

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of God*

MIRROR OF ISLAM

\* BUSINESS OF THE  
PROPHET'S LIFE

\* DOCTRINE OF ISLAM

\* GIBS ON ISLAM



**Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai**

**MOUHAMMAD IN THE  
MIRROR OF ISLAM**

**\* GILIMPSES OF THE  
PROPHET'S LIFE**

**\* DOCTRINES OF ISLAM**

**\* G.B SHAW ON ISLAM**

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**MUHAMMAD**

***IN THE MIRROR OF***

***Islam***

# COMMISSION

OF THE



1700



'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī





*In the name of God, Most Merciful  
and Compassionate*

'Allamah Tabataba'i was one of the foremost masters of the traditional and religious sciences and Islamic philosophy in contemporary Iran. He was the author of numerous books and articles in Arabic and Persian, among them the monumental **al-Mizan (The Balance)** in Arabic, a Quranic commentary, and the five volume **Usual al-falsafah (Principles of Philosophy)** in Persian. His **Shi'ite Islam** has been translated into English by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, dean of the Faculty of Letters of Tehran University. The present article appeared under the title "**Muhammad dar Ayinah-i Islam**" ("Muhammad in the Mirror of Islam") in the book **Muhammad, Dhatam-i Payambaran (Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, Husauniyyah-i Irshad, Tehran, 1347/1968)**, published to commemorate the 1400th anniversary according to the lunar calendar of the prophecy of Muhammad. He died on November 15th 1981.



## **ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS**

Islam is based on two realities: the divine personality of the Prophet Muhammad, who was chosen exactly fourteen lunar centuries ago to deliver God's message and to be the leader of men; and the Quran, a book of divine origin which is the Prophet's enduring miracle and which contains God's words along with intellectual and practical teachings of a universal nature. These two realities must be considered as one of the most important factors in the development and perfection of human life, or rather, they are the most important factor to have manifested itself over the course of fourteen centuries in the faith and practice of hundreds of millions of men, extending its influence deep into every aspect of their society.

It is true that of the world's religions Islam is the youngest and that its followers are fewer in number than the sum of the adherents of other

faiths, yet Islam is possessed of certain distinguishing characteristics which sets it apart from other revealed ways. For example, if we refer to the sacred books of Hinduism and in particular the Veda, we see that the religious teachings presented there are almost exclusively of an ascetic nature and at the same time that they are directed towards a minority of the religion's followers. Thus, the majority of Hindus are excluded from deriving direct spiritual benefit from these sacred books.

Buddhism and also Christianity display with Hinduism the same exclusively ascetic outlook in their teachings. In the case of Christianity this is obvious from the four Gospels and the other basic religious texts. There are no practical injunctions or social laws and moreover philosophy and rational thought are looked upon with disfavor. The Divine Sacrifice and the remission of the sins of mankind are doctrines which reduce the relevance of injunctions concerned with this world.

Other religions have either ceased to draw men to themselves, such as Sabeanism and Manicheanism, or else are limited to a particular group of people, such as Judaism.

Thus it is only Islam which gives first importance to rationally demonstrable beliefs and positive individual and social injunctions, as, it is hoped, the present paper will make clear.

## **The prime importance of the individual from the point of view of human nature**

Human nature seeks no more than to perpetuate as far as possible its own existence and to achieve its instinctive desires. If the first step man takes in his development is to form social groupings, and if he preserves these societies by acting in accordance with their laws – thus surrendering to the same extent a degree of his individual freedom – it is in order that by depriving himself of one portion of his freedom he gains and benefits from another portion by being better able to provide for his innate requirements and his subsistence.

The first goal of creation is the happiness of the individual; the happiness of society follows upon this. In other words the purpose of creation is the perfection of human nature, and this perfection is realized in the being of the individual, not in the shape and form of society.

Thus, man is directed towards the formation of social groupings to preserve the individual. For in order that he may realize the fundamental purpose of life – happiness and well-being – it is necessary that he should follow an orderly system of living a system which inevitably must be social. He must eat, drink, clothe himself, sleep, rest, wed, bear offspring, secure his needs, and through the use of his mind provide the means of his own subsistence.

## **The effect of the world view of the individual upon his activity**

The form and characteristics of this orderly system which man follows in his life is dependent upon his conception of the nature of the Universe and of himself, who is an inseparable part of that Universe. Thus we see that a group of men do not admit the existence of a creator for the world and imagine that the world came into being accidentally and that man is only this material form which comes into existence at birth and ceases to exist at death. These men organize their way of life and rules for living with a view to the material needs of their ephemeral earthly existence, and this alone. They follow a path which can lead to no more than a limited material happiness and well-being.

On the other hand those who accept a creator for the universe and believe that the regulation of the affairs of man and of the world is in the hands of "the gods" do not consider man's life to be just this material existence; they organize their way of living in such a way as to attract the favor of the gods and keep away their anger, and in this manner to achieve happiness in life and remain safe from unpleasant occurrences resulting from the gods' wrath.

Again, those who accept the Unity of God and believe that the Universe and all that is in it is governed by One God who is All-Wise and All-Power-

full, and that man does not cease to exist at death but lives an eternal life, will organize their lives accordingly, that is, with an eye to assuring felicity in both worlds.

It is thus clear that "religion" is the organization of life, and that life lived according to a program is religion. Those who try to separate religion and life and claim that the first of these is only empty formalism are sadly mistaken. It is in view of this that Islam calls the path one follows in life "religion", while it calls the true way the "Straight Path" and the false way the "Deviated" or "Crooked Path". God says: "The curse of Allah is on evildoers, who debar (men) from the path of Allah and would have it crooked, and who are disbelievers in the Last Day". (Quran VII, 44-45. This and all subsequent quotations from the Quran are from the translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, New York, 1953).

### The islamic world view

The concept upon which the Prophet of Islam founded his religion is that all of existence has been created by the One God, and that every one of the parts of existence is directed by God towards the perfection and happiness peculiar to that part. Man also, who possesses eternal life, is directed towards the happiness and welfare peculiar to his nature; and this he gains by following the path shown to him by God.

The Holy Prophet addressed his message to natural man, that is, man endowed with human nature and God-given intelligence and will who is not tainted by superstition and blind belief. Such an individual with his God-given primordial nature has the innate capacity and ability to apprehend the above-described world view. With the slightest reminder he naturally understands that the world in its vastness and grandeur and its perfect arrangement and order is the creation of a transcendent Creator whose infinite Being is the source of every beauty and perfection and who is above all ugliness and evil. He understands that the creation of the world and its inhabitants was not without meaning and purpose; that the life of this world will be followed by another life, and that the good and bad actions of this world will not go unanswered for. And as a result he understands that there must be a way of life peculiarly suited to the needs of man which will enable him to live according to his own real nature.

Islam's choice of natural and primordial man as the object of the religious message has several basic results:

1) The Principle of Equality. The Islamic teachings apply to all individuals. There is no distinction between black and white, man and woman, noble and humble, rich and poor, king and beggar, strong and weak, eastern and western, learned and ignorant, old and young, or between



those who are present and those who will come in the future, for all of these share human nature and that which it implies in common. Equality of this sort is limited to Islam; other ways, each in its own measure, have certain discriminatory principles. For example, Hinduism distinguishes in a total manner between Brahmins and non-Brahmins and between man and woman ;in Judaism a distinction is made between the children of Israel and the Gentiles, and in Christianity between man and woman. As for secular social systems, in these there is a distinction between subjects of a country and foreigners. It is only Islam which considers humanity as an undiversified whole and has uprooted completely the principle of distinction and discrimination. "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct". (Quran XLIX, 13) "Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. Ye proceed one from another". (Quran III, 195) That is, male or female, you are all of the same human status.

2) The Principle of Realism. In view of the fact that man is provided with the instinct of seeking reality and of discerning between the real and the unreal, the laws and injunctions laid down by Islam are based upon a correspondingly realistic view of things. This can be explained as follows: Although man in his natural activity is stimulated towards

his vital goals by feelings and emotions, he in fact sets out after real goals, not illusion and fantasy.

The newly born baby who cries in his hunger and reaches for his mother's breast in search of milk desires that which is milk in reality, not the illusion of milk; he cries from real hunger, not from fantasy and imagination. Every individual who strives in the way of achieving his own interests seeks his own real interests, not their mental concept. In the same manner when feelings and emotions present certain desires to man, and without being able to take into account his true best-interest stimulate him toward certain goals, it is the faculty of discrimination or reason which harnesses and modifies these emotions and shows to man that which is in reality the good and the evil and the rightness and the wrongness of his actions.

It is reason, moreover, which forbids the sick person from eating harmful foods although he wishes to eat them; it is reason which prevents man from entering upon dangerous activities, hence depriving him of a large part of his freedom of actions; it is reason which is man's single superiority over other animals, and his most important faculty for distinguishing the real from the illusory.

The laws and injunctions brought by the Prophet of Islam are based upon a realistic view of things, not upon the whims and fancies of men.

That is to say that man must perform that action which is really and truly in his best interest

even if it is against his fancy; and he must avoid that action which he feels like performing but which is not in conformity with his real interests. The case of the religious community is the same: it must accomplish what is truly in its best interest and what is in conformity with its felicity, even though this act may be contrary to its wishes; it must not perform that action which is the wish of the majority of its members but which is contrary to its true interest.

In the Language of the Holy Quran that which is in conformity with reality or with man's true best interest is called "The Truth" (al-haqq). It is the single goal towards which man must direct his endeavor and after which he must strive. "After the Truth what is there saving error?" (Quran X, 33) "And if the Truth had followed their desires, verily the heavens and the earth and whosoever is there in had been corrupted" (Quran XXIII, 71).

An almond nut which is placed in the ground under the necessary conditions will after a few days break its skin, and a green shoot will come forth from its kernel as well as a number of roots which are put forth in various directions; by way of the roots the shoot will take continuous nourishment from the ground and will constantly grow and develop until ultimately it becomes a fully grown almond tree with trunk, branches, leaves, blossoms and fruit.

The sperm of an animal placed in the womb of

the female of the species under particular circumstances will assume the form and shape peculiar to itself and by means of the activity peculiar to its species will day by day become larger and more complete until it reaches the limit of its perfection. If we investigate in the same manner all of the creatures of the world one by one it will become perfectly obvious that for each of them there is a way peculiar to itself through which it reaches the limit of its own perfection, and that from the first day of its coming into being it is attracted towards its final end. In its development it never goes astray nor does it change its direction as if, for example, an almond shoot could develop into a horse or a horse could go to sleep one night and wake up the next morning an almond tree. Rather every creature is guided towards its final goal by means of creation itself, and in traversing this path of development it never falls into error.

The path which has been laid out for each creature leading to its final goal is one which is in conformity with the means and potentialities with which it was provided by its own nature. These means allow it to attract what is of benefit and repel what is harmful and threatens its existence. Chickens eat grain, sheep and cattle feed upon forage, and wolves, leopards and hawks hunt for game, for each is equipped with particular digestive systems which are proper only for particular nutritive substances. In the same way, birds defend themselves with their beaks, sheep and cattle with

their horns, scorpions and bees with their strings, lions and leopards with their teeth and claws and deer by flight, for the defensive equipment of each of them is just this. In summary, each of these creatures moves in its life towards a particular goal and end. It performs actions in which the equipment provided by its very existence guides it, and the nature of which this equipment determines.

This guidance and determinations is the same general guidance and determination which the Quran has referred to and attributed to the Creator: "Our Lord is He who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright". (Quran XX, 50) "Who createth, then disposeth; Who measureth [ i.e., "determineth" ], then guideth". (Quran LXXXVII, 2-3).

Obviously man also , who is one of the species of creation, is not an exception to this general rule. His natural disposition and character show to him the path which he should take in life, and point out and distinguish the duties and responsibilities which he must fulfill. "From what thing does He create him [ man ] ? From a drop of seed. He createth him and proportioneth him, then maketh the way easy for him" (Quran LXXX, 18-20).

Meditation upon this and upon our previous discussion will show that the result of both of these discussions is the same, that is, that correct actions and deeds (those which are in conformity with man's true best interest) – which man must

choose by means of his instinct of discerning between the real and the illusory — are the very same actions towards which the nature of man guides him, endowed as it is with its own peculiar equipment. It is thus that the way towards which the Holy Quran invites man, which it has named “the Religion of the Truth”, it also refers to as the natural and primordial religion, and it attributes it to creation itself. “So set thy purpose ( O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright — the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah’s creation That is the right religion”. (Quran XXX 30). “By a soul and Him who perfected it, and inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it. He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow, and he is indeed a failure who stunteth it”. (Quran XCI, 7-10).

From another point of view, since creation is the work of God and since every sort of beauty and appropriateness which is observable in it is the result of His Mercy, that which is appropriate to human nature inasmuch as it determines the actions; which man must perform is called “the Will of God” (This of course the Will of God inasmuch as it ordains laws, guides men in his actions and holds him responsible for these actions; it is not the same as the Will of God inasmuch as it creates — which can never be disobeyed or violated). Likewise the duties and rules which result from

that which is appropriate to man's nature are called the commands and prohibitions of God. "The Lord bringeth to pass what He willeth and chooseth. They [men] have never any choiche". (Quran XXVIII, 68).

Since the religion of Islam consists of duties and commands from God, the Creator, and since the person who follows its doctrinal and practical injunctions has submitted himself to the Will of God, in the language of the Holy Quran this religion is called "Islam" ("submission" or "surrender"). "Lo! religion with Allah (is) the Surrender" (Quran III, 19). "And whoso seeketh as religion other than the Surrender (to Allah) it will not be accepted from him" (Quran III, 85).

3) The Principle of Equilibrium between the Material and the Spiritual. The third result of Islam's message being directed at natural man, a result which is indeed one of the great achievements of this religion, is that a middle way is taken between materiality and spirituality. This is in contrast to Judaism which as can be observed in its Holy Book, the Torah, is not concerned with spiritual matters, and with Christianity, which on the contrary – according to the explicit saying of Jesus – is not concerned with the material life of this world. Other religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and even Zoroastrianism, Manicheanism and Sabeanism, which to one degree or another are concerned with spiritual things, have separated the

spiritual way from material life, to the degree that the connection between the two has been totally severed. It is only Islam which chooses the middle way and bases itself upon the foundation of primordial nature.

