

"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**

FOUNDED BY THE LATE AL-HAJJ KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

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MARCH, 1940 A.C.

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Mr. HAMEEDULLAH BOWMAN

We are glad to have the opportunity of introducing our friend Mr. Bowman to our readers. Although he has been a Muslim for many years yet owing to various circumstances over which one sometimes has no control he could never get in touch with us. But about the end of August last year when the Imam of the Mosque at Woking had gone to Southport to attend a Convention of Religions at which he was billed to speak on "The Message of Islam", Mr. Bowman, who lives in Liverpool, found time to come down to Southport and make the personal acquaintance of the Imam. A brief life-history of our brother-in-faith, published in this issue, will be found interesting by our friends interested in the welfare of Islam in England. We print his declaration of Faith also.

—Ed. I. R.



THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

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[No. 3

A DECLARATION

I, Frederick Hameedullah Bowman, of Liverpool, England, 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 ill-Allah Muhammad-un-Rasul Allah.

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

(Sd.) F. H. BOWMAN.

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MY EXPERIENCE OF ISLAM

BY FREDERICK H. BOWMAN

In response to a request from the Imam Sahib, I have much pleasure in outlining the circumstances in which I first heard the truths of Islam. My mother, Alice Bertha Bowman, poetess and novelist, whose writings have been appreciatively accepted by Royalty, contributed, many years ago, articles and verses to "The Allahabad Review." This paper was published in India by the late Sarbuland Jung M. Hameedullah, afterwards Chief Justice of the Deccan. As a small boy, I read this publication and others in which her contributions appeared, and I conceived an early ambition to see my own name in print, especially as my mother's story, "A Romance of Llangollen," had won an authorship prize in "The Anglo-Indian Week's Times." I myself showed aptitude for literature at school and became editor of the Fifth Form Magazine. I was contributing to the public press before I left school, and Mr. Hameedullah, then a barrister, took a keen interest in my literary progress. I adopted his name. Now that he has, alas, passed away, my devoted gratitude is retained by his family, and I regularly correspond with his distinguished son, Mr. Mahmudullah, Home Secretary of the United Provinces of India, who so ably maintains the high traditions of his ancient Delhi ancestry. When I was at school, there was a Muslim mosque in Liverpool and I attended many services there with my mother. So interested did I become that I even tried to emulate the local Sheikh, and, in a home-made robe, I mounted a box at home to address my own meeting of neighbours and spread the truths of the Muslim Faith. The mosque eventually closed, and, for some time, I was out of touch with the Faith. I went on the stage,

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wrote many professionally toured plays, produced shows myself, had my stories and serials published by the leading London firms, wrote films and acted in some of them, and composed various songs. I have always sympathised with suffering animals, which was one of the characteristics of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. His humanity extended to the lowest of creatures. I am now President of the Animal Service Association, which I founded for the protection of the beasts of burden. My latest song is "Women and War," a plea for peace. I have for some years been the editor of my own paper, "The Talking Picture News," and had the honour of being presented to King George the Fifth at the June Levee in 1934 at St. James's Palace. I noticed this year that the Imam Sahib of the Woking Mosque was to deliver an address on Islam at the Southport Religious Conference, so I went over to hear him. It gave me great pleasure to meet him afterwards, when we had a most interesting chat. I hope we shall keep in touch with each other. I was born in Liverpool, and my people were Protestants. I have, however, always preferred to think for myself, and the Muslim view of God has always appealed to me.

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'ID-UL-FITR (1358 A.H.) SERMON

BY MAULVI ABDUL MAJID

To-day is a happy day for us Muslims and, I venture to say, for non-Muslims also. This day is happy for us Muslims, because we meet to-day in a prayer of thanksgiving to God the Beneficent, the Merciful, for having enabled us to perform our duty, which, to use the words of the Qur-án, was designed by God with the purpose "of fitting us to guard against evil." And, further to express our happiness at the completion of this moral duty of ours, each one of us is required to pay the sum of half-a-crown as *sadaqat-ul-fitr* or *fitrana*. This charity, be it noted, is obligatory on every Muslim whose paying capacity comes within the range of the specifications of the law of *Zakat*, or the Islamic poor-rate. It must be paid by every Muslim both for himself and for those dependent upon him.

This day, as already stated, closes the month of fasting—a course for self-purification, for seeking light and guidance from God, Who is the source of all that is good and the fountain-head of all that is noble and the Inspirer of every good desire bringing forth good conduct. I said that this day was a happy day for non-Muslims as well. For it is through the agency of this festival (there are two occasions of Muslim festival each year) that we Muslims by practical demonstration proclaim to the non-Islamic world the message of the spiritual equality of mankind. It is through the agency of this spiritual education of mankind in action that Islam and we Muslims have succeeded in breaking down the resistance offered to the peace of the world by the unconscionable barriers of racialism and the hatreds, which are the result of geographical limitations and linguistic and colour prejudices, from amongst

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one-sixth of the human race. This is indeed a great moral achievement in itself. A non-Muslim writer, Dr. Maude Royden, in her monograph, "The Problem of Palestine," published this year, has the following remarks to make on this singular characteristic accomplishment of Islam :

"The religion of Mahomet proclaimed the first real democracy ever conceived in the mind of man. His God was of such transcendent greatness that before Him all worldly differences were nought, and even the deep and cruel cleavage of colour ceased to count.

"There are social ranks among Moslems, as elsewhere, but fundamentally (that is to say, spiritually) all believers are equal, and this fundamental spiritual democracy is not a fiction, as it so commonly is among Christians ; it is accepted, and real. This accounts for its extraordinary spread among different peoples. It accounts for its strength to-day in Africa, where the Christian missionary preaches an equality which everywhere is mocked by the arrogance of the white races and the existence of a colour bar. The Moslem, black, brown or white, alone finds himself accepted as a brother, not according to his colour but according to his creed.

"During the War in France, I was told of some Indian Moslem soldiers who created a disturbance on finding black troops from Senegal served in the same estaminet as themselves. They were about to proceed from protest to violence, when one of the better informed pointed out that these blacks were Moslems. Instantly the protests were silenced and an apology offered. White Christians do not

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always behave so, whether in London or in American hotels. It was on the strength of their religion that the Arabs conquered, and by its means they have made their great gift to civilisation."

We Muslims are never proud of ourselves as being Chinese, Iranian or Indian. What we are proud of is our religious culture. And it may be said, in passing, that this pride is not begotten of hatred or haughtiness. We talk of it because it is a gift from God, and we are humbly thankful to Him for this. The Islamic nations, at the height of their culture and material glory, never thought of themselves as Arabs or Turks, but simply as Muslims. For them, the difference between themselves and others was spiritual. They were Muslims and others were non-Muslims. We are Muslims and the sole justification for our existence, other things being equal, lies in the propagation of an outlook on life which brushes aside, effectively, once and for all, those obstacles which stand in the way of bringing about harmonious relations in the first place between one individual and another and, for that matter, between one nation and another, thus eventually paving the way for a world brotherhood of mankind.

