

al-Islam

What It Is



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al-Islam – what it is

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Preface

I am a white Englishman, born in the heart of the industrial English Midlands during the Second World War. As a child, Islam was something 'foreign' and hardly referred to in our schooling. How, then, is it that I came to know anything about Islam?

Having been brought up in three sects of Christianity (CofE, Methodism – my parents' upbringing – and a short period in the Evangelical Movement, by choice), I converted to Islam in 1978 at the age of 34 after some study in respect of the inner (Sufic) teachings of Islam, inspired by the book *The Sufis*, by Idries Shah. Furthermore, I came to have direct experience of all the main Islamic branches that exist. In 1985 it happened that I ceased to be a formalist Muslim, but that is not because I found fault with Islam. I espouse the unity of all religions, which is what I regard as part of The Prophet Muhammad's teachings. I continue to think of Islam as being hugely important in the development of mankind, but I believe its original and central message is essentially no different to any other religion. That message relates to the spread of peace through love of God and His creation.

But the key to this issue – in my view – is in my earlier reference to 'Sufic', or Sufism. This inner dimension of Islam – which is transmitted through spiritual teachers according to time and place – has been home territory to many of Islam's greatest thinkers, and, notably, one al-Ghazzali, who at one time condemned the Sufi teachings, but then came to be one himself!

It is through a belief I developed, about this inner quality of Islam, that enabled me to move amongst so many different Islamic sects and, later, brought me to reading the Bhagavad Gita, the Vedic manual to living the inner life. I have also studied more about the Essenes, Christianity (particularly about the early Gnostics, and also the Cathars, Unitarians, Quakers and Mormons), Sikhism and Buddhism. The Jain, Zoroastrian and Ba'hai faiths were also uncovered! In 1997 I visited Assisi in Italy, and something occurred there that can only be described as "seeing the light" (or part of it!).

It is through love for the religion of Islam, and its rightful place in the world that I have prepared this simple work, by the Grace of God.

With love,

John Lerwill,

London.

February, 2007

John.Lerwill@btinternet.com

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Introduction



Islam is, it could be said, at a crossroads. At the same time, the Western World in the main does not know what Islam is - we may have heard of Allah, 5-times a day prayer, Ramadhan, Mecca and perhaps one or two more aspects of Islam and about Muslims, but is that sufficient to know about a religion whose influence sparked the development of a then new and great civilization of learning and tolerance as it spread both westwards and eastwards, absorbing (as it went) Greek, Hindu and Persian learning?

That its affect was so emphatic on the Medieval World caused Christianity to examine this new civilization very closely, and imbibed many of its views in relation to science and the cosmos. To-day we use 'Arab numerals', and a number of Arabic words have entered our vocabulary. Islam even encroached into much of Iberia (what we now know as Spain and Portugal) and its adherents created wonders of architecture and landscape gardening in a climate of tolerant intellectual growth in which the Jews also flourished.

Islam's influence on the world was felt so strongly so long ago now, and that probably urges us to view it as something obsolete - not relevant to us in the West. However, that view became somewhat shattered on 9/11 in 2001, as we realised that something apparently related to Islam suddenly appeared to be a direct, deadly threat.

Since 9/11 (and after other attacks), there have been many assurances proffered that "this was not Islam in action, this was an aberration - the action of extremists", "Islam teaches Peace, not the killing of innocents" - etc. These statements *are* true. But do they explain to the West anything of what Islam really is? Furthermore, how many *Muslims* really understand their religion? How is it possible for Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus (and other religious adherents) to co-exist in harmony when their ways appear - on the surface - to be so different?

However, it is Islam that these days is in the spotlight, and the conscientious of those who follow that noble path seek to know what is the truth in their religion? What *does* the Qur'an say - they ask - about this or that important issue? How do we - they ask - relate our religion to modern circumstances? In many cases, these questioning Muslims look to *ijtihad* as a means of solving their queries. Ijtihad is an accepted intellectual method of questioning issues about Islam, but I fear that it is too intellectually orientated, and will not appeal to the masses. Ijtihad does, however, encourage examination of the truth - and any move in that direction must surely be beneficial.

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The History and Teachings of Islam

History

Islam is, according to its adherents, the last revealed Word of God through His Prophet (*nabi*) and messenger (*rasul*), Mohammad son of Abdullah, as contained in the Qur'an. Mohammad was born in the 6th Christian century in Arabia, and began his Islamic mission at the age of 40. Islam is, however, founded on the religion of Abraham (*Ibrahim*). The Judaic/Christian prophets Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (*Issa*), together with Mohammad, constitute the six major prophets recognised by Islam. But tradition and the Qur'an states that there were many thousands more prophets preceding Mohammad, who is the last according to Islam.

The Prophet Mohammad is known to have been extremely honest in his dealings before he received the message of Islam. To such an extent, Khadija (a business-woman herself) chose Mohammad as her husband, even though she was much older. This clearly demonstrates that the Islamic woman's rights were clear and bold, and that any notion of restricting a woman is anathema in Islam. The restriction of women in Islam – where it exists – is much more due to cultural and Chauvinistic tendencies.

The origin of the Arabs is said to lie with the seed of Abraham through his servant-concubine Hagar and their son Ishmael. They were both cast out into the desert, and were saved by the appearance of a divinely-created spring. This water-source is still venerated by the Muslims when they perform pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca.¹

Following the death of Prophet Mohammad, the 'Righteous Caliphate' led the Ummah (people of Islam). There were four such Caliphs in turn: Abu Bakr, Uthman, Omar, and then 'Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. Following this, Islam was split; the third caliph, of the aristocratic family of the Omayyads, laid the foundation for a hereditary Caliphate. Later, there was the Abbasid Caliphate, which moved the Islamic capital to Baghdad.

The feeling, nurtured by the opposition to the Omayyads, that Ali and his descendants were the rightful heirs of the Prophet, became incorporated in the religious dogma of the discontented factions. The schism between Orthodox (Sunni) and Alid (Shiite) Islam has continued to run throughout Islam down to the present day. Islam is to-day seen to be consisting of these two main threads, or groups. The name SHIA originates from the phrase *shia-atul 'Ali*, relating to that party of Muslims (those who practise Islam) who followed the authority of 'Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet, on the death of the Prophet. The SHIA based their belief on the apparent authority of the Prophet himself, just prior to his death, on the way from returning from pilgrimage (*hajj*). The SHIA are mostly to be found in Iran and Iraq. The SHIA, however, are themselves now broken into two main camps, and the most orthodox of these are those to be found in Iran and Iraq.

The SUNNI practise to-day represents the vast majority of Muslims, and is based on the recorded statements (*hadith*) and practises (*sunnah*) of the Prophet. The SUNNIS reject the claims of the SHIA.

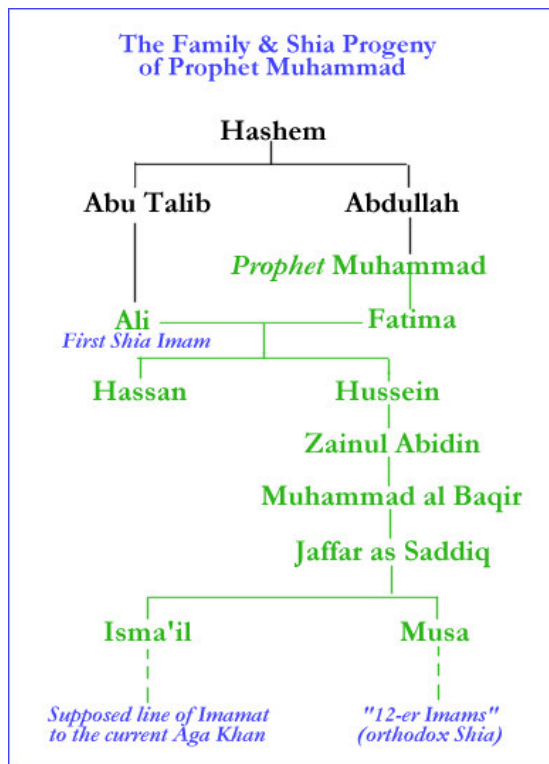
¹ 'The Arabs', by P.K. Hitti, pub'd. ca. 1970, is a worthwhile reading of the history of the Arabs.

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Teachings

To the SHIA Muslims (for a definition of SHIA, please see HISTORY, above), the divine wisdom of the Qur'an was – after the Prophet – most properly divulged by 'Ali. To them, 'Ali was vested with the power of ta'wil (inner teaching, or wisdom), and, accordingly, was recognised as the first Imam (spiritual leader)² by the Shia. Subsequent Imams must be of the progeny of 'Ali and appointed by the Imam of the time, prior to his death.

After the assassination of 'Ali, the most notable Imams in Shia Islam (though all Imams were gifted in different ways) were 'Ali's son Hussein (who, with his 72 companions, was slaughtered at Karbala (in modern Iraq) by the treacherous Yazid and his army), and Jaffer-as-Saddiq, who is known to have had particular influence over the entire Muslim community. He had the



attention of many spiritual groups and individuals in Islam, both Sunni and Shia, and also (remarkably), the alchemist Gabir (Jabir). After Imam Jaffer, there was some confusion as to which son was to carry on the mantle as Imam, particularly as his eldest son (Isma'il) was thought to have died before his father. Imam Jaffer is known only to have confirmed the passing of Imamate to Isma'il, however, and as Isma'il was just not there on the demise of the Imam, Musa assumed the Imamate. Thereby began the first major division in the Shia Imamate, as Musa's line became known as 'the Twelvers' (ending in a 12th Imam without progeny), to-day being the most orthodox branch and living mainly in Iran/Iraq, whilst the believers in Isma'il later became known as Isma'ilis.

