problem. But this too is not real solution. A writer has reviewed the whole question in the columns of *The Times* (August 29th), and in conclusion has been forced to admit:

To sum up, it will be seen that the capacity of the great Dominions for absorbing the surplus women of the Mother Country is an extremely limited one, and that it is confined

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mainly to those areas in which only the pioneer work of civilization has been done. For the average young Englishwoman the prospect is one of a life shorn largely of those amenities which she has come to regard as essential, and for which she is not peculiarly fitted, either by training or environment.

The only practical way to deal with the present situation is, as we have observed more than once in these pages, the legalization of polygamy. It may also be added that Jesus Christ never enjoined monogamy upon his followers; and there is no reason why we should labour under social and economic disabilities which have no authority of Scriptures.

TAQDIR IN ISLAM

By DR. BASHARAT AHMAD

(Continued from the last Number)

FREEDOM OF WILL.

WHETHER man is absolutely free to choose between right and wrong is the main point upon which hangs the whole issue. The psychologist may have his own discussion whether or not man's will is influenced by external and internal circumstances such as heredity, environments, education, physical health and so forth. We are not concerned in our present discussion with the correctness or otherwise of his conclusions. What we want to ascertain is the verdict of Islam on the point. The Holy Qur-án has left this all-important problem untouched. It has positively declared man's undisputed right to make a choice between good and evil. Again and again the point has been emphasized to drive the idea home to man, lest he should forget his own responsibility for his conduct. In fact the whole trend of Qur-ánic ethics points in this direction.

“Say, the Truth is from your Lord, whosoever

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may wish, he may believe and whosoever may wish he may disbelieve," says the Holy Qur-án. God has simply pointed out the right course. Whether that may or may not be followed, is left to man himself to choose. He refrains from any interference with the free choice of man. Again, "Verily we have shown to him (man) the (right) path; he may be grateful or ungrateful."

There is no compulsion, on the part of God, brought to bear upon man to adopt this course or that. Yet again: "Verily this is a reminder to the peoples; for those of you who wish to take the right course." Here too man has been let alone in the matter of selection. Further on: "It is for God only to furnish strong proof, and if He allowed His wish (to influence man), He would have guided all." Denial of interference cannot be made in clearer terms. If He were so pleased as to thrust His own wish upon man, He would not have let a single one go astray. To the same effect the Holy Qur-án says:—

"If God determined things of His own wish, He would have made all men as one religious nation," i.e. He would have brought together the whole of humanity to the same path—the path of righteousness. But He has so ordained that He shall in no way bring any pressure to bear upon man to incline him this way or that. Man is the sole master of himself. He must steer his ship on his own account, whether to a haven of safety or against a rock of destruction.

It would not be out of place to refer in this connection to a few misunderstandings having a direct bearing on the problem in hand, arriving merely out of ignorance of the real significance of certain expressions in the Holy Qur-án. For instance the verse "He (God) leads astray therewith (with the Holy Qur-án) many and guides therewith many." It is argued on the strength of such-like statements

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that God deliberately guided some and misled others. God, in other words, is held responsible for the doings of man. The authors of this calumny against Islam must bear in mind that the Holy Qur-án, which claims to be a guidance for the whole world, could not in the same breath give utterance to a statement quite contradictory. How can it serve as a guidance for the whole of the human race if, as it is taken to mean, it aims at misleading many? It cannot at once guide and misguide people. There are no contradictions in the word of God. The fault lies with the shallow knowledge of the interpreter. The verse simply regrets that the Holy Qur-án, which was meant for the guidance of people, was made by some an occasion to go astray. Let it be noted that the Qur-án does not play the part of an efficient *cause* to mislead some people, but they themselves make it an *occasion* for themselves to go wrong. Such constructions are not infrequently used in the Holy Qur-án itself. The words put in the mouth of the Prophet Noah, "My preaching did not increase them but in running off," amply illustrate the point. Obviously enough, Noah's preaching, which was intended for their good, could not be the cause of their apathy; it only became an *occasion* for their turning away. Noah preached to them with a view to draw them to his own ways. They, however, turned a deaf ear to his exhortations out of obstinacy and prejudice. Thus, instead of coming round to the path of truth, they grew in aversion. The preaching of Noah is in no way responsible for their attitude. In the same way the Holy Qur-án cannot be said, to the disregard of clear testimony to the contrary, to have misled people. Another verse usually picked out for hostile criticism runs thus:—

"Surely those who disbelieve, it being alike to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, will not believe. Allah has set a seal upon their

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hearts and upon their hearing, and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great chastisement for them.¹

The sense of these verses is misconstrued to amount to this : because God has set a seal on their hearts and upon their hearing, it is therefore in vain for you to warn them. It is then argued that God Himself has deprived them of their faculties. Why ? To hold them responsible if they do not listen to the call of Truth. This is again a case of misinterpretation. The real significance of the verses point to the admitted law of nature that whichever faculty should suspend discharging its proper function, the time shall by and by come when it will get totally atrophied. If the hand, for instance, is not put to use, as not a few Hindu ascetics subject themselves to this form of rigour, the limb is sure to lose all vitality, and no amount of cure will then do it any good. Exactly the same is the case with every other faculty, physical, mental or moral. If the heart, the eye or the ear is not regularly exercised, it will gradually grow unfit for the discharge of its true function. This is what the verses say. If the opponents are such as have made up their mind not to listen to you at all, they will get, according to the law of nature, deprived of their faculties of head and heart. It is their own neglect that has brought about the loss of their mental faculties. Why should the blame be laid at the door of the Divine Being ? It is unfair to single out a verse here and a verse there, put thereon a wrong interpretation, and then jump to the conclusion that the God of Islam thrusts His own will upon man.

Another common objection against the freedom of human will is put as thus : God knows beforehand all the events of the world, as also who will do good and who evil, what will befall one and what another. God's knowledge being perfect, everything

¹ The Holy Qur-án, ii. 6, 7.