In explanation the following can be said: All of us see individuals, who in fact make up the majority of men, who throughout their lives have no goal other than material advancement and no thought other than that of bettering their social position, collecting wealth, and enjoying material pleasures. Night and day they exert themselves in providing for their livelihood, and they take not the slightest notice of anything beyond the framework of the fleeting and ephemeral life of the material world.

In contrast to this group there are other men — of course exceedingly few in number — who occupy themselves with meditation upon the nature of the world and on the inconstancy and instability of life. They see that every pleasure is combined with a hundred pains, every joy with a hundred sorrows, every wealth with a hundred cares and worries and that ultimately, every union is followed by separation, every time of well-being by sickness, and every life by death. Moreover, they see that outside of the narrow prison of this world and behind the deceiving mirage of this life there exists an eternal world where nothing of the pains and troubles of this world enter and where happiness



and felicity belong to the virtuous and the noble.

As a result of this meditation they cut off all social intercourse and shut their eyes to both the beauty and the ugliness of the fleeting world — within which any sort of gratification of desires one day results in regret and despair. Such men retire into a corner and busy themselves with contemplation from near or from afar of the eternal world and the infinite Beauty and Perfection by which the world is encompassed. These two groups of men exist today and according to the testimony of history they have always existed. Their existence among men, moreover, is itself the best witness that man in his God-given primordial nature affirms the validity or rather the necessity of traversing both the way of material and of spiritual life. For if man closes upon himself completely the door of social life and with his hands folded abandons all endeavor, he will necessarily be deprived of this life without delay, and so also of the spiritual life. If on the other hand he abandons the spiritual life, with the same stroke he renders ineffectual his own reason and intelligence, the one characteristic which distinguishes man from other animals, and he pretends not to see that he is endowed with the power of discernment between the real and the unreal.

Thus it is that primordial man, possessing as he does the eye of discernment, can never assume a one-sided existence and content himself only with the material or only with the spiritual, for on the

one hand without material things life in the material world is impossible and on the other without the spiritual life the innate knowledge and worship of God within primordial man come to nothing.

As has been pointed out, Islam in its teachings has chosen a path which is mid-way between the purely spiritual and the purely material, a path which harmonizes and integrates together these two antagonistic aspects of existence; and in truth, man cannot reach the perfection of self-realization in any other way. This is because, as is completely clear, every one of the species of creation reaches its own perfection and goal of existence by means of its natural and instinctive activity, and the nature of the activity of the species is tied to the nature of the powers and tools with which it is equipped.

Man, who is also one of the species of creation, is included in this universal law. He possesses a soul or spirit which was created for infinite and eternal life and which can never undergo corruption or destruction, and he can, through his own worthy activity, reach the goal of perfection, which is higher than any other happiness or felicity. But at the same time his heavenly soul is bound to an earthly body in which his means of activity are placed, and the faculties and powers with which he employs these means have a certain type of relationship with the body. Furthermore, human nature guides man towards social life and civilization, and without doubt this guidance is in order that

man may attain to the goal of life and the perfection of the species. And the perfection and happiness of each creature is unquestionably a perfection and happiness which creation has determined for him in reality; they are not of an illusory nature nor are they of a sort which superstitious thought might delineate. The happiness of a rose bush is that it should occupy itself with its natural growth and bring into being that towards which its vegetable nature guides it, not that it should be placed in a golden vase within an ornate palace.

Therefore, how is it possible that man could arrive at his true perfection and happiness other than by employing the material means at his disposal or other than in a social environment? Islam for its part has made the surroundings of man's material life, which are of a completely social nature and in which all material means are made use of, the background for its program of education. According to the guidance provided by man's primordial nature and innate characteristics it has formulated extensive laws and injunctions concerning man's individual, social, particular and universal actions, which are in turn a complete program for his education and perfection. A portion of these injunctions concern duties which man has towards his God, and include expressions of servitude in the face of His Lordship, poverty and need in the face of His Wealth and Independence, lowliness in the face of His Grandeur, insignificance in the face of His Majesty and Glory, ignorance in

the face of His Knowledge, incapacity in the face of His Power, and submission in the face of His Will. Moreover, to the extent possible these expressions have been given a social character, such as the case of the groups which gather for the daily congregational prayers, the larger groups which meet for Friday prayers, and the still larger gathering which takes place at the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

A second portion of these injunctions concern duties which man has in social surroundings and in relation with his fellow man. Of course in these duties, which are the Islamic laws, the sense of responsibility towards God has been taken into account, for man must surrender only to His Will (that is, the requirements of His creation). In other words, all actions must be performed in the shadow of the three basic principles of Islam: Divine Unity, Prophecy, and the Last Day. "Say: O People of the Scripture [ Jews and Christians ] ! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partners unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him)". (Quran III, 64).

From the previous discussion it has become clear that in the religion of Islam the path to be followed in life has been ordered and arranged in such a way that man's social and material life

resembles a cradle in which the spiritual life is nurtured. The inner spiritual light of the practicing Muslim is such that all of his individual and social actions contribute to purifying his soul and strengthening its radiance. Although outwardly he is with people, inwardly he is with God, and although he is in the midst of a crowd, he dwells in the spiritual retreat of the divine secret. At the same time that he is running here and there in pursuit of material goals, and is undergoing a series of events both bitter and sweet, pleasant and unpleasant, beautiful and ugly, and in general is involved in the events of the tumultuous external world, his heart is free and exists in a world of tranquillity in which he sees the Face of God wherever he looks. "And whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance". (Quran II, 115).

A pious Muslim extends his spiritual life into every aspect of his material life. Wherever he is and whatever he is doing he is in contact with God. Everything with which he occupies himself in the material world is a mirror in which he sees God reflected. On the other hand, non-Muslims who turn towards the spiritual life imagine that their natural and everyday life is a veil between themselves and the Truth they are seeking. As a result they are forced to abandon normal life and to assume an unaccustomed manner of living in their quest after spiritual perfection. Whatever the advantages of such a way, from the point of view of a person who lives

a normal life it is a difficult road to follow and one in which to persevere requires an extreme degree of will power. However, the person who follows the spiritual life according to the directives of Islam knows full well that such a way is easier than that of Islam, for such people, by abandoning every-day life, have taken the easy way out and have fled from the difficulty of continual vigil and effort. They have set a barrier in the road towards perfection which creation itself and the means it has put at man's disposal have prepared. Such men have set out on a path of their own fancy, and it is questionable whether they will ever reach the goal which creation has determined for them.

In addition, given that the world and all that it contains are the creation of God and that the phenomena of the world, each according to the measure of its own existence, are signs of the Thru and mirrors displaying God, and given that man along with the various conditions which mark his primordial nature is one of these signs, then it is necessary that in the spiritual life (the way of Knowledge of self and of God) God be recognized in every situation. All of these mirrors must be utilized in the acquisition of divine knowledge and in the contemplation of God's Beauty, for if this is not the case man will gain nothing more from his labors than an imperfect knowledge or a perfect ignorance.

#### 4) Knowledge and Wisdom from the Point of

View of Islam. The person who has made a cursory study of the religions and creeds of the world will have no doubt that the dignity and honor which Islam has accorded to knowledge and wisdom and the extent to which it has encouraged their acquisition is unparalleled in any other religion or ideology, whether revealed or non-revealed. It is the Holy Quran which asks, "Are those who know equal to those who do not?" (Quran XXXIX, 9), and which praises the exalted station of knowledge in the most eloquent manner. And it is the Holy Prophet who has said "The pursuit of knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim", "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" and "Seek knowledge, even unto China". Again, it is the Holy Quran which commands its followers never to stray from the way of knowledge nor to follow what is only supposed or assumed, and never to accept without deliberation what passes before their sight or crosses their minds, for they will be responsible for their beliefs. "(O man), follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart – of each of these it will be asked". (Quran XVII, 36).

As has become clear Islam encourages its followers to acquire knowledge with all the powers at their disposal, and in this respect it has designated knowledge of religious jurisprudence a doctrinal sciences and the injunctions of the religious law (Shari'ah) as mandatory. "And the believers should not all go out to fight [in the holy war]. Of every

troop of them, a party should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may gain sound knowledge in religion". (Quran IX, 122).

A point which must be kept in mind is that the capacity of individuals for the comprehension of scientific and intellectual truth varies. There are people who have no talent for logical thought and who, with their simple minds, live in a surrounding of physical labor and on a level of purely material life, while there are others whose thought is logical and who by their very nature take a special joy in comprehending profound concepts and scientific theories. Still others have cut their attention from both thought and physical labor and, having a special aversion for the dark world of matter and its deceiving beauty and fleeting pleasures, find in themselves a particular attraction towards the transcendent world and a peculiar fascination for its lasting and infinite beauty, of which the beauty of this world is only the reflected image. Such men easily comprehend the verities and mysteries of the transcendent world by means of inner illumination.

It is with a view to this diversity, which is clearly visible among men, that Islam instructs each of these three groups in its own terms and language. One group it has taught by means of the external and formal aspect of religion and a second group by way of intellectual demonstration, while the third group it has instructed to struggle against



the carnal soul and to purify the heart. In the same way, in the Quran God has struck a similitude about His Own utterances and expressions: "He sendeth down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure". (Quran XIII, 17). The Holy Prophet has said, "We prophets have been commanded to speak to men according to the measure of their understandings".

Those among its followers who have not the taste for rational demonstration and who would face the danger of error and deviation if they were to attempt to traverse this path, Islam has charged with no more than the measure of their ability, and beyond the three principles of religion (Divine Unity, Prophecy and the Last Judgment) it only instills them with simple practical injunctions such as commands to do good and prohibitions from committing evil; this type of formulation is found in a great number of Quranic verses and in sayings of the Prophet and the Shi' it Imams.

Of course in the case of the three principles of religion man in his primordial nature can engage in a simple form of rational demonstration, and hence he will have accepted nothing but definitely proven knowledge. And in fact this method provides him with rational proof of the remaining teachings and injunctions which he has accepted without rational demonstration, for the truth of the principle of prophecy proves in a definitive manner the validity of all of the sayings which have reached us from

the Prophet.

The way of rational demonstration – Islam teaches those people who are endowed with sound minds and who have the capacity to comprehend scientific theories and intellectual and logical arguments through logical and rational demonstration. In other words, it guides them towards that which their uncorrupted and reality-seeking primordial nature immediately perceives. It does not fist impose upon them its doctrines and beliefs and then defend these by reasoning and proofs.

The Book and the Tradition, that is, the verses of the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and the Shi' it Imams which make clear the meaning and purpose of the Quranic verses – are full of this type of rational demonstration. In them the Islamic beliefs and doctrines are explained in detail by means of the simplest forms of expression and the most convincing proofs, and likewise, mention is made in them of the general and universal benefits and advantages of the Islamic laws and injunctions.

Obviously, we must not overlook the fact that the meaning of discussion and demonstration of the benefits and advantages of Islamic laws and injunctions is not that if an individual Muslim or Islamic society in general does not understand a particular injunction, that injunction should be rejected. For as we have already mentioned, these laws were promulgated by means of prophecy,

and the proof of the validity of prophecy is a summary proof of the validity of these laws, even if we do not possess the detailed reason for this.

The way of purification of the soul – The third group of men are those who are ready and eager to sever all material attachments and to turn their attention away from the deceiving adornments and illusory desires of this world. Such men are prepared to forget all that is other than God and to close their eyes to every beauty and ugliness and every sweet and bitter experience of this transient and illusory existence. Opening the eye of discernment towards the eternal world, they are prepared to contemplate without the veil of materiality the radiance of the Majesty and Grandeur of God, to traverse the stages of human perfection which must be crossed upon leaving this fleeting life, and to enter into the Proximity of the Divine. With such men Islam converses secretly of the divine mysteries in a language which they alone understand, and thus it guides them from the depths of ignorance to the pinnacle of knowledge and wisdom.

### **A possible criticism and its answer**

A number of orientalist have said that Islamic mystical and metaphysical doctrines have been borrowed from those of India, for Islam in itself is no more than a series of extremely concrete and simple beliefs and sterile forms of worship. The succinct reply to these claims is provided nicely by

the words of the poet: "O Sweetheart, the difficulty is that you're no judge of words".

We, of course, in our answer to this criticism do not wish to defend Islam from the point of view of its mystics and engage in proving the validity and originality in the face of Indian mysticism of the various ways which they have traversed on the spiritual path. In the same way, in our discussion of rational demonstration we were not concerned with analyzing and proving the validity of all the books on philosophy written by Muslims whatever it might be. Rather, our goal in this article is limited to a general survey of the original and Islamic sources, that is, the Book and the Tradition, without concerning ourselves with agreeing or disagreeing with the activities and conduct of any particular one of the foregoing classes of men.

The claim of the above mentioned orientalist is based upon the principle of evolution, according to which the development and perfection of natural phenomena is explained in a scientific manner. This principle has been generalized to include every sort of happening in whatever sphere, even habits, customs and phenomena of an instinctive and innate nature and beyond this, phenomena of a spiritual nature. Thus the root cause of every event is sought in preceding events. According to the same principle it has been said that Islamic laws were borrowed from those of the Romans and Islamic doctrines from the philosophical ideas of

the Greeks.

These orientalists have been mistaken in their judgment in two respects. First, they have considered what is called "mystical intuition" to be of the same order as normal thought and hence they have imagined that the knowledge gained by purification of the soul is a system of poetical thoughts, much as if a poet with his overflowing and creative imagination and his eloquent means of expression could voice such concepts better than a mystic knower of the divine secrets. A similar mistake is made in the case of revelation, which is the celestial perception of prophets and the means of receiving divine sciences and laws. As a result, the basic source of Islamic doctrine and injunctions is represented as being Greek thought and Roman law. This mistake is perfectly obvious in the discussion carried on about prophecy and the "mode of thought" of prophets. Moreover, the words and utterances which have reached us from the prophets – whether their claim to prophecy be true or not – openly contradict such opinions.

