

"Muhammad is . . . the Apostle of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets . . ." HOLY QUR-AN 33  
"There will be no Prophet after me."—MUHAMMAD.

*The*

# *Islamic Review*

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# THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

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## A DECLARATION

I, Mrs. Maureen Aslam Hussain, of Harcourt Road, Sheffield, 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.]

(Sd.) M. ASLAM HUSSAIN.

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

### AN APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE QUR-AN

BY SIR NIZAMAT JUNG

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE BOOK AND THE MAN

In studying the Qur-án in my later years, I have realised the importance of finding a direct and intelligible line of approach to the heart of the message contained in it. The path of the reader has to be made smoother and easier than it has hitherto been under the guidance of learned commentators of the old school. For, it may be said without disrespect that those who professed deep knowledge of it seem to have often gone a little off the field—some of them indeed having soared away into the clouds of metaphysical dissertation, leaving their disciples bewildered on the earth below. We must not forget that the Qur-án was revealed for man's guidance, that it purports to be a clear guidance, and that the guidance it offers is essentially of a moral nature. Hence its claim to be *a book of practical wisdom for the improvement of man's conduct in life*.

If we approach it in this belief, our progress through it would be easier, our acquisition of knowledge more helpful, and its effect upon the mind more invigorating. My object in these pages is to suggest this mode of approach.

This essay is no more than a collection of notes made by me from time to time, which I have now put together and arranged in order.

*The Book.*—The method I followed in studying the Qur-án was not that favoured by the learned; nor was it influenced by any desire to discover the esoteric significance of the Qur-ánic message. The question ever present to my mind was only this: How did it come about that this one book, through the agency of one man, had so large a share in shaping the destiny of the human race, and what was the nature of the miracle by

## **AN APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE QUR-AN**

which it could teach the savages of Arabia in the brief space of a few years to take their place in history as a righteous and powerful nation, and what was the secret of this nation-building power?

*Pivot of Islamic Teaching.*—I have been reading the Qur-án diligently for the past 20 years, and if I was asked what my impression of its teaching was, I would say "insistence on faith and righteous practice in all the concerns of life." It exhorts man in the name of his Creator to purify the spirit by unceasing vigilance over his desires and actions; for whatever he does will affect his soul. Good makes it good, and evil makes it evil, and good and evil are their own requital. This maxim which has been repeated in the Qur-án over and over again, may be said to be the pivot of Islam; which further to reinforce, it has been laid down that none can take over the burden of another. This makes it quite clear to us that no soul can hope to get rid of its responsibility by passing it on to another, and that there is no room in Islam for such a doctrine as that of vicarious redemption.

In reading the Qur-án, I feel that the scene is laid in the midst of human life and human relations. The doings of the inhabitants of the small town of Mecca raised the big question of right and wrong, of true and false, of one God and many gods, of the permanent and indestructible and the transient and self-destroying. The quarrel of parties and the petty facts incident to it led to a clear perception in one great mind of what should be adopted, and what should be rejected. And this perception led it on by degrees to a recognition of universal truths and an unalterable faith in practical righteousness. The lessons taken from everyday life thus led to the promulgation of an ethical code which was sanctified as religion by that exalted form of inspiration which is known as Revelation. All this is reflected in the pages of the Qur-án.

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*The Man.*—I am seated before the Ka'aba writing this, and I see that solid square building (around which hundreds of men and women are moving in "Tawaf") as the centre of the great controversy which raged 1,370 years ago between the false and the true. There were idols within its walls then, bearing different names to which various divine powers were attributed and worship accorded. These attributes and powers were admitted by all except one man whose common sense told him that stocks and stones were not worthy of reverence! And something within him assured him that the Power which created Nature with all its diversity was in reality one indivisible omnipotent power, all-seeing and all-knowing and all-compelling. He was a man who had spent the best years of his youth in gazing upon Nature: upon earth and sky, and upon mountains and plains where clouds and showers brought forth herbs and plants to sustain the life of man, bird and beast. This suggestive view of Nature had been filling his mind with visions and with wonder; and the ever-recurring question from within the depths of his soul was, 'Who is the Maker of all this and the Ruler of all this?' Not those idols sitting in the Ka'aba, surely! He continued to ponder until the chief actor in the visible scene of life, man, engaged the attention of this born observer of Nature. How was man generated? Was he self-created? What gave him his superiority? Did not the hand of man make those idols which he foolishly began to worship afterwards? How helpless, how contemptible those idols were! To think that they were the makers of this wonderful Universe! How absurd! How mad!

The mind of this man, deeply agitated night and day, brooding over this palpable untruth amidst the baffling problems of life, was shaken to its very depths, and he was lost for days in meditation and reverie. And

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often seeking solitude as a means to inspiration, he spent weeks in lonely mountain caves. Such were the preliminary conditions under which the future Prophet was being prepared for his Mission. He was haunted by a sense of the unreality of the life that prevailed among the inhabitants of Mecca with their false creed and depraved practices; and the reality of the great world of being which was governed by Divine Ordinance, of which he witnessed unmistakable signs on the earth around him and in the skies above, weighed upon him from hour to hour, from day to day. Thus his convictions grew deeper and stronger, but he could not express them—could not even mention them to any one. All that was surging up from within was forced back upon itself and increased the travail of his spirit, till there came the supreme moment in his life when he felt that he was an instrument in the hands of a mighty Power which was driving him on and urging him with an irresistible force to deliver to mankind the message of life and death, of salvation and perdition.

How he first received the formal Command, how with fear and trembling he first ventured to mention it to his beloved wife, and afterwards to some near relatives who soon became converts, and how, finally, he disclosed his Mission to the people of Mecca—to be jeered at and reviled and persecuted—all this is too well known to be repeated. Nor need we dwell upon the harrowing details of the cruelty which pursued him for no less than 10 or 11 years and made him an outlaw whose life was forfeit.

It is related that the people of Mecca who made life almost impossible for the Prophet tried to entice him by offering to him in marriage the most beautiful woman in Mecca and making him their king! Would he accept this or prefer to ruin himself by persisting in his mad pursuit? History has recorded his answer and its result.



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Here we have a man who had no fear in him because he was all truth, who knew neither doubt nor despair, and whom the bitterest persecution could not make impatient or put out of temper, and whom no bribe could tempt. What was the secret of his fearlessness, his burning sincerity and his indomitable assurance? What but the truth of his mission as he felt it, the direct Command of God to exhort and guide mankind—a Command that must be obeyed. He felt that he was a vessel into which the voice of God, thrilling with His mighty power was being poured, and that his function was merely to deliver it to his fellow beings. The divine afflatus was utterly irresistible, and he could not suppress it. It was not he who was making use of it, but it was this afflatus which was making use of him! Like one of those receivers which receive and emit sounds, he was a mere passive agent; and the state in which he received and delivered his message has been compared to an epileptic fit! Such are the outstanding facts of his mission, and they are uncontroverted. What do they prove? That he was not a fabricator, that he was not a maker of books—that he was not a preacher of sermons. An illiterate man, unread and untaught (in the usual sense of the word), a man who had never been known to utter an untruth—such he stood before his people, and such he stands before the world: the deliverer of a saving message, the mouthpiece of a mighty voice, the instrument of Revelation. But this is only one aspect of him, the other is that of warner and moral preceptor. From this he becomes a reformer, a leader, a statesman, a nation-builder! And incidentally, as it were, he becomes also a legislator, a military commander and a king of men (in fact though not in name). And over and above and around all this is seen the halo of Prophethood, the insignia of Divine Ordinance. He was made to see visions as are not seen by

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ordinary beings, to utter prophecies of coming events, such as are beyond the utmost reach of human prevision. With such faculties and such powers, what was his actual work in life? *Moral guidance along the path of noble achievement.* This is the real message of the Qur-án of which he is the accredited exponent.

