

*The*

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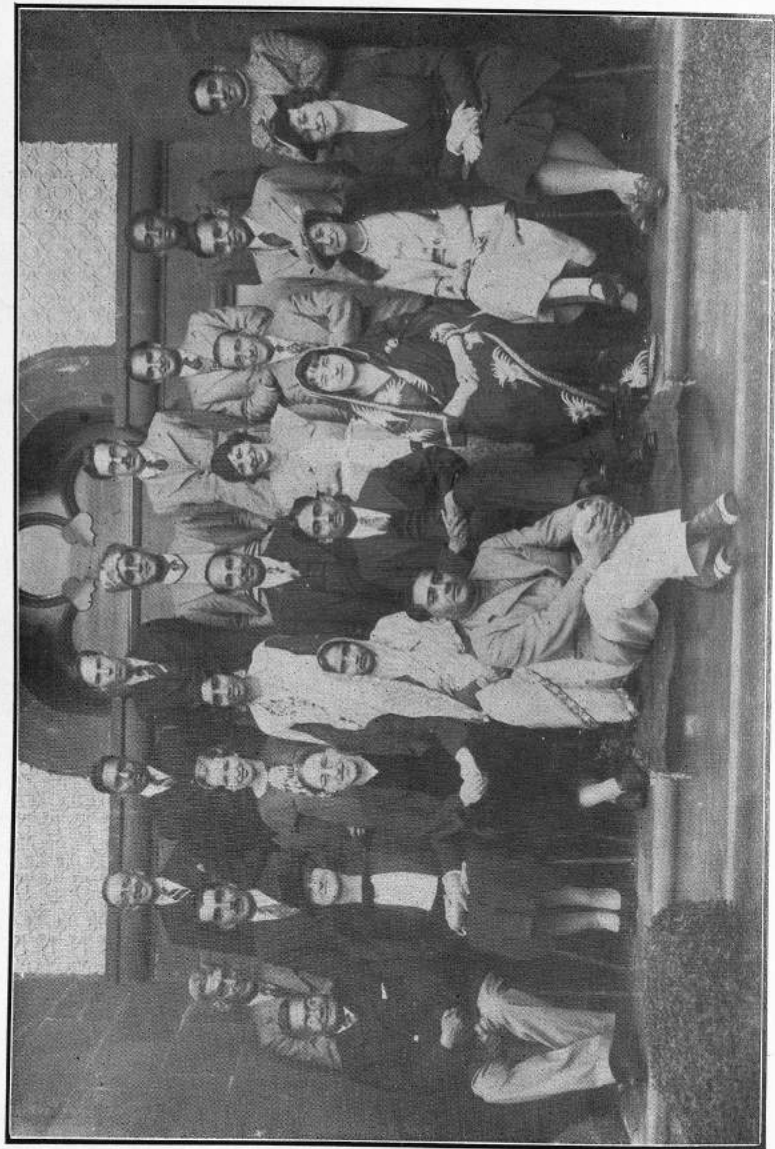
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## THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

VOL. XXVI. ]

SAFAR 1357 A.H.  
APRIL, 1938 A.C.

[No. 4.]

### A DECLARATION

I, Miss Lilian Joan Simpson, of London, do hereby faithfully and solemnly declare of my own free will that I worship One and Only Allah (God) alone; that I believe Muhammad to be His Messenger and Servant; that I respect equally all Prophets—Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others, and that I will live a Muslim life by the help of Allah.

*La ilaha il-Allah Muhammad-un-Rasul Allah.*

[There is but one God (Allah) and Muhammad is God's Messenger.]

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ISLAM—ITS DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

BY MAULVI AFTAB-UD-DIN AHMAD

*(Continued from Vol. XXVI, Page 95.)*

Nor does Islam countenance the possibility of man's repeating his life in the same world over and over again. Instead, this religion seems to hold that man's spiritual journey is too extensive a course to allow him to repeat the same life even once—and, in this attitude towards this topic, it is supported by the laws working in other departments of Nature. No life is found to repeat any stage in its evolution. There is such a thing as a temporary cessation of the onward march in life and the atoning for one's delinquencies in that period of halting, and the Islamic conception of hell-life corresponds to this phenomenon in physical nature. To illustrate this, if a man is found to transgress the laws of health, we do not find him going back to his childhood. He may be seriously ill and weakened to a helplessness like that of a baby, but he never actually becomes a baby. He ceases his onward march for a while, and, after a sufficient amount of suffering, recovers his own self again and resumes the journey of evolution from the point at which he had left it.

Connected with this subject is the problem of evil and suffering. Islam does not hold the view held by some new religious sects in the West that evil does not exist, but it does hold that nothing in this world is inherently evil in the sense of being injurious to man. It is its use or misuse that turns a thing into evil. Given the right knowledge of all the laws that govern life, there would be no such thing as evil in the world. On the physical plane, as we know, the deadliest poison may be an agency for miraculous healing if it is used in the right way. On the other hand, lack of proper handling may turn the most innocent and ordinarily

## ISLAM—ITS DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

useful thing into a very dangerous one. As in the physical, so in the moral world—no feeling or emotion of man is itself evil. Rather, feelings and emotions that are generally regarded as evil are potential with great benefits for the spiritual life of man. To take two extreme cases—what is called greed is originally man's fundamental desire for acquisition. It is only in its perverted and low form that this feeling is called "greed." Properly guided and refined, it is the principal source of man's progressive life. Similarly the urge for sex, so long denounced by unwise and religious leaders as an unredeemed evil, has now been proved to be the mainspring of our civilization and culture—and so with all the other emotions in man. It is their wrong use that makes them look like the perennial source of evil. Given the proper use, they are the only guarantee for any good that man is capable of. The chief function of a religion is to enlighten man with respect to how to turn all these emotions to his best advantage.

Equally bold is the attitude of Islam towards sufferings. However repugnant and bewildering the fact of human suffering may be to the timid, Islam knows that its hideousness is only a thing of the surface, and that in its depths it functions as the most essential factor in the progressive life of man. On the physical plane, for example, it is the existence of difficulties and troubles, and the attempts for their overcoming that constitutes what is called civilization. On the moral plane, again, you cannot imagine any humanitarian feeling and its exercise without the existence of miseries and sufferings; and on the spiritual plane, a spiritual life is not perfect unless it has passed through suffering. Wisdom of the spirit comes only through suffering. Thus suffering is not necessarily an evil or a curse of God. Nay—I say it is never an evil. Even when it comes to a sinner as a punishment for his deeds, it is a

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blessing in that it is a warning and a reminder. The ultimate purpose of all suffering thus being reformation, purification and the giving of the needed urge to his otherwise sleeping faculties, Islam is right in regarding sufferings as a kind of negative blessings of God and not His curses, and does not find any difficulty in reconciling them with His rule of mercy and justice. As for inherited troubles, once it is admitted that these, like the congenital diseases, can be overcome, they become merely a matter of time and attention. We may dismiss as easily the so-called problem of inequality. Once you admit that the difficulties of the lack of opportunities have been overcome by some men in the world, you implicitly acknowledge the unreality of this problem—and deeper reflection will convince you that the difficulties of their start in life have really been responsible for the greatness of the really great men of the world. This does not mean that there are no unjust difficulties placed in the way of beginners, nor that we should try either to keep these iniquities or to multiply them. This will not be the Islamic attitude. Islam recognises the existence of evil tendencies in the course of things and events, and also believes in the necessity of resisting them, but if one takes these difficulties and troubles to be the consequences of and the atonement for, any previous delinquency, one will be metaphysically unfit to attempt their removal.

