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The REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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The Review of Religions is an organ of the Ahmadiyya Movement which represents the pure and true Islam. It is open to all for discussing problems connected with the religious and spiritual growth of man, but it does not accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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The Review of Religions

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ROBERT BROWNING AND ISLAM

By M. A. Samad (Jubbulpore)

“Then set your face upright for religion in the right state—the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah’s creation: that is the right religion.” (Holy Quran).

This verse of the Holy Quran describes Islam as the religion of Nature; every atom in the universe, all the created things and beings are said to be living in Islam, inasmuch as they submit to the laws of God willingly or unwillingly:

“Is it other than Allah’s religion that they seek to follow and to Him submits whosoever is in the heavens and in the earth willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they return.” (Holy Quran).

Our Holy Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace) is reported to have stated that every child is born in Islam, and will remain a Muslim if left to follow its own conscience and inner urge, without any external or artificial coercion. The greatest proof of this remark of the Prophet is necessarily the historical one. A Muslim views with deep satisfaction and gratitude the fact that all great thinkers in the East as well as in the West, who have dared to break away from their dogmatic traditions, and cared to inquire after Reality independently have invariably been led to adopt the principles of Islam, although they might not themselves be conscious of it. The great Indian religious leaders, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami

Dayanand, could not reform Hinduism, unless it was by adopting the eternal principles of Islam, and purging away their own long-cherished beliefs based on the Vedas and the Shastras. Similarly in the West we notice a strong tendency among the educated and intelligent to fling aside the traditional Christian dogmas and to adopt for themselves an attitude of life very akin to that of Islam. Spiritualism and the Modernist Movement in the West are nothing but half-way houses towards Islam. They represent the so many attempts of the enlightened Westerners, though still far from perfect, to get at the all-sufficient truth of Islam.

Among the famous English literatures we find Stevenson, Carlyle, Shelley, Browning—all defying their ancestral faith, denying belief in the Trinity, Inherent Sin, and Atonement, and avowing, in turn, their faith in the Unity of God, inherent sinlessness of man's nature, personal accountability for one's own actions, which marks yet another trumpet of Islam over Christianity. Here I shall consider at some length the case of Browning. The great Victorian poet has on so many occasions expressed himself to be a follower of Islam rather than a Christian. I begin by quoting from his beautiful poem 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', where he has affirmed his belief in man's inherent sinlessness. Addressing Man, he says:

"Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with
earth's wheel?"

The Holy Quran calls man "the Vicegerent of God on earth", and considers him to have been quickened with the Spirit of God. Browning only repeated this truth, revealed in the Holy Quran some fourteen centuries ago, when he wrote:

"Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide

And not partake, effect and not receive !
 A spark disturbs our clod ;
 Nearer we hold of God

Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe."

Then again the Holy Quran had long ago invited us to "Receive the baptism of God, and who is better than God in baptising?"¹ And the beloved Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace) had even then declared salvation to be the reward of personal striving, and of our imbuing ourselves with Divine attributes.² Browning again chooses to follow in the footsteps of our prophet, when he affirms his disbeliefs in the doctrine of Atonement, making our personal striving as all in all, with God as our Helper and Prototype.

"Here, work enough to watch
 The master work, and catch

Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play."

Now I would ask my readers to read the following stanza from 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', and judge for themselves if it does not appear to be only a weaker and less perfect echo of the unique Muslim prayer contained in the first chapter of the Holy Quran.³ Writes Browning :—

"Not once beat 'praise be Thine !

I see the whole design,

I, who saw power, see now love perfect too :

Perfect I call Thy plan :

Thanks that I was a man !

Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shall do !"

The great German thinker and poet, Goethe, thus only gave expression consciously to what hundreds of other enlightened westerners, newly awakened from their long lethargy, adhered unconsciously, when he said, after reading the Holy Quran : "If this be Islam, do we not at all live in Islam?" Carlyle, it was, who answered, "Yes, all of us that have any moral life, we all live so."

¹ Holy Quran, II : 138.

² *Sayings of Prophet Muhammad.*

³ "All praise is due to God, The Lord of the Worlds.

