

# ISLAM AND ITS PRINCIPLES AS COMPARED WITH CHRISTIANITY.

AN ADDRESS TO THE HERETICS AT CAMBRIDGE.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,—

Allow me first of all to thank you for the honour you have conferred upon me by inviting me to address an intellectual assembly like yours. In a way, ladies and gentlemen, I am sympathetic with the guiding principles of your club. It is based on the cravings of human reason; and man is, after all, a rational being. We may make allowances for things ultrarational; but things irrational on their very face, cannot be countenanced. I admit that all of us are not capable of comprehending everything on rational basis; but we cannot be inflicted upon things apparently unreasonable under the garb and name of *mysteries*. We cannot afford to believe in dogmas and tenets that have got no bearing on our conduct of life. And what is religion after all; a practical code of life conducive to our utility, to our civilisation, and to the development of our faculties. Religion may teach us to hold certain beliefs, but those beliefs must actuate us to adopt that code of life. It may propose certain practices to observe, but that also to equip us for the observance of the said code. Beyond that, I have no faith in religion. I hardly need a religion which bases my salvation only on my belief in some dogmas having no direct bearing on my life, and leaves me to choose my own code of life.

With all this deluge of literature, which is daily pouring here from the Press, and with all the rational hankering after knowledge in the West, I am constrained, ladies and gentlemen, to remark, Islam is still enshrouded with misrepresentation and misinformation. Rationalism and free thought, unfortunately, took its conception of God and religion from current beliefs in the West, and was not satisfied with religion naturally. But Islam, represented in its purest form was sure to change rationalistic attitude towards religion, as it has begun to do now. I for one, ladies and gentleman, would rather be an atheist than accept a god whose character and attributes received their epiphany in the Manger and on the Cross. I would rather be an agnostic than to know of God through the Church theology. But Islam and the Quran, our sacred book, appeal to me the necessity of religion. It has brought home to my mind that to be a good citizen and to be a useful member of the society I am in need of certain beliefs, which must act as guiding principles of my life, because no human action can come into existence without certain beliefs. Your belief in my coming here to address you is responsible for your to-day's gathering here; lastly, I am in need of certain practices and daily exercises, which may keep me in touch with those beliefs, and enable me to adopt the said course. In short, I am in need of certain law and code, with certain beliefs and practices to make me alive to the said code and the law, which when followed may

bring my latent faculties into action and convert my potentialities into actualities.

In my to-day's address I have been asked, as I understand, to deal with the comparative principles of Islam and Christianity. It was therefore foreign, ladies and gentlemen, to the scope of my subject, as proposed, to enter into any argumentative discourse on the respective merits of the two religions excepting where I thought necessary for elucidating the subject in hand. Muslims as well as Christians are theists, and believe in the existence of God. I start with this basic principle, and will try to confine myself to the bare statement of facts. Now I come to my subject, which is:—

### ISLAM AND THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM AS

### COMPARED WITH CHRISTIANITY.

Islam, in the literal sense of the word and the one given to it by Al-Quran, the sacred book of Islam, means complete submission to the law; and if Nature, taken with all its workings and manifestations as a faithful index to the will of that 'Great Intelligence,' or 'Infinite Eternal Energy,' as Herbert Spencer says, 'from which all things proceed,' may safely be relied upon by us as best guides in adopting a religion or code of life for ourselves, it cannot recommend any course other than Islam to the human mind—*i.e.*, submission to the law. Even a superficial observer of Nature, cannot help seeing the most implicit obedience and submission to certain unchangeable prescribed laws observed by every

atom in Nature. Nay, the very existence of the various components of Nature and their reciprocal use and service to one another, which is solely responsible for the harmonious and beneficial working of the whole universe, exclusively depend upon their strict observance of the said laws. Imagine a momentary violation of the prescribed course by an insignificant atom, and the ultimate destruction of the whole fabric of the universe, is a necessary consequence. Look at the sun, the moon, the stars, the day, the night, the seasons, the trees, the ocean, &c., &c., they all have their respective prescribed courses, which they scrupulously observe, and there is no day in the whole history of the world when any transgression occurred. This is what Islam literally means; and the Book of God, the Quran, which for elucidating the truths it inculcates, always counts upon Nature, the work of God, as a testimony to His Words, in this case also, to expound Islam refers in the most realistic way to what I have just said; thus bringing home to us the necessity of adopting the Islamic, that is submissive attitude towards the law of God, and warning us against our assuming the reverse course. The text goes thus:—

