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THE  
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**BY THE LIGHT OF THE QUR-AN**

“ Say: O My servants! who have acted extravagantly-against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

“ And return to your Lord time after time and submit to Him before there comes to you the chastisement, then you shall not be helped.

“ And follow the best that has been revealed to you from your Lord before there comes to you the chastisement all of a sudden while you do not even perceive.” (39;53-55)

### "THEOCRACY" IN ISLAM: ITS MISSION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

BY ATATUR-RAHMAN

"HUMAN AFFAIRS ARE NEITHER TO BE WEPT OVER NOR YET DERIDED, BUT TO BE UNDERSTOOD."—*Spinoza*.

"The history of the human race is the history of the evolution of a race of beings possessed of a reasoning and self-conscious faculty, a spark of the Divine consciousness, in which lies the possibility of expansion, of becoming a mirror of an increasing portion of the glory of the universal consciousness. In order to advance from the animal, who is not self-conscious and cannot say to himself 'I am I'—man had to develop egotism. He had to learn to put himself against other men, and against the resistance of the material world. His higher stage of development is to preserve that developed ego in an expanded form. The ego expands through the family, the tribe, and the country till ultimately it must include the human race in a conscious brotherhood. It is, in other words, the history of the power manifesting through individuals. No conquerors, indeed, have produced any results in the world on the same scale as the Founders of the great religions. Muhammad has been in our history for a much shorter period of time than Jesus, but look what the Prophet of God did in Asia and Europe and how Islam affects all our lives to-day<sup>1</sup>."

2. In these days the abnormal social feelings of different groups of humanity are frustrating all the hopes of science to make humanity feel just one family living in one house. It is, indeed, a pity that while science has done so much to unite humanity in space, the mental barriers which its different sections have

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1. *This our War*, by Arthur Moore, Editor of *Statesman* in its issue dated December 25, 1941.

## **"THEOCRACY" IN ISLAM**

raised against one another have been staging in this twentieth century a scene of life which mankind might have experienced when it had not yet emerged out of its life in caves and jungles. We wish that man had realised how little he knows his own self and its tendencies. He scarcely knows that his simplest social tendencies need a culture without which he cannot maintain the barest civilised existence. It is true that religion like politics can hardly be distinguished from life. It is very difficult to draw a line where religion and politics begin, and where they end. Therefore, a religio-political system of government takes a due note of this social need and provides a systematic programme for it; a new and better way of life acting as the spring to release in man an image of one creating and sustaining God of us all, and to replace the God we imagine to our liking and about whom we differ according to our tastes.

3. Muhammad, the Prophet of God, put a finishing touch to this evolution of the human race by abolishing all race distinctions, and not only proclaiming but implementing the theory of the universal brotherhood of man. The system by which he achieved this result so successfully has been described by European historians as 'Theocracy.' The designation is not wholly appropriate as in its strict sense it means the constitution of a state in which the Almighty is regarded as the sole Sovereign and the laws of the realm as Divine commands—priesthood necessarily becoming the officers of the invisible ruler. The Holy Prophet established the government under the Divine commandments, broadly based upon justice and truth. Co-operation between a ruler and the ruled is indispensable to the running of a government. Islam, therefore, took special care to so frame its rules as to promote the spirit of co-operation among its adherents.

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It threw into the background the question of the unity of language, or territory or colour, ties which go to make a nation. Whereas these latter ties are too apt to breed selfish patriotism, Muslims were so united in the bond of religious fraternity that it proved far more firm and lasting than the others. Muslims were made to fully realise the fact that the cord of fraternity was the very cord of Allah ; they should hold it fast, and therein lay their prosperity and durability of strength.

4. The teachings of the Holy Prophet ensure good in this world as well as in the hereafter. He laid great emphasis upon knowledge meaning a clear understanding of our rights and obligations, *i.e.*, an appreciation of the fact that all things belong to us while all of us, including every individual, belong to God. With knowledge came freedom of thought which brought an intellectual revolution within such a short time as has no parallel in history. How different it was when the priests controlled the faith of the masses. Such freedom of thought as was brought to being by Islam is even now denied to people in some countries of Europe.

5. The Holy Qur-án lays great emphasis upon the accountability of actions to God after death. This makes the moral basis of Theocracy in Islam most effective and is the surest road to self-realization which is the worthy ideal of life preached by the philosophers of every country. Islamic laws have been generally carried out by Muslims with practically no State organization to enforce it. In a democratic country like America, Prohibition Acts proved to be ineffectual, even when enforced by the Government. It is an historical fact that the Holy Prophet began his regime in Madina without having police or other functionaries to keep order. He set up a machinery of moral police.

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Those who unfortunately fell a prey to some evil propensity, could not help making a clear breast of it before him within a day or two of its occurrence, though unobserved by any other eye. No one was needed to arrest a culprit. The offender himself was his own captor.

6. Salmond in his '*Jurisprudence*' describes the most vital functions of a government as two, *viz.*, War and the Administration of Justice. Both in effect are the two different ways of safeguarding the rights of the people, war being the unjudicial way, and the administration of justice, the judicial one. The Holy Prophet has made the Military Service compulsory for every Muslim just in the same way as we have it to-day in most of the European countries. The difference, however, is that the Holy-War (Jihad) cannot be waged in the name of the nationality alone; it must have a spiritual sanction; it must be *Fi-Sabil-Allah* (for the service of God), in which the right of free-worship is the cardinal stipulation.

7. These are the mainstays of Theocracy in Islam. Then the duties of a subject people towards their government are as follows:

Co-operation, loyalty and obedience. Islam created such an atmosphere through the Muslims that the human sentiments which are responsible for the fulfilment of these duties are kept alive by themselves. The end in view in enjoining Prayers, Fasts, Pilgrimage, and Zakat was to give a religious colour to all laws of citizenship based upon co-operation, loyalty and obedience and to impart to them a silver-lining of morality.

8. It is said that Democracy gives political education to the masses, but we must not forget the deluge of blood through which it had to wade during

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the war of Cromwellian Revolution, the French Revolution, the Central European Revolution, the War of Italian Independence and a host of other rebellions, before calling itself constitutional. Theocracy in Islam achieved this object by emphasizing from its very inception the importance of obedience to authority in the most unequivocal terms in the Holy Qur-án: "O ye, who believe, obey God and obey the Messenger and those from amongst you who are in authority and if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle" (Holy Qu-ran 4 : 59) and limiting "the arbitrary, autocratic power of the Khalifas to the ordinances of the Shariah or Law of Islam. This limitation arose from the peculiar character of Muslim Law as being primarily (in theory at least) derived from the inspired Word of God, and as laying down regulations for the conduct of every department of human life, and thus leaving no room for the distinction that arose in Christendom between Canon Law and the Law of the State.<sup>1</sup>"

9. As the aim of Theocracy in Islam is the uplift of humanity the Prophet of God, Muhammad, strove to improve marriage laws ; to humanize marital conditions ; to forbid the worship of idols, to stop the killing of new-born girls ; to unite the tribes into one close network of unity and concord ; to bar the dreadful gate of war ; to usher in an era of peace, happiness, and goodwill. In order to understand how this Theocracy worked, it is necessary to judge its results from the standpoints of the social and economic improvement of the people, the raising of their legal status and lastly from the benefits conferred upon them by means of education.