So much about doctrines and beliefs.

With respect to the practices, the outstanding institution of Islam is that of prayer. Left to the individual, prayers are apt to fall into disuse. Like every other affair of man, prayers need some external method for reminding, or else they are sure to lose their hold on people's attention. Social mind is the greatest factor in the undertakings of man. So prayer has been made a social obligation in Islam. Certain prayers have



## ISLAM—ITS DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

to be said in congregation at the Mosque at regular intervals—five times a day. Apart from their spiritual necessity, these public prayers have been the training ground for socialistic feelings in that they are calculated to remove the feeling of exclusiveness from the minds of individuals and groups. There is, however, a danger in this for the individual mind to be merged in social consciousness, and to be deprived of an independent culture of spirituality, which can serve it in good stead in its own individual life. Indeed, if for the worldly life collective consciousness is of the utmost importance, for the spiritual life individual consciousness is the only thing to care for. So, apart from these obligatory public prayers, Islam also insists on private and individual prayers. Among these latter prayers, the one to be said at midnight is very much emphasised.

Besides the daily congregational prayers five times a day, there are special congregational prayers once a week on Fridays, preceded by a timely address. Friday, as a matter of fact, is a sort of Muslim Sunday, the only difference being that the idea of cessation of work is not associated with it.

Then there are two festivals in the year, which also have to be celebrated with congregational prayers. One is called *Eidul Fitr* or "the festival of breaking fast." It is a sort of thanksgiving after the Muslim month of fasting.

The other festival is called *Eidul Azha* or the "festival of sacrifice." It is in commemoration of the attempted sacrifice by Abraham of his then only son, Ishmael. It should be remembered that the Prophet Muhammad is a descendant of Abraham, physically as well as spiritually, and that his religion is claimed to be a continuation of the Abrahamic tradition. It should also be noted that there is no official festival in Islam

connected with the life of the founder—the Prophet Muhammad.

The most important congregational prayer in Islam, which, on account of its outstanding importance, has been treated as a separate institution, is that of Hajj or pilgrimage, held once in every year in Mecca, the birthplace of Islam. Every Muslim, man or woman, is expected to join this prayer once in his or her life, provided he or she has the means. The *Eidul Azha* congregations, as a matter of fact, are a sort of echo of this world-gathering of Muslims at Mecca at the time of the Hajj. It is no exaggeration to say that there is nothing like this solemn gathering anywhere else in the world. The equality of man is nowhere as solemnly demonstrated. Apart from the fusion of races, colours, nations and status, even the last vestige of distinction, in the shape of dress, is removed. All have to wear the same unsewn piece of white cotton cloth when presenting themselves before God. In fact, it is this spiritual training that has been at the back of that fine international understanding between Muslims, often envied by outsiders.

If these congregational prayers of Islam are a positive training in developing the socialistic feelings in believers, there are also institutions which act as a negative training for it. The institution of fasting is one of them. For one month in the year, all adult and healthy believers are to abstain from food, drink and sensuous enjoyments from dawn to sunset. This is, indeed, a training in self-control, the lack of which makes innumerable well-meaning persons and their lives as most anti-social men. The festival of *Eidul Fitr*, as I have already remarked, comes at the end of this month of restraint.

Further, if this institution of fasting is a moral training in self-control, the institution of Zakat, or poor-

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rate, affords an economic training in the same direction. Everyone knows that the evil of economic inequality, which has so often reacted in bloody revolutions, is not based on the fact that one man can earn more than the other, but on the fact that these privileged earners feel no obligation to those who are less fortunate. All the religions, including Islam, have tried to foster this sense of obligation in the minds of the rich by an appeal to the spiritual aspirations of man, but Islam has broken the ice, so to speak, in this matter. By an organised institution it sets in motion this desirable feeling in the rich for the poor.

At the end of the year, every believer, man or woman, has to take stock of his or her capital and savings and part with  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the whole as a symbol of his or her obligation towards the less fortunate. There is, accordingly, no chance in Islam for the existence of economically frozen-hearted people. It is worth while to remember here that an obedience to secular law in this matter is very different from an obedience to a religious law. A law deriving its authority from no other source than secular powers is, at its best, tolerated, and at its worst avoided by hook or by crook or even flouted as soon as the opportunity affords, but a religious law evokes quite a different feeling in man.

I have practically come to the end of my discourse, but, before I actually finish, I feel it necessary to say a few words about two among the various regulations of Islam that it has not been possible for me to deal with in the course of this short lecture.

The first of these is about warfare. I have already touched upon the attitude of Islam towards resistance in general. I need not repeat my observations. As I have said, the question for humanity is how to minimise the manifestations of the moral struggle of man on the

physical plane. The Qur-án lays down a rule in these words: "Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made, because they are oppressed, and most surely God is able to assist them. Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is God. And had there not been God's repelling some people by others, there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which God's name is much remembered; and surely God will help him who helps His cause; most surely God is Strong, Mighty" (22: 39-40).

In other words, with all our pacifism, we have to offer physical resistance to the forces of evil when they assume an aggressive attitude, and begin actively oppressing those that believe in the moral principles governing the universe. This, according to Islam, is the irreducible minimum.

The other regulation I propose to touch upon is the one with regard to polygamy. Polygamy, according to Islam, is not an *ordinance*, but a mere *permission*. I need not labour the point here. Islamic marriages are free civil contracts. The woman, in every respect, in the same sense as the man, is a free consenting party in every marriage, and she can legally assume the right of ending the marriage tie, in the course of the marriage contract, should the husband take a second wife. Seldom, however, is this stipulation made, as the Muslim women *know by experience* that polygamy is a rare case, and when resorted to by a Muslim is done invariably with a sense of charity, and with no idea of gratifying sensual pleasure. This needs a little elucidation. Women in all countries, not excluding those in which absurd standards of equality are sought to be enforced, are as a sex economically dependent on men. It is remarkable that of all legal systems of the world it



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is the Islamic law alone that has earnestly sought to make women co-possessors of the national wealth with men, not only through its elaborate law of inheritance, but also through its cleverly devised system of dowry. Even under the Islamic law there are cases of destitute women that are bound to rouse the sense of chivalry in hearts benevolently disposed. Such cases engage all the more public attention when they involve ladies of good family who become helpless by the sudden death of their husbands, leaving no asset. Charity, coupled with chivalry, has always come to the aid of such victims of misfortune, but in such cases of charity, pity on the side of the one party and gratitude on that of the other, are too apt to develop into a feeling of what is called love in the West. Such cases of love exist in all countries—whether under the law of monogamy or under that of polygamy. If the law allows the legislation of the union, so much the better. If not, then nature takes its own course. The attitude of Islam towards situations like these is rather uncompromising—and that in the interest of woman. It will not allow one single act of unofficial connection between a man and a woman, on pain of severe physical and social punishment. It will, instead, rather allow men to marry even polygamously in uncontrollable situations. Indeed, it is very unfortunate for a civilised nation not to realise that any latitude for “free-love” allowed explicitly or implicitly in the society is detrimental to the interests of, and a dishonour to, womanhood. If, in addition, such a latitude is allowed with the full knowledge that it has to be done because of the economic helplessness of woman, it is an outrage on the human sense of justice. Like all other works of idle sentimentalism, the inflexible law of monogamy is, therefore, defeating the very object which it intends to accomplish, whereas the Islamic law, following the line of right idealism, admirably achieves this object without any fuss.

