

“Muhammad is . . . the Apostle of Allah and the Last of the Prophets . . .”

—HOLY QUR-AN, 33 : 4.

“There will be no prophet after me.”

—PROPHET MUHAMMAD.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَجْلَدٌ مِمَّا نَشَرَهُ الرَّسُولُ مُحَمَّدٌ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ

# THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

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## BY THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY QUR-AN

And that you should keep your course towards the religion uprightly; and you should not be of the polytheists.

And do not call besides Allah on that which can neither benefit you nor harm you, for if you do then surely you will in that case be of the unjust.

And if Allah should afflict you with harm, then there is none to remove it but He; and if He intends good to you there is none to repel His grace; He brings it to whom He pleases of His servants; and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

—Holy Qur'án, Ch. X, vv. 105—107.

### The Purport

True monotheism demands that man should rise above all dependence on the means of the world—human and material. A true monotheist realises that although events are brought about in this world through some visible causes, yet the invisible Creator is the supreme controller of all such causes and that the collocation

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

of factors in any happening is, in the last analysis, beyond the control of any power on earth. It is such realisation alone that can bring man in real contact with the living God and enable him to influence the course of events through living prayers.

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### A DECLARATION

I, H. G. Grestock of 16 Yale Court, Honeybourne Road, N.W. 6, do hereby faithfully and solemnly declare of my own free will that I worship One and Only Allah (God) alone ; that I believe Muhammad to be His Messenger and Servant ; that I respect equally all Prophets —Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others, and that I will live a Muslim life by the help of Allah.

*Lá Iláha Illa 'l-láh Muhammadu 'nRasúlu 'l-láh*

(There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger).

Dated 12th October, 1947. (Sd.) H. G. GRESTOCK.

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### ON THE EVE OF THE NEW YEAR

“ Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death.”

—The Holy Qur-án LVII : 17.

With the December issue we come to the end of the 35th year of our existence. All praise to Him !

The new year from all external calculations is a year of great uncertainties, of chaos and of a dismal outlook. And yet it is exactly at such points in history that new religious movements with a challenge to all material forecasts have upheld a beacon light of hope to the collapsing mind of civilized humanity.

Religious faith, it must be remembered, is a vision and an insight and not a make-belief. It is a penetration with unerring certainty of the deeper understanding in man into regions of knowledge which defy the vague calculations of a mere philosopher.

When things go on well, the necessity of the true religious man is not so much felt or at least not recognized. But the moment the prospects appear gloomy such people are sought for just out of sheer necessity. Because

## ON THE EVE OF THE NEW YEAR

they alone can stand out as light-houses in the midst of a tumultuous sea of futility and confusion.

At the end of 35 years we have come to that turning point in history for which we have been preparing our readers and those who came in contact with them. It is a point where the old order makes room for the new which, in its turn, is to be founded on a new moral understanding between individuals and groups, because the old one has been torn into shreds. In the absence of such an understanding no treaty, no pact, no league, no convention, no constitution, no philosophy or system of society can give that stability to our tottering social order which is the supreme need of the moment. Thinking humanity has come to realise this and there is a yearning visible everywhere for such a religious basis of social life. Man's faith in secularism is already shaken to its foundations and it needs only a vigorous preaching to extract a confession from the leading figures of humanity that we should turn towards a suitable religious system for the reconstruction of our tottering social order.

With all the scantiness of our resources we have already engaged the attention of Western nations. A little more energetic action and a little more patience will enable us to make these nations realise that the adoption of Islam as a social and moral code has become an unavoidable necessity for civilised humanity.

In India, the fury of Hinduism is, in fact, the fury of a mental conflict. The patriotism of the Hindu mind is anxious to retain all the cultural assets of Hinduism and at the same time it feels an urge for advancement and expansion which is contrary to the fundamental nature of this culture. Its leading thinkers are aware of the invaluable and indispensable nature of the Islamic principles of life in this international age and yet they are reluctant to adopt the religion of a people whom they have learnt to hate as foreign invaders and whom they find to-day backward in the race of economic life.

We have to resolve this complex of the Hindu mind and bring out on the surface its latent awakening to the need for Islam. In this connection it is necessary to make a determined effort to convince the Hindu mind

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that Islam never means to win converts through military or even political power and that if it is anxious to-day to capture this last stronghold of idol-worship, this anxiety is to be carried into effect by intellectual and moral persuasion.

Indeed, were Islam at all anxious for the employment of its political power to make itself the only religion of the peninsula of India, there would be no room for Hindu, Muslim question left here to-day. In fact, the fall of the political power of Islam in India was a signal for the spiritual march of this faith in this great sub-continent. The presence of a Western power with its paraphernalia of a brilliant materialistic civilisation had kept the great Hindu nation bewitched all this time. Now that that power has withdrawn itself, the Hindu nation is face to face with Islam as an indispensable social and moral factor in the future destiny of India.

Prejudice springing from race-arrogance and considerations of vested economic interest, may keep this great issue obscure for some time to come, but sooner or later it will emerge from this obscurity and engage the serious attention of the leading thinkers of Hindu India.

It shall be the duty of Indian Islam to help this issue assuming its due importance in the intellectual life of India.

Let our patrons come forward with unabated zeal and unslackened determination to strengthen our hands at this momentous hour when the history of the world is visibly taking a new shape. Let our readers and supporters help us, in all possible ways, to inundate the countries of the East and the West with the correct knowledge of the faith of Islam with the instrumentality of this powerful organ and proved champion of the last dispensation of God for humanity.

## LET SLEEPING DOGMAS LIE

BY A BRITISH MUSLIM

Some people seem unable to let well alone. They are always trying to improve men and nature and to replace eyesores when they have been removed or cured. Like the proverbial—and it is to be hoped—fabulous Irishman, they are always thirsting for a fight. In my younger days I knew a Christian minister who frequently voiced his desire for a return of the days of persecution in order that he might have the opportunity of bearing witness to his faith. Such braggarts, as history has proven, nearly always prove to be arrant cowards when put to the test and their faith even thinner than skin deep—nothing more than a veneer, not even penetrating below the surface.

If, however, some of the red-hot agitators should have their wish granted and the road to active persecution opened more wider than it is at present to petty persecution in all quarters of the Christian world, we should undoubtedly witness a considerable number shuffling back into the fold of the elect. The bloodthirsty are very unlikely to witness the reinstallation of the rack and gibbet, the “Virgin” and other diabolical instruments of torture for the denial of what they are pleased to call the “truths” of Christianity. They do not mean, of course, “truths” but rather the concoctions of orthodoxy.

Within recent years, in particular, there have arisen from the dead ashes of exploded creeds a number of people who have given voice to their desire for this return to orthodoxy, by which they mean a return to Calvinism and other pernicious doctrines, a return to Fundamentalism, as it is now called, but which is much the same thing. Even that word is now being discarded in favour of Traditionalism. If they were to turn to the words of Jesus and to the Bible, on which they assert their faith is founded they would see at a glance that the basis of obedience is the unquestioning obedience to the will of God. Jesus said (John vii, 17) :

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"If any man will do His (God's) will he shall know of the doctrine"

But that is contrary to their creed. To-day as in the days when he taught Jesus says : (John viii, 43) :

"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot understand my speech."

They forget or ignore that one of the petitions he told them to utter in his great prayer was :

"Thy will be done on earth as in heavens."

They ignore the teaching of Paul, Peter and John as found in Ephesians vi, 6; Colossians, iv, 12; I Thessalonians iv, 3; I Peter ii, 15; and I John ii, 17. They, of course, ignore also that the will of God is the very basis of Islam. To recognise truth in religions other than their own is quite beyond them, notwithstanding that Jesus himself once told the woman of Samaria (John iv, 21) :

"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father."

Some admit, though rather tardily, that Jesus was a reformer. His reformation, like that of the Prophet Muhammad, was more than that. It was a revolution : he was an iconoclast, an anarchist in religion, one of his aims being to "gather into one all the nations of the earth."

Bishop Milner, writing from the Roman Catholic point of view in *The End of Religious Controversy*, says that "God cannot be the author of different religions" and the title he has given to his book, as well as the definiteness of his eight-word declaration would indicate that in his statement he defies contradiction or amendment. This doctrine of 'No salvation outside the Church' has been preached by Roman Catholics for many centuries. In the fifth century St. Augustine said that :

Whoever is separated from this Catholic Church, however innocently he may think he lives, for this crime alone, that he is separated from the unity of Christ, will not have life, but the anger of God remains upon him ;

and in the following century, S. Fulgentius wrote :

"Out of this Church, neither the name of Christian nor does Baptism save, nor is a clean sacrifice offered, nor is there forgiveness of sins, nor is the happiness of eternal life to be found.

