

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

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CONTENTS

	Frontispiece
	Page
A Fraternal Group	
New Year's Message	1
Why Islam appeals to me? by A. H. A. Rahman	2
The Catholicity of Islam: by K. B. Syed Ahmad Ali Khan	4
Muslim Conception of Asceticism: by M. A. C. M. Saleh	9
Islam and the Covenant of Abraham: by Nadire Florence Ives Osman (New York)	12
Atheism and the Existence of God: by M. L. M. Hussain	16
The Healing Qualities of the Qur-an: by M. T. Akbar, K. C.	23
A Great Day: by Begum Shaista Ikram Ullah	28
Muhammad the Greatest Benefactor of Humanity: by Begum Mir Amir-ud-Din	31
Correspondence	34
Book Review	36

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَجْلَدٌ فِي نِصَابِ سَنَةِ رَسُولِ مُحَمَّدٍ خَلِّهِ الْبَرَكَاتُ

THE

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Vol. XXVIII]

ZULQA'DA 1358 A.H.
JANUARY 1940 A.C.

[No. 1

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

DEAR READERS,

Entering upon a new year, with a service of 27 years behind, is undoubtedly a matter for thanksgiving for the workers of a journal like this. The patrons and the management of the *Islamic Review* should both realise the gratitude which they owe to Allah on this account! May His name be glorified for ever and ever more!

This realisation of Divine help and favour should, however, be accompanied by a similar realisation of the responsibility which it entails. Most serious times are ahead as we enter upon this twenty-eighth year of our venture. The world is in a travail. Human civilisation is in the melting-pot. Europe is gasping for a spiritual life-breath. The delivery of the life-giving message of the Qur-án to a groaning world is entrusted to our feeble hands. May we be given the requisite physical and moral equipment to acquit ourselves honourably of this stupendous duty!

Let this be the prayer rising from our hearts trembling with diffidence in view of our own insignificance and the enormous sanctity and significance of the task in our hands!

Let our hope rest firmly on the Divine promise :

“Most surely We help our apostles, and those who believe, in this world's life and on the day when the witnesses shall stand up.”—

Holy Qur-án, 40 : 51.

Editor.

WHY ISLAM APPEALS TO ME ?

BY A. H. A. RAHMAN.

The writer of these lines is a convert to Islam. To the western mind, the chief appeal of Islam must be its simplicity. There are one or two other faiths which are as easy of approach but they sadly lack the vitality of the Faith of the Prophet (may Allah bless him !), and the spiritual and moral elevation which it offers.

The simple austerity of Islam cannot appeal to emotional men or hysterical women, or those who love the histrionic in religion. For such there is room in religions other than Islam. Such cannot find satisfaction but in places and systems where the eye is pleased with a riot of gorgeous colour, the ear charmed with classical music and the heart moved by profusely flowered altars and pathetic tableaux. For there is no appeal whatever to the brain. And what is more, in some of these religions one is not permitted to think for oneself in religious matters. The brain must be primarily a receptacle for anything the ordained priest chooses to plant there.

What a contrast we find in the Holy Prophet's injunction to his followers : “Seek knowledge, though it be available only in China.”

The Holy Prophet (may Allah bless him !) was aware of the enormity of the sin of attempting to atrophy man's intelligence.

Islam must also appeal by virtue of its tolerance. Muslims are taught to venerate all the prophets of God, including Jesus Christ. Strangely enough, it was Christian intolerance that awakened my first interest in Islam. While yet a boy I attended a missionary lecture and was greatly impressed by some of the speakers who had lived among the "Bloodthirsty Mohammedans." When, a few years later, I had the good fortune to listen to a Muslim Missionary I was greatly impressed by his wonderful forbearance in dealing with a crowd who had left their own (Christian) meeting to heckle the "heathen." His words greatly impressed me and shattered completely my staunch Christian beliefs.

On several occasions, having asked a Christian priest a certain question, I have been answered thus: "I cannot tell you but you must believe it; that is where 'Faith' comes in."

How different is Islam wherein no question is beyond or beneath answering!

Goethe, after reading the Holy Qur-án, remarked: "If this is Islam, then every thinking man among us is in fact a Muslim."

The Churches are utterly incapable of grappling with the present-day problems. Islam alone offers the solution. This seems to be a mere assertion. But a little thought convinces us of this truth.

The mind of the Western World has been for too long prejudiced against Islam.

Now and then a shaft of light comes through from unexpected sources as, for instance, when General Smuts stated a few years ago that for each convert of the combined Christian churches in Africa, Islam gets ten.

THE CATHOLICITY OF ISLAM

K. B. SYED AHMAD ALI KHAN

“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians—whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good—they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.” (Qur-án, Sura II, 62.)

The comprehensive character and liberal scope of Islam cannot be better illustrated than by the passage of the Qur-án quoted above. It explains that Islam does not confine itself to forms; it looks to the spirit and substance. The mere recognition of a creed or formula does not constitute Islam. It is “a life to be lived in the present.” If by faith and practice one is a Muslim, he is a Muslim by whatever nomenclature he may choose to call himself.

The Qur-án further says, “Ye (Muslims), say we believe in God and that which was revealed to us (the Qur-án) and that which was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and his descendants and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and that which was given to other prophets from their Lord and we do not differentiate among them and we are only obedient to God.” (II, 136, repeated in II, 83.) This is based on that fundamental, which all moral creeds possessed in common with Islam, the everlasting heritage of universal Truth which cannot be new but is immutable and eternal. Righteousness has been defined as follows:

“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces (in prayer) towards the east or the west; but righteousness is of him who believeth in God; . . . who giveth money for God’s sake unto his kindred, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the stranger, and those who ask, and for the

THE CATHOLICITY OF ISLAM

(redemption of) captives ; who is constant at prayers and giveth alms ; and of those who perform their covenants when they have covenanted ; and who behave themselves patiently in hardship and adversity, and in times of violence : these are they who are true." (Qur-án, Sura II, 177.)

In Islam the service of man and the good of humanity constitute pre-eminently the service and worship of God and consequently a Muslim is always reminded ; " Do good here so that you may reap there."

The Prophet is asked in the Qur-án to address the People of the Book thus : " Ye, People of the Book, let us meet on common grounds, that we worship none but Allah ; that we do not make any partner with Him ; that we take none except Allah to be our God." (Sura III, 63.)

" Shirk," or suggesting a partner for God, is a heinous crime. All other sins may be excused by God but " shirk " cannot be pardoned. (Sura IV, 48 ; repeated in IV, 116.)

The Prophet is asked in the Qur-án to call people to the path of God with reason and good advice and to argue in the most polite way. (Sura XVI, 125.)

The creation of man is not in vain ; he has been created for some definite purpose. He is reminded of this in the Qur-án thus : " Did ye think We had made you for sport, and that ye should not be brought back again to us? " (XXIII, 115.) The purpose of his creation is referred to in the Qur-án in Sura LI, 56, thus ; " We did not create Jinn and men but that they should serve Me." The word ' Ibada,' which is translated as 'serve,' is a term of very wide connotation in Islamic theology. It means to act in strict conformity with the Divine Laws. The Qur-án says : " Worship God alone ; be kind to kindred and servants, orphans and

ISLAMIC REVIEW

the poor; speak righteously to men, pray and pay alms," "defer humbly to your parents; with humility and tenderness; say, O Lord, be merciful to them, even as they brought me up when I was helpless." "Abandon the old barbaricities of blood vengeance and child murder, and be united as one flesh. . . ." (Sura XVII, 24.) "Then, again, "Touch not the goods of the orphan. Perform your covenant, and walk not proudly on the earth." (Sura XVII, 34.) "Reverence the womb that bore you." "Commit not adultery; for it is a foul thing and an evil way." "Let the believer restrain his eyes from lust; let women make no display of ornaments, save to their own kindred," are some of the items of the ethical code of Islam.