10. *Social Improvement.*—Science has made great advance in every direction but it must be confessed

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1. *Caliphate*, by Sir T. W. Arnold, p. 53.



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that there is no science of human society as such. Karl Marx is the most commanding figure in the school of social revolutions; but his principles have not given the necessary elements of stability to the fabric of society. "Even the best of modern civilizations," says Prof. Huxley, "appears to exhibit a condition of mankind which neither embodies any worthy ideal nor even possesses the merit of stability<sup>1</sup>."

The political revolutions of the last century which prevailed in Europe resulting in universal education and universal suffrage, have, to all intents, attained their ends. Society is being organized by classes into huge battalions, the avowed object of which is the making war on each other. We have syndicates, corporations, and federations of capital on one side, and societies, trade unions, and federations of labour on the other. There is an ill-defined general feeling that religious system must have some undefined function to perform in the evolution which society is undergoing. But as to what that function is, where it begins, where it ends, and what place religious beliefs are destined to fill in the future, science has given us no indication. Social phenomena seem to be continually moving beyond its theories into unknown territory. The central fact with which we are confronted in these progressive societies is, therefore, that the interests of the social organism, and that of the individual comprising it, at any particular time, are actually antagonistic. Mr. Kidd in his recent book on "Social Evolution" has again emphasized the fact that religion is the "central feature of human history" and its phenomena constitute one of the most persistent and characteristic features of human society (p. 87), and that the super-rational sanction it provides for

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1. See his "Government, Anarchy or Regimentation," *Nineteenth Century*, May 1890.

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conduct is essentially necessary as a form in social development. Religion, therefore, supplies an ultra-rational sanction by which this antagonism is avoided, a combination is evolved of the most effective subordination of the individual to the interests of the social organism with the highest development of his own personality.

11. In his celebrated farewell address, the Prophet of Islam laid emphasis upon equality, the right of proprietorship, exercise of justice and protection of what one has. These are the fundamentals of Theocracy in Islam which aims at the internationalisation of humanity based upon universal brotherhood and provides bases for social security. They achieved a society in which there was no law-protected power-holding class on the one side, and no excluded and disinherited masses on the other—a stage in which for a long period legislation (Shariah) aimed at securing to all the members of the community, the right to be admitted to the rivalry of life, as far as possible, on a footing of equality of opportunity. The significance of this broadening of individual liberty, observable alike in laws, political institutions, social and domestic relations, is important as an aspect of that progress in economic freedom and social emancipation which marked the rule of Theocracy in Islam throughout many centuries.

12. In this connection it would be sufficient to mention briefly what Theocracy in Islam did to the institution of slavery—the bed-rock of society under the military empires of pre-Islamic days. “By the original Roman Law the master was clothed with absolute dominion over the slave extending to the power of life and death. The slave could not possess property of any kind, whatever he acquired was his master’s . . . . For entering the military service

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or taking on him any state office a slave was punished with death. He could not in general be examined as a witness except by torture. . . . The penalties of the law of crime were specially severe on slaves."<sup>1</sup> Islam did not grant absolute freedom to slaves all at once. The social theories of the age was against it. It introduced, from humanitarian standpoint, such a healthy change in the system as secured for them human rights, and strengthened their position in society. For the first time in human history Islam determined the relations between the master and the slave and put them on a legal basis. Laws were codified, and were enforced by the Qadzis.<sup>2</sup> Slaves could be permitted to purchase their freedom by an accumulation of their wages. Fugitive slaves on reaching Islamic territory were given their liberty. The child of a free man and a slave woman was born free while his mother regained her liberty at the death of her husband. "It has already been indicated that the Qur-án (4 : 94 ; 5 : 91 ; 58 : 4) and the Hadith make it a commendable act for masters to emancipate slaves in expiation of certain misdeeds, *e.g.*, involuntary manslaughter or if the slaves demand it and are worthy (Qur-án 24 : 33)."<sup>3</sup> These slaves on emancipation, if they cannot take care of themselves as Atiq (freedman), are not allowed to become the Waifs of society but a system of patron and client is encouraged under which the late masters become their patrons. The patrons cannot refuse their patronage or alienate it in any way and it passes to his heirs on his death. The client, on the other hand, cannot change his patron. "It must specially be noted that Umar, in assigning annuities, made no distinction between the free-blooded

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1. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 25, p. 337, 9th edition.

2. *Cf.*, *Mukhtasar of Khalil Ibn Is-haq and Tanbih of Sharaze.*

3. *Sociology of Islam*, by R. Levy, p. 114.

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Arab (Sarih), the half Arab (Halif) and the client (Mawla). He would have all Muslims treated alike without distinction. This is the laconic order he issued to an Arab Governor who, while refusing to the clients, granted annuities to the Arabs. "It is wicked in a man to despise his brother-Muslim."<sup>1</sup>

13. "Writing about 1862 A.C. the English traveller W. G. Palgrove says that in Arabia he constantly met with Negro slaves in large numbers. Emancipation of slaves he found to be common. About a quarter of a century, after Palgrove, Doughty in *Arabia Deserta* speaks of the condition of the slaves as he saw it. He describes it as always tolerable and often happy. The Dutch scholar and traveller Snouk Hurgronge, who spent six months among the Muslim Ulama at Makka as one of themselves, bears out Doughty's statement."<sup>2</sup> The same competent observer remarks that "slavery in Mohammadan (Muslim) lands is an age-old institution required by circumstances. It provides the Negro with better treatment than exploitation by Europeans."<sup>3</sup>

14. "This is one side of the picture. The other side of it also merits description." From Acquino's to Antonio of Florence and thence to Savonarola, we can describe the mediæval attitude to serfdom in two sentences from the *Summa Theologica*, the first of which we have already cited but which remains as the simplest key to the whole of mediæval thought.

I. "The distinction of possessions and slavery was not brought by Nature but devised by human reason for the benefit of human life" that is, the introduction of slavery is due to the *Jus Gentium*.

II. "Without the *Jus Gentium* men cannot live together, which (living together) is a point of law of

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1. *The Orient under the Khalifs*, by S. Khuda Bukhsh, p. 78.

2. *Sociology of Islam*, by Levy, pp. 118-119.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

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nature since man is by nature a social animal as is proved in Politics ; " that is, the institution of some sort of servitude was contained in natural law and could never be wholly abolished.<sup>1</sup> This trend of thought dominated the social attitude of European towards slavery long after Theocracy in Islam had made the lot of a slave a comfortable one. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in the eighteenth century but " in Singapore in 1891 there was a regular trade in Chinese slaves, both men and women, and official protection was given to the trade."<sup>2</sup> In the Southern states of the U.S.A. at the present time, Negroes are treated no better than slaves. " The Negro has been emancipated and admitted to free voting citizenship ; he has grown wealthy and has raised himself by education. But to his fellow-men of a different colour he remains inferior still. Mr. Laird Clowes, whose careful and detailed investigation of this remarkable question has recently attracted attention in England says : " Throughout the South the social position of the men in whose veins Negro blood courses is unalterably fixed at birth. The child may grow to be wise, to be wealthy, to be entrusted even with the responsibilities of office, but he always bears with him the visible marks of his origin, and these marks condemn him to remain for ever at the bottom of the social ladder. To incur this condemnation he need not be by any means black. A quarter, an eighth, nay, a sixteenth of African blood is sufficient to deprive him of all chances of social equality with the white man. For the being with the hated taint there is no social mercy. A white man may be ignorant, vicious and poor. For him, in spite of all, the door is ever kept open. But the black or

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1. *Social Theories of the Middle Ages*, by Bede Jarret, p. 121.

