

"Muhammad is . . . the Apostle of Allah and the Last of the Prophets . . ."—
HOLY QUR-AN, 33 : 40. "There will be no Prophet after me."—MUHAMMAD.

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

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Sgt. K. I. M. Weldon (Muhammad-As-Samman) . . . Frontispiece.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE

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Vol. XXX]

DHU'L-HIJJA, 1360 A.H.
JANUARY, 1942 A.C.

[No. 1

A DECLARATION

I, MRS. MARY MUHAMMAD, of Glasgow, Scotland, 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 ill-Alláh Muhammad-un-Rasúl-Alláh.

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

Dated 13th January, 1941.

MARY MUHAMMAD

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THE HOLY QUR-AN AND ITS COMMENTARY

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

(Continued from p. 410 of Vol. XXIX).

If any doubt would lurk in the minds of the readers with regard to the real motive for Islamic wars the words "there should be no hostility except against the aggressors" should finally resolve it.

Verse 194.—"The Sacred Month for the sacred month and all sacred things are (under the law of) retaliation; whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict injury on him to the extent of the injury he has inflicted on you, and be careful (of your duty) to God, and know that God is with those who guard (against evil)."

The same theme is continued. Any worldly symbol of sanctity is useful so long as it promotes our moral orderliness and is recognised by all concerned. But if it is taken undue advantage of by one of the parties in the contract, and acts as a help to inequity and oppression, its sanctity ceases to exist; to attach any sanctity to it even then is simply foolishness. Thus to violate any sacred institution under the law of retaliation, *i.e.*, to prevent mischief, is not only not a sin but a positive act of virtue, provided our measures are confined to the remedy of the evil and no further.

Our action should be on the line of the purpose of God, the source and real Possessor of all sanctity. There should be nothing in our measure that would smack of revengefulness or greed or the spirit of destruction. We should violate the sanctity of the sacred months only to re-establish it, after it has been violated by an impious lot. Ours is no violation, in fact, just as the hangman's action is no murder. The words of exhortation show the hesitation of the believers in the

THE HOLY QUR-AN AND ITS COMMENTARY

matter even when the sanctity of the sacred months has been violated by the reckless unbelievers.

Verse 195.—“ And spend in the way of Alláh and cast not yourself to perdition with your own hands, and do good (to others); surely Alláh loves the doers of good.”

When even hoary traditions are no security against the beastly spirit of lawlessness on the part of unbelievers and it lies entirely with the Muslims to re-establish the sense of sanctity for obligations, these latter have not only to risk their own lives in coming to grips with the enemies, but also to provide materials for such a war by spending ungrudgingly in the cause. Any hesitation in the matter would but mean ruin to themselves and to the cause for which they stood. It would be what is called a suicidal policy. In so risking your lives and belongings you will not only save yourselves but also be instrumental in saving other innocent lives which would be otherwise destroyed by the wanton cruelties of the unbelievers. It is a well-known fact that the weak and the destitute were mercilessly oppressed by the pre-Islamic Arabs and one of the chief objects of Islamic wars was the establishment of the reign of justice and security for all. These wars have, therefore, rightly been called “doing good to others.” Their purpose was decidedly benevolent. It was not to gain any worldly benefit for themselves that the believers were engaged in them. If they had any objective that concerned themselves, it was the love of God.

Verse 196.—“ And accomplish the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and the visit (*‘Umra*) for Alláh, but if you are prevented Allah is severe in requiting (evil).”

There is in this verse a recommendation for *‘Umra* or a visit at any time other than the one appointed

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for pilgrimage. During the pilgrimage days, the crowd and congestion do not leave much opportunity for a meditation and prayer in the Sacred House. The individual aspect of the visit is overshadowed by the collective aspect of it. The 'Umra appears to have been designed to fulfil this need. It seems to be in the same relation to Hajj as Sunnat Prayers are to the Fardz ones, the only difference being that it is recommended in the Book of God. In matters of ritual whereas in the Hajj one has to observe *Ihram*, i.e. the prescribed unstitched costume, *Tawaf*, i.e. a circuit round the Ka'ba, *Sa'y*, i.e. running between Safa and Marwah, and finally staying at the plain of Arafat, in the 'Umra, one observes the first three but not the last one. One is said to 'profit' (*tamatta'a*) by combining the 'Umra with Hajj, when one puts on the ritual dress for 'Umra during the months of pilgrimage and after having finished with it puts on the same dress again for the purpose of the Hajj. The shaving of the head is the indication of one's having finished the course of *Ihram* or the ritual pilgrimage dress. As the aforesaid combination is a kind of concession, a kind of price is to be paid in the form of some sacrifice or ten days' fasting if one cannot afford it. If, however, one is prevented from paying an actual visit to the Sacred House, either by the abnormality of the political conditions or by illness, one should send his offering which may be a camel or a cow, a goat or a sheep. When one has made up his mind for the Hajj and put on the *Ihram*, he will be regarded as one having performed the pilgrimage even if the circumstances do not permit its actual performance. He should, however, continue putting on the *Ihram* and not shave his head till the sacrifice can be reasonably regarded as having reached its destination. In the case of offering being

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prevented from reaching the Sacred House, it should be sacrificed on the spot whence further advance is impossible. As the previous verses spoke of wars and a preparation for them, this one clears a point of Hajj ritual that may arise out of war-conditions. Thus duty to man in its most extreme and perplexing form, as is presented by war, is to run parallel with one's duty to God, of which the Hajj presents the highest and most exacting form.

THE GARDEN OF PEACE

BY W. B. BASHYR-PICKARD, B.A. (CANTAB.)

(Continued from p. 433 of Vol. XXIX)

VII

•The mild rains have descended almost without ceasing to-day. It has been a day of gladness. One has felt that the earth has been gratefully and busily storing up a bountiful supply of moisture against the coming of the warm spring sunshine and the blossoming of the joy of summer.

When darkness had descended and the evening meal had been accomplished with gladness, thankfully in such a time of stress and peril and war-hardship, and when the evening ablution had been completed, I again took up the Qur-án with a feeling of expectancy, wondering what gem would glitter before my eyes from that shining casket of sacred truth. This, then, is what I read : " O children of Adam ! We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and clothing for beauty : and clothing that guards against evil, that is the best. This is part of the communications of Alláh that they may be mindful. O children of Adam ! Let not the devil cause you to fall into affliction as he expelled your parents from the Garden, pulling off from

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them both their clothing that he might show them their evil inclinations ; he surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you cannot see them. Surely We have made the devils to be the guardians of those who do not believe.”—*Qur-án*, VII : 26-27. Then I considered what this clothing might be, which the devil had taken away from our first parents ; and it seemed to me that it was the garment of innocence and modesty, finding no evil in what God had created.

So I continued reading thus : “ And when they commit an indecency, they say : ‘ We found our fathers doing this, and Alláh has enjoined it on us.’ Say : ‘ Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency : do you say against Alláh what you do not know’ ? ”—*Qur-án*, VII : 28. That appeared to me to be a clear statement of what is right. So far from enjoining indecency, God forbids indecency ; and the mistaken customs of the past are not by the command of God. They who seek God must clothe themselves with the garment of purity. This I found borne out in the next verse which read : “ Say : ‘ My Lord has enjoined justice ; set upright your faces at every time of prayer and call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience ; as He brought you forth in the beginning, so shall you also return.’ ”—*Qur-án*, VII : 29. How excellent the splendour of the verse ! To set one’s face directly towards God at every time of prayer, and to call upon Him with sincerity and obedience—how excellent a way of life and how excellent the reward ! As we came from God we shall return unto Him. There shall be no separation from the Beloved.

