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THE HOLY QUR-ĀN

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مُحَمَّدٌ وَصَلَّى عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

ZU 'L-HIJJA, 1348 A.H.
VOL. XVIII. MAY, 1930 A.C. No. 5

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE OF THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD

By Professor EBRĀHIM KĀHN

[This issue is for the month of Zu 'l-Hijja, on the 9th of which month Muslims from all parts of the world gather together in Mecca to perform their pilgrimage. We print, therefore, a vivid description of the last Pilgrimage of the Holy Prophet.—Ed. *J.R.*]

THE season of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca was drawing near, and the Prophet set out from Medina accompanied by a large number of friends and Comrades.

When the procession arrived at the holy field it was joined by the followers of the Faith streaming in from all sides, from every quarter of the peninsula, and even from more distant lands.

The Prophet rose to address the assembled multitude, and as he looked there stretched before him a veritable sea of human heads! The Meccan Comrades, who had befriended him in the early days of his distress, sat near him, together with the "Helpers" of Medina, who had accorded him a warm and hospitable welcome when, with every door in Arabia shut in his face and deadly peril at his heels, he approached their city. Beyond this circle of immediate friends were seated those brethren of the Faith who had early accepted the new

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Dispensation and braved alike the ridicule of acquaintances and the daggers of the persecutors. Those tempters, too, who in his early days had offered the Prophet wealth, beauty, and authority—nay, every conceivable thing that lay within the power of human giving—if he would but abandon his blasphemous campaign against their ancestral gods, were present in the gathering, but now with offerings far different from those formerly contemplated. While it was yet the dawn of Islam in Arabia, the Messenger of Peace had been wont to proceed to the holy Ka'aba for prayer, and the neighbours would sneer in his face, spit on his body, throw filth on his clothes, spread thorns in his way, and heap the entrails of goats and camels on his head when bowed down to Allah in silent prayer. To-day, these same mockers attended the congregation in all humility, as earnest converts to the Faith. The Prophet had once repaired to Tayef and invited the inhabitants to listen to his Gospel of Peace, and they had turned him out of the town and stoned him on the way till the blood flowed. To-day these same Tayfites were conspicuous in the assembly as zealous adherents of Islam. The Quraishite leaders, who had driven the family of the Prophet into exile and practically besieged them in their banishment so that starvation stared them in the face; the excited youths who were deputed to write in his blood, at dead of night, flashing scimitar in hand, the tragic fate of a revolutionary Preacher; the fiery myrmidons, who dashed in hot pursuit of the Prophet in his flight from Mecca to Yathreb (Medina); the murderous marauders who subjected Medina, the city of refuge, to successive invasions with unrelenting rigour, were all found in the field of Pilgrimage. Unholy coalitions had, in time past, been formed to smash the small fraternity; campaigns of falsehood had been organized to undermine the very foundation of the new Faith; a great price had been set upon his head, murderers engaged, huge blocks of stone hurled upon him from housetops, attempts made to set fire to the house wherein he was and burn him to death, and poison actually administered to him. But on the day of the Farewell Pilgrimage the sneer was hushed, the sword lay in its sheath,

FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE OF HOLY PROPHET

and one and all sat before him, anxiously waiting to drink in the words of the Faith from his sacred lips.

The Prophet surveyed the vast gathering in a silence that was tense. What profound thought this unprecedented scene might have evoked in his mind none may divine. Probably a thrill of pleasure coursed through him at this visible demonstration of the success of his mission after so many years of storm and stress; probably, too, his searching glance missed among the audience the familiar figures of those who had laid down their lives ungrudgingly on the altar of the Faith, and a deep sigh stirred his affectionate breast that they were not destined to witness this flower of sacred triumph which was to blossom from their martyred blood! He had long passed the meridian of life. The burden of the self-imposed toil which had confined him for years to the lonely Cave of Hira in earnest devotion, often accompanied by fasting that extended even to the twentieth day, lay heavy on his aged shoulders; the severe physical and mental strain which had been almost continually inflicted upon him by the relentless infidels for close on twenty years had gradually but inevitably told upon his health; his life-blood was being sapped by that supreme anxiety for the repentance of his persecutors and for the success of his Call—an anxiety that often kept him on his feet night after night without rest in urgent prayer, humbly beseeching Divine aid in the prosecution of his mission, not seldom resulting in the swelling of his feet even to bursting-point; the chill of age and of approaching infirmity was clearly felt; even his iron will was unmistakably realizing at last its inability to support his frame in its wonted strength, while the dangerous effect of the poison which had so long remained in a state of suspended animation had revived and was even then eating his life away. Did the Seer visualize his approaching end and the success that was to crown his mission? Perhaps he did. For his voice, that unparalleled voice of his, assumed that day a tone, took on a depth of intensity, that struck the huge concourse into sepulchral silence. Pathos and delight—delight in the fulfilment of a supreme mission of universal import, the pathos, perhaps, of leaving this fair

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earth with all that he held dear and of finally relinquishing an office to the duties of which he had sacrificed friend and relation, peace and comfort, his all—mingled strangely in his vibrant voice when he opened his lips:

“Ye people! Hearken unto my words, for I know not whether in another year it will be vouchsafed to me to find myself amongst you in this place.”

“Your lives and properties are sacred and inviolable amongst one another, as this day and this month are sacred to all, until ye appear before your Lord. And (remember) ye shall indeed appear before your Lord, who shall demand from each of you an account of his actions.”

“Ye people! Ye have rights over your wives and your wives have rights over you. Treat your wives with kindness and love; verily, ye are responsible for them to Allah.”

“Usury is forbidden. The debtor will return the principal, and a beginning will be made with the loans of my uncle Abbas, son of Abdul Muttalib.”

“The aristocracy of old time is trampled under my feet. The Arab has no superiority over him that is not an Arab, and he that is not Arab has no superiority over the Arab. All are children of Adam, and Adam was made of earth.”

“Ye people! Hearken to my words and understand them. Know that all Muslims are brothers, one of another. Ye are one brotherhood. Nothing which belongs to another can be lawfully possessed by any, unless freely given out of good will. Guard yourselves against committing injustice.”

“And your war-captives! See that ye feed them with such food as ye yourselves eat; and clothe them with the stuff that ye yourselves wear; and if they commit a fault which ye are not minded to forgive, then part with them, for they are the servants of the Lord and are not to be harshly treated.”

“I am leaving to you two noble things; so long as ye cling to them ye shall not go astray: the Book of Allah and the Tradition of His Prophet.”

“Let him that is present tell it unto him that is absent:

FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE OF HOLY PROPHET

for it may be that he who shall be told may remember better than he who hath heard it here."

"O ye that are assembled here! have I delivered my message and fulfilled my word?"

The assembled congregation cried out with one voice:

"Yea, verily thou hast."

A sudden glow flashed upon the face of the Prophet, and with eyes filled with grateful tears he raised his trembling hands towards heaven and said thrice:

"O Lord! I beseech Thee, bear Thou witness unto it."

Contemporary historians have agreed that in all the annals of this old world there is no record of any leader, religious or political, who received such implicit obedience from his numerous disciples, such unqualified homage from the entire body of citizens, as did the Prophet of Arabia. He was well aware of the solid strength of the young Muslim commonwealth. He had predicted and assured his followers in the most unequivocal terms that the empires of Persia and Rome would soon crumble to dust before the onrush of Islam. But the glamour of military prowess and the greed of temporal gain had no power to influence or deflect the steadiness of his spiritual vision. The unquestioned Sovereign of a powerful Commonwealth uttered not one syllable concerning sovereignty. The departing Hero in his last great public utterance spoke no word of country, nation, soldiers, or wife, though he had all. The soldier of Truth, as he had done all his life long, at the end sped the last arrows from his all but empty quiver against the forces of darkness and falsehood. The Chivalrous Knight, with a thousand scars on his bosom and a halo of glory round his head, said nothing concerning his own proud achievements, but thundered fiery injunctions in defence of the weak and oppressed—the women, the slaves, the poor, the afflicted.

Thirteen centuries have passed since this memorable address was delivered; but the standard of conduct here set up by the unlettered Prophet of Islam remains, generally speaking, an ideal yet to be realized by the world.