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must inevitably happen accordingly. Where, then, is the room for a free choice of man between right and wrong? Such an objection is the outcome of ignorance of Divine attributes. It is a truism that an event gives birth to the knowledge of the event, and not vice versa. In other words, knowledge is the outcome and hence not the cause of an event. To illustrate the point, it is only when John has murdered Jack, that a third person, Jill, gets knowledge of the murder. First comes the event and then the knowledge thereof. It is inconceivable that Jill should have knowledge of the murder unless it has actually taken place. It is ludicrous to imagine that such a pre-knowledge on the part of Jill has constrained John to commit murder. In this case it is Jill, whose knowledge has compelled John, and not the latter that ought to be sent to the gallows. It is plain that knowledge cannot be the cause of an event, but its outcome. Now, the knowledge of God, unlike that of man, is not limited by time. It comprises the future as much as the *present* and the *past*. He is beyond the human limitations of time and space. What is *past* or *future* in human sphere is present to Him. Just as man gets knowledge of a *past* event, He can have cognisance of a *future* event as well. But the fact remains that knowledge is the *outcome* of the event, in the case of God as in that of man. But we have shown that knowledge can in no wise be said to have been the cause of the event. It would be a funny perversion of the natural order of things. The knowledge of God, therefore, cannot be said to have compelled the coming about of the event; for knowledge springs from the occurrence. The event, though yet to happen in the future from the human point of view, is to Him as *present*. The Holy Qur-án aptly speaks of the Divine knowledge in the metaphor of a book. A book holds all the knowledge contained therein at one and the same

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time. It is the reader in relation to whom the notions of past, present and future arise. The portion of the book he has gone through has become to him as past, that he is reading is the present, and that he has as yet to study the future. But it must be marked that the book itself is above such considerations. To it all knowledge it comprises is present knowledge. In like manner the knowledge of God is all-comprehensive, whether past, present or future. He holds it all at one and the same time. Like the reader of the book, the limitations of past, present or future are conceivable only in relation to man. To God is attributed Omniscience. All the events are as if just now before His eyes. Thus His knowledge is as much the product of the events as that of man. It is therefore absurd to argue that His knowledge is in any way responsible for the various events of life. His knowledge, like human knowledge, exerts no compulsion to bring about the event, which is already there, to Him. Man himself is responsible for his deeds; Divine knowledge does not interfere with his privilege to exercise his will as he would.

THE CONCLUSION.

To recapitulate, the conception of *taqdir* in Islam amounts to this. God has created everything on a particular measure which is determined by the function the object is intended to discharge. Consequently it has been endowed with appropriate faculties, as also with the capacity to observe certain laws by obedience to which it may achieve its end. The whole system of the universe having a single object to fulfil, it is indispensable that the component parts, in order to be useful to one another, should vary in respect of their respective functions. Man, who is a part and parcel of the universe, must therefore have his own position in the system, his own faculties, his own capabilities, his own end to serve, and his own obligations to discharge. To seek

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light on the various points concerning him we turn to the pages of the Holy Qur-án, and we find that in relation to the rest of the universe, man occupies the position of the over-lord. He has to subjugate and put it to his own service. As regards inter-human relations, the Holy Book assigns a common platform for all, the high and the low. Universal brotherhood of man, irrespective of caste, colour or clime, under the common Providence of Allah, the Creator, the Nourisher and the Evolver of all, is the rule to regulate the relations of man to man. God alone should be the object of man's endeavours, under all circumstances. As to his capabilities, he has been endowed with the best conceivable. He is capable of making infinite progress and of attaining union with his Creator. He has been furnished with the requisite equipment to fulfil his obligations. The universe which is meant to be subservient to his welfare, he can control and exploit with the help of his intellect. But to enable him to acquit himself creditably in more delicate situations, viz. in his relations to his fellow-men and to his Creator, his intellect, which is not infallible, has been supplemented by Divine Light. Revelation enlightens him as to the laws, obeying which he may achieve the *summum bonum* of his life, viz. at-one-ment with his Creator. The diverse vicissitudes of life, its pleasures and pains, its prosperity and adversity, are mere opportunities to bring his dormant virtues into play and thereby effect their evolution. Assigned a set purpose to fulfil, endowed with particular faculties and capabilities suited to the realization of his fixed end, and provided with necessary guidance, he is left alone to work out his own edification. Thereafter there is no Divine interference with him in the matter of choice between right and wrong. Thus the Holy Qur-án, allowing him freedom of will, saddles man with responsibility, which serves as a spur to self-exertion.

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Islamic *taqdir*, recognizing freedom of human will, infuses into man a sense of responsibility and accountability, and thus gives an impetus to the advancement of culture of the right sort. Islamic *taqdir* makes man the lord of the universe, controlling the forces of nature, putting them to the service of man and thereby promote general welfare. Islamic *taqdir* brings paradise to the door of man by creating goodwill and fraternal affection between man and man.

Above all, Islamic *taqdir* uplifts man from a self-centred brute to spiritual heights, where he loses himself in the service of humanity and of the Lord, his Creator. He is borne to celestial regions where there is neither snow nor storm, where the virtuous drink deep at the cool fountain of Divine love, basking in the sunshine of Divine bliss.

THE ETHICS OF WARFARE

WAR has been at all times one of the greatest curses of the world. It has existed all along, from time immemorial, ever since man emerged from his condition of crude individual savagery to one of communal or racial consciousness. Petty fights between one individual and another were only war on a small scale. But when the notion of community, and later on of nationality (or rather nationalism), established itself in the minds of men, gradually developing till it culminated in what the world to-day calls its "modern civilization," the extent and magnitude of the fights also took shape in a broader and more refined (barbarous) scale. Nation rises against nation when the interests of each side are supposed to be at stake. Thus the whole fabric of human brotherhood is torn to pieces, and man kills his brother-man with perfect indifference and equanimity.

The question whether or not such an action

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is justifiable has occupied philosophers and thinkers of all ages to give a true answer. It is justly argued that war is a last resource without which the existence of an injured nation or community could not have been maintained against the brutality of their aggressive enemies; that "might is right" is still too deeply embedded in the nature of certain sections of mankind to make any universal and lasting peace possible; that man has not reached that stage when the millennium shall reign on earth; and that at their present stage, fights and wars are still the rules of the world, and we cannot help submitting to these rules if we care to uphold our existence among the "survivals of the fittest." Such are the arguments put forward in favour of war. They are quite reasonable from the stand-point of those on whom aggression is really made. But it is defensive wars that might thus be defended, and never aggressive wars. It is this defensive war which has been permitted and enjoined in the Holy Book of Islam, and never otherwise.

It says:—"Permission (to fight) is given to *those upon whom war is made* because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them, (i.e.) Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely Allah will help him who help His cause; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty" (xxii. 39, 40).

"And fight in the way of Allah *with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits*; surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits. And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter; and do not

fight with them at the sacred mosque *until they fight with you* in it; but *if they do fight you*, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion should be only for Allah; *but if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors*" (ii. 190-193).

Such precepts as the above, with regard to defensive war, are certainly more consistent with reason and human nature, and hence more accepted and adopted by the people of the world (even though unconsciously) than the ideal injunction of Jesus Christ (on whom be peace) that one should "turn and surrender his left cheek when his right cheek has been smacked"—an injunction which, if followed, cannot but lead to suicidal results; and which, being applicable only to a weak, cowardly party and not to all cases and all ages, no self-respecting individual or nation can afford to follow with justice. If a robber breaks into our house, it would certainly not be right for us to let him take everything he wanted, or ravish our women-folk, without making any effort to restrain him when we are in a position to do so. We *have* to "resist evil."