An example of the life of a righteous man has been referred to in the Qur-án thus: "The servants of the Merciful are they that walk upon the earth softly; and when the ignorant speak unto them, they reply, 'Peace!' They that spend the night worshipping their Lord, prostrate, and standing; . . . those that, when they spend, are neither profuse nor niggardly, but take a middle course . . . those that invoke not with God any other god, and slay not a soul that God hath forbidden otherwise than by right, and commit not fornication . . . they who bear nor witness to that which is false, and when they pass by vain sport, they pass it by with dignity: . . . who say, 'O our Lord, grant us of our wives and children such as shall be a comfort unto us, and make us examples unto the pious;'—these shall be rewarded, for that they persevered; and they shall be accosted in paradise with welcome and salutation: for ever herein, a fair abode and resting-place." (Sura XXV, 63, 64, 67, 68, 72, 74—76.)

The Qur-án does not present any dogma, it embodies universal truth and its verses appeal to the inner

THE CATHOLICITY OF ISLAM

conscience of man. It gives a history of the past ; endorses the message of the previous prophets, advises us to respect them, and paves the way for future progress. A belief in the message of the Almighty and His Messenger, coupled with action under the inspiration of the said Message, is all that is required.

The above is a specimen of the basis on which our Prophet (peace be on him and his true followers!) started his mission. That he constantly adhered to the injunction of the Qur-án of calling people gently towards the new faith is sufficiently illustrated by his own life. While the terms of the Truce at Hudaibiya explain the peaceful manner in which Islam was propagated, the dignified attitude of the Prophet at the fall of Mecca illustrates the extremely forbearing character of the Prophet himself. The scrupulous regard accorded to the terms of the Hudaibiya Truce by the Prophet and his party occasioned the conversion of the inveterate enemies of Islam.

The sermon delivered by the Prophet to the assembled people after the fall of Mecca will always remain a monumental certificate to the character of the Prophet. The sermon begins by a declaration of the natural equality and brotherhood of mankind (Qur-án, Sura XLIX, 13) and then proceeds : "Descendants of Koraish, how do you think I shall act towards you ?" "With kindness and pity, gracious brother and nephew," was the reply. "I shall speak to you as Joseph spake unto his brothers." "I shall not reproach you today ; God will forgive. He is the most Merciful and Compassionate."

The Prophet was commissioned to preach a message which was the last in its order and universal in its character. He aimed, therefore, not at the conquest of the soil but at the conquest of the heart. Material objects can be retained only so long as the possessor has

ISLAMIC REVIEW

the necessary power to retain them. They are but transitory and change hands from time to time. But a heart once conquered cannot waver.

That the spirit of the Master was continued, after he had gone, by his rightly-guided successors the most correct samples of Islam, is also a matter of history. These early leaders of Islam have always sacrificed their personal interests in favour of the nation. The way in which some early battles like those of Camel and Siffin ended sheds a flood of light on the magnanimity and foresight of these leaders. The acquisition of more territories was of no meaning if the light of faith grew dim in the heart. Amidst their conquests, therefore, the Muslims were always reminded that conquest should not be for the soil; the primary object must be the conversion of the heart. It is one of the most charitable works to guide a person who may be going astray. Every Muslim is instructed to do so, but within reasonable limits and in the most polite manner.

The Islamic brotherhood is universal. It does not recognise any prejudice of caste, creed or colour. No superiority or inferiority is recognised on account of personal status or descent. The only distinction recognised is that of the quality of action. A new convert is entitled to the same privileges as one who has been in the fold of Islam for generations. Instances where slaves have been placed on the throne are reported in history.

The fact that Islam has survived centuries amidst opposing forces, serious prejudices and vile calumnies and is still gaining ground is a strong testimony to the inherent catholicity of its teachings and to the forbearing character of its preachers. Had it rested on individual or government support, it would have perished with the fall of Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo and Granada.

MUSLIM CONCEPTION OF ASCETICISM

But, no, it stands on its own intrinsic merit. The Arabs were expelled from Spain, but not before the whole of Christendom had absorbed the culture they (the Arabs) imparted to Europe. The age has come when Islamic principles are being realised and acted upon, although prejudice does not permit the avowal of the source. The Book of Islam is always open for those who want to study it and learn therefrom.

MUSLIM CONCEPTION OF ASCETICISM

HAJJ OR PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA

BY M. A. C. M. SALEH

Zul-Hijja is the last Arabic month of the Muslim year, on the 10th day of which falls the festival of the Feast of Sacrifice. This great event in the history of Islam has a twofold significance, for it combines both the pilgrimage and the sacrifice in its acts of devotion prescribed in the Holy Qur-án. Traces of pre-Islamic customs have also been found embodied in the rites and rituals of pilgrimage and sacrifice. The origin of this dates back to Abraham, the Patriarch, rightly called the Father of Islam in the line of prophethood, that is, proved to have the same Mission as that of Muhammad (on whom be peace!), and the same Message to give as that of Islam, in continuous succession since the creation of Adam.

The institution of Islam has four great pillars on the ecclesiastical side, resting on its fundamental structure, pilgrimage to Mecca being the fourth and the last in the order of this edifice, which forms the ultimate basis of the realisation of Muslim unity in its entirety. The sanctity of religion reaches its culminating point with the performance of the pilgrimage and the symbol of sacrifice enjoined therein; the deeper

spiritual aspect of it envisages an ascetic experience in man's practical life. The pilgrim has to renounce worldly pleasures and be prepared to sacrifice all that he holds good and dear in a secular sense. Being thus spiritually inclined, he brooks no ill-will, hatred or jealousy but departs in peace. The pangs of separation, as he leaves all things aside in his journey to Mecca, cause him pain in his heart seldom felt in his life.

The fulfilment of his mission gives him the hope that his future progress along the lines marked out for him will lead him to the spiritual path of success, untrammelled by fears of woe and worry and the cares of this world. This feeling is the natural outcome of his own inner experience in the glory of God and in the righteousness of his cause for the peace of his mind. Man is engrossed in all sorts of temptations and his freedom lies in his attempt to remove the shackles with the courage and spirit of the Divine, latent in him, developed to the fullest extent.

Pilgrimage in Islam is an experience which fortifies its adherents with the formula of how to be prepared to face death honourably and cheerfully. It is symbolical of the expression of death and the sign of the approaching end. Completely isolated from the environment of his upbringing, the pilgrim plods along the path of purity with the deepest concern for the salvation of his soul, annihilating in this way all that which hinders him from reaching his goal of spiritual perfection. This asceticism and spiritual training equip him with eternal bliss in the fullness of time for the safety of his immortal soul. Describing religion as one invincible weapon, Sir Samuel Hoare, in an article on the Art of Life, observes that "as in the enthralling pursuit of the art of life the mind and the body must be ready for action, so also must the soul be in constant

MUSLIM CONCEPTION OF ASCETICISM

training for the emergencies of life and the supreme moment of death." This version finds expression in the Holy Qur-án. Ibn^o Abbas, explaining it fully, confirms the statement that the ascetic and secular experiences are allied to each other.

