

ISLAM AND ZOROASTRIANISM

BY

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ISLAM AND ZOROASTRIANISM

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JESUS, AN IDEAL OF GODHEAD AND HUMANITY
THE MOTHER OF LANGUAGES
FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM
LEAGUE OF FAITH

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To
NAWAB IMAD-UL-MULK BAHADUR
OF
HYDERABAD, DECCAN, INDIA

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Islam and Zoroastrianism

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

IN my recent sojourn in Bombay I chanced to visit some of the tombs of the Muslim saints ; and among the pilgrims there, representing as they did almost all the creeds and classes in Bombay, I saw a large number of Parsees. The Parsees, as a community, have always appeared to me as a class of decent people, with beautiful ideals of life before them. Their humble and reverent attitude toward the Muslim denizens of the tombs, the spirit of homage which characterized their deportment, induced me to renew my study of the Zoroastrian faith—the religion of the so-called Fire-worshippers, who, monotheist as they claim to be—and they could not be otherwise in the judgment of anyone who studies their philosophy and ethics, with the analytic and synthetic eye—could not but pay homage to, and worship, fire—the true and, as they believe, the most perfect manifestation of the

Creator, the most living of the four elements, that with "its coalescing tendency," "soars up," and "purifies all that it touches."

Man, of all creatures in the universe, happens to have the spirit of worship most deeply ingrained. Nature has saddled him with various behests and cravings, creating in him divers thirsts and hungers. The varied passions that, on account of these appetites, arise in his breast—desire and anger chief among them, nay, the roots and parents of all other passions—create in him the emotions of hope and fear. These two chiefly accentuate in him the spirit of homage and adoration for those who seem to satisfy the demands of his various desires. He begins to worship those who can bring him the object of his hope; and bows down, out of fear, before those who, in his judgment, can deprive him of things he needs. He cannot distinguish between *the immediate* and *the ultimate* cause of all that appears in his surroundings. He jumps to the surface and ignores the bottom; especially if the true consciousness of religion has not dawned upon his nascent mind. Animism, spiritualism, and then, element-worship, have each played a great rôle in this connection, in ancient days; afterwards becoming merged in Star-worship or Sun-worship. "This great luminary is, to

the superficial eye, the primeval source of all life, the origin of all manifestation in the universe, the vivifier and resuscitator of dead matter, the upbringer of all vegetation, the mover of all activities, and, in short, the best bestower of all blessings. Would it, then, be matter for surprise if the ancient world, with a mind not sufficiently developed to appreciate the true Deity, bowed to the Luminary,"¹ and became its votary? Would it be a matter for wonderment if fire, the direct descendant, nay, "the first begotten son" of that Deity of Light, the only element, among the whole world of manifestations in the universe, that keeps its distinctive features—to wit, heat and light—intact in it, became his vicegerent on the earth to receive homage from the worshippers of the Sun? Pure monotheism would go to the real Fountain Head of all light, but the polytheistic tendency, innate in an undeveloped mind, would blight its judgment and benight its reasoning. Man would take the agent for the principal, the husk for the kernel, the effect for the cause, and the immediate for the ultimate. This psychology creates polytheism. All forms of "isms," ranging from *fetishism* to *Man-worship*, thrive under it.

¹ *The Sources of Christianity*, p. 58. (The Basheer Muslim Library, the Mosque, Woking.)

Messengers from God came from time to time to kill such propensities. They brought one and the same message from the Above, that there was no object of adoration but one God, and that all our homage and worship should go to Him, and Him alone. They came to wean the human mind from the Immediate, and to transport him to the Ultimate. The Queen of Sheba, as the Qur-án says, was also a Sun-worshipper. She came to Solomon. The wise prophet sought to bring home to her that the sun was not the first source, but a many-grades-removed creation and agent of the First Primeval Cause that gave emanation to all we see in the universe; and that it was to Him that all our adoration should be turned. Solomon built a tank and filled it with water. He covered its surface with crystal glass, with such exactitude as to leave no chance for the naked eye to distinguish between the water and the glass. The Queen had to traverse the tank before she could reach the place of her interview with Solomon. She naturally mistook the crystal for the water. She uncovered her feet and legs, to cross that which seemed to be water; but the very touch of the crystal, at her first step, undeceived her; and the great truth dawned upon her mind that there was

some other Light that was working behind the Sun; that the Luminary was only a Crystal through which His face was showing to the universe; and that her worship, therefore, should go to Him, and not to the great Luminary.

Zoroaster, the prophet and messenger of God, who came to inspire Persia with the true monotheistic verities, had a similar task before him. Those were the days when Sun-worship prevailed in all the countries in the vicinity of Persia. Mithra, Baal, Attis, Adonis, Bacchus, Horus, etc., were various conceptions of the Sun-Deity, that received worship respectively from Persia, Babylon, Syria, Palestine and Greece, in the time of Zoroaster and thereafter. The Persians also worshipped another son of Ahura Mazda—Fire. No wonder if, in the frigid mountainous zones of Persia, fire was given precedence even to the Sun. The Sun has his ascension as well as his declination. He falls within the clutches of the Demon of Darkness after the autumnal Equinox. For full six months he cannot show his face for so long a period as man would wish him to show it. The night becomes longer and longer. Would not these circumstances, accentuated by the rigour of the climate, bring all human adoration in those regions to this Son of Mazda, the fire,

which brings real blessings to do away with the evil influence of the Deity of Darkness? Would not Fire bring a constant happiness and inextinguishable light, if it be “provided with proper incense,” “with proper nourishment,” and “with proper upkeep”? Would not the hoary-headed reverend priest in grateful mood exclaim: “Mayest thou be maintained by one of full age! Mayest thou be maintained by one wise (in religion), O Fire, son of Ahura Mazda!”? ¹

The great prophet of Persia wanted to divert the attention of his people from the Immediate to the Ultimate; and to him—and I may say to every thinking mind of Sufistic tendencies—fire was a true manifestation of the great Author of the Universe. Fire, most certainly, is one of the elements which lead us to contemplate the features of the Great Mind. We know very little of God; we know nothing of His Essence; the little we know of Him is our knowledge of His Attributes, and that knowledge even has come to us either through His revelation to His messengers or through our contemplation of the various components of His work—the Universe around. The latter, I think, must needs be a true and practical illustration of the former. The great

¹ *Atashnyaish Avesta: VIII; The Nyayishes.* By Manekji N. Dhalia.

prophets, when speaking of the Almighty and His ways, were compelled to have recourse to the great Book of Nature. The final Word of God, the Qur-án, when speaking of the most Beneficent and Merciful Lord, had to refer to His work, in order to substantiate and inculcate the great truth, in the following words :—

And your God is one God. There is no god but He. He is Rahman and Rahim (i.e. He who anticipates your need and looks to it beforehand), and His kindness rewards munificently all your works—most surely in the creation of the heaven and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits man, and the water that Allah sends from the clouds, these give life with it to the earth after its death and spread in it (all kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, these are signs for a people who understand.

We should thank the most Beneficent Lord, and adore Him for all these blessings so necessary for our existence; and should not take these manifestations of His compassion as, in themselves, objects of worship. Al-Qur-án enumerates all such components of the Universe as have been taken by ancient peoples as gods. It draws the attention of men of understanding to One who created the so-called man-made gods for the service and benefit of man, who is the lord, and should not be the worshipper, of Nature.

Men of understanding are those who remember Allah . . . and reflect on the creation of the heaven and the earth—and the things in them—the sun, the moon, the stars, the water, the fire, the trees, and the various other things taken as gods by people—and say: Our Lord, Who lookest to our sustenance and maintenance, Thou hast not created all this in vain. Glory be to Thee.¹

In short, all the great thinkers, and all the prophets of God, in order to wean the people from the worship of created things, made the very object of their adoration an efficacious means to bring them to the Great Creator. Zoroaster also belonged to the same blessed race. He would follow the same course in elucidating the great truth; it would befit his gracious lips to say the following when addressing “the offspring of the renowned ancestors” :—

I will now tell you, who are assembled here, the wise sayings of the Mazda, the praises of Ahura and hymns, and the hymns of the good spirits, the sublime truth which I see arising out of these sacred flames.

You shall therefore hearken to the soul of Nature; contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind.²

The last prophet of the world arose at a time when the people of the world, everywhere, had become a prey to the worst type of Polytheism. Everything in Nature was a god,

¹ Al-Qur-án, iii. 190.

² *Gathas Ahunavtati* (Yas. xxx. 1, 2).

to the people on the earth—the sun, the moon, the stars, the clouds, the earth, the water, the fire, the air, the trees and man—in short, each combination of elements and each prominent organism was enthroned on the pedestal of Divinity. No wonder that the pure pages of the Qur-án make mention of all these man-made gods, and declare that they are the creation of the Lord, Who has made them subservient to mankind; that man is not their minister, but their lord. If Muhammad invites men of understanding to contemplate these things, and thus to reach the sublime truth of worshipping one Great God, Zoroaster did the same when that great master enjoined: “Contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind.” The mind, with purity of heart and with untainted nature, obeying the above exhortation, cannot but see, in the beams of fire, the Hand of the Lord Who is on High, to which its flames *soar*, the Hand that is *pure, living*, and all the time, by His *ceaseless movements, coalesces* the jarring elements of Nature into one harmonious whole.

Zoroaster has always appeared to me a great guide and teacher from the Lord, and not a mythical conception of Sun-worship, as portrayed by some of his followers in the days of Mythology; and I have my reasons. Of all the peoples of the Mythological age—from

Persia and Egypt to Ireland—the Parsees have cut quite a distinct figure. Under the Sun-worship cult, the worst of human nature seemed in process of development to its full extent. Their festivals presented horrid scenes of all that may be summed up in the term “bacchanalian orgies.” Bestiality, licentiousness and lewdness of character had free vent, behind the scenes, in the sacred precincts of the various temples of the Sun-gods, in Syria, Phrygia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. And the worst of all was, that all these undesirable and unbecoming festivities were given the colour of sanctity by the use of the name of the Deity. To atone for sin, they offered sacrifice, but in some cases it never came short of human sacrifice: only smoke arising out of human gore could please the divine nostrils. I do not wish to perturb the minds of my readers by going into details. Suffice it to say that Satan, with all his hosts, had usurped God in the heart of men, under the dictates of the Sky-Scriptures of the ancient world. Could Zoroaster be placed on the same pedestal with the other conceptions of the Sun-god, as has mistakenly been done by certain Western writers? To me it smacks of profanity. The history of the Parsees is not the history of the other peoples of the Sun-worshippers. They have observed purity of mind and heart.

The Mazdayasnian creed could not but have read thus in an expanded form :—

“ . . . seek ye the purity of a saint by casting off Dushmata, Duzhukhata, Duzhvarshta, and holding fasts—Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta ” (i.e. good thought, good word, good deed).

The charity, the philanthropy, the fair way of dealing of the so-called Worshippers of Fire, could not be inspired by element-worship. The good and noble in man cannot come to the surface except under the light that descends directly from heaven upon the mind of a person whose heart furnishes an exclusive throne for the Lord Almighty, Who is the Fountain-Head of all grace, and the main-spring of all blessings—and among them Fire. Zoroaster was such an one. He came with the same religion as other prophets of the Lord brought to humanity. His teachings could not remain immune from human interpolation, like other old creeds under the vicissitudes of time. His teachings, when freed from accretions and additions, will reveal precisely the same truths as were inculcated by the other prophets. To show this, is the only justification for the subsequent pages.

CHAPTER II
ONE AND THE SAME RELIGION
FOR ALL

CAN God be partial in His dispensation ? The devout person, ordinarily, makes Him so. Almost every religion declares its followers to be the only blessed people, the only authorized recipients of Divine Revelation. Hinduism was incapable of perceiving that the Light from God might penetrate to other people, beyond the confines of India. The Vedas were, in its estimation, the one and only Light for the whole world ; and a Hindu will maintain this view, though millions and trillions of God's creatures have, even until now, remained unaware even of the very name of these Sacred Books of India. The Israelites, the favourites of Jehovah, would not permit themselves even to imagine that the manna for the soul could be vouchsafed to those not of the House of Jacob. Jesus, the son of Mary, was the only son of God—so preached the Evangelists to the so-called heathen. To precisely the same tune, the hymn of Exclu-

siveness has been, and is, sung from every pulpit and platform. No one, for a moment, ponders over those broad Divine Morals that are manifest everywhere in the Divine Dispensation of the world around us. The Creator of the Universe showed no partiality in His provision for the physical needs of men. The sun, the moon, the stars, and all that we see in the heaven and the earth indispensable to human existence, were given to every unit of mankind. Go where you will, this physical dispensation of the Almighty has been equally vouchsafed to every race. And if the human soul be a matter much more important than the human body, will the Creator of the Universe be less universal in His spiritual dispensation? The premises, though so clear in the terms of His creation, have not, of themselves, enabled man to arrive at the right conclusion. The spirit of exclusiveness, though an important life-tendency within certain limits in man, has, nevertheless, created narrow-mindedness in the sphere of religion; and, in the long run, has impaired the very superstructure of human society. Sons of the same Adam and Eve have become segregated into different and militant camps; and the strong cord of universal brotherhood, so palpably observable on the physical plane in the very fabric of the human body, was, on

the moral and spiritual plane, broken to pieces.

Every man has been given the same body and the same soul, the same limbs and joints, the same nerves and muscles, with the same brain-cells that create the same mind and consciousness in the human frame. Colour, class, and language are a matter of accident. If religion came to uplift man-consciousness, and to sublimate it from animal-consciousness up to God-consciousness—and this can be the only conceivable object for which religion came from God to humanity—will God deprive any race or nation of this spiritual manna? For thousands of years the human race laboured under the false ideas engendered by narrow-mindedness. It befogged its reason, so that it could not realize this simple truth. Al-Qur-án, however, came just at the juncture when this militant spirit on the religious horizon was at its height. The Qur-án at the very outset disillusioned human minds of these crude and dangerous imaginings, when in its very beginning it described God as *Rabbul Alamin*—the Creator, the Nourisher, the Maintainer, and the Uplifter of all races and communities equally, in body and mind. Though the truth so briefly, comprehensively and impressively inculcated in the first words of the Qur-án was eloquent enough to kill the

evil spirit of Exclusiveness, yet this Gospel of Universal harmony and peace has, in order to leave no chance for doubt, continued to preach the same truth in numerous other passages in the most unambiguous terms. It says that every race and community was given a Guide and a Messenger from the Lord, and that there was no race in the world that did not receive a Warner from the Lord. If, then, Moses was raised by the Lord of Hosts to liberate the children of bondage from Egyptian thralldom, to lead them to the Promised Land, and, with a code of Divine ethics, to make them a nation of righteous people, so, too, the gentle Nazarene came at the nick of time with the palm of olive in his hand, to infuse the true spirit of Love and Charity into the sordid minds of those who, persisting in taking the letter for the spirit, had become victims of self-indulgence and the most degraded types of selfishness. If Zoroaster kindled the fire of purity and activity in Persia, to thaw the ice of rigid ceremonialism and formalism, so, too, the Divine Rishis in India brought down the stream of Divine water from the Himalayas to fertilize, spiritually, the plains of India. But those were the days when barriers, natural or artificial, kept the various units of humanity separate from each other, there being no efficacious means of transmission or communi-

cation, wherewith to inform one of the other. All races stood segregated. A universal religion in those days was a physical impossibility; and so the Divine Providence, in the word of the Qur-án, blessed every race with a Divine Message. Each nation had its own Prophet.

Islam, which literally means "Peace," could bring no better Gospel of Peace than that which revealed the truth contained in the verses above quoted. It gave Divine origin to all religions in their first form. They may differ from each other now, in the various tenets and doctrines that they preach—that is a necessary consequence of the wear and tear of time—but they, one and all, emanated from the same Divine source, and brought the same Divine message. Diversity in religious ideas has proved a mighty factor in the disintegration of human society; and the India of to-day, unfortunately, presents the very worst example of it. Unless we accept the genesis of every religion as from Above, we cannot achieve unity of purpose in our efforts to establish universal brotherhood. For this reason I am abundantly justified in naming the Qur-án the Gospel of Peace. As I read what follows in the last Word of God, it inculcates in very clear terms a truth not to be found in any other religion. No other

religion—and I say so without fear of challenge or contradiction—has taught and maintained these eminently sane, healthy principles :—

(All) people are a single nation ; so Allah raised up prophets as bearers of good news and as Warners, and He revealed to them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed.¹

O people, be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women.²

Say : We Muslims believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was revealed to Moses and Jesus and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord ; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit.³

Under these Divine injunctions a Muslim must accept all the prophets of the world as his own guides and teachers, and embrace their tenets and doctrines, wherever they be found in their original form. A Muslim should not make distinction between his own and others' prophets. The moment we accept the prophets of other races as our own guides, and pay them the same reverence and allegiance as we do to ours, three-fourths of the trouble that keeps the children of humanity apart from each other will be removed. This Gospel of

¹ Al-Qur-án, xi. 218.

² iv. 1.

³ ii. 136.

Peace comes from the Book of a religion which ignorance and prejudice call a religion of intolerance and narrow-mindedness; while I have hitherto failed to find, as a student of religions, anything similar to these injunctions in the sacred scriptures of other nations.

The Last of the Prophets appeared at a time when the world was standing at the threshold of a new civilization. The time was not far off when the natural or artificial barriers that separated nation from nation were to be removed for good. Chaos was to be succeeded by Cosmos. The golden period of Universalism was about to dawn on the earth. The large and distant world was going to be narrowed down into one big country, with countries as cities, and with towns as lanes and alleys, as it were, of the same city. Every great city was to assume a cosmopolitan character, welcoming representatives of every nation and race in the world as its denizens. The time had therefore come when the Lord of Hosts wished to establish one Universal Church with the whole world as its diocese. The mantle of this universal prophethood fell on the holy shoulders of Muhammad, and he proclaimed to the world in the words of the Qur-án :—

. . . I came to you as the prophet to the whole human race. . . .

In my hours of deep contemplation I have many a time pondered over the significance of these thundering words. Divesting my mind of all the predilections and inclinations which the human mind must retain in some measure for the religion in which it was born, my impartial judgment has compelled me to subscribe to the truths of the above message, that came from Mecca some thirteen hundred years ago. It is in pursuance of this Universal Message that I turn my face to that holy land at least five times a day when I am in prayer. I say I cannot but accept the truth of the message; I have often thought—nay, have been forced to the conclusion—that no adherent of any religion that bases its foundation on a Divine Revelation can do other than believe in the Revelation of the Qur-án from God. He must realize the absolute necessity of accepting it.

We belong to an age of research and inquiry. The present-day sifting of facts, accompanied with scientific criticism, has impeached the genuineness of all the pre-Qur-anic holy books. They have all been found wanting. Will God be content to leave us groping in the dark in search of religious truth, when in days gone by it pleased Him to raise up Messengers and Prophets to guide mankind in the right way? Does not the open Book of Nature—the *Kitabe*

Mubeen, as the Qur-án calls it—reveal the same truth in every page of it, in bold characters? The principle of demand and supply obtains throughout the whole Universe. No sooner does a thing that meets human needs disappear, or lose its utility, than a fresh supply comes to compensate for its loss. The Qur-án, when speaking of the necessity for its Revelation, refers to this truth in the following terms :—

We never render a thing useless or make it disappear but we send another thing similar to or better than the former.

