ISLAM AS A MORAL AND POLITICAL IDEAL.—I.

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There are three points of view from which a religious system can be approached—the standpoint of the teacher, that of the expounder, and that of the critical student. I do not pretend to be a teacher whose thought and action are, or ought to be, in perfect harmony; nor do I seek in any way to work out, in his own life, the ideals which he prescribes to others, and thus influence his audience more by example than by precept. Nor do I claim the high office of an expounder who brings to bear a subtle intellect upon his task, endeavors to explain all the various aspects of the principles he expounds and works with certain pre-suppositions, the truth of which he never questions. The attitudes of mind which characterize a critical student is fundamentally different from that of the teacher and the expounder. He approaches the subject of his inquiry free from all pre-suppositions, and tries to understand the organic structure of a religious system, just as a biologist would study a form of life or a geologist a piece of mineral. His object is to apply methods of scientific research to religion, with a view to discover how the various elements in a given structure fit in with one another, how such factors function integrally, and how their relation with one another determines the functional value of the whole. He looks at the subject from the standpoint of history and raises certain fundamental questions with regard to the origin, growth, and formation of the system he proposes to understand. What are the historical forces, the operation of which evoked, as it were, a necessary consequence, the phenomenon of a particular system? Why should a particular religious system be produced by a particular people? What is the real significance of a religious system in the history of the people who produced it, and in the history of mankind as a whole? Are there any geographical causes which determine the original locality of a religion? How far does it reveal the latent soul of a people, their social, moral and political aspirations? What transformation, if any, has it withstood in them? How far has it contributed towards the realization of the ultimate purpose revealed in the history of man? These are some of the questions which the critical student of religion endeavors to answer, in order to comprehend its structure and to estimate its worth as a civilizing agency among the forces of historical evolution.

I propose to look at Islam from the standpoint of the critical student. But I may state at the outset that I shall avoid the use of expressions current in popular Revelation Theory, since my method is essentially scientific and consequently unequivalent the use of forms which can be interpreted in the light of everyday human experience. For instance, when I say the religion of a people is the sum-total of their life-experience, I am only translating the fact of revelation into the language of utility. Similarly, interaction between individual and universal energy is only another expression for the laying of the ground, which ought to be so described for processes of scientific accuracy. It is because I want to approach my subject from a thoroughly human standpoint, and not because I desire to do Divinely Revelation as the final basis of all religion, that I prefer to employ expressions of a more scientific content. Islam is, moreover, the youngest of all religions, the last creation of humanity. Its founder stands out clear before us; he is truly a personage of history, and lends himself freely even to the most searching criticism. Inevitable legends have woven no serious round his figure; he is born in the broad daylight of history; we are thoroughly understand the inner spring of his actions; we can subject his mind to keen psychological analysis. Let us then, free from being, eliminate the superfluous elements and try to understand the structure of Islam as we find it.

I have just indicated the way in which a critical student of religion approaches his subject. Now, it is not possible for us, in the short space at my disposal, to answer, with regard to Islam, all the questions which a critical student of religions I ought to be able to answer in order to reveal the real meaning of this religious system. I shall not raise the question of the origin and the development of Islam. Nor shall I try to adduce the various currents of thought in the pre-Islamic Arabian society, which bear the seeds of the future system. I shall confine my attention to the Islamic idea in its ethical and political aspect only.