*In uddina indulla hilislam . . . afa ghera  
dinallahi yabghooni wa laho man aslvma  
fissamawati walarde tuhan wa karhun wa  
elehi yarjoan . . . . Wash-shamsu tajri le  
musta qerriu liaha, zalika taqdir ul-Azeez-  
el-Aleem. Walqamra qaddarnaha manazela:*

*hatta aada kal - urjoon-el - qadeem; lash-shamsu yaubaghi laho en tnd ri kal qadm-ara walallelu sabiq-en nahar, Kullun fi fal-akin yasbahoon . . . Wa man yabtagee ghair-el-Islama deenan falan yuqbila minho wa howa fil akhrate minal kasareen.*

#### TRANSLATION.

“Verily Islam (submission to the laws of God) is the religion of God, . . . Do they desire any other religion than that of God? To Him doth everything that is in the Heaven and in the earth submit in willing or forced obedience and to Him do they return. . . . Look to the sun, which with all her system is going to its place of rest; this is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Knowing. And for the moon; we have decreed stations for it till it changes like an old and crooked palm branch. To the sun it is not given to overtake the moon, nor doth the night outstrip the day, but each in its course doth journey on. (QURAN XXXvi., 38, 39, 40).

This is Islam. Now, If they desire any other course than Islam that shall not be acceptable, and they shall be the loser.

#### RELIGION OF NATURE ISLAM.

Thus we find that every component of Nature, as the Quran says, works in harmony with the rest to its best advantage in complete submission and Islam to the prescribed law. But is not man, the finest product of Nature, also a mere collection of its various atoms? Is he not a sort of microcosm? Do his

constituents, when combined to make his body and soul, change in their nature? Do not our various limbs joints, organs and muscles in their working, follow certain prescribed courses? Are they not submissive to our behests, provided we utilise them according to laws appertaining to them respectively? Do they not refuse to act when put to task in a different way? You wish to see, and your eyes obey you; you wish to hear, and your ears are at your service; but can you hear with your eyes, or can you see with your ears? Try to taste something with your eyes. or pour some water into your ear to quench your thirst, and you not only fail to satisfy your cravings; you are sure to have your faculties and organs impaired. Everything in you is Muslim—*i. e.*, faithful to you when you yourself are Muslim—*i. e.*, faithful to the law; but adopt the contrary course, and you are the loser. Thus the verse quoted by me comes home to you to its very letters:—

*Wa man-yabtughe gyair-ellslama denun,  
fanadyuqbila minho wa howa fil dkhrate  
minal khasareen,*

(TRANSLATION.)

“If you adopt any course of life other than Islam it is not acceptable, and you are the loser.”

Thus by our nature we are made to observe the law. The development of all our faculties solely depends upon our doing so. This truth again is taught to us in the following words of the Quran:—

*fitlratullah-hillati fatran-ndsa eleha, la  
tabdila li khalqillah zailka deen ul qayyam.*

(TRANSLATION.)

“To observe the law is a nature given by God to man, and he has been created on this nature, and no one can change the nature given to things by God. This is the faith which is firm.”

CHRIST, A MUSLIM.

By nature we are capable of observing the law, and this is the basic principle of Islam which differentiates it from the received form of Chistianity, because Christ never taught the present dogmatic doctrines taught by His church. He Himself was a true Musalman, and literally taught Islam in most unequivocal terms when He said to His disciples:—

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

“For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (*Sermon on the mount.*)

But after Christ we are taught by Paul and his successors in the Church, that we are not capable of observing the law; sin, which means transgression

of the law, is innate in our nature, an inheritance; we cannot escape punishment therefore under Divine justice unless atoned for, and which can only be effected by one of immaculate nature—namely, God. Thus the whole superstructure of Christian theology hinges upon one doctrine of inheritance of sin. Our incapability to keep the law is the root, and other doctrines are its offshoots. We need not question the rationale of theologies. I would accept it as it is, but allow me, Ladies and Gentlemen, to make one suggestion. Is not the very attribute of divine justice, which it is believed is responsible for the doctrine of Atonement, absolves me of all my liability to punishment? Will you punish your servant, sir, for doing or omitting to do a thing which by nature he is incapable of doing otherwise? Will you beat, sir, your dog for not yielding rich milk, and your cat for not giving you a good ride? Will you condemn your sheep for not entertaining you with melodious songs, and your pair of monkeys for not giving a good waltz? No, Sir. I know you are too wise to commit such unpardonable folly, your sense of justice will not allow you even to lose your temper on others for not doing things which they were incapable of doing; and shall I understand, sir, if I have to accept the doctrines of the Church for my salvation, that Divine justice and wisdom is inferior to mine? Nay, God, as believed by the theist, has another advantage over us—He is Omniscient and Creator. Is He not responsible for all the defects, if any, in my