Every atom, every organism, and, in a word, every entity in the Universe, bears strong testimony to this truth. Nothing in Nature disappears or becomes vitiated in its utility, but a fresh supply of it comes to fill its place. If this be true on the physical plane, will it not be true also on the religious plane for the upkeep of moral and spiritual health? If the Bible has lost its original purity, as has been generally admitted in Christendom, and if folk-lore has crept into it; if the Holy Gathas disappeared and a substitute was formulated on hearsay traditions, so that their pristine beauty and purity, as displayed in their present versions, could not be vouched for by the erudite Dasturs of the Parsee community; if

the language of the sacred Vedas became so impenetrable, even to the learned Pandits, that its Shurties (verses) have given rise to anti-theetical principles, responsible for the countless sects of Hinduism—and this was the state of things at the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad—could the Great Source of Light, Who had, in times gone by, enlightened every nation, to bring humanity to the right path, keep silent and remain indifferent to the chaotic conditions thus produced in religion by the loss of each and every sacred scripture of the world? If the simple and ungarnished minds of old had need of Divine enlightenment to work out and fulfil what was noble and good in them, then the coming materialism—the rising generation with its atheistic attitude of mind—is still more in need of the Divine Hand to guide it through the labyrinth of so-called present-day “culture.” For the same reason I say that if a person, whatever his religion, can see his way to believe in the necessity of the Divine Revelation that brought him the truths of life through his own prophet, he must needs believe in the necessity of another subsequent Revelation, when the purity of his own Scripture has suffered so sorely from human interpolation and the vicissitudes of time. The Qur-án says as much when speaking of the necessity for its Revelation :—

By Allah most certainly We sent apostles to the nations before you, but the devil made their deeds fair-seeming to them, so he is their guardian to-day. And we have not revealed to you the Book except that you may make clear to them that about which they differ, and as a guidance and mercy for a people who believe.¹

The soundness of the logic advanced in the above quotation cannot be questioned. All men have an equal claim on the bounteous providence of God. Religion, if necessary for the uplifting of humanity, must have been given to all in the same form; the differences we find to-day, that cause our present-day wrangling, must, then, be the work of some evil agency. This elixir of life, as a revealed religion must be, was vouchsafed to our predecessors in its purest form. Shall the Bestower of Life suffer His creatures to drink it to the dregs, if it has become polluted, defiled? Water comes every year from the clouds to revive and restore dead Nature. We have a vast mass of water in the form of oceans, rivers and lakes; but, for all that, life would be impossible if a fresh supply of pure water did not descend from above, as the water on the earth loses its virtue by being mixed with earthy material. It cannot continue to serve the purpose for which it came from heaven. We must have new rains to

¹ Al-Qur-án, xvi. 63-64.

sustain our life. If we raise our hands in prayer to God when drought overtakes us, must we not look to Him when the water of life—His own Word—becomes fouled by human trampling, or disappears? This, too, the Qur-án sets forth in the following terms, after emphasizing the necessity of its revelation :—

And Allah has sent down water from the cloud and therewith given life to the earth after its death ; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who would listen.¹

Zoroaster, inspired by God, said :—

I will now tell you, who are assembled here, the wise sayings of Mazda, the Praises of Ahura and the hymns of the good spirit . . . ye offspring of renowned ancestors, awake to agree with us !

The “offspring of renowned ancestors” still exist. They have kept the name of their predecessors, in their own ways, with a wonderful capacity to adapt themselves to new environments, so as not to fall behind in the race of life. They are alive to agree “with us,” i.e. the Prophet Zoroaster, but where are “the wise sayings of Mazda,” “the Praises of Ahura,” and “the hymns of the good spirit” ? The few Sacred Gathas remaining in their Pehlavi or Gujrati version—without

¹ Al-Qur-án, xvi. 65.

considering how far these versions enable us to read the mind of the Master—cannot sum up all “the wise sayings of Mazda.” Religion, if revealed from the Lord—be He called Allah, Jehovah or Ahura Mazda—must be such as to supply all the needs of the human mind. To raise man from the animal right up to the holy precincts of Ahura cannot be accomplished by reciting a few gathas that invite us to pay homage to the sun, the moon, the stars, the water and the fire; nor can the sublime ideal be achieved by keeping before our minds certain basic principles of Ethics—and those, too, in an abstract form like that of the blessed triad of the Parsees—“good thoughts, good words and good actions.” . . . It may be useful in the case of a few chosen souls, but the average mind needs more enlightenment. Every religion has its Leviticus. It has merged everywhere, in dry ceremonialism and formalism. Ritualism, though necessary to educate an undeveloped and nascent mind to a certain desirable course of life, cannot, however, fulfil the real requirements of a true religion. It cannot appeal to cultured souls; it generates in all cases a tendency to worship the letter and leave the spirit. The history of the Israelites, in the days of Jesus, is too eloquent to require any effort on my part to illuminate the subject. The children of Jacob

saw the fulfilment of their religion in "cleaning pots and washing utensils." They white-washed the tombs full of worms and vermin. They strained at the gnat, yet swallowed the camel, with perfect ease. This must be the end of every cult that hinges on ritualistic piety. Zoroaster was the true prophet of God. His own exhortation, "Contemplate the sacred beams of fire with a pious mind"—the only legacy we have been left of the gems of his philosophy—shows that he had keen insight in human nature. He knew the nature of the ulcer likely to become generated in the human heart, and he prescribed the true panacea. But where is that panacea now? What we have in our hands to-day is the Pehlavi version of the Sacred Books, and it is of a very limited nature. "Unfortunately, the old manuscripts have not come down to us, as all the copies that we now possess were made some time during the last two centuries. The various editions are due to the various copyists. We cannot point to any one MS. or groups of MSS. that may correspond with the original actually used by Neryosangh," the author of the Sanskrit text of the Pehlavi Khorda Avesta. But, again, there is no proof to establish that Neryosangh's original was the true version of what was given by the Prophet to his people. Even the "Pehlavi version

was made at a time when the language of the Avesta had become almost dead, and the knowledge of the sacred text was on its decline." And further, all the translations existent have been prepared in the light of tradition. But "the more remote the tradition becomes from its original source, the less is its value."

The Greeks trampled on Persia, and played havoc with the religion, civilization and literature of that land. At the advent of Islam the religion of Persia had already undergone another change—and that for the worse—under the teaching of Muzdik—rightly called the Akhaman incarnate. He incorporated in the Iranian religion all that I have spoken of elsewhere in connection with the cult of Sun-worship. The worship of the fire, under Muzdik tenets of life, failed to generate in the Persian heart that purity which, some say, must come to a Fire-worshipper.

If the present sacred literature of the Parsees cannot be vouched for as interpreting truly the mind of their prophet to his progeny—a thing which no other sacred literature of any religion can do, excepting the Qur-án—was it not incumbent on Ahura Mazda to speak to men again, as He did once through Zoroaster? If Jehovah or Parum Barahan, the Hindu God, was pleased to enlighten mankind as to His

will, and thus to enable them to walk humbly with Him in their various avocations of life, will He not speak again to humanity to bring it to the right path, when His former word has become extinct or corrupt or unintelligible, and humanity is sunk in vice and wrong, by reason of its ignorance? Take any religion that existed in the world at the appearance of the Holy Prophet of Arabia: its Sacred Writ had either disappeared, or had become corrupt or unintelligible. If my readers—to whatever creed they may belong—do actually believe in the Divine Mission of their respective prophets, then they must needs believe in the Divine Mission of the Prophet Muhammad, seeing that the object of the sacred mission of the former prophets had been brought to nothing, through the vicissitudes of time. No one would contentedly see the house that had been built for himself falling into ruin; rather would he hasten to its repair at the first alarm of anything wrong. Will the Almighty and All-Wise God, then, remain indifferent if the spiritual edifice that His Messengers raised up, has fallen into pieces? He will send another messenger to restore the edifice to its original grandeur. Muhammad came with this mission. He brought again the same religion that had already been in existence from the days of Adam. He brought the same sublime

truth ; he sang the same " Praises of Ahura " ; he reproduced the same " wise sayings of Mazda " in the shape of the Qur-án, as the following words declare :—

. . . an apostle from Allah reciting pure pages wherein are all the right books.

It means that the Qur-án reproduces all those truths which had previously been revealed for the guidance of man. It contains all the good given in other sacred books, but freed from all the errors that crept into them. No one can deny the truth of these verses. Errors have admittedly crept into the literature of old religions, nor can any level-headed person deny the necessity of their reproduction, purged of all those accretions and subtractions, for which the human hand is to blame in corrupting their sacred nature ? If you accept Zoroaster, you must accept Muhammad. The latter brought again the wisdom which had become lost after the departure of the former. Would we willingly eat what has been contaminated by the touch of unworthy hands ? Why, then, are we to be content with manna for the soul that has lost its purity ? If we refuse to drink from a tumbler into which some careless waiter has dipped his fingers, how can we be content to drink deep from the goblet of the Elixir of Life when it

has become fouled with unwholesome matter from sources far other than Divine? "Ye offspring of renowned ancestors, awake to agree" with us and contemplate the truth we lay before you with a "most pious mind."

CHAPTER III

WORSHIP OF FIRE

“ You shall therefore hearken to the soul of Nature ; contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind ” (GATHAS AHUNAVIATI, Yas. xxx. 1 and 2).

IN the true spirit of a Messenger from the Most High, Zoroaster imparts “ the wise sayings of Mazda ” to the Fire-worshippers of his day. His design is to raise the element worshipped, and thereby enable them to realize “ the sublime truth which,” he says, “ I see arising out of the sacred flame.” The sublime truth came thundering to his people when he said : “ You shall hearken to the soul of Nature, and adore the great spirit that permeates Nature and pervades the whole Universe in different forms and shape, of which fire is one. ‘ Contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind ’ ” ; do they not, when soaring high, lead us to think of the most Exalted, the fountain of all purity, the great Unity who brings all conflicting elements in Nature into harmony ? The great soul in Nature teaches the great lesson of creating concord out of discord through “ the coalescing flames of fire.” Every-

thing in Nature, however insignificant it be, reminds us of her Soul, if we approach it with a pure mind. Fire may be, as a Fire-worshipper would maintain, the purest of elements, but Mahatma Gandhi, in a spirit of apology for idolatry, would go so far as to worship even so common a thing as a stone of the Narbada River—so he writes in his *Young India*—if it reminds him of his God. How lucidly the real truth has been summed up by the Great Persian poet Saadi, the nightingale of Shiraz :—

Bargh-i-darkhtan-i-sabz dar nazar-i-hoshiar ;
 Warqest az daftar-i-ma'rifat-i-Kirdgar.

(To a vigilant eye, a leaf from a green tree is a leaf from the book of knowledge about the Great Worker.)

Gandhi and Saadi say the same thing ; but the difference in their expression arises from the environments of each, the one a Muslim—a strong monotheist—and the other a Hindu, of a race notorious for its polytheistic tendencies. Ancient India saw many other things besides fire that appealed to her nascent mind. She found them as indispensable for her comfort as fire. Wherefore to fire she added water, air, earth and many other things to the list of her deities. So did other people in those days, in every other country.

Zoroaster came with a message to a nation

whose adoration was centred on Fire. But Muhammad came with the Universal message to the world of Polytheism, that worshipped everything in Nature—the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, Water, Air, Trees and so forth. If Zoroaster asks his people to “contemplate with pious mind the sacred beams of fire,” and by doing so “hearken to the soul of Nature,” Muhammad inculcates the same truth but in bolder terms and with a broader view when he cites the Qur-ánic words as follows :—

Most surely in the creation of heaven and earth and the alternation of night and the days there are signs for men of understanding.

Both the prophets invite their followers to ponder over things in the Universe and then to adore the Lord Who created these blessings for the benefit of humanity. Everything, however insignificant in magnitude, discloses a world of beneficence to man, when properly investigated. Our ignorance of the various properties in other things, together with our knowledge of the utility of a certain thing in our requirements, induce us to make a fetish of the latter—we accept it as the object of our adoration and the supreme manifestation of the Divine Essence. Fire, a true representative of the sun, the primeval cause of the Universe, has, doubtless, priority over many other things.

But ours are the days of discovery and research. We have gone beyond the nebular world—the world out of which arise heat and light, that are the two palpable and distinctive qualities of the sun. But nebula is in itself the offspring of ethereal complexities that are of the darkest possible colour. Science tells us that the ethereal world generates a thousand and one things every moment, and that these, in their turn, become the genesis of all other components of Nature. Our scientific researches lead us to conclude that our present knowledge can by no means comprehend the whole of the world of wonders that emanate every moment from that impenetrable and imponderable substance, i.e. Ether, the source of all light, the source of all heat, and the source of every other entity around us. If our passion for worship must find some particular thing in Creation for adoration, why should Sun or Moon, Mountain or the Holy Fire, command and claim our obeisance? Why should not Ether itself, the mother of all, and the universal fountain-head, receive our worship?

Sheikh-i-Akbar Mohiud-din Ibn-i-Arabi, the great Saint in Islam, renowned in the Muslim world for his advanced spirituality and power of vision, disclosed, some eight centuries ago, a great verity now brought within scientific ken. He says that the colour which the

Divine Essence assumed for His first manifestation is pitch-darkness of impenetrable nature. *Al-Batin*—that means the “Unseen”—is the first name of the Almighty. *Al-Batin* was pleased to become *Az-Zahir*, “the manifest.” His first colour was dark. Science brings us the same revelation.¹ Ether, with its pitch-darkness is the first emanation. Light came out of darkness. Charcoal furnishes us with a homely, but at the same time an apt illustration of this great truth, seeing that out of charcoal, fire is born.

If we need some palpable object for worship, in order to concentrate our wandering thoughts, which is, after all, the only plausible apology for worshipping created things, our choice then should go to an entity that could be the highest possible manifestation of the Divine Essence. Man seems to me the only creature that can give manifestation to all the conceivable attributes of God. He is the best handiwork of

¹ I am tempted to give here one or two more instances of the revelations made by Sheikh-i-Akbar through his Vision, disclosing to the world things that, centuries after, came to human knowledge as scientific facts. He saw the earth revolving, as we read in his book *Fatoohat-i-Meccia*. He was of Arab descent, but Spanish by birth, in the days of Muslim glory in Spain. He says that he saw, in a trance, a large tract of land beyond the ocean in the west of his country. And what a wonderful coincidence, that a Spaniard should make the discovery of America!

God ; he is of the goodliest fibre that brought physical development to its consummation. His mind is a fragment of the Divine mind ; His consciousness rises up to God's consciousness. He is the only animal that can soar up to the borders of Divinity and reproduce Divine morals. The world has not been devoid of a few such, of the chosen—the élite, as it were—of God, who attained this goal of humanity. The average mind must needs become dazzled by the Divine lustre that comes out of them to give light to their surroundings. Nay, sometimes they even do that which can only be done by God. People see in them something extraordinary, and bow down to them. Ignorance and credulity accept them as God incarnate. But they are only evolved individualities, iron in the fire, giving light and heat. They possess, seemingly, all the properties of the fire ; but they are iron. The secret in this is that they bring a complete death over their individuality ; they sacrifice their own volition at the altar of the Divine Will ; they lose their own colour, and become dipped in Divine colours ; they die in spirit before the physical death overtakes them ; they are thus lifeless instruments in Divine Hands. God becomes, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad says, “ their hands, their eyes, their lips and their legs.” They walk

humbly with the Lord, they manifest powers belonging only to God, when such a need arises for the upliftment of humanity. But it should not be forgotten that all this is a human achievement, an acquisition within our range, and not an impossibility, not a miracle. "You can do the same as I do," says Jesus, albeit not save by "prayer and fasting." Pity it is that the words of the great teacher were disregarded, and that he who so spake to uplift his fellow-man to his own level of spirituality and godliness, was raised to the pedestal of Godhood. Difficult is the task to sublimate the animal in us to Divinity; but it is not an impossibility. It needs the hardest of striving to set the door of full Beatitude open before us, but it has never been locked against us. It opens to those who strive the hardest, as disclosed in the words of the Qur-án.¹ Islam has not failed to produce such self-unfolded souls in every century, and these days of ours are not without them.

Man, therefore, has the first claim on our homage and worship, if we must yield to polytheistic propensities, and find some fetish for our adoration. Speaking of man's eminence and his potential height, Al-Qur-án says:—

Consider the sun and its light. And the moon when she borrows light from him, And the day when it exposes

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxix. 69.

it to view, And the night when it draws a veil over it.
And the heaven and its make. And *the soul and its perfection*.¹

These holy words shortly sum up the whole universe. Man, the universe in miniature, comprises all these things within himself. His frame has within itself a place for everything in nature; this is a truth that becomes revealed to us in its initial stages when we dream. We see things, not from the world without, through our power of imagination, but from the world within, for the things of the outer have become embedded in our nature because we rise from clay. Man is created to be a living manifestation of all that comes out of the various things enumerated in the verse last quoted, but on the moral and spiritual plane. Like the Sun and the Moon, he should reflect spiritual light for the enlightenment of those around him. If, like the day, his advanced intellect and wisdom may revive and restore others to various activities, so like the night he may give rest and peace to those who are weary and heavy laden. I could write at greater length upon this same verse, with all that it implies, but I may sum up the whole question very briefly by saying that man is capable of doing the same sort of good to his fellow-beings as the various entities men-

¹ Al-Qur-án, xci. 1-7.

tioned above do to man. But again, the microcosm brings its potential world to actuality only in an evolved soul. No doubt, man may also become the lowest of the low. If he can soar to the highest of the high, he is capable, also, of sinking to the lowest depth of degradation. How then may he avoid the darker side, and so reach the goal? This has been referred to in the Qur-ánic verses that come immediately after the words last quoted:—

So He (God) intimated to it (the soul) by inspiration its deviating from truth, and its guarding against evil. He (the man) will indeed be evolved and successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it. . . .¹

These sacred lines disclose the true path. They inform us of the two conspicuous ways—the way to good and the way to evil. The other sacred Books of God did the same; but they succumbed to the vicissitudes of the times, and did not reach us in their original purity. The Qur-án, on the other hand, comes to us in its full original entirety. It shows us the way whereby we may raise ourselves to the Divine precincts; and it also warns us against the pitfalls in our way. We have our passions, in their natural condition, as a legacy to us from the animal world. But they are, none the less, the bed-rock of the spiritual

¹ Al-Qur-án, xci. 8–10.

edifice. They are the ore, but they have pure gold embedded in them. Just as various scientific processes are needed to bring gold out of the ore, so a certain divine process is needed to work upon the ore of our conscience, to enable us to bring out the spiritual gold. But man is not the only creature with such imperfections. Everything in the earth discloses deficiencies. Even the adored fire may cause a world of mischief, misery and privation, if not properly controlled.