To begin then, I have to recognize that every great religious system starts with certain propositions concerning the nature of man and the universe. The psychological implication of Buddhism, for instance, is the central fact of pain as a disintegrating element in the constitution of the universe. Man regarded as an single individuality, is helped against the forces of pain, according to the teachings of Buddhism. There is an insusceptible relation between pain and...
the individual consciousness which, as such, is nothing but a constant possibility of pain. Freedom from pain means freedom from individuality. Starting from the fact of pain, Buddhism is quite consistent in placing before man the idea of self-destruction. Of the two terms of this relation, pain and the sense of personality, one (i.e., pain) is ultimate; the other is a delusion from which it is possible to emancipate oneself by ceasing to act on those lines of activity, which have a tendency to intensify the sense of personality. Salvation, then, according to Buddhism, is inaction; renunciation of self and sorrowlessness are the principal virtues. Similarly, Christianity as a religious system, is based on the fact of sin. The world is regarded as evil and the taint of sin is regarded as hereditary to man, who, as an individuality is insufficient and stands in need of some supernatural personality to intervene between him and his Creator. Christianity, unlike Buddhism, regards human personality as something real, but agrees with Buddhism in holding that man, as a force against sin, is insufficient. There is, however, a notable difference in the agreement. We can, according to Christianity, get rid of sin by depending upon a Redeemer; we can free ourselves from pain, according to Buddhism, by letting the insufficient force disintegrate or lose itself in the universal energy of nature. Both agree in the fact of insufficiency and both agree in holding that this insufficiency is an evil, but while the one makes up the deficiency by bringing in the force of a redeeming personality, the other prescribes its gradual reduction until it is annihilated altogether. Again, Zoroastrianism looks upon nature as a scene of endless struggle between the powers of evil and the powers of good, and recognizes in man the power to choose any course of action he likes. The universe, according to Zoroastrianism, is partly evil, partly good; man is neither wholly good nor wholly evil, but a combination of the two principles—light and darkness continually fighting against each other for universal supremacy. We see then that the fundamental pre-suppositions, with regard to the nature of the universe and man, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, respectively, are the following—

(1) There is pain in nature and man regarded as an individual is evil (Buddhism).

(2) There is sin in nature, and the taint of sin is fatal to man (Christianity).

(3) There is struggle in nature; man is a mixture of the struggling forces and is free to range himself on the side of the powers of good, which will eventually prevail (Zoroastrianism).
ISLAM AS A MORAL AND POLITICAL IDEAL.—I.

depicts the peace of the earth, and we glorify thee and sing Thy praises'? God answered: "I know what thou dost not." This verse of the Quran, read in the light of the famous tradition that every child is born a Muslim, peaceful indicates that according to the tenets of Islam man is essentially good and peaceful—a view explained and defended, in our own times, by Ruseéen—the greatest father of modern political thought. The opposite view, the doctrine of the depravity of man held by the Church of Rome, leads to the most pernicious religious and political consequences. Since if man is essentially wicked, he must not be permitted to have his own way; his entire life must be controlled by external authority. This means priesthood in religion and bureaucracy in politics. The Middle Ages in the history of Europe drove this dogma of Romanism to its political and religious consequences, and the result was a form of society which required terrible revolutions to destroy it and to erect the basic pre-suppositions of its structure. Either, the enemy of despoticism in religion, and Ruseéen, the enemy of despoticism in politics, must always be regarded as the emancipators of European humanity from the heavy fetters of pedantry and absolutism, and their religious and political thought must be understood as a virtual denial of the Church dogma of human depravity. The possibility of the elimination of sin and pain from the evolutionary process and faith in the natural goodness of man are the basic propositions of Islam, as of modern European civilization, which has, almost unconsciously, recognised the truth of these propositions in spite of the religious system with which it is associated. Ethically speaking, therefore, man is naturally good and peaceful. Metaphysically speaking, he is a unit of energy, which cannot bring out its dormant possibilities owing to its misconception of the nature of its environment. The ethical ideal of Islam is to disenchase man from fear, and thus to give him a sense of his personality, to make him conscious of himself as a source of power. This idea of man as an individuality of infinite power determines, according to the teachings of Islam, the worth of all human action. That which intensifies the sense of individuality in man is good, that which embitters it is bad. Virtue is power, force, strength; evil is weakness. Give man a keen sense of respect for his own personality, let him move fearless and free in the immensity of God's earth, and he will respect the personalities of others and become perfectly virtuous. It is not possible for me to show in the course of this paper, how all the principal forms of vice can be reduced to fear. But we will now see the reason why certain forms of human activity, e.g., self-recognition, poverty, slavery.
obedience which sometimes conceals itself under the beautiful names of humility and unworldliness—modes of activity which tend to weaken the force of human individuality—are regarded as virtues by Buddhism and Christianity, and altogether ignored by Islam. While the early Christians glorified in poverty and unworldliness, Islam looks upon poverty as a vice, and says: "Do not forget thy share in the world." The highest virtue from the standpoint of Islam is righteousness, which is defined by the Queen in the following manner:—

