

NOTES ON ISLAM

BY

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*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning
of knowledge."—Proverb*

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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
K. AMJUD HUSSAIN.
*One of the four for whom these Notes
were first written,
in 1917.*



FOREWORD

The following Notes were enclosed by the author in his weekly letters to his brother and sons who were students in the Universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh and Birmingham. I persuaded him to allow me to have them printed, as I thought they were suggestive and useful. He has however desired me to say that they should not be regarded as anything but concise memoranda jotted down (at short intervals between the busy hours of his official life) as general answers to questions put to him. They contain some passages which are too concise or abstract, if not vague or enigmatic. But, the author says, he left them designedly so in order to induce his readers to try to understand them or at least to seek explanation and illustration. Numerous foot-notes have been added for the same purpose.

He frankly admits that his view of Islam is neither quite orthodox nor quite heterodox but something midway between the two. It was put forward in order to make his boys think for themselves and argue with him. The first three Notes may be 'skipped' at the first reading.

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Banganapalle,

11th August 1922.

}

K.M.H.

Duty is Deity Work is Worship.—*Sanskrit Proverb*

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Worship Truth Love Humanity.—*Islamic Maxim*

THE MUSLIM PRAYER.[1](#)

Surai Fatiha

Praise be to Thee my God, Lord of the Worlds! O Merciful, Compassionate art Thou! The King of all on Day of Reckoning, Thee only do we worship and adore, To Thee, most merciful, we cry for help; O guide us ever more on the straight path, The path of those to whom Thou gracious art On whom Thine anger falls not then nor now, The path of them that from Thee go not stray. Amen.

Grant that the knowledge I get may be the knowledge worth having.—*Thomas a Kempis*.

NOTES ON ISLAM

Note 1.

Introduction.



WO of you—Lateef and Altaf—will recollect that more than a year ago you wrote to me saying that you were puzzled by certain questions which a Missionary had put to you. I remember that Amjud or Mahmood even went so far as to ask what was the good of Islam, when countries and people professing that faith had weak governments and were crumbling to pieces under the influence of Christian Powers.² I answered your queries only in a general way as your University education had not then advanced far enough. But I think the time has now come when I should try to explain to you what I conceive to be the true spirit of the religion of our fore-fathers.

I firmly believe that Islam is the best³ religion in the world—I mean, Islam rightly understood and interpreted and *not* the 12Muhammadanism⁴ of some of our formularist Maulavies,⁵ who say that a man goes to Hell or Heaven according as he wears his trousers lower or higher than his ankles! They have degraded our religion by paying undue attention to formulas and forms to the exclusion and neglect of its living spirit and reality⁶. The poet Hafiz rightly stigmatised their vain controversies when he said that چون ندیدند حقیقت ره افسانه زدند "since they did not see the fact, they ran after fiction."

I am more than ever convinced of two characteristics of Islam:—

1st.—It is not inconsistent with *true* Christianity, or with any other *true* religion⁷ of which the fundamental principle is توحید One God و حده لا شریک له "the Peerless One."⁸

132nd.—It conforms to modern scientific ideas better than any other religion.


I have already explained, in some of my letters⁹ to you, why I believe that Islam is but a continuation and consummation of Christianity as taught by Jesus himself in *his own speeches* which are reported in the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament. We have nothing to do with the interpretation of his words by his Apostles and others after them. If we take the plain words and the plain meaning of those words reported to have proceeded from his own blessed mouth,¹⁰ we clearly see that they teach the same sublime truths as our Prophet himself inculcated. Jesus did not live long to complete his mission, Muhammad completed it. Both were God's holy messengers **الرسول**. Says the Qur'an: "This day I have completed your religion for you." **اليوم اكملت لكم دينكم**

I need not now go into details, or refer to other religions, to shew that the spirit of Islam is not inconsistent with their true spirit, if rightly conceived and interpreted in the light of modern science. I hope I shall be able some day to write down the result of my own thought and investigation in the matter. I content myself at present with drawing your attention to the first characteristic of Islam, and I propose to write a few Notes to draw your special attention to its second characteristic which is the more remarkable—the characteristic that it is quite consistent with modern ideas of science.

No scientific idea influenced the thought of the last century more profoundly than the idea of progress or development embodied in what is called the Law of Evolution. It is now widely accepted. You will be surprised to know that many an Islamic tenet is entirely in accord with it. Indeed Maulana Rumi outlined it poetically in his famous *Masnawi* in the thirteenth century, in the same manner as Lord Tennyson did in his *Princess* in the nineteenth. I desire that you should try to understand it in its modern form. I strongly recommend that you should read an admirable book by Edward Clodd called *The Story of Creation*¹¹. When I first read it, some years ago, I felt it was as pleasant and interesting as a novel. Its introduction and Part II are quite easy to read. They will give you a very good idea of the great revolution which Darwin and Wallace, Huxley and Spencer have wrought in the thought of our own times.

Note 2.

The First Chapter of the Qur'an.

 THE following is a translation of the "Opening Chapter" of our Holy Qur'an. I have analysed it by placing Roman and Arabic numerals, the first indicating verses آيَا and the second indicating sub-divisions of verses.

Opening Chapter.

In the Name of God
Compassionate, the
Merciful.

Praise be to God,

(1) Lord (Nourisher)
of the Worlds,

(2) the Compassionate,
the Merciful

(3) King of the Day
of Reckoning (= day
of judgment.)

سورة فاتحة

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله

(١) رب العالمين

(٢) الرحمن الرحيم

(٣) مالك يوم الدين

.I

II.

.II

(1) Thee only do we
worship,

(١) اياك نعبد

(2) and Thee only do
we ask for aid.

(٢) و مالك يوم الدين

(3) Guide us in the
right Path (that is)

(٣) اهدنا الصراط المستقيم

16III. the Path of those

صراط الذين

.III

(1) to whom Thou
art gracious,

(١) انعمت عليهم

(2) who are not objects
of wrath,

(٢) غير تامغضوب عاينهم

(3) and who go not
astray.

(٣) و لا الضالين

*Amen*¹²

آمين

The whole Sura divides itself into three parts and each part into three divisions thus:—

Part I.—*Nature of God.*

Three principal attributes of God:—

(1) Creator or Nourisher

رب

(2) Protector

رحمن و رحيم

(3) Adjuster

مالك يوم الدين

Part II.—*Man's duty to God* lies in,

(1) Worship

عبادت

(2) Seeking His Protection

استعانت

(3) Seeking His Guidance

استهدا

Part III.—*The Straight Path* = مذهب اسلام = *for Man*

(1) the path of Grace (= path of those who obtain Grace)

(2) not the Path of Sin (=path of those who deliberately go wrong).

(3) nor the Path of Error (=path of those who by mistake go astray).

Observe:—

(a) Each of the three duties in the second part corresponds with the three attributes mentioned in the first part.

(b) The third part, the Path of Grace, *i.e.*, the straight path, is *the mean between two extremes*—the path of deliberate sinners on the one hand and the path of unwitting stragglers on the other.

(c) The Islamic prayer is simpler than the Christian prayer. I do not say the one is good and the other is bad. No; *both* are *very* good indeed, but the one *seems simpler* than the other. Compare them.

The Christian Prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Adoration.

(a) Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come.

Submission.

(b) Thy will be done in earth
as it is in heaven.

The Muslim Prayer.

THE FATIHA.

Adoration.

(a) Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the
compassionate, the merciful, King of the day of
reckoning.

Submission.

(b) Thee only do we worship and of Thee only do
we ask aid.

Supplication.

(c) Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

St. Matthew, vi 9-13.

If you will carefully compare the parts of each Prayer which I have written as separate paragraphs marked (a), (b) and (c), you will observe that there is difference only in the language, but no difference whatever in the real meaning. There is in both Prayers absolutely the same spirit of

- a) Adoration,
- (b) Submission, and
- (c) Supplication.

Both begin with the *praise* of the Lord to whom all praise is due. This is followed in both by an expression of our *entire dependence* on Him and submission to His will. Lastly, there is *solicitation for guidance*, positive and negative, *viz.*, guidance towards right action and guidance for avoiding temptation.

The three parts (a), (b) and (c) of the Christian as well as of the Muslim Prayer are in perfect accord with the results of a comparative study of the religious systems of the world. They correspond to three essential elements in *all* religions, *viz.*,

- (a) *Belief* in the existence of a Supreme Power which is Infinite and Absolute,
- (b) *Feeling* of man's entire dependence on that Power, and
- (c) *Desire* to seek or solicit guidance of that Power in the daily life of man.

Supplication.

(c) Guide us into the right path—the path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, not the path of those who are the objects of wrath nor of those who have gone astray. Amen.


The Qur'an, i.

You will thus see that both the Lord's Prayer in the Bible and the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an go to the roots of all religions ever professed by man. They are truly Universal Prayers. No man need hesitate to join in the solemn recitation of either.

We ought to view all monotheistic religions—religions which enjoin belief in one God—in the spirit in which St. Peter viewed them when he said (*Acts* x. 34-5): "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." The same is the spirit of the oft-repeated definition of 'Muslims' in the Qur'an: الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات "those who believe and work righteousness." "Trust in the Lord and do good," as the Psalm says.

Note 3.

I.—*What is Religion?*

 have said that *true* Islam is the *best* religion in the world. I must prove my assertion. In order to do so I have to explain:—

- I. What do I mean by religion?
- II. What is true Islam?
- III. Why is it the best religion?

I.—*Religion, God and Nature.*

Religion.—No thinking man can help asking himself the questions: "Whence has this world come? Whither is it bound to go?" in other words, "What was the *origin* **مبد** and what will be the *end* **معا** of the world of men, animals, plants and things that I perceive?" The answers which each man gives to these questions constitute his *religion*. A few earnest persons (poets, philosophers and theologians) try to answer these questions for themselves by patient study and earnest thought¹³. But a large majority of men and women merely take the answers taught them by their parents, teachers or priests. There may possibly be a small number of men who do not trouble themselves about these questions. These are not "thinking men" and may therefore be left out of account.

Religion is a silent and subtle power that works in the heart of man and makes for righteousness. It is generated by his conviction as to the beginning and end of himself and the world in which he lives and moves¹⁴.

God.—No intelligent and intelligible answers can be given to questions as to the origin and the end or the government of *Nature*¹⁵ without assuming the existence of the *One and only one God* who is *Infinite* and *Absolute*, *i.e.*, One who hath neither beginning nor end and who is not conditioned or limited by anything whatever¹⁶. The Infinite and Absolute One has been called by different names by different people at different times¹⁷. Yezdan, Ishwara, Jehovah, God, and Allah are the names, in different languages, of the same *Infinite and Absolute God*.

God of the Granite and the Rose Soul of the Sparrow and the Bee! The mighty tide of being flows Through countless channels, Lord, from Thee.

* Conceptions of God, His attributes, and His relation to Nature.—These have been and will ever be many and various. But I summarise three principal conceptions under each head, for I believe that other ideas, notions or conceptions are but combinations of two or more of these:—

I. Conceptions of God:—

1. God as the Ultimate *Law*.
2. God as the Omnipotent Energy or *Power*.
3. God as the Supreme Being or *Person*¹⁸.

II. Notions of God's principal attributes:—

1. God as Creator or Nourisher.
2. God as Preserver or Protector.
3. God as Adjuster or Judge¹⁹.

*Paragraphs marked with asterisks and their footnotes may be omitted at the first reading.

III. Ideas of God's relation with Nature²⁰ (*i.e.*, with the world of men, animals, plants and other objects, and their inter-relations, of which men are aware):—

1. All is *from* God = God is *above* Nature which He created and governs (Theism).
2. God is *in* All = God is *in* Nature although Nature is not God (Panentheism).
3. God *is* All = God *is* Nature and Nature is God (Pantheism)[21](#).