I began by saying that the essence of Qur-ánic teaching was moral righteousness, and now I come to that stage in his career when he stands forth as the great teacher of practical righteousness showing how within a comparatively short period a community of cruel, wicked people, who owned no conscience within and no overruling power above, was subjugated and reformed so completely as to produce godly men fit to be his companions through life—men who proved capable of leading armies and administering conquered territories, yet who were contented with a private life of stern self-denial. The first Caliph had given away all his wealth at the very outset to serve the cause of Islam and lived like a poor man when he was at the head of affairs. When he sent forth armies his orders to the commanders were:

“Remember, that you are always in the presence of God, on the verge of death, in the assurance of judgment, and the hope of paradise. Avoid injustice and oppression, consult with your brethren, and study to preserve the love and confidence of your troops. When you fight the battles of the Lord acquit yourselves like men, without turning your backs; but let not your victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make any covenant or article stand to it, and be as good as your word.”

What but the teachings of the Qur-án and the example of the great Prophet could have produced such

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a man, and later, a man like the great Omar, who, seated on the floor of the Prophet's Mosque at Medina in his patched clothes, could issue mandates to the Governors of Persia and Syria and Egypt to administer their charge like upright men, to live as simple God-fearing men, to allow free access to all suppliants, not to have guards at their gates, not to wear silken garments, and so on? What but the teachings of the Qur-án and the example of the great Prophet could have produced commanders and soldiers who would not look with the eyes of desire on the spoils of Persia and the fabulous treasures of Madain? Can history show any other such instance of moral reform brought about by the personal influence of one man, or point to another such system of life expanding automatically into a great civilisation conspicuous by its durability? Is it not because of his unique personality and his unique work that Europe is lost in wonder at his achievement and that some Europeans are wishing in this twentieth century of false progress and impending disaster for the advent of a Dictator like Muhammad? We know what Carlyle, the man of deep thought and truthful soul and hater of all sham, has said of him, and we know what Doctor Johnson, another sincere God-fearing soul, has written about the Prophet's heart-burning cry which has been ringing in deserts and cities and palaces to lead men towards light.

*The Qur-án: Nature's Book.*—The words of the Qur-án which were poured into the heart of the Prophet, reveal to us the soul of the man and the life of the man and the whole work of the man. They reveal also the scene amidst which he had to work—the fierce conflict, the bitter opposition and the assurance of final triumph. All this makes the Qur-án a human book, as an English lady friend of mine once remarked to me; and throughout its pages there runs a vein of virile common sense, and there is such convincing reasonable-

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ness in its simple arguments that it may well be called what another English friend of mine called it—a rational book.

It is a book of simple injunctions and prohibitions, direct in its appeal and reasonable in its statements, containing threats of punishment for bad, and promises of reward for good actions in this life, and giving fairly comprehensive lists of good and bad qualities. The language is simple, but it rises into fervid eloquence charged with thunder and music as the occasion may require. It is not a book to be easily ignored even by the apathetic. It is like a trumpet call to moral action—the pre-requisite of righteous living; and fortunately for us there is no unintelligible metaphysics in it, no incomprehensible mystery.

By saying all this, it is not my intention to convey that the Qur-án is anything like a well arranged textbook dividing its subject-matter into sections following a logical order. No such thing. On the contrary it may be said to be, as some European writers have actually said, a jumble! And this to my mind is the most convincing proof of its not having been deliberately written by man! It is a collection of spontaneous messages uttered under some strong compulsive pressure, consisting partly of exclamations and exhortations, and threats and promises, and partly of observations and reflections on the fate of races which perished in their contumacy after having rejected the warnings sent to guide and save them. It gives a brief account, in different chapters, of the Missions of Moses and Jesus and other Prophets. The chief characteristic of the Book is that it is interspersed throughout with directions concerning righteous conduct and propriety of behaviour, while it contains specific laws governing conjugal relations and inheritance and charity, etc. The style of the shorter

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chapters revealed at Mecca is, generally speaking, abrupt and exclamatory and elliptical. Pictures are flashed upon the mind by pointing to certain signs in Nature as tokens of God's power and providence, in the face of which man persists in his ingratitude. Observation of Nature, strong feelings aroused by it, sudden intuitions of abiding truths, thrilling impulses—all these combined in a mysterious manner and made the utterer a passive vocal instrument.

*The Cry of The Prophet.*—This accounts for the style of the Qur-án and its apparent disorder which is so confusing to those who are unable to follow the inner movements of the Prophet's mind and its perplexities and the overpowering influence operating upon it. It explains the nature of the "Cry of the Prophet." This happy phrase of Dr. Johnson's is like a ray of light falling upon a dark place and stultifies all that jargon about the jumble. As there is unity in Nature's diversity, one power running through and giving life to everything, so there is a unity of theme and thought and feeling running through the apparently ill-arranged subject-matter of the Qur-án. Readers used to well-arranged books and unused to Prophets' cries must naturally be repelled by the Qur-án at first sight, but let them go on reading and re-reading it till the spell begins to work and the sounds of the words and the sights they reveal carry them off into a world above perception—a world in which there is an intuitive recognition of reality. It is then that the pictures become vivid and enlarged till they overspread heaven and earth, and the sounds swell into that thunder-music which is not to be found in the language of any other book.

The attitude of the reader towards the Qur-án is not to be that of a critic sitting down with the avowed object of writing an article for a literary magazine, or a paragraph for the book-note column of a journal. Nor should it be that of a Doctor of Theology with a mind

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heavily laden with cumbersome learning and pre-possessed in favour of some one system and prejudiced against all others. All sacred books have a natural appeal in them, and the appeal is to unsophisticated minds. Go to them with an open mind and a clean heart, and you will not fail to find something good in them—the spirit of good, at any rate. But, for the Qur-án, I claim something more than this, namely, an extraordinary breadth of vision, truth to Nature, insistence on practical righteousness while teaching man to live according to Nature. It insists on the separation of good from evil, of right from wrong. It brings religion down from the clouds and fixes it upon solid earth as a world-compelling power, even as Socrates is said to have done in regard to philosophy. It does not confine Nature within artificial bounds, it does not prescribe any ritual as being essential to salvation. The daily prayer it enjoins is not a “ritual” but a remembrance and an acknowledgment of subordination and gratitude to the Creator, and of the very essence of it is the earnest desire to be guided aright.

*Mankind One Brotherhood.*—It makes all mankind one brotherhood. It pronounces them to belong to one religion—the religion of Nature, the religion of voluntary and cheerful submission to the laws of Nature as promulgated by its God. Does not the law of Nature comprehend all creation? It is the universality of its teaching, the truth of its prophetic visions, and the lucidity and fervour of its simple language that give to the Qur-án that wonderful power which moves the heart and brings tears to the eyes. Its voice is, in truth, a ringing “Prophet’s cry!” Get rid of the notion that it is a text-book of sermons written for the pulpit, and you get rid of much false thinking about the Qur-án. Get rid also of the nebulous belief that it is the mystical language of heaven, above and beyond human comprehension, and you will find it a human book sent for

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human guidance in *this* life—*through* which lies the way to heaven or hell.

The voice of the Qur-án, I repeat, with all its music and its thunder is a clear call to moral action: an inspiring, invigorating, reassuring call. There is no tremor of doubt or hesitancy in it anywhere, no trace of speculative uncertainty.

It exhorts man to rise to the full stature of completed manhood, so as to realise the divine element in his spirit. It proclaims his perfectibility through righteous endeavour. It lays the foundation of his heaven in this very world of toil and strife. It encourages him to face the world as it is, to work in the midst of it, and to accept the facts of Nature as part of the great Scheme. He is neither to run away from them, nor to yield timidly to such as may be evil, but to combat them and overcome them and so save himself from their injurious effects. This is the Right Path.