The second mistake is that, even if we accept the theory of evolution as proven and definitely established, this theory must not be taken as providing the reason for the manifestation of an instinctive drive. For, an instinct placed within a species' primordial nature at its creation will be manifested within each individual of that species (provided there be no external impediment),

whether or not there is a precedent.

As a case in point it can be said that diversity in food stuffs and the preparation of sophisticated cuisine was learned by the Arabs from the Persians, but it cannot be said that the Arabs learned how to eat from the Persians. Likewise, it can be said that democratic government with its manifold administrative organizations spread to the East from the West, but this cannot be said about the very act of forming a society and establishing a government.

In our previous discussion it became clear that the way of purification of the soul, that is, the spiritual life and mystical intuition, is innate within the nature of man; once awakened through the necessary groundwork and the removal of obstacles, it will direct man to enter upon the path of spiritual illumination. Hence, religion, which by its very nature is concerned to one degree or another with the transcendent and eternal world, cannot but cause the appearance of certain among its followers who, this hidden urge having been awakened within them, will sever all attachments with this fleeting world full of pain and hardship, and with the hope of absolute bliss and serenity will concern themselves with the eternal abode. And in practice also we see that in every one of the world's religions there exists a group enamored of the spiritual life and mystical way.

By comparing the presentation of spiritual matters in the basic texts of the world's reli-

gions it can be clearly observed that the texts of Islam have concerned themselves with the description of everlasting felicity and the eternal world more than the texts of other religions. Therefore, the appearance of the way of the purification of the soul within. Islam is perfectly natural, without there being the need for any relationship as to its origins with India or with any other place. Furthermore, as history is there to prove, a large number of the companions of Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and the first Shi'ite Imam) such as Salman, Kumayl, Rashid, Maytham and Uways were under his direct spiritual guidance and instruction – at a time when Islam had not yet reached India and when there could be no question of contact with Indian thought. The fact that the chains of spiritual initiation (*silsilah*) of practically all of the Sufi orders in Islam reach back to Ali further corroborates this point.

### **The difference in means of expression between Islamic and other mysticisms**

The delicate and refined expressions of Islamic mystical doctrine in contrast to the formulations of other mysticisms, and especially to that of the Indians, has the advantage of elucidating mystical verities within the wrapping of formulations of a more general nature. Hence, everyone is able to profit from them, each in the measure of his understanding. Other mystical ways do not possess this distinction.

It is for this same reason that Islam has been saved from the harmful results which have affected other religions of presenting mystical truths openly and unguardedly. For example, in the case of Indian mysticism, if we study carefully the Upanishads we will see that the doctrine presented there is a precise and extremely profound expression of the Unity of God, but at the same time that it is so bold and explicit that any one who refers to it who is not completely versed in mystical and metaphysical doctrine will consider its marvellously complete formulations as nothing but superstitious prattle, or at very least he will interpret passages which express the Unity of God in the most sublime manner as being nothing but incarnationism, pantheism and idol worship.

This claim, moreover, is proved by the opinions which many orientalist who have specialized in Sanskrit have voiced concerning Indian mysticism; for after the tremendous amount of research which they have undertaken in the original Hindu and Buddhist texts they still consider Indian mystical doctrines as nothing but superstition, produced by the minds of men deprived of the advantages of life. And the basic reason for all such opinions on the part of orientalist is the explicitness and the shocking nature of the bold formulations of these texts.



## Further consideration of the Islamic message

In the same way that God's creation has placed a particular kind of material life within the reach of mankind and has not discriminated among men, but has equipped each of them with equal means, it has also placed the spiritual life, which is hidden behind the veil of material life, within the reach of all men. And in the same way that the perfection of the material life of man lies in the manifestation and actualization of all of his positive and negative actions and deeds – which he performs by means of his body – so also creation has extended the perfection of the spiritual life to include all of these actions and deeds. In harmony with creation, Islam has considered the spiritual life to belong to all men and has made no distinction between them, and likewise it has extended the spiritual life to all the positive and negative aspects of men's lives. It invites men to accept the ties of social life and to act in a positive manner in traversing a determined path. In teaching this way it has had recourse to indications enclosed in the covering of normal and every-day expressions. This is because our verbal formulations are in any case born of the thoughts of the generality of men. We use them in our social and material life in order to facilitate mutual understanding, and by means of them we exchange thoughts and mental concepts. Now mystical and contemplative comprehension, which is rarer than the elixir

of life and which throughout history has never found general acceptance, is something completely different from normal human expression. The person who wants to formulate into concepts the knowledge gained through intuitive and mystical comprehension is like the person who tries to describe by means of words the colors of the rainbow to one blind from birth. And the person who puts contemplative and mystical insights into the mold of words is exactly like the person who carries water from place to place with a sieve.

It is for this reason that Islam has had recourse to symbols and intimations in expressing mystical truths, and has thus remained untouched by the misfortunes which have overtaken other religions.

### **A brief consideration of the spiritual path**

It may possibly be imagined that the claim that Islam has expounded the mystical way by means of intimations and symbols is unfounded and amounts to chasing false ghosts. However, sufficient meditation upon Islamic teachings and formulations, and a weighing of these against the agitated and ecstatic states of the Islamic mystics, will prove the opposite and will show that hidden within themselves and by allusion these teachings elucidate all of the stages of perfection which are traversed on the mystical way, although a true and detailed comprehension of these states is only possible through mystical intuition.

The travellers on the spiritual path, who as a result of their natural and primordial readiness have surrendered their hearts to the infinite Beauty and Perfection of the Truth, worship God only out of love, not out of hope for reward or fear of punishment, for to worship Him in order to gain Paradise or to avoid hell is in fact to worship that very reward and punishment in place of God.

As a result of the divine attraction which has engulfed their hearts, and more particularly as a result of having seen that God has revealed the verse "Therefore remember Me, I will remember you" (Quran II, 152) and hundreds of other Quranic verses where the remembrance of God is spoken of, wherever and in whatever state they happen to be the mystic travellers are occupied with His remembrance "Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining". (Quran III, 191). And when they hear the messages of the Beloved, "Lo! in the heavens and the earth are portents for believers" (Quran XLV, 3), "And there is not a thing but hymneth His praise" (Quran XVII, 44), and "And whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance" (Quran II. 115), they understand that all existent things are mirrors, each displaying the unique Beauty of the Truth in accordance with the possibilities of its own being. Other than their quality of being mirrors they have no existence in themselves. Hence such men look to every phenomenon with love and eagerness, and have no object other than to contemplate the Beauty of God.

And when they hear God's messages "O ye who believe! Ye have charge of your own souls. He who erreth cannot injure you if you are rightly guided" (Quran V, 105) and "Thou, verily, O man, art working towards thy Lord a work which thou wilt meet (in His presence)" (Quran LXXXIV, 6), they understand that by the nature of creation itself they are bound within the framework of their souls and other than the way of their souls there is no road open to them to reach God. Whatever they see or find in the expansiveness of the world they see and find themselves. It is here that man understands that in fact he is cut off from all places and things and other than he himself and his God there is no one else. Even if such a person is in the midst of a hundred thousand people he is alone, and if others see him in the midst of a crowd, he sees himself in a spiritual retreat far away from everyone else, no one being with him but God. It is then that he looks at himself and sees all things within himself, and he understands that he himself is also only a mirror in which the unique Beauty of God is manifested, and that he has nothing but God. When he has remembered God in this fashion and has cleansed his heart and emptied it of vanity and frivolity, the remembrance of God becomes firmly fixed within his soul and he enters among the ranks of the people of certainty (*al-yaqin*) and God's promise, "And serve thy Lord till the inevitable (*al-yaqin*) cometh unto thee" (Quran XV, 99) is fulfilled. The doors of the kingdom of the heavens

and the earth open to him and he sees that all things are possessed absolutely by God. "Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty". (Quran VI, 76).

The person endowed with such a vision will behold the three stages of Divine Unity. First the Unity of God in His Acts will be revealed to him. He will see with certainty that it is God who directs the Universe and all that it contains, and that the innumerable causes and agents which are at work in the world, whether theirs be the activity of free will or of necessity, are all painted upon the canvass of creation by His all-powerful Hand. Cause and effect and the relationship between the two – each is brought into being and executed by the One. "And unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth". (Quran XLV, 27).

Secondly the Unity of God's Names and Qualities will be disclosed to him and he will see without intermediary that every quality of perfection which appears in the world, and likewise every quality of beauty and of majesty, whether life, knowledge, power, might, grandeur or whatever, is a glimmer from the infinite Source of Light which is the Truth, and that these qualities shine forth through the variegated windows which are the existences of things with the distinctions they possess. "Allah's are the fairest names". (Quran

VII, 180).

Finally in the third stage of Divine Unity he will behold that all of these varied qualities are the manifestation of an infinite Essence, and that in reality each of them is identical with every other and all are identical with the Essence Itself. "Say: Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Almighty". (Quran XIII, 16).

### **The superiority of Islam in the doctrine of Divine Unity**

The above are the three stages which the lovers of the Truth in the various religions of the world pass through. When they begin their travel on the way of spiritual perfection they take these stages to be their final goal. Islam, however, does not limit itself to these stages but delineates a goal for its followers which is even higher and which surpasses the goal formulated in the text of any other religion. For, it does not stop at negating all limitations from God and considering Him as infinite and transcendent over all qualification, but it goes so far as to negate from Him this very quality of Infinity (since every quality [ even that of Infinity ] cannot help but "qualify" and so limit that to which it is attributed). Hence the Divine Essence is considered as transcending all names and designations and even as transcending this very description. The sixth Shi'ite Imam, Ja'far al -Sadiq,

according to a tradition which is quoted by al-Kulayni in the book *Usul al-kafi*, has deduced this stage from the following verse of the Holy Quran: "Say (unto mankind): Cry unto Allah, or cry unto the Beneficent, unto whichsoever ye cry (it is the same). His are the most beautiful names". (Quran XVII, 110). However, since further elucidation of this doctrine would mean that we must enter a philosophical discussion which is not in keeping with the nature of the present article, for the present we must leave this aside.

### Sanctity in God

The followers of the path towards perfection from the beginning of their journey until the point where they reach final peace witness a great deal which must remain hidden from the eyes and hearts of the earth-bound inhabitants of the material world, and a consideration of these states and stations would be beyond the scope of the present article. What is important here is the question of sanctity in God (*wilayat-i ilahi*).

When the travellers on the spiritual path reach the stage of Divine Unity and enter into the proximity of God, they let go totally of what they had possessed up to that time, for they have come to know that everything belongs to God. They give up the false claim of "owning" things and of being independent in this ownership. It is then that an

indescribable tranquillity and repose comes over them and they are released absolutely from all pain, fear and sorrow. "Lo! those who say: Our Lord is Allah, and afterward are upright, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not nor grieve, but hear good tidings of the paradise which ye are promised. We are your protecting friends in the life of the world and in the Hereafter". (Quran XLI, 30-31). "Lo! verily the friends of Allah [ those who possess sanctity, *wilayah* ] are (those) on whom fear (cometh) not, nor do they grieve". (Quran X, 63).

It is at this point that worldly joys, sorrows, successes and failures appear to them as all the same, and having found a new existence they view the world and all that it contains in a new light. "Is he who was dead and We have raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walketh among men, as him whose similitude is in utter darkness?" (Quran VI, 123). And in the end they and everything they possess belongs to God, and God to them: "Whoso is near to God, God is nigh unto him".

### Conclusion

From our discussion it has become clear that the spiritual life in Islam is wider in its scope and more profound in its depth than what is found in other religions, for, as we have explained, Islam in



its breadth has laid down detailed guidelines for all of the possible situations of human existence, whether as regards this world or the next; and in its upward flight and its depth it aims at a goal beyond that of other creeds.



**GLIMPSES** OF  
THE  
**PROPHET'S LIFE**



*In the name of Allah  
The Beneficent the Merciful*

## INTRODUCTION

“Ours is an age of scientific progress, an era of technological advancement, a century of ceaseless inventions. In this time of phenomenal material development man has attained a high standard of knowledge of natural sciences compared with what he knew about a century or so ago. Consequently the knowledge and experience he has gained over the last few decades have given him courage and confidence to the extent that made him undertake highly perilous and adventurous projects. He has successfully reached the bottom of oceans and climbed to the heights of the sky. Now-a-days he is wildly engaged in a keen competition to land on other planets. Having witnessed all these achievements one might tend to think that man ought to be congratulated on his multiplicity of contributions to the world of civilisation in the field of science and technology. Unfortunately facts exist that prevent us from feeling too proud to belong to human race. The bitter experience acquired

from the last two World Wars has led to disappointment and resentment. The initial optimism induced in the people's mind by the victories of man's intellect over the forces of nature abandoned its place, after the two catastrophes, to feelings of indignation and utter disgust. The crystal-clear evidence points to the fact that the monopoliser of knowledge turned out to be devoid of such human qualities as magnanimity, sense of justice and equity, care for humanity, in short all values that serve to distinguish men from beasts. Mistakes of the past filled people's minds with distrust and added to their disunity and enmity. Under the prevailing circumstances the prospect of world peace, to be realistic, is not at hand, nor have we any reason to believe that those responsible for the present chaos and misery are in quest of world peace and happiness. On the contrary, all that the big powers of the world hanker after is supremacy over the rest of the world. The modern society is sick and bewildered. It should be noted that this is not the first time that man has stumbled into the same pitfall created by the absence of true guidance; one that takes into full consideration man's weaknesses as well as his virtues. No one in his right senses can suppose human intellect to be capable of formulating a way of life which, if followed-strictly, would save him from falling into error.

Many present-day ideologies claim to have the

goodwill and qualities that will lead man to prosperity and happiness. However, in practice they have been seen to be insincere as well as incompetent to provide man with what they have promised him – rather than solving our problems they have added to them by creating a world torn by dissensions and social ailments”. In our opinion the world is in desperate need of Islam – the religion of peace, and submission to the Creator of the universe. The religion of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad upon all of whom be peace. Having witnessed the bankruptcy of all too many “isms” once again we feel the urge to refer to the Last Prophet of Islam as the last hope for the salvation of us all.