Sacrifice in Islam has a close affinity to pilgrimage, for one helps the other to achieve the great object in the life of man. Human nature is prone to the animal instinct in him but the cultivation of the Divine attributes makes him immaculate. One of the sacred principles of Islam is symbolised in the sacrifice of an animal which is the final act of the pilgrimage. "The animal that is sacrificed really stands for the animal in man, so that the outward sacrifice of the animal reminds man of the necessity for the sacrifice of the animal within him." Islam, in the clearest language, stipulates a condition upon all its followers that this world is only a means to an end and that their ambition in life should be so adapted as to meet this contingency faithfully and to fulfil the noble ideals of Islam.

In commemorating this great event on the tenth day of Zul-Hijja in a manner befitting the supreme sacrifice of Abraham, the Prophet, of his dearest son, Ishmael, one cannot fail to be struck by the wonderful unity which is achieved in the plain of Arafat, among the discordant elements of humanity assembled in their thousands and tens of thousands, presenting the grand spectacle of a vast sea of heads prostrating to pay homage to Allah as in the Day of Judgment. This is epitomised in the words which the learned author of the "Religion of Islam" gives :

"There is a vast concourse of human beings,
All clad in one dress, all moving in one way,
All having but one word to speak,
'*Labbaika! Allah-umma labbaika,*' meaning
"Here are we,"
O Allah! here are we in Thy presence.' "

ISLAM AND THE COVENANT OF ABRAHAM

BY NADIRE FLORENCE IVES OSMAN (NEW YORK)

Islam seemed to appear suddenly in the world, but had it not been prophesied before? In order to discover the historical background of this religion, which was proclaimed by its Prophet, Muhammad, we must turn to the records of early Jewish history, beginning with the book of Genesis. The accounts have come down to us in a fragmentary state, some of the verses being in Aramaic, interspersed with the Hebrew. Yet we may trace therein support for the statements of the Qur-ân.

Early in Abram's life, we are told: "Now the Lord said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.'"

Abram again received an assurance when, in obedience to Divine command, he left his home, in Ur of Chaldea, passed through the famine then prevailing in Canaan and arrived in Egypt, returning thence to Canaan. And God said, "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth." (Gen. 13: 14—16.)

Still parenthood did not come to Abram. He was, therefore, very much surprised to receive a continual encouragement from God as to the multitude of his descendants. "What wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?" he complains. (Gen. 15: 2.)

"And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: 'He that shall come forth out of thy bowels, shall be thine heir.'" (Gen. 15: 4.) "In that same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying: 'Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river.'" (Gen. 15: 8.)

After Abram and Sarah had passed ten years in Canaan, Abram's wife despaired of an issue from herself. The account in Genesis tells us that she gave Hagar, her Egyptian maid, "to her husband to be his wife." (Gen. 16:3.) Arabic tradition tells us that this Hagar was a well-born lady who, due to the fortunes of war, had been sold as a slave before she came to the house of Abram. Such reverse were the custom and to be expected.

Sarah, however, came to hate Hagar. Her treatment of this unfortunate woman was such as to cause her who had conceived to flee from their dwelling, even before her child was born. Yet in the wilderness a heavenly guidance came to her. "And the angel of the Lord said unto her: 'Return to thy mistress and submit thyself under her hands. I will multiply thy seed exceedingly that it shall not be numbered for multitude The Lord hath heard thy affliction.'" (Gen. 16:9—11.)

So Abram was no longer to be childless! And like unto Abram, a promise had also come to Hagar as to the multitude of her seed.

Later in Abram's life, God renewed the covenant with its promise of blessings and the possession of the land of Canaan. Abram's name was changed to Abraham which literally means "father of a multitude." "For a father of many nations have I made thee" (Gen. 17:4). He was also promised that God would cause nations to issue from him, and that Kings should be brought from his seed (Gen. 17:6). God declared an everlasting covenant with Abraham and to his seed after him, and promised that the land of Canaan should be given to them for an everlasting possession.

As a sign on the part of Abraham and his seed of acceptance, God required that they should be circumcised. God then informed Abraham that he would also have a son of Sarah.

When Abraham heard this, he immediately thought of his first-born, Ishmael. Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee, he cried. (Gen. 17:18.) And God answered: "I have heard thee. Behold, I have *blessed* him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly." (Gen. 17:20.) Abraham thereupon had himself, his son Ishmael (who was then 13 years old) and his male followers circumcised.

This rite of circumcision, in later years, was continued by the Arabs, following Ishmael's example, to the generation of Muhammad. It is still an integral part of Islam. All males, entering into the Islamic religion, observe the covenant of Abraham, as do their Jewish brethren.

In analysing the terms of the covenant announced by God, we can see that it did not exclude Ishmael from participation, even though in verse 17:21 it is stated that God would establish the covenant with Isaac, thus tempting us to conclude that Isaac alone was chosen by God to be Abraham's heir. But Gen. 17:14 had previously proclaimed that only the uncircumcised manchild had broken the covenant; therefore, Ishmael was included in the covenant.

As Ishmael and his descendants continued to observe the covenant, let us reflect for a moment upon how God has fulfilled His part of the agreement. Ever since the advent of Islam, over 1,300 years ago, the Holy Land and the other specified areas have remained with the descendants of Ishmael. They are, unto this day, lands predominantly Arabic in civilisation. Were Ishmael to be regarded as excluded from participation in the covenant, we should be forced to conclude that God has been unable to keep His word to Abraham,—for 1,300 years is a very long time to elapse.

The account of the casting forth of Hagar and Ishmael, as related in Genesis, is substantially true, yet

its real significance is obscured through a desire to discredit the Ishmaelite branch of Abraham's House, a weakness which so frequently appears in dynastic controversies. However, a leading event, that is of the utmost importance from the Muslim point of view, had occurred before the casting forth, yet it appears in Genesis as having occurred *after* that incident, and in far different circumstances. I refer to the command of God to Abraham that he should sacrifice his son upon an altar. Naturally, you may enquire how we can be sure that the Ishmaelite tradition is the true one, and that the account in Genesis is false. Let us first consider closely and logically the incident as it is related in Genesis.

Anthropologists have seen in this curious episode but another fragment of folklore, incorporated in a recorded tradition of the life of a primitive people, albeit an important step in human progress,—when a man of genius substituted a symbol for the human sacrifices that were widely offered to appease threatening deities.

Christian fundamentalists have attempted to explain the incident as a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of a physical Jesus, through the mediation of that same Jesus as High Priest, a sacrifice given to a grim and unrelenting God, of whom Jesus was a one-third part, in order to wash away the sins of the whole world. However, this is but a weak theory superimposed upon what had been written before, for the account, as it is related in Genesis, is without subsequent or mystical inferences.

The Qur-ánic account of Abraham's readiness to obey God's command offers a deeper insight into what underlay the seemingly strange request. There, the story of Abraham's temptation, beyond offering an example of implicit obedience to do even an unreasonable act to please God, reveals a much more profound motive.