But the vital question is, "Is war Preventable?" Superficial observers never care to investigate why there should be aggressions and injustices in the world. They, in fact, dismiss such an idea of independent thinking by ascribing these curses to the convenient but untenable Church doctrine of Original Sin—a theological dogma which is now moribund in all thoughtful quarters. Let us ask those who still persist in clinging to this theory of Original Sin as part of their creed, is there no hope that evils in all their diverse manifestations, such as aggressions, cruelties, barbarities—in short all forms of ungodliness—can finally be uprooted

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from this earth? Is sin really inborn in man, and tendency to evils really beyond his control? In other words, does war or wickedness in this world really have its root in man's "tainted birth" and his inability to free himself from the fetters of that heritage? If so, then there is nothing bright in the outlook of humanity, and the much-talked-of world-peace is nothing short of idle myths and mockery. One does not wonder then that the supposed death of Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) on the cross has come to atone for this "depravity," and redeem such fortunate members of the human race as believe from everlasting perdition in hell! What a beautiful logic and what a philosophic conclusion! If such be truly the case, the world will never have *permanent peace*. Devastations and untold miseries caused by war, the dying agonies of trampled soldiers, the separation of wives from husbands and of children from their fathers, all these and many more will always find their way, from time to time, into this world. Sins and sufferings, immorality and crimes, terror and dilapidation will ever remain the lot of the world, and reign supreme now and again, knowing no end, as long as ill-fated mankind is spared to inhabit this earth. Yet, can such a conception be compatible with reason, and with all fairness be regarded as part of the All-Beneficent plans of the Mighty Creator? Let us contemplate the grand purpose for which man has been created, and we will be at a loss to understand what purpose can be served by his being sent into this world if evil, and only evil, is the ruling aptitude in him. Man is doubtless the noblest product of creation—a microcosm of the universe—created, according to the Holy Qur-án, "in the best of the make," and according to the Holy Prophet, "after the image of God." It is but debasing to imagine that he can only rank himself with the lower animals in spite of all the intelligence and

forces for good that have been placed in him. As a matter of fact, common-sense revolts from such an idea, and all religions worthy of the name condemn it.

A Muslim philosopher says that covetousness is the root of all evils; and a deeper reflection than is usually given it will convince one that there is nothing to gainsay the truth of the assertion. It is a truism. Its application holds just as good in the case of nations as in that of individuals. The spirit of covetousness has actuated all forms of wickedness. To it are due all aggressions and injustices throughout the history of man. Hence Islam has laid down, in its five "Pillars," rules and ordinances which tend to close every possible door for covetousness. If all and every man completely follow Islam, and abstain from cherishing even the slightest suggestion of covetousness in his heart, all the world would be well and good. No exploitation of one nation by another, nor aggression, can come to mar the peace of the world. But in spite of all seeming self-denials, covetousness will still rankle in the midst of mankind as long as the spirit of *narrow patriotism* is held up as a virtue by each individual nation. The fondest aims and dreams of the League of Nations will inevitably fall to the ground as long as distinction is made between one nation and another, between the weak and the strong, so far as "rights and interests" are concerned. There should be a thorough theocracy, a real and practical brotherhood of man under the universal *rubúbiyah* of God, and not merely an ideal one. But this again will ever remain an impossibility, if religion in its true and ennobling sense is regarded with indifference. Agnosticism, atheism, materialism, and disbelief in the continuance and accountability of man's soul after death have wrought havoc in creating selfishness and bestiality in man. And these lie at the root of all covetousness, which in turn is the mainspring of all aggressiveness and

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wars. They are the cankers that have eaten into the very heart of world-peace possibility; and if, following the logic of the doctrine of the Original Sin, these cankers are beyond the control of man or non-preventable, it follows by *a priori* reasoning, that the product of such cankers is, as a matter of course, none the less non-preventable. But this theory of man's "depravity" cannot fail to be exploded when put to the test of man's noblest instincts and reason. "No bearer of burden bears the burden of another," says the Holy Qur-án again and again, and that is in perfect consonance with the dictates of human nature in view of the alleged inheritance of man from the sin of his first parents. Man has been equipped with vast capabilities for unlimited progress, and each soul stands alone with its own responsibility. "Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is (the benefit of) what it has earned, and upon it (the evil of) what it has wrought,"¹ says the holy word of God again, and such other declarations of man's individual responsibility abound in the Qur-án.

In the light of the above facts, the truth becomes self-evident. The world can become good if it cares to do so. To establish such a state, religious, moral and spiritual educations in all their aspects should go deep into every heart, in addition to secular and material education. Science, which has been abused by being made an instrument for human butchery and destruction, should be solely directed into good channels for the advancement and regeneration of our brother-men. Physical sciences should go hand in hand with metaphysical sciences, and materiality should never again be divorced from spirituality. Then only, and never till then, will atheism and materialism go into exile.

Come to Islam and examine its broad-minded

¹ The Holy Qur-án, ii. 286.

tenets with fair-minded eyes, and with earnest truth-seeking scrutiny. You will find in it all that is necessary to establish the Kingdom of God on this very earth. The holy Prophet Muhammad succeeded in doing this, and the people of the present day and of all ages to come will also succeed to achieve that end, provided they faithfully act upon the true teachings of Islam, and honestly and earnestly follow in the footsteps of the noble Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him !).

So, after all, war *is* preventable ; but *not* unless man is true to the noblest impulse of his nature and to the laws and guidance laid down by the All-Knowing Lord of the Universe, Who speaks through His blessed messenger Muhammad : “ Surely We have shown him (man) the way : he may accept or reject.”¹

ZAIN-UL-ABIDIN BIN AHMAD (Malay).

THE NEW ERA IN THE WEST

“ Turn aside evil by that which is better, and lo ! he between whom and thyself was enmity, shall be as though he were a warm friend.”—Holy Qur-án.

WE often hear that forgiveness, charity and brotherliness are the sole monopoly of a particular creed, and how often it is repeated that a new era was ushered in by the enunciation by Jesus of what is termed the “ Golden Rule.” How forgetful people are that Confucius said many years before Jesus lived, “ Do not do that to others which ye would they should not do unto you.” Let it be clearly understood that in Islam we believe in the One Source of Eternal Truth, and from the Divine Fountain-head streams of Truth poured forth for the guidance of the whole of humanity. The virtues are no special gift to any particular race or tribe, as some would

¹ *Vide* Qur-án, lxxvi. 3.