nature? Is He not cognisant of my capabilities and incapacities as their author? How can He, in all decency and justice, expect from me things of which He did not make me capable? Why should he inflict upon me the law when He knows what I am, and is solely responsible for my being incapable of obeying it.

Christianity thus stands on the horns of a dilemma. If I can keep and teach the law, my entry into the kingdom of heaven has been assured in the words of Christ, and I do not need any atonement; and if by nature I am incapable of doing so, a just God cannot punish me, and the Grace of the Blood is unnecessary. On the other hand, Islam, which means complete submission to Divine Laws, teaches us that we all are equipped with the highest and best capabilities, which, when worked out properly, secure us our salvation. Heaven, in the terminology of Islam, is the name of that state of man after death when he leaves the world with all his faculties developed to make further progress, and one who dies while his moral and spiritual conditions remain untrained and unbalanced carries his hell on his own shoulders. Your heaven and hell is with you and in you. If you see that most often you 'reap even in this life the good and bad consequences' of your good or bad deeds if you see that, except in rare cases, you yourselves are responsible for the happiness or misery which is your lot in this life. If, therefore, no human action passes without bearing its fruits, and they are not

necessarily immediate, but in most cases require time to ripen, there ought to be some time for them to do so, especially in the case of such actions which one did on the very day he expired ; therefore, if on these logical premises you can be led to believe in the life after death, perfect development of your faculties for further progress has been named as heavenly life in the Quran, and unnatural and unmoulded state a hell.

#### TENDENCY TO BREAK THE LAW NO PROOF OF INCAPABILITY.

I admit that man from time to time has shown a tendency to break the law, but this evil propensity does not negate capability to do otherwise. "Every child is a born Muslim—i.e., capable of observing the law," says the Holy Prophet, whose chief mission was to ennoble the human race ; "it is his subsequent environment which make him non-Muslim, a breaker of the law." The whole problem resolves into one question for its solution. Has man shown capability to keep the law ? and the reply, even on a superficial glance into the working of human society, is in the affirmative. It is surprising to note that those very nations who at present profess Christianity have given the lie to its basic principle by their daily life. We, the Orientals, are much more free of those fetters and shackles of social conventionalities which the West has created in various calls of life. Everyone amongst you daily observes a hundred-and-one rules of fashion and custom when in your toilet room, or

at your table, or in some public function. Your ordinary games and pastimes are governed by rules and regulations. You can afford to do all this, but in the matter of faith you profess otherwise. Let me go a little further, to those rules and regulations which have received the sanction of the legislature. Are not most of you good citizens? Do you not observe almost all the laws of your country? I know King George has not as yet been relieved from the duty of entertaining daily many a royal guest within the four wall of his jails, but millions of men literally follow and observe all what has been provided in your codes of civil and penal laws. Consult any jurist and he will tell you that all our laws of regulation and ordinances in their rudimentary form, can easily be traced to those laws given to Moses and his followings. What a nice, amusing idea to entertain. We all can become good citizens in the kingdom of King George if we like, but it is impossible for us to be so in the realm of God, whose laws are simpler, more natural and adapted to our conditions of life than what the complication of the modern society has inflicted upon us. Can you for a single moment imagine the growth and formation of human society even in its most rudimentary form without mutual understanding amongst its members to respect certain rules and regulations which the polity of the time frames for the protection of life and property? And can those rules be imagined even if man is incapable of observing them? I for one cannot understand why, in

religious matters, we should fall short of average commonsense.

If all our civic laws can be easily traced to the Ten Commandments given to Moses, and if the dignitaries of the Church do really believe in the doctrine which they teach to others—that man by nature is incapable of observing those Commandments—am I to understand, sir, that their Holyships really believe themselves to be criminal by nature? As this is the logical conclusion which the above given premises lead me to infer.

