

MUHAMMAD

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PROPHET

(Second Edition)

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www.aail.org

Published by

MUSLIM BOOK SOCIETY,

Booksellers & Publishers,

Azeez Manzil, Brandreth Road,

LAHORE.

FOREWORD

Though The Ideal Prophet has come out of my own pen but some of its chapters are so charming in their contents that even a perusal of them for a dozen of time has not satiated my thirst for them. Among them are the three chapters dealing with the personality of the Holy Prophet that seem to me very arresting. I thought I could not deprive others of the pleasure I enjoy in reading them.

Though the circulation of the whole book has produced wonderful results in bringing many nearer to Islam, yet even others could not fail to admire the Prophet for his personal achievements. Besides, we can circulate it more freely in this form than the other one.

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Brandreth Road, Lahore. (India.)

July 1st, 1932.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مُحَمَّدٌ وَنُصِّلَى عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE MUHAMMAD

Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought.—HOLY QUR-AN, xxx. 41.

Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death.—lvi. 17.

IN these verses the Qur-án speaks of the corruption that prevailed in all countries of the world before the advent of the Holy Prophet. Death—mental, moral and spiritual death—had overtaken the human race, and darkness prevailed everywhere, clouding the beliefs and perverting the actions of the people. Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions of the world, had lost all healthy influence on the lives of their followers. “The Christianity of the seventh century was itself decrepit and corrupt.”¹ It was rent with schism and heresies. The religion of Jesus had reverted to heathenism, and the religious conception of the masses was only an infiltration of the Pagan cult. Besides, the souls of the dead were worshipped and their relics and images were the objects of chief adoration.²

¹ Muir.

² “The Christians of the seventh century had insensibly relapsed into a semblance of paganism; their public and private vows were addressed to the relics and images that disgraced the temples of

The social and moral condition of the world was equally deplorable. The followers of these religions had not only ceased to practise virtue, but vice itself had come to be looked upon as virtue, and men committed deadly sin to earn merit in the eye of the Lord. Every nation had sunk to a state of complete moral depravity. The corruption had appeared in the continents and on the islands. The statement may startle many, but it is the truth. The reader has but to remember that that time was the darkest period of the Middle Ages in Europe, and of the Mazdeic and Puranic ages in Persia and India respectively. Illicit sexual intercourse—a crime next only to murder in its consequences—was committed in the performance of various sacred rites. It was practised as a virtue with the sanction of religion. In the confessional in Christendom, more sin was committed than was washed away. “The condition of Constantinople under Justinian, the Christian and the glorified legislator, is the best index to the demoralized and degraded state of society all over Christendom. Public or private virtue had no recognition in the social conceptions; a harlot sat on the throne of the Cæsars, the East: the throne of the Almighty was darkened by a crowd of martyrs, saints and angels, the objects of popular veneration; and the Collyridian heretics, who flourished in the fruitful soil of Arabia, invested the Virgin Mary with the name and honours of a goddess. The mysteries of the trinity and incarnation appear to contradict the principle of the Divine Unity. In their obvious sense, they introduce three equal deities, and transform the man Jesus into the substance of the son of God: an orthodox commentary will satisfy only a believing mind. . . . The creed of Mahomet is free from the suspicion of ambiguity, and the Koran is a glorious testimony to the Unity of God.”—GIBBON.

and shared with the emperor the honours of the State. Theodora had publicly plied her trade in the city of Constantine, and her name was a by-word among its dissolute inhabitants. And now she was adored as a queen in the same city by 'grave magistrates, orthodox bishops, victorious generals, and captive monarchs.' The empire was disgraced by her cruelties, which recognized no religious or moral restraint. Seditions, outbreaks, and sanguinary tumults, in which the priesthood always took the most prominent part, were the order of the day. On these occasions every law, human or divine, was trampled under foot; churches and altars were polluted by atrocious murders; no place was safe or sacred from depredations."¹ In Persia, the Phallic cult, introduced centuries before by Artaxerxes Mnemon, the brother of Cyprus, was brought to its climax at that time by Mazdak, who, among his other abominable tenets, taught partnership in women. He sanctified scenes of obscenity accompanied by every kind of bacchanalian orgy. This frightful communism in women was also practised in India, under the teachings of *Shaktakmat*, then in its prime in India. A *shaktak* priest could, of right, command the company of others' wives for his pleasure. Such demands were willingly obeyed, and the brides usually passed the first week of their honeymoon in the company of the high-priests. It was an act of virtue, and earned in their sight divine

¹ Syed Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam*.

grace enough to bless their wedded life. The night of Shivratri, a Hindu festival, occasioned, in its celebration, an exhibition of the worst type of brutality when, under the influence of women and wine, even incestuous connections failed to excite any horror, since, indeed, the *Shaktak mantras* (sacred hymns) chanted on the occasion, ennobled everything foul and mean. If a conception of the Deity in any class of people rightly mirrors their conception of virtue (and it does, for the Deity everywhere and always focuses in Himself all that appears noble and good to His votaries), the Hindu gods of the time indicate the very worst type of morality then obtaining in India; for we find the lives and exploits of those Indian deities teeming with immorality.

But Arabia was the darkest spot in that darkest age of the world's history. Drink, adultery and gambling were common. Murder, infanticide and robbery were the pride of the Arabs. "There were no moral, religious or social restrictions, no limits to marriage, no restraints on divorce." Besides general promiscuity in sexual relations, they indulged habitually in incestuous connections. Sons treated the widows of their fathers as their wives. Wives in wedlock were not ashamed to receive attentions from others; nay, a married woman could even boast of the number of lovers she had had in the lifetime of her husband. Human sacrifice was prevalent, and the daughters were buried alive at birth. Bloody quarrels

and suicides were frequent, and a single rash word often paid its penalty in death. The spirit of rapine, murder and revenge had reached such a pitch that women did not feel content until they had dyed their garments with the blood of their enemy, and eaten his very heart. I cannot imagine any evil which was not practised in Arabia in its worst form in those days. "In this primitive and abject state, which ill deserves the name of society, the human brute, without arts and laws, almost without sense and language, is poorly distinguished from the rest of the animal creation." Such is Gibbon's comment on the Arabs of those days. It is true that no period in history has ever been free from evil and wickedness; but the worst feature of the time was that human consciousness had reached its lowest stage of degradation; that is to say, it accepted evil for virtue. If the world ever needed a Prophet, it was at that time; "as in nature, light follows darkness, and rain comes after drought," the appearance of a Prophet has always occurred to terminate any cycle of degraded humanity. But that was a period when the whole horizon of the world had become darkened under the clouds of infidelity, ignorance and wantonness. Virtue had vanished, and evil stood for righteousness.

