

CENTRE CULTUREL ISLAMIQUE, PARIS  
Series No. 1/a

# INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

By  
DR. M. HAMIDULLAH



**SH. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF**  
PUBLISHERS, BOOKSELLERS & EXPORTERS  
LAHORE - PAKISTAN

# CONTENTS

Chap.

## INTRODUCTION

I.	The Prophet of Islam—His Biography	...paragraph	1
II.	The Preservation of the Original Teachings of Islam	...paragraph	43
III.	The Islamic Conception of Life	...paragraph	99
IV.	Faith and Belief	...paragraph	126
V.	Devotional Life and Religious Practices of Islam	...paragraph	160
VI.	The Cultivation of Spiritual Life	...paragraph	199
VII.	The System of Morality	...paragraph	223
VIII.	The Political System of Islam	...paragraph	258
IX.	The Judicial System of Islam	...paragraph	300
X.	The Economic System of Islam	...paragraph	337
XI.	The Muslim Woman	...paragraph	380
XII.	Status of non-Muslims in Islam	...paragraph	406
XIII.	Muslim Contribution to the Sciences and Arts	...paragraph	443
XIV.	General History of Islam	...paragraph	489

## Chap.

Daily life of a Muslim	...paragraph	516
Difference of Schools (Sunni, Shi'ah etc.)	...paragraph	563a
The Service of worship ; Why in Arabic alone?	paragraph	575a
Why a Purely Lunar Calendar ?	.. paragraph	576
<b>APPENDICES</b>		
Texts referred to for Prayers	...page	243
Translation of the Appendices	...paragraph	578
Transliteration of the Appendices	...paragraph	579
Table of Principal Islamic Feasts	...paragraph	580
Time Table for Daily Prayers in Abnormal Zones	...paragraph	581
Permanent Time Table for Abnormal Zones	...paragraph	583
Personalia	...paragraph	584
<i>Map Showing the Lands under Muslim Rule at one Time or other</i>	...page	200
<i>Map Showing the direction of Qiblah from various parts of the globe</i>	...page	224
<i>Various postures of Prayers Service (Illustration)</i>	...page	227
<b>SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MUSLIM AUTHORS</b>	...page	273
<b>INDEX</b>	...page	275

Bismillah! (With the Name of God)

## INTRODUCTION

It is encouraging to note that this humble effort of the *Centre Culturel Islamique*, Paris, is attracting more and more attention. Not only three large English editions, published so far by us—and as large four to five unauthorized editions in three different countries, that have come to our knowledge,—are exhausted, but also translations are undertaken in ever-increasing number of languages. Several of these have come out, others are either waiting financial means or are still in more or less advanced stage of completion. All praise to God.

It is an honour to us to see that the work is prescribed as text book, in several countries. Opportunity of a new edition is taken to revise the text and make a few additions or corrections.

We welcome criticism and suggestions for ameliorating and correcting. God will reward the readers who would contribute in this respect.

For the Editorial Board,  
Centre Culturel Islamique,  
59, rue Claude Bernard,  
F. 75006-Paris, France.

Paris 1393 H./1973

Muhammad Hamidullah

From the 3rd Edition

Opportunity is taken to revise the text and add chapters and paragraphs to make the work as complete as its dimensions permit. References are also added in considerable instances, to satisfy the curiosity of some and the scepticism of others.

Printing is done away from here. Proof reading is done by the diligent and painstaking assistance of Mr. Muhammad Habibullah, to whom go our best thanks.

From us the effort, from God the enabling power. Praise be to Him, first and last.

M.H.

Paris, 1388 (1968)

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)

## From the 2nd Edition

The first edition was exhausted in a few months. Opportunity is taken of the second edition to improve the text and carry out several amelioration, which, it is hoped, will be appreciated. It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge with thanks numerous friendly suggestions received from various quarters.

M.H.

*Paris, Rajab 1378 H. (1959)*

## From the First Edition

There has been a wide demand for a correspondence course on Islam. In response to this, a modest effort has been made with the help of several collaborators, particularly of Prof. M. Rahimuddin and the present series of fifteen monographs has been prepared under the joint auspices of the *Centre Culturel Islamique* and *the Mosque*, in Paris. This will, it is hoped, give a general idea of Islam, its history and culture and its handling of the diverse aspects and problems of life. Each subject is a monograph in itself and self-contained, hence a certain repetition has been unavoidable, the more so because life is a variegated affair and the fields of human activities are closely related to one another and often overlap.

For further inquiries, suggestions or useful criticism the 'Centre Culturel Islamique, c/o The Mosque, Place Puits de l'Ermite, Paris v. France,' may be referred to,

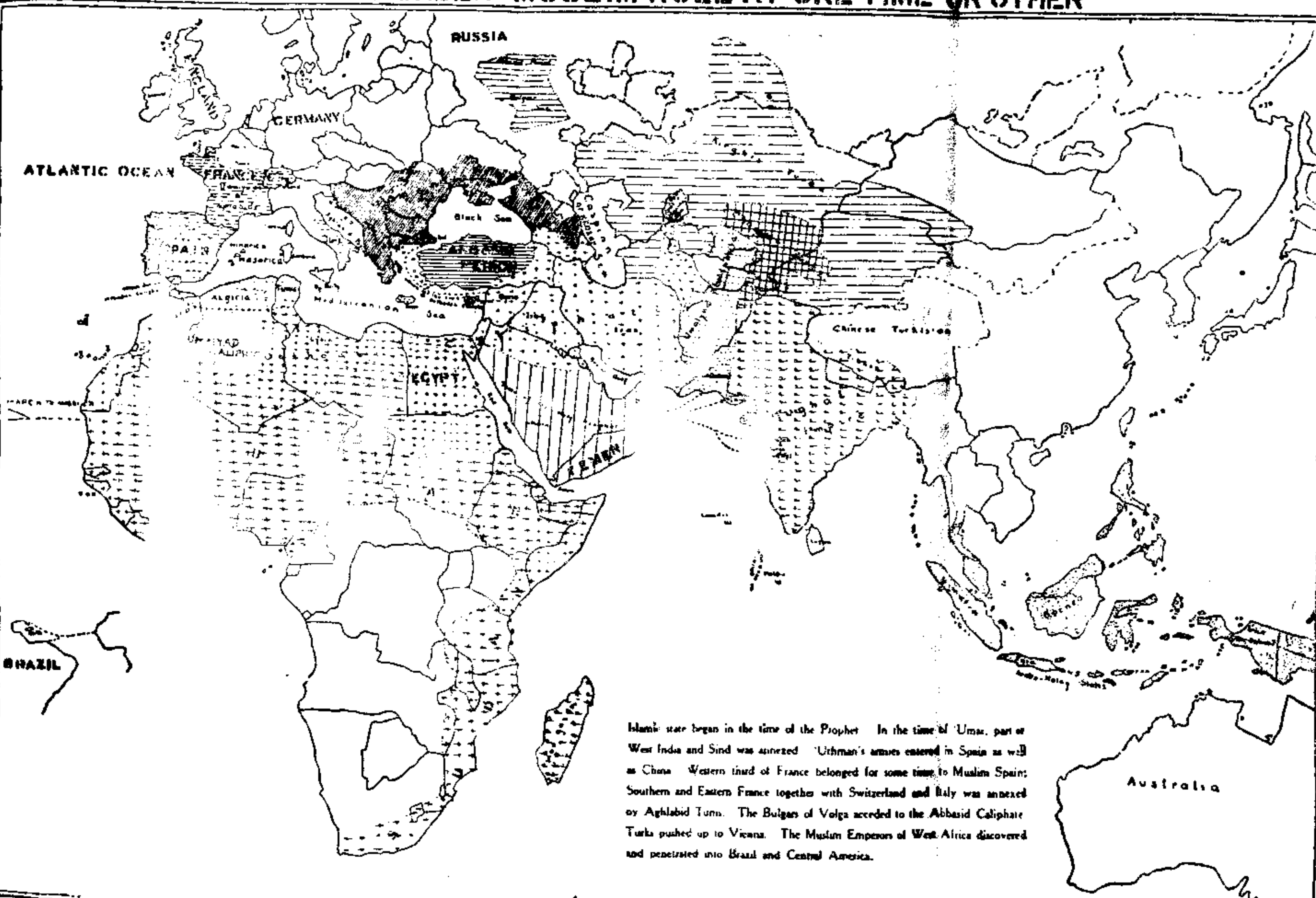
*for the Editorial Board,*

MUHAMMAD HAMIDULLAH

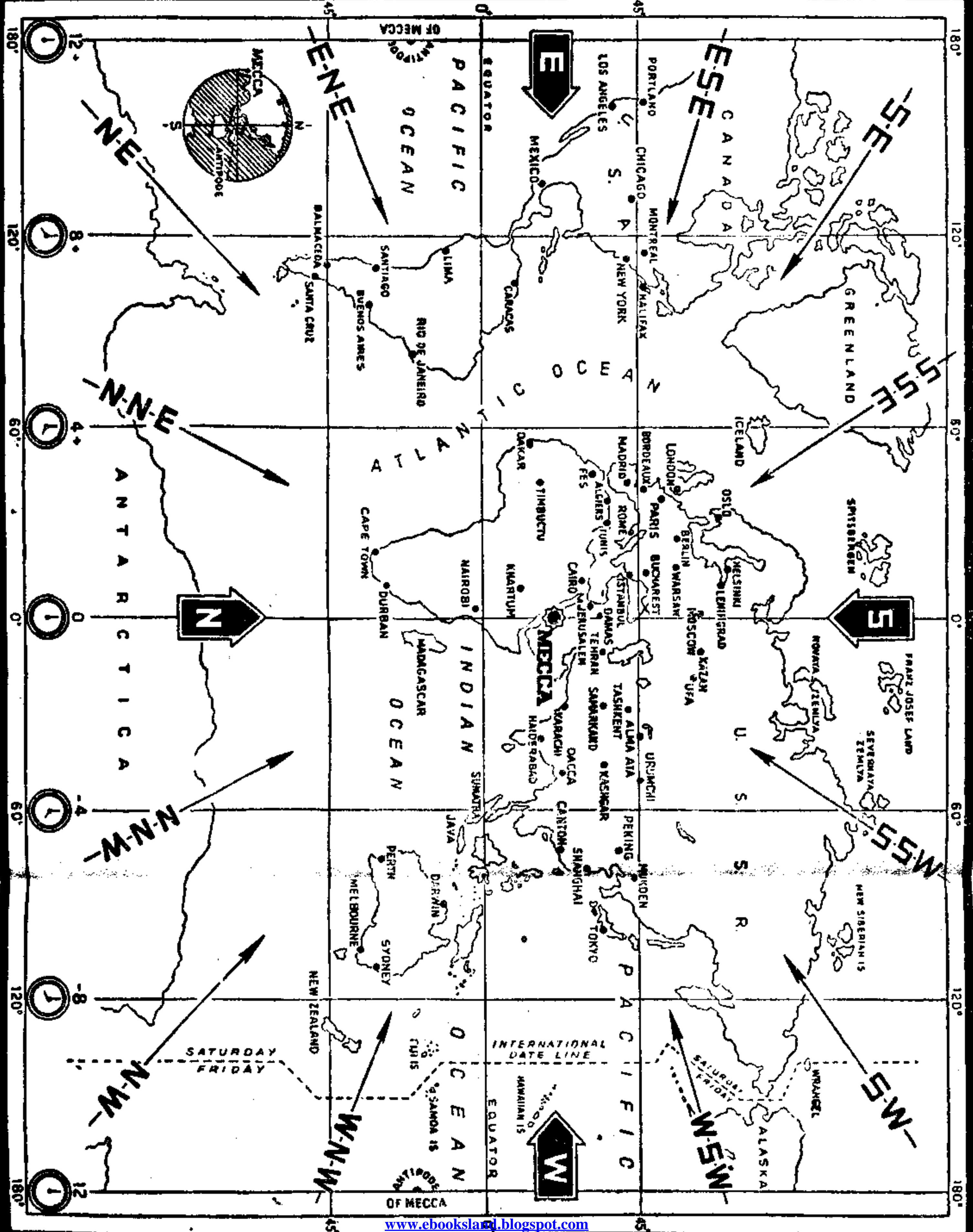
*Paris, Sha'ban 1376 H. (1957)*



# LANDS UNDER MUSLIM RULE AT ONE TIME OR OTHER



Islamic state began in the time of the Prophet. In the time of Umar, part of West India and Sind was annexed. Uthman's armies entered in Spain as well as China. Western third of France belonged for some time to Muslim Spain; Southern and Eastern France together with Switzerland and Italy was annexed by Aghlabid Tunis. The Bulgars of Volga acceded to the Abbasid Caliphate. Turks pushed up to Vienna. The Muslim Emperors of West Africa discovered and penetrated into Brazil and Central America.



BISMILLAH!

CHAPTER 1

## THE PROPHET OF ISLAM— HIS BIOGRAPHY

**I**N the annals of men, individuals have not been lacking who conspicuously devoted their lives to the socio-religious reform of their connected peoples. We find them in every epoch and in all lands. In India, there lived those who transmitted to the world the Vedas, and there was also the great Gautama Buddha; China had its Confucius; the Avesta was produced in Iran. Babylonia gave to the world one of the greatest reformers, the Prophet Abraham (not to speak of such of his ancestors as Enoch and Noah about whom we have very scanty information). The Jewish people may rightly be proud of a long series of reformers: Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, and Jesus among others.

2. Two points are to note: Firstly these reformers claimed in general to be the bearers each of a Divine mission, and they left behind them sacred books incorporating codes of life for the guidance of their peoples. Secondly there followed fratricidal wars, and massacres and genocides became the order of the day; causing more or less a complete loss of these Divine messages. As to the books of Abraham, we know them only by the name; and as for the books of Moses, records tell us how they were repeatedly destroyed and only partly restored.

### CONCEPT OF GOD

3. If one should judge from the relics of the past already brought to light of the *homo sapiens*, one finds that man has always been conscious of the existence of a Supreme Being, the Master and Creator of all. Methods and approaches may have differed, but the people of



every epoch have left proofs of their attempts to obey God. Communication with the Omnipresent yet invisible God has also been recognised as possible in connection with a small fraction of men with noble and exalted spirits. Whether this communication assumed the nature of an incarnation of the Divinity or simply resolved itself into a medium of reception of Divine messages (through inspiration or revelation), the purpose in each case was the guidance of the people. It was but natural that the interpretations and explanations of certain systems should have proved more vital and convincing than others.

3/a. Every system of metaphysical thought develops its own terminology. In the course of time terms acquire a significance hardly contained in the word and translations fall short of their purpose. Yet there is no other method to make people of one group understand the thoughts of another. Non-Muslim readers in particular are requested to bear in mind this aspect which is a real yet unavoidable handicap.

4. By the end of the 6th century, after the birth of Jesus Christ, men had already made great progress in diverse walks of life. At that time there were some religions which openly proclaimed that they were reserved for definite races and groups of men only, of course they bore no remedy for the ills of humanity at large. There were also a few which claimed universality, but declared that the salvation of man lay in the renunciation of the world. These were the religions for the elite, and catered for an extremely limited number of men. We need not speak of regions where there existed no religion at all, where atheism and materialism reigned supreme, where the thought was solely of occupying oneself with one's own pleasures, without any regard or consideration for the rights of others.

## ARABIA

5. A perusal of the map of the major hemisphere (from the point of view of the proportion of land to sea), shows the Arabian Peninsula lying at the confluence of the three great continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. At the time in question, this extensive Arabian sub-continent composed mostly of desert areas was inhabited by people of settled habitations as well as nomads. Often it was found that members of the same tribe were divided into these two groups, and that they preserved a relationship although following different modes of life. The means of subsistence in Arabia were meagre. The desert

had its handicaps, and trade caravans were features of greater importance than either agriculture or industry. This entailed much travel, and men had to proceed beyond the peninsula to Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, Iraq, Sind, India and other lands.

6. We do not know much about the Lihyanites of Central Arabia, but Yemen was rightly called *Arabia Felix*. Having once been the seat of the flourishing civilizations of Sheba and Ma'in even before the foundation of the city of Rome had been laid, and having later snatched from the Byzantians and Persians several provinces, greater Yemen which had passed through the hey-day of its existence, was however at this time broken up into innumerable principalities, and even occupied in part by foreign invaders. The Sassanians of Iran who had penetrated into Yemen had already obtained possession of Eastern Arabia. There was politico-social chaos at the capital (Mada'in = Ctesiphon), and this found reflection in all her territories. Northern Arabia had succumbed to Byzantine influences, and was faced with its own particular problems. Only Central Arabia remained immune from the demoralising effects of foreign occupation.

7. In this limited area of Central Arabia, the existence of the triangle of Mecca-Ta'if-Madinah seemed something providential. Mecca, deserts, deprived of water and the amenities of agriculture in physical features represented Africa and the burning Sahara. Scarcely fifty miles from there, Ta'if presented a picture of Europe and its frost. Madinah in the North was not less fertile than even the most temperate of Asiatic countries like Syria. If climate has any influence on human character, this triangle standing in the middle of the major hemisphere was, more than any other region of the earth, a miniature reproduction of the entire world. And here was born a descendant of the Babylonian Abraham, and the Egyptian Hagar. Muhammad the Prophet of Islam, a Meccan by origin and yet with stock related, both to Madinah and Ta'if.

## RELIGION

8. From the point of view of religion, Arabia was idolatrous; only a few individuals had embraced religions like Christianity, Mazdaism, etc. The Meccans did possess the notion of the One God, but they believed also that idols had the power to intercede with Him.

Curiously enough, they did not believe in the Resurrection and After-life. They had preserved the rite of the pilgrimage to the House of the One God, the Ka'bah, an institution set up under divine inspiration by their ancestor Abraham, yet the two thousand years that separated them from Abraham had caused to degenerate this pilgrimage into the spectacle of a commercial fair and an occasion of senseless idolatry which far from producing any good, only served to ruin their individual behaviour, both social and spiritual.

## SOCIETY

9. In spite of the comparative poverty in natural resources, Mecca was the most developed of the three points of the triangle. Of the three, Mecca alone had a city-state, governed by a council of ten hereditary chiefs who enjoyed a clear division of powers. (There was a minister of foreign relations, a minister guardian of the temple, a minister of oracles, a minister guardian of offerings to the temple, one to determine the torts and the damages payable, another in charge of the municipal council or parliament to enforce the decisions of the ministries. There were also ministers in charge of military affairs like custodianship of the flag, leadership of the cavalry, etc.). As well reputed caravan-leaders, the Meccans were able to obtain permission from neighbouring empires like Iran, Byzantium and Abyssinia—and to enter into agreements with the tribes that lined the routes traversed by the caravans—to visit their countries and transact import and export business. They also provided escorts to foreigners when they passed through their country as well as the territory of allied tribes in Arabia (cf. Ibn Habib, *Muhabbar*). Although not interested much in the preservation of ideas and records in writing, they passionately cultivated arts and letters like poetry, oratory discourses and folk tales. Women were generally well treated, they enjoyed the privilege of possessing property in their own right, they gave their consent to marriage contracts, in which they could even add the condition of reserving their right to divorce their husbands. They could remarry when widowed or divorced. Burying girls alive did exist in certain classes, but that was rare.

## BIRTH OF THE PROPHET

10. It was in the midst of such conditions and environments, that Muhammad was born in 569 after Christ. His father, 'Abdullah

had died some weeks earlier, and it was his grandfather who took him in charge. According to the prevailing custom, the child was entrusted to a Bedouin foster-mother, with whom he passed several years in the desert. All biographers state that the infant prophet sucked only one breast of his foster-mother, leaving the other for the sustenance of his foster-brother. When the child was brought back home, his mother, Aminah, took him to his maternal uncles at Madinah to visit the tomb of 'Abdullah. During the return journey, he lost his mother who died a sudden death. At Mecca, another bereavement awaited him, in the death of his affectionate grandfather. Subjected to such privations, he was at the age of eight, consigned at last to the care of his uncle, 'Abu-Talib, a man who was generous of nature but always short of resources and hardly able to provide for his family.

11. Young Muhammad had therefore to start immediately to earn his livelihood; he served as a shepherd boy to some neighbours. At the age of ten he accompanied his uncle to Syria when he was leading a caravan there. No other travels of Abu-Talib are mentioned, but there are references to his having set up a shop in Mecca. (Ibn Qutaibah, *Ma'arif*). It is possible that Muhammad helped him in this enterprise also.

12. By the time he was twenty-five, Muhammad had become well known in the city for the integrity of his disposition and the honesty of his character. A rich widow, Khadijah, took him in her employ and consigned to him her goods to be taken for sale to Syria. Delighted with the unusual profits she obtained as also by the personal charms of her agent, she offered him her hand. According to divergent reports, she was either 28 or 40 years of age at that time, (medical reasons prefer the age of 28 since she gave birth to five more children). The union proved happy. Later, we see him sometimes in the fair of Hubashah (Yemen), and at least once in the country of the 'Abd al-Qais (Bahrain-Oman), as mentioned by Ibn Hanbal. There is every reason to believe that this refers to the great fair of Daba (Oman), where, according to Ibn al-Kalbi (cf. Ibn Habib, *Muhabbar*), the traders of China, of Hind and Sind (India, Pakistan), of Persia, of the East and the West assembled every year, travelling both by land and sea. There is also mention of a commercial partner of Muhammad at Mecca. This person, Sa'ib by name, reports: "We relayed each other; if Muhammad led the caravan, he did not enter his house on



his return to Mecca without clearing accounts with me; and if I led the caravan, he would on my return enquire about my welfare and speak nothing about his own capital entrusted to me."

#### AN ORDER OF CHIVALRY

13. Foreign traders often brought their goods to Mecca for sale. One day a certain Yemenite (of the tribe of Zubaid) improvised a satirical poem against some Meccans who had refused to pay him the price of what he had sold, and others who had not supported his claim or had failed to come to his help when he was victimised. Zubair, uncle and chief of the tribe of the Prophet, felt great remorse on hearing this just satire. He called for a meeting of certain chieftains in the city, and organized an order of chivalry, called *Hilf al-fudul*, with the aim and object of aiding the oppressed in Mecca, irrespective of their being dwellers of the city or aliens. Young Muhammad became an enthusiastic member of the organisation. Later in life he used to say: "I have participated in it, and I am not prepared to give up that privilege even against a herd of camels; if somebody should appeal to me even today, by virtue of that pledge, I shall hurry to his help."

#### BEGINNING OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

14. Not much is known about the religious practices of Muhammad until he was thirty-five years old, except that he had never worshipped idols. This is substantiated by all his biographers. It may be stated that there were a few others in Mecca, who had likewise revolted against the senseless practice of paganism, although conserving their fidelity to the Ka'bah as the house dedicated to the One God by its builder Abraham.

15. About the year 605 of the Christian era, the draperies on the outer wall of the Ka'bah took fire. The building was affected and could not bear the brunt of the torrential rains that followed. The reconstruction of the Ka'bah was thereupon undertaken. Each citizen contributed according to his means; and only the gifts of honest gains were accepted. Everybody participated in the work of construction, and Muhammad's shoulders were injured in the course of transporting stones. To identify the place whence the ritual of circumambulation began, there had been set a black stone in the wall of the Ka'bah, dating probably from the time of Abraham himself. There was rivalry among the citizens for obtaining the honour of transposing this Stone

in its place. When there was danger of blood being shed, somebody suggested leaving the matter to Providence, and accepting the arbitration of him who should happen to arrive there first. It chanced that Muhammad just then turned up there for work as usual. He was popularly known by the appellation of *al-Amin* (the honest), and everyone accepted his arbitration without hesitation. Muhammad placed a sheet of cloth on the ground, put the stone on it and asked the chiefs of all the tribes, in the city to lift together the cloth. Then he himself placed the Stone in its proper place, in one of the angles of the building, and everybody was satisfied.

16. It is from this moment that we find Muhammad becoming more and more absorbed in spiritual meditations. Like his grandfather, he used to retire during the whole month of Ramadan to a cave in Jabal-an-Nur (mountain of light). The cave is called 'Ghar-i-Hira' or the cave of research. There he prayed, meditated, and shared his meagre provisions with the travellers who happened to pass by.

#### REVELATION

17. He was forty years old, and it was the fifth consecutive year since his annual retreats, when one night towards the end of the month of Ramadan, an angel came to visit him, and announced that God had chosen him as His messenger to all mankind. The angel taught him the mode of ablutions, the way of worshipping God and the conduct of prayer. He communicated to him the following Divine message :

With the name of God, the Most Merciful, the All-Merciful.

Read: with the name of thy Lord Who created,

Created man from a clot.

Read: and thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,

Who taught by the pen,

Taught man what he knew not.

(Quran 96/1-5.)<sup>1</sup>

18. Deeply affected, he returned home and related to his wife what had happened, expressing his fears that it might have been something diabolic or the action of evil spirits. She consoled him, saying

1. For the references of the Holy Quran, we follow the Islamic numbering of chapters and verses, and not the European one, which both differ from each other occasionally by a few verses.

that he had always been a man of charity and generosity, helping the poor, the orphans, the widows and the needy, and assured him that God would protect him against all evil.

19. Then came a pause in revelation, extending over three years. The Prophet must have felt at first a shock, then a calm, an ardent desire, and after a period of waiting, a growing impatience or nostalgia. The news of the first vision had spread and at the pause the sceptics in the city had begun to mock at him and cut bitter jokes. They went so far as to say that God had forsaken him.

20. During these years of waiting, the Prophet had given himself up more and more to prayers and to spiritual practices. The revelations were then resumed, and God assured him that He had not at all forsaken him; on the contrary it was He Who had guided him to the right path; therefore he should take care of the orphans and the destitute, and proclaim the bounty of God on him (cf. Q. 93/3-11). This was in reality an order to preach. Another revelation directed him to warn people against evil practices, to exhort them to worship none but the One God, and to abandon everything that would displease God (Q. 74/2-7). Yet another revelation commanded him to warn his own near relatives (Q. 26/214); and: "Proclaim openly that which thou art commanded, and withdraw from the Associators (idolaters). Lo! We defend thee from the scoffers" (15/94-5). According to Ibn Ishaq, the first revelation (§ 17) had come to the Prophet during his sleep, evidently to reduce the shock. Later revelations came in full wakefulness.