The Qur-án makes the acceptance of the universal law the foremost duty of man. It teaches him to live in accord with it and seek and gain his balance as a sentient, rational, responsible being,—passion-driven but spiritually guided. Such submission to the divine order of things is Islam. It is the religion of Nature.

Is this not what man from the earliest stage of his existence has been trying to find? And is this not what the Stoic philosophers sought? And is this not what all the religions and all the philosophies that we know of came into the world to teach? And is this not what we really mean by such terms as civilisation, culture, etc.,—that is, living up to the highest and best that man is capable of?

*The Qur-án, a Revelation.*—We Muslims believe implicitly in the divine origin of the Book and call it a Revelation; and we refuse to attach any importance at all to such “critical” remarks as would apply more appropriately to books written by men. But people of

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other religions, who think and say that it was composed by the Prophet are confronted with a serious difficulty when they have to explain how it became possible for an illiterate Arab of the 7th century, who had not met any men of learning conversant with the literature and philosophy of civilised nations, to have taken such a deep and comprehensive view of the life of man and its vital needs, to have gone into such detail regarding the essentials of the good life, and to have crystallised the ethics of all systems into short pithy maxims of conduct in the form of practical injunctions and prohibitions? How is it that no other great writer of ancient or modern times has ever produced such a book, out of the teachings of which has arisen a new world of civilisation and culture? In a word, how did it happen that this unlettered man could throw up from the depths of his mind words that are like sparks of light charged with soul-compelling sound, "words that breathe and thoughts that burn"? We have either to take the Book as a Revelation, or the man himself as a Revelation.

*Islam a Complete Civilisation.*—And what did the Book and the man give to the world? "Islam," which as Dr. Gibb says, "is indeed much more than a system of theology; it is a complete civilisation. If we were to seek for parallel terms, we should use Christendom rather than Christianity, China rather than Confucianism. It includes a whole complex of cultures which have grown up around the religious core, or have in most cases been linked on to it with more or less modification, a complex with distinctive features in political, social and economic structure, in its conception of law, in ethical outlook, intellectual tendencies, habits of thought and action. Further, it includes a vast number of peoples differing in race, language, character and inherited aptitudes, yet bound together not only by the link of a common creed, but even more strongly by



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their participation in a common culture, their obedience to a common law and their adoption of a common tradition.”<sup>1</sup>

*Religion for a Commonwealth of Nations.*—Is not this a religion that can build up a commonwealth of nations on a firmer basis than that of political convention? Dr. Gibb continues: “We are so accustomed to think of Islam as an oriental religion and of its culture as an oriental culture that we are apt to overlook the real character of Moslem civilisation and to miss its true place and significance in the history of human society. The old view that Islam issued from Arabia in a complete, fixed, and unalterable form has long been recognised as a fallacious half-truth. Even in the narrow field of religious doctrine, Islam remained for at least two centuries relatively plastic. Its fundamental principles were doubtless fixed once and for all, but they were not finally developed into a theology until after a long period of controversy. Now the religion of Islam itself is a branch of that group of religions which includes also Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity and shares with them the same ultimate postulates. From the very first it belonged, in consequence, to what we may call—in contradistinction to the Indian and Chinese religious groups—the western group. This western character was, moreover, intensified in the sequel. The outer world into which Islam issued from Arabia was the Hellenistic world, the heir of Græco-Roman civilisation, and almost all its early conquests were made within this Hellenistic world. Thus it came about that the *external* influences which moulded Moslem civilisation were Hellenistic and Persian. Its intellectual life was penetrated through and through by Greek culture; its very theology is in debt to Aristotle. The whole culture of Islam was thus essentially a culture of the western type, and stands much closer to us than the cultures of India and the Far East. To call it

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from “Whither Islam?” edited by H. A. R. Gibb.

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'oriental' is a misnomer; it is oriental not in the absolute sense, but only in its local extension, as the eastern branch of western civilisation, and it has at all times been shared by Jews and eastern Christians as well as Moslems."

Does this not prove the breadth and elasticity of Islam, its capacity for adapting itself to its environments and absorbing into itself all that is best in the world's culture without departing from its essential principles or allowing their purity to be impaired?

This is the work of the man who stands out as the grandest figure in history.

Gibbon writes about his work:

"It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder: the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries, by the Indian, the African, and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran. If the Christian apostles, St. Peter or St. Paul, could return to the Vatican, they might possibly inquire the name of the Deity who is worshipped with such mysterious rites in that magnificent temple: at Oxford or Geneva, they would experience less surprise; but it might still be incumbent on them to peruse the catechism of the church, and to study the orthodox commentators on their own writings and the words of their master. But the Turkish dome of St. Sophia, with an increase of splendour and size, represents the humble tabernacle erected at Medina by the hands of Mahomet. The Mahometans have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the object of their faith and devotion to a level with the senses and imagination of man. 'I believe in one God, and Mahomet the apostle of God,' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by

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any visible idol; the honours of the Prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.”<sup>1</sup>

*Leitner's Tribute to Islam.*—The following extracts from an Essay on Muhammadanism by G. W. Leitner, written more than 50 years ago, would further help to elucidate what I have said:

*Approach to Another's Religion.*—“It really seems to me that if men cultivated something like true charity they would have a different view of other religions than they now hold, and that they would endeavour to learn about them from their original sources, instead of from the prejudiced second-hand reports of the opponents of these religions.”

*To Walk with God is Practice in Islam.*—“‘To walk with God,’ to have God with us in our daily life with the object of obtaining the ‘peace that passeth all understanding,’ to submit ‘to the Divine will’—this we, too, profess to seek; but in Muhammadanism this profession is translated into practice, and is the cornerstone of the edifice of that faith.”

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“In one sense Muhammadanism is like, and in another sense unlike, both Judaism and Christianity. To walk with God, to have God ever present in all our acts, is no doubt what the prophets of these religions taught; and in that sense they were all Muhammadans, or rather ‘Muslims’—namely, professors of the faith of ‘Islam.’ ”

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*Muhammad was Inspired.*—“But so far as I know anything either of Judaism or of Christianity, the system preached by Muhammad was not merely imitative or eclectic; it was also ‘inspired’—if there be such a process as inspiration from the source of all goodness. Indeed, I venture to state in all humility that if self-sacri-

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<sup>1</sup> “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” Chapter L, pp. 282-283.

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fice, honesty of purpose, unswerving belief in one's mission, a marvellous insight into existing wrong or error, and the perception and use of the best means for its removal, are among the outward and visible signs of inspiration, the mission of Muhammad was 'inspired.' "

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*Islam's Universality.*—"The idea of Muhammad not to limit the benefits of Abraham's religion to his own people, but to extend them to the world, has thus become the means of converting to a high form of culture and of civilisation millions of the human race, who would either otherwise have remained sunk in barbarism, or would not have been raised to that brotherhood which 'Islam' not only preaches but also practises."

\* \* \* \*

"It seems to me that the question of what Muhammadanism really is cannot be summed up better than in stating it to be pure Judaism plus proselytism, and original Christianity minus the teaching of St. Paul. This as regards its theory; in practice it is far more than modern Christianity in its artificial European aspect—the 'Sermon on the Mount' translated into daily life."

*Freedom and Equality.*—"Nowhere in Muhammadan society is there any invidious distinction between rich and poor; and even a Muhammadan slave is not only a member of the household, but has also far greater chances of rising to a position in the Government or in society than an English pauper."