* The above is but a rough summary. I have neither time nor space to explain and illustrate it. I have ventured to give some hints—imperfect hints, I fear—in the footnotes. I may however state here that, of the above three conceptions, notions or ideas Islam accepts the medium or the middle one which, as a little thought will show, includes the other two conceptions also. You need not at present try to understand the summary or the words given in brackets. My subsequent Notes will explain it to some extent. Please remember that there are many men and many minds, and that there are likely to be as many religions, as many conceptions of God, as many notions of His attributes, and as many ideas of the beginning or end of things, (مبدأ أو معاد) as there are *thinking* minds[22](#).

Let me conclude this Note with a short answer to the question why religion is necessary to Man[23](#). No society is possible without religion, because of the dual nature of Man. As our poets say با بها ئم بهره داري بپوسته says and as all modern men of science (such as Sir Oliver Lodge and others) admit, there is a higher and a lower in every man's nature, the one lifts him up and the other pulls him down in the scale of animal and social existence. Religion is necessary in order that every man's higher nature may conquer his lower nature in order that he may become a social being who is virtuous and does good of his own accord, and may not remain a mere beast whom the whip alone prevents from doing mischief. It is religion that fosters high-thinking and holy-living, so necessary for the advancement of the human race.

Note 4.

II.—*What is true Islam?*



THE answer to this question is contained within the four corners, as it were, of the Opening Sura [24](#) سورة فاتحة which is a general summary of the whole Qur'an. I have already analysed it and asked you to compare it with the Christian prayer called the Lord's prayer. I am sure you have noted and admired its simplicity and clearness and its almost scientific precision and comprehensiveness. I am only amplifying what I have already said when I say that the Sura teaches three cardinal and eternal truths:—

Ist.—There is but One God who has created the worlds, maintains them, and rules them. In the inimitable words of the Sura of Purity.

قل هو الله احد

الله الصمد

Say, God is one.

God is Eternal.

سورة اخلاص

= One.

= Infinite.

He does not beget
nor is He begotten.
And He hath no

لم يلد و لم يولد
و لم يكن له
كفوّاً احد

kith or kin.



= Absolute. [25](#)

2ndly.—(a) God being our Creator, we have to *worship*, adore and love Him and Him alone. This is the duty we owe to God. (b) Again, God being our merciful Preserver, we have to seek the protection of Him and Him alone. This is the duty we owe to ourselves. (c) Finally, God being our Judge or Ruler, we have to solicit guidance of Him and Him alone. This is the duty we owe to our fellow-creatures (including lower animals) in the world we live in.

You must not fall into the error of believing that God is Creator at one time or place, that He is Maintainer or Preserver at another time or place, and that He is Judge or Ruler at a third time or place. No, no; He, being the One and only God, is all the three together, Creator, Preserver and Ruler, at all times and in all places. It is we who, in order to understand Him properly and adore Him rightly, separate in our minds His three principal attributes, and think of Him as our Creator *when* we worship Him, think of Him as our Preserver *when* we seek His protection, and think of Him as our Ruler or Judge *when* we solicit His guidance. It is only we, finite and conditioned creatures, that are tied down to and limited by time, place and circumstances. To God there are none such. He is the One Infinite and Absolute, the One who hath neither beginning nor end—the One who is absolutely unlimited and unconditioned by time, place, circumstances, or anything else. This is the Islamic

conception or idea of God.

3rdly.—What does the Sura teach us as to the guidance which we have to ask of God in our dealings with our fellow-creatures? It is guidance into the straight path. What is the straight path? It is the path of righteousness or the path of *Grace* which is between two extremes, the path of *Sin* and the path of *Error*. A Muslim's right path, *i.e.*, his right course of conduct, lies between two extreme paths or courses of conduct, *viz.*, on the one hand, the path of those who sin, who knowingly and deliberately go against the will of God, which is manifest in Nature, and on the other hand, the path of those who unwittingly, through ignorance, go against His will. The right path lies thus:—

Path of Sin
which leads
to ruin or
destruction.

Path of Grace
which leads to
eternal bliss.

Path of Error
which leads to
confusion worse
confounded.

You thus see that *true* Islam consists in a threefold duty to God, to oneself, and to others, and this duty is to be discharged by simply adopting, under God's guidance, *the mean between two extremes*. As our Prophet has pithily expressed it خير الامور الوسطى "the best of things is the medium thing." This is the fundamental principle which underlies everything which is Islamic or Muslim.[26](#) Please remember it, as also the three-fold Islamic Duty:—

(a) Duty to God, which is Worship or Adoration implying, as it does, complete submission to His will = اسلام

(b) Duty to yourself, which is self-preservation or self-perfection = اسلام


(c) Duty to others, which is peace and good will towards them = اسلام

"Islam"[27](#) as a religion means nothing more nor less than those three duties.

Islam is not Philosophy, much less is it Science. It is but a Religion, *an attitude of man's mind towards his environment*—the attitude of self towards others and God. Both Philosophy and Science influence one's attitude of mind. To that extent Islam has to reckon with both. It is therefore that Sufis and other philosophic sects have risen in Islam from time to time. The sphere of Islam is Faith manifesting itself in good works; and the spheres of Science and Philosophy are Knowledge and Reason. The latter often come into contact with the former, but can never be identified with it.

Note 5.

What is not Islam.

 IN my previous Note I tried to sketch briefly what is true Islam. I now offer a few observations on, or illustrations of, what is *not* Islam. In order to know anything quite well, it is desirable not only to know *what it is* but also to know *what it is not*.

1. The religion taught by the Qur'an and the Traditions احاديث of our Prophet is *Islam* and not "Muhammadanism," as it is often named. Those who profess Islam are *Muslims* and not "Muhammadans," as they are called. The word "Muselman" is but a corruption of the Arabic plural مسلمون of the singular مسلم. We and our religion have been called [28](#) after the name of Muhammad just as the terms Christians and Christianity have been derived from the name Christ. But "Muhammadanism" and "Muhammadans" are not at all the correct names of "Islam" and "Muslims" as you will presently see. [29](#)

2. From the point of view of Islam, all religions may be divided thus:

Religions are either,



False: being beliefs
in more gods than
one,
(Paths of Sin)



or



True: being beliefs
in one and only God;
and True Religions
are either,



Pure, such as
true Islam unmixed
with any
inconsistent
ideas.
(Paths of Grace)



or



Mixed, such as
religions which
mix up inconsistent
ideas with the
idea of one God.
(paths of Error)

Observe that a pure Religion, such as true Islam, comes in between false Religions and mistaken or mixed

Religions, just as the Quranic Path of Grace lies between the Path of Sin and the Path of Error. It is the mean between two extremes.

3. It is not Islam to believe that there has been no true religion besides Islam.³⁰ Such an erroneous belief leads to intolerance, thereby begetting bigotry and fanaticism تعصب. It is 31contrary to the teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet. The first verse of the second *Sura* سورة الم = commands us to believe in not only what was revealed to Muhammad but also in what was revealed to those who went before him. It clearly indicates that there are, and will ever be, many true religions of which Islam is one. Almost the first saying of our Prophet reported in collections of his traditions احاديث is "whoever says 'there is no god but God,' will attain Salvation" *i.e.*, will obtain eternal bliss. This shews clearly that all religions which inculcate belief in one God are true religions—are right Paths of Grace which lead to eternal bliss. Observe that most Muhammadans (not Muslims) of to-day have forgotten this principle and have therefore become intolerant fanatics,³¹ which accounts largely for the loss of political power of most Muhammadan Governments of modern times.

4. Neither is it Islam to believe that all religions are true. Such an erroneous belief leads to indifference, thereby begetting caprice and impiety. It is obviously contrary to the teaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet, for they both denounce many a false religion. If everybody thinks that every religion is true, there will be no two men professing the same religion, and there will be no real agreement between their thoughts and actions. Co-operation³² اتفاق و among men (which is the root of Family, Society and State) would tend to become impossible. Note that it is the indifference to religion and the consequent impiety of some of the Muhammadans of to-day that accounts mostly for their lack of co-operation, and for their loss of political power in modern times. Degradation is the lot of *faithless* Muslims, for as the Qur'an says, "Ye will be exalted only if ye be faithful Muslims."

From what has been said you can easily infer that we should adopt the mean between two extremes and must therefore believe that neither are all religions true nor are they all false, but that *some religions* are true and that

Islam is one of them. The characteristic mark of true religions is belief in one God; and this indeed is the reason why Muslims are permitted to eat and live with, and even marry, Jewesses, Christians and others who believe in one God and possess sacred Scriptures.

5. I, for one, would not hesitate to call all Monotheists (Jews, Christians, and other Unitarians **موحدين**) *Muslims*, because they believe in one God: but I would not call them *Momins* **مومن**, because they do not believe in one God in accordance with the teaching of our Prophet. You know that our Creed **كلمة** consists of two parts:—

- (i) There is no god but God,
- (ii) And Muhammad is His Messenger.

Those who believe in the first part are Muslims (**مسلم** = the peaceful)³³ and those who believe in the first as well as the second part of the Creed are Momins (**مومن** = the faithful). Both Muslims and Momins are believers in one God; the only difference between them is that Muslims may not (like Momins) accept Muhammad as their guide in the belief. The Qur'an (iii. 83) defines Islam thus:—

Say ye; We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down (revealed) to us, and that which hath been sent down to Abraham and Ismail and Issac and Jacob and the tribes; and that which hath been given to Moses and to Jesus and that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord. No difference do we make between them—and to God we are resigned (Muslims).

6. "There is no deity but God." Since God is One, His Revelation to Man cannot be other than one and the same for all time. There has therefore been and will ever be but one true religion. That religion is Islam **إِن الدِّينَ** "Verily the (only) religion with God is Islam" (Q. iii 17). All the prophets from Adam to


Muhammad received but one and the same Revelation and therefore preached Islam and Islam only ذلك الدين "It was (and is) the standard religion"—Q. xii. 41.[34](#) اقيم

Whenever any people went astray and deserted Islam for idolatry a prophet arose among them to preach Islam and bring them back to righteousness.[35](#) Each prophet or messenger of God did nothing but try to restore the universal religion to its pristine simplicity and purity.

It was only in interpreting the Revelation and applying it to the practical needs of their age, that successive prophets and their followers differed; and the differences gave rise to the so-called *religions* and religious systems of the world.

Note 6.

"Islam" and "not-Islam".

 must devote this Note also to my observations on "Islam" and "not-Islam" in order to prepare you for a just appreciation of my contention that there are many good religions in the world but Islam is the best of them³⁶.

1. The Prophet Muhammad lived and died more than thirteen hundred years ago. There are now on the face of the earth no less than 250 millions (= 25 crores) of human beings who profess his religion, and who love and respect him just as his own immediate followers loved and respected him. These two simple facts are enough to prove—

- (1) that there must be something real and true in the religion professed by so many people, and
- (2) that the man who preached and established it must have been both great and good to an extraordinary degree;

for common experience leads us to conclude (a) that nothing which is false or unreal can survive centuries of change and (b) that none who is not good and great can be loved and respected by millions of men. No Muslim or Momin need therefore believe in any thing more than:—

- (i) that Islam is a real and true religion, and
- (ii) that Muhammad was a very great and good man.³⁷

Thus, your belief in one God لا اله الا الله makes you a Muslim³⁸ (= *peaceful*), no matter by what other name you call yourself; and your belief in the goodness and greatness³⁹ of Muhammad محمد رسول الله makes you a Momin (= *faithful*), no matter by what name others may call you. Let me quote here a passage from Sir Edwin

Arnold's Preface to his beautiful poem "The Pearls of Faith: the Ninety-Nine Names of Allah:" **اسماء حسنى**

"The soul of Islam is its declaration of the *unity* of God: its heart is the inculcation of an absolute *resignation* to His will. Not more sublime, in religious history appears the figure of Paul the tent-maker, proclaiming 'the Unknown God' at Athens, than that of the camel-driver Muhammad, son of Abdullah and Amina, abolishing all the idols of the Arabian Pantheon, except their chief—Allahu ta 'Ala, God the Most High—and under that ancient and well-received appellation establishing *the one-ness of the origin, government, and life of the Universe*. Thereby that marvellous and gifted Teacher created a vast empire of new belief and new civilization, and prepared a sixth part of humanity for the *developments and reconciliations* which later times will bring. For Islam must be conciliated; it cannot be thrust scornfully aside or rooted out. It shares the task of the education of the world with its sister religions, and it will contribute its eventual portion to

—"that far-off divine event Towards which the whole creation moves."