VIII

To-night I feel a greater need for patience. The world has been tumbling about the barque of my voyaging with tossing, crested waves. Humanity seems to

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have failed me or to maintain a calm indifference to my existence. Perhaps it is that I am tired. I will then the more insistently seek entrance into the Garden of Peace. Opening the Book and turning once again the pages of the glorious Qur-án, this passage did I read : " Kind speech and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury : and Alláh is Self-sufficient, Forbearing."—*Qur-án*, II : 263. This verse to a large extent restores my equanimity. It reminds me that, should I have done any good, any kindness to anyone, then I must on no account use that action as an occasion to bring them annoyance. I must on no account even remind them of it. Surely it must be displeasing to mention any benefit conferred, to awaken any sense of obligation unfulfilled. I remembered the Chinese saying : " Do good, and throw it into the sea," or in other words : " Benefit people, then go and forget all about it." Yes, this seems to me an excellent practice. The memory of a benefit should rest with him who hath received it rather than with him who hath conferred it. Again, in happier mood, I turn the pages of the Book, till I read these verses : " O you who believe ! Do not forbid yourselves the good things which Alláh has made lawful for you, and do not exceed the limits ; surely Alláh does not love those who exceed the limits. And eat of the lawful and good things that Alláh has given you and be careful of your duty to Alláh, in Whom you believe."—*Qur-án*, V : 87-88. Here in this Garden of Blessedness blows the sweet breeze of reason. Asceticism and self-deprivation are not regarded as meritorious, as marks of nobility of soul, as a means of approaching nearer to God, but rather must they be considered as signs of ingratitude for the bounties of God or as pride in the vain imagination that humanity can dispense with the good gifts of God and live a

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better, holier life without them. How vain the imagination! How far from the true path are all such! For indeed the key and token and talisman of blessing is placed in the hands of all who will bear in mind the words in the verse, which say: "Do not exceed the limits." That is the test, that is the heart of the injunction. Accept what is lawful gladly, but go not therein to excess.

(To be continued.)

WHAT I OWE TO RELIGION*

BY A. M. A. AZEEZ, B.A. (HONS.), OF THE CEYLON
CIVIL SERVICE

"What I owe to Religion" is the title that has been chosen for me by the Broadcasting authorities. The word "owe" is difficult to interpret in this context, for it does not admit of a purely legal or financial connotation as religion does not occupy the position of a money-lender or a business company. Whatever religion gives, it gives freely and in abundance and imposes no terms as regards return or repayment. The idea of a balance-sheet is totally inappropriate under such circumstances. For this reason I propose to interpret the word "owe" as broadly as I can and deal with some of the cardinal truths taught by my religion. And what is Religion? It is something that touches all levels of human existence, something that gives significance to all facts of human experience. Religion is something that lays down absolute values and standards; and by these standards alone we could measure our beliefs and our actions. The very nature of religion makes it almost impossible to find a definition

* Being the third of a series of four broadcast talks organised by the Superintendent, Broadcasting Station, Colombo, and delivered on 2nd September, 1941.

WHAT I OWE TO RELIGION

that is all-sufficient and adequate from all points of view. There are no doubt many definitions but each of them stresses only one particular aspect of religion. For the purpose of my talk the definition that is most satisfactory is the one given by Professor Whitehead in his book "Religion in the Making." He says : " A religion on its doctrinal side can be defined as a system of general truths which have the effect of transforming character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended." My partiality for this definition is on account of its close approximation to the Islamic conception of religion, where " mere belief counts for nothing if not carried into practice." Belief according to Islam is " not only a conviction of the truth of a given proposition but it is essentially the acceptance of a proposition as a basis for action." This view is confirmed beyond all doubt by the ever-recurring description of the righteous in the Holy Qur-án as " those who believe *and* do good."

Religion, according to Professor Whitehead, is a system of general truths, and these general truths deal essentially with the following questions :

" What art thou in thyself, and from whence hast thou come ? Whither art thou going and for what purpose hast thou come to tarry here a while and in what does thy real happiness and misery consist ? "

These are questions we are compelled to ask ourselves sometime or another. We might evade them ; but not for ever. A bitter disappointment or a sad bereavement makes us reflect on the why and wherefore of existence. If we fail to find satisfactory answers, life becomes meaningless and devoid of purpose. It is here that our religion comes to our rescue, leads us a helping hand and satisfies our quest. With the help

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of religion, life, which is otherwise meaningless, assumes a shape, and existence is given a purpose ; death loses its sting and the grave its victory ; conduct gains a standard and life a guidance.

The cardinal truths of Religion—or some of them at least—deal with the problems of God, Society, Man and the World. What has Islam to say on these important problems ? Scattered through the pages of the Holy Qur-án are found descriptions of God and His attributes. Here is an example : “ He is Allah beside Whom there is none who should be served, the Knower of the unseen and seen ; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is Allah beside whom there is no God, the King, the Holy, the Author of Peace, the Granter of Security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Restorer of every loss, the Possessor of every greatness ; High is Allah above what they set up with Him. He is Allah the Maker of all things, the Creator of all existence, the Fashioner of all images. His are the most excellent and beautiful attributes (that man could imagine) ; everything that exists in the heavens or in the earth declares His glory and His perfection, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.” Here is another passage : “ Vision comprehends Him not and He comprehends all vision.” And here is yet another passage : “ Nothing is like a likeness of Him.” From these it is clear that God is above all material conceptions. And all descriptions of Him are but partial or incomplete. Islam, as a religion of uncompromising and unadulterated monotheism, emphasises in these passages the Unity, Majesty and Mercy of God.

The conception of God leads to the conception of Society and from the unity of one follows the unity of the other. “ All men are a single nation ” and “ people are naught but a single nation,” preaches Islam. It is

WHAT I OWE TO RELIGION

a religion that gives no countenance to any theories of racial, national or caste superiority. This has been restated in unequivocal terms by the Prophet of Islam in one of his sermons. He says: "The aristocracy of old time is trampled under my feet. The Arab has no superiority over him that is not an Arab and he that is not an Arab has no superiority over the Arab. All are children of Adam and Adam was made of earth." If there is any superiority, it does by no means depend on the accident of birth or possession. It depends on one's conduct towards God and man. With regard to this, the Holy Qur-án leaves us with no doubt. "O men! We have created you all of a male and female and then made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most careful of his duties."

And about Man, Islam has a message, ennobling and encouraging. Islam proclaims that "man is the chosen of God" and "he with all his faults is meant to be the representative of God on earth." Man is "the trustee of a free personality which he accepted at his peril"—a gift refused by the heavens and the earth and the mountains. It is on account of this personality—this ego—that man is unique in creation. "Of all the creations of God he alone is capable of consciously participating in the creative life of his Maker." Man is unlike Nature which is inert and passive. Instead Man has the capacity to shape the forces that surround him. "It is the lot of man to share in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to shape his own destiny as well as that of the universe, now by adjusting himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of his energy to mould its forces to his own ends and purposes. And in this process of progressive change God becomes a co-worker with him, provided

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man takes the initiative. Verily God will not change the condition of men, till they change what is in themselves." Man according to Islam is the vicegerent of God to whom God has made subject "the night and the day; the sun and the moon." By virtue of his free personality, man has the freedom to choose—either good or evil. To choose the good is to fear the Lord and walk in the path of those on whom God has bestowed His Grace. "There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or the West, but he is pious who believeth in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the scriptures and the prophets; who for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming; who observeth prayer, and payeth the legal alms, and who is of those who are faithful to their engagements when they have engaged in them; and patient under ills and hardships, in time of trouble; those are they who are just, and those are they who fear the Lord."