The world had seen Divine Messengers and Prophets before, but the time of their appearance was not so dark as the time when Muhammad appeared; nor had the former prophets such a difficult task

before them as had the Prophet of Arabia. Moses came for the emancipation of the Israelites, and to lead them to the Promised Land; but the Egyptians of his time were not without culture and civilization. They studied science and art; they had their own system of ethics; and a class among them, called magicians, were interested in reading the secrets of nature, and practised mesmerism. Jesus also appeared in the midst of Roman civilization and culture. He saw around him a culture which compares not unfavourably with that of to-day. The Romans were idolators, but his own tribe practised monotheism. Ceremonialism, worship of the letter, hypocrisy and self-indulgence were the chief evils of his day, but the religion of God and His commandments was not unknown to his people. Jesus came only to fulfil the Law and the Prophets in their true spirit. And if these conditions were such as to demand the appearance of Divine Messengers like Moses and Jesus, the sixth century of the Christian era did most decidedly call for the appearance of several prophets in several countries, or, failing that, the coming of one master mind who should restore the religion of God to its perfect form everywhere; for the laws of God were everywhere transgressed and His limits trampled upon universally; and the earth had never seen such a darker age. But the Arabs were the most wicked people of all. They committed sins of the vilest type and openly exulted in them. They were the most

ignorant of the human race, and that in spite of the fact that they possessed the rare gift of poetry in a rare degree, but it was merely to recount their own vile deeds.

If the moral horizon of the world was so gloomy at the time, its spiritual and religious side was not less dark; and here I speak only of Christianity. Jesus himself did not found a church, nor did he bring a new religion; he came to reform the church of Moses.¹

But only a century or two after him, he himself became a new centre of ancient tradition, a new sanctuary, as it were, which enshrined the religion of the old. "All that was believed and taught about various deities in the pagan world—thousands of years before Jesus—in India, Greece, Persia and Rome, became incorporated in the pure and simple faith of Jesus, and his blessed name soiled with things he never knew or taught. A Divine Messenger and a true Prophet of God was given the office of a pagan deity and was degraded into a substitute for the Sun-god—a popular deity in the ancient world; all that was observed in the ceremonials of the heathen cult was introduced into his faith, which was originally none other than Islam."²

¹ Dean Inge, in the Conference of Modern Churchmen held at Cambridge on August 9, 1917.

² *Sources of Christianity.*

Christianity came to demolish paganism, but became a helpless prey to it. "It was not in Christendom alone that, what is popularly misnamed, philosophy had done its worst; the evil culminating in idolatry. This so-called philosophy, which had developed itself afresh as Spinozism, had already overpowered the earlier Revelation in the East. The results in the Semitic races of Central and Eastern Asia were most corrupt systems of idolatry, so that between these and Christendom, to which may be added the northern tribes of Europe, the known world, in the days of Muhammad, represented one vast scene of idolatrous abominations, and, as we have since discovered, the then unknown world was in the same condition. . . . Even some of the Jewish tribes failed to escape the general contagion, joining in the idolatrous observances and sundry offerings to the heathen worship in the Ká-aba at Mecca."¹

All the books from God that came from time to time to every nation and to every country for human guidance had lost their purity, and man-made creeds obscured the Word of the Lord. The scriptures of the Israelites, the Persians, the Hindus, the Chinese, the Buddhists, all suffered in their purity, and the Bible shared the same fate. To-day there are few who honestly believe in the genuineness of the Bible. It has admittedly become adulterated with folklore. Many of the clergy of the Anglican Church confess

¹ Professor J. J. Lane.

themselves unable, unfeignedly to believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments and to take oath as to their genuineness,¹ as they did not believe in the truth of many of the legends and beliefs narrated in the Scriptures.

If such was the condition of sacred literature in the sixth century of the Christian era, and if the Will of the Lord had become so obscured as to be unknown to the human mind, it is difficult to believe that God could remain indifferent to the state of affairs then obtaining throughout the entire world. Surely He would reveal His Mind yet again to humanity, and restore His Word to its pristine beauty and purity. The Qur-án refers to the point in the following verse, when speaking of the necessity of its revelation:—

People are a single nation, so Allah raised Prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that which they differed, and none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, revolting among themselves, so Allah has guided by His Will those who believe the truth about which they differed, and Allah guides them whom He pleases to the right path.²

The logic in the above is obvious. It speaks of the Divine Dispensation that has always enlightened

¹ In the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, in the sitting of July 5, 1917, some of the clergy demanded that the wording of the third question put to them at their ordination should be changed; as they were unable conscientiously to answer it in the prescribed terms because they did not possess the belief demanded. The question and the answer were as follows:—

Q. "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?"

A. "I do so believe them."

The question was consequently changed.

² Holy Qur-án, ii. 213.

man concerning God's Will. Books were given to various peoples, but they went against the word contained in those books. Prophets were raised up before Muhammad, in every nation, yet every nation left the right path. Differences arose as to the true tenets and religious variations of each faith. No religion presented a worse spectacle than Christianity. Either a prophet was needed by every nation to settle its own differences, or one was needed to settle the differences of the various nations; for the Truth, though given to several prophets, had become obscured in those days. The last Book of God which came to meet the need of the day sums up the whole situation in the following lines:—

By Allah, most certainly We sent (Apostles) to nations before you, but the devil made their deeds fair-seeming to them, so he is their guardian to-day and they shall have a painful chastisement.

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 a mercy for a people who believe.¹

These are words too eloquent to need any comment in the light of the events narrated above. They speak of two things: first, the devil made the deeds of the people fair-seeming to them, and secondly, the religion of every apostle from God had become split into an infinity of divisions and sections. It must be the devil who made their deeds fair-seeming to the people if deeds of the blackest dye were taken as righteousness in those days, and "let us do evil that good may come" became a moral precept in

¹ Holy Qur-án, xvi. 63, 64.

Christendom. Even to-day, in every religion except Islam, we find sects and sub-sects that have cropped up from time to time to suit the whims of the spiritually conceited.

Christianity can modestly boast of more than four hundred such sects, and the worst of it is, that the sectarian differences in all these religions are basic and doctrinal, unlike Islam, where, notwithstanding the existence of various schools of thought, the so-called three or four sects in Islam do not admit of any crucial or doctrinal divergences.¹ But the internal differences among other religions are not of modern growth. They existed in a more tangible form immediately before the revelation of the Qur-án. Other religions had maintained their purity for a long period after their foundation, but Christianity was a hopeless mass of chaotic beliefs even within a century and a half of its Lord's death. Truth is one-sided and never double-faced, but, under Christianity, there seemed no limit to its aspects. Would God remain silent, and give countenance to this chaos? Every moment, in the physical world, He works cosmos out of chaos; why should He not do the same in the world of religion? Dean Inge, of St. Paul's, said, in addressing the Oxford branch of the Churchmen's Union :—

Many Churchmen would say that the place of liberal movement was outside the door. Yet just think what would be the result if all expressions of free-thought had been stifled within the Church of England,

¹ *Sources of Christianity.*

The Church would now be committed to believe that the sun went round the earth, that Heaven was a place which we might reach in an aeroplane when we knew the way, that Hell was a place under our feet, and that, as the mediæval theologians suggested, volcanic eruptions were caused by over-population in the infernal regions—things which no educated person could or did believe. If these things were so, there would be no room in the Church of England to-day except for the fools and liars. Modern Churchmen believed that the Church was called upon to face difficulties and solve them by unfettered inquiry. They did not believe that authority or tradition had settled everything, that we had only to accept formulæ drawn up in the early centuries, but that we must take into account recent developments in philosophy, history and criticism, and, above all, natural science. Recent researches of older religions have brought to light things that are penetrating modern minds and leaving them no other course but to reject the time-honoured beliefs and received opinions on matters religious.