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There would be no Nihilists and no Socialists in Europe were Western society constituted on the basis of Muhammadanism; for in it a man is not taught to be dissatisfied, as is the great effort, aim, and result of our civilisation.

\* \* \* \*

*Polygamy.*—"On the unlimited polygamy which produced this state of things Muhammad put a check; he directed that a man could only enter into the marriage contract with two, three, or four wives, if he could behave with equal justice and equal love to them all.

"Unless he could do that he was only permitted to marry one wife. Now as, practically, no one can be, as a rule, equally fair and loving to two or more wives, the spirit of Muhammad's legislation is clearly in favour of monogamy."

"I believe that the real cause of his many marriages at an old age was charity, and in order to protect the widows of his persecuted followers."

\* \* \* \*

*Status of Woman.*—"He also raised woman from the condition of being a property to that of a proprietor, and he constituted her as the first 'legal' sharer whose interests the Muhammadan law has to consult."

\* \* \* \*

"The married woman is in a better legal position than the married English woman, and she can give evidence in attestation of a birth, marriage, or death, which is still denied to a woman in Republican France."

\* \* \* \*

*Islam's Moral Standard.*—"The Muhammadans have no taverns, gaming houses, or brothels, nor have they any idea of legalising prostitution; and as regards their general conversation it is infinitely more decent, as a rule, than that of most Europeans. I have seen young Muhammadan fellows at school and college, and their conduct and talk are far better than is the case among English young men indeed, the talk of the latter is often such as would incur punishment in a Muhammadan land."

*Meaning of Holy War.*—"As regards the assumed immutability of the Muhammadan religion, there is a liberty of interpretation of the Koran which enables

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'Islam' to be adapted to every sect and country, *e.g.*, the law laid down for its interpretation that conditional sentence has to take precedence of an absolute one, is one that secures every reasonable liberty of conscience: *e.g.*, 'fight the infidels' is an absolute sentence; 'fight the infidels if they attack you first' is a conditional sentence, and has therefore first to be taken into account in determining the much misunderstood question of the 'Holy War' or rather 'Jihad,' against infidels. Indeed, no such war is legitimate except in self-defence against those who persecute Muhammadans because they believe in one God and who turn them out from their homes; in other words, as in the case of the Muslim refugees to Abyssinia."

\* \* \* \*

*Tolerance in Islam.*—"As for religious toleration, there is much more of it in practice among Muhammadans than has been the case, at any rate, in Christian countries; and had this not been the fact, the Armenian, Greek, and Jewish communities would not have preserved their autonomy, religion, and language under, say, Turkish rule—a rule, I may add from personal knowledge—which offers many lessons of forbearance and humanity to Christian legislation."

\* \* \* \*

*Kinship with Christianity, Judaism.*—"Muhammad included Jews and Christians among Muslims; or those who believe in God and the last day 'shall have no fear upon them, neither shall they grieve.'"

"I cannot conclude this address better than by insisting on the fact that the Jewish, Christian and Muhammadan religions are sister-faiths, having a common origin; and by expressing a hope that the day will come when Christians will honour Christ more by also honouring Muhammad.

"There is a common ground between Muhammadanism and Christianity, and he is a better Christian who reveres the truths enunciated by the Prophet Muhammad."

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

### CURRENT MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING ISLAM

By ABDUL LATIF ARNOLD

So many incorrect conceptions regarding our religion exist in the minds of even educated Christians that, within the limits of a short article, it would be useless to attempt to touch upon more than a few of the more prominent.

It must be remembered that Islam, spread as it is over such a large portion of the world's surface, cannot fail to be viewed by the orthodox Christian Churches with much misgiving.

The words of Canon W. H. T. Gardner may be quoted in this connection:

"Islam is the only religion . . . that has in the past signally defeated Christianity: the only one that seriously disputes the world with Christianity: the only one which, in several parts of the world, is to-day forestalling and gaining on Christianity."—*The Menace of Islam*.

Such misgivings have at various times impelled certain unscrupulous Christian writers to issue a series of bitter attacks against Islam in which not only have facts become so grossly distorted as to cease to be facts at all, but also these writers, with mistaken zeal, have not hesitated to ascribe to Islam doctrines unknown to Muslims.

To the latter category belongs the widely accepted belief that Islam owes its world-wide dominance almost entirely to its propagation by the sword. Quite apart from the fact that throughout the history of the world any attempt at coercion has resulted only in the strengthening of the religion which coercion was calculated to destroy the words of the Holy Qur-án, "There is no compulsion in religion," in unmistakable language give the lie to the whole fabrication.

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In point of fact Islam, for over thirteen hundred years since its inception, has set an example of tolerance unapproached by any other religion.

It is surprising, to proceed to another popular Christian belief, to find Lawrence of Arabia, who had such good first-hand knowledge of the Arabs, and therefore, presumably, of their religion, which plays an all-important part in their lives, stating in his "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" that the idea of love does not enter into the Muslim's conception of Allah.

One could not ask for a stronger proof of how difficult it is for even an intelligent mind to rid itself of prejudices which have been instilled into it.

Surely the mere fact that every Sura of the Qur-án, with one exception, is prefaced by the words "Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim"—"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful," sufficiently controverts this wholly unfounded libel, without taking into account the fact that two of the attributes ascribed to Allah are: "Al-Wadud," the Loving, and "Al-Rauf," the Kind. Further, could the conception of a God without love inspire millions of human beings to leave whatever they may be doing for the purpose of worshipping Him with a passionate intensity unequalled by the followers of any other religion in the world?

More surprising even than Lawrence's remark, however, was the remark made by a prominent theologian—the Bishop of London—in a speech at the Albert Hall, in the year 1912, to the effect that Muslims "turned out the name of Christ as evil."

The Bishop had never, apparently, read the Qur-án. If he had done so, he would have found many references to Christ, each one of them attributing to him the honour which is his due. For example, "The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is but an apostle of Allah." (Sura 4, verse 171.)



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Can it be supposed that the Muslims "turn out the name of Christ as evil" when the Book which they believe to be the very Word of God describes him as the *Messiah* and an *Apostle of Allah*?

It is true that Muslims do not recognise the Divinity of Christ; but Christ himself disclaimed more than once that he was anything more than a Messenger of God. To cite an instance of this; in the Gospel of St. Matthew we read "And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is, God." (Matt. 19, 16-17.)

If Christ himself was God, as the Christians claim, this statement becomes devoid of meaning.

Another hardy Christian superstition is that Islam does not recognise that women possess souls. To contradict this false idea, it is only necessary to quote a saying of the Holy Prophet, "When a woman observeth the five times of prayer, and fasteth during the month of Ramadan, and is chaste, and is not disobedient to her husband, then tell her to enter Paradise by which door she pleaseth."

So far from it being true that Islam does not recognise that women possess souls, Islam has actually given to women a higher status than is accorded to them by any other religion in the world.

The quotation cited above may be compared with the following: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak: but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also sayeth the Law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." (I Cor. 14, 34-35.)

An excellent example of unscrupulous criticism is the remark by Robert Speer, in 1906, at the Student

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Volunteer Convention in Nashville: "The very chapter in the Mahommedan Bible which deals with the legal status of woman . . . goes by the title in the Koran itself of the Cow."

This remark was subsequently quoted by Dr. Zwemer. Certainly, the latter gentleman, prompted by some belated—one might almost say unwonted prickings of conscience—added, although, of course, the title of the Chapter was not given it for that reason.

One wonders, therefore, why this remark was quoted at all, unless to convey, however dishonestly, an unfavourable impression of Islam. It is hardly necessary to mention that this particular Sura derived its name from the story of the Golden Calf of the Israelites. One last example may be quoted from Sale's preface to his translation of the Holy Qur-án, a translation which, with its prejudices and unfair commentary, is often the only source from which Christians derive their knowledge of the most wonderful of sacred books. ". . . for however criminal soever Muhammad may have been in imposing a false religion on humanity, the praises due to his real virtues ought not to be denied to him."