ISLAM AND SUPERSTITION

A PEDLAR in religion with his cunning placard to push on his sale—this is the estimate that a Muslim with an ordinary knowledge of his faith would make of the author of a book entitled *The Influence of Animism on Islam*. The author tries to show that Islam is not free from superstitious beliefs. Islam, admittedly monotheism in its purest form, with the Qur-án replete with teachings to kill polytheistic tendencies in every shape, could not be taken to give even a slight semblance of countenance to any kind of superstition, but by one whose virulent mind has blinded him from seeing things in their proper light. But perhaps it is something else also which induced the author of the book to produce such nauseating reading. It is a trick of the trade, and the author of the book could not fail to make use of it in order to attract an average reader to purchase it. But it would be wickedness on our part if we pushed on our business at the expense of others. Not to make mention of the Qur-án, that is so full of its teachings against superstitious beliefs, the Prophet, through his precepts and example, destroyed superstition in all its form and purged Arabia of it before he left the world. “Those who do not use spells,” the Prophet said, “and are not influenced by omens like the people of ignorance, and who put their whole trust in God, will enter paradise.” The Holy Prophet lost his son. The sun also became eclipsed on that very day when the sad event occurred. The pagans of Mecca, superstitious as they were, could not fail to connect the two events together. They thought that the great luminary had become darkened in his mourning for the death of the son of the Prophet. This convinced the Arab pagan of the truth of the claims of the Prophet; they hastened to him in repentance and asked for his forgiveness for their

ISLAM AND SUPERSTITION

past hostilities. They offered also to become Muslims. But the Prophet no sooner heard the story than he refused to accept them in his fold. He dismissed them, saying : “ Do not be superstitious as to eclipses : they do not occur because of the death of a person. Such a serious change should inspire a Muslim to offer special service and adore the Unity of God and ask for His blessings.”

Could this come from an impostor ? There was a chance—and a most efficacious chance too—to secure adhesion of his implacable enemies to his cause, but he could not do so. He was the true Prophet. But the author of the book under my notice could not forget the jugglery of his own fellow-priest who secured conversions of the thousands of the Americans to their Church in the olden days through this very phenomena.

Most of the old Americans were the worshippers of the sun, and when the missionary to those people of the old times failed utterly to convince them of the truth of his faith, his cunningness came to his help. The sun eclipse was near to occur, and the padre, calculating the time of the eclipse, said to those people that their God would succumb to his Lord on such and such day and at such and such time, and would disappear. The prophecy became fulfilled, and Christ was glorified. This is not the solitary instance in the history of the Foreign Christian Mission. Conversion of Jutland was secured through a similar trick.

Ignorance engenders superstition, and credulity feeds it. It will overtake any class of people of an undeveloped condition of mind. Their faith, though rational in its teaching, will not keep them away from it. If certain Muslims in some quarters show superstitious propensities, it is lack of culture, and not their faith, that stands responsible for it. Islam could be put to task if anything in it favoured superstition.

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But the followers of the church, wrongly named after Jesus, cannot afford to pelt others, when they themselves live in glass-houses. Every bit of their basic doctrines savours of superstition and is a remnant of Paganism, as has been so lucidly shown by the learned author of the *Sources of Christianity*.¹ Immaculate conception, Divinity of the son of Mary, the Grace of the Blood, the Sacrament, and many other so-called Christian verities—all this was neither taught nor even imagined by Jesus. But the pre-Christian world was not without such belief. When the old Fathers of the second and third centuries totally failed to introduce the faith of Jesus into the lands of the Gentiles, they incorporated everything in Paganism into their faith, and thus popularized religion in those countries. Europe accepted the old religion with all its tenets; only in a new garb.

THE QUR-ÁN AND THE MODERN ERA OF STEEL

By SYED MAQBOOL AHMAD, B.A.

FOURTEEN hundred years ago man only knew one use of iron and that was to forge for himself offensive and defensive armours. Not until our present era did anyone know the real value of iron, excepting probably some agricultural countries might have known its small utility in scratching earth for seeds to grow. But Arabia of old did not even know this much. Who can now deny that iron is at present the most indispensable metal in our modern life? Let alone its utility, one cannot, indeed, imagine a civilization without iron.

There is a chapter in the Qur-án which is entitled, "The Iron," and therein we find the following verse:

"Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the measure, that men

¹ *Sources of Christianity*, by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. The Basheer Muslim Library. Price 2s. 6d.

QUR-ÂN AND THE MODERN ERA OF STEEL

may conduct themselves with equity; and We have made the iron, wherein is the great violence and advantages to men, and that Allah may know who helps Him and His apostles; surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.”

The verse mentions two uses of iron: its use as a means of violence, which was so well known in the time the Qur-ân was revealed; and such advantages inherent in it so that it surpasses all metals.

Undoubtedly, as Maulāna Muhammad ‘Alī in his Commentary on the Qur-ân remarks, the meaning of these words could not have been so clear to the minds of the Arabs thirteen hundred years ago as it is to ours to-day. And now contemplate on the last part of the above-quoted verse, which apparently seems to have no bearing on the first. No one can deny that of all the nations of the world, it is the Europeans and the Americans who know the best use of iron, and the passage suggests that nations who will know the best utility of iron will be the Helpers of God and His Apostle. We need not detain ourselves for the fulfilment of this prophecy; for it is true, although it appears paradoxical to assert this, Islam has been greatly assisted in Africa, the Pacific Ocean, and India by the spread of the European inventions and opening of various traffic facilities which would not have been possible without iron. It is computed that the Muslims in India alone have doubled within the last fifty years of British rule, and its greatest progress was made in provinces that enjoyed British rule longer than any country—for instance in Bengal—while in a country like Hyderabad-Deccan, which is directly under Muslim rule, its progress was negligible. While Turkey for centuries was unable to convert a single Greek, Slav, or Armenian in her dominions, Muslims in Russia trebled within a century in spite of bitter opposition from the Tsar Government. My readers might have heard of the wholesale conversion of Cossacks of the Steppes who now number five million and have a separate republic which goes under the name of Kirghizia. In the same century, Buriat Tartars who were pagans were brought into the fold of Islam through the influence of these Cossacks, and Islam is still progress-

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ing in the northernmost part of Siberia. Similarly while in Afghanistan and Arabia under Muslim rule, Islam does not multiply in numbers, it has progressed by leaps and bounds in the dark continent of Africa and Malaysia under the European rule. This is either due to better transport and communication facilities provided by the Europeans with their helpmate—iron—or it is due to the presentation of a life of contrast between the civilized but sodden Europeans and the simple and abstemious life of the people of Islam.

The modern era does not seem to have escaped the oracular vision of Al-Qur-án. Some early Meccan chapters are couched in a high-flown poetical language. They can only be appreciated in the original Arabic; no translation could do full justice to them. It is not always easy to interpret them in the right sense, and consequently the Qur-án has itself warned us against indulging too much in the glosses of these metaphorical passages. Nevertheless, some verses are so striking that I read them in the light of the latest inventions of our modern era. I am tempted to quote, for instance, the first part of Chapter LI on Broadcasting. While reading it, keep before your mind's eye the latest inventions—broadcasting, flying, motor-racing, and, last but not least, the League of Nations. Now ponder over these verses:

“ By the broadcaster broadcasting.”

“ By raisers of heavy load up.”

“ By gliders gliding swiftly on earth.”

“ By those who apportion mandates.”

“ Verily that wherewith you are threatened is bound to come.”

“ And the Faith shall be established.”

“ By the heavens full of orbits.”

“ You widely differ in what you say.”

“ He shall be turned aside who shall . .

Commentators differ widely in explaining these verses. Some have understood the first verse to mean a tempest, the second standing for clouds carrying the load of rain, the third calling our attention to ships gliding on water, and the fourth referring to angels distributing Kismet. For my

QUR-ÁN AND THE MODERN ERA OF STEEL

part, the more I reflect on these verses the more I am convinced that the signs mentioned in the first four verses speak of an important epoch-making age which, though now here, was not known when the Qur-án was revealed. Wind and cloud may be more appropriate, but I see no reason why a modern inhabitant of New York should not be equally enthused with his own environment, which are materially different from Mecca of thirteen hundred years ago. Both are entitled to be inspired by their own impressive signs of the times. To the one the everyday objects of nature are interesting, while to the other the humdrum of modern inventions and life. The Qur-án is a universal book, and it caters for all time. So in whatever environment you are, and whatever your tastes be, do not forget one great truth—"there lies much beyond our short span of life." *That* is the main point and should not be forgotten in spite of our tremendous progress on all sides. That is the pivot upon which the whole spiritual life of the world moves. Forget it and you forget yourself and your aim in life, and you become mere straws to be badgered about from pillar to post in the wind and doomed to be crushed to dust.