But the “time-honoured beliefs and received opinions on matters religious” did exist in the sixth century, and these crude views on Heaven and Hell were obtaining then in Christendom. If Jesus came with a message from God, would the Almighty allow the Church called after the name of Christ to have no room except for “the fools and liars” for some eighteen centuries and wait for the learned Dean and his co-workers to set the error right by means of their Modernist movement? It reminds me that it would be in place here to add a word about the Modernist deliberations of the present day. Since A.D. 1915 the dignitaries of the Church have met almost every year to reform their beliefs. They establish the following:—

(1) Jesus was only a man, and not God in any sense of the word.¹

(2) His sonship of God only meant his nearness to God—a stage of spiritual elevation open to every

¹ Holy Qur-án, xxix 90—93 ; v. 75 ; iii. 58 ; ix. 30.

son of Adam; and the theory of the Immaculate Conception or of the Virgin Birth was introduced only to strengthen belief in his Godhood.

(3) The belief in the fall of Adam was erroneous.¹ Man enters the world without any sin in nature.² Sin is an acquisition, and salvation from it can be attained through one's own exertions. No one can atone for the sin of others.³

(4) Most of the Christian rites have been incorporated from paganism,⁴ among them the Sacrament as an infiltration from the Mysteries of the cult of the sun-worshippers.

(5) Jesus shared the errors of his contemporaries.⁵

(6) The Church passing under his name was not founded by him.⁶

(7) The Bible is not the pure Word of God,⁷ but mixed with folklore, and many of the events mentioned in it are unbelievable; and if Jesus referred to them as a truth—as in the case of Jonah's fish, he shared with others wrong beliefs current in his day.

¹ The Vicar of Partington, in the Conference of Modern Churchmen, August 26, 1925, at Oxford.

² "Every one who is born is in the nature of Islam (submission to God) at his birth" (Muhammad).

³ Holy Qur-ân, vi. 165.

⁴ Qur-ân, ix. 30. Dr. Barnes, in his sermon in August 1925.

⁵ Dean of Carlisle, Oxford, 1921.

⁶ Qur-ân, v. 116, 117. Dean Inge, in the Churchmen's Conference at Cambridge on August 9, 1917.

⁷ Qur-ân, iv. 46. The Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury, in the sitting of July 5, 1917.

(8) Jesus did not die on the cross, but was under a swoon, and his resurrection was spiritual, not physical.¹

We may leave aside the crude theology of the Middle Ages; we may take some of the doctrines of the Romish Church as a remnant of Paganism; but the Reformation does not seem to improve the matter if so much was left for the Modernist to do. The Reformation, after all, proved to be a political move to free the State from the domination of the Church. Perhaps its aim was to undo the work of the Nicene Council which made the State subordinate to the Church. Of course Protestant bodies, and especially the Church of England, profess to believe in much the same doctrines as those of the Romish Church, minus infallibility of the Pope and one or two other things; but the Modernist movement destroys the whole superstructure on which the current Christianity has been built, and tries to restore the Church of Christ to its original purity. Yet this work of the Modernist has been anticipated by the Holy Prophet of Islam. I do not find a single thing of any consequence in their deliberations which has not been lucidly dealt with in the pages of the Qur-án, and with more logic, precision, and true teaching thereon.

In this respect I fail to understand Christian psychology. If religion is a divine institution, receiving its inspiration directly from God, all these

¹ Qur-án, iii. 54.

modernizing efforts are an insult to the Divine dispensation; and yet the churchman would seem to experience no difficulty in giving a cordial welcome to a new revision or recasting of his beliefs. Perhaps he is used to it. Modernization has been the exclusive boast of the Western Church from the beginning. If Paul could so modernize it to suit it to the pagan requirements of his time—and yet he is accepted as the sole authority in the Church—it will not perhaps greatly disturb the present-day religious instinct if some new interpretation is found out to bring the Christian faith more or less into line with the demands of rationalism as has been hinted in the recent deliberations of the Modernists at Oxford. But if God spoke to man from time to time to express His will to man for his guidance, and always chose one man to be His mouthpiece—and they can scarcely disbelieve in this Divine Economy, otherwise the whole fabric of Christianity falls to the ground—one fails to understand this delegation of Divine work to human councils and conferences. God is unchangeable in His ways. His laws are immutable. The study of every ancient religion in the world, including that revealed to the Israelites, speaks of the same Divine Economy. The message from God came always through one man at a time, and that when the old message became corrupt through human handling a new messenger came to restore the religion of God to its original purity. Jesus came for the same

ministry. He also prophesied that another¹ would appear after him to bring the whole truth. But no one heeded his words. The Grace of the Blood, under the inspiration of the Pagan cult² mysteries, came to substitute the old divine system of human salvation that could be achieved through observing "the Religion of Commandments and Obedience"; the mode of divine revelation under went a change as well, perhaps under the same inspiration. Instead of choosing one man as His messenger, God began to express His mind through Councils and Synods of the parsons and prelates. But man-made things cannot satisfy the human mind it is a progressive mind. The present intellectual unrest concerning current creeds in the West is not a new development of its kind; every third or fourth century since the birth of the Church the world has seen its re-occurrence. Do not all these attempts at the modernization of the Christian faith prove its creed to be only a human fabrication? If from God, it should have remained the same in all the evolutionary stages of man's mind, and at the same time capable of satisfying each new demand as it arose. Does not the whole of Nature itself bear testimony to this truth? Everything in the universe is as old as the world itself, and yet ever new and fresh, with ever the same capacity for satisfying the human mind, though it is always in process of a development that never ceases. Every

¹ St. John xiii. and xvi.

² Dr. Barnes.

new need can be and is satisfied by what is discovered in the original authority. For this reason the Qur-án gives the attribute of *Rahman* to Allah—the Beneficent Lord who created things to satisfy human needs long before those needs came into existence. The Providence of the all-knowing God must precede the appearance of need. Similarly religion, if from God, should be comprehensive enough to be grasped by the progressive mind. Christianity certainly could not stand this test; and from a Muslim point of view a religion is hardly worth the name if it is not proof against the vicissitudes of time. We claim that the religion revealed in the Qur-án possesses this adamant, unshakable character, leaving aside all question of its merits or demerits. No desire for change in its doctrinal beliefs has ever been felt by its adherents, no matter how developed their culture or how advanced their thought. Islam can boast of achievements in culture and science far greater than those of Christianity. It has always encouraged liberal education, yet the most cultured people within its pale have been foremost in support of its teaching. It was with much astonishment that one of the English dailies in India was forced to admit the while Western liberal education caused bankruptcy of religious belief and encouraged scepticism and materialism, it only served to strengthen the belief of the Muslim in Islam.