2. *Sociology of Islam*, by Levy, p. 126.

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coloured man, no matter what his personal merits may be, is ruthlessly shut out. The white absolutely declines to associate with him on equal terms.”<sup>1</sup>

15. “It was in keeping with the dual, religious-political character of the Islamic State that for the purpose of maintaining the law there came into existence another officer, the *Muhtasib*, who was concerned with the less secular side of it, and whose business it was to see that the religious and moral precepts of Islam were obeyed. He was appointed by the Caliph or his Vizier, and, like other holders of public office, he had to be a Muslim, and a freeman of a respectable character. Public morals had a large share of the *Muhtasib*’s attention. Amongst the many miscellaneous duties with which the *Muhtasib* was charged a number were concerned with public amenities. Another matter which came within his cognizance was cruelty to servants and animals either by underfeeding or overburdening with tasks beyond their powers.”<sup>2</sup> “In addition to *Muhtasib* the later Umayyads and the Abbasides established *Názir-ul-Mazālim* (Reviewer of wrongs). This powerful court combined the duties of the Qadzi with the power of the sovereign and concerned itself among other things with the duty of the repression of evil-doing and the enforcement of regulations within the jurisdiction of the *Muhtasib* (Censor) but beyond his power to apply.”<sup>3</sup>

16. The treatment of non-Muslims is an outstanding feature of social justice under Theocracy in Islam. On payment of a capitation tax they enjoyed all the privileges of society and also exemption from military service. Even the *Muhtasib* was lenient to them. If the former found any Muslim drinking wine in public it was his duty to admonish him and spill the

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1. *Social Evolution*, by Benjamin Kidd, pp. 50-51.

2. *Sociology of Islam*, by Levy, p. 367.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 387.

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wine on the ground but if he happened to belong to one of the “protected” religions he was to be warned not to offend again in public. “In the Hanafite and Hanbalite laws the life of a protected subject was placed on precisely the same footing as that of a Muslim—a most important principle indeed. The very same blood-money was payable in either case.”<sup>1</sup> “We find among the public functionaries under the Omayyads of Cordova one who was charged with the special protection of the person and interests of Jews and Christians.”<sup>2</sup>

17. *Economic Development*.—The fiscal system of the Islamic government was founded upon an unique basis of taxation and devision of the entire revenue after deducting State expenses among the members of the Muslim community. This was initiated by Caliph Abu-Bakr and further developed by ‘Umar. It was in fact an extension of the socialistic tendencies implemented by Prophet Muhammad. “The conversion *en masse*, of almost all the inhabitants of Arabian Peninsula, necessitated the introduction of order and method in the distribution of money—one of the most powerful levers of the new religion and one of the stoutest supports of the new State. Here the decisively democratic and socialistic conception of the original Islam lay at the basis. By its novelty and important consequences this political institution stands out as one of the most conspicuous landmarks not merely in the Islamic but in history as a whole.”<sup>3</sup> It was in furtherance of this policy that Caliph ‘Umar gave a decision—momentous for the growth and development of the Islamic Empire. The decision was that the conquered land shall be regarded as an inalienable

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1. *The Renaissance of Islam*, by Prof. A. Metz, translated by S. Khuda Bukhsh and D. S. Margoliouth, p. 40.

2. *History of Spain*, by Burke, p. 117, Note I.

3. *The Orient under the Caliphs*, by S. Khuda Bukhsh, p. 74.

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crown possession—for all time—the produce to be at the disposal of the State for the *Common good*. Thus the inhabitants were left in possession of the land, both in Babylon and Egypt, and the change of government did not disturb their economic contentment. Social amelioration was not only the concern of the central government but of each individual Muslim according to the behests of the Holy Qura-án. The administration of poor law was made easier as every Muslim realised the obligation placed upon him in respect of Zakat. This is the moral side of human nature which Theocracy in Islam cultivated so successfully in furtherance of its aim of the general uplift of humanity.

18. An important step taken by Theocracy in Islam—far-reaching in its economic effect was the abolition of usury among the Muslims. Usury is indeed the bane of national wealth and the sheet-anchor of economic dictatorship of the moneylenders. Hence the distribution of wealth among all classes has been emphasised in all economic law of Islam, “so that it may not circulate (only) between the rich among you.” Holy Qur-án (59 : 7).

19. The foresight shown by the Holy Prophet in banning usury has been more than justified in the political sphere. It has saved many unpleasant incidents of European history, *viz.*, the banishment of Jews from European countries. “It is commonly stated that the first known usurer was a French Rabbi, Jacob Tom of Raneru in 1146, but the practice once started, its ramifications must have developed with great rapidity, for the “Ordinance of Jewry” by which the whole business came under regulation in 1094, shows the hold the Jews had by that time secured over the clientage, and the strength of their position in public life. By the thirteenth century, their



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property, coupled with the immunity from restrictions binding the Christians, had roused public feeling, which rose in proportion to their growing wealth and the increasing number of those in debt. Popular dislike coincided with the adoption of public action against them. In 1240 the Caursines moneylenders from Cahors were expelled by Henry III from England. The Statute of Judaism (1275) endeavoured to deal with them short of proceeding to this extremity. It forbade the practice of usury and urged the Jews to engage in commerce and handicraft for which facilities were now offered them, together with liberty to hold land. This legislation naturally proved useless; it was hardly possible for the Jews skilled in one trade to turn successfully to another and thus handicapped on all sides they turned for a living to clipping the coin. Urged by a Papal Rescript to take further action, the king then fell back on an attempt at their conversion, promising to every convert full liberty of residence and trade. With the failure of this last attempt to settle the "Jewish question" Edward I in 1290 banished the Jews from England under circumstances of considerable hardships and distress."<sup>1</sup> In our times the banishment of Jews from Germany is recent history. Is there a single parallel instance of their banishment in the whole history of Islamic government? It could not be, for it was directly against the principle of "Universal Fold" which Islam came to achieve.

20. Women who were considered as "misfits" of society in Pre-Islamic days in Arabia were raised to the status of equality with men. Bureaucracy conceded this right to them only after the Great War of 1914-18. It was no small reform that the Prophet carried out when he permitted to women

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1. *Social Theories of the Middle Ages*, p. 169, *op cit*.

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the handling of their property. "For the true justification of property lies in the principle that it forms the material environment for due self-development of the Propria-Persona, and this self-development is necessary for the due performance of the social functions of the individual<sup>1</sup>" In passing we may mention that in India it is because of this total deprivation of the woman from all control over wealth that she has been given the epithet of "Nirdhana" in the Hindu Shastras. In Shatpat Brahman it is clearly written: "The gods have totally segregated the women from their husband and thus segregated they neither possess any soul nor are entitled to any heritage." "The law of marriage and inheritance, on the contrary, in spite of the fact that the Hebrews and Arabs are supposed to belong to the same family of nations and possessed old common Semitic institutions, are essentially the original product of Islam. The Muslim Law of Inheritance is bolder in its outline, more definite in its assignment of shares, more considerate to the other sex, and far more refined and human than the Hebrew Law.<sup>2</sup>" In regard to marriage, two important reforms which entirely changed the outlook of woman on society, were, first of all, the option of puberty and, secondly, rights upon dissolution of marriage. In Pre-Islamic Arabia, marriage arranged by parents were indissoluble at the suit of the wife; whereas the husband could discard her at any time.