The *italics* are mine. I shall have to refer to them in my subsequent Notes. Observe, the cosmopolitan poet uses only the word "Islam" and not "Muhammadanism".

2. It is not Islam or Eman **ايمان** to deify Muhammad or to represent him to be akin to God, as sometimes some Moulvies represent him and call him "the One (Ahad) in the guise of Ahmad⁴⁰." Our Prophet himself never claimed that he was anything more than a mere man. Indeed, he taught us **الله لا اله الا الله** **والله اعلم** say **الله اعلم**

ان محمداً عبده ورسوله that he was but "a servant and messenger of God." The only thing he ever claimed for himself was that God had chosen him to be a messenger **رسول** to convey His messages to men. "That an immense mass of fable and silly legend," says Rodwell, "has been built up upon the basis of the Qur'an, is beyond a doubt; but for this Muhammad is not answerable,⁴¹ any more than he is for the wild and bloodthirsty excesses of his followers in after ages."

3. God's messages which Muhammad delivered to men were all collected soon after his death and are preserved intact in a remarkable book called the Qur'an—a book which has lived through no less than thirteen centuries without undergoing the least alteration in a single word or even a dot! The difference in the messages contained in the Qur'an and the ordinary sayings of the Prophet reported in books on Hadis حديث is simply this:—that when delivering God's messages Muhammad himself felt, and those who were in his company witnessed, that he was inspired by some divine energy or power which impelled him to say what he said; whereas at other times, when he was talking like an ordinary man, no signs of divine energy or inspiration were visible. It will carry me too far if I endeavour to explain here the real nature of "the divine inspiration" under which he delivered what he and others believed to be "divine messages". You will understand it if you read such books as Professor James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Let us, like good Momins, take it as a *fact*, what our Prophet's intimate companions صحابة vouched, that he appeared to be quite a different man when he uttered such messages. Their style or matter itself even to this day proves to all unbiassed minds that they are no ordinary sayings of an ordinary man. There is something unique in them which we can only feel but cannot define or express in words. Even historians and biographers like Gibbon and Muir and translators like Rodwell, Palmer and Lane-Poole are obliged, in spite of themselves, to admit and admire, what some of them call, the rugged grandeur and eloquence of the Qur'an. Even Sale says that some passages are really sublime.

4. We call the Qur'an *the word of God*, chiefly because it contains messages of high spiritual value delivered by *an illiterate man* like Muhammad. It is neither a history like some of the books of the Old Testament, nor a biography like the four Gospels of the Bible. It is only a collection of sermons, commands, and instructions delivered and issued from time to time as occasions required. It contains, indeed, references to stories of older Prophets and previous events well known⁴⁰ to the people of Arabia. But they are less by way of narration than by way of illustration. They are parables more or less 42 (تلك الامثال نضر بها لناس). Commentators like Zamakh-shari (تفسير كشاف) and Imam Razi (تفسير كبير) whose learning and authority cannot be questioned, have clearly proved that there is nothing in the Qur'an which is improbable or cannot be rationally explained to

be quite in accordance with the laws of Nature **قانون قدرت**. If you read Sir Syed Ahmad's Commentary **تفسير** or his Essays **خطبات** you will find rational explanations of the ideas of Paradise and Hell, the Day of Judgment,⁴³ etc. I need not dwell on them here. I would however draw your attention to what is called the rule of "Parsimony in Thought" which is in vogue among men of Science. It is that if and when you can explain anything by what is well-known and understood by every one, you should not believe in the existence of "supermen" or assume the occurrence of supernatural events. When, for example, we can explain any action of Muhammad as an ordinary action of a reasonable man, we should not assume or believe that he performed a miracle. If we can explain the defeat and discomfiture of Abraham's Army by natural causes, such as an epidemic, we ought not to assume the occurrence of any supernatural event⁴⁴.

5. The Qur'an does not favour any particular system of Philosophy. It leaves Muslims free to adopt any system of thought that commends itself to them, provided that it is not inconsistent with the (توحيد) idea of the one eternal and absolute God. Thus the Qur'an confines itself to the sphere of religion—the sphere where man is brought face to face with his God.

(a) *What, then, is the object or aim of the Qur'an?*

من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه (He who has understood himself has understood his God.)

(b) *Why should a man be revealed unto himself?*

In order that he might know his true relation with the rest of the world so that he might shape his conduct accordingly *i.e.*, be true to himself, true to others, and true to his God in thoughts, words, and deeds.

42

(c) *How does the Qur'an reveal a man unto himself?*

By showing him:—

(1) God in History [45](#) (هو ا ل اول و He is the First and the Last.)

(2) God in Nature [46](#) (و الظا He is the Manifest.)

(3) God in Man's Conscience [47](#) (و الباطن and He is the Hidden—Qur'an lvii. 3.)

In this sense the Qur'an is truly a revelation!

His sign is in all things,

ففى كل شى له آية *

Indicating that He is One.

تدل علما انه و احد *

Note 7.

III.—*Why is Islam the best religion?*

MY real task begins with this Note. I have to explain to you why I consider Islam⁴⁸ the best of the religions that are now professed by men all over the world. Mark, I do not say that other religions are not good, but I only say that Islam is the best religion of all those I know. Why do I say so? Because no other religion accords so well as Islam with the modern ideas of Science.

By applying the adjectives "good," "better" and "best" to religions, I indicate the *degree* to which each religion, by its tenets and teaching, induces men to seek their welfare **فلاح**: and by the word "Science" **علم** I mean simply the systematised knowledge of things known and knowable.

Science discovers things that are necessary or desirable for human welfare. *Arts* generally show the way in which those things can be obtained or manufactured. *Governments* provide, or ought to provide, facilities for scientific investigation and for improvement in arts. And it is *Religion* that should move men to take the fullest advantage of the science and arts of the time. You may take a horse to a river but you cannot make him drink unless he is thirsty. If he is thirsty he will drink of his own accord; but if he is not, neither the appearance of clear water, nor the easy way to get at it, nor indeed your whip or coaxing can ever induce him to drink. In the same way Science may show you water or anything that is useful, Arts may show you different ways of getting it, the Government of your State may offer rewards or even threaten punishment; but you will not drink, that is to say, you will not take advantage of the good things shown you and placed at your disposal, unless you are thirsty, unless there is something in you which impels you to it. This thirst, this something that is the moving force or *motive*, is created or furnished by Religion.

The chief use of religion lies in the desire that it fosters in men to live well, and virtuously.⁴⁹ It is true that for most men the fear of punishment and the hope of reward, either here or hereafter, are motives for right conduct:

and some religions (and even Islam as taught by some Moulvies) give glowing pictures of Heaven 45 and Hell awaiting good and bad people after death.⁵⁰ But these motives are unworthy of the higher nature قوا ئی ملکوتی of man. They are like the crack of a whip or the show of green grass to a horse that will not run. They are not so effective and lasting as the high spiritual motive for a virtuous life furnished by true religion. I cannot dwell further on this point without entering upon a philosophical or metaphysical discussion which is foreign to the purpose of these Notes. Suffice it to say that the spiritual or religious motive for virtuous conduct is the best of all motives, as it conforms to the higher or angelic تہا کو nature of man and assists him in subduing his lower or animalی بها nature.⁵¹

"The son of man is a unique and complex product (of Evolution) which has combined in him the natures of both the angel and the beast. If he leans towards the latter, his animal nature, he falls lower than the beast itself, but if he turns his attention to the former, his angelic nature, he rises higher than the angel himself."

آدمی زاده طرفی
معجزو نے است
از فرشتی سر
شتی وز حیوان
گر کند میل این
شود کم ازین
ور کند قصد آن
شود بی ازان

It is but religion, true Religion, that enables the "son of man" *i.e.*, mankind to surpass angels in godliness. Note, this is exactly what Sir Oliver Lodge says in his book, *The Substance of Faith allied with Science*.

There is another use of Religion to which I should refer briefly before I pass on to the main argument. You always intend doing many things but never succeed in doing them *all*, either because you change your mind or

because somebody or something prevents you from carrying them out. It is nevertheless important to yourself and society that your wishes, which are naturally more numerous than your actions, should be as good as the actions themselves. Laws and social conventions cannot adequately control them, for they take account of only outward manifestations, that is, actions which flow or result from your inward desires, passions and prejudices. These are controlled by such religions as true Christianity and true Islam which take that as done which was merely intended to be done, and inhibit bad intentions even before they appear in action.

Now, whatever religion supplies the best motives for virtuous conduct and most effectively prevents mischievous intentions, must necessarily be one which conforms best with the most approved ideas of the science and arts of the time. I hold that Islam is such a religion.[52](#)

Let me begin by showing a conformity of Islam to a modern idea, that there are more worlds than one.[53](#) There are still some religions which assume that there is no other world than the world we live in, and that God created and maintains it for men only. Science has proved that such assumptions are unwarranted, and has even suggested grounds for believing that there are beings in the innumerable worlds of stars. This world of ours with its inhabitants has therefore no right to monopolise God to itself. Nor indeed have we, human beings, any right to consider ourselves as its superior inhabitants. Science is now-a-days on the track of finding out beings who are or who may be superior to man. Note that all this is implied in the expression **رب العالمين** "the Lord of the *worlds*" contained in the Sura and other parts of the Qur'an. It does not say "the king of the *world*" (**رب العالمين**) or of *men* **رب العالمين** but says generally and truly that God is the King or Lord of great or grand *worlds*: **رب الانسان**, the definite article **رب العالمين** in Arabic is often used to express greatness or grandeur as in the word **الله** which means the Most High God.

According to Islam there are two sources of knowledge, *Science* and *Revelation*: the one represents man's effort to learn God's ways, and the other represents God's grace to discover His ways to man.[54](#) I for one believe that the difference between the two sources of knowledge corresponds to the difference between "Experience"

and "Intuition," between Acquired Ideas and Innate Ideas—a difference which modern philosophers (Spencer and Bergson) consider to be one of degree only and not of kind.

Note 8.

Unity⁵⁵ and Union.

I cannot go over the whole field of Muslim theology to show how its ideas are in accord with the scientific thought of our days. I will confine myself to three principles and three maxims implied in the analysis of the Opening Surah سورة فتح given in one of my previous Notes⁵⁶.

I. The verse الحمد لله رب العالمين الرحمن الرحيم ما اليوم الدين points to *the Principle of Unity*:

There is but one God who created the worlds, maintains and rules them.

From this results the *Maxim of Union & Loyalty*:

Union is strength = Be loyal to your King.

II. The verse نستعين اهدنا الصراط المستقيم points to *the Principle of Perfection*:

Worship of God, His protection, and guidance are necessary for the perfection of our mind and body.

From this results the *Maxim of Self-help*:

God helps those who help themselves = Be true to yourself.

III. The verse صراط الذين انعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم points to *the Principle of Moderation*:

It is the straight path of righteousness that enables you to avoid crooked paths of sin and error and leads you to happiness.

From this results the *Maxim of the Average*:

Adopt the mean of two extremes = Be moderate in everything.

I will now endeavour to shew, as briefly and as simply as possible, how the principles and maxims I have stated correspond with the best scientific ideas of the present age. By "the best scientific ideas," I mean nothing more than *conclusions* arrived at by eminent men of science after severe study and prolonged investigation. I can only refer to the conclusions as such without attempting to summarise the reasoning, etc. by which they have been reached. You may read the works of authors I shall name, if you wish to learn more of their thoughts.

I.

Principle of Unity.

1. The first Principle of Unity توحيد implies that there is but one Energy or Force whose different transformations we call *forces*, but one Life whose appearance in different shapes we call *lives*, and but one Mind whose different manifestations we call *minds*. But the universal Energy, the51 universal Life, and the universal Mind57 الرحمن الرحيم مالك يوم الدين are themselves but so many forms, appearances or manifestations of the one Being الله who is Infiniteالصمد and Absoluteلم يلد و لم يولد و لم يكن

احد. This is exactly what scientific men and philosophers have said and are saying to-day. Read the works of any of the eminent men mentioned in the margin, 1. Herbert Spencer.