There is yet another aspect of the case worth consideration by modern thought and Church theology. The present intellectual struggle proves at least this, that the religion taught by Jesus has not reached us in its entirety, that the Divine Dispensation has failed. That the teaching of the Master saw corruption in the very beginning is an admitted fact. Every subsequent effort to restore it to its pristine purity, though seemingly successful for the time, has, nevertheless, always failed to receive support from the coming generation.

You cannot rebuild a ruined house with the materials of decay. You cannot, from the crumbling bricks and rotting timbers that may remain to you, reconstruct that house in any form approximating to its original. You can, at best, produce a pathetically ineffectual imitation, or a grotesque parody, good neither to look at nor to live in.

And if it be so with man's efforts to restore the work of his own hands when it has become ruinous, how shall it be with those things that are the work of God's hand?

The fruits of the earth that ripen, summer by summer, and fall into decay and are gone, leaving only rottenness, behind them—can man, from that rottenness, bring back the fruit again in its beauty and its sweetness? The elements, the constituent atoms that go to the making of the fruit, are from God—everlasting, undiminshing, indestructible. They

exist—have existed from the birth of Time—in all-surrounding space, a vase, confused, heterogenous mass, the secret of whose compounding is known to God alone. And as the earthly fruit decays with the decaying year into rottenness and nothing, the constituent atoms that compose it pass back into the mass from which they came, to be absorbed into it again, thence to be again sent forth by God at the appointed time to be blended anew in the buds of spring and the ripe fruits of summer. It is God's work to renew and restore them when need arises. It is not for man to interfere.

And if it be so with the works of God, will it be otherwise with the Word of God, the Message that He has been sending through all the ages by the mouth of His chosen Prophets?

The Last Word of God, while explaining the necessity of the Revelation of the Holy Qur-án, because the previous revelations had become tempered with human handling, thus refers to this very natural phenomenon to elucidate the truth I am speaking of:—

By Allah, most certainly We sent (apostles) to nations before *you*, but the devil made their deeds fair-seeming to them, so he is their guardian to-day, and they shall have a painful chastisement.

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 a mercy for a people who believe.

And of the fruits of the palm and the grapes—you obtain from *them* intoxication and goodly provision; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who ponder.¹

¹ Holy Qur-án, xvi. 63, 64 and 67.

If the house be decayed, man cannot, out of that decay, build it anew.

If the fruit be decayed and rotten, man cannot out of that rottenness bring forth fresh.

If the Word of God become decayed and corrupted by the taint of human error, loss, denial, interpolation, suppression, misconstruction, its vitality sapped, its usefulness destroyed, man cannot out of that corruption, out of the wreck of the remnant of the revealed Word, build for himself that Word anew.

As with the material decay of flowers and fruit, so with the spiritual decay of religion and faith. It is God's work, and His alone, to restore and renew.

So it is with the teaching of Jesus. Shall we look to human effort to aid us in discovering it, in restoring, in building it up again, when the result of such effort is sure to be baffled by a new development of thought within a century; or should we look to God to renew the revelation of His will as man everywhere was wont to do before the advent of Jesus? If the latter is the safest course, then the need for it appeared only a few centuries after Jesus, and the Qur-án and the Prophet Muhammad came to meet that need in the sixth century of the Christian era. It is immaterial if the said need has been felt in the West to-day, as every tenet found wrong now did exist so at the appearance of Muhammad. That was the right time for its rectification; and if we find that all that has been deliberated upon by the

Modernist of the day has already been dealt with in the Qur-án, and the Book has given the true view on every subject—a view that has been to a greater extent confirmed by the Modernist—will it not justify our belief in the divine origin of Islam and in its claim to receive universal adherence, as the corruption of the religion of God had reached its climax in the four corners of the world at the Revelation of the Qur-án?

I cannot conclude this chapter without saying a word as to the universal debt owed by humanity to the Prophet of Arabia and for his re-establishing man's belief in the Unity of God; and that at a time when the whole world had forgotten it. Polytheism in its lowest and worst form practically monopolized human worship, at that time. From an eggshell to God, incarnate in human form, every manifestation of Nature—stones, trees, winds, waters, rivers, clouds, skies, stars, the moon and the sun—received from humanity the adoration that should go only to Allah. Nay, men even worshipped their own passions and desires under different names. If in India countless images were worshipped and their aid invoked to fulfil various human desires, Christendom had its countless saints to be adored on similar occasions. The Phallic cult was at its prime, especially in India, where some of its temples are still in existence. Some of these I have myself seen, and the nauseating and indecent scenes carved on their walls have

revolted me. Here sheer obscenity reaches its climax, and shameless wantonness could not be more unbridled. It requires no great stretch of imagination to picture the ghastly deeds that must have been practised within the four walls of these houses of gods of lust; and all in the name of Religion. Can the reader conceive of a blacker type of theology than that which existed when Muhammad came to save belief in the Unity of God, as Swedenborg admits?

Arabia was the seat of every creed before the days of the Prophet. Judaism, Zoroastrianism, various sections of Christianity, star-worship, belief in the reincarnation of the soul, and varying shades of various "isms" and cults, had their followers there. But Arabia in the main remained above the outside influences and followed her local creed teeming with superstitions. The Arabs did not confine their worship to the sun, moon and stars; every fetish was their god. Ka-ába, the most ancient and the first house of Allah—Abraham also went there to worship God—had become the place for the worship of three hundred and sixty gods, every day being consecrated to the worship of one deity. This Arab pantheon was presided over by Hubal, Lat and Uzza. The gods were shaped like human beings, eagles, lions, etc. Besides various sacrifices, parents dragged their own sons to be killed at the altar of these deities. Could God leave Arabia, as well as the rest of the world in that horrible condition when Judaism and Christianity

and the other creeds had lost their faith in the Unity of God and were no longer operative in bringing humanity to light?