Amongst the Shia to-day, there is a party that, according to them, still has an Imam whose ancestry derives directly from 'Ali. This is the main group of a branch of the Isma'ili Shia which is to-day generally called the Nizari Isma'ili Shia. They are also called Agakhanis, whose Imam is the current Aga Khan. His followers are scattered world-wide, and are thought to number about 20 millions, though a number is difficult to determine, particularly as their habitat is in the midst of Russia and China, as well as the major countries of the Western World, and elsewhere. The Isma'ili Shia are noted for their modernity without loss of contact with the inner teachings of Islam.

From Isma'il onwards, this party of the Shia moved their mission (*da'wa*) to Syria from Medina (Arabia). The Shia movement has never since returned to the Islamic starting point of the Hedjaz in Arabia, and in recent times, the Wahhabi Muslims of Saudi Arabia have even gone so far as to destroy the

² Note the term 'Imam' is also used by the Sunnis, but to denote a leader of prayer in the mosque. For them, it has no other connotation.

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tombs of the Prophet's progeny at Medina. It was an Isma'ili Imam, al-Mu'izz, who founded the modern Egyptian city of Cairo and its famous Islamic university. The name Cairo is a corruption of *Al-Kahira (the conquest of) al-Mu'izz*. Thus began the famous *Fatimid Caliphate* period of the Middle Ages, which was a glorious and evolutionary reign in the history of Islam.

It is noteworthy that at the height of its culture, Christians and Jews not only flourished within the Islamic state, but at one time were allowed to practise their own laws within the Islamic state. The medieval *Knights Templar* (much to the chagrin of other crusaders) gained empathy with the Muslims, and the knights admitted both Muslims and Jews into their spiritual meetings.

The teachings of the Shia are concerned with two major forms, or aspects of life; the outward (*zahir*), and inner (*batini*). A good example of these two aspects is in the meaning of the word *jihad* (or sacrifice for God). The Western World is mostly unaware that the GREATER *jihad* (in *batini* – inner – Islam) is action against one's own base self, NOT (for example) action against others in the form of unwarranted terrorism.

There are other 'inner' traditions in Islam, generally called SUFI-ism. Most of these *batini* traditions are known to have stemmed from 'Ali also, although some strands have emanated from other 'Companions of the Prophet', such as Abu Bakr (the first caliph after the death of the Prophet). There are many strands in the SUFIs, each based on the name of a spiritual leader who is known to have passed on the spiritual message, such as Naqshband, and Rumi, who is also known for his poetic, but allegorical, writings, and is known to have been greatly influenced by Shams-i-Tabriz, who is strongly suspected as having been an Isma'ili missionary (*da'i*).

Where Islam spread, the 'inner' and mystical element of the faith went also. It became most profoundly developed in Asia Minor, Persia, Afghanistan and India. Ibn al-'Arabi (born in Spain) is a very major name in Sufic tradition. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith (an attempt at reconciling Hindu/Islamic disparities), was hugely influenced by Sufi thought.

Isma'ili Shia and Sufis are both now very prevalent in Western countries.

The Doctrines of Islam

In the first half of the 20th century, Islam was made known to the British public when a mosque was established at Woking, Surrey, the Imam³ of which—for some 20 years of its earlier period—was the Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. For many years, the mosque and the Khwaja were well-known and well-feted, and attracted a number of dignitaries into Islam. In the Muslim section of the cemetery at Brookwood, Woking, are interred two very well-known translators of the Qur'an, Marmaduke Pickthall and Yusuf Ali.

The Khwaja wrote that someone once asked Prophet Muhammad, "What is Islam?". He replied, "Reverence and respect for the commandments of God, and compassion to His creatures."⁴ In the same publication (of 1924), the Khwaja noted:

. . . the world is gradually coming to realize the truth of Muhammad's noble utterance, that every child, wherever it is born, enters into the world with a

³ The Sunni notion of 'Imam'—as leader of a mosque; often just a leader of prayer.

⁴ In 'The Sources of Christianity' by Khwaja Kamal-Din (1924), p.158

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pure nature. Sin is an acquisition, and not a heritage.⁵

It was the Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din that wrote a short treatise called ‘Al-Islam’, a copy of which came into my hands at a second-hand bookshop in the year of my arrival at Wimbledon (London) in 1976. I have always been fascinated by the crispness of this book, and its appeal to the heart; the heart of the Sufi—the spiritual traveller. And yet what is revealed is a science; the science of ‘knowing thyself’. In it are rarely any hard-to-conceive laws that are delineated,⁶ but instead a crisp definition of the real role of Islam in the world, which is to elevate the soul of the individual, community and nation, and all who are willing to aspire to greater spiritual ideals. The perspectives are put across in a manner that Vedantists and Christians can relate to if they are open-minded, and it is hard to deny that if these perspectives were to be taken and applied seriously, a very different and peaceful world would evolve. Invoking the idea that if the individual is spiritually prepared, then that paves way for the evolution of the family, the community, the nation and the world, Al-Islam tackles such issues as the role of women and socialism, and the real nature of Paradise, a matter approached quite differently to that perceived by those with a shallow understanding of Islam.

That these perspectives address human and world problems does not mean that there have not been equally or more important spiritual teachings given by others, but the point of this publication is to show as clearly as possible the compatibility of thinking between Islam and other faiths.

The next chapter—which is much the greater part of the publication ‘Al-Islam’—will provide an insight into the nature and meaning of Islam as written by the Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. I have not altered his text, but I have tried to provide a little more clarity by changing the style of its presentation, and by adding a few notes. It should be noted that the Khwaja did not subscribe to the Shia point of view, but in his views on the idealistic essentials of Islam, I feel that there would be few pure-hearted Muslims of any sect who would disagree with the Khwaja’s interpretations and views.

That chapter is followed by another chapter by the Khwaja on the ‘Muslim Eithics of War’ – a topic of current concern – as published in another of the Khwaja’s publications, ‘The Sources of Christianity’ (published 1924).

The Qur’anic translations in both chapters appear to belong either to the Khwaja or the published translation by Muhammad Ali.

*God is the light of the heavens and the Earth;
the likeness of His Light is as a niche
wherein is a lamp
the lamp in a glass,
the glass as it were a glittering star
kindled from a Blessed Tree,
an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West,
whose oil well nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it;
Light upon Light.*

al-Qur’an 24:35 (the ‘Verse of Light’)

⁵ In ‘The Sources of Christianity’ by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (1924), p.33

⁶ And it is worth remembering that many injunctions within the Qur’an were transmitted according to the conditions then prevailing in the Arabian peninsular.

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Islamic Doctrine⁷

The doctrinal beliefs in Islam, are seven—belief in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Prophets, the Hereafter, the Divine Measure of good and evil, i.e. the Law, and the Resurrection.

Al-Qur'an also recognizes Divine revelations to other peoples,⁸ and enjoins belief in them:

Say: We believe in Allah and that revealed to us and to . . . Ibrahim, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, and that given to Moses and to Jesus and to the prophets . . .; we do not distinguish between any of them and to Him we submit.⁹

Growth of the Soul

The soul, at its inception, lies concealed in the animal consciousness of man; it comes to the surface at a later stage; after which further developments make it perfect. Seven, too, are its evolutionary stages, as Al-Qur'an describes:—

<i>Ammarah</i> ¹⁰	The Commanding [the animal within].
<i>Lawwama</i> ¹¹	The Self-accusing [conscience].
<i>Mulhima</i> ¹²	Inspired.
<i>Mutma'inna</i> ¹³	At rest.
<i>Radiyah</i> ¹⁴	Pleased with God.
<i>Mardiyyah</i> ¹⁵	Pleasing to God.
<i>Kamilah</i> ¹⁶	Perfected.

Islam uplifts *Ammarah* to *Kamilah*. *Ammarah* is the nascent condition of the soul, in the garb of bestial passions, when natural impulses predominate. These are uncontrollable, and tend to iniquity. The spirit makes its full exhibition in a baby, who seeks everything he sees, and claims it as his own, but remains always unsatisfied, like a brute that mouths upon everything when its appetite is excited. Millions of men stand on the border of animality. The property of others excites their cupidity, and darkens their minds. Al-Qur'an says:

They have hearts, but they understand not, have eyes and they see not, have ears and they hear not; they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse error;¹⁷ they cling to the earth and follow low desires.¹⁸

⁷ According to Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din.

⁸ Al-Qur'an 35:24

⁹ Al-Qur'an 3:83

¹⁰ Al-Qur'an 12:53

¹¹ Al-Qur'an 75:2

¹² Al-Qur'an 91:8

¹³ Al-Qur'an 89:27

¹⁴ Al-Qur'an 89:27

¹⁵ Al-Qur'an 89:27

¹⁶ Al-Qur'an 91:7

¹⁷ Al-Qur'an 7:179

¹⁸ Al-Qur'an 7:176

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They may claim civilization, but the animal in them is still unbridled. It pounces upon others' property, whether it be in the guise of a robber or of a conqueror. The dictates of the spirit at this stage are very exacting, hence its name *Ammarah*—the Commanding. It often inclines to evil, as Al-Qur'an says:

Most surely [man's] self is wont to command evil.¹⁹

This is the hardest stage to reform, so much so that many have become hopeless of human redemption. They say that sin is in man's nature. They are mistaken. They take the nature for the capacity that ought to remain suppressed. The first step of uplifting is everywhere the most difficult. But if everything beautiful in Nature grows usually out of something ugly, where then lies the impossibility in our case? To encourage such pessimists in religion, Al-Qur'an gave the gospel that man was well equipped to find the right path,²⁰ and capable of every moral progress.²¹ Do we not observe within us certain signs of the before-mentioned stages of the soul? A callous soul sometimes repents; becomes inspired to do good.