## THE MISSION

21. The Prophet began by preaching his mission secretly first among his intimate friends, then among the members of his own tribe, and thereafter publicly in the city and suburbs. He insisted on the belief in One Transcendent God, in Resurrection and the Last Judgement. He invited men to charity and beneficence. He took necessary steps to preserve through writing the revelations he was receiving, and ordered his adherents also to learn them by heart. This continued all through his life, since the Quran was not revealed all at once, but in fragments as occasions arose.

22. The number of his adherents increased gradually; but with

the denunciation of paganism, the opposition also grew intenser on the part of those who were firmly attached to their ancestral beliefs. This opposition degenerated in the course of time into physical torture of the Prophet and of those who had embraced his religion. These were stretched on burning sands, cauterized with red hot iron and imprisoned with chains on their feet. Some of them died of the effects of torture, but none would renounce his religion. In despair, the Prophet Muhammad advised his companions to quit their native town and take refuge abroad, in Abyssinia, "where governs a just ruler, in whose realm nobody is oppressed" (Ibn Hisham). Dozens of Muslims profited by his advice, though not all. These secret flights led to further persecution of those who remained behind.

23. The Prophet Muhammad called his religion "Islam," i.e., submission to the will of God. Its distinctive features are two: (1) a harmonious equilibrium between the temporal and the spiritual (the body and the soul), permitting a full enjoyment of all the good that God has created, (Quran 7/32), enjoining at the same time on everybody duties towards God, such as worship, fasting, charity, etc. Islam was to be the religion of the masses and not merely of the elect. (2) A universality of the call—all the believers becoming brothers and equals without any distinction of class or race or tongue. The only superiority which it recognizes is a personal one, based on the greater fear of God and greater piety (Quran 49/13).

#### SOCIAL BOYCOTT

24. When a large number of the Meccan Muslims migrated to Abyssinia, the leaders of paganism sent an ultimatum to the tribe of the Prophet, demanding that he should be excommunicated and outlawed and delivered to the pagans for being put to death. Every member of the tribe, Muslim and non-Muslim rejected the demand. (cf. Ibn Hisham). Thereupon the city decided on a complete boycott of the tribe: Nobody was to talk to them or have commercial or matrimonial relations with them. The group of Arab tribes, called Ahabish, inhabiting the suburbs, who were allies of the Meccans, also joined in the boycott, causing stark misery among the innocent victims consisting of children, men and women, the old and the sick and the feeble. Some of them succumbed, yet nobody would hand over the Prophet to his persecutors. An uncle of the Prophet, Abu Lahab, however left his tribesmen and participated in the boycott along with the pagans.



After three dire years, during which the victims were obliged to devour even crushed hides, four or five non-Muslims, more humane than the rest and belonging to different clans, proclaimed publicly their denunciation of the unjust boycott. At the same time, the document promulgating the pact of boycott which had been hung in the temple, was found, as Muhammad had predicted, eaten by white ants, that spared nothing but the words God and Muhammad. The boycott was lifted, yet owing to the privations that were undergone the wife and Abu Talib, the chief of the tribe and uncle of the Prophet died soon after. Another uncle of the Prophet, Abu-Lahab, who was an inveterate enemy of Islam, now succeeded to the headship of the tribe. (cf. Ibn Hisham, *Sirah*).

#### THE ASCENSION

25. It was at this time that the Prophet Muhammad was granted the *mi'raj* (ascension): He saw in a vision that he was received on heaven by God, and was witness of the marvels of the celestial regions. Returning, he brought for his community, as a Divine gift, Islamic worship, which constitutes a sort of communion between man and God. It may be recalled that in the last part of Muslim service of worship, the faithful employ as a symbol of their being in the very presence of God, not concrete objects as others do at the time of communion, but the very words of greeting exchanged between the Prophet Muhammad and God on the occasion of the former's *mi'raj*: "The blessed and pure greetings for God!—Peace be with thee, O Prophet, as well as the mercy and blessing of God!—Peace be with us and with all the well-behaving servants of God!" The Christian term "communion" implies participation in the Divinity. Finding it pretentious, Muslims use the term "ascension" towards God and reception in His presence, God remaining God and man remaining man and no confusion between the twain.

26. The news of this celestial meeting led to an increase in the hostility of the pagans of Mecca; and the Prophet was obliged to quit his native town in search of an asylum elsewhere. He went to his maternal uncles in Ta'if, but returned immediately to Mecca, as the wicked people of that town chased the Prophet out of their city by pelting stones on him and wounding him.

#### MIGRATION TO MADINAH

27. The annual pilgrimage of the Ka'bah brought to Mecca

people from all parts of Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad tried to persuade one tribe after another to afford him shelter and allow him to carry on his mission of reform. The contingents of fifteen tribes, whom he approached in succession, refused to do so more or less brutally, but he did not despair. Finally he met half a dozen inhabitants of Madinah who being neighbour of the Jews and the Christians, had some notion of prophets and Divine messages. They knew also that these "people of the Books" were awaiting the arrival of a prophet—a last comforter. So these Madinans decided not to lose the opportunity of obtaining an advance over others, and forthwith embraced Islam, promising further to provide additional adherents and necessary help from Madinah. The following year a dozen new Madinans took the oath of allegiance to him and requested him to provide with a missionary teacher. The work of the missionary, Mus'ab, proved very successful and he led a contingent of seventy-three new converts to Mecca, at the time of the pilgrimage. These invited the Prophet and his Meccan companions to migrate to their town, and promised to shelter the Prophet and to treat him and his companions as their own kith and kin. Secretly and in small groups, the greater part of the Muslims emigrated to Madinah. Upon this the pagans of Mecca not only confiscated the property of the evacuees, but devised a plot to assassinate the Prophet. It became now impossible for him to remain at home. It is worthy of mention, that in spite of their hostility to his mission, the pagans had unbounded confidence in his probity, so much so that many of them used to deposit their savings with him. The Prophet Muhammad now entrusted all these deposits to 'Ali, a cousin of his, with instructions to return in due course to the rightful owners. He then left the town secretly in the company of his faithful friend, Abu-Bakr. After several adventures, they succeeded in reaching Madinah in safety. This happened in 622, whence starts the Hijrah calendar.

#### REORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

28. For the better rehabilitation of the displaced immigrants, the Prophet created a fraternization between them and an equal number of well-to-do Madinans. The families of each pair of the contractual brothers worked together to earn their livelihood, and aided one another in the business of life.

29. Further he thought that the development of the man as a whole would be better achieved if he co-ordinated religion and politics

as two constituent parts of one whole. To this end he invited the representatives of the Muslims as well as the non-Muslim inhabitants of the region: Arabs, Jews, Christians and others, and suggested the establishment of a City-State in Madinah. With their assent, he endowed the city with a written constitution—the first of its kind in the world—in which he defined the duties and rights both of the citizens and the head of the State—the Prophet Muhammad was unanimously hailed as such—and abolished the customary private justice. The administration of justice became henceforward the concern of the central organization of the community of the citizens. The document laid down principles of defence and foreign policy; it organized a system of social insurance, called *ma'aqil*, in cases of too heavy obligations. It recognized that the Prophet Muhammad would have the final word in all differences, and that there was no limit to his power of legislation. It recognized also explicitly liberty of religion, particularly for the Jews, to whom the constitutional act afforded equality with Muslims in all that concerned life in this world (cf. *infra* § 303).

30. Muhammad journeyed several times with a view to win the neighbouring tribes and to conclude with them treaties of alliance and mutual help. With their help, he decided to bring to bear economic pressure on the Meccan pagans, who had confiscated the property of the Muslim evacuees and also caused innumerable damage. Obstruction in the way of the Meccan caravans and their passage through the Madinan region exasperated the pagans, and a bloody struggle ensued.

31. In the concern for the material interests of the community, the spiritual aspect was never neglected. Hardly a year had passed after the migration to Madinah, when the most rigorous of spiritual disciplines, the fasting for the whole month of Ramadan every year, was imposed on every adult Muslim, man and woman.

#### STRUGGLE AGAINST INTOLERANCE AND UNBELIEF

32. Not content with the expulsion of the Muslim compatriots, the Meccans sent an ultimatum to the Madinans, demanding the surrender or at least the expulsion of Muhammad and his companions but evidently all such efforts proved in vain. A few months later, in the year 2 H., they sent a powerful army against the Prophet, who opposed them at Badr; and the pagans thrice as numerous as the Muslims, were routed. After a year of preparation, the Meccans again invaded Madinah

to avenge the defeat of Badr. They were now four times as numerous as the Muslims. After a bloody encounter at Uhud, the enemy retired, the issue being indecisive. The mercenaries in the Meccan army did not want to take too much risk, or endanger their safety.

33. In the meanwhile the Jewish citizens of Madinah began to foment trouble. About the time of the victory of Badr, one of their leaders, Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, proceeded to Mecca to give assurance of his alliance with the pagans, and to incite them to a war of revenge. After the battle of Uhud, the tribe of the same chieftain plotted to assassinate the Prophet by throwing on him a mill-stone from above a tower, when he had gone to visit their locality. In spite of all this, the only demand the Prophet made of the men of this tribe was to quit the Madinan region, taking with them all their properties, after selling their immovables and recovering their debts from the Muslims. The clemency thus extended had an effect contrary to what was hoped. The exiled not only contacted the Meccans, but also the tribes of the North, South and East of Madinah, mobilized military aid, and planned from Khaibar an invasion of Madinah, with forces four times more numerous than those employed at Uhud. The Muslims prepared for a siege, and dug a ditch, to defend themselves against this hardest of all trials. Although the defection of the Jews still remaining inside Madinah at a later stage upset all strategy, yet with a sagacious diplomacy, the Prophet succeeded in breaking up the alliance, and the different enemy groups retired one after the other.

34. Alcoholic drinks, gambling and games of chance were at this time declared forbidden for the Muslims.

#### THE RECONCILIATION

35. The Prophet tried once more to reconcile the Meccans and proceeded to Mecca. The barring of the route of their Northern caravans had ruined their economy. The Prophet promised them transit security, extradition of their fugitives and the fulfilment of every condition they desired, agreeing even to return to Madinah without accomplishing the pilgrimage of the Ka'bah. Thereupon the two contracting parties promised at Hudaibiyah in the suburbs of Mecca, not only the maintenance of peace, but also the observance of neutrality in their conflicts with third parties.

36. Profiting by the peace, the Prophet launched an intensive



programme for the propagation of his religion. He addressed missionary letters to the foreign rulers of Byzantium, Iran, Abyssinia and other lands. The Byzantine autocrat priest—Dughatur of the Arabs—embraced Islam, but for this, was lynched by the Christian mob; the prefect of Ma'an (Palestine) suffered the same fate, and was decapitated and crucified by order of the emperor. A Muslim ambassador was assassinated in Syria-Palestine; and instead of punishing the culprit, the emperor Heraclius rushed with his armies to protect him against the punitive expedition sent by the Prophet (battle of Mu'tah).

37. The pagans of Mecca hoping to profit by the Muslim difficulties, violated the terms of their treaty. Upon this, the Prophet himself led an army, ten thousand strong, and surprised Mecca which he occupied in a bloodless manner. As a benevolent conqueror, he caused the vanquished people to assemble, reminded them of their ill deeds, their religious persecution, unjust confiscation of the evacuee property, ceaseless invasions and senseless hostilities for twenty years continuously. He asked them: "Now what do you expect of me?" When everybody lowered his head with shame, the Prophet proclaimed: "May God pardon you; go in peace; there shall be no responsibility on you today; you are free!" He even renounced the claim for the Muslim property confiscated by the pagans. This produced a great psychological change of hearts instantaneously. When a Meccan chief advanced with a fullsome heart towards the Prophet, after hearing this general amnesty, in order to declare his acceptance of Islam, the Prophet told him: "And in my turn, I appoint you the governor of Mecca!" Without leaving a single soldier in the conquered city, the Prophet retired to Madinah. The Islamization of Mecca, which was accomplished in a few hours, was complete.

38. Immediately after the occupation of Mecca, the city of Ta'if mobilized to fight against the Prophet. With some difficulty the enemy was dispersed in the valley of Hunain, but the Muslims preferred to raise the siege of nearby Ta'if and use pacific means to break the resistance of this region. Less than a year later, a delegation from Ta'if came to Madinah offering submission. But it requested exemption from prayer, taxes and military service, and the continuance of the liberty to adultery and fornication and alcoholic drinks. It demanded even the conservation of the temple of the idol al-Lat at Ta'if. But Islam was not a materialist immoral movement; and soon the delegation itself

felt ashamed of its demands regarding prayer, adultery and wine. The Prophet consented to concede exemption from payment of taxes and rendering of military service; and added: You need not demolish the temple with your own hands: we shall send agents from here to do the job, and if there should be any consequences, which you are afraid of on account of your superstitions, it will be they who would suffer. This act of the Prophet shows what concessions could be given to new converts. The conversion of the Ta'ifites was so whole-hearted that in a short while, they themselves renounced the contracted exemptions, and we find the Prophet nominating a tax collector in their locality as in other Islamic regions.

39. In all these "wars," extending over a period of ten years, the non-Muslims lost on the battlefield only about 250 persons killed, and the Muslim losses were even less. With these few incisions, the whole continent of Arabia, with its million and more of square miles, was cured of the abscess of anarchy and immorality. During these ten years of disinterested struggle, all the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula and the southern regions of Iraq and Palestine had voluntarily embraced Islam. Some Christian, Jewish and Parsi groups remained attached to their creeds, and they were granted liberty of conscience as well as judicial and juridical autonomy.

40. In the year 10 H., when the Prophet went to Mecca for *Hajj* (pilgrimage), he met 140,000 Muslims there, who had come from different parts of Arabia to fulfil their religious obligation. He addressed to them his celebrated sermon, in which he gave a resume of his teachings: "Belief in One God without images or symbols, equality of all the Believers without distinction of race or class, the superiority of individuals being based solely on piety; sanctity of life, property and honour; abolition of interest, and of vendettas and private justice; better treatment of women; obligatory inheritance and distribution of the property of deceased persons among near relatives of both sexes, and removal of the possibility of the cumulation of wealth in the hands of the few. The Quran and the conduct of the Prophet were to serve as the bases of law and a healthy criterion in every aspect of human life.

41. On his return to Madinah, he fell ill; and a few weeks later, when he breathed his last, he had the satisfaction that he had well accomplished the task which he had undertaken—to preach to the world the Divine message.

42. He bequeathed to posterity, a religion of pure monotheism; he created a well-disciplined State out of the existent chaos and gave peace in place of the war of everybody against everybody else; he established a harmonious equilibrium between the spiritual and the temporal, between the mosque and the citadel; he left a new system of law, which dispensed impartial justice, in which even the head of the State was as much a subject to it as any commoner, and in which religious tolerance was so great that non-Muslim inhabitants of Muslim countries equally enjoyed complete juridical, judicial and cultural autonomy. In the matter of the revenues of the State, the Quran fixed the principles of budgeting, and paid more thought to the poor than to anybody else. The revenues were declared to be in no wise the private property of the head of the State. Above all, the Prophet Muhammad set a noble example<sup>1</sup> and fully practised all that he taught to others.

---

(1) Consequently we do not propose to speak at length of miracles. Miracles or extraordinary happenings are facts. Muslims have to believe in them, since the Quran speaks of them. But if they look to us as extraordinary, to the Almighty Creator of causes and effects they are His prearranged events, and they happen when we do not expect them.

If they take place at the prayers of a prophet, they are called *mu'jizah* (that which puts others in the incapacity); at the hands of the saints, they are *karāmah* (honour, i.e. God honours them therewith); and at the insolence of the diabolical persons, they are *istidrāj* (test, i.e. God tests the faith of a believer thereby). It is not easy for the ordinary man to distinguish which is what. Again, the life of the Prophet Muhammad has been predestined by God to be the "perfect model to imitate" (*uswah hasanah*) for each and every Muslim; and naturally a Muslim of the commonalty cannot get miracles at command. For these and other imperative reasons we have not described here the miracles of the Prophet of Islam, which are greater and more numerous than those of any other former prophet, and even of all of them combined. Twice dead persons came to life at the call of Muhammad, the moon split into two, small quantity of food or water sufficed for a large number of persons, water gushed from under his fingers; he said: bring a small *sura* of three verses like that of the Quran, and call all the men and jinns to collaborate therein (and the challenge has remained unanswered since the last fourteen hundred years). And so on and so forth; and they have filled entire volumes. But the Quran himself has told us to take heed of the teaching and the practice of the Prophet, and not of the miracles (cf. 29/50-51). A good Muslim like Abu Bakr did not require to see miracles, and a perverted person like Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab did not believe even on seeing most extraordinary miracles of the Prophet. They are intended only for the intellectually under-developed.

In the most orthodox book of Muslim dogmas, *Sharh Mawāqif*, there is this thought-provoking phrase: The miracles of a prophet are intended for the members of his community to try to realise the same thing by ordinary technical means of causes and effects. [www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)

## CHAPTER II

### PRESERVATIONS OF THE ORIGINAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM

**T**HERE could be nothing in common between the true and the false and no two things in the world could be as opposed to each other as these. In the commonplace material things of daily life, the evils of falsehood are obvious and acknowledged by all. Of course in matters of eternal salvation, of beliefs, and of the original teachings of a religion, the evil that falsehood does transcends all other evils.

44. An honest and reasonable man would experience no difficulty in judging whether a certain teaching is just and acceptable, or not. In matters of dogmas however what often happens is that one judges first the person of the teacher prior to his precepts. If he is found trustworthy, one is the more easily persuaded to acknowledge one's own defects of understanding part of his teachings rather than reject totally his words. In such cases, the fact of the authenticity of his words and of his teachings, particularly when the teacher has died, becomes all the more imperative.

45. All the important religions of the world are based on certain sacred books, which are often attributed to Divine revelations. It will be pathetic if, by some misfortune, one were to lose the original text of the revelation; the substitute could never be in entire conformity with what is lost. The Brahmanists, Buddhists, Jews, Parsis, and Christians may compare the method employed for the preservation of the basic teachings of their respective religions with that of the Muslims. Who wrote their books? Who transmitted them from generation to generation? Has the transmission been of the original texts or only their translations? Have not fratricidal wars caused damage to the copies of the texts? Are there no internal contradictions or lacunae to which references are found elsewhere? These are some of the questions that every honest seeker of truth must pose and demand satisfactory replies.



## MEANS OF PRESERVATION

46. By the time that emerged what we call the great religions, men had not only relied on their memory, but had also invented the art of writing for preserving their thoughts, writing being more lasting than the individual memories of human beings who after all have a limited span of life.

47. But neither of these two means is infallible when taken separately. It is a matter of daily experience that when one writes something and then revises it, one finds more or less inadvertent mistakes, omission of letters or even of words, repetition of statements, use of words other than those intended, grammatical mistakes, etc., not to speak of changes of opinion of the writer, who also corrects his style, his thoughts, his arguments, and sometimes, rewrites the entire document. The same is true of the faculty of memory. Those who have the obligation or habitude to learn by heart some text and to recite it later, especially when it involves long passages, know that sometimes their memory fails during the recitation: they jump over passages, mix up one with the other, or do not remember at all the sequence; sometimes the correct text remains subconscious and is recalled either at some later moment or at the refreshing of the memory by the indication of someone else or after consulting the text in a written document.

48. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad of blessed memory, employed both the methods simultaneously, each helping the other and strengthening the integrity of the text and diminishing to the minimum the possibilities of error.

## ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

49. The teachings of Islam are based primarily on what the Prophet Muhammad said or did. He himself dictated certain texts to his scribes, which we call the Quran; others were compiled by his companions, mostly on their private initiative, and these we call the Hadith.

## HISTORY OF THE QURAN

50. Quran literally means reading or recitation. While dictating this to his disciples, the Prophet assured them that it was the Divine revelation that had come to him. He did not dictate the whole at

one stretch: the revelations came to him in fragments, from time to time. As soon as he received one, he used to communicate it to his disciples and ask them not only to learn it by heart—in order to recite it during the service of worship—but also to write it down and to multiply the copies. On each such occasion, he indicated the precise place of the new revelation in the text of till-then-revealed Quran; his was not a chronological compilation. One cannot admire too much, this precaution and care taken for accuracy, when one takes into consideration the standard of the culture of the Arabs of the time.

51. It is reasonable to believe that the earliest revelations received by the Prophet were not committed to writing immediately, for the simple reason that there were then no disciples or adherents. These early portions were neither long nor numerous. There was no risk that the Prophet would forget them, since he recited them often in his prayers and proselytising talks.

52. Some facts of history give us an idea of what happened. 'Umar is considered to be the fortieth person to embrace Islam. This refers to the year 5 of the Mission (8 before the Hijrah). Even at such an early date there existed written copies of certain chapters of the Quran, and as Ibn Hisham reports, it was due to the profound effects produced by the perusal of some such document that 'Umar embraced Islam. We do not know precisely the time since when the practice of writing down the Quran began, yet there is little doubt that during the remaining eighteen years of the life of the Prophet, the number of the Muslims as also that of the copies of the sacred text went on increasing day by day. The Prophet received the revelations in fragments, it is but natural that the revealed text should have referred to the problems of the day. It may be that one of his companions died; the revelation would be to promulgate the law of inheritance; it could not be that the penal law regarding theft, murder, or wine-drinking for instance, should have been revealed at that moment. The revelations continued during the whole missionary life of Muhammad, thirteen years at Mecca and ten at Madinah. A revelation consisted sometimes of a whole chapter, short of long, and sometimes of only a few verses.

53. The nature of the revelations necessitated that the Prophet should repeat them constantly to his Companions and revise continually the form which the collections of fragments had to take. It

is authoritatively known that the Prophet recited every year in the month of Ramadan, in the presence of the angel Gabriel, the portion of the Quran till then revealed, and that in the last year of his life, Gabriel asked him to recite the whole of it twice. The Prophet concluded thereupon that he was going soon to depart his life. Whatever the spiritual meaning of his angelic aid to the Prophet, his Companions attended these public recitations (called *'ardah*, and the celebrated last presentation: the *'ardah akheerah*) and corrected their private copies of the Quran. Thus the Prophet used to revise in the fasting month verses and chapters and put them in their proper sequence. This was necessary, because of the continuity of new revelations. Sometimes a whole chapter was revealed at a stretch, at others fragments of the same chapter came continually, and this posed no problems. The same was not the case if several chapters began simultaneously to be revealed in fragments (*suwar dhawat al-'adad* of the historians). In this last case one had perforce to note them provisionally and separately on handy materials, such as shoulder blades, palm leaves, slate-like stones, pieces of hides etc. and as soon as a chapter was entirely revealed, the secretaries classified these notes (*nu'allif al-Quran*) under the personal supervision of the Prophet and made a fair copy (cf. Tirmidhi, Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Kathir, etc.). It is also known, that the Prophet was in the habit of celebrating an additional service of worship during the fasting month, every night, sometimes even in congregation, in which he recited the Quran from the beginning to the end, the task being completed in the course of the month. This service of *Tarawih* continues to be observed with great devotion to this our day.

54. When the Prophet breathed his last, a rebellion was afoot in certain parts of the country. In quelling it, several people fell who knew the Quran by heart. The caliph Abu-Bakr felt the urgency of codifying the Quran and the task was accomplished a few months after the death of the Prophet.

55. During the last years of his life, the Prophet used to employ Zaid ibn Thabit as his chief amanuensis for taking dictation of the newly received revelations. Abu-Bakr charged this same gentleman with the task of preparing a fair copy of the entire text in the form of a book. There were then in Madinah several *hafizes* (those who knew the whole Quran by heart) and Zaid was one. He had also attended the *'ardah akheerah* referred to above. The caliph directed him

to obtain two written copies of each portion of the text from among those which had been collated with the recitation of the Prophet himself, prior to its inclusion in the corpus. At the direction of the caliph, the people of Madinah brought to Zaid copies of the various fragments of the Quran which they possessed. The sources declare authoritatively that only two verses were such as had a single documentary evidence and that the rest were supported by the production of numerous copies.

56. The fair copy thus prepared was called the *Mus'haf* (bound leaves). It was kept in his own custody by the caliph Abu-Bakr, and after him by his successor 'Umar. In the meanwhile the study of the Quran was encouraged everywhere in the Muslim empire. Caliph 'Umar felt the need of sending authentic copies of the text to the provincial centres, to avoid deviations; but it was left to his successor, 'Uthman, to bring the task to a head. One of his lieutenants having returned from far off Armenia, reported that he had found conflicting copies of the Quran, and that there were some times even quarrels among the different teachers of the Book on this account. 'Uthman caused immediately the copy prepared for Abu-Bakr to be entrusted to a commission, presided over by the above-mentioned Zaid ibn Thabit, for preparing seven copies; he authorized them to revise the old spelling if necessary. When the task was completed the caliph caused a public reading of the new "edition" before the experts present in the capital, from among the companions of the Prophet, and then sent these copies to different centres of the vast Islamic world, ordering that thenceforward all copies should be based only on the authentic edition. He ordered the destruction of copies which in any way deviated from the text thus officially established.

57. It is conceivable that the great military conquests of the early Muslims persuaded some hypocritical spirits to proclaim their outward conversion to Islam, for material motives, and to try to do it harm in a clandestine manner. They could have fabricated versions of the Quran with interpolations. The crocodile tears shed at the order of the caliph 'Uthman, regarding the destruction of unauthenticated copies of the Quran, could have been only by such hypocrites.