Here I wish to say something as to Christian beliefs prevalent at the time of the coming of the Holy Prophet. In the early days in Rome, Christians were in a minority. There were various cults of Paganism arrayed against Christianity, among which Mithraism was to prove her most formidable foe.¹ A struggle ensued, but the struggle of Christianity against Mithraism was not like that of Islam against Pagan beliefs in Arabia. Christianity borrowed the rites of the Pagan cult wholesale. She did not destroy them, as Islam did in Arabia. A renegade from Paganism could enter the fold of Christianity and take all his old rites and customs with him. The process of development was a natural one; and in due course, all Pagan rites became part of the ritual of the new cult, chief among these being "the Sacrament," a circumstance which twentieth-century Christianity has only just begun to detect. That this was so even before the days of Justin Martyr appears from his *Apologia*. Somewhere about the middle of the third century, when the Fourth Gospel, though written at the beginning of the second century, began to dominate Christian thought, the Pagans advanced the challenge: "If Jesus were a man, why worship him? if a God, why weep for His suffering?" and

¹ Professor J. Parkinson.

this led to various ideas as to the nature of the Triune God. Some held that the three—the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost—were not distinct Persons but functions of the one God. Others said that they were three aspects of the Deity—power, wisdom and goodness. The ancient Hindus and the Greeks believed in a similar trinity. Some thought that Jesus was merely a superior man born supernaturally. The insoluble enigma, which will remain so for eternity, proved a Upas-tree for deadliness, and Christendom became a seething cauldron of warring sects. Fighting, massacres and persecution of the most brutal nature took place in the very Churches. This internecine strife could have killed Christianity had not the State come to her aid. The triumph of Constantine was the victory of Christianity. Theodosia placed her on a secure footing. But this did not stop the wrangling over dogma; the strife became ever more intense, and the feeling more bitter. Arius held that “the Son is totally and essentially distinct from the Father.” Bishop Alexander had Arius ejected from the Church at two Councils at Alexandria. Sect after sect arose; each coming with a new but equally unintelligible solution. Another dispute arose as to the manner of the combination of the Divine and human natures in Jesus; another over the position and personality of the Holy Ghost, until Manichæism arose and identified Jesus with Mithra the Sun-god. It claimed that Jesus had only a seeming body, and

could not suffer. I sum up the results of the various Councils held to explain the riddle.

The Council of Nicæa (321) determined against Arius; that Christ was truly God, co-equal and co-eternal with His Father—separate, yet one.

Council of Constantinople (381) determined against Apollinaris that He was also truly man.

Council of Ephesus (431) established that the two natures were indivisibly one.

Council of Chalcedon (451), that the two natures were nevertheless perfectly distinct.

Nestorianism split the Eastern Empire into two camps. Heraclius sought to create harmony between the two by his decree of 630 A.C., affirming that while in Christ there were two natures, there was only one will; but the attempt was useless. The Catholic Church decided that there were two wills, although they always coincided. Constantine II (681) finally accepted the doctrine that in Christ the two wills were harmonized; but this did not improve the matter. It merely added another unintelligible dogma to the already existing jumble of meaningless doctrines that Orthodox Christianity had evolved. The contact between Christianity and its Pagan surroundings brought still further modifications. Pagan rites and ceremonies were freely appropriated, and, by the end of the sixth century A.C., Christianity was as polytheistic as any of the earlier religions. Mary was raised to the rank of a Divinity. The primary trinity

consisted of two Gods and a Goddess—Father, Mother and the Son. Images were set up in the churches and prayers to Saints were addressed to their images. The use of holy water, admittedly a Pagan fetish, gradually became universal in the rites of the Church. Christianity had, in fact, to all intents and purposes returned to Paganism and Idolatry when Muhammad appeared. Could there be a better occasion and a direr need for the appearance of a Prophet, especially when we find that the present Christian thought is to a great extent due to contact with Muslim ideas?

Muhammad established the Unity of God in its purest form and placed it on an unshakable foundation. If religion is sent to tell something of God, and to acquaint humanity with its Creator and His attributes, can history point to any person other than Muhammad who has served the cause of religion better than he?

To-day Polytheism is on the wane, and Monotheism in the ascendant. Even the Trinitarians, and the worshippers of stones in India, come with apologies and excuses for their ideas on religion and for their modes of worship. They take pains to explain that their beliefs do not contravene the belief in the oneness of God. And the credit of this all should go to Muhammad. Will my Unitarian friends consider for a moment this aspect of the question? Could their faith have been saved, or could it have reached them at all, without the ministry of

Muhammad? They do not believe in the Divinity of any person. They worship one God. Jesus came with the same message, but could not fulfil his work on account of the shortness of his ministry. But if his claim to their allegiance is for the same reason, and not a part of what they inherited from their parents, should they not come to Muhammad with the same respect, seeing that the latter did more than the former in the matter? Jesus was, after all, a Prophet. There were other prophets before him who had been accepted as such by them; but if Muhammad came with the same mission and accomplished it in a way transcending any previous attempt, can any person in the name of truth and consistency deny his Prophethood? I would go further, and say to the whole world of religion: "If you believe in the Divine revelation, in a Book—the Book you claim as yours from God—and if you believe in a Prophet who, you claim, was raised up by God to bring His message to you, then you must needs believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad, and in the Divine origin of the Qur-ánic revelation."

God spoke, to reveal His mind to various people, through their Prophets, and if in the course of time the will of the Lord becomes obscured through human interpolation, God will speak again. He will choose someone from among the human race as His mouthpiece, as He did before. The Revealed Books of all the nations had become corrupt at the advent of

Muhammad, and they exist in the same condition now; no person other than Muhammad has appeared, till now, to restore them to their original form. If this statement be true, the non-Muslim world is on the horns of a dilemma. Either it must accept Muhammad as the Prophet of God Who raised him up to purify religion from human corruption, or the pre-Islamic Books of God were not of Divine origin. Had they been in truth the Word of God, He must have taken some steps to keep them in their integrity when the human hand spoiled them. The Qur-án, in this respect, appeals to Nature, and drives the truth home to its readers in these words:—

Whatever sign we cause to lose its worth and use, or be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it (ii. 106).

No sooner does a thing created by God disappear or become vitiated for its use, than a fresh supply comes to take its place. This law of demand and supply obtains universally in the physical world. It must do the same in the spiritual world. The Word of God comes to sustain the spirit and nourish the soul; if it disappears or becomes vitiated, it must come again in its Divine purity: and it has done so in the form of the Qur-án.

CHAPTER II.

THE IDEAL CALL

IT was in the cave of Hira that the mantle of Prophethood fell on the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The first message of his call was couched in the following words: "Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is most Honourable. Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not. Nay: man is most surely inordinate."¹

A message free from personal or tribal predilection, and at the same time so grand and so majestic—the Gospel for human upliftment. God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, when he was deputed to liberate the Children of Israel from the thralldom of Pharaoh. This was the main object which called forth the ministry of Moses. He had also to raise his brethren in Israel to a nation of conquerors and rulers. But he could not accomplish the latter object. Anyhow, his mission was more or less of a tribal nature. Then comes the son of Mary, and the spirit of the Lord descended upon him from Heaven, in the shape of a dove. His message was that *the son of man was the son of God*, with whom his Father was "well pleased."

¹ Holy Qur-án xcvi. 1-6.

I do not propose to dwell at length on these two messages that Moses and Jesus respectively received from the Most High, at the beginning of their Call to Divine Ministry. Suffice it to say that the mission of the one concerned the affairs of a tribe singled out from thousands of tribes of the world, while that of the other spoke of the personal aggrandizement of some particular personality, and his sole concern, as he frequently expressed, were the lost tribes.