In reply to a request of an old student seeking his advice Al-Ghazali wrote: “My Dear and beloved Son, may Allah number you among His obedient servants and lead you along the path of His friends. Know that the source of the best of advices is the Messengership of the Prophet upon whom be the peace and blessings of Allah. If by now you have acquired some enlightenment out of this source what would you need my advice for? But if still you have not derived beneficial lessons from it then what did you earn and learn during all these years?”. (1)

Al-Ghazali remarks on another occasion: “If one considers the sayings of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) and what is related in the

tradition about his concern for showing to people the true way and his graciousness in leading men by various acts of sympathy and kindness to improve their character and conduct and to better their mutual relations – leading them in fine, to what is the indispensable basis of all betterments, religious and secular alike – if one considers this, one comes to the necessary knowledge that his good will towards his people is greater than that of a father towards his child". (2)

The study of the life of the Prophet can never be overemphasized for only by a careful examination of his personality throughout a life-long struggle can one understand the spirit of the Divine Message with which he was entrusted. Says the Qur'an "Verily in the Messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much". (3) It also states "...And whatsoever the Messenger giveth you, take it. And whatsoever he forbiddeth, abstain (from it)" (4)

Clearly, these two Quranic verses are sufficient to urge a Muslim to undertake a serious study of the Prophetic Traditions and behave accordingly.

Fortunately the way of life of God's Messenger private and public has been recorded with considerable detail. His followers went as far as to count the number of grey hairs in his beard and even write detailed description of his shoes. The first written work (siyar) relating to the life of the



Prophet is ascribed to Urwa, who is said to have met some of the companions of the Prophet, and his student Zuhri. Some have ascribed the first written work to Ibn Ishaq who passed away in Baghdad in the year 150 A.H. The oldest and most reliable of such books that have come down to us are those written by Waqidi (d.207 A.H.), Ibn Hisham (d.313 A.H.) and Tabari (d.315 A.H.) (5). A great deal of the sayings of the Prophet, however, started to be written during his lifetime (6) and were compiled after his passing away. It need hardly be stated that the "science of Tradition" is Highly developed and the method of authentication is simply stupendous.

### Age of Disenlightenment

The meaning and importance of the Prophet's message can best be comprehended against the background of pre-Islamic Arabia. Historians refer to this period as the "era of ignorance" (Jahiliyyah). Before the inception of Islam the Arabian peninsula was a scene of social disorder. Depending on their localities its inhabitants had adopted various beliefs such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism etc. Idolworshippers, however, constituted the majority. It is reckoned that twenty centuries before the advent of Islam Prophet Ismail was sent to guide the tribes of Hijaz, Yemen and Amaliqa. Over this long span of time, however, most of his teachings were obliterated.

Only the concept of Oneness of God had lived for a considerable time. Six or seven centuries before the beginning of the Muslim Era. Hijra Arm bin Luay, the then Meccan chief bought an idol from Balqa where he had been for medical treatment. Later on some three hundred and sixty idols were made and erected in and around the Kaaba. As time went by even idol-worshipping deteriorated to the extent that an idolator would eat his idol made of dates when he felt hungry and use the stone ones to clean himself in toilet. (7) This should serve as an unforgettable lesson to the present generation and those to come as to how negligence and the absence of remembrance of God, and the authority emanating from His message led an otherwise capable nation to the depth of darkness.

Some of the Arab tribes regarded daughters as nuisance and when they attained the age of five or six they would be buried alive. Some killed their children for fear of poverty.

In that lawless society morals had become very loose indeed. When a man died his wife or wives were inherited by the nearest male relation. In this way one could take his step mother as his wife. There was no law pertaining to marriage of divorce. Hence a man could acquire as many wives as he wished and divorce when he pleased. To divorce his wife it was sufficient for a man to say to her "you are to me as the back of my mother"; but

she would not be permitted to marry another man. Thus women used to be treated like articles of trade to be bought, sold or bartered away.

Slaves, female and male alike were the victims of that cruel society which held unlimited power over their life or death.

Gambling, drunkenness and fornication, cruelty and plunder were objects of pride for the Arabs. Such was their daily life.

The pre-Islamic Arabs led a tribal life. The concept of nationhood or government were foreign to them. And Inter-tribal relations, were worse than could be imagined. In the fifty years before Islam one hundred and thirty two battles took place between the tribes. This warlike character of the Arabs is reflected in their ancient poetry. One Arab poet wrote:

“If an enemy tribe we do not find,  
we got to war with a related or friendly tribe.  
And our war-lust is thus quenched. (8)”

Arabs were not people of letters. “Even in a large town like Mecca, where commerce flourished and traders required to consign to writing a memorandum of their transactions on credit, there were no more than fifteen or twenty persons who knew to read and write... Baladhuri even names these seventeen individuals”. (9)

Despite all that is said so far and the scores of

other shortcomings, the pre-Islamic Arabs had, they also possessed certain admirable qualities. They were outspoken, hospitable, generous, brave, and never yielding to their enemies. However in the absence of sound instructions even the best of qualities are bound to be misused.

But was this social decadence peculiar to the Arabs alone. Obviously not. Their contemporaries might have led a more luxurious and civilised life but were in, more or less, the same state otherwise. Thus ignorance had brought mankind to the brink of destruction from which only something miraculous could save them.

### The Messenger

When mankind was so deeply engrossed in futile and harmful practices, GOD most high out of His endless mercy raised a Prophet from among them to purify them and restore their lost dignity. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). The posthumous son of Abdullah, the youngest son of Abdul Muttaleb, a most important leader of Mecca, and Amina, daughter of Wahab, son of Abd Manaf, son of Zuhrah, the chief of Bani-Zuhrah was born, according to the majority, on 12th Rabiulawal, (probably 22nd April) 571 A.C. \* The name "Muhammad"

\* According to the majority of Shia historians, the Prophet's birthday was on 17th Rabiulawal. (M.Y.A.)

(meaning "The praised one") was given to him by his grandfather Abdul Muttaleb. When questioned about his choice of this uncommon name the latter replied. "I desire that he may be praised in the heavens for the sake of God and in the earth for the sake of His creatures". A week or two after his birth, Muhammad was given in charge of a wet-nurse called Halimah, from Bani-Saad, as this was the custom of the nobility of Mecca. Halimah nursed Muhammad for five years, who in return honoured and showed deep affection towards her and her family, throughout his life. It is related that once there was a year of famine and Halimah paid a visit to him. He gave her a camel burdened with goods and forty sheep.

Muhammad was about six when his mother died. From then onward he was brought up by his grandfather Abdul-Muttaleb, an affectionate old man. And upon the death of Abdul-Muttaleb two years later the guardianship of Muhammad (p.h.u. h.) passed to Abu Talib a kind and generous uncle.

Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was liked and respected by all since his youth for his noble character, charming manners and exceptional qualities; and his relations with the people earned him the appellations "Al-Ameen" and the "truthful" respectively. Abdullah bin Abi-Alhamsa reports that long before Muhammad proclaimed his mission he had some transaction with him. The transaction was not completed when the former left Muhammad,

promising to be back. Abdullah forgot about the affair completely. "Three days later", says Abdulla "when I was walking past the place I found him still waiting for me. He was not annoyed with me at all for my carelessness. All that he said was: 'you put me to the trouble of waiting here for three days'.

Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was about twenty-three years old when the four leading families of the Quraish undertook the reconstruction of the Kabah, the sacred House of God, after its walls were damaged by flood. All went well until the stage was reached when the sacred black stone had to be installed in its proper place. The four, unable to share the honour of placing the stone were soon at each others throats. The arguments had gone so far that Mecca seemed to be at the brink of a civil war. Observing the serious situation Abu Umayya bin Al-Mughira al-Makhzumi suggested that the first person entering Baby Safa be made arbitrator. And when they saw Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) entering there was a unanimous agreement to abide by the judgment of "the Trustworthy". Muhammad ended the quarrel quite simply: He placed the Black Stone in the centre of a piece of cloth spread out and let the chief of each tribe hold one corner of this cloth. On Muhammad's order the chiefs raised the cloth up to the required height, he then fixed the stone in the appropriate position. He thus prevented what seemed to be an

inevitable war. But some forty more years had to elapse before he made the Arabs bury the hatchet which they so often used to chop each others heads.

At the age of twenty-five he married Khadijah, daughter of Khwailad bin Asad bin Abdul-Uzza bin Qusai. She was forty then and had been married twice before. Khadijah ranked high among the women of Quraish. She was kindhearted, elegant, noble and attractive. And having inherited considerable property from her second husband, she was wealthy. But above all she was renowned as "Al-Tahirah" (meaning "the pure"). Although a number of celebrities from the Quraish had expressed the desire to marry her, they all met with refusal. Therefore Muhammad's marriage with Khadijah was to be regarded as another feather in his cap. Khadijah never ceased to be an ideal wife till she breathed her last. And Muhammad (p.b. u.h.) always remembered her after her passing away with gratitude and deep appreciation.

At the age of forty he began to receive the Divine Revelation. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) who, was thus assigned to convey God's Message to people began to preach the "new faith" quietly and patiently to whomsoever would be likely to accept. When the Message was proclaimed publicly it met with fierce opposition. The Meccans did not fail to discern the fact that the new religion aimed at a complete reformation of the

society, to which they would not subscribe. Disbelievers began to think of ways and means to render the call to Islam ineffective. They first tried to bribe the Prophet by offering him wealth and leadership: they were refused. They threatened and attempted to kill him they did not succeed. They called him a madman. But in the very depth of their hearts they admired him and admitted the fact that they were unfair to him. So that when Caesar, the Roman emperor questioned the Meccan chief Abu Sufyan, who at the time was a deadly opponent of the Prophet, regarding Muhammad (p.b. u.h.) the former replied: "Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, is nobly born. His followers are on the increase. He is honest and truthful, has never told a falsehood, nor even broken a pledge. He enjoins the people to worship one God and pray to no other deity. He preaches kindness, piety and tolerance towards all". (10)

"Why then" one might ask "did the Meccans not follow the Prophet but instead fought him?" The answer to this is quite evident. The Message of Islam was aiming at changing the course of their lives, transforming their personalities, remoulding their manners and behaviour. Above all the new faith demanded that they should abandon their idols, which they held to be sacred. Besides, the boastful Arabs, who regarded the rest of mankind as "ajam", inferior to them, could not simply swallow the concepts of "equa-



lity of men", "social justice", "human rights" etc. while Islam preached that man's superiority was not to be judged by race, rank, ancestry or the number of camels and slaves one possessed. Righteousness alone was to count.

As Islam continued to spread, the anger and anxiety of the Meccans grew too. They threatened the Prophet with dire consequences if he did not put an end to his preaching. This did not carry any weight with the Prophet. But the cruelty of the disbelievers to the Muslims was now beyond endurance. It was then that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) advised some of his companions to migrate to Abyssinia. The lesson to be derived from this departure of the Muslims from their motherland to a totally foreign country is important. This incident indicates the degree of their faith in Islam and the extent to which they would go in their sacrifice for their religion. Life in Mecca was miserable, hard and cruel to Muslims. Saad bin Abi Waqqas relates that on an occasion out of acute hunger he was forced to wash and eat a piece of dry camel skin which he discovered while passing water.

Believers were molested, tortured, killed, some fled abroad but the struggle continued. No one gave in.

When all methods failed the eminent personalities of Quraish fathered together in the hope that they would convince Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) Their spokesman Utbah spoke to him in the Kaabah:

"...If you have created this upheaval because you want wealth and riches, say so, and we shall make you the richest man in the land. If you want power and authority tell us and we shall make you our ruler..." Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) replied: "I want no wealth nor riches. I have no desire to be crowned a king... I am a humble servant of God. He has sent me to you as His Apostle. He has revealed to me His Book and He has commanded that I warn you against His wrath if you reject Him, and to bring you a promise of His blessings, if you believe. So I have given you His Message and no power on earth will stop me from propagating it..." These words uttered by the Prophet in a way forecast the future success of Islam in the definite statement "... and no power on earth will stop me from propagating it..." The remarkable thing is the fact that when these words were uttered the whole Muslim population was negligible in comparison with that of disbelievers. The Prophet's words much angered Quraish who decided to boycott the Muslims. Accordingly no one in Mecca would be allowed to do business with the Prophet, his family or his followers, sell food to them, pay a visit or even talk to them. Thus the Messenger and his followers were compelled to abandon Mecca and settle in a nearby valley. Nevertheless the Prophet continued to go to the Kaaba and to pray publicly. And whenever he had the opportunity he preached to strangers visiting Mecca for business or pilgrimage. Muslims lived in misery and utter discomfort for more than two

long years feeding practically on grass for scarcity of food until some relenting Meccans lifted the ban. Shortly after this the Prophet lost his wife and his uncle Abu Talib who had been of a great help to him. The Prophet went on striving hard for the dissemination of the Message. One day, accompanied by Zayd, he walked up the rugged mountains to the city of Taaif, some fifty miles away from Mecca. Overcome by fanaticism and ignorance the people of this town brutally attacked and stoned the Prophet who had come to deliver them from darkness to light. As Ghulam Sarwar puts it: "If there was any just occasion for any man to curse his enemies, it was now for Muhammad to do so with regard to the people of Taaif. He was bleeding, and his heart was almost broken at the cruel treatment he has so unjustly received. He might have said, 'O God! destroy these people who are so wicked and not one of them has any sense of fairness'. He did nothing of the kind". (11) Instead of condemning and complaining about his enemies he sought refuge in God in humility of heart and utmost sincerity.

In the eleventh year of Prophethood a happy incident took place. Six pilgrims from the city of Yathrib, later named Madinatul-Nabi, became Muslim and swore allegiance to Muhammad (p.b. u.h.) These new converts spread Islam in Madina quite fast so that in the following year a group of 72 yathribite Muslims presented themselves to the

Prophet and secretly pledged themselves and their people "to stand by him as they would stand by their own children".

Intensified persecution of the Muslims by Quraish made impossible for the former to dwell in Mecca any longer. In this difficult period the Prophet was divinely ordained to leave Mecca. He left for Madina shortly before the Quraish broke into his house intending to kill him.