There are certain duties which all men discharge willingly; we face hardships where we are interested. *We could, therefore, if we would, soar higher in moral and spiritual realms.*

Islam teaches that man is not the slave of evil. He can show the best of virtues, if he will but strive. We cannot put our burden on others,²² as we have to evolve something out of ourselves. If an operation on a surgeon's body, or his taking some medicine himself, cannot cure his patient, then others' action cannot raise us to our goal. Like other entities in Nature, we need some systematic course suitable to each stage of progress; some disciplinary measures to create in us a disposition to pursue it. Islam brings us both.

The Five Pillars of Islam

We have divers appetites, and need many things to satisfy them. Cupidity suggests evil, and consequent violation of the Law. But Islam, subjectively, is a disposition to obey Laws. It respects social order. To strengthen this disposition, Al-Qur'an prescribes a course of disciplinary measures, rightly called the FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM :— The Formula of Faith (that there is no object of adoration but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger); Prayers, Fasting, Poor Rate and Pilgrimage (to Mecca).

Their observance lies in our partially parting with that which we rightly possess. The Book says:

By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend out what you love.²³

such as time, occupation, food, drink, connubial companionship, wealth, family, business, friends, clothes, personal comforts, and above all our various objects of adoration. These are our chief concerns, and cause the whole struggle in life. They move our criminal tendencies if we are not scrupulously honest. But

¹⁹ Al-Qur'an 7:53

²⁰ Al-Qur'an 90:7-10

²¹ Al-Qur'an 95:4,6

²² Al-Qur'an 35:18

²³ Al-Qur'an 3:91

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could we commit wrong in order to have them, if we learn to give them up willingly?

The *Formula [of Faith]* demands from us that we give up every object of adoration before Allah. In *Prayer* we part with our occupations; in *Fasting* with food, drink, and connubial relations; in *Poor Rate* with a portion of our wealth [for the benefit of society]. Then comes the *Pilgrimage*. We leave our family, friends, business and country; we part with our clothes and comfort, covering ourselves only with two sheets; and when we enter Hedjaz, we must abstain from disputes, quarrels and evil language;²⁴ we observe strict fraternal relations with strangers, always proclaiming aloud our readiness to offer all that we possess to God. In the end we kill an animal. Till then we had practically forsaken everything pertaining to the cravings of the passions, and the demands of the animal within. That we crushed. If, therefore, the last ceremony of the Pilgrimage consists in killing a brute, it rightly symbolizes the killing of the flesh. The Prophet remarked that the Pilgrimage is the top of the disciplinary measures in Islam. It washes out man's sin, if performed in the right spirit. He discards the flesh and frees the soul. He makes himself a true Muslim.

Rudimentary Reforms

Till now I have outlined Islam in general terms. Al-Qur'an came for universal reform. It takes every shade of humanity within its purview. First, I will sketch briefly its primary reforms.

Food plays a great part in moulding the human character. A sound mind creates sound morality, but only in a sound body. Al-Qur'an therefore forbids all such foods as injure the body, the mind and the soul. It forbids blood, and the flesh of the animal not bled to death, such as that, for example, which dies of itself, or by a fall or a blow, or is killed or eaten by beasts of prey; the flesh of swine or of any animal sacrificed to idols, or killed in a name other than that of God, is also forbidden.²⁵

Eat and drink that which is good and clean,²⁶ but be not extravagant.²⁷

Clean your clothes and every other thing²⁸ and purify yourself when unclean.²⁹

As to general manners, the Book says:

Make room for others when you assemble and rise from your places when so asked.³⁰ Speak rightly³¹ and gently, and lower your voices; look not upon others contemptuously; walk not exultingly, and pursue the right path.³² Enter houses by their doors;³³ enter not into others' houses without permission; salute the inmates, but enter not if they are not in.³⁴ When saluted, salute the person with

²⁴ Al-Qur'an 2:197

²⁵ Al-Qur'an 5:3

²⁶ Al-Qur'an 5:4

²⁷ Al-Qur'an 6:142; 7:81

²⁸ Al-Qur'an 74:4,5

²⁹ Al-Qur'an 5:6

³⁰ Al-Qur'an 58:11

³¹ Al-Qur'an 33:70

³² Al-Qur'an 31:18,19

³³ Al-Qur'an 2:189

³⁴ Al-Qur'an 24:27,28

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a better salutation or return the same.³⁵ Avoid wine, gambling and idols.³⁶ Commit not suicide;³⁷ nor kill your children,³⁸ nor commit murder.³⁹ Do not fornicate, nor live with women in secret intimacy.⁴⁰ Marry virtuous women⁴¹ and give them their dowries.⁴² Your mothers are forbidden to you in marriage, so are your daughters, sisters, aunts, nieces, foster-mothers, foster-sisters, step-daughters and daughters-in-law.⁴³

Ordinances like these—and there are many more in Al-Qur’an—were given to raise man from the animal condition in which, indeed, Arabia stood at the appearance of the Holy Prophet.

The Second Stage of Consciousness

But the most difficult task of man’s reform begins when the initial stage is over. It consists in raising, in the human breast, *Lawwama*—the upbraiding spirit—generally called conscience, and then bringing it to perfection, a stage which the most part of mankind has yet to reach.

We are sociable by nature; the health of society compels us to respect its bounds. Knowledge, experience and wisdom ripened with the sufferings that accrue, as the penalty for breaking social laws, create remorse in us. This means the rise of conscience. Our breasts become an arena of struggle. Temptations allure; conscience chides; we stumble.

But if we listen to the latter it strengthens us gradually to withstand the dictates of *Ammarah*—the animal within. We are anxious to know of right and wrong, and strive to avoid evil.

The passion of adoring the Deity is very strong in man. Whatever may be our conception of God, all our notions of good and righteousness become focused in Him. His pleasure and displeasure provide our moral basis. Whatever we think He loves becomes good, and whatever He hates is wickedness. We must do the former, and the latter we should avoid. Such ideas chiefly mould our conscience. Hence Al-Qur’an mentions certain things that God loves and other things that He abhors:

Allah does not love exceeding limits,⁴⁴ mischief-making,⁴⁵ ungratefulness,⁴⁶ injustice,⁴⁷ pride,⁴⁸ boasting,⁴⁹ treachery,⁵⁰ utterances of hurtful language,⁵¹ extravagance,⁵² unfaithfulness,⁵³ exulting,⁵⁴ etc. God loves those who do good,⁵⁵ judge

³⁵ Al-Qur’an 4:86

³⁶ Al-Qur’an 5:90

³⁷ Al-Qur’an 4:29

³⁸ Al-Qur’an 6:152

³⁹ Al-Qur’an 17:33

⁴⁰ Al-Qur’an 4:25

⁴¹ Al-Qur’an 5:5

⁴² Al-Qur’an 5:5

⁴³ Al-Qur’an 4:25

⁴⁴ Al-Qur’an 2:185

⁴⁵ Al-Qur’an 2:250

⁴⁶ Al-Qur’an 2:276

⁴⁷ Al-Qur’an 3:56

⁴⁸ Al-Qur’an 16:23

⁴⁹ Al-Qur’an 4:36

⁵⁰ Al-Qur’an 4:107

⁵¹ Al-Qur’an 4:148

⁵² Al-Qur’an 6:140

⁵³ Al-Qur’an 22:38

⁵⁴ Al-Qur’an 28:76

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equitably,⁵⁶ purify themselves,⁵⁷ repent and return to God, trust in Him,⁵⁸ act righteously⁵⁹ and speak truthfully. The Divine curse, that in Islam means remoteness from God, comes on man for unbelief,⁶⁰ belief in enchantment, magic and superstition,⁶¹ polytheism,⁶² hypocrisy,⁶³ turning from the right path,⁶⁴ breaking covenants and promises,⁶⁵ concealing truth,⁶⁶ disputing truth,⁶⁷ falsehood,⁶⁸ speaking evil of God and His apostles,⁶⁹ and murder.⁷⁰

These various virtues and vices have not been jumbled together in a page or a chapter, nor has Al-Qur'an given them as a set homily, with accents of blessing and cursing; they have been spoken of in many different ways—sometimes in connection with human nature, when Al-Qur'an speaks of its beauties and ulcers, sometimes when narrating some events of the life of the people of old who were successful, or failed, in consequence of these virtues and vices.

Al-Qur'an explains them fully, giving their characteristics. It creates in us the spirit that reproves evil and approves righteousness. The upbraiding soul thus becomes strong and establishes itself. Al-Qur'an warns us also against certain mentalities that harden men's mind up to the stage of callousness, when

Allah sets His seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes.⁷¹

In them, conscience dies; progress terminates, and we become the lowest of the low. [We thus invoke the following tendencies:]

(1) *Indifference*:—"Surely those who disbelieve—it being alike to them whether you warn them or not—they will not believe."⁷²

(2) *Hypocrisy*:—"And there are those who say: We believe; and they are not at all believers."⁷³

(3) *Two-sidedness*:—"When it is said to them, Do not make mischief . . . they say: We are but peacemakers."⁷⁴

(4) *Conceit*:—"When it is said to them, Believe as others believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe?"⁷⁵

⁵⁵ Al-Qur'an 2:195

⁵⁶ Al-Qur'an 5:142

⁵⁷ Al-Qur'an 2:22

⁵⁸ Al-Qur'an 3:158

⁵⁹ Al-Qur'an 3:75

⁶⁰ Al-Qur'an 33:64

⁶¹ Al-Qur'an 4:52,51

⁶² Al-Qur'an 48:5

⁶³ Al-Qur'an 9:68

⁶⁴ Al-Qur'an 47:23

⁶⁵ Al-Qur'an 5:13

⁶⁶ Al-Qur'an 2:69

⁶⁷ Al-Qur'an 3:60

⁶⁸ Al-Qur'an 24:7

⁶⁹ Al-Qur'an 33:57

⁷⁰ Al-Qur'an 4:93; 17:33

⁷¹ Al-Qur'an 2:7

⁷² Al-Qur'an 2:6

⁷³ Al-Qur'an 2:8

⁷⁴ Al-Qur'an 2:11

⁷⁵ Al-Qur'an 2:13

al-Islam – what it is

(5) *Fear*— "When they meet believers, they say: We believe; and when they are alone with their devils, they say: Surely we are with you, we are only mocking."⁷⁶

(6) *Indecision*— "Wavering between that (and this), (belonging) neither to these nor to those."⁷⁷

(7) *Attachment to hereditary wrong beliefs* — "That on which we find our fathers is sufficient for us."⁷⁸

Conscience becomes strong under these directions if we follow them, and so we enter into the sphere of moral order.