It is with these noble aims in view that the Muslim festivals are held. I wish to emphasise that Muslim festivals are not mere festivities degenerating into mere frivolities. This is because Islam knows that all social functions, if dissociated from the remembrance of God, are liable to get out of hand and to degenerate into a reckless indulgence of the lower self. Islam has, therefore, enjoined, before everything else, the saying of prayers at these festivals. Those who have witnessed Muslim festivals will bear out the statement that the manner of them is in sharp contrast with the way in which the festivals of other religions are cele-

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brated. By way of illustration, I may refer you to the depths of degeneracy into which the European carnival has fallen. The carnival, as you know, was originally a feast which preceded the Christian period of fasting—Lent. But nowadays the Christian feast has lost its original significance and denotes nothing but riotous revelry and unfettered licence. On the occasion of carnivals in Europe, both men and women wear fancy dress and mob each other with confetti. They set at naught all social codes of morality. In a word, all that is sacred in normal life is suspended, and its place is taken by licence. And all this is at its height in Roman Catholic countries, more particularly in France and Italy !

The aim of Muslim festivals is to educate the world to realise the eventual destiny of mankind, which is the “fellowship of mankind.” Thus those friends, who see fit to object to the celebrating of this festival of ours to-day on the ground that all festivities should have been suspended for the duration of the present war, would perhaps be able to discriminate between the nature of Muslim festivals and the usual kind of festivities to which one is accustomed in Europe. All Muslim festivals are controlled and guided by spiritual values, which are superimposed upon, and dominate, the biological values which play such a prominent part in non-Muslim festivals. The whole world is at present passing through a very crucial period.

Each one of us, at least, likes to believe that, at the end of this war, a new order will emerge from the present chaos ; that a new humanity will be born out of the present turmoil. I think it is meet that I said a few words on the attitude of Islam towards wars and the position to be taken up by us Muslims in the present war in particular.

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As a rule, plain truths are not liked by us. There are things which we like, and their result is bad for us; and there are things which we hate, and their outcome is good for us. Thus our liking or disliking a thing does not make it either good or bad for us. We Muslims believe that all that comes from God is good, even though we may not understand it. We Muslims, for that reason, are neither panderers to nor danglers in, cheap sentimentalism. But that does not mean that Islam is devoid of idealistic teachings. ✓ The merit of the teaching of Islam lies in its capacity to be practical and yet idealistic. The religion of Islam is dynamic in its outlook on life and has no time for any talk or outlook which lacks courage to look things in the face. We Muslims never like to take refuge behind the stockade of such philosophies and religious outlooks on life as place a fantastic estimate on the worth of an individual, his powers and importance, but refuse to take due notice of the baser side of human nature of men and women who, for a number of reasons, may not be so elevated and advanced as ourselves, and may even be bent upon annihilating us outright. We Muslims like to call a spade a spade and seek remedies accordingly for those mental and moral aberrations, from which some people and nations may be suffering. Naturally, religions and philosophies which are oblivious of this phase of the life of mankind not only fail to see eye to eye with us, but they also decry us by styling us as gross, harsh and materialistic. But it passes my understanding when I see their prominent exponents exhorting their co-religionists to take up arms and be up and doing and fighting. The only conclusion to which I can come is that cheap sentimentalism and empty talk are employed by these exponents to keep people under their hold. Because of this dynamic and fearless outlook on life and our readiness and

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preparedness to look facts in the face, we have been branded, since our appearance on the world stage, as warlike people and as people whose history reeks of bloodshed and cruelties. It would indeed be a stroke of luck if anyone of us came across a book or a lecture by a non-Muslim in which, in one form or another, we Muslims were not described as loving war for the sake of war. I hope that my assurance will be accepted, when I tell you that we Muslims are the greatest pacifists the world has ever known. The very word Islam means pacifism, and the word "Muslim," its active participle form, means a pacifist ; or, to use the words of the Prophet Muhammad, a Muslim is one from whose hands, tongue and limbs, everyone is safe. But as for men and women who are nothing but armchair philosophers, who indulge in nebulous talk and who would like to solve the problems of the world by mere thought force, or who, in other words, have not the courage to face the stern realities of life, it will be natural enough, if such people cannot understand us. Whenever such people read of the Prophet Muhammad and learn something of the war conducted by him in self-defence (Muhammad who counts amongst his followers to-day over 400 millions of people) it will be natural enough if they seek consolation in stigmatising us, his followers, as people who literally believe in the use of the sword for securing their ends. Calumnies have been heaped upon the fair name of Islam simply because its fault, if any, is that it refuses to play the ostrich policy. Nothing, of course, would convince such people of the necessity of unsheathing the sword. At all costs they would go on eulogising pacificism to the skies. Islam and the Holy Prophet will appeal to them to a certain extent, but, at a given point, they would part company with them. It is this particular point that I wish to discuss in the next few words of

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mine. Islam not only deals with the problem of war, but it has also laid down a detailed system of ethics, governing and controlling war. The only difference, according to me, between us Muslims and non-Muslims, especially the Christians, is that we Muslims freely admit the presence and necessity of wars and humanise them by laying down ethical restrictions, whereas our Christian friends, though they act exactly in the same manner as we do, will not admit the presence and necessity of wars. Our Christian friends have no support for their conduct either in the words or example of the Holy Prophet Jesus (upon whom be the peace and blessings of God !) nor in any ethics having for their basis the words of the Master.

In order to understand this fundamental difference between the approach to the problems of life by the two great religions of the world, Christianity and Islam, I quote at some length the words of Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal from his book, "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam" :

"The main purpose of the Qur-án is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe. It is in view of this essential aspect of the Qur-ánic teaching that Goethe, while making a general review of Islam as an educational force, said to Eckermann : ' You see, this teaching never fails ; with all our systems we cannot go, and generally speaking no man can go, farther than that.' The problem of Islam was suggested by the mutual conflict and at the same time mutual attraction, presented by the forces of religion and civilisation. The same problem confronted early Christianity. The great point in Christianity is the search for an independent

content for spiritual life which, according to the insight of its Founder, could be elevated not by the forces of a world external to the soul of man, but by the revelation of a new world within his soul. Islam fully agrees with this insight and supplements it by the further insight that the illumination of the new world thus revealed is not something foreign to the world of matter but permeates it through and through.

“ Thus the affirmation of the spirit sought by Christianity would come, not by the renunciation of external forces, which are already permeated by the illumination of spirit, but by a proper adjustment of man’s relation to these forces in view of the light received from the world within. It is the mysterious touch of the ideal that animates and sustains the real, and through it alone we can discover and affirm the ideal. With Islam, the ideal and the real are not two opposing forces which cannot be reconciled. The life of the ideal consists, not in total breach with the real, which would tend to shatter the organic whole-ness of life into painful oppositions, but in the perpetual endeavour of the ideal to appropriate the real with a view eventually to absorb it, to convert it into itself and to illuminate its whole being. It is the sharp opposition between the subject and the object, the mathematical without and the biological within, that impressed Christianity. Islam, however, faces the opposition with a view to overcome it. This essential difference in looking at a fundamental relation determines the respective attitudes of these great religions towards the problem of

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human life in its present surroundings. Both demand the affirmation of the spiritual self in man, with this difference only, that Islam, recognising the contact of the ideal with the real, says 'yes' to the world of matter and points out the way to master it with a view to discover a basis for a realistic regulation of life."