The patronising tenor of the last sentence seems somehow to increase the bad taste—or sheer wickedness—of the preceding part of this excerpt. How ill such irreverence on the part of a Christian compares with the deep respect with which the founder of Christianity is invariably treated by a Muslim!

In short, then, we must realise that there still are writers who can, in referring to "the only religion which is to-day forestalling and gaining on Christianity" treat its Prophet and its teachings with the vulgarity and the bad taste which led the perpetrator of an earlier translation of the Qur-án to write in his preface: "The great Arabian Impostor, now at last, after a thousand years,

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is, by way of France, arrived in England, and his Alcoran, or Gallimaufry of errors (a book as depraved as the parent and as full of heresies as his scald head was of scurf) has learned to speak English."

These quotations do not make pleasant reading, but it is desirable that Muslims should realise that it is their manifest duty to avail themselves of every opportunity to remove from the minds of Christians with whom they come in contact, misconceptions which such scurrilous remarks have engendered.

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### MUHAMMAD AS A MAN

By K. B. SYED NAJMUDDIN AHMED JAFRI, B.A.,  
BAR-AT-LAW

History testifies to the fact that anecdotes and legends are woven round big personalities and leaders of human society. In some cases, it is difficult to find in them any historical basis, but in others they are so authentic that it is impossible even for a historian to ignore them. In fact, they give a true insight into the innermost life of the personality concerned. Such is the case with Muhammad. He was born in a critical and historical age. Exceptional endeavours have been made to keep true records of his everyday life; and practically all the wheat has been fully threshed out from the chaff in his case. It is, therefore, not difficult to put down the bare facts of his life to enable us to judge the man.

To have a real estimate of Muhammad and of his personality, it is necessary at the outset to have a panoramic view of the political, social and economic conditions of his time. It will help us in understanding the dynamic force in him. Few of us mortals possess the stamina to challenge the evils of the times; most of us are carried off on the crest of Time like broken twigs and branches in a roaring sea; but those who are born

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leaders of men, realising their inspired mission, always challenge the misguided spirit of the times. It is this vision and faith in their mission which makes them stand erect in the face of hostile surroundings. They are as steadfast as the rock of Gibraltar. It is they who "die to live." In Muhammad's time there was not a single factor which we can call as being conducive or helpful to his preachings, except his own daily life of honesty and truth—and the benediction of God.

Pages of history show how heroes of different times and climes have made efforts to adjust their external and internal ways of life in order to present a model before the public, especially to inspire their followers. But it was quite different with the Messenger of Islam. There was perfect balance from the very outset between his life as an ordinary man and as the founder of a great religion. As a matter of fact, his life as an ordinary man was the driving force behind his leadership and pre-eminence, and it is this factor which puts in high relief, when compared with the leaders of some other important religious movements. Those of us who are students of history must be familiar with the fact that Gautama Buddha made ceaseless efforts to adjust his everyday life to the fundamentals of that religion which he wanted to preach to the world. Whereas Muhammad's life, both before and after his preachings, remained one harmonious whole. It made no change in him as a Man or as a Prophet of Islam.

It was this life of his which, in the long run, turned all the scales in his favour, so that he emerged victorious in the end. When he taught the Arabs the oneness and unity of God, he saw that a host of gods were arrayed against him. When he pointed out to them the principles of equality, he found that all the tribes were suffering from a superiority complex and had strange ideas of the dignity and purity of tribal blood. He saw that the art

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and profession of looting was adored by all. Women had no rights; infanticide was popular and customary. Slavery was treated as something natural and conducive to the stability of their society and to their standard of wealth. In fact, there was no moral order, and things were managed by the Law of the Jungle. Scientifically speaking, we can say that the trend of events had reached a climax in Muhammad's time. It became inevitable either that the social and moral structure of Arabia should go down into the abyss, or that the Almighty should depute someone who would save it from destruction and carve out a new stability and harmony. There is a very famous saying in the *Gita* that, whenever law and religion are in danger, God always sends his messenger; and, accordingly, God sent Muhammad to serve the divine purpose for humanity. According to the scientific theory of Cause and Effect, we may say that the historical process working at that time created our beloved leader Muhammad. And it is evident that there was nothing accidental in the birth of Muhammad in that era. Muhammad thought his personality and mission refracted the great historical forces acting and reacting on the map of Arabia. It was the historical horoscope, not only of Arabia, but of Asia which made the people of clearer vision see this great Jupiter in the firmament.

Before he donned the mantle of religious leadership, people had begun to love Muhammad as a man. To them his daily life was a model. The first thing that struck people's hearts was the fact that from his childhood he never spoke a single lie and always refrained from doing anything that would deprive him of the confidence of his neighbours or his people. It was for his upright character that, long before he became the Messenger of Allah, he was famous as Ameen or Trusty, among his people. In those days there were no banks where people could securely deposit their money and

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property, so they used to deposit their wealth in his custody. It was in fact this feature of his life which attracted the richest woman of that time in Arabia, by name Khadijah, to marry him. There is another incident of his life, which shows how far he, as a man, was free from all earthly temptations, and how high was his ideal of truth in his daily life. The people of his own tribe, the Quraish, made several attempts to win him by different temptations, as his preachings were undermining their temporal and spiritual influence. They sent their representative time and again offering Muhammad the leadership of his own tribe, the rule of Mecca, the hand of the richest girl in Arabia, and other things. But he flatly refused to accept any of these offers and said he could not deviate from his sacred mission for any thing in the world. Since then—and I am afraid even now—it has been a common belief that every messenger of God was endowed with powers to perform supernatural feats. They also challenged him that, if he was a divine messenger, he too must perform some miracles before them. Upon this the Prophet said that he was an ordinary human being like themselves, and there was no difference between them and him, except that he had brought a message from God for them. He told them not to judge him by miracles or by magic, but from his daily life which was all before them. He further added that as they were convinced of the purity and honesty of his life, which had been faultless in every respect, there was no reason why they should not believe in the divine truth of his message. Hearing this statement, they bowed their heads. Another great event bearing on this point is that when his son, Abraham, died, it so happened by coincidence that there was a solar eclipse on that day. This phenomenon made the people believe that there was something divine in Muhammad, and they came running to him, crying that they were convinced of his divinity. Hearing this, Muhammad said

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that if they believed in such natural events as miracles, then they were unfit to become his followers. As good students of psychology, we must admit that had there been any failing in Muhammad as a man, he could not have achieved victory as the head of a democratic religion.

Let us further elucidate the different traits of his life by a few more facts. It is a fact that even the Jews of Medina (who always conspired against him because the economics of Islam struck at the very root of the finances of the Jews), often made him the arbitrator of their disputes, even if it was a case of a Jew *versus* a Muslim. Another historical event throwing light on the dignity of Muhammad's private life was that when Aamr-bin-As asked Najaashi—the Emperor of Abyssinia—to expel the Muhajirs, who had taken protection in his land, the Negus enquired about the private life of Muhammad, upon which Aamr-bin-As, though the arch-enemy of Muhammad, confessed that it was faultless and inspiring. The same high opinion was expressed by another enemy of his, named Abu-Sufian, who went to seek the help of the Roman Emperor Heraclius. When Muhammad gained victories over Mecca and Taif (which were once the storm-centres of his opposition), and their people were brought before him to be treated according to the laws of war, he pardoned them all. Incidentally, it may be pointed out here that the treaty which Muhammad made with the people of Mecca at that time is considered to be a model one. He gave them all the rights of citizenship. In this connection, there is a very interesting episode which throws light on him again as a man. Before the ink of the treaty had dried, an old man in great agony came to Muhammad's camp, complaining of the persecution of Meccans and praying that he might be allowed to remain in the Muslim fold, but when he was taken to the Prophet, Muhammad ordered

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his repatriation to the Meccans, saying that no individual could stand in the way of pledges or treaties. He did not regard treaties as scraps of paper, but as sacrosanct, bound with the golden chains of truth and honesty. He had great respect for the religion of others and put into practice the ideal of toleration laid down in the Qur-án: "For you, your religion, and for us, ours." It was a standing instruction of his to his troops that they should always respect the religion of others. Once it so happened that someone brought a copy of the Old Testament to him; he placed it on his pillow out of reverence. Again, when a deputation of the Najran Christians was sitting with him, and the time for their prayers came, he allowed them to offer their prayers in his own mosque. It was his habit to go round sharing in the anxieties of his neighbours and extending the hand of help and friendship. Some of his sayings in this matter are proverbial:

"Verily, he is not a Muslim from whose vices his neighbours are not safe."