## LET SLEEPING DOGMAS LIE

So much for Roman Catholicism, though many similar utterances by 'authorities' could be cited. But similar utterances have been made by bishops and other leaders of the Protestant Church of England 'as by law established'. For instance, Bishop Pearson, in his *Exposition of the Creed* has written :

Christ never appointed two ways to heaven ; nor did he build a Church to save some and make another institution for other men's salvation. As none were saved from the deluge but such as were within the ark of Noah, so none shall ever escape from the eternal wrath of God who belong not to the Church of God.

'Exclusive' rather than 'inclusive' would thus seem to be the dictum of the Christian churches. Nor is this exclusiveness confined to episcopal bodies. It is also a feature of Nonconformity. Sir Edmund Gosse, whose father was a member of the Plymouth Brethren and a recognised preacher in that small select body—one of the straitest of the Nonconformist sects—tells us in *Father and Son* that his father

could not admit that a single Unitarian (or Socinian, as he preferred to say) could possibly be redeemed ; that he had no hope of eternal salvation for the inhabitants of Catholic countries. I recollect his speaking of Austria. He questioned whether a single Austrian subject except, as he said, here and there, a pious and extremely ignorant individual, who could not comprehend the errors of the Papacy, but had humbly studied his Bible, could hope to find eternal life. He thought that the ordinary Chinaman or savage native of Fiji had a better chance of salvation than any Cardinal in the Vatican. And even with the priesthood of the Church of England, he believed that while many were called, few, indeed, would be found to have been chosen.

We need emancipation from our tendencies to despondency arising from our slavery to preconceived and prejudiced habits of thought. We revel—as do many parents and guardians of youth—even in the affairs of daily life and conduct in negative injunctions, which are less inspiring than affirmative precepts. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" is less likely to bring joy and peace in obedience than "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths."

For more than half a century my recreation has been devoted to the study of Comparative Religion, mainly at first-hand sources or from the works of reliable and unprejudiced scholars, upon whose translation reliance could be placed. This was essential if the truth was to be discovered

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

beneath the mass of accumulated falsehood by opposing partisans who consider 'lying for the glory of God' a commendable occupation. It is very difficult to find an unbiased, unprejudiced or accurate statement of religious belief or even of historical incidents from an interested partisan, whose inclination is to place propaganda on a more lofty platform than facts. I have frequently been asked by written communications the best method to study Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and other non-Christian faiths and my answer has always been to shun the writings of Christian exponents until the works of those faiths have been read, particularly the Bibles of those faiths. I have found in every religious system many features worthy, not only of admiration, but also of imitation and I have also found some features, the best, let it be said, are common to all, demonstrating the truth that if not of common origin they are near enough to be ranked as first cousins and that the variations are mainly due to emphasis placed upon one or more of their peculiar features. When I wanted to make more than a cursory study of Islam I did not go to the works of writers such as Humphrey Prideaux or Sir William Muir even or Sale, but sought the writings of Muslim authors, whose productions I compared with the statements of Christian writers.

As this article is anonymous I may, perhaps, be pardoned for mentioning a personal incident which may serve to show the possibility of presenting the various faiths of the world in a dispassionate and unbiased manner. At the termination of a course of twelve lectures given in a public hall in London on the Faiths of the World some years ago, a member of the audience came forward and thanked me for what he was pleased to term my lucid explanation and for the information given. He then added: "I have been trying but without success to find out from your lectures to what creed you yourself subscribe." I thanked him for the compliment for I was glad to find that my presentation of each faith had been so faithful and unbiased.

That I have found the greatest truth and the greatest beauty in Islam may be accepted when I say that I find the more Islam is studied and put into practice the

## LET SLEEPING DOGMAS LIE

greater becomes its beauty : yet it is so simple in character and content that it may be grasped and put into practice by every man and woman, whether of high or low estate, highly or meanly educated, rich or poor, master or servant and that each man and woman who puts Islam into practice may thus become an evangelist to the world at large.

Islam also inculcates toleration and makes it impossible for a Muslim to hold or to retain the belief he may once have held that the non-Christian races of India or of any other country belong to a lower order of beings than the British or Christian. At one time, within the memory of many of us, Islam, Hinduism, Parsism and Confucianism were among the faiths regarded as 'heathen' and it was not possible to obtain a faithful presentation of those or other beliefs from missionary writings. To-day, however, even Christian missionaries are beginning not only to recognize but to admit that all religions possess treasures worthy, not only of preservation but also of honest presentation.

Yet there is still work to be done, because not all writers have reached that high grade. *Religions*, which, as the organ of the Society for the Study of Religions, contains statements which may be regarded as specialist pronouncements, says, in its last issue :

The nation is constantly being reminded by ministers of religions of all denominations that it is losing, where it has not actually lost, its religious faith. No one can deny that in these warnings and denunciations, there is a great deal of truth. But the fault is not entirely that of the laity. Surely the clergy have to bear their share of responsibility in so lamentable a state of affairs.

The fault lies mainly, if not, indeed, entirely to the absence a personal witness to the truth. A weekly paper of importance as to standing asked recently through one of its correspondents, "What is the cause of the present spiritual bankruptcy?" to which I ventured to send the following reply :

May I suggest that the root cause of spiritual bankruptcy is the fact that the churches of every sect and denomination are propagating, not the teaching of Jesus but the creeds and 'isms' of their own particular sects.

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It is not without its amusing features that the first answer received by me sought to prove that the main cause was due to the failure of ministers generally to recognize the truth and claims of the British Israel movement. The day following I received a communication from another correspondent who said that the trouble lay entirely in the fact that men generally ignored the claims of the Roman Church and went off on side lines and he instanced British Israelism as one of those side lines.

I venture to suggest that the cancer which is affecting every country, race and nation, is not denial of the existence of God so much as recognition of Him but indifference to His claims. Human belief in the Eternal may be described as aqueous or even vaporous. It lacks solidity. Islam is not an easy religion for the modern man or woman because its first and continuous demand is for surrender of independence. If life is lived as ordained in the Holy Qur-án and the teachings of the Prophet, there must be absolute submission to the Will of Allah, not a mere formal declaration, nothing, perhaps, even written on a paper, but engraven on the heart, for the surrender must be that of the Will, more complete than can be expressed in the words of any document.

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### THE WAY OF LIFE

BY WILLIAM BASHYR PICKARD, B.A. (CANTAB)

#### The Guidance (4)

“And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth belongeth unto God ; and certainly We enjoined those who were given the Book before you and (We enjoin) you too that you should be careful of (your duty to) God ; and if you disbelieve, then surely whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth belongeth unto God ; and God is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

“And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth belongeth unto God ; and God is sufficient as a Protector.”<sup>1</sup>

In passing, note the reiteration. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, yea, and the heavens and

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur'an, IV : 131, 132.

## THE WAY OF LIFE

the extensiveness thereof. Whether you recognize this fact or disregard it or deny it, God remaineth Serene, Self-Sufficient, Unchanging, Worthy of Praise, the Most Potent of Protectors.

“Whoever desires the reward of this world, then with God is the reward of this world and the hereafter ; and God is Hearing, Seeing.”<sup>1</sup>

If ye crave the good things of this world, seek them at the hands of God and submissively obedient to the laws of God, to Him they do belong and He is well able to bestow them upon whom He will. Seek not the things of this world apart from God and forgetful of God. Know that, if thou enjoyest them, they are His. Sought wrongfully, and obtained wrongfully, verily the goods of this world are deceptions and poisonous to the wrongful possessor. Beware !

“O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for God’s sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives. Whether rich or poor, God is most competent to deal with both cases. Therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate. If you swerve or turn aside, then surely God is aware of what you do.”<sup>2</sup>

This verset is of easy comprehension. Thus : God, the One, the Supreme, is the Truth. Therefore, witness in His Name must be to the truth. In respect of justice the greatest regard must be paid to truth, unflinchingly to truth. Before the searching ray of truth the shadow, the darkness, the obscurity of self-seeking, personal advantage, apparent expediency must vanish out of consideration. By the truth must justice be done. In this, nothing should cause us to waver or to be in a moment’s doubt. We must look beyond our own personal disadvantage or loss. We must cast out fear of our friend’s displeasure. We must be indifferent to the wrath of injured relatives. If their interest is based upon a turning away from the truth, then their unworthy interest must topple to the ground before the breath of truth. In God there is no fear. Truth likewise should be without fear.