### **The Messenger in Madina**

The migratory journey of the Prophet to Madina in the year 622 A.D. marks the beginning of a new era. "Hijra" as this migration is referred to is regarded as a turning point in the Muslim history.

After the warm welcome accorded to him by the people of Madina the Prophet set to work to establish city state in Madina. He called for consultation of all the inhabitants of the place, Meccan immigrants, Madinite converts, Jews and the Arabs who had not yet embraced Islam and promulgated a state constitution. This is the first written constitution of any state in the history of the world. It contains details of the rights and duties of both the ruler and the ruled..." (12)

"In the second year of Hijra the Prophet initiated mobile defense". (13) As it can be seen from these two examples ORGANISING THE COMMUNITY was one of the first activities of the

Prophet in Madina. Muslims thus began to live a disciplined life and were kept on the alert.

### **The Battle of Badr**

It must be borne in mind that the migration of Muslims to Madina was a forced flight, hence a state of belligerency existed from the very outset between the Muslims and the Meccan disbelievers. That the two communities had to clash sooner or later was anybody's guess – But when? A very rich Meccan caravan carrying goods worth 50,000 dinars – under Abu Sufyan was on its way from Syria and heading towards Mecca. And once they strengthened their economic situation Quraish were most likely to launch a massive attack on Madina, where, with the help of Jews rebelling against the Prophet they could exterminate the Muslims totally. There had already been a number of incidents that had added to the ever-existing tension. Under the circumstances the condition of the Muslims was rather precarious. Noticing the seriousness of the situation the Prophet sent out Talha bin Abaidullah and Saaid bin Zayd to Al-Haura for reconnaissance. The two emissaries hurried to Madina when Abu Sufyan's caravan drew near. Abu Sufyan a cunning man leaving the caravan behind went to Badr in person where he soon found out that the place had been visited by men from Madina and was quick at dispatching a man to Mecca for help. It must have seemed

natural and easy for the Muslims to intercept the caravan in question, which if missed, would strengthen the armed forces of Quraish considerably. Further, an attempt to seize the caravan would force Quraish to fight an untimely war.

When the news reached Mecca Abu Jahl, an influential leader summoned the people to the Kaabah and instructed them to get ready for the march. When the Quraish army left Mecca it consisted of about 1000 soldiers, 700 of whom rode camels and the rest were on horse back. They were fully armed with all the fashionable weapons of the time. Meanwhile Abu Sufyan managed to change his route and thus escape from the Muslims. The crisis should have ended when this new development was conveyed to Abu Jahl, who refused to retreat. Instead, he insisted on making a display of strength to demoralize the Muslims. He marched on until finally he encamped his forces on one side of the valley of Badr, six marches from Madina.

Muslims, under the command of the Prophet, however, formed quite a contrast when compared to their enemies. To start with they were not more than about 300 men poorly clad and ill-equipped. Only a few had armour and the rest just a sword. They possessed two horses and seventy camels each of which had to carry three men. But most seriously of all, they were outnumbered by three to one. Evidently this small band of Muslims was neither prepared nor had the intention to fight an

army like that of Quraish at that stage; everyone had Abu Sufyan's caravan in mind, and excepting the Prophet, none had taken into consideration the possibility of facing the whole population of armed Quraish in the battlefield so unexpectedly. It was a big surprise, therefore, for the Muslims, to hear of Abu Jahl's army on their arrival in the valley of Dhafirah. To deal with this new situation, the Prophet returned to his starting point, nearby Madinah, where he could consult his companions. A section of the companions stated that they were with him for fighting. After some moments of silence and hesitation there was a unanimous agreement to fight. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) ordered: "March on and be glad that God has promised me one of two parties" (that is either Abu Sufyan's caravan or victory over Abu Jahl's army). A day later, however, the Muslims discovered that the caravan was out of reach.

The two armies clashed on Friday, 17th Ramadan in the second year of Hijrah. (probably 14th January 624 A.D.) After arranging the Muslims in battle lines the Prophet turned towards the Kaabah in supplication. He ended his prayers in the following words:

"O God! these Quraish have come with  
Their friends to belie thy messenger. O  
God! we need thy help which thou hast  
promised. O God! should this small band  
Of ours perish, there would be none left

to worship thee". (14)

Quraish started the fight when Shaibah and Utbah, Sons of Rabiah, and Walid, Utbah's son, advanced to challenge the Muslims to single combat. On the Prophet's order Hamza, the Prophet's uncle, Ubaidah son of Harith and Ali son of Abu Talib met the three men respectively. Hamza and Ali soon killed their opponents, while Ubaidah was wounded by Utbah who met his end soon with Ali's sword. After this victory of the Muslim combatants a raging battle ensued. The Muslims fought with unprecedented spirit and valour. In the end the infidels were utterly routed leaving behind seventy dead and seventy prisoners. Among those slain were eleven of the fourteen meccans chieftains who had conspired to kill the Prophet shortly before he left Mecca. Their death dealt a severe blow to the Quraish leadership. As to the Muslims, their losses were fourteen dead in all. But they had been instrumental in winning the most important victory in their history to be involved. This was a divine victory as Gos said in the Quran: "Ye (Muslims) slew them not, but Allah slew them". (15)

The Prophet was merciful and compassionate not only to Muslims but also to his enemies. The treatment accorded to the prisoners of Badr amply confirms this fact. The prisoners were fed while some of the Muslims remained hungry, "an act of benevolence which hardly finds any parallel in the history of mankind". The ransom fixed for the



prisoners was that those who knew to read and write should each teach ten Muslim boys the art. (16)

### **The Battle of Uhud**

Although the battle of Badr had resulted in a victory for the Muslims no peace or a treaty of any kind was concluded between the Meccans and the Muslims. Not only the state of belligerency between the two communities continued to prevail, but also preparations by Quraish for a war of greater dimensions were to commence soon. 'Ikrimah the son of Abu Jahl, who was killed in the battle of Badr, and many other chiefs of the Quraish paid a visit to Abu Sufyan and proposed to take revenge from the Muslims if only he were to meet the cost of the expedition. Abu Sufyan agreed. Accordingly the entire profits of Abu Sufyan's caravan were spent in preparation for the coming war. The clans of Kinanah and Tahamah also joined Quraish against Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) At the same time much intrigue sedition were being concocted with the Madinite Jews. The Prophet, however, was not oblivious of the circumstances. He too, through covenants brought all the coastal tribes of Arabia into alliance. This severed the easy access of the Quraish to Syria and Madina, and forced them to open commerce with Iraq. In the meantime a rich Meccan caravan on its way to Iraq was intercepted by Zaid bin Harith with one hundred riders from Madina and

a big booty acquired.

By the month of Shawwal (January) in the third year of Hijra Quraish had completed their preparation for war. Their forces consisted of 3000 soldiers (700 of whom wore mail armour) 3000 camels, 200 horses.

Shortly, before the Meccan Army set forth, Abbas, the Prophet's uncle and his only sympathiser among the Meccans sent him a letter with a man from the tribe of Ghifar to inform him about the Meccan's plan to invade Madina. Upon this the Prophet warned the people to withdraw their animals from the outskirts of Madina and dispatched his own men to investigate the authenticity of the news. Alarming as it was the news was confirmed. The next thing to be heard was that the Meccan army reached Uhud; about three miles northeast of Madina.

The question of "how to confront the enemy" was debated. The Prophet was of the opinion that Madina be fortified and defended against Quraish, it could prove easier to repel the enemy from there. Leaders of the Jews as well as Muhajirs (immigrants) and Ansar were of the same opinion. But the rest who constituted the majority had a different opinion. These were mainly young Muslims who wanted to fight the enemy in the open. The Prophet agreed to the majority's decision.

After the Friday congregational prayers, Mu-

hammad (p.b.u.h.) gave the glad news of the victory to those who were persevering and ordered the army to march.

But they were not far from Madina when Abdullah bin Ubay and his 300 jewish comrades betrayed the Muslims. Ibn Ubay left the Muslims after making the flimsy excuse that the Prophet had not taken his advice but was following "boys". Thus when the Muslims arrived at Uhud only 700 men were left with the Prophet. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) positioned his troops at the foot of Mount Uhud so that the mountain remained at their back. He lined up his forces in a battle array and posted Abdullah bin Jubair with fifty archers to guard the rear of the Muslim army against a possible onslaught of the enemy from that direction. The Prophet sternly warned the archers thus: "Guard our rear for we fear that they may attack us from that side, and remain in your positions and do not move therefrom. Even if you see us defeating the enemy and entering his camp, do not depart from your positions. And if you see us being killed do not come to our help to defend us. And it is for you to shoot their horses, for the horses cannot win against arrows." (17)

Quraish were the first to start the fight. Following this Zubair led an attack on the right wing of Quraish army and outmanoeuvred them. Then Hamza, Ali and Abu Dujanah with lightning speed made a shattering dash into the ranks of the enemy.

Under the irresistible onslaught of the three, the enemy became demoralised and began to be scattered in confusion. The Muslims who at the start gained the upper hand and controlled the strategy of the battle overwhelmed their foes in all directions. To most Muslims the battle seemed to be over, the enemy was retreating in disorder; Victory was theirs! It was at this crucial stage that the Muslims committed a most serious mistake, taking victory for granted they fell upon the spoils. Most of the archers too, observing the scene from the mountain pass thought that the fight was over and despite the Prophet's clear instructions and stern warning not to abandon their position at all cost and events went to join in securing the booty. The Muslims paid for this second mistake very dearly. A cavalry division of the enemy under the command of Khalid bin Walid noticing the departure of the archers lost no time in launching an attack from the very position the archers were supposed to guard and inflicted heavy casualties on the Muslims. What contributed most to the chaos among the Muslims however was perhaps the false news that the Prophet had been killed. Shocked by this news some of the Muslims fled in panic. But the rest fought with unequalled courage and determination. Especially the bravery of the many martyrs who laid down their lives in defending the person of the Prophet would move one to tears and ecstasy. Whatever the mistakes and the losses of the Muslims on the day of Uhud these

should not mask the fact that Muslims who rallied round the Prophet fought the enemies with perseverance until the latter retired from the battle field.

The events of Uhud, however provided the Muslims with a precious moral victory. Referring to what happened in Uhud says the Qur'an:

“And Muhammad is but a Messenger,  
Surely (many) messengers have gone before him  
If then, he die or be killed  
Will you turn upon your heels?  
(Qur'an III, 143).

And most certainly God made good His promise to you when he cut them into pieces with His knowledge,  
Until when you weakened  
And quarrelled about the order (given to you)  
And you disobeyed (the prophet)  
After he had shown you what you had loved (victory);  
Of you were some who desired Future (Paradise),  
Then He moved you away from them.  
That he might discipline you.  
And He has certainly forgiven you,  
And full of grace is God towards the faithful.  
(Qur'an III, 151).

### The Jews

The Prophet had concluded peace with several

Jewish tribes residing in Madina! Of these Banu Qainuqa violated their side of the treaty by committing hostile acts against the Muslims openly. Not long after the battle of Badr an event took place which taxed the patience of the Muslims. A Muslim woman was insulted by some men of Bani Qainuqa'. A Muslim man passing by the scene had to interfere. In the fight that ensued he killed the offender, the Muslim man too was killed. This worsened the relation between the Muslims and Banu Qainuqa. The Prophet requested Banu Qainuqa to respect the agreement and refrain from harming the Muslims. But the Jews would not listen they grew arrogant and said: "O, Muhammad! Let not the victory over a people who did not know the science of war deceive you. By God, if you fight us, you shall know that we are men". Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was left with no alternative; he laid seize to the quarters of Banu Qainuqa. After fifteen days the Jews surrendered. With the intercession of Abdullah bin Ubey and few others the Prophet let the Jews emigrate leaving their arms behind. They left Madina for Wadi-ul-Qura, north Arabia, Syria, and other places.

Banu Nadir was the other Jewish clan which lived in Madina. They too were bitter enemies of the Muslims. In the 4th year of Muslim Era they plotted to kill the Prophet. Upon this treason they were asked to leave the city. They refused to do so. They were however defeated in a skirmish that

took place and promptly deported. While some repaired to Syria others established a state of their own at Khaibar. After a while, the Jews of Khaibar established diplomatic ties with the Meccans against Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) At the same time they concluded agreement with all the tribes of Arabia against the Muslims. Thus in a few days they succeeded to rally some 10,000 men under the banner of the Quraish and leadership of Abu Sufyan to invade Madinah. The Jewish intrigues continued until Khaibar was conquered by the Muslims and the Jews routed completely in the 7th year of the Hjirah. The siege of Madina lasted for two weeks and ended in a complete fiasco. The enemy tried in vain to overcome the trenches and barricades surrounding the city — The trenches that were dug by the Muslims constituted a new technique not known to the Arabs before\*. And the enemy was taken by surprise. Then a severe wind blew which was followed by a dust storm pulling down the enemy's tents. This confused and demoralised the tribes who began to argue among themselves and ultimately left Madina.

\* "On the advice of Salman Al-Farissi, the Prophet ordered trenches to be dug round Madina and filled with fire. — (M.Y.A.)".

In the sixth year of Hijra a ten-year truce was concluded with the Quraish, at Hudabiya. Then the Meccans violated the treaty by attacking Khuzaah tribe which was an ally of the Muslims, the Prophet decided to march on Mecca. In the eighth year of Hijra Mecca was conquered peacefully. The Prophet asked the Meccans: "What do you think I will do to you?" They answered: "You are a generous brother and the son of a generous brother". (14) Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) pardoned his bitterest enemies, those who for years tormented, tortured and killed Muslims, finally turning them out of their own hearth and homes, then not allowing them to rest even in Madina. Despite all these he granted them all, except few hardened criminals, general amnesty. He was indeed in words and deeds "a mercy to mankind". Old tribal and personal enmities were replaced by an unprecedented peace, tranquillity, feeling of unity and fraternity.

The old warring Arabs who knew no nationhood in all their history become united for the first time by the bond of "Islamic brotherhood".