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have us believe, but belong, by the mercy of Allah, to the human family. Far away in the dim recesses of history we find that mighty races peopled the earth: they had their religions, their codes, their moral obligations and civilizations. They worshipped and lived and died as we do. These races were not "outside the dispensation of God's providence," but to them Allah sent His teachers and Prophets. In the Holy Qur-án we read of Ad and Themoud and such great peoples, and we find that they each had a Warner and Guide. Now let us see the teachings of various creeds which to-day would have us as votaries. Let us take one side of the picture. One creed limits the mercy of God to a small petty nation; then what has become of the Message delivered by the Prophet who came to them? Obviously it is either transformed or lost, and so we must reject this particular creed as a guide for humanity. Another tells us that we must accept some Prophets who appeared to a small Semitic race and reject all others. Let us examine this proposition for a moment. Allah is the Creator, Evolver, Sustainer and Cherisher of the human race as a whole, and therefore it is rank blasphemy to say that He only occupied His attention with a small fragment of humanity and left the greater part without guidance. Furthermore, the last Prophet of this particular creed, we are informed, did not live long enough even to properly instruct a handful of disciples. These, during the lifetime of their Teacher, *never understood his message*, and so how can we expect those who followed to retain the true message which he brought for humanity? After he left his disciples, his words were not written down for a century or two, and we get to-day only a garbled version of his life and mission. Again, it is plain that Allah could not permit man to remain without the Truth, and so came a *New Message*. In the old days nations thought of themselves as the specially favoured of the Deity, tribes

also became puffed up with pride and regarded each other as inferiors, and wars and persecutions became the order of the day. Mankind needed a wider outlook, and the idea of Brotherhood had to be taught. When some people say that the world commenced to learn this truth 1,900 years ago, ask them to read the facts which are preserved in history and they will be forced to admit that no change of conduct took place, mankind were just the same as ever. A miracle was necessary to transform warring elements into a composite whole, and the miracle happened. Thirteen hundred years ago a *New Idea* was given to the world, a *New Message* reverberated throughout the mountains of this planet of ours, and a New Prophet appeared to give the Word of Allah to an expectant humanity. What effect had this *New Message*? Nations ceased to quarrel, tribes forsook their blood-feuds and became members of a community, idolatry ceased, murder, rape, infanticide and hatred disappeared. Again I say refer to history and confirm these words. From that date man began to understand the real meaning of brotherhood. Race and colour distinctions vanished and did not return. A *New Era* began for the world, and to-day the priests of these other creeds are fighting against the decree of Allah, but are being surely defeated. The Holy Qur-án says: "They desire to put out the Light of God with their mouths; but God will perfect His Light averse though the faithless be." The New Message is sweeping all before it, and will surely triumph. The Western World is held fast in the shackles of materialism and bigotry, but the "Light of God" shines brightly even in this land of Britain.

Passing in a train near Woking the attention of the traveller is arrested by something which compels attention. Nestling amid pine-trees one sees a Mosque, and this sentinel of Islam is an outpost in the West upon which many attacks are made. Slowly

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but surely, however, the ranks of the opposing armies are being made more and more vulnerable, and the counter-attacks of Truth carry the battle.

Edwin Johnson, the author of that great book *The Rise of Christendom*, says: "I have looked with interest on the first Mosque that has been built on English ground. Our Mohammedan friends may desire to learn something of us, but it is we who have to learn from them in respect to the great mediæval tradition. They are the masters of it. They are of the Orthodox Church; theirs is the sublime theology and inflexible logic. We owe it to the common civility of the great Empire to which we belong to endeavour to correct the vulgar fables which have prevailed since the fourteenth century in respect to their religion, and to desist from affronting them with what they must ever regard as a corrupt version of their own sacred legends."

He further says: "The Moslems are, in fact, by virtue of their traditions, the unanswered, and, as we hold, the unanswerable critics of the legends of the Synagogue and of the Church. If, in a broad illustrative sense, there are three branches of Christendom, Islam, Judaism and Catholicism, then Islam is the eldest. Arabia is the common mother of the great mediæval tradition."

Let these words of a Western author of such note be a source of encouragement to all our brethren. Here from the pen of a Westerner is the full confession of the truth of Islam.

The Holy Qur-án has given us the key to the present situation when it bids us turn our enemy into a friend, and it is thus that we shall triumph. Every person who has the courage to openly admit belief in Islam is influencing enemies from the religious point of view and making them study so that they will awake, and one day Islam will be the religion of the whole world. *The New Era in the West* is beginning, and we must all do our share of the work.

Remember that it means making enmity to cease, to drive away discord and bring peace, to give to mankind the real spirit of brotherhood springing from the awakening of the heart and intelligence by the Message of Allah.

KHALID SHELDRAKE.

THE CHARACTER OF MUHAMMAD

By MASUD ALI VARESI

(Continued from p. 251.)

VIII

PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE

PATIENCE is a useful constituent of life. It cannot be dispensed with. It is in one way connected with affability and in the other with resignation to the will of Providence. One's humility and affability are really commendable particularly when one is in power and affluence, and subjugates one's rising anger. Patience, however, is independent of power and affluence. It consists in welcoming things as they are in face of impending troubles, unpleasant circumstances and brewing storms, with thorough resignation to His will, without a murmur, without a desire for vengeance. Just as forgiveness is the outcome of one's humility, in the same way submission to the Almighty's will is the product of patience and fortitude. It must be borne in mind that Islam does not allow such patience and fortitude which stands in the way of our reformation and betterment by lawful means. We are under no circumstances empowered by Islam to render ourselves slaves to lethargy. The principle in Islam is summed up thus: "Verily for man is meant the same for which he endeavours: and his endeavour will be surely considered" (An-Najm).

To shrink from the struggle for existence is to

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defeat the objects of patience. It means to give precedence to indolence unwarranted by the dictates of Islam. It connotes cowardice and lowness of spirit in its worst form. It would rather mean to be ungrateful than be resigned to God's will. There could be nothing more disdainful than not to utilize the different gifts and faculties with which man is endowed by Omnipotence. Such a step would be rather blasphemous. Islam only esteems that patience which should be exercised under circumstances over which man has no control. The injunctions of Islam ordain one to utilize to the full all lawful opportunities. It is expected from us to leave no stone unturned to turn circumstances to our advantage by all lawful means, and whoever neglects it commits a great sin and rather abuses the blessings of God. The facts connected with the Prophet's life bear fullest testimony to this statement. He bore persecutions with patience and fortitude, but at the same time his efforts were all through directed to the extinction of unpleasant circumstances. He depended altogether upon God, but exerted himself to the full for the realization of the ideal, the real goal. He was all patience. The persecutions he suffered at the hands of the infidels of Mecca were by no means ordinary. He bore his calamities with wonderful and exemplary patience, but was never harassed by them. They laughed at his mission, they did all they could to vex and torture him. They called him a lunatic, a sorcerer, and a pretender. They passed taunting remarks on his poverty. When they failed in their vile and detestable attempts, their impudence and enmity against him knew no bounds. Thorns were scattered in his path, which shows that he could not afford to buy a pair of shoes, and walked barefooted. They contrived schemes and troubles against him afresh and anew. They would trouble him in a variety of ignoble ways when he said his

prayers in the Kaaba. Accordingly a certain infidel once threw dust on him, and when he returned to his house in the same state one of his daughters brushed the dust aside from him and washed his head. While doing this she was shedding tears. "Do not weep, my child, verily Allah is thy father's protector," consoled the Prophet (Sirat, Ibne Hesham, page 227).