(To be continued)

ATHEISM AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

BY M. L. M. HUSSAIN

The twentieth century is essentially an age of freedom of thought and action. The unbridled progress and the enormous development of science and learning have invariably widened one's outlook on life, so much so that no possible corner has been neglected by the thirsty mind. Reason has overwhelmed superstition. Learning has outstripped ignorance and illiteracy. The ever increasing tide of civilisation is sweeping off the face of the earth all that is barbarous and inhuman.

But, as with all other things let loose suddenly, reason has gone astray. In endeavouring to smash the barriers of Faith, so guardedly prescribed by the ancients for a wild population of brainless mass it has drifted aimlessly on a mighty ocean of misguided conception. The camp of the atheists, who have blindly denied the existence of the Infinite, has increased considerably during recent times, and modern civilisation has been threatened by these iniquitous creatures. It is high time that we examined the question and decided for ourselves once and for all the possibility of such an existence as the Infinite.

But, ere we proceed on such delicate lines, let us construe the atheist. Atheism is the inevitable tragedy of misdirected reason and wasted energy and of the acquirement of ineffectual and unsubstantial philosophy. It is the egotism of a temporal power repudiating the admission of a Master, and very often the sly dissimulation of an ambitious and unscrupulous creature; for, in all soberness, an atheist cannot exist unless he is subjected to one of the above influences.

Of course, man had been perverse since the inception of his race. It is no wonder, then, that one should

ATHEISM AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

feel obdurate at the teachings of another; but, when perverseness is fronted to the extreme against the Force of Truth, one cannot but regard it with pity and sympathy, for blind to the ultimate consequence the atheists are being goaded on to a disastrous calamity from which they will only rise to repent, when such repentance is too late. If, therefore, reason is fostered along proper channels, an atheist cannot be an atheist.

The undeveloped brain of the child cannot differentiate between its mother and sister or comprehend whether it was ever born of a woman or if ever there was such a thing existent. Likewise the mind of an atheist is so developed that it is unable to demarcate between God and His manifestations. The inability herein depends not on the development or maturity of the mind, but partly on the human perversity to refuse to acknowledge a Universal Mind and partly on the unfortunate misconception of cause and effect.

We see a starving family moaning in agony, and we say, "Oh, the despotism of God!" A careless pedestrian is knocked down by a passing car and a sympathetic crowd exclaims, "Oh, cruelty!" Turn wherever we may, we profess to see nothing but gross injustice, cruelty, despotism and evil. Could God, we ask ourselves—if ever there was such a being—tolerate all these tyrannies? No, a God is unnecessary. If a thing must happen, it *must* happen. Nothing can prevent it! Our attitude is, "Either the Creator is not All-Powerful or else He is not All-Good."* It is the matter of the moment as it affects the populace that is considered and judgment is delivered accordingly against Providence. We refuse to grasp the ulterior motive with which these alleged atrocities were perpetrated, or else we really cannot comprehend it, which tentatively shows our spiritual inability to conceive the Infinite.

*Sir A. Conan-Doyle: "The Stark Munro Letters."

“ I very often have my doubts if there is such a thing as the existence of evil. If we could honestly convince ourselves that there was not, it would help us so much in formulating a rational religion. . . . No ; let me be frank, and say that I can't make cruelty fit into my scheme.”*

Here is another version of this great thinker :

“ It seems to me that the study of life by the physician vindicates the moral principles of right and wrong. But when you look closely it is a question whether that which is a wrong to the present community may not prove to have been right to the interests of posterity . . . but I will make my meaning more clear when I say that I think right and wrong are both tools which are being wielded by those great hands which are shaping the destinies of the Universe, that both are making for improvement ; but that the action of the one is immediate, and of the other more slow, but none-the-less certain.”

The impotence of the human mind to gauge the Scheme of Nature is obvious, but it always pays to be pessimistic. Omar Khyyám, in solving the powerlessness of man, asserts very emphatically that there is “ somebody ” outside who knows all.

*The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes ;
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all—He knows—He knows !*

The focussing of the mind on evil alone subtly induces a mentality only susceptible to evil suggestions and strongly averse to the opposite influences. The

*Sir A. Conan-Doyle : “ The Stark Munro Letters.”

mind becomes a good receptacle for slander and is of no spiritual benefit to the possessor. A highly specialised architect will not be able to grasp the significance of the fundamentals of surgery. In the same manner, an atheist, enlarging and minutely analysing the despotism of God alone with ease and elasticity, will not be in a fit position to perceive all that is noble and beneficent in the creations. As a matter of fact, he obviously cannot unless a miraculous effort directs him in the right path, which is a rarity.

There is no more ungrateful creature in this world than man, who, though having all that is royal, powerful and praiseworthy in Nature within him, yet fails to see beyond the tip of his nose. He assumes that his sense of perception and power of reasoning are beyond dispute, and yet takes for granted that that which seems evil is really evil. He distinguishes right and wrong in the heat of the moment when according to the effect in him it is either soothing or painful.

“ I confess that I have never been able to understand the position of the atheist. In fact I have come to disbelieve in his existence and to look upon the word as a mere term of theological reproach. It may represent a temporary condition, a passing mental phase, a definite reaction against an anthropomorphic ideal, but I cannot conceive that any man can continue to survey Nature and to deny there are laws at work which display intelligence and power. *The very existence of a world carries with it the proof of a world Maker, as the table guarantees the pre-existence of the carpenter.* (Italics mine.) Granting this, one may form what conception one will of the Maker, but one cannot be an atheist.”*

*Sir A. Conan-Doyle : “ The Stark Munro Letters.”

Even Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, spoke of the existence of a First Cause, as the following lines will show :

“ . . . that what we are wont to call self is nothing but name and form, that is to say, a compound of the four elements which undergoes perpetual changes under the action or influence of *kāṃ*. Having acquired this conviction of the truth of this principle, it remains with you to investigate carefully the causes which produce both name and form. This simple examination will lead you at once to the perfect solution of all your doubts. Behold the difference that exists between the holders of false doctrines and the true believers. The former, whom we may almost call animals, never take the trouble to examine the nature of beings or the cause of their existence. . . . How different is the condition of the true believers, our followers! *They know that the living beings inhabiting the world have a beginning.* (Italics mine) It is evident, for instance, that the seeds of plants and trees which are continually in a state of reproduction, have a beginning, but what that beginning is no one presumes to determine. So it is with man and all living beings.”*

Now, having established the absurdities of atheism, let us hasten to have a broader view of the Infinite. This can be better realised when we have an intimate knowledge of ourselves—the real essence of man.

Man has been described as a universe in miniature, and scientists have accepted this fact. If, therefore, this is a verity, as undoubtedly it is, the mind of man

*Right Reverend P. Bigandet : “ The Life or Legend of Gautama, the Buddha of the Burmese.”

ATHEISM AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

must be a miniature of the Universal Mind. The ultimate conclusion being that man has no better sign than himself to realise the existence of an Almighty Creator.

Accepting this principle, cogitate on yourselves and see if you cannot find the existence of a God. Here are a few clues for the thinking mind to ponder over :

We all know that there is some subtle, invisible force in us which directs and commands our physical organism. This invisible force, which we call the soul, cannot be our body since all bodies cannot move, but something immaterial, simple and indivisible. We also know that if this force fails to operate, that is, leaves the body, we are dead. Of this we have not one iota of doubt, though we cannot perceive this force. Likewise there *must* be some mighty force in the universe which carefully directs and determines its movements, and which, like the soul, must be simple, indivisible and immaterial. This force is what we call God or Allah. (The word "Allah" is a comprehensive Arabic appellation for God, embracing all the hundred attributes of the Almighty.) Therefore, Allah is as necessary for the world as the soul is to the body.