The God of the Qur-án does not demand glorification from man when He prohibits him from worshipping any other thing besides Him. Neither does He seek self-ascendancy, nor does he need to be extolled by humanity. His grand object, in monopolizing all human worship exclusively for Himself, is to uplift man above the rest of His creation. Divine glorification, as I have frequently said in my writings, under Qur-ánic teaching, consists in human edification. After God, the whole Universe may be classed in two categories. If God can claim all the greatness for Himself, the rest of the known world is either equal to man or inferior, and therefore subservient to him. It was to learn this great lesson that we were enjoined to reserve our adoration for the One God. Our belief in the unity of God generates in us a belief in the equality between

man and man, and in the subservience of all Nature to mankind. The former creates the spirit of democracy in its best sense. Our belief in the Oneness of God should teach us that every one of us is capable of achieving all that others have been able to achieve. This great lesson comes home to us with double force when the most perfectly evolved personality, that of Muhammad, says to his fellow-men :—

I am only a man like unto you.

This noble saying opens all the avenues of human achievement before us. It stirs in us the spirit of emulation, and galvanizes our enthusiasm, actuating us to strain every nerve to acquire that which has been achieved by the best of our race. The moment we bow down to some other man possessing super-excellent qualities, and pay to him all that should go to our Lord, the spirit of emulation dies, all aspirations are killed and our faculties stunted. We become an abject slave to our equals, though, no doubt, of evolved capabilities. As to the members of our own race, and the rest of nature, the Book says :—

We have made everything in the earth and in the heavens subservient to you.

What a beautiful gospel, for sweeping the utmost blessings of civilization within human

reach! The pre-Islamic world, with all its pre-eminence in the fine arts and its metaphysical and æsthetic attainments, could not make any appreciable progress in material science. The coming of Islam caused a wonderful upheaval of modern scientific thought. The contrast that the pre- and post-Islamic days present in this respect, though inexplicable to many an historian, is, however, amenable to explanation. Material civilization consists in finding out all that lies in Nature, and then reducing it to our service. But if her various manifestations stand before us as our God, we shall scarcely dare to think of bringing them into subjection. How can a man dream of making his deity his slave? It would have been sheer profanity. Apart altogether from the great luminaries, the then supreme gods of the ancient world, even rivers and trees and mountains were man's Lords. How then could we break down, and cut through mountains, and bring forth what lay in the bowels of the earth, to further our civilization? It were sin. Most beneficial, then, was the Gospel that the Qur-án brought :—

Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the clouds, then brought forth with it fruits as a sustenance for you, and He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers subservient to you. And He has made subservient to you the sun, and the moon pursuing their

courses, and He has made subservient to you the night and the day. And He gives you of all that you ask Him ; and if you count Allah's favours you will not be able to number them ; most surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful.

These sacred words show that everything that man, in days of old, raised to divinity is for his service ; the deities of yesterday became the handmaids of to-day. We look very small in our own estimation, if we realize our blunder in mistaking our servant for our Lord. The truth, thus revealed to the human mind at the advent of Islam, led him to compel all his deities to his service and to discover ways that might conduce to that end. Al-Qur-án, which in this respect, indeed, may rightly be called the charter of the Kingdom of God on earth, gives man a Universal permit when it says :—

And He gives you of all that you ask Him ; and if you count Allah's favours you will not be able to number them ; most surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful.

“ All that you ask,” “ all that you need,” is within your reach. All this has been given to you as from Allah's favour. Your needs are numberless, but so are His blessings. But we have been unjust to our God as well as to ourselves. God created things to minister to our needs ; we bowed down to them, and thus clouded the Divine glory, and degraded our

own dignity. The Lord of the universe became a slave to His own slaves; we, who possess a portion of the Divine mind in our frame, have done thus a great injustice to ourselves. Could there be a graver form of ingratitude than that of neglecting to use the favours of the Lord in the way in which they were created to be used? Our duty was to glorify God, and to thank Him, by bringing the sun, the moon, the stars, the water, the fire, and that which came out of the earth, into subjection to us. And we poured out our praises and thanksgiving to these created things, instead of giving the glory to their Creator.

A word more for the contemplation of my brethren, the Fire-worshippers, and I conclude this chapter. They, like us, regard Allah as the real light of the Earth and Heavens, but if their guileless mind becomes fascinated by the beauties of Fire, and they long to "Hearken to Allah," the Soul of Nature, through Fire, because in the element they see "something soaring up, something living, something showing a coalescing tendency, something having purity and ceaseless movement," I may refer them, in the following Qur-ánic words, to another manifestation of Divine Light that possesses all such beauties of fire as have been enumerated, in the above quotation, by Professor Wadia in his *Message of Zoroaster* (pp. 36-41).

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a lamp, the lamp is in a glass (and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not—light upon light—Allah guides to His light whom He pleases and Allah sets forth parables for men.¹

Ponder over the words: “gives light though fire touch it not.” Undoubtedly fire gives light to that which comes in contact with it. Certainly the touch of fire ignites and gives light. But is not that thing of greater importance, and sublimer in nature than fire, which gives light though fire touch it not? Electricity in a glass is, as it were, a brightly shining star. Fire becomes reduced to ashes. Fire soils the place with the particles of coal from which it comes. We may feed the fire with sandal-wood or with perfumed material; but they will only produce ashes. We have to clean up the grate afterwards; but electricity stands above the fire in this respect. Why not, then, take Electricity as a symbol of great Mazda, as it is like the likeness of His Light, as the Qur-án says:—

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. He guides to His light whom He pleases. Allah sets forth parables.

If Zoroaster says, “Contemplate the beams

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxiv. 85.

of fire with a most pious mind," it was but a parable to enable you to "hearken to the soul of nature," which the great Prophet saw, "arising out of the sacred flames." The days of symbols were the days of the infancy of the human mind, when, in the words of Krishna, images served the purpose of dolls. Children will play with dolls, and learn all that they have to learn when they reach maturity. Man, in the infant state of his consciousness, may be incapable of realizing Divine verities in their abstract form. He needs dolls. He goes after symbols. But we have passed that age. Even in the time of Krishna, man had passed it. We walk in these days in the starry world with much the same exactitude as we walk in the streets and lanes of Bombay, not with the help of our naked eye, but with the eye of the mind. We feel the existence of things that are not within the cognizance of our senses. We believe in their existence, and with this basis, we start our investigations in the realm of Nature, and bring forth a rich harvest in the varied developments and achievements of modern science. This we can do in our scientific researches. Can we not do the same in theology and Divine lore? This is not an impossibility. You may say all you will in support of symbolism, but a Muslim in his prayers and in his hours of

contemplation is a standing contradiction to all these time-ridden theories. A Muslim, through various disciplines, will purge his mind of all that draws it from contemplating God. He brings a death on all his wavering passions and emotions. He becomes above all worldly joys and sorrows, longings and ambitions. With a mind closed against all other inclinations, he meditates upon the Divine Essence. A light then comes from above and descends upon his heart. It takes exclusive possession of it, and makes it the throne of the Lord. All the idols are cast down from their seats in the human heart, and it becomes the temple of Allah, the Source of all Light. Man himself becomes the light of Allah, then he manifests God dwelling in him. He receives obeisance¹ from the angels of the Universe, those sentient beings that work out the potentialities of Nature into actualities. He is then the true vicegerent of God.²

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 34.

² ii. 30.

CHAPTER IV

THE TWINS OF ZOROASTER

(i.e. the Spirit of Good and the Spirit of Evil)

THE QUR-ÁNIC SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL

“Allah—there is no God but He; His are the very best names” (AL-QUR-ÁN, xx. 8).

“He is Allah, besides whom there is no God; the Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.

“He is Allah, besides Whom there is no God; the King, the Holy, the Author of Peace, free from defects, the Granter of security, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of every greatness. He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most excellent names; whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory and He is the Mighty, the Wise” (AL-QUR-ÁN, lix. 22–24).

“I pray to Thee, my Lord, O Invisible Benevolent Spirit” (GATHA, Yas. xxviii. 1).

~~TH~~ICE I read the adjectives in the last cited passage, and thrice “The Excellent Names” in the quotations preceding it. I find the epithet “Benevolent” in the Holy Gatha, describing

the Supreme Spirit, who "is the Best, being the Source of Light for the world, i.e. Mazda."¹

Again I read in the Qur-án :—

Call upon Allah, or call upon the Beneficent God ; whichever you call upon, He has the best and excellent names.²

Mark the significance and force of the words "whichever you call upon, he has the excellent names." Al-Qur-án enumerates some ninety-nine names of God,³ i.e. His Attributes ; those of His Attributes, that is, that can possibly be conceived by the human mind. They all denote good, and do not suggest even the least idea of evil.

The holy Zoroaster also addresses God by the best of names in his Divine songs. The Universe, as the index of His Mind, leads to the same truth and that is this, that full of antithesis and contrast as the world appears to be, all its conflicting and jarring components go to produce a world of good. The Author of all these blessings could not be the Author of evil. "Whichever you call upon, He has the excellent Names" ; everything in Nature bears the strongest testimony to this Qur-ánic truth. Judge the Lord in any way you will, His are the excellent attributes ; His is the

¹ Yas. xliii. 2. ² Al-Qur-án, xcii. 110.

³ See pp. 101-108 of this book.

best work; He is the most Beneficent, the most Compassionate and the most Merciful. How could He at the same time be the source of tyranny, oppression and malevolence, or of any other form of Evil? The idea, on the very face of it, is inconceivable. Beauty and ugliness, righteousness and wickedness, congruity and incongruity cannot synchronize, nor can they rest side by side in the same place.

The glorification of God is the chief theme in every religion. Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, Muhammad, all of them sang holy hymns glorifying the Beneficent Lord. The sacred Gathas do the same. "Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory."¹ Can Divine glory be consistent with His being simultaneously the author of good and evil? Could we glorify Him for making us a plaything in the hand of, say, a victim to Aharman, the spirit of evil—a necessary sequel of the theory of the Twin Spirits? If this Qur-ánic verse, "His are the Best Names," is universal in its scope, as it appears to be, it does not allow even the least shadow of the idea that the spirit of evil emanated from that Sacred Fountain, the Holiest of the Holy. We cannot entertain the conception of holiness with regard to One Who is also responsible for the evil in the world. And yet we read the following in

¹ Al-Qur-án, lix. 24.

some of the Sacred Scriptures of the Fire-worshippers: "In the beginning there were two primal spirits, twin, spontaneously active; these are the good and the evil."¹ I admit that the world is full of contrasts and antitheses, which phenomena, no doubt, create a sort of confusion of ideas and lead to a misconception of things, under which many learned doctors and *dasture* of the religion of Avesta labour, when they try to explain the so-called Twins of Zoroaster. Far be it from me even to dream of ascribing such so-called philosophy to a prophet of Zoroaster's rank. The explanation is the old one: his words have not reached us in their original form. We have only their rendering in Pehlavi, which was done at a time when the Avesta—the Revealed Book of the Fire-worshippers—was not itself extant.

In his attempt to explain the Twins of Zoroaster—*Spenta-mainyush* (Good Spirit) and *Angra-mainyush* (Evil Spirit), the learned Dr. J. J. Moodi, a Parsee Divine in Bombay, in his paper read in the Chicago Conference on the Religious System of Parsis, the Fire-worshippers, says:—

"I will here describe the functions of the two spirits in the words of European scholars. In the words of Dr. Haug, 'Spenta-mainyush was regarded as the author of all that is bright

¹ *The Divine Songs of Zoroaster*, by D. J. Irani.

and shining, of all that is good and useful in nature, while Angra-mainyush called into existence all that is dark and apparently noxious. Both are as inseparable as day and night, and, though opposed to each other, are indispensable for the preservation of creation. The Beneficent Spirit appears in the blazing flame; the presence of the hurtful one is marked by the wood converted into charcoal. Spenta-mainyush has created the light of day, and Angra-mainyush the darkness of night; the former awakens men to their duties, the latter lulls them to sleep. Life is produced by Spenta-mainyush, but extinguished by Angra-mainyush, whose hands, by releasing the soul from the fetters of the body, enable her to rise into immortality and everlasting life.'

"According to Prof. Darmestetter, Spenta-mainyush 'is all light, truth, goodness and knowledge; Angra-mainyush is all darkness, falsehood, wickedness and ignorance. Ahura (i.e. Spenta-mainyu) dwells in the infinite light, Angra-maniyu dwells in the infinite night. Whatever the good spirit makes, the evil spirit mars.' According to the well-known Pehlavi book *Bundehesh*, this conflict between the good spirit and the evil spirit will, in the end, end in favour of the former."

The learned author of *The Message of Zoroaster* enchants his readers by arraying fact

after fact in his beautiful book when explaining the said Twins. His erudition may lead him to observe with the same equanimity that this principle of Twins solves the difficult problem of the world better than any other philosophical system that the human mind had ever conceived. His philosophic exposition of the Twins hinges upon the principle of polarity, or the phenomena of the contrasts that pervade the whole universe. He thinks that these various contrasts of the world do stand for these Twins. But could the world of conflict and contrast, i.e. the pairs of antitheses in Nature, be rightly classed as parenthetical to the category of good and evil in their varied forms? Flame and charcoal, the light of the day and the darkness of the night, life and death, are undoubtedly antagonistic entities. No one can deny that the Beneficent Spirit appears in the blazing flame, in the light of the day, as well as in life in general; but to call charcoal, or the darkness of the night, or death, a personification of Angra-mainyush, i.e. the Evil Spirit, in the light of the beneficial services they respectively render to humanity, is merely a betrayal of ignorance. The darkness of the night can in no case be dubbed falsehood or wickedness or ignorance, as Professor Darmestetter calls them in the lines quoted above.

To begin with, we must have a clear conception of good and evil, and then see which of the conflicting entities, whereof the world is so full, comes under one or the other. I frankly admit my own deficiencies in essaying to come forward with a comprehensive definition of good and evil. It has puzzled so many brains. But I would nevertheless take courage and say, though with diffidence, that anything whether it be thought, word, or action, that helps to work out Nature to its goal, and brings to the surface that which is noble and good in us, whether on the physical, moral or spiritual plane, or that which brings our capabilities to perfection, and converts our potentialities into actualities on the right lines, or, in a word, anything which brings forth Self-Unfolding or Self-Expression in man or in Nature, according to the Will of the Creator—which, as the Qur-án says, was the sole purpose of Revelation from God to man—cannot but be good. On the other hand, anything that mars our physical, moral and spiritual faculties, retards human growth on the right lines, and brings to nought all the noble and good things that our Creator embedded in human, as in other, aspects of Nature, is evil. If this definition is anywhere near the truth, we cannot call the darkness of night an embodiment of Angra-mainyush. It brings rest

to a man, tired with the long day's work, under its blissful wings and lulls him to sleep. If sleep is a blessing of Divine Providence, which refreshes man and equips him for further activities, he cannot enjoy a restful sleep unless and until the darkness of the night surrounds him. The light of the sun increases the circulation of the blood, so necessary to energize our activities, while the darkness of the night decreases the speed of that life-fluid in the human frame, a process essential for bringing full rest to all our limbs and joints. For the same purpose we close the shutters of our bedroom if we wish to sleep in the daytime; being thus compelled to resort to this "evil"—the darkness—though really good, as far as its beneficial function goes. Can vegetation grow without exuding the extra carbonic gas which it inhales from the light of the day, and can this chemical function be properly worked out without the darkness of the night? And if we cannot live without all the choicest blessings of God that the vegetable world produces for us, can we call darkness an evil? All the fruits of the earth owe their ripeness and sweetness to the light of the moon. The science of navigation depends for its success on the ebb and flow of the tide, but this could only be effected in the darkness of the night. The starry worlds, each and all of their units,

as the Qur-án foretold¹—a verity belatedly discovered by science—shed their lights towards the earth ; it penetrates into her recesses and makes the mother-earth pregnant of all that comes out of it in the form of vegetation, minerals, alkalis and acids. These, all, are the blessings of the night. Day and night, both of them are good, and we cannot call them “ pairs ” of good and evil. Can we describe charcoal—that repository of a hundred and one things so necessary to contribute to our happiness and comfort—as evil among the said pairs ? How curious it is that the very charcoal, which Dr. Haug, in his over-zeal to explain the philosophy of the said Twins, declares to be the embodiment of “ the hurtful one,” becomes the mother of Fire that receives all homage and worship from the followers of Zoroaster ? One could multiply instance after instance from the world of contrast, and show that each member of each pair of contrasts in the world is equally essential and beneficial for humanity, and cannot therefore be evil. Death, in contrast with life, may seem to some an evil. But it is not so. Let me repeat the words of Dr. Haug :—

¹ Consider the heaven and the comer by night, And what will make you know how great the comer by night is ? The star of piercing brightness that pregnates . . . Consider the heavens that pour in . . . And the earth that splits and receives (Al-Qur-án, lxxxvi. 1-12).

“Life is produced by Spenta-mainyush (Good Spirit), but extinguished by Angra-mainyush (Evil Spirit), whose hands, by releasing the soul from the fetters of the body, enable her to rise into immortality and everlasting life.”

Death is the extinguisher, but its hand, as the quotation shows, does a great service to us, by releasing our souls from imprisonment and thus enabling us “to rise into immortality and everlasting life.” Even a wicked soul, as is Angra-mainyush, has, in the form of death, become Spenta-mainyush, seeing that it has cut short man’s life of wickedness and unrighteousness, and consequently lessened his period of punishment in Hell.

Death does not mean annihilation. It is a gateway for our entry into higher regions of life. Everything is in the course of evolution. It travels from one order to the other. When a thing reaches its perfection in one order, it loses its activity; cessation of further progress appears, and it becomes decomposed; but the essence—the outcome of the progress that it made in the old order—comes out of it. Death means the entry of the essence into the next or higher order, on the decomposition of the shell or husk. Everything in Nature has its own prescribed function to perform. But in their use we sometimes go beyond the

prescribed limits, and thus convert good into evil. The Qur-án, when bringing home to us this great truth, that everything in Nature has got a prescribed course to pursue for the benefit of humanity, and that it is left to man to create his own heaven and hell, i.e. his success and failure, by making good or ill use of the creation, says thus :—

Consider the sun and light, And the moon when she borrows light from him, And the day when it exposes it to view, And the night a veil over it, And the heaven and its make and the earth and its extension, And the soul and its perfections. So He intimated to it by inspiration its deviating from truth and its guarding against evil. He (man) will indeed be successful who purifies his soul, and he will indeed fail who stunts it.¹

In these sacred words some of the antitheses of the Universe have also been described. They have been created for the benefit of humanity; none of them can be called evil. The Creator takes it upon Himself to inspire humanity against the abuse of His creation. He who acts upon the inspired truths, and abstains from deviating from the right course, becomes successful, i.e. he leads a life of righteousness and equity, and thus fulfils the object of his being; but the other, who deviates from the prescribed course, fails by reason of his faculties becoming stunted and

¹ Al-Qur-án, xci. 1-9.

distorted. These verses not only expose the fallacy of the logic so advanced by the advocates of the Twins, they also give an insight into the nature of the question of good and evil, and how the latter gets its birth.