21. As a corollary to the cardinal principle of Islam, namely, personal accountability of action after death, the Law of Intention was introduced which safeguarded the interests of millions of innocent people. The most celebrated saying of the Holy Prophet recorded in the books of Tradition is: "Deeds

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1. *Socialism and Modern Thought*, by M. Kaufmann, p. 4.

2. *The Orient under the Caliphs*, pp. 461-62, *op cit*.

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are to be judged according to the intention of the doer." This checked effectively the tribal wars of the Arabs in which the action of one man made the whole tribe responsible for it.

22. *Educational Benefits.*—It was in the field of education that Islam conferred the greatest benefit upon humanity. Beginning with the Divine injunction to the unlettered Prophet to read in the Name of the Lord, the emphasis upon the acquirement of Knowledge developed side by side with the expansion of the Faith. The ransom of the educated war prisoners was that they should teach the Muslim children to read and write. "When the Arabs came in contact with the debris of ancient civilization they showed their aptitude by putting into practice the beautiful precepts of the Prophet, who said to his followers: "Science is the remedy for the infirmities of ignorance, a comforting beacon in the night of injustice. The study of the Sciences has the value of fast: the teaching of them has the value of prayer; in a noble heart they inspire the highest feelings, and they correct and humanise the perverted<sup>1</sup>." It is a matter of general agreement that one of the unmistakable features of Islamic civilization, throughout its long history, is its quenchless thirst for Knowledge. The promotion of learning, and respect for the learned was to be found in each period and in each country. Islam gave to other sciences the same footing which it gave to the study of the Holy Qur-án and the Hadith and Fiqh (Muslim Jurisprudence)—a place in the mosque. Lectures on Chemistry and Physics, Botany and Medicine and Astronomy were given in the mosque equally with lectures on the above-named subjects, for the mosque was the University of Islam in the great days.

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1. *Islam in the World*, by Dr. Zaki Ali, p. 102.

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23. One interesting fact stands out as remarkable in the Theocracy in Islam. It is this that it brought about equality in all departments of life. In the sphere of education the school-room was open to all, the high and the low. In Spain under the Umayyad and in Baghdad under the Abbasid Khalifas, Christians and Jews equally with Muslims, were admitted to the schools and universities—not only that, but were boarded and lodged in hostels at the cost of the State. “It is at least something—something to their credit that, in an age when the Arabs were masters of a goodly portion of the civilized world, within the limits of their sway they encouraged and patronized learning and literature in others—their subjects for the time being. Thus, in their day, it was the Arabs who kept the torch of culture burning. They contributed what they could to the task the glory of preserving the Past for the Present and the Future. For this at least we are in their debts. Had they chosen, things might have been so appallingly different<sup>1</sup>.” A less prejudiced author Emmanuel Deutsch says: “By the aid of the Qur-án the Arabs conquered a world greater than that of Alexander the Great, greater than that of Rome, in so many tens of years as the latter had wanted hundreds to accomplish her conquests; by the aid of which they, alone of all the Semites, came to Europe as kings, whither the Phœnicians had come as trades men and the Jews as fugitives or captives. They came to Europe to hold up the light to Humanity, they alone, while darkness lay around, to raise up the wisdom and knowledge of Hellas from the dead, to teach philosophy, medicine and astronomy, and the golden art of song to the West as well as to the East, to stand at the cradle of modern

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1. *Arab Civilization*, by Joseph Hall, translated by S. Khuda Bukhsh, p. 86.

## "THEOCRACY" IN ISLAM

science and to cause us late *epogoni* for ever to weep over the day when Granada fell<sup>1</sup>." "The Arabians," says Osler in his *Evolution of Modern Medicine* lit. "a brilliant torch from Grecian lamps and from the eighth to the eleventh centuries the profession reached among them a position of dignity and importance to which it is hard to find a parallel in history<sup>2</sup>." "The cultural influence of the Arabs was also profound in nearby Sicily in the Norman Period, as we know from a picture of a chronicle of the early thirteenth century representing the sick-bed of the Norman King Wilhelm II who like his shrewd predecessors fostered Islamic culture in his realm. We see by the bed-side of the dying monarch (1189) the Arab physician Hashim<sup>3</sup>."

### TO SUM UP

24. (1) Theocracy in Islam offered a solution to the capitalistic economic system of Pre-Islamic days by banning usury which enriched a few by means of exploitation of the many and consolidated the economic basis of society by ensuring equitable distribution of the national wealth—by the introduction of "dole system" and the institution of *Zakāt* for the surplus gains of the rich. Not the least conspicuous was the step taken by it for the betterment of the lot of slaves in spite of the social tendencies of the age; for what was slavery but capitalism in its naked and hideous form?

(2) It rescued women from social and intellectual black-out by raising their legal status and making them responsible members of the community; thus enabling them to play their destined part in the evolution of society.

(3) It bestowed the greatest benefit upon mankind by means of education which was made available to all and also by enormous gains to knowledge. Even

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<sup>1</sup> 1. *Islam in the World*, by Dr. Zaki Ali, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> 2. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> 3. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

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more than in its laws, the social theories of an age can be seen in its education, in the ideas thus held up to it for motive, in its form, in the things it studies, the hope it gives. Education alone was the means to effect a transformation of the world and not the least the education of women.

25. A word may be said about Theocracy in Christianity which held sway over Europe in the Middle Ages for more than a thousand years. The balance-sheet of its achievements has been drawn up by a competent author in the following words: "We reach at length the twelfth century. All movement has been, so far, in one direction. Western Europe has become a vast theocracy. Implicit obedience to ecclesiastical authority, unquestioning faith in the ultra-rational, the criminality of doubt and of error, is the prevailing note throughout every part of the organization. Human history is without any parallel to the life of these centuries, or to the state which society had now reached. The church is omnipotent, her claim is to supremacy in all things, temporal as well as spiritual; Emperors and Kings hold the crowns from God as his Vassals; the whole domain of human activity, moral, social, political and intellectual, is subject to him. The attainments of the Greek and Roman genius are buried out of sight. The triumphs of the ancient civilizations are as though they had never existed: they are not only forgotten; there is simply no organic continuity between the old life and that which has replaced it."

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1. *Social Evolution*, by Benjamin Kidd, p. 130.