All the actions of the human body are directed by *one* inexplicable Force (Soul) and not, as Plato propounded, by three souls. If, as this philosopher said, these three souls—the sensitive, vegetative and intellectual—are distinct from each other, there would be not one man but three beings ; " for when there are more than one substantial form there must be more than one substantial being." So that there cannot be but one soul in man. In the like manner, there must be *one* God to guide the universe, since duality is the essence of misguidance.

Whatever we do, think or feel, either with our internal senses or external senses, is done in compliance

ISLAMIC REVIEW

with the directions of the soul. So are all things in this world executed according to the Laws of Allah.

Our body does nothing whatever without the knowledge of our soul. In the like manner, nothing happens in this world without the knowledge of Allah.

The soul and the body are so subtly united that it is very difficult to draw a line of demarcation between them. We cannot call the body a human body, unless the soul is united to it, so that the soul is but the substantial form of the body with which it is united; and it is almost as difficult to discover in what part of the body the soul lies. It is obvious that "it does not lie in the limbs which serve him as tools, nor in the apparatus by which he is to digest, nor in that by which he is to inhale oxygen . . . it does not lie in the features which are to express his emotions, nor in the eyes and ears which can be dispensed with by the blind and deaf. Nor is it in the bony framework which is the rack over which nature hangs her veil of flesh."* Where, then, is the soul of man? If it cannot be in one particular spot it must be in the whole body. Thus Allah is not only closely connected with the Universe, but also not stationary in one particular place. He, then, is everywhere.

Although we do know that the soul is in the body, we cannot guess in what form or feature it is. How, then, can we hope to imagine the form or feature of Allah?

Again, when the soul is in the body, we can neither see it nor compare it with anything in this world. Thus we neither can see Allah nor compare Him with anything.

The soul is neither solid nor visible nor a compound of the four elements, but something spiritual. It is neither a part of the body nor wholly separated

*Sir A. Conan-Doyle "The Stark Munro Letters."

THE HEALING QUALITIES OF THE QUR-ÁN

from the body. So is Allah. He "exists by virtue of His own essence."

Thus the final deduction is: "There is no god but Allah." And as the soul is necessary to the human body to live, so is Allah necessary for the world to exist.

THE HEALING QUALITIES OF THE QUR-ÁN

BY M. T. AKBAR, K.C.

The Holy Qur-án is referred to by Allah as a mercy and a healing for what is in the breasts of Muslims. (10 : 57.) In 17 : 82 we find the following :

"We send down (stage by stage)—

In the Qur-án that which—

Is a healing and a mercy—

To those who believe :

To the unjust it causes—

Nothing but loss after loss."

In these last two lines Allah indicates that the Holy Book is only a source of loss (or perdition, as Muhammad Ali translates) to those who are unjust, especially those unbelievers who will not do justice to the Qur-án. The examples that we see in the translations of the Qur-án by such unbelievers as Sale, Muir, Rodwell, Palmer, and the opinions of men like Wells, Shaw, Zwemer, Nicholson and a whole host of others, are illustrations of God's inexorable law indicated in these two lines. But let me refer to the healing qualities of the Qur-án. On reflection, it will be found that there are three different senses in which this healing quality of the Holy Qur-án can manifest itself. The most obvious reference is the power of the Qur-án to mend broken hearts. The iniquity, cruelty and injustice of man towards man can often shatter a man's heart to fragments, and drive him or her to desperation ; so can the

calamities of nature and the blows of outrageous fortune. The Roman way of meeting disasters was to take one's own life, as we see it graphically illustrated by Shakespeare in *Anthony and Cleopatra*. But the Muslim way is different, for God says, in a *Hadith Qudsi*, that where there is a broken heart, there God most surely is present and, therefore, it is in such desperate circumstances that the reading of the Qur-án acts as a marvellous healer of spiritual and moral wounds. But the Qur-án must be read, not as most of us do, unintelligently and at express speed,—but slowly and intelligently, the reader allowing the meaning of each sentence, with all its implications, to soak deep into the unfathomable depths of his soul. Let any of my readers try this whenever he meets with a sorrow which appears to him to rend his soul, and he or she will then realise why the best method of remembering God, so as to bring self-possession to his or her soul—as the Qur-án says—is to read the Qur-án intelligently, even one chapter or even one verse of it. It is impossible to describe this marvellous quality of the Holy Qur-án. Can one convey the exquisite taste of sugar-candy to others who have not tasted it? Let my readers read any chapter of the Qur-án they like, the Surah *Zumar* for instance, or *Dahr*, and see for themselves the effects of the words of Allah, especially when He describes His Mercy, His Compassion and His Forgiveness to man at every stage of his or her life.

The second sense in which the Holy Qur-án acts as a healer of diseases—spiritual, moral or even physical—is the wonderful manner in which the Qur-án acts as a mirror to one's soul, showing up all its weaknesses, defects and depravity. The Holy Qur-án not only shows up one's imperfections, but the words following this demonstration, immediately bring consolation and indicate how the defect is to be remedied.

THE HEALING QUALITIES OF THE QUR-ÁN

For instance, I cannot read the Surah *Ad-Duha* (93 : 10 and 11) without thinking of my own great besetting sin :

“ And as for him, who importunes, do not chide him.”

But the next verse says :

“ But the Bounty
Of thy Lord—
Rehearse and proclaim.”

As a matter of fact, this last verse is an example of the third sense in which the Qur-án acts as a healer, on which I must comment more fully. The Holy Qur-án contains treasures untold for the seeker after truth, in this third sense. In this last verse, God indicates how man is to act when he feels like chiding an unfortunate beggar. All that a Muslim has to do when his inclination is set this way is to whisper to himself Allah's words “ *Wa Amma Bi Ni'mati Rabbika Fahadqis* ” and he will find his patience returning and his anger subsiding. Not only, then, does the Qur-án, in almost every line, act as a mirror to one's soul, showing up its errors and indicating how they are to be remedied, but the very words which have to be uttered to cure the sore or wound have been given by that Almighty Allah, who created the heavens and the earth. Sometimes, too, the effect that will follow on the repetition of the words by the sincere Muslim or Muslimah, is even given by Almighty Allah.

For instance, verses 172 and 173 of Chapter III state clearly what happened when the tiny Muslim band marched out to meet the Meccans under Abu-Sufyan at *Badr-us-Sughra*. The hypocrites and unbelievers tried to intimidate the Muslims by exaggerating the numbers of their opponents, and thus attempted to cast terror into their hearts. The Muslims only uttered this one sentence : “ Allah is sufficient for us and most

excellent is He as a Protector." The effect of this prayer is given in the next verse: "So they returned with favour from Allah and His Grace; no evil touched them and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace." Let my Muslim readers, when they are face to face with physical danger, utter this prayer of the early Muslims and see for themselves the results. But these prayers must be uttered by true Muslims—obviously; for what effect can be expected when they are uttered by an unbeliever in God, or a drunkard or a man who is habitually careless in his prayers or neglects his Ramadan fast against the express orders of Allah?