“And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear God’s communications disbelieved in or mocked at, then you should not sit with such people, until they enter into some other discourse. Surely, if you did, you would be like them.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur’an IV : 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, IV : 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, IV : 140.

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In the case of contempt of religion, of evil speaking against God, it is not always necessary to brandish the sword, to embroil the peace and pursue the path of blood and violence. Better to withdraw thyself, lest, continuing to sit peaceably amongst them, thou be smirched with their wickedness and they interpret thy silence as consenting. Surely God is All-Powerful, well able to defend.

“God does not love the public utterance of hurtful speech, unless (it be) by one to whom injustice has been done. And God is Hearing, Knowing.

“If you do good openly or do it in secret or pardon an evil, then surely God is Pardoning, Powerful.

“Surely those who disbelieve in God and His apostles and who desire to make a distinction between God and His apostles and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others; and desire to take a course between (this and) that, these it is who are truly unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement.

“And those who believe in God and His apostles and do not make a distinction between any of them—God will grant them their rewards: and God is Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage of the Holy Qurān begins with an admonition against hurtful speech in public. Speak no evil; speak no slander. If thou thyself art not suffering from an injustice, refrain from speaking evil gossip. Restrain the serpent tongue from backbiting. In the volume of talk and with oft repetition the evil grows. And God is Pardoning, Powerful.

The concluding three verses broach quite a different subject, one that should be widely proclaimed and widely practised. By this passage religious tolerance and goodwill between religious communities is firmly established. Who, having read these Quranic words, can ever after have recourse to narrow fanaticism? One God verily, but also, and of a surety, many apostles of God. Set not apostle at variance with apostle. Can the revelation from God to an apostle be brought into human distinction, as to say, ‘This is’ and ‘This is not’? Who with the scales of human mind can weigh the revelation of God to condemn the followers of one apostle and to ostracise the followers of another apostle? Unto God

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur’ān IV : 148—152.

## THE WAY OF LIFE

should go the belief of the heart. The energy of the spirit, the mind and the body should go towards practical righteousness, to the service of humanity, to help the brother, to bind the wounds, to comfort the afflicted, in kindly charity towards the poor, in giving instruction and in attaining knowledge.

And God is Forgiving, Merciful.

"O followers of the Book! indeed Our Apostle has come to you, making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much: indeed there has come to you a light and a clear book from God."<sup>1</sup>

Light shines from the Qur'an, making clear the way.

"With it God guides him who will follow His pleasure into the ways of peace and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His will and guides them to the right path."<sup>2</sup>

"Unto God belongeth the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them. He creates what He pleases: and God hath power over all things."<sup>3</sup>

"Unto God belongeth the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and to Him is the eventual coming."<sup>4</sup>

Let us never forget, let not the world delude us, let not our passion pour their smoke-screen around us, let not the comforts of oblivious idleness lull us to be unmindful of this supreme truth that all things belong unto God, we belong unto God and to Him do we return.

"And We sent after them in their footsteps Jesus, son of Mary, verifying what was before him of the Torah and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and verifying what was before it of the Torah and a guidance and admonition for those who guard (against evil)."<sup>5</sup>

Clearly from this verset is it shown that the teaching of Jesus is from God, that the Gospel, the true teaching of Jesus, contains guidance and a light for those who seek light and a warning for those who would be warned. Let it not be thought that there is antagonism between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of Muhammad (upon both of whom be peace!). Nay, far otherwise. The Lord of Jesus is verily the Lord of Muhammad, the

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur'an, V : 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 46.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 18.

## ISLAMIC REVIEW

One the same Lord. But it would appear that the true teaching of Jesus has become obscured in the course of time and practices in his name prevail which it is difficult to reconcile with his teaching. The message of Muhammad still shines from the Qur'an, clear, uninterpolated, not twisted or bent aside by human craft or for human aggrandisement. To all who seek it the source remains uncontaminated, refreshing, guiding, upholding.

"For every one of you did He appoint a law and a way. And if God had so pleased, He would have made you (all) a single people ..... Therefore strive with one another in hastening to virtuous deeds. To God is your return, every one of you ; He will give you knowledge of that in which you differed."<sup>1</sup>

Very significant—a verset truly to be pondered over. Different nations have had their own differing guidances from God. The setting, customs and language may vary in any comparison of these guidances, but the central message may be observed unvarying—turn towards God and do good.

Remembering this Qur'anic verset, men surely will readily be able to practise a wide tolerance and will recognize that, under garments of varying thought, the heart of humanity warms towards the One God and works in desire of righteousness.

Observe, and observe closely that emulation and all striving should not be in disputations about differences in creed and custom, but verily, 'strive with one another in hastening to virtuous deeds.'

"And whoever takes God and His apostle and those who believe for a guardian, then surely the party of God are they that shall be triumphant.

"O you who believe ! do not take for guardians those who take your religion for a mockery and a joke, from among those who were given the Book before you and the unbelievers : and be careful of (your duty to) God, if you are believers."<sup>2</sup>

Protection is from God. The powerful ones of the world are not protectors, unless they be rooted in God. Otherwise, their favour having no stability, but being a matter of caprice or immediate interest, a change of circumstances or outlook may suddenly turn their favour into hostility. Then the very power of their former pro-

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur'an V : 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, V : 56-57.

## THE WAY OF LIFE

tection is turned into a violence of persecution from which you shall hardly escape.

Hear now the reiteration of what we stressed above, when we urged tolerance and fair dealing between faith and faith and when we proclaimed that towards One God there may be many ways of attainment,

Verily the Quranic verse is :

“Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabaeans and the Christians—whoever believes in God and the last day and does good—they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.”<sup>1</sup>

So, at all times, remember the Book of Guidance, the Qur-án, remember the Distinction between right and wrong, the practical way wherein to walk. As a traveller in this work-a-day world might take with him a guide-book to save himself the trouble and expense and great discomforts of losing his way before reaching his destination, so can you find the Qur-án your Guide. As the traveller nowadays would con his book to select what beauties and places of interest he should seek out and visit—a solace to the tedium of his wayfaring, so from the Qur-án may you apprehend the true and worthy delights of life, which, by the Mercy of the Maker, are yours as you pass by along the succession of days.

In thy reading of thine own Qur-án, mark down the passages which gleam with special message for thee, illumine for thy remembrance some verse that hath delighted thee. Then, in the after time, if thou return again to that page, thou wilt see the light beckoning thee from the well-noted verse and thou canst not but rejoice.

Perhaps thy leisure for perusal of the sacred page may be brief, how welcome, then, will show the guiding-mark to the passage that beforetime held blessing for thee ! So shalt thou drink and depart refreshed, praising the Merciful.

“God is He besides whom there is no god ; the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting by whom all subsist. Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep. Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His. Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission ; He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not at all : and He is the Most High, the Great.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur'an V : 69,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II : 255 (Ayat-ul-Kursi.)

## PROPHETHOOD IN JUDAISM AND ISLAM

BY MUHAMMAD SADIQ DUDLEY WRIGHT, PHIL. D.

The expression "Sons of the Prophets" is met with in II Kings iv, 1. The word there used for "son" is *ben*, which has the limited meaning of "son" or "offspring", yet it seems certain that it could not have been used here with that special application. Elsewhere, in I Samuel, x, 5; xix, 20, we read of the "company of prophets", where the word used is *chabel* or "cord." The same word is used in Esther i, 6; Job, xxxvi, 8; Psalm cxl, 5; Proverbs, v, 22; and elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Rabbi Hermann Adler (one-time Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, was of the opinion that the term indicated that they were members of a guild, corporation or college. From I Samuel, iii, 1; x, 5, xix, 20, it may be assumed that such guild was founded and organized by Samuel; that, afterwards, it became a mighty power in the State. Assuming such to be the case, it is clear from I Kings, xviii, 4, it did not become extinct on the passing of its founder to the higher life and it is not impossible the establishment may have endured though, perhaps, in a modified form, until the days of Malachi, who is generally known as "the last of the prophets" or even, as is claimed by the Carmelites, to the time of John the Baptist.

We learn from I Samuel, xix, 18-20, that one of these companies had its home in Naioth, in Ramah, where Samuel lived. The meaning of *Naioth* is "a place of study" or "college" or "school" and in the *Targum of Jerusalem*, it is referred to as a "house of instruction".