2. Dr. A.R. Wallace.

3. Prof. James.

4. Sir Oliver Lodge.

5. Dr. Theodore Merz. and you will find that the conclusion they have reached after life-long investigations, tallies remarkably with the conception of God which Islam formulated centuries ago.

Every child begins with the experience of 'This is *mine*' and 'That is *not mine*.' This experience matures in the

adult into "I" and "not-I"—the *subject* that knows and the *object* that is known. We call the *knower* or subject, Mind; and the *known* or object, Matter. Most modern Philosophers agree in believing that Mind and Matter are but two aspects of One Reality underlying All. Just as a big building like the Falaknuma Palace presents different aspects when viewed from different directions, and yet is one and the same building; so the Reality of Existence *appears to us* in different aspects as Mind and Matter, and yet is one and the same Reality⁵⁸.

Dr. Theodore Merz of the Durham University, at the end of his grand survey of the Scientific Thought of Europe in the 19th Century,⁵⁹ says: "The scientific mind advances from the idea of Order or arrangement to that of Unity through the idea of Continuity."

The process adopted by Science of arriving at Unity is only the reverse of what Islam adopted: the former begins *a posteriori* with Order, finds Continuity and arrives at Unity, but the latter started *a priori* with Unity, passed over Continuity, and found Order, thus:—

Science. *Islam.*

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Order | 1. Order 1. Unity رب العالمين = الله The Reality ⁵⁸ of which both Mind and Matter are different aspects. |
| 2. Continuity | 2. Continuity الرحمن الرحيم = Force or Energy. |
| 3. Unity | 3. Order 60. الملك يوم = Order or Process. |

What Sir Edwin Arnold calls the soul of Islam, *i.e.*, the Principle of Unity, so patently corresponds with the ultimate results of modern Science and Philosophy, that I need not dwell on it at any great length. It is sufficient to point out that Science has now proved three Unities, the Unity of *Substance*, the Unity of *Force*, and the Unity of *Process*; and Philosophy has shown that the three Unities resolve themselves into One Infinite Power.⁶¹

"There is no strength (to avoid evil) nor ability (to do good) except through God who is great and supreme."

لا حول و لا قوة الا بالله العلي
العظيم

Maxim of Union and Loyalty.

2. How is the Maxim of Union and Loyalty inferred from the principle of Unity? Man, being a creature of God, should try to be godly and godlike, try to imitate God in actions, try to co-operate with his fellow creatures for the good of all, and should thus attain the ideal: "Union is Strength." This is the Islamic doctrine of Atonement⁶² (= at-one-ment **فنا فى الله**): to be *at one* with God by *union* and *co-operation* with God's creatures so far as your and their constitutions and environments allow. But you need not bother yourself with theories at present. It will be enough if you remember that the ultimate aim or the sole object of the Prophet's mission was to establish the universal union and brotherhood of mankind by means of a firm belief in the eternal truth of God's unity. He preached the Unity of God and worked all his life for the union of men into a universal Brotherhood.

In order that you should *co-operate*, i.e., work together with your fellow-men for the good of all, your work must needs be *co-ordinated*. It must be guided and directed so that it tallies with the work of others. This guidance and direction comes from your leader, whom you and your fellow-workers must obey, in order to attain the best results. Co-operation thus implies Co-ordination which requires a leader—Caliph or King—whom you ought to follow loyally. *Loyalty to your leader* is therefore the gist of co-operation. The Qur'an and the Traditions are full of injunctions for obedience to "those in authority among you"

اولوا الامر منكم "The surest way of pleasing God is to obey the King."

Modern Science teaches exactly the same thing. I have a series of little books in my Library called "People's Books" published at 6d. each by Messrs. Jack, London. One of them on "Zoology" is written by Professor MacBride, F.R.S. He traces the development of Man from Protozoa,—little specks of animalculæ—and points out how each species of animals has risen higher than another by (i) greater "inventive capacity", the capacity of adopting new means to an old end and old means to a new end: and (ii) higher "tribal morality" implied in co-operation and loyalty to leaders. He says: "Mankind progresses by the appearance of individuals in whom (besides the inventive genius) the instincts of co-operation and loyalty are more strongly developed". It is precisely those instincts that Islam fosters by its doctrine of the universal brotherhood of Muslims—a doctrine which implies primarily loyalty to your King. Just as the affairs of a family like yours, consisting of a dozen members, cannot prosper unless each follows loyally the lead of the eldest, or the wisest among you; so the affairs of a nation can never be in a satisfactory condition unless each individual is loyal to his King and country, and co-operates with his Government by willingly doing what is required of him.

Muhammad enjoined اطلب العلم ولو كان "Seek knowledge even if thou hast to go for it to China"—(the farthest country known in his days).

Delve gems of Science divine Ev'n unto Cathay's mine.

He said that wisdom was the birthright of every Muslim who should seize it wherever he found it. He thus encouraged the learning of Science and the consequent acquirement of inventive capacity which is biologically as essential for human progress as co-operation and loyalty.

A study of animal life from the lowest animalcule to the highly civilized man, teaches us to know, feel and act, in a particular manner, *viz.*,

(a) to *know* our environment, *i.e.*, to know the Laws of Nature in order to improve our general capacity for invention, manufacture and commerce, (Knowledge)

(b) to *feel* for our fellow-men in order to increase mutual good-will so necessary for co-operation, (Sympathy)

(*c*) and to *act* for the general good of our race under the guidance of our political and social leaders, (Loyalty).

"Knowledge, Sympathy and Loyalty" are thus the watchwords of the Science of to-day no less than of the Islam of our ancestors.[64](#)

Note 9.

Perfection and Self-help.

ALLOW me to explain here that my object is not to persuade you to believe what I say but only to make you think for yourself. I will therefore avoid arguments and discussions as much as possible and content myself with bare outlines of certain Islamic doctrines and brief references to the corresponding ideas of modern Science. I shall be very pleased if they serve to excite your curiosity and stimulate your thought.

II.

Principle of Perfection.

1. The second Muslim doctrine which I have called the Principle of Perfection may be inferred from the second part of the Sura:—It is essential for our perfect development that we should worship God and implore Him for help and guidance in the discharge of the three-fold duty of our life.

No sane man thinks that he is perfect as he is. There is always a feeling of some sort in our mind that somehow, and in some respect or other, we are not as perfect as we should be. It is to remove this feeling of imperfection inherent in us that we have to worship God and supplicate His help and guidance. If you ask: "Why should I worship God?" Islam answers your question by asking another: "Why should you admire beauty in Nature and Art?" You can answer only: "Because it is beautiful. I am so constituted that I cannot do otherwise than admire a beautiful object when I see it". You are unable to give any other reason satisfactorily accounting for your admiration of the beautiful. Islam returns a similar answer to your question: "*You should worship God because He is God*". You, as one of His creatures, cannot help worshipping or reverently adoring Him when you see, at every instant of your life, manifold manifestations of His divine Goodness and Beauty. Some Sufis⁶⁵ even go to the extent of identifying God with "Infinite Beauty" *حسن ازلى* which is the object of their love *عشق* and ecstasy *وجد*.

You remember the verse which every devout Muslim recites when he hears the news of the death of any one
الله وانا اليه راجعون

"Verily we are God's and to Him we shall return".

This as well as some other verses support the Islamic belief in the re-union of a man's soul with God. As I have mentioned in my previous Note, Islam conceives that there is but one Universal Soul. Small parts—infinitesimal fractions—of the Universal Soul are confined in men's bodies and break free at death to re-join the Whole⁶⁶. This belief is in entire accord with Sir Oliver Lodge's theory (or "speculation", as he calls it) put forward in his book, *Faith allied to Science*. Without stopping to enquire how far the belief indicated by Qur'anic verses, or the theory advanced by a man of science, is supported by scientific facts, I would only point out that it gives a clear and intelligible meaning to the word "worship" عبادت. It is the communion of the fractional soul, which is somehow confined in a man's living body, with the Whole Soul, the Soul of the Universe, to which it—the fractional soul—shall return some day freed from the trammels of the flesh. This "communion" عبادت includes Adoration تهليل and تسبيح and Prayer دعا.

I cannot do better than quote Sir Oliver Lodge's admirable description of the meaning and object of Prayer:—

"In prayer we come into close communion with a Higher than we know, and seek to contemplate Divine perfection. Its climax and consummation is attained when we realize the universal Permeance, the entire Goodness and the Fatherly Love of the Divine Being."

الحمد لله رب العالمين الرحمن مالك يوم الدين

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, compassionate and merciful, King of the day of Reckoning.]

"Through prayer we admit our dependance on a Higher Power, for existence and health and everything we possess; we are encouraged to ask for whatever we need as children ask parents; [ادعوني استجب لكم] Call upon

me—I will hearken unto you] and we inevitably cry for mercy and comfort in times of tribulation and anguish."

"The spirit of simple supplication may desire chiefly:—

"1. Insight and receptiveness to truth and knowledge.

ايم نعبد We worship Thee alone.]

"2. Help and guidance in the practical management of life.

واياك نستعين We seek help from Thee alone.]

"3. Ability and willingness to follow the light whithersoever it leads."

اهدنا الصراط المستقيم Guide us into the right path]

Compare the verses I have placed in brackets with what Sir Oliver says, and you will observe how well he has interpreted the Qur'an. It looks as if he had the Opening *Sura فاتحة* before him when he wrote. Even the sequence of his ideas corresponds *practically* with the order of the verses. But you may be quite sure that he never thought of the Qur'an at all. He evolved it all from his own inner consciousness well trained by scientific studies.

Maxim of Self-help.

2. There are numerous verses in the Qur'an which enjoin "purification *تزكيم* of one's self" and prohibit "cruelty *ظلم* to one's own mind". They obviously imply the rule of conduct which I have called the Maxim of Self-help. No one has expressed it more beautifully and truthfully than Shakespeare in the well-known speech of Polonius.

This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to

any man.

Herbert Spencer, Prof. T.H. Green, Lecky (Historian), Profs. Muirhead, Mackenzie, and Sen.

It is the basis of the ethical system advocated by authors mentioned in the margin. There are at present two contending schools of Morality. Each tries to determine what is 'good' or 'bad', and sets up a 'standard' or test by which men's actions should be judged as 'right' or 'wrong'. The standard according to the one school is Happiness (the surplus of pleasure over pain); according to the other it is Perfection (the fullest development of men as social beings). I think the latter school is more in favour now than it was at the end of the last century. Men of science now-a-days realize with Herbert Spencer that every one ought to develop himself by freely exercising all the powers of his mind and body to the fullest extent consistent with, and limited by, the *like* exercise by his fellow men.⁶⁷ I cannot expatiate on this subject without entering into the realms of philosophy and metaphysics. I have only to say that the teaching of Islam as regards self-development is in entire accord with the views of latter-day moralists.

If you are a student of Ethics you will observe that the doctrine of "making the most of oneself" (Perfection) is, in accordance with the Islamic principle of Moderation, the mean of two extreme doctrines:—the doctrine of "duty for duty's sake" (Rigourism) on the one hand, and the doctrine of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (Utilitarianism) on the other.

Duty—Perfection—Utility.

I have to add that "self-perfection" really means "self-help," = due exercise of one's faculties with patience and perseverance. If you have not read Dr. Smiles' book on Self-help, you had better read it at your earliest convenience. I can recommend no better commentary on the saying: "God helps those who help themselves."⁶⁸

Note 10.

Moderation and Via Media.