"Verily, he is not a Muslim who fills up his stomach while his neighbours are starving."

"The smallest service, for even a minute, to a brother in humanity, is far more valuable than spending the whole of a year in prayers."

He never cherished any grudge, even against his enemies. For example, when his enemy, Abu-bin-Raib died, he sent his own wrap for his coffin. A servant who was with him for ten years has said that he never used harsh words to him during his service. Even when he was a king, some tribesmen came to see him and eased themselves in his room. After their departure, he himself cleaned the room, though many people around him ran to do it.

At the time of his death, Muhammad was not only the spiritual head of a great religion, but the temporal head of a great Empire. If he cared, he could have



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lived with pomp and ease and could have amassed untold wealth, but it is a fact that when he died, even his shield was mortgaged for a few seers of barley. He never availed himself of the great national fund ("Bait-ul-Mál") for his personal use; on the other hand, he used to labour for his living. He was without doubt a great soldier, a great statesman, a great reformer, but by far was he greatest as a man.

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### RELIGION: ITS VALUE TO THE WORLD

BY BEGUM SULTAN MIR AMIRUDDIN

It is, indeed, a great privilege and honour to me to have been asked to come all the way from India to participate in this World Congress of Faiths—a Congress which is animated by the loftiest and noblest ideal conceivable. When Sir Francis Younghusband, the heart and soul of this great movement, was kind enough to invite me last year to the Congress that was held in London, I was, unfortunately, unable to respond to his invitation. When he asked me again this year, I felt that the call of duty to this noble cause was urgent, with the result that I am here before you now. For the call of this Congress is not a mere call for a livelier world-consciousness, but a call for something deeper, something more vital, something that goes deep down to the very roots of the problems that affect our present world, namely, a call for a "kinship of souls," a call for religion, which is passing through a period of crisis at the present day.

One of the most significant facts of our times is that the growth of scientific knowledge and the increase of the critical spirit have led many individuals to regard religion as superfluous. When the old foundations of faith have in many directions been demolished, the question that comes surging up within our hearts is

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\*Text of an address delivered at the World Congress of Faiths held at Oxford.

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whether or not a spiritual integration of the world is possible. Happily amidst the dense clouds of religious apathy that obscure the horizon, we perceive also some rays of hope glimmering through, indicating that the gulf of isolation between science and religion could be bridged. On the one hand, the opposition to the theory of Evolution by the theologians of the West is giving way. This theory, I may mention in passing, is not inconsistent with the Islamic conception of the world, reference having been made to it in the Qur-án on several occasions. On the other hand, the theological argument of Theists, that the plan and the purpose which are manifest throughout the Cosmos make it impossible to exclude the presiding activity of a Mind, is finding favour with some scientists. Science itself, under the leadership of Jeans, suggests a mathematical structure to the Universe, and there are indications that scientific discoveries would, in course of time, strengthen the ground for a spiritual interpretation of the Universe.

Religion, as I conceive it as a Muslim, is a relation in accordance with "reason and knowledge" which man establishes with the Unseen Reality and which binds his life to that Reality and guides his conduct. When we look about us in the modern world, certain aspects of the conditions prevalent strike our minds with the conviction that never before has there been an age when the guiding power of religion was more desperately needed. We must, with gratitude, acknowledge that Science has endowed this planet with priceless gifts: it has prolonged life; it has invested us with powers to traverse the Universe with the speed of a hurricane; it has drawn humanity together through the medium of the wireless and the cinema; it has multiplied the resources of production. In short, it has taught man to produce a vast material structure which can bestow

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upon him happiness and comfort beyond the wildest dreams of his ancestors. Nevertheless, the misfortune of it is that it has, simultaneously, conferred on him such powers also which, if not controlled, would lead to the destruction of civilisation. The control by man of these external forces depends for its stability upon his acquiring control over his own inner forces—his internal nature. It is, therefore, imperative that the science of matter in whose knowledge he is immersed should be harmonised with the science of the spirit that he ignores to-day.

The world is involved in an incongruous situation. Old barriers of isolation have been abolished and the Universe has become, economically, a unit; yet the long-cherished unity of the human race appears to be far from realisation. The contacts that are being made to-day demonstrate to us the painful truth that nothing divides mankind as much as the wrong kind of proximity, namely, mere physical nearness unaccompanied by a cultural intercourse with and an understanding of those with whom one comes into touch. The fact that presents itself with tragic impressiveness is that the outward uniformity towards which the different nations tend is not being accompanied by the inner unity of mind and that is the crying need of mankind. Racial antipathy sunders humanity and perpetrates injustice; rigid chauvinism fosters division and disharmony; trade rivalries kindle international antagonisms, selfishness engenders selfishness, with the consequence that the modern stretch of history's horizon looms portentous. The intrusion on the rights of others, the race of armaments, the multiplication of the agencies of destruction for the annihilation of the innocent civilians of the expected belligerent countries, and the spirit of intolerance that is rampant in many parts are some of the symptoms of the "malaise" which affects the world.

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Following the therapeutic procedure, our primary concern should be to locate the cause of the disease before prescribing a remedy. Careful examination makes it apparent that the ailment is traceable to spiritual superficiality in the nature of the men who are the constituents of the entire organism—the Universe. Hence, what is needed for the treatment of this malady is the vitalising of religion. Human personality, it must be remembered, is a combination of three elements—body, mind and spirit—all of which require sufficient nutriment. When there is a plethora of nourishment on one or more at the expense of the others, the equilibrium is disturbed and disorder results. To-day, it is the excessive gratification, not only of the body but also of the mind, that has starved out the soul—a condition that calls for serious attention.

The kernel of the world problems lies not in the human head but in the human heart. Economic maladjustments cannot be rectified by the intelligence of financiers at economic conferences without the suppression of greed and selfishness in human nature and the calamity of the dreaded Armageddon cannot be averted by the efforts of eminent statesmen at the League of Nations and Disarmament Conferences without the condition precedent being satisfied, namely, the disarmament among the nations of the spirit of aggression and aggrandisement. It is the disregard of the principle of "Live and Let Live" and the assertion of the rights of the particular against the rights of the universal that should be curbed and suppressed, and the war psychosis that such a spirit engenders extirpated before we can glance down the vista of the future with complacency. The fundamental issue of the present era which is labouring in the throes of insecurity is spiritual. The struggle is not so much between two rival groups of powers as between two conflicting and incompatible

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philosophies of life—one based on self-interest and the other on the interests of the Universe. Ever since the conclusion of the last Great War, we have started an enquiry as to how we can avert wars in future. We should rather have been asking ourselves the question, “How can we foster and cultivate peace and understanding?”—a question which this Congress of Faiths has set itself to answer. The answer to this is that peace can be enjoyed only after we have sown its seeds—the seeds of right relationship—in the hearts of men and uprooted the existing weeds of fear, distrust, superiority complex of race and class, greed, and selfishness, a task which can be more successfully performed by religion than by secular organisations.