We Muslims believe in pacifism in the sense that we abhor war but, if circumstances are such that war becomes unavoidable, then the religion of Islam, unlike its sister religions, has got an ethic of war. It does not shut its eyes to the stern realities of life. It has courage enough to tell the world that war is one of the ways of God to cleanse it of a vitiated atmosphere ; it says that war is a biological necessity. We read in the Qur-án, " And if God had not repelled some men by others the earth would have been corrupted. But God is a Lord of kindness to His creatures." (2 : 251.) In this verse, for the first time in the religious history of mankind, I believe, it is stated that wars sometimes become inevitable, and that their purpose is to purge mankind of the vicious elements that come to get the upper hand and trample under their feet justice, liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and religious conviction. It is under such circumstances that wars become a source of blessing to mankind, as a result of which justice and freedom of conscience are restored.

I wish to make it clear that Islam, like St. Paul, could have said in the words of Jesus, " Bless your persecutors." We Muslims feed our persecutors and enemies when they are hungry, and, if they are thirsty, we would give them to drink ; for, to use the words of St. Paul, that is the way to make them burn with shame. This is idealistic without doubt, if idealistic and fantastic are synonymous. But is it always practical ? Islam knew that it should take into due consideration

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the demands of human nature and that idealism has limitations, and that the showing of an absolute undiluted leniency to the enemy might do more harm than good. Thus, instead, the Qur-án laid down a guiding principle of life for us, which reads, “Repel evil by what is best.” (23 : 96.) Thus it improved immeasurably upon such ideas as are couched in the phrase, “Bless your persecutors.” The doing of good in return for evil is the common teaching of all religions, and is by no means a monopoly nor a peculiar distinctive element of Christian ethics. But nowhere is the principle put in such a beautiful and practical form as in the Qur-án in the verse read by me ; and, what is more, the whole change has been brought about by the mere use of a single word, *i.e.*, by what is *best*. To return good for evil is only possible under certain circumstances ; and, notwithstanding all the sentimentalism of the Gospel doctrine, no individual or community that has ever taken that teaching for a guide, has found it possible in practice to return good for evil in all cases. Some of the later disciples of Jesus have, perhaps, because of the impracticability of the original doctrine, taken rather the opposite course. The Qur-án, however, says, “*repel* evil by what is best.” Evil is not a thing that must be encouraged. It must be repelled. But, in repelling, the rule according to the Qur-án is that it must be repelled by what is best. If you can *repel* evil by doing good for it, that is the course recommended ; but if punishment is necessary, and the meekest follower of Jesus must admit that in some circumstances this is so, then punishment is recommended. The aim is to repel evil, and the method of repelling evil is to be the best that is possible in the circumstances. The rule laid down here was the guiding rule of the Prophet Muhammad and is that of Muslim ethics. I am afraid

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that the above explanation with regard to the repelling of evil may be misunderstood by some, especially by those who wish to live in a world of delusions. So I hasten to add that, as far as idealistic teachings go, Islam is abreast of all and is second to none in the loftiness of its ethics. Let me give just a short comparison between the teachings of Christianity and those of Islam to show that they run on parallel lines and that, in mere idealism, there is nothing to choose between them, while the characteristic which distinguishes Islam from other religions is its genius in conforming its idealism with practicability. In Christianity, as is clear from Thessalonians, 1, 5:15 and Galatians, 6:10 and Romans, 12:17, one is asked not only to refrain from offending or shocking one's pagan neighbours, but also to endeavour positively to do them good. Christianity does not admit any reprisals, even if the injury has been done to ourselves. (Romans, 12:17.) Now, if you ask how Christianity repels evil, we are told that the moral order will look after itself; for the principle of retribution is inherent in a moral universe and that we need make no effort "to get even with" people who have done us wrong. Evidently this fantastic idealism is sure to do more harm than good. But now I give to you the parallel teachings in the words of the Qur-án. We read:

"O you who believe, be upright for God, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you to act inequitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety; and be careful of your duty to God; God is aware of what you do." (5:81.)

We read also:

"And the recompense of evil is punishment like it, but, whosoever forgives and amends, he shall have his reward from God; surely God does not love the unjust." (42:40.)

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To ensure peace we have often to disturb peace, and then it is that the martial spirit, that has been implanted in us by God for our safety, comes into play. The protection of life and property is a common instinct, but it has often served as a pretext for oppression and tyranny. We, it must be admitted, are not free from inordinacy ; and, if we need something to put us on the right path, war is indispensable in order to restrain those who would otherwise be beyond our control. In other words, we need an ethic of war. We fail to find any healthy principle of war in the Bible.

No man can be bound by another's injunction, if that is at all likely to be detrimental to his own interests. But if he finds himself so bound, he tries to find some means to get rid of the obligation. Treaties in Europe are meant for the waste-paper basket. They are honoured more in the breach than in the observance. We need a word from God Himself on this subject to serve as our article of faith. This is not mere theory. The history of warring peoples has proved it. Those who were once the embodiment of oppression and a curse to humanity on account of their prowess, became as gentle as lambs under the salubrious influence of Divine Revelation, and won for themselves the title of "Gentlemen Soldiers" from the world. They were once reckless in the matter of life and wielded their swords ruthlessly, but these unscrupulous people became clean fighters under the teachings of God.

The question of war has always been a most difficult and intricate problem. War could neither be dispensed with in the interests of peace, nor could it be pursued on the lines laid down in bygone days. The world had urgent need of true reform in this respect, and Islam fulfilled that need. I will now give the essentials of Islamic teachings in this matter. Fighting to satisfy the hankering after land or property belonging to

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others has been repeatedly condemned in the Qur-án. But, from the very beginning, these motives have always given rise to fighting in the world ; even to-day the same hankering makes civilised nations covetous of the possessions of others. They have engineered various schemes and have come with plausible pretexts, but cupidity and usurpation is at the bottom of all their movements. Islam, however, forbids all fighting for such objects. It allows war only under those conditions for which the Creator has purposely endowed us with a martial spirit. Islam permits fighting for three reasons :

- (i) To restrain disturbances and to keep every land free from the incursions of others.
- (ii) To defend life and property from the hands of others.
- (iii) To enable every person to follow his religious convictions, to whatever persuasion he may belong.

I need not emphasise the first two points ; they are self-evident. I will merely quote the following verses from the Holy Qur-án concerning them.

With regard to No. 1, the Qur-án says : “ If you, O Muslims, will not fight, there will be in the land persecution and great mischief.” (8 : 73.) With regard to No. 2, the Qur-án says :

“Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made, because they are oppressed ; and most surely God is well able to assist them ; and those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause.” (22 : 39, 40.)

The third object of war is, however, a vexed question. It has furnished the enemies of Islam with a pretext for carping against the faith, though the Holy Qur-án has given the most desirable and humane teachings on the subject.