# THE ECONOMIC VIEW OF LIFE EXAMINED

BY MAULVI AFTAB-UD-DIN AHMAD

Man's motive for action is the satisfaction of his economic needs. The history of man is the history of his economic struggle, individual and collective. That is the philosophy of the Communist. As a matter of fact, one need not go to history ; even a casual observation of man as he exists to-day will make this appear as a self-evident truth. The toiling human beings in their millions seem to have but one motive *viz.*, economic. Living in this world of matter, man has to satisfy the recurring needs of his physical existence by a continuous struggle against external nature, which is sometimes bountiful, at others merciless. He wants to make up for the inclemencies of Nature by co-operation with his fellow beings. Social life will thus appear to be a sort of safeguard or insurance against economic difficulties which man cannot overcome by his individual efforts. Death, disease and natural calamities must always be there and man must provide against them. Hence he must live in society. All this would make a plausible case for the Communist theory and for his contention that religion bungles the situation by introducing values supermundane. But man has some inherent weaknesses of his own which spoil the otherwise serene atmosphere of this social arrangement, supposed to have been built up by the economic needs of man. He is disinclined to work and desires what he does not deserve. He is anxious to enjoy the rights of social existence without caring much for its obligations. For a healthy social life there must be punishments for these irregularities. Individualists and Capitalists prescribe indigence and starvation for the sin of indolence, and harsh criminal measures for the infringement of social laws. Had the benefits of these measures, however, been greater than their harms mankind would have been spared the horrors of Red revolution and

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the huge commotion it has created in the world. A deeper and more merciful method of handling the situation has to be evolved if we have the peace and prosperity of humanity really at heart.

The Communist contention is undoubtedly based on some realistic experiences. Man is not revolutionary by nature. Peaceful home-life and an orderly society has an irresistible attraction for the average man of the world. A whole mass of people cannot rise in revolt against the established order unless they are driven to despair. There must, therefore, be something seriously at fault with the general economic order of the world. The Communist, to be sure, is not an anarchist. And yet we should not treat the Capitalists as subhuman beings. They must also have some real and strong reasons for their contention. A compromise is possible, nay desirable, in the best interests of humanity. Man should be made to work but not through fear of starvation, nor by the iron rod of a dictator. He should be supplied with incentives that would relieve the drudgery and monotony of economic work. He should be deterred from the breaches of social laws, but not by the mere threat of corporeal punishments, but mostly by the inner susceptibilities of a refined and awakened soul. And here comes in the function of religion. Religion handles the emotions and manipulates the psychology of man. Religion knows that man is not a mere physical being, that he lives more through his emotions and imagination than through his physical needs and through reactions to immediate surroundings. Religion enlivens imagination and regulates emotion. But while doing so, it does not ignore the present and the solid earth either. On the contrary, its services to the economic ordering of humanity are far more effective than those of the economists themselves. In any case, it effects a reconciliation between the higher



## THE ECONOMIC VIEW OF LIFE

emotions and the material needs of man. It recognises the fact that economics is an essential requisite for physical existence. But it knows also that even for the smooth running of the economic system, man needs a culture of his higher emotions, and a system of discipline calculated to chasten his lower and material feelings, whence spring actions that tend to disturb the equilibrium of society. It makes man aware of the fact that even from a purely economic point of view man increases in efficiency and energy as he experiences the joy of sacrifice and giving. Indeed, a deeper study of man's economic motive will reveal that a strictly selfish man is a very poor producer. If all men were grossly selfish, the world would suffer terribly in economic production. Thus while true religion judiciously regularises the economic efforts of man, it provides food for those higher emotions which enable man to jeopardise, of his own free choice, the interests of his physical existence. It is aware of a great truth which the Communist has deplorably missed. It is that man lives more for others than for himself; he lives more for sentiments and causes than for the crude physical aspect of his own life. Leave aside the very higher sentiments for God, Truth, Justice in its broad sense, Beauty in the very comprehensive sense of art and culture—the masses of people even in this age of rank materialism, even the masses of communists, are still irresistibly swayed by emotions, mostly racial and national. Man is so constituted that he cannot live for his own self alone. He fulfils himself by identifying himself with others.

Indeed, it is difficult to justify on purely economic grounds the actions of those millions of idealists and visionaries who have embraced physical annihilation to establish a regime in Russia that would do justice to the surviving proletariat. Mere concern for the physical

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existence would make a despicable coward of every man, and even defeat the very object of the struggle for existence. A man wedded to purely materialistic outlook on life cannot die for a cause, for the safety and comfort of others, even if these others be his own people, his very kith and kin. When you yourself are annihilated and when there is no value other than purely economic that is material, it should mean nothing to you to be told that your nation or people would reap the benefit of your sacrifice.

Fortunately for man, he is not the selfish and materialistic being he is painted by our enthusiastic Communist friends. No doubt, he is selfish and exploiting ; but he is also found to throw his own interest and comforts to the winds for the sake of others. This is an aspect of his character which cannot be explained by the economic theory of life. And yet I do not blame the propounders and upholders of this theory. They are not inspired teachers. They do not deal with the possibilities of human nature but with how it expresses itself at the moment, a moment extremely abnormal in the history of our species. They take into account only the surface expressions of human nature and have tried to regulate our social relationship on their basis, at a time when the surface expressions are very deceptive indeed. To cite an example of the abnormality of our emotional reactions, we may refer to the modern man and woman's attitude towards their offspring. Man in all ages, and even the lower animals, have experienced unalloyed joy at the arrival of an offspring. Some male animals, of course, feel jealous of a male offspring but this is not on any ground of economics, but on the basis of rivalry in leadership. Towards the female offspring even this animal father is affectionate. As for the female parent, it is invariably loving and sacrificing. But a modern woman, not to

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speaking of man, has a dread for children, purely on economic considerations. The lack of means is a false plea, seeing that couples belonging to nations that enjoy comforts and amenities, which the bulk of humanity cannot even imagine, complain of this lack of means and this complaint is heard not so much from the poorer sections as from the higher classes. From the various and conflicting contentions on the subject, it is difficult to see what standard of living will make these men and women cheerfully undertake the responsibility of rearing children. If one analyses their minds carefully, one will find nothing but selfishness, masquerading under the name of economic consideration, at the back of their unwillingness to produce children. All they care for is enjoyment in its grossest form and a child in any case spoils this kind of enjoyment. Children mean sacrifice on the part of parents—sacrifice of material comforts, of time and energy ; which modern men and women are so averse to. Throughout the ages, the natural instinct of animal life has made this enormous sacrifice appear joyful and hilarious through certain active emotions. Parents have always valued the life of their offspring more than their own. In the modern civilized man and woman, for reasons which this is not the place to discuss, the instinctive play of these emotions has stopped. This is a very abnormal phenomenon indeed ; man has become worse than animal. To base any theory on this abnormal expression of human nature, is certainly unwarranted. When Karl Marx was propounding his theory he was mistaking a diseased state of human mind for a healthy condition. We admit that the history of this disease in the human mind is as old as humanity. Man relapses to it every now and then. But to say that this is the rule, the fundamental principle of man's social existence is a travesty of facts. One might as well say on the

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basis of gigantic proportion of diseases that there is no such thing as health in the human body or that diseased condition is a rule with man's physical existence. It seems, although a Jew, Karl Marx was much impressed religiously by the Christian theory of evil deduced from the doctrine of the inherent sinfulness of man. Perhaps, the melancholy history of his own race gave additional support to his predilections to this view of human nature. The economic theory of history is the same theory of original sin stated in terms of Sociology. The Holy Qur-án rejects this view of human nature, in one of its early Makkan Chapters, when the great mind of the Great Prophet must have been greatly agitated over this problem. With the appalling barbarity, selfishness and callousness of man before his eyes, he was given a vision of the deeper aspects of human history.

It was revealed :

“ Consider the Fig, the Olive, and the Mount Sinai (the three standing as symbols for Buddhism, Christianity and the Mosaic Dispensation respectively) and this city made secure (meaning the tradition of Abraham and Ishmael to be renewed under the ægis of Muhammad) certainly We created man in the best make.