These schools or companies of Prophets, therefore, seem to have formed the first organization for imparting knowledge of which there is any mention in the Scriptures. They were not what is known as monastic institutions. Some of the students, at least, were married as we gather from II Kings, iv, 1, although, from verse 38, it seems probable that they partook of some meals in common, a custom that prevails in the older English universities, even in the instance of extramural members, *i.e.*,

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those whose residence is outside the college walls. Presumably, also, from II Kings, i, 8, some of the members, if not all, wore a garment of camels' hair, girt with a leathern girdle (see also Matthew iii, 4). Although they did not form what is generally understood to be a monastic order, living a common life in celibacy, Jerome saw in them the germ of such life. They were not exempt from the misfortunes that sometimes befall ordinary mortals, living in the world, for the widow of one of the Sons of the Prophets came to Elisha with the complaint that a creditor had claimed to seize one of her sons as bondman but Elisha had no corporate property from which he could help her in her need.

Localities other than Naioth formed seats or centres of these prophetic communities. There was Bethel, mentioned in II Kings, ii, 3, where Samuel (I Samuel vii, 16) went annually on circuit; Gilgal (II Kings ii, 1) was also included in his circuit; also Jericho (II Kings, ii, 5). In Dr. Adler's opinion it is also probable from II Kings, iv, 8-9, that a similar settlement existed at Shunem, seeing that Elisha was frequently journeying backwards and forwards to that town. Such visits, he says, were surely not without a definite object and it is not improbable that disciples were trained there for the service of the Temple.

From I Chronicles xxix, 29, it would appear that the first Hebrew authors mentioned by name in the Old Testament were members of these schools, *viz.*, Samuel, their founder, who was the leader (I Samuel xix, 20) to whom the authorship of Judges, Ruth, the Pentateuch and the two books bearing his name, has sometimes been ascribed; Gad, the devoted companion of David in his exile, the author of the lost *Book of Gad the Seer* (I Chronicles xxix, 29); Nathan, the stern reprover of David the author of another lost book, containing the chronicles of the reign of King David. It has been conjectured that the members of these colleges wrote the annals of the nation which we possess in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles and other books which have been lost, mentioned in I Chronicles xxix, 29; II Chronicles ix, 29; xi, 15; xiii, 22; xx, 34. In these schools also were trained David, the shepherd warrior, wandering outlaw, composer of psalms and the Lord's anointed; Saul, the wild

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and wayward king, but also the Lord's anointed; and Heman, the grandson of Samuel.

These colleges appear always to have had the leading prophet of the day as their president. With Samuel, says Dean Stanley, the long line of judges in Israel ended and the long line of prophets began. Samuel is revered among Muslims as the herald of the prophets and Muslim tradition hails him as the revealer of the mysteries of the nocturnal flight of the Holy Prophet Muhammad from Makka to Jerusalem. He was succeeded by Elijah (II Kings ii) who, when translated, was addressed by Elisha as "My father, my father." This was, in ancient times (I Samuel x, 12; II Kings ii, 4) a title of dignity, as well as of paternity. In this meaning it has been retained in the Roman and Greek churches. It is also found in the Jewish form of *Ab Beth Din*, or "Father of the House of Judgment."

Dr. John Ker, in his *Lectures on the History of Preaching*, says :

It is in the time of Samuel that we first read of companies of prophets under a director of music as forming the accompaniment of their prophecies and of the Spirit of God falling upon them as in the New Testament Church. But, doubtless, teaching was the chief part of duty and it is at this stage we find the beginning of that great advance in spirituality of view, which appears in the Psalms and later prophets, when ritual was seen to be a lower thing than mercy and truth and righteousness. This was so great a step in the prophetic position that Samuel is spoken of in the 99th Psalm as occupying a marked place "among them that call upon His name" and he is put in the Acts of the Apostles (iii, 24) at the head of the prophetic rule. Later, we hear of Schools of the Prophets at Bethel and Jericho and Gilgal, the very seats of idolatry; of the places where some of them met becoming too narrow for them; and of their going forth to form new schools.

Moses Maimonides, in *Fundamentals of the Law* (chap. vii) says :

They that aspired to be enrolled in the prophetic order were called Sons of the Prophets. But, however eagerly they aspired to this high estate, it was not a thing of certainty that the Spirit of God would descend upon them. The call came only to those who were worthy instruments for receiving the divine inspiration; who were endowed with wisdom; who, self-controlled, led the simple life, holding themselves aloof from the follies and vanities of earth and its many inventions. The call came to those who had purged their minds from sordid cares and who devoted their thoughts to

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spiritual concerns, meditating upon the goodness and wisdom of God.

According to Ewald, there were secular privileges attached to membership of the Schools. In *Antiquities of Israel*, he says :

A prophet, especially if he had vindicated his position, had the right, according to the fundamental constitution of the nation, i.e., the Theocracy itself, of speaking in the national assembly or elsewhere in public. That right was maintained uninterruptedly, even to a late period, however much the public authority of the prophets might gradually decline after the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

There is no evidence that admission to the Schools of the Prophets was limited to any particular class or rank in life. In all probability Gehazi was a member of one of these Schools under Elisha's leadership. Seeing that he was entrusted with an important mission, he could have been no menial. His punishment came when he proved unable to withstand greed and covetousness. On the other hand, Amos, the shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees, of Takoah, became an inspired messenger, although he says definitely (iii, 14) that he was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son.

Whence arose the prophets? Dr. Claud G. Montefiore thinks that the most probable theory is that prophecy was of Canaanitish origin and that it was borrowed or imitated by the Hebrews from the Canaanites. That seers and prophets coalesced, the former being the older society or order.

*Nabi* is the Hebrew term for "prophet" and Abraham (Genesis xx, 7) is the first person in the Old Testament to be so described; he is followed by Moses (Deuteronomy xxxiv, 10, *et seq.*). He was regarded as the greatest of the prophets, because to him was entrusted the supreme privilege of communicating the Law unto Israel. By the time of Samuel, prophecy had become a permanent institution and, for the first time (I Samuel xxix) we read of the *neblim*, "disciples of the prophets" to become masters in due time. But neither the name nor the office had its origin among the Hebrews. *Nebo* or *Nebi* was the herald or prophet of Marduk, the great Babylonian deity. In Babylonia and Assyria, divination was an organized function of the State and the art of divination

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has been traced to Emmeduranki, the Babylonian. As *nebo* was the Babylonian expression for "interpreter of the gods", W. E. Addis thinks it was also used by the Hebrews to denote "spokesman" or "interpreter". The late Rev. A. A. Green, a Jewish scholar, propounded the theory that the Schools of the Prophets are to be identified with the Order of the Nazarites, who, whenever they are mentioned, are intimately connected with the prophets and their schools. Both Samuel and Elijah, he says, were Nazarites, both ecstatic prophets and both identified with the Schools of the Prophets. Amos, he says, used the terms *Nabi* and *Nazir* indiscriminately. *Nabi* is also the Arabic word for "prophet" and the meaning of *Naba'* is "an announcement of great utility" or, secondarily, "a prediction." It has, therefore, a wider application than that given to it in common speech, where it is limited to prediction.

The Qur'ān supplies more details about the prophets than the Bible, although the latter contains several books supposed to have been written by them, which later research has demonstrated to be, in many instances, a fallacious belief.

The line of the prophets sent to the nations, as given in the Qur'ān, is a lengthy one, but it is nowhere suggested that the list is complete nor even that the names of all the prophets are even known to men. Indeed, the contrary is definitely asserted. For instance, we read in the Qur'ān (xxxv, 24) :

Surely We have sent you with the Truth as the bearer of good news and a warner ; and *there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.*

Muhammad Ali, in his translation of the Holy Qur'ān (appendix I), has the following note on this verse :

This broad doctrine that a prophet was raised among every nation is taught repeatedly in the Qur'ān and, curiously enough, it is met with in the earlier revelations at Makka as well as the later revelations at Madina. This great truth, which had remained hidden for thousands of years from the wisest men of the world, had shone upon an unlearned Arabian, who could not have even known what nations then existed and what scriptures they possessed. This broad doctrine forms the basis of the universality of a divine message to the whole of mankind.

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Also in the Qur'ān (iv, 165), we read :

We sent apostles as the givers of good news and as warners, so that people should not have a plea against Allah after the coming up of the apostles.

And in x, 47: "And every nation had an apostle", concerning which Muhammad Ali has written :

This is one of the noblest lessons that the Qur-ān has taught of which humanity will always be under the deepest obligations to the Holy Prophet.