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“No compulsion in religion” is the universal immunity given by the Qur-án to an adherent of any faith no matter what its form. Islam came to establish freedom of conscience and action in general but particularly in religion. A Muslim is bound to wage war against any person, whether of his own kith and kin and religion or not, who interferes with the beliefs of a non-Muslim. This state of things has been called “Faith for God” in the Qur-án ; that is to say, everyone must be allowed to choose his own faith and to worship his God in the manner he thinks best. It is a disturbance of this state of things, that makes a Muslim draw the sword against any person, Muslim or otherwise, who violates the Islamic ideal of peace. Liberty of conscience was unknown before Islam. The feeling in Islam for religious freedom is so strong that a Muslim is enjoined to act as a policeman, as it were, in the protection of all religious houses. For example, a Muslim is ordered to protect a Christian church from a Muslim attack. The Qur-án is too clear on the point to allow any other conduct.

We read in the Qur-án, “And had there not been God’s repelling some people by others, certainly 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.” (22 : 40.)

In this verse the Qur-án identifies the maintenance of religious houses of every faith with the “cause of God.” It is to be noted that Muslims are ordered to sacrifice their lives not only to save their own mosques but the religious houses of other peoples as well. The civilised world, with Christian notions lurking in its breast, is still far from holding the noble principle thus enunciated in the Qur-án. Even in time of war a Muslim soldier is forbidden to touch an alien’s house

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of worship. He has to spare the life of religious teachers. One more consideration, and I shall have finished. What should be the attitude of us Muslims towards the present war? In view of the above remarks, our duty as Muslims is quite clear. I do not hold a brief for any political ideology. I am just trying to place before you our duty in the present circumstances. We Muslims have suffered much at the hands of the French and the British. Fate had thrown us into the arms of one another. Clashes and injustices were perhaps only natural. The Zionist policy in Palestine has done us great harm. Untold miseries has it brought upon our brethren in the faith in that country. But the very fact that synagogues have been pulled down in Germany upon the slightest pretext makes it obligatory upon us Muslims to throw our weight into the cause of the Allies. The Allies may be fighting for the defence of democracy and we Muslims possibly may not agree with the definition or the signification attached to that word by European diplomats. Nevertheless, in the present circumstances, our attitude is quite clear. Unless and until religious liberty is restored, no Muslim should think that he has done his duty.

MARTYRDOM OF IMAM HUSSAIN AND ITS SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

BY DR. M. HAFIZ SYED, M.A., PH.D., D. LITT.

"And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead: nay (they are) alive, but you do not perceive."

—*Holy Qur-an*, 2: 154.

On Muawiyah's death, Yezid ascended the throne according to his father's testament. Yezid was both cruel and treacherous; his depraved nature knew no pity nor justice. His pleasures were as degrading as his companions were low and vicious. Drunken riotousness prevailed at court, and was naturally imitated in the streets of the capital. Hussain, the second son of Ali, had inherited his father's virtues and chivalrous disposition. In the terms of peace signed between Muawiyah and Hasan, his right to the Caliphate had been expressly reserved.

Hussain had never deigned to acknowledge the title of the tyrant of Damascus, whose vices he despised, and whose character he regarded with abhorrence; and when the Muslims of Kufa besought his help to release them from the curse of the Ommeyade rule, he felt it his duty to respond to the appeal for deliverance.

All Hussain's friends tried to persuade him not to trust the Kufa promises. They knew the Iraqi character. Eager, fierce and impetuous, the people of Kufa were utterly wanting in perseverance and steadiness.

Hussain traversed the desert of Arabia unmolested, accompanied by several of his kinsmen, his two grown-up sons, a few devoted followers, and a timorous retinue of women and children; but, as he approached the confines of Iraq, he saw no signs of the Kufan army, which had promised to meet him; he was alarmed by the solitary and hostile face of the country, and suspecting treachery, the Ommeyade's weapon, he encamped his small band at a place called Karbala near the western bank of the Euphrates.

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Hussain's apprehensions of betrayal proved only too well-founded. He was overtaken by an Ommeyade army. For days his tents were surrounded and as the murderous ruffians dared not come within the reach of Hussain's sword, they cut the victims off from the waters of the Euphrates, causing terrible suffering to the small band of martyrs. In a conference with the chief of the enemy, Hussain proposed the option of three honourable conditions : either that he should be allowed to return to Madina, or should be stationed in a frontier garrison against the Turks, or be safely conducted to the presence of Yezid. But the commands of the Ommeyade tyrant were stern and inexorable. No mercy should be shown to Hussain or his party, but they must be brought as criminals before the " Caliph " to be dealt with according to the Ommeyade sense of justice. As a last resource, Hussain besought these monsters not to war upon the helpless women and children, but to take his life and so end the unequal contest. But they knew no pity. Hussain then pressed his friends to ensure their own safety by timely flight ; but they unanimously refused to desert or to survive their beloved master. One of the enemy's chiefs, struck with horror at the sacrilege of warring against the grandson of the Prophet, deserted with thirty followers " to claim the partnership of inevitable death." In every single combat and hand-to-hand fight the valour of the Fatimides was invincible. But the enemy's archers picked them off from a safe distance. One by one the defenders fell, until at last there remained but the grandson of the Prophet. Wounded and dying, he dragged himself to the riverside for a last drink ; but the enemy's arrows drove him back. Re-entering his tent, he took his infant child in his arms ; the child was transfixed with a dart. Then his sons and his nephews were killed in his arms. Able

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no more to stand up against his pitiless foes, alone and weary, Hussain seated himself at the entrance of his tent. One of the women handed him water to assuage his burning thirst ; as he raised it to his lips, he was pierced in the mouth with a dart. He lifted his hands to heaven, and uttered a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. Then raising himself for one desperate charge, he threw himself among the Ommeyyades, who fell back on every side. But faint with loss of blood, he soon sank to the ground, and then the murderous crew rushed upon the dying hero. They cut off his head, trampled on his body and, with savage ferocity, subjected it to every ignominy.

It will now be easy to understand, perhaps, to sympathise with the frenzy of sorrow and indignation to which the adherents of Ali and of his children give vent on the recurrence of the anniversary of Hussain's martyrdom.

This, in brief, is the authenticated story of the tragedy of Karbala, so well known in all Asiatic countries, where Muslim civilisation has its sway. It is not enough to admire the supremely selfless character of the martyr of Islam. We have to probe deeper in order to get at the true significance and inner meaning of the struggle, which the illustrious grandson of the Prophet of Islam had to make, and by which he set an immortal example of selfless devotion to duty, complete resignation to the will of God and unswerving devotion to the ideal which he believed to be true.

What was it that sustained Hussain through this crucial ordeal ? Why was he so ready to sacrifice at the altar of Divine Love all that was dear and near to him ? Why did he remain unmoved in the midst of excruciating pain and insufferably cruel bereavement ?

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In spite of every possible humiliation and ignominy of every description that he and his family faced, why did he not budge an inch from his firm position ?

If he had some control over nature's forces and was endowed with supernatural power, why did he not avert the tragedy or save his little ones from thirst, starvation and death ?