Many of us Muslims in our old age have to put up with merited or unmerited scoffing from quarters from which one would not expect such mockery. To such suffering Muslims, the advice I would give is to follow the example of Sultan Ibrahim bin Adham, or, if they cannot rise to such a spiritual height, let them only utter these words from Chapter 15, verse 95, where Allah says:

"Surely We will suffer you against the scoffers!"

There are thousands of other examples which each Muslim should make it a practice to collect and memorise and adopt for everyday use. The very prayers of the prophets in their predicaments are given with the results; Adam and Eve, when they asked for forgiveness from God; Joseph, when he was tempted; Moses, when he was fleeing in distress; Zachariah, when he begged of God for a son; Jonah, in his distress; Solomon and others. It is only in this way that a Muslim man or woman will realise for himself or herself the truth of God's words that the Holy Qur-án is a mercy and a healing to the wounds of the believers.

Let me give a few more examples: In verses 155 to 157 of the *Surah al-Baqara*, Allah, after warning man

THE HEALING QUALITIES OF THE QUR-ÁN

that He will test man at each stage of his journey through life, promises as follows: "And give good news to the patient who, when a misfortune befalls them, say *Inná Lilláhi Wá Inná Ilaihi Raji'un* (Surely we belong to God and to Him do we return). Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord and those are the followers of the right course." Is not this one line of prayer worth all untold wealth to each Muslim man and woman? For Allah promises to shower His blessings and mercy on such a Muslim and only those Muslims will understand the full implications of this promise of Allah, who (as indicated by Sayyidina Muhiyal-din Al Arabi) realise the Omnipotence and Sublimity of God and the worthlessness of man. In these modern days, when accidents occur, depriving man of his limbs or even his life, on the streets or the sea or the air, true Muslims have nothing to fear, for the prayer (only one-and-a-half lines), that one has to mutter on entering the vehicle or ship or 'plane is clearly given. Even the words one must utter with each mouthful of food, so as to get the full nourishment from that mouthful, have been clearly laid down.

The Holy Qur-án, as I have said, has prescribed how we are to invoke the remembrance of God by showing us the very words we have to utter in all situations in life. This, to me, is the greatest wonder of all the wonders of this Book, which is nothing else than the very words of God revealed to Our Holy Prophet, as a mercy and healing to mankind.

The manner in which the Qur-án was revealed is a matter of history of the most authentic kind, but the means adopted by God Almighty to prevent the subsequent alteration or contamination of the actual words revealed by Him could only have been devised by Him. The preservation of the Holy Qur-án was

undoubtedly due to the institution of the five compulsory congregational prayers in Islam and to the injunction that the Qur-án, as it was revealed, should be recited aloud by the Holy Prophet, in his capacity as *imam* or leader of the congregation as part of these prayers. Only my Muslim readers will be able to appreciate the fiery enthusiasm of these early Muslims to store up in their memories and to commit to writing the precious words of God revealed to our Holy Prophet. These early Muslims suffered un/old persecution at the hands of the pagans ; they were surrounded by mortal enemies thirsting for their blood, and they were not sure of what the next hour would bring them. But they had the incalculable blessing of the Prophet's presence with them, and the consolation of gazing on his countenance and of hearing the precious words of God from his lips. It is this book which we, unworthy Muslims, have inherited from our Prophet as a mercy and healing from God. And yet do we, in the present age, fully realise the preciousness of this inheritance, and do we treat it as it deserves ?

A GREAT DAY*

BY BEGUM SHAISTA IKRAM ULLAH

The day we have gathered to celebrate is a great day. Great not only for us Muslims, but for the whole world and humanity ; for he, who was born this day, changed the course of history and influenced the trend of human thought profoundly.

The achievements of the Prophet of Islam will remain for all times as one of the greatest miracles of history. It is said that once the unbelievers came to him and asked to be shown miracles so that they might

* Text of a lecture delivered on the occasion of the Holy Prophet's Birthday Anniversary, celebrated by the Muslim Society in Great Britain, at the Portman Rooms, London.

A GREAT DAY

believe. But the Holy Prophet refused. He did not want his message of truth to be accepted on the strength of supernatural performances. No, he did not have to perform spectacular miracles; for his stupendous achievements in the short space of twenty-three years are in themselves amongst the greatest of miracles that have ever happened. Twenty-three years represent a very small period in the world's history; and of these, thirteen were spent under severe persecutions in Mecca. Ten years only were left in which to regenerate mankind. But it was done. The Prophet Muhammad was the greatest philosopher, the greatest lawgiver, the greatest reformer the world has ever known.

He had no money, no power, no army at his command, no resources of a kingdom at his disposal.

The country in which he was born was virtually unknown to the civilised world. It was torn by strife and ruled by terror. Its people were a despised and ridiculed race. They had made no contributions to civilisation, and did not count among the nations of the world. They were ferocious, untamed and turbulent. But he made of them heroes, kings and generals, great philosophers, saints and mystics.

In the realms of thought, the Prophet Muhammad's contributions are no less remarkable. What a great mind must have been his! What breadth of outlook! What vision he must have had to have formulated a code of law and moral precepts that have remained unchallenged for fourteen hundred years! No assertions were made that have not been borne out by discoveries of science. No doctrine, no dogma was laid down that reason cannot accept. A code at once simple but rigid, and the example and the personality of the Prophet turned the savage and licentious race into a people of austere morality and of sterling qualities of character. The civil laws given by the Prophet

Muhammad are not only such as to be compatible with the ideals of justice and equity of the twentieth century, but are still in advance of them. This is especially apparent in the laws regarding property and the laws concerning women's rights. Islam made capitalism impossible when it formulated its laws of inheritance, by which the wealth of a man is not handed down intact to his son, but divided between all his heirs. The laws regarding women's rights are a still greater example of a vision unknown in those days, and only dimly comprehended even now. Our Prophet lifted woman from the degrading position of being a mere chattel and placed her upon an equality with man. He gave her the right of inheritance in her father's property; the right of consent in marriage; the right of *Mahar* (dowry) over and above the share in her husband's property. It was the Prophet Muhammad who pronounced marriage to be a contract undertaken by mutual consent and liable to be dissolved by either party for sufficiently weighty reasons. Other religions had hitherto considered it as a sacrament, binding for life in all circumstances. In the ideals of civic duty, of government, of the brotherhood and fellowship of man transcending the boundaries of race, colour and nationalism, the same wonderful breadth of vision is seen. The ideal of internationalism, towards which the world is groping to-day, was preached first by Muhammad and has been practised by his followers for fourteen hundred years.

Of all the contributions to civilisation that Islam has made, the most valuable is that of this ideal. It has been its characteristic, its source of strength. It is not a mere idea, but a living and working principle with Muslims. In 1920, when Turkey was being annihilated, Muslims of India did all they could to stop it; and to-day, when Albania falls a victim to Italy's lust for

conquest, indignation is roused throughout the Islamic world.

We Muslims call our Prophet *Khatam-al-Mursalin*. We regard him as *Khataman-Nabiyyin*. (That is, The Last of the Messengers of God). We believe that religion was made perfect by him and no more prophets shall come again to formulate a new religion. A study of the tenets of Islam will reveal that it is indeed suited to all times and to all centuries.

What words can adequately pay tribute to him who brought this message of peace, this means of salvation to a tortured and darkened world!