Alluding to the modern era which goes hand in hand with the life of crime, strife, exploitation, and class-war, one might ask, is this sordid era worth the remark of a revealed Book like Al-Qur-án? The material progress in the world has relegated the spiritual progress, contentment, and peace of mind. It is now ever running the risk of being blown up by its own handicraft. Human greed and love for gain is stalking unhampered. It is admitted on all hands that the need for a religious stimulant, with its psychological effect on the mind of Europe, was never more acute than now.

The modern civilized world, because it has missed the curative influence of Islam, is being constantly cankered. It was Islam, and it was really very unfortunate that it was not allowed to replace the dogmatized Christianity at a moment when renaissance was ushered in Europe. Picture to yourself a modern Europe with Islam as its religion. Dare anybody say that drunkenness, gambling, usury, capitalism, would have

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gone unchecked. Christianity had nothing but a fluid atonement theory to give it. And now since the evil cannot even be checked by any religious mandate, the world has little use for Christianity. The New Testament might very well teach an impracticable ethic which delighted the hearts of the old Essenes, but the fact remains that it has failed to produce a healthy spiritual outlook in the world. What Europe now wants is a religious belief of common sense, and once this comes, the practical ethics of Al-Qur-án is bound to follow. That is one of the many justifications for introducing the Qur-án into Europe. It is late now, but not too late.

MUHAMMAD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

By Professor 'ABDU 'L-AHAD DĀWŪD, B.D.

IV

THE PROPHET FORETOLD BY THE BAPTIST WAS CERTAINLY MUHAMMAD

THERE are two very significant remarks about John the Baptist made by Jesus Christ, but recorded in a mysterious way. The first remark about the Baptist is that in which John is presented to the world as the reincarnate Eliah (Elijah) of the Old Testament. The mystery with which this appellation is enveloped consists in the significant silence of Christ about the identity of the person whom Eliah (*not* Elias) was expected to officially announce and introduce to the world as the Last Prophet. The language of Jesus in this respect is exceedingly obscure, ambiguous, and mysterious. If John was Eliah, as is expressly and fearlessly declared, why, then, is the person whose precursor was Eliah *not expressly and fearlessly mentioned*? If Jesus were the "Messenger of the Covenant" and the *Dominator* [as the Vulgate translates the Hebrew *Adon* (Mal. iii. 1)], why does he not openly say so? If he courageously declared that it was not he himself but

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another Prophet who was that "Dominator," it must, indeed, have been a criminal hand which erased and effaced the words of Jesus from the original Gospel. At all events, it is the Gospels that are responsible for this ambiguity and obscurity. It cannot but be described as diabolical tampering with the text that has misled billions of Christians for so many centuries. Jesus, whatever he believed he represented, ought to have, to say the least, shown himself straightforward, and to have frankly declared: "John is the Eliah who was sent as a precursor to prepare the way for me!" Or if such was not the case, then he could have made the following declaration: "John is the Eliah who is sent to prepare the way for Muhammad." Perhaps this is due to the love of Jesus for ambiguity. There are, in fact, several instances—as reported in the Gospels—where Jesus gives an answer or makes a statement which is obscure and entirely unintelligible. Leaving his godhead aside, as a Prophet, nay even as a teacher, he was expected to be a straightforward teacher and leader.

The other remark is shrouded in still a thicker mystery. "No man born of woman was ever greater than John the Baptist," says Jesus, "but the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John." Does Jesus Christ mean to teach us that John the Baptist and all the Prophets and the righteous men *were outside* the Kingdom of God? Who is the "least" that was "greater" than John, and consequently than all the people of God preceding the Baptist? Does Jesus mean by the "least" *himself*, or the "least" among the baptized Christians? It cannot be himself, because in his time that Kingdom was not yet established on earth; if it be, then he could not be the "least" in it since he was its founder. The Churches—rather each Church, orthodox or heterodox, from its own peculiar point of view—have discovered a very abstruse or a very absurd solution for this problem; and that solution is that the "least" Christian washed with the blood of Jesus—either through the Sacrament of Baptism, according to the belief of the Sacerdotalists, or through the regeneration of some kind, according to the superstition of the Evangelicals—becomes "greater" than the Baptist and all the army of

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the holy men and women, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Eliah, Daniel, and John the Baptist! And the reason or proof of this marvellous claim is that the Christian, however sinful, ignorant, low, and poor he may be, providing he has faith in Jesus as his Saviour, has the privileges which the holy Prophets coveted to have but did not enjoy. These privileges are innumerable: purification from original sin through the Christian Baptism; the knowledge of the "Holy Trinity" (!!! *hāshā! astaghfiru 'llāh!*—Allah forbid and pardon this term); the feeding upon the flesh and the blood of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist; the grace of making the sign of a cross; the privilege of the keys of Heaven and of Hell delivered to the Sovereign Pontiff; and the rapturous ecstasies of the Puritans, Quakers, Brethren, and all other sects called Nonconformists who, each in its own way, while claiming the same privileges and prerogatives, all agree that each good Christian will become on the day of resurrection a pure virgin and present herself as a bride to the "Lamb of God"!

Do you not think, then, that the Christians are right to believe that the "least" among them is "greater" than all the Prophets? Do you not think, then, that a sturdy Patagonian monk and a penitentiary Parisian nun are higher than Adam and Eve, because the mystery of the Trinity is revealed to these idiots and not to our first parents who lived with Allah in Paradise before their fall? Or, don't you think that this sort of belief is most unbecoming and undignified in these lofty times of advanced science and civilization? To claim that an English prince or an orphan negro is "greater" than John the Baptist because they are Christians is, to say the least, abominable!

Yet all these diverse beliefs and creeds are derived from the New Testament and from the words put into the mouth of Jesus and of his Apostles. For us Muslim Unitarians, however, there are a few scintillating sparkles left in the Gospels; and they are enough for us to discover the truth about the real Jesus and his cousin, Yoḥannan Ma'mdānā (John-Baptist).

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JOHN-BAPTIST FORETOLD MUHAMMAD

I. According to the testimony of Jesus, no man born of woman was ever greater than John the Baptist. But the "least" in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John. The comparison made by the "Spirit of Allah" (Rūḥu 'llāh, i.e. Jesus) is between John and all the preceding Prophets as the officers and administrators of the Kingdom of Heaven. Now in chronological order the *last* Prophet would be the *least* of them all, he would be their junior and their youngest. The word "z'irā" in the Aramaic, like the Arabic "saghīr," signifies "little, small, young." The Pshitttha Version uses the word "z'irā" or "z'eirā" in apposition to "rabba" for "great, old." Every Christian will admit that Jesus is *not* the "last" Prophet, and therefore he cannot be the "least." Not only were the Apostles themselves endowed with the gift of prophecy, but also many other holy men in the apostolic age were favoured with it (Acts xi. 27, 28; xiii. 1; xv. 32; xxi, 9, 10, etc.).

And as we cannot determine *which* of these numerous Church Prophets was the "last," we are naturally forced to seek elsewhere a Prophet who is indisputably the Last and the Seal of the Prophetic List. Can we imagine a stronger and more brilliant evidence in favour of Muhammad than the fulfilment, in his holy person, of this wonderful prophecy of Jesus Christ?

In the long list of the prophetic family, certainly the "youngest," the "least" is Muhammad; he is the "Benjamin" of the Prophets; yet he is their Sultan, their "Adon" and their "Glory." To deny the prophetic and apostolic character and nature of Muhammad's mission is a fundamental denial of the whole Divine Revelation and all the Prophets who preached it. For all other Prophets put together had not accomplished the gigantic work which the Prophet of Mecca did alone in the short period of but twenty-three years of his apostolic mission.

The mystery of the pre-existence of the spirits of the Prophets has not been revealed to us, but every true Muslim believes it. It was that pre-existing spirit that by the power

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of the Word of Allah "Kun" ("Be!") a Sarah, a Hanna, and a Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth to Isaac, to the Baptist, and to Jesus. There are several other names as recorded in the Old Testament—for instance, Samson, Jeremiah.