This had not been easy to achieve. It took 23 years of ceaseless striving and sacrifices to see the success of the Prophet's mission (p.b.u.h.)



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# Doctrine OF *Islam*



## FOREWORD

This is the second issue of this series. We are greatly encouraged by the response of Muslims, in buying the first booklet, and our hope of its circulation has been fairly fulfilled. Suggestions and criticisms have been welcomed and taken seriously into consideration. We hope that readers will send their suggestions and criticisms in order to keep up to the standard, and realise the set goal of this humble work.

The basic concepts of Islam are the existence of God, prophethood and the Hereafter. They are the foundation of the Islamic culture. The comprehension of these fundamental concepts is the primary condition for achieving the Islamic culture in practice. The second condition is the belief in these concepts. The firm conviction which generates lively emotions and sentiments moulded in the Islamic shape. This type of belief which generates rich sentiments would define the way of thinking, like, dislike, and finally behaviour of people. When the Islamic basic concepts are understood and believed, then it is expected to have the culture and civilization of Islam into real life. But when they are not perceived as the case with

Muslims today, the Islamic life should not be expected. We should simply try to facilitate the ways and means to study these thoughts, and see their logic and credibility. If Muslims cared to give this vital point some attention, then a tremendous change in the lives of Muslims might be witnessed within a short time.

This booklet is a small attempt to simplify this task for our young Muslim brothers. The esteemed author has kindly devoted valuable time to write this booklet. We aspire that it will fill part of the cultural vacuum existing throughout the world.

## INTRODUCTION

### What is Islam?

Islam is the final religion sent to humanity. The Islamic Message was delivered through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family). He was sent in the year 610 after Christ. Islam is a principle. A principle is defined as a doctrine plus a system of life in harmony. The system is in harmony with the doctrine when the system is built upon and derived from the doctrine. A person who does not believe except in this world would be inclined to care for his own pleasure regardless of other people's welfare. Such a person would find no point in sacrifice for others, because materially this means loss for him. Yet, there are some people who would be moved emotionally by idealistic motives sometimes but those people are usually few and their work is inconsistent and trivial. On the other hand, a person who believes in God and a life after death would account for the Hereafter. He would refrain from bad deeds for knowing that great punishment might be inflicted upon him. He would be willing to sacrifice because there is a promise of a reward in the next world. Hence

behaviour of people is moulded as soon as they decide which doctrine they adhere to.

Islam is a main-line enlightenment of the Creator to humanity. It deals with all fields of their activity, whether on the individual or collective level. Special care is given to individuals and their behaviour where their spiritual side is strengthened and sublimed. That is through understanding the ideology first, then binding them to God in prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, etc. The collective aspect is given due importance, where the social, economical and political system were clearly formulated and minutely explained.

Islamic legislation defines two kinds of laws, namely, the constitutional type and the regulative type. The constitutional laws are basic and permanent. For instance, the concept of defence against enemies is a permanent law, but means of defence are changing with time and place. In the past the means of transport and defence were horses, camels and elephants, etc. But now rockets, aeroplanes, nuclear ships and weapons are used. Therefore the constitution is concerned with the basic needs while the regulative laws are concerned with the best means and ways to satisfy these requirements.



## Value of human knowledge

### *a. Results of Philosophy*

The eminent British philosopher Francis Bacon said: "A little of philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth man's mind to religion". Why? It is better to let one of the most distinguished and productive representatives of 'Logical positivism' (logical empiricism), Rudolf Carnap answer this question. He said: "We may soon come to a degree of certainty sufficient for all practical purpose, but absolute certainty we can never attain".

In fact it amounts to the question that do we know anything at all? The answer may seem simple, but when examined, it would be one of the most difficult questions which ever confronted man. Professor Ayer (the chairman of the Humanist Association and Professor of Logic at Oxford University) said: "I believe in science" but he went on, "though I believe in science, I do not believe that science is infallible". He concluded: "Since we can never have a logical guarantee that any such theory will not be falsified, we are never in a position to claim that we are in possession of the final truth".

It seems that the best summary for the result of philosophy is that given by the eminent philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. He said: "My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognises them as senseless,

when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw the ladder, after he has climbed over it). He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly. Whereof one can't speak, thereof one must be silent".

Bertrand Russel said: "One can't be certain of anything and if he is certain of anything then he is certainly wrong. He also said: "The job of the philosopher is to help people to fight their doubt". Even a great rationalist like Descartes started by saying that he was doubting the only thing that he did not doubt – his doubt itself. His way of tackling the problem can be taken as follows. (Since I doubt, therefore I am thinking. Since I think therefore I exist. Since I exist, therefore God exists for a thing cannot happen without a cause). The weak points in his argument are the following:

i. He assumes that his doubt is absolutely true which is an arbitrary proposition.

ii. He assumes causality without offering a reason for such assumption.

To throw more light on the uncertainty question, the following points could be added:

a. The known means of knowledge i.e., our five senses and mind are all liable to doubt simply because they have cheated us many times and we cannot exclude any particular occasion from doubt.

b. Our reasoning can be reduced to the apriori propositions of logic. The truth of these propositions might be subjected to analysis and hence they are not considered as instinctively basic. For instance, some concepts were considered as axioms at one time like the absoluteness of time and the Euclidian geometry; then it was found that they were not absolute.

c. It seems that it is impossible to conceive a thing without affecting it as suggested by Kant. Hence we can never have an exact image of anything.

d. It will be worse when uncertainty becomes dominant. Then doubt extends to the concept of uncertainty itself which leads to the Wittgenstein's declaration, "Whereof one can't speak, thereof one must be silent".

### *b. Islamic theory of knowledge*

A theory in epistemology which was worked out by the famous Muslim philosopher Al-Farabi (870-950 A.D.) classified human knowledge into two types:

i. Imaginative knowledge (Al-Tassawor):

These are the mental images that are formed in our minds irrespective of the external conditions. The basic premises like causality and the law of contradiction are within this category of knowledge. Imaginative knowledge is taken as absolutely

certain for it is not susceptible to any excuses of doubt.

ii. Decisive knowledge (Al-Tasdeeq):

This includes all our knowledge which comes as a result of a mental decision (i.e., all inferred knowledge). This cannot be taken as absolutely certain because our senses have deceived us many times and mental inefficiency cannot be discarded.

It could be proposed that the best definition of a certain proposition is that which the mind cannot but see it. That includes the mental images in our brain. Hence the existence of these mental images is absolutely certain. Doubt remains about their representation of external realities. The premises of human knowledge such as "causality" could be considered as properties and interaction characteristics of the mental images and hence they are absolutely true. Doubt creeps in about the course of analysis, synthesis and deductions of the brain, because of its liability to errors and imperfect nature. When we see something it is absolutely certain that there is a mental image in our brain for there is no excuse for doubt about the existence of the image, but it is not necessary that what we see has an external reality. Our doubt about its external reality comes from our empirical experience. Hence we are in a possession of certain facts, namely the premises of knowledge which we have considered as characteristics of the mental images. And application of these premises in a pro-

bability consideration may allow a logical decision in favour or against a proposition.

Hence rationally speaking a proposition is acceptable if it is more probable. I am in a position now to say that a doctrine is worth adhering to if it is logically favoured by higher probability considering its essence and consequence of adaptation. The following pages could then be considered as an attempt to explain the rational support of the Islamic doctrine.

It must be added that belief (Iman) is a state of mind which God bestows on good Muslims (i.e. those who submit to His will). Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.f.) was not a philosopher. It is well known that he was illiterate. The Islamic message was inspired to him by revelation.

Islam encourages rationalism. Throughout the holy Quran man is encouraged to think and reason out, but rationalism alone (i.e., without the purity of the soul which results from acting according to the will of Gos) is not sufficient for belief (Iman). I am more concerned here with the rational support of the Islamic doctrine, bearing in mind that acting according to the will of God is a necessary requirement for a firm and lively belief.

### **Revelation statement**

The Islamic doctrine is based on the following foundations: —

*i. Belief in God:*

God is the ultimate of the existence of the universe. He is the Creator whose essence and form is beyond perception. It is only some of His characteristics that we have knowledge of through experience and prophecy. The Creator's intrinsic characteristics are infinite and absolute. He is eternal and cannot be limited to space or time, because He is the Creator of both. He is one and Just. The characteristics of God can be classified into two divisions:

i. Positive: such as Almighty, Powerful, Creator, Benevolent, Willing, Knowing, Wise, etc.

ii. Negative: such as uncompound, unseen, etc. Islam stresses on two concepts, namely the Unity and Justice of God. The first concept assumes order and harmony in the universe. The second concept furnishes the ground for prophethood and man's free will. Man is born neutral in his intentions concerning good and bad. Islam considers man as potentially able to do either of the two. When he pursues one path, then he will experience an acceleration in that path as a natural consequence. Man is made aware of the nature of the two paths through his instincts, prophets, the callers for righteousness, and the callers for evil.

## Belief in Islamism\* and Prophecy

God created nature including man, as a natural phenomenon, according to definite laws. These laws may be statistical in some fields, and may include control of the evolutionary process in nature. "Islam" is an Arabic word which means submission. "Muslim" is a word which means that which submits to the laws of God. Thus the unwilling things in the world such as lifeless objects, like atoms and stars are muslims. Man is given a high capacity of thinking, and his activities fall into two categories. The first kind is instinctive, such as his heartbeat which obeys the laws set by God. The will is given to human beings and exercises its power within a special sector of life. This sector includes all human activities apart from matters beyond his control. However, even this part of human activity has some ideal laws where human beings can achieve optimum behaviour. These laws are given to man by God, and conforming to them means that we are muslims — i.e., submitting to the will of God. These are the Islamic laws. Other Godly religions are also God's laws, but either their role had finished or they have been altered by men. Islamic is the last religion God has chosen for humanity.

A prophet is a good man fit and able to deliver the message of God. He should be faultless in

\*Islamism means in this context submission to the will of God.

order to be a model for others to follow. In other words, he ought to be an efficient person to conduct a cultural transformation within the society. Prophets have appeared throughout history to perform their duty as witnesses, mercy and warners. They conduct the cultural change and warn people against deviation.

### **Belief in the Hereafter**

Man consists of a material body and a soul. The latter is called in modern psychology "mind". After death the material body goes back as chemical compounds while the mind or soul goes to a world of its own type. It is believed that during the period between death and the day of judgment people are classified under three categories. Those who have been extremely good by obeying God and His Prophet will be in a state of happiness during that period which is called "Barzakh". Other people who have been extremely sinful during their life will get the torment of "Barzakh". The rest of people who are in between, their soul would be static. The second stage is the day of Judgment, people will be reminded of their good and bad deeds in this world, and prepared to receive their reward or punishment.

Good people will be rewarded by being sent to Paradise, while the evildoers will be sent to Hell. In Paradise people will receive a wonderful pleasure and happiness (22/Repentance): "God has promi-



sed the believers, men and women, gardens underneath which rivers flow, forever therein to dwell, and goodly dwelling places in the Gardens of Eden, God's good pleasure; that is the mighty triumph." In Hell people would get every torment, and the fuel of the fire is human beings and stones.

A person commits sins when he behaves against God's laws. Everyone is responsible for his own deeds. He is not charged for sins committed by other people.

### **A rational discussion of the Revelation Statement**

Islam does not require faith without being logically convinced. In this section, the consistency and the rational positivity of the doctrine will be shown.

#### **Existence of God and His characteristics**

There are four ways to prove the existence of the Creator:

##### *a. Personal experience*

There are some events which we encounter in our lives that cannot be explained except by the existence of God. Many people encounter incidents which convince them of the existence of God. It must be admitted that this type of conviction is applicable in a small scale and hardly considered by others who are not related to that particular event. But its importance cannot be discarded, specially if we are to use probability measures.

### *b. Religion*

Many good people have appeared throughout history and preached belief in God. Those people are called prophets. Prophets must have unique qualities such as wisdom, piety, truthfulness, trustworthiness, etc. These qualities must be known to people before being sent as prophets. All prophets claimed to have some extraordinary communication with God. It is established that their intentions and works were consistent and support their claims.

### *c. Philosophy*

(The first cause, argument)

Considering the "Law of cause and effect", take matter in general. It certainly needs a cause for its existence *now*. This argument might be objected to by saying that its cause needs a cause, and that will end up in an infinite series. However, this objection can be discarded by proving that the chain of causes must terminate in an ultimate cause. This ultimate cause should be self-sustained and requires no cause for its existence. In other words there should be a cause different in nature and essence from those in the chain.

Now, let the cause of the existence of matter be A and its cause be B and so on. Thus a chain (A,B,C,D,E,F,...) is formed. If A disappears then matter disappears. Similarly the existence of D is necessary for the existence of A and so on. Now

take an arbitrary link in the chain say N; however, the status of N in the series is subjected to three possibilities:

- i. Must not exist.
- ii. May exist,
- iii. Must exist.

The first and second assumptions require the non-existence of matter as explained above.

Hence, we are left with the last assumption.

The circle argument can be disproved also. The circle of causes implies a series A, B, C, D,... then back to A, B, ... etc., going round a circle. Take any pair in the circle, say A and D. There are three possibilities: i. A exists before D. ii. D exists before A. iii. A and D exist simultaneously.

If A exists before D then there is no meaning in saying that A is dependent on D, simply because D used to have no existence before it was caused to exist by A. The second assumption can be disproved in a similar argument. The third assumption means that neither of the two are the cause of the existence of the other. Hence they require a cause beyond their existence.

A further objection might be raised on the account of the arbitrary proposition of N for it might be taken as the very matter itself. This assumption contradicts the premises of logic, namely a priori proposition like causality. It is needless to go further, but it can be proved easily that matter has the same essence but different forms, then it may be asked, "What are the causes which have given different forms to the same

essence?" If it is said that there was no original form, then matter needs a factor beyond its essence to provide its present form. If it was said that these forms were eternal, then what were the causes which made them different. If they were intrinsic, then either potential or active. The former requires agitating cause, while the latter needs the existence of contradictory things simultaneously, which is against the premises of logic. Hence the fact that matter has both an essence and a form necessitates that it is a contingent.