## THE STATUS OF WOMAN IN ISLAM

BY BEGUM SULTAN MIR AMIRUDDIN

(Continued from Vol. XXVI, page 110.)

With regard to the social reforms introduced by the Holy Prophet in the condition of women, we find that one of the essential teachings of his creed was respect for womanhood. In the Qur-án, there is one full chapter entitled the "An Nisa," especially devoted to women and women's rights. He stamped out female infanticide and elevated womankind to such an extent that he proclaimed that "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers." He also realised the necessity for women to be educated to the same extent as the men, and enjoined that to acquire knowledge was the equal duty of both men and women. Such was the encouragement and respect accorded to this much-neglected half-section of human society that, in the early centuries of Islam, women rose to an exalted position in the different branches of learning and in various spheres of life. The ladies of the Prophet's family were noted for their erudition, their virtues and their strength of character. The Prophet's daughter, Hazrat Fatima, was an embodiment of all the virtues and wisdom. Numerous are the accounts of her wise and kindly acts, verified by her devotion and other characteristics which justify the title of the "Lady of the Light" and the "Lady of Paradise." Zainab, the sister of Hussain and the daughter of Ali, was noted for her remarkable courage and indomitable spirit under the stress of heart-rending calamities. She shielded her youthful nephew from the Omayyads, after the butchery of Kerbala, in a manner which overawed even Yezid. Sakina, the daughter of Hussain, was the most accomplished and the most brilliant woman of her time—a renowned scholar and poetess to

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whom distinguished men used to bring their verses for correction.

It was as a result of the teachings of the Holy Prophet and of the reforms that he instituted with regard to the position of women that we find, in the hey-day of Muslim civilisation, women playing a conspicuous part in the history and in the diffusion of culture. Zubaida, the wife of Harun-ur-Rashid, who was, in addition to her several accomplishments, a noteworthy poetess, founded several colleges, built homes for the poor, and the famous aqueduct of Mecca which bears her name. In the fifth century A.D., Shaikh Shubda lectured publicly on literature, rhetoric and poetry to large audiences at the Cathedral Mosque of Baghdad. She occupies, in the annals of Islam, a place of equality with the most distinguished Ulema. Zainab-Ummul Muwayyid was a famous jurist, having licence to teach law. I have mentioned only a few of the many women who attained to eminent heights in culture and learning.

Such being the exalted status to which women were raised in all walks of life by Islam, no falser calumny could be levelled against it than to state that this religion denies a soul to woman—a belief which, I am surprised to find, is common amongst even the most enlightened sections of European society in such a well-informed age as the present. Both during my last visit to Europe and at the meetings which I have addressed during the past month in England, this point loomed large among the questions that were put to me after my lectures. Does it not pass one's comprehension to imagine how a religion which placed woman on a footing of equality with man could regard her as a being without a soul? There is absolutely no ground, no justification whatsoever for this absurd notion which is a mere fiction of the brain of certain anti-Muslim enthusiasts; for, in the whole

field of Islamic literature, there is not a word which could give the slightest hint of such a view. On the other hand, in the Qur-án it is pointed out that both men and women have proceeded from the same source, and, whenever a mention is made in it with regard to the future life, as for example, its rewards and punishments, the woman is mentioned side by side with the man. In legal books and documents, the word "man" is usually presumed to refer to woman as well, but the Qur-án in every passage makes explicit mention of woman so as to leave no room for any possible suggestion that it refers to only one sex. The following verse should suffice to show that, with regard to all kinds of moral and spiritual progress, equality is guaranteed to women along with men:

"Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women and the alms-giving men and the alms-giving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the chaste men and the chaste women, and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember Allah much, for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward."

The absurd notions about Islam that have come into vogue among Christian nations have been the outcome of the acts of mediæval Ecclesiastics who fabricated all kinds of calumnies against it, because it had won the hearts of Asia and Africa and was also making inroads on the West. Since these clergymen had both the necessary funds and the control of the press, they broadcast their views freely among the peoples of Europe and succeeded in implanting in their minds the



## THE STATUS OF WOMAN IN ISLAM

desired prejudice. It was only in the nineteenth century that honest thinkers like Carlyle, Goethe and Gibbon sprang up. Perceiving the intrinsic worth of the religion preached by Muhammad, they began by their writings to clear away certain misconceptions and effected a change for the better in the European attitude towards the Muslim Faith.

In dealing with this subject, I cannot omit a reference to the purdah system, for which, again, Islam is exposed to much attack. At the outset, I must point out that the seclusion of women is not an Islamic institution. Ages before the light of Islam dawned on the world, that custom was in vogue among most of the nations of antiquity. In Greece, women of respectability lived a life of complete seclusion and their apartments were separate from those of men. From there it found its way among the Byzantines, and thence descended to Russia, until it was abolished by Peter the Great. In Corea, it prevailed in all its strictness. It was observed in China, in the Spanish colonies of South America, in Iran and in other Oriental countries. In fact, the purdah system, as it exists at present, came into vogue in the Muslim countries in the reign of the Ommayad Emperor, Walid II, under the influence of Persian usages and customs.

During the life-time of the Prophet, women were accustomed to go about freely and always used to attend prayers in mosques, for the Prophet had explicitly enjoined: "Do not prevent women from coming to the mosque." There not only did they pray but also took part in religious deliberations. On one occasion, when the Caliph Omar was delivering his sermon, some unknown woman from among the assembly declared that the Caliph's remark was subject to correction. On finding that the woman was right, the mighty Caliph observed: "The women of Medina understand the

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Qur-án better than Omar," and made the necessary alteration. Moreover, during the early days of Islam, women accompanied the men to the battle-fields, nursed the sick and wounded, performed the Hajj pilgrimage and selected their chiefs or Caliphs. Such things would not have been possible had they remained in seclusion.

Though Islam does not prescribe seclusion for women, it has wisely laid down certain injunctions, applicable not only to women but also to men for the purpose of promoting modesty and decency of dress and demeanour. Both men and women have been ordered in the Qur-án to cast their eyes down. Had women been required to remain in seclusion or to go about veiled, such an injunction would not have been necessary, at least for the men. The Qur-ánic injunction with regard to women in particular is "not to display their *zinat*." Even according to those who contend that *zinat* means not only ornaments but also beauty of the body, it is permissible to have the face and hands uncovered. The author of the "Hedaya" has made the following observation in this connection:

"It is not permitted for men to look at strange women except at the face and palm of the hands, which is allowable because women being frequently concerned in business with men such as giving and taking, etc., it would, therefore, subject them to great inconvenience if these parts are veiled." Thus, it is apparent that Islam is not responsible for the stringency with which seclusion has been observed among women in Oriental countries; the custom owes its origin rather to certain notions of respectability which were derived from non-Islamic usages.