The Beneficent, the Merciful.

Master of the day of requital.

Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help.

Guide us on the right path.

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours.

Not of those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray" Quran (I : 1—7).

MERITS OF ISLAM

Saith Ali Mohammad, B.A., of Secunderabad (Deccan) has very kindly sent us the report of a lecture at Secunderabad by M. Mohammad Salim H. O. for which kindness we feel indebted to him.

Molvi Mohamed Saleem Sahib, who has been the Islamic missionary of Palestine, Iraq and Egypt, spoke on the "Merits of Islam". The learned speaker at the outset said that if only the protagonists of various religions instead of harping upon the defects of other religions and finding faults with their teachings and their Holy Founders, point out the merits of their own religions much of the discord and communal bitterness which has clouded the Indian firmament would vanish away. It is the publication of such books like "Um-mahatul Momeneen," "Rangila Rasool" etc., which have vitiated the harmonious relations of the two major communities of India. He pointed out by citing Quranic verses that a Muslim is one through whose speech or hand no harm is done to others; nay the test of a Muslim is measured by the extent he proves himself to be a source of peace and contentment for others.

Emphasizing further, the learned lecturer pointed out that the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has distinctly laid down "all human beings are of one divine family" so it beholds every Muslim to be cautious both in his words and deeds as not to hurt the susceptibilities of the followers of other religions and see that no injury is ever done to God's creatures, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims.

Coming to the subject proper, the speaker said, that the first thing which appeals to him in Islam is the all comprehensive nature of the conception of God in Islam, for the God of Islam is not the God of Muslims only, He is the God of Jews, Christians and Hindus etc., God of Islam is not Rabbul Muslameen, i.e., God

of Muslims only but He is Rabbul Alameen *i.e.*, the God of all the worlds. As against this we find that the conception of God of Jews, Christians and Hindus is narrow and exclusive, for example Jews maintain that their God Jehovah is the God of the house of Israil only and God had not sent any Divine Messenger beyond their particular nationality. In the same manner Hindus maintain that God spoke to the four Rishis only and His Beneficence is confined to Arya Varat alone. Contrasting the conception of God in Islam with that of Christianity, the speaker said that the message which "Rabb" conveys is more comprehensive than "Abb" or "Father".

Then again, the Speaker said, that Islam has laid down not as a principle of expediency but as an article of faith, that every Muslim must recognise that the Holy Founders of all religions were true. Just as God says: "Never make any distinctions amongst Prophets". It follows therefore, that no one can become a true Muslim unless he believes in all the Prophets that God has been raising from time immemorial for the regeneration of mankind. Pointing out the mighty significance of this aspect of Islamic teaching the learned speaker said, it is because of this reason that a true Muslim can never become guilty of ever speaking disrespectfully of the founders of any religion. This is in marked contrast with the teachings of other religions; for if ever they enjoined their followers to rever the founders of other religions, it would be for the sake of Policy and for temporary reason only. This is so because such a teaching does not form an integral part of their religion, while in the case of Islam the acceptance of the principle of believing in all the founders of other religions forms a cardinal article of a Muslim's faith; as such, the reverence in which the Holy Founders of other religions are held by Muslims is not out of Policy but is a permanent thing. It becomes obvious therefore that the merit of Islam lies in the fact that it acknowledges the truth underlying other religions, nay it goes one step further for the Holy Prophet had said that "even if any leader of any

community comes to your place, you must respect him." This is a teaching, which if practised will remove most of the bitterness that exists between the two major communities of India.