#### *d. Science*

It is known by intuition that for every intelligent work there is a maker. Consider any example in nature such as the human brain. Then compare it with the highest invention, namely the computer. It is obvious that the latter is a product of the human brain. It is then impossible for the brain to exist without an intelligent maker. Some people like to escape towards an imaginary thing called accident. If accident can be discarded as an impossibility, then the only way left is as Max Planck, the great physicist puts it: "to God".

Probability and chance is a very well defined branch of mathematics. If a specific card is to be drawn from a pack of ten cards at random, then the probability of drawing that card is  $1/10$ . Consider the cards are numbered from one to ten, and it is required to find the probability of drawing the cards in sequence. The probability of that

event is  $1/10^{10}$ . In comparing the peculiarity of this simple operation with that of a living cell, the denominator becomes very large. In other words, the probability of its being by accident becomes very remote. However, if the comparison proceeds to the creation of a human being, it becomes extremely large. To clarify this point, imagine someone tells you that his car came about by an accident through some peculiar circumstances. The immediate reaction to such a claim is to examine his mental status. Going further in comparing the peculiarity of the whole universe, the denominator approaches infinity. It might be objected that the universe is finite. The answer is that approaching infinity is sufficient for a mathematical proof. Also we are dealing with design and not the finite material used in the design.

Indeed, there is no place rationally or emotionally for a blind accident to make a human eye. Putting its lens and pupil in their positions, a retina to reflect light, two types of fluid and millions of cones and rods behind the retina to analyse light. There is no place for a blind accident to make the genes which transfer the biological characters of the ancestors to the descendants. It is said the genes of all the whole human population would not fill a thimble of a tailor!

### **The characteristics of God**

It is now established that God is the cause of

existence of the universe, hence it cannot be said that He is limited to a space or time. His characteristics can be envisaged through His work. It is seen that there is good order and purpose in the world, hence He is wise. There are big powers in the universe, therefore He is powerful, etc. Evil is a word which has a relative meaning. When it is spoken about God's acts, it is implied that His work is perfect in every respect. They contain all the factors of mercy and benevolence. Evil is a deficiency which cannot be attributed to God. If someone gives ten pounds, then takes one pound back he is still generous and good.

God is one. If it is assumed that there are many then they should have either the same will or different wills. If they have the same will, then there is no meaning in saying they are many. If it is assumed that they have different wills, then they are either the same or different. When they are equal, then the limit of their behaviour is the same, and consequently they have the same will. When they have different powers, then the strongest will overcome the weakest.

God is just. Injustice is a weakness which cannot be attributed to the Creator, who is perfect in every respect.

### **Islamism and Prophecy**

The word "Islam" has two concepts. The first concept could be realised linguistically. The Arabic

word ISLAM means "submitting willingly". It refers to the submission to God in general, and in this case it includes all the religions and calls for God besides looking at it from a still broader view by including all non-willing objects. The second concept is a formal definition which refers to Islam as a community and any person who declares "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah", is a Muslim.

Islam fits man's nature and is in harmony with his needs and hopes. Human experience shows that it is harmful to behave against one's nature. For example, not getting married and wronging others. Religion calls this state "sin". It is an empirical experience that being in harmony with the natural laws (God's laws) is a good thing, for instance being truthful, trustworthy, kind, righteous, etc. Religion calls this state "good".

Prophecy is necessary for the following reasons:

i. Man is distinguished from animals by his mental capacity and freedom of choice. The mental capacity is high but limited. His questions range from the origin of the universe to the life after death. He searches for the best means of securing his present and future life. Furthermore, he puts his knowledge under test and examines its origin and value. He even questions his own perception. Then it can be seen that there is a big scope for debate and difference on any subject! Philosophers who have a deep insight into matters differ about basic concepts! ! All kinds of contra-

dictory ideas are found coexisting in the world of philosophy. There is a universe, says realism. Idealism claims that there is no real universe at all, it is all a matter of imagination to Berkley and David Hume! Marx claims that our perception is a mere reflection of our environment. Immanuel Kant and Descartes said there is some basic instinctive knowledge. Hence this confusion must be ended in some way.

Therefore sending prophets is inevitable to rescue humanity from being lost in doubts. It is necessary to show them the way of life in conforming to God's laws, these laws are the Godly religions throughout history.

ii. The high standard of behaviour and moral conduct which the prophets used to enjoy before experiencing revelation. As an example of a typical prophet the case of Prophet Muhammad is considered.

The following points are in favour of the Prophethood of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.f.).

a. He was known as truthful and trustworthy before he claimed Prophethood. His moral character was unique and beyond any question or doubt.

b. He had never doubted his message. There were many attempts to divert him from his course by money, women, followers, etc., but he was never shaken or moved by these offers. He lived for twenty-three years after his Prophethood,



consistent in every respect.

c. He was an illiterate person. The Quran is the miracle that God has given him to convince people of his message and Prophethood. The fine literature, the magnificent social, economic, political and spiritual system are well perfected and defined. There are more than 750 verses in the Quran which state facts most of which can never be known to people at the Prophet's time.

d. He knew the year of his death. He also prophesied of many things which were fulfilled.

e. He waited for two years after he had received the first few chapters of the Quran. During this period he did not receive any revelation. This historical fact strongly supports that the Quran is God's revelation.

### **Life after death**

The following points support the existence of a life after death.

a. The investigation of modern psychology in the field of clairvoyance, precognition (prophecy), psychokinesis (effect of mind on matter) and extraordinary perception have shown that man does not consist of this material body only, but there is something behind the bush, psychologists call it the "mind" (which is different from the brain). Religion calls it the "soul". It is only a matter of terminology.

b. Para-psychology works together with spiri-

tualism in the modern psychiatric investigations. The following are some scientists who did some research in this field.

### **Sir Oliver Lodge**

(Winner of Rumford medal of the R.S., President of the Physical Society of London, and of the British Association for Advancement of Science). He stated that: "Speaking for myself, with full and cautious responsibility I have to state that as an outcome of my investigation into psychical matters, I have at length and quite gradually become convinced, after more than thirty years of study, not only that persistent existence is a fact, but that occasional communication across the chasm — with difficulty and under definite conditions — is possible. The evidence has thoroughly convinced me (i) of human survival, (ii) of the possibility under favourable circumstances, of communication between the dead and living, (iii) that death is only an episode in continuous existence. I also think it fairly established that some kind of help, guidance or inspiration reaches us at times across what is sometimes called 'the gulf' or through what is often called 'the veil' ".

Professor Hart (in his book "The Enigma of Survival" who was quoting Lodge said: "The hypothesis of continued existence in another set of conditions, and of a possible communication across the boundary is not a gratuitous one made for the sake of comfort and consolation or because

of a dislike to the idea of extinction; it is a hypothesis which has gradually forced upon the author — as upon many other persons — by the stringent coercion of definite experience; the foundation of atomic theory is to him no stronger. The evidence is cumulative and has broken the back of all legitimate and reasonable scepticism”.

### **Sir William Crookes**

(Inventor of the Crookes tube in electricity, President of the R.S., of Chemical Society, of The Institute of Electrical Engineering and of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, discoverer of Thallium, etc.). He began in 1869 a scientific investigation of psychical phenomena which led him to the conclusion “that invisible and intelligent beings exist who say that they are the spirits of dead persons. “He made the following statement from his presidential address before the British Association in 1898: “Thirty years have passed since I published an account of experiments tending to show that outside our scientific knowledge there exists a force exercised by intelligence differing from the ordinary intelligence common to mortals. I have nothing to retract, I adhere to my already published statement. Indeed I might add much thereto”.

### **Sir William Barret**

(F.R.S. Professor of Experimental Physics in the Royal School of Science in Ireland). He is another scientist who spent decades in physical

research. He commented on some experiments where an automatic writer produced messages purporting to come from people who had died. He says: "Certainly, for our own part, we believe there is some active intelligence at work behind, and apart from the automatist, an intelligence which is more like the deceased person, it professes to be, than that of any other we can imagine. It is an attempt at intelligent co-operation *between certain disembodied minds and our own*".

There are many other scientists who believe in the above-mentioned results. For example Professor Rhine a biologist and plant psychologist, Sir Alister Hardy present professor of Zoology in the University of Oxford. In his book "The Living Stream", (1962) he supports very strongly these results and states that there is a new movement in modern biology which is aiming at what he calls "natural theology". Even an opponent to religion like Russel declared in "Why I am not a Christian" that he does not doubt the scientific manner by which psychical researches were carried out.

Harnell Hart professor of Sociology in the University of Kentucky, said in his book, "The Enigma of Survival": "That something corresponding to 'the astral World' emerges logically from combination of clear dreams and telepathy is recognised in the writing of at least two distinguished philosophers – C.J. Ducass, of Brown University, Providence R.I., U.S.A., and H. H. Price, of Oxford University, England (1956) (P. 238):

“The existence of some sort of (Astral world) appears to be a logical necessity. Vivid dreams do, of course, occur, and telepathy is a scientifically established phenomenon. Hence, there is no reason to reject as inherently incredible the numerous accounts of shared dreams. Eminent philosophers both in America and England have pointed out that rationality of conceiving the life beyond death in terms of telepathy shared experience”. (P. 245).

Many people suffer and they are not compensated for in this World. Many others do mischief and commit crimes but they have not been punished while living on this earth. It has been already concluded that God is just because He is perfect. Then, it may be asked, “is it justice to let good people suffer without compensation?” The natural answer is that there is a life after death where people will receive reward or punishment for what they have done.

### **The Beneficial nature of the Islamic Doctrine**

Some points in favour of this beneficial nature:

a. Islam provides hope to people to live and a purpose to pursue. A hope which ties them to God. A purpose which can vary from aiming at the satisfaction of the Creator to the mere selfish interest. The purpose of satisfying the Creator is a sublime thought. Iman Ali (p.b.h.h.) said: “I worship God

neither of fear nor for gains, but because He is worthy of worship”.

The selfish interests are manifested in the desire to enter Heaven and avoid the torment of Hell.

b. Islam fulfills the instinctive need to a religious belief. The need for religion is a fact which is admitted by all those who study religion in human society.

c. The Islamic attitude for “Sin” is a rational one. It passes the responsibility of committing sin on those who indulge in it. In other words, Islam denies the inheritance of sin. This attitude frees man from the sense of guilt of bad deeds which he has not committed.

d. The believers tend to respect themselves as dignified human beings and have the same feelings for others. This respect is the result of their communication with the Creator, that is through prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, etc.

e. The Islamic philosophy about life implants good and tender feelings in the Muslim’s outlook. Muslims’ view of life is that of co-operation (62/the Spider): “How many a beast that bears not its own provision, but God provides for it and you”. (22/the Cow): “Who assigned to you the earth for a couch, and heaven for an edifice, and sent down out of heaven water, wherewith He brought forth fruits for your provision”. It is assumed there is order, harmony and co-operation in the world. On the other hand, the materialistic view of life

is that of struggle, vicious competition and war. Therefore the Islamic philosophy prevails the feeling of peace and tranquillity. The materialistic philosophy injects tension, competition and fighting sense among people.

\* \* \*





**G. B. SHAW  
ON ISLAM**

WALSH & J  
MARRIAGE

## A Shavian meets a Theologian

An interesting interview  
1934

Maulana Mohammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, the eminent Muslim Divine, whose learned lectures have already made him popular with the people of Mombasa, although he has been here only for a short while, and is visiting the island for the first time, proceeded to the bungalow of the Resident Magistrate on Wednesday morning to interview George Bernard Shaw, the world-renowned Irish savant, who was passing through here on his way to South Africa, according to an appointment made the previous day. The Maulana Saheb, who was accompanied by the acting president of the Muslim Association, Mr. Alimohammed Jaffer, arrived punctually at 9.40 a.m.; and G.B.S., on being informed, immediately came out to receive him.

A well-built, medium statured, erect and imposing figure of a gentleman of noble mien, smiling, not the smile of the sceptic that flickers around the corners of lips, but one of real welcome, suffused his face, and there was nothing shavian about

him, for even his chin was not shaved, if the pho-  
netic pun be permissible. A long flowing beard,  
on the contrary, imparted a serene dignity to his  
falsely represented Freudian features. Full of vim  
and vigour, if it was not for the grey colour of his  
hair, beard and eyebrows, one would scarcely cre-  
dit him with the four score years which, sooth to  
say, he carries with almost youthful elasticity.

As the Maulana Saheb stepped out of the car,  
there was a hearty exchange of greetings between  
them, after which the Maulana Saheb expressed his  
great pleasure at meeting him. The Grand Old Man  
instantly rejoined that he himself was very eager  
to know him as he had been hearing about him for  
a long time, and it was, indeed, an occasion of re-  
joicing to him that they had met that day.

The conversation which followed was very in-  
teresting, though devoid of Shavian sarcasms, per-  
haps, because the usual roles of G.B.S. interviews  
were reversed in this case, for it was G.B.S. who  
asked the questions of the interviewer, and listen-  
ed attentively to the prompt, lucid and logical re-  
plies of the latter.

As an indirect account of the lively discussion  
might rob it of its personal touch, it is preferable  
that the stalwarts are now made to speak for  
themselves.