The concluding portion of the Qur´anic quotations dealing with ´Rudimentary Reforms´ [above], spoke of marriage—an institution so necessary for the uplifting of humanity.

We cannot reach the goal without cultivating the habit of doing for others as we do for ourselves.

It demands enlargement of consciousness. The animal consciousness, though very limited in its scope—so much so that its first development into Mother-consciousness, at the birth of offspring, dies very soon after the young become capable of looking after themselves—can expand widely when it appears in the human frame.

Muslim Divines speak of seven stages of its growth: *Animal, Individual, Parental, Tribal, Racial, of the Species, and Cosmic*. In fact, the evolution of the soul follows the development of consciousness. Animal consciousness in us takes little time to sublimate into individual consciousness. We are sociable; society cannot proceed unless individual rights are respected, which means the cultivation of individual consciousness. If I feel for my rights, I must feel also for others´ rights. This mentality springs from necessity. But to go further is very hard. There we have to leave our cherished possessions for others. It means sacrifice. It is uphill work.⁷⁹

People speak of love; but love is sacrifice. Higher morality springs out of selflessness, which comes into practice, in its natural course, in marriage. Marriage joins the two souls; they soon begin to live and feel for each other; children are born and intensify the sacrificial spirit. We work hard and let our savings go to them. Self-seeking tendencies become weakened. Marriage brings also other relatives and friends in touch with us; we begin to feel for them. Our consciousness now crosses the walls of family, and we find the fourth stage—that of Tribal-consciousness. It, in its turn, engenders Race-consciousness, which, if cultivated on broader charitable lines, creates consciousness of the Species, and Cosmic-consciousness. Then we feel for every man, and for every other creature, as we do for ourselves. Our consciousness reaches its sublimity, and our soul is soon fully fledged. Love and compassion are at the root of all. Their seed is in our nature, but its nursery is the married life; as Al-Qur´an says:

⁷⁶ Al-Qur´an 1:14

⁷⁷ Al-Qur´an 4:143

⁷⁸ Al-Qur´an 5:104; 7:27

⁷⁹ Al-Qur´an 90:12

al-Islam – what it is

God created mates for you, and puts between you love and compassion.⁸⁰

This is the object of marriage in Islam.

True love and compassion grow naturally under the family roof. Al-Qur'an refers to it in another verse—a verse that is read from the pulpit to the whole Muslim world on each Friday:

God enjoins upon you justice, beneficence, and that which you do to your family folk.⁸¹

Justice brings social order to perfection and moves individual consciousness in the right way, but further progress depends upon doing to others as we do to our families. How finely the verse sums up the whole of morality. Do the same to all creatures of God that you do to your kindred, and you will raise Mother-consciousness to Divine-consciousness. For this reason the Prophet declared: "Marriage is of my ways; he who goes against my ways is not from me." But marriage cannot serve its purpose unless the position of the woman is raised and domestic ethics improved.

History is too eloquent on the subject for there to be any need for me to show the degraded condition in which Islam found women. Al-Qur'an really raised her up to man's level when it said:

O people, fear your Lord who created you from a single being, created its mate of the same essence.⁸² They are your garments and you are their garments,⁸³ to them is due what is due from them.⁸⁴

The Prophet said: "Women are men's twin-halves; the most valuable thing . . . is a virtuous woman; God enjoins to treat women well, for they are their mothers, daughters and aunts; female rights are sacred; see that women are maintained in their rights."

Before Islam, some thought that woman was without a human soul and too unclean to enter into sacred places. Al-Qur'an gave the lie to such a conception, and declared that woman was equal to man, both in moral and in spiritual advancement. Al-Qur'an acknowledged her admission to paradise—the final abode for the soul; and in the following speaks equally of both:

Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, the believing men and the believing women, the obeying men and the obeying women, the truthful men and the truthful women, the patient men and the patient women, the humble men and the humble women, the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women, the fasting men and the fasting women, the chaste men and the chaste women, the men who remember Allah and the women who remember Allah; He has prepared for them forgiveness and mighty reward.⁸⁵

As to domestic morals, which alone can improve ethics in general, Muhammad says: "He is the most perfect Muslim whose disposition is most liked by his own family. The best of you are those who are best to their wives; the thing

⁸⁰ Al-Qur'an 30:21

⁸¹ Al-Qur'an 16:90

⁸² Al-Qur'an 14:1

⁸³ Al-Qur'an 2:187

⁸⁴ Al-Qur'an 2:228

⁸⁵ Al-Qur'an 3:35

al-Islam – what it is

which is lawful but disliked by God, is divorce. A virtuous wife is man's best treasure. Do not prevent your women from coming to the mosque. Admonish your wife with kindness. A Muslim must not hate his wife; if he be displeased with one bad quality in her, let him be pleased with another one which is good. Give your wife to eat when you eat, clothe her when you clothe yourself; abuse her not; nor separate yourself from her in displeasure. Do not beat her. If a woman undertakes more than one day's journey, her male relative should accompany her."

Islam gives ample teachings to carry us further up to Cosmic-consciousness [*Kamilah*], but here I can only give a very brief extract from Al-Qur'an and quote but a few of the sayings of the Prophet.

We are commanded goodness to parents, in gratitude for all they did for us when we were small,⁸⁶ especially to the mother who bore us "with fainting upon fainting,"⁸⁷ and gave us milk for "two years";⁸⁸ we should be compassionate and gentle to them; when they reach old age, speak to them generously, never chide them, nor say to them even "Ugh," and leave them gently when going in pursuit of calling.⁸⁹

The Prophet says: "It is pity that young persons may lose paradise by not serving old parents; paradise lies at a mother's feet. Allah's pleasure is in a father's pleasure; His displeasure in a father's displeasure."

After our parents, we should do good to our kinsmen, the orphans, the needy, the kindred-neighbour, the alien-neighbour, the fellow-passenger, the wayfarers, servants, political prisoners;⁹⁰ and liberate the slaves,⁹¹ and feed the poor, the orphans, the captive⁹² and those "in hunger" or "lying in the dust."⁹³ All this out of love for Allah, neither desiring reward nor thanks, nor taking pride nor boasting.⁹⁴

The Prophet says: "Do you love your Creator? Love your fellow-beings first. One who takes charge of the orphans will be with me on the day of requital. Look after widows; he is not of us who is not affectionate to his children and reveres not the old. To cheer up the weary, to remove the sufferings of the afflicted, will have their rewards. He who helps his fellow-creatures in need, and helps the oppressed, him will God help in difficulty. He is the most favoured of God from whom the greatest good cometh to His creatures. He who removes his brother's want, God will forgive his sin. All God's creatures are a family; he who does most good to God's creatures is His most beloved. Seek for God's goodwill in that of the poor and indigent. Avert Allah's wrath with charity. They will enter paradise who have a true, pure and merciful heart. O Aiysha, do not turn away the poor without giving something, be it but half a date."

Islam laid great stress on charity, because charity cultivates the sacrificial spirit. Sacrifice is the mainspring of all moral qualities. Al-Qur'an divides

⁸⁶ Al-Qur'an 17:23

⁸⁷ Al-Qur'an 31:14

⁸⁸ Al-Qur'an 31:14

⁸⁹ Al-Qur'an 17:28

⁹⁰ Al-Qur'an 4:36

⁹¹ Al-Qur'an 90:13

⁹² Al-Qur'an 76:87

⁹³ Al-Qur'an 90:15,16

⁹⁴ Al-Qur'an 76:7,9

al-Islam – what it is

them under two headings. First, those that prevent us from injuring others' life, property and honour; and chief among these are CHASTITY, HONESTY, MEEKNESS and POLITENESS. Secondly, those that prompt us to do good to others. Among these are FORGIVENESS, GOODNESS, COURAGE, TRUTHFULNESS, PATIENCE, SYMPATHY and KINDNESS.

Al-Qur'an does not read any vague sermon on them. It defines them and shows the right occasions for their use. Sentiments and deeds, in themselves, are neither good nor bad. It is the propriety of the occasion that gives them the dignity of morality. Again, circumstances change their character. Forgiveness to incorrigible offenders is tyranny. Charity misplaced is extravagance. Man needed some enlightenment on this aspect of charity, which Al-Qur'an supplied.

I quote here some verses [and add commentary] that help to cultivate these morals.