#### RELIGION TO MAKE US CAPABLE.

Indeed, it is the business of religion to create that condition of mind in its followers which may actuate them to respect its laws and regulations. Christianity, constructed on quite a different basis, hardly needed any other principle to teach. All its doctrines, as I have shown before, are the corollaries of one basic principle which makes breaking of the law as our heritage. But Islam, which takes nobler views of man, has inculcated certain principles to maintain and keep up the nobility of our nature. Before I may explain Islamic principles to you, allow me to make reference in a way of illustration to such institutions which the polity of the society in every stage of its advancement has deemed it necessary for its successful working.

#### SEVEN UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF EVERY POLITY.

That we cannot dispense with the law is a

truism. No two men can live together without mutual understanding to respect each others' rights and obligations. Security of life and property, the basic principles of every polity, cannot be achieved without such understanding, and the law comes into existence only to create, regulate and protect these *inter-se* rights and obligations. But the efficacious working of the law requires its binding force over those who are meant to be governed by it. This necessitates creation of certain institutions, and we can trace them even in the most primitive form of organised society. The law, in the first place, cannot command observance unless it traces its source to some body who, through consent or otherwise, has been or is vested with some sovereign authority, over the others. Kingship, Parliament, Council of Legislation, &c., are the various forms of the same sovereign political authority. But can this source of law impart to you its ordinances without there being some intermediate agency between you and the authoritative body. Your own society practically has admitted the necessity of having some messenger of the law who publishes the will of the ruler to you. But the law, again, is a dead letter unless it is respected. You really need some actuating principle to abide by it. No law is observed unless it provides punishment for its breach. You shall be judged according to your action and receive the fruits of your deeds, is the only incentive which induces most of us to keep the law. Therefore, the

polity of the organised society not only provides some institution to judge our actions, but also makes arrangement to secure our presence in order to bring us to book. But the law is to be operated through its functionaries, whose existence is also essential for its proper working. These are the six principles of every society which I may be allowed to call an involuntary mechanism of human society. But for the real welfare of the society we should become scrupulously jealous even of our own actions, lest they may lead to any wrong and this cannot be done unless we are keenly alive to the necessary consequences of our actions. We should believe in those unavoidable relations which do exist between every cause and its effect. That evil must lead to evil, and good must produce good, is the only guiding principle to make us useful members of the society. In other words, one cannot do good and shun evil without his firm belief in the principles of causation. Add it to the six principles I have narrated and you have seven working principles which utility recommends to every society to secure complete happiness. They may be counted as follows :—

The sovereign authority, his functionaries, his laws, his messengers of the law, his judgment, belief in causation, and our appearance to receive judgment.

#### SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM.

One word more, and I will show how Islam teaches these very seven truths as its basic principles.

Islam did not come to give you certain dogmatic tenets, without knowing which the world was not a whit the loser, before they were enunciated; neither it saddles you with certain ceremonials. Islam is a perfect code of life to regulate your daily conduct and make you a useful citizen of the world. It gives you certain principles to guide your life and enjoins upon you certain practices to bring those principles into actions. Like Christianity, it does not teach you to disregard present life in the interest of one to come. Nay, it bases the happiness or misery of the coming life upon your present actions. "One who is blind in this world," as the Quran says, "shall remain so in the coming life," speaks volumes, of making your actions as actions of a right-minded man. But is not the human heart the only fountain-head of human actions? Are not motives lurking in our breasts solely responsible for all our doings? Does not regulation of action depend upon regulation of mind? Purity of action undoubtedly comes from purity of heart, and evil feelings generate evil actions. Your functionaries in the Criminal Intelligence Department may keep a most vigilant eye on my intentions read through my actions; can they pry into my heart, can they watch the working of my mind? It is impossible, and therefore you need one who may read what lurks in your breast—*Allemun bizatissadoor*—one who knows your breast, as the Quran says—in order to make your heart a pure fountain head of good actions. Again, is not evasion of

detection chiefly responsible for the continuation of crime? Is not avoidance of police observation and seclusion often sought by the criminals in order to do their malpractices? Have you arranged an ever watchful eye on a people's doings? No, you cannot, unless your sovereign authority possesses the attribute of Omnipresence.