The attitude of Islam towards the world is distinctive and encouraging. Islam advocates no escape from the world. It is not something to be frightened of or something to be avoided at all costs. Instead the world is something to be shaped by the human will for spiritual ends. The life of Prophet Muhammad bears glorious testimony to this. In the shaping of the world, strivings and conflicts are invaluable elements. This idea has been expressed in beautiful language by Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the Philosopher-Poet of Islam.

"Why complain of enemies ?

I will declare the truth ; thine enemy is thy friend ;
His existence crowns thee with glory.

Whosoever knows the states of the Self

FROM THE CROSS TO THE CRESCENT

Considers a powerful enemy to be a blessing from God.

To the seed of Man the enemy is as a rain-cloud :
He awakens its potentialities."

It is for these reasons that there is no such thing in Islam as a "profane world." All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realisation of spirit. All is "holy ground" and the "whole of this earth is a mosque."

Such in brief are Islam's ideas on God, Society, Man, and the World. And what do I owe to Religion?— Everything that matters in life.

FROM THE CROSS TO THE CRESCENT

BY ABDUR RAZZAQUE SELLIH*

The idea of setting down my experiences in the Islamic religion occurred to me a few years before this. But I did not do so as I thought it rather too early. At the time of my conversion, I was so absorbed with the religion of Islam that I felt an urge in me to set them down in print. But here too I was cautious, as it became necessary for me not to be too hasty as I may be accused of writing under "impulse." Hence this length of time. I think that I have waited quite long and I am glad that these many years of Islamic life have given me the opportunity to record my experiences as they came to me. In short, what I mean to say is : How I made my journey from Christianity to Islam or "From the Cross to the Crescent."

Whatever they may be to the non-Muslims or whatever impression they may leave on them is best for them to judge. For my own part, I do not want to tread beyond the bounds of my own personal experiences in the Religion of Islam.

*Mr. Abdur Razzaque Selliah's article "Why I Embraced Islam" together with his photo appeared in the August 1934 issue of the *Islamic Review*.

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My gratitude is due to Malik Nazir, the Librarian of the Sadiq Egerton College, Bahawalpur, for the kind assistance he rendered in allowing me access to the wide range of books that have helped me to publish this.

THE FIRST STEP

The world was humming its sweet songs to me and I was very pleased to lend an ear to them. Everything was nice and pleasant and there was nothing to distract attention. My home was always filled with that joyful radiance and love which should pervade every good home. There was nothing to grudge or grumble about. I was well off in every sense. Home, friends, country and everything was sufficient and pleasant. I had none who was in the least inimical towards me. In my younger days I had the good luck of being educated in a Junior Seminary where I was sent by my father with the hope of making me a priest of the Roman Catholic Church some day. My college days were so full of buoyancy that I regret that the best part of my life as a boy had sped so swiftly. But one cannot expect to be a mischievous brat every day. I was fortunate enough to have the goodly company of the kind priests, from whose exemplary character I soon learnt to develop one for myself. Their influence is yet on me and for this I am always indebted to them.

When I left the college walls and entered into the chaos of this world, I was quite a lad and, least to say, a harmless fellow. A good job in an up-to-date office soon kept me busy. Punctuality and perseverance were the "keys" for success handed to me by my kind superiors of the seminary *plus* my devotion to the religion. A few years rolled by and "eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow we die" was the harmless line of principle I followed. In short, I marked time with the world. I was a regular church-goer and a frequent

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communicant at Mass and these habits were a great help to me. I was happy in the thought that I loved all and that all loved me. Thus was life till I knocked my head against Islam. Since then a change started in me. It came about in this manner. I was very fond of books and, starting from Sexton Blake and other detective novels, I drifted into more serious and weighty studies till the turn of mind to learn other religions came into me. I loved Catholicism so much that I wanted to know more about it and the more I read of it the more I loved it. Especially the Bible with its sweet and sublime language soon became an imperishable friend and constant consoler in my worries. In my own little way I became a defender of the faith and remained so until my curiosity was aroused by the speeches of Mr. Khalid Sheldrake when he came to Ceylon on a missionary tour. I was furious over the manner he accused Catholicism and derided its practices. He said so many things against Christianity in general that I was simply flabbergasted. I became dazed like a man brought into strong sunlight after years of life in a dungeon. I was very keen to gather all he said from certain Muslim friends of mine and thus secretly I was forming my plans to answer him. To achieve this end I secured some books on Islam and Christianity and began to study them. The more I read them the more hatred I took towards the authors of these books—and they were Muslims too! I read also the views of Christian authors on Islam and it was then that I realized the hopeless failure of them to answer the Muslim critics. I steadied myself and went deeper into Islam. Now I became aware that I was definitely getting “interested” in the religion of the Great Arabian Prophet. Yet I felt I was not doing justice to the religion of Christ or to myself in allowing my conscience to accept as truth everything that these Muslims said.

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Their accusation against the Sacraments and the Mysteries soon decided for me the course I should adopt. The one way out was to approach a priest and ask him if these "facts" were true. And so one day, absolutely calm and with a collected mind, I went off to visit an eminent priest and theologian. Our opening was very pleasant as he was personally known to me and to the family also. I told him everything in detail and how I read Islamic books and their reactions in me. He listened with great interest and asked me: "Do you believe that these Mohammedans, the enemies of Christ, could ever speak the truth?" This was not very good to listen to as I expected from him a more tolerant and broadminded view on these matters and asked him if the Muslims had not the "power" to utter the truth. I also told him that their writings were so reasonable, and I felt beyond the slightest doubt that there was no reason to discountenance Muslims simply because they were not Catholics!

• The good priest must have felt rather annoyed at my attitude and ended by advising and warning me to keep my fingers off "such dangerous and pernicious" books. I was thoroughly disgusted with all this, coming as it did from a theologian from whom I expected to secure some weapons to defend my religion but who, on the contrary, was throwing cold water on my expeditions and damping my enthusiasm for the study of Islam and Christianity. I did not like this, so I saw no reason why I should not study Islam further. The more I studied it the greater I learnt to love and respect it. My views of the Prophet too were becoming clarified and the pictures presented by Christians of Christ were becoming dubious in my mind. I felt that something inescapable and inevitable was drawing nigh. It was during such a period that a kind of discontentedness and restlessness set into me. I felt awfully off my feet and greatly distressed.

(To be continued.)