A similar incident occurred one day. He was saying his prayers in the shade of the Kaaba. The same day some camels were butchered in Mecca. Abu-Jahl and others threw the excreta on the Prophet. By chance the Prophet's daughter, Hazrat Fatema, came there. She removed the heavy dirty burden from him (Bokhari). The tradition goes that once Urwa bin Zubair asked Abdullah bin Amar to relate to him the hardest ill-treatment ever meted out to the Prophet by the infidels. "One day," he said, "the Prophet was saying his prayers in the *Kāba*. In the meanwhile, Aqba bin Ali Muīt came there. He cast round the Prophet's neck a cloth and with the utmost energy began to strangle him. Fortunately, Hazrat Abu Bakr (Peace be on him!) arrived at the moment. He caught hold of Aqba's shoulders, moved him backward and exclaimed, "Do you mean to kill this man who proclaims that Allah is his sustainer?" (Bokhari, page 519).

Apart from personal troubles, the mental anguish of the Prophet must be very great indeed to see his friends and companions persistently suffering at the hands of the relentless enemies. It is revolting to think of the endless train of miseries and persecutions the poor, the helpless and the indigent Muslims had to suffer. These poor adherents of the new faith had caused the enemies no injury. They did not even abuse their idols. They were only responsible for having cornered the light of faith and truth in their hearts,

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and they would cherish it with fostering care and tender solicitude, regardless of the uncompromising attitude of the Meccans. The godly and the righteous Muslims were indifferent to their physical torments. Their faith ushered them into a new spiritual atmosphere with an unbounded and unspeakable bliss all round. They would not care for the losses and troubles of this ephemeral life, but fondly bask themselves in the light and glow of Islam with its unalloyed spiritual ecstasies. The Meccans were fully sensible of the compassionate nature of the Prophet, and so they delighted themselves in their cruel treatment of his followers. Their tyrannies were making galloping strides, and they adopted their extreme course when they found the Muslims invincible and unswerving from truth, inasmuch as many of them patiently suffered and at length breathed their last as the direct result of the miscreants' ignominious treatment. Be what may, the Prophet was bent on the completion of his heavenly mission. He would suffer with patience and fortitude the inhuman atrocities, but would never for a moment shrink from the performance of the duty imposed upon him by Allah.

These few illustrations reflect on the brutal attitude of his co-nationalists. It must have been a very great ordeal for the Prophet to bear it. But there are facts other than these, and as a messenger of God he was not immune from the irony of fate. He had to bear its brunt from time to time, and suffer the mishaps of life as others do. The death of his sons is a historical fact. He had four sons, Qāsim, Tāhir, Tayyab and Ibrāhīm. All of them died in their infancy. It is a plain truth that the death of children, and specially of male children, is a tremendous shock to parents. Elsewhere it may be treated as a greater calamity, but in Arabia particularly it was looked upon in those days as the greatest misfortune where in male

progeny centred the real power of tribes and families. Their male issues played an important part, and were the chief medium of holding in succession the dynastic traditions. Daughters were spurned and boys were deeply loved as the sustainers of traditional honour and dignity of the nation. The Meccans consequently made sarcastic remarks on the death of the Prophet's sons. They tauntingly called him childless because he had no male issue to perpetuate his name. On this God the Almighty consoled His Prophet in these words: "Verily it is thy enemy whose family and name is extinguished." The Divine promise was accordingly fulfilled. After a generation their very children embraced Islam and cursed their forefathers for their paganism. The enemies of the Prophet on his promulgation of the new faith practically made his very life unbearable, but with unswerving loyalty to truth and his Allah, he did his work to the full.

Uns of blessed memory relates: "We accompanied the Prophet to make a call on Abu Saif, the blacksmith, whose wife suckled the Prophet's son Ibrahim. The moment he reached there, we found Abu Saif in his dying moments. When the Prophet saw him, his eyes were filled with tears. Here, the hard nature of the Arabs is noticeable. Seeing the Prophet so deeply touched, Abdur-Rahman bin Auf said: "O Prophet, you also?" (i.e. you also are exposing your impatience). "O son of Auf," replied the Prophet, "these tears are the product of pity and kindness. Certainly, tears stream forth from eyes, and the heart pains and commiserates, but we do not utter anything repugnant to the will of God" (Bokhari, page 174).

An analogous event is related by Asama bin Zaid thus: "A son of one of the daughters of the Prophet was dying. The latter was sent for. He sent her his blessings with the message,

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"Verily, whatever God has taken away was His, and whatever He has allotted is His. He has fixed an hour for all. You must therefore be patient and thankful to Him." She again sent a message requesting him to come to her. The Prophet went there with all his companions. When he raised the child in his arms, it had already lost the harmony of breath. Tears rushed into the Prophet's eyes. Saad noticed this and said, "O Messenger of God, what is this?" "It is compassion and grief," responded the Prophet, "inborn in God's creatures by His command; and verily Allah showers His mercy on His compassionate servants." In other words, the Prophet meant to say that the shedding of tears should not be attributed to lack of patience. It is rather patience in itself. Lack of feeling in an individual on the separation of his relations and friends demonstrates his cold, indifferent and brutal nature, and a disposition which can scarcely command respect, sympathy and appreciation.

These illustrations clearly indicate that the Almighty God had favoured the Prophet with a noble, pure and beautiful heart, and had protected him from unlawful and minor frictions. Patience, the virtues of which are so universally appreciated, assumes the shape of cold and inhuman indifference when it is allowed to develop itself into tremendous proportions. At this stage it deprives an individual of his sympathy with friends and relations and of grief on the loss of his dear ones. It benumbs his feelings, inasmuch as he treats such loss as an event of little importance. Contrary to this, the very tears shed, for instance, on the last moments of a baby, or on the miserable condition of a widow, or on one's physical pain, or on the performance of one's painful duty, prove his lack of courage, and are subject to ridicule. Temperance is an invaluable gift, and only he attains

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to it who is favoured by Providence. "Allah is most gracious."

Apart from these two, there is a third variety of patience. An individual, capable of making himself comfortable with an abundance of luxuries, discards them not because of his helplessness, lethargy or low-mindedness, but because his generosity, sympathy with human beings and philanthropic nature compel him to lead a life stripped of any possible additions to the most indispensable requirements of life. Such a man resorts to patience and provides others with their necessities. This form of patience is really most taxing and transcends the other forms in superiority. The first two leave no loophole for a man : he is forced to resign himself to his fate and console himself by shedding a few tears. But the last form is a voluntary action and exacts the highest self-sacrifice. This form of patience was the distinguishing characteristic of the Prophet's life.