Because, like his holy grandfather, his faith in the unity and the existence of a Power mightier and higher than the mightiest of natural phenomena, was unshakable.

He was a most worthy successor to the spiritual heritage which the holy Prophet of Islam had handed down to him. When conviction, however, had once taken possession of his mind, it was unshakable. No earthly power or friendly persuasion could move him away from his iron resolve.

To him, spiritual life was a reality. He did not pay a mere lip homage to all that was sacred and Divine. He was the truest of believers in God and His messenger and the Life Eternal. He had fully realised that God alone was real, and that earthly life with all its glitter and glamour was hollow and unreal. He knew, beyond the shadow of doubt, that the outer, solid-seeming world was constantly changing, and was therefore transitory. Earthly joys were deceptive. To work in conscious co-operation with the Divine Plan was the manifest duty of every Muslim whose one concern in life must be to do His bidding.

Once he told his elder brother Imam Hasan that he clearly foresaw what was going to happen to him and that he was preparing to lay down his life in order to vindicate the cause of true Islam undaunted by fear or frown. He recognised no power higher than Allah, Whose will must be carried out.

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From the outer and physical point of view, he seemed to suffer the pangs of hunger and thirst, pain and anguish ; the cries and lamentations of his dearest and nearest kith and kin bruised his heart ; but from the higher point of view, he remained inwardly calm and resigned, as he was in full possession of spiritual life and knew clearly and confidently that outer forms and human bodies were, after all, perishable.

To quote an ancient teacher, " This dweller in the body of everyone is ever invulnerable." As a spiritual being of a high order, Imam Hussain was fully convinced that the human spirit was perpetual and ancient. " Weapons cleave him not, nor fire burneth him, nor waters wet him, nor wind drieth him away." (*Gita*, II : 23.) It has ever been " perpetual, all-pervasive, stable, immovable, ancient." One who is conscious of his spiritual reality cannot be shaken off his feet by the shattering of outer forms, and frail human bodies.

Not until man identifies himself with the life instead of with the form can the element of pain in sacrifice be got rid of. The law of sacrifice is the law of life-evolution in the universe. Those who look only at the perishing forms see nature as a vast charnel-house ; while those who see the deathless soul escaping from the trials and turmoils of earthly life, hear ever the joyous song of Life that knows no end.

Hazrat Imam Hussain's whole heart rushed upwards to the ever merciful God in one strong surge of love and worship, and he gave himself in joyfullest self-surrender to be *a channel* of His life and love to the world. To him, to be a carrier of His light, a worker in His realm, appeared to be the only life worth living.

God does not endow any one with Divine vision, nor does He reveal His true glory to any one, unless that person surrenders everything to Him.

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THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM

BY MAULVI ABDUL MAJID

(Continued from page 76 of Vol. XXVIII)

No religion has escaped the blight of priestcraft which has in the long run arrogated to itself the functions of intermediaries between the people and the Almighty, and has thus relegated in to the background the importance of the dignity of the human soul. The importance of this cannot be over emphasised. For it is on this concept that all the legal concepts should be based and are based in Islam. If we begin to make distinctions at the very foundations, then the whole of the fabric of our legal and social system becomes perverted and suffused with ideas which create disharmony and amorphous social institutions and customs which harden and tighten, instead of mitigating, the existing distinctions.

In considering what Islam has done in mitigating the racial, linguistic, and geographical discrimination for which nature, rather than man himself, is responsible, I would commend to you the testimonies of non-Muslim observers, who, while admitting the unparalleled success of Islam towards realising the brotherhood of man by the Islamic socio-religious institutions just do not have the courage to do so without adding some qualifying and modifying statements.

Count Keyserling, the well-known modern German Philosopher, in his book, *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, has the following observations to make on the Islamic structure of society: "... the national character always seems somewhat blurred wherever the crescent moon illuminates the landscape, which is particularly noticeable here in India, where the types are otherwise outlined so clearly. But its place is

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taken by a more universal and no less definite character : that of Mussalman. Every single Mohammadan whom I asked what he is, replied, 'I am a Mussulman.' Why has this religion alone understood how to substitute national feeling by something wider ? And by something wider which is not less strong and significant ? How is it that Islam, without a corresponding dogma, achieves the ideal of brotherhood, whereas Christianity fails in spite of its ideals ? It must be due to intimate relations between the underlying tendencies of this peculiar faith and fundamental traits in the nature of its followers, concerning which I am still in the dark."

The above remarks can well be supplemented by the following, equally interesting, taken from another source :

"One of the most striking features of the Muhammadan world, which has been emphasised by many observers, historians, travellers and missionaries, is the feeling of unity in Islam which overleaps all the barriers set up by nationality or by geographical position. Islam has succeeded in obliterating race prejudice to an extent to which no other religious system in the world offers any parallel, and though, like other forms of the ideal of human brotherhood, Islam has failed to realise its ideal of the brotherhood of all the believers, still the measure of its success is the more noteworthy feature."

—"Europe and Islam" by Sir Thomas Arnold in *Western Races of the World*, Volume V, published by the Oxford University Press.

Dr. Maude Royden, C.H., D.D., in her monograph *The Problem of Palestine*, London, 1939, page 37, has the following remarks to make : "The religion of Mahomet proclaimed the first real democracy ever conceived in the mind of man. His God was of such

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transcendent greatness that before him all worldly differences were nought and even the deep and the cruel cleavage of colour ceased to count. There are social ranks among Moslems as elsewhere, but fundamentally (that is to say, spiritually) all the believers are equal: and this fundamental spiritual equality is not a fiction, as commonly among Christians; it is accepted and is real. This accounts very largely for its rapid spread among different peoples. It accounts for its strength to-day in Africa, where the Christian missionary preaches an equality which is everywhere mocked by the arrogance of the white races and the existence of the colour bar. The Moslem—black, brown or white—alone finds himself accepted as a brother not according to his colour but his creed.

“During the war in France I was told of some Indian Moslem soldiers who created a disturbance on finding black troops from Senegal served in the same estaminet as themselves. They were about to proceed from protest to violence, when one of the better-informed pointed out that these blacks were Moslems. Instantly the protests were silenced and an apology offered. White Christians do not always behave so, whether in London or American hotels. It was by the strength of their religion that the Arabs conquered and by its means they have made their great gift to civilisation.”

A Muslim is never proud of himself as being “Chinese,” “Persian” or “Indian.” He is proud of his religious culture. The Islamic nations at the height of their culture and glory never thought of themselves as Arabs or Turks, but simply as Muslims. For them the difference between themselves and others was spiritual. They were Muslims and others non-Muslims. Muslims never despised, nor do they ever despise any people for the colour of their skin.

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The Arabs never despised a Spaniard or Negro Muslim. An Indian Muslim in spite of the racial differences between himself and the Negro Muslim of West Africa never speaks contemptuously of his Negro brother-in-faith because he is a Negro or a Chinese. But, as stated already, it should not be understood that it was merely the theoretical verses of the Qur-án that enabled the Muslim to "blur the national character;" for beautiful homilies and platitudes are no less a common feature of the religious books of the world other than the Qur-án. All religions, including Islam, claim to have as their ideal the establishment of a world brotherhood of man. Every seer, every sage, every prophet, seems to have wished for it; for it is along the lines of world brotherhood of man that the world will have to travel for its ultimate salvation.