The problem of good and evil is a great puzzle. Its misappreciation has not only given rise to wrong notions that have led to divergent ethics, but it has also produced a disastrous effect on human character. The wrong solution of the problem tends to weaken man's sense of responsibility—the story of the “fall of Adam,” for instance, with “the theory of sin innate in man” as its corollary; and similarly, I may say, the theory under discussion reduces man “to the rôle of automaton, as a helpless, passive and unconsenting instrument of evil. The Qur-án, however, simplified the problem. God, as the Book says, is the Source of all good. The mishandling, or abuse of things, creates evil. Opium and arsenic, used for the purposes for which they have been created, are blessings of God, but their abuse makes of each a curse.”¹ Even the best of God's blessings, in the limited horizon of the human eye, becomes harmful when it is used to excess. Will not Fire, the symbol of Benevolent Mazda, play havoc with property and life, if ignorance or inadvertence permit it to

¹ *Towards Islam*, p. 212, by the same Author.

function in undesirable ways? Excess in drinking even such a harmless thing as water, will bring on dropsy, and extravagance in diet will cause indigestion, with its train of numberless diseases. Survey the whole Universe, and you will fail to find one single thing that is not with purpose, and that purpose the benefit of mankind. Everything came out of the Spenta-mainyush of the Benevolent Mazda, and nothing incarnates the Angra-mainyush. But everything has got its ordained measure, and its prescribed occasion. If we transgress the given limits, or put things to a use for which they are not intended, the good changes into evil. Do not laxative and costive medicines stand in contrast? Which of the two is evil and which is good? Both of them do immense good, if properly used. Both will prove harmful, if used to excess, or on wrong occasions. In short, everything, used in its defined measure, is good. It becomes evil when mishandled or misapplied. The Holy Qur-án draws the attention of its readers to this basic principle of measure, that regulates the work of the Universe :—

The Beneficent God taught the Qur-án. He created man, taught him the mode of expression. The sun and the moon followed a reckoning. And the herbs and the trees do adore Him. And the heaven; He raised it high, and *He made the measure: that you may not be*

*inordinate in respect of measures and keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measures deficient.*¹

Articulate sounds, when brought forth in the prescribed measure, produce unison and symphony; but disregard of the measure would create a disagreeable chaotic noise. Our language is also subject to the same law. Different letters stand for different measures of sound; their different combinations produce different words; and by learning these collocated measures of articulation, which receive different meanings and different forms, we learn language. Abusive language consists of words which have also their decent use; it is their abuse that creates indecency. In a word, everything is capable of being good or evil, in a certain degree. This is true, not only on the physical plane, but on every other plane. Passions, in a measured form, create morality. Our consciousness in its nascent condition is only a collocation of animal passions. Bestial as they are in their initial condition, they are the bedrock of all morality and spirituality. Just like the various ores in the bowels of the earth, impulses and emotions have been imbedded in the seams of the human heart. But, just as the ores, when worked out under different but given measures, produce good

¹ Al-Qur-án, iv. 1-9.

steel and burnished gold, these very passions, low and carnal as they are, sublimate into the highest form of morality, when properly cultivated. The ugly becomes the genesis of the beautiful, the ridiculous gives birth to the sublime, and the seemingly evil thing engenders the best of good when brought under the prescribed conditions. The human organism is, after all, an outcome of a specific combination of atoms, which evolves consciousness and discretion, and gives rise to certain passions and emotions. These impulses, when controlled in accordance with certain standards, become moralities. They, in their turn, are weighed into spirituality. . . . The same emotions and impulses when specialized produce different morals, good or bad in their effect. The same passion, cast in various moulds, receives several names. A passion, noble in one shape, becomes ugly by change of form. What seems to be evil, changes into virtue when conditions become altered. Do not pertinacity of character and obstinacy—or, say, constancy and stubbornness—come from the same origin, i.e. sticking with intent and persistence to some one thing? But their manifestation, under different circumstances, creates perfect Adam and Archfiend. Submission and slavery, modesty and timidity, toleration and condonation, heroism and bravado, generosity and extravagance,

the spirit of emulation and jealousy, aspiration and ambition, desire and avarice, etc., are one and the same in their inception—the manifestation of the same impulses in different garbs ”¹ and in different measures. What are the measures that, governing these natural passions, convert consciousness into conscience, is our great concern. “ He (God) made the measures, that you may not be inordinate in respect of the measures; . . . and do not make the measure deficient.” We must know those measures in order not to be inordinate in the use of passion. No passion in its initial form is good or evil. It is not the killing of human passions which makes for high morality, as is taught by some theologies, but rather their balancing and control. This engenders healthy morals, and creates spirituality. All such teachings as base their ethics on the killing of the passions have proved a failure. The Buddhist principles of life, and the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount have always remained visionary ideals. Asceticism and monasticism in their various forms have done more harm than good. Natural impulses will not be crushed, and efforts to do so have produced disastrous results. Celibate institutions have nursed incontinence and moral leprosy. It was the Revelation of the Holy

¹ *The Threshold of Truth*, p. 79, by the same Author.

Qur-án that disclosed this truth to the world ; that showed that the natural impulses in man were the fundamental constituents of the human mind. It was only a question of measure. Human passions were to be regulated, under certain standards, to evolve true humanity. Mercy, misplaced, was injustice ; and anger, restrained and regulated, created the discipline necessary for social growth. The magistracy was one of the justified instruments of national anger against wickedness, and mercy to murderers means cruelty to society. In short, the same principle of measure works in the physical, moral and spiritual worlds.

But who can impart to us the required knowledge of these desired measures ? Only the Benevolent Mazda, the Beneficent Allah, the Source of all things. He only knows the purpose for which things have been created, and He only can enlighten us concerning the measures, limits and occasions of His creation, for their multifarious use. Everything in a certain measure is good. Change the measures or their occasions, and what was good becomes evil. It is God alone Who can enlighten us on these verities ;

And upon God it rests to show the right ways.¹

Our Lord is He who gave to everything its measure and shape, then guides it to its goal.

¹ Al-Qur-án, xvi. 9.

Glorify the name of your Lord and the most High, who creates things, balances them to completion, and who makes things according to measure, and then guides.

The measurement of good and the measurement of evil is from Allah (the definition of Faith in Islam).

Have we (God) not given him (man) two eyes ; and a tongue, and two lips ; and pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways ? ¹

The two ways spoken of, according to a saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, are the way of good and the way of evil. Both ways are pointed out to man in His Revealed Word, and he is at liberty to choose which he will. "The two eyes" will enable him to distinguish good from evil, while with the "tongue and the lips" he can inquire as to the true course, if he cannot see for himself.

¹ Al-Qur-án, xc. 8-10.

CHAPTER V

SPENTA-MAINYUSH AND ANGRA- MAINYUSH

(THE SPIRIT OF GOOD AND THE SPIRIT OF
EVIL)

IT is only the human mind, and not the God-Mind, that possesses the capacity to create good and evil. Nature is the best index of the Divine mind. Everything in His creation has been given its own proper function. It may, in its ways and properties, be antagonistic to other things in the Universe; but the course prescribed for it prevents it from injuring or retarding the growth or working of the rest of the Universe. The Divine polity reduces the whole world of confusions and contrasts to a harmonious unity. Antithetical to each other, as so many things are, in their ways and working, they become mutually complementary under Divine control. Heterogeneity creates homogeneity of purpose; and discordant tones in the great orchestra of the Universe—as sometimes in the work of great musicians—

produce the most beautiful and harmonious chords. This truth has been lucidly set forth in the following words of the Qur-án :—

Glory be to Him, who created *pairs of all things*—of what the earth grows, and of their kind and of what they do not know, and a sign to them is the night. We draw forth from it the day, then lo ! they are in the dark. And the sun runs on to a term appointed for it ; that is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Knowing. And (as for) the moon, We have ordained for its stage till it becomes again as an old dry palm branch. Neither is it allowable to the sun that it should overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day ; and all float on in a sphere.¹

“ Pairs of all things.” What a wonderful Revelation of a great scientific truth, in a most expressive form ! It is not only the animal kingdom that depends for its procreation on the existence of pairs, but everything in the Universe, organic or inorganic, grows out of pairs—aye, even in the world beyond that of the atoms. If atoms are the offspring of the electronic complexes, they, in their turn, are derived from the combination of other pairs—the positive and the negative. Muhammad could not have disclosed this Universal truth, but through direct Revelation from God. The pairs, that the Qur-án refers to, are the same as the pairs to which Science refers when it speaks of “ contrast,” “ con-

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxiii. 36-40.

fictions," "polarity," and "antithesis." What a happy choice of words is that made by the Qur-án! Things that Science classes as "contrast" are not antithetic nor antagonistic to each other, but they are "pairs"; they have to mix and to be in connection with each other with such closeness that they lose their conflicting natures and merge their respective individualities into something new. The Arabic word for the "pair" used in the Qur-án is more eloquent. *Azwayj*, the Arabic equivalent of "pairs," is the plural of *zanj*, the verb-meaning of which is "to mix one with the other." Can we label these "contrasts," and refer to them in illustration of the theory of good and evil, as has been done by certain of the Fire-worshippers, and their advocates in the Western world? Which of the two shall we call "evil," when each of the "pairs" is a necessity in creating all that is going on in the world? Take the original pair of all, whose union creates not only a world of things, but whose comparatively recent discovery and use has contributed immensely to our happiness and comfort—nay, has galvanized the progress of our civilization. I mean electricity—the union of the positive and the negative. Which of this pair, I ask, is evil, and which is good? Antagonistic and conflicting they may be to each other, in their

properties, but they are complementary as well to each other, and that under "the ordinance of the Mighty, the Knowing," under whose control they all "float" in their respective "spheres," without hindering the movements of each other—a chemical combination that produces a result far better than cohesion, as far as our comfort is concerned. But the former takes place only in things which are contrary to each other in their properties. In short, the whole heterogeneous mass is the bed-rock of universal homogeneity, and must consequently indicate Spenta-mainyush, and not Angra-mainyush—the Evil Spirit.

Every organism and inorganism is included in the world of so-called "contrasts." The same mass envelops the antitheses of the world, and supplies them with their respective nourishments. But their ingredients must be different from each other. The constituents of an apple-tree must be quite different from those of any other tree—the pear, the mango, the pomegranate. Diversity of shape, colour and properties is due to the difference of the quantities of the material used in the building of their fabric. The cat, the dog, the chicken, aye, and man and the whole animal kingdom, have the "same substance, but in different specializations and different measures." There exists some sort of *constructive ability* in

every organism, called *Qurwat-i-Mudabbirah*, by Muslim divines, that assimilates its necessary ingredients in the prescribed measure, but rejects all that is inimical to its growth, and that without interfering with the growth of its neighbour, though the latter may be antagonistic in some way to the former. A thorn-bush can grow side by side with a fruit-tree. Does this all point to Angra-mainyush, i.e. the Evil mind, or to the Good mind ?

Human consciousness, no doubt, exhibits contrary traits. It possesses capacities alike for good and evil. But every other thing in Nature exhibits goodness only. If human consciousness on the terrestrial sphere, is the last growth of evolutionary progress from ethereal specks up to the brain-cells in the human frame, can we say with complacency that the God of the Universe, at its inception, created the "Twins of good and evil," as asserted ?

Humanity¹ only, as I said before, exhibits

¹ Some animals, undoubtedly, live upon others, but it is a life tendency in them, and must not be taken as a manifestation of the evil spirit. If their existence is of any service to humanity, as natural history shows, they cannot be called a materialization of the evil mind, simply because their existence demands a nourishment that causes extinction of life in some other organism. The lower order evolves into a higher order, only at the expense of the former. Exaltation comes through sacrifice. The vegetable world receives locomotion by becoming food for the animal. This is the law of Nature,

traits of good and evil nature. But these two natures are neither concomitant nor essential for the furtherance of each other. They are not independent, self-existing entities; they do but point to certain capacities in man. Professor A. S. Wadia has very rightly called evil a nonentity, and therefore will not the learned author of *The Message of Zoroaster* see his way to admit the fallacy of a contradiction in terms, in his able exposition of the philosophy of good and evil? If evil is really a nonentity, and only a misapplication of capacities and capabilities, and that only in the human world, while man is the last and the finest creation on the earth, how could evil exist in the very beginning as an entity as one of the so-called "Twins" of Zoroaster? I, for one, hold that our great prophet of "the offspring of the renowned ancestors,"

obtaining at each stage of evolution. Animals like serpents, scorpions, mosquitoes, bugs, etc., are created to consume poisonous matter. Poisonous gases and germs which become engendered in dark places having no access to light and air, become transformed into poisonous vermin and creeping things; they are brought to life to consume poison, and for no other purpose. The very object of their life becomes accomplished, the minute they come to existence, and as their subsequent life causes harm to others, their destruction is a necessity. Thus both the functions—the creation and destruction of such a life—are manifestations of the Good and not of the Evil Spirit.

the Persians, could not be the author of so unthinkable a philosophy. The real message has been lost. Tradition has supplanted knowledge. Translation after translation of the original, with the extinction of the language in which the wise sayings of Mazda were originally conveyed, have rendered it impossible for men to understand the mind of the Master and to appreciate his real meaning. This and various other causes are responsible for the philosophy of Evil and Good that is now current among our brethren, the worshippers of fire, and wrongly fathered upon Zoroaster.

I have said elsewhere that good and evil morals both take the same substance as their root constituents. The instinct in us to attain to that which we find in the possession of others, creates in us ambition, as well as aspiration. It may engender in us jealousy or the spirit of emulation; we may commit larceny, theft or dacoity, or we may adopt some honest means to gain that which gives happiness, comfort and position to others in society. All our morals, good or bad, in different categories, take the same substance for their development, i.e. our natural impulses and emotions. Similarly, if fire brings happiness and comfort, and is so useful, that among all other elements, as a Parsee Dastur

would say, it alone can be the representative of the Deity, it becomes also a most efficacious instrument of devilry by reducing to ashes everything that is sublime and beautiful. This brings me again to "the question of measures" dealt with before. Evil, in the Qur-ánic sense, is trespassing, going beyond the proper limits in the use of the material. It does not mean that there are certain measures of things that create evil. Every limit and measure of every substance, physical or mental, is designed and predestined for a certain occasion, to produce a desired good. Misapplication and mishandling lead to evil. To pass the limit prescribed, is sin; abuse of the material needed for our physical and moral growth creates, respectively, disease and evil. All the words that the Qur-án uses for designating the idea of sin, convey the idea of going beyond certain limits, as, for example, *Zanb*, *Jurm*, *Udwan*, *Junah*, etc. The root idea of *Zanb* is "an overgrowth"—going beyond a certain limit. *Jurm* as a verb means "to cut"—a thing cut off and therefore out of place. *Junah* is "to be aside." *Udwan* means "trespass." All these Qur-ánic words corresponding to "sin" give an idea of going beyond certain limits, in their root-meaning. The words in themselves explain the Muslim conception of evil. The Arabic word *Tauba*, mean-

ing "repentance," actually conveys the same idea. It literally means "returning." If, therefore, going beyond limits is sinning, returning to them is repentance. Lip-repentance carries no weight in Islam. Thus, on the high moral plane, as well as in the physical world, nothing, in its natural condition, is good or bad. The observance of limits is virtue, their disregard evil. Legislation is only a demarcation.

But proper limits can only be assigned by the All-Knowing Personality. Actions enjoined in the Holy Qur-án as virtues have for the same reason been called "limits of God" :—

They who turn to Allah, who serve Him . . . who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the *limits of God*; and give good news to the believers.¹

Allah enjoins you concerning children . . . [and here the Qur-án enumerates certain virtues and then says], these are Allah's limits . . . and whoever goes beyond His limits . . . he shall have an abiding chastisement.²

So whoever exceeds the limits after this . . . he shall have a painful chastisement.³

Do not exceed the limits; surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.⁴

The dwellers of the deserts are very hard in unbelief and hypocrisy, and more disposed not to know the limits of what Allah has revealed to His apostle.⁵

But why was human nature endowed with this capacity for exceeding limits, this capacity

¹ Al-Qur-án, ix. 1-12. ² iv. 11-14. ³ xi. 178.

⁴ xi. 189. ⁵ ix. 97.

for sin? It is a question which may well arouse something deeper than mere curiosity; and the wrong answer, almost universally accepted as right, has gathered the cloud of obscurantist theology and misapprehended philosophy which darkens the world to-day. It is the penalty of Discretion, the greatest of the gifts of God, vouchsafed to man alone, as a responsible being.

Matter on the physical plane receives its consummation in Humanity. The human body is the masterpiece of matter. Nature could not improve upon it. The components of the whole Universe received their best specialization in man, and there they give rise to something new, something that is not found in any other order, and that something is human consciousness. For the building of our body we have within us that which Science called "constructive ability." Life, the great vivifying principle, arranges properly all the matter that our body receives. The constructive ability always acts rightly, and never errs; though we are unconscious of the whole process. The same working is required in our moral and spiritual growth. We need a conscious constructive ability, which may use the material of our impulses, emotions and passions automatically, on proper lines, and thus build within us a desirable moral and spiritual

edifice. Inasmuch as the material of human consciousness consists of diverse instincts and emotions, and each and every passion of ours has its proper and improper use, a power of discretion in man to make choice, was a necessity. But that power is liable to err. We need, besides, the power to exercise our judgment in the right direction. If, then, discretion is a blessing, it, none the less, contains within itself the curse of its abuse.

Man without discretion would be a mere automaton. Every organism in Nature, other than man, is working on right lines, but devoid of human consciousness. The object of our sojourn on earth is not physical progress. This, as I have said, has already attained its height in the human frame. We are here to make of our consciousness a constructive ability that may not err; and this will be achieved when our passions shall have become controlled and our impulses regulated.

Perfection of judgment demands freedom of choice and liberty of action. We cannot make a child a good mathematician if we leave him no chance to work out for himself the mathematical problems that are put before him. We must tell him what to do, and how to do it. If, however, we keep him working under our strict supervision, correcting him every time he is on the point of making a mistake, his

faculties cannot develop to the best advantage. This kind of tutelage will make a machine of him, and nothing else. His own faculties will have no chance of development, and in the long run will become stunted and permanently impaired. Leave the child to his own choice. Teach him the principles whereby questions are to be solved, and then leave him alone. Let him make mistakes, and correct him afterwards, and you will find one day in the child a Newton or a Stephen. The world beyond the grave is chiefly the world of mentality—the universe of high morals and spirituality—i.e. sublimated forms of the passions that now exist in us in their natural condition. The doors of Heaven will be open only for those men and women who train their power of judgment and discretion to a right use, and consequently raise a building of spiritual gold from the ore of the passions embedded in their nature. The Muslim paradise consists in having our faculties brought to full and right fruition. The training of judgment is the chief thing in our period of probation here on earth; and to this we cannot attain unless we have our discretion in an unfettered condition, with capacity for evil as well as for good.

Smooth ways are not the ways of perfection. Trials and tribulations give character. Diffi-

culties and persecutions are the salt of a perfect life. Pitfalls and lures strengthen vigilance and watchfulness. Hardship and disaster create perseverance and pertinacity of character. There is no high moral end that can be achieved without lures, hardships or temptations. Negative virtue is no virtue. Proper occasions are needed to make virtue a reality, and this can seldom be unless some evil comes to tempt us. Generosity begins to play its part only where poverty and indigence have caused misery. Courage shines forth in the defence of those wrongly persecuted. Continnence observed in the loneliness of a jungle is only a potentiality ; it may fail, but it becomes materialized into a stalwart virtue when temptations surround us, and we stand as adamant—proof against the evil. Does not the Holy Fire bring home to us the same lesson? “Contemplate its holy flames”—I, too, repeat the words of the Sacred Book—and we shall learn a great lesson. Contact with fire means the cleansing of impurities. Cast a man into the fire of temptation, and if he comes out unscathed, he will be perfect. He will not find any difficulty in following the blessed triad of Zoroaster, i.e. good thoughts, good words, and good actions. Thus, what tempts us to evil is, rightly regarded, working for our good.