A MYSTICAL READING OF ISLAM

BY KHAN BAHADUR B. M. K. LODI

(Continued from page 387 of Vol. XXIX)

This is just the case of people who have risen to and travelled in the "supreme horizon" lying beyond the vision of human eye. "The Father and Maker of this whole it is hard to find; when one has found Him, to declare Him to all is impossible," is what was said by *Plato*. It will be still more discouraging to hear from *Sri Krishna* that "Nor sacrifice nor *vedam*, alms nor works, nor severe austerity nor study deep, can win the vision of this form for man."¹ With the Chinese Taoism, "One who knows does not talk and one who talks does not know." Perhaps it is an attempt to express the same inability on the part of one realising the cosmic-consciousness which is made by *Whitman* in the following words²:

"When I undertake to tell the best, I find, I cannot,
My tongue is inefficient on its pivot,
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,
I become a dumb man."

A dumb man who takes a sweet cannot explain its sweetness to others but this incommunicability of the taste does not render the sweetness a nullity; the sweetness is there.

It will be an unending tale indeed. The mouths and the minds of the wise have thus become miserably incapable of expression so that the rest remain craving, sobbing and sighing with an anguished heart, like a hungry beggar sighing to become a king. There is an analogy in *rivers* and *streams*. They are so fast and noisy while running overland but become quiet and silent when they enter the sea; because there remains

1. Bhagavad Gita, XI: 48.

2. Page 141, *Cosmic Consciousness*, by Dr. P. M. Bucke.

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no more drop, no more river, no more sea ; all become wedded together into one and any distinctive description is out of question. It was, therefore, said that "our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence."

He who has realised the Truth remains silent and he is, therefore, called a *mystic*. The word "mystic" is derived from the Greek root *muō* meaning "close lips or eyes." Now if the mystic cannot thus describe what he sees, shall we infer that he sees nothing at all? No. Because a person who takes *sugar* is unable to express its sweetness to those who have not tasted it, because the smell of a *rose* can never be described adequately to one who has not smelt it, because no one can perceive the lump of *salt* which is dissolved in water, because a man who feels *pain* in any of his limbs is unable to communicate it to others who have not experienced similar pain themselves, because the pleasure of the sex cannot be expressed to, nor realised by those who have not had any such experience, it cannot be concluded that none of these phenomena really exists in the realm of knowledge. It will be absurd to plead that sugar is not sweet, that a rose is not fragrant, that there is no salt in the water, that there is no such thing as bodily pain or sexual pleasure and so on. While as ordinary personal experience gained even in matters of this manifest world is thus found utterly incommunicable, it will be preposterous to deny the existence of and experiences in an unmanifested world where, to the enlightened few only, endowed with the faculty of divine insight or mystic intuition and to none others, "unheard becomes heard, unperceived becomes perceived and unknown becomes known." Herbert Spencer has so significantly put it that "in the very denial of our power to learn

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what the Infinite is there lies hidden the assumption that it is.”

It may again be argued that even the little knowledge gained by the enlightened people is not capable of being subjected to a logical analysis or a rational exposition. Yes, because it is of too occult a nature to admit of a direct discussion thereof. It is like a blind man asking for a description of *light*. Physical eyes cannot reach Spiritual visions. Spiritual things can only be discerned by Spiritual eyes, else it is no more spiritual. A mystery capable of being expressed to others in words is no more a mystery. To plead, therefore, that nothing could be seen or achieved spiritually is a logical fallacy.¹

A third argument is that the state of things in question, namely, one's own utter inability to express that which one has seen or realised may be due to the fact that the knowledge achieved so far is too imperfect and superficial to be intelligently transmitted to others. It should be remembered that a knowledge of God can never be perfect.

“The knowledge the wisest men have shared,
Of Thy great Power and Thee,
Is less when with Thyself compared
Than one drop in the sea.”

—Palmer's *Oriental Mysticism*.

Besides, the occult knowledge derived of the grand truths of *Nature* is said to be too revolting in effect to be divulged to one and all. A gun cannot be entrusted to him who does not know how to handle it. Attempts are made by gnostics and mystics to communicate their knowledge to others in symbolical or figurative

1. Some of the greatest Muslim mystics—and all real mystics, since the advent of Islam, have been found only in Islam—have tried to convey to the world as far as they could do it through human language, their impression of such experience—Ed. I. R.

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language, so as to gradually prepare their mind in order to receive and retain the same. One of the significances of the word *Upanishad* is "secret doctrine." The authors of the Upanishads have therefore warned that "this highest mystery in the Vedanta should not be given to one whose passion has not been subdued,"¹ but "to be imparted only to the earnest enquirers who are possessed of self-restraint and high moral discipline."² The essential preliminary requisite of a paint is a spotless white surface; a slight blot will blur the colour of the paint. So that an achievement of divine knowledge or a spiritual enlightenment becomes individual and restricted to a selfless few who seek it, to a spotless few who merit it.

There is yet another question: Is the spiritual enlightenment a hard-earned and self-acquired possession, or a divine gift? Apparently from a theosophical point of view it is a difficult question to answer. Nevertheless, is it not a fact that what lies in the hands of a surgeon is just the *operation* and not its result? The result is guided by a Natural Law—a correct diagnosis of the disease, a happy choice of and a careful conduct of the operation itself. It is what is called a Divine Will, a Divine Law, a law that endowed a cat with an instinct to carry her kitten in her mouth, a mother bear and carry her young when small on her back and a young monkey to exert and cling to its mother's body. It is the same law that has given an owl a clear sight to search for its prey during the night. It is a gift under the same Divine Law which converted an uneducated, lawless and indiscreet youth like *John Bunyan* into a saint, into the saintly author of that wonderful monument of

¹ *Svet Upanishad VI : 22.*

² *Introduction, Minor Upanishads, by the Advaita Ashrama of Mayabati, Himalayas.*

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allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It is a privilege which God grants (but involving a corresponding responsibility) and not a right which man can claim.¹ Let us see what the scriptures of theistic religious systems say on the subject: (1) *David* has said: "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee."² (2) "Only he, whom He favours, knows Him; to Him, the 'Self' reveals itself." —*Katha Upanishad*. (3) "He makes him whom He wishes to lead up from these worlds to do a good deed and the same makes him whom He wishes to lead down to a bad deed" (*Kano Upanishad*, III : 8). (4) "Though ever performing all actions, taking refuge in Me, by *My Grace*, he obtaineth the eternal, indestructible abode."³ (5) "By His *Grace* thou shalt obtain supreme peace, the everlasting dwelling-place."⁴ (6) "*May divine love* flow to him whosoever Thou wishest!"⁵

The following are a few of the several relevant passages appearing in the Qur-án :

- (1) "He guideth whom He will to the right path."
- (2) "God bestoweth His sovereignty on whom He will."⁶
- (3) "He grants wisdom to whom He pleases."⁷
- (4) "Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy."⁸
- (5) "He maketh whom He will to enter into His mercy."⁹

1. Numbers, XVI : 5.
2. Psalm 65 : 4.
3. Bhagavad Gita, XVIII : 56.
4. Bhagavad Gita, XVIII : 62.
5. Parsis' Gatha, 44 : 16.
6. II, 142 : 213.
7. II : 247.
8. II : 259.
9. II : 105.
10. LXXVI : 31.