“ Then We render him the lowest of the low,

“ Except those who believe and do good, so they shall have a reward never to be cut off.” (The Holy Qur-án 95 ; 1—6).

In formulating his theory of the social development of man, Karl Marx evidently has lost sight of the genuine religious history of man. He forgot that there have been persons in history like Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Abraham, whose lives are a living refutation of the theory that man's only consideration for social action is economic. It was to making man spurn at the anxiety

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for what is called economic existence, that their whole energy was devoted. Not that they forbade people to do any work for their living. But they certainly meant to say that it was not a matter to engage the whole or even a major part of our attention. At the most it should hold a very minor position in the activities of our life. They had the insight to see that economic order of our social life has the danger of toppling over by an undue emphasis on it. They proposed instead a scheme for the development of higher faculties. Under their noble guidance, man and woman instead of fighting for their economic rights, came to know the pleasure of sacrifice. They knew that when every one knew the joy of sacrifice, any the smallest amount of economic resources would appear plenty. They also demonstrated the truth much ignored in these days that man could be moved to enormous social activities by an appeal to such an intangible ideal as of God, an ideal that cuts at the root of the economic theory of life, and in the face of which the activities based on pure economic motive pale into insignificance. Their lives and successes have proved beyond doubt that man is not the selfish creature that he appears to be. No doubt he is capable of being worse than animal in selfishness and meanness but that is because he is averse to being benefited by Divine guidance.

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### THE CHARGE OF EXCLUSIVISM

BY O. V. ABDULLAH

"Surely Ours is to show the way" (The Holy Qur-án 92 : 12).

There is a tendency among the modern apologists of Hinduism to deprecate Islam on the ground of its being rigid and exclusive and to extol Hinduism for its vagueness and indefiniteness. Thus Sir S. Radhakrishnan, speaking of Hinduism, remarks: "In its pure form, at any rate, it never leaned as heavily as other religions do on authority. It is not a 'founded' religion, nor does it centre round any historical events."<sup>1</sup> Further on in the same book<sup>2</sup> he says: "The lack of definiteness in a religion like that of the Hindus seems to me to stand for a higher form of definiteness."

This kind of defence, I am afraid, only betrays lack of any solid reasons for justification. Faced with the inescapable fact that in Hinduism there is neither a universally accepted Book, nor a generally acclaimed teacher, nor any definiteness as to the nature of God or even His very existence, the apologist of Hinduism seeks shelter in a strange metaphysical process by which want of definiteness is made to stand for definiteness. What is still more amusing is the attempt to find fault with other religions for not being in the same boat !

What is wanted of a religion is its ability to give men a true conception of values and to show them the proper place of this life in the Divine Plan. And it is the very fact that Islam does provide its adherents with the necessary equipment for meeting the storms and dangers of the sea, that has brought on its head the charge of rigidity and exclusiveness. The monotheism of Islam, it is said, is too rigid to admit of any but Him

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1. *An Idealist View of Life*, page 89.

2. *Ibid*, p. 204.

## THE CHARGE OF EXCLUSIVISM

as God. Compare, says the Hindu apologist, this narrow, unaccommodating conception of God with the universalism of Hinduism which shelters the monism of the Vedanta, the agnosticism of the Buddhist and even the animism of the wild tribes. Whereas, continues the self-complacent Hindu, all Muslims have to accept the Holy Qur-án as infallible and follow the practices of the Prophet, the Hindu religion is broad enough not to prescribe any particular Book or Teacher as infallible.

If these be the grounds of criticism, then indeed Islam is rigid and exclusive. For it can no more afford to admit of plurality of gods or condone idolatrous practices or connive at priestcraft and ritualism, than can a compromise be effected between truth and falsehood. It is only a religion which is not sure of its own ground that can accommodate both monotheism and polytheism in its pantheon.

On the other hand, if the charge is based on the ground that its definiteness and simplicity makes it intolerant towards other systems and creeds, then it is misinformed or based on prejudice. One has only got to make a comparative study of the conception of God, the attitude towards other teachers and the conception of salvation—to take only a few points—in Islam and Hinduism, to be convinced of the broadmindedness of Islamic principles.

But before doing so we must first analyse Radhakrishnan's defence of Hinduism. The implication of his remark is that a religion should not prescribe a book or point to any particular leader to be followed. If only he takes the trouble to go a little deeper, he will find that these things help, rather than hinder, spiritual development.

One has only to consider the need for a 'book,' to see Radhakrishnan's mistake. The ordinary man has certain settled notions and convictions in life. It is these that guide him in life. And these form his

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religion. He cannot do without it. If he forsakes his former set convictions, he does so only to accept certain others instead. It is therefore vital that what he believes in promotes his spiritual and material welfare. But the history of philosophic thought proves that the human brain is unfitted for the purpose of thinking out such a religion. Philosophers are still not agreed on the nature of God or His attributes or even about His existence. In fact there are as many views on God as there are philosophers. Even image-worship is not left without a defender: Radhakrishnan takes pains to justify it in his "The Heart of Hindustan."

When such is the result of human endeavour to construct a religious edifice, it is quite patent that God Himself must undertake the task of teaching man the proper place of this earthly life in the Divine Plan, if man is to be saved. And this has necessarily got to be in the form of a book, as that is the only way to preserve the teachings for the guidance of future generations.

And keen observers of the condition of modern civilized societies are realising the need for such a Book to guide the present generation. Thus H. G. Wells in his "Salvaging of Civilization" puts in an eloquent plea for such a Book thus: "And this is the essence of what I am driving at, our modern communities are no longer cemented, they lack organized solidarity, they are not prepared to stand shocks and strains, they have become dangerously loose mentally and morally. That, I believe, is the clue to a great proportion of the present social and political troubles of the world. We need to get back to a cement. We want a Bible. We want a Bible so badly that we cannot afford to put the old Bibles on a pinnacle out of daily use." Words of power for Sir S. Radhakrishnan to ponder over!



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Mr. Wells emphasises not only the need for a new Bible but also the necessity to put it to daily use. And here he is right. For, the constant perusal of such a Book acts as a reminder of our spiritual obligations and serves as a refreshing check to the undue influence of our mundane activities. That is why God commands us in the Qur-án to recite the sacred words in slow measured tones every day in the stillness of the dawn when the soul can receive light better<sup>1</sup>.

So much for the need for a Book. But even a Book by itself will not suffice. The teachings in it have got to be realised in our lives. And who can be better guides in this than Founders or Teachers? Not only do they show the practicability of their teachings, but they also act as models to be emulated. Contact with such a Teacher can transform a hardened sinner into a saint. It is but the absence, at the moment, of men of great spiritual status, that makes Radhakrishnan underrate their importance. Real spirituality, like a contagious disease, is catching. The very air breathes with their dynamic influence, and those who happen to come into contact with them, succumb to their spiritual magnetism. There are varying degrees of spirituality and even now men are not wanting who emanate such magnetism to some extent.

Failing such personal contact, the next best is a faithful biography of a leader. Such a biography conjures up before the reader's mind's eye, the saintly greatness of the man and exercises a potent influence on his conduct. In this respect Muslims are in a privileged position. They have with them an exhaustive account of the life of the Holy Prophet. From the cradle to the grave, his life both public and private was an open book for his companions. The different

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1. Holy Qur-án 7 : 78, 79 : 4.