What may be regarded as a striking poetical commentary on the foregoing quotations from the Holy Qur-ān has been contributed to literature by James Russell Lowell :

God sends His teachers into every age,  
To every clime and race of men,  
With revelations fitted to their growth,  
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth  
Into the selfish rule of one sole race :  
Therefore, each form of worship that hath swayed  
The life of Man and given it to grasp  
The master-key of knowledge—reverence,  
Enfolds some germ of goodness and of right ;  
Else never had the eager soul, which loathes  
The slothful down of pampered ignorance  
Found in it even a moment's fitful rest.

We talk of nations and races, but the Qur'ān speaks of one nation only—the human race, of which Allah is Lord and King. Muslims do not speak of revelations made by the prophets, but of revelations made by Allah *through* the prophets. In the Qur'ān (ii, 13) we read :

All people are a single nation, so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners.

When we speak of the 'brotherhood of man', a phrase often on men's lips with a political application, we limit it mentally to a brotherhood of nations on one planet only—the Earth. Allah, however, is, in Islam, Lord of All the Worlds and the brotherhood of Islam is co-extensive with His realm and governance. This, says Muhammad Ali, is not a dry dogma but a living principle. Allah is not a local deity, as He was to the pre-Islamic Arabs, but the Universal Lord.

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Muslims accept, not only Muhammad as *The Prophet*, but they accept and honour all the prophets who preceded him, whether mentioned or not by name in the Qur'ān or the Bible. We read in Qur'ān xl, 78 :

We sent apostles before you ; there are some of them We have mentioned to you and there are others whom We have not mentioned to you.

Adam is mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Bible but the Qur'ān does not state that he whom we know and call by the name of Adam was the first man in point of time. This is the name mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis and its meaning is "earth" or "earthy." When, however, we come to the second chapter of Genesis, the Hebrew of the term "man" is no longer *adam* but *ish*, which means "a superior man", a man of spiritual apprehension and of higher intelligence. This duplication of terms to denote man is to be found in nearly, if not all, root languages and serves to disprove the erroneous doctrine of the Fall of Man but, rather, as illustrative of the mental and spiritual progression of man as taught in the Qur'ān :

xviii, 37: Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then He made you a perfect man ?

xxii, 7-9 : Who made good everything that He has created and He began the creation of man from dust . . . Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit.

xl, 67: He it is who created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then He brings you forth as a child, then that you may attain your maturity.

Two names are also given for "prophet"—*nabi*, as we have seen, alike in Hebrew and Arabic ; and *rasul*, "the sent one", which is of special significance. It is, of course, familiar to Muslims who repeat it several times daily in the first article of the Creed of Islam.

In the Qur-ān (xxiii, 40,) we read : "Muhammad is the seal of the prophets". This word "seal" has been interpreted by Lane to mean "the last" and this interpretation has secured a world-wide circulation. There is no warrant, however, for accepting this as a term indicating finality, except, as Muhammad Ali points out, it is

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combined with the perfection of the attributes of prophethood. Muhammad Ali says :

He is the seal of the prophets because with him the object of prophethood, the manifestation of the Divine Will in laws which shall guide humanity, was finally accomplished in the revelation of a perfect law in the Holy Qur-án and he is also the seal of the prophets because certain favours bestowed on the prophets were for ever to continue among his followers.

To seal a document is to give it authority and authenticity to its contents and the practice in legal circles is for the person signing such document to place his (or her) forefinger on the seal and say "I deliver this as my act and deed."

An impression is abroad that revelation ceases at a certain period or stage in human existence, but there is no authority for such opinion and Sufism, for instance, recognizes no time-limit to Divine revelation. Revelation in the sense of communion with Allah is possible and occurs, as is held by Jews, Christians and Muslims without limitation of time or nationality or place. It occurs, not by the incarnation of a divinity or deity, but by the spiritual progression of the individual and his purification from sensuality.

Neither Jesus nor Muhammad claimed or attempted to found a new religion. That was not the mission of either. Rather, in each instance, it was to restore the knowledge of the Unity of God—a doctrine which had become overclouded with superstition and idolatrous practices. Each received certain directions and instructions. The mission of Jesus, as he himself definitely stated, was to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" but to Muhammad was given the commission to be the prophet to all nations, particularly, as we read in the Holy Qur-án (ii, 4): to all "who believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you." Islam is the only religion that laid down the broad basis of faith in all the prophets of the world and the recognition of truth in all religions.

## JESUS SON OF MARY HIS BIRTH AND DEATH

BY KHWAJA NAZIR AHMAD, BAR-AT-LAW

(Continued from Vol. XXXV, p. 423)

The Holy Qur-án speaks of Adam as being made a vicegerent of God on earth to whom *Iblis* refused to make obeisance.<sup>1</sup> In chapter II the word *Adam* is used throughout<sup>2</sup> yet all commentators take it as referring to man,<sup>3</sup> for man has been addressed as God's vicegerent on earth :

And He it is Who has made you successors in the land.<sup>4</sup>

And God made all things on earth subservient to man.<sup>5</sup> The following verses make the position perfectly clear that in the terminology of the Holy Qur-án *Adam* and *man* are interchangeable :

And certainly We created you ; then We fashioned you, then We said to the angel : make obeisance to Adam.<sup>6</sup>

And certainly We created man (*Insan*) of clay (*Salsal*) that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned in shape . . . And when your Lord said to the angels : surely I am going to create a mortal (*Bashar*) of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape. So when I have made him complete and *breathed into him of My spirit*, fall down and make obeisance to him.<sup>7</sup>

When your Lord said to the angels : Surely I am going to create a mortal (*Bashar*) from dust (*teen*). So when I have made him complete and *breathed into him of My spirit*, then fall down making obeisance to him.<sup>8</sup>

I may mention here that man being the vicegerent of God on earth, it is but natural that God's creation should bow before him. But according to the Holy Qur-án *Iblis* (*satan*), which represents our power of evil, did not. *Iblis* really is the root idea of desperateness, rebellion, perversity or enmity or in other words our baser passions, which lead us to do wrong and commit sin. It is also noteworthy

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur-án, II : 30-36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II : 31-37.

<sup>3</sup> See Yusuf Ali, p. 24, n. 47 ; Muhammad Ali, p. 23 n. 449.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, VI : 166.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII : 2 ; XIV : 32-34 ; XVI : 10-19 ; XXII : 65 ; XXXI : 20 ; XLV

12=13.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, VII : 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, XV : 26-29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXVIII : 71-72.

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that according to these verses the spirit of God is breathed into every man ;<sup>1</sup> and it is this *spirit* which enables man to distinguish between right and wrong, and which really stands for knowledge and reasoning and which makes us superior to all other creation of God.

The verses which I have just quoted narrate the same events, about the creation of man and the refusal of *Iblis* to bow before him. If we compare these verses with those of Chapter II (36-39),<sup>2</sup> we are led to the irresistible conclusion that *Adam* and *man* are interchangeable terms and that *Adam* stands for mankind generally or as it has been said: Adam is a symbol for man.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Jarir also explains that "*like Adam*" means the likeness of or like man.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, when in the chapter III verse 58 God spoke of the likeness of Jesus to be like that of Adam, the reference was to *man* as such who had been created of *turāb* (dust). In this light the Qur-ānic verse clearly indicates that Jesus was like any other human being and since this verse follows the events concerning the birth of Jesus, they clearly point out, in the words of the Holy Prophet that "Jesus was conceived by a woman just as any other woman conceives a child" through a male agency.

The verse in question speaks of creation from *turab* (dust). It is the real term for, or name of, dust. It is a generic term which covers all its stages—dust itself, clay (*teen* or *teen lazib*) and *salsāl kalfakhhār* (mud which is brittle like pottery)—the Material, the Physical and the Spiritual stage which is reached after the Divine Spirit has been breathed into it. The reference to *turāb* (dust) is really to indicate the low origin, the humility and the humanity of man, for the life germ is one of the products of dust in the living man. The Holy Qur-ān, therefore, uses this very term in connection with Jesus to show that like any other man he too was human and not divine.

<sup>1</sup> See also the Holy Qur-ān, XXXII : 29 ; XXXIV : 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII : 50 ; XX 116-126. XVII : 61-65.

<sup>3</sup> Yusuf Ali : *Translation of the Holy Qur-ān* 643, n. 1968.

<sup>4</sup> *Tafsir Ibn Jarir*, Vol. III : 189.