58. It is reported that the Prophet sometimes abrogated certain verses that had been communicated to the people previously, and this



was done on the strength of new Divine revelations. There were Companions, who had learnt the first version, but were not aware of the later modifications, either because of death or of residence outside Madinah. These persons might have left copies to their posterity, which although authentic were yet outdated. Again, some Muslims had the habit of asking the Prophet to explain certain terms employed in the holy text, and noting these explanations on the margins of their copies of the Quran, in order not to forget them. The copies made later, on the basis of these annotated texts could sometimes have caused confusion in the matter of the text and the gloss. In spite of the order of the caliph 'Uthman to destroy the inexact texts, there existed in the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Hijrah enough matter of compiling voluminous works on the "Variants in the Quran." These have come down to us, and a close study shows that these "variants" were due either to glosses or mistakes of deciphering the old Arabic writing which neither possessed vowel signs nor distinguished between letters of close resemblance by means of points, as is done now. Moreover, there existed different dialects in different regions, and the Prophet had allowed the Muslims of such regions to recite in accordance with their dialects, and even to replace the words which were beyond their ken by synonyms which they knew better. This was just an emergent measure of grace and clemency. By the time of the caliph 'Uthman, however public instruction had advanced enough and it was felt desirable that concessions should no more be tolerated lest the Divine text be affected and variants of reading take root.

59. The copies of the Quran sent by 'Uthman to provincial centres gradually disappeared, in the succeeding centuries; one of them is at present in the Topkapi Museum of Istanbul; another incomplete one is now in Tashkent. The Czarist government of Russia had published this latter with a facsimile reproduction; and we see that there is complete identity between these copies and the text otherwise in use. The same is true of other extant MSS. of the Quran, both complete and fragmentary, dating from the first century of the Hijrah onwards.

60. The habit of learning by heart the text of the entire Quran dates from the time of the Prophet himself. The caliphs and other heads of Muslim States have always encouraged this habit. A happy coincidence has further reinforced the integrity of the text. In fact

from the very beginning, Muslims have been accustomed to read a work in the presence of its author or one of his authorised pupils, and obtain his permission of further transmission of the text established and corrected at the time of study and collation. Those who recited the Quran by heart or simply read the written text, also acted in the same manner. The habit has continued down to our own day, with this remarkable feature that every master indicates in detail in the certificate given by him not only the fact that the rendering of his pupil was correct, but also that it was in conformity with that which this master had learned from his own master, and that this last had affirmed that he in his turn had learnt it from his master, the chain mounting up to the Prophet. The writer of these lines studied the Quran at Madinah with Shaikh al-Qurra. Hasan ash-Sha'ir, and the certificate he obtained notes, among other things, the chain of masters and masters of masters, and in the final act how the master had studied simultaneously from 'Uthman, 'Ali, Ibn Mas'ud, Ubaiy ibn Ka'b and Zaid ibn Thabit (all companions of the Prophet) and that all had taught exactly the same text. The number of *hafizes* is now counted in the world by hundreds of thousands, and millions of copies of the text are found in all parts of the globe. And what deserves to be noted is that there is absolutely no difference between the memories of the hafizes and the texts employed.

61. The original of the Quran was in Arabic, and the same text is still in use. Translations have been made in all the important languages of the world, more or less serviceable to those who do not know Arabic. It is to be remembered however that it is in the original Arabic language that the text has come down to us, and there has been no need of retranslating into Arabic from some later translation.

62. A text in the original language, a codification under the auspices of the Prophet himself, a continued preservation by the simultaneous double control of memory and writing, in addition to studying under qualified teachers, and this by a large number of individuals in every generation, and the absence of any variants in the text — these are some of the remarkable features of the Quran, the holy book of the Muslims.

#### CONTENTS OF THE QURAN

63. As stated previously, the Muslims believe that the Quran is

the Word of God, revealed to His messenger Muhammad. This messenger is only an intermediary for the reception and communication of the revelations; his role is neither of an author nor of compiler. If the Prophet Muhammad sometimes ordered the suppression of certain verses, that was done merely on the basis of a new revelation coming to him from the Almighty.

64. God is transcendent and beyond all physical perception of man, and it is through the medium of a celestial messenger, an angel, that God causes His will and His command to be revealed to His human messenger, for the sake of mankind. God is above all bounds of language. We may in explanation employ the metaphor, that the prophets are bulbs, and the revelation the electric current; with the contact of the current, the bulb gives a light according to its voltage and colour. The mother-tongue of a prophet is the colour of the bulb. The power of the bulb, the current and other things are determined by God Himself; the human factor is just an instrument of transmission, only an intermediary.

64/a. The Quran is, according to Islam, the Word of God; and the Quran itself repeats again and again, that the believer must recite it day and night, whenever one can. The mystics have well explained that it is a travelling of man towards God by means and through the word of God, the word of God being the high road, even as the electric current is the road for light, which joins the lamp with the power house. This is not an empty verbosity. In fact the Prophet Muhammad has strongly recommended that one should read the whole of the Quran once a week. This has led to its division into seven parts called *manzils*. Further the Quran has 114 chapters, called *surats*, each of which has a number of verses, called *ayats*. In Arabic *manzil* means a station after the day's journey; *surat* means a walled enclosure, a room; and the root *awa*, from which the word *ayat* is derived, means to go to bed. Station, room, bed, these are the three elements of the journey of the traveller, spiritual or temporal. The traveller undertaking a long spiritual journey has to halt in a station after the day's journey, requires a room and a bed to take rest before the further march the next day in this eternal journey towards the Eternal and Limitless!

65. The Quran is addressed to all humanity, without distinction

of race, region or time. Further, it seeks to guide man in all walks of life: spiritual, temporal, individual and collective. It contains directions for the conduct of the head of a State, as well as a simple commoner, of the rich as well as of the poor, for peace as well as for war, for spiritual culture as for commerce and material well-being. The Quran seeks primarily to develop the personality of the individual: every being will be personally responsible to his Creator. For this purpose, the Quran not only gives commands, but also tries to convince. It appeals to the reason of man, and it relates stories, parables and metaphors. It describes the attributes of God, Who is one, Creator of all, Knower, Powerful, capable of resuscitating us after death and taking account of our worldly behaviour, Just, Merciful, etc. It contains also the mode of praising God, of pointing out which are the best prayers, what the duties of man are with regard to God, to his fellow-beings and to his own self; this last because we do not belong to ourselves but to God, who has deposited our self with us. The Quran speaks of the best rules relating to social life, commerce, marriage, inheritance, penal law, international law, and so on. But the Quran is not a book in the ordinary sense; it is a collection of the Words of God, revealed from time to time, during twenty-three years, to His messenger sent among human beings. The Quran employs graphically the word "king" for God, and "slave for man; when the king desires to communicate a message to His slave He sends a messenger, and gives His instructions to his envoy; therefore there are certain things understood and implied; there are repetitions, and even changes of the forms of expression. Thus God speaks sometimes in the first person and sometimes in the third. He says "I" as well as "We" and "He", but never "They". It is a collection of revelations sent occasion by occasion — and this fact must be recalled to the beginner — and one should therefore read it again and again in order to better grasp the meaning. It has directions for everybody, every place and for all time.

66. The diction and style of the Quran are magnificent and appropriate to its Divine quality. Its recitation moves the spirit of even those who just listen to it, without understanding it. In passing, the Quran (cf. 17/88, 11/13, 2/23, 10/38) has by virtue of its claim of a Divine origin, challenged men and jinn to produce unitedly even a few verses equal to those of the Quran. The challenge has remained unanswered to this day. [www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)



## THE HADITH

67. The narrations on Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, are called *Hadith*, whether they concern what he said or did or even simply tolerated among his disciples if they said or did something in his presence. This tacit approval implies the permissibility of the conduct in question of the public.

68. The Quran has reminded dozens of times the juridical importance of the Hadith: “. . . obey God and obey the messenger . . .” (4/59), “. . . what the messenger giveth you, take it; and whatever he forbiddeth, abstain from it . . .” (59/7), “nor doth he speak of his own desire: it is naught save a revelation that is revealed” (53/3-4), “And verily in the messenger of God ye have a good example for him who looketh unto God and the Last Day and remembereth God much” (33/21). Thus whatever the Holy Messenger commanded, it was, in the eyes of the community, the will of his Divine sender. There have been cases when the Prophet, not having received a revelation, had made a personal effort to formulate opinion through common sense. If God did not approve that, a revelation came to correct him. This internal process of the formation of the Hadith came only *post eventum* to the knowledge of the community, and had no practical consequences. But the Hadith has another importance as under:

69. The Quran is often succinct; it is in the practice of the Prophet that one must look for the method of application, the details and necessary explanations. An illustration in point is: The Quran has said only: “Establish the service of worship”. without giving the details of the manner in which it should be celebrated. The Prophet also could not describe everything merely by words. That is why one day he told the faithful: “Look at me, see how I worship, and follow me.”

70. The importance of the Hadith is increased for the Muslims by the fact that the Prophet Muhammad not only taught, but also took the opportunity of putting his teachings into practice in all the important affairs of life. He lived for twenty-three years after his appointment as the messenger of God. He endowed his community with a religion, which he scrupulously practised himself. He founded a State, which he administered as supreme head, maintaining internal peace and

order, heading armies for external defence, judging and deciding the litigations of his subjects, punishing the criminals, and legislating in all walks of life. He married, and left a model of family life. Another important fact is that he did not declare himself to be above the ordinary law, which he imposed on others. His practice was therefore not mere private conduct, but a deailed interpretation and application of his teachings.

71. Muhammad, as a man, was careful in his actions and modest. As a messenger of God, he took all necessary and possible steps for the communication, as well as the preservation of the Divine message, the Quran. Had he taken the same steps for the preservation of his own sayings, he would have been considered by some as an egoist. For this reason, the story of the Hadith is quite different from that of the Quran.

#### OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

72. There is a part of the Hadith, the very nature of, which required that it should be written down, namely the official documents of the Prophet.

73. From a passage of the *Ta'rikh* of at-Tabari it appears that, when the Muslims of Mecca, persecuted by their compatriots, went to Abyssinia for refuge, the Prophet gave them a letter of recommendation addressed to the Negus. There are some other documents likewise written by him before the Hijrah, but when he left his native town to settle in Madinah and found invested in himself the State authority, the number and the subject-matter of his letters increased from day to day.

74. Shortly after his arrival in Madinah, he succeeded in establishing there a city-state, composed both of the Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants; and he endowed that State with a written constitution, in which he mentioned in a precise manner the rights and duties of the head of the State and the subjects, and laid down provisions regarding the functioning of this organisation. This document has come down to us. The Prophet also delimited in writing the frontiers of this city-state. About the same time, he ordered a written census of the entire Muslim population, and al-Bukhari says, the returns showed 1,500 individual registries. [www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)

75. Moreover there were treaties of alliance and of peace, concluded with many Arabian tribes. Sometimes two copies of the treaty were prepared and each party kept one. Letters-patent were awarded extending protection to the submitting chieftains, and confirming their previous proprietary rights on land, water sources, etc. With the extension of the Islamic State, there was naturally certain amount of correspondence with provincial governors for communicating new laws and other administrative dispositions, for revising certain judicial or administrative decisions emanating from private initiative of officials, for replying to questions set by these officials to the central government, and regarding taxes, etc.

76. There were also missionary letters sent to different sovereigns inviting them to embrace Islam, such as those despatched to the tribal chieftains in Arabia, emperors of Byzantium and Iran, Negus of Abyssinia and others.

77. For every military expedition, volunteers were raised, and written lists were maintained. Captured booty was listed in detail to enable an equitable distribution among the members of the expeditionary force.

78. The liberation as well as purchase and sale of slaves also seems to have been made by written documents. At least three such documents, emanating from the Prophet himself, have come down to us.

79. An interesting incident may here be mentioned. On the day of the capture of Mecca in the year 8 H., the Prophet had made an important pronouncement which included certain legal provisions. At the demand of a Yemenite, the Prophet ordered that a written copy of his pronouncement should be prepared and handed over to the person, Abu-Shah.

80. We may also mention a case of the translation of the Quran. The Prophet had prescribed that every Muslim should celebrate his worship in Arabic. Certain Persians embraced Islam; and they did not want to put off prayer till the time they should have committed to memory the Arabic texts or chapters of the Quran. With the approval of the Prophet, Salman al-Farsi, a Muslim of Persian origin knowing Arabic, translated into Persian the first chapter of the Quran for

the immediate above mentioned requirements of the Persian converts. They employed it till they learned the Arabic text by heart. (Cf. *Mabsut* of Sarakhsi, 1,37; *Nihayah Hashiyat al-Hidayah* by Taj ash-Shari'ah ch. salaah).

81. Works incorporating these kinds of documents of the time of the Prophet cover several hundreds of pages.

82. It may be observed that the Prophet was particularly interested in public instruction, and he used to say: "God has sent me as a teacher (*mu'allim*)." On his arrival in Madinah, his first act was the construction of a mosque, where a part was reserved for school purposes. This was the famous *Suffah* which served as dormitory during the night and as lecture hall during the day for all those who wanted to profit by this facility. In the year 2 H., when the pagan army of Meccans was routed at Badr and a number of prisoners captured, the Prophet ordered that all those prisoners who knew reading and writing could pay their ransom by giving instruction to ten Muslim boys each (cf. Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Sa'd). The Quran (11/282) also ordained that commercial credit transactions could only be executed by written documents attested by two witnesses. These and other arrangements contributed to the rapid increase of literacy among the Muslims. It is not surprising that the companions of the Prophet grew ever more interested in the preservation by writing of the pronouncements of their supreme guide. Like every new and sincere convert, their devotion and enthusiasm were great. A typical example is the following: 'Umar reports that on his arrival at Madinah, he became contractual brother of a local Muslim—at the time of the famous Fraternisation ordered by the Prophet rehabilitating the Meccan refugees—and both of them worked alternatively in a farm of date palms. When 'Umar worked, his companion visited the Prophet and reported to 'Umar in the evening all that he had seen or heard in the presence of the Prophet; and when his turn came 'Umar did the same. Thus both of them were abreast of what was passing around the Prophet, e.g., the promulgation of new laws, learning the questions of politics and defence, and so on. As to the written compilation of the Hadith, during the lifetime of the Prophet, the following incidents will speak for themselves:

#### COMPILATIONS OF THE TIME OF THE PROPHET

83. At-Tirmidhi reports: One day an Ansarite (Madinan Mus-



lim) complained to the Prophet that he had a weak memory and that he forgot quickly the Prophet's instructive discourses. The Prophet replied: Take the aid of thy right hand (i.e., write down).

84. A large number of sources (al-Tirmidhi, Abu-Dawud, etc.) narrate that 'Abdallah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, a young Meccan, had the habit of writing all that the Prophet used to say. One day his comrades rebuked him, saying that the Prophet was a human being, he could sometimes be happy and satisfied, at other times annoyed or angry, and that it was not desirable that one should note indiscriminately all that he uttered. 'Abdallah went to the Prophet, and asked him if one could note all that he said. He replied! "Yes". To be surer. 'Abdallah persisted: Even when thou art happy and satisfied, even when thou art angry! The Prophet said: "Of course; by God! Nothing that comes out of this mouth is ever a lie." 'Abdallah gave his compilation, the name of "*Sahifa Sadiqah*" (the book of truth). For several generations it was taught and transmitted as an independent work; it was later incorporated into the larger collections of the Hadith compiled by Ibn Hanbal and others. Ad-Darimi and Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam report: Once this same 'Abdallah had his pupils around him and somebody asked: "Which of the two cities will be captured by Muslims first, Rome or Constantinople? 'Abdallah caused an old box to be brought to him, took a book out of it, and having turned its pages awhile, read as follows: "One day when we were sitting around the Prophet to write down what he was saying, someone asked him: Which of the two cities will be captured first, Rome or Constantinople? He replied: The city of the descendants of Heraclius." This narration definitely proves that the companions of the Prophet were interested even during his lifetime in writing down his very words.

85. More important is the case of Anas. One of the rare Madinans who could read and write when only ten years old, he was presented by his devoted parents to the Prophet as his personal attendant. Anas did not quit the company of the Prophet till he died. Remaining night and day in his house, Anas had the opportunity of seeing the Prophet and hearing from him that which was not practicable for others. It is Anas who reports the saying of the Prophet: "Capture the science by means of writing." In later times, one of the pupils of Anas reports: If we insisted—another version: if we were numerous—Anas used to unroll his sheets of documents and say: These are the

sayings of the Prophet, which I have *noted and then also read out to him* to correct any mistake.”—This important statement speaks not only of the compilation during the lifetime of the Prophet, but also of its collation and verification by the Prophet. The case is cited by numerous classical authorities, such as ar-Ramhurmuzi (d. about 360 H.), al-Hakim (d. 405), al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 463) and these great traditionists cite earlier sources.

#### COMPILATIONS OF THE TIME OF THE COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET

86. It was natural that the interest in the biography of the Prophet should have increased after his death. His Companions left for the benefit of their children and relatives, accounts of what they knew of the Prophet. The new converts had a thirst for the sources of their religion. Death was diminishing daily the number of those who knew Hadith at first hand; and this was an added incentive to those who survived, to pay closer attention to the preservation of their memoirs. A large number of works were thus compiled on the sayings and doings of the Prophet, based on the narration of his Companions, after the death of the master. Of course that refers to the first hand knowledge.

87. When the Prophet nominated ‘Amr ibn Hazm as governor of Yemen, he gave him written instructions regarding the administrative duties he had to perform. ‘Amr preserved this document, and also procured copies of twenty-one other documents emanating from the Prophet, addressed to the tribes of Juhainah, Judham, Taiy, Thaqif, etc., and compiled them in the form of a collection of official documents. This work has come down to us. (See appendix in Ibn Tulun’s *I’lam as-Sa’ilin*).

88. In the *Sahih* of Muslim, we read that Jabir ibn ‘Abdallah compiled an opuscle on the pilgrimage of Mecca, in which he gave an account of the last pilgrimage of the Prophet and included his celebrated farewell address pronounced on the occasion. Several sources mention also a *Sahifah* of Jabir, which his pupils used to learn by heart. Probably it dealt with the general sayings and doings of the Prophet.

89. Two other companions of the Prophet, Samurah ibn Jundab and Sa’d ibn ‘Ubadah are also reported to have compiled their me-

moirs, for the benefit of their children. Ibn Hajar, speaking of them, adds that the work of Samurah was big and voluminous. Ibn 'Abbas, who was very young at the death of the Prophet, learnt many things from his elder comrades, and compiled with this material numerous works. The chroniclers state: When he died, he left a camel-load of writings. Ibn Mas'ud, one of the greatest jurists among the Companions, had also compiled a book on Hadith, and later his son 'Abd ar-Rahman used to show that to his friends (cf. al-Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, ch. Ibn Mas'ud).

90. Al-Bukhari narrates, that 'Abdallah ibn Abi Awfa, Abu Bakrah, and al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah taught Hadith by correspondence: If anyone desired information about the Prophet, they replied in writing. They even took the initiative of communicating, to officials and friends for instance, decisions of the Prophet bearing on the problems of the hour.

91. More instructive is the following report, preserved by numerous sources (such as Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's *Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm*): One day a pupil of Abu-Hurairah told him: Thou hadst told me such and such a thing. Abu-Hurairah, who was apparently in his old age, with enfeebled memory refused to believe the Hadith, yet when his pupil insisted that it was from him that he had learnt it, Abu-Hurairah replied: If thou hadst learnt it from me, it must be in my writings. He took him by his hand, and conducted him to his house, showed him "many books on the Hadith of the Prophet," and at last he found the narration in question. Thereupon he exclaimed: I had told thee, that if thou hadst learnt it from me, it must be found in my writings.—It is to be noted that the story employs the expression: "many books". Abu-Hurairah died in the year 59 H. To one of his pupils, Hammam ibn Munabbih, he dictated (or gave in writing) an opuscle of 138 traditions about the Prophet. This work, which dates from the first half of the first century of the Hijrah, has been preserved. It enables us to make a comparison with later compilations of the Hadith and to confirm the fact that the memoirs of the ancients on the Hadith have been preserved with great care for the benefit of posterity.

92. Adh-Dhahabi (*Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*) reports: The caliph Abu-Bakr compiled a work, in which there were 500 traditions of the Prophet, and handed it over to his daughter 'Aishah. The next morn-

ing, he took it back from her and destroyed it, saying: "I wrote what I understood; it is possible however that there should be certain things in it which did not correspond textually with what the Prophet had uttered." As to 'Umar, we learn on the authority of Ma'mar ibn Rashid, that during his caliphate, 'Umar once consulted the companions of the Prophet on the subject of codifying the Hadith. Everybody seconded the idea. Yet 'Umar continued to hesitate and pray to God for a whole month for guidance and enlightenment. Ultimately he decided not to undertake the task, and said: "Former peoples neglected the Divine Books and concentrated only on the conduct of the prophets; I do not want to set up the possibility of confusion between the Divine Quran and the Prophet's Hadith." Latest research shows that formal reports testifying to the writing down of the Hadith concern not less than fifty Companions of the Prophet. Details would be too long here.

#### INTERDICTION ON THE WRITING DOWN OF HADITH

93. The last two narrations, regarding Abu-Bakr and 'Umar, are important in as much as they explain the real implication of the tradition which says that the Prophet had forbidden to write down his sayings. If there was really a general interdiction these two foremost Companions of the Prophet would not have dared to even think of the compiling of the Hadith; and when they renounced the idea of recording the Hadith, they would not have invoked a reason other than the interdiction of the Prophet, to silence those who remained in favour of the idea. As far as we know, the only narrators who are reported to have said that the Prophet had ordered not to write down anything other than the Quran, are Abu-Sa'id al-Khudri, Zaid ibn Thabit, and Abu-Hurairah. Neither the context nor the occasion of this direction is known. One should note that Abu-Sa'id al-Khudri and Zaid ibn Thabit were among the young companions of the Prophet: in the year 5 H., they were scarcely 15 years old. However intelligent they might have been, it is comprehensible that the Prophet prohibited them in the early years after the Hijrah from noting down his talks. As to Abu-Hurairah, we have just seen that he had himself compiled "many books on the Hadith." He is known in history as a very pious man, puritan and rigid; and it is unthinkable that a man of his character should have violated an express prohibition of the Prophet, if he had not heard later from the Prophet himself of the lifting of the prohibition. Abu-Hurairah came from Yemen in the year 7 H., to



embrace Islam. It is possible that in the first days after his conversion, the Prophet ordered him to write down nothing but the Quran; and later when he had mastered the Quran and was able to distinguish between the Divine Book and the Hadith, the reason of the interdiction ceased to exist. An important fact is that Ibn 'Abbas is also reported to have said, as his personal opinion, without reference to the Prophet, that the Hadith should not be compiled in writing. Nevertheless, as we have seen above, by his prolificity he surpassed those companions of the Prophet who had consigned the Hadith in writing. The contradiction between the word and the deed of those who are nevertheless known for their piety and scrupulous observance of the directions of the Prophet confirms our supposition that the injunction against writing down of the Hadith had a certain context which has not been preserved to us in the narrations, and that it had a limited scope. We must therefore seek to reconcile between the two contradictory orders of the Prophet rather than reject them both.

94. Three possible explanations come to our mind: (1) The interdiction might have been individual, and concerned those who had newly learnt the art of writing, or those who had newly embraced Islam and were hardly able to distinguish between the Quran and the Hadith. The interdiction was waived in case of the proficiency later acquired. (Abu-Hurairah, for instance, came from Yemen, and it is probable that he mastered the *Musnad* or Himyarite script and not the so-called Arabic script prevalent in Mecca and from thence in Madinah). (2) It might have aimed only at forbidding writing of the Hadith on the same sheets of paper which contained chapters of the Quran, in order to avoid all possible confusion between the text and the commentary. Abu-Sa'id al-Khudri alludes to it; and we possess the formal injunction of the caliph 'Umar against this particular way of writing Hadith. (3) It might have concerned some particular discourses of the Prophet, for instance, the occasion when he made prophecies regarding the future of Islam and its great spiritual and political conquests; the injunction being motivated by the desire that the belief in predestination may not lead certain people to abandon the spirit of endeavour.

95. Other explanations may be adduced, but these would for the present suffice.

#### IN LATER CENTURIES

96. In the beginning the compilations of the Hadith were short

and individual, every Companion noting down his own recollections. In the second generation, when students attended lectures of more than one master, it became possible to collect several memoirs in larger volumes noting carefully the difference of the sources. A few generations later all the memoirs of the Companions of the Prophet were collected, and later still an attempt was made to classify these traditions according to subject matter, and deduce juridical rules, and other scientific usages. As in the case of the Quran, it was required to learn by heart every Hadith; and to aid the memory, one utilized the written texts. Learning from qualified and authorised teachers was also a condition *sine qua non*. This triple method of preservation and security was rigorously observed by some, and less so by others. Hence the relative importance of the different masters and their trustworthiness.

97. Not long after the Prophet, the reporters of the *Hadith* adopted the habit of mentioning not only the name of the Prophet as the ultimate source of the knowledge in question, but also the means one after another of obtaining that information. Al-Bukhari, for instance, would say: "My master Ibn Hanbal has said: I have heard my master 'Abd-ar-Razzaq saying: My Master Ma'mar Ibn Rashid told me. I heard my master Hammam ibn Munabbih told me: My Master Abu-Hurairah told me: I heard the Prophet saying" such and such a thing. For every single report of a few words upon the Prophet, there is such an exhaustive chain of references relating to successive authorities. In a single chain of the narrators, which we have just cited, we find reference made not only to the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari, but also the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal, the *Musannaf* of 'Abd ar-Razzaq, the *Jami'* of Ma'mar, and the *Sahifah* of Hammam dictated to him by Abu-Hurairah, the companion of the Prophet. We find the reports of this chain in all these works—which luckily have all come down to us—in exactly the same words. In the presence of a succession of such authoritative sources, it would be a foolish presumption and rank calumny to suggest, for instance, that al-Bukhari had invented the narration and attributed it to the Prophet or fabricated himself the chain of the narrators, or simply collected the folklore, the hearsay of his epoch and attributed it to the Prophet.