Islam⁶⁹ is, so to speak, the youngest of all the great religions that are now professed by millions of people. Like a child who is heir to all the mental and physical tendencies inherited and acquired by his ancestors, Islam inherited all the revelations which "one hundred and eighty thousand" (*i.e.* innumerable) prophets had communicated to the world before the advent of Muhammad. I have already referred to the injunction, contained in the Qur'an, that we should believe not only what was revealed to Muhammad himself, but also what was revealed to all "Messengers of God" who had come before him; provided always that we have authentic records of those revelations.⁷⁰ (This proviso is very important.) It is therefore no detraction from the merits of Islam that some of its doctrines resemble those of other revealed religions. Parsis say that Islam borrowed **بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم** "In the name of God the most merciful and most compassionate"⁷¹ from their ⁶⁴holy scripture, Zendavesta, which begins with the words **بنام ایزد بخشا ئنده بخشا یشگر** داد. Some Christian writers on Islam seem to take delight in pointing out that the Prophet of Arabia borrowed this, that, and the other doctrine from certain Christians and Jews whom he had met in his earlier life. It is very doubtful whether he had ever met such people. But it is certain that he was too illiterate **امی** to understand their recondite doctrines if they had condescended to teach him. Even if we admit that he borrowed doctrines from other religions, his own religion is not thereby rendered the less valuable; for there is no religion which is *absolutely* original. He never denounced former religions but only claimed to have confirmed and supplemented them by the religion revealed to him. He always referred to "former revelations" with great respect.

Muslims picture the Supreme Truth as a beautiful citadel built on the top of a steep mountain. Different religions are but so many paths [هذا](#) leading to it from different directions. In their estimation Islam is the best and the easiest path of all. This fanciful idea implies that some of the paths might cross each other at different parts of their course, and others might run parallel to one another or even run together for a considerable distance. Many religions may therefore have certain doctrines bearing close resemblance to each other like parallel paths. Some religions may even have certain doctrines in common, like paths running together. All religions are, and purport to be, paths leading to one and the same citadel of Truth.[72](#) None the less has each of them an individuality of its own and a claim that it is better and easier than all others.[73](#)

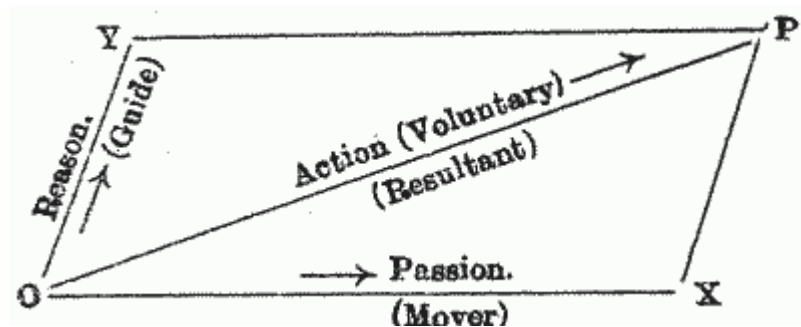
III.

Principle of Moderation.

I have prefaced this Note with the above remarks because the Principle of Moderation and the connected Maxim of the Mean, which are indicated in the third and last part of the Sura, were enunciated by Plato [طون](#) and his disciple Aristotle [ارسطو](#) who lived more than 1,000 years before Muhammad. Some Muslims count those great sages of ancient Greece among the innumerable (1,800,000) Messengers of God who preceded 66our Prophet.[74](#) The records [75](#) [صحائف](#) possess an authority second only to that of the Qur'an itself, being in fact revelations which God vouchsafed from time to time for the benefit and guidance of mankind.

1. I need not repeat what I have already said as to 'the Path of [غاية](#) [صراط الذين انعمت عليهم](#) being the *mean* between two *extremes*, 'the Path of [المغضوب عليهم](#) [Sin](#) and 'the Path of Error' [ولا الضالين](#). I may however explain that the pursuit of the Path of Grace implies the Principle of Moderation in the sense that we should fully and freely exercise all our mental and physical powers *with due regard to their respective limitations*. For all practical purposes, you may take Reason, Passion and Action as the principal representatives of a man's powers, and view Reason as the guiding force in his constitution,

Passion as the moving force, and Action (voluntary acts and omissions) as the resultant of the guiding and moving forces thus:—



Now, the Principle of Moderation means simply that you should not allow your passions to influence your actions unduly, nor should you allow your reason to control your passions unduly; but you should ever try to hold the balance even between them in order that the resultant action might be quite right—might discharge the three-fold duty of man,—and might thereby tend (be it in ever so small a degree) to the perfection of the individual and the race. If at any time your passion over-rides your reason, you commit Sin; and on the contrary, if you exercise your reason so much as to stifle your passion altogether, you fall into Error. If you permit neither reason, nor passion to discharge their respective functions, you lapse into Inaction which is again an Error. Undue suppression of Passion, and over-exercise of Reason, as well as non-exercise of both—militate against the Principle of Moderation, the essence of which is (as Aristotle pointed out) that no power should tyrannize over any other in our constitution.

What is "due" or "undue" exercise of a power, is a question which your common sense should decide in each case with reference to the person acting and the circumstances under which he acts. The only general rule that can be laid down is implied in the ideal of perfection explained in the previous Notes. Every exercise of any of

your mental or bodily power is right or wrong according as it does, or does not, tend to the perfection of yourselves or your offspring, and your community or race.

I have only to add that the Principle of Moderation, in the form in which I have roughly described it, is fully recognized by such up-to-date writers on the Science of Ethics as Sir Leslie Stephen, one of the two talented Editors of the Dictionary of National Biography.

Maxim of the Mean or Average.

2. Addressing Muslims the Qur'an says:—

كَذَا لَكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

"We have thus made you a middle nation (= a moderate people) in order that you should be an example to mankind."—i. 137.

One of the ways in which God has made Muslims a moderate people is by enjoining them to avoid extreme courses of action and to adopt the middle or the mean course whenever and wherever it is possible⁷⁶.

The Maxim of the Mean is the objective counter-part of the subjective Principle of Moderation. The latter says: Don't over-, or under-exercise any of your faculties; and the former says: Don't have too much or too little of any thing. Too much of any thing is good for nothing. Too little of it is worse than nothing. "Too much" and "too little" are relative terms and signify nothing by themselves. It is only with reference to oneself and one's environment at any particular time and place that they acquire a meaning as "excess" and "defect" respectively. I cannot explain it better than give a few instances in a tabular form where the "mean" comes between the "excess" and the "defect" of a quality of the head or heart, or a course of action.

(1) Qualities of the Head (Reason):—

<i>Excess.</i>	<i>Mean.</i>	<i>Defect.</i>
Caution	Prudence	Neglect

Doubt	Conviction	Uncertainty
Conceit	Modesty	Diffidence
Sensitive	Attentive	Indifferent

(2) Qualities of the Heart (Passions):—

Cowardice	Courage	Rashness
Sensuality	Temperance	Abstinence
Bigot	Enthusiastic	Lukewarm

(3) Courses of Action:—

Restriction	Liberty	Licence
Favouritism	Justice	Injustice
Prodigal	Generous	Miserly

You will find out for yourself what are the appropriate qualities or courses of conduct, of which the excess, mean and defect are expressed by the words given above. Fear, for example, is the feeling of which excess is Cowardice and defect is Rashness, while the mean is Courage. Similarly as regards one's own opinion of one's powers, excess is Conceit and defect is Diffidence, while the mean is Modesty. Again too much or too little restraint on action is Restriction or Licence while the mean is Liberty.

It will be a useful exercise to make a long list of such words as express the difference of *degrees* of the various qualities or functions of Reason, Passion and Action (= Knowledge, Feeling and Will.) But it will *not* always be possible to find three contrasted words, like those in the table, for every quality or action; because no language is so perfect as to have separate and single words to express the immense number and manifold shades of ideas which our mind is capable of entertaining. Still the fact is duly recognized by modern Science that there are differences not only of kind but also of degree in everything—ideas, feelings, desires, actions, objects and attributes of objects—with which we are concerned. Although you may not have a word expressive of degree in

every case, yet you can *practically* ascertain the extremes and the mean in all cases without exception, and can so order your conduct as to avoid the one and adopt the other in all cases. I may point out here that "*the Mean*" is not the "arithmetical mean" (like $6\frac{1}{2}$ which is the arithmetical mean of 5 and 8) but only *an approximately medium or middle course of conduct—via media*.[77](#) خيرا لا مورا وسطا

You may object that, since the ascertainment of the mean in each case requires calm thought with reference to yourself and your environment, the rule is too difficult to follow in these days of quick communication, speedy locomotion, and urgent action. I answer that it is but an *ideal* rule of conduct. Like all rules of Logic (Thought), Æsthetics (Beauty), or Ethics (Conduct), it sets before you an ideal which you should ever strive to attain though you may not attain it fully at any time. No thinker may have been absolutely logical, no Artist may have wrought a perfect work of beauty, and no man may have ever been quite moral. But that is no reason why thinkers, artists, and men generally, should not endeavour to attain perfection in their respective spheres of thought and action.

There is a further and greater objection to the rule of the middle course, *viz.*, that, if followed strictly, it will reduce all men to a dead level of mediocrity, and will not foster the development of men of genius. I have to admit regretfully that such will be the case, and, as my next Note will show, it will be in accordance with a Law of Nature recently discovered. Some writers have even attempted to prove that *genius* or excessive intelligence is a form of madness as bad as its opposite form, *imbecility* or defective intelligence. They seem to believe that only the men of average intelligence are quite sane.


Great wits are sure to madness near allied
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.—*Dryden*.

The late Sir John Gorst created a sensation when he declared in the House of Commons that great countries were governed by mediocrities only.

The world knows nothing of its greatest men.—*Sir H. Taylor*.

Note 11.

Evolution and Survival.

T was Adolphe Quetelet, Astronomer-Royal of Belgium, who in the seventies of the last century attempted to prove that "*the average man is to a nation what the centre of gravity is to a body.*" A similar, if not quite the same, conclusion has since been reached by Sir Francis Galton and Professor Karl Pearson in their researches into men's physical and intellectual qualities in the light of Darwin's theory of Natural Selection or Survival of the Fittest. This theory which, in its more extended form, is called the Law of Evolution, has profoundly influenced, if not entirely revolutionized, the Science and Philosophy of our own times. It has *not* however succeeded, as was at first feared, in destroying men's belief in God, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. For it has done no more than disclose but a few of the numerous ways in which He creates and rules.

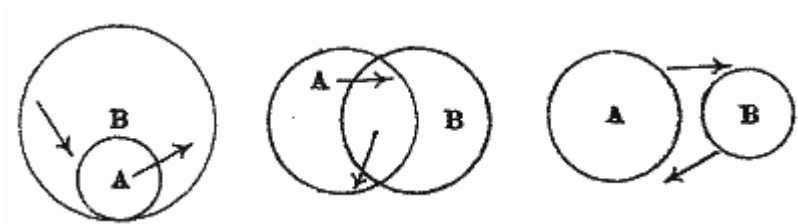
I have been a student of Evolution Literature ever since I left College. Speaking for myself I can say that my study of it has not in the least shaken my belief in God, but has rather strengthened it. I entirely agree with a popular writer^{[78](#)} on "the Scientific Ideas of To-day," who says:

"True Science does not seek to deprive man of his Soul or to drive the Creator from his Universe, but it honestly endeavours to study His marvellous works ... to see the manner in which He has caused Nature to work out His design."

The Law of Evolution or the Development Hypothesis, as it has been called, is in fact a clever guess at truth—very valuable as a formula which enables us not only to remember the result of numerous observations and experiments, but also to predict certain events to be verified by subsequent observations and experiments. It is impossible to convey a clear idea of it in a few sentences. A great man like Herbert Spencer spent 50 years of his life in explaining and illustrating it in no less than ten stout volumes of his "Synthetic Philosophy." The central idea may however be expressed in the following propositions, using the word "*thing*" in its widest sense as any object of perception, or knowable objects^{[79](#)}.

1. Nothing exists absolutely by itself; everything exists in relation with something else which is its "environment."

2. A thing and its environment cannot exist side by side for any considerable time without each affecting or influencing the other in some respects at least: a thing A and its environment B, which cannot but exist together, must needs act and re-act on each other.



3. The action and re-action of the thing A and its environment B on each other, brings about mutual adjustment, the fitting of each into the other.