But Muhammad is given a message of quite a different character, soaring above individual or racial interest. It speaks of man as a class. It tells of the highest aim that a son of man is capable of reaching, and of the ways wherewith to accomplish that grand object. The message, in so many words, speaks of *reading and writing—who taught with the pen*—and of learning sciences unknown to the world in the time of the Prophet—*taught man what he knew not*. The message is of a universal character, and brings the whole human race within its area.

The condition of the world at the Prophet's coming demanded a universal message, which was not the case at the advent of Moses, Jesus or any other of the prophets. One hardly understands the Bishop of London when he says that the God of Conscience appeared in the fullness of time in the person of Christ. Had the Bishop been fully aware of the state of affairs existing in the world some two thousand years ago, his own words would have carried no meaning in his

own judgment. If Jesus appeared to redeem man from sin and its penalty, why was that particular time chosen for his appearance? And why should the world have had to wait some five centuries more to see the time when sin reached its climax. It was in the time of Muhammad that wickedness was everywhere supreme. Would not that have been the proper time for the appearance of the world-Saviour, if he had to take upon himself the burden of others, and ransom them through his blood. But history (I should say myth) only repeated its events in the person of Jesus, if his mission was such as is popularly believed.

At the time of his appearance, Persia, China and India were respectively under the salubrious influence of three great Masters—Zoroaster, Confucius and Buddha—who appeared almost simultaneously some five hundred years before Jesus. Judea needed a reformer, other countries apparently did not.

Ponder over the words of these three messages given to the three Prophets, and one becomes impressed at once with the largeness of the soul of the last Prophet. Man is the best product of Nature so far as the physical world is concerned. Physical growth reaches its consummation in his frame, and yet this all comes out of a blood-clot, as the above quotation from the Qur-án shows. The Creator of man, as the sacred words tell, Who raised a wonderful creature like man out of a clot, now intends to raise

him to the height of mental, moral and spiritual culture. He informs man of this His grand object through Muhammad; and in the very first revelation He discloses the way, and the means whereby to reach that goal.

The message, to begin with, comes from *Rabb*, the Arabic equivalent in the original text of the English word "Lord" as in the English rendering of the verse. The message would read thus: "Read in the name of your Rabb. . . . Read and your Rabb is most Honourable." The word "Rabb" is very significant. In commenting on the meaning of the word "Rabb," His Holiness Muhammad Ali, the author of the English translation of the Qur-án, gives the following:—

The Arabic word *Rabb* conveys not only the idea of *fostering*, *bringing-up*, or *nourishing*, but also that of regulating, completing, and accomplishing (TA-LL), i.e. of the evolution of things from the crudest state to that of the highest perfection. According to Rgh,¹ *Rabb* signifies the *fostering of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion*. Hence *Rabb* is the Author of all existence, Who has not only given to the whole creation its means of nourishment but has also beforehand ordained for each a sphere of capacity and within that sphere provided the means by which it continues to attain gradually to its goal of perfection. It will thus be seen that the word *Rabb*, which, for want of a better word, I render as *Lord*, conveys a far nobler and grander idea than the word *ab* or *father*, which has comparatively a very limited significance.

The italicized words in the above quotation—*Rabb* signifies the fostering of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion—fully

¹ Rághib.

sum up the intended significance of the word "evolution." I am not modernizing the Qur-án. I hate juggling with words in matters of religion. The above definition of the word "Rabb" was given by Imam Rághib centuries ago, in his dictionary of the roots of the Qur-ánic words, and he quotes pre-Islamic poets to support this finding. He wrote at a time when the theory of evolution had not been dreamt of. Moreover, the general meaning of the word as given from Lane's lexicon in the above quotation conveys the complete idea of evolution.

The message coming from Rabb that Allah now intends to open to man all those evolutionary stages which stand between him and his goal and will enable him to pass through them.

The opening verse of the Qur-án styles Allah "Rabbul Alamin." It means the Creator, Nourisher and Evolver of the worlds—and of the different orders of things in the universe. It eloquently suggests that everything in the universe is in the course of evolution, and the Qur-án comes from the same Creative and Evolutionary Agency to help man to the same end. The theory may come as a new truth to a dogma-ridden world, but not to a Muslim. "The vital truth of which the term 'Evolution' is perhaps an inconvenient symbol"¹ was established some thirteen hundred years ago, when Rabb was given in the

¹ Professor Bethune-Baker, "The Modern Churchman" (*The Universe*, Nov. 30, 1925.)

Qur-án as one of the four foremost attributes of Allah ; “the Gospel, wholly permeated by it in its history, its philosophy and its ethics,” came in the form of the Qur-án.

To-day the Fundamentalists are at loggerheads with the Evolutionists. But, leaving apart Darwinism, the principle of evolution—that things inherently possess capabilities and, under favourable circumstances, bring them to development—pervades the whole universe. The word “evolution” is, however, not expressive enough to convey the real idea. The Qur-án uses *falah*—an Arabic word—as its substitute, that literally means “uncovering” or “furrowing out of hidden things”—unfolding of latent faculties. According to the Qur-án, as we read in its beginning, Divine Revelation came for the *falah* of man, namely, to guide him to the Divinely prescribed course that may bring his faculties to their fullest growth.

I do not write in any modernist spirit. On the contrary, I read this in the Last Book of God in clear terms and in various places, which I may quote by way of illustration :—

“And certainly We made above you seven ways ; and never are We heedless of creation. And We send down water from the cloud according to a measure, 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 palm-trees and grapes for you ; you

have in them many fruits and from them do you eat. And a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai which produces oil and a condiment for those who eat. . . . 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 clothe the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators. Then after that you will most surely die. Then surely on the day of resurrection you shall be raised. . . . Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers, And who keep aloof from what is vain, And who act aiming at purification. And who are continent. Except before their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for they surely are not blameable, But whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are they that exceed the limits; And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant, And those who keep a guard on their prayers; These are they who are the heirs, Who shall inherit the Paradise; they shall abide therein."

These verses, which form the first section of the 23rd chapter, deal with the creation of man, from his nebular condition up to his birth on earth, and his further journey to realms beyond the grave. Thrice the Book speaks of seven stages in its growth. Something comes from above; becomes settled in the

earth. It takes the form of different vegetations, called in the text "an extract of clay," which through various stages of evolution assumes the shape of life-germs—the genital seed. In this respect the above verses make special mention of things that constitute plasmic congeries. There are, further, seven stages in the womb, which give rise to "another creation"—that is to say, human consciousness. This consciousness has again to attain the seven mental or moral qualities mentioned in the above verses; and when we have thus perfected our course on the earth, we inherit Paradise.

Now to resume the subject, man has achieved all that he now possesses through knowledge and science—science that was not known in ancient times, and therefore rightly called modern science. The Qur-án says the same thing. It speaks of knowledge unknown to man before, and the fact that modern science received its inception at the hands of the Muslims, and flourished afterwards, speaks volumes for the portentous prophecy conveyed in the first message to Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him).