## CONCLUSION

98. It is by this triple method of safeguard, viz., committing to

memory and preserving at the same time by writing and studying the same under qualified teachers—in which each method helps the other and makes the integrity of the reports triply sure—that the religious teachings of Islam have been preserved from the beginning down to our day. This is true as much of the Quran as of the *Hadith* which consists of the memoirs of the companions of the Prophet, concerning the sayings, doings and tacit approval by him of the conduct of his companions. It may be remembered that as a founder of religion too, the Prophet Muhammad had had an immense success. In fact in the year 10 H., he was able to address at 'Arafat (Mecca), a gathering of Muslims numbering about 140,000 Muslims who had come for pilgrimage (without counting many others who had not come to Mecca that year). The biographers of the companions of the Prophet affirm that the number of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad who have reported at least one incident of the life of the Prophet exceeds a hundred thousand. There are bound to be repetitions, but the very multiplicity of the sources recounting one and the same event does but add to the trustworthiness of the report. We possess in all about ten thousand reports (eliminating the repetitions) of the *Hadith*, on the life of the Prophet of Islam, and these concern all aspects of his life including directions given by him to his disciples in spiritual as well as temporal matters.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ISLAMIC CONCEPTION OF LIFE

**T**HE vitality of a society, a people or a civilization depends in a large measure on the philosophy of life conceived and practised. In his natural state, man scarcely thinks of anything but his own individual interest, and only later of his close relatives. There have however been human groups, in every epoch, which have particularly distinguished themselves. When we study the features and characteristics of the past score of civilizations,—and possibly we are now at the dawn of another one—we find that even though one group may become distinguished as the torch-bearer of a civilization in a particular epoch, that does not necessarily mean that all other contemporary groups would be living in a state of savagery. There is rather a relative pre-eminence of one over the others, in the ladder of graded civilizations. When the Phoenicians, for instance, appeared on the scene and developed a brilliant civilization, several other contemporary peoples were perhaps almost as civilized, although lacking the occasion and a suitable field of their activity. At the Arabo-Islamic epoch, the Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese, the Indians and others possessed all the characteristics of civilized peoples; nonetheless they did not rise to the heights of the standard-bearers of the civilization of their epoch. In our own time, if the people of the U.S.A. and Russia form the vanguard with their nuclear might, and other claims, the British, the Chinese, the Frenchmen and the Germans follow close behind. Notwithstanding this progress of some, there are, at the same time, even in this second half of the 20th century, in certain parts of the globe, groups still in savagery if not actual cannibalism.

100. The question arises as to why the evolution of some is rapid, and of others slow? In an epoch when the Greeks enjoyed a glorious civilization why was it that Western Europe was barbarian? Why did barbarism prevail in Russia when the Arabs had risen to the height of splendour? The same question may be posed in respect of several countries in several epochs. Is it purely and simply a question of chance and circumstance, or is it due to the fact that some individuals



of lofty note and noble personality were born in one human group to the exclusion of other groups? There are perhaps other possible explanations also, more complex and depending upon a variety of co-existing causes, governing the accomplishments of some, and the frustration or even extinction of the other.

101. There is still another question. After a momentary state of splendour, why do people fall anew into relative obscurity if not into a semi-barbarous state?

102. We propose to investigate these questions, in relation to contemporary Islam, and discuss, if possible, the chances it has of survival.

103. If one were to believe Ibn Khaldun, the biological factor is the essential cause. At the end of a single generation, the race exhausts its vitality, and for purposes of rejuvenation there must be a change at least in the family of men at the helm of affairs. This racial theory, even if it be considered as a learned exaggeration, can affect ethnic civilizations and such religions as do not admit conversion. Islam luckily escapes this cycle of decadence; for its followers are found among all races, and it continues to achieve greater or smaller progress everywhere in the world. Moreover it is unanimously recognized that Islam has almost completely effaced, inside its community, racial prejudices, a feature which permits it to accept without hesitation, men of any race to be its leaders and standard-bearers. The systematic emancipation of slaves, which was ordered by the Quran, presents another glorious example. As a matter of fact there have been several dynasties of Muslim rulers in history, drawn solely from slaves who had been freshly liberated.

104. The life and death of a civilization depend in an equal measure on the quality of its basic teaching. If it invites its adherents to renounce the world, spiritually will certainly make great progress, yet the other constituent parts of man, his body, his intellectual faculties, etc., will not be allowed to perform their natural duties and will die even before their season of bloom. If, on the other hand, a civilization lays emphasis only on the material aspects of life man will make great progress in those aspects at the expense of others; and such a civilization may even become a sort of boomerang causing

its own death. For materialism often engenders egoism and lack of respect for the rights of others, creating enemies, who await their chance for reprisals. The result is mutual killing. The story of the two brigands is well known. They had captured some booty. One of them went to the town to buy provisions, and the other had to collect wood to prepare the meal. However each one resolved secretly in his heart to get rid of the other and monopolize the illicit gain. So the one who had gone shopping, poisoned the provisions; while his comrade awaited him in ambush, and killed him on his return from the town; but when he tasted the food, he too joined his companion in the other world.

105. There may be another defect inherent in a civilization, when its teachings do not contain an innate capacity for development and adaptation to circumstances. However nice its teaching may be for one epoch or one environment, it may not prove so for another; to be captivated by such a teaching will evidently be fatal to those who come later. An ordinary example would illustrate the point. At a time, when there was no electric lighting and when the centres of cults had no stable revenues, it was certainly an act of piety to light a candle in some place of religious interest, frequented during the night. Nothing may be said against a belief that an act of piety, on the part of a repentant, constitutes an expiation and an effacement of the crime committed against God, or against man which otherwise was hard to repair. But can the continuation of lighting a candle in a place which is already brilliantly lit with electric lamps be anything more than a wastage? Let us study Islam in the light of these circumstances.

### ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY

106. It is well known that the motto of Islam is summed up in the expression of the Quran (2/101), "well-being in this world and well-being in the Hereafter." Islam will certainly not satisfy the extremists of either school, the ultra-spiritualists (who want to renounce all worldly things and mortify themselves as a duty) and the ultra-materialists (who do not believe in the rights of others), yet it can be practised by an overwhelming majority of mankind, which follows an intermediate path, and seeks to develop simultaneously the body and the soul, creating a harmonious equilibrium in man as a whole. Islam

has insisted on the importance of both these constituents of man, and on their inseparability, so that one should not be sacrificed for the benefit of the other. If Islam prescribes spiritual duties and practices, these contain also material advantages; similarly if it authorizes an act of temporal utility, it shows how this act can also be a source of spiritual satisfaction. The following examples will illustrate the argument.

107. One will agree that the aim of spiritual practices is to get closer to the Necessary Being (*dhat wajib al-wujud*), our Creator and Lord, and to obtain His pleasure. Therefore, man tries to "dye himself with the colour of God," as the Quran (2/138) enjoins, in order to see with His eyes, to speak with His tongue, to desire with His will,—as a Hadith says, in short to behave entirely according to His will, seeking even to imitate Him according to one's humble human capacities. A believer must fast at the moment prescribed by the Quran, because that is the order of God. To obey the order of the Lord is in itself piety, but in addition to that, the fast weakens the body, which fortifies the soul by diminishing material desires. One feels a spiritual uplift, thinks of God and of all that He does for us, and enjoys other spiritual benefits. But the fast also does material good. The acidities which secrete from the glands, when one is hungry and thirsty, kill many a microbe in the stomach. One develops also the capacity to bear privation at moments of a crisis and still carry on one's normal duties undisturbed. If one fasts for material ends, it has no spiritual value; yet if one fasts for gaining the good will of God, the material advantages are never lost. Without entering into a detailed discussion, it may be observed that all other spiritual acts or practices of Islam have also the same double effect, spiritual and temporal. So is it in worship, individual or congregational, and so is it in the abnegation of the self at the moment of the pilgrimage to the House of God, in charities to the poor, and in other religious and spiritual practices apart from the obligatory minimum. If one does something solely for the sake of God, it has a double merit: spiritual advantage without the least loss of material benefits. On the contrary, if one does the same thing with only a material aim, one may obtain this object but the spiritual advantage would be completely lost. Let us recall the celebrated saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "Verily actions are solely according to motives and intentions." (cf. Bukhari, Muslim, etc.

108. Speaking of a strictly temporal act, such as a tax or a war, one pays taxes to the government. It should not be astonishing, that Islam considers this act<sup>1</sup> as one of the five basic elements of the Faith, as important as belief, worship, fasting and pilgrimage! The significance is deep: One unites the spiritual and the temporal in a single whole, and one pays the tax not as a corvee or even as a social duty, but solely for the sake of God. When this duty of paying the taxes becomes fixed in the mind as something sacred, a duty unto God from Whom nothing can be concealed and Who is, moreover, capable of resuscitating us and demanding our account, one can easily understand with what care and scruple a believer will pay his dues in the performance of this obligation. Similarly, war is forbidden in Islam except in the way of God; and it is not difficult to understand that such a soldier is more apt to be humane and will not seek any earthly gain in the course of risking his life. By spiritualizing the temporal duties, Islam has had no other motive but strengthening the spiritual side of man, who, in this manner, far from seeking the material advantage of the material thing, aspires thereby to obtain only the pleasure of God. The Prophet has said: Ostentation is a sort of polytheism (*shirk*); and the reason as explained by al-Ghazali, is that when he said: If somebody worships or fasts for ostentation, it is *shirk* (polytheism), a worship of one's self, not of God Almighty; on the contrary, if one even cohabits with one's own wife—not for the carnal pleasure, but for performing the duty imposed by God—that is an act of piety and devotion, meriting the pleasure of and reward from God, as the Prophet has observed (cf. Ibn Hanbal, V, 154, 167, 187, etc.)

109. A corollary perhaps of the same all-embracing conception of life, is the fact that the Quran uses very often the double formula "believe and do good deeds", the mere profession of faith, without application or practice, has not much value. Islam insists as much on the one as on the other. The doing of good deeds without the belief in God is certainly preferable, in the interests of society, to the practice of evil deeds; yet from the spiritual standpoint, a good deed without faith cannot bring salvation in the Hereafter.

---

1. In the Quranic terminology, Zakat does not mean charity. It is a tax on agricultural product, on mineral extractions, on commerce, on herds and all these taxes are called zakat. The expenditure is mentioned in the Quran 9/60, for details see *infra* chapter 10. [www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)



110. But how to distinguish the good from the evil? In the first instance, it is the revealed law which alone can be the criterion, but in the last resort, it is one's conscience which can be one's arbiter. When a problem is posed. One can refer to the text of the Islamic law, personally if one can, and with the help of the learned and the experts if necessary. Yet a jurisconsult can only reply on the basis of facts which have been brought to his notice. If certain material facts should have been concealed from him, whether intentionally or otherwise, the consequent injustice cannot be imputed to law. We may recall a charming little discourse of the Prophet, who said one day: "People! in the complaints which come to me, I decide only on the basis of facts brought to my knowledge; if, by lack of full information, I decide in favour of someone who has no right, let him know that I accord him a part of the Hell-fire." (cf. Bukhari, Muslim, etc.) An Islamic judicial maxim stresses the same when it says: "Consult thy conscience even if the jurisconsults provide justification to thee." (contained in a Hadith reported by Ibn Hanbal and al-Darimi).

111. Never to think of others, but of one's own self, is not human but beastly. To think of others after having satisfied one's own needs is normal and permitted. Yet the Quran praises those "who prefer others above themselves though poverty become their lot" (59: 9). Evidently this is only a recommendation, and not an obligatory duty laid on the average man; if one does not observe it, one will not be considered a criminal or a sinner. We can cite the famous saying of the Prophet, in the same vein of recommendation: "The best of men is the one who does good to others."

112. The Quranic direction may be considered as a characteristic trait of Islam, to wit: "and of the bounty of thy Lord (on thee) by thy discourse" (93: 11). A saying of the Prophet (cited by Tirmidhi) explains it in an impressive manner: "God likes to see the traces of His bounty on His creature." It had so happened, that one of his companions came to see him with a miserable attire, even though he was a well-to-do person. When the Prophet asked him the reason, he replied that he preferred to have a wretched look, not for miserliness but for piety, as he preferred the needy to his own self. The Prophet did not approve it, and put a limit to self-sacrifice and ordered (cf. Abu Dawud): "When God has given you means, the traces of His bounty should be visible on you." The

Quran (28: 77) further enjoins “. . . and neglect not thy portion of this world.” Islam does not admit that man should cease to work and become a parasite; on the contrary one must use all one’s gifts and talents for profiting by God’s creations, and acquire as much as possible; what exceeds one’s requirements may go to the aid of those who lack the necessaries. The Prophet has unequivocally said: “It is better that you leave behind you, your relatives well-off, rather than obliged to beg alms of others.” (Bukhari). Notwithstanding the imposition of heavy daily practices, Islam does not demand mortification or voluntary misery; on the contrary the Quran reproaches those who would develop such an attitude:

“Say: Who hath forbidden the adornment of God which He hath brought forth for His servants, and the delicious things of nourishment? Say: they are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, being exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection. Thus do We detail Our commands for people who have knowledge.” (7/32).

There are things permitted by the Divine law: to deny voluntarily for one’s self is not necessarily an act of piety, as would be the case of abstaining from things forbidden by the same law.

## BELIEF IN GOD

113. Man seems to have always sought to know his Creator for the sake of obeying Him. The best religious leaders of every epoch and civilization have established certain rules of conduct for this purpose. The primitive people worshipped the manifestations of the power and beneficence of God, hoping thus to please Him. Some others believed in two separate gods, one of the good and the other of the evil: yet they overlooked the logical consequences of such a distinction which implies a civil war between gods. Yet others have enshrouded God with mysteries which mystify sometimes the person of God. And some others have felt the need of such symbols, formulas or gestures, which hardly distinguish their theological conceptions from idolatry or Polytheism.

114. In this field, Islam has its particularity. It believes in the absolute Oneness of God, and prescribes a form of worship and prayer which admits neither images nor symbols (considering them to

be the remnants of primitivism and idolatry). In Islam, God is not only transcendent and non-material, beyond any physical perception, (cf. Quran 6/103: "Sights comprehend Him not"), but He is also Immanent, Omnipresent and Omnipotent (cf. Quran 50/16, 56, 85, 58/7). The relations between man and his Creator are direct and personal, without requiring any intermediary. Even the saintliest of the saints, such as prophets, are only guides and messengers; and it is left to the individual man to make his choice and be directly responsible to God.

115. It will thus be seen that Islam seeks to develop the personality of the individual. It admits that man has his weaknesses, as he is constituted simultaneously of the capacities both of good and evil; yet it does not admit that there is original sin in him, as this would be an injustice. If Adam had committed a sin, this should create no responsibility on his posterity, each individual human being remaining responsible for his personal account only.

116. In his weakness, the individual may commit offences against God or against fellow creatures. Each offence has in principle a proportionate liability (punishment), yet Islam recognizes the possibility of pardon, the elements of which are repentance and reparations. As to offences against man, they should be amended, as far as possible; so that the victim may pardon either gratuitously; or at the restitution of the object taken away from him or by having it replaced, or in any similar way. As regards offences against God, man may receive either a suitable punishment or a gracious pardon from the Lord. Islam does not admit that God needs to punish first some innocent person in order to accord His pardon to other repentant sinners; for this vicarious punishment would be unjust on the part of God.

## SOCIETY

117. Even as Islam seeks to develop individuality in man, it seeks also social collectivity. This could be seen in all its prescriptions, be they religious or temporal. Thus the service of worship is collective in principle, (if in case of need there is some exemption regarding the five daily prayers, there is none regarding the weekly or annual prayer services); pilgrimage is an even more manifest example, since the believers assemble in the same place, coming from all points of the globe; the collective aspect of fasting manifests itself in the fact

that it takes place in the same month for the faithful all over the world; the requirement of having a caliph, the obligation of paying the zakat-tax intended for the needs of the collectivity, etc.—all these things testify to the same objective. It goes without saying that in collectivity, or society, there is a force which persons do not possess individually.

118. For reasons best known to Him, God has endowed different individuals with different talents. Two children of the same couple, two pupils of the same class do not always have the same qualities or capacities. All lands are not equally fertile; climates differ; two trees of the same species do not produce the same quantity or quality. Every being, every part of a being has its own peculiarities. On the basis of this natural phenomenon, Islam affirms, on the one hand, the original equality of all, and on the other, the superiority of individuals one over the other: All are creatures of the same Lord, and it is not material superiority which counts for obtaining the greater appreciation of God. Piety alone is the criterion of the greatness of the individual. After all, life in this world is but ephemeral, and there must be a difference between the behaviour of a man and a beast.

#### NATIONALITY

119. It is in this sense, that Islam rejects the narrow basis of birth and common blood as the element of solidarity. The attachment to parentage or to the soil on which one is born, is no doubt natural; yet the very interest of the human race demands a certain tolerance towards other similar groups. The distribution of the natural wealth in different parts of the world in varying quantities renders the world interdependent. Inevitably one is forced to "live and let live"; otherwise an interminable succession of vendettas will destroy all Nationality on the basis of language, race, colour, or birthplace is too primitive; therein is a fatality, an impasse—something in which man has no choice. The Islamic notion is progressive, and is based solely on the choice of the individual. For it proposes the unity of all those who believe in the same ideology, without distinction of race, tongue, or place of abode. Since extermination or subjugation of others is excluded the only valid possibility is assimilation. And which means can serve better such assimilation, if not belief in the same ideology? It may be repeated that Islamic ideology is a synthesis of the requirements both of the body and the soul; moreover it inculcates a tolerance. Islam has proclaimed that God has always sent His messengers, at



different epochs among different peoples. Islam itself claims nothing more than the function of renewing and reviving the eternal message of God, so often repeated at the hands of prophets. It prohibits all compulsion in the matter of religious beliefs; and however unbelievable it may sound, Islam is under the self-imposed religious dogmatic duty of giving autonomy to non-Muslims residing on the soil of the Islamic State. The Quran, the *Hadith* and the practice of all time demand that non-Muslims should have their own laws, administered in their own tribunals by their own judges, without any interference on the part of the Muslim authorities, whether it be in religious matters or social (cf. *infra* ch. 12 § 406 ff).

### ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

120. The social importance of economic questions is too evident to require emphasis. The Quran does not exaggerate when it declares (4:5) that the material goods constitute the very means of the subsistence of humanity. If everyone were to think of none but his single self, society will be more and more in danger, for the simple reason that there are always a very few rich and a very many poor; and at a moment of struggle for existence, the vast majority of the famishing will in the long run exterminate the small minority of the rich. One can bear many privations, but not of ailments. The Islamic conception on this subject is well known. It envisages the constant redistribution and circulation of the national wealth. Thus, the poor are exempt from taxation, whereas the rich are taxed to provide for the needy. Again, there are laws, which require the obligatory distribution of the heritage, those which forbid the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, by banning interest on loans, and prohibiting bequest to the detriment of the near relatives, etc, and those which prescribe rules for the expenditure of the State revenue, aiming at the beneficial redistribution of the income among the beneficiaries among which the poor top the list. If this principle is kept in view, it tolerates differences in the means and methods according to regions, epochs and circumstances, provided the goal is achieved. The competition of free enterprises may be tolerated if this does not degenerate into the cut throat exploitation and ruin of those who are economically weak. The planning of the whole may equally be tolerated if that appears necessary, due to circumstances or economico-demographical evolution. In any case, wastage of goods as well as of energy is to be

avoided, and such means adopted which are better adapted to the needs of the moment.

#### FREE WILL AND PREDESTINATION

121. This leads us to the philosophic question of the free will. This eternal dilemma can never be resolved by logic alone. For, if man enjoys free will with respect to all his acts, the omnipotence of God suffers thereby. Similarly, if God predestines, why should man be held responsible for his acts? The Prophet Muhammad has emphatically recommended his adherents not to engage in discussions on this topic. "which has led astray those peoples who preceded you", (as Ibn Hanbal, Tirmidhi and others report); and he has separated the two questions, viz, the omnipotence of God and the responsibility of man. In fact there is no logic in love, and the Muslim loves his Creator: he cannot admit that God should have defective attributes; God is not only wise and powerful, but also just and merciful in the highest degree. Islam separates celestial affairs, which are the attributes of God, from human temporal matters and insists on the faithful to act; and since the Divine will rests concealed from man, it is man's duty never to despair after a preliminary failure, but to try again and again until the object is either realized or becomes impossible of attainment. The Islamic concept of predestination comes in this latter case to console man: that was the will of God, and the success or failure in this world has no importance in connection with eternal salvation, in which matter God judges according to intention and effort and not according to the measure of realization and success.

122. According to the Quran (53/36-42), among other passages) such is the truth always revealed by God to His successive messengers:

"Or hath he not news of what is in the leaves (Books) of Moses and of Abraham who paid his debt: That no laden one shall bear another's load, and that man hath only that for which he maketh effort, and that his effort will be seen, and afterwards he will be repaid for it with the fullest payment; and that thy Lord. He is the goal. . . .?"

We are rewarded only because we have accepted also to be punished for acts which are predestined. This seems to be the Divine Deposit with which we have been entrusted, when the Quran (33/72) reports:

“We did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but Man undertook it;—he was indeed unjust and ignorant.” God said: I shall predestine your acts, and want to reward or punish you according to whether they are good or evil. Other created beings said: How? Thou wilt create, and we have to be responsible for the same? They got afraid. Man believed in the limitless mercy of the Lord, and said: Yes Lord, I accept to take this responsibility and this Deposit of Thine. This pleased the Lord so much that He ordered even the angels to prostrate before Man. To sum up, since Islam separates completely the two questions, it is not difficult for it to admit simultaneously the requirements of man (effort, sense of responsibility) and the rights of God with all His attributes, including the power to predetermine.

123. Predetermination in Islam has another significance, not less important, namely, it is God Who alone attributes to a human act the quality of good or evil; it is God Who is the source of all law. It is the Divine prescriptions which are to be observed in all our behaviour; and which He communicates to us through His chosen messengers. Muhammad being the last of these, also the one whose teaching has been the better preserved. We do not possess originals of the ancient messages which have suffered damages in the unhappy fratricidal wars of the human society. The Quran is not only an exception to the rule, but also constitutes the latest Divine message. It is a commonplace that, a law later in date abrogates the former dispositions of the same legislator.

124. Let us, in conclusion, refer to another trait of Islamic life: It is the duty of a Muslim not only to follow the Divine law in his daily behaviour in his life as an individual as well as a part of the collectivity, in matters, temporal as well as spiritual. He is also to contribute according to his capacities and possibilities, to the propagation of this ideology, which is based on Divine revelation and intended for the well-being of all.

125. It will be seen that such a composite creed covers the entire life of man, not only material but also spiritual; and that one lives in this world in the preparation for the Hereafter.

## CHAPTER IV

### FAITH AND BELIEF

**M**EN believe in very many sorts of things: in truth, with all the relativity which this concept has; in superstitions, and sometimes even in what is based on misapprehensions. The beliefs may change with age and experience, among other factors. But certain beliefs are shared by a whole group in common. In this context, the most important aspect is the idea of man regarding his own existence: whence has he come? where does he go? who has created him? what is the object of his existence? and so on and so forth. Metaphysics try to answer to these questions of mental anguish, but that is only a part of religion which is more comprehensive and answers to all the allied questions. The science which treats with this is religion. Beliefs are purely personal affairs. Nevertheless, the history of the human species has known in this connection many an act of fratricidal violence and horror, of which even the beasts would be ashamed. The basic principle of Islam in this matter is the following verse of the Quran (2: 256):

“There is no compulsion in religion; the right direction is henceforth distinct from error; and he who rejecteth the Devil and believeth in God hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break; God is Hearer, Knower.”

It is charity, and even a sacrifice, to guide others and to struggle for dispelling the ignorance of fellow-beings without compelling anybody to any belief whatsoever—such is the attitude of Islam.

127. The knowledge and intelligence of man are in a process of continuous evolution. The medical or mathematical knowledge of a Galen, or of an Euclid scarcely suffices today even for the matriculation examination; the university students require much more knowledge than that. In the field of religious dogmas, primitive man was perhaps even incapable of the abstract notion of a transcendental God,



Whose worship would require neither symbols nor material representations. Even his language was incapable of translating sublime ideas without being forced to use terms which would not be very appropriate for abstract notions.

128. Islam lays very strong emphasis on the fact that man is composed simultaneously of two elements: his body and his soul; and that he should not neglect any one of these for the sole profit of the other. To devote oneself exclusively to spiritual needs would be to aspire to become an angel (whereas God has created angels other than us); to dedicate oneself to purely material needs would be to be degraded to the condition of a beast, a plant, if not a devil, (God has created for this purpose objects other than men). The aim of the creation of man with a dual capacity would remain unfulfilled if he does not maintain a harmonious equilibrium between the requirements of the body and those of the soul simultaneously.

129. Muslims owe their religious faith to Muhammad, the messenger of God. One day the Prophet Muhammad himself replied to a question as to what is Faith and said: "Thou shalt believe in the One God, in His angelic messengers, in His revealed books, in His human messengers, in the Last Day (of Resurrection and final judgement) and in the determination of good and evil by God." On the same occasion, he explained as to what signifies submission to God in practice, and what is the best method of obedience, points which shall be treated in the next two chapters.

## God

130. Muslims have nothing in common with atheists, polytheists, and those who associate others with the One God. The Arabic word for One God is *Allah*, Lord and Creator of the universe.

131. Even the simplest, the most primitive and uncultured man knows well that one cannot be the creator of one's own self: there ought to be a Creator of us all, of the entire universe. Atheism and materialism does not respond to this logical need.

132. To believe in polytheism will entail the difficulty of the division of powers between the several gods, if not a civil war among them. One can easily see that all that is in the universe is inter-

dependent. Man, for instance, requires the aid of plants, metals, animals and stars, even as each one of these objects needs another's help in some way or other. The division of Divine powers thus becomes impracticable.