4. According as this mutual adjustment or fitting is relatively *complete* or *incomplete*, there is Evolution or Dissolution, survival or extinction, of the thing (A) itself.[80](#)

5. The process of Evolution or Survival is characterized by:—

(a) *Integration*: grouping together of certain *like* units (such as atoms or molecules, living cells or individuals) into a whole,

(b) *Differentiation*: certain parts (or functions) of the aggregated whole becoming *unlike* each other or specialized, and

(c) *Adjustment*: fitting of the aggregated and differentiated whole into its environment.

6. In the opposite process of Dissolution or Extinction the thing undergoes the same changes in the reverse

order before it disappears as such.

In other words, given a thing and its environment, the one has to adapt and adjust itself to the other, or cease to exist. Nothing survives, as an individual, which does not change. Like a picture in its setting, a thing has to *fit* itself to its environment in order that it might survive for the best advantage of itself and its kind. Thus, the *fit* lives and the *unfit* dies⁸¹. As the Qur'an expresses **ان الارض يتركها** "the Earth is inherited by only the fit among My creatures."⁸² This applies not only to plants and animals, man and society, but also to inanimate or inorganic things, as the President of the British Association announced some years ago.

A man, for example, has for his environment, the atmosphere of the place he inhabits, the society he lives in, the occupation he follows, the laws he obeys, etc. He can live long and happily only when the qualities of his body and mind befit him to that environment, *i.e.*, when they enable him (to become **صالح**) to adapt himself continuously to the circumstances of his position. What, then, is the general nature of such qualities?

You know that one of the best methods of Science is Measurement. No scientific knowledge is exact unless it enables you not only to distinguish one quality from another, but also to measure each quality or determine its degrees in some way or other. It is not sufficient to know hot from cold but the degrees of temperature must be measured by a thermometer.

The new methods of Statistics and graphic representation have been applied to a large number of men and women for the purpose of finding "the fittest" qualities or "characters" as they are technically called. Professor Karl Pearson⁸³ and others have thus found that among a large number of men and women in a given community any physical or mental character which deviates largely, by excess or defect, from the mean or average, renders them the less fit to survive the struggle for existence. *Individuals possessing any character which deviates extremely from the mean tend to disappear*. For example, the average height of men has been found by measurement of a large number of people to be (say) 5ft. 6in. and it has also been found by statistical methods that men who are 7ft. or men who are only 3ft. are very rare. It is therefore concluded that men who are too tall or too short *i.e.*, who deviate extremely from the mean, tend to disappear and are therefore *unfit* to

survive.

This is only a rough and ready example of what is called the Law of Periodic Selection which has now superseded the Belgian philosopher's Law of the Average (or "the Mean"). It applies to human conduct as well as to human qualities. That conduct alone (*i.e.*, only that particular course of deliberate action) befits a man to his environment, which deviates the least from a standard or average of such conduct. It is the indispensable condition of his happiness and longevity.

You thus see that the Islamic Maxim of the Mean is justified by Science.

Note 12.

Religion begins with the fear of the Lord and ends in the love of Man. [84](#)



LET me devote this concluding Note to a few general remarks. The meanings and definitions of certain words given below are somewhat arbitrary, but I trust they will enable you to understand and remember certain abstruse matters.

I.

(a) Take the word "thing" to mean any object of thought, such as, for example, a house, a labourer, redness, distance, home, charity, eloquence, or the British Constitution. All these are *things* which you can think of.

(b) You may then define a "fact" as a known or knowable thing or relation between things; in other words, a *fact* is any thing or relation, which you know or can know if you take the necessary trouble.

(c) The word "Nature", with a capital N, is but a name for the sum-total of all facts known and knowable. Poets, philosophers, and even some men of Science, personify this sum-total of facts known and knowable, *i.e.*, *Nature* and refer to it as "she" or "her". It is but a convenient way of saying, by implication, that there is the same uniformity, continuity and unity in Nature as in our idea of a person.

Now, all thinking men of all ages of history have ever tried to understand Nature as a whole and to answer regarding her three important questions represented by three interrogatives, what? how? and why?

(1) *What* is Nature? = What are the facts which constitute Nature. (Knowledge of Nature).

(2) *How* has Nature come to be what she is? = How is it that facts constituting Nature have become as we perceive them? (Explanation of Nature).

(3) *Why* is Nature as she is and not otherwise? = Why is it that facts constituting Nature have a certain uniformity (order) continuity and unity in spite of changes that take place continuously? (Reason of Nature).

Broadly speaking, I may say that Science (with its various departments called "Sciences") tries to answer the first question *what*, the question as to *facts* of Nature. Philosophy tries to answer the second question *how*, the question as to the *explanation* of Nature. Religion or Theology (which includes highest Poetry) tries to answer the third and last question *why*, the question as to the *reason* of Nature. You may thus clearly remember the respective provinces of Science, Philosophy and Religion by remembering three words What, How and Why. When you read a book which treats of facts or the *what* of Nature; or of the explanation or the *how* of her; or of the reason or the *why* of her; you may be sure it is Science, Philosophy or Religion respectively that you are reading, whatever be the name of the book itself.

I have said that Science, Philosophy or Religion "*tries* to answer" and not "answers", because the answer of any of them can never be final or immutable. None of them can ever reach finality. As the experience of mankind grows continuously, new facts or new phases of old facts are discovered in the course of time. Just as men have to adapt or adjust themselves to new facts (or to changes in old facts) or else die; so men's Science, Philosophy and Theology have to adjust themselves to new facts or else become empty nothings.[85](#)

II.

I have often said that I believe Islam to be the best religion because (so far as I know) it accords best with the current ideas of Science. If you accept my view of the respective provinces of Science, Philosophy, and Religion, you can easily comprehend that a Religion like Islam which purports to expound the reason *why* of Nature must needs correspond with the *what* (Science) as well as with the *how* (Philosophy) of Nature. The three great divisions of Human Thought—I mean, Science, Philosophy and Religion—are necessarily connected with one another, as otherwise they cannot make up *the whole Universe of Human Thought* and cannot satisfy men's craving for complete and consistent knowledge.

III.

The Law of Evolution which I mentioned in the previous Note is but a Theory of Creation, an explanation of *how* Nature has come to be what she is. New facts which future ages may discover may prove the theory to be

either right or wrong. At present it is the best hypothesis—the best guess—because it accords best with known facts. It acts as a guide to knowable facts as well. It has shown that men cannot progress, indeed cannot long survive, if they fail to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their position, if they fail to fit into their environment which surrounds them like an envelope. Ceaseless change is the order of Nature. Continuous adaptation is the law of life. *Adaptability* is therefore the *sine qua non* of men's life and existence. The religion which suits them must also have the quality of adaptability. I hold Islam has this quality in an eminent degree and is therefore the most suitable religion.

Please remember that I speak of Islam as taught by the Qur'an itself and not "Muhammadanism" as professed by *some* so-called followers of the Prophet. You have to interpret the Qur'an⁸⁶ quite naturally as any other book or historic document, but not in the way in which *some* Muhammadans do it with the aid of marvellous fictions and miraculous traditions. Islam has to resist (to use a big word) the *anthropomorphic* tendency of the human mind, *viz.*, the tendency to view abstract *qualities* or agencies as persons having a separate existence as individual beings.

IV.

I have said that there is no inherent antagonism between Christianity and Islam *if* and *when* the sayings and doings of the founders of each are rightly viewed and understood in a simple and natural manner. Muhammad never ceased saying that he had come to attest and complete the mission of Jesus and his predecessors, who were God's messengers like himself.⁸⁷ The greatest and the best rule of human conduct which Jesus laid down was: "Love thy neighbour as thyself".

You remember the well-known lines of Burns:

O wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as others see us.

The gift which the poet prays for is vouchsafed to very few mortals. Almost all of us have naturally, and often unconsciously, such a high opinion of ourselves that, even if we would, we could not see ourselves as others see us. The next best thing that we can do is, therefore, *to see others as we see ourselves*, to cherish the same regard

for others as we instinctively cherish for ourselves. If (to take an extreme case for example) we cannot detest ourselves as others sometimes detest or hate us, we can at least try to love others as we love ourselves, "try to do unto others as we wish that others should do unto us". Thus the rule: "Love thy neighbour as thyself", is quite consistent with human nature and is the most comprehensive rule of conduct which has ever been laid down for the guidance of mankind. To my mind there is no better proof of the identity in spirit of Christianity and Islam than the confirmation of Christ's command by Muhammad himself.

No-one will be a faithful Muslim until he loves his neighbour as he loves himself.

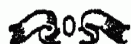
لا يـو من اءء كم ءءىا ءءىا يءب
ما يوءب لنفس

For this reason, I believe that there is no difference between the two religions *if* the metaphysical⁸⁵ doctrines engrafted on both be eliminated. *True Islam is but true Christianity writ short.*⁸⁸ Both recognize that the source of virtue is love,

For love is Heaven and Heaven is love.

APPENDIX.

We are indebted to Mr. J.C. Molony for the following illuminating criticism which affords food for serious thought—Editor:



If we assume the existence of a God, interested in the governance of this world, it becomes impossible to deny that Muhammad was God's messenger, or, at least, God's prophet. It seems to me unlikely that a man could change the belief of nations by chance, incredible that he should do so were he an impostor. Muhammad was certainly honest; the persistence of the faith called after him leads me to consider him as inspired. Or, if "inspired" be objected to as a general religious term of very indefinite meaning, let us say that he saw into the heart and reality of life further and more clearly than any man has done since his day. How then comes the fact, noted by Amjad and Mahmood and admitted by you, that Islamic countries in the main have wretched governments, and are crumbling away before Christian Powers? I do not think that you have answered this question⁸⁹. You have merely pointed out that Islam, if rightly understood, is an excellent religion.

The boys, I think, have stated their dilemma too sharply; the contrast is not entirely between Islam and Christianity. India is for all practical purposes a "Hindu" country, and the power of the old Indian Kingdoms has faded before Christian invaders. In that section of the world in which Christianity is the prevailing and accepted form of religious belief, the temporal might of those nations professing one great form of the Christian creed, the Roman Catholic, has undoubtedly waned in comparison with that of the nations professing what is generally called the Protestant faith. There are many varieties of non-Roman Catholic Christianity, but Protestantism is a label sufficiently comprehensive and sufficiently well understood for our purposes. I speak without sectarian bitterness; I am not, I fear, a convinced adherent of any particular form of religious faith. I have met many good

men, and have many friends, among Muhammadans, Hindus, and Roman Catholics. But I think that the objective truth of what I say, particularly in the Christian sphere, is indubitable. Compare for instance the decay of Spain with the grandeur of England, the feebleness of Austria with the strength and order (turned to ill uses though they may be) of Germany.⁹⁰ The question at once arises whether religion has anything to say to the matter. I think that it has.

Muhammadanism, Hinduism, and Catholicism (I omit the prefix Roman) have concerned themselves too much with Heaven and Hell, with the avoidance of future damnation and the obtaining of future bliss. These religions have afforded some justification for the gibe that Auguste Comte levelled at Christianity; he said that it sprang from "a servile terror and an immense cupidity." Religion should be rather *a guide of life here* than *a guide to a life to come*. Kant would have curtailed the beatitude "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" into "blessed are the pure in heart". It is good to be good; it is not good to be good in the hope of some ultimate gain thereby.⁹¹ The great Catholic Bishop of Pondicherry, Monseigneur Bonnard, wrote to one of his desponding priests: "Continue a missionary to the end, and you will assuredly be saved". In my opinion he was wrong; I should think little of a missionary, whether Christian or Muhammadan, who endured the trials of a missionary life (and some of those old French priests did endure abundantly) solely in the hope of making a personal, albeit spiritual and eternal, profit at the end of it all.

Now, "Bishop Blougram", a character created by the poet Browning, though supposedly inspired by the personality of Cardinal Wiseman, says in his *"Apology"*:

There's one great form of Christian faith I happened to be born in—which to teach Was given me as I grew up,
on all hands As best and readiest means of living by.