On Chastity

Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks when they see strange women, and observe continence. Say to the believing women that they refrain from casting their looks upon strange men, and display not the decorated parts of their body except those external. Let them wear head-covers over their bosoms; and let them not strike their feet . . . and turn to Allah for protection from stumbling.⁹⁵ Draw not near unto fornication (keep aloof even from its occasions), for it is indecency and it is an evil. Let those who cannot find means to marry, keep chaste (and employ other means to preserve continence).⁹⁶ As for monkery,⁹⁷ they invented it—we did not prescribe it to them—only to seek Allah's pleasure; but they did not observe it with its due observances.⁹⁸

On Honesty

Control the property of those among you who are intellectually weak; do not give away what God has placed with you, but maintain them out of profit of it. . . . and speak to them words of honest advice.

Test the orphans until they attain puberty; if you find them matured in intellect, give them their property, and consume it not extravagantly . . . whoever is rich let them abstain altogether, and whoever is poor, let him eat reasonably, then when you make over to them their property, call witnesses in their presence.⁹⁹

Those who swallow the property of the orphans . . . they only swallow fire into their belly, and they shall enter the burning fire.¹⁰⁰ Do not consume each other's wealth unjustly, nor offer it to judges as a bribe, so that you may seize others' property dishonestly;¹⁰¹ verily God orders you to give back your trusts to their owners.¹⁰² He does not love the treacherous.¹⁰³ Measure rightly, weight with exact balance; defraud not men of their substance; nor tread the earth

⁹⁵ Al-Qur'an 24:33

⁹⁶ Al-Qur'an 24:33

⁹⁷ i.e. cloistered monks.

⁹⁸ Al-Qur'an 52:27

⁹⁹ Al-Qur'an 4:6

¹⁰⁰ Al-Qur'an 4:10

¹⁰¹ Al-Qur'an 2:188

¹⁰² Al-Qur'an 4:61

¹⁰³ Al-Qur'an 6:60

al-Islam – what it is

with criminal intention.¹⁰⁴ Do not give worthless things for good ones.¹⁰⁵

On Meekness

Live peacefully.¹⁰⁶ . . . There is much good in peace;¹⁰⁷ if they incline to peace, do thou also incline to it.¹⁰⁸ Servants of the Merciful are those upon earth¹⁰⁹ . . . who walk meekly. When they hear frivolous discourse they pass on with dignity.¹¹⁰ Do not pick quarrels on trifling matters. Turn (away vain, vexatious words and deeds) with something better; the person between whom and thyself there was enmity, shall become as it were thy warmest friend.¹¹¹

On Politeness

Speak to men good words.¹¹² Let not men laugh other men to scorn, who perchance may be better than themselves; neither let women laugh other women to scorn; defame not others, nor call one another by nicknames. Avoid especially suspicion; suspicion sometimes is a sin; neither backbite others.¹¹³ Accuse not others unknowingly; verily the hearing, the sight and the heart shall be called to account for this.¹¹⁴

On Forgiveness

Forgiveness is first among those qualities which we exercise for doing good to others. Instead of seeing offenders punished we forgive them. Islam does not recommend unconditional pardon, or non-resistance to evil on each occasion. Reclamation and mending are its chief aim. If they cannot be attained without harsh measures, it allows them.

The recompense of evil is evil proportionate thereto, but if a person forgives and amends thereby, he shall have his reward from Allah.¹¹⁵

But in the case of evil coming from our inferiors, the Book not only recommends forgiveness, but the showing of liberality to them, provided it may bring reclamation.

They are the doers of good who master their anger and do good to them.¹¹⁶

Al-Qur'an does not recognize every manifestation of pardon as a high morality. Harmlessness, or inability to revenge a wrong, is not forgiveness. If only non-recompense of evil meant forgiveness, many of the lower animals show it. The cow, the lamb and other animals may be described as meek. But that quality can properly be claimed only by those who show mercy when others stand at their mercy; who suppress anger and vengeance, when they have power to wreak it. Al-Qur'an does not allow forgiveness if it leads to evil consequences.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Qur'an 26:182

¹⁰⁵ Al-Qur'an 4:2

¹⁰⁶ Al-Qur'an 8:1

¹⁰⁷ Al-Qur'an 4:127

¹⁰⁸ Al-Qur'an 8:61

¹⁰⁹ Al-Qur'an 25:63

¹¹⁰ Al-Qur'an 25:72

¹¹¹ Al-Qur'an 41:34

¹¹² Al-Qur'an 2:71

¹¹³ Al-Qur'an 49:11,12

¹¹⁴ Al-Qur'an 17:38

¹¹⁵ Al-Qur'an 42:40

¹¹⁶ Al-Qur'an 3:133

al-Islam – what it is

On Goodness

God commands to do good for good, and to do good without recompense and in the way we do good to our kindred; God forbids exceeding the limit of justice and doing good on wrong occasions.¹¹⁷

Though Al-Qur'an speaks highly of charity, it nevertheless places some restraints on its exercise. It disallows charity to the extent that it may impoverish its doers, nor does it allow charity proceeding from evil sources:

And when they spend, they are neither extravagant nor niggard and keep the mean.¹¹⁸ Bestow alms from the good things you have already acquired; do not aim at what is bad that you may spend it (in alms).¹¹⁹ Make not your charity worthless by laying obligations upon those you have relieved, or by injury and reproach.¹²⁰ The servants of God feed the poor, the orphans, the bondsmen, and say, We do so to please God; we seek not recompense nor thanks.¹²¹ They give alms in prosperity and in straightness,¹²² secretly and openly.¹²³

Al-Qur'an names also the persons to whom alms should go:

The poor, the needy, the collectors or distributors of alms, the newcomers in faith when in need, the captives, those in debt or in trouble, those furthering God's cause, the wayfarer.¹²⁴

On Courage

Courage should not be confused with the fearlessness of a soldier or of a hunter who is habituated to danger. True courage can be displayed only in redress of wrong.

The truly brave are those who stand firm and behave patiently under ills and hardships;¹²⁵ their patience is only for God, and not to display bravery.¹²⁶ When men gather against them and frighten them, this increases their faith; they say, Allah is sufficient for us, and is the excellent Protector.¹²⁷ Be not like those who march from their houses insolently, and to be seen of others, and turn away from God's way.¹²⁸

True courage does not lie in the insolent ostentation of bravery, but in patience and steadfastness in resisting passions, and standing fearlessly to support good and avert evil. It is not the daring dash of a savage, but the unbreakable courage of a virtuous man.

On Truthfulness

¹¹⁷ Al-Qur'an 16:90

¹¹⁸ Al-Qur'an 15:67

¹¹⁹ Al-Qur'an 2:267

¹²⁰ Al-Qur'an 2:263

¹²¹ Al-Qur'an 76:8,9

¹²² Al-Qur'an 3:138

¹²³ Al-Qur'an 13:22

¹²⁴ Al-Qur'an 9:6

¹²⁵ Al-Qur'an 2:172

¹²⁶ Al-Qur'an 13:22

¹²⁷ Al-Qur'an 3:172

¹²⁸ Al-Qur'an 8:47

al-Islam – what it is

Abstaining from falsehood is good, but it is not a moral quality if it incurs no risk. It becomes high morality if we stick to truth when life, property or honour, is in danger.

Shun ye the pollution of idols, and shun ye falsehood.¹²⁹ They shall not refuse to present themselves when summoned; and conceal not true testimony, for he who conceals it has a wicked heart.¹³⁰ When you speak, be true and just, though the person concerned be your kinsman. Stand fast to truth and justice for Allah's sake, though it may be against your self or parents or near relative, be he rich or poor.¹³¹ Be upright for Allah; let not hatred of a nation incite you to act inequitably.¹³² The men of truth and women of truth have a rich reward.¹³³ They enjoin truth and steadfastness upon each other.¹³⁴

On Patience

None of us is without troubles; we have to taste sorrows and sufferings and submit to misfortunes. But it is only when the loss is suffered with total resignation to God, that patience becomes a moral virtue.

O you who believe! Seek assistance through patience and prayer;¹³⁵ surely Allah is with the patient. We will certainly try you with somewhat of fear, hunger, loss of property, lives and fruits. Give good news to the patient who, when misfortune comes, say, surely we are for Allah; to Him we shall return.¹³⁶

On Sympathy

We labour under a wrong notion of sympathy. Race and colour prejudices prompt us to wrong others in the interests of our own people. We exercise our patriotic spirit in the same way. This psychology arises from natural impulses, witnessed even among the lower animals. A raven's call brings thousands of other ravens together against their foes. Al-Qur'anic injunctions on the subject are very useful.

Sympathize and co-operate in good and pious matters, and do not co-operate for evil and malice.¹³⁷ Slacken not in your zeal for the sympathy of your people. Do not advocate the fraudulent, nor plead for those who defraud one another.¹³⁸

Divine Revelation

Virtue for virtue's sake is undoubtedly a great consolation, a strong incentive for leading a moral life; but strength to face hardships in the cause of righteousness comes only to those whose belief in God's existence reaches the stage of certainty, i.e. to whom God appears and speaks as He did to them of old time. Islam promises this:

¹²⁹ Al-Qur'an 22:31

¹³⁰ Al-Qur'an 2:283

¹³¹ Al-Qur'an 4:135

¹³² Al-Qur'an 5:8

¹³³ Al-Qur'an 33:35

¹³⁴ Al-Qur'an 103:3

¹³⁵ Al-Qur'an 2:153

¹³⁶ Al-Qur'an 2:153,155,156,157

¹³⁷ Al-Qur'an 5:2

¹³⁸ Al-Qur'an 4:104,105,107

al-Islam – what it is

Those who strive for Us, we will certainly guide them to our ways.¹³⁹

These moralities, when observed properly, enable us to receive the Divine Revelation. First, angels begin to invite us to good actions and take us under their care. Do we not feel sometimes inclined to do good voluntarily and shun evils, as if inspired by some unseen agencies? The inspiration comes from angels.