133. In their praiseworthy solicitude, for not attributing evil to God, certain thinkers have thought of two different gods; a god of the good and a god of the evil. But the question is whether the two would act in mutual accord, or there would arise conflict between them? In the first case, the Duality becomes redundant and superfluous; and if the god of the good consents to the evil, then he becomes even an accomplice in the evil, thus vitiating the very purpose of the Duality. In the second case, one will have to admit that the god of evil would be more often victorious and obtain the upper hand. Should one believe then, in a weakling, the god of the good as God. Moreover, the evil is a relative thing: with regard to one if something is evil the same thing becomes a good with regard to another person, and since the absolute evil does not exist, there is no attribution of the evil to God (cf. *infra* § 155, 157, 228 also).

134. Monotheism alone, pure and unmixed can satisfy reason. God is One, though He is capable of doing all sorts of things. Hence the multiplicity of His attributes. God is not only the creator, but also the master of all: He rules over the Heavens and the earth; nothing moves without His knowledge and His permission. The Prophet Muhammad has said that God has ninety-nine "most beautiful names," for ninety-nine principal attributes: He is the creator, the essence of the existence of all, wise, just, merciful, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, determinant of everything, to Whom belongs life, death, resurrection, etc., etc.

135. It follows that the conception of God differs according to individuals: a philosopher does not envisage it in the same manner as a man in the street. The Prophet Muhammad admired the fervour of the faith of simple folk, and often gave the example of "the faith of old women," that is, unshakable and full of sincere conviction. The beautiful little story of the elephant and a group of blind men is well known: They had never before heard of an elephant; so on its arrival, each of them approached the strange animal: one laid his hand on its trunk, another on its ear, a third on its leg, and a fourth on its tail, another

on its tusks, etc. On their return, each one exchanged impressions and described the elephant in his own manner and personal experience, that it was like a column, like a wing, something hard like a stone, or soft and slender. Everyone was right, yet none had found the whole truth which was beyond his perceptive capacity. If we replace the blind men of this parable by searchers of the Invisible God, we can easily realize the relative veracity of individual experiences. As certain mystics of early Islam have remarked: "There is a truth about God known to the man in the street, another known to the initiated, yet another to the inspired prophets, and lastly the one known to God Himself." In the expose given above, on the authority of the Prophet of Islam, there is enough elasticity for satisfying the needs of different categories of men; learned as well as ignorant, intelligent as well as simple, poets, artists, jurists, mystics, theologians and the rest. The point of view and the angle of vision may differ according to the individual, yet the object of vision remains constant.

136. Muslim savants have constructed their entire system on a juridical basis, where rights and duties are correlative. God has given us the organs and faculties which we possess, and every gift implies a particular obligation. To worship God, to be thankful to Him, to obey Him, to shun all that does not suit His universal Divinity—all these constitute the individual duties of everyone, for which each one shall be personally responsible.

### THE ANGELS

137. God being invisible and beyond all physical perception, it was necessary to have some means of contact between man and God; otherwise it would not be possible to follow the Divine will. God is the creator not only of our bodies, but also of all our faculties—which are diverse and each capable of development. It is He Who has given us the intuition, the moral conscience, and the means we employ to guide us in the right path. The human spirit is capable of both good and evil inspirations. Among the common folk it is possible that good people receive sometimes evil inspirations (temptations) and bad people good inspirations. Inspirations may come from someone other than God also, such as the evil suggestions coming from Devil. It is the grace of God which enables our reason to distinguish between that which is celestial and worthy of following, and that which

is diabolic and fit to be shunned.

138. There are several ways of establishing contact or communication between man and God. The best would have been incarnation; but Islam has rejected it. It would be too degrading for a transcendent God to become man, to eat, drink, be tortured by His own creatures, and even be put to death. However close a man may approach God, in his journeying towards Him; even in his highest ascension, man remains man and very much remote from God. Man may annihilate himself, as say the mystics, and efface completely his personality, in order to act according to the will of God, but still—and let us repeat that—man remains man and subject to all his weaknesses, and God is above all these insufficiencies.

139. Among other means of communication between man and God, which are at the disposal of man, the feeblest perhaps is a dream. According to the Prophet, good dreams are suggested by God and guide men in the right direction.

140. Another means is *ilqa* (literally, throwing something towards someone) a kind of auto-suggestions, of intuition, of presentiment of solutions in case of impasses or insoluble or difficult problems.

141. There is also the *ilham*, which may be translated as "Divine inspiration." Things are suggested to the heart (mind) of a man whose soul is sufficiently developed in the virtues of justice, charity, disinterestedness, and benevolence to others. The saints of all epochs in all countries have enjoyed this grace. When someone devotes one's self to God and tries to forget one's self, there are moments—of very short duration—when the state of the presence of God flashes like a lightning, in which one understands without effort that which no other effort would have succeeded in making him aware. The human spirit—or his heart as the ancients said—is thus enlightened; and then there is a sentiment of conviction, contentment and realization of truth. It is God Who guides him and controls him and his thoughts as well as his actions. Even the prophets—the human messengers of God—get this kind of direction, among others. Anyhow there remains the possibility of error of judgement or of comprehension on the part of man. The mystics affirm that sometimes even the most pious men are led astray by their imperceptible ego, not being able to distinguish the base inspirations [www.thepoet.com](http://www.thepoet.com) as a Divine trial.



142. The highest degree of contact, the surest and the most infallible means of communication between man and his Creator is called *wahy* by the Prophet Muhammad. It is not an ordinary inspiration, but a veritable revelation made to man on the part of the Lord, a celestial communication. Man is matter, God is on the contrary above even the spirit, and therefore beyond all possibility of direct physical contact with man (Quran 6 : 103). God is omnipresent, and, as says the Quran (50 : 16): "nearer to man than his jugular vein"; yet no physical contact is possible. Therefore it is a *malak*—literally a messenger, i.e., a celestial message-bearer, commonly translated as "angel"—who serves as intermediary, or the channel of the transmission of the message of God to His human agent or messenger, i.e., the prophet. None except a prophet receives such a revelation through the intermediary of a celestial messenger. It ought to be remembered that in Islam, prophet does not mean one who makes prophecies and predictions, but only an envoy of God, a bearer of Divine message intended for his people. As to the angel, it does not enter in the scope of our studies here to discuss whether it is a spiritual being, distinct from the material beings in the universe, or something else.

143. According to the Quran, the celestial messenger, who brought revelations to the Prophet, is called Jibril (Jibrail, Gabriel), which etymologically means "the power of God." The Quran cites also Mikal (Mikail Michael), without indicating his functions. The functionary in charge of hell is named Malik (literally "master" or "owner"). It speaks also of other angels without name and without attributes, all of whom execute the orders of the Lord. The Islamic belief is that Jibril, also termed by the Quran "trustworthy spirit (*al-ruh al-amin*), stands above all. In the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, as distinct from the Quran, we read that this celestial messenger, Jibril, did not appear to the Prophet always in the same form. The Prophet saw him sometimes like a being suspended in the air, sometimes in the shape of a man, sometimes like a being having wings, etc. In a narration (cf. § 129) preserved by Ibn Hanbal (I, 53 or No. 374), it is reported that one day in the presence of many people, an unknown person came and put some questions to the Prophet Muhammad, and thereafter went away. Several days afterwards, the Prophet told his companions : I am persuaded to believe that the person who put to me questions on that day was none other than Gabriel, who had come to teach you your religion; and never was I so tardy in recognizing him.

It was so, because he had come to examine the Prophet and not to communicate to him some message of God.

144. The way in which the revelation used to come could be deduced from the following reports in which the Prophet himself or his on-lookers have described it: "Sometimes it came to me like the beating sound of the bell—and this is the hardest experience for me—and when that ceases, I retain well engraved in my memory all that it has said; but sometimes the angel appears to me in the shape of a human being and speaks to me and I retain what he says" (Bukhari). In the transmission of Ibn Hanbal, this same report reads: "I hear the beating sounds and thereupon I keep silent; there is not an occasion of the revelation to me when I do not fear that my soul will depart." His Companions relate their observations as under: "Whenever a revelation came to him, a sort of rest (immobility) captured him" (Ibn Hanbal). Or "Whenever the revelation came to the messenger of God, he was overwhelmed and remained in this state a while as if he was intoxicated" (Ibn Sa'd). Or "The revelation came to him in the coldest day, and when it ceased, the front of the Prophet perspired with (sweat falling as) pearls" (Bukhari). Or "Once when the moment (of revelation) arrived, he let enter his head inside (a garment?), and lo, the face of the messenger of God had become red, and he snored; later the state vanished" (Bukhari). Or "Whenever the revelation came, he suffered therefrom and his face darkened" (Ibn Sa'd). Or "When the revelation came to him, we heard near him like the humming sound of bees" (Ibn Hanbal and Abu Nu'aim). Or "The Prophet suffered great pain when the revelation came to him, and used to move his lips" (Bukhari). Other series of reports say that he then felt the weight of a great load, and say: "I saw the Prophet when a revelation came to him while he was on his camel; the camel began to foam with rage and twist its legs to the point that I feared that they would break with a crack. In fact sometimes the camel sat down, but sometimes it obstinately tried to stand, with legs planted like pegs althrough the time of revelation, and this lasted until the state (of revelation) vanished, and sweat fell from him like pearls" (Ibn Sa'd). Or "The load almost broke the leg of the camel with a crack" (Ibn Hanbal). Zaid Ibn Thabit reports his personal experience of a certain day in the following words: "His leg lay on my thigh and weighed so heavy that I feared that my femur would break with a crack" (Bukhari). In another version, there is this addition: ". . . had it not been for the Prophet of God, I would have

pushed a cry and taken away my leg." Other reports say: "The revelation came to him once while he was standing on the pulpit of the Mosque and he remained immobile" (Ibn Hanbal). Or "He was holding a loaf of meat (during his meal) when a revelation came to him, and when the state ceased, the loaf was still in his hand" (Ibn Hanbal). At such an occasion, the Prophet sometimes lay on his back, sometimes the inmates even covered his face in respect with a piece of cloth, as the circumstance may be. Yet he never lost his consciousness nor control of his self. In the early times of the mission, he used to repeat aloud, during the course of the revelation, what was revealed to him, but soon, while still at Mecca, he abandoned this habit of simultaneous repeating, but began to remain silent till the end of the state of revelation, and then he communicated the message of God to his secretaries to note (as is mentioned in the Quran 75:16): "Stir not thy tongue herewith to hasten it; upon Us the putting together and the reading thereof." And again (20:114): "And hasten not with the Quran ere its revelation hath been perfected unto thee and say: my Lord, increase me in knowledge." And when the Prophet returned to his normal state, he used to dictate to his scribes the portion of the Quran which had just been received by him, in order to publish it amongst the Muslims and to multiply the copies (cf. § 50 and 53 *supra*). In his *al-Mab'ath wa'l-Maghazi* (MS of Fes), Ibn Ishaq reports: "Whenever part of the Quran was revealed to the Messenger of God, he first recited it among men, and then among women."

### THE REVEALED BOOKS

145. God being the Lord of the earth as well as of heavens, it is the duty of man to obey Him, more so because in His mercy, He sends His messengers for the benefit of man, God is the sovereign and the source of all law, spiritual as well as temporal. We have just spoken of the revelations and communications of the will of God to man. It is the collection and compilation of these revelations which constitute the Revealed Books

146. The formula of the creed enunciated by the Prophet Muhammad speaks of the Books, and not merely of the Book which would refer to the Quran only. This tolerance is characteristic of his teaching. The Quran speaks of it in numerous passages. For instance (2:285): "Each one (of the Muslims) believeth in God and His angels

and His books and His messengers,—(and says): We make no distinction between any of His messengers.” Again (35 : 24) it declares: “. . . and there is not a nation but a warner hath passed among them.” And yet again (4 : 164, 40 : 78): “Verily We sent messengers before thee (O Muhammad), among them those of whom We have told thee, and some of them We have not told thee about.” The Quran names and recognizes the scrolls of Abraham, the Torah of Moses, the Psalter of David and the Gospel of Jesus as the books revealed by God.

147. It is true that there is no trace today of the scrolls of Abraham. One knows the sad story of the Torah of Moses and how it was destroyed by Pagans several times. The same fate befell the Psalter. As for Jesus, he had not had the time to compile or dictate what he preached; it is his disciples and their successors who gleaned his utterances and transmitted them to posterity in a number of recensions, of which at least 70 recensions or Gospels are known, and excepting four all are declared by the Church to be apocryphal. Be it what it may, it is a dogma for every Muslim to believe not only in the Quran, but also in the collections of the Divine revelations of pre-Islamic epochs. The Prophet of Islam has not named Buddha, nor Zoroaster nor the founders of Indian Brahminism. So the Muslims are not authorised to affirm categorically the Divine character, for instance, of Avesta or of the Hindu Vedas; yet they cannot formally reject either the possibility of the Vedas and Avesta having been in their origin based on Divine revelations, or of having suffered a fate similar to that of the Pentateuch of Moses. The same is true in connection with what appertains to China, Greece and other lands.

#### MESSENGERS OF GOD (PROPHETS)

148. An angel brings the message of God to a chosen man, and it is this latter who is charged with its communication to the people. In Quranic terminology, this human agent of the message is differently called: *nabi* (prophet), *rasool* (messenger), *mursal* (envoy), *bashir* (announcer), *nadhir* (warner), etc.

149. Prophets are men of great piety, and models of good behaviour, spiritual as well as temporal and social. Miracles are not necessary for them (although history attributes miracles to all of them and they themselves have always affirmed that it is not they but God who



did that) ; it is their teaching alone which is the criterion of their veracity.

150. According to the Quran, there were certain prophets who had received the revelation of Divine Books, and there were others who did not receive new Books but had to follow the Books revealed to their predecessors. The Divine messages do not disagree on fundamental truths, such as the Oneness of God, the demand for doing good and abstaining from evil, etc., yet they may differ as to the rules of social conduct in accordance with the social evolution attained by a people. If God has sent successive prophets, it is a proof that previous directions had been abrogated and replaced by new ones, and, except for these latter, certain of the old rules tacitly or explicitly retained.

151. Certain prophets had had the Divine mission of educating members of a single house (tribe or clan), or of a single race, or of a single region ; others had vaster missions, embracing the entire humanity and extending over all times.

152. The Quran has made express mention of certain prophets, such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, David, Moses, Salih, Hud, Jesus, John the Baptist, and Muhammad, but the Quran is explicit that there have been others also before Muhammad, he being the seal and the last of the messengers of God.

#### THE ESCHATOLOGY

153. The Prophet Muhammad has also demanded belief in the doomsday. Man will be resuscitated after his death, and God will judge him on the basis of his deeds during the life of this world, in order to reward his good actions and punish him for the evil ones. One day our universe will be destroyed by the order of God, and then after a certain lapse of time, He Who had created us first, would bring us back to life. Paradise as a reward, and Hell as a punishment are but graphic terms to make us understand a state of things which is beyond all notions of our life in this world. Speaking of it, the Quran (32 : 17) says : "No soul knoweth what is kept hid from them—of joy as a reward for what they used to do. Again (9 : 72) : "God promiseth to the believers, men and women, Gardens underneath which rivulets flow, wherein they will abide—blessed dwellings

in Gardens of Eden—and the pleasure of God is grander still; that is the supreme triumph.” So this pleasure on His part is over and above even the Gardens of Eden. In yet another passage of Quran (10:26) we read: “For those who do good is what is the best, and more (thereto).” Al-Bukhari, Muslim etc. report, that the Prophet used to refer to this verse saying that, after Paradise there would be the vision of God, ultimate reward of the pious. As far as Paradise is concerned, an oft-quoted utterance of the Prophet Muhammad is: “God says: I have prepared for My pious slaves (-men) things in Paradise the like of which no eye has ever seen, nor ear ever heard, nor even human heart (mind) ever thought of.” As to what is beyond Paradise, Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and other great sources record an important saying of the Prophet: “When the people meriting Paradise will have entered it, God will tell them: ‘Ask Me what else can I add to you?’ People will wonder, having been honoured, given Paradise and saved from Hell, and will not know what to ask. Thereupon God will remove the veil, and nothing would be lovelier than gazing the Lord.” (In another version, instead of ‘veil’; ‘hijab’, ‘the garb of grandeur’ *Rida-al-Kibriya* is used.) In other words, the opportunity of contemplating God would be the highest and the real reward of the Believer, this for those who are capable of understanding and appreciating the abstract notion of the other World. It is in the light of this authoritative interpretation that one should read what the Quran and the Hadith unceasingly describe for the common man with regard to the joys of Paradise and the horrors of Hell in terms which remind us of our surroundings in this world: there are gardens and rivulets or canals in Paradise, there are young and beautiful girls, there are carpets and luxurious garments, pearls, precious stones, fruits, wine, and all that man would desire. Similarly, in hell there is fire, there are serpents, boiling water and other tortures, there are parts extremely cold; and in spite of these sufferings, there will be no death to get rid of. All this is easily explained when one thinks of the vast majority of men, of the common masses, to whom the Divine message is addressed. It is necessary to speak to every one according to his capacity of understanding and of intelligence. One day, when the Prophet Muhammad was speaking to a company of the faithful about Paradise and its pleasures (including its flying horses), a Bedouin rose and put the question: “Will there be camels also?” The Prophet smiled and gently replied: “There will be everything that one would desire.” (Ibn Hanbal

and Tirmidhi). The Quran speaks of Paradise and Hell simply as a means of persuading the average man to lead a just life and to march in the path of truth; it attaches no importance to details whether they describe a place or a state of things? That should not interest us either; a Muslim believes in them, without asking: "how?"

154. It goes without saying that Paradise will be eternal: once meriting it, there would be no question of being ejected from it. The Quran assures (15: 48): "Pain will not touch them, and there is no expulsion from it." Some would enter it forthwith, others would suffer longer or shorter periods of detention in Hell, before meriting Paradise. But the question is whether Hell is eternal for the unbelievers? The opinions of the Muslim Theologians have differed on the points although a great majority of them affirm, on the basis of the Quranic verses (4: 48, 4: 116) that God may pardon every sin and every crime except disbelief in God, and that the punishment that would be meted out for this last sin would be eternal. Others opine that even the punishment of disbelief may one day terminate by the grace of God. These theologians deduce their opinions, also from certain verses of the Quran (11: 107, etc.). We need not pursue further this discussion here, but hope God's unlimited mercy.

#### PREDESTINATION AND FREE-WILL

155. In his expose, the Prophet Muhammad has lastly demanded the belief that the determination (*qadr*) of all good and evil is from God. Does this phrase signify that everything is predestined for man, or does the statement merely imply that the qualification of good and evil in a given act depends on God? In other words, nothing is good or evil in itself, but it is so only because God has declared it to be such; and man has to do nothing but observe it.

156. Here is in fact a dilemma for the theologian. If we declare that man is responsible for his acts, it would be incompatible with the predestination of his acts. Similarly, if we declare that man is free in his acts, this would imply that God has neither power over nor the knowledge of what man is going to do in his worldly life. The two alternatives create an embarrassment. One would like to attribute to God not only justice, but also omnipotence and omniscience. The Prophet Muhammad ridicules this discussion, which will ever remain inconclusive: and he has formally ordered his adherents not to engage

in it, adding: "people before you have been led astray by this discussion." He recognizes for God, in all respect and reverence, the attribute of omnipotence-omniscience, and affirms also that man shall be held responsible for his acts. He does not want to tie up one of these things with the other. In a way, he relegates this discussion to the level of the futility of knowing whether the egg came first into existence or the hen?

157. Moreover good and evil are but relative terms. A tiger hunts a rabbit for food. What is good (sustenance) for one is evil (death) for the other. That is why the evil that seems to reach us is on account of our own nature, which merits or requires that "evil". That is also why it is for God to determine, for whom a given act is good and for whom evil. Furthermore it should be remembered that the conception of "responsibility" is a this-worldly thing, whereas the "Divine reward and punishment" belong to the other-worldly matters. We are shocked only when we relegate them both to the same level. To do so would be a fallacy.

158. Let us remember that it is this double belief in the omnipotence of God and the absolute individual responsibility of man, which rouses a Muslim to action, even as it enables him to support easily an unavoidable misfortune. Far from creating in him an immobility, it gives him a dynamism. We have to refer to the exploits of the early Muslims, who were the best practitioners of the teaching of the Prophet, in order to convince ourselves of the truth of this statement.

## CONCLUSION

159. This is a resume practically of all that a Muslim has to believe. The whole formula of the creed is succinctly summed up in the two expressions: "There is no God if not God Himself, and Muhammad is the messenger and slave-servant of God." This would serve to remind us that Islam is not only a belief, but also a practice, spiritual as well as temporal. It is in fact a complete code of human life.



## CHAPTER V

# DEVOTIONAL LIFE AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF ISLAM

**I**T is the aim of Islam, to offer a complete code of life, without neglecting any one or the various domains of human activity. Its objective is a co-ordination of all these aspects. The concern for "centralization" is displayed in the fact that all Islamic practices touch simultaneously the body and soul. Not only do temporal practices acquire sacred moral character, when they conform to Divine prescriptions, but the spiritual practices also possess a material utility. The rules of conduct, whether spiritual or temporal, emanate from the one and the same source, the Quran, which is the Word of God. The ineluctable result is that according to the Islamic terminology the *imam* (supreme director or leader of the Muslim world) signifies not only the leader of the service of prayer in the mosque, but also the head of the Muslim State.

161. In a well-known saying, the Prophet Muhammad has defined the faith (*Iman*), the submission (*Islam*) and the best method (*Ihsan*), leading thereto. In the preceding chapter the Beliefs have been explained. For elucidating the subject under discussion, it would admirably suit our purpose to quote and comment on what he has said on the second point. He declared: Submission to God (*Islam*) is, that one should celebrate the services of worship, observe annual fasting, perform the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) and pay the zakat-taxes.

### SERVICE OF WORSHIP

162. "Worship is the pillar of religion" is a saying of the Prophet Muhammad. The Quran speaks of it more than a hundred times, and calls it variously *salat* (inclination), *du'a* (prayer, appeal), *dhikr* (remembering), *tasbih* (glorification), *inabah* (returning, attachment), etc.

163. In its concern for creating an atmosphere of the sovereignty of God on earth, Islam has prescribed five services of worship daily:

one should pray when one rises—and one should rise early—again early in the afternoon, late in the afternoon, at sunset, and at night before one goes to bed. This requires abandoning, during the few minutes spent in each service of worship, all material interests, in order to provide proof of one's submission and gratitude to God our Creator. That applies to every adult, man or woman.

164. The service of early afternoon is transformed every Friday into a weekly congregational service, with greater solemnity, in which the *imam* of the locality delivers also a sermon before prayer. Islam has instituted two annual feasts: one at the end of the fasting month, and the other on the occasion of the pilgrimage to Mecca. These two feasts are celebrated by two special services of worship, in addition to the daily five. Thus, early in the morning people assemble for a collective service of prayer, after which the *imam* delivers a sermon. Another service of prayer, of restricted obligation, is held for the deceased before burial.

165. Speaking of the hidden meaning and mysterious effects of the service of worship, the great mystic Waliullah ad-Dihlawi says:

“Know that one is sometimes transported, quick as lightning, to the Holy Precincts (of the Divine Presence), and finds one's self attached, with the greatest possible adherence, to the threshold of God. There descend on this person the Divine transfigurations (*tajalli*) which dominate his soul. He sees and feels things which human tongue is incapable of describing. Once this state of light passes away, he returns to his previous condition, and finds himself tormented by the loss of such an ecstasy. Thereupon he tries to rejoin that which has escaped him, and adopts the condition of this lowly world which would be nearest to a state of absorption in the knowledge of the Creator. This is a posture of respect, of devotion, and of an almost direct conversation with God, which posture is accompanied by appropriate acts and words . . . Worship consists essentially of three elements: (1) humility of heart (spirit) consequent on a feeling of the presence of the majesty and grandeur of God, (2) recognition of this superiority (God) and humbleness (of man) by means of appropriate words, and (3) adoption by the organs of the body, of postures of necessary reverence. . . . To show our honour to somebody we stand up,

with a fulsome concentration of attention, turning our faces towards him. Even more respectful is the state when we bend and bow our heads in reverence . . . Still greater respect is displayed by laying down the face — which reflects in the highest degree, one's ego and self-consciousness — so low that it touches the ground in front of the object of reverence . . . As a man can reach the top of his spiritual evolution only gradually, it is evident that such an ascension must pass through all the three stages; and a perfect service of worship would have three postures, Standing up, Bowing down, and Prostrating by laying the head on the ground in the presence of the Almighty; and all this is performed for the necessary evolution of the spirit so that one might feel truly the sublimity of God and the humbleness of man." *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*, vol. I, Secrets of Worship).

166. In a passage (22 : 18), the Quran says: "Hast thou not seen that before God are prostrate whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is on the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the hills, and the trees, and the beasts, and many of mankind . . . ?" Again (17 : 44): "The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise." The Islamic service of worship combines in fact the forms of worship of all creatures. The heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars) repeat their act of rising and setting (like *rak'at* after *rak'at* of the service); the mountains remain standing (like the first act in the service); the beast remain bowed and bent (like the *ruku'* in the service); as for trees, we see that they get their food through their roots, which are their mouths and this in their words signifies that the trees are perpetually prostrate (like the *sajdah* or prostration in the Islamic service of worship). Further, according to the Quran (8 : 11) one of the principle functions of the water is to purify (and compare the need of ablutions for the service). Another passage (13:13) says: "The thunder hymneth His praise," and this makes us think of the loud pronounciation of *Allaahu akbar*, so often repeated during the service, even if we disregard the loud recitation of the Quran during the service which is done during certain services and not in others. The birds flying in flocks worship God (Quran 24 : 41), as also Muslims do when celebrating their congregational service. Just as the shadow stretches and shortens in the course of its daily life, (which is its particular way of submission to and worship of God, cf.

Quran 13:15, 16:48), so too the human worshipper stretches or shortens himself while standing, bowing, prostrating or sitting in the course of the service. (See pictures of the different postures of Muslim worship in the last chapter. The above-mentioned acts of different creatures have been adapted and assimilated therein, adding thereto what is particular to man and not found in other creatures). (cf. § 167, *infra*.)