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to pray toward east and west, but righteousness is of him who believeth in God and the Last Day and the angels and the scriptures and the prophets who give the money for God's sake unto his kindred and the needy and to strangers and to those who are in captivity and in expiation of a false oath taken by mistake. The Prophet's own treatment of slaves was extraordinarily liberal. The proud aristocratic Arab could not tolerate the social elevation of a slave, even when he was manumitted. The democratic ideal of perfect equality, which had found the most uncompromising expression in the Prophet's life, could only be brought home to an extremely aristocratic people by a very cautious handling of the situation. He brought about a marriage between an emancipated slave and a free Quraysh woman, a relative of his own. This marriage was a blow to the aristocratic pride of this free Arab woman; she could not get on with her husband, and the result was a divorce, which made her the more helpless, since as a respectable Arab would marry the divorced wife of a slave. This ever-watchful Prophet avoided himself of this situation and turned it to account in his efforts at social reform. He married the woman himself, indicating thereby that not only a slave could marry a free woman, but also a woman divorced by him could become the wife of a man as no less than the greatest Prophet of God. The significance of this marriage in the history of social reform in Arabia is, indeed, great. Whether prejudice, ignorance or want of insight has blinded European critics of Islam to the real meaning of this union, it is difficult to say.

In order to show the treatment of slaves by modern Muhammadans, I quote a passage from the English translation of the autobiography of the late Amir Adbur Rahman of Afghanistan.

"For instance," says the Amir, "Ammar Khan, a Chitrali slave, is my most trusted Commandant-in-Chief at Horat, Nasir Muhammad, another Chitrali slave, is the most trusted official of my Court; he keeps my seal. In his hand to put to any document and to my food and drink; in short, he has the full confidence of my life, as well as my kingdom is in his hands. Parwana Khan, the late Deputy Commandant-in-Chief, and Zia Muhammad Khan, the late Lord of Treasure, two of the highest officials of the kingdom in their lifetime, were both of them by slaves."
The truth is that the institution of slavery is a mere name in Islam, and the idea of individuality revolves itself as a guiding principle in the entire system of Muhammadan law and ethics. Briefly speaking, then, a strong will in a strong body is the ethical ideal of Islam. But let me stop here for a moment, and see whether we, Indian Musalmans, are true to this ideal. Does the Indian Muslim possess a strong will in a strong body? Has he the will to live? Has he got sufficient strength of character to oppose those forces which tend to disintegrate the social organism to which he belongs? I regret to answer your questions in the negative. The reader will understand, that in the great struggle for existence it is not principally number which makes a social organism survive. Character is the ultimate equipment of man, not only in his efforts against a hostile natural environment, but also in his contest with kindred competitors after a fuller, richer, larger life. The life forces of the Indian Musalmans, however, has become woefully entangled. The decay of the religious spirit, combined with other causes of political nature over which he had no control, has developed in him a spirit of self-worship, a sense of dependence and, above all, that latent fire of spirit which is so characteristic of all the religious races and people by the great name of 'contentment' in order he can oppose his own enslavement. Owing to his indifferent commercial morality he falls in economic enterprises; for, want of a true conception of national interest and a right appreciation of the present situation of his community among the communities of the country, he is working, in his private as well as public capacity, on lines, on which I am afraid, must lead him to ruin. How often do we see that he shrinks from advocating a cause, the significance of which is truly national, simply because his standing also pleases an influential Hindu, through whose agency he hopes to secure a personal distinction? I unhesitatingly declare that I have greater respect for an illustrious shopkeeper, who earns his honest bread and has sufficient force in his arm to defend his wife and children in times of trouble, than the brahmin graduate of high culture, whose low, timid voice betokens the death of soul in his body, who takes pride in his submissiveness, one scarcely, complains of sleepless nights and produces unhealthy children for his community, his prejudice may be well. I hope I shall not be offending the reader, when I say that I have a certain amount of admiration for the devil. By refusing to prosecute himself before Adam whom he honestly believed to be his inferior, he revealed an high sense of self-respect, a touch of character, which, in my opinion, ought to redeem him from his spiritual
character which you want to develop is absolutely worthless. I grant the present system of education in India gives us bread and butter. We manufacture a number of graduates and we have to send titled mendicants to Government to beg appointments for jobs. Well, if we succeed in securing a few appointments in the higher branches of the civil service, what then? It is the means which constitute the backbone of the nation; they ought to be better fed, better housed and properly educated. Life is not bread but better gone; it is something more; it is a healthy character reflecting the national ideal in all its aspects. And for a truly national character, you ought to have a truly national education. Can you expect a free Muslim character in a young boy who is brought up in an undesirable school and in complete ignorance of the social and historical tradition? You cannot expect him to work to him doess of Cunningham's history; it is idle to expect that he will turn out to be a truly Muslim character.