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The only other matter which needs consideration is the oft-recurring phrase : *kun fa yakoon*. This phrase refers to two independent stages : *kun* stands, so to say, for *amr* : command, which is premeasurement and *yakoon* for actual creation or completion.<sup>1</sup> God decides on an *amr* or, in other words, He commands it by saying *kun* (Be). Thus if we can postulate the primeval matter, it owes its origin to God Who is responsible for the first basis of existence, "the Cause of all causes." Thus *kun* is merely the commanding stage. It is a single thing unrelated to time. The next stage commences in the twinkling of an eye.<sup>2</sup> There is no interposition of time or condition between the Will and its consequence, for with command the process of creation starts to which the term *khalaqa* is to be applied.<sup>3</sup> This again involves the idea of measuring and fitting into a scheme already ordained. It means that function of creation, in case of man, which is laid down in the Holy Qur-án itself, that is the function whereby the germ holds and gradually becomes a clot, flesh and bones and then takes the shape of man.<sup>4</sup> Thus with *kun* the process of creation starts and this is represented by *fa yakoon* (and it is). But although the process of creation starts atonce, yet it does not mean that it is also completed immediately. The Holy Qur-án speaks of the creation of the heavens and earth in six periods or stages.<sup>5</sup> Even if the word *yaum* is translated as *days*, it cannot be styled immediate but *kun fa yakoon* has been rightly applied to their creation for after the command, the creation started immediately and became completed in due course of time appointed by God.<sup>6</sup> Similarly in the creation of all that we find on the earth six stages are mentioned : water,<sup>7</sup> earth,<sup>8</sup> vegetation,<sup>9</sup> worms, animals,<sup>10</sup> and finally man.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Imam Fakhrú Din Rāzi, *Tafsir-i-Kabir*, Vol. II : 469 see also *Rūh-ul-Ma'āni*, Vol. I : 585.

<sup>2</sup> The Holy Qur-án LIV : 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Tafsir, Ibn Hussain*, Vol. III : 203.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> The Holy Qur-án VII, 54, X : 3 : XI : 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, II : 117.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, XXI : 30.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, XVIII : 37 ; XXX : 22 etc. (dust) ; VI : 2, VII : 11-12 etc. (Clay) XV : 26 : 28, LX : 13-14 etc. (black mud).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, VI : 100, X : 24, XIII : 45, XX : 54 : XXVII : 60-66.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, II : 64.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, XXXI : 10 etc.

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The Book in fact points to the final evolution of man from the animal stage. The Holy Qur-án says :

There is no animal that walks upon the earth—but (they are) genera like you.<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Qur-án also mentions six parallel stages in the physical evolution of man : dust, life-germ, clot, flesh bones and breathing of the spirit of God in making man perfect.<sup>2</sup>

After the command of *kun*, therefore, the process of creation starts, but the stages of creation have to be completed in due course of time. In the case of Jesus the *amr* or command was that Mary should give birth to Jesus. The process of creation started at once and she was married and conceived him, and after the appointed time, during which she travelled to different places, she gave birth to Jesus. *Kun fa yakoon* in her case did not and could not mean that God commanded and Jesus was born forthwith. The Book itself speaks of his being conceived by Mary and also of the different stages of her pregnancy. That is why the Qur-ánic reference to the second *kifalat*,<sup>3</sup> which is really an indication of marriage, of Mary is sandwiched in between the talk of the angels with Mary and the birth of Jesus. It is thus made clear that *kun* was followed by *fa yakoon* or, in other words, as soon as the command of God to Mary is mentioned, the Book itself indicates how the process of *fa yakoon* started immediately, in her case, by drawing up lots for the selection of a husband for Mary.

To sum up God could have created Jesus without a father, but according to the Holy Qur-án He did not do so and Jesus was born in the normal and natural manner. Jesus was the son of Mary and Joseph the Carpenter.

(To be continued)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, VI : 38. The Holy Qur-án also mentions that as a punishment for their insolence, certain men were degraded to the next lower stage of animality i.e., were commanded to "Be ye apes." See II, 65 ; VII, 166.

<sup>2</sup> The Holy Qur-án, XXII : 5, XXXV : 11-12 ; XL : 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, III : 43.

## ISLAM AND ITS FOUNDER

BY MAULVI AFTAB-UD-DIN AHMAD

Although ideologically Islam is as old as humanity itself, it being the religion of the first morally conscious human being and the religion of all the spiritual leaders and teachers of humanity throughout the ages, its latest manifestation under this peculiar Arabic name revealed itself through the Prophet Muhammad of Arabia in the year 610 of the Christian era. A revealed religion, it invested Prophet Muhammad with this honoured rank in a cave near Makka, called Hira, on one of the closing nights of the month of Ramadan in that year. The Prophet was 40 years of age at this time. Starting on this night the revelations of this latest and international dispensation continued throughout the rest of the Prophet's life, under the title "the Qur'ān" (a thing to be read) a word prophetic in its etymology, because no other book religious or otherwise, has ever been so widely read and recited as this.

Unlike other founders of religion, Prophet Muhammad, the vehicle of this new dispensation, was born in the broad daylight of history. We know the date of his birth, the circumstances of his early life, the year of his marriage, and of his prophethood, his activities and occupations. But the wealth of details with which his life subsequent to his claim to prophethood, is recorded and transmitted is simply amazing. He was born in the year 571 C.E., the year which saw the attempted invasion of Makka by Abraha, the Christian governor of Yemen. The miraculous escape of Makka from devastation on this occasion may be regarded as a sign from God indicating a new and bright chapter in the history of the Arab nation. Born posthumously, he became doubly orphaned at the age of six, when his dear mother also left this world of uncertainties. Thus at the very beginning of his life he was made to realise the utter loneliness of the individual existence. Who knows if this experience was not the basis for his Godward tendencies that later supported the gigantic structure of his resplendent God-realisation. Contem-

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porary witnesses aver that from his early boyhood he was serious-minded, contemplative and truthful in an extraordinary measure. He was the most reliable of the citizens of Makka, and even the highest people referred their important disputes to him. Fearless truthfulness and an acute sense of justice marked him out as the most outstanding figure of his times. The sufferings of others melted his heart that would not move at the severest trouble involving his own person. Early in his youth he started an organisation for the relief of the destitute and the oppressed. Changing circumstances brought him experiences of pasture life as well as of the business life of the city. Appointed by his future wife Lady Khadija, a wealthy proprietress of a business concern, he showed an integrity that was astonishingly revolutionary for the times. He earned the admiration of his employer and this admiration growing into a kind of love she offered her hand in marriage. Though the lady was 15 years his senior the love coming as it did from a higher plane than the sensual, was accepted in the same spirit in which it was offered. This marriage brought him the longed-for freedom from the cares of economic existence and gave him plenty of time for devotional practices. The thought of God being his all-absorbing passion, the highest ambition of his life was to be absolutely free to offer himself up for absolute devotion. His marriage with Lady Khadija, his erstwhile employer, brought him this much sought for opportunity. Month after month he would spend in retirement in the nearby cave of Hira, fasting and praying for enlightenment for himself and for the amelioration in the moral condition of the then depraved humanity. Deep-minded that he was, he realised before long that all kinds of social iniquities from which the vast bulk of humanity was found suffering had their origin in the spiritual ignorance that pervaded the atmosphere of the world. It was man's engrossment with his physical self to the total neglect of his higher being that made him callous, brutal and deceitful to his fellow beings. Progressive contemplation brought him greater and greater certainty with regard to his knowledge of the destiny of man. Till one night in the year 610 C.E. when he was about 40, he received a direct message from God, in the manner of past prophets. The message was "Read". Evidently it was in response

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to his perpetual prayerful attempts to read the destiny of man. For himself he was unable to read it. His tiny lamp of understanding found itself insufficient to penetrate the gloom of uncertainty that hung round this destiny. Naturally when the angel of God conveyed him the message "Read", in his native simplicity the Prophet replied "I cannot read". And he only spoke the truth. By himself he was utterly incapable of reading such a mysterious book. Thrice the Command was repeated and thrice the self-same reply came forth from the addressee. "Read in the name of thy Lord Who created you"—came the final command. Yes, it was possible for him to read this mysterious book only when he attempted to read it in the light of the name of God. And this light was now being provided to him. It was God Himself who was revealing to him the whole meaning of the life of man and His purpose for creating and maintaining humanity then and for all times. "Read" the message continued:

And your Lord is Most Honourable, Who taught (to write) with pen, taught man what he knew not ; nay, man is most surely inordinate, because he sees himself free from need (of guidance). "Surely to your Lord is the return".