It would look strange to an ordinary observer that the extraordinary changes in the circumstances of the Prophet rendered no alteration at all in his noble and edifying character. In Medina he exercised self-sacrifice and self-control in the same way as he observed patience and fortitude at the tyrannical treatment of the infidels of Mecca. It was only the form of patience that underwent a slight change. His plain living in Medina was what has been described in the foregoing pages, in spite of the Prophet's undisputed success and triumphant position. His patience and self-control can be well ascertained from the facts already stated. It was his frequent habit to starve for two days regularly, frequently, at a time when he ruled as a monarch, when he was most dearly loved by all, when some of his devoted and loving adherents were millionaires who, with willing serfdom, were ready to sacrifice their honour, riches, household, and even their lives at his slightest bidding, in

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order to entitle themselves to Divine merit both in the present world and in the world to come. But why did he live such a poor life? Simply because whatever fortune fell to his lot, it was freely distributed to the poor, the indigent and the friendless from time to time. He himself remained almost penniless. Is not the fact in itself the most noble, dignified and elaborate example of an appreciable patience? Is not his life teeming with illustrations of this nature? These are bright and transcendently undeniable facts which baffle the most bigoted and prejudiced and relentless writers, and the truth of which cannot be rejected by the inveterate enemies of this greatest personality in the world.

Suwaid bin Nomaan relates: "I was in company with the Prophet in the battle of Khyber. When he reached Sahba, near Khyber, he said his Asr (between afternoon and before sunset) prayers, and then ordered food to be served. There was nothing else to eat but *sattu* (parched grain, reduced to meal and made into a paste). Accordingly it was served. All of us kneaded it and ate it and drank its water. Thereafter the Prophet got up and rinsed his mouth with water. Then we said our prayers" (Bokhari, page 812).

Jabir (Peace be on him!) relates: "At the battle of the ditch, we were digging a ditch. In the course of digging a great slab of stone intervened. For the last three days we had nothing to eat, and the Prophet was so hungry as to tie a stone to his stomach. But in spite of this he willingly alighted into the ditch, took the spade, began to break the stone, and at last crumbled it into tiny particles like sand. Then I took leave of him and went home. I told my wife that I saw the Prophet in a condition that was breaking my heart. I asked her if she had anything to eat. 'There is a small quantity of barley and a kid,' answered my wife. I slaughtered the kid in conformity with the re-

ligious code, and put it in the kettle to be cooked. My wife in the meanwhile ground the barley. Then I went to the Prophet and begged him to kindly partake of the little food I had. 'How much food have you?' inquired the Prophet. I related the whole story. 'There is plenty of it, and very good indeed,' answered the Prophet, adding, 'Tell your wife not to remove the kettle from the stove and not to take the loaves of bread out of the oven till I come.' Then he took all the Muhajereen (those who made a flight with the Prophet from Mecca to Medina) with him. Seeing this I was deeply anxious, and I said to my wife, 'O unfortunate woman, the Prophet is coming with all the Muhajereen and Ansaar' (those who befriended the Prophet at Medina after flight). 'Did he ask you all about the affair?' asked my wife. I answered in the affirmative. In the meanwhile the Prophet arrived there. 'Come, but do not overcrowd the place,' said the Prophet to his followers. Thereafter the Prophet took out all the loaves of bread, put the meat on them, and began to distribute them among his companions. All ate to their heart's content, and still there was food left. Then the Prophet said, 'Eat and distribute it among others, for they are hungry'" (Bokhari, page 588).

This one event is quite enough to illumine some of the different aspects of the Prophet's nature. They are worthy of observation and constitute a comprehensive and analytical study of the highest and noblest ideals and aspirations of life. This one event is a mirror on which we distinctly perceive the transparent reflection of the characteristic ingredients of Muhammad's simplicity, amiability, assiduity, hard work, patience, perseverance, justice, generosity, spiritualism, altruism and social equality. This event, it may be expressly mentioned here, is not a unique event in his life, which abounds with such events. Uns of blessed memory relates: "One day Abu Talha told Umme Salim that the

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Prophet's shivering voice caused him to arrive at the conclusion that he was very hungry. He then asked her if she had anything to eat. She produced some small breads of barley, wrapped them up in her scarf, handed them over to me and dispatched me at once to call on the Prophet. I found him in the mosque. Many people were present. I stood speechless. He looked at me and questioned me if I was sent to him by Abu Talha. 'Yes, sir,' I submitted. 'To invite to food?' he inquired. I replied in the affirmative. Hearing this, the Prophet took all the men present with him. I ran ahead, came to the house, and related the whole story. Abu Talha and Umme Salim were pensive because the food was not much for such a great gathering. But Abu Talha had implicit faith in the Prophet. He came out and welcomed him. Muhammad (Peace be on him!) stepped into the house and addressed Umme Salim thus: 'O Umme Salim, bring what you have.' She brought those very breads, and squeezed something out of a can. The Prophet touched the breads with the substance and called his party, ten at a time, to eat. The result was that all ate to their full" (Bokhari, page 815).

These events happened at a time when the great Allah had, with wonderful graciousness, cast the riches of the world at his feet. But he was all through the same. There was not the slightest change or difference in his conduct. He suffered the heavenly calamities without a murmur and with thorough resignation to His will, in the same way as he bore the ignoble cruelties of the Quraish with thorough patience. In like manner, when Providence made him Lord of Medina, he was as patient as before. Although there was no moment in his life when his heart did not beat in perfect unison with God, but in spite of this perpetual and never-ending nearness and spiritual greatness, he did not content himself with his mental devotion, and along with the external calamities and

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sufferings he kept whole nights awake in prayer and meditation. He stood up so long in nightly prayers that his legs frequently swelled. Whenever they would ask him the cause of so prolonged prayers and close devotion when he was the chosen beloved of God, he would exclaim, "*Should I not then be His grateful servant?*" (Bokhari, page 152). The Prophet meant to say that the real Lord, the most merciful and most compassionate Allah, the Master of bounties and gifts, had prospered him with innumerable rewards and favours, but these in themselves were obligatory on him to thank Him as best as he could: that he would not forget Him or overlook His constant presence, because He was so bounteous and compassionate. All the dictates of duty, all the intellectualism of moral philosophy, all the moral obligations are beautifully summed up in the ethical and beautiful remark of the Prophet, and bear their real worth to be impressed on human mind in this mortal and instable world. It is a revelation the virtues of which should be fully acknowledged, felt and embraced by each and every individual who professes his faith in One God. It should be treated as the most dignified, perfect and indispensable motto of one's life, and with unmitigated fervour be imparted a practical bearing. Who can, in this cosmos, deny the purity and reasonableness of this sagacious and sincere remark? If the Almighty God be pleased to direct His creatures one and all to the right path, this one remark of Muhammad (Peace be on him!) is convincingly sufficient to serve as a guiding code for mortals to attain to immortality of soul. But, ah! this world, this civilized world, called the world of evolution, is walking backward from the real goal. And lamentable is the case of the present-day Muslims who ignore the precepts of their lord and guide.