The backward condition of Muslim society in general and of women in particular during the past years is traceable not to the religion of Islam which is dyna-

## THE FIFTH PILLAR OF ISLAM

mic and not static in character, as is wrongly conceived in the West, but to the disregard of Islamic precepts and, in the main, of the injunction with reference to the acquisition of knowledge and culture. Fortunately, Muslim countries, *e.g.* Turkey, Iran, Syria and Egypt, are now in the grip of a spirit of Renaissance and are bestirring themselves and effecting radical improvements. The revival is manifesting itself to a remarkable degree in the ranks of womanhood, and in no country is this spirit more dominant than in New Turkey where a persistent forward movement characterises the actions of its women who, to-day, occupy positions even as High Court Judges and diplomatic representatives—offices not yet enjoyed by the women of Great Britain. The stirrings among Muslim women to-day to raise aloft the banner of culture and advancement is but a response to the strident call of Islam to progress and enlightenment—the outcome of a true appreciation of the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. May peace be upon this Great Teacher, the staunchest supporter of the woman's cause that the world has ever known!

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## THE FIFTH PILLAR OF ISLAM

BY ABDUS SAMAD, B.A.

Kalima, Salát, Siám, Zakát and Hajj—these five institutions are called the Five Pillars of Islam. Each of these institutions is meant not only for the purification of our soul, but also to help us to establish a universal brotherhood of humanity, which is a primary object of the Holy Faith.

Kalima or the Article of Faith states that nobody deserves to be worshipped except the One and Only God, and that Muhammad is His Apostle. It signifies

that no man or woman is superior to any other man or woman—even the greatest of men, Muhammad, the last Prophet of God, being at the same level, in this respect. There is only One Being superior to all; He is no other than God Himself. All human beings—white and black, rich and poor, civilised and savage—are equal.

Salât or the Muslim Prayer is not wholly a private affair of individuals. A part of it is compulsory to be said in the congregation. The Muslim congregational prayer has elicited admiration from friend and foe alike, for it is indeed a marvellous thing. There are no “reserved seats” in the Muslim church. The poorest beggars are often found in the front row, the ruling monarch of the land standing behind or beside them. The master does not scruple to stand shoulder to shoulder, or sit side by side, with the meanest of his servants.

Siám or Fasting, which is the third Pillar of Islam, requires us to abstain from even lawful food, drink and sexual connection within a prescribed period of the day for one full month every year, and it thus trains us not only in habitual abstention from unlawful things, but also in strict submission to the Will of God. On the other hand, what can be a greater equaliser of the high and the low, and bringer of sympathy and fellow-feeling between man and man, than the hunger and the common suffering that fasting compels us to undergo? Only fasting can adequately convey to the mind of the rich what the pain of hunger really means to the starving millions of the world.

The fourth Pillar is Zakát or Almsgiving. Charity, in some form or other, is found in almost every system of religion, but Islam specialises in making it obligatory and organised. Every well-to-do man or woman is bound to contribute at least one-fortieth of his or her



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annual savings in favour of the less fortunate members of society. Zakát obviates the danger of capitalism, saves society both from millionaires and from paupers—the result being the production of a huge middle-class and so promotes equality and peace.

In this article, we wish to deal particularly with the fifth Pillar of Islam, *viz.*, Hajj or Pilgrimage. It has been stated above that it is compulsory for every Muslim to say a part of his prayers in the congregation. This he has to do not less than five times a day. At five prescribed times of the day, the Muslims of every locality gather in a mosque and say their prayers together. After the prayers are over, they may exchange opinions with one another and discuss various matters relative to God and religion as well as to the world and their daily life. This helps very greatly to generate and foster friendship and fellow-feeling among the members of the community. At the beginning of every week, again, the members of several mosques congregate in a big central mosque; and twice a year—at the time of the festivals of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Azha—the entire Muslim population of a town assemble in an open space. The scope of the brotherhood of Muslims thus goes on increasing in ever-widening circles—the culmination being an All-World Brotherhood brought forth by the annual institution of Hajj, which is a representative assembly of the Muslims from every part of the world. At least once in his life, it is the absolute duty of every Muslim, who can afford it, to join that World Conference in the holy city of Mecca, situated at the meeting place of the three continents—Asia, Europe and Africa. The ritual part of Hajj is not lengthy nor is it complicated; and, after the due performance of it, the Muslims from the various countries are free to discuss religion and politics, education and agriculture, trade and commerce. The

advanced and civilised nations of the modern world began (only recently) to appreciate the value of Leagues of Nations and World Conferences; but the Holy Prophet of Islam realised the need more than thirteen hundred years ago.

The principal points in the institution of Hajj are the following: Ihram (staying in the plain of Arafat), Tawwaf and Saay.

The Ihram is a preparation for the Hajj. The practical equality and brotherhood of Islam are most remarkably noticeable in the Ihram, when even the last vestige of distinction between the high and the low, *viz.*, that of dress, is removed. All the pilgrims put off their ordinary garments and, the head remaining uncovered, wear two simple seamless sheets—kings thus become indistinguishable from peasants, and aristocrats from commoners. All look alike. Islam challenges all the religions of the world to point out one such institution in them.

The plain of Arafat is a few miles away from the city of Mecca. The pilgrims gather there on the 8th of Zil-hajj and pass the night in contemplation of God, the Evolver of Nations. On the following morning, the vast congregation, comprising hundreds of nationalities, listens to a sermon delivered from an elevated place.

Tawwaf consists in making seven circuits round the Holy House of God, called the "Kaaba," and Saay, in running seven times between two small hills, Safa and Marwa. The making of circuits round the House of His Beloved One and running to and fro in quest of Him is a figurative representation of that stage of man's life in which he is totally lost in the love of God.

There are a few other things in connection with the ceremony of Hajj, and we must mention here at least

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two of them, *viz.*, the kissing of Hajar-ul-Aswad or the Black Stone, and the sacrifice of an animal in the field of Mina. Some enemies have attacked Islam by pointing to the kissing of the Black Stone as a remnant of the Arab idolatry of pre-Islamic days. How curious it is to note that the very Islam, which stands for the breaking of idols of every kind, is itself charged with idolatry! However, the stone had never served as an idol of the Quraish even before the advent of Islam, and it is kissed, in reality, much in the same spirit as leads a British soldier to salute the Union Jack. It is nothing but a national emblem, and the kissing of it signifies a covenant with God to lead a purely Muslim life. It is enough to quote here the memorable words of the great Caliph Umar: "Verily I know that thou art a stone; thou dost no good or harm in the world; and if it was not that I saw the Prophet kiss thee, I would not kiss thee."

The sacrifice of the animal, which is performed in the morning of the 10th Zil-hajj, is an important item in the programme of Hajj; because, being imitated on the same day by Muslims in every part of the globe, it forms the main item of Id-ul-Azha or the Festival of Sacrifices. The object of the Islamic sacrifice should not be misunderstood. It is not for appeasing any angry deity, as is the case with the sacrifices of some other religions, but is only for commemorating a noted event of Jewish history, *viz.*, the attempt by the great patriarch Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael. It must be remembered that Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was a direct descendant of this Ishmael who willingly submitted himself to be sacrificed at the altar of Jehovah.

The flesh of the sacrificed animal is not thrown away, but is distributed among "the poor and the needy,

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the distressed and the beggars;" and, as the sacrifice is not limited within the field of Minâ, as stated above, but is performed in every part of the earth by all Muslims who can afford it, unfortunate members of the human race all the world over, who cannot perhaps manage to procure meat even for a single meal during the whole year, can have a few meals of meat as a result of this happy occasion—the Festival of Azha. The sacrifice is thus another example of the real and practical brotherhood between man and man in Islam.