No doubt the world was no stranger to reading and writing before Islam, but these arts were confined to a few sanctuaries and convents. The rest of the world had no knowledge of them. How could they come into vogue when the very use of paper was unknown before Islam? Skins of animals, stone

tablets, animal-bones and tree-leaves supplied the scanty material for ancient lore to be written upon. Such things could not help the furtherance of reading and writing. Muslims introduced paper and gave a large impetus to learning. In fact, reading, the use of the pen, and the learning of "knowledges" not known before, i.e. modern science, were three chief factors that worked out the greatness of man and brought him to the honourable position he holds now in the whole universe. Here again I would quote the first message to the Prophet, and leave it for my readers to find out for themselves whether the very three factors of human magnificence have not been mentioned in these words: "Read in the name of your Lord who created, He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is most Honourable. Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not. Nay: man is most surely inordinate."¹

A man may write volumes to extol the "master," or the prophet whom he follows, but facts are, after all, facts. The grandeur and universal scope of the message to Muhammad eclipses those to Moses and Jesus; and the coming events proved the truth of each. Moses did liberate the children of Jacob from the Egyptian bondage, and Jesus did speak and preach of "Our Father in Heaven." But "Our" were the Israelites. They were his sole concern. He would weep for Jerusalem; he would go after it like a hen

¹ Holy Qur-án, xcvi. 1—6.

after her chickens. The coming Evangelists, no doubt, widened the scope of his mission to limits never imagined by him. But in his own lifetime he would not throw pearls before swine. He would not give the bread of the children to the dogs. In short, both Moses and Jesus came with missions of a limited scope and of a limited object. But Muhammad comes with a universal mission.¹ He looks to mankind for his ministry. He makes the whole human race his concern. He makes the whole world his diocese. Again, he comes with an object peculiar only to mankind. If Moses stands for liberty, and Jesus interests himself in sermonizing upon love and meekness, Muhammad thinks of something else; without which liberty, love, meekness or any other human moral cannot work properly. There is something else in humanity which, if it remains undeveloped, will make of man a brute of the worst type. I mean, wisdom, the power of reasoning and logic. Animals have the sense of liberty. They do care for it. They go after freedom. Love and meekness are also not unknown to them, but man has been given that which has been denied to the animal kingdom. He possesses a peculiar mentality and a consciousness not possessed by animals, I mean his intelligence. Muhammad stands for the development of this differentiating and characteristic human faculty. In it lay the greatness and grandeur of the human race; and it could not be

¹ Holy Qur-án xxxiv. 28.

worked out except through reading, through writing and through learning things unknown before. Do we not find the same in the very first revelation to Muhammed as quoted above?

But how could Humanity work out her greatness and reach her goal if man did not know of his capabilities as well as of his shortcomings? He must know the extent of his progress and the ways to reach it. He must also know his deficiencies and how to avoid them. Could there be any better object for the mission of a prophet than to enlighten humanity on these things? But in this respect all different philosophies, creeds and persuasions of the ancient world could not avail. Evil in man was their chief theme. They all emphasized the evil side of human nature. The Church in the West made sin an inseparable component of humanity; the teacher of Zoroastrianism made man a plaything in the hands of the Spirit of Evil. Buddha could not see anything but trouble and tribulation surrounding man—and that as a consequence of something evil in the nature of man—and his whole salvation was forfeit. The old Sages of Brahmanism could not see anything beautiful and sublime in the God-made world. They saw their happiness only in detachment from it. In short, man did not appear to the ancient world as an entity possessing something good and noble in him. But Muhammad strikes a new note. He gives us the true anatomy, if the word be permitted, of the human

mind. Verily, the Qur-án says: " We created man, of goodliest fibre, and made him the lowest of the low, but those who believe and do good deeds, for them is the reward uncut." Man was a microcosm, possessing in himself all that the other units in the universe possessed separately, He was of the best make, but with evil inclinations of the worst type. His capabilities were unlimited, and his destined progress knew no bounds. But if he could soar to the highest of the high, he could also descend to the lowest of the low. This was all unknown to him. Nor did he know the way to develop his powers and avoid the snares that beset him. A prophet from God was needed to bring such a message, and I say that one cannot imagine a better mission for such a prophet than that of bringing the required enlightenment to humanity. It was the mission of the Prophet Muhammad. If Moses, Jesus and many other prophets of the world can rightly be accepted as messengers from God by their respective followers, Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) undoubtedly has got a prior and better claim to universal allegiance as a true messenger from Allah.

CHAPTER III.

THE IDEAL SUCCESS.

Muhammad was surrounded by idfidelity, drunkenness, immorality, oppression, irreligion and infanticide ; true religion had vanished, and an admixture of idolatry, fetishism, nature element and man-worship was prevailing everywhere, even among Christians and Jews. Above all, he had to face people who were immensely conservative ; who would not stoop to any interference with their own ways ; who were tenaciously attached to their old customs and habits, and would not tolerate any admonition from another. It was a hopeless task to reform them. But Muhammad came with a mission to do so, a mission that surpasses the mission of other Prophets in its arduous nature. But did Muhammad hesitate or shirk it ?¹ Did he begin his work with words and deeds of compromise, as others did ? Did he adopt half-measures, or try the gradual infusion of new thoughts ? Were his actions ever influenced by expediency ? No. He goes directly to the root of the evil. Sensitive, retiring and reticent as he was, he neither temporized nor kept silent. He felt the force of his convictions and had the courage to act up to them. He was never influenced by expediency,

¹ Professor J. Parkinson.

neither did he ever care for diplomacy. He was always direct, whether in reply, advice, or reproof. To the non-Muslim world, he would say, in the words of the Qur-án: "Whoever desires a religion other than Islam—submission to God—it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers."¹ To the Christian he would say: "Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God . . . believe therefore in Allah and His Apostle and say not, Three. Desist, it is better for you . . . and they say the beneficent God has taken to Himself a son. Certainly you have made an abominable assertion. The heavens may almost be rent thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in that they ascribe a son to God . . . say, God is One. He is independent, He is neither begotten nor begets."² The Christians say: "The Messiah is the son of Allah; these are the words of their mouths; *they imitate the saying of those who were pagans before*:"³ Allah destroyed them; now they are turned away." To the Romish Church he would say: "They have taken their Doctors of Law and their monks for Lords besides Allah."⁴ The Jews believed that they were the sons of God, and so the Christians thought themselves to be so; but Muhammad would admonish them and say: "The Jews and Christians say we are sons of Allah and His beloved ones; say, why then does He chastise you?"⁵ In addressing the

¹ Holy Qur-án, ii.

² Holy Qur-án, ch. cxii.

³ See *Sources of Christianity*. ⁴ Holy Qur-án, ix. 31. ⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 18.