166/a. It may be recalled that the Islamic word for the service of worship is *'ibādah*, which is from the same root as *'abd*, i.e., slave. In other words, worship is what the slave does, the service the master desires of him. God demands of the mountains to remain standing, of beasts and birds to remain bent, and of plants to remain prostrate before Him, that is their service, their worship. To everyone what suits him and what his Lord desires of him. Of course to man also what becomes of him as a rational being, as the foremost of the creatures, as the vicegerent of God.

166/b. Ablution or ritual washing and physically being clean is a pre-requisite of the validity of a Service of Worship, as will be detailed later (§ 549 ff.). A Muslim philosopher has nicely brought into relief its significance. For this ritual purification one has to wash the hands, the mouth, the nose, the face, the arms, the head, the ears and the feet. Washing them is not merely the outward cleanliness; it is a repentance for the past and a resolution for the future. Repentance washes away the past sins, and resolution through invoking the help of God concerns what is yet to come in life; and this relates to our principal organs of mischief. The hand attacks, the mouth talks, the nose smells, the face or presence abuses the prestige and exerts influence and pressure, the arms hold, the head thinks and plots, the ears hear, the feet march in the way of evil, forbidden by God. Not to speak of the sexual sin, from which one gets rid even before beginning the ablutions, and one has to get clean in W.C. This symbolical and mystical aspect of purification is evident in the formulas of invocations which accompany washing each organ. In the W.C. we say: "O God, purify my heart from hypocrisy, and my sex from shameful acts and fornication." One begins the formulation of the intention of the ablutions by saying: "Praise be to God Who has made water pure and purifying." When washing the face, one prays to God: "Brighten my face on the Dooms Day, and do not darken it," for washing the arms: "Employ me in good deeds and not in evil one, give me my



Rolls on Dooms Day in my right hand and not in left, and facilitate me my reckoning and do not make it difficult;" for head: "Teach me useful knowledge;" for ears: "Let me listen to Thy word and the word of Thy messenger;" and for feet: "Make my feet firm on the path when crossing over the Hell, and do not let them stumble on the day when the feet of Thy friends will remain firm and the feet of Thy enemies will stumble."

167. The five daily services were made obligatory for Muslims on the occasion of the ascension of the Prophet (*mi'rāj*). The Prophet Muhammad has moreover declared that the service of worship of a believer is his own ascension, in which he is raised into the presence of God. These are no empty words; let us look at what a Muslim does in his worship. First of all, he stands up, holds up his hands, and proclaims: "God alone is great"; thus he renounces all except God, and submits himself to the will of his Lord alone. After having hymned and recalled the merits of God, he feels so humble before the Divine majesty, that he bows low and puts down his head as a sign of reverence, proclaiming "Glory to my Lord Who alone is Majestic." Then he stands erect to thank God for having guided him, and in his mind of minds he is struck so much by the greatness of God that he feels impressed to prostrate himself and to place his forehead on the ground in all humility, and declare "Glory to my Lord Who alone is High." He repeats these acts so that the body gets accustomed to the spiritual exercise and gradually becomes worthier and worthier so as to be lifted from the world of matter and pass through the heavenly atmosphere, and enter the presence of God. There he salutes God, and receives the answer to his greetings. In fact, he employs for the purpose the very formulae that were used during the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad, when he exchanged greetings with God: "The blessed and purest of greetings to God—Peace with thee, O Prophet, and the mercy and blessings of God—Peace with us and with all the pious servants of God." Without material, idol-like symbols, the believer travels, so to say, towards the transcendent God, on a spiritual journey, which, in certain communities, is termed "communion."

168 Such is the spiritual significance of the service of worship. As for its material utilities, these again are numerous. It assembles five times daily the inhabitants of a locality, provides the opportunity of relaxation for some minutes in the course of the monotonous duties

of individual avocations, and gathers the highest as well as the lowest personalities of the place in perfect equality (for it is the chief of the locality, who is to conduct the prayer; and in the metropolis, at the central mosque, it is the head of the State himself who performs this duty). Thus one meets not only other members of the community, but also the responsible functionaries of the place and approaches them directly without formality or hindrance. The social aspect of the service of prayer is that the believer feels around him the sovereignty of God, and lives in a state of military discipline. At the call of the *muezzin*, all rush to the place of assembly, stand in serried ranks behind the leader, doing acts and carrying on movements in common with others, in perfect uniformity and co-ordination. Further, the faithful, in all parts of the globe, turn their faces, during the service of worship, towards the same focal point, the Ka'bah or the House of God in Mecca. This reminds them of the unity of the world community of Muslims, without distinction of class, race, or region.

169. The preferable and more formal way of worship is the congregational service. In the absence of such a possibility, or lacking adequate facility, one prays alone and individually, man or woman. The five prayers of the day mean rather a minimum duty of passing about 24 minutes, during 24 hours, in the presence and remembrance of God; but the believer must actually remember God, every instant, in weal and in woe, at work or in bed or while engaged in any occupation. The Quran (3:190-91) says: "... men of understanding, who remember God standing, sitting, and reclining, and consider the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and say) Our Lord! Thou didst not create this in vain . . ." God has made the universe subservient to the use and benefit of man; but the enjoyment must be accompanied by recognition (gratitude) and obedience, and not by rebellion against God and injustice against other fellow-beings.

170. It may here be mentioned, that at the very moment when the service of prayer was instituted, the Quranic verse (2:286) was revealed: "God tasketh not a soul beyond its scope." It is the intention and will that counts in the eyes of God, and not the quantity or the exterior method of accomplishing a thing. If a devout man honestly believes that he is unable to perform five times daily the service of prayer, let him observe it four times, thrice, twice or even a single time

every day, according to his opportunities and circumstances, and the duration of the hindrance. The essential point is that one should not forget one's spiritual duty in the midst of material and mundane preoccupations. Such a reduction is permitted in abnormal conditions, such as when one is ill and has fits of unconsciousness, or unavoidable duties in the service of God as we infer from the practice of the Prophet himself. In fact it is reported that in the course of the battle of Khandaq, it happened that the Prophet himself performed the *zuhr*, *'aṣr*, *maghrib* and *'ishā* services, all these four late in the night, for the enemy had not allowed a single moment's respite during the day to attend to prayer. (Maqrīzī, *Imtā'*, I, 233). This means twice the prayer during the day. Again on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, it is reported (see Bukhārī, *Muslim Tirmidhī*, Ibn Ḥanbal, Mālik, and particularly *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, *kitāb as-ṣalāt, bāb al-jam' bain as-ṣalātain fi'l-hadr*, No. 49, 50, 54) that "sometimes the Prophet combined *zuhr-'aṣr* and *maghrib-'ishā* having neither fear (of enemy) nor (inconvenience of) travel; adding: and the Prophet wanted thereby that there should be no inconvenience for his community." This narration implies thrice the prayer during the day. Evidently all depends on the conscience of the individual faithful who is personally responsible to God Whom one cannot dupe and from Whom one can conceal nothing. There is again the question of the timings. We know that there is a great difference in the risings and settings of the sun between normal (equatorial-tropical) countries and the regions situated beyond and extending to the two poles. Al-Bīrunī (cf. *al-Jamahir*) has observed that at the poles the sun remains set for six months continually, and then rises to shine continuously for six months (excepting the two days of the equinox). The jurist-theologians of Islam affirm in general that the hours at 45° parallel remain valid upto 90° parallel, i.e., upto the poles; and in the regions, comprised between 45° and 90°, one is to follow the movement of the clock and not that of the sun. This applies to worship as well as fasts and other like duties.

171. Women are exempted from prayer-services during their monthly indisposition and accouchement.

## THE FAST

172. The second religious duty of a believer is the fasting for one month every year. One must abstain during every day of the month of Ramaḍān from eating, drinking and smoking (including in-

oculations and injections) from dawn to sunset in the equatorial and tropical countries (and for an equivalent period in regions situated far away from the centre of the globe, calculated on the basis of the hours at 45° parallel, as we have just mentioned). Of the sick we shall speak later on, § 174. It goes without saying that one must likewise abstain from thinking of carnal and other pleasures, incompatible with the spiritual regimen. It is quite a rigorous discipline, which may appear very difficult to the adherents of other religions; yet even the new converts get accustomed to it very soon if they show good will, and inclination as is evidenced by the experience of centuries.

173. The fast extends over a whole month; and as is well known it is the purely lunar month which counts in Islam. The result is that the month of fasting, Ramaḍān, rotates turn by turn through all the seasons of the year, autumn, winter, spring and summer; and one gets accustomed to these privations in the burning heat of summer as well as the chilling cold of winter, and one undergoes all this as a spiritual discipline, in obedience to God. At the same time one derives from fasting temporal advantages connected with hygienic, military training, development of will power, among others, even as those resulting from the services of worship. More than anybody else, it is the soldiers who have, during sieges and other occasions of a war to support the privations of food and drink and still continue their duty to defence. So the most stupid ruler or commander-in-chief would be the one who hinders his militia from fasting in the month of Ramaḍān. But it must be repeated that the aim is, essentially and chiefly a religious practice and a spiritual exercise enabling proximity to God. If one fasts for temporal motives only—under the prescription of a doctor for instance—he will be far from accomplishing his religious duty, and will not benefit spiritually at all.

174. As in the case of prayer, women do not require to fast during their feminine indispositions, yet with this difference that the defaulting days are to be made up later by an equal number of days of fasting. The same applies to the sick. As to the very old, he need not fast, yet if he has means he must feed a poor for each day of the fasts of Ramaḍān.

175. It may be recalled that the Prophet forbade fasts extending over several days continuously (for 48 hours or 72 hours for instance),



over the whole year, or during the whole life, even to those who longed to do so in their zeal for spiritual practices to obtain increased benefit. He remarked: "Thou hast obligations even with regard to thine own self." In addition to the obligatory fast of Ramaḍān, one may fast, as a work of supererogation, if one likes, from time to time; and for this voluntary fast, the Prophet has recommended fasting for two days at a time. From the medical point of view, one notes that fasting eternally becomes a habitude, which does not produce the same effect as fasting at intervals. To fast for less than a month does not produce great effect, and a fast for more than 40 days becomes a habitude.

175/a. It is a myth to say that fasting, in the sense of the privation of food and drink, in cold climate is contrary to the requirements of human health. Biological observations show that wild beasts get practically nothing to eat especially when it snows. They sleep or otherwise pass their time "fasting", and get rejuvenated on the approach of spring. The same is true of trees also, in winter they lose completely their leaves, and sleep, and are not even irrigated; and after a few months of "fasting", they are rejuvenated in spring and get more vigorous than ever, as everybody can see in their luxuriant new foliage and blossoming. In fact like all animal organs, the digestive apparatus also require rest. Fast is the only conceivable method for it. Now-a-days a new school of medicine has come into existence in all the western countries, which treats, particularly chronic diseases, by short or long periods of fasting.

175/b. It is an antique notion in human society to offer the tithe of one's gains to God; the tithe of the harvest is an example. Fasting is offering the tithe of our meals to God. A parallel notion (endorsed by the Quran 6:160: "Whoso bringeth a good deed will receive tenfold the like thereof") is that a good deed is rewarded ten times as much by God. That explains the saying of the Prophet: "Whoever fasts the month of Ramaḍān and six more days in the following month, *Shauwāl* is as if he has fasted the whole year." In fact the lunar year employed in Islam, has 355 days, and the lunar month sometimes 29 and sometimes 30 days. So a Muslim fasts every year for 35 or 36 days, which is worth tenfold, i.e., 350 or 360 days, the average being 355, which is the number of the days in the lunar year.

176. The mystics observe, that an ebullition of animal nature

hinders the perfection of the human spirit. In order to subjugate the body to the spirit, it is necessary to break the force of the body and increase that of the spirit. It has been found that nothing is as efficacious for this purpose as hunger, thirst, renunciation of carnal desires and the control of the tongue, the heart (mind) with its thought and other organs. One of the aspects of individual perfection is the subordination of animal nature to reason and the spirit. Nature sometimes rebels, and its behaviour at other times is one of submissiveness. One therefore needs the practice of hard exercises, such as fasting, in order to keep in check animality. If one commits sins, penitence and mortification through fasting may bring solace and purify the soul, even as they fortify the will so as not to indulge again in vices. It has also been remarked that neither eating nor drinking is a trait of the angels; and in imposing this regimen, man makes himself resemble more and more the angels; and since his actions are intended to conform to the behests of God, in the result, he approaches nearer to Him and obtains His pleasure; and that is the ultimate aim of man.

### THE HAJJ

177. *Hajj* literally means a travel (i.e., towards God) as also an effort to dominate something (the self, in this connection). Conventionally this term is translated as pilgrimage, although it is far from giving the exact significance of the word *hajj*. This is the third of the religious duties of a Muslim. It is obligatory on every adult, man or woman, to go once in his or her life-time to Mecca in order to perform there the great *Effort* for annihilating the ego (*fanā'*), i.e., assimilating one's self with the will of God. Those who do not possess the material means of travel, are exempted from it. But which Muslim would not collect, little by little, the necessary amount for being one day able to visit the centre of his religion, the Ka'bah or the House of God? The Quran (3 : 96) does not exaggerate when it says that this is the oldest House in the world dedicated by mankind to God and to the cult of monotheism. If one were to think only of Abraham—who according to the Islamic tradition, was but the restorer of the edifice erected originally by Adam—it would still be older than the temple of Jerusalem, constructed by Solomon. No other place of worship older than the Ka'bah of Mecca, is known to be still functioning.

178. The rites of the *Hajj* may briefly be noted: At the borders

of the sacred territory, around Mecca, one puts off the ordinary dress, and puts on by way of a religious uniform two sheets of cloth—a loin cloth and a shoulder cover, a dress required only of men, not of women. He is bare-headed, and one tries to forget one's self during the several days of the *Hajj*. He goes to 'Arafāt, in the suburbs of Mecca, to pass there the day in meditation. Towards evening, he returns, passes the night at Muzdalifah, and early next morning arrives at Mina which is on the outskirts of Mecca. There he passes three days, during which he lapidates Satan every morning, sacrifices a goat, pays a short visit to Ka'bah for performing the ritual sevenfold circumambulation and running through the hills of Şafa and Marwah in front of the Ka'bah. The symbolic background may also be described here:

179. After their fall from Paradise, Adam and Eve were separated and lost. They searched for each other, and by the grace of God met together at 'Arafāt. In gratitude to God, the descendants of Adam and Eve turn to Him, make an effort to forget themselves and be assimilated with the Divine Presence, with a view to entreat His pardon for their shortcomings in the past and His help for the future.

180. As to the lapidation of Satan, it may be recalled that when Abraham claimed to love God above everything else, God demanded of him as a proof the immolation of his beloved son. To add to this trial, Satan went first to Abraham to dissuade him from his resolution—and they say that this happened at Mina—but Abraham chased Satan away every time by pelting stones at him. Then he went to Hagar, and lastly to Ishmael himself; each one of them did the same. So one repeats the acts symbolically, and resolves to fight diabolic temptations.

181. The visit to the "House of God" is self-explanatory. To give evidence of obedience, one goes there with respect and in humility. It is a very old custom to circumambulate a thing for showing one's readiness to sacrifice one's self for the object of devotion and care and love.

181/a. The Black Stone requires a particular mention on account of the many misunderstandings on its score. It is not a meteorite, but a black stone. Its practical importance is to show the starting point of the circumambulation, and by its colour it is conspicuous in the

building. Secondly, this stone is not worshipped, nor even Muslims prostrate in the direction of this stone, prostration being done towards any and every part of the building of the Ka'bah, and more often than not one turns to directions other than the Black Stone (al-Ḥajar al-Aswad). It may be recalled that when the Qaramitah ravaged Mecca in 318 H./930, they carried the Black Stone to their country as booty and it remained there for 21 long years. In the course of this absence of the Black Stone, no Muslim turned to the place where it was kept (in 'Umān), but continued to turn towards the Ka'bah in Mecca. Even the building of the Ka'bah is not essential; if it is demolished, for instance for repairs and new construction, Muslims turn to the same spot, whether the Ka'bah with its Black Stone is there or not. As said, the practical importance of the Black Stone is that it indicates the point from which the circumambulation begins and at which it ends; but it has a symbolical significance too. In the Ḥadīth, the Prophet has named it the "right hand of God" (yamin-Allāh), and for purpose. In fact one poses there one's hand to conclude the pact, and God obtains there our pact of allegiance and submission. In the Quranic terminology, God is the king, and He has not only His treasures and His armies, but also His realm; in the realm there is a metropolis (*Umm al qurra*) and in the metropolis naturally a palace (Bait-Allāh, home of God). If a subject wants to testify to his loyalty, he has to go to the royal palace and conclude personally the pact of allegiance. The right hand of the invisible God must be visible symbolically. And that is the al-Ḥajar al-Aswad, the Black Stone in the Ka'bah.

182. As to the act of covering seven times the ground between Ṣafa and Marwah, it is related that when Abraham left his wife Hagar and the suckling Ishmael in the desolate and un-inhabited site of Mecca, the provision of water was soon exhausted. So Hagar ran hither and thither, driven by maternal affection, to search for some water for the thirst-stricken baby; and then the spring Zamam gushed forth. So one repeats this act in the same place where Hagar did it, to pay homage to maternal love and in thanksgiving for the mercy of God.

183. The social aspect is not less striking. The world brotherhood of Muslims manifests itself there in the most vivid manner. The believers, without distinction of race, language, birthplace or even class feel the obligation to go there, and to mix with one another in a spirit



of fraternal equality. They camp together in the desert, and perform their religious duties in common. For several days, at fixed hours, they march, make a halt, pass the night under tents or in bivouac,—all this, to an extent greater even than the five daily prayer-services, trains the soldier of God for a life of discipline.

183/a. When the Prophet Muḥammad performed his own ḥajj, a few months before his demise, he uttered then from above the *Hill of Mercy* (Jabal ar-Raḥmān) a sermon which constitutes the charter of Humanity in Islam. Some 1,40,000 Muslims had come that year from all parts of Arabia, to listen to this testament of their Prophet, which may be analysed as follows: He reminded the basic elements of Islam, viz., belief in the One God with no icons or other material representation; Equality of all Muslims without discrimination on account of race or class, and there being no superiority to one over any other except by the individual excellence in the matter of piety and fear of God; Sacrosanct character of the three fundamental rights of each and every human being concerning his person, his property and his honour; Prohibition of transaction on interest, be the interest big or small; Prohibition of vendetta and private justice, obligation of treating well the womenfolk; Constant re-distribution and circulation of the private wealth to avoid its accumulation in the hands of a few (by means of the law of obligatory inheritance, restrictions on wills and prohibition of interest, etc.); and Emphatic restatement that the Divine Revelation alone should be the source of law for our conduct in all walks of life:—The pilgrims are made to hear this same sermon every year, recited from above the same sacred Hill of Mercy, at 'Arafāt.

184. There is a reason to believe that a pre-Islamic practice was continued, at least in the early generations of Muslims, during the Ḥajj festivities: Profiting by the occasion provided by such a vast assembly, an annual literary congress was organized, where poets "published" their new compositions, orators made harangues before the spell-stricken masses to demonstrate their talents, professional wrestlers fascinated the spectators, and traders brought merchandises of all sorts. Caliph 'Umar gave it a most salutary administrative character. For this was an occasion for him to hold the sessions of an appeal court against his governors and commanders as also of public consultation on important projects in view. Let us recall once again, that in Islam the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the temporal live in co-existence and even in a harmonious collaboration.

## THE ZAKAT-TAX

185. In modern times, the man in the street understands by *zakāt* certain percentage of his hoarded cash which is to be given to the poor every year. But in the Qur'ān, in the Ḥadīth and in the practice of the early centuries of Islam the *zakāt* (also called *ṣadaqāt* and *ḥaqq*)\* meant all sorts of tax perceived by the Muslim State on its Muslim subjects: tax on agricultural product, on sub-soil exploitation, on commercial capital, on herds of domesticated animals living on public pastures, on hoarded cash, etc. In the beginning all these taxes were paid directly to the government, but later, during his caliphate, 'Uthmān decided that Muslims could spend directly the tax on the hoarded cash to its beneficiaries prescribed by the Qur'ān (9 : 60) without the intermediary of the government.

185/a. The Qur'ān (4 : 5) recognizes that wealth is the basis and the essential means of the subsistence of humanity. Therefore it should not be surprising that payment of tax to the government has been raised by the Prophet to the dignity of an article of faith and one of the four fundamental rites of religion, along with prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. In Islam one does not pay a "tribute" to the chief of the city for his personal luxury and vanity, but one pays his dues, as a right connected with the collectivity, and more particularly in favour of the needy; and this for the purpose of "growing" and "purifying" one's self, as is the etymological sense of the term *zakāt*. The Prophet Muḥammad said, "The chief of a people is in fact their servant." In order to demonstrate the truth of this saying, and the absolute disinterestedness with which he had assumed the direction of his people—both as a spiritual guide and the head of the State—the Prophet formally declared that the revenues of the Muslim State, coming from Muslim tax payers, were religiously forbidden to him and to all members of his tribe. If the head of the State does not abuse public confidence it follows that his subordinates cannot but be scrupulous in the performance of their duties.

---

\*Chronologically speaking, the Qur'ān has used the terms *naṣīb* (6 : 136, 16 : 56) and *ḥaqq* (6 : 141, 70 : 24) in the Meccan surats, and *ṣakāt* (2 : 43 passim), *infāq* (2 : 267), *ṣadaqāt* (9 : 60) and *ṣadaqah* (9 : 103) in the Madinan period. Later the word *ṣakāt*, to the exclusion of all else became the technical term used by the jurists.

186. In the time of the Prophet and the Orthodox Caliphs, there was in the Muslim State no tax on Muslims other than the *zakāt*. Far from being an almsgiving, it constituted a State-tax, an obligatory contribution fixed in quantity and in epoch, levied by sanctions and coercion from the recalcitrants. In order better to inculcate the importance of these payments in the spirit of the faithful, the Prophet declared that the *zakāt* was a religious duty and a Divine prescription, on par with belief in One God, the service of prayer, the fasting and the *Hajj*. If belief is a spiritual duty, and prayer, fasting and *Hajj* are bodily duties, the payment of the *zakāt* is a fiscal duty. The jurists call it *'ibādat maliyah* (worship of God by means of property). This is another proof—if there is need of one—of the fact that Islam co-ordinates the entire human life into a single whole, for the purpose of creating a harmonious equilibrium between the body and soul, without either favouring or treating with disdain of these two elements of the human constitution.

187. The Qur'ān indifferently employs several terms to designate the tax: *zakāt*, used in numerous verses which means both growth and purification. It connotes that one must pay part of one's growing wealth in order to purify it; *ṣadaqāt* (Qur'ān 9 : 60) which signifies both truth in charity, implying that to be true to humanity, one must be charitable towards the less fortunate; and *ḥaqq* (cf. 6 : 141) or right. If it is the right of others, it also entails duty on the one who possesses,—rights and duties being correlative terms, and collaboration being the basis of all functioning of society.

188. There are taxes on savings, on harvests, on merchandises, on herds of beasts pasturing in public meadows, on mines, on maritime products, etc. The tariffs differ, yet all are called *zakāt ṣadaqāt* and other synonymous names indifferently.

189. The tariffs of the time of the Prophet seem not to have been considered rigid and incapable of modification. We have seen above (§ 88) that the Prophet himself exempted the inhabitants of Ṭā'if from the *zakāt*, (with some other examples for other regions also). The great caliph 'Umar reduced, as Abu 'Ubaid records, the duties on the importation of victuals in Madinah. In the life-time of the Prophet, there were occasions when he was obliged to appeal for extraordinary contributions, for instance, the defence of the country against foreign

menace. This has enabled the jurists to conclude that the government may impose new provisional taxes, called *nawā'ib* (cf. *Mabsūṭ* of Sarakhsi, x, 21) or augment the rates, for the duration of the crisis. The silence of the Qur'ān on the items and rates of taxation confirms the deduction of the jurists.

190. But the Qur'ān speaks in detail of the expenditure of the State, and the principal heads of the government budget:

“The *ṣadaqāt* (taxes levied on Muslims) are only for the needy and the poor, and those who work (for these State revenues), and those whose hearts are to be won, and for (freeing) the necks, and the heavily indebted, and in the path of God, and for the wayfarers;—a duty imposed by God, and God is the Knower, the Wise.” (Q. 9 : 60).

As stated above, *ṣadaqāt* and *zakāt* are synonymous, meaning: What is perceived on a Muslim subject. What is perceived on a non-Muslim, such as *kharāj*, *jizyah*, *ghanimah*, etc., it is not included in *zakāt*; the beneficiaries of the two also differ considerably.

191. While other legislators would rather prescribe rules for income, Qur'ān, on the contrary, formulates the principles of State expenditure only. In the eight categories of beneficiaries of *zakāt*, of whom the verse speaks, it will be noted that there is no mention of the Prophet. Some remarks may be useful for the better understanding of the range and extent of this verse, which speaks of certain exclusive recipients:

192. According to so great an authority as the Caliph 'Umar, (cf. Abu Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, ch. *Fi man tajib alaihi al-jizyah*), the needy (*fuqarā*) are those of the Muslim community, and the poor (*masākīn*)—almost an equivalent—are the poor among the non-Muslim inhabitants (the protected persons), (cf. § 353 *infra*). It is to be noted that the *ṣadaqāt* do not include the revenues coming from non-Muslims, yet Islam includes them among the beneficiaries of the taxes paid by the Muslims.

193. Those who work for the revenues are the collectors, accountants, those in charge of the expenditure, controllers and auditors, which list practically embrace the entire administration, both civil and



military, of the State, in view of the fact that the beneficiaries of these revenues include practically all departments of administration.

194. Those whose hearts are to be won are of many kinds. The great jurist, Abu Ya'la al-Farra' (*al-Aḥkām as-Sultāniyah*, p. 116), points out: "As for those whose hearts are to be won, they are of four kinds: (1) those whose hearts are to be reconciled for coming to the aid of the Muslims; (2) those whose hearts are to be won in order that they might abstain from doing harm to Muslims; (3) those who are attracted towards Islam; and (4) those by whose means conversion to Islam becomes possible for the members of their tribes. It is lawful to benefit each and every one of these categories of 'those whose hearts are to be won,' be they Muslims or polytheists."