The knowledge of Cunningham's history will certainly create in him a great deal of admiration for that Puritan revolution; but it cannot create that healthy pride in his own race which is the lifeblood of a truly national character. Our educated young men know all about Wellington and Gladstone, Valpy and Luther. He will tell you that Lord Roberts worked as the South African war like a common soldier at the age of eighty; but how many of us know that Mohammed II conquered Constantinople at the age of twenty-five? How many of us have even the faintest notion of the influence of our Muslim civilization over the civilization of modern Europe? How many of us are familiar with the wonderful historical productions of Ibn Khaldun or the extraordinary noble character of the great Mir Abdul Qadir of Algeria? A living nation is a living because it never forgets its dead. I venture to say, that the present system of education in this country is not suited, no suited to us as a people. It is not true to our genius as a nation, it tends to produce an un-Muslim type of character; it is not determined by our national requirements, it breaks entirely with our past, and appears to proceed on the false assumption that the idea of education is the training of human intellect rather than human will. Nor is this superficial system true to the genius of the Hindus. Among them it appears to have produced a number of political idealists, whose false reading of history drives them to the uprooting of all conditions of political order and social peace. They see in our past an example which they must reverence, and every year every one of our children. Well, thanks to the King-Emperor, India is a free country; everybody is free to entertain any opinion he likes. I look upon it as a waste. If we are to be truly ourselves, we ought to have our own schools, our own colleges, and our own universities, keeping alive our social and historical tradition, making us good and peaceful citizens and creating in us that free but law-abiding spirit which wells up out of all the nobless types of political virtue. I am quite sensible of the difficulties that lie in our way; all that I can say is that if we cannot get over our difficulties, the world will soon get rid of us.
barbarians of Mongolia drowned in blood the civilization of Bagdad in 1258 A.D., when the Muslim power fell in Spain and the followers of Islam were mercilessly driven out of Cordova by Ferdinand in 1236, Islam had just seemed a footing in Sumatra and was about to work the peaceful conversion of the Malay Archipelago.

In the hour of its political degeneration," says Professor Arnold, "Islam has achieved some of its most brilliant conquests. On two great historical occasions, the Holy Thrones in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, and in each case the conquerors have accepted the religion of the conquered. "We understand," says the same learned scholar elsewhere, "that Islam gained its greatest and most lasting missionary triumph in times and places in which its political power has been weakest, as in South India and Eastern Bengal."

The truth is that Islam is essentially a religion of peace. All forms of political and social disturbance are condemned by the Qur'an in the most uncompromising terms: — I quote a few verses from the Qur'an:

Eat and drink from what God has given you and do not on the face of the earth in the matter of relish.

And disturb not the peace of the earth after it has been restored: this is good for you if you are believers.

And do good as others as God has done good to you, and seek not the violation of peace in the earth, for God does not love those who break the peace.

That is the house in the next world which we build for those who do not mean rebellion and disturbance in the earth, and the end is for those who fear God.

Those who seek in time and ourward disorder in these, God will punish them with His whip of punishment.