The Gospel of Barnabas reports Jesus as speaking of the Spirit of Muhammad which he declares to have been created before everything else. Hence the Baptist's witness about the Prophet whom he foretold: "He who comes after me has become before me, for he was before me" (John i. 15).

It is useless to interpret these wonderful words of the Baptist about Muhammad as referring to Jesus as the author of the Fourth Gospel attempts to do.

There is a remarkable chapter about John the Baptist in the well-known book of Ernest Renan on *La Vie de Jesu*. Long ago I carefully read this work. If the learned French writer had the least consideration for Muhammad's claim in the world of Prophets, I am sure his profound investigations and comments would have led him entirely to a different conclusion. He, like all other dissident and Biblical critics, instead of finding out the truth, criticizes religion adversely and leads his readers to scepticism.

I am happy to say that it is my privilege, by the grace of Allah, to solve the problem, to ring up the curtain of mystery which has covered the true sense and meaning of "the Least in the Kingdom of Heaven!"

2. John the Baptist recognizes Muhammad as superior and more powerful than himself. That significant expression made to the Jewish multitudes, "He that cometh after me" reminded their Scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers of the ancient prophecy of their great ancestor Jacob, in which that patriarch uses the unique title of "Shilokḥah" for the "Rasūl Allah," the epithet frequently used by Jesus for Muhammad as preserved in the Gospel of Barnabas. At the time of writing my article on the "Shiloh"¹ I said that the word might be a corruption of "Shilōūkh" or "Shilokhah,"² which means the

¹ Cf. *Islamic Review* for September, 1928, p. 313 *et seq.*

² The Oriental Hebrews and Assyrians pronounce the word "Shilokha" or "Shilōākh." It is very difficult to write or transliterate the Semitic languages in the Latin characters.

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Apostle of Allah, but I did not then recollect that St. Jerome, as well, had understood the Hebrew form in that sense, for he has translated it as “*qui mittendis est.*”

We have only an epitome of John's sermon in a few lines, written not by himself but by an unknown hand—at least not in his own original tongue—and much tampered with by transcribers and redactors who had already made his disciple Jesus an idol or a god. But when we come to compare this sermon preached in the wilderness of Judea and on the shores of the Jordan with the marvellous grace, elegance, eloquence, and power so manifest in every verse and page of the Holy Qur-án, we understand the sense of the words, “He is more powerful than I!”

When I picture to myself the ascetic Baptist preaching aloud in the wilderness, or on the banks of the Jordan, to the masses of the Jewish believers, with a theocratic history of some four thousand years old behind them, and then make a brief review of the quiet, orderly, and dignified manner in which Muhammad proclaimed his celestial verses of the Qur-án to the unbelieving Arab pagans; and, finally, when I examine and behold the effect of the two preachings upon the hearers and the final result, I understand the magnitude of the contrast between them, and of the significance of the words “He is more powerful than I!”

When I contemplate the seizure and imprisonment of the helpless Baptist by Herod Antipas¹ and his cruel decapitation—or when I peruse the confused but tragical accounts of the flagellation of Jesus (or Judah Ischariot) by Pilate, his coronation with a crown of thorns by Herod, and the catastrophe upon the Calvary—and then turn my eyes upon the triumphal entry of the great Adon—the Sultan of the Prophets—into Mecca, the total destruction of all the ancient idols and the purification of the Holy Ka'ba; upon the thrilling scene of the vanquished deadly enemy headed by Abū Sufyān at the feet of the victorious Shilohah—the Apostle of Allah—begging his

¹ There is anachronism in the account of John's martyrdom concerning the family of Herod the Great in the Gospels (Matt. xiv, etc.); the reader can consult the *Antiquities* of Joseph Flavius.

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clemency and making the profession of faith; and upon the glorious worship, devotion, and the final sermon of the Seal of the Prophets in these solemn Divine words: "Al-yauma akmaltu lakum dīnakum" ("To-day I have completed for you your religion"), etc., then I fully understand the weight and value of the Baptist's confession, "He is more powerful than I!"

3. "The Coming Wrath." Have you ever met with a sensible, judicious, and convincing interpretation of this phrase in any of the numerous commentaries on the Gospels? What does John mean, or wish his audience to understand, by his expression: "Behold the axe is already set at the root of the tree"? Or his remark: "He holds the fan in his hand to purge out his threshing-floor"? Or when he reduced the title "Children of Abraham" to nothing?

I will not detain you on the vagaries of the commentators, for they are reveries which neither John nor his hearers had ever dreamed of. Could John ever teach those haughty Pharisees, and those rationalistic Saduquees¹ who denied the corporeal resurrection, that on the day of the last judgment Jesus of Nazareth would pour down upon them his wrath and burn them like the fruitless trees and like the chaff in the fire of hell? There is not a single word in all the literature of the Scriptures about the resurrection of bodies or about hell-fire. These Talmudistic writings are full of eschatological material very similar to those of the Zardushtees, but have no distinct origin in the canonical books.

The Prophet of repentance and of good tidings does not speak about the remote and indefinite wrath which certainly awaits the unbelievers and the impious, but of the near and proximate catastrophe of the Jewish nation. He threatened the wrath of Allah awaiting that people if they persisted in their sins and the rejection of his mission and that of his colleague, Jesus Christ. The coming calamity was the destruction of Jerusalem and the final dispersion of Israel which took place some thirty years afterwards during the lifetime of many among his hearers. Both he and Jesus announced the coming

¹ This Hebrew name is wrongly written "Saducees."

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of the Great Apostle of Allah whom the Patriarch Jacob had announced under the title of Shiloha, and that at his advent all prophetic and royal privileges and authority would be taken away from the Jews; and, indeed, such was the case some six centuries later, when their last strongholds in the Hijaz were razed to the ground and their principalities destroyed by Muhammad. The increasingly dominating power of Rome in Syria and Palestine was threatening the quasi-autonomy of the Jews, and the emigration current among the Jews had already begun. And it was on this account that the preacher inquires, "Who has informed you to flee from the coming wrath?" They were warned and exhorted to bear good fruits and good harvest by repentance and belief in the true Messengers of God, especially in the Rasūl Allah, who was the true and the last powerful Commander.

4. The Jews and the Christians have always charged Muhammad of having established the religion of Islam by force, coercion, and the sword. The Muslim modernists have always tried to refute this charge. But this does not mean to say that Muhammad never wielded the sword. He had to use it to preserve the name of God. Every patience has limits, every favour has an end. It is not that Allah's patience or favour is finite; with Him all is settled, defined, and fixed. The chance and the time graciously granted by Allah to the Jews, to the Arabs, and to the Gentiles lasted for more than four thousand years. It was only after the expiry of this period that Allah sends His beloved Muhammad with power and sword, with fire and spirit, to deal with the wicked unbelievers, with the ungrateful children of Abraham—both the Ishmaelites and the Israelites—and to deal with the power of the Devil, *once for all*.

The whole of the Old Testament is a tale of theocracy and of idolatry. Now and then a little sparkle of Islam—that is, the religion of Allah—glittered in Jerusalem and in Mecca; but it was always persecuted by the power of the Devil. The four diabolical Beasts had to come and trample under their feet the handful of believers in Allah. Then comes Muhammad to crush and kill the Venemous Serpent and to give him the

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opprobrious title of "Iblīs"—the "Bruised" Satan. Certainly Muhammad was a fighting Prophet, but the object of that fighting was victory not vengeance, defeat of the enemy and not his extermination, and, in a word, to establish the religion of Islam as the Kingdom of God upon the earth. In fact, when the Crier in the desert shouted, aloud, "Prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight His paths," he was alluding to the religion of the Lord in the form of a Kingdom which was drawing nigh. Seven centuries before, the Prophet Isaiah had cried out and pronounced the same words (Isa. xl. 1-4); and a couple of centuries later Allah Himself paved the way for Cyrus by raising and filling up every valley, and by lowering every hill and mountain, in order to make the conquest easy and the march rapid (xliv. 1-3). History repeats itself, they say; the language and its meaning is the same in both cases, the former being a prototype of the latter. Allah had smoothed the path for Cyrus, subdued his enemies to the Persian conqueror because of His House in Jerusalem and His chosen people in the captivity. Now again He was repeating the same providence, but on a larger and wider scale. Before the preaching of Muhammad, idols and falsehood disappeared; before his sword empires tumbled down; and the children of the Kingdom of Allah became equals and formed a "people of the Saints of the Most High." *For it is only in Islam that all the believers are equal, no priest, no sacrament; no Muslim high as a hill, or low like a valley; and no caste or distinction of race and rank. All believers are one, except in virtue and piety, in which they can excel each other. It is only the religion of Islam that does not recognize any being, however great and holy, as an absolute mediator between Allah and man.*

Friday Prayer and Sermon.—At the London Muslim Prayer House—111, Camden Hill Road, London, W.8, close to Notting Hill Gate Tube Station—every Friday at 1 p.m. **Sunday Lectures** at 7.30 p.m. **Qur-ān and Arabic Classes**—every Sunday at 5.30-7 p.m. Nearest Tube Station: Notting Hill Gate.