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facets of his life bring out, before the reader, the beauty of his soul. No wonder he spontaneously falls in love with him and tries to be in his footsteps. That is why the influence of Muhammad (peace be on him !) is as strong and captivating to-day as it was to his own immediate companions.

And the influence of the Prophet of the Desert is definitely on the side of mutual understanding and sympathy. The religion he preached and the life he led, alike disprove the Hindu philosopher's theory that a "Book" and a "Founder" make for exclusiveness and rigidity. On the other hand, it can easily be shown that the absence of any particular Book or Founder has not made Hinduism broadminded or catholic. A comparative study, based on a few points, will make things clear.

For instance take the idea of God in Hinduism. Sir S. Radhakrishnan had argued, as we saw,<sup>1</sup> that there is no particular Book in Hinduism. Yet he admits in "Heart of Hindustan"<sup>2</sup> that all Hindus "are expected to accept the Vedas as their highest religious authority." But, as Swami Vivekananda has shown, all sorts of conception of God find their support from the Vedas.<sup>3</sup> In this medley of conflicting ideas of God, the idea that stands out prominent is the idea of the tribal nature of God. "The cowmother of the Vedas yielded milk only to the Brahmins, the Kashatriyas and the Vaishas, and fed and fostered them alone."<sup>4</sup>

In complete contrast to this Islam lays special stress on the concept of the "Lord of the Worlds." The word 'Rabb' which means "Lord of the worlds", occurs 960 times in the Holy Book, no other name of the Divine Being being so frequently mentioned. Search

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1. See the first paragraph.

2. Page 26.

3. Vivekananda, *Hinduism*, page 58.

4. Atharva Veda, XIX : 71, 1 quoted in *Muhammad in World Scriptures*.

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through the world's sacred literature, you will never find such emphasis on the non-tribal non-national nature of God. As Gibbon has admitted, the Qur-án is a glorious testimony to the unity of God. And there is nothing to approach the sublimity, grandeur and majesty of the Qur-ánic concept of God in other religious books.

As a corollary to the concept of God as the God of all nations, the Holy Book lays stress on the Divine solicitude for the spiritual and material welfare of all His creatures. There is no Chosen Race in Islam and a Muslim has to believe that "every nation had an apostle," (10 : 47) and that "there is not a people but a warner has gone among them" (35 : 24). This is exclusivism indeed !

The idea of salvation in Hinduism further lends support to my contention. It is obvious that given the idea of God as the God of the Aryas, the idea of salvation cannot be less exclusive. And this is what we actually find. According to Professor Radhakumud Mukerjee "the former (Vishnupurana) frankly states that birth in the sacred 'Bharatha bhum' is earned by the spiritual merit of a thousand lives, as it leads to salvation, 'that greater blessing of final liberation' which is not attained even by the gods . . . . Similarly the other purana (Bhagat purana) also extols the place of birth as the supreme factor in man's emancipation."<sup>1</sup>

Contrast this with the Islamic concept of salvation. The Qur-án pooh-poohs the idea that salvation is the monopoly of a particular people or race in the following verses :

And they say : 'None  
Shall enter Paradise unless  
He be a Jew or a Christian.'

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1. Prof. R. Mukerjee in 'Prabuddha Bharata' April 1938 issue.

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Those are their fancies.

Say : " Produce your proof

If ye are truthful."

Nay,—whoever submits

His whole self to God

And is a doer of good,—

He will get his reward

With his Lord ;

On such shall be no fear,

Nor shall they grieve.' (II : 111-112.)

The emphasis in Islam is on belief in God and the Last Day and the doing of good (II, 62). A Muslim is one who tunes his will to the Will of God. That is why the Qur-án expressly calls Abraham a Muslim (III, 67), though he lived long before his spiritual descendant Muhammad (peace be on him !).

That is why, again, a Muslim has to accept as an article of faith all the prophets of God. A Muslim must believe in the prophethood of Jesus, of Moses, of Abraham and of all other prophets. What is more, he is enjoined not to make any distinction between one prophet and another, but to regard all of them as those Nearest to God (Muqarrabūn). Compare this cosmopolitan attitude with that of Christian missionaries or Hindu propagandists who make the vilification of other Teachers their life's mission. In their zeal to extol Jesus as the only saviour of mankind, the Christians have no scruples in vilifying even the Old Testament prophets like Solomon and David. And the modern Arya Samajists, in their endeavour to revive Arya Dharma, have spared no pains to attack the person of Muhammad (peace be on him !).

It is such hopelessly unsympathetic attitude of the non-Islamic religions towards sister faiths that has made religion itself the target of much adverse criticism.

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Instead of trying to bring all the true lovers of religion together, these have only tried to create separatism and self-sufficiency. The first step towards a better understanding between religions is a recognition (not merely out of policy) of the genuineness of the missions of all the prophets of the world. Unfortunately religions other than Islam do not accept this wholesome attitude and the result is the very deluge of books caricaturing and defaming the life and work of other teachers. It is Islam alone that offers us the best solution in this, as in any other matter. Not only does Islam admit the equal respectability of all the teachers, but it goes further and says that they were all Godsend servants teaching the same religion of Unity, Faith and Discipline. It encourages its followers not to engage in fruitless quarrels over doctrines, but to try and find out common grounds between religions, in the following verse :

Say : " Oh People  
Of the Book ! come  
To common terms  
As between us and you :  
That we worship  
None but God ;  
That we associate  
No equals with Him ;  
That we erect not,  
From among ourselves,  
Lords and patrons  
Other than God."  
If then they turn back,  
Say ye : " Bear witness  
That we (at least)  
Are Muslims (bowing  
To God's Will) "—III, 64.

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This call to inter-religious goodwill and understanding looks like a cry in the wilderness of religious bigotry and strife. But there is no room for despair. The passionate plea of Mr. Wells for a "new Book" shows which way the wind is blowing. The world will, in spite of Sir S. Radhakrishnan, eventually realise that it needs Divine guidance. The sooner the world recognizes that the 'Book' it is searching for is the Holy Qur-án and the ideal teacher it is anxious to follow is the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him!) the better it is for world peace.

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### BOOK REVIEW

#### Life of Muhammad

BY SUFI MUTIUR RAHMAN BENGALÉE

*Published by the Moslem Sunrise Press, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. 1941, pp. 286.*

There are seven chapters in the book, the last one dealing with the prophecies about the Prophet Muhammad in the Old and the New Testaments.

Attempts at presenting the life and character of the Prophet of Islam to the English-speaking Western public, in a suitable manner, have been many since the appearance of Syed Ameer Ali's book on the subject. The books that made substantial additions to the efforts of this pioneer writer, were :

*Muhammad the Prophet*, by Maulana Muhammad Ali, and *The Ideal Prophet*, by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar's book—*Muhammad the Holy Prophet*, also broke some new grounds, drawing as it did upon the original sources.

The book under review is the latest attempt on this line, and, we should say, a successful one on the whole. Without showing any originality either in its approach or even in the statement of facts, except in

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a few rare cases, it presents its case fairly well. The most outstanding merit of the book is that it is authenticated throughout. It gives reference for every important statement it makes.