The killing of animals has a higher significance as well. The animals are killed as a symbol of the sacrifice of the animal spirit—of the low desires in man. Indeed, if we do not sacrifice along with the animals all those objects of our desire which are devoid of the Holy Spirit, then the sacrifice of the animals will be in vain. We conclude with the quotation of the significant prayer recited at the time of the sacrifice, which runs thus:

"Verily I have turned my face as a true believer towards Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth; and I am not of the polytheists. Verily my prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the nations; no associate has He. And this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit to the Will of Allah. In the name of Allah. Allah is the Greatest."

The Qur-ân has repeatedly put the question: What harm can a belief in Allah do to any person? And we ask all the peoples, particularly our Bolshevik friends, Why do you not worship the God—Allah—Whose worship makes it *essential* to engage in the most extensive, beneficial and sincere social service to all humanity and which gives a remarkable strength and nobility to the human character to make him the best



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and worthiest citizen of a socialist and communist society and State, and the most humanitarian and useful member of a world-wide international brotherhood? Why? and again Why?

That, without the Qur-ánic God-idea as the basis, any effort for social service will often fail to achieve its real object—the happiness and contentment of all the peoples of this earth—has been very recently demonstrated in no other place more than in Russia—Bolshevist Russia. Who can say that the Bolsheviks were not actuated by the best of motives to *Kolhoize* the whole of Russia so as to have collective farms spread all over the land instead of having single peasants or *Koolaks*? But those persons, mostly young and atheistic, who were entrusted with this work of *Dekolhoization* caused such blood curdling misery to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people—Russia's own citizens—that instead of *Kolhoization* becoming a boon, it has been a real curse to a multitude of people.

In future this collective farming plan may prove very beneficial to the Russian people, but does the loss and suffering it has caused to millions of Russian citizens, because it was carried out without God, make it worth while? Will any other country try it for itself after what has happened in Russia in enforcing it? The present generation has been sacrificed for the future. But who knows of the future? If during this very generation a war takes place depriving the present-day reformers of their power and *Dekolhoization* takes place only a battlefield of blood instead of land will remain, which is an example for all others in social service.

The moral of the tragedy of *Kolhoization* in Russia is that power, even if it be for social service, in the hands of young men whose animal passions are not controlled by the Qur-ánic God-idea, is likely to prove

injurious to society instead of being helpful. Suppose those young men had been taught to believe that they owed it to their Omnipresent and Omnipotent God not to hurt His creatures; then even if they had themselves thought *Kolhoization* to be a blessing for some people or for the State they would have taken all possible care to prevent its doing harm to such a large number of other peoples and to carry out the plan of *Kolhoization* in a way that would have avoided injury. All personal elements would also have been discarded and the work of *Kolhoization* would have been carried out only with one object—the good of the people themselves for the love of God alone—*ala Hubbihi* as the Qur-án puts it.

Blessed be the soul of Muhammad, who was undoubtedly the best product of the millions of years of revolutions of this earth, to have given us such a beneficent conception of God as is helpful in our everyday life, which forms our character and makes us helpful members of society.

## IS ISLAM A “BORROWED FEATHER”?

BY KHAN BAHADUR AL-HAJJ B. M. K. LODI

The question I have raised in the heading of this article is very comprehensive, and no decisive answer is possible until the question is examined, however briefly, in all its possible aspects, and is pursued to its logical conclusion. Accordingly I have divided the subject into six parts:

1. General.
2. The phenomena of similarities.
3. The real cause of the phenomena of similarities—not borrowing, but *Divine inspiration*.
4. Was Muhammad fit to be an inspired Prophet of God?

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5. Is the Qur-án a borrowed word of man, or a *revealed* word of God? Is it not also the last word, and for all mankind?

6. Is Muhammad the *last* of the Prophets? Is he a Prophet for Arabia and for the Arabs only, or is he the *World-Prophet*?

### PART I

#### (GENERAL)

Ignorance begets hatred, prejudice and feuds, and "ignorance in religion," whether of one's own or of others, is the inveterate enemy of peace. In consequence, religious wrangling is rife almost everywhere in the world—active in some places and latent in others. The situation becomes aggravated when the seeds of religious discord are sown in other fields of struggle; for instance, in communal, social and political problems of the day. The people have thus split into several factions where dogmas are contained in water-tight compartments, and have become dispossessed of their heritage and bulwark of unity. The up-shot of all this is that their common advancement is retarded in social, moral, political and even spiritual matters.

The evil is increasing day by day. Is there no means of eradicating the evil? There is. Study religion and diverse religious beliefs dispassionately, understand them correctly, and promulgate the results of your study widely, and you will restore the unity of society. A knowledge of others' faiths is an acquisition in religion, an incalculable asset in religious dealings; it generates a spirit of appreciation, respect and toleration of the faiths concerned. Nor can it be denied that, in a common understanding of one another's religion, lies a message, a *divine* message as it were, of peace and good-will, which is very necessary

for the welfare of society. Never before was the need of a correct and sympathetic understanding for one another's religion more keenly felt than now.

Unfortunately, however, *Islam* is not studied in the above spirit. Even the few who have studied it have misunderstood it, while there are many who have misrepresented it. Consequently, more than any other religion in the world, Islam has fallen a victim to the ravages of ignorance, prejudice and malice at the hands of its opponents. That "there is far more misunderstanding of Islam than there is, I think, of the other religions of the world," was the considered opinion of the late lamented Dr. Annie Besant. A truer picture of the disadvantage under which Islam is labouring (gratifyingly not so much as before) cannot be drawn. Many are the Orientalists who have studied Islam, but few have dived deeply enough. Superficiality was not the only characteristic of their study; it was accompanied by prejudice and by malice. There was a time when certain writers of the West unkindly indulged in depicting Islam and its Prophet in the darkest possible colours, and in vilifying them in the eyes of the world. In fact, there was an organised campaign of opposition against Islam—and with a motive. The opponents were mostly missionaries paid for propagating their own faith at the expense of others, particularly of *Islam* which they thought to be their rival, and which, as admitted by Sale and Lane, was spreading so quickly, and taking root so deeply that it threatened the very existence of Christianity. There were a few others in the field of attack, e.g., Sir William Muir, who admittedly wrote on Islam under *inspiration* from missionaries. In the result, Islam was "distorted" and "discredited" (Lane), and its doctrines were "set with infamous light" (Sale). Coloured glasses render the vision blurred.



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Many were the genius-minds devoted to oppose Islam, and many were the methods adopted for the purpose of misrepresenting Islam. One of the misrepresentations, not of a negligible character, but conceived by its authors in a spirit of undermining the very foundation of Islamic structure, is that *Islam is a borrowed feather*. To point out that the allegation is baseless and glaringly absurd is the purpose of this article.

Of the great and living religions of the world, *Islam* is the youngest, and, on that account, it is alleged that Muhammad borrowed the necessary materials from a few older systems, developed the same into a system of his own, and gave it the name of *Islam*. This is very far from the truth and a ridiculous travesty of the facts. Not a few foreign writers have sought, but in vain, to substantiate the allegation, and all of them have hopelessly lost their ground, because their contention is a historical anachronism and geographically untenable.