195. By the term "freeing the necks," one has always understood the emancipation of the slaves and the ransoming of the prisoners of war made by an enemy. A word about the slaves may not be out of place. No religion before Islam seems to have paid attention to the amelioration of the condition of the slaves. The Prophet of Islam forbade altogether the enslavement of the Arabs as Sarakhsi records; as to other peoples, the Qur'ān (24 : 33) orders that if a well-behaving slave is prepared to pay off his value to his master, this latter cannot refuse the offer; in fact, he will be constrained by the court to grant his slave opportunities to earn and save the necessary amount for obtaining manumission, (and be exempted from serving his master in the meanwhile). Further, as we have just seen, the Muslim government allots a sum in the annual budget for the aid of the slaves desiring emancipation. The object of permitting slavery in Islam is not the exploitation of an unfortunate fellow-being. Far from that, its aim is first to provide shelter to the prisoners of war who have lost everything, and for some reason or other are not repatriated; and secondly to educate them and give them the opportunity of acquiring culture in Islamic surroundings, under the government of God. Slaves are obtained only in legitimate war, waged by a government. Private razzias, kidnapping or even sale of infants by their parents have no legal sanction whatsoever.

196. Aid to those who are heavily indebted or have too great a charge may take different shapes. We see Caliph 'Umar organizing a service of interest-free loans also.

197. "In the path of God" includes every charitable cause; and the jurists have not hesitated to start with military equipment for the defence of Islam, since Islam struggles only and solely for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

198. As for the "wayfarers," one can help them not only by giving them hospitality, but also by ensuring them health and comfort, security of routes and adoption of measures for the well-being of such who have to pass through a place other than their own, whether they be natives or aliens, Muslims or non-Muslims.

## CONCLUSION

198/a. After having detailed the facts concerning the religious practices, it may not be out of place to repeat, that the development of the whole and the co-ordination of all parts—is the basic principle governing the Islamic way of life. The Qur'ān has repeated scores of times: "establish worship and pay zakāt-tax." What can be a better manifestation of this unity of the body and soul than the fact that the worship of the One God and payment of the duty towards society are commanded in one and the same breath! The spiritual duties are not devoid of material advantages, and temporal duties have also their spiritual values; all are dependent again on the intentions and motives that govern one's performance of those duties.

## CHAPTER VI

# THE CULTIVATION OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

**I**SLAM envisages for man a discipline for his life as a whole, material as well as spiritual. But there is no denying the fact that, owing to differences of individual temperaments, certain people would specialize in certain domains and not in others. Even if one were to concentrate on the spiritual side of one's existence, he still remains more or less attached to the other occupations of life, for his nourishment, for the sake of the society of which he is a member, and so on.

200. In his celebrated expose of his teaching on faith, submission and the best method of this submission, the Prophet Muḥammad defined this last point in the following terms: "As to the embellishment (*iḥsān*) of conduct, so render thy service unto God as if thou seest Him: even though thou dost not see Him, yet He seeth thee." This beatification, this best and most beautiful method of devotion or service unto God, is the spiritual culture of Islam. "Service unto God" is a most comprehensive term, and includes not merely the cult, but also relates to human conduct throughout life. The most cultured from the spiritual point of view, are those who abide most closely by the will of God, in all their acts.

201. Questions concerning this discipline from the subject matter of mysticism. The term mysticism has in Islam several synonyms: *Iḥsān* (which we find also used in the above-mentioned expose of the Prophet), *Qurb* (or approaching God), *Ṭarīqat* (road, i.e., of the journey unto God), *Sulak* (journey, i.e., unto God), *Taṣawwuf* (which etymologically means: to put on a woollen cloth). This last term is, curiously enough, the most currently used.

202. It is true that Muslim mystics—even as their counterparts in other civilizations—are not very eager to divulge their practices and their peculiarities to those outside the restricted circle of their disciples or conferrers. This is not because there are scandalous secrets, but probably because of the fear that the men in the street may not

understand why they undergo so much "useless" pain by renouncing the amenities of life; and also because the commoners do not believe in the personal experiences of the mystics. So the mystics think, it is better to conceal them from those who are unable to appreciate them. Incidentally it also happens that if a thing is enshrouded in secrecy, it becomes so much the more cherished by those who ignore it, yet are in search of it.

203. Differences of individual temperaments have existed in the human race at all times. It goes to the credit of Islam, that it has discovered certain things which it could impose on each and everybody, irrespective of temperament, a minimum necessary to be shared and practised in common; and this minimum necessity touches not only the spiritual but simultaneously also the material needs. In order to understand it well, it may be noted that all are agreed that the best Muslims were the immediate disciples of the Prophet, namely his companions. A study of their lives shows that from the very outset they were possessed of a variety of temperaments. There was Khālid, a warrior, an intrepid soldier, on whom the Prophet was pleased, in admiration, to confer the title of "the Sword of God"; there were 'Uthmān and Ibn 'Awf, who were rich merchants, and the Prophet had announced the good tidings that they belonged to the people of the Paradise; there was also Abu Dharr, who detested all property, and preferred an ascetic life of mortification. We may recall the Bedouin nomad, who had visited the Prophet one day, in order to learn what were the minimum duties to merit Paradise. The Prophet had replied: Faith in the One God, prayers five times a day, fast during the whole month of Ramaḍān, and the pilgrimage and payment of zakāt-tax if one had means thereto. The Bedouin embraced Islam, and burst forth: By God! I shall do nothing more and nothing less. When he departed, the Prophet remarked: Whoever wishes to see a man of Paradise, let him look at him! (cf. Bukhārī and Muslim). Be it the warrior Khālid, or the wealthy 'Uthmān, they never neglected the essential duties of Islam and its spirituality; similarly Abu Dharr, Salmān, Abu'd-Dardā' and others who liked asceticism, did not obtain permission from the Prophet to lead, for instance, lives of recluses, to fast perpetually, to get castrated in horror of carnal pleasures, etc. On the contrary, the Prophet enjoined on them to marry, and added: "Thou hast obligations even with regard to thy own body." (cf. Ibn Hanbal). According to Islam, one does not belong to one's self, but to God; and it is not per-



mitted to misuse the trust which God has reposed in us in the shape of our persons.

### THE SUFFAH

204. In the grand mosque of Madinah, there was in the time of the Prophet a special portion, called *Suffah* somewhat away from the prayer hall. This was a centre of training and education, functioning under the personal supervision of the Prophet himself. A considerable number of Muslims occupied it. They devoted part of their time, during the day, to learn the Islamic way of life, not only in matters of man's relations with God, but also with other members of society. They also worked to earn their bare necessities of life, so that they might not become parasites and a burden on others. During the night, they passed their time, like the best mystics, in the observance of supererogatory (*naḥal*) prayers and in meditation on God. Call this institute a convent (a *Tekkeh*, a *Khānqāh*) or by any other name, there is no doubt that the inmates of the *Suffah* were more attached to spiritual practices than to material avocations. Perhaps one will not be able to know the details of the practices which the Prophet had enjoined on these early Muslim mystics, which practices must have varied according to the temperament and capacities of each individual. Yet the object being determined, there was enough liberty to select lawful means leading thereto. It may be recalled, by the way, that the Prophet once said: "Wisdom is the lost-property of the believer; wherever he should find it, he should recover it" (cf. Tirmidhi, Ibn Majab).

### THE ESSENCE OF MYSTICISM

205. Through mysticism, Islam envisages a rectitude of beliefs, embellishment or beatification of the acts of devotion, taking the life of the Prophet as a model to be followed in all activities of life, the amelioration of personal conduct, and the accomplishment of duties imposed by Islam.

206. It has nothing to do with the power to know invisible things, with performing miracles, or imposing one's will on others by mysterious psychic means; not even with asceticism, mortification, seclusion, meditation and the consequent sensations (which may sometimes be means, yet not ends); or even with certain beliefs regarding the person of God (pantheism, etc); much less with

what the charlatans assert, that a mystic is above the Islamic law and the necessary minimum duties imposed by it.

207. For want of a better term, one might use the word "mysticism" which in Islam means the method of the best individual behaviour, i.e., the means by which one acquires control over one's own self, the sincerity, the realization of the constant presence of God in all one's acts and thoughts, seeking to love God more and more.

208. In the Islamic teachings, there are certain "external" duties, such as prayer-service, fast, charity, abstaining from evil and wickedness, etc. There are also "internal" duties, such as faith, gratitude to God, sincerity and freedom from egoism. Mysticism is a training for this latter aspect of life. However, even the external duties are motivated for purifying the spirit, which is the only means of eternal salvation. In general, the mystic develops by his spiritual practices certain of his faculties and talents, which appear to the commoners as miraculous; but the mystic does not seek them; he even despises them. To know invisible things, even if that becomes possible for certain persons by certain practices, is not desirable for the mystic; for these constitute the secrets of God and their premature divulcation is harmful to man in the long run. That is why the mystic does not utilize such powers even if he comes to acquire them; his aim remains always the purification of the spirit, in order to become more agreeable to the Lord. The perfect man is he who beautifies not only his outer but also his inner self, or — as mystics say — his body and his heart. For the external aspect, there is the *Fiqh* or body of Muslim law which consists of rules for the entire outer life, such as cult, contractual relations, penalties, etc. It is however the internal aspect which is the true subject matter of mysticism. The acts of prayer-service belong to the domain of the *Fiqh*, but sincerity and devotion are inner things, and belong to mysticism. Let us recall in this connection two verses of the Quran: "Successful indeed are the believers who are devout in their prayer-service" (23 : 1-2), and "Lo, the hypocrites . . . when they stand up to worship they perform it languidly and in ostentation so as to be observed by men" (4 : 142). The good and bad services of worship, indicated therein, give us a clue to the understanding of what Islam requires of its adherents in all activities of life.

208/a. Islamic tradition reserves to the caliph or the head of the

Muslim State not only politics (including administration of justice), but also cult, i.e., the outward practice of the religion, such as service of worship, fasting, pilgrimage. All this falls under the purview of the *Fiqh* (Muslim law) developed by the different schools (see *Infra* § 563/a). In this realm, monopoly of power has been jealously imposed, although this concerns rather the less important part of our life. Sectarian differences exist among Muslims, since the death of the Prophet, as to who had the right to succeed to the Prophet in the exercise of the power regarding politics and cult. Let us leave the decision to God on Dooms Day, and let us occupy with our future and the defence against the enemies of God. As to the inner life, which alone determines the salvation in the everlasting Hereafter, in this sphere there are no jealousies: several persons could and did succeed the Prophet simultaneously. If the Naqshbandiyah Order of mystics seeks its authority from the Prophet through Abu Bakr, the Qadiyah and Suhrawardiyah orders for instance, do the same through 'Ali, and all this among the Sunnis to whom Abu Bakr alone was the immediate successor of the Prophet in the political field. This spiritual Realm, which unites Sunnis and Shi'as, is no vapid abstraction: it has its own full-fledged administrative organisation. The existence of *abdāl* and *autād* or spiritual governors and administrators is known on the authority of the Prophet himself, as we read by as early an author as Ibn Sa'd. A monograph of Suyuti has collected all the traditions of the Prophet on the subject of *quṭb*, *abdāl* and *autād*. One need not enter into details here.

#### PLEASURE OF GOD

209. The common folk desire that God should love them, in a sort of one way traffic, without their loving Him: that He should give them well-being without their obeying Him. The Qur'ān (2: 165) teaches: "... those who believe are stauncher in their love for God. Again, it indicates the traits of the best men and says (5: 54): "... a people whom He loveth and who love Him."

210. Obtaining Divine pleasure is not analogous to the enjoyment of material comforts, which God may give a man in order to test his gratefulness. Sometimes a man remains deprived of these comforts so that his endurance and constancy may be tested. In both cases man must show his devotion and attachment to God. This necessi-

tates, on the one hand, abnegation of the ego by getting absorbed in the will of God, and on the other, a constant feeling of the effective presence of God.

211. The philosophic conception of pantheism emanates from the necessity of "self-abnegation in God." For a mystic, the mere affirmation of this belief has no value; he aspires to assimilate it and feel it as a reality. Thus it is that the learned distinctions between pantheism in the sense of the unity of existence, and that of the unity of vision, or any other, are for a true mystic mere logomachy, which makes the eager traveller lose his track, and retards his arrival at his destination.

212. It may be recalled here that the Islamic notion of pantheism does not lead to the reunification of man with God. However close a man may approach God, there is still a distinction, a separation, and a distance between the Creator and the created. One abnegates one's ego, but not one's person. The higher the level we attain, the more does God speak with our tongue, act with our hand, and desire with our heart\* (cf. Bukhārī). There is an ascension and a journey of man towards God, but there is never a confusion of the two. Thus it is that a Muslim does not use the term "communion", which may imply a union and a confusion. The Muslims designate the spiritual journey by the term *mi'rāj*, which means a ladder, an ascension, which varies according to individuals and their capacities. The highest imaginable level a human being can attain is the one that has been reached by the holy Prophet Muḥammad; and this experience of his is also called *mi'rāj*. So, in a state of consciousness and wakefulness, the Prophet had the vision (*ru'ya*) of being transported to heaven and graced with the honour of the Divine Presence. Even there, in this state beyond time and space, the Quran (53 : 9) indicates formally that the distance between God and the Prophet, "was of two bows' length or even nearer," and this graphic description lays emphasis simultaneously on the closeness of proximity as well as the distinction between the two. The Prophet himself employed the term *mi'rāj* in connection with the common faithful, when he indicated that "The service of worship is the *mi'rāj* of the believer." Evidently to each according to his capacity and his merit.

---

\*Literally : "I become his ear with which he hears, his eye with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, his feet with which he walks."



213. The spiritual journey has a whole series of stages, and it is only gradually that one traverses them. In the life of the Prophet Muhammad, we see that he began with retreats in the cave of Hirā': then came the Meccan period, in which there was in store for him suffering and self-abnegation for the sake of the Divine cause. It is only after the Hijrah that he permits himself,—under Divine instructions always—to oppose injustice with force. It is quite possible that someone, who pretends to be a derwish, should only be so in appearance, being in reality a wolf disguised, as a sheep, similarly it is quite possible that a king, with all the powers and treasures accumulated in his hands, should still be in practice a saint, who does not at all profit by these things, but makes a great self-sacrifice, in the course of accomplishing his duties, by renouncing his personal comforts.

214. To break the ego, the first requirement is a feeling of humility, which should be developed. Pride is considered as the greatest sin against God. In the words of al-Ghazali, ostentation is the worship of self, therefore really a kind of polytheism.

215. Temperaments differ, that is why the roads also are various. One insists on the need of a guide and master. One who has studied medicine privately, without passing through a period of apprenticeship or even attending the courses of study with proficient doctors, is not allowed to practise medicine. The cases are rare where one sees all one's defects; rarer still are instances of people who correct themselves immediately. A master is necessary in the first instance to indicate to us our defects and also the way in which these are to be removed. There is a constant development and a perpetual evolution in the individual, and the master spares us many an unnecessary effort. If one were not to profit by the experience of the past, and if each newborn were to recommence all of the task and to fall back on his own individual self, there would be no growth of culture and civilization which may be defined as the accumulated knowledge and practice of generations of our ancestors. The pupil has a regard for the judgment and counsel of his master, which he never has for his comrades and equals. After theoretical studies, one passes through a probationary period, for learning their practical application. This is as true of the material sciences as of the spiritual ones. There are many things which one can never learn by mere reading or listening; their practical application under the supervision of an experienced master is always useful, if not indispensable. Further, mere knowledge does not suffice

it should be assimilated and become a second nature.

216. Mystics recommend four practices : eat less, sleep less, speak less and frequent people less. "Less" does not mean complete abnegation, which is sometimes impossible (such as in eating and sleeping), and always undesirable ; there must always be a moderation. One should eat to live, and not live to eat. To eat for the purpose of obtaining the energy to accomplish the will and the commandments of God, is an act of devotion ; and to diminish the nourishment and get weakened to the extent to diminishing the spiritual productivity is a sin. Sleep is necessary for health, and is a duty imposed on man ; but laziness, which makes us remain in bed for long, affects our spiritual progress. Sleeping less does not mean passing time in material needs, but finding more time for the practices of devotion and piety. Speaking less means diminution of frivolous talks, and avoidance, if possible, of all evil talk. It is often our habit to give good counsel to others, but forget to practise it ourselves. To frequent people less, means refraining from unnecessary talk and wasting time in needless contacts. To do a good turn to others, and to be occupied with the realization of things which could procure the pleasure of the Lord are rather desirable frequentations. However, it should not be forgotten that the needs of the individuals differ according to their stage of evolution ; one does not give the same advice to an expert master as to a young novice. Mundane frequentations often occasion temptations, waste of useful time, and the forgetting of our more important obligations. It may be permitted to add a fifth counsel : spend less. meaning on luxury, on flirtation, on personal pleasure ; the amount thus saved could be used for purposes dear to us but for which we have no money—in our spend-thrift habits—to contribute our mite. The five counsels may constitute five principles of economy in Islam, both spiritual and material.

#### SPECIAL PRACTICES

217. One has to remember God all time. The essential feature is the remembering by the heart. But concentration not being constant one employs physical methods for strengthening the presence of the spirit, and focusing of thought on the Divine person. The Quran (33 : 41-2) says : "O ye who believe ! Remember God with much remembrance. And glorify Him early and late." Again (3 : 191) : "such

as remember God, standing, sitting and reclining and meditate on the creation of the heavens and the earth (and say:) our Lord, Thou createdst not this in vain; glory be to Thee; Preserve us from the doom of Fire." There are litanies, in which some formulas are repeated a number of times; there are prayers which one pronounces every day as a habit. This is done aloud or in a low voice, but all should be related invariably and always to God, to His person or to His attributes, and never to created beings. Even if the subject be the Prophet Muhammad, for gratitude and admiration, the approach should be always through God, and not praying Muhammad himself independently to do something for us. For instance "O God, incline to Muhammad and take him into Thy protection," or "O God resuscitate Muhammad in the glorious place which Thou hast promised him, and accept his intercession in our favour," etc. For developing concentration of thought, the mystics sometimes live in seclusion, or retreat, stop respiration for moments, close the eyes, and concentrate on the throbbing of the heart while thinking of God, etc. They also say that there are three grades of remembrances of God: to remember only His name, to remember His person by means of and through His name, and to remember His person without having the need of His name or any other means. That these practices were recommended by the Prophet himself and that they are not of a foreign origin, it may be recalled that Abu Hurairah had a rosary, made of a thread, with 2,000 knots to serve as many beads, and he repeated a certain prayer on it every night. (Ibn Faḍlallāh al-'Umari, *Masālik al-Absār*, vol. 5, M.S. of Istanbul).

218. Among other practices, one may mention a life of asceticism, self-mortification, and meditation particularly on death and the final judgement. For Islam these are not ends, but only the means, rather temporary and provisional, for the purpose of mastering and breaking the ego. Everything that one permits to one's self in this world is divided into two categories: necessities and luxuries. One can never renounce the necessities, for it would be suicide. To commit suicide is religiously forbidden in Islam, for we do not belong to ourselves, but to God; and to destroy something before its full-fledged realization is to go against the will of God. As for luxuries, if they are not made the aim of our existence in this world, they are lawful. One can renounce them in order to dominate over one's animality; one can also do so in order to help those who do not possess

even the necessaries of life, or perhaps as a penitence. But it is not permitted to act in an exaggerated manner or out of all proportion. A verile man who makes an effort to lead a chaste life has greater merit than the one who destroys his desires by means, for instance, of a surgical operation. One who has no capacity for evil has no merit in comparison with the one who has the most perfect capacity for it and yet abstains voluntarily from it, for fear of God.

219. Self-mortifications, abstinences and other spiritual practices enhance certain faculties, yet the acquisition of such faculties, however miraculous they might be, is not the aim of one who travels towards God. One seeks to realize acts, but not the sensations which are produced thereby automatically. Even an infidel may acquire certain of the faculties of saints, yet without the ultimate salvation. The mystic is continually directed towards his destination, and does not think of, much less profit by, these incidents of the saintly journey.

220. The life of a Sufi, derwish or mystic begins with repentance for the past sins and the reparation, as far as possible, of the harms done to other people. God pardons harms done to His own rights, but not those to the rights of other creatures; it is these latter who alone can pardon. It is only then that one can march on the path leading to the Lord. It is not the monopoly of any person or class or caste; it is within the reach of everybody, and it is the duty of each and everyone to take this road. The provisions for this journey are two-fold: obedience to God and constant remembering of Him. Obedience is easier in the sense that one knows what one has to do and what the will of the Lord is. He has revealed His will and His prescriptions through His chosen prophets, in order that they communicate them to the common folk.

221. God has sent innumerable prophets. If their teachings have differed in details, it is not because God has changed His opinion, but only because, in His mercy and wisdom, the evolution or deterioration of the human capacities necessitated a change in the rules of conduct and in the details. Although in the essentials of their teachings, particularly in those which concern the relation of man with God, prophets do not differ,—and the Qur'ān lays a strong emphasis on it,—it is part of the obedience of man to God's orders to abide by the latest disposition of His will. If God taught men something



through the prophet Abraham, for instance, it will not be disobedience to abandon it for abiding by the teachings of the prophet Moses, because he brought in his time the latest disposition of the orders of the same Law-giver; what is more, to neglect the directions of Moses and continue to practise the teachings of Abraham would be a flagrant disobedience to God. It is thus that man should practise, turn by turn, the messages of God brought by successive prophets, the latest of whom being Muḥammad of holy memory. It is thus that, with all his respect for the previous prophets, a Muslim cannot abide except by the latest disposition of the will of God communicated to man. A Muslim venerates the Torah, the Psalter and the Gospel as the word of God, yet he abides by the latest and the most recent of the words of God, namely the Qur'ān. Whoever remains attached to the preceding laws, cannot be considered, by the Legislator, as law-abiding and obedient.

## CONCLUSION

222. Man being composed simultaneously of body and soul, of an outer and an inner existence, the harmonious progress and blanced evolution towards perfection require that attention should be paid to both these aspects of man. Mysticism or spiritual culture in Islam envisages the diminution of the Ego and the ever-increasing realization of the presence of God. To be absorbed in the will of God does not at all mean an immobility; far from that. In innumerable verses, the Qur'ān urges man to action and even to compete in the search for the Divine pleasure by means of good actions. Not to follow one's own evil desires, but to abide by the will of God alone, does not lead to inaction. Only that happens which God wills; yet not knowing the will of God, which remains concealed from men, man must always continue his effort, even though failure follows failure, when trying to attain the good which he conscientiously believes to be good and in conformity with the revealed commandments of God. This notion of a dynamic predestination, which urges one to action and resignation to the will of God, is well explained in the following verses of the Qur'ān (57 : 22-23): "Naught of disaster befalleth on the earth or in your souls but it is in a Book (Prescription) before We bring in into being—lo! that is easy for God—that ye grieve not for the sake of that which hath escaped you, nor ye exult because of that which ye had been given; God loveth no prideful boasters." Man should

always think of the grandeur of God, and vis-a-vis this, of his own humility, as well as of the day of the Resurrection when the Lord will demand individual accounts. The Qur'ān says (29 : 69) : "As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths, and lo ! God is with the good."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SYSTEM OF MORALITY

**M**EN may be divided into three principal categories: (1) Those who are good by nature, and incorruptible in the face of temptations, whose very instinct suggests to them whatever is good and charitable; (2) Those who are just the contrary and are incorrigible; and (3) Those who belong to the intermediary group, and behave suitably if they are constrained thereto by supervision or sanction, but who otherwise lapse into a state of carelessness or do injustice to others.

224. This last category comprises the immense majority of the human race, the members of the other two extreme categories comprising but a few individuals. The first kind (of the human-angels) does not require any direction or control; but it is the second kind (of the human-devils) which must be controlled, and prevented from doing evil. Great attention has to be devoted to the third kind (of the human-men).

225. The members of this third category resemble in certain respects the beasts: they are calm and content with what they possess, so long as they perceive nothing better in the possession of others, or do not suspect some mischief on the part of others. This evil propensity in the face of temptations has been, at all times, the object of intense preoccupation on the part of human society. Thus the father controls his children; the head of the family, of the tribe, of the city-state, or of any other group of men, tries to force those who are placed under his authority to be content with what they possess, and not to usurp that which others have obtained in an honest and legitimate way. Perhaps the very aim of human society is no other than controlling temptations and remedying the damage already done. All men, even members of the same nation, are never developed alike. A noble spirit is willing to sacrifice and do works of charity. An intelligent spirit sees very far; and the consequences which would compromise the immediate gain prevent it from doing evil, even if it should not be persuaded to sacrifice on its own initiative. As to the ordinary spirit,

not only does it not willingly consent to sacrifice, but even permits itself to thrive at the expense of others, unless there be a fear of violent and immediate reaction on the part of its victim, or society, or any other superior power. And the obtuse spirit is not deterred even by this fear, and persists till the last in its criminal intent, struggling against all opposition, until it is placed by society in a state where it can no more have a nuisance value, such as a punishment by death or imprisonment.

226. All laws, all religions and all philosophies try to persuade the masses, or the intermediary category, to behave in a suitable manner and even to offer voluntary sacrifices in order to help the poor, the destitute and those who have needs and yet cannot satisfy them, for no fault of theirs.

#### CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF ISLAM

227. Islam is an all-embracing mode of life. Not only does it prescribe beliefs but also the rules of social behaviour; moreover, it occupies itself with the nicer application and functioning of its laws. We know that Islam does not believe in the life of this world as an end in itself, or in body without any relation to soul. On the contrary, it teaches belief in the Hereafter. Its motto, as enunciated by the Qur'an, is "The best in this world as well as the best in the Hereafter." It is thus that not only does it praise the good and condemn the evil, but also provides rewards and sanctions, both spiritual and material. As far as its injunctions and prohibitions are concerned, Islam inculcates in the spirit, the fear of God, the last judgement after the Resurrection, and the punishment of the Hell fire. Not content with this, it takes all possible precautions in the realm of material sanctions, in order to deter man from permitting himself acts of injustice and violation of the rights of others. It is thus that the believer prays and fasts even when he is not coerced to do that; he pays the tax even when government ignores fixation of the amount or finds itself unable to obtain payment by force.