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(6) "And whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expandeth his bosom . . . and whomsoever it is His will to send astray . . . He maketh His bosom close and narrow."¹

Thus almost all religious systems are unanimous in inculcating the truth, as sung by the Persian poet, that a Divine Knowledge or Enlightenment is not a thing to be achieved by one's own physical exertions until it is also blessed and bestowed by the Divine Providence.² "When you exert and succeed in any affair, attribute the success to Divine Grace and not to your own exertion"³ (Sa'di). "Many be called but few chosen," is the Biblical saying.⁴

To resume the question of God's conception and of its expression. On his return from "the night journey,"⁵ the Prophet Muhammad was asked by his daughter *Fatimah*: How did you see God? "I saw God with God's sight and vision," was the reply,⁶ that is, it is only God that sees, and He sees Himself, as will appear from the concluding words of Verse 1, Chapter XVII of the Qur-án—"He is the *Hearing*, the *Seeing*," referring to Prophet Muhammad's travels in the Realm of God.

¹. VI : 126.

² این سعادت بزور بازو نیست - تا فد بخشن خرائے بخشند
چو آید بکرشیدات چیزے پیش

³ بتدریب حق دان نه سعی خویش

⁴. Math. XX : 16.

Not that this enlightenment comes without any effort. As a matter of fact, it made most exhausting efforts to attain this priceless blessing. But efforts have to be dedicated to God before they can be blessed with their desired results. It has to be realised that the energy for the requisite effort is again the gift of God. This is the final point in mysticism or, to be more precise, spiritiaKsm.—Ed., I.R.

⁵. *Futúhat Makkiah*, by Ibn Arabi.

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BY MAULVI ZARAFATULLAH

(Continued from p. 257 of July 1941 issue.)

Here we may reasonably ask the following questions :

- (a) (i) If it is a recognised fact that almost all the Prophets prophesied about all great future Prophets and all great coming events, in order that the people may be in a position to recognise and receive them, why was it not that so great a scheme of God, so very essential a thing for salvation, as the atonement of sins by Jesus's blood, was not revealed to, and foretold by, every one of the former Prophets ?
- (ii) Secondly, what will be the fate of those who had lived before and thus had not the good luck to hear and believe in it ? In fact, the present Christianity has detached itself from the silver-current of the universal religious tradition and formed itself into an isolated pool, thus giving rise to unwarranted and inconsistent doctrines.
- (b) If there be any simpler and easier form of religion (*e.g.*, worshipping of idols and *devas*), why did not the Prophets or *avatars*, as they are called, who are the only legitimate authority—the Departmental Experts, so to speak, on the subject, even so much as give any hints on the same ?

The fact is that they came mainly to protest against this easy conception of religion when idolatry and *deva*-worship became the order of the day. It is to be carefully noted that disunity and dissensions following the worship of a diversity of gods invariably preceded the advent of a prophet, putting a stop to the old order and establishing in its place peace, unity and

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prosperity in the land, through the worship of one True God. Perversion or *glani* of religion, which these high-souled leaders come to end, means idolatry, *deva*-worship, dissensions, immoralities and adversity; "reformation" or *sanskar*, which they are believed to accomplish, means the establishment of the worship of one true God, unity, morality, peace and prosperity.

That even pure Christianity and pure Buddhism were incomplete by themselves and were meant for only a section of the whole human race may be seen from the following facts :

- (i) That when Christianity went among the new, rising, adventurous peoples of Europe, they became captivated by the high-flown, one-sided ethics of Christianity (such as those embodied in "the sermon on the mount"); but finding them impracticable and incapable of providing them with any guidance in the midst of worldly affairs in which they found themselves, they separated these affairs from religion which was carefully locked up in the churches and carried on so far as the former were concerned in their own way, making and borrowing secular laws as the exigency of the time dictated. They extolled Jesus to the Heavens for his fine, unheard-of ethics and finally removed him far beyond the precincts of mortality so as not to be followed as a human model.
- (ii) When Buddhism went out of India in countries where living was not so easy as in India, the sweet-sounding theme of Ahimsa, the central doctrine of Buddhism, was bound to disappear, and the religion of Buddha then turned mainly to the personality of Buddha which was to be soon raised above the level

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of human beings. It must be admitted, however, that these religions continued to do much good, in some way or other, among pagans and barbarians having no religion worth the name.

Was then there not the necessity for a new prophet, with a new revelation, if God really wished to guide His creatures aright and not to leave them to their fates? Yes, for this reason, as also for the following the advent of a new prophet became necessary.

2. As everything in this universe attains completion and perfection or full development, so religion, which originated with the first man had had to be brought to perfection.

3. Mankind was at first "one family," and they began with one religion. As they spread and separated themselves from one another—which was inevitable under these circumstances—they had to be given diverse religions. Now, after they have run their courses, it was necessary that they should look back and know each other, and the disadvantages of time and space being minimised, they should be knit together by one great religion of a universal application into one sacred brotherhood. There was the need for the appearance of one who would not only purify each of the two great religious traditions but also combine them into one perfect universal whole, thus fulfilling the prophecies contained in all of them.

If it is agreed that there was a need for the advent of such a religion, the following questions may pertinently be asked in this connection:

1. What attributes of God should this religion reveal?
2. What will be the form of and method adopted by the new Book, *i.e.*, the new revelation?

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3. What will be the nature and form of that universal religion ?
4. What sort of personality has the new Prophet to be ?

One may legitimately anticipate the following answers in reply :

1. God is All-Loving ; but He is not only All-Loving. He has also this universe to look after and sustain ; the elements to create, rudiments to develop, good things to help, rotten things to replace, bad things to improve, the good to reward, the evil to punish, and the repentant to forgive. Thus He has to be All-Powerful, All-Sustainer, All-Giver, All-Forgiver, All-Punisher, All-Just, All-Merciful, All-Knowing, All-Wise, etc., etc., as well. For a saintly man or a forsaker of the world, who is incapable of any evil desires, the first mentioned Divine quality might have sufficed ; but for the common people, who are His proper subjects, the other qualities are also urgently necessary ; we must not only love God but fear Him also above anything else.
2. As for the book, it should set forth in a clear and unambiguous, sweet, yet highly authoritative language, not leaving even a shadow of doubt, all the principles of religion, together with their broad forms, which will apply to all peoples at all times to come ; and this in a voice thundering yet at the same time melodious, sending thrilling sensations of fear and ecstasy through the body and mind, so that the very recitations—just their very sound—may enliven and rouse the most inactive and indolent.

It should enjoin and prohibit most authoritatively, but appealing at the same time to reason and referring

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to one's own welfare, in the manner of a father admonishing his sons, gently and kindly at the end. It should denounce and threaten wrong-doers with fearful punishments (which are nothing but chastenings) to make them desist from the wrong path, declaring that God is very quick in punishing all evil deeds ; at the same time it should assure them of full forgiveness, however heinous the sin may be, if only they would revert, declaring that He is All-Merciful, lest they run away from Him through sheer fear. It should very wisely hint at some hidden principles of nature and encourage researches and discoveries in the manner of a wise teacher, who trains the senses and the intellect more than he teaches and stuffs the brains of the pupils with his own thoughts both in the inward (*i.e.*, mental and spiritual) and outward (*i.e.*, material) universe, so that the spiritual and material sciences may grow side by side under the guidance of, and in the acknowledgment of the mercy of God. •

It should, at the same time, be free from any undue sentimentality. Feelings and sentiments, in a due measure, are necessary as they sweeten and beautify the intellectual sides but, as too much of everything is bad, disproportionate sentimentality perverts religion and is itself a great source of sins and superstitions.