*G.B.S.* : I regret I was not able, on account of  
a previous engagement, to attend your lecture last

night, although I was very keen on doing so. You spoke on the philosophy of Peace, but, as a Muslim it would have been more appropriate if you had delivered a lecture on the philosophy of War, for Islam, soubtless, has spread at the point of the sword'

*Maulana:* This is a common misunderstanding regarding Islam. I was dealing with this problem only last night, and I am really surprised that this myth, which has been throughly exploded, should receive any notice from a research scholar of your calibre. However, I may briefly tell you now that the literal meaning of the very word "Islam" means peace. An authentic record of the Teachings of Islam in their pristine purity has been preserved in the Quran and the Traditions, and they establish, beyond a shadow of doubt, that Islam permits the use of the sword only when wantonly attacked and compelled to defend itself. Besides, there is an explicit injunction in the Holy Quran, vis., that "There should be no coercion in religion", thus clearly forbidding the use of force or compulsion in matters of religion. As a matter of fact, I entertain the same conviction regarding the teachings of genuine Christianity, for our sense of reasoning tells us that if they be revelations and their source of emanation be consequently Divine, they cannot but emphatically veto violence of any manner in respect of belief, and enjoin its inculcation by means of arguments and rational discourses. History bears testimony to the fact that "Christ

was declared consubstantial with the Father" (Gibbon) by the Council of Nice convened by Constantine in Bithynia in the year three hundred and twenty-five 325. A.C. and to enforce the belief in the Divinity of Christ, there followed that horrid, inhuman slaughter of thousands of innocent people who refused to accept the Divinity of Christ conferred on Him by the said Council, not only in Europe, but in the sacred city of Jerusalem as well. But in spite of it all, I can never hold the real Christianity responsible for it. Of course, those representatives of the Church who wanted to impress the hearts of the people with their power and greatness, and perpetuate their priestly authority, ensuring the people's submission to their wills, can be rightly saddled with all the blame. Similarly the sanguinary wars, which are known as crusades, were the outcome of the machinations of such interested ecclesiastical groups of men who, realising that the uncompromising preaching of the Oneness of God by Islam was a great obstacle in their path, and their self-manufactured Divine authority was at stake, launched an unscrupulous campaign against Islam and Muslims, and circulating blood-curdling tales of imaginary atrocities by Muslims on Christians, instigated the credulous mediaeval Europe to wage holy wars against Islam and Muslims, whom they described as infidels, inveterate enemies of their religion, property and persons obviously, therefore, these Church dignitaries alone can be held liable to account for those cruel,

protracted but futile wars, and not the original teachings of Christianity or Islam and the Muslims. Further, if we grant as a supposition that some Muslim rulers and tribes, actuated by the lust of conquest of other countries, long after the advent of Islam, of course, became aggressors and waged offensive wars, we can, to be fair, condemn those individuals responsible for their reprehensible acts, and surely not Islam. In this connection I made some pertinent remarks recently in one of my speeches at Durban, which I would like to repeat to you. (So saying the Maulana Saheb read out the following passage from a booklet which he had with him). "If the people immersed in paganism and superstition, ignorant of the real teachings of religion, wage wars in its name, the responsibility is theirs and no blame can be ascribed to religion. Were not millions of human beings killed during the Great War in the name of peace, justice and the laudable object of safeguarding the rights of weaker nations? Should we then condemn the humane and noble qualities because the statesmen, under the cover of these names, sanctioned the inhuman slaughter for the attainment of their own selfish ends?"

*G.B.S.:* There is no doubt that the Church fanatics were, to a great extent, responsible for the sad events, and the pure teachings of Christianity have no standings prevail regarding Islam and that it is being widely misrepresented; but do the Muslim

masses agree with your interpretation, and do they believe that Islam was not spread at the point of the sword?

*Maulana:* Every Muslim is bound to endorse it, for whatever I say is the literal translation of the original words of Quran, and my own views or conceptions have nothing to do with it. Many books have been written on this subject, and Syed Amir Ali, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Allama Shibli and other learned Doctors of Islamic Theology have exhaustively dealt with this problem in their books.

*G.B.S.:* I know that there is a considerable amount of concord between Islam and pure Christianity!

*Maulana:* The correspondence is not merely nominal or superficial, for the Quran distinctly lays down that when the ultimate goal of an inspired or revealed and Divine religion is the Being of God unanimity in such revelation is indispensable. Islam has been conceived as a new religion, but the fact is that according to Quran the religion preached by it is the same that was preached by all the true Prophets, and for the dissemination of the teachings of which all the Prophets, from Abraham right up to Jesus, were deputed by God. It was only because their original teachings were either tampered with, corrupted, and their authenticity became dubious that the Almighty God sent the last Prophet and last Book to restate, confirm and



complete His original Message.

*G.B.S.:* The translations of the Quran, which I have read, certainly go to substantiate your statements. I very much prefer the translation made by one who has adopted a different variation of the arrangement of the verses to that which is generally followed by other translators. I had it always with me during my tour of Marocco and Algeria, and my occasional references to its contents proved to be a source of amusement to the Muslims of those lands. It is one of the editions of "Every Man's Library", and I have commended its wider publicity to some of the publishers.

*Maulana:* The translation you allude to is that of Mr. Rodwell?

*G.B.S.:* Yes.

*Maulana:* There is no doubt that Mr Rodwell has expended a lot of energy and industry in translating the verses of the Quran in their chronological order, but as his knowledge of the Arabic literature and Islamic history was not sufficiently wide and profound, a considerable number of translated passages are so misleading and contain such flagrant mistakes (Which I by no means attribute to a deliberate intent on his part, but, as I have already said, they may be the result of his limited learning in the said spheres), that they are cheating & are

likely to create wrong impressions about Islam. As far as the translation of the Quran are concerned, I would recommend you to read "The Meaning of the Glorious Quran" by Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall, and I am sure that its perusal will enable you to appreciate a great deal more the appealing and impressive style of the Quran's perspective. However, I do not imply that it is a perfect version of the original, for you yourself can aptly judge, being an admittedly splendid writer, that in spite of the translator being the ablest and the best, he can never transmit the force and brilliance of your original writings into his translations.

*G.B.S.:* It is quite true that the original spirit of a writing cannot be transplanted into its translation in another language, and the same is the case with the translations of the Bible, but they have now achieved a very high standard and the process of raising it still more is being continued.

*Maulana:* Although the translations of the Bible may attain the highest stage of perfection from the standpoint of language, but as the original message delivered by Jesus Christ is no extant in its unalloyed purity, one cannot say, under any circumstances, that the translations contain the original message of Christianity or are the genuine versions of the teachings imparted by Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, as the original manuscript of the Bible is no more in existence, no seeker after truth

can quench his thirst, whilst the Quran, in contrast has been preserved in such a manner that there has not been the slightest change, not even to the extent of a letter or a dot. Hence, if we want to know the real teachings of Christianity we can find them in the Quran.

*G.B.S.:* Has there been really no alteration in the Quran, and is it absolutely preserved in its original form? Did Prophet Mohammad know how to write, and is his writing in existence?

*Maulana:* There is a complete and authentic record of each and every word, letter-nay, even the signs and marks of the Quran. The Prophet, immediately following the revelation of a verse or verses to him, used to send for the special scribes appointed for the purpose, and dictate the same to them. When transcribed, he would ask them to recite what they had written and, after listening and verifying it, would explain to them its meaning. The manuscripts in the handwriting of one of the most honoured and trusted among these scribes, by name, Zaid bin Sabit, are preserved intact in the archives of Constantinople and Medina, and all the editions of the Quran in the world are their exact copies, without the difference of even a comma or a dash.

*G.B.S.:* What are there punctuation marks in the Quran?

*Maulana:* The punctuation marks in the English language comprise commas, colons, semi-colons, fullpoints etc., but the principles of Quranic elocution comprehend numerous signs of this kind. For instance, a stop is compulsory in certain places, whilst it is optional in others; some endings are to be fully pronounced, whilst others are quiescent, and so on. The correct accents, pronunciation, accurate halts, etc., are so intricate and difficult of acquisition that the Quranic elocution has been evolved into a distinct art, and copious volumes have been written on its theory and practice.

*G.B.S.:* All this is rather astonishing and new to me. I was also surprised to learn that you delivered a speech on Islam and Science at Nairobi. What I find difficult to understand is: how can you possibly present that picture of Heaven and Hell which is portrayed in the Quran in a manner convincing to persons conversant with science whose minds are inured to accept nothing without visible or palpable proof? I hold the Prophet of Arabia in great esteem, and I can quite understand that it would have been impossible to restrain that illiterate and ignorant race, sunk in the miasma of utter moral depravity, from committing the most heinous crimes, and imbue its people with a desire to strive after righteousness and assimilate high morals and virtues, without projecting such a terrible and intensely awe-inspiring spectacle of Hell and an equally bewitching and enticing image of

Heaven before their vision. I also very much admire the forcible and striking diction of the Quran. What grace and beauty characterise that passage which depicts the dreadful scene of the dooms-day field, and dealing with infanticide, dramatically leaves off at the question, "For what crime wert thou slain?" to the innocent child that was buried alive or put to death. In my opinion it is the most effective way of creating an abiding impression on the minds of the people. But I am afraid I am digressing, for I would very much like to know how the problem of Heaven and Hell can possibly be elucidated in the light of science.

*Maulana:* You are a master of the art of writing, and your enchanting literary productions with your magical pen revolutionise the mentality of the readers. I am sure you will agree with me on this point; that material language cannot possibly act as an apt vehicle for the accurate conveyance of the significance of spiritual problems without the help of metaphors and similes, and these at best can serve to frame analogies. One must therefore bear this fact in mind and make due allowance for the manner of description of Hell and Heaven in the Quran. Simultaneously, however, with such illustrations, that confine their appeal to physical senses, the Quran stipulates in the clearest terms not to be inquisitive regarding the nature of the blessings of Heaven, and under no circumstances think of them in any way comparable to the

objects of this world. The reality of their constitution has been neither witnessed by any human eyes nor have the ears even listened to words capable of expressing it; nay, it is beyond the pale of human imagination, and even pictures of it cannot be visualised. How can it be asserted in the face of this clear explanation that the blessings of Heaven resemble in any way whatsoever the things that please us contribute to our happiness in this world? The truth of the matter, on the contrary, is that just as a consequence of obedience to natural or physical laws, material progress and comfort commensurate with the degree of comprehension and execution follow, as a matter of course, so in proportion to the allegiance of adherence to moral and spiritual laws and their translation into practice one attains the utmost spiritual ease or happiness possible and likewise their violation entails spiritual suffering to the same extent. Now if, according to the law of progress, everything is heading for advance, there must naturally be a zenith of the same, and beyond that there must be no point of further progress. Comfort or happiness and grief or suffering are two states which a person encounters in this life; hence there must be an extreme point of both of these states. This very extreme point of pleasure or bliss is called Heaven, and the extreme point of pain or sorrow, Hell.

Just as there are material media that are either conducive to happiness or instrumental in inflicting suffering in this world, so must there be some

kind of media to procreate that state of bliss or generate pain and suffering in the other world. A metaphorical word-picture of the media of happiness has been presented in the name of Heaven, and the terror-striking, fightful portrait of sufferings has been drawn to represent Hell. Now this other world which we call celestial or spiritual is neither like this material world in which we live and have our beings, nor is it purely spiritual, having no connection whatsoever with matter, and where there are only souls utterly free from matter.

The Human being, body and soul together, is responsible or accountable for his activities. Hence the soul in partnership with the quintessence of happiness or grief suitable to the conditions obtaining in that world. A very hazy picture of those states can be said to reflect itself in those unexplainable experiences of ours which we call dreams.

*G.B.S.:* This is really a very beautiful, eloquent and satisfactory explanation, but will the present-day Muslims be prepared to accept it?

*Maulana:* This description is by no means a concoction of my brain, but, as I have already said, it is propounded by the Quran. I cannot even claim any credit for the manner of description, because of my predecessors, Imams Fakhruddin Razi and Gazali, when addressing enlightened philosophers like yourself, expressed themselves in similar words. If I may say it in the oriental style, I have

only gathered a few crumbs from their magnificent feasts.

All the teachings of Islam are rational; there are no mysteries and dogmas. They only require to be explained for properly making them understood. It is difficult to understand the literature of any art with which we are not conversant. Hence in order to grasp and assimilate the problematic points related to any particular art, we must first acquire knowledge and cultivate intimate acquaintance with that art, and we shall easily understand them when seek their solution in the light of this knowledge.

(At this stage Mr. Shaw's hostess came in, and Mr. Shaw introduced Maulana Saheb to her. Addressing Mr. Shaw, she said that it was almost time to leave for the Docks. Mr. Shaw said he must certainly make a move then. He then turned to Maulana Saheb and said): —

*G.B.S.:* Your conversation is so very interesting and informative that I would like to have the privilege of your company for years, but unfortunately I have to leave now.

*Maulana:* I also ardently desire to have the benefit and enjoyment of exchanging views with a cultured and learned scholar like your good self, particularly when I find that a superficial acquaint-



tance with the teachings of Islam has evoked such a positive statement from you regarding Islam, viz., that "The future religion of the educated, enlightened and cultured people will be *Islam*". I would like to speak to you about the profound philosophical points and the psychological truths that the Quran expounds, so that an enlightened and erudite savant of your calibre, perfectly familiar with the tastes and mental tendencies of the civilised world, can present them to it in a suitable manner.

*G.B.S.:* I am really very sorry that I could spare such a short time for speaking to a learned scholar like yourself.

*Maulana:* I am, however, grateful even for this opportunity, and avail myself of this occasion to present to you the printed copies of two of my lectures on "Religious and Scientific Progress of the World" and "Spiritual Culture in Islam", which I recently delivered at Durban during my tour of South Africa. I also give you this small book on "*Islam*" by my friend, Mr. Elias Burny, a Professor of Economics at the Usmania University, Hyderabad of Deccan, who has made a classified collection of the Quranic verses under various heads with explanatory notes. You will, please, peruse them, and if you will be so kind as to communicate with me on any points, either from these booklets or others, that might need elucidation. I shall be too pleased to try my level best to explain them to

you in writing according to my inadequate knowledge.

*G.B.S.:* There is no doubt that your way of presenting the Islamic teachings is very fascinating, but will the orthodox section of the Muslims agree with you?

*Maulana:* Sooth to say, I myself am strictly orthodox and identify myself with that section which refuses to countenance the slightest alteration in the teachings of Islam. The words of this tradition of the Prophet, viz., that "He who interprets the Quran according to his own opinion should be prepared to accomodate himself in Hell", are indelibly impressed on my mind. Let alone the fundamental principles, I am one of those who try to act in confirmation with the precepts of the least significance.

*G.B.S.:* I have been very pleased to make your acquaintance, and it will be the most precious of all memories of this trip of mine.

(Bidding farewell to each other, the Mulana Saheb wishing G.B.S. a bon voyage, they parted, and G.B.S. was seen standing on the verandah wishing a flying farewell till the car went out of sight).

\* \* \*



George Bernard Shaw



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