Everything that comes in our way arouses conflicting passions. Unseen agencies sometimes, without warning, inspire us to do good or bad. These agencies in the Qur-ánic phraseology have been named "angel" and "devil." They may or may not be individualized entities—that is a wide subject, and too far removed from that which now claims our consideration to warrant any attempt to treat of it here—but, whatever they may be, they are realities. Fire must work out its property of burning. It may cook us our meals; it may warm us in the rigid inclemency of winter; or it may involve a whole town in its flames, and thus cause misery and privation. Both these alternatives are open to man. Inducements to do good, or temptations to succumb to evil, surround him. Angel and devil, both are persuading him. But it is his own discretion, his own good upbringing, his own development of his own faculties on the right or the wrong lines, that make him amenable to the one or the other. Everything, in its own measure, serves some good purpose; but our mishandling, misplacement and misapplication, coming chiefly from our ignorance, create evil. Sin is not innate in us, neither does it exist in the working of the Creator, who is All-Pure and All-Benevolent. It is our own doing, our own creation, and our own

seeking. Evil inspirations and evil environments come to help us to perfect our righteousness; and they cannot exercise any control over those who subordinate their judgment to the Divine will and are His servants.¹ It is our submission to the Lord that enables us to stand proof against the evil that is round about us.

¹ Al-Qur-án, xv. 42.

CHAPTER VI
MESSAGE OF THE HOLY PROPHET
MUHAMMAD

LA-ELAHA-IL-ALLAH

“ No other Elaha,—object for worship, obedience or of submission—but Allah.”

“ LA-ELAHA-IL-ALLAH ” is the subjective form of the grand Message that the Last of the Prophets brought to the whole world from Mecca. “ Imbue yourselves with Divine Morals ” came also from his blessed lips to give, objectively, the same message to man. The significance of these holy words will appeal strongly, as a great practical reality, to those who have recently learnt that the secret of success and prosperity, in worldly affairs, lies in keeping themselves in tune with Nature. Nature as a whole, when read with the eye of true science, gives us the noblest manifestation of the Great Mind, the Creator of the Universe. If all the forces, or laws, of Nature prove to be only a working form of the Divine Attributes, as Islam tells us, our

being in tune with Nature, or with the Infinite, will be then tantamount to keeping pace—if the phrase be permitted—with Allah. The object will be accomplished if we can equip ourselves with God's attributes and reproduce the Divine morals. The "conflict between Science and Religion," that dreary, persistent echo from the platforms of Atheism and Materialism, will continue just so long as Science and Theology are each tainted with falsehood. True Science and true Theology are one and the same thing. One reveals the Laws of God, working in the various manifestations of the Universe, on the physical plane, and the other discloses the same Laws at work in the Moral and Spiritual sphere. All these laws emanate from the same First Intelligent Cause, and cannot, therefore, admit of any mutual discrepancy.

We know nothing of the Divine Essence. He is neither "He" nor "She." "Nothing is like a likeness of Him."¹ "So transcendent is the Divine Being, and so far above material conception, that a likeness of Him cannot be imagined, even metaphorically; for not only is nothing like Him, but, as stated here, nothing is like a likeness of Him. Such is the transcendently pure conception of the Divine Being in Islam, He is not only above material limitations,

¹ Al-Qurán, xlii. 11.

but even above the limitations of metaphor.”¹
 Again the Qur-án says about God :—

Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth !
 How could He have a son when He has no consort,
 and He Himself created everything, and He is the Knower
 of all things ! That is Allah, your Lord, there is no God
 but He ; the Creator of all things, therefore serve Him,
 and He has charge of all things. Vision comprehendeth
 Him not, and He comprehendeth (all) visions ; and He
 is the Knower of subtilities, the Aware.²

If theology tries to bring God within the physical vision of man by seeking to visualize Him, as it were, in a human body, it cannot hope to convey even the faintest conception of the Infinite ; He cannot be comprehended within narrow limits, seeing that He is the Spirit, and can be seen only with the spiritual eye. And yet human vision, physical or spiritual, can nowise comprehend Him. All that we know of Him is either through true science, that reveals His laws working in the Universe, or through His own Revealed Word, descending on the prophets who, under Divine inspiration, inform us of His Attributes. If scientific researches can neither exhaust nor examine all the secrets and recesses of Nature, the only index of the Great Mind on the physical plane, all that which a Messenger from

¹ Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Qur-án, p. 988.

² Al-Qur-án, vi. 102-104.

God can bring to us, will be that which comes within the limits of our human comprehension. Our own knowledge of Allah cannot bring Him within the limits of definition. He has revealed Himself to us, according to our own capacities. The last Word of God gives us some ninety-nine names of Allah. The names do not, as I said before, exhaust the list of His Excellent Names. These names only describe those aspects in which the Divine Essence has disclosed Himself to the human mind. In other words, He chose ninety-nine ways under which He was pleased to accomplish the grand design He had in view in creating the Universe, with man as its lord on the earth. The Universe, and the laws that work in it, are a materialization of the Divine Attributes. A person with an atheistic turn of mind cannot but admit the essential reasonableness of the Qur-ánic Theology. The God of the Qur-án is the God of Nature. If the working of Nature discloses a reign of law, which demands implicit obedience to it from all the component parts of the Universe, and if different forms of the law exhibit different characters and features of that Great Mind, Who is admittedly working behind the scene, it is not difficult to arrive at some of the conceivable attributes of the First Intelligent Cause; and a true theology must reveal them.

From the ethereal world to the plasmic congeries in the human brain, every evolutionary stage seems to work under certain great laws—the law of creation, the law of sustenance and nourishment, and the law of development. Every organism, as soon as it is created, finds what is needful for its sustenance and nourishment already existing in the Universe; and when it utilizes such material it begins to disclose that which lies latent in it. The produce always exceeds, so many fold, the matter used. Thus creation, nourishment and development are unceasingly working on, in all the departments of Nature. Again, if any organism does not work up to the prescribed standard, the working hand in Nature at once comes forward to repair the defect. No one can deny these verities. But if the very idea of the law points to the existence of a Law-giver, one must, perforce, believe in the existence of the Creator, the Nourisher, the Maintainer, the Evolver and the Reclaimer. In the very beginning of the opening chapter of the Qur-án we are told of the Being possessing these same four attributes that work in Nature. We are told of the Being who is :—

(1) *Rabb*—the Creator, the Nourisher, the Designer, the Upbringer of everything in the world.

(2) *Rahman*—the Beneficent Lord, who unceasingly

creates the material for the sustenance of every creature even before its birth.

(3) *Rahim*—the Merciful Lord, who enables everything to reap manifold fruits in comparison with the material it has used.

(4) *Malik-i-Youmiddin*—the Owner of the time of Requital, who chastises His creatures for their correction.

The God of the Qur-án, then, is the God of Nature. Can Science and Theology be in conflict under this conception of Godhood? As far as I have studied the various laws of Nature, now discovered, they all come within the scope of one or other of the Qur-ánic Names of Allah. Similarly, our social, civic and moral laws are but a semblance of the requirements of certain other of the Qur-ánic Names. If a worldly-wise man respects all these laws, and thereby achieves success and prosperity in life, such an object will be more amply and more surely gained by a Muslim if he strives to keep his conduct in consonance with the demands of the Names of Allah as given in the Qur-án.

But the Qur-án speaks of many other excellent names. What a treasure of knowledge and science has been stored up for us in these Holy Names, if we meditate upon them? Science does not claim to bring all the laws and forces of Nature within our ken. Scientific researches are continuous; but we cannot always rely on their inferences. The research

of to-day falsifies the inference of yesterday. Through hardship and suffering we come to truth. Should we not enrich our knowledge if we made our researches in the light of these Qur-ánic Names of God? What a vast harvest lies before us, if we ponder upon the working of these Excellent Names! If Nature is the handiwork of God, its working must be commensurate and in consonance with His attributes; and the Word of God should enlighten us with regard to them. I hope the reader will now understand that which I asserted at the beginning of this chapter, namely, that to be in tune with Nature, only means to be in tune with the Divine attributes. Success in every branch of life, then, will depend on how we translate our Muslim formula of faith into action.

When the Holy Prophet said: "He who says *La-elaha-il-Allah* will enter into Paradise," he simply said the truth. It is not merely a true formula of faith; it is, as well, a formula of a most successful life. The life of Paradise is the life of success here and hereafter. But mere lip-recital of the formula is an absurdity. Its meaning must guide our actions.

Man is a microcosm. Everything in Nature is represented in the human frame; and, as the God-Mind rules in the whole Universe,

the human mind rules this Universe, in little. Just as the human frame pictures the whole world on a small scale, so does the human mind reflect the Divine Mind. Man was made after the image of God, as has been said in many sacred books. So, nevertheless, it was not said of flesh and clay, but of that Divine flame, the Breath of the Lord, called the soul, which, when evolved—and the chief object of a religion from God cannot be other than to bring that flame to its full blaze—receives obeisance even from angels. The Qur-án says :—

And when your Lord said to the angels : Surely I am going to create a mortal of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape. So when I have made him (man) complete, and breathed into him of my inspiration, fall down making obeisance to him. So the angels made obeisance, all of them together.¹

The whole Qur-án is a commentary on *La-elaha-il-Allah*. Allah is the central figure of the Holy Book, which can be divided into the following six headings :—

First, it makes mention of His Attributes.²

Secondly, it refers to the various aspects of the Universe, in illustrating the working of these Attributes.

¹ Al-Qur-án, xiv. 28-30.

² *The Threshold of Truth*, pp. 117-118.

Thirdly, our conformity with those Attributes, which have been styled virtues, righteousness, and purity. Anything done or felt, which is not in unison with these Attributes or manifestations of God, is evil.

Fourthly, the law, or the commandment, which, being followed, enables us to conform as aforesaid, and safeguards us against going astray.

Fifthly, the mention of certain personalities who conform their lives to the said manifestations, and of those who do not do so. To the first category belong the Prophets, the righteous, the truthful, and the martyrs or witnesses to His ways. Those who oppose belong to the other class.

Sixthly, the book tells of the life after death, which again speaks of the same principle. Those who have been able to imbue themselves with Divine Attributes will have an abode of felicity called Heaven; while the other class, falling short of the standard of qualification for the Heavenly life, will have to pass some time in a condition enabling them to make up the deficiency, which is the Hell of the Holy Qur-án. Islam does not admit of Eternal Hell. Thus it will appear that the Holy Qur-án has been revealed only to tell of God and His ways, and to give guidance whereby we may abide by His ways.

Leaving aside the untrustworthy character of the other Sacred Scriptures as they have come down to us (let us believe in their genuineness, if you will), they are not of much help to us; they do not speak of all the Attributes of God as disclosed in the Book of Nature. Therefore, if the Qur-án takes God and His manifestations as its main theme, and shows how to conform to those manifestations, can it not claim to be the only book which fulfils the object of a revelation from God ?

The Muslim formula of faith thus becomes the fundamental principle of Muslim ethics. All the paths that are essential to be followed in seeking Allah, will become morals and ethics in Islam. All lexicons agree that the word Allah has always been used as a proper Name in Arabic. It was never applied to any other deity—though there were vast numbers of deities in the pre-Islamic days in Arabia. But some etymologists hold that the word is composed of “Al” and “elah,” the former corresponding to the English “the” and the latter signifying “the object of obedience.” Allah, then, means “The Obeyed,” the Deity that receives obedience through His Laws from everything in Nature. Even the atheist cannot but worship “The Obeyed” through his actions. He is, perforce, a helpless slave

to His ordinances, which biologists call "the Laws of Nature." The so-called atheist differs from us only in one thing: he submits to the Law, but we go to the Source of the Law. In short, God receives obedience from everything. Every organism owes its existence, maintenance and perfection to its obedience to the Designer. In doing so, it follows the Religion of Islam, i.e. the Religion of Obedience to Commandment. On no plane can we thrive and reach our goal save only through submission to Allah; that is to say, through losing our individuality in Him, and getting ourselves dyed in the Divine colours. And if He has appeared to humanity in so many colours—being the ways in which His Essence manifests itself in the Universe—we must strive to reproduce the same, if we wish to reach our goal, by making our possibilities and capacities a perfect reality. To seek Allah is, then, to acquire His Attributes, so far as they are within human power. The Messages¹ which the Founders of the Great Religions of the world have left us may be conveniently summed up in a moral precept, which was a key-note of their own lives, and which they especially enjoined their disciples to follow. Siri Krishan's message was: "Get Wisdom"; Buddha's, "Forsake Desire"; Christ's, "Have

¹ *The Message of Zoroaster*, p. 161.

charity"; Muhammad's, "Seek God"; and Zoroaster's, "Make thyself pure."

Among the ninety-nine names of Allah I find the following: *Al-Hakim*, "the ever Wise"; *Al-Ghani*, "One who is above every need"; *Al-Halim*, "the Meek"; *Al-Wadood*, "the Loving"; *Al-Barr*, "One of Great Goodness"; *Al-Quddus*, "the Pure One."

He, then, who seeks Allah must get wisdom, he must forsake desire and be charitable and meek, and do good. He must live a pure life. One who, therefore, follows Muhammad must needs do all that has been taught by the Prophets that went before, and yet he has fulfilled only a partial righteousness. Wisdom, the forsaking of desire, love, meekness, charity and purity do not make up the sum-total of humanity. All men are not people of philosophy and wisdom. They need truths and tenets in clearer and plainer form, and so I will give those Holy Names that are mentioned in the Qur-án, with their English translations. It is very difficult to afford an adequate rendering of these Arabic names, as Arabic words are exceptionally rich in significance.

1. *Hoo*, He. 2. *Ar-Rab*, The Creator, The Maintainer, The Nourisher, The Upbringer. 3. *Ar-Rahman*, The Beneficent, The All-Giver. 4. *Ar-Raheem*, The Compassionate. 5. *Al-Málik*, The Master, The Owner.

6. *Al-Malik*, The King. 7. *Al-Quddús*, The Holy One, The Pure One. 8. *As-Salám*, The Author of Peace, Free from Defects. 9. *Al-Maumin*, The Granter of Security, 10. *Al-Muhaimin*, The Guardian over All. 11. *Al-Azéz*. The Ever Mighty. 12. *Al-Jabbár*, The All-Compelling; the one who brings everything under His Will. 13. *Al-Mutakabbir*, The Possessor of All-Greatness, Glory and Dignity. 14. *Al-Kháliq*, The Creator, The Combiner. 15. *Al-Bâri*, The Maker, The Moulder. 16. *Al-Musawwir*, The Fashioner. 17. *Al-Ghaffâr*, The Great Forgiver. 18. *Al-Quahhâr*, The Great Dominant. 19. *Al-Wahhâb*, The Great Bestower. 20. *Ar-Razzâq*, The Great Provider. 21. *Al-Fattâh*, The Great Opener. 22. *Al-Aleem*, The All-Knower. 23. *Al-Qubbiz*, The Straightener, The Chaser. 24. *Al-Bâsit*, The Amplifier, The Opener. 25. *Al-Khâfiz*, The Abaser. 26. *Ar-Râfi*, The Exalter. 27. *Al-Muizz*, The Honourer. 28. *Al-Muzill*, The Debaser. 29. *As-Sami'*, The Ever Hearer. 30. *Al-Basir*, The All-Seer, The Observer. 31. *Al-Hakam*, The Judge. 32. *Al-Aali*, The High. 33. *Al-Lateef*, The Knower of Subtleties. 34. *Al-Khabir*, The One who is Aware of Everything. 35. *Al-Halím*, The Clement, The Meek, the Forbearer. 36. *Al-Azeem*, The Owner of Greatness. 37. *Al-Ghâfir*, The Pardoner, The Suppressor of Evil Propensities. 38. *Ash-Shakoor*, The Great Grateful. 39. *Al-Aâla*, The Most High. 40. *Al-Kabir*, The Ever Great. 41. *Al-Hâfiz*, The Ever Preserver. 42. *Al-Muqît*, The Ever Maintainer. 43. *Al-Hasib*, The Reckoner. 44. *Al-Jalél*, The Ever Glorious, The Benign. 45. *Al-Karim*, The Ever Bountiful. 46. *Ar-Raqib*, The Ever Watchful, The Watcher. 47. *Al-Mujib*, The Ever Hearer of Prayers. 48. *Al-Wâs'i'h*, All-Comprehending One, The Granter of Felicity and Facilities. 49. *Al-Hakim*, The Ever-Wise. 50. *Al-Wadood*, The Loving. 51. *Al-Majid*, The Glorious. 52. *Al-Bâis*, The Opener of the Tomb, The Resurrector. 53. *Ash-Shâhid*, The Witness. 54. *Al-Haqq*, The Truth. 55. *Al-Wakil*, The Guardian, One who has charge of things, One who can be trusted upon for the charge of

Affairs. 56. *Al-Qawi*, The Mighty. 57. *Al-Matin*, The Firm. 58. *Al-Wali*, The Friend, The Patron. 59. *Al-Hamid*, The Ever Praiseworthy. 60. *Al-Muhsi*, The Accountant. 61. *Al-Mubdi*, The Great Beginner. 62. *Al-Moiid*, The Restorer. 63. *Al-Mo'hyi*, The Life-Giver, The Quickener. 64. *Al-Momit*, The Causer of Death. 65. *Al-Haiy*, The Ever-Living. 66. *Al-Qayim*, The Self-Subsistent, One who Sustains others. 67. *Al-Wajid*, The Finder of Everything. 68. *Al-Wahid*, The One. 69. *Al-Ahad*, The Alone in his Attributes. 70. *As-Samad*, The Eternal, The One on whom all depend, and who depends on no one. 71. *Al-Qadir*, The Powerful. 72. *Al-Muqtadir*, The Possessor of every might and power. 73. *Al-Muquaddim*, The Foregoer. 74. *Al-Muakhhir*, The Ender of Everything. 75. *Al-Awal*, The First. 76. *Al-Akhir*, The Last. 77. *Az-Zahir*, The Without, The Manifestor, The Essence. 78. *Al-Batin*, The Within, One that creates essence of thing. 79. *Al-Wali*, The Governor. 80. *Al-Mutali*, One who is above others. 81. *Al-Barr*, One of Great Goodness. 82. *At-Tawwab*, The Great Forgiver. 83. *Ar-Raof*, The Lenient, The Kind, especially in warding off trouble or difficulties. 84. *Malikul-Mulk*, King of All Kingdoms. 85. *Zuljalal-Wal-Ikrâm*, Lord of Awfulness, Glory and Honour. 86. *Al-Muqsit*, The Equitable. 87. *Al-Jami*, The Gatherer. 88. *Al-Gani*, One who is above every need, All-Sufficient, The Rich. 89. *Al-Mughni*, One who makes others above their needs. 90. *Al-Muati*, The Giver. 91. *Al-Mané*, The Preventer. 92. *An-Nafé*, The Propitious, The Benefiter. 93. *Al-Hadi*, The Guide. 94. *An-Noor*, The Light. 95. *Al-Azli*, The Eternal. 96. *Al-Bâqi*, The Survivor. 97. *Al-Waris*, The Inheritor. 98. *Ar-Rashid*, All-guidance. 99. *As-Saboor*, The Long-Suffering, The Patient.