The secret of the miraculous success of Islam, as witnessed by non-Muslim writers, lies in the institution of prayer as conceived by the genius of Muhammad, culminating in the institution of the yearly pilgrimage to Makka. Let us, therefore, now proceed to view the part played by prayer and pilgrimage in the social life of a Muslim.

In the daily prayers all racial and tribal differences between Muslims are effaced, because they learn to stand in the mosque shoulder to shoulder in brotherhood. Although it is not essential to offer the daily prayers with the congregation in the mosque, yet the Prophet regarded such an act as highly commendable, inasmuch as it brings into contact different members of the community living in the same quarter of the town in an atmosphere, and on a level, of equality.

But, realising that it is not possible even for the most zealous members of the community living in one particular quarter of the town to attend the mosque of that quarter, the Holy Prophet Muhammad took a

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further step and made the attendance at the congregation once a week obligatory on every Muslim ; for he wanted to make the social contact, already made feasible by the daily prayers, closer and more effective and to enable men to learn something of the reality of the Islamic ideal that all men are brothers and equal in the sight of God. The weekly Friday congregation requires all the Muslims of any one quarter of the town in which they reside to assemble in the mosque. This was enough to bring together the Muslims of one quarter, to give them the polish which we get only when we come into touch with others. Yet even this was not sufficiently comprehensive. He, therefore, instituted the two yearly congregations, where it was enjoined that Muslims of many quarters of the town should come together. But neither did Muhammad stop at this. For, although the daily prayers as well as the weekly Friday prayers and the two yearly gatherings—‘Idul-Fitr and ‘Idul-Azha—were effective and comprehensive enough, they were not cosmopolitan, catholic and international in character. Consequently, in order to pave the way for a world-brotherhood which was destined to arise from the ever-growing shrinkage of the world, he developed the two yearly congregations into an international gathering to take place every year at Makka. This marks the highest stage of social evolution in Islam—or in any other system of the world.

Now in this connection I should like to say a few words with regard to the ceremonial side of the institution of the pilgrimage, so that you may get an idea as to how it succeeds in helping its votaries to visualise to themselves their complete spiritual equality before God. Performance of the pilgrimage to Makka is incumbent on every Muslim once in his lifetime, subject to the condition that he has the means to undertake the

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journey as well as to make due provision for those dependent on him. Security of life is also a necessary condition. The pilgrimage is performed in the month of Zul-Hijja the twelfth month of the Muslim year, and the pilgrim must reach the town of Makka before the seventh day of that month. The principal points in connection with the pilgrimage are :

Entering upon a state of *Ihrām*, in which one's ordinary clothes are removed and all pilgrims wear one kind of apparel, consisting of two seamless sheets, leaving the head uncovered. It will thus be seen that the state of *Ihrām* makes all men and women stand upon one plane of equality, all wearing the same simple dress and living in the same simple conditions. All distinctions of rank and colour, of wealth and nationality disappear. The king is indistinguishable from the peasant.

The whole of the gathering, which averages some 1,00,000 men and women from all parts of the world, assumes one aspect, one attitude before its Maker, and thus the grandest and the noblest sight of human equality is witnessed in that wonderful desert plain called the "Arafât" which indeed makes a man have a true knowledge of his Creator. The whole world is unable to present another such noble picture of real brotherhood and practical equality between man and man.

Sir Thomas Arnold, in his book, *The Preaching of Islam*, London, 1913, thus expresses himself on the institution of pilgrimage as conceived by the Prophet Muhammad :

"But, above all, and herein lies its supreme importance in the missionary history of Islam.—it ordains a yearly gathering of all believers of all nations and languages brought together.

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from all parts of the world to pray in that sacred place called the Ka'ba, towards which their faces are set in every hour of private worship in their distant homes. No fetch of religious genius could have conceived a better expedient for impressing on the minds of the faithful a sense of their common life and of their brotherhood in the bond of faith. Here, in a supreme act of worship, the Negro of West Africa meets the Chinaman from the distant East, the courtly and polished Ottoman recognises his brother Muslim in the wild islander from the farthest end of the Malayan seas."

Thus Islam has really succeeded in removing colour prejudice and hatred from at least 350 millions of people and, if it had done nothing else than this, it would have had good claim to hold the world its debtor for all time to come. *We Muslims believe that the justification for our existence lies in our carrying through the world a practical brotherhood of man.*

Let me now further develop the idea of understanding shown by Islam towards the members of other faiths. We read in the Qur-án: "Say: O followers of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but God and that we shall ascribe no partner to Him and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God" (3:63).

In this verse broad bases are laid for a common understanding. But this was not regarded as enough. The Qur-án took another step and required every Muslim to believe in all the prophets of God. A Muslim becomes outside the pale of Islam if he does not believe in the prophethood of any of the prophets of God—Moses, Jesus, etc. Thus the Qur-án did not leave it to the

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predilection of the individual to reject or to accept His Prophets, nor to his liberal education, which also might or might not make him accept the Prophets of God. It is nowadays in fashion to be broadminded and to respect the sentiments of the members of faiths other than one's own. For instance, it would to-day be difficult to find people who would not acknowledge the greatness and even the prophethood of Muhammad. But, if you were to ask them if there is any sanction for such an attitude in their religious scriptures, I think they would find it difficult to make an answer in the affirmative.

Thus a non-Muslim can say anything he likes, even of a derogatory nature, about the Prophets of God, and no compunction for having done something wrong and ignoble would torment him ; but a Muslim dare not do so. A belief in all the Prophets of God born anywhere in the world was made an article of faith because Islam does not believe that true and lasting amity between one man and another, one community and another, can be brought about, unless we begin to respect and reverence all those upon whom is centred the affection of people who do not see eye to eye with us. Thus a Muslim must respect all the Prophets of God and must regard them as the chosen ones of God. The Jew could, with impunity, condemn Jesus, and the Christian Muhammad, but the Muslim could not do so. He must accept them both as Prophets of God. In the history of the spiritual education of man, Islam stands out like a beacon-light, because it taught its followers to respect the Prophets of God. As time passes, the real importance of this seemingly simple but far-reaching doctrine, potent enough to control the hearts of men (that supremely difficult task) will be increasingly realised and appreciated by the world.

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Islam also is the first religion to take into account those factors which have stood in the way of the emancipation of mankind. Bondage can be of two kinds : either spiritual and mental or material.

The spiritual and mental exploitation of man Islam has dealt with by announcing to its followers *i.e.*, those who accept the Islamic outlook on life, that there is no intermediary between them and their Creator—God. Islam, like Christianity, has emphasised the dignity of the human soul, its personality and its equality in the eyes of God, but, knowing that priestcraft in its worst forms had crept into its sister religions, Islam took preventive steps against this insidious evil, so that up till now Islam is free from priestcraft in the sense in which it is understood in the West. Thus we have no altars, no baptism, no holy communion, no choirs in the mosque, because these practices and formalities either give rise to the institution of priesthood, or become an easy tool in the hands of those who can adroitly make use of them in exploiting man spiritually.