Jews he said: "Most of you are transgressors. . . . Allah has cursed and brought His wrath upon (them) of whom He made apes and swine."¹ To the hypocrites he would say: "There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease and they shall have a painful chastisement, because they lied."² To those who would not listen to admonition nor care for warning he would declare: "Allah has put a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and there is a covering over their eyes and there is a great chastisement for them."³ "Deaf, dumb, blind, so they will not turn back."⁴ Those were the days when salvation through vicarious atonements, sacrificial rites, intermediaries and intercessions was a popular belief; and no one was prepared to bear or give countenance to any attempt that would expose the hollowness of that belief. And yet Muhammad falsified all these doctrines when he said: "What! shall I seek a Lord better than Allah? And He is the Lord of all things; and *no soul earns (evil) but against itself, and no bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another*" (vi. 165). "There does not reach Allah their flesh (of animals sacrificed) nor their blood, but to Him is acceptable righteousness on your part" (xxii. 37). "So the intercessions of intercessors shall not avail others."⁵

Arabia was a seat of different religions, each decrying the other; while no religion, though it

¹ Holy Qur-án, v. 57—60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 18.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 10.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, lxxiv. 48.

suffered in purity, was without some partial truth. The ~~same~~ state of things we find to-day. But Muhammad denounced sectarianism and decried the hostile attitude of the various religions towards each other, in the following words of the Qur-án: "And the Jews say, The Christians do not follow anything (good), and the Christians say, The Jews do not follow anything (good), while they recite the (same) Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say; so Allah shall judge between them on the day of resurrection in what they differ."¹ "Say: We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) that which was given 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."²

Those were the days when ritualism was the sum total of almost every religion. But Muhammad distinguished between a formal and ceremonial piety. He made faith in God, and benevolence towards man, the essence of religion. "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, 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 the orphans and the needy

¹ Holy Qur-án, ii. 113.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 136.

and the wayfarer and the beggars and for the (emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate; and the performance of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict—these are they who are true (to themselves), and these are they who guard (against evil).”¹

The Arabs were extremely addicted to “drink” and gambling, but he would not allow even moderation; he would go directly to the root of it and would preach total prohibition thus: “O you who believe! intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an uncleanness, the devil’s work; shun it, therefore, that you may be successful.”² His countrymen used to kill their female babies or bury them alive. It was a custom honoured by usage, but Muhammad uprooted it, saying when one is buried alive—“for what sin was she killed?”³ In short, no false belief or wrong doctrine remained of which the error or hollowness was not exposed. No evil custom or bad habit was left unrebuked. And yet Muhammad would neither inspire any false hope nor would he claim any identity with the Deity. “No extraordinary pretensions, no indulgence in hyperbolical language, no endeavour to cast a glamour round his character and personality: “I am only a preacher of God’s words, the bringer of God’s message to mankind,”⁴ repeats he always.

¹ Holy Qur-án, ii. 177. ² *Ibid.*, v. 90. ³ *Ibid.*, lxxxi, 8—9.

⁴ Syed Ameer Ali.

Miracles he performed, but not to propagate his faith.¹ He would plainly say he was but a man like others; he had no treasures, nor did he claim to know the secrets of the future: "Say: I am only a man like unto you."² "Say: I do not control any benefit or harm for my own soul except as Allah pleases, and had I known the unseen I would have had much of good, and no evil would have touched me. I am nothing but a warner and giver of good news to people who believe."³ "Say: I do not say to you I have with me the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel." The Arabs were a superstitious people. Had the Prophet so wished, he could have claimed any supernatural powers for himself. Many incidents occurred in his lifetime when people would have ascribed divine powers to him, but he destroyed all such vain suggestions by a plain denial. It is stated that on the day of the death of his son, the sun became totally eclipsed. Some of the pagans thought that the sun was in mourning for the sad event. They went to him with repentance, ready to accept his mission. But he would not take advantage of such subterfuges. He said: "Surely the Sun and the Moon are two signs of Allah; they do not suffer eclipse in consequence of the death of anybody nor on account of any one's life."

¹ Bukhari, Book of Manáqib.

² Holy Qur-án, xviii. 110.

³ Holy Qur-án, vii. 188.

Here is a man, a reformer, a Prophet, a Messenger from God, who stripped himself of all the paraphernalia reported to have been possessed by those who came before him with a similar mission. He disowned all that might invite following, help, co-operation or sympathy. Thus he made no friends, but enemies of them all. He would not yield to solicitations nor accept a position of wealth, to prejudice the mission—a mission in no way contributing to his personal aggrandizement—but the mission of God; the mission of humanity and the mission of everything that is noblest and best, the mission to establish the Unity of God and, through it, the unity of the human race, the mission of raising degraded humanity to its destined elevation. In short, he deprived himself of all that could have smoothed his way to success; had he done otherwise, he would have been untrue to himself and insincere to his mission for which he had the call. He did not work miracles to achieve his object, but he worked what was more than a miracle: he worked against odds and achieved a success—such a success as has never come to any person before or since in religious or secular history, and that in the adverse circumstances to which he had been subjected. But to achieve this unique success he did not resort to things beyond human reach, in which case he could not have acted as an exemplar. He used all the honest and honourable means that are open to others, and so his life is an object-lesson to those who have

to work for success against heavy odds and under adverse circumstances.

A Prophet comes to act as a guide and a model; Muhammad has a special claim to those qualifications. He is the Prophet in human colours, and consequently a true specimen for our imitation. He faces difficulties, and surmounts them with means within the reach of humanity. Other Prophets, as the report goes, have recourse to miracles to meet the difficulties in their way. One could understand the need of a miracle in order to strengthen the conviction of, or drive home, certain truths to a man in the street—it is a necessity, and there is a genuine report of any number of miracles performed by the Holy Prophet for that purpose—but we, in our day, have to face similar difficulties in our life, and we cannot do miracles in order to surmount them. Moses saved his people from the Egyptian tyranny through a miracle, but Muhammad defended the city of Medina with his little band against ten thousand odds through his heroic and soldierlike measures which a commander of an army will be proud to follow with advantage. But Moses with all his miracles could not infuse that spirit of manliness into his followers which we observe in the ranks of Muhammad. Jesus had to complain always of the lack of faith in his disciples, though they saw many a miracle from the master, but Muhammad had a band of the faithful unique in their devotion to the master.

Few persons remember their days of adversity when they come to power. High-mindedness and great strength of character alone can stand against the vicissitudes of life. To him who possesses these qualities change means newness of occasions that call forth such other noble qualities as could not be exhibited in his former state. In fact, every quality has its own occasion and demands special circumstances for its revelation. If trial gives man a character, success brings out his nobility of mind, if he possesses it. Humanity is not only softness of heart ; it consists of various morals, tender and stern, and needs a variety of conditions for their development. If some find manifestation in penury, others demand affluence if they are to appear in perfection. Very few of the Guides of Humanity were granted occasion to taste both. But Muhammad, to act as a perfect model for humanity, had to pass every phase of life. If prosperity brought out his generosity, his forgiveness, and his highmindedness, his adversity gave him occasion to exhibit his patience, his fortitude, and his trust in God.