#### THE BASIS OF MORALITY

228. Often, it so happens that motives or circumstances bring about a profound change in the import of acts which outwardly seem to resemble one another. For instance, the death occasioned at the



hands of a brigand, of a hunter mistaking his victim for a game, of a fool, or a minor, in self-defence, by a headsman executing the capital punishment ordered by a tribunal, a soldier defending his country against an aggressive invasion, etc.—in all these cases the killing is sometimes pushed more or less severely, sometimes pardoned, sometimes considered a normal duty entailing neither praise nor condemnation, and sometimes obtains high praise and honour. Almost all human life is composed of acts whose good and evil are relative. This is why the Prophet Muhammad has often declared: “Acts will be (judged) only according to motives.”

229. Islam is based on the belief of a Divine revelation sent to men through prophets as intermediary. Its law and morality, even as its faith, are therefore based on Divine commandments. It is possible that in the majority of cases human reason also should arrive at the same conclusion, but essentially it is the Divine aspect which has the decisive significance in Islam, and not the reasoning of a philosopher, a jurist or a moralist, the more so because the reasonings of different individuals may differ and lead to completely opposite conclusions. Sometimes the motive of discipline is found underlying an obligation and practice which is apparently superfluous.

230. One may divide human actions, first of all, into good and evil, represented by orders and prohibitions. The acts from which one must abstain are also divided into two big categories: Those against which there is temporal sanction or material punishment in addition to condemnation on the day of the Final Judgement, those which are condemned by Islam without providing a sanction other than that of the Hereafter.

231. In a saying attributed to the Prophet (and reported by Qadi ‘Iyad, in his *Shifa*, ch. 2) we see the conception of life envisaged by Islam: “ ‘Ali asked the Prophet one day about the principles governing his general behaviour, and he replied: knowledge is my capital, reason is the basis of my religion, love is my foundation, desire is my mount for riding, remembrance of God is my comrade, confidence is my treasure, anxiety is my companion, science is my arm, patience is my mantle, contentment is my booty, modesty is my pride, renunciation of pleasure is my profession, certitude is my food, truth is my intercessor, obedience is my sufficiency, struggle is my habitude and

the delight of my heart is in the service of worship.”

232. On another occasion, the Prophet Muhammad said: The sum-total of wisdom is the fear of God. Islamic morality begins with the renunciation of all adoration outside God, be it adoration of the self (egoism), or adoration of our own handicrafts (idols, superstitions), etc.; and the renunciation of all that degrades humanity (atheism, in justice, etc.).

233. Abolishing the ineluctable inequalities—based on race, colour of skin, language, place of birth—Islam has proclaimed (and realized more than any other system) the superiority of the individual based solely on morality, which is a thing accessible and open to everybody without exception. This it is that Qur’ān (49:13) has said: “O mankind, lo! We have created you of a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another; verily the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most pious; lo! God is Knower, Aware.”

234. In a beautiful passage (17:23-9), the Qur’ān gives twelve commandments to the Muslim community, and says:

- (i) Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him.
- (ii) And that (ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them were to attain old age with thee, say not ‘Fie’ unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word. And lower unto them the wing of tenderness through mercy, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them both, as they did care for me when I was little. Your Lord is best aware of what is in your minds. If ye are righteous, then lo! He is ever Forgiving unto those who turn (unto Him).
- (iii) Give the kinsman his due, and the poor, and the wayfarer, and squander not (thy wealth) in wantonness. Lo! the squanderers are ever brothers of the devils, and the Devil was an ingrate to his Lord. But if thou turn away from them, waiting mercy from thy Lord, for which thou hopest, then speak unto them a convenient word.
- (iv) And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded. Lo! thy Lord enlargeth the provision for whom He will, and

straineth (if from whom He will). Lo! He is ever Knower, Seer of His slaves.

- (v) Slay not your children, fearing a fall to penury; we shall provide for them and for you. Lo! the slaying of them is great sin.
- (vi) And come not near unto fornication. Lo! it is an abomination and an evil way.
- (vii) And slay not the life which God hath forbidden save with right. Whoso is slain wrongfully, we have given power unto his rightful representative, but let him not commit excess in slaying. Lo! he will be helped.
- (viii) Come not near the property of the orphan save with that which is better till he comes to strength;
- (x) And keep the covenant. Lo! of the covenant it will be asked.
- (x) Fill the measure when ye measure, and weigh with a right balance; this is meet, and best refuge.
- (xi) Follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart—of each of these it will be asked.
- (xii) And walk not in the earth exultant. Lo! thou canst not rend the earth, nor canst thou stretch to the height of the hills. The evil of all that is hateful in the sight of thy Lord. This is part of the wisdom wherewith thy Lord hath inspired thee (O Muḥammad). And set not up with God any other god, lest thou be cast into hell, reprovèd, abandoned.

These commandments, comparable to and more comprehensive than those given to Moses, were revealed to the Prophet during the *mi'raj*.

235. It would be too lengthy to cite here all the Quranic exhortations. However, we may quote a passage (4: 36-8), in which it speaks of the social behaviour of the average man: "And serve God; ascribe nothing as partner unto Him: (show) kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is of kin (unto you) and the neighbour who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveller and the wayfarer, and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess; lo! God loveth not such as are proud and boastful, who hoard their wealth and enjoin avarice on others, and hide that which

God hath bestowed upon them of His bounty; for disbelievers, We prepare a shameful doom. And (also) for those who spend their wealth in order to be seen of men, and believe not in God nor the Last Day; whoso taketh Satan for a comrade, a bad comrade hath he."

236. In another passage (49: 10-12), the Qur'ān describes the characteristics of Muslim society: "The believers are naught else than brethren; therefore make peace between your brethren and observe your duty to God, that haply ye may obtain mercy. O ye who believe! Let not a folk deride a folk who may be better than they are, nor let women (deride) women who may be better than they are; neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames; bad is the name of lewdness after embracing the faith: and whoso turneth not in repentance, such are evil-doers. O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion: for lo! some suspicion is a crime: and spy not, neither backbite one another; would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother (by backbiting)?; ye abhor that (so abhor the other); and keep your duty to God: lo! God is Relenting, Merciful."

#### THE FAULT AND ITS EXPIATION

237. Nobody could object to the good counsel, offered in the above-mentioned verses; but man has his weaknesses. He is constituted simultaneously of the elements of good and evil. By his innate defects, he gets angry; he is subject to temptations, and is driven to do harm to those who are weaker and have no means of defending or avenging themselves. Similarly, his noble sentiments make him repent afterwards; and in proportion to the force of his repentance, he tries more or less to rectify the harm he had done.

238. Islam divides faults into two big categories; those which are committed against the rights of God (unbelief, neglect of worship, etc.), and those against the rights of men. Moreover, God does not pardon the harm done by a man to his fellow-being: it is the victim who alone can pardon. If one does harm to another creature, be it man, animal or any other one commits in fact a double crime: a crime against one's immediate victim, and also a crime against God, since the criminal conduct in question constitutes a violation of the Divine prescriptions. It is thus that, when there is an injustice or crime against another



creature, one has not only to try to repair the damage, by restituting to the victim of one's violation the right which had been taken away from him, but he has also to beg pardon of God. In a famous saying of his, the Prophet Muhammad gave a warning, that on Doomsday, a certain person would be thrown in Hell because he had tied up a cat with a rope giving it neither to eat nor to drink, nor letting it go and seek itself the food, thus causing the death of the poor animal in inanition. In another Hadith, the Prophet spoke of Divine punishment to those men who did not fulfil their duty against even the animals, by not giving them sufficient food, or loading them beyond their strength, etc. The Prophet prohibited even the hewing down of trees without necessity. Men should profit by what God has created, yet in an equitable and reasonable measure, avoiding all dissipation and waste.

239. When one causes damage to another and wishes to repair it, there are several ways he could adopt. Sometimes by merely asking pardon everything is set right; at other times it may be necessary to reſtitute the rights which were taken away, or replace them if the original rights could not be restituted, and so on.

240. To show clemency to others and pardon them is a noble quality, and upon this Islam has often insisted. In culogizing it, the Qur'ān (3: 133-34) says: "And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord and for a Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the pious, who spend (as charity) in ease and in adversity, who control their wrath and are forgiving towards mankind: and God loveth the doers of good."

241. Pardon is recommended, yet vengeance is also permitted (for the average man). In this respect, the Qur'ān (42: 40) says: "The guerdon of an ill-deed is an ill the like thereof. But whoever pardoneth and amendeth, his wage is the affair of God. Lo! He loveth not the oppressors". This is one of many similar versés.

242. God is incomparably more forgiving and merciful than the most merciful of men. Among the names with which Islam calls God, there is *Rahmān* (Most Merciful), *Tauwāb* (Most Pardoning) 'Afu (one who effaces faults), *Ghaffār* (Most Forgiving), etc. Those who commit a sin against God, and then repent find God full of indulgence. Two verses of the Qur'ān may show the Islamic notion of the bounty of

God :

- (a) "Verily God pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him, while He pardoneth all else to whom He will (4 : 116).
- (b) "... O My slaves who have been prodigal to your own hurt! despair not of the mercy of God; Verily God forgiveth all sins: verily He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (39 : 53).

243. If one gives up disbelief and turns to God to beg pardon of Him, one can always hope for His clemency. Man is weak, and often breaks his resolutions; but true repentance can always restore the grace of God. There is no formality, no buying of Divine pardon by the mediation of other men; but one must turn directly to God, present Him one's sincere regrets in a *tete-a-tete* conversation (*munā-jāt*); for He is the knower of all and nothing could be concealed from Him. "The Love of God for His creatures is hundred and more times greater than that of a mother for her child," as has once been remarked by the Prophet. For the Prophet Muḥammad has said: "Mercy has been divided by God into one hundred portions, of which He has retained Himself 99 and distributed the one portion among all the beings living on the earth; the mutual mercy found among the creatures comes from the same". In a saintly saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) the Prophet reports God as saying: "Whoever tries to approach Me by a span, I approach him by a cubit, whoever approaches Me by a cubit, I approach him by a fathom, whoever comes towards Me walking, I run to meet him." The Qur'ān (11 : 114) announces no doubt: "Verily the good deeds carry away evil deeds." Alms and charities are no doubt recommended, yet they do not buy automatically the Divine pardon for a given sin; each has an independent existence, and God's freedom is absolute.

## THE INJUNCTIONS

244. The Qur'ān often employs two characteristic terms to designate the good and the evil. Thus it refers to *ma'rūf* (the good known to everybody and recognized as such), and *munkar* (the evil denounced by everybody and recognized as such). In other words, the Qur'ān has confidence in human nature, in the common sense of man; "There will

---

**VARIOUS  
POSTURES  
OF  
PRAYERS  
SERVICE**



Takbīr-i-Tehrīma (تکبیر تحریمیہ)

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)





Salām (سَلَام)

*(With eyes looking over the right shoulder)*

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)



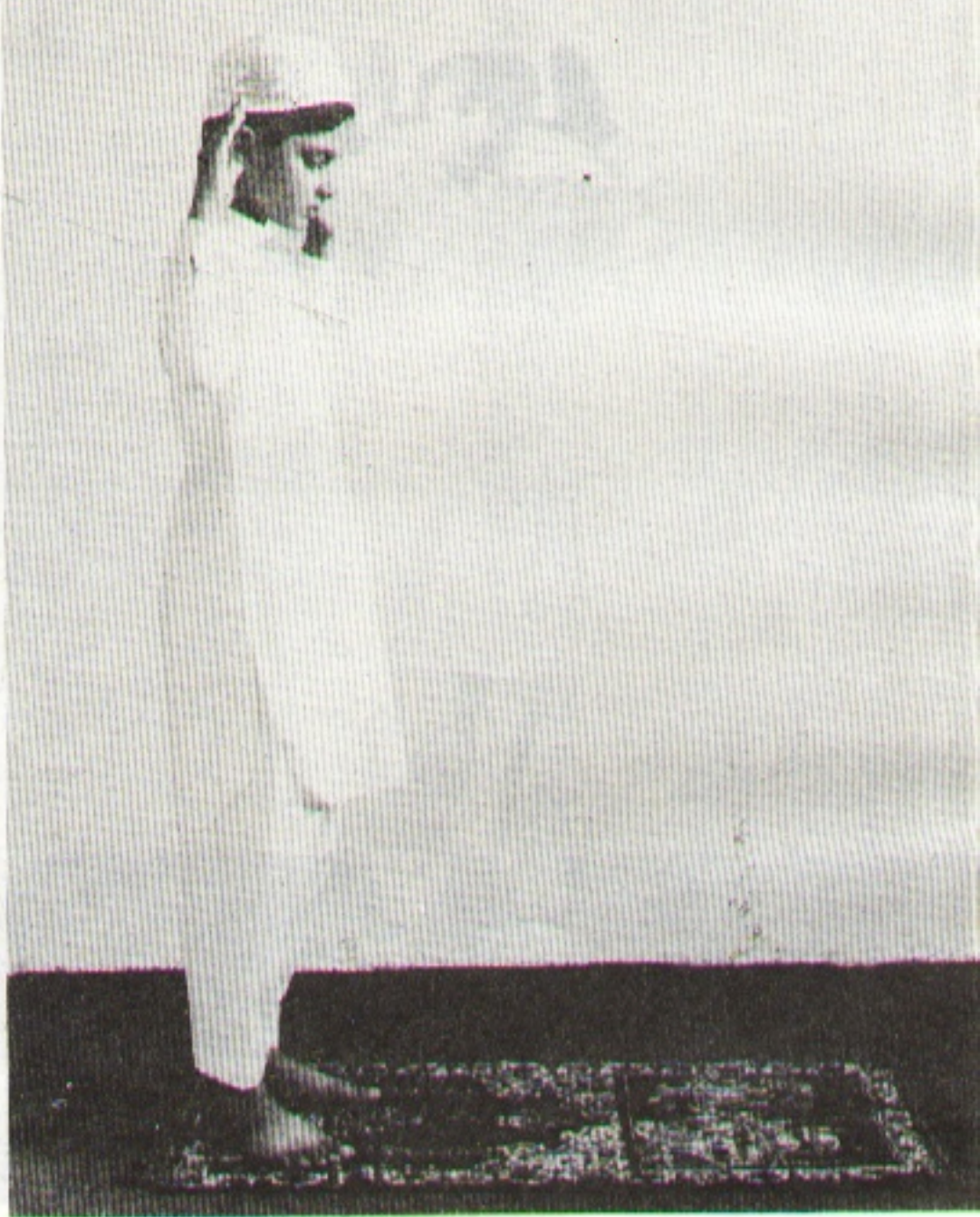
Salām (سلام)

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)  
(Looking over the left shoulder)





Du'ā (دُعَا)  
[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)  
(Supplication)



Takbir-i-Tehrīma, side pose (تکبیر تحریمہ)

*(With eyes on the spot of Sajah)*

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)



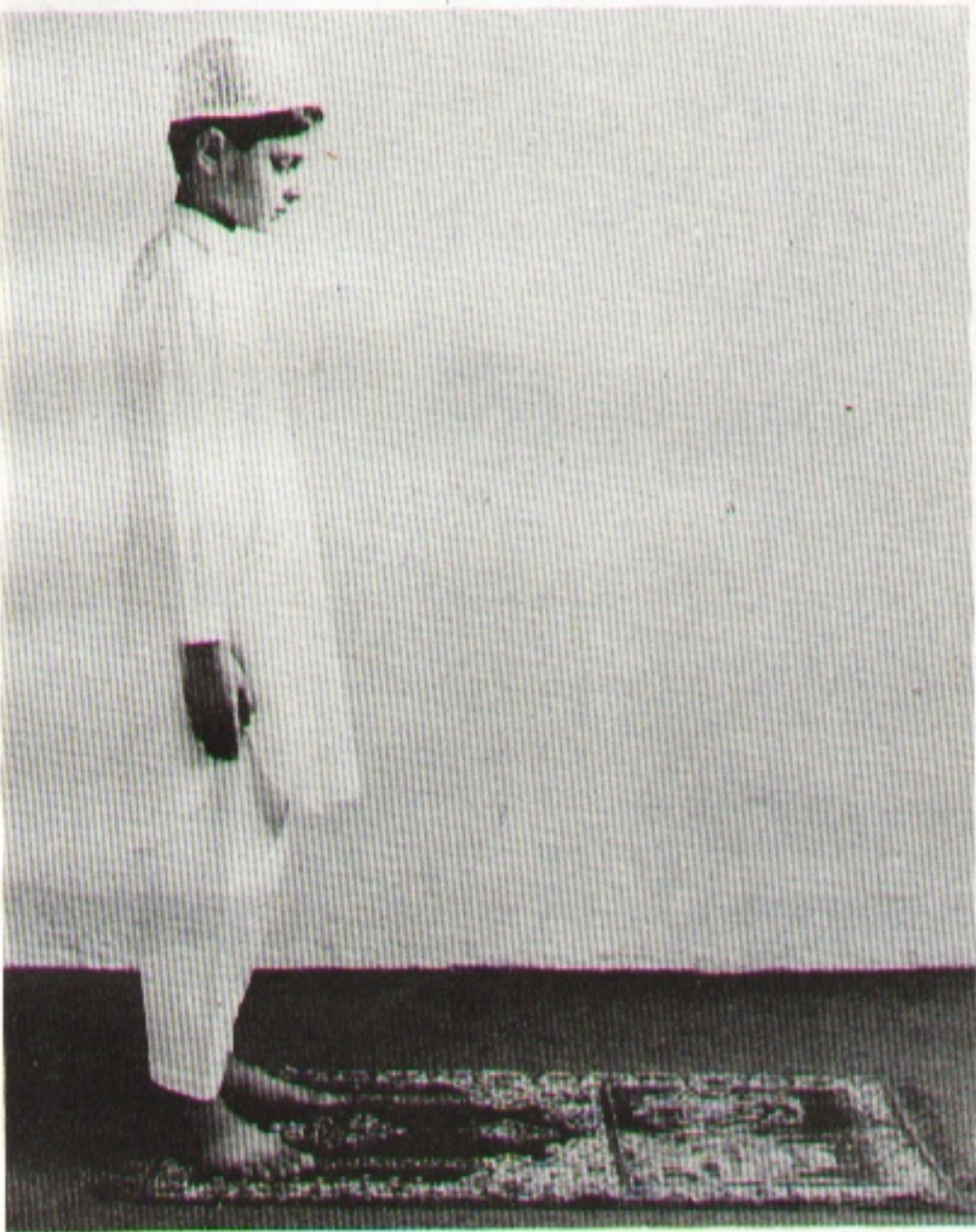


Posisi Qiyām (قيام) (تَوَكُّفٌ)  
(Prayer begins)



Rukū' (رکوع)





Position for Qawmah (قومه)

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)



Sajdah (سجدة)

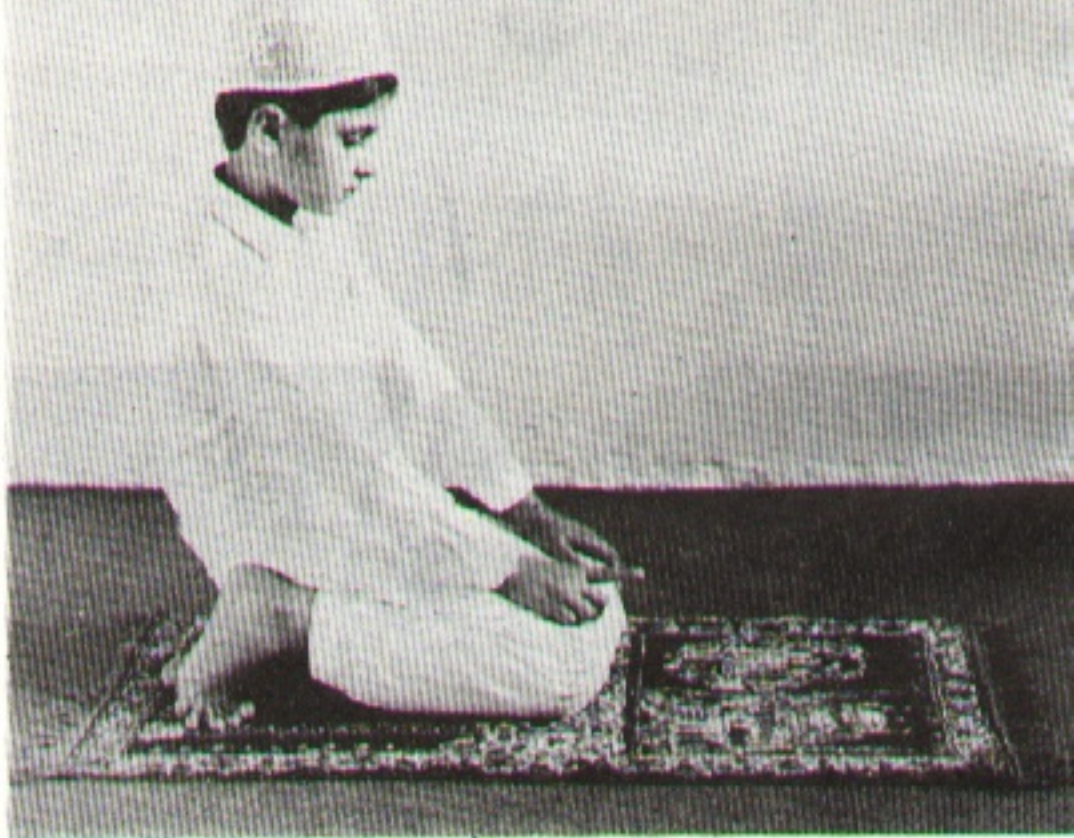




Jalsah (جلسہ)

(Front pose)

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)

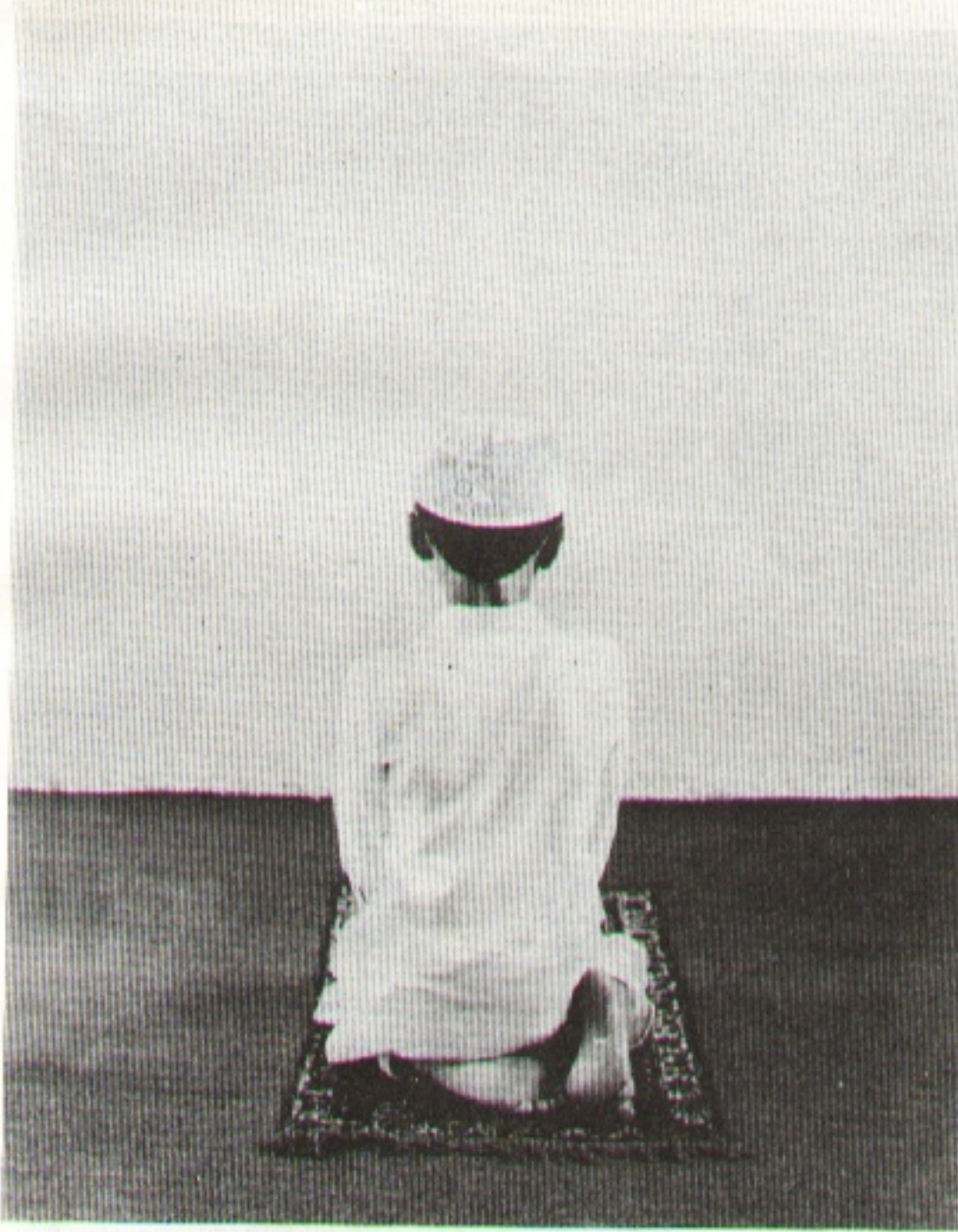


Jalsah (جالس)

(Showing the position of right foot)

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)





Jalsah (جلسه)

[www.ebooksland.blogspot.com](http://www.ebooksland.blogspot.com)

(Back pose - position of right foot)