Service, Sermon, and Lectures every Sunday at the Mosque, Woking at 3.15 p.m. Every Friday at 1 p.m.

“QUR-ĀN ON CREATION OF UNIVERSE”

“THE QUR-ĀN ON THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE”

By MUHAMMAD DILĀWAR KHĀN, B.A.

“Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, but We have opened them; and We have made of water every thing living; will they not then believe? And We have made great mountains in the earth lest it might be convulsed with them, and We have made in it wide ways that they may follow a right direction. And We have made the heaven a guarded canopy and (yet) they turn aside from its signs. And He it is who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon: all (orbs) travel along swiftly in their celestial spheres” (Qur-ān, xxi. 30-33).

In the above verses of Al-Qur-ān our attention is drawn to the creation of the Heavens and the Earth in words which apparently seem scanty, but which nevertheless are full of a very deep significance. It is known to the readers of Al-Qur-ān that the book always deals with great historical events in a concise but very significant manner. In exactly the same beautiful way it has dealt with great moral ideals and has also similarly touched most comprehensively on the great problem of the creation of our planet and the sun and the wonderful orbs that we see above. Such, indeed, should have been the attitude of a Divine Book towards these great problems; for an exhaustive summary would have taken several volumes for its completion and an average person would have almost found it impossible to plod through all of them. But God intended that man should develop his latent faculties, and He did not mean that he should depend upon “lotus” and live an idle life. He wanted him whom He had made in His own image that he should prove himself to be the image in the real sense. Ever and anon the pages of Al-Qur-ān draw our attention to the Universe and why and how it was made. Again and again we find emphatic utterances that all that we observe in the Universe has been made subservient to us. Several times we are reminded of “Why don’t you ponder

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over these things?" and "Why don't you ponder over the changes of day and night and the creation of Heaven and Earth?" and of asking Him to guide us to understand these problems.

To return to our subject of the creation of the Earth and the Heavens according to the Holy Qur-án. Let us just see if this is supported by the scientists of our time. It may be observed that although Al-Qur-án does not require in the least that Science should give support to its teachings or its discourses on certain scientific problems, yet undoubtedly it will afford great pleasure to all Muslims if in these matters the description of the Holy Qur-án and the researches of Science coincide.

Science says that in the beginning there was nothing but the two gases of hydrogen and helium which for millions of years occupied the space until by contraction they gave birth to the Sun. Then after millions of years the Sun gave birth to our Earth and the other planets. Subsequently the Earth caused the Moon. After a period beyond our imagination the Earth got cooler and cooler and the first living thing on it was made of water on account of the incessant heat of the Sun. Earthquakes and volcanoes resulted in the appearance of mountains to prevent our planets from convulsions and so on.

Now in the verses quoted above, God tells us that there was a time when this Earth and the Heavens above us (which also means the Sun and its planets) were all "held up" in the womb of hydrogen and helium, and "We unstretched" the one from the other. We are further told that when the Earth, after years of rotation round its mother (Sun), had got cooled down, then it was that out of its water God made every living thing, and it was to prevent the Earth from convulsion that God made mountains on it, and caused the Sun and the Moon and all the orbs to travel along their celestial spheres in a regulated form. A slightest deviation of the Sun from his path will be sufficient to extinguish our planet in the twinkling of an eye. The Great Designer beyond all this is the Almighty Allah, and so may say some good scientists.

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Why do not those who disbelieve, says the Holy Qur-án, in the Divine origin of it ponder over this description?

How could an illiterate person thirteen hundred years before our era give to the world such an account of the creation of the Universe unless he was inspired by the "Great Maker of the Heavens and the Earth"?

SPIRITUALISM AND THE MUSLIMS

By 'ABDU 'L-GHANĪ CHAUDHARĪ, B.A.

(Formerly Editor, *The Khilāfat Daily*, Bombay)

THE IMPORTANCE OF WESTERN SPIRITUALISM TO ISLAM

WHEN God's truth is perverted by human interpolation or misinterpretation He selects some spiritually evolved person for the Divine Mission, to be performed not through a teacher or a Prophet—when no Prophet is needed—but through a human instrument sensitive in a high degree to the influence of the force that is life's motive-power. Amongst such, one in the spiritualistic world is Mr. Stainten Moses, who undoubtedly a seeker after Truth, was evidently selected as a human instrument for carrying out this mission amongst his own people in the West. He was inspired with some wonderful teachings by Imperator and Al-Ghazālī, who were in their own time the great seekers after Truth on this earth, and were raised to the status of Spiritual Guides and Teachers in the next life. The Western world was hopelessly smothered in materialism, the theological dogmas were absolutely lifeless, and the last revealed words of God had not penetrated to the Western minds. Hence the need for Mr. Stainten Moses's *Spirit Teachings*.

Let us, therefore, briefly discuss some of the main points in connection with these inspired teachings. In explanation of their object it is said:

"The revelation of God is progressive, bounded by no time, confined to no people."

"The Divine Truth which we proclaim is not more strange to you than was the message of Jesus to his age."

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“ Be assured that the same power which availed to stir the dead faith of the Jew, and to reveal his God more clearly, is still able to infuse new life into the wellnigh lifeless body of Christian faith, and to restore it to energy and vitality.”

“ Even as He, the Lamb of God, the Saviour of men, rescued Divine Truth from Jewish ignorance and superstition, so do we rescue Divine Verities from the crushing weight of man’s theology.”

Then the *Teachings*, while urging that “ the work of destruction must precede the work of construction,” says:

“ We do but fight against that crude human view which renders God contemptible, and makes Him a cruel tyrant who needed to be propitiated by His Son’s death. We do not detract from Jesus’s work when we disavow the false and dishonouring fables which have gathered round His name, and have obscured the simple grandeur of His life, the moral purpose of His sacrifice. . . . One great section of the Christian Church would claim infallible knowledge for its head, and persecute in life, and condemn in death, even to everlasting shame and torment, those who receive it not. This is a dogma of late growth in your very midst. . . .”

“ Neither have we made any mention of a boundless store of merit laid up for him [man] by the death of a sinless Son of God, or of the Co-equal Partner of the Throne of Deity—a store on which he may draw at will to make up for his own shortcomings. We have not spoken of such an atonement of magical potency and universal application in answer to a cry of faith. . . .”

Thus the theory of the Trinity, of the Atonement, of the infallibility of the head of the Catholic Church are all blown to the wind. Then it is urged that no distinction should be made between the Prophets of God; all are alike in bringing to their people, in their own time and in accordance with human need, the progressive chain of Divine Revelation—truth being from the same Supreme Source and all one:

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“ It is not necessary that we should enter into a curious comparison between God’s great teachers. Rather would we give to all the meed of praise that is their due, and hold up the example of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and love to the imitation of a generation which sadly needs such a pattern.”

After impressing upon people the necessity of looking to the spirit of Divine teaching and of following the living examples of Prophets, the real position of Jesus as an exalted Prophet of God is explained:

“ The attributing to a man of Divine honour, to the exclusion in very many cases of personal honour and love for the Great Father, is a mischievous error which derogates from the duty of man to his God. The holding of a narrow, cold, dogmatic creed, in all its rigid, lifeless literalism, cramps the soul, dwarfs its spirituality, clogs its progress, and stunts its growth.”

So much for the work of destruction which has been laid upon the *Spirit Teachings*. Now I will discuss very briefly the constructive beliefs that lead to the true religion.