The allegation of the critics is based evidently on the fact that there is much in Islam which may be found in other religions, particularly in *Judaism* and *Christianity*. There is no doubt that certain doctrines and dogmas are identical in Islam and in the two earlier Semitic religions, but historical and geographical circumstances disprove the theory of "borrowing." The real cause of the similarity lies not in human but in Superhuman hands. It is a cause that could equally be traced in all *revealed* religions, and that is, as we will prove by-and-by, *divine* inspiration.

Let us first start with an enumeration of some of the great World-Teachers and their countries. They are:

1. Sri Krishna (India).
2. Moses (Egypt).
3. Zoroaster (Persia).

4. The Buddha (India).
5. Confucius (China).
6. Jesus (Bethlehem of Judea).
7. Muhammad (Arabia).

They were not contemporaries; nor did any *two* of them flourish in one country. They lived far far apart from one another both in space and time. None of them, therefore, had any opportunity to meet another, to compare notes and exchange ideas as if at a World-Congress of Religions. Nor is it in evidence that any one possessed the religious literature of the other, either in the original or in its translation. Nor was their tongue one. These are all facts, simple and historical, falling within the range of general knowledge, and calling for no formal proof.

Let us next specifically examine the personal position of Muhammad. He was an unlettered Arab of the Sixth Century A.D. He did not know how to read or write. This is a historically-reputed fact, and a fact which even most hostile and fastidious critics of Islam have not yet been able to refute. Neither the local conditions nor the family circumstances of Muhammad were favourable enough to afford him any facility for receiving, during his younger or pre-mission days, even an elementary education in Arabic at the hands of a teacher. The literary history of Arabia, as written by learned scholars and historians, both Muslims and non-Muslims, the genuineness of which remains yet unchallenged, makes it clear that the educational conditions that prevailed in Arabia at the time of Muhammad, were too insignificant to count. Education remained so much neglected, if not despised, as told by Sale (a), and so sparse that there were only 17 *men* who could read and write Arabic, and those, too, of the tribe of the Quraish. They are even mentioned by name, and Muhammad is

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(a) P. 30, Preliminary Discourses, *English Translation of the Qur-ân.*

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not one of those seventeen (b). So prominent and so positive are these facts that they have not escaped the pens of certain eminent non-Muslim writers like E. G. Browne (c). The need to encourage and spread education was so keenly felt by Muhammad himself that he, as admitted by Sir William Muir (d), even offered to release certain poor Meccans who were taken prisoners at the battle of *Badr* (e), provided that they taught a few Medina citizens to read and write.

We could therefore take it for certain that Muhammad was illiterate; he did not know even the A. B. C. of his own mother-tongue, as is acknowledged by foreign writers:

1. "We must therefore take him (Muhammad) as he was an uneducated man. . . ."—*John P. Brown* (f).

2. "We have no knowledge of his early education whatever, much less in the deeply spiritual principles which appear in the *Qur-án*."—*John P. Brown* (g).

3. "He (Muhammad) had no school-learning. Life in the desert with its experiences was all his education."—*Carlyle (Heroes and Hero-worship)*.

4. "Untutored, but fervent mind. Learning he has none or next to none."—*Margoliouth* (h).

5. "As to acquired learning, it is confessed he had none at all."—*Sale* (i).

6. "And even by the standards of the desert, he was uneducated; it is doubtful if he ever learned to write."—*H. G. Wells* (j).

(b) P. 12, Vol. I, *Life of Muhammad*, in Urdu, by Maulana Shibli.

(c) P. 261, Vol. I, *Literary History of Persia*.

(d) P. 19, Introduction, *Life of Muhammad*.

(e) *Badr*, about 50 miles south-west of Medina, where in the second year of the Hijrat, 313 Muslims, mostly unarmed, met over 1,000 of the well-armed and well-equipped pagan Meccans, and were successful (642 A.D.).

(f) P. 67-69, *Dervishes, or, Islamic Spiritualism*.

(g) *Vide note* (f).

(h) His Introduction: Rodwell's *English Translation of the Qur-án*.

(i) P. 30, Preliminary Discourse to his *English Translation of the Qur-án*.

(j) P. 412, Vol. II, *The Outline of History*.

Did Muhammad know any other foreign language? Was he otherwise in touch with any of the non-Islamic Scriptures? Had he had any sort of access to them? Were there any Arabic Translations of the foreign Scriptures during his time? History answers these questions in the negative, and History has silenced even the most eloquent pens, for instance of Muir, Rodwell and Palmer.

The next question will be whether Muhammad visited any foreign countries, and became acquainted with the religious ideas that were prevalent there? The only country he visited outside Arabia is, as is evidenced by history, Syria, and he visited it *twice*. Some of the foreign writers imagine that, during these travels, Muhammad might have imbibed a few ideas from Judaism and Christianity, a theory which others, like E. G. Browne and John P. Brown, have rejected. They have rejected it, because, in the circumstances connected with his travels, it was physically impossible for Muhammad to devote himself to the study of religion in addition to transacting the business on which he went. His first visit was with his uncle Abu Tâlib when he was a lad of *twelve*, too tender an age to study religion, much less to grasp religious ideas. On the second occasion, he was twenty-five, *i.e.*, 15 years before he was called to the Prophethood, when he was deputed by Khadija, his would-be wife, to go out as her agent and transact her business. On both occasions, he stayed in Syria only a few days, fewer still on the second, because he was able to finish his business much more quickly than he had expected, and successfully too, so that he had to return at once. We leave it to the unbiased judgment of non-Muslim readers to decide if Muhammad, wholly busy as he must have been in business during his second visit, and illiterate as he continued to remain even then, could have *orally* learned so much about Judaism or



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Christianity during his hurried visit and brief sojourn, as to produce, in the very words of some of the critics, such a "gigantic Book," such a "masterpiece of religious literature," as the Qur-án.

The critics have, however, pointed out that there were Jews and Christians in Arabia itself. Yes, they were there, just a sprinkling of them, and outside Mecca. There was a small community of Jews in Medina and in Yemen, while the Christians who had entered Arabia through Roman influence, remained scattered and disorganised in Nejran and a few other localities. Muhammad, however, never visited any of these centres during either his pre-mission days, or during the time of the Meccan Revelations of the Qur-án. It is well known that he went to Medina only when he had to leave Mecca for good. One of the violent critics of Islam, Sir William Muir, has acknowledged that "there is no ground for believing that either at Mecca or at Medina there existed anything of the kind from which could have been framed a narrative agreeing as that of the Qur-án in many particulars, and even in some of his expressions with the Gospels, both genuine and apocryphal, while in others it follows, if not outstrips the popular legend." (a) Is it necessary to dwell further upon the point?

Let us, however, glance at the nature of the relationship that existed between Muhammad, on one side, and Jews and Christians on the other. Never were they cordial. On the other hand, they had openly declared themselves against Muhammad's mission, while a few were clandestinely conspiring against his life itself. Readers may be aware that it was in fact a Jewish woman who poisoned his food, which proved fatal to him later on. In short, the Jews were giving him more trouble than were the Meccans. Is it in human nature,

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(a) Page 155, Chapter VII, *Life of Muhammad*.

therefore, that Muhammad, placed as he was in a position of opposition and oppression, would seek his avowed enemies for any information or instruction in their religion? Further, had there been even a single instance of his having received lessons from their theology, and at their hands, during his pre-mission days, it would have proved suicidal to his mission when he proclaimed himself to be a Prophet of God, and when he claimed the Qur-án as a divine revelation, because they would have been the first to raise the hue and cry that it was they who had supplied him with the necessary materials. There is no account at all in history of such a happening. History is silent. As regards the Jews, there is one other matter to ponder over. They were, in the words of Palmer, a "people who were unwilling that any Gentile hand should touch their Holy Book"—an argument, a weighty argument indeed, against the alleged theory of "borrowing."