A few illustrations of the evil effects of undue sentimentality :

(1) Just before the battle of Kurukshetra between the Kauravas and the Pandavas started, Arjun, the greatest hero of the Pandavas, at the sight of his dear friends and near relations, became too much touched to shoot an arrow or even advance a step further and sat down dejected, with both his hands clasped round his breast. It was at this juncture that the instructions for pure *Karma* (deeds) flowed from the lips of Kṛishna. The Kauravas were the most aggressive people who

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persecuted the Pandavas fearfully in every possible way, and now it was the duty of the latter to punish them and regain their rights and kingdom from which they had been ousted. A well-regulated, properly controlled self-assertion is the rule of the universe; it is the only rule that can be universally practised. There are stern duties amidst the hard realities of our worldly life to perform which it needs great courage and to avoid which is only another name for cowardice. Indeed, there is another sort of courage, which consists in self-sacrifice. There do arise occasions when the self-sacrifice of one saves many or does immense good to the world. It then becomes necessary for a man to possess this virtue. All the same its exhibition is of occasional necessity and is of an exceptional character. It will be evident that a well-regulated self-assertion ("Live and let live") is the general rule and therefore a virtue necessary for the sound and regular working and preservation of the human world and so essential to a complete and perfect religious life.

(2) A feeling of disgust at a nuisance is good, nay, necessary. But with some people it becomes so extravagant that they constantly live in such a state of mind as if the very touch of the air outside would pollute them, not to speak of eating or drinking with anybody else. They fear pollution and disease, never realising that mental, even physical, diseases are fast attacking them in spite of their morbid consciousness.

(3) Given the proper time and place, *Ahimsa* is undoubtedly a very good and necessary virtue. But to carry it to the extreme of not taking of any meat food when it is necessary for health or life, to walk with one's nose covered and mouth shut for fear of inhaling or eating microscopic insects and not to drink either iced or boiled water owing to same apprehensions, not

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to ride on an animal, not to walk on the roads without sweeping them beforehand, to prevent any living being from being trampled unconsciously under feet— even not to prevent anyone from killing unjustly an animal, lest he would thus prevent its attaining a higher birth after death—practices such as these that form part and parcel of Jain life are simply horrible and amount to closing the gates of existence before one's self and bringing about one's own annihilation, and this is sin.

(4) Chastity, a sentiment of love and respect and constancy for the consort, is a necessary virtue and an exceedingly sweet one to possess. But to carry it to the extreme of remaining a widower or a widow throughout one's life or of being burnt alive on the funeral pyre for that love is going beyond the limit.

(5) To love and respect a religious reformer is a duty, but to regard him as a god is a sin. Even to invent many incredible stories, some of them immoral, and to justify them on the ground of his supposed Divinity and sing of them to the point of fainting is ludicrous.

(6) Mercy is a sweet and necessary quality. But to show it in complete abeyance of justice is injurious to one's self, to the man to whom it is shewn and to others as well.

(7) To attend too much to worldly pursuits and desires is bad and prohibited but to renounce the world altogether from the very beginning is going too far.

(8) Monogamy under normal circumstances is a good rule. But to disallow its relaxation even a little, when it becomes urgently necessary under the stress of abnormal circumstances as a legitimate check on much worse evils, is really sacrificing the virtue of chastity to maintain which the institution of marriage exists. In the last analysis it is upholding the name at the cost of reality.

In a word, religion has so many sides ; to strain it unduly in any one of these sides is to deform and pervert it.

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SOME GEOGRAPHICAL POINTS IN THE QUR-AN

BY SYED MUZAFFAR-UD-DIN NADVI

(Continued from page 398 of Volume XXIX)

Again, we find in the Targūm that the queen of Sheba was invited by Solomon for territorial exploitation, whereas the Qur-án says that she was summoned to the court of Solomon for the purpose of abandoning polytheism and infidelity and embracing the religion of God. Again, according to the Targūm, Solomon was not aware of the Sabāeans and the exaggerated description of their wealth caused him great surprise; while, according to the Qur-án, the cause of Solomon's surprise was not the great prosperity of the Sabāeans but the religion they professed, as the following words of the Qur-án show :

“ Surely, I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne; I found her and her people adoring the sun instead of Alláh, and the devil has made their deeds fair-seeming to them and thus turned them from the way, so they do not go aright.” (XXVII : 23, 24.)¹

1. (a) Both in the Targūm and the Qur-án, the story of Solomon begins with “Hudhud” (Lapwing). Some modern commentators have suggested that “Hudhud” may have been the name of some person, such names being not uncommon in those days. No doubt, at that time, men were named “Hudhud” (e.g., during the reign of Solomon, a prince of Midian was named “Hudhud,” *vide* Kings, and in Arab annals, the father or brother of the queen of Saba is also named “Hudhud”), but the Qursnic statement “Fataqqad-at-Ṭaira” (he reviewed the birds), unmistakably shows that the “Hudhud” referred to was a bird and not a person. In view of the fact that the possibility of the rationality of animals is now being favourably considered and that alphabets are being prepared for monkeys' language, it is not impossible or absurd to think that a bird could speak intelligently. Furthermore, a trained “Hudhud” can convey messages from one place to another just as pigeons do, and hence the speech of Hudhud in the case under discussion might refer to the letter which it conveyed. As it was possible for a Hudhud to convey Solomon's letter to the Queen of Saba (*vide* the Qur-án), so also was it possible for it to bring a letter from the Queen to Solomon.

(b) Another point that has raised discussion is the throne of the Queen of Saba. It is mentioned in the Qur-án that Solomon had it transmitted to his court and, after changing its form, asked the queen if she could recognise it. The Old Testament, which makes no mention of the queen's throne, says, “And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance and precious stones Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with pure gold.” (II Chronicles, IX : 1, 17.) Possibly, the gold with which Solomon's throne was overlaid may refer to the different parts of the throne of the Queen of Saba. In the Targūm also, some curious things are mentioned in connection with the throne.

(Continued overleaf)

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The Religion of the Sabæans.—The Sabæans used to worship the sun, as the Qur-ân says: "I found her and her people adoring the sun instead of Allâh." (XXVII: 24.) The Bible is silent on the point, but Targûm supports it, as it says: "When the queen was going to worship the sun."² In the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Vol. XXIII, page 256) we find, "Sun-worship seems to have been peculiar to the Sabæans. 'Shams,' was a goddess, while the chief divinity of the Minæans was the god 'Athtar,' a male figure, worshipped under several forms of which the commonest

(Continued from previous page)

Historical evidences conclusively prove that the Sabæans were noted for their skill in the art of decoration. The Greek historian, Agatharchides, who preceded Islam by 800 years and was a contemporary of the Sabæans, writes:

"The Sabæans are the richest people in the world. For a few goods, silver and gold are brought in quantities, and flow in from every side while, owing to their remote situation, they have never been conquered by anyone. Hence, specially in the Metropolis, they have a number of vessels of silver and gold, and couches, and porticoes, the pillars of which are gilded in the shaft, and the capitals are adorned with silver ornaments, while the architraves and doors are finished with gold and precious stones. On these structures they bestowed great care and industry." (*Vide* Duncker's *History of Antiquity*, Vol. I, pages 310—312.)

It is possible that the queen might have prepared a fine sample of workmanship for Solomon, and presented it to him personally when she came to his court in Palestine. Both the Qur-ân and the Old Testament refer to the gifts offered to Solomon by the Queen of Saba.