The aim of life of the higher intelligences, or, in other words, their religion, is explained in the following words:

“ Tell them [people] that it [teachings] will lead them to know of Intelligences whose whole life is one of love and mercy and pity and helpful aid to man, combined with adoration of the Supreme.”

The theory of “ original sin ” and “ Atonement ” is repudiated; and man is regarded as an “ incarnated spirit ” who has consciousness—rude, frequently, and undeveloped—of inherent right and wrong; and who has “ opportunities of development, degrees of probation, phases of training, and helps in progression if he will use them.” He is “ a conscious, responsible intelligence, with duties to perform, with responsibilities, with capacities, with accountability, and with power of progress or retrogression.” And for working out his poten-

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tialities into actualities, " according to the laws which regulate his being," the following Religion of Action is impressed:

" Man's duty to himself as a spirit incarnated in a body of flesh is *Purity* in thought, word, and act. . . . Respecting the duty which man owes to the race of which he is a unit, to the community of which he is a member, we strive again to crystallize into one word the central idea which should animate him. That word is *charity*. . . . As to the relation between man and his God, it should be that which befits the approach of a being in one of the lowest stages of existence to the Fountain of Uncreated Light, to the great Author and Father of all. . . . This in a figure symbolizes Reverence and Adoration."

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Are not the ideas expressed above in strict accordance with the teachings of the Holy Qur-án? Is not the rubbish of human interpolation removed? Is not the Prophet Jesus placed in his own dignified and exalted position as the Prophet of God and not a " Co-equal Partner of the Throne of Deity " ? Elsewhere the *Teachings* says:

" If you will read the records which so imperfectly record the earth life of Jesus, you will not find that He claimed for Himself any such position as the Christian Church has since forced upon Him. He was more such as we preach Him than such as the Church called by His name has made Him."

Does not the Holy Qur-án say the same? Is not Jesus exalted to his real position in Islam in the same manner? I may be asked why Mr. Stainten Moses was not directly asked to believe in the last revealed words of God through the Holy Prophet of Islam (May peace and blessings of God be upon him!). The answer to this question is not far to seek. Nowhere has Islam been so much misrepresented as in Western Christendom. A Christian mind, grown and developed under the influence of religious prejudices, cultivated, nursed, and

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encouraged by Christian Clergy through centuries of strenuous endeavour, would not lend a sympathetic or even tolerant ear to the truths of the *Spirit Teachings* if those truths had been given in the name of Islam. In order to educe a change in the mind that has been prejudiced by centuries of antagonistic teachings, first of all a substantial ground must be prepared wherein to dig a foundation for the Truth. This is the law of nature which always works slowly and imperceptibly. God's truth has been revealed to mankind progressively, and the process of progressive development has taken countless ages. Study the history of the development of human thought, and you will find that the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle was the progressive development of a system founded by Thales, who "taught that the principle of all things was water," and Anaximenes, who believed that "Air" was the "beginning of things." The same is the case with religion. The human mind is, and has always been, very slow to accept the Truth; but it is better to accept the Truth slowly than hastily to rush into error. While we find, on the one hand, the Aryans of the Vedic period worshipping the powers of Nature in the names of various gods, struggling and struggling to find out the Truth leading ultimately to the knowledge of One Infinite Self, the Supreme Source of Existence, we also find, on the other, the Semitic race giving human attributes to their God, and placing Him on the throne of the Universe as a lawless despotic Ruler, until their mind became, through centuries of progressive development, able to comprehend God as He is. Hence, in preparing the ground for implanting the Islamic principles in the Western mind Nature has followed her ordinary course. The ground is prepared, and even the foundation is dug; it is now left to the true sons of Islam to come forward, seize the opportunity, and build up the edifice of Universal Religion of Unity and Love, and illumine it with the light of Islam.

Moreover, Mr. Stainton Moses was inspired with teachings independent of what he had already learnt or known; and these independent teachings are an overwhelming proof of the universality of the teachings of Islam. Al-Ghazālī's formative

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and creative mind knew the significance of this idea; hence, through certain invisible channels, he communicated Islamic teachings to an independent Christian mind without even mentioning the name of Islam or the Holy Prophet (May peace and blessings of God be upon him!).

But be that as it may. One thing is very evident as to the manner in which the Eastern influences are working on inquiring Western minds. The progress in physical sciences has resulted in a materialism which has threatened the peace and prosperity of mankind; and the forces of nature are being utilized for the purpose of destruction. The labours of those who, through incessant struggle, discovered the laws of nature and brought them into use in new inventions can hardly be undervalued. But in spite of thousands of years of progress, human nature is just the same. It discovers certain laws of nature and applies them to the gratification of certain physical ends, thereby waging war against other and higher laws! But in nature there is another inevitable law: The lower must submit to the higher for its own well-being and progress; and whenever it kicks against this law it must be punished. It is therefore the *use* or *abuse* of a thing that counts. The *use* of a thing means to let it function within the limits of the law; and its *abuse* means transgression of those limits. Fire will never refuse to perform its natural function, whether food is to be cooked or a church or a mosque to be burnt—in the first case it is *used*, while in the second it is *abused*. And the abuse of a thing does not discredit its discovery by the human mind. Nature meant it to be used and not abused.

Discoveries in physical science cannot, therefore, be discredited. Man must be taught that they are meant to be used for the higher purpose of life—for the service of humanity, not for its destruction. And this purpose is explained by the inspiring spirits of the Almighty in communicating their messages to those who were and are fit to establish spiritual contact with them.

The fact that Eastern influences are guiding the Western mind in this direction should serve as a lesson to the people of the West. They must be grateful to the spirits of the East

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and forget all prejudices of colour and race; and recognize the unity of races and the brotherhood of humanity, which is fully evidenced by the unprejudiced minds of the Eastern spirits who have come forward to their help and guidance at this critical juncture. This is the only tribute they can pay to the higher spirits for their selfless efforts in serving humanity.

It should equally come somewhat as an eye-opener to Eastern people. Nature is never partial to any particular race in the dispensation of her bounties. Whosoever tries to seek her help, to him does she extend her helping hand, irrespective of East or West. Look at the ways of the Almighty. The Eastern spirits come to guide the people of the West! Why? because the West needed and sought their guidance. Instead of seeking inspiration and guidance, they urge their own interpretations that suit the preconceived notions of their own mind. They believe only in their own individual superiority, while the real faith in true wisdom has gone out of your mind. Faith does not mean a mere desire to believe; it is the state of mind that serves as a connecting-link between this life and the higher spirits; it establishes a communication between the physical and the spiritual worlds, resulting in an individual inspiration. But quarrelling over interpretations cuts this cord of communication, and the inspiring spirits cannot get into touch with a mind that is deprived of faith and, at the same time, is full of vanity.

To the followers of Islam, however, the influence of the Eastern spirits over the West is an encouraging sign of the time. Islam signifies submission to and harmony with the laws of nature which manifest the glory of God everywhere in the world, irrespective of racial or geographical boundaries; and the forces of Islam are so working in all directions and in manifold spheres of life. While progress in physical science is discovering the truths of Nature's laws, modern Spiritualism and spirit-communications are revealing the mysteries of life and man's destiny in the progressive spheres of after-existence. And all these progressive developments in the exposition of physical and spiritual phenomena reveal the truths that underlie the final Revelation of the Supreme Source of Exist-

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ence. Let not Muslims think for one moment that these forces are antagonistic to Islam; if they do they will lag behind.

Islam brought the message of progress to mankind in all the spheres of life. It not only adapts itself to new progressive changes, but is, in fact, the creative power that works out changes in human progression, embracing, at the same time, all conditions that helped the development of human thought in the past. Let us not, like the followers of other religions, confine Islam to the limits of our own finite mind—it is the torch-bearer of Truth, and Truth is universal. Al-Ghazālī was a famous theologian of his age. While a mere theologian, Islam was to him just what his own mind, under the rigid influence of theological dogmas, suggested to him; and he therefore wrote furiously against the Greek and Alexandrian philosophy. But when he retired from this life, penetrated the veil of Mysticism, and attained to spiritual development, Islam was no longer to him the same rigid form compounded of certain theological dogmas, but a comprehensive truth that embraced all systems of rational thought; and lo! now he was able to reconcile the Greek and Alexandrian philosophy with Islam, and to establish a new school of Islamic philosophy!