It was thus a message of reading written and recorded word, the mysterious process by which knowledge is transmitted in space and time. It was also a warning to man against the folly of careless indifferent attitude towards life. In a word, it was a message of light and of heart searching. It implied a revolution in the nature of man, a revolution that proposed to break the complacency of the human mind and expose it to the thrills of a new existence in spiritual illumination as along this line alone lay the achievement of peace and good-will among men, the absence of which primarily led the Prophet to set out on his spiritual quest. A few words in elucidation of this phenomenon seems to be necessary for a world grown stranger to this tradition. It is no doubt an illumination of the heart of man, but not springing from the heart itself. It is external as sunbeams or lamp light are external to the physical eye of man. The faculty of spiritual vision exists there in the heart of man, but a light must come from above to illuminate the prospects. 'This is the light of revelation vouchsafed to the chosen Prophets of

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God and is a recurring phenomenon in history. It comes in the form of spoken words. It takes other forms as well—sight, written words, flashes of ideas etc.—but the highest type is of spoken words. A world of light appear to be descending with these words, coming from the Author of the universe, and wherever they have come they have brought in their wake a stirring of a new quest for higher life in people who happen to come in contact with them. Conferring their recipient an utmost certainty about the ultimate destiny of man, they set ablaze the hearts of a whole people with a new zest for civilized existence. The words, I must repeat, are external to the heart of their recipient, as a telephone message is to the ears of its listener. They are so decidedly external that they leave their tangible physical repercussion on their recipient. Thus it is related by those who actually saw the Prophet on such occasions that he would perspire heavily and become excessively weighty at the time of such experiences. Sceptics even though professing adherence to the tradition of Prophethood, have tried to deduce from these evidences, the only ones of their kind in history, some kind of malady in the Prophet, forgetting that these symptoms are the only indications of the existence of such stupendous a phenomenon as the direct impact of the Divine Mind on the tiny mind of a human being. A second message which followed closely upon this first message further clarified the implication of this new dispensation saying "O you who are clothed: Arise and Warn". It was a command to disseminate the light of knowledge revealed to the Prophet. He was not to keep it to himself because God was determined to bring about a better condition of things in the world, to make life worth living, even by harder measures if mild persuasions failed. The redemptive will of God was active and the Prophet was to act only as its agent and a living embodiment. That, indeed, is the role of all Prophets. Added to his own passion for reformation was now the direct voice of God commanding him to act. His ardour, therefore, bordered on frenzy. His enthusiasm to bring people round the idea of a living, speaking God, was in reverse measure to the cold indifference of his countrymen. Naturally, people first pitied him and then began to regard him a nuisance. But

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this, again, is a fate which is common to all true lovers of man. He would preach the new message individually as also collectively out in the market-place. By nature modest and shy, his new role forced him to come out in the public. He took courage in both hands and went so far as to invite all the tribes of the Quraish, standing one day on the Mt. Safa. After making them confess that never in his life he had been found to tell a lie he proclaimed his mission to them and exhorted them to give up the abominable practice of idolatry, to eschew all forms of evil, to believe in the unity of God, and to come to the path of virtue. But the moment he spoke in this vein, they all became furious. Gradually the Prophet and his handful of followers became the target of all sorts of persecution. But finding that persecution instead of slackening the ardour of the Prophet and the believers rather tightened it, they tried to tempt him away from the path of his mission. They called on the Prophet and offered him the following temptations :

“ If your ambition is to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much of it as you wish, if you aspire to win honour and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king, if you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the fairest maiden of your own choice.”

Irresistible temptations no doubt. But the Prophet's reactions were typical of a man whose vision transcends this world of matter and whose eyes are fixed on an ideal that is beyond the grasp of the average human understanding. He replied :

“ I want neither pelf nor power. I have been commissioned by God as a warner to mankind. I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity in this life as well as in the life to come. Should you reject the word of God, surely God will decide between you and me.”

Now, while all sorts of attacks were being directed against the person of the Prophet, his followers had been finding life almost impossible in Makka. Tender-hearted that the Prophet was, he did not mind his own sufferings so much as those of his followers. He advised them to give their faith a preference over their love of their homeland saying :

“ There is a land where no one is wronged, a land of justice.

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Stay there until it should please God to open for you a way out of these difficulties.”

The country the Prophet had in his mind was the Christian country of Abyssinia. And in pursuance of this advice eleven persons sailed for Abyssinia. But the enemies of truth would not give these peaceful lovers of truth any respite even in this distant land. They sent a delegation to the Negus of Abyssinia demanding the extradition of the persecuted Muslims, on the alleged ground that they followed a religion which repudiated the ancestral faith of the Arabs as well as the religion followed by the Negus and his subjects, *viz.*, Christianity. Called upon to reply to this charge, the head of the Muslim immigrants, Ja'far son of Abu Taleb, made a statement, which not only admirably sums up the teachings of the Prophet, but also throws light on the miraculous change which the Prophet had already succeeded in bringing about in the moral character of his followers. The spokesman of the Muslims said:

“O King! we were an ignorant people, given to idolatry. We used to eat corpses even of dead animals and to do all kinds of disgraceful things. We did not make good our obligations to our relations, and ill-treated our neighbours. The strong among us would thrive at the expense of the weak, till at last, God raised a Prophet for our reformation. His descent, his righteousness, his integrity and his piety are well known to us. He called us to the worship of God and exhorted us to give up idolatry and stone worship. He enjoined us to speak truth, to make good our trusts, to respect the ties of kinship and to do good to our neighbours. He taught us to shun everything foul and to avoid bloodshed. He forbade all manner of indecent things, telling lies, misappropriating orphan's belongings and bringing false accusations against the chastity of women. So we believed in him, followed him and acted upon his teachings. Thereupon, our people began to do us wrong, to subject us to tortures, thinking that we might thus abjure our faith and revert to idolatry. When, however, their cruelties exceeded all bounds, we came over to seek an asylum in your country, where, we hope, we shall come to no harm.”

*(To be continued)*

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### ISLAMIC CULTURE

BY SYED WIZARAT ALI

Islamic culture in the hey-day of Islam was the pride of the world. Dr. Zaki Ali, the learned author of "Islam in the World" has made some very interesting observations on it and I give below some extracts from his valuable work, hoping they will make instructive reading :

"Islam is not only a faith and a political ideal, but also a civilization composed of the most heterogeneous elements and nevertheless, possesses a characteristic unity. That religion is the uniting bond of these factors, and that politics and civilization owe their existence to religion, is unquestionable. What assigns to religion, mainly, if not exclusively, the credit of having evolved a uniform Islamic civilization, is the fact that, with Muslims, religion is an all-powerful factor and furthermore, the entire historical phenomenon of Islam goes back to its founder, the Prophet."

In the evolution of Islamic civilization, the determination to rule, and the advantages arising from rapid economic development, were also important and effective factors. In the unified Near Eastern Islamic State represented by the Omayyad and Abbaside caliphates, there developed upon a Hellenistic basis an integrated civilisation with Arabic and an increasing number of Asiatic traits showing the influence of all the various countries involved. Islam then permeated both State and Civilisation, impressing them with a definite idea of the state and a culture that characterised its future, while in turn it underwent considerable changes as a result of the assimilation of the spiritual heritage of former religions. This occurred as much externally as it did inwardly. Thus, Islam became a combination of a religion and an ideal of a state and of a civilisation, and despite all local peculiarities and political splits it formed a great spiritual unit reaching from the Atlantic ocean to China.

Islamic culture aims at the cultivation of the entire human race.

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The Qur'ān is the inspiration and the cause of all achievements of Islamic culture.

The Prophet encouraged, counselled and ordained the search of science. When the Arabs came in contact with the debris of ancient civilisations 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.”

These and other precepts explain the eagerness and the jealous care with which the Muslim rulers protected and encouraged the learned. For them this was a work of piety.

Says Dr. Lucien Leclerc :

“ Never shall the world see again so marvellous a spectacle as the Arabs afforded during the ninth century. These pastoral people, whom religious enthusiasm had suddenly made masters of half the world, having once founded their empire, immediately set to work to acquire that knowledge of the sciences which was lacking to their greatness. Of all the invaders who competed for the last remains of the Roman Empire, they alone pursued such studies, while the Germanic hordes prided themselves upon their brutality and ignorance, took a thousand years to unite the broken chains of tradition, the Arabs accomplished this in less than a century. They provoked the competition of the conquered Christians—a healthy competition which secured the harmony of the races. . . . At the end of the eight century, their whole scientific possessions consisted of a translation of one medical treatise and some books on alchemy. Before the ninth century had run to its close, the Arabs were in possession of all the sciences of the Greeks ; they had produced from their own ranks students of the first order, and they showed from this time an aptitude for the exact sciences, which was lacking in their instructors, whom they henceforward surpassed.”