The same, I fear, might now be said of Muhammadanism. But to my mind there is no fixity, no absolute truth in any form of religious dogma. Religion is a thing that must grow with man's intelligence; it is not a box of spiritual truths packed once and for ever, and unpacked for the gaze of successive generations. It is not enough to believe in certain facts that happened long ago, or to obey certain injunctions given long ago in a particular

country; we must apply the spirit of a religion to the circumstances in which we live. We shall never attain to final absolute truth, "the end is not yet, and the purposes of God to man are but half revealed" (Jowett).

Unfortunately when any religion has taken itself as final it has developed a priesthood, and that priesthood has been apt to lay down a code of fixed rules wherewith alone compliance is required. It is a fatally easy thing to live in conformity with any definite code of rules. Muhammad himself, I imagine, was a singularly liberal theologian. He laid down certain regulations for the conduct of life, excellent considering his place and time; the modern Muhammadan has accepted these as a maximum spiritual demand, ignoring the fact that they probably represented the minimum demands of common sense in Muhammad's time and country.

Muhammad directed that a Muhammadan should not drink alcohol. This is a maxim of excellent sense in Arabia; Haji Burton, who much appreciated good wine, has told us that in the Arabian deserts wine is positively distasteful as well as unwholesome. I have not the least desire that Muhammadans should drink wine. I merely say that there is no *merit*, other than that of common sense, in obeying this excellent instruction in countries wherein circumstances render it excellent. I do not believe that Muhammad would find the least fault with disregard of his maxim in countries where the climate makes the *moderate* drinking of wine both pleasant and beneficial.

Muhammad instituted the Ramzan fast, mainly, I am told, to harden his soldiers. But the Muhammadan of to-day finds a positive merit in fasting. There is none; else the jockey's profession comprises the most virtuous men in the world.

Muhammad permitted polygamy, and enjoined the practical seclusion of women. This, as Sir Syed Ahmad has pointed out, was the counsel of common sense in Arabia at the time of the Prophet. Apparently there were more women than men, and if a woman was not under the protection of some man, and was not under guard, she was very likely to come to harm. But I do not think that this counsel holds good for all time. Polygamy among Indian Muhammadans is dying out, but the general Muhammadan here still imprisons his womankind in the comfortable assurance that he is thereby paying his own way to salvation. I do not see much hope for the

physical and mental development of Muhammadans so long as one half of the people remains in seclusion and ignorance, in a habit of life necessarily unhealthy. If you observe that you thereby escape the evils that are published to the world in European divorce courts, I would answer that in the first place I doubt the completeness of your escape, (it is a matter on which I have heard much sardonic comment from Muslim friends), and that in the second place, even granting what you say, 80% of women free, educated, virtuous and healthy, is a far better result than 100% merely virtuous, and that by constraint.

Muhammad laid down that a man should pray five times a day. To my mind this was merely the Prophet's way of saying that man's whole life should be a prayer: the modern Muhammadan too often "repeats prayers" five times a day and is satisfied. He might as well repeat the multiplication table five times a day. "Words without thoughts to Heaven never go" said the king in *Hamlet*. I do not know if our friend D.B. prays ten times a day, or five times, or not at all, and (candidly) I do not care. All I know is that in his responsible position he would die rather than take a bribe, tell a lie, intrigue against his master. And I fancy that the Prophet, could he return to earth, would find this abundantly sufficient.

You mention a few other points of orthodoxy; the cut of one's hair, the length of one's trousers. Dr. Khaja Hussain told me that he once saw a Muhammadan Street aroused to frenzy and riot by the appearance of a true believer in Feringhi (or Kafir) boots. It is all of a piece. Muhammadans have concentrated their attention on these ready-made rules for getting to heaven; their prophet found no such easy road to bliss. I do not imagine that it would ever have occurred to his great soul to claim any particular merit in that he did not drink wine, in that he repeated prayers (he at least understood these prayers) five times a day, in that he did not let his wives roam the country a prey to any marauder of those wild times. After all any one can obey these regulations with very little trouble to himself; it is not quite so easy to adopt the spirit that guided Muhammad's life. Sir Afsur, I do not doubt, will tell you that it is an advisable thing for a soldier to drill smartly, to keep his arms and accoutrements clean, and that with a little trouble it is not difficult for a soldier to do all this. But he will tell you, I feel sure, that this is far from being all; the supreme duty of a soldier is to be brave in battle—an affair of much more difficulty. A soldier may be smart and clean, but if he fails in battle his smartness and cleanness are

worth nothing—he is a bad soldier.

Muhammadanism has lost touch with life; it contents itself with the letter of the Prophet's teaching and shuts its eyes to, does not search for, the indwelling spirit. It is a small kernel rattling in a very big shell, as Charles Kingsley said in "Yeast" of the Church service at St. Paul's in the fifties of the last century. *Religion has been divorced from life, and so the followers of Islam as nations have decayed.*

It is the same with the other religions that I have mentioned. The old time Brahmin called himself such because he was educated, intelligent, sanitary in his habits, upright; he did not claim to be all this simply because he was the son of his father. The great obstacle to progress down here is the fact that people imagine it is sufficient to follow in a mechanical unintelligent way the letter, while totally disregarding the spirit, of some old and after all not very important rules. Ireland is said to have been an "Isle of Saints", I have my doubts on the subject, but suppose it so. It is now full of fine churches and religious establishments; no people in the world go to church with greater regularity, abstain more thoroughly from meat on Fridays, etc. etc. But with the mechanical observances they are, I fear, too well satisfied. Drunkenness, idleness, utter disregard for truth, are rampant in Southern Ireland, and therefore Southern Ireland is what it is. Formal devotion is no substitute whether in the daily battle of the world, or (I believe) in the ultimate judgment of God, for the proper ordering of one's every day actions.

If Muhammadans breathe the breath of life on the dry bones of their religion I see no reason why the temporal power of Islamic countries and the spiritual strength of the Muhammadan Church should not revive. Something of the kind has happened in France. Zola cried out against "the nightmare of Catholicism"; antagonism to the Catholic Church had been growing up long before M. Combes started to "strafe" the religious establishments of the country. The orthodox imagined that France was losing all religion: Auguste Comte, an unbeliever, proclaimed that France was daily becoming more religious. Rènè Bazin, a Catholic writer, implicitly admits that Comte was right. The people were sick of the dry, lifeless, formal rules that were offered to them; the priesthood have had this truth hammered into them, and they are quickening their formulæ with life to fit the life of the people, not striving to dessicate the people's life to fit their formulæ.

J.C.M.

As a *socio-political institution* Islam is, in the middle of its fourteenth century (1340 A.H.), in the same vicissitudes of development, as Christianity was in the middle of *its* fourteenth century (1350 A.D.)—an institution weakened by contending sects and rendered stagnant by rigid formalism. "It is a dispensation of providence", says Syed Ameer Ali, "that whenever a religion becomes reduced to formalism cross-currents set in to restore spiritual vitality." As in Christianity in its fourteenth century, so in Islam of our own times, the vitalising cross-currents have set in and we are now witnessing a Muslim Renaissance all over the world. Its pioneers in India were Sir Syed Ahmad, Mowlana Shibli, and the poet Hali. The Rt. Hon. Ameer Ali, Dr. Iqbal and a host of others bear aloft the New Light. The Muslim Reformation is coming on as surely as the Christian Reformation came in the wake of Patristicism and Formalism. It need not necessarily mean Political Revolutions as in Europe.

A.H.

OUR PRAYER.

1.
All praise is due to Thee, O God! None other than Thee we adore. Thou art the Master of the Worlds, Thine aid alone do we implore.
 2.
Thou art Compassion; lead Thou on To Thy right path our human race. Thy Mercy floweth evermore, Do guide us to the path of Grace.
 3.
Thou art the Lord of Judgment-day, For sure shall all be judged by Thee, O keep us off the path of Sin And Error's way. So mote it be!
Abdur Rahim.
-

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Translated by Mushtari Begum of Bejnor and published in the *Islamic Review* April 1916.
- 2 This was written in 1917.
- 3 By the word "best" I mean "the most suitable for both the spiritual and material needs of man." I do not wish to cast any reflection on any other religion. See [Note 7](#).
- 4 I make a difference between Islam and Muhammadanism. The latter is not pure Islam. It has forgotten the *spirit* of Islam and remembers only the *letter* of its law. "The dry bones of a religion are nothing; the spirit that quickens the bones is all." See Note 5.
- 5 There is no place in Islam for either priests or monks. Yet the Muhammadanism of to-day has both. There are

Tartuffes and Pecksniffs in this religion as well as in any other religion.

6 This is the real reason of the political and social weakness of most Islamic countries of our own times.

7 The teaching of Muhammad has been admirably summarised by a Christian writer as follows:—

"There is no deity but God. He created the Universe and rules it with love and mercy. He alone is to be worshipped; in Him confidence is to be placed in time of adversity. There must be no murmurings at His decrees; life—your own and others dearer than your own—must be placed in His hands in trust and love."

I do not believe that there is any monotheistic religion in the world which will dissent from this teaching. The writer (in the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia*) goes on to say:—

"The fatalism which has come to be regarded as part of the Moslem creed had no place in the system established by Muhammad who again and again distinctly and emphatically repudiated the idea. Muhammad taught *reform*, not *revolution*."

In these days of political unrest I cannot impress on you too strongly the meaning of the last sentence in which I have italicised two words.

8 See p. 33 para. 6.

9 The Author has not kept copies of these letters.—*Ed.*

10 The Qur'an speaks very highly of Jesus:—

اسمه مسيح عيسى بن مريم وحيها في الدنيا و الاخره و من المقربين

"His name is Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, illustrious both in this and in the next world. He is one of those who have near access to God."—iii. 40.

11 Published and sold by the Rationalistic Press, London for 6d.

12 The translation of the Sura in this analysis is slightly different from that given in the succeeding page.—*Ed.*

13 "It is strange": says Havelock Ellis, "men seek to be, or to seem, atheists, agnostics, cynics, pessimists; at the core of all these things lurks religion.... The men who have most finely felt the pulse of the world and have, in their turn, most effectively stirred its pulse, are religious men."—*New Spirit*, 228.

14 The word "religion" also means a system of beliefs and rites pertaining to them. I do not use the word in that sense here.

15 *i.e.*, the world such as we perceive and conceive it.

16 "I know that even the unaided reason, when correctly exercised, leads to a belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in a future retribution"—*Cardinal Newman*.

17 Prof. Scott Elliot at the end of his book, *Prehistoric Man* (p. 381) writes thus: "It seems true that almost every race of man is not only capable of believing in a Supreme God but, so far as the evidence goes, did reverence one God who was often also thought of as the Creator of the Sky or of the World.... There is a very strong body of evidence showing that every race of mankind possessed quite early in its development a feeling of awe and reverence towards an Unknown God."

18 There are at present three missionary religions in the world—religions which were intended and designed by their respective founders to unite all men without any distinction into a Universal Brotherhood.

(1) Buddhism asserts that God is Law or Wisdom.

(2) Islam teaches that God is Energy or Power.

(3) Christianity says that God is Father or Love.

But all these religions inculcate in fact one and the same Truth in its three aspects, as Muslim Sufis would say. I believe the gist of doctrines held by them is that God is Omnipotent *Energy* manifesting itself uniformly as *Law* and operating benevolently as *Love*.

Wisdom = Power = Love.

You should try to solve the equation for yourself. You will not fail to understand it if you think hard.

[19](#) Here again taking the three missionary religions mentioned above, the Identity is:—

Creator = Preserver = Adjuster.

God said unto Moses, *I am that I am*—*Exodus, iii, 14*.

[20](#) Some Sufis define Nature as Individual *plus* his Environment. By *individual* they mean any one capable of thinking of himself as "I" or "Me" and every thing else as "not I" or "not me" which is his *environment*.

[21](#) It may be said that all the three ideas of God's relation with Nature (the three "isms" I have mentioned in brackets) are but different *degrees* of a man's desire for communion with his God. Says Rumi in his celebrated *Masnavi*: "All religions are in substance one and the same"—Bk. iii, story 12 (St. Daquíqi).

[22](#) See last para. of [Note 4](#) and also [Note 10](#) الطرق الى الله بحسب الانفس There are as many ways leading to God as there are minds.