The Quranic verse, viz., "One who had the knowledge of the 'Kitâb' offered to bring the throne (of the Queen of Saba) in the twinkling of an eye" (XXXIV: 40) should not be taken too literally. It means only that a certain man who knew his business offered to carry out the order of Solomon within the shortest possible time. Much speculation has centred in the word "Kitâb" used in the above verse. In our opinion, the word here means a letter, in which sense the Qur-ân has already used it twice in the same story, viz., "Carry this book (letter) of mine." "Verily, a good book (letter) has been brought to me." Besides, the word "Kitâb" in the sense of a letter is very frequently used in Arabic and eloquent speakers do not use any other word for a letter. Hence the meaning of the verse in question will be: "The courtier who was acquainted with the contents of the letter of the Queen of Saba offered his services to fetch the throne instantly."

(c) It is mentioned in the Qur-ân that the Queen of Saba, having witnessed Solomon's great wisdom and dignity, exclaimed, saying: "I embraced Islam with Solomon." (XXVII: 44.) An indication of her belief is found in the following verse of the Old Testament:

"Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made He thee king over them to do judgment and justice." (II Chronicles, IX: 8.)

The following occurs in the New Testament: "The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here!" (Matthew, XII: 42.)

² *Vide Jewish Encyclopædia*, Vol. XI, page 236.

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are the Eastern 'Athtor' and 'Athtar.' Sacrifices and incense were offered to the gods." The Greek historian, Theophrastenes (D. 312 B.C.) also testifies to the Sabāeans' sun-worship.¹ Arab narrators also support the view that the Sabāeans were sun-worshippers. The title of the founder of the Sabāean tribe was 'Abd al Shams (Slave of the sun or worshipper of the sun). Archæological discoveries have also proved beyond doubt that, of the several gods of the Sabāeans, one was named 'Shams' (sun) which was worshipped in the whole of South Arabia.² Muslim travellers discovered on a building in Yemen, in the second or third century of the Muslim era, an inscription which was worded in the Himyarite language and read as follows :

"Shamrir'ash built it for the goddess Sun."⁴

The Dismemberment of the Sabāeans.—As stated before, the Sabāean kingdom had been divided into three provinces—Abyssinia, Yemen and North Arabia. About 115 B.C., the Sabāeans' power declined and Abyssinia was captured by Axumites (men of elephants), North Arabia was taken by the Ishmaelite Arabs, and Yemen was conquered by the Himyarites. A number of the Sabāeans migrated to different parts of the country. Now the question is : What were the causes that led to the decline and destruction of the Sabāeans ? Legendary evidences and fictitious accounts of the Arabs suggest that many tribes left Yemen and went to other parts of the country to avoid the great catastrophe, viz., the Flood of the Dyke, which had been foretold by soothsayers. In the first place, however, such predictions are quite absurd and not worthy of

¹. Vide Heron's *Historical Researches*, Vol. I, page 351.

². *Hamza Isfahani*, page 107 (Cal.)

³. *Encyclopædia of Islam*, Vol. I, page 389.

⁴. *Hamza Isfahani*, page 110 (Cal.)

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any serious consideration ; and, in the second place, the flood was predicted for the town of Ma'rib and not for the whole of Yemen, and actually the waters, making a breach in the dyke, swept over the town only and not over the whole country. The Sabāeans could move from Ma'rib only ; why, therefore, from the whole country ?

The fact is that the source of the Sabāean wealth and prosperity was commerce. Yemen is situated opposite the coasts of India and Africa on either side. Ships from those countries, laden with gold, precious stones, spices, perfumes, ivory, etc., anchored in Yemen, whence these things were carried on camels to Syria and Egypt on the coasts of the Red Sea. The Qur-án refers to this overland route by "Imām-um-Mubīn" (a main road) and "Rihlatash-Shitāi was-Saif" (journey of winter and summer). On account of the frequency of commercial caravans, small townships had grown up on this road between Yemen and Syria. The Greeks in the fourth century, and the Romans in the first century B.C. took possession of Syria and Egypt respectively. They were always afraid of the Arab attack while the latter were anxious to keep the monopoly of trade in their hands, and never allowed the foreigners to pass along that route. Moreover, the Greeks and Romans could not easily cross the sandy and hilly places of Arabia. To remove these difficulties they transferred the Indian and African commerce from the land-route to the sea-route, and thenceforward the cargo used to be landed on the coasts of Egypt and Syria, *via* the Red Sea. This change brought about the ruin of the whole territory from Yemen to Syria ; and all the Sabāean colonies were gradually wiped out of existence. The Qur-án confirms the above events

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when it says :

“Certainly there was a sign for Sabā in their abode : two gardens on the right and the left ! Eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him : a good land and a Forgiving Lord.”

“But they turned aside, so We sent upon them the Flood of Dyke (*i.e.*, a torrent which burst the dyke of Ma’rib and destroyed the city), and, in place of their two gardens, We gave to them two gardens yielding bitter fruit and (growing) tamarisk and a few lote-trees.

“This We requited them with because they disbelieved ; and We do not punish any but the ungrateful.

“And We made between them and the towns which We had blessed (other) towns to be easily seen, and We apportioned the journey therein : Travel through them nights and days, secure.

“And they said : O our Lord ; make spaces to be longer between our journeys ; and they were unjust to themselves ; so We made them stories and scattered them with an utter scattering ; most surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one.” (XXXIV : 15—19.)

The verses quoted above refer to two incidents, (a) the Flood of Dyke, which spread devastation in the magnificent gardens of Sabā (and the verses make no mention of the destruction of the whole nation on that ground, as suggested by some scholars), and (b) the destruction of the commercial colonies which had sprung up on the overland route. Some people say that this event had no bearing on the Sabāeans as a

CORRESPONDENCE

whole, but the Qur-án says that the Divine catastrophe (*i.e.*, extinction of commercial colonies) was the chief cause of the decline of the Sabāeans. A German scholar, Müller, also testifies to the correctness of the account of the Qur-án when he says: "This event (the Flood of Dyke) was not the cause but the consequence of the decline of the country. When the inland trade fell away and the traffic of the coast towns took the sea-route, the ancient metropolis and the numerous emporia came to ruin, while the many colonies in the North were broken up and their population dispersed. To this the Qur-án alludes in its oracular style." (Vide *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. XXIII, 13th edition, page 957.)

The New Discovery Regarding Sabā.—*Reuter* furnished us on the 10th March, 1934, with the following information regarding the discovery of the lost capital of Sabā:

"The lost capital of the Queen of Sheba is claimed to have been discovered by the French novelist and explorer, Andre Malraux, who recently left secretly to explore the Arabian desert by air. M. Malraux, in a message from Djibouti, states that he has found the legendary city. Twenty towers of the temple are still standing at the northern edge of Rub' al-Khali."

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[A short time ago our young and enthusiastic brother-in-Islam, Mr. G. E. Smith, wrote to a certain Miss Martin from whom a letter had appeared in the *London Daily Mirror*. Mr. Smith's letter was unfortunately not delivered because of an insufficient address but it is of such great interest to all Muslims and breathes such boundless sincerity that we feel compelled to reproduce it here.—ED., I. R.]

COXHOE:
April 21, 1941.