One case from these verses shows clearly all forms of political and social disorder are denounced by the Qur'an. But the Qur'an is not satisfied with mere denunciation of the evil of fraud. It goes to the very root of this evil. We know that both in ancient and modern times, sacred meetings have been a constant source of political and social unrest. Here is what the Qur'an says about such conferences: — "Believers, you converse secretly what is to say, hold secret conferences, converse not for purpose of sin and rebellion." The ideal of Islam is to secure social peace at any cost. All methods of violent change in society are condemned in the most unmistakable language. Turtush—an Islamic lawyer of Spain— is quite true to the spirit of Islam when he says: "Forty years of tyranny are better than one hour of anarchy."
"Listen to him and obey him," says the Prophet of God in a tradition mentioned by Buhière, "even if a negro slave is appointed to rule over you." Muslim nations another important tradition of the Prophet on the authority of Arfajeh, who says,- We heard the Prophet of God say, when you have agreed to follow one man then if another man comes forward intending to seek your ticket (wonton your strength or to make you dispense in dismember, kill him.

Those among us who make it their business to differ from the general body of Moslems in political views ought to read this tradition carefully, and if they have any respect for the words of the Prophet, it is their duty to dissociate themselves from this mean traffic in political opinion which, though perhaps it brings a little personal gain to them, is exceedingly harmful to the interests of the community. My object, in citing these verses and traditions, is to educate political opinion on strictly Islamic lines. In this country we are living under a Christian Government. We must always keep before our eyes the example of those early Muhammadans who, persecuted by their own countrymen, had to leave their home and settle in the Christian State of Abyssinia. How they beheld in that land must be our guiding principle in this country where an execrable Western idea has taught people to criticize the existing Government with a dangerous lack of historical perspective. And how the Christians are determined for us by the Quran, which says—

And thou wilt find nearer to the friendship of the believers those men who call themselves Christians. This is because among them there are learned men and bishops and other overseers.

Having thus established that Islam is a religion of peace, I now proceed to consider the purely political aspect of the Islamic ideal—the ideal of Islam as entertained by a corporate individuality. Given a settled society, what does Islam expect from its followers, regarded as a community? What principles ought to guide them in the management of communal affairs? What must be their ultimate object and how is to be achieved? We know that Islam is something more than a creed, it is also a community, a nation. The membership of Islam as a community is not determined by birth, nationality or naturalization; it consists in the identity of belief. The expression Indian Muhammadan, however convenient it may
circumstances did not permit us to perform. It is not the number of Muhammadans which it protests, but the spirit of the British Empire that makes it the greate:st Muhammadan Empire in the world.

To return now to the political constitution of the Muslim society. Just as there are two basic propositions underlying Muslim ethics, so there are two basic propositions underlying Muslim political constitution.

(1) The law of God is absolutely supreme. Authority, except as an interpreter of the law, has no place in the social structure of Islam. Islam has a horror of personal authority. We regard it as uncanonical to the fulfillment of human individuality. The Shari'a, of course, differ from the Sunnis in this respect. They hold that the Caliph or Imam is appointed by God and his interpretation of the law is final; he is infallible and his authority, therefore, is absolutely supreme. There is certainly a grain of truth in this view; since the principle of absolute authority has functioned usefully, it is even in the case of primitive societies and reveals its deficiency when applied to higher stages of civilization. Peoples grow out of it, as recent events have revealed in Persia, which is a Shari'a country, yet demands a fundamental structural change in the government in the introduction of the principle of election.

(2) The absolute equality of all the members of the community. There is an universality in Islam. "The noblest of among you," says the Prophet, "are those who fear God most." There is no privilege of class, no priesthood, no caste system. Islam is a unity in which there is no distinction, and this unity is secured by making men believe in the two simple propositions—the unity of God, and the mission of the Prophet—propositions which are certainly of a supernatural character, but which, based as they are on the general religious experience of mankind, are intensely true to the average human nature. Now, this principle of the equality of all believers made early Muslims the greatest political power in the world. Islam worked as a levelling force; it gave the individual the sense of his inward power; it elevated those who were sociably low. The elevation of the downtrodden was the chief secret of the Muslim political power in India. The result of the British rule in this country has been exactly the same; and if