Besides these 99 Names, the Muslim Divines have deduced many other Names from the description given of God in the Holy Qur-ân; for

instance, *Al-Muhit*, The All-Pervading—The Bringer of every other thing within the province of His Action; *Ash-Shafi*—The Healer, The Giver of Health; *Al-Jamil*, The Beautiful, and so forth.

All that is good, all that is noble and sublime, is comprised within the province of these Names. All high morals and spiritualities are but a shadow and a passing semblance of these Attributes of Allah. All that produces a healthy society and perfects civilization, is simply their consequence; and all that we need has been foreshadowed in them. On the other hand, every imaginary form of wickedness and unrighteousness is only a conflict and antithesis of these names; all the forces of Nature discovered, or yet to be discovered by science, are, and will be, merely the working forms of these Attributes.

All the prophets of God, as history shows, brought their messages, each to a particular tribe, or race, of humanity. They kept the door of their ministry shut to other nations. In other words, their religion was not that of proselytization; and this for obvious reasons. They appeared in times when humanity was rigidly separated into different units, by reason of the natural or artificial barriers whereby mutual communication was impeded or made impossible. Each came, too, to purge that

people to whom he was sent, of some particular evil. Each people suffered from a particular moral disease, and for each the Divine Healers brought the necessary cure. Thus it is that they confined the scope of their activities within certain limits, and laid stress, principally, on the particular high moral awakening of which particular peoples stood directly in need. Consider the moral conditions of the races that gave birth to Siri Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Zoroaster, and you will appreciate the inspiration which bade them give their several messages of Wisdom, of the Curbing of Desire, of Charity and Love, of Meekness and Purity, to their respective people. But Muhammad's times were different. Virtue, to all intents and purposes, was extinct, and evil in every conceivable form was rampant and unashamed within the four corners of the world. Human capabilities had reached that stage of development where guidance was needed, if they were to come to fruition. "Walk humbly with the Lord" was the ever-recurring and all-comprehensive Message that had been given before Muhammad, in various accents and tongues, by each and every Messenger from the Most High. But it was too vague to allow of any clear conception of the Most High, in Whose colours man must dip himself in order to reproduce true Divine Morals. Could the

messengers of these Teachers in India, Persia, and Galilee meet human requirements throughout the world? Man needed a full and complete Revelation of the Divine highway. Different were the ways, some distant, some crooked, some circuitous, winding round the hill to reach the top ; but we needed the straight path—*Sirát-i-Mustaqim* of the Qur-án—and the last Book of God came to guide us thither. I do not propose to discuss at length the ninety-nine names enumerated above, but I will mention some of the virtues that they include and imply ; and I leave it to my readers to judge for themselves if they are not indispensable components of a perfect human society :—Mercy, generosity, bravery, peacefulness, security, greatness, patience, forgiveness, honour, chastity, good government, insight into the subtleties of Nature, and full knowledge of the suppression of evil propensities ; gratitude, benignity, watchfulness, truth, power, firmness, independence, riches, guidance, and so forth, in addition to the virtues emphasized by the several prophets, which also come within the purview of certain Holy Names. If man is the image of the Lord, that image cannot come to fulness of life unless and until we work out, so far as in us lies, all the morals of which we read in the Qur-án. “ Seek God,” i.e. “ Imbue yourself with Divine Attributes,”

or, in other words, *La - elaha - Allah* — this alone can be only the best, the most comprehensive message to humanity. In his learned discourse, while attempting to show the comparative ineptitude of the various messages of other prophets and the supreme importance and comprehensiveness of the message of the Holy Zoroaster, my friend Mr. Wadia sums up his remarks on the Message of Muhammad, in the following words :—

However, with the march of exact science, when to man his bread and water are assured, and when the watchful regard of his Creator has taken the semblance of a natural law, he comes to depend more on the immutable laws of Nature than on Him who made them. This is the cause of the growing infidelity one notices in the civilized States of modern Europe ; and in the so-called advanced section of our own small community. Though religious instinct is inborn in man, no civil law or papal bull can make him actively and sincerely religious, relying on his Creator for every thought and movement of his life. Consequently Muhammad's precept cannot be conscientiously followed by a vast number of men, especially in the most civilized parts of the world.

In the light of what I have said in this chapter, these remarks would seem to need some reconsideration and, perhaps, revision by the author. Honest as he is in his observation, from his angle of vision, he must widen his horizon. To "seek God" does not mean only the saying of prayers and the singing of hymns.

It means that all our activities must be ordered in obedience to His ways. In matters of hygiene, for example, we have to follow His ways—ways that have been discovered by physiology, materia medica, and other branches of that science. To see God, therefore, will be to comply with the laws of these sciences. Can we lead a healthy life without seeking God in this manner? The same is true of all human activities. If we depend on the immutable laws of Nature to assure us of our bread and butter, and set aside the dogmatized religion and the false theology, wrongly fathered on certain of the great Prophets, then we follow Islam, and serve Allah; if, that is to say, the Revelation of those laws has been given to us through true science. No civil law or papal bull can make us active and sincere in the activities of our life; but if we wish to bring them to success, we must rely on the Creator for every thought and movement of our life, if the features of the Almighty have rightly been pictured, and His ways truly delineated. Consequently Muhammad's precept can be, and is, "conscientiously followed by vast numbers of men, especially in the most civilized parts of the world." Even an atheist follows the God of Muhammad in the various avocations of his life. He must bow to the immutable laws of Nature; the more exact he is in this

respect, the better his chances of worldly prosperity. The reign of the law is an admitted verity in the working of all parts of the Universe, including humanity ; and if these forces of Nature are nothing else but manifestations of Allah, then obedience given to them in any department of life is Islam, i.e. submission to the laws of Allah. Hence *La-elaha-il-Allah* is the only comprehensive message that could come from the Most High to minister to all our needs.

CHAPTER VII

AL-ISLAM

THE world had her creeds before Islam. They were mostly of one character. Prayers, hymns, ceremonials and offerings were their chief aim, while sacrifices propitiated the Divine anger. This made up the religion; some added to it a few sermons and miracles, while many saw their gods in their own low desires.¹

THE MUSLIM THEORY OF RELIGION.

Islam came with a new conception of religion. Al-Qur-án drew our attention to the universe, there to find the clue to the Religion of God. It disclosed a theory of life on lines compatible with things in Nature. The Book unravelled the human heart. It laid down a code whereby to work out our nature. It admitted certain modes of worship, emphasizing, the while, the all-essential fact, that the Glory of God lay in the edification of man. "It is not righteousness (it says) that you turn your faces towards the East and West;

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxv. 48.

but righteousness is this, that one should believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the Prophets; and give away wealth out of love for Him, to the near of kin and orphans and the needy and the wayfarers and the beggars and for the captives; and keep up prayer and give alms; and the performers of their promises . . . and the patient in distress and in affliction and in time of conflict.”¹

The verse distinguishes between a formal and a practical piety; it sets forth the essence of religion, which is faith in God, and goodwill towards man.

Islam saw man's true religion in human nature and its development. “Set up your face upright for religion in the right state—the nature made by Allah, in which He has made man—that is the right religion.”² “Is it then other than Allah's religion they seek, and to Him submit whoever is in the heavens and the earth?”³

The Book revealed that, like everything in Nature, man enters into this world with a pure and untainted nature, possessing the highest capacities with unlimited progress before him; capable also of sinking to be “the lowest of the low.”⁴ He can reach the

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 171.

² iii. 82.

³ xxx. 30.

⁴ xcvi. 4-6.

goal, and avoid the abyss, if he receives proper guidance.

Our physical nature, like all organisms, grows unconsciously on prescribed lines, assimilating the useful and rejecting the baneful; a process impossible in the sphere of consciousness. We have freedom of choice, but we lack the constructive ability, to direct our judgment to the right path, which we possess on the physical plane. In the human frame, material growth reaches its consummation; and we are born to build up the moral and spiritual structure on the right lines. This we can do only if our discretion becomes trained to walk aright, as is our physical nature in its frame of the body. For this we need laws of right and wrong, and a disciplinary course, the pursuit of which may evolve in us a capacity to follow those laws, i.e. the disposition of Islam, that means submission to laws.

DOCTRINAL BELIEFS.

The laws must come from our Creator—the Source of all the laws that move the universe, as Islam says, through agencies called angels. The law should come to us through personages themselves capable of observing it strictly, and of guiding us thereto.¹ It must affect

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 129.

this life and the hereafter, where we shall reap the fruits of our actions. These principles furnish a base for the doctrinal beliefs in Islam, which 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-án also recognizes Divine revelations to other peoples,¹ 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.”² We must observe their teachings; but for them we look only to Al-Qur-án; as God’s other Books, so it says, became adulterated, and Al-Qur-án came to reproduce their teachings.

Man, as I said before, possesses capabilities for sublimation and degradation. On one side he clings³ to earth, seeing that he comes out of clay.⁴ He is an animal—nay, sometimes worse than that;⁵ on the other he is the vicegerent of God on this earth;⁶ he receives obeisance from angels,⁷ and rises to the very borders of Divinity. If the former is

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxxv. 24.

² iii. 83.

³ vii. 176.

⁴ xxiii. 12.

⁵ vii. 179.

⁶ ii. 80.

⁷ ii. 84.

his beginning, the latter is his goal. Al-Qur-án came to uplift man from animality to Divinity. It first refers to our physical growth in the womb, which in its seventh stage of evolution engenders "another creation."¹ This new creation is the human consciousness—the bed-rock of subsequent development. Islam does not take the soul as a different entity that descends from somewhere and mixes with the body. 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-án describes :—

<i>Ammarah</i> ²	.	.	The Commanding.
<i>Lawwama</i> ³	.	.	The Self-accusing.
<i>Mulhima</i> ⁴	.	.	Inspired.
<i>Mutmainna</i> ⁵	.	.	At rest.
<i>Radiyah</i> ⁶	.	.	Pleased with God.
<i>Mardiah</i> ⁷	.	.	Pleasing to God.
<i>Kamilah</i> ⁸	.	.	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

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxiii. 12-14.

² xii. 58.

³ lxxv. 2.

⁴ xci. 8.

⁵ lxxxix. 27.

⁶ lxxxix. 27.

⁷ lxxxix. 27.

⁸ xci. 7.

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 mounds 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. "They have hearts," Al-Qur-án says, "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,"¹ "they cling to the earth and follow low desires."² 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-án says: "Most surely (man's) self is wont to command evil."³

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

¹ Al-Qur-án, vii. 179.

² vii. 176.

³ xii. 53.

out of something ugly, where then lies the impossibility in our case? To encourage such pessimists in religion, Al-Qur-án gave the gospel that man was well equipped to find the right path,¹ and capable of every moral progress.² 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,³ 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.

FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM.

We have divers appetites, and need many things to satisfy them. Cupidity suggests evil,

¹ Al-Qur-án, xc. 7-10. ² xcv. 4, 6. ³ xxxv. 18.

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-án prescribes a course of disciplinary measures, rightly called the FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM :—The Formula of Faith—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,”¹ 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 could we commit wrong in order to have them, if we learn to give them up willingly ? The formula 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. Then comes the Pilgrimage. We leave our family, friends, business and country ; we part with our

¹ Al-Qur-án, iii. 91.

clothes and comfort, covering ourselves only with two sheets; and when we enter Hedjaz, we must abstain from disputes, quarrels and evil language;¹ 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-án 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-án therefore forbids all such foods as

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 197.

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.¹ "Eat and drink that which is good and clean,² but be not extravagant."³ Clean your clothes and every other thing⁴ and purify yourself when unclean."⁵ As to general manners, the Book says: Make room for others when you assemble and rise from your places when so asked.⁶ Speak rightly⁷ and gently, and lower your voices; look not upon others contemptuously; walk not exultingly, and pursue the right path.⁸ Enter houses by their doors;⁹ enter not into others' houses without permission; salute the inmates, but enter not if they are not in.¹⁰ When saluted, salute the person with a better salutation or return the same.¹¹ Avoid wine, gambling and idols.¹² Commit not suicide;¹³ nor kill your children,¹⁴ nor commit murder.¹⁵ Do not fornicate, nor

¹ Al-Qur-án, v. 8.

² v. 4.

³ vi. 142; vii. 31.

⁴ lxxiv. 4, 5.

⁵ v. 6.

⁶ lviii. 11.

⁷ xxxiii. 70.

⁸ xxxi. 18, 19.

⁹ ii. 189.

¹⁰ xxiv. 27, 28.

¹¹ iv. 86.

¹² v. 90.

¹³ iv. 29.

¹⁴ vi. 152.

¹⁵ xvii. 33.

live with women in secret intimacy.¹ Marry virtuous women² and give them their dowries.³ 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.⁴

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

SECOND STAGE.

But the most difficult task of man's reform begins when the initial stage is over. It consists in raising, in the human breast, *Lawwamah*—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.

¹ Al-Qur-án, iv. 25.

² v. 5.

³ v. 5.

⁴ iv. 25.

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-án mentions certain things that God loves and other things that He abhors:—Allah does not love exceeding limits,¹ mischief-making,² ungratefulness,³ injustice,⁴ pride,⁵ boasting,⁶ treachery,⁷ utterances of hurtful language,⁸ extravagance,⁹ unfaithfulness,¹⁰ exulting,¹¹ etc. God loves those who do good,¹² judge equitably,¹³ purify themselves,¹⁴ repent and return to God, trust in Him,¹⁵ act righteously¹⁶ and speak truthfully. The Divine curse, that in Islam means

¹ Al-Qurán, ii. 185.

³ ii. 276.

⁶ iv. 86.

⁹ vi. 140.

¹² ii. 195.

¹⁵ iii. 158.

⁴ iii. 56.

⁷ iv. 107.

¹⁰ xxii. 88.

¹³ v. 142.

² ii. 250.

⁵ xvi. 28.

⁸ iv. 148.

¹¹ xxviii. 76.

¹⁴ ii. 22.

¹⁶ iii. 75.

remoteness from God, comes on man for unbelief,¹ belief in enchantment, magic and superstition,² polytheism,³ hypocrisy,⁴ turning from the right path,⁵ breaking covenants and promises,⁶ concealing truth,⁷ disputing truth,⁸ falsehood,⁹ speaking evil of God and His apostles,¹⁰ and murder.¹¹

These various virtues and vices have not been jumbled together in a page or a chapter, nor has Al-Qur-án 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-án 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-án 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-án 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

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxxiii. 64.

² xviii. 5.

⁶ v. 13.

⁹ xxiv. 7.

⁴ ix. 68.

⁷ ii. 69.

¹⁰ xxxiii. 57.

² iv. 52, 51.

⁵ xlvii. 28.

⁸ iii. 60.

¹¹ iv. 93; xvii. 33.

and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes.”¹ In them, conscience dies; progress terminates, and we become the lowest of the low.

(1) Indifference—“Surely those who disbelieve—it being alike to them whether you warn them or not—they will not believe.”²

(2) Hypocrisy—“And there are those who say : We believe; and they are not at all believers.”³

(3) Two-sidedness—“When it is said to them, Do not make mischief . . . they say : We are but peacemakers.”⁴

(4) Conceit—“When it is said to them, Believe as others believe, they say : Shall we believe as the fools believe?”⁵

(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.”⁶

(6) Indecision—“Wavering between that (and this), (belonging) neither to these nor to those.”⁷

(7) Attachment to hereditary wrong beliefs—“That on which we find our fathers is sufficient for us.”⁸

Conscience becomes strong under these

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 7.

³ ii. 8.

⁶ i. 14.

⁴ ii. 11.

⁷ iv. 148.

² ii. 6.

⁵ ii. 18.

⁸ v. 104 ; vii. 27.

directions if we follow them, and so we enter into the sphere of moral order.

The concluding portion of the Qur-ánic quotations dealing with rudimentary reforms, 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.¹ 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-án says: “God created mates for you, and puts between you love and compassion.”² This is the object of marriage in Islam.

True love and compassion grow naturally

¹ Al-Qur-án, xc. 12.

² xxx. 21.

under the family roof. Al-Qur-án 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.”¹

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-án 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.”² “They are your garments and you are their garments;”³ to them is due what is due from

¹ Al-Qur-án, xvi. 90.

² xiv. 1.

³ ii. 187.

them.”¹ 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-án gave the lie to such a conception, and declared that woman was equal to man, both in moral and in spiritual advancement. Al-Qur-án 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.”²

As to domestic morals, which alone can improve ethics in general, Muhammad says: “He is the most perfect Muslim whose dis-

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 228.

² xxxiii. 85.

position is most liked by his own family. The best of you are those who are best to their wives; the thing 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, but here I can only give a very brief extract from Al-Qur-án 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,¹ especially to the mother who bore us "with fainting upon fainting,"² and gave us milk for "two years";² 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

¹ Al-Qur-án, xvii. 23.

² xxxi. 14.

leave them gently when going in pursuit of our calling.¹

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 ;² and liberate the slaves,³ and feed the poor, the orphans, the captive⁴ and those “ in hunger ” or “ lying in the dust.”⁵ All this out of love for Allah, neither desiring reward nor thanks, nor taking pride nor boasting.⁶

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

¹ Al-Qur-án xvii. 28.

² iv. 36.

³ xc. 18.

⁴ lxxvi. 87.

⁵ xc. 15, 16.

⁶ lxxvi. 7, 9.

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-án divides 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-án 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-án supplied.

I quote here some verses that help to cultivate these morals.

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.¹ 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).² As for monkery, 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.”³

Honesty.

“ Control the property of those among you who are intellectually weak ; do not give away what God has placed with you, but maintain

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxiv. 38.

² xxiv. 38.

³ lii. 27.

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.”¹

“Those who swallow the property of the orphans . . . they only swallow fire into their belly, and they shall enter burning fire.² Do not consume each other’s wealth unjustly, nor offer it to judges as a bribe, so that you may seize others’ property dishonestly ;³ verily God orders you to give back your trusts to their owners.⁴ He does not love the treacherous.⁵ Measure rightly, weigh with exact balance ; defraud not men of their substance ; nor tread the earth with criminal intention.⁶ Do not give worthless things for good ones.”⁷

Meekness.

“Live peacefully.⁸ . . . There is much good in peace ;⁹ if they incline to peace, do thou

¹ Al-Qur-án iv. 6.

² ii. 188.

⁶ xxvi. 182.

⁹ iv. 127.

⁴ iv. 61.

⁷ iv. 2.

² iv. 10.

⁵ vi. 60.

⁸ viii. 1.

also incline to it.¹ Servants of the Merciful are those upon earth² . . . who walk meekly. When they hear frivolous discourse they pass on with dignity.³ 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.”⁴

Politeness.

“Speak to men good words.⁵ 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.⁶ Accuse not others unknowingly; verily the hearing, the sight and the heart shall be called to account for this.”⁷

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

¹ Al-Qur-án viii. 61.

³ xxv. 72.

⁶ xlix. 11, 12.

² xxv. 68.

⁴ xli. 84.

⁵ ii. 71.

⁷ xvii. 88.

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." ¹

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," it says, "who master their anger and do good to them." ² Al-Qur-án 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-án does not allow forgiveness if it leads to evil consequences.

Goodness.

"God commands to do good for good, and to do good without recompense and in the way

¹ Al-Qur-án, xlii. 40.