After all, what was the condition of *Judaism* and *Christianity* as they prevailed in Arabia in the Sixth Century A.D.? Was there any material in them that could possibly exert any influence on the theology of Muhammad? The conditions were decidedly against any such possibility. The following are a few. Though Monotheists—the worshippers of the One God of Abraham—the Jews had become anthropomorphists. In the interior of Ka'ba, the Holy Temple of Mecca, they were having a statue representing Abraham with a ram beside him ready for sacrifice. They were also venerating Moses and Ezra next to God, and worshipping a household god in human form. All this was in violation of their original creed of Monotheism. There remained, therefore, nothing distinctive and remarkable for Muhammad to copy. His was an uncorrupted, "trenchant and clear-cut" Monotheism. The people themselves got disgusted with their confused theology,

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so much so that they were anxiously awaiting the coming of a Messiah as foretold by Moses, but, when Muhammad came, they rejected him as they rejected Jesus.

*(To be continued.)*

## MUHAMMAD MY MASTER

By HAMID RAZA, B.A. (ALIG.)

The advent of Muhammad ushered in a new era in the history of humanity. Through him, the human spirit embarks on a voyage of adventure, acquires a new culture and light, wins a mastery over nature, and finds a key to unlock the secrets of the material universe. His solution of the modern problems is at once the most rational and clarifying, and he does not let the human spirit be baffled and enfeebled by a struggle against itself or against the world of matter. He is the one ideal guide, enabling the modern man to explore the world of value and perfection through the world of matter. His progressive outlook has a dynamic force to destroy whatever makes for petrification: a leaven which is continually changing the age-long habits of men's minds. The religion he teaches finds in successive ages new and higher values as mankind advances towards a clearer understanding of the truth. Muhammad's personality is the culmination of the accumulated experience and aspiration of man. In him resides the collective instinct of the whole human race. He makes no distinction between the Gentile and the Jew, the Arab and the non-Arab, the black and the white, the poor and the rich. His prophetic vision ranges the entire gamut of human history when he warns mankind against worshipping the idols of Caste, Colour and Race: "The Arab is not superior to the non-Arab; the non-Arab is not superior to the Arab. You are all sons of Adam, and Adam was made of earth. Verily all Muslims are brothers. You are all members of one

common brotherhood. . . . If a deformed Abyssinian slave holds authority over you and leads you according to the Book of Allah, hear and obey him." Nowhere have the Muslim ethics of democracy and equality been as tersely summarised as in this, the last speech of the Prophet.<sup>1</sup> In the annals of mankind there is none save Muhammad to deal a stunning blow to the racial antipathy that has proved the bane of Western civilization. The Race and Colour question is "one of the most perplexing and curious phases of group-psychology and one which has not received anything like adequate treatment at the hands of psychologists."<sup>2</sup> Let the truth of this remark be confined to Europe and her children, but the Muslim East presents no such difficulty. The problem of Race and Colour has received a remarkable solution at the hands of the Arabian Apostle. It is due to his teaching that Muslims have never known the problem. Bilal, the Negro slave, becomes the first Muezzin of Islam and is respected and loved by the aristocratic Quraish. Sir J. R. Seeley observes: "Equality, brotherhood between classes and nations—are these ideas so radically inconsistent with theology that they cannot be realised until theology has been swept away? So far from it that, if we did not know historically by what process Catholic theology became allied with Caste and privilege so far as to compromise itself, we should have thought such an unnatural alliance scarcely possible. In France, theology was found on the side of privilege *but, in the Moslem East, the equality of mankind has been preached, and successfully, in the name of theology.*"<sup>3</sup> (Italics are mine.) Indeed, the Founder of Islam deserves the unique credit of creating a social order which knows not the meaning of class distinction and

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Shibli No'mani, *Sirat-un-Nabi*, ii, pp. 118—132; *Islamic Culture* (Hyderabad), iii (1929), pp. 77—79.

<sup>2</sup> De Lacy O'Leary, *Islam at the Cross Roads*, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> *Natural Religion*.



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proclaims the principle of the brotherhood of man. No religious teacher can boast of having made brotherhood thus real and actual in the daily lives of his followers. Muhammad alone is the saviour of the modern world as his religion condemns the vested interests of Caste, Colour and Race, and is absolutely free from every sort of class exploitation. He has diagnosed the disease of weaker nations and uplifted them spiritually, materially and physically. The salvation of millions of India's untouchables lies in *him*. He makes slaves the masters of their destiny. In Islam, the slave of to-day is the grand vizier of to-morrow. The poor untouchables, groaning under the age-long tyranny of Hinduism, can be raised by the equalitarian principles of Muhammad. He is the most revolutionary fighter against every form of religious obscurantism, untouchability and oppression. His followers need not set up a neo-Islam to win the untouchables. The neo-Hinduism which to-day gives quarter to the "unclean" untouchables is a mere historical farce. Islam has admittedly the most glorious record of work in diffusing the light of culture and knowledge in the dark continent of Africa. Speaking of the nation-building power of Muhammad's religion, a modern writer says:

"Wherever a barbarous tribe has raised itself at all above the level of barbarism and taken any development, it has done so usually through conversion to Islam."<sup>4</sup> No more evidence is required to impress upon the reader the supreme importance of the work and mission of the Prophet in all ages.

Muhammad was the most successful Temperance Preacher the world has known. Science can never minimize the indispensable need for Prohibition. The civilized world will never forget her abiding debt to the Prophet. It is difficult to enforce Prohibition in the

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<sup>4</sup> Sir John Seeley, *Introduction to Political Science*, p. 63.

realm of Uncle Sam, but Muhammad, by a word from God, achieves wonders in the sphere of social and moral hygiene. Alcohol, that "anti-civilization drug," is a forbidden drink to his followers; and see what have been the results of this divine legislation! The world of Islam is absolutely free from a countless number of vices daily committed in Christendom. Read the statistics of American Criminology and you will be convinced of the validity of Muhammad's teaching. Professor Macdonnel remarks:

"The institution of abstinence from intoxicating liquor is a very valuable feature of Islam, and has had a beneficent influence in the diffusion of Muhammadan civilization. . . . It is, in my opinion, to be regretted that a similar prohibition was not adopted in the early stage of Christianity, as so much social evil is to be traced to indulgence in intoxicants in European countries. Such a prohibition by the founder of religion seems to have resulted historically in general abstinence in this respect, while the effort to enforce it by democratic legislation at the present day does not seem to promise similar success. The American nation with a population of 100 millions in the United States has adopted it in this manner; but the law is evaded to such an extent that it seems somewhat ineffective for the present at least. We must wait for the slow advance of civilization to complete this reform." <sup>5</sup> Such is the glowing tribute of a critic hostile to Islam and to the holy Prophet. The West will do better to follow Muhammad, for he accelerates the advance of civilization by enforcing Prohibition on the most successful basis and thus improves general human morality. The matchless reform of the Prophet has borne its fruit and it is preposterous "to wait for the slow advance of

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur Anthony Macdonnel, *Lectures on Comparative Religion* (published by the University of Calcutta, p. 158).