Again, if suppression of crime to a great extent depends upon having all offences punished, do not hundreds and thousands of culprits remain unpunished? Can you bring all of them within the meshes of the law? No, you cannot. And what about punishing those who died immediately after commission of some offence? Therefore, if punishment is to be deterrent, your polity is incomplete unless it provides also to punish those who remain unpunished in the present life. Therefore, in order to make the polity of an organised society complete, your sovereign authority must possess omnipresence, omniscience, and power to read the secrets of the heart, beside other attributes. And to make your institution of punishment deterrent in its effect, judgment after death on actions unrequited in this life is essential. Add these necessary elements to the connotation of the above-mentioned seven principles of your polity, and you have the polity of Islam. And, to substantiate my assertions, I read now the text which gives the definition of Islamic faith. It recites seven truths, and one cannot become Muslim unless he believe in all of them; but before I read and translate the Arabic

text, allow me to remind you of the seven institutions of your society. They are :—

1. Sovereign authority as the source of law.
2. His functionary to execute his will—*i.e.*, the law.
3. His will, which is the law.
4. Messengers of his will (law) to the subject.
5. Judgment on the observance and breach of the law.
6. Causation—*i.e.*, causes and effects.
7. Our appearance to receive judgment.

Now I read the text—

*A muntu billáhe wamallaekatihi wa kutubehi wa ruslehi wal yomal A'khira wal qadre khaere hi wa sharrihi minellahi ta'ala wal basu badal mout.*

(TRANSLATION.)

*Firstly.*—I do believe in Allah. God, the Source of law, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient, One who can read into my heart ; and with His other attributes.

*Secondly.*—I believe in His angels, the functionaries of the will of the Divine fountain-head.

*Thirdly.*—I believe in His books, repository of the law.

*Fourthly.*—I believe in His messengers, through whom the law was imparted.

*Fifthly.*—I believe in the last day, when I

am to be judged for my actions and omissions.

*Sixthly.*—I believe that God has determined measurements of evil and good as causes and effects.

*Seventhly.*—I believe in the day of resurrection to receive requital.

These are the seven principles of Islam, and one who believes in them becomes a Musulman. But are you gentlemen in the West, Christians or Musulmen? I don't mind your professions. By practice you have adopted Islam. You believe in the law and your capability to observe the law. You have practically adopted the said seven principles of Islam, though in a limited sense. Widen your connotation of these truths, accept the law in its perfect form which is in the holy book of Islam and you are perfect Muslim, a state you are nearing day by day, and God be with you! *Ussalamu Ala Man ittambul Huda.*

The address was followed with the following questions and answers :—

*Question.*—If heaven means a developed state of our faculties, what about the *houries* mentioned in the Qurán?

*Answer.*—The question requires some introductory remarks before I attempt its answer. Allow me to tell you, first of all, that the Mohammedan paradise is not a material world like ours, as represented by the Christian missionaries here. No doubt the book of Islam in its description of heaven makes

mention of things we see in this world ; but all this is to be read in the light of certain verses in the Qurán, as well as the sayings of the prophet, which clearly say that things in heaven are beyond human conception and perception. Therefore the *houries* of heaven are not the damsels of the earth. But why have they been described so ? May I draw your attention to our own way of describing things not known to our hearers ? Are not words mere indexes of ideas, and ideas mental pictures of things in the external world ? But if a thing which is Indian does not exist in England, the English language can have no word for it, and to convey its idea to our friends here we shall have to refer to something which has some resemblance in some way with the thing in question. Similarly, if the Mohammedan paradise possesses things different from ours, Alkoran in order to describe them to us, had to name things having some resemblance to heavenly things. Now I come to the question. Islamic heaven is the progressive condition of our faculties that are developed here with things to help the progress. What has the *hourí* to do with it ? I will simply ask one question : Has female company anything to do with the mould and formation of our character in this world ? No one will deny it. Women decidedly have a humanising effect on our lives. Their company makes man of a brute. But the company could not have been coveted if the fair sex had not its own charms. If, therefore, female company has really got some wholesome

effect on the development of our moral and spiritual character, which effect becomes much more intensified if our better halves possess charming faces and fascinating airs, are we not in need of similar company in our life to come if the faculties have still to make further progress? I think we really need the company of some black-eyed, vermilion-lipped *houris* of graceful air, whose charms may make an angel of a man? What would be the nature of her company or her relation with us is beyond our perception, as the Book of God says.

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