God sends down angels with inspiration on whom He pleases.¹⁴⁰ ...

The angels become encouraged if we follow them. They become our guardians; we receive Divine Revelations through them from time to time.

As for those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved; receive good news of the garden you were promised. We are your guardians in this life and the hereafter; you shall have therein what your soul desires.¹⁴¹

Inspiration

This is the third stage of our uplifting, called *Mulhima*—the Inspired. This brings the soul on its road to perfection.¹⁴² The Divine flame from within kindles and consumes all dross. We walk in its light; Allah listens to our cries and answers our prayers by the words of His own mouth. God says:

Call upon Me, and I will answer your prayers.¹⁴³ If My servants ask thee concerning Me, tell them that I am very near to them; I listen to the supplications of the supplicator; seek Me with prayers, and believe in Me, so that they may proceed rightly.¹⁴⁴

The assurance coming in some tangible form, we feel in God's company and become steadfast in the hardest ordeals. Temptations die and cravings for virtue increase; struggles are passed and won, and the soul begins to rule the flesh.

It is the fourth stage of the spiritual progress [Mutma'inna]; carnal desires come within proper bounds; evil disappears, and virtue becomes man's food.

O believers! God endeared the faith to you and impressed its beauty and excellence upon your hearts. He made unbelief and wickedness and disobedience hateful to you and made your heart averse to evil.¹⁴⁵ Truth came and falsehood fled; verily falsehood had to flee.¹⁴⁶

Man forgets himself in God's love; his life is solely for the Master.¹⁴⁷ He steps automatically on the right path.

Yes, whoever submits entirely to Allah and is the doer of good, he has his reward

¹³⁹ Al-Qur'an 6:163

¹⁴⁰ Al-Qur'an 16:2

¹⁴¹ Al-Qur'an 4:30

¹⁴² Al-Qur'an 91:7,9

¹⁴³ Al-Qur'an 40:60

¹⁴⁴ Al-Qur'an 2:186

¹⁴⁵ Al-Qur'an 49:7,8

¹⁴⁶ Al-Qur'an 17:83

¹⁴⁷ Al-Qur'an 9:24

al-Islam – what it is

from his Lord; he shall have no fear nor shall he grieve.¹⁴⁸

Here we pass from the moral into the spiritual order. The passion of Mine and Thine dies; we hold our acquisitions as a trust for others.¹⁴⁹ With no race or colour or family distinction, we live for God and His creatures.

The lover of God sacrifices his life in His way and receives His pleasure as his price.¹⁵⁰

In the hardest afflictions they look to God, saying: "O Lord! Give us in this affliction contentment of mind that may give us patience, and our death be upon Islam (i.e. total resignation to God)." And God says:

"For them are good tidings in this world and in the hereafter."¹⁵¹

These are the fifth and sixth evolutionary stages of our soul [Radiah and Mardiyah]. We reach the door of heaven on this very earth:

Thou soul at rest, return to thy Lord, pleased with Him and He pleased with thee; enter among My servants and enter into My paradise.¹⁵²

Ponder over these words. They explain the Muslim paradise; *service of God is paradise.*

At this stage man becomes a willing instrument in God's hands. He merges in Him and subordinates his judgment to His will, and says, as Muhammad said: "My prayers and my sacrifices, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds."¹⁵³ Here God becomes his limbs and joints, as Al-Qur'an speaks of Muhammad:

The hand of the Prophet, which is above their hands, is the hand of God.¹⁵⁴ Whatever thou castest, not thou, but God, has cast.¹⁵⁵

God becomes closer to us than our neck-vein [- or jugular vein].¹⁵⁶

He engraves faith on our heart with His own hands and strengthens us with His Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁷

Man's soul reaches its zenith. The spirit of Allah breathed in man, as the perfection of his physical frame¹⁵⁸ comes to prominence. We reach the final stage, and the angels of God—the movers of the forces of Nature—fall prostrate to our will.¹⁵⁹

People of the present day speculate about occult powers and hanker after abnormal achievements. Should these things be worthy of the notice of a

¹⁴⁸ Al-Qur'an 6:163

¹⁴⁹ Al-Qur'an 33:72

¹⁵⁰ Al-Qur'an 2:203

¹⁵¹ Al-Qur'an 10:65

¹⁵² Al-Qur'an 98:8

¹⁵³ Al-Qur'an 6:162

¹⁵⁴ Al-Qur'an 48:10

¹⁵⁵ Al-Qur'an 8:17

¹⁵⁶ Al-Qur'an 50:15

¹⁵⁷ Al-Qur'an 58:22

¹⁵⁸ Al-Qur'an 15:29

¹⁵⁹ Al-Qur'an 2:38,72

al-Islam – what it is

Muslim who reaches this stage? He becomes equipped with Divine morals, and reproduces God's attributes within human walls. Could we go farther, if God becomes our limbs and joints? The world has produced such men, but some of them were mistaken for God. They were iron in the fire, exuding heat and light, but resuming a normal condition when out of it. They showed Divine colours, but exhibited human infirmities. They did not possess two natures—Divine and human—but only one human nature sometimes at its highest, and sometimes normal.

Imagine the condition when all struggles are over; all low passions—avarice, envy, rivalry, vanity, vengeance, vanished; every desire of the soul achieved; life a perennial spring, flowing with high moralities—chastity, honesty, meekness, patience, constancy, truthfulness, forgiveness, benevolence, sympathy and kindness to all creatures; man standing in full beatitude, as if in the presence of Allah.

Could there be a better conception of a blissful life? This is the Muslim paradise that opens in this life, while these very moral and spiritual conditions will become, after death, materialized in a form known only to God,¹⁶⁰ to make us a heaven there. The paradise will be an embodiment of the spiritual blessings which advanced souls begin to enjoy here. Al-Qur'an says (to those lost in His love):

The Lord has given a drink that purified their hearts: They drink of a fountain which they opened with their own hands.¹⁶¹

Their own good deeds will, in that life, assume the form of trees that will give unceasing fruits. To such a life men and women will have equal entry.

The dwellers of the gardens shall be on that day in happy occupation; they and their wives reclining in shade on raised couches; they shall have fruits and whatever they desire; Peace—a word from the merciful Lord.¹⁶² . . . The angels will enter in upon them, from every gate; peace be upon you because you were constant.¹⁶³ . . . And we will remove whatever of ill-feeling is in their breasts.¹⁶⁴ . . . Their cry therein shall be, Glory to Thee, O Allah; and their greetings in it shall be Peace, and their last cry shall be Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.¹⁶⁵

Other verses similarly show that perfect peace shall be the ruling order in the Muslim paradise, and its blessings purely of a spiritual nature.

And they shall say: All praise to Allah, Who made grief to depart from us . . . Who made us alight in a house abiding for ever . . . toil shall not touch us therein nor shall fatigue afflict us.¹⁶⁶ . . . Well pleased because of their own striving, in lofty gardens wherein you shall not hear vain talk.¹⁶⁷

Freedom from grief, fear, toil, and anxiety is the chief characteristic of Al-Qur'anic paradise—a truth repeated again and again in Al-Qur'an. Could

¹⁶⁰ Al-Qur'an 32:17

¹⁶¹ Al-Qur'an 55:46

¹⁶² Al-Qur'an 76:5

¹⁶³ Al-Qur'an 36:38

¹⁶⁴ Al-Qur'an 13:23,24

¹⁶⁵ Al-Qur'an 7:43

¹⁶⁶ Al-Qur'an 35:34,35

¹⁶⁷ Al-Qur'an 88:9-11

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the idea of the spiritual paradise be better expressed? Undoubtedly Al-Qur'an speaks of gardens, trees, milk, honey, fruits and numerous other things; but these are not of this life; they are metaphorical expressions. Al-Qur'an is too eloquent on the point to leave any doubt:

A parable of the garden, which the righteous are promised; therein are rivers of water that do not alter . . . and rivers of milk . . . the rivers of honey . . . fruits.¹⁶⁸ . . .

Other verses say the same;¹⁶⁹ that this all is an allegory; and for obvious reasons. If heavenly blessings are such, as the Prophet says, "as no eyes have seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into man's heart to conceive them," they can only be conveyed by parables and examples.

The Houris, upon whom so much stress is laid by our adverse critics, are no other than our own female folks, with hearts pure and eyes restrained from evil. Al-Qur'an says:

The garden of perpetual abode which they will enter along with those who do good from among their parents, their spouses and their offspring.¹⁷⁰

The root of the word *Houri* means white, pure, unsullied. We read undoubtedly of the beauty of their eyes, but their very description¹⁷¹—"Those who restrain the eyes"—refers more to their spiritual beauty than to anything of the flesh. The eyes restrained from evil means purity of heart. It is our heart, under Qur'anic teachings, that creates heaven and hell:

The day on which property will not avail, nor sons, except who comes to Allah with a *heart* free from evil.¹⁷²

Speaking of hell, Al-Qur'an says :

It is the fire kindled by Allah which rises above *the hearts*.¹⁷³

Besides, only those born here will be admitted to that life, with no further procreation therein. Heavenly life is simply a starting-point for further progress of a different character.

Their light shall run before them and on their right hands; they shall say: Our Lord make perfect for us our light.¹⁷⁴

The prayer is really a desire for perfection. "Every stage of excellence to which man shall attain shall seem to be imperfect when compared with the next stage of progress."