MUHAMMAD THE GREATEST BENEFACTOR OF HUMANITY

BY BEGUM MIR AMIR-UD-DIN

If magnitude of design, smallness of means and vastness of results are the three measures of a man's greatness, none compares with the Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him!). Born amidst surroundings strongly conservative, in the words of Sir William Muir, "reform never was at any period more hopeless," yet, with means palpably slender, he wrought wonders. Within the short period of twenty-three years, he metamorphosed the whole Peninsula of Arabia and accomplished a revolution—moral, social, political and economic—not only immense but also durable in the world.

The first task that he undertook was to establish the unity of God which is the cardinal principle of his teachings. Side by side with this, he advocated the cause of rationalism. In an age when the whole atmosphere was surcharged with superstition and supernaturalism, the mind of this great Teacher was, in its intellectualism and progressive ideals, remarkably

modern. He did not lay any claims to Divinity, and it is a matter of satisfaction that, in consonance with his injunctions, in spite of his almost supernatural personality, his followers do not deify him. From first to last, there is to be found in him a true simplicity, a genuine sincerity and a feeling of deep humility before the Creator. At the time of the death of his son, Ibrahim, an eclipse of the sun occurred. People imagined this to be a sure token that the Heavens themselves were participating in the grief, but the Prophet called them together and disabused them of the notion, saying: "Fellow-citizens, the sun and the stars are the works of God's hands, but they are neither eclipsed nor effaced to announce the birth or death of mortals."

Practicability was the keynote of the Holy Prophet's teachings. By his own acts, he gave a lead in every phase of life, and made adequate provision for every contingency in the world. It is indeed remarkable that many of the reforms of the present age, *e.g.*, the ideas of temperance, of the emancipation of women, of socialism, of democracy, were anticipated by the Prophet Muhammad and he gave a practical demonstration of their excellence. It was because of this that Bernard Shaw, one of the geniuses of the modern age, observed: "I believe if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much-needed peace and happiness."

Unity of the human race was an act to which the Holy Prophet devoted himself with intense zeal. For the first time in the history of the world he declared that his mission was not confined to any particular sect or tribe but embraced the whole Universe, and he proclaimed that God was the Sustainer and Nourisher of all nations without discrimination. Along with

MUHAMMAD THE GREATEST BENEFACTOR

time, he taught that the criterion of nobility was not birth but conduct, and demolished at a single stroke all distinctions of caste, colour and nationality. Seated on a camel's back, with the azure vault of Heaven as his only canopy, this King of Arabia emphasised to the teeming millions around him the equality of the human race in the following terms: "The Arab has no superiority over the non-Arab, nor has the non-Arab any superiority over the Arab. All men are equally the children of Adam, and Adam sprang from the dust." At a time when the whole air is ringing with cries of world-fellowship, the message of Islam serves as a balm to the sore wounds of humanity.

One other achievement of the Prophet, to which I should like to advert, is the effort that he made towards raising the status of women. In pre-Islamic days, the Arab's abhorrence of womankind was such that a female child was often buried alive as soon as born. Women not only had no rights of inheritance but were themselves subject to inheritance and passed, after a man's death—like his other goods and chattels—to his heirs. All this the Prophet completely altered. He recognised woman to be an entity in herself, extended to her the right of inheritance and placed her, in almost all matters, on a footing of equality with men; so much so that the juridical rights that have been enjoyed by Muslim women during the past 1,300 years far exceeded those possessed by the women of Great Britain until their condition improved with the passing of the Married Women's Property Act in the latter half of the last century. If Islam had done nothing else for humanity, this emancipation of women which it effected centuries before the idea took root in the West would itself be sufficient to entitle it to universal reverence.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

CORRESPONDENCE.

[Our readers will remember that our sister-in-Islam, Mrs. Lewes-Parker, B.A., embraced Islam a few months ago. She has been ever since taking all opportunities to bring the light of Islam to all her friends and acquaintances. Below we print correspondence that ensued between her and a chance lady acquaintance of hers and ourselves. The correspondence and the occasion which led to it are all the more interesting because they remind us of the eagerness displayed by the early followers of Islam in spreading its truth.

To the lady who is anxious to learn about Islam, a copy of "What is Islam?" and a copy of the Holy Qur'an Translation was sent by us—
EDITOR, I. R.]

SELSEY.

DEAR IMAM,

Assalam Alaikum!

I am enclosing a letter I received this morning. As you will see it is from a travelling companion whom I met on my return journey from Town when I had the pleasure and privilege of making your acquaintance.

We were alone in the compartment and conversation turned to the subject of religion. During the early course of it I told the young lady that I was a Mushima and, as best I could, I outlined the principles and ethics of our faith.

She was extremely interested and expressed a wish to know more. I promised to let her have books to read and also said that I would like to put her in touch with you for I am fully conscious that as yet there is much for me to learn and while I can plant the footsteps in the right direction the guiding hand of the adept is necessary to bring the journey to a good end.

I would have taken her address in the train or given her mine but, unfortunately, she had no card with her and no pencil to write her address, and I had no pencil either.

The only cards I had with me were of the estate address in Uganda, so I scratched my Selsey address on one with my brooch pin and prayed to Allah that the contact would not be lost through that. As you may imagine, I was very pleased when the letter arrived this morning.

I am sending her, by this post, a letter and my copy of "The Sources of Christianity" by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, and I wanted to send her "What is Islam?" but I have loaned that to a gentleman whom I have interested in Islam and he has not yet returned it.

I wondered if you would also write to her and perhaps send her some literature. She is not so far from Woking and I think she would much like to meet some of our happy fraternity.

I am looking forward to meeting you again and my family as well.

Your sister-in-Islam,
RAFIKUN NISA GERTRUDE LEWES-PARKER.

CORRESPONDENCE

CARSHALTON, SURREY.

DEAR MRS. LEWES-PARKER,

How quickly that usually rather tiresome journey seemed to go last Thursday! Even after you departed at Chichester, I felt very content thinking over our conversation.

Ever since I have been trying to spare time for a letter, and until now have failed.

Of course, I can't exactly sit down and write you a letter full of news, but there is one thing, which rather impressed me which might also interest you.

I believe I told you that my Mother would probably throw up her hands in horror if she heard that I was about to leave the "straight" and "narrow," way as indicated by the Church of England. Well, it was perhaps natural that I should tell her a bit about our meeting in the train, and eventually I discovered she was of much the same way of thinking as myself, but had been afraid to admit it to anyone.

Consequently, it is with even greater interest that I now await the literature you promised me, so please be very kind and send it soon.

Hoping to hear from you soon and perhaps to meet you also.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
J. E.

CARSHALTON, SURREY.

DEAR MRS. LEWES-PARKER,

Thank you very much for the book you so kindly sent me; it is, as you say, interesting and enlightening.

I heard from the Imam of the Mosque at Woking; he sent me "What is Islam?" which also helped me to understand what a truly wonderful faith this is.

I am now anxious to know what to do next. Shall I write to the Imam? If so, how do I address him?

Another thing which worries me is that my time, as you can guess, is somewhat limited, and I am a person who needs to keep in touch with inspiration. I am realising this rather regretfully now. Ever since I began to doubt Christianity, there has been a turmoil in my mind which has rather resulted in an undisciplined soul. I do feel now I will have something to hang on to, but I feel very unworthy. Would you be kind and write to me again? There is nobody here to whom I can talk, and I feel that it is a desperately urgent thing that I should proceed with my knowledge of the faith.