Continuing his speech the lecturer said, Islam obliterated all distinction of race, rank and colour. The criterion of greatness, according to Islam is piety. There is no class distinction in Islam. A man may belong to a noble family but so long as he is not virtuous, his noble lineage will not count. Islam does not acknowledge racial distinction. It deals death blow to racial theory and lays stress on the fact that it is piety and righteousness alone which exalted any person or nation. It is for this reason that Islam had laid down the injunction for its followers that they should endeavour to excel in virtues. It is futile to pride oneself on the basis of one's ancestry. In this connection, Islam had distinctly laid down that Muslim should be considerate of the feelings of their neighbours. Irrespective of cast or creed, it beholds us to pay full regard to the susceptibilities of others and prohibits any injury being done to others on the score of not belonging to their faith. If only, people at large start putting this aspect of Islamic teaching into practice, it will prove the death-knell of communal bitterness and in its place mutual harmony will prevail. The main cause of the frequent riots among Muslims and Hindus is because, they do not respect the feelings of one another; they regard it as play-thing and a sort of game to be enjoyed. It is in the mutual respect for one another's feelings that this unfortunate state of affairs can hope to be removed.

Dealing with the stress which Islam has laid down regarding the places of worship of all the religions, the speaker said, that it is duty of Islamic Government to see that they are well protected. Islam had laid down further that just as it is the duty of the Muslims that their Mosques are not desecrated similarly, it behoves them to prevent the place of worship of others from being defiled or polluted. As per this injunction, it is

impossible for any Muslim to dare contemplate the demolition of any temple, church etc. If such sentiments permeates through us all, India will soon present a state of real blissfulness.

Continuing his speech, the speaker pointed out that Islam enjoins strict obedience to the Government in which you live and does not allow the feelings of rebellion and revolt to be nurtured against the established authorities. If you have any grievances by all means, bring to the notice of authorities by all constitutional methods, but never for a moment endeavour to take law in your own hands. Taking into consideration, the significance underlying it, we can say that if it is put into practice, it will pave the way for peace politically.

In short, from every aspect we can look, we find that Islam contains such stimulating and sublime teachings as to captivate our hearts. If only, the non-Muslims study Islam with unbiased and dispassionate attitude, they will find it to be the sublimest religion. In order, that the above soul-stirring and all comprehensive teachings may be made alive again in this modern age, God has sent His Messenger Hazrat Ahmed of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mehdi and the expected World Teacher. May Allah! grant to all people the grace to respond to the call of the divine messenger so that, the glorious face of Islam may become manifest and that the world may be illumined by its light.

PROPHET DAY MEETING

The 18th Annual Prophet Day Meeting organised under the auspices of the Ahmadiyya Movement was held at 5 p. m. on Sunday the 4th November 1945, at Wellington Square, Calcutta. Dr. Kali Das Nag, M.A., D. Litt. presided. The proceedings started with recitation from the Holy Quran.

The President in course of a stirring address stated that the teachings of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) should be translated in different Indian languages for the enlightenment of non-Muslim communities. From history it is evident that at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet, degeneration and corruption became manifest both in the body political and the moral character in India, Iran, Arabia and other countries; and the advent appears to be the Divine response to the crying need of humanity at the time. The fundamental idea, proceeded the speaker, in the life of the Holy Prophet was his profound belief in God, by means of which he had miraculous escapes from dangers and difficulties. He was not educated in the modern sense, but studied the book of life, the result was the greatest wonder of human history—the Holy Quran. Continuing the speaker said, that the Holy Quran contained the truth received by the Prophet through revelation from God and is an imperishable heritage for the whole of humanity. He bore all persecutions through a keen spiritual struggle which is one of the wonders of history. The light which he received from God the message of brotherhood and the message of unity was the fundamental idea underlying his teachings. The Ahmadiyya Movement has unravelled the unity underlying all diversities which is real Islam. The speaker then traced the revolution brought about by the Holy Quran not only in Arabia, but in Iran, Central and Eastern Asia, Egypt, North Africa and Europe through Spain. History of unity has not been recorded but that of conflict has been, said the speaker. Muslims

had preserved the sciences and philosophies during the dark medieval age without which renaissance of Europe after the Crusade could not have been possible, though this is very grudgingly admitted by the European historians. In conclusion, the speaker urged the rewriting of history with an emphasis on the message of unity rather than that of conflict.

Speaking on behalf of the local Parsee community, Mr. Ardesher Dinshaw, B.E., associated himself with the tributes paid to the Holy Prophet, and thanked the Ahmadiyya community for having provided a common platform for