The same conditions apply even to-day. All attempts to seek out the Truth lie within the fold of Islam. The time has come when Muslims all over the world should study the new conditions of life and read them in the light of Islam.

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The British Muslim Society entertains the Afghan Minister in London.

On Tuesday, the 18th March, 1930, at 5 p.m., at the Hotel Cecil, London, the members of the British Muslim Society arranged an At Home in honour of His Highness Janah A'la la Sardar Shah Wali Khan, the Afghan Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of St. James's, to mark their profound satisfaction at the restoration of social and political stability in Afghanistan under the wise and resolute guidance of His Majesty King Nadir Shah.

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More than 120 members of the Society and their friends were present, and the function was, in a striking degree, pervaded by the atmosphere of Islamic love and amity.

Tea was served at 5 p.m., after which Al-Hajj Lord Headley called upon Mr. Al-Arabi, a Syrian friend, to recite a few verses of the Holy Qur-án by way of formal introduction to the proceedings of the evening. This was followed by a short speech by Lord Headley, which was received by all present with great enthusiasm. His Lordship said:

TO HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL SHAH WALI KHAN,

We, the Muslims of Great Britain, representing but a minute fraction of the Brotherhood of Islam throughout the world, wish to show that though numerically small, we are not wanting in that warmth of feeling which cannot fail to give your Excellency a full assurance of our hearty welcome and our hope that you may find your stay amongst us may be a long and happy one.

We members of the British Muslim Society now desire to pay a high tribute to the personal record of your Excellency—first of all as conqueror of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and later on as Afghan Minister in Moscow during the reign of H.M. King Ammanullah. We believe that your constant attention to duty during the perilous times inseparable from civil war brought about a condition of affairs which is tending, and will continue to tend, towards the peace and prosperity of your beautiful country.

We feel very strongly that in welcoming you to London in the important post you now occupy we are extending the right hand of brotherly affection to one whose pleasure and duty it will always be to maintain friendly relations between Great Britain and Afghanistan.

We beg that you will convey to His Majesty the King of Afghanistan our most respectful and fraternal greetings, and express the hope he will be long spared to guide the destinies of his country and people in the paths of progress and prosperity so that Afghanistan may be a strong and united Muslim State.

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May we ever bear in mind that Islam is to be served only by obedience to the Divine Will of Allah, and that whether we are Afghans or Englishmen we belong to that great Brotherhood a true following of which ensures the respect of all the nationalities of mankind and, we hope, the approval of our Almighty and Ever-present Protector.

(Signed) HEADLEY,
President, British Muslim Society.

His Highness replied to the address in Persian, his eloquent phrases being translated into English by Mr. 'Abdul Kadir Khan. He expressed his delight at the warm welcome which had been extended to him by Muslims in London, assuring his audience of the unflinching zeal of Afghanistan in the service of Islam. Incidentally, he referred to the false news which had been circulated in the British Press with regard to the health of His Majesty the King, and exhorted all present not to take them seriously.

At the conclusion of the speeches it was announced that His Highness would be very pleased to make the acquaintance of his Muslim friends, with whom he chatted and conversed freely.

The evening was a great success in every way, and the British Muslim Society deserve the thanks of all for their masterly arrangement of so important a function.

Among those present were their Excellencies the Egyptian Minister, the Albanian Minister, the Iraq Minister; Sir Denison Ross, Mrs. Buchanan-Hamilton, Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah and Mrs. Shah, Diwan Altaf Husain of Mangool, and Mr. Zada, President of the Egyptian Association in Great Britain and Ireland.

Religion and Civilization.

The *Rationalist Annual* (1930) contains a contribution entitled, "Has Religion made useful contributions to civilization?" from the able pen of the Hon. Bertrand Russell. The author himself admits that the word "religion" is used very loosely, yet, like all other eminent European writers, he lumps all religions together and picks out Christianity for his criticism,

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treating it as though it was, in essentials, the same as Islam, Buddhism, and the rest. His conclusion is that because Christianity does not appear to have lent its moral support to "world progress" in all its multifarious phases, Islam and other religions must share the blame. A long time will probably have to elapse before European writers can bring themselves to realize that Islam and Christianity are two fundamentally opposed entities; and that Islam is, in relation to other religions, in a class by itself. When European savants credit Islam with the same characteristics as those of Christianity, they are merely displaying complete ignorance of the history of Islam. Such chroniclers are prone to confuse the present-day condition of the Muslims with the teachings of Islam, which is a mistake.

Christianity and Islam offer totally different points of view with regard to life and its problems. That of Islam conduces to self-respect, uprightness, and a sense of equality between man and man; whereas Christianity indicates humiliation, fear, and inferiority, as is evidenced by the doctrine of the Atonement and the institution of priesthood. It is by adopting the outlook on life taught by Islam that the Western world to-day has become what it is; for the secret of the progress of mankind lies in the true understanding of the doctrine of monotheism. And it is even admitted by non-Muslims that no religion has ever succeeded as has Islam in maintaining its purity unsullied through the ages. True monotheism always leads to self-respect and a sense of equality; for it involves two principles: first, that Allah is the only object worthy of worship, and that even his apostles, prophets, are not to be raised to, or associated with, the throne of divinity; and secondly, that there is no difference between man and man—this second principle being a natural corollary to the first. Nations which have taken to heart this golden conception of monotheism have always gone from strength to strength; but wherever and whenever these twofold principles have been neglected we find stagnation and collapse.

As long as Europe stuck to Roman Catholicism which teaches dependence, which in its turn breeds servility and

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degradation, as, for example, when it teaches that the mediation of an ordained priest is indispensable to communion with God as in the Eucharist, and that an ordinary mortal is endowed with supernatural power simply by virtue of the ceremony of the "laying-on of hands," it never made any scientific progress worth the name.

Hinduism teaches a "watertight" caste-system which is tantamount to saying that there are essential differences between man and man, thereby fostering a sense of inferiority which stultifies all man's growing ambitions. Then there are religions which sank so low as to teach that the elements and forces of nature were fitting objects of worship. Such religions could never inspire their devotees to fight and make conquests of the forces of nature. For you cannot combine service and worship in one and the same object.

Islam, of all religions, has succeeded in keeping its followers true monotheists. This is the chief reason why the Islamic peoples progressed in all domains of science and learning and could at the same time stick to their religion. Islam took such pains to keep the conception of monotheism safe from all human glosses that even love and veneration for a benefactor so supreme as was Muhammad have led to no attempts to deify the Prophet. It was alone, too, in ordering its followers constantly to repeat these words: "There is no God but God and Muhammad is His apostle."

Neither Christianity, nor Hinduism, nor Buddhism took any such precautionary measure; with the result that we find the majority of humanity is still the slaves, at least in name, of teachings which create a sense of inferiority. That is why in the case of all these religions the efforts in the conquest of nature of their followers were never crowned with success until they stuck to their teachings.

Again, the material progress of man in modern times is menaced by yet another serious danger: the greed and selfishness of mankind which lead, periodically, to world-wide bloodshed. Because European nations have made material progress by discarding the religion of the Church, they have been without any idealistic influence that might illuminate their

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actions. Greed and selfishness are stalking everywhere unashamed, and assume daily more threatening postures. But such was not the case when the Muslims were at the height of their glory. Europe is suffering from the entire lack of a controlling and regulating factor. The Christian religion has been divorced from the practical life of everyday, which has thus been left without any moral foundations whatsoever. Europe is frantically trying to retrieve them in Christian Science, Revivalism, Mormonism, Spiritualism, and the rest. But such cults are at best half-truths, and the more misleading for that reason. The European soul is thirsty, and its thirst can never be slaked save at the fountain of Islam.

What is a Houri ?

In a recent series of articles and letters which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* on the subject of the "Conception of Heaven," Sir Denison Ross, of London University, observed that the Muslim paradise promised to each Muslim a number of "houris to gaze upon." The word "houri" is one of those beautiful and unfortunate words which, although quite respectable in their original sense, have lost their significance entirely as a consequence of malevolent propaganda. The distortion of quite a number of words in the English language offers a very interesting study to anyone interested in the methods employed by Christian Europe during the early part of the Middle Ages to create a gulf between Islam and Christianity at a time when, as everyone knows, the two had settled down to understand each other.