² iii. 133.

we do good to our kindred ; God forbids exceeding the limit of justice and doing good on wrong occasions.”¹ Though Al-Qur-án 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.”² Bestow alms from the good things you have already acquired ; do not aim at what is bad that you may spend it (in alms).³ Make not your charity worthless by laying obligations upon those you have relieved, or by injury and reproach.⁴ 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.⁵ They give alms in prosperity and in straitness,⁶ secretly and openly.⁷ Al-Qur-án names also the persons to whom alms should go : “ The poor, the needy, the collectors or distributors of alms, the new-comers in faith when in need, the captives, those in debt or in trouble, those furthering God’s cause, the wayfarer.”⁸

¹ Al-Qur-án xvi. 90.

² ii. 267.

³ lxxvi, 8, 9.

⁷ xiii, 22.

² xv. 67.

⁴ ii. 268.

⁶ iii. 188.

⁸ ix, 6,

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;¹ their patience is only for God, and not to display bravery.² When men gather against them and frighten them, this increases their faith; they say, Allah is sufficient for us, and is the excellent Protector.³ Be not like those who march from their houses insolently, and to be seen of others, and turn away from God's way."⁴

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.

Truthfulness.

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

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 172.

² xiii. 22.

³ iii, 172.

⁴ viii, 47.

ye falsehood.”¹ “They shall not refuse to present themselves when summoned; and conceal not true testimony, for he who conceals it has a wicked heart.”² 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.³ Be upright for Allah; let not hatred of a nation incite you to act inequitably.⁴ The men of truth and women of truth have a rich reward.⁵ They enjoin truth and steadfastness upon each other.”⁶

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;⁷ 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,

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxii. 81.

² iv. 135.

³ xxxiii. 85.

⁴ ii. 153.

⁵ ii. 283.

⁶ v. 8.

⁷ ciii. 8.

Surely we are for Allah; to Him we shall return.”¹

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-ánic 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.² Slacken not in your zeal for the sympathy of your people. Do not advocate the fraudulent, nor plead for those who defraud one another.”³

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

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 153, 155, 156, 157.

² v. 2.

³ iv. 104, 105, 107.

to them of old time. Islam promises this: "Those who strive for Us, we will certainly guide them to our ways."¹

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.² . . ." 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."³

This is the third stage of our uplifting, called *Mulhima*—the Inspired. This brings the soul on its road to perfection.⁴ The Divine flame from within kindles and consumes all dross. We walk in its light; Allah listens to our cries and answers our prayers

¹ Al-Qur-án, vi. 163.

³ xli. 30.

² xvi. 2.

⁴ xci. 7, 9.

by the words of His own mouth. "Call upon Me," God says, "and I will answer your prayers."¹ "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."² 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; 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."³ "Truth came and falsehood fled; verily falsehood had to flee."⁴ Man forgets himself in God's love; his life is solely for the Master.⁵ He steps automatically on the right path. "Yes, whoever submits entirely to Allah and is the doer of good, he has his

¹ Al-Qur-án, xl. 60.

² xlix. 7, 8.

³ ix. 24.

⁴ ii. 186.

⁵ xvii. 88.

reward from his Lord; he shall have no fear nor shall he grieve.”¹

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.² 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.”³ 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.”⁴

These are the fifth and sixth evolutionary stages of our soul. 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.” 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

¹ Al-Qur-án, vi. 168.

² ii. 208.

³ xxxiii. 72.

⁴ x. 65.

my sacrifices, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.”¹ Here God becomes his limbs and joints, as Al-Qur-án speaks of Muhammad: “The hand of the Prophet, which is above their hands, is the hand of God.”² “Whatever thou castest, not thou, but God, has cast.”³ God becomes closer to us than our neck-vein.⁴ “He engraves faith on our heart with His own hands and strengthens us with His Holy Spirit.”⁵ Man’s soul reaches its zenith. The spirit of Allah breathed in man, as the perfection of his physical frame⁶ 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.⁷

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

¹ Al-Qur-án, vi. 162.

³ viii. 17.

⁶ xv. 29.

⁴ i. 15.

² xlvi. 10.

⁵ lviii. 22.

⁷ ii. 88, 72.

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,¹ 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-án 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.”² Their own good deeds will in that life assume the form of trees that will give unceasing

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxxii. 17.

² Iv. 46.

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.¹ . . . The angels will enter in upon them, from every gate; peace be upon you because you were constant.² . . . And we will remove whatever of ill-feeling is in their breasts.³ . . . 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."⁴ 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.⁵ . . . Well pleased because of their own striving, in lofty gardens wherein you shall not hear vain talk."⁶

Freedom from grief, fear, toil, and anxiety is the chief characteristic of Al-Qur-ánic

¹ Al-Qur-án lxxvi. 5.

² xiii. 23, 24.

³ xxxv. 34, 35.

⁴ xxxvi. 38.

⁵ vii. 48.

⁶ lxxxviii. 9-11.

paradise—a truth repeated again and again in Al-Qur-án. Could the idea of the spiritual paradise be better expressed? Undoubtedly Al-Qur-án speaks of gardens, trees, milk, honey, fruits and numerous other things; but these are not of this life; they are metaphorical expressions. Al-Qur-án 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.¹ . . .” Other verses say the same;² 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-án 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.”³

The root of the word *Houri* means white, pure, unsullied. We read undoubtedly of the

¹ Al-Qur-án, xlvii. 15.

² xiii. 15.

³ xiii. 23.

beauty of their eyes, but their very description¹—"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-ánic 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."² Speaking of hell, Al-Qur-án says: "It is the fire kindled by Allah which rises above *the hearts*."³

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."⁴ 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-án 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

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxxvii. 78.

² civ. 5-7.

³ xxvi. 89.

⁴ lxvi. 8.

immeasurably wider 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."¹ The Qur-ánic paradise is not within certain frontiers. "Hasten to a garden the extensiveness of which is as the extensiveness of heaven and earth."² 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,³ 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

¹ Al-Qur-án, xc. 6.

² xlvii. 21 ; iii. 182.

³ xci. 10.

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-án 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-án, 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-án 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;¹ those sentient beings

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 84.

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.¹ 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.² Thus Islam brought to man for the first time the best form of democracy in all its ramifications. 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 $2\frac{1}{2}$ 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

¹ Al-Qur-án, xviii. 110.

² xlix. 18.

and encouraged trade.¹ It denounced sedition² and secret societies.³ 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, 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 ships, the ocean, the trees and so forth, were made subservient to man.⁴ 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-án 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.”⁵ Thus the Book revealed that everything in Nature had its use for man, who must ponder over it and realize that to

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 275.

³ lviii. 10.

⁴ xiv. 32, 33.

² xvi. 99.

⁵ iii. 190.

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-án taught them to man clearly for the first time. 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. Allah ¹ 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. Al-Qur-án first bids us look only to Allah for help. It also declares that no intermediary stands between Him and

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxxi. 12.

man,¹ 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."² . . ." Of our own exertions we are told, "For (every soul) is what it has earned³ and upon it is (the evil of what) it has wrought."⁴ "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."⁵ 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

¹ Al-Qur-án, lxxiv. 48.

² xiii. 11.

³ ii. 286.

⁴ xcix. 78.

⁵ vi. 16.

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."¹ 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-ánic Decree,² to those who rule for the benefit of the governed, and who do not weaken the subject³ 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-án describes them, "walk on the earth humbly and keep in their wealth a fixed

¹ Al-Qur-án, vii. 32.

² lxvii. 1, 2, 3.

³ xxviii. 4.

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 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." ¹

¹ Al-Qur-án, xx. 23, 35; xxv. 75; ii. 201-286; iii. 192, 193.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME OF THE CRITICISMS OF ISLAM

OURS are the ways of realities. We have had enough of theories. Experiment and observation alone will bring conviction. Facts have taken the place of concepts. We wish to read everything in the light of events. Academic discussion, if designed to convince us, must be explained in terms of facts and figures. The world-conflagration of the Great War has of itself established some of the verities of Islam. Those who were wont to assail Islam with hostile, even virulent, criticism, have been compelled, by the exigencies of the situation thus created, to adopt the very teachings that they condemned before. The Phoenix of the West built for itself a funeral pyre and fanned it to a blaze by the flapping of its wings ; but it rose again from the ashes, a different bird. Germany kindled the fire with wonderful rapidity. She alarmed the Continent. Belgium fell ; and the Spirit of Self-Preservation—a life-tendency in human nature—began to gaze with intent

eyes at those who believed in the Sermon on the Mount, which taught the turning of the left cheek when the right cheek was struck. But the philosophy of having both cheeks buffeted did not appeal to the Western mind, which could not see its way to accept the wisdom of the Prince of Peace. This was no time for the olive-branch—the mailed fist seemed in every way preferable. The Church in the West has excelled rather as an exponent of State-craft, than as a custodian of human conscience. So said a recent Premier, and so it proved to be in the days of the war. “I come with sword and fire.” These words of Jesus were preferred to what he uttered in the Sermon on the Mount. The belligerent spirit came to the surface, during the critical days when a number of clergy in cassock and surplice, headed by the Bishop of London, marched in procession to Hyde Park. When the Marble Arch was reached, the Bishop of London, mounting a cart, delivered an address, from which I quote the following :—

“All those passages in the New Testament which conscientious objectors quote are misunderstood and misquoted. . . . If we saw a blackguard ill-using a little child, should we stand still? No, we should deal with the blackguard speedily and vigorously. Smaller nations will fight for their rights, and stronger

nations must assist in hauling the bully off the little nations of the world. . . .

“We must drive the invaders out of the lands they have despoiled. If we had sat still and dared nothing, the women and children of Britain would have been treated as those in Belgium.”

The Bishop of Chelmsford, in dedicating a motor-ambulance for the use of wounded soldiers at Ilford shortly afterwards, said that the war was going on, for it would be folly and crime to put aside the sword until the purpose for which we had drawn it had been secured.

These war homilies, coming from such high dignitaries in the Church, could not fail to produce the desired effect. They began to resound from every pulpit and platform. But a thinking mind saw in them a psychology that, compelled by circumstances, was prone to follow Muhammad and the Qur-án, and to close the Bible, for the time being. The Law of Conscription received the support and sanction of the Church; but the conscience that had received its mould from the clear tenets of Jesus came to the surface in the person of the “conscientious objector.” He regarded the use of the sword as against the teaching of the Master even in self-defence. He would rather go to prison than take his place on the

battlefield. Many a "conscientious objector" became the guest of the King within the four walls of imprisonment, and their conviction did not perturb the mind of the Church. In acting on the principle that the sword must be unsheathed in defence of life and property, England and her Allies became Muslim. In the words of the Qur-án :—

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 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.¹

This was the earliest permission given to the Muslims of the day of the Prophet, to fight. The words clearly show that the war was first made by their opponents on the Muslims ; they were expelled from their homes for full thirteen years. The Prophet and his companions were subjected to every kind of persecution, so much so that the Prophet had to flee to Medina for his very life. Other Muslims followed him. But the Meccans would not leave him even at Medina, the place of his refuge. They pursued him with an army, and

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxii. 39, 40.

the Prophet had to come out of Medina in self-defence, under the Divine Order conveyed to him in the words quoted above. That the Prophet was not on the offensive, but on the defensive, can easily be appreciated by mere reference to the locality of the first three campaigns—Badar, Uhad, and Ahzab. The distance between Mecca and Medina is more than a hundred and fifty miles. Badar is at a distance of thirty miles from Medina, and Uhad only twelve miles from Medina; while the scene of the third battle was Medina itself. The town was besieged by the Arab Allies. Is it, now, difficult to ascertain who was the aggressor, and who on the defence?

This led to a general state of war throughout the whole country, where offence and defence came from both sides, and which brought down that Revelation from the Most High, which may be termed the Muslim Ethics of War:—

And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter. . . . 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 oppressor.*¹

The holy verses put the object of the fight in the clearest possible terms: "Permission (to

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 191-198.

fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed." "And fight with those who are fighting with you, and drive them out from whence they drove you." Who would question the righteousness of the war, if it was waged for such a necessity? "But if the enemy desists, there should be no hostility, except against the oppressors." A Muslim should not wage war when "persecution ceases, and men are not forced to accept or renounce a religion, but are at liberty to profess any religion, of the truth of which they are convinced, for the sake of their own God."¹ The words "religion should be only for Allah," cannot be taken to mean Islam, as the very words that follow them make the sense quite clear. "But if they desist, then there should be no hostility." There should remain no compulsion in the matter of religion, as the Qur-án says elsewhere, and everyone should be at liberty to hold any religion he likes. The Qur-án thus lays down the broad principle of religious freedom for which one searches elsewhere in vain. "It deserves to be noted that the lives of Muslims are to be sacrificed not only to stop their own persecution by their opponents, and to save their own Mosques, but to save churches, synagogues

¹ Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Qur-án, p. 89.

and cloisters as well, and thus to establish perfect religious freedom.

Has any other religious teacher taught that noble principle? Or is there a single direction in the Sacred Scriptures of any other religion, that its followers should lay down their lives to protect the places of worship of other religions? Muslims closely followed these directions, and every commander of an army had explicit orders to respect all houses of worship. Can it be said with any show of plausibility at all "that Islam spread with the Qur-án in one hand and the sword in the other?" Can our critics point to one instance when even a single person was forced to accept Islam at the point of the sword, in the days of the Prophet or his Caliphs? I assure them that all their efforts in such a direction will be in vain. The Great War, however, came in time to disillusion the world of all the misrepresentations and misinterpretation that had been fathered on the Muslim Ethics of War. Muslims fought on the same principle which compelled the Allies to unsheathe the sword at the outset. But the civilized nations of the present-day world could not desist from hostilities, where a Muslim's religion would have rendered a continuance of the struggle impossible.

The Great War has, however, created circumstances similar to those which caused the promulgation of the institution of polygamy, as it existed in the days of the Prophet. The very creation of man and woman with sexual instincts, and the functions to be performed by each for the procreation and maintenance of the species, makes the connubial companionship of man and woman, as it were, a birth-right. It is said that the Great War has left in Germany six times as many women as men. Similar statistics come from France and other belligerent nations. But natural passions cannot be killed. If neither religion, nor legislation can devise any desirable scheme for solving the difficult situation that faces modern civilization to-day, a species of moral leprosy must supervene that will contaminate the whole social fabric. Polygamy is the only solution.

It should not be forgotten that the institution of polygamy was permitted by the Qur-án at a time of war, in the days of the Prophet, when numberless widows and orphans had been left without any protection or help. Polygamy is not an injunction in Islam, but only a permission. It is not a substantive law, but a remedial or emergency law, and should not be brought into operation unless circumstances shall be such as to justify it. A Muslim may not have more than one wife ;

except under certain restrictions. Equality of treatment is the essential in the case of a plurality of wives; and any violation of this is a great sin. No doubt it excites revolt in woman; but a woman cannot be married without her free consent. She need not marry a polygamist, and if she fears that her alliance with an advocate of monogamy may result in a change in the views of her husband, who may marry again, she may insert a proviso against such a contingency. Marriage in Islam is a civil contract, and both the parties can enter into it under certain conditions, the infringement of any of which, of itself nullifies the contract. A woman is at liberty to marry a person, under the condition of his not taking another wife. The violation of that condition will be sufficient to entitle her to divorce her husband and, if so provided in the contract, claim reasonable damages. She is also at liberty to separate herself from her husband, and refuse him conjugal rights, compelling him at the same time to maintain her. Islam thus provides woman with every weapon to protect herself against polygamy, if her nature revolts against it. Islam came to give a code of conduct to cover all the ups and downs of life.

Criticism of Muslim polygamy, in its virulent form, comes from a race which is, in practice, infinitely more polygamist than are

the Muslims. Marriage, in its naked form, is only a connection of man and woman. It is only the interest of the coming generation, and the ascertainment of fatherhood, that gives it sanctity. Take the institution in its primitive form, and you will find the Westerner more of a polygamist than are the people in the East. The latter, to a very limited extent, and, moreover, in a legalized form, do that which the former does unscrupulously, in an illegal way. Neither by legislation, nor by religion, has the human world, since its beginning, been able to remedy these two evils—the unbridled brutality of man under his excited passions, and the helplessness of a woman. Unless and until the world is purged of these two weaknesses, the Muslim institution of polygamy is the only thing possible. It dignifies womanhood and comes as a blessing to the issue of male and female connections. An innocent woman who has fallen a victim to male brutality, will only be adored and cared for so long as she retains her charm or beauty. But alas! she is shown the door when the rainy days come. She has no claim on the property or heritage of the man. Is not the honourable position of being a second wife, under the sanction of society, much to be preferred? I have never heard of any society that has been able successfully to

uphold the Utopian ideal of the lasting companionship of one man and one woman. But if it be an impossibility, the interests of the woman and the protection of her rights need a system like that of Muslim polygamy. The prophetic eye of the Last Prophet saw that the conditions obtaining in his times were likely to rule the coming generations ; and he provided the remedy.

Ascertainment of paternity is a necessity for the welfare of the coming generation. Nature compels every man to look after those who come out of his own loins. This brought forth the institution of marriage and gave it a sanctity. But what of the fate and condition of those harmless children whose parents came together illicitly ? Why should they bear the stigma of illegitimacy ? Why should they suffer the hardships of bastardy ? Why should a woman be compelled to conceal her shame, and have recourse to painful operations in order to save herself from the infamy of motherhood without a husband ? Why should these issues of illicit connection be deprived of the right to inherit the property of a man, from whom they inherit the body with all its diseases ? The deceived woman must suffer the consequences of her indiscretion, but why should the innocent children share the shame with her ? These evils glare at Western civil-

ization with baleful eyes. They are the blot on the escutcheon of the people in the West. We see very little of it in the East. If religion, ethics and legislation have failed, till now, to work out human salvation from this degradation, Muslim polygamy is the only panacea that can confidently be resorted to in quarters where this moral poison is sapping the social fabric. And again I say that polygamy is not—if I am allowed to use this metaphor—a food. Monogamy is the natural food; polygamy is a remedy, a medicine to be administered to certain diseased conditions of life. It entails hardships, no doubt; but no person on his sick-bed can expect sweetmeats from his medical attendant. He must take medicine, however bitter and unpalatable it be. Polygamy is a permission, again I say, and not an injunction, and will cease to be necessary in human society, when men and women see realities of life as they are.

I come with no apologies for my Prophet, who purged the institution of polygamy of all its evils. His own example is the example of nobility and charity. Could a gentleman who, in the prime of his life and youthful vigour—as was Muhammad at the age of twenty-five—married a widow of forty years of age, and led an exemplary life with her for full twenty-seven years without thinking of

another wife, though allowed to by the society he was living in, be regarded as a person ruled by passions, if after the death of his first wife he takes in marriage a virgin, and certain widows (many amongst whom had passed the age of marital relations) with the sole object of giving them protection, and the wherewithal to live? They had many claims upon him. Their husbands had given their lives for the sacred cause; and the noble ladies had been left with no one to look after them. To keep them under his roof and provide for their needs, without entering into marriage relations with them, would have set an example, that would do more harm than good in the world. Such treatment, charitable as it was, even under the roof of a prophet, would lead coming generations to various abuses. Some of the widows could have married others; efforts were made as well in this direction; but no other person from among the companions of the Prophet was willing to accept their hand in marriage. The Prophet had to do so. The ladies could not be lodged under the roof of those who did not stand in the prohibited degree of relationship. The only commendable and virtuous course was the one adopted by the Prophet. Besides, we cannot criticize a custom, if respected by the people of the time, and not leading to any immorality and in-

justice, in the light of ethics subsequent in growth, especially when the conditions are changed.