Between the eighth and twelfth centuries, the hegemony of the philosophical and scientific worlds, as of the world of arms and affairs, lay with Islam, whose sway

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extended athwart the world from China to the Atlantic. Teeming with intellectual activity, this great stretch of lands had become united not only by a religion but also by a language ; the tongue of the Quran was used for the purposes of learning and philosophy, and Islam thus enjoyed an advantage never attained by any civilisation before or since.

The distinctive activities of the Arab mind were already manifest under the Omayyads, though it was during the Abbaside time that it made its best display. History is the beginning and core of all sound philosophy and all great literature, and the first Arab writers of distinction were historians, biographers, and quasi-historical poets. Romantic fiction and the short story followed as a reading public developed, willing to be amused. And as reading ceased to be a special accomplishment and became necessary to every man of affairs and to every youth of breeding, came the systematic growth of an education system and an educational literature.

At the end of the eighth and the commencement of the ninth centuries, at a time when the Caliphate was at the height of its power and Muslim prosperity assured by a flourishing agriculture, great industrial activity, extended commerce, and an established highly developed financial system, there began that remarkable intellectual movement which exercised so great an influence upon the history of the world, and which, within a short space of time, introduced among the Arabs an astounding amount both of oriental and occidental culture. That which had its inception in Syria and Mesopotamia through the introduction of Hellenic knowledge, and which was nurtured in Persia under the Sassanides, achieved under the Muslims an undreamt of consummation, since they advanced, from an adoption of foreign civilisation, through the stage of complete assimilation to that of original performance.

The tenth century saw Islamic civilisation in its prime and its influence extended over whole Muslim world. The real issue of Islamic civilisation came to pass only upon the accession to power of the Abbasides. The transition to liberal cosmopolitan tendencies with their

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sequence of higher forms of economic and intellectual life soon found expression in the transference of the capital to Baghdad which, built upon Mesopotamian soil embodied the traditions of the ancient oriental world-empire and, as the point of intersection of all the great trade-routes of the Near East, was the natural mart for international traffic. With the glamour of the court upon it, magnetically attracting to itself the population and treasures of two hemispheres, Baghdad grew to be the greatest and most splendid of all cities.....the seat of a world-controlling power, the centre of industry and commerce, the scene of boundless luxury and reckless indulgence. Baghdad became also an academy of learning, and in the domain of intellect no less than in that of material culture the exclusive and potent motive underlying the astonishingly fruitful labour whereby foreign civilisation was assimilated was to be found in the determination and ambition of the Caliphs. Systematic translation on a large scale, embracing by degrees every branch of knowledge, was not undertaken until the Abbasides supported the undertaking with ample means and interested themselves in obtaining the costly original manuscripts, at times only to be acquired through diplomacy, instituting special commissions of scholars for the carrying out of the work.

Science attracted the attention of Al-Mansur (954 C. E.) who applied himself, among other things, to astronomy. The most splendid memorial was, however, established for himself as a patron of art and science by the caliph Al-Mamun (813—833) who brought together the largest collection of writings and founded a special institution for translating, placing it under the direction of distinguished scholars. And it was, infact, during his reign that the work of translation attained its height. The presence at Baghdad of the Nestorian physician, George Bachtichou, was the spark which was to light the fire. As a matter of fact, the Nestorians played a very large part in initiating the Arabs into the Greek sciences by giving them the first translations made.

Persian and Indian literature was taken into account as well as Greek, the latter, however, forming the bulk, being at first translated from the Assyrian, later, directly from the original. As regards their contents, at first,

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medical, mathematical, astronomical and geographical works were dealt with, in process of time also that upon philosophy and science. The Arab translations are even to-day of the greatest value, partly for exegetical reasons, partly because they fill many of the gaps in ancient literature.

Among the great translators of Greek into Arabic should be mentioned Honein ibn Ishāq, who went to Greece and, staying there two years in order to learn the language, returned to Baghdad with a large number of manuscripts. His literary activity was prodigious. Honein, whose name was Latinised as Joannitius, may be regarded as the prince of translators. When he finished a treatise, he brought his work to the enlightened Caliph Al-Mamun in whose presence it was carefully weighed, and Honein received for every manuscript translation its weight in gold.

The Arabian passion for Greek manuscripts was so great that the Arabs confiscated a copy of Hippocrates as the prize of victory, Al-Mansur sent messengers to Constantinople for the works of Euklid; Harun-al-Rashid, in dictating the terms to the defeated emperor of the Byzantines, specified Greek manuscripts as his most coveted booty.

Another celebrated translator was a Greek, Qusta ibn Luqa, who knew Arabic quite as well as his own tongue. The reigns of Abdurrahman III (912—961) and Al-Hakam II (961—976) coincided with a veritable golden age wherein Cordova, the town of the Caliphs, became the Baghdad of the West, the centre of the highest culture and the most refined art, the repository of a rich store of books, a centre for scientific research, a school for thousands of eager learners, and was long the most enlightened, best governed and most tolerant city of Europe.

In all the large cities throughout the Muslim Empire the rich paid their weight in gold for translations and vied with one another in possession of libraries and the rarest works. Out of this great intellectual movement sprang the great educational centres of Baghdad, Basra, Cairo and Cordova. They developed into great universities the light of which shone far beyond the frontiers

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of Islam. No distinction of class was allowed, and the nobleman's son studied side by side with the artisan's. Liberal allowances of food were made to poor scholars and tuition was free. Christian students were attracted to these centres of learning and admitted on an equal footing with Muslims. Muslim scholars scoured the universe for knowledge and made it available to the whole world.

In a short survey of a subject of such an ample scope it is impossible to describe in detail and comprehensively the Muslim achievements in every domain of science and art. The foundation of hospitals is one of the glories of Islamic civilisation and is proof of the philanthropic spirit actuating the rulers and the nobility of Islam.

One of the most celebrated hospitals of Cairo was Mansurian Hospital built by Sultan Al-Mansur Gilafum in 1283. The description of it by Al-Makrizi reads like that of a twentieth century institution with hospital units. Each category of disease had its particular section, and was attended by a staff of specialists. The large endowment enabled the patients to be kept in every comfort, while the physicians were paid large salaries. Musicians and singers came to entertain convalescent patients. Lastly, when patients, who had recovered, left the hospital, they were given five gold pieces which enabled them to live for sometime without having to do any heavy work. It may be added that there was also a special hospital for women. These were the peculiarities of Islamic culture based as it was on the Quranic teaching.

As early as 709 the Caliph Al-Walid established infirmaries at Damascus for the blind and for lepers. Harun-al-Rashid established a tradition of his own by attaching a college and a hospital to every mosque.

Emmanuel Deutsch says :

“By the aid of the Qur'an the Arabs conquered a world greater than that of Alexander the great, greater than that of Rome, and in as many tens of years as the latter had wanted hundreds to accomplish her conquests ; by the end of which they, alone of all the Semites, came to Europe as kings. They came to

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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, astronomy and the golden art of song to the West as well as to the East, to stand at the cradle of modern science, and to cause us late epigoni for ever to weep over the day when Granada fell."

Max Neuburger says :

"Islamic civilisation which in its prime surpassed that of ancient Rome in animation and variety, and all its predecessors in comprehensiveness, lasted until the commencement of the eleventh century. In the West the fall of Cordova (1236) set the seal to its fate ; in the East the Mongol invasion terminated the rule of the Abbasides in Baghdad (1258). Nevertheless, for centuries after this golden age, the achievements of Moorish Spain were by no means inconsiderable, much being accomplished also in Egypt, of which country the Mongols stopped short, whilst even under the rule of the Suljukes and Mamlukes intellectual aspirations were by no means wholly quenched, and even in the present may be traced the impress which the Arabic epoch left upon the evolution of mankind.

The Arabs brought to the conquered countries their peculiar habits and customs to which they closely adhered. For inspite of the great facility with which the Arabs borrowed so much of foreign civilisation, they impressed their own national, quite original, stamp, on the land they conquered and ruled. Whilst the brave gifted, unsophisticated Arabs, aflame with religious exaltation, were by invasion making themselves masters of all the richest civilised countries, their administrative systems both Civil and Military soon developed, and became powerful witnesses of their culture and civilisation. There have been numerous Muslim philosophers, physicians, chemists, astronomers, men of letters, etc., who have left their indelible marks on the pages of history. Those who seek and exert themselves to put the responsibility of the intellectual degradation of Muslims upon the spirit of the Qur'ān are clearly in the wrong. On the contrary, those who have followed its counsels have been the creators of a civilisation which is astounding to this day.