(To be continued.)

STUDIES IN ISLAMIC POETRY

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THE productions of the Cambridge University Press are sure of a welcome from all friends of serious thinking and profitable reading. Dr. Nicholson makes a generous allusion to the renowned Orientalist, Professor E. G. Browne, as not only his teacher but his helper and friend. We all know and admire Professor Browne, and we feel his work will have received an additional lustre from the brilliant output of his gifted pupil. This book is divided into two parts, and with the first part we will not so particularly deal, contenting ourselves with the information that it is an essay on early Persian poetry and the academic forms of that elaborate prosody. These 42 pages are of great value, and must be referred to on another occasion. For the present we desire to notice the second portion of the book, pp. 43-289, which forms one consistent whole, and deals with the Arabic poetry of Abu'l-'Ala al-Ma'arî.

Al-Ma'arî, the old blind poet who died in Mesopotamia 860 years ago, is a master of his art, yet has not preserved quite the rank one would expect, and the reason is not far to seek. "The Meditations" are a series of reflections in verse, often most beautiful, which often transgress the bound of speculation and trench on the domain of scepticism. We will not quarrel with the devout who in his age and in some subsequent ages have looked on this writer with disfavour. We believe, nevertheless, that he should be read; first, because of the adornment which his verse gives to the body of Islamic poetry, next because his very freedom of thought proves the essential toleration of Muslim society. That such speculations should be reprehended by some is comprehensible; to a non-Muslim mind it will be utterly incomprehensible

¹ *Studies in Islamic Poetry*, by Prof. Reynold A. Nicholson, Litt.D., LL.D.

that such speculations were permitted at the end of the tenth century, when no such speculations were tolerated in Christendom.

The general situation of the Muslim empire, especially of Syria, during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries of the Western calendar reflects the fortunes of the 'Abbâsid Caliphate and its destruction and displacement by the Fâthimid Caliphs. The House of 'Abbâs descended from the Prophet's uncle. The Fâthimids claimed a direct descent from the Prophet through his daughter Fâthima. To support this claim they invoked the supernatural. A Persian Shî'ah, 'Abdullah ibn Maymûn, started an elaborate conspiracy in 875 based on the Ismâîlite belief. This sect of the Shî'ahs arose from the recognition of seven Imâms of the Prophet's House, of whom the last was Muhammad ibn Ismâîl, who died about 770. The Ismâîlites believed that he would some day return and fill the earth with justice. 'Abdûllah played on this belief; and thirty years after his death his grandson appeared among the Berbers of North Africa and announced himself as Ubaydullâh the promised Mahdî, and a descendant of the Imâm Muhammad ibn Ismâîl. He founded the Fâthimid dynasty in Tunis. His successors conquered Egypt and Syria, reaching Damascus 969-70. The Fâthimids were accused of keeping up a secret diplomacy with Qarâmita brigands (Carmathians), and the wrongly called Assassins. During the tenth century the Qarâmita sacked Mecca. The unofficial agreement of the Fâthimids with such forces had for its object the upheaval of the Islamic world in order to destroy the 'Abbâsid Caliphate and to substitute the Fâthimid control.

The 'Abbâsid Caliphs had ceased to govern, though their spiritual authority was acknowledged by most of the independent princes who supplanted them. In Baghdâd a Persian dynasty, the Bu-

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wayhids, had gained the rulership as well as that of western and southern Persia. The Sâmânids, another Persian house, had become masters of Khurâsân and Transoxania, the Turkish Ghaznevids not dispossessing them till later. The Seljûqs were advancing westward, to occupy Damascus in 1055 and Aleppo and Damascus fifty years after. At the time of which we write, however, the great centre of interest was Cairo. Since its foundation in 969 it had been the seat of the Fâthimids. These threatened and fought every independent prince, and kept up civil war during nearly a century. Around Aleppo the worst and, most fiercely contested of these conflicts raged. The city passed from the Hamdânids to the Fâthimids, and from them to a Badawîn dynasty, the Banû Mirdâs. The assistance of the "Greek" emperor at Constantinople was actually invoked to keep out the Egyptian invaders. Aleppo was besieged for over a year, and was set free by the timely aid of the Emperor Basil.

The pilgrimage to Mecca was frequently stopped by civil war between the forces of the 'Abbâsids and Fâthimids and their supporters. There were no pilgrims from all 'Iraq during the years 982 to 990, in 1002, 1008, 1010, nor from 1017 to 1021. The absence of a powerful central authority permitted brigand bands to control the caravan routes and levy blackmail or rob travellers. In 913 the price of wheat rose enormously in 'Irâq, and people died of hunger on the roads. The same dearness of wheat occurred ten years afterwards. Again, in 1047, Mosul, Mesopotamia and Baghdâd were devastated by famine and pestilence. Nearly ten years after that these scourges were not only ravaging Baghdâd but also, as Abu'l Mahâsin says, "Syria and Egypt and the whole world." During the same period great earthquakes and tidal waves produced disasters in the same areas, and added to the horrors of anarchy and social disorder. San-

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guinary sectarian conflicts were continually recurring and affected the welfare of entire provinces. In Baghdâd and 'Iraq a conflict of authority existed between the Sunni religious chief and the Shî'ah emperor.

One would have thought that such a formidable array of political causes would be held to sufficiently account for the woes of this area of the world at the period under consideration, without any need to seek the causes, as does Professor Nicholson, in slavery, polygamy, the decay of religion or the unequal distribution of wealth. We do not say that all these factors can be ignored or lightly dismissed. We have spoken of the dearness of wheat causing famine. In 992 at Baghdâd a pound of bread cost forty dirhems, and numbers of people died of hunger. Yet in 1009 died a cloth merchant of the city, leaving a fortune of one million dînârs, exclusive of goods, merchandise and jewels.

The damage inflicted by the disruption of the 'Abbâsid Caliphate was to some extent repaired by the dynasties that succeeded to its temporal possessions. The courts of Aleppo, Bukhârâ, Ghazna and other cities became seats of culture. Islamic literature, hitherto confined to Arabic as the language of the Qur-ân, was enriched by Persians writing in Persian.

It is, however, of the period just previous to this that we now speak, when a really great poet, Ma'arî, wrote in Arabic. Ma'arî had no great hope of better times; he saw too clearly the potent and encompassing horror of war, the slow agony of literature during the destruction of States and the crumbling of social and personal morals. These gave a sceptical turn to his thought, which was also possibly influenced to some extent by the critical spirit, akin to freethought, that had arisen in Baghdâd and with which he made acquaintance during his unhappy sojourn in that city.