Such a statement may seem to be a paradox in view of the fact that religion has a sinister record of dissensions and bloodshed. The history of the Crusades, the Thirty Years' War, and the “Autos-da-fé” of the Inquisition militate against the value of religion as a peace factor. Consequently, some, disgusted with the fanatical feuds that persist even in this Century of Progress and with the failure of religion to make a useful contribution to the needs of the times, have taken the drastic step of seeking to abolish it altogether. It must be conceded that religion has been much misused, that it has been recalcitrant to its duty, and has swerved from its primary purpose, but to destroy it is tantamount to killing the body to cure the disease. It has been the saddest experience of man to witness the misapplication of the highest instruments of civilisation, namely, of both science and religion; but, because Science has become a tool in the hands of many for executing designs of oppression and hate, would it be compatible with wisdom to advocate its destruction? Similarly, because Religion has been misinterpreted and misused, would it not be a calamity to desire its expulsion from the world?

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It is not true religion, that is, religion as viewed in its pristine purity, that has been responsible for fanatical warfares. The prophetic souls who swung the world into a new orbit were inspired by the lofty ideal of establishing peace and harmony among mankind and were endowed with a comprehensive vision of truth. An illusion of egotism, however, seized the minds of some later interpreters of the faith who hardly grasped the import of the original message and re-shaped it in a mould of their own making. This illusion made them conceive Truth from the angle of their own exclusiveness, generated in them an attitude of contempt for other standards and values, and coerced them to impose aggressively their belief upon others. As religion has travelled away from its sacred sources, it has lost its original catholicity and has hardened into arrogant dogmatism, and it is not fair to censure it for the misdeeds and enormities of those who scarcely comprehended its message. The poet Hafiz stigmatises the infirmity of judgment of the narrow-minded bigots and deplores that "Since they did not see the fact, they ran after fiction."

True religion, as distinguished from pseudo-religion, is basically universalistic in spirit and teaching; cosmopolitanism radiates through the whole nature of man when his heart is illumined by the divine light. The function of religion as indicated by its etymology is to bind all human beings in one bond of common fellowship and love, and to unite them to their Maker. Monotheistic faiths teach that men, despite their obvious differences, are brothers through their common relation to the Divine Creator. The unity of the human race is the natural corollary of the unity of God. The basic principle of Islam is its doctrine of Universal Brotherhood. This is stressed in the Qur-án in the words, "All people are a single nation" (II, 213). The term *Rabbul Alamin*, as applied to God, signifies that

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all the nations of the world are regarded as the children of one Father, whom He fosters, nourishes and guides by degrees to their goal of perfection. The Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him!) made it his life-work to preach universal love as the emblem of the love towards the Creator. "Do you love your Creator?" he said, "Love your fellow-beings first" (Sahih Bukhari). The social communion that Islam creates, transcends geographical, racial and national boundaries as also caste and class distinctions based on either birth or wealth. For, according to the Qur-án, rectitude of action alone constitutes the criterion of nobility and what characterises Islam is that it was not content merely to preach the ideal of the equal worth of all personalities but actually made it a fact of common law and established it as a practice. As a result, within the brief period of 23 years, as if by a magic wand, it exterminated race, colour and class prejudice from among innumerable, ever-bickering, heterogeneous units of humanity, not of one but of different countries. The hearts of men and women in the Orient began to beat in unison with the hearts of those in the Occident; the fairest of Arabs and Persians intermingled in terms of closest intimacy with the darkest of Ethiopians; and the most abject of human beings, the slaves, became not only commanders-in-chief of armies and governors of provinces, but were, in the Muslim world, raised to the status of royalty itself. To such an achievement history presents no parallel. If to-day these lofty principles, preached and practised by Islam, are followed, they will serve as a balm for the many disorders which affect our sorely distressed world. Since they produced such marvellous results in the days of old, it is easy to conceive how much more effective they would be at the present epoch when the different sections of humanity are brought into closer proximity.

*(To be continued.)*

## CORRESPONDENCE

THE IMAM,  
THE MOSQUE,  
WOKING.

TRAVELLERS' CLUB,  
PALL MALL, S. W. 1.

DEAR IMAM SAHIB,

I was sorry to have to go away before Luncheon yesterday but I am not able to stand being with a large number of people for long.

I was greatly impressed by the service and I thought you made a most important point in your inspiring address. We do indeed want the spirituality of the East to counterbalance the present materialism of the West.

Believe me,  
With kind regards,  
Yours sincerely,  
FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND.

THE IMAM,  
THE MOSQUE,  
WOKING.

THE DRIVE,  
ILFORD,  
ESSEX.

DEAR SIR,

Thank you for your interesting book and for the kindness in replying and your trouble to give me the list of books, which I am sure will prove informative.

The outlook for Peace looks pretty bad for the world, but there is an awakening among the peoples of all the world of the futility of war. May there arise someone big enough to lead this willingness for Peace to a right Path! Although I have been brought up a so-called Christian, my ideals are for a united world.

I conclude with the wish that I may be fortunate enough to hear you speak again.

Yours sincerely,  
GEO. BARCOCK.

3 CHOLMLEY GARDEN,  
N. W. 6.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am so sorry I was not able to say "good-bye" to you before leaving this afternoon, but my friend Mrs. Singer had to go while you were still in the Mosque, and I wanted to accompany her to the station.

I found the ceremony very interesting, and I much enjoyed the fine address you delivered. I also enjoyed very much the excellent repast with which we were regaled.

It was great pleasure to me to find such a nice spirit of friendship evinced by the members of your congregation. May such a spirit always prevail among the members of our two ancient religions.

If at any time you should happen to be coming to this part of London, I hope you will let me know, so that I may have the pleasure of a visit from you at home.

With greetings, and many thanks for your invitation for to-day.

Yours sincerely,  
FRANCIS I. HASSAN.



## ISLAMIC REVIEW

THE IMAM, SHAH JEHAN MOSQUE,  
WOKING, SURREY.

DEAR SIR,

As a member of "The World Congress of Faiths," I was present at Kensington Town Hall at which we had the privilege of hearing you speak. You said during that talk that all Muslims bow to acknowledge the divine origin of all religions. I shall be grateful if you can give me some reference to a standard book of your faith in which that is stated.

I myself belong to a reformed and modernised Christian Church in which the same belief is held. I take the liberty of enclosing a *Statement of Principles* and that idea is advanced on page 5.

With all good wishes,

Yours very truly,

J. I. WEDGWOOD,

*Docteur (Sciences) de l'Universite de Paris.*

"KARKHANA,"

TEKLES PARK,

CAMBERLEY, SURREY.

THE IMAM,  
SHAH JEHAN MOSQUE,  
WOKING.

REV. SIR,

I thank you sincerely for your letter of the 6th giving me the references as to the Divine origin of all religions. I happen to be one of the few Christians who accept that and find it necessary for any understanding of a world several million years old.

Yours sincerely,

J. I. WEDGWOOD,

*Bishop.*

26 BUCKLAND CRESCENT,  
HAMPSTEAD,  
LONDON, N. W. 3.

THE IMAM,  
THE MOSQUE,  
WOKING.

DEAR SIR,

I shall be greatly obliged to you if you would be good enough to let me have the text of H. G. Wells' references to Islam in his "Short Outline" to which objection has been so strongly taken by the Muslim Community in England and which was the subject of a recent public demonstration.

Any comments which you might wish to add thereto will be acceptable, in order to present the Muslim point of view to our readers.