The seven heavens of Al-Qur'an are seven evolutionary stages, but that is not the termination. The last heaven will be another starting-point for advancement till we merge into the Divine Essence. Here we also make great progress; but it is a life of preparation for us, to traverse immeasurably wider

¹⁶⁸ Al-Qur'an 47:15

¹⁶⁹ Al-Qur'an 1315

¹⁷⁰ Al-Qur'an 13:23

¹⁷¹ Al-Qur'an 37:78

¹⁷² Al-Qur'an 26:89

¹⁷³ Al-Qur'an 104:57

¹⁷⁴ Al-Qur'an 66:8

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realms opening at our death, when the soul will become freed from physical limitations.

They shall have high places, above them higher places. They shall have reward never to be cut.¹⁷⁵

The Qur'anic paradise is not within certain frontiers.

Hasten to a garden the extensiveness of which is as the extensiveness of heaven and earth.¹⁷⁶

The Prophet, when asked, "If paradise be so extensive, where will be the hell?" remarked: "Allah be glorified, where is the night when the day comes?" This explains conclusively that the Muslim Heaven and Hell are two conditions of life after death, and not two places. Here we utilize mostly terrestrial things for our growth, but there our material will be something from the whole universe, but much finer than earth. A heart free from evil will move freely in heaven and on earth, but the wicked will become crippled. He will be subjected to a course of treatment to remove the spiritual poison that he himself created in his system,¹⁷⁷ that stunted his faculties; but when it shall have become counteracted, and he be fit to start on the onward journey to the goal, he will be no more in hell.

Islam does not speak of any eternal condemnation, nor does it close the door of paradise on any human being. Hell is meant to cleanse men of the dross that hindered their spiritual progress; and when that object is gained, its necessity finishes. If fire is a good cleansing factor, Al-Qur'an is only consistent with its claimed explicitness, if it uses the metaphor of fire when describing hell. It will automatically become cold, when every soul shall have become purged of its impurities; and the day will come on hell, as the noble Prophet said, when cool breezes will blow in its avenues. This is the Muslim conception of hell, which, even in this life, burns in an evil heart.

Material Progress

As to our material progress I have as yet said nothing. The conditions obtaining chiefly in the West, led me to dwell mostly on the moral and spiritual beauties of Islam. Al-Qur'an, however, promulgated the best of ethics for producing material civilization. The short space at my disposal compels me to be brief.

To begin with, Al-Qur'an declared that man was not only God's Image but His vicegerent on the earth who, through acquiring the necessary knowledge, can receive homage from angels;¹⁷⁸ those sentient beings who, as the Book says, move forces of Nature and actualize her potentialities. The Book then defines man's relations with the rest of the universe. It preaches the equality of man in every human attainment.¹⁷⁹ It declares that everyone could do what his superiors do. It demolishes all man-made barriers such as descent, race, colour and wealth. It makes righteousness the only criterion of greatness.¹⁸⁰ Thus Islam brought to man for the first time the best form of democracy in all its ramifications.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Qur'an 95:6

¹⁷⁶ Al-Qur'an 47:21, 3:132

¹⁷⁷ Al-Qur'an 91:10

¹⁷⁸ Al-Qur'an 2:34

¹⁷⁹ Al-Qur'an 18:110

¹⁸⁰ Al-Qur'an 49:13

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As to government, Umar, the second Caliph, remarked that it was no government if the voice of the governed was not heard. State property was made public property by him, in every sense of the word. Every child received its stipend up to a certain age. Islam also introduced Socialism on workable lines. Every Muslim is ordered to contribute annually 2.5 per cent, of what he owns, to help the poor. For the rest, man's charitable nature has been moved to part voluntarily with that which Western Socialism demands that the State shall exact from the rich to benefit the poor, and it has proved more efficacious than the other is likely to prove. Islam honoured labour. It sanctified honest living, however humble, and denounced mendicancy. It abolished usury and encouraged trade.¹⁸¹ It denounced sedition¹⁸² and secret societies.¹⁸³ It preached the maintenance of the *status quo*, if just and equitable. But the greatest boon that Islam conferred on humanity was the unique stimulus it gave to learning.

Soon after Islam the world saw an upheaval, as it were, of material sciences unknown before. They did not, for obvious reasons, appeal much to pre-Islamic people, to whom Nature and her elements were the chief gods. Such, then [to them], it would be sacrilege to reduce to service; nevertheless Islam came, and brought them to the dust when it declared that everything in heaven and earth—the sun, the moon, the stars, the rivers, . . . the ocean, the trees and so forth, were made subservient to man.¹⁸⁴ Man soon realized that his gods were his servants. He began to think of utilizing them, and brought material sciences into existence. In order, however, to draw his attention to scientific research, Al-Qur'an said:

Men of understanding . . . reflect on the creation of (that in) heaven and earth . . . (and say): Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain. Glory be to Thee.¹⁸⁵

Thus the Book revealed that everything in Nature had its use for man, who must ponder over it and realize that to glorify God was not mere lip-gratitude, but rather consisted, first in discovering the properties of things, and then in giving thanks to Him, on finding our needs supplied by them. Science cannot reach the height suggested by Islam unless the whole solar system is reduced to our service. Is it, then, a matter of wonderment, if the early Muslims became the forerunners of the workers in modern sciences, that brought forth modern civilization?

In short, the equality of man and subservience of Nature are the two motor levers of Civilization. Al-Qur'an taught them to man clearly for the first time [to the Arabs]. In fact, they are the natural sequel of our belief in the Oneness of God. But if Islam preached monotheism in the purest form, it was rather to create in us self-reliance and independence of character than for anything in the way of extolling the Divine Majesty. Allah¹⁸⁶ does not lose anything if man becomes polytheist, nor is He a jealous God. Man is himself the loser in worshipping other than God, for in doing so, he kills all his high-soaring faculties. But for this, he could have done the same things which have, in his estimation, deified some evolved personality.

¹⁸¹ Al-Qur'an 2:275

¹⁸² Al-Qur'an 16:99

¹⁸³ Al-Qur'an 58:10

¹⁸⁴ Al-Qur'an 14:32,33

¹⁸⁵ Al-Qur'an 3:190

¹⁸⁶ Al-Qur'an 31:12

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Al-Qur'an first bids us look only to Allah for help. It also declares that no intermediary stands between Him and man,¹⁸⁷ nor shall any intercession prevail before the Majesty of Allah; and then as to Allah Himself we are told:

Allah does not change the condition of the people until they change their own condition.¹⁸⁸ . . .

Of our own exertions we are told:

For (every soul) is what it has earned¹⁸⁹ and upon it is (the evil of what) it has wrought.¹⁹⁰ He who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.¹⁹¹

We, however, are assured that our good actions will be rewarded tenfold or more, but that the first move must come from us. Could there be a better lesson for self-help, a better encouragement for self-exertion and a sterner warning against doing wrong?

There was another drawback which retarded civilization, and which Islam removed. Man's view of life, and of worldly things, was too narrow to allow of their enjoyment. The dark side of humanity was preached, and its bright side totally ignored. Philosophy and religion both taught the same. They were, however, not altogether wrong. The selfish aggression of those making material progress in those days, and especially their self-indulgence, gave birth to such notions; and so austere ascetic exercises, and the monastic life, became the best religion. Salvation lay in total renunciation, and mendicancy arose in consequence. Could material progress thrive under these conditions? Islam came in time, and changed the trend of things. Monasticism was denounced and mendicancy prohibited. Enjoyment of worldly things was recommended, but on guarded lines:

Say: Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good provision? These are for the believers . . . in this life.¹⁹²

What a sound logic! For to depreciate God's good provision is to find fault with His work. The earth and its contents must have some use, but they could not be created to pamper self-indulgence, or further aggressiveness. Tyranny and autocracy rule the world, no doubt, from time to time, but only for a short time. The rule of the people must go, under Qur'anic Decree,¹⁹³ to those who rule for the benefit of the governed, and who do not weaken the subject¹⁹⁴ races, while strengthening their own people for their own ends. "The good provisions" of the world are for the servants of the Beneficent God, who, as Al-Qur'an describes them:

. . . walk on the earth humbly and keep in their wealth a fixed portion for him who begs or is deprived (like the dumb animal). And when they spend they are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, but keep the just mean; they do not call

¹⁸⁷ Al-Qur'an 74:48

¹⁸⁸ Al-Qur'an 13:11

¹⁸⁹ Al-Qur'an 2:286

¹⁹⁰ Al-Qur'an 99:78

¹⁹¹ Al-Qur'an 6:16

¹⁹² Al-Qur'an 7:32

¹⁹³ Al-Qur'an 67:1,2,3

¹⁹⁴ Al-Qur'an 28:4

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upon another God with Allah; and slay not the soul forbidden by Him. They observe continence and commit no fornication; they bear not false witness, and are upright in their testimony. They are faithful to their trust and their covenants . . .

- whether in national affairs or in private life.

When they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly. They are constant at their prayers and pass their nights prostrating themselves before their Lord. They keep a guard on their prayers.

(i.e. they work it out in their daily life).