Writing at a moment like the present, the author could have thrown some concentrated light on the two principal problems of the day: Sex and Economics—on the background of the Prophet's teachings and practice. A modern reader would expect from a book like this more than some general remarks on these two burning questions of the day.

Also some carefulness about the transliteration of Arabic words would have left a happier impression on the educated readers of the book. Still another defect one notices in it is a slight taint of sectarian propaganda and bias. But as a good set off against all this the reader finds a lot of relevant informations at the end of the book, without which it would have lost much of its attraction as a missionary publication.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

JUBBULPORE,

18-4-44.

DEAR SIR,

Please explain the full significance and the true interpretation of the following verses from the Holy Qur-án:

“O Prophet! Lo! We have made lawful unto thee thy wives whom thou hast paid their dowries, and those whom thy right hand possesseth of those whom Allah hath given thee as spoils of war, and the daughters of thine uncle on the father's side, and the daughters of thine aunts on the father's side and the daughters of thine uncles on the mother's side, and the daughters of thine aunts on the mother's side who emigrated with thee, and a believing woman if she give herself to the Prophet and the Prophet desire to ask her in marriage, a privilege for thee only, not for the

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(rest of) believers." (Pickthall's Translation, xxxiii: 50). What is the special privilege allowed to the Prophet? Are not all the Muslims allowed to have in marriage the kinds of women described above? Or does it mean that the Prophet could keep them without marriage or without paying their dowries? This is, perhaps, not true, and would not be decent. Why should this privilege (whatever it is, be allowed to the Prophet alone to the exclusion of other believers?

Then again please explain, "It is not allowed thee to take other women henceforth . . . . . save those whom thy right hand possesseth." (xxxiii : 52)

Why should this exception be made in the case of female prisoners of war when a complete stop was meant in the further increase in the number of wives? This further shows that female prisoners of war are not allowed adequate safeguard of their chastity, when those possessing them could marry them with lesser restrictions than in the case of free believing women; and even against their wishes. I think that any perfect moral code should allow them as much safeguard of their chastity and rights regarding their marriage and other sex problems as are granted to free believing women. I even think that women should not be taken as prisoners at all unless they are actually taking part in the war, and no restrictions should be placed upon them except as far as their political activities are concerned; and then they should be set free at the end of war.

A. S.

### REPLY :

1. "A privilege for thee only" or "Specially for you" as Maulana Muhammad Ali would put it, is not in reference to the kinds of women described in the verse, or to the payment of dowry but to the restriction of number, as is shown by the use of words "We know what We have ordained for them," that immediately follow the passage. It is evidently a reference to verse 3 of chapter "The Women," which limits the number of wives a Muslim can marry to four at the maximum. It is a well-known fact that the believers, on the revelation of this verse, divorced such of their wives as were in excess of this number.



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The Prophet, however, was given an exemption in this matter. The reason is that the Prophet's wives were a band of women preachers in training. Their lives were consecrated to religion in the manner of nuns, and the Prophet was the supreme teacher they were privileged to learn from. That is why they were forbidden to marry in the event of the Prophet's death. Please read in this connection the article, "The Prophet's Marriages" published in the October 1942 number of this journal. Razi says on the authority of Imam Shafa'i that the privilege spoken of in the passage under discussion is this ban on these ladies being married to others on the death of the Prophet. But we prefer the other interpretation. As for the rules of marriageable relations they apply to the believers as well as to the Prophet.

2. "Whom thy right hand possesseth" does not mean here 'the female prisoners of war' but the wives already married. Had it been otherwise, the Prophet, out of respect for this permission, should have brought in his harem at least one woman out of so many prisoners of war that came to his possession after the revelation of this verse. And even if the phrase be taken to mean "female captives of war" it refers to those who were already included among the Prophet's wives. There were two of them Safiyya and Jawairiyya. Like elsewhere the Qur-án makes a distinction here between the free women married to the Prophet and the prisoners of war given the honour of becoming his wives. It thus speaks of a condition of things already in existence.

Incidentally, it is a wrong reading of Islamic injunctions to think that non-combatants can be taken as war prisoners, male or female. As for the moral justification of war-prisonership of the Islamic type, it is immaterial whether it relates to the male or to the female, it should be borne in mind that such prisonership is conditioned upon religious war. That is to say such prisoners can be taken by Muslims only when they have to fight against enemies who will not allow any freedom of religious faith and are bent upon crushing the voice of conscience by sheer brute force.

Even permanent enslavement of such enemies of mankind should not be considered too severe a

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punishment. But the Holy Qur-án is extremely merciful even to these. It lays down :

“So when you meet the disbelievers in battle, smite the necks until when you have overcome them, make them prisoners, and afterwards either set them free as a favour, or let them ransom themselves, until the war lays down its weapons.” (47 : 4).

So it is not permanent slavery that the Qur-án prescribes for these prisoners. It clearly aims at the ultimate emancipation of all such prisoners. If the ransom money is paid by their own people, well and good. If not, the religion of Islam makes various provisions for such emancipation. A part of state revenue is to be spent for this purpose, besides a large number of private ways of freeing slaves as acts of religious virtue.

The rules and regulations on this subject visualise the ultimate freedom of every person enslaved in the Islamic way. But as the process is a gradual one, some arrangements have to be made for the intervening period ; hence the injunctions concerning treatment of slaves. Islam does not seem to favour the prison house system, the evils of which are becoming more and more patent as humanity grows in understanding. It is not honourable either. While thinking on this question one should not forget that in the conception of slavery in Islam there is nothing of that ignominy and humiliation which is associated with this word in the English language. A slave in Islam is treated as a member of the family to which he or she is attached. As for the female slaves, the Holy Prophet promises a double reward to a person “ who has a slave-girl with him, then he teaches her good manners and instructs her well in polite accomplishments, and he educates her and gives her a good education, then he sets her free and marries her ” (Bukhari 3 : 31 and many other places).

So a female slave has to be married in a regular way even by the master if he wants to treat her as his wife.

We hope this will satisfy you.

Yours very sincerely in Islam,

AFTAB-UD-DIN AHMAD,

*Editor.*

**Resolution No. 331, dated 31-3-1944 passed by the Managing Committee of the Working Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Lahore.**

The Managing Committee of the Working Muslim Mission and Literary Trust heartily appreciates the timely contributions to the Deficit Fund of the Trust by the Muslims in India and abroad. It is extremely good of them to have realised the grave difficulties with which the Mission was faced. This is really an indication of a real anxiety and love in their minds for the propagation of Islam.

Evidently our brethren in faith are at one with us in believing that Islam is the one solution of all those difficulties that face the Muslim world as well as the rest of humanity to-day. Indeed it is through the proper establishment of the Islamic system of life that the sufferings of humanity can be ended and a new era of peace and security ushered in. And among the numerous movements and organisations in the Islamic World, it is this Mission alone that has been carrying on the work of the propagation of Islam in a systematic and effective way in the East as well as in the West. The results of its activities are there before the world, too patent to be pointed out. And if the past has been so encouraging, the future holds out prospects still more brilliant.

In view of the rising tide of Islam in the West which no discerning eye can miss, we venture to request our helpers to make some efforts in their circle of influence to popularise this most beneficial movement of the time, and persuade every well-wisher of Islam to participate in this sacred enterprise.

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