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Only a free translation is, in most cases, possible; though by the assistance of Professor Nicholson's literary talent it is most frequently a translation in verse, and in very good verse too.

We will first quote a few remarks which will help to re-establish the poet in the esteem of Muslims. Commenting on the violent, schematic and subversive aims of the Carmathians, who rejoiced at the disorders throughout the old domains of the 'Abbâsid Caliphate, Ma'arî says:—

If Islam has been overtaken by calamities which lowered its
prestige, yet none ever saw the like of it.
And if heretics revere Saturn, I revere One of whom Saturn is
the most ancient worshipper.
Ye took 'Alî as a shield (to justify yourselves) though he
always punished the drinking of wine, even in sips.

Scourging the hypocrites among the orthodox, he
says:—

For his own sordid ends
The pulpit he ascends,
And, though he disbelieves in resurrection,
Makes all his hearers quail
While he unfolds a tale
Of Last Day scenes that stun the recollection.

The poet is particularly hard on bad rulers.

'Tis sad enough that all the righteous are gone together, and
that we are left alone to inhabit the earth.
Truly, for long 'Irâq and Syria have been two ciphers; the
Caliph's power in them is an empty name.
The people are ruled by devils invested with absolute authority;
in every land is a devil in the shape of a Governor—
One who does not care though all the folk starve, if he can pass
the night drinking wine with his belly full.

* * * * *

There are robbers in the desert, camel-rievs,
Robbers in mosque and market may be seen;
The name of these is "notary" and "merchant,"
The others bear the name of "Badawîn."

* * * * *

She questioned her astrologer about
The child in cradle: "How long will he live?"

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"A hundred years," cried he, to earn a drachma,
And death came to her boy within the month!

* * * * *

Fear thou thy God, and still beware of men
Garbed not as those who for religion fight.
They eat up all; in song and dance they then
Get drunk and with the loveling take delight.

* * * * *

I swear, not rich in sooth is he whom the World made rich
Tho' he wax in pride; nor blest is he whom Fortune blessed;
His brimming cups and the mandolines of his singing-girls
Are lightning-flashes and thunderbolts of calamity.

An intense and sardonic disgust with the defection
of men inspires several verses which we condemn as
"too bitter," because the events that excited them
are long past.

Had Time in his course spoken, he would have reckoned every
one of us as dirt.
He would have said: "Lo, I repair to Allah, and ye are the
foulest obscenity.
Once I coughed you out by mistake—will you excuse me for
coughing?"

* * * * *

The world's abounding filth is shot
O'er all its creatures, all its kinds;
The evil taint e'en she hath got
Whose loom for her a living finds;
And tyrant-ridden peoples moan
No worse injustice than—*their own*.

* * * * *

Birds vary from the eagle to the wren,
Mind makes the only difference in men.

* * * * *

Reason set out by hook or crook to reform the world,
But lo, mankind were past all reformation.
Whoe'er would cleanse the crow, in hope to see the sheen
Of a white wing, on him falls tribulation.

* * * * *

My clothes are my winding-sheet, my dwelling my grave; my
life

My doom; and to me is death itself resurrection.
Bedizen thee with splendid adornment and get thee wealth!
Outshone, lady, are the likes of thee by a dust-stained
Unkempt little pilgrim-band who walk in the ways that lead

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To Allah, be smooth the track they travel or rugged.
Nor bracelet nor anklet gleams amongst them on wrist or foot,
No head bears a diadem, and no ear an earring.

* * * * *

To Allah complain I of a soul that obeys me not,
And then of a wicked world where no man is righteous:
Intelligence mouldering in dust, as an empty house,
But ignorance stuccoed o'er—a mansion with tenants.

* * * * *

The sons of Adam are fair to see,
But each and all to taste unsweet
Their charity and piety
Draw to themselves a benefit.
A rock the best of them outvies;
It does no wrong, it tells no lies.

* * * * *

He that lives without flattering those in his company is a bad
companion to his friends and intimates.
How many a friend would wish to hear the news of my death,
yet if I am ailing he will show regard for me and exclaim,
"May I be thy ransom!"

* * * * *

I simulate unto thee—may Allah forgive my fault!
The whole world's religion too is but simulation.
And often a man belies the thought of his dearest friend,
Tho' fair his demeanour be, his countenance comely.
If Allah they worship not—my people—with faith entire,
Him only, I cut myself clean off from my people.

Space forbids a sample of Al Ma'arî's pietistic philosophy with which many are familiar from the teachings of the early Sûfis. A remarkable poem of 23 lines beginning: "You have become ill of wisdom and faith; Come to me," is a remarkable call to the simple life, to a regimen of low feeling and high thinking, and of noble tenderness to all created things. Professor Nicholson thinks the poet derived some of his views from Indian ascetics, whom he probably met at Baghdâd. The Austrian professor von Kremer believed he could trace them to Jaina influence. The poet abstained from animal food, on the principle of non-injury. On the same ground he deprecated the use of animal skins for clothing, recommended wooden shoes, and blamed

fine ladies for wearing furs. His clothing was of undyed cotton. He praised cremation, without urging his readers to practise it. Where earth burial is practised he advises the placing of the dead in Mother Earth, uncoffined, for coffins are second graves. In these and many other ways the poet dares to place himself at variance with the habits if not the spirit of Islam. Nevertheless, in other passages he reminds us (and apparently himself) that he is a Muslim. For example, he says of Indian ascetics, that they show their asceticism by letting their nails grow long—whereas he, like Muslims in general, considers it a mark of asceticism to pare the nails, the length of which in China is said to be an evidence of luxury.

His philosophy is perhaps most faithfully condensed in the little poem with which we close our notice.

Kneel in the daytime to thy Lord and bow,
And when thou canst bear vigil, vigil bear.
Is fine wheat dear, 'tis nobleness in thee
To give thy generous horse an equal share ;
And set before thyself a relish of
Bright oil and raisins, scanty but sweet fare.
A clay jug for thy drink assign : thou'lt wish
Nor silver cup nor golden vessel there.
In summer what will hide thy nakedness
Content thee ; coarse homespun thy winter wear.
I ban the judge's office, or that thou
Be seen to preach in mosque or lead the prayer ;
And shun viceroyalty, and to bear a whip,
As 'twere a sword a paladin doth bare.

* * * * *

Commit thyself to His eternal care ;
And let thy wife be decked with fear of Him
Outshining pearls and emeralds ordered fair.
All praiseth Him : list how the raven's croak
And cricket's chirp His holiness declare—
And lodge thine honour where most glory is :
Not in the vale dwells he that seeks the highland air.

Luzûmiyyât (i. 293, 4), by Abu'l-'Alâ Ahmad ibn 'Abdallah al-Ma'arî.

ARTHUR FIELD.