They accept the truth of the Judgment Day, and are fearful of the chastisement of the Lord. When they are reminded of their Lord's communications, they do not fall down thereat, deaf and blind, but say, "Our Lord, grant us in our wives and offspring the joy of our eyes, and make us guides to those who seek righteousness. Our Lord, grant us good in the hereafter. Lord, do not punish us if we forget or make a mistake. . . . Our Lord, do not impose upon us that which we cannot bear; pardon us and grant us protection, forgive our fault and cover our evil deeds and make us die with the righteous people". ... These shall be rewarded with high places because they were patient, and shall be in gardens honoured.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Al-Qur' an 2:23,35; 25:75; 2:201-286; 3:192,193

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A Few More Sayings of the Prophet¹⁹⁶

He who is devoid of kindness is devoid of good. *(Reported by Jarir, transmitted by Muslim)*

He who does not give up uttering lies and acting according to them, Allah has no need of his giving up food and drink. *(Reported by Abu Hurairah, transmitted by Bukhari)*

No one eats better food than that which he eats from the work of his own hands. *(Reported by al-Miqdam, transmitted by Bukhari)*

There are two blessings which most people misuse – health and leisure. *(Reported by Abu 'Umar, transmitted by Bukhari)*

You will recognize the faithful, for they show mercy to one another, love one another and are kind to one another as if they all were of the same body. When one body ails, the entire body ails. *(Reported by Nu'man, transmitted by Bukhari)*

The best Islam is that you feed the poor and offer salutations to those you know and those you do not know. *(Reported by Abdullah ibn 'Amr, transmitted by Bukhari)*

When you observe four things there is nothing in the world that may cause your loss of bliss: guarding of trust, truthfulness in speech, good conduct and moderation in food. *(Reported by Abdullah ibn 'Amr, transmitted by Bukhari)*

¹⁹⁶ from *Submission (sayings of the Prophet)*, by Shems Friedlander (1977).

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Muslim Ethics of War¹⁹⁷

If a Christian Government unsheath the sword in defence of Christians, then a Muslim, on the principles which we indicate below on the authority of the Qur'an, will stand shoulder to shoulder with it, even though, in so doing, he be acting in opposition to a Muslim Power.

The Qur'an sanctions the use of the sword under certain circumstances. First and foremost, in the cause of religion—religion as such, it must be borne in mind, and not Islam exclusively. For this, two distinct occasions have been mentioned. First, when a house of worship is in danger—*be it Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or any other*—a Muslim is enjoined to shed his very blood to save it from demolition. Says the Qur'an:—

Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them;

Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely Allah will help him who helps *His cause*; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.¹⁹⁸

It is significant that the mosque is mentioned last of all. This single verse has since been responsible for the safety [under Islam] of all buildings dedicated to any form of worship. . . .

Again, the use of the sword is also permissible when freedom of conscience is at stake. Of all religions, Islam stands conspicuous in establishing a perfection of religious freedom.

There is no compulsion in matters religious¹⁹⁹

- proclaimed the Qur'an, which has since been the Magna Carta of religion for peoples of all creeds under the rule of Islam. Not only is all interference with another's religious views forbidden, but, should such interference be enforced at the point of the sword, it is the duty of a Muslim to repel it with the sword. In the matter of religion, none may stand between man and God. It is the birthright of man to hold whatever convictions he deems right. Persecution of others must be resisted at all costs by a Muslim, irrespective of whether the aggrieved be a Jew, or a Christian, or of any other faith. For this purpose the Muslim is not only allowed, but enjoined, to fight until perfect religious liberty has been established.²⁰⁰

As regards temporal affairs, authority to wield the sword has been limited to one, and only one, case—self-defence. This permission has been further restricted by the condition that as soon as the enemy shall have suspended hostilities, and shown an inclination towards peace, then Muslims must do the same. This is a principle which Britain acted upon during the Great War; and

¹⁹⁷ From the Appendix to 'The Sources of Christianity' by Khwaja Kamal-Din (1924)

¹⁹⁸ Al-Qur'an 22:39,40

¹⁹⁹ Al-Qur'an 2:256

²⁰⁰ Al-Qur'an 2:192,193

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the Church supported her. Whatever the interpretation put upon the Sermon on the Mount, the fact remains that in comporting herself as she did in the Great War, Britain followed the teaching and example of the Prophet of Arabia.

Muhammad had to fight seven battles in all, of which the first three—the principal ones, the rest being more of the nature of skirmishes when a general state of war prevails—best illustrate the principle in question. For thirteen long years the Prophet and his comrades were the victims of inhuman persecutions at the hands of the Meccans—an historical fact admitted by friend and foe. He suffered all this without retaliation. When, however, things reached a pitch when his life itself was in imminent danger, some safeguard became necessary. The very night when the conspirators were to make away with him, he managed to escape with his life to Medina, in the company of his devoted friend Abu Bakr. But his enemies did not let him alone, even in this far-off refuge 150 miles from Mecca. Jealous of his success in his new place of sojourn, they made repeated efforts to nip the tender plant of Islam in the bud. In all these three battles, the locality of the battlefield is, I think, a decisive factor, showing that the Muslims were constrained to resort to the sword in sheer self-defence. The first of these was fought at Badr, 120 miles distant from Mecca, the enemy headquarters, and 30 miles from Medina. And what was the comparative strength of the contending parties? 313 Muslims against 1,000 Meccans.

Uhad was the scene of the second battle. It was still nearer the Muslim's home of adoption—only 12 miles from Medina. The relative strength this time was about 1,000 Muslims to 3,000 Meccans.

The third was an attack on the town itself. Siege was laid to Medina with an army 10,000 strong. Do not these facts and figures—the locality of the action and the relative strength of the two—furnish conclusive testimony to the fact that self-defence was the only motive which prompted the Muslims to strike a blow? This is exactly the occasion when Jesus would have us sell our clothes to purchase swords. But it was left to Muhammad to illustrate also the practical application of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, and this he did in a manner unique in the history of the world. With 10,000 men he marched against Mecca—the same Mecca which was the scene, for long years, of Muslim persecution. The town surrendered, and was occupied without the spilling of a drop of blood. The vanquished, who had spared no ingenuity in inflicting tortures on Muslims—the ringleaders of the deadly opposition, tormentors, oppressors, and assassins—lay wholly at the mercy of the victors. No punishment would have been too hard for them, according to modern military laws. But was it that the "Spirit of Truth" had to perfect the teachings of the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount—to lead people into "all truth"? Was it for him to illustrate, in practice, the precept of Jesus: "Love thine enemy"?

Summoning their leading men, he announced his decision—a decision beyond their wildest expectations of leniency—"This day there shall be no reproach on you." Such a magnanimous amnesty secured to the Muslims what could never have been gained in any other way—victory over their enemies' hearts by love. The gulf of decades of bloodthirsty malice was bridged by a single stroke. Love was applied to anoint and heal the raw wound of hate. The great and famous dynasty of Muslim rulers—the Umayyads—to whom the world is indebted for vast treasures of art, of science and of philosophy, sprang from the descendants of the ringleader of enemies thus won over.

So long as man is what he is, and his nature is not a true Muslim or a true Christian nature—which are at bottom one and the same—war will remain an

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indispensable factor of human life. Nevertheless, until the arrival of the millennium, much can be done to alleviate the terror and the suffering which are the outcome of wanton brutality. Consequently, Islam, recognizing war as an unavoidable evil, has at the same time laid down, as far as possible, rules and regulations to reduce its evils to the minimum. The Hague Conferences, too, some years since, framed a code of warfare for obviating unnecessary bloodshed, loss and suffering; but how far it has succeeded in practice it is not for me to say. If, however, such restrictions had been imposed by the Hand of God, the adherents of the various religions of the world would have been more careful to abide by them. The Qur'an lays down:

Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them.²⁰¹

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits; surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.

And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter; and do not fight with them at the sacred mosque until they fight with you in it, but if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers.

But if they desist, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

And fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion should be only for Allah; but if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.²⁰²

The Prophet Muhammad also enunciated a system of war, which I give below, in the words of his immediate successor, Abu Bakr:

When you meet your enemies in the fight, comport yourself as befits good Muslims, and remember to prove yourselves the true descendants of Ishmael. In the order and disposition of the host, and in all battles, be careful to follow your banners boldly, and be ever obedient to your leaders. Never yield to, or turn your backs on, your enemies; it is for the cause of good that you fight. You are incited by no less noble a desire than His glory; therefore, fear not to enter into the fight nor let the numbers of your foes alarm you even though excessive. If God should give you the victory, *do not abuse your advantages, and beware how you stain your swords in the blood of him who yields; neither touch ye the children, the women, nor the infirm old men whom ye may find among your enemies. In your progress through the enemy's land cut down no palms, or other fruit trees; destroy not the products of the earth; ravage no fields; burn no dwellings; from the stores of your enemies take only what you need for your wants.* Let no destruction be made without necessity, but occupy the city of the enemy; and if there be any that may serve as an asylum to your adversaries, them do you destroy. Treat the prisoners and him who renders himself to your mercy with pity, as God shall do to you in your need; but trample down the proud and rebellious, nor fail to crush all who have broken the conditions imposed on them. Let there be no perfidy nor falsehood in your treaties with your enemies: be faithful in all things, proving yourself ever upright and noble, and maintaining your word and promise truly. *Do not disturb the quiet of the monk or hermit and destroy not their abodes, but inflict the rigour of death upon all who shall*

²⁰¹ Al-Qur'an 22:39

²⁰² Al-Qur'an 2:190-193

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*refuse the conditions you may impose upon them.*¹

I leave it to the judgment of the reader to decide how far these regulations, if universally adopted, would have contributed to the welfare of humanity. Generally speaking, they have been observed by Muslims ever since.²⁰³

²⁰³ Written in 1924, these words of the Khwaja do not resonate with recent ‘Islamist’ actions. More the pity.

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Further Reading

P.K. Hitti, *'The Arabs'*;

Karen Armstrong, *'Islam; A Short History'*;

Idries Shah, *'The Sufis'*;

A.J. Arberry's part-translation of Attar's *Memorial of the Saints*, published as *'Muslim Saints and Mystics'*,

Fahad Daftary, *'The Isma'ilis; their History and Doctrines'*,

Seyyed Hossain Nasr, *'Isma'ili Contributions to Islamic Culture'*.