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civilization to complete this reform." One magic word of the Prophet accomplishes a radical revolution in the morals of his people. History does not record elsewhere such wonderful transformation as was brought about by the Prophet.

Muhammad is the liberator of woman. The fact has been forgotten that he is the greatest feminist the world has known. From the abysmal depths of degradation he has raised woman to the position beyond which she can go only in theory. Sexophobia is unknown to his Creed, and his conception of womanhood is at once the most sublime and righteous. His system inculcates nothing but respect for the fair sex. "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother" rejects Tertullian's theology that woman is "the devil's gate, the betrayer of the tree, the first deserter of divine law." He protects the rights of women as no prophet or social reformer has done before or after him. The much-vaunted emancipation of woman is a mere illusion as long as her economic exploitation is tolerated by Society. Muhammad is the first Prophet to grant woman the right of economic freedom. No feminist legislation can advance further than the acknowledgment of woman as an independent economic entity. The West waited for nineteen centuries before it could produce the Mary Wollstonecrafts, Harriet Martineaus, Frances Wrights, Helen Taylors, Mary Pankhursts, Annie Besants and Margaret Sangers to defend the economic rights of their sisters. I will ask the reader to judge how the spirit of Muhammad's legislation has influenced the modern concepts of the economic independence of woman. Among all the feminists, Muhammad deserves the highest place for abolishing the economic slavery of one-half of the human race. He places man and woman on a footing of complete equality in enjoying their spiritual, civic, legal, and economic rights, and recommends an

honourable treatment of the gentler sex. The Qur-ánic command is explicit on the point:

"But deal kindly with them (women), for, if ye hate them, it may happen that ye hate a thing wherein Allah hath placed much good."

The idea of woman as a creature *wherein Allah hath placed much good* is entirely new and sublime in the history of sex and subversive of the Christian dictum that "woman is the root of all evil." (St. Jerome.) That woman possesses no soul under Islam is a mere myth long exploded by Christian scholars. The Prophet teaches: "Women are the twin-halves of men." No piece of world ideology has perhaps been framed to take such a healthy view of the sexes as co-ordinating units. The current seclusion or purdah, as observed by Muslim aristocrats and gentry is of the Perso-Byzantine origin and not sanctioned by the Qur-án. Muhammad proclaims the goal of universal human brotherhood which includes the goal of universal sisterhood as well. None will, as a matter of fact, dispute the observations of Mr. Otto Rothfeld on the Prophet's work as the benefactor of woman:

"No other world-wide system has ever been so reasonable and so human. It is a legislation passed through the mouth of its Founder for all followers of the Faith, as human beings bound in their relations to other men and women only by justice, which is the ultimate morality of the world." <sup>6</sup> Muhammad frees woman from the age-long bondage of man and restores her status as a *femme sole* in society. His social conception is constructive, not disintegrating. In the most exalted mood, he never overlooks the sanctity of that basic unit of human society, the family.

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<sup>6</sup> Otto Rothfeld, I.C.S., *Woman of India*, pp. 21-22.



## CORRESPONDENCE

COVENTRY:

SIR,

I am very interested in the beliefs, rites, customs, etc., of Islam, *i.e.*, of course, the Faith more commonly known as Mahommedanism.

Could you tell me of any books (in English, if possible) dealing with the above.

Can the Koran be obtained in English, as I would like to read it through and study it.

I enclose stamped addressed envelope for reply.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours truly,

(Signed) (Mr.) A. A. WALKER.

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FARNBOROUGH, HANTS.

DEAR SIR,

Will you kindly send me your literature which you advertise outside the Mosque, Woking.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) G. DAVIS.

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LONDON, W. 1.

YOUR EMINENCE,

Thank you for your letter and the information it contained. I am very grateful.

I wish to be accepted as a Member of the Muslim Fraternity, and declare my belief in the Oneness of God, and the Prophetic Mission of Muhammad.

I would greatly appreciate your advice on any books I can read to further my knowledge, and of any periodical papers that may be issued.

Thanking you in anticipation of your interest, I am,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) L. JOAN SIMPSON.

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NIGERIA, W. AFRICA.

SIR,

I am very much interested in reading the Koran. As I do not know Arabic, I would very much like to obtain an Arabic English version.

I have heard that there is a possibility of obtaining a free copy, and, if so, would like to, very much.

Let me hear from you about this.

Yours truly,

(Signed) HAROLD L. OGILVE.

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DOVER, ENGLAND.

GENTLEMEN,

Will you please mail your booklet explaining the religion of Islam to me at your earliest convenience?

You will oblige,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Mrs. J. P. Cochman.

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

ROCKVILLE CENTRE,  
NEW YORK.

THE IMAM,  
THE MOSQUE,  
WOKING.

DEAR SIR,

While I was in Ethiopia as a war correspondent, I became considerably interested in some of your literature, which was very considerably handed to me by a Muslim gentleman of the town of Dire Dawa, whose name, unfortunately, escapes me at the moment. It seems to me that there may be much of merit in your movement, and so on, if you care to place me on your mailing list, I would be glad to give my careful attention to any literature you may send.

Thanking you for your courtesy, I remain,

Very truly yours,

(Signed) KENNETH BROWN COLLINGS.

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### PRECIOUS GEMS

All forms of modesty are best.

Humility and courtesy are acts of piety.

True modesty is the source of all virtues.

Fear not the obloquy of the slanderer in showing God's religion.

Say that which is true, though it be bitter and displeasing to many.

He shall enter into the Garden of Bliss that hath a true, pure and merciful heart.

There is no monasticism in Islam.

Whosoever is humble to men for God's sake, let him be exalted.

Be persistent in good actions and refrain from evil deeds.

Verily you have two qualities which God and His apostle love, *i.e.*, fortitude and gentleness.

He is not a perfect man of fortitude who hath not fallen into misfortunes.

Deliberation in undertakings is pleasing to God.

A good disposition, deliberation in works, and to adopt the golden mean in all affairs are of the qualities of prophets.

## WHAT IS ISLAM?

### WHAT IS ISLAM ?

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

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

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

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

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

**ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM.**—These are seven in number: Belief in (1) Allah; (2) Angels; (3) Books from God; (4) Messengers from God; (5) the Hereafter; (6) the Premeasurement of good and evil; (7) Resurrection after death.

The life after death, according to Islamic teaching, is not a new life, but only a continuance of this life, bringing its hidden realities into light. It is a life of unlimited progress; those who qualify themselves in this life for the progress will enter into Paradise, which is another name for the said progressive life after death, and those who get their faculties stunted by their misdeeds in this life will be the denizens of the Hell—a life incapable of appreciating heavenly bliss, and of torment—in order to get themselves purged of all impurities and thus to become fit for the life in Heaven. State after death is an image of the spiritual state in this life.

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

**PILLARS OF ISLAM.**—These are five in number: (1) Declaration of faith in the Oneness of God, and in the Divine Messengership of Muhammad; (2) Prayer; (3) Fasting; (4) Almsgiving; (5) Pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine at Mecca.

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.**—The Muslims worship One God—the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Just, the Cherisher of All

the Worlds, the Friend, the Guide, the Helper. There is none like Him. He has no partner. He is neither begotten nor has He begotten any son or daughter. He is indivisible in Person. He is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Glorious, the Magnificent, the Beautiful, the Eternal, the Infinite, the First and the Last.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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