DEAR MISS MARTIN,

A few minutes after buying the *Daily Mirror* this morning I read your letter which somehow struck such a note of sincerity that I think your letter deserved more response than the best the L. L. B. could do for you. Therefore, I beg you to forgive me for

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approaching you on the subject which, being the theme of your letter, is possibly the keynote of your life as it is mine (I humbly hope it will always remain so)—the true religion of the One True God. If my letter should offend you as a Christian I must most deeply apologize, but I think that my own views on religion as an earnest seeker of truth will at least interest you. You know deep in your heart that humanity will never achieve widespread peace and happiness until it recognizes and obeys God and His laws as He meant them to be obeyed. The trouble is that so many earnest seekers of true guidance can find no such guidance as they feel is necessary for true harmony in the ways of God, and they become discouraged, disillusioned. There are millions in this country in this condition to-day. I was one and felt myself drifting into semi-atheism when, a few months ago, as if by a miracle, I was retrieved and set on the path of true guidance and inspiration to acknowledge God and to do my duty to Him in my daily life. I had many misconceptions about Islam when I first wrote an enquiry to the Woking Mosque, but from the first literature they sent me in response I felt something growing within me, until now I am *sure* beyond all doubt that I have found in Islam the true religion of God. You have no doubt some historical knowledge about the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be with him!) but if you read an unbiased study of his life you might grow to love this simple and humble man who taught that Jesus, Moses, Abraham, Buddha, Noah, etc., were all, like himself, the sent messengers of God. Did you know that Muhammad found woman in a condition far worse than slavery and that he was the first leader of humanity to place her on a complete footing with man? I could write pages and pages more to you. Islam is not only a faith to be remembered, it is a faith to be lived every day of our lives. A Muslim lives in the sight of God whatever he or she does. Christians must pray to God every Sunday, a Muslim must remember God always and praise Him five times a day every day. In no country is woman more respected and honoured than in the countries under Islam. I beg to enclose some helpful literature; one pamphlet is written by an English Muslima; she is one of many, I assure you. I do not know what feelings all this will create in you but I can confidently promise you that if you seriously study Islam any further you will certainly learn things which will amaze and possibly transform your soul.

Yours truly,
G. E. SMITH.

[*Copy of a letter sent by the Imam to the Daily Mirror as a protest against an article entitled "Love under the Axis" which appeared in the issue of that paper for May 12, 1941.*]

To

THE EDITOR,
THE *Daily Mirror*,
LONDON, E.C.

15th May, 1941.

DEAR SIR,

I have been literally shocked and so have been all the Muslims in this country by the article entitled "Love under the Axis" which appeared in the *Daily Mirror* of May 12. It will arouse

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intense indignation in the minds of the inhabitants of Muslim countries when it reaches them. I just could not believe that, living as we are under most critical circumstances, such articles could be allowed to appear in a responsible English journal. It might be either stupidity or ignorance that could have led to the publication of this article. I cannot possibly accuse you of either. Then why in the name of justice this grotesque and derogatory article which simply bristles with misconceptions of Islam and its peoples?

May I analyse it for you further? In the first place the contents of the article do not correspond at all with the title. What has "Love under the Axis" to do with Islam? From such a title one expected to read something about Italy or Germany. Certainly not about the Arabs or Islam.

I am not at all concerned with the local customs of the Arabs and do not hold brief for them in exactly the same manner as I would not confuse many of the peculiar customs of the European nations with their religion. What I strongly protest against is when the writer of your article dons the robe of an authority on the teachings of the Qur-án.

The press can do both harm and good. For this reason one should think twice before committing to paper anything liable to hurt those whose goodwill we are anxious to seek and cultivate. Articles of this nature give a ready weapon to those who are never tired of proclaiming that Great Britain, in spite of the fact that more than one hundred million Muslims live under the British flag, is fundamentally anti-Islamic. We who have been trying to cultivate good relations between the peoples of Islam and these isles find our efforts neutralised by such articles as yours. A few more like this and the claim of the anti-British people is established.

We have been literally hurt by your article in more than one way. Not only has it grieved us but it has discredited the great religion of Islam, which has a following of some three hundred millions, in the eyes of your readers instead of letting them appreciate the good points we decidedly have. You will agree with me that we should do well to avoid this if we really mean to think in terms of the future and welfare of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

I really do not know from where you got the assertion that "humbleness, in fact, is the keynote of married life under the shadow of Islam." You do us a grievous wrong in printing in heavy type allegations fathered upon the fair name of Islam such as "The beauties of the other world are for men alone. The Koran promises that men will be rewarded over there with cool rivers and with lovely virgins to serve them. Virgins, however, who have not been touched by either man's or spirit's hands."

I appeal to you to be good enough to take steps to undo the harm done us and for that matter the cause of humanity.

I beg to remain,

SIR,

Yours faithfully,

ABDUL MAJID, IMÁM,

THE SHAH JEHAN MOSQUE, WOKING.

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To

THE IMAM,
THE MOSQUE,
WOKING.

HOME FORCES :

11th October, 1940.

DEAR SIR,

I am very pleased to confirm to you that I received your letter and literature yesterday. I would like to assure you that your reply to my first letter to you has more than exceeded my hopes and expectations. The books you enclosed have interested me tremendously and, since reading the excellent book, "What is Islam?" I am most firmly convinced that I am approaching the most important landmark of my life. Before reading this book, there were many very important questions I should have liked to have asked concerning the religion of Islam, but, after reading this book diligently, I find that most of those important questions and queries have been most effectively answered.

I would like to explain to you how I first became firmly attracted to your religion but it came about so suddenly and in circumstances so uninspiring and ordinary that there is nothing to explain except that my first real knowledge of Islam came from an excellent History master I had at school nearly eight years ago. He even told us about the Mosque to which I am addressing this letter and I forgot nothing of the outline he gave me then. Were I in civil life at my home in London I should visit you at my first opportunity but being in the service of the Army I am, of course, not at all free to do so, but I am sure that despite surface difficulties I should be able to be as good a Muslim in the Army as I could be were I free. I should like to know details of the fasts and Muslim Calendar and also if there are foods forbidden to a good Muslim for if I am to join your Great Brotherhood I must be a complete and total adherent to the laws of the Prophet; also I should need advice on how to conduct my prayers in my present environment. I have no doubts now at all that I have found what I have unconsciously sought so long but it is naturally my duty to ponder over the adjustments which my conversion will necessitate. These are now the only points I need to be clear on before I act.

I shall certainly need a copy of the Sacred Qur-án that I might read from it every day. I do so hope you will be able to oblige me with further details about the Holy Qur-án. It is my intention to make a thorough study of my new Faith and your list of books interests me greatly as well.

I must thank you most sincerely for your magnificent response to my plea to you. I shall keep the letter and books you have so kindly sent me with the utmost care.

I shall end this letter here then, dear sir, hoping you will soon send a reply to it, and I shall await your further advice with pleasant anticipation. Meanwhile I shall read again and re-read the literature you have sent me and do my utmost to prepare myself to be worthy of the title of "Muslim."

I remain, Dear Sir,
Yours respectfully,
(Ptc.) G. E. SMITH.

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Issalam Alaikum.

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ISLAMIC REVIEW

of God, we have undertaken to publish this book. On Him alone do we rely for the expenses of its publication and its wide circulation. Yet we want our Muslim brethren to have the blessing of helping His cause at this moment, a turning point in the religious history of mankind. They will, in buying its copies, not only help the Mission in meeting the expenses of its publication but will help its circulation in so far as they will buy them for sympathetically disposed non-Muslims and libraries.

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