The way in which words lose their meanings can perhaps be best exemplified by quoting the origin of "dunce," which now stands for a "blockhead," but derives from the name of a philosopher of Oxford in the Middle Ages named "Duns Scotus." His enemies, being desirous of discrediting him, called his followers "dunces"; and the word "houri" falls into precisely the same category. Why "houri" should be taken to mean a "voluptuously beautiful woman" can only be understood if one remembers the distorted European conception of the Muslim Heaven.

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That even Sir Denison has made no effort to discover the real meaning of the word serves to show that even fair-minded Europeans are liable to flounder in the morass of misconceptions which Europe has inherited from the Middle Ages.

The word "houri" is the mutilated form of the Arabic word "hūr," which is the common plural form of both the masculine and singular *Ahwar* and feminine singular *Haurā*. The word "hūr" applies to both men and women as also to qualities and actions.

Why it should be limited particularly to "beautiful women" or "damsels," as Rodwell renders it, passes our understanding. Maulānā Muhammad 'Alī translates this word as "pure ones."

The Holy Qur-ān does not speak of any conjugal relations being maintained in a physical sense in the life to come. Besides, wherever the various blessings of paradise or the torments of hell are spoken of, they are but physical manifestations of spiritual blessings which the doers of good enjoy in this life as well as in the next. There are gardens, trees, rivers, milk, and numerous blessings spoken of by the Qur-ān as being found in paradise, but that all these are *not* things of this life can be easily understood from a tradition of the Holy Prophet, who says: "Allah says I have prepared for my servants what no eye has seen and no ear has heard and what the heart of man has not conceived of." The Holy Qur-ān speaks in the same strain when it says: "No soul knows what is hidden for it." For this reason the "hūr" or pure ones are not the things of this life—decidedly not the beautiful women of this life. "Hūr" are a heavenly blessing which the righteous women shall have along with the righteous men.

Decayed Creeds.

Why the churches are not well attended is slowly but steadily dawning upon the clergy as well. The following excerpts from the sermon of the Reverend Sydney Whitehouse, as quoted in the *Daily Mail* for January 20, 1930, bears an eloquent testimony to this marked change:

"Traditional Church teaching is completely out of har-

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mony with the expanding thought and enlightened conscience of all educated men and women."

"The time has come for the majority of orthodox creeds and dogmas to be placed in theological museums, where they could be admired as interesting relics of a pre-scientific age."

"It is estimated that in Great Britain and Northern Ireland alone the annual income of the Church is over £25,000,000, and that there are over 25,000 priests and clergymen. Yet in spite of that tremendous outpouring of money the churches are very poorly attended."

"What the Church as a whole has not realized is that the bottom has been knocked out of all supernatural religions, and that any religion built upon miracles is as a house built upon sand."

Better late than never!

Miracles of Jesus and Muhammad.

The reverend gentleman is perfectly right in pointing out that the central fact in the Christian religion is a miracle: "if Jesus did not rise from among the dead, the Christian faith and the preaching of Christianity is in vain. Religious duties, moral teachings, and spiritual awakening do not occupy the place which miracles do in the Gospels. The dead are made to rise from their graves, multitudes of the sick are healed, water is turned into wine, devils are cast out, and many other wonderful deeds are done. Suppose for the sake of argument that this was true. What was the effect of this on the lives of those who witnessed these miracles?"

"The miraculous in a prophet's life is needed to assure the people of the truth of his message and to convince the ordinary mind that being a possessor of extraordinary powers he must be followed in spiritual matters. The bringing about of a moral and spiritual transformation is admittedly the real object, the miraculous being only needed as a help towards the attainment of that object. The former at most may be looked upon as the means to an end, the latter is the end itself. The best evidence of miracles thus consists in the effect they produce, and the most important question for us

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therefore is that supposing Jesus wrought all the miracles recorded in the Gospels, what was the result? How great was the success he attained in bringing about a transformation? One Gospel tells us that Jesus was followed by multitudes of sick persons who were all healed; another says that many were healed. Now if either of these statements were true, not a single person should have been left in the land who should not have believed in Jesus. It is inconceivable that those who saw such extraordinary deeds done by Jesus Christ should have rejected him as a liar. They saw the sick healed and the dead raised to life and yet they all disbelieved in him as if not a single miracle had been wrought! And how strange that even the great multitudes that were healed do not seem to have been believers in Jesus, though the Gospels tell us that faith was a condition prior to being healed; for if even these multitudes had believed in Jesus, he would have had a following at the time of his crucifixion far more numerous than he actually had, and sufficiently large to baffle the authorities. But what do we find? The following of Jesus is poor, not only as regards number, but also as regards its character. From among the five hundred that followed him, he chose twelve who were to sit on twelve thrones, who were to be entrusted with the work after the Master, and these twelve showed a strange weakness of character, the greatest of them, Peter, denying Jesus thrice for fear of being treated harshly by the enemies, and not even hesitating to curse when he thought that a curse was the only means of escape. The others even durst not approach Jesus, while one of the chosen ones turned out to be a traitor. On an earlier occasion when Jesus asked them to pray for him, he found them all asleep. Often had he to rebuke them for having no faith. Who was it in the world on whom the miraculous deeds of Jesus, if they were ever done, made an impression? The mere fact that Jesus was unable to bring about any transformation worth the name, and to make any impression either on his friends or foes, is a sufficient testimony that the stories of miracles were invented afterwards.

“ The poorness of the result attained by Jesus Christ, not-

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withstanding all the stories of miracles, becomes the more prominent when compared with the wonderful results attained by the great World-Prophet that appeared in Arabia. The Holy Prophet had before him a nation which had never before been guided to truth, among whom no prophet had appeared before him, the attempts at whose reformation by both the Jews and the Christians had proved an utter failure. This nation had, both as regards material civilization and moral calibre, been sunk in the depth of degradation, and for centuries the voice of the reformers had fallen on deaf ears. Yet within less than a quarter of a century a wonderful transformation was brought about. The old evils had all disappeared, and ignorance and superstition had given place to love of knowledge and learning. From the disunited elements of a people who did not deserve the name of a nation had sprung up a living and united nation before whose onward march in the world the greatest nations of the world were powerless and whose civilization and knowledge fed the world for long centuries. But this material advancement was only the result of an inner change, of a moral and spiritual transformation, the equal of which has not been witnessed in the world. Thus both morally and materially, Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, raised a nation from the depths of degradation to the highest plane of advancement. As against this, what did Jesus do? He had before him the Jewish nation read in scriptures and practising many virtues at least externally. He also found them living under a civilized Government with advantages of a material civilization to help their progress. In spite of these advantages he was unable to produce the least change in the life of that nation as a whole. If the effect was so poor, it is impossible that anything great was done. In this light the stories of the miracles are clearly pure inventions or exaggerations made to compensate for the apparent failure.

“A critical examination of the Gospels leads to the same conclusion. Mark viii. 12 contains a plain denial of signs: ‘And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There

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shall no sign be given unto this generation.' Similar statements are contained in the other Gospels; see Matt. xii. 39; xvi. 4; Luke xi. 29. 'Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas' (Matt. xii. 38, 39). Here we have a plain denial to show any sign except the one sign of Jonas, which is understood by some commentators as meaning the sign of preaching, by others as remaining in the grave (alive, of course, as Jonas was) for three days and three nights. If Jesus worked such great wonders, how was it that the Pharisees asked for a sign, and how was it that Jesus refused to show any sign? In answer to their demand he ought to have referred to the testimony of the thousands that had been healed; in fact, the masses around him should have silenced the questioners by their evidence. But no such thing happened. The commentators say that the Pharisees asked for a greater sign than the healing of the sick 'to which they were *accustomed*.' If it was indeed so, then, too, it is clear that Jesus' healing of the sick was nothing extraordinary. And why did not Jesus refer to his raising of the dead?

"Again, Mark tells us that Jesus was unable to do any mighty work in Nazareth, save healing a few sick persons: 'And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.' This, too, shows Jesus' inability to work any miracle, the healing of the sick being looked upon as a very ordinary occurrence. These statements are a clear evidence that the stories of wonderful works were invented afterwards, or at least there is much exaggeration in them." ¹

¹ *Muhammad and Christ*, by Muhammad Ali, Lahore, 1921, p. 17 *et seq.*

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