The monogamy that rules modern society should not be taken as a Christian verity. Only two centuries before, polygamy was in vogue in Christendom. Many bishops were allowed to keep several unauthorized wives besides the one in Church wedlock. The law of monogamy had its genesis from the Institutes of Justinian. Judaism, Hinduism, and almost all other ancient religions, allowed polygamy. And is it not strange that those who come with their criticisms of us, forget that their own prophets believed in the plurality of wives? Abraham, David, Solomon, and many other patriarchs of the house of Jacob; Krishna and many others with the fame of sanctity and righteousness, gave the benefit of their roof and protection to more than one wife. The blessed Zoroaster, so the tradition goes, also married three wives.

Nay! do you say that Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Are you better knowing or Allah? And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah? and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do. *This is a people that have passed away: they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.*¹

¹ Al-Qur-án, ii. 140-141.

THE PARABLES OF THE QUR-ÁN.

The last Book of God is not a Book of legend and stories. It refers to certain events in the lifetime of the other prophets, and mostly of the house of Jacob; but it takes them to illustrate certain truths which the Book intends to teach to its readers. Some of its narratives differ from those on the same subject that we find in the Bible. This divergence of detail in the two Books has invited criticism from some of the European writers, tending to impeach the claim of the Qur-án to be of Divine origin. The Qur-án could not come from the All-Knowing God, the critics say, if its version of the said episodes differs from that given in the Bible. The logic, with all its plausibility, betrays a fallacy. They start with premises the truth of which is yet to be established. Undoubtedly if the version of the Bible be admitted as coming from God, the claim of the Qur-án as coming from the same source must fall to the ground. But, thanks to present-day researches and the Higher Criticism on the Bible, the position of our critics is not tenable. The Bible is admittedly full of folk-lore. Many of its legends have been discredited, so much so that clergymen of high distinction in England in 1916 refused to take oath as to the genuineness of the

Scriptures or to accept them as Divinely inspired. No one now believes in the ark of Noah and the story of Jonah's fish. The first five books of the Old Testament, they say, did not come from Moses. They would not suffer the Prayer Book to remain on their tables, because it contains certain psalms that should be expunged from the Bible. The concluding eleven verses of the last chapter of St. Mark and the well-known verse in the Gospel of St. John that supports the belief in the Trinity, have been proved to be an accretion to the oldest manuscripts—a fact which was discovered by the first English translators of the Bible in the days of James I. If the Biblical records are, then, deficient in genuineness, they cannot supply good criteria for testing the claim of the Qur-án to rank as the Word of God. The Qur-án need not turn to these Scriptures for its truth. It has got in it inherent proof to substantiate its claims. As regards the end of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who, as the Talmud says, "rebelled excessively against the Most High," we find some divergence between the statements of the Qur-án and the Bible. The Bible does not mention that the body of Pharaoh, when he was drowned with his hosts, was cast ashore; but the Qur-án says :—

When drowning overtook him he (Pharaoh) said : I

believe that there is no God but He in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit.

What! now! and indeed you disobeyed before, and you were of the mischief-makers.

But We will this day deliver your body that you may be a sign to those after you.¹

These verses show that the body of Pharaoh was cast ashore and was delivered to his people to be preserved as a sign to the coming generations. This Qur-ánic statement, which gives a version of the story quite different from that which appears in Exodus, aroused criticism in the West. The statement itself was considered as sufficient to throw doubt on the claim of the Qur-án as a Revealed Book, because the Bible was silent, nor did history show that the body of Pharaoh had been preserved. But modern Egyptian archæology substantiates the Qur-ánic statement. The body of Rameses II, the Pharaoh of Moses, as preserved among the mummies in Egypt² has been discovered. This instance in itself is sufficient to prove the unreliability of the Bible narratives, and the truth of the Qur-ánic version. The discovery has been made in our days, and could not be known to the Holy Prophet, especially when the world's knowledge, based upon the Bible, was otherwise. This one instance in itself establishes that the Qur-án comes from

¹ Al-Qur-án, x. 90-92.

² *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Mummy."

a Divine Source. It not only discloses what occurred after Pharaoh was drowned, but it also refers to our own times when the drowned body should be brought to light. The words of the Qur-án, "But we will this day deliver your body that you may be a sign to those after you," are conclusive. "Those after you" proved to be our generation, who come some thirteen hundred years after the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur-ánic narrative speaks of two events, one that occurred some two thousand years before him, and the other that occurs in our day. How could the Holy Prophet have such an exact knowledge, expressed in the clearest terms without oracular ambiguity? "That you may be a sign to those after you"—a prophecy proved literally. Can my critics refer to any prophecy elsewhere that has been given in unambiguous language? But apart from the historical parables in the Qur-án, the Book reveals many a scientific truth of quite recent discovery. It establishes that the Book given to Muhammad did come from Allah, and that the Voice he heard, with its message for humanity, was from the Most High.

To do full justice to the subject would require a voluminous book. The Qur-án abounds with references to this subject, upon which, however, inasmuch as it scarcely comes within the purview of my present work, I must

perforce content myself with a few observations. It should however, be borne in mind that the Sacred Book is not a treatise on material science. It lays down a general and a universal principle that everything, on any plane in the world—physical, intellectual, or spiritual—is governed by the same laws. The whole universe, emanating from one Great Mind, is under a sort of Monism. Whatever obtains in one plane, the same works in all other planes. It is with this principle in view that the Book so often refers to various natural phenomena within the cognizance of our senses, in order to elucidate and illustrate moral and spiritual truths promulgated in it. By way of induction, verities on physical planes are referred to by the Qur-án to explain truths uncognizable by ordinary senses. It is in this connection that the Qur-án discloses certain truths that have only recently come within scientific knowledge. For example, as to the Emanation of the Universe, the Qur-án speaks of some kind of “Light” that gave birth to the whole universe in its most embryonic form; and out of the said Light arose electricity.¹ The first form of our globe,

¹ Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a pillar on which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, (and) the glass is as it were a *brighly shining* star . . . gives *light though fire touch it not* (Al Qur-án, xxiv. 85).

in the words of the Qur-án, was a burning fiery gaseous matter, that afterwards assumed the form of some kind of water. Then, speaking of rocky mountains, the Book says that the earth being in a tremulous condition, so much so that one could hardly stand upon it,¹ rock and mountain came into creation, to balance the earth and make it steady. Not the animal or the vegetable world only, but everything in any order—from ether up to man—came into existence only through pairs of different things. In this respect, the Book of God lays down a principle of universal applicability, when it says: “And out of everything We created pairs.”² As to the appearance of life, science still holds a diversity of theories. It is as yet a riddle, inasmuch as life appears suddenly in the organic world; it acts as an overseer, and arranges all the material received by every organism, in its proper form and place. Some have held that the vivifying principle descended from certain planets. But the Qur-án is very clear on the point. “Water,” it says, “gives birth to life.”³

¹ And He it is who spread the earth and made in it firm mountains (Al-Qurán, xiii. 8).

And He has caused great mountains in the earth lest it might be convulsed with you (xvi. 15). And he created the mountains as pegs (lxxviii. 7).

² Al-Qur-án, li. 49.

³ xxi. 80.

Concerning the creation of man, the Book speaks of him as an essence of clay; various things that come out of the earth contain in them the essence of everything in it, culled forth in their best form. Man takes them in, in his food and drink, which give birth to genital seeds. Things that grow out of the bowels of the earth come, in the first instance, from the upper regions, either in the form of the light that each luminary sheds towards the earth, or through water that descends from above. The light, as well as other ethereal matters, thus coming down from the heavens, passes to the recesses of the earth, and makes her pregnant. The earth then gives birth to her various products—vegetables, minerals, and other things that contain in them starch, sugar, grease, condiments, proteids, phosphorus and liquids. These things give birth to the genital seed. The seed becomes located in the womb, where it passes through other evolutionary stages up to the human consciousness. These truths have recently come within our knowledge, but the Qur-án has spoken of all of them with scientific accuracy.

And We send down water from the cloud according to a measure, then We cause it to settle in the earth, and most surely We are able to carry it away.

Then We cause to grow thereby gardens of fruits, and from them do you eat.

And a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai which produces oil and condiment for those who eat.

And most surely there is a lesson for you in the cattle. We made you to drink of what is in their bellies, and you have in them many advantages.¹

And certainly We created man of an extract of clay.

Then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place. Then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the Creators.²

I need not comment upon these verses. They are quite clear in themselves.

I have made mention of seven things necessary to constitute the protoplasm. The Qur-án, of course, does not name them in scientific phraseology; nevertheless in the above quotations it speaks in clearest terms of those things that constitute plasmic congeries, not excluding even "condiments." As to the starry world, that begins its work at night-time by piercing into the seams of the earth, thus making her pregnant, the Qur-án says:—

Consider the heaven and the comer by night; and what will make you know what the comer by night is,—the star that is bright, piercing, and making things pregnant. . . . Consider the heavens that pour and the earth that receives and splits (with plants).³

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxiii. 18-21.

² xxiii. 12-14.

³ lxxxvi. 1-3, 11-12.

The quotation reminds me of another wonderful revelation, that Science has only recently discovered, about the liquid nature of the ether in which stars float. The Qur-án says, when speaking of the heavenly bodies :—

All float in their respective sphere.¹

The subject, as I said before, needs a book to itself which, if God wills, will very soon see the light of day from my pen. But what I have said here supplies ample food for thought to the seeker after truth. These revelations could not have been made, even by a trained scientist, in the days of the Prophet. They could only be revealed by the Omniscient Lord, the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen.

¹ Al-Qur-án, xxiii. 40.

CHAPTER IX

AFTERWORD

THE days of myth were the days of charm and fascination, but now they are past history. In all branches of human speculation, myth plays a very little part, excepting only in religion, where, in certain quarters, it still prevails. We live now in dry days of Science, and while it is, doubtless, true that Science enlightens us on many a riddle in Nature, yet, to most of us, its appeal is but slight. Its ways are prosaic ways, and its dealings insipid. It deprives us of that "poetry of life" that tickles curiosity at each step of existence, and feeds the imagination; we face hard facts and naked figures, and lose all zest and relish. Grateful ought we then to be for our days of infancy, which provide us with occasion—brief though it be when measured by years—to dip into the pleasures of the olden days. In our infancy everything around us inspires us with new sensations, and creates in us new interest. We have a world of our own Every

phenomenon, with its changes, has its own charming story to tell us in colours of fancy and fantasy. Dumb and lifeless as much of our environment may be, it appears to us as if animated with the richest colours of life; they speak to us, though unheard by others. The luminaries in the heavens, the mountains, the rivers, the elements, all come to entertain us in their peculiar ways, bringing pleasure as well as pain, creating hope and fear. The moon and the stars lull us to sleep, and when we are asleep tell their tales. We are in a fairy-land. All these charms come to an end when reason begins to dawn upon our mind. Science steps forward, officiously, and un-deceives us in regard to all our illusions and dreams. Some say that ignorance is bliss; in our age of maturity it is so.

Similarly, the days of myth were the childhood days of humanity. By increase of knowledge man began to read Nature in her true colours. With reluctance we have accepted the dry truths of scientific revelation; we have given ground gradually to its onslaughts in various territories of knowledge, but in order to have a little enjoyment in the baby-like imaginations of the days of myth and mystery, we do not like to yield to the demands of reason in the province of religion. Religion in its pure and simple form does not appeal

to us. We must have something of a mysterious nature about it. The more a religion goes against science and insults reason, the more it commands our allegiance and respect. We seem to possess a system, as it were, of watertight compartments in the chambers of our hearts—one for reason and one for religion. When we are in a religious mood, knowledge and science are forgotten. But, after all, one cannot afford for long to ignore the dictates of reason. It must prevail. We must face realities, in the light of knowledge. In the long run we begin to realize that our religious convictions are not seaworthy; they do not hold water. Yet, we are tenaciously attached to them, and as we inherit them like other things from our predecessors, we stick to them. We attempt to give the lie to all such new discoveries, as contradict our religious dogmata, but when we fail in this effort, we try to explain our beliefs in the limelight of new ideas. We try to reconcile them with newly discovered truths. We put old wine into new bottles, with disastrous results; we enter on a new campaign, the campaign of modernization which, in its turn, gives way to scepticism. In the end, we give up our religion as hopeless.

Christianity, for example, has passed through all these stages. The Church in the West began to show its deficiencies under the search-

light of modern science, in the first decades of the last century, when science withstood all the oppression and persecution that came from the Church. The Church custodians then entered on a plan of reconciliation and compromise; here they again failed. Then came modernization; but all to no purpose. The laity apart, the clergy class became dissatisfied with that which they taught to others as Christian verities, and the Church began to "repel," as the Archbishop of York admitted in 1922. It needed, men said, urgent remodelling; but, in that process, the Church lost all its fundamental characteristics. In the numerous conferences which the foremost of the Church dignitaries in England held at Oxford, Cambridge and other centres from 1915 to 1923, almost all the fundamental beliefs and doctrines of the Church religion were given up. The Church then set to work to rebuild the faith. But religion is not built. It comes from God. Other religions have fared the same way. The religion of the Fire-worshippers is facing the same difficulty. Modern knowledge will not allow its adherents to remain satisfied with all that comes by way of exposition from the learned Dasturs, especially when they explain the ritualistic side of the old faith. The worship of fire, and the theory of good and evil as wrongly fathered on Zoroaster in the

name of "the Twins of Zoroaster" do not appeal to many. The whole trouble has arisen from two causes. First, almost every religion has lost its original Scriptures; the sacred books of the ancient religions are no longer in the hands of their present adherents. Their purity has suffered, tradition and folk-lore have taken the place of the original inspired message. The Word of God, that came everywhere in ancient days, has reached us in a most adulterated state. Human ingenuity and invention have endeavoured to supplant it. Secondly, there is a lack of the true religious mentality. While reason and logic rule us in all our walks of life, in religion its teachers do not allow us to raise a voice. But modern knowledge will not allow its adherents to remain satisfied with all that the learned Dasturs try to explain, especially as to the current ritualistic side of the faith. It is in this connection that I want to say a word. I have tried to explain what lay in the mind of the great Prophet when he spoke about the sacred flames of fire. Zoroaster did not come to teach the worship of fire. Such worship existed in Persia long before him, as a part of the old Sun-worship cult. Zoroaster came to bring his countrymen to the altar of the One on High. Had we had his sayings and teachings in our hand in their

original purity, and if, on reference to them, his words of wisdom could be held to substantiate the present form of his religion, I should not have ventured this attempt. But as the Sacred Scriptures given to "the renowned ancestors" by the great Sage have been lost, and we possess no reliable means of estimating the validity of that which comes to us as a version of the lost Scriptures, we have been left no other alternative but that, if the present form of the faith does not seem to meet the demands of intelligence and knowledge, our friends the Parsees should revise their beliefs. If element-worship, or the paying of homage to various manifestations of Nature are no more needed, as the days of myth are passed, let them seek to adopt some pure monotheistic form of religion, seeing that monotheism was really the main feature of the faith taught by Zoroaster, and leave the fire to perform, on our kitchen hearths and in other suitable places, the functions that have been assigned to it by its Creator. Must we not bow down to the Lord towards whom its holy flames arise?

The object of religion cannot be accomplished either by performing ritual or by bowing down before any creature of Allah, whether such be an element or any other organism. I go so far as to say that even the mere bowing down before God is, in itself, of

no avail. We should, first of all, try to realize the object of religion, and then see if that object is achieved by all that we do in the name of religion. Everything in Nature is pregnant with wonderful potentialities ; everything, in time, will develop in the way designed for it. This is religion. Man is the Mighty Atom in the whole universe. He possesses, also, peculiar and wonderful potentialities. He, in fact, is *the entity* in the moral, intellectual and spiritual world. Anything that puts man on the right track to bring him to the heights in any plane to which he may be destined, is, and ought to be, his religion ; and any book that deals with true Science, on a physical and intellectual plane, is the book of his religion in that respect. But he has something within him nobler and higher yet. His mind is fashioned after the mind of his Creator. He comes into the world to reproduce Divine morals and to equip himself with Divine Attributes. Every religion that came from the Lord (and that of Zoroaster was one of them) taught man the way to reach that goal. But they lost their original purity, as I showed elsewhere. The various religious systems that now obtain throughout the world consist only in ritual and ceremonial. Their tenets savour, more or less, of mythology, and they love to call it mysticism. If they help to work out

the object of religion, as I have just stated it, one need not revise his religious views. But they most decidedly do not accomplish that object; they are not worthy of receiving adhesion from us. We feel gratified, no doubt, when we do certain religious ceremonials, we experience special sensations in entering our respective religious houses. But it is habit, and only habit.

One thing has always excited my curiosity and amazement. No religion has failed to produce men of spirituality in its early days. But after some centuries such men become extinct. History is silent on this side of these religions. Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and, say, Zoroastrianism, all of them may refer to some personalities of advanced spirituality in their olden days. But they fail to refer to any later character as resembling that of Rama or Krishna, or some of the Patriarchs of the house of Jacob, or the Sages who arose in the first centuries of Christianity, or among the renowned ancestors of the Parsees, who could do such things as we read of in records of these personalities. Hinduism only makes mention of a dozen names, and they lived some two thousand years ago. Why, then, this lack of such illustrious persons in subsequent ages, in every religion? On the other hand, if we come to Islam, we find such holy men in

every century of Islam that rose in every country and in every great city ; our own day, also, sees men of such calibre. If the denizens of the tombs demand respect and receive homage from the coming generations, it is only in Islam. It should not, however, be imagined for a moment that the Muslims evince any polytheistic tendency in their reverent attitude to those beyond the grave. We read of them things that show the various grades of spirituality to which they respectively attained ; their lives act as a beacon-light to guide us in the dark waters of these chaotic days of materialism. We accept them as our models, inasmuch as we desire to raise the crop and reap the harvest that fell to their lot. Man has been equipped with a piece of the Divine Mind. We did not come here to pamper bestial impulses or to pander to carnal appetites. The present-day civilization which attracts our fancy is only a refined method of ministering to the animal passions ; and we ourselves should be no better than the animals if we took part in the things of the world, except so far as we must, to keep body and soul together, and to help others to reach the goal. We possess a flame of the Divine Fire in the core of our hearts. We have to kindle it, not with the incensed material which our friends the Fire-worshippers use in their

holy places, but with the material of high morals and evolved spirituality. Adore the Flame of the Divine Fire in your heart; let all your homage go to it, and if the flame is once lit, and blazes up, you will stand in the presence of full Beatitude—a fire from Heaven will descend upon your heart; it will consume all that savours of fleshly passions. You will become purged of all earthly desires. Your soul will begin to soar and meet the Highest of the High, and you will do what your ancestors used to do in the olden days. Hard is the task, but it is not an impossibility; and if you want the true and straight path you will find it in the Qur-án, the only sacred Book that claims to possess authenticity and original purity in the whole world of Sacred Writings—a fact admitted by friend and foe.

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