[23](#) "Religion places the human soul in the presence of its highest ideal (=God), it lifts it above the level of ordinary goodness, and produces at least a yearning after a higher and better life in the light of God."—*Max Muller*.

[24](#) Sura = Chapter.

[25](#) Absolute = not conditioned by place time measure or circumstances. Infinite = without beginning or end.

[26](#)

"The proper name of the religion preached by Muhammad is Islam."--Sale

[27](#)

The word "Islam" means literally (1) resignation (2) preservation and (3) peace. Lord Tennyson has most admirably expressed the Islamic ideal of self-surrender to the will of God and has incidentally decided the vexed question of free-will in a single line:—

"Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

28

By Christians in European countries.

29

"The proper name of the religion preached by Muhammad is Islam"—*Sale*. See p. 37.

30

I use the word in the restricted sense of "Islam as taught by Muhammad." If you take Islam to mean belief in one God and virtuous conduct in life, you may say that there has not been and will never be any true religion besides Islam. In this sense Islam is the only true religion. See p. 27, last para. of Note 2 p. 19, and of this Note pp. 33, 34.

31

"A man must not do reverence to his own sect or disparage that of another man without reason. Deprecation should be for specific reasons only, because the sects of other people all deserve reverence for one reason or other. By thus acting, a man exalts his own sect, and at the same time does service to the sects of other people. By acting contrariwise, a man hurts his own sect and does disservice to the sects of other people."—King Asoka's *Edict XII*.

"Every sect favourably regards him who is faithful to its precepts, and, in truth, he is to be commended."—Akbar, (*Ain Akbari* III).

32

See p. 55.

[33](#)

Muslim = resigned and submissive, therefore, *peaceful*.

[34](#)

See Foot note [\(30\)](#) p. 30.

[35](#)

Compare *the Bhagvat Gita*, iv. 7-8:—

"Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then *I myself come forth*;

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, *I am born* from age to age."

The words *italicised* suggest the Hindu doctrine of Incarnation and Metempsychosis. Orthodox Muslims do not believe in any such doctrine (حلول و اتحاد) but would substitute for the italics the words: *I send a messenger or reformer*. See, e.g., Quran, xvi. 36.

[36](#)

To students of Islam and its history I cannot recommend better and more useful books than the Rt. Hon. Dr. Syed Ameer Ali's *Spirit of Islam* and *History of the Saracens*. New and revised editions have been recently published. They present the various aspects of Islam in their proper perspective. They are classics for English readers.

[37](#)

"Grant the existence of God and it is impossible to deny that Muhammad was His Messenger. A man does not change the belief of half the world by chance." So wrote a Christian friend of mine.

38

Muslim = resigned or submissive, therefore, peaceful.

39

I mean "goodness and greatness" as a *human being*, for Muhammad never said or did anything to show that he was not a human being. The Qur'an commanded him, "Say I am a man like yourselves" قل انا بشر مثلکم. He therefore insisted that men should attach greater importance to the nature of the message than to the character of the messenger himself. "I am," said he "no more than a man: when I order you anything with respect to religion, receive it, and when I order you about the affairs of the world then I am nothing more than a man."

40

"Ahmad" is another name of Muhammad. I have nothing to say to those mystics, who, by a reasoning peculiar to their doctrines, identify the Messenger (Prophet) with the Master (God).

41

Nor indeed is Jesus answerable for the Inquisition and *autos-da-fe*.

42

"These are parables which we have set forth for men—Q. xxix. 43.

43

يوم الدين = the day of the Faith = the time of Dissolution predicted by Islam as well as by Science. Sir Syed Ahmad fully explains the meaning of يوم الدين = Universal Destruction and قيامت صغر = individual

destruction, (*i.e.*, death) from the viewpoint of modern Science.

44

As regards miracles, the beliefs that are held do not matter so much as the spirit in which they are held. If the spirit is right and leads to virtuous conduct in life, any reasonable belief will quite do. Here comes in the Pragmatism of Islam. It does not object to anything which has a *practical value* unless it is unreasonable, immoral, or inconsistent with the Islamic ideas of the unity of God and the brotherhood of man.

45

"We will soon show them our sign in all horizons (= regions) and in their own souls, until it shall become quite clear to them that it is the Truth—Qur'an xli. 53. سنريهم آياتنا فى الافاق وفى انفسهم حتى يتبين لهم الحقايق الحق

46

God's is the East and the West, therefore whichever side you turn, you will see the face (= presence) of God—Qur'an i. 115.

ولله المشرق والمغرب فاينما تولو فثم وجه الله

47

And He is within you (= in your mind), why don't you see Him?—Qur'an li. 21. وفى انفسهم افلا تبصرون

48

Islam must not be confounded with what is called "Muhammadanism" which is but an ossified form of Islam, clothed in Mediæval beliefs and disfigured by pagan practices. See Mr. J.C. Molony's admirable report of the Census of the Madras Presidency for 1911, where, quoting from the poet Hali's famous *Musaddas*, he describes

how far Muhammadanism in Southern India has been influenced by Hinduism. Read also Hali's excellent pamphlet called **الدین یس** "the Simplest Religion" which describes how Islam has been "ossified," *i.e.*, rendered rigid and unprogressive.

49

I know of no religion which does not say, "Do good and avoid evil" and I consider it no religion which does not say, "Live well and happily."

50

Ghalib:

* ہمکو معلوم ہے جنت کی حقیقت لیکن

* دلکے خوش ر کھنے کو غالب ی خنال اچھا ہے

51

See p. 24 above.

52

It supplies the best motive for overcoming the perversity of human nature to which St. Paul directs our attention in these beautiful words: "The good that I would, I do not: and the evil which I would not, I do."—Rom. vii. 19.

53

Read Draper's "Conflict between Science and Religion" which is a historical account of how some scientific ideas had to contend with religious prejudices—a book which, by the way, disproves the charge that Caliph Omar destroyed the great Library at Alexandria.

54

God reveals Himself to everybody at every instant of his life. It depends entirely on the spirituality or spiritual capacity of each individual to what extent he knows God and God's ways. The "spiritual capacity" is partly inherited from one's ancestors and partly acquired by faith and devotion, as well as by right conduct and good works.

[55](#)

دگر یاد * چکنم حرف دگر یاد The *Alif* of the Loved One's form is
engraven on my heart, No other letter did my Shaikh ever to me impart—*Hafiz*.

[56](#)

See Note 2.

[57](#)

I have neither time nor space to explain the full significance of the Qur'anic verses I have quoted here.

[58](#)

Some would call this Reality, God; but others would say that God is greater and higher than the Reality which manifests itself in different forms. He is above all that any man can think of or imagine. اے برتر از خیل وقیعہ
وگمان و وہم

[59](#)

Vol. ii. 748. You have to read the book itself to understand this. I cannot explain it in a short note.

[60](#)

I have neither time nor space to explain the full significance of the Qur'anic phrases I have mentioned here.

[61](#)

"In the world there is nothing so great as man. In man there is nothing so great as mind"—*Sir William Hamilton*.

"In the mind of man there is nothing so great as the idea of God"—*Islam*.

62

This is quite different from the Christian doctrine of Atonement.

63

It was the spirit of co-operation which Islam engendered among wild and unruly Arabs, that enabled them to put aside their tribal feuds, to unite and conquer more than half the known world in the first century of the Hijri era (= the 7th century of the Christian era). It was the lack of that spirit in the next two centuries that dismembered the Muslim Empire.

64

I say "*the* Islam of our ancestors", because the Islam of *some* of our contemporaries, called Muhammadanism, is not quite the same.

Read Prof. Gregory's *Discovery or the Spirit and Service of Science*.

65

"Sufis" are those Muslims who claim with Mowlana Rumi

ماز قرآن مغز را برداشتیم * استخوان پیش سگان انادا ختیم

"We have taken the marrow out of the Qur'an and thrown the bones to dogs," meaning by "dogs" those who quarrel over words (متکلمین) of the sacred texts.

66

"Man" says Carlyle, "is a symbol of Eternity imprisoned into Time."

[67](#)

This proviso defines also the Liberty of Subjects in a State. Every man should be free to do whatever he wishes provided that he does not thereby prevent others from enjoying the *like* liberty of action. It is the basis of all good Laws which should provide *equal opportunities* to all subjects without distinction.

[68](#)

Muhammadans generally misunderstand and misapply the doctrine of "Qismat" or Fate. The Prophet distinctly taught that we should first of all do whatever lies in our power and then leave the rest to God. We are apt to forget the first part of his precept and cling to its second part only which accords with our tropical laziness. See footnote [7](#) on page 12.

[69](#)

إِذَا لَكَ الدِّينَ الْقِيَامُ = It (Islam) is the standard religion.—Q. xii. 41.

[70](#)

Islam rejects some "previous revelations" not because they are untrue but because their records that have come down to us are not quite genuine and trustworthy.

[71](#)

The heading of all chapters except one of the Qur'an.

[72](#)

"Mankind comes to Me along many roads; and on whatever road a man approaches Me on that road do I welcome him, for all roads are Mine."—*Bhagawat Gita* الطريق الى الله بحسب الانفس See p. 24.

73

See Note 2 (concluding part) which mentions three common factors in all religious systems of the world.

"The city of the Hindu God is Benares and the city of the Muslim God is Mecca. But search your hearts and there you will find the God both of Hindus and Muslims. If the Creator dwells in tabernacles only, whose dwelling is the Universe?"—*Kabir*.

74

Some Muslims believe that Zoraster, Krishna, Buddha, and Confucius were also prophets or messengers of God but that they were no more than good and great men. They do not attribute any divinity to them.

"Religion", said Hitchcock, "implies Revelation". By "Revelation" is meant a set of sublime (and therefore, divine) truths revealed, *i.e.* communicated from time to time to chosen men (= Prophets) who had the necessary spirituality to comprehend them and to convey them, as God's messages, to their fellow-men in the *human* language of themselves. The defects (if any) found in the authoritative records (= Scriptures **صحف**) are the defects in the human language and not certainly in the sacred and sublime truths revealed to the chosen men, the Messengers of God. It is the defect of *human* understanding, no less than the poverty of *human* language, that has often prevented the full comprehension of the divine dispensation and the sublime truths in the messages of Prophets. It is *our* comprehension of the truth itself that has given rise to diversity in religious beliefs and practices.

75

Provided they are authentic and genuine and not altered by interpolations and omissions.

76

Neither the Bible nor the Qur'an is responsible for the cruel excesses committed by Christians or Muhammadans in the name of Religion.

77

"The best of things is the medium thing"—*Muhammad*.

78

Charles R. Gibson.

79

Vide Note 12 para. marked (a) p. 79.

80

For the purpose of this Note it will be enough if you understand the first four propositions. I am afraid you will find some difficulty in understanding the remaining two propositions without illustrative examples, for which I have no space here.

81

"For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth, and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off."—Psalm 37th, 22.

82

Qur'an, xxi. 105. Following the late Mr. Justice Karamat Hussain of Allahabad, I take the word لما to mean "fit" in the evolutionary sense. See his book عام الاخلاق.

83

He edits a journal called "Biometrika" which is devoted to the statistical study of biological problems.

84

Prof. Muirhead of the University of Birmingham, in his kind letter to the author on these "Notes."

[85](#)

Hence Formalism creeps into every Religion and renders it lifeless when its doctrines fail to adjust themselves to new facts or to changes in old facts. See *Appendix*.

[86](#)

It should be construed and applied to new ideas and changed circumstances of each age in quite the same manner as Judges in a Court of Law construe and apply old Statutes to facts of cases that come before them. See Hali's *الدين يسر*

[87](#)

See the verse of the Qur'an quoted on [p. 33](#).

[88](#)

Or say: True Christianity is but true Islam writ large. "On the whole this religion of Mahomet's is a kind of Christianity."—*Thomas Carlyle*.

[89](#)

See hints:—Para 3 of Note 5 pp. [31, 32](#); Footnote [\(48\)](#) p. 43; Footnotes [\(4\)](#) and [\(5\)](#) page 12; Footnote [\(85\)](#) p. 81.

[90](#)

Written in 1917.

[91](#)

Cp. Note 7.