(to be continued.)

ISLAM AND THE COVENANT OF ABRAHAM

BY MRS. NADIRE FLORENCE IVES OSMAN (NEW YORK)

(Continued from page 15, Vol. XXVIII)

In the Qur-ánic account, with the proper sequence of events restored, and their necessity revealed, the jigsaw puzzle of speculation is forever solved.

The Muslims believe that God urged Abraham to lead to that altar Ishmael, and not Isaac (incorrectly called "Abraham's only son" in the account of Gen. 22:1—18). Abraham was asked to do this incredible thing by that voice which had so faithfully guided him through the years. The veil of incomprehension

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quickly dropped from his eyes when he realised, through the moving symbolism, what would be required of him. Ishmael, who had grown up beside him as his only child, was to be taken from him, together with the mother—ostensibly to yield to the exactions of his wife, Sarah. Yet, in reality, Ishmael, left in a remote place, would there found a nation that would thrive, although removed from the developments of contemporaneous life. Ishmael and his descendants were ordained to dwell in simplicity, continuing even the patriarchal conditions of Abraham's own life, close to the book of nature, until God should have need of them.

It is related in the Genesis account that God willed Abraham to substitute a ram for that son. Now this outward manifestation of Abraham's sacrifice, like the sign of circumcision, was to play a most important and identifying part in the spiritual system underlying world events, for every year rams are sacrificed by Muslims in commemoration of this event, and have been so sacrificed by Ishmael's descendants from time immemorial. The occasion is regarded as a great feast day for all who hold Ishmael in reverence. It emphasises the preparation that God had made for the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad, of the line of Ishmael. Here we may discover a passionate attachment to a religious heritage that survives even to our own day. It attests a devotion to the monotheism of Abraham. Before Moses, there was no Mosaic law, no ritual such as developed after the experience of Egypt. We are sure only of a pure faith and of a covenant.

When Sarah said: "Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac" (Gen 21 : 10), it cost Abraham much. Their casting forth was declared to be "grievous in Abraham's sight." (Gen. 21 : 11.)

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Yet with but meagre provisions, Abraham left them in the desert-like vicinity of Mount Paran, of Arabia. Genesis, nevertheless, tells us that God heard the voice of the lad in their extremity.

“The angel of God called to Hagar and said unto her : ‘ . . . fear not ; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thine hands, for I will make of him a great nation.’ ” (21 : 17, 18.)

“*And God was with the lad ; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness.*” (Gen. 21 : 20.)

Is it not plainly to be seen that Ishmael was destined to be a righteous man ? Should it be so incongruous then that this Ishmael is regarded by the Muslims as a prophet to his descendants ? He was certainly not an unworthy outcast. Great harm has been done through the interpretation given to Genesis 16 : 12 : “And he (Ishmael) will be a wild man ; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him.” This has given rise to the belief that Ishmael was a social outcast, but such an idea is the result of a misunderstanding of the conditions of desert life. A great organising power is necessary to patrol and regulate a vast barren waste, so that peace and security may there prevail. Safety is merely local, and every stranger represents a threat. While this state of affairs does not lead to a stable civilisation, it does not reflect upon the individual character, which may develop a grandeur of its own, living, as it were, always on the edge of danger.

Genesis itself flatly contradicts this erroneous idea that the name of Ishmael is synonymous with a social outcast. We find evidence of a contact that was maintained between these two great branches of Abraham’s offspring. When Abraham died, it is stated

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that his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, together buried him. (Gen. 25 : 9.)

When we turn to Arabic tradition, we find there stories of the bond of love and piety that united the father and his distant son, which we have every reason to believe. We may well imagine the visits that Abraham paid to Ishmael in his lifetime. Later, we shall study what they accomplished together.

One more instance may be noted in Genesis which would prove that a bond of sympathy continued to unite even Isaac and Ishmael when their father was gone from them.

When Esau was 40 years old, he took two native women to be his wives. Gen. 26 : 35 tells us : “ which were a grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebekah.” But then, we are informed : “ seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father, then went Esau unto Ishmael and took unto the wives he had Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, to be his wife.”

If the tie of relationship between Ishmael and his father had been severed, we should be tempted to conclude that Abraham had committed an act of sheer cruelty in so abandoning Ishmael and his mother after their long years in common. Instead of that, we are advised that Abraham acted with discretion and restraint in a painful and difficult situation, to which he was enjoined to submit. His son, Ishmael, on his side, responded with forbearance. Through the mists of time has mercifully been preserved to us that brief glimpse of the two brothers, united in their pious rites at their father’s grave.

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CORRESPONDENCE

LIVERPOOL, W. 1.

The 1st December, 1939.

THE SECRETARY,

THE MOSQUE, WOKING.

DEAR SIR,

I warmly reciprocate the blessings you send me in the name of Allah and Mohammed (Peace be upon him!).

I explained to the Imam Sahib at Southport that for many years, through the collapse of the Islamic mosque at Liverpool in such regrettable circumstances, I have been out of touch with organised religion. As a boy I certainly joined the fraternity of Islam and was a regular worshipper and in maturity I see no reason to abandon the teachings of my childhood. I am much indebted for your kindness in sending me the complimentary copy of the *Islamic Review* for a year. I shall read it with reverence.

Always yours sincerely,

F. HAMEEDULLAH BOWMAN.

KINGSWAY AVENUE,

WOKING.

The 27th October, 1939.

DEAR SIR,

Following your very interesting lecture at the Shah Jehan Mosque to the girls of Fulham Central School and your promise of a copy of the "Koran" to the most deserving student, we asked the girls to write about the subject-matter of your talk and we consider the enclosed to be the best one sent in. We think, perhaps, you, also, will be interested to read it. It was composed and written by Edith O'Dell, 16 years of age.

Thanking you once again for your lecture which girls and staff enjoyed immensely and for your very generous offer.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

(Miss) ETHEL A. HEAVENS.

(Staff.)

CORRESPONDENCE

KINGSWAY AVENUE, WOKING.
The 4th November, 1939.

THE SECRETARY,
THE SHAH JEHAN MOSQUE,
WOKING.

DEAR SIR,

On behalf of the Head Mistress and Staff of the Fulham Central School for Girls, I wish to thank His Eminence the Imam for the copy of the book "Wisdom of the Qur-án" which he has kindly sent me for our School Library and also for the invitation to your annual festival. The Head Mistress, Dr. E. Toms, and about four members of the Staff, will be very pleased to attend on Monday, the 13th November.

I have not yet had a suitable opportunity of passing on the copy of the Holy Qur-án to Edith O'Dell, so please excuse her delay in thanking you. She will, no doubt, do so early next week.

With best wishes and thanks.

Yours very truly,
ETHEL A. HEAVENS.

KINGSWAY, WOKING, SURREY.
The 11th November, 1939.

DEAR SIR,

I wish to thank you for presenting me with the Holy Qur-án. I shall always treasure it, and it will remind me of a very interesting morning spent in the Shah Jehan Mosque.