I must thank you again for your kindness, and ask you to remember the little you know of me in your prayers.

I would like to study the book a little more before returning it.

Yours sincerely,
J. E.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

BOOK REVIEW MOHAMMAD

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With the rising interest of the West in the system of Islam, the life of the Prophet has been in increasing demand. Quite a few biographies of the Prophet have appeared of late in English, from the pens of both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The present and latest biography, coming from a person apparently born in the faith, has, for some reason, attracted wide attention from the British public. The publishers are right in claiming that the book is fluent. Written in story form and with the touch of a novel, it is sure to make fascinating reading to the average modern person. It will also, perhaps, succeed in satisfying the average mind as to how Islam succeeded in establishing itself as a religion, a social system, a constructive political power and a civilising force simultaneously in the hands of one person. It may also give the reader an impressive idea of the aims of the religion, its social and cultural ideals, an approximate measure of its vitality and the secret thereof. If these were the aims of the book, it should be readily admitted that the author has succeeded in his effort. If, on the other hand, it was the intention of the author to present the English-speaking world with a work that should be an authoritative and accurate account of the life-history of the Prophet as he really was and as he has appeared to his followers during all these centuries, I am afraid that this intention is far from being realised. To begin with, nothing is more odious to a student of Islam than to see liberties being taken with the Qur-án, not only in the wording of the quotations, but also in ascribing to it what should really

BOOK REVIEW

be a *hadith*, or a mere saying of the Prophet. As an instance of such inaccuracy, one may read the quotation about animals occurring on page 90 of the book. It may be well meant, but such misquotations, far from enhancing the dignity of the work, and of the cause it claims to uphold, lower it in the eyes of the world.

Coming to the Prophet himself, the reader should be excused if he gets the impression that Muhammad was only another Mussolini, Hitler, Napoleon or even Machiavel. Far from bringing out the real spiritual parts of the man who was primarily the founder of a religion and of a system that aimed at spiritualising the affairs of humanity, the book simply shows the supposed cleverness, even if it were extraordinary, of the Prophet, in exploiting the base material feelings of the people whom he wanted to lead. The interpretation put to the proletarian appeal of his religion, to his negotiations with the Medinites, to his adoption of the Ka'aba as the centre of his religion, and finally to his marriage with Maimuna, may please the feelings of a modern sceptic, but to a person of spiritual susceptibilities, the motives ascribed seem far too low for any average pious man, not to speak of a leader of spirituality. Apart from these too materialistic interpretations, however, there are some astounding theories of the author which are grotesque, notwithstanding their originality. One such theory is that the Prophet was sinful as compared with Jesus and that he had to commit each sin in turn. No greater perversion of a fundamental principle of Islam can be imagined. As a student of Islam, if not as a Muslim, the author should have been aware of the principle of the sinlessness of prophets. The long exploded theories like that of the lapse of the Prophet have been quite uncritically adopted by the author to the utter dismay of the Muslim world.

It would indeed shock the feelings of the most dissolute of Muslims to be told that "Countless was the number of women to whom the Prophet gave his love," that the Prophet was enamoured of Zainab and Aisha, and that he kept concubines. Indeed the reference to the conjugal life of the Prophet on page 220 is simply outrageous. Equally shocking would it be to any decent reader to be told of the method by which Khadija is alleged to have ascertained the Divine nature of the Prophet's experience at the cave of Hira. Incidentally, the description of the physical experience and symptoms of the revelation-trances shows the author's want of access to the authoritative works on this subject. Even as a casual student of Islam he should have used the word "dowry" and not "purchase price." In brief, all references that bear on sex questions are surcharged with modern vulgarism quite unbecoming to a religious treatise of this kind.

In the case of warfare, again, attempts have been made to show, perhaps to please the biased minds of the West, that the Prophet, like an anarchist, was bent upon making war on the Quraishites, although the author himself admits the incident of the enemies stealing away the herds of Medinite cattle. The incident of Nakhla, the starting-point of warfare with the idolaters, is far from accurately narrated. As a matter of fact, the very theory on which the narration of these wars is based is contrary to the recognised principles of Islam. The Qur-án explicitly lays down that the only form of war permitted is defensive. It must be said in the author's favour that he has tried to minimise the bad effects of his sword theory by holding that these wars were intended to bring money and not to spread the faith; but even that is both incorrect and inglorious. Spoils of war, particularly of wars made in self-defence, must be lawful by all canons of war,

BOOK REVIEW

and it was so in the code of Muhammad. To say that it was the central attraction to the believers is not only an insult to the faith of Islam, but subverts the whole trend of events from the beginning of the Prophet's ministry. It was not the call of war and booty which drew the early faithful, but the call of suffering, forbearance and sacrifice of everything including hearth and home. To describe the political and martial punishments of desertion, of perfidy and insurrection as "bloody and despotic measures" is again both uncritical and unfair. Perhaps it is in line with the judgment of prejudiced Western writers on the subject. In this connection, certain colour has been given to some incidents which is unauthorised. The fact is that the book has not discriminated between history and legend, between allegations of enemies and substantiated facts. Many instances of this can be cited, but for the sake of briefness I would like to refer to the cases of Ka'b and the poetess Asona. Muslim historians have given a different version of these stories. What aggravates this theory of violence is the allegation that the resort to the sword was made when the Prophet could not successfully argue with the unbelievers. The suggestion is that the Prophet's knowledge of Jewish and Christian scripture was all wrong and that he replaced arguments with the injunction of war.

The author, amusingly enough, proceeds to give us, on page 166 of his book, a quotation to that effect from the Qur-án: "Those who are adherents of My faith need not enter into discussions or arguments about the fundamentals of the faith, but they must destroy all those who refuse obedience to the faith of God." This is, indeed, the limit of presumption. I assure the author that the verse exists only in imagination, but there is actually a verse in the Qur-án which says: "Call to the way of the Lord with wisdom

ISLAMIC REVIEW

and goodly exhortation, and have disputation with them in the best manner." (Chapter 16, Verse 125.)

The suggestion that Abu Bakr was an indecent story-teller, that Umar used to beat the wives of the Prophet, that Uthman's conversion to Islam was due to his passionate love for Ruqayya, the Prophet's daughter, may amuse a cynical world, but will be treated with ridicule (in enlightened circles. The acknowledgment that the Prophet showed extraordinary power of magnanimity and forgiveness when established in power, that he remained ascetic in his habits even when the wealth of a whole kingdom was at his feet, that the atmosphere of his harem was pure, free from jealousy and intolerance and gossip, and that finally he succeeded in creating "the mighty edifice of universal peace—Islam," does but poorly redeem the grave injustice done to his personality by wrong assumptions, slavish copying and an outrageous display of fancy. A holy person, such as Muhammad, ought to have been approached with better spiritual equipments than those exhibited in this book, which then might have done some real good to humanity at this critical point in its history by interpreting the spiritual genius of the most historical of the religious teachers of the world in a way agreeable to the higher aspirations of man.

In conclusion, the publishers could also have done something towards the accuracy of the work by not publishing what will be taken as a portrait of the Prophet on the cover of the book, but which is nothing better than a caricature.

A. D. A.

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