With thanks.

Yours faithfully,

F. VICTOR FISHER,

*Editor.*

## 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 Pre-measurement. Everything created by God is for good in the given use and under the given circumstances. Its abuse is evil and suffering.

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

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

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

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.

*Supplement to the Islamic Review, September, 1939*

Dear Brother-in-Islam,

*Assalam Alaikum!*

Crisis after crisis has been making civilzed humanity to live a life of constant anxiety. It looks the affairs of the world need a thorough overhauling. The Western world, still paying lip allegiance to Christianity, is restless with a feeling of social and religious revolution. But a whole community cannot throw religion overboard. The very social existence will be impossible without the spiritual control of a religion. But Western peoples are not aware what religion can be embraced with advantage if Christianity were discarded. Their impression of Islam is from the prejudiced writings of Christian authors and the outwardly depressing scenes of the Eastern Muslims' life. They have never had the opportunity of learning Islam with its beautiful social and moral principles. As you know if there has been any attempt to appraise them of the beauties of Islam in a befitting way it has been through the services of the Working Muslim Mission.

The achievements of this Mission have been very marvelous indeed, during its 26 years of existence. The adoption of Islam by the nations of the West is no longer a fantastic idea. As a matter of fact the rumours of wholesale conversion in one Western nation was recently circulated in the press of another Western nation. In the midst of political gloom overhanging the destiny of humanity, is not this a state of things over which Muslims should feel thankful to Allah? We should recall how since the rise of Islam Western Christianity has been fighting, tooth and nail, to annihilate this religion. If in the beginning it applied only physical force to accomplish this object since its attaining the present high level of intellectual culture, it has harnessed its new resources to the same object of keeping Islam down. Allah's ways, however, are mysterious. With an insignificant amount of effort on our part, the mighty age long enemy of Islam is prepared to embrace it as a warm friend.

When actually it comes to pass, it will be a double blessing indeed. It will not only save Christendom from the impending catastrophe, which is due, evidently, to lack of spiritual guidance in the sphere of politics and economics, but also enliven Islam by bringing in it new blood and new

*Supplement to the Islamic Review, September 1939.*

understanding. The prospect is undoubtedly a thrilling one. But does it not need some effort from the Muslim side? What great object has ever been achieved without sacrifice?

I know Muslim economic resources are very weak. But I am not prepared to believe that it is so weak that we cannot afford to keep one efficient Mission in the soil of Europe, which will keep the flag of Islam flying.

Turning the religious atmosphere of Europe to the advantage of Islam, by its 26 years of solid work, it is really very distressing to find this Mission awfully handicapped for want of funds just at this moment when it is approaching its harvest season, so to speak.

Times out of number the Quran exhorts the believers to spend in the way of Allah. And what could be more appropriately called the way of Allah at the moment than the one adopted by this Mission? With its healthy existence is bound up the future glory of Islam. It is actual *jihad* which is being carried on from this place

Can we not under the circumstances expect you to move on brothers and sisters in your circle of influence to lend us their helping hand at this momentous hour? Where there is a will, there is a way. It is drops that make the mighty ocean. If understanding Muslims like your good self take the matter seriously up I have no doubt very soon we shall find ourselves free from the cramping anxieties for Mission finances.

Every penny will count, and so every effort, even if apparently unsuccessful. May Allah help you!

Yours in Islam,

IMAM,

*Mosque, Woking.*

P.S.—All remittances made payable to the The Financial Secretary, Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Azeez Manzil, Brandreth Road, Lahore or Imam, Mosque, Woking, (Surrey—England).

# ZAKAT

In these few lines we should like to draw the attention of our Muslim readers to a point which is of the utmost importance for the welfare of Islam and the Muslims. The institution of Zakat, which is one of the fundamental principles of Islam, was established by the Holy Quran not only as an act of individual charity, but also as a matter of national concern. The Zakat, or the legal fortieth of all the personal amassings, was collected by the Holy Prophet and his successors as a part of the national treasury and thence applied to various purposes specified by the Holy Quran and best suited to the national welfare of the Muslim Community.

To our great misfortune, this prime source of our national wealth and strength has now almost gone dry by its misuse and, instead of this great volume of permanent income being used as originally intended to make the whole Community flourish, we have only a few individual acts which lose themselves in the sand. This highly organised system of Islam has so degenerated that before Rajab comes, thousands of professional beggars, who can earn their living, get out of their houses and spread from one corner of the country to the other to beg for Zakat, thus cheating the Muslim Public under a cloak of piety,—a state of things never contemplated by Islam. The principle of Zakat was meant really to uplift the Community of Islam and not to turn it into a nation of beggars.

The Zakat is generally calculated and distributed by the Muslims in the sacred month of Rajab. If the Zakat may properly be collected and used, it would meet our various needs. Great stress has been laid by the Holy Quran and the Prophet (may the peace of Allah be upon his soul) upon the institution of Zakat, and the Book lays down some eight objects to which Zakat should be applied. The sacred words are :—

“ Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and officials (appointed) over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth) and the (ransoming of) captives and those in debt and in the way of Allah and the way-farer; an ordinance from Allah; and Allah is Knowing, Wise. ”

(Holy Quran 9 : 60.)

Among the eight items of expenditure of Zakat explicitly mentioned in the Holy Book, one item is the wages of “the officials appointed over them” which clearly indicates that the Holy Quran requires the Zakat to be collected in the Bait-ul-Mal. The Holy words show that  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Zakat, *i.e.* 3rd, 4th, and 7th item should go towards the propagation of Islam and its defence against enemies, and to this we should

like to invite your attention particularly. Propagation of Islam is the greatest national needs of the Muslims all over the world. It is much to be deplored that one finds over and over again instances of missionaries and other Christian teachers wilfully misrepresenting our Faith to the world. The Holy Prophet of Islam is being deformed before our eyes. Under the circumstances it would be quite in the fitness of things that a greater portion of Zakat should be spent on this object, *i.e.*, to put the correct version of Islam before the world. There are good many restless souls in the world who are eager to accept Islam. We can do wonders within a short time if we have money enough to distribute Islamic literature broad cast. The whole world is thirsting for Islam, let the Muslims make up their minds to convey the blissful message of peace and amity to the farthest ends of the world. This can be easily done if our Muslim Brethren realize the importance of the institution and obey the injunctions of the Holy Quran with regard to the payment of Zakat for strengthening the funds for the propagation of Islam.

Need we say that our Missionary activities at Woking, England, have proved to be most successful of all the other movements that we (the Muslims) have undertaken within the last quarter of a century to serve Islam, while our political activities have been baffled by others. The best way to preach Islam in Europe is dissemination of Muslim literature, and in this respect our efforts so far have met with entire success.

Hence, we are encouraged to place before you the claims of the Woking Muslim Mission, England, on your Zakat. We can say without fear of contradiction that this Mission is carrying on the work of the propagation of Islam on the largest scale in the world. The Mission has turned out the most useful and most convincing literature. It has been sending the *Islamic Review* to thousands of libraries in England, America, Africa, Australia, China and Japan, free of charge. It has been publishing thousands of tracts and pamphlets for the furtherance of the cause of Islam and for defending the honour of the Prophet. It has been establishing good many distributing centres for the Islamic literature all over the world. Its Missionaries have regularly been working in England. We would, therefore, request you to kindly see that when carrying out the commandments of the Holy Quran as to the payment of Zakat, a portion is set apart by yourself, your friends and relatives for the Woking Mission Trust in order to uphold the noble cause of Islam. In case our appeal based on the accepted principles of Islam, meets with your approval, the money (Zakat) may be remitted to the Financial Secretary, the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Azeez Manzil, Brandreth Road, Lahore (Punjab, India).

K. A. G.

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