Also, thank you for correcting my essay; the Mistresses have pointed out my mistakes.

The Qur-án will be very educational to me I am sure, and will provide many hours of pleasant reading.

Once again thanking you for your kindness to me.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
EDITH O'DELL.

WOLVERHAMPTON.
The 23rd October, 1939.

DEAR SIR,

I have read some of the doctrines of the Faith of Islam, and have been greatly interested and would like some further enlightenment.

I trust that you will find it possible to send me some interesting literature concerning worship, etc.

I understand that Woking is the nearest place of worship. If, however, there is a mosque in Birmingham, I would be glad to attend.

Yours faithfully,
R. DU FEN. EDWARDS.

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WOLVERHAMPTON.

Friday, the 3rd November, 1939.

THE IMAM,

THE MOSQUE, WOKING.

DEAR SIR,

I wish to thank you for the very interesting literature you sent me and also for your kind invitation to the Celebration of the Festival (but I am afraid that I will not be able to attend—but if, however, I do find it possible I will make every effort to be present).

I have read through the literature and the Faith of Islam appeals to me as it is broadminded and unprejudiced. What really made me write to you was that as I was brought up in Christian surroundings I have come to realise the hypocrisy of present-day Christianity. Christ himself (rightly or wrongly) was, according to the Bible, an absolute pacifist—and yet soldiers bearing the emblem of the Crucifix (under the cloak of Christianity) have brought misery and suffering to non-Christians—instead of respecting the Faith of other peoples.

This present conflict! We are told that the Allies are fighting for freedom against tyranny and oppression and have received victory “blessings” from all denominations of the Christian religion. On the other hand, Christian priests in Germany are “blessing” Hitler’s victory.

That is what I admire about Islam; it does not confine itself to any particular nationality!

I would like to ask this question: I am a member of the British Union (Leader, Sir Oswald Mosley); is this party compatible with Islam?

I believe that both the Jewish and Catholic religions are rackets and wherever they are present we find poverty, immorality, etc. I would include also many other Christian religions (with perhaps a few exceptions). I have always supported spiritually the Arab Nationalists’ cause in Palestine. Also I have great admiration for the so-called “rebels” on the North West Frontier of India. Are all these ideas consistent with Islam?

If it would not be asking too much I would be grateful if you could let me have a symbol of Islam in the form of a badge; it might be noticed by a Muslim here, whom I might not otherwise meet. I have never had the pleasure of a personal discussion with a Muslim, but if, perchance, he saw a badge of the Faith in my lapel, it would bring us together.

In case I am not present at the Festival Celebration, please do not think that I am disinterested. As a matter of fact, I am commencing a new occupation next week and I doubt whether I could absent myself on Monday, the 13th.

Trusting you will appreciate this fact and again thanking you for your kind attention to my enquiries.

Yours faithfully,
R. F. EDWARDS.

CORRESPONDENCE

To

November 7, 1939.

MR. R. F. EDWARDS,
WOLVERHAMPTON.

DEAR FRIEND,

I am thankful to you for your letter of the 3rd instant which you have written to us on having read our literature on Islam. I am glad of your appreciative remarks.

You wish to know if your membership of the British Union, whose Leader is Sir Oswald Mosley, is compatible with the teachings of Islam. Now, in reply to this, I write to say that I can only give some guiding principles as enunciated by Islam, leaving it for you to decide the issue. Islamic polity is controlled by certain guiding principles. The first and the most important is that God has no associates neither in His essence nor in His attributes and the stress laid upon this by Islam can be best understood when we remember that though we are expressly asked in the Qur-án to obey our parents implicitly it is enjoined upon us to disobey them at the risk of their displeasure, if they ever invited us to polytheism (the Qur-án, 17 : 23).

The second, as a corollary to the foregoing, teaches us to remember that all human beings are equal both spiritually and morally and are equal before the eyes of law. Even a king forms no exception. We Muslims do not believe in the myth which is embodied in the sentence "the king can do no wrong." The Qur-án, consequently, teaches us that everything in the world is created by God for the service of man.

The third principle is that there should be no compulsion in matters religious (the Qur-án, 2 : 256); there should be absolute freedom of conscience and no one is to be persecuted because of his religious persuasions.

God alone is the source of our moral conduct; it is His attributes that are our watchword. Our Prophet Muhammad once said : "Imbue yourselves with the Divine Attributes;" that is to say, take Him for your prototype. According to Islam it is God who is the ruler and the chief of the world. His Will is the source of all legislation in Islam. Have we ever seen God making any distinction in the dispensation of His favours between a white and a black? We, therefore, have no right to be intolerant towards others or assume haughty airs towards those who do not belong to the same faith as we do or have not the same colour of skin as we have.

Now Nazism, as I understand it, is absolutely opposed to these fundamentals—the source of all conduct and legislation in Islam. The present-day legislation in Germany is inspired by racial discrimination and religious distinctions. It, to begin with, believes in racial superiority, it believes in exiling people for their religious opinions. It has actually pulled down synagogues. I have no idea if these are the aims of the British Union. In case they are, then there can be no two opinions on the matter. Islam has come to establish in reality the Brotherhood of Man which is the imperative need of the present-day world. Enough of dissensions. Let

ISLAMIC REVIEW

us talk of ways enabling us to treat each other as brothers and members of one family.

To illustrate further the foregoing I cite to you the case of the Jews. I know the Jew is inassimilable and that there are many who believe that the present-day troubles are due to the financial machinations and control of the affairs of the world by the Jews. I need hardly point out to you that such statements are sweeping. It is not all the Jews who are guilty. There are good and honest Jews too. Why should they suffer for the misdeeds of their co-religionists ?

As a Muslim, I would not persecute the whole community for the crime of the few ; I would not exile the Jews bag and baggage in punishment of the few guilty ones. I would try instead to bring about changes in our economic system without persecuting the Jews as Jews. When you and I wish to introduce desired reforms in our own midst, we try to restrict the activities of such as obstruct our reforms and jeopardise their existence. A discrimination is made on the basis of the crime but not on the basis of the race or religion. Only those are made to suffer penalty who harm the interests of society ; only those are brought to book who create trouble. It is not only inhuman and unjust, it is also irreligious to condemn a person because of his race or religion. In Islam there is no colour distinction ; in Islam religious differences are not regarded as synonymous with lack of the existence of truth or goodness in those who are not Muslims. The Qur-án says : " Every one who does good shall have reward from his Lord (2 : 62 ; 5 : 48). The duty of a Muslim ends with his having pointed out to a non-Muslim the error in his belief.

As to the badge, I have much pleasure in advising you that there has been a design before the Muslim(?) Society in Great Britain for their consideration for some time and it is hoped that soon it will be available for the use of its members. Your reminder is much appreciated.

I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you in our midst on the occasion of the next festival of 'Id-ul-Azha which falls on or about the 18th January, 1940.

Please do not hesitate to write to me if there is anything you would like to know about Islam.

With kind regards,

I am,
Yours sincerely,
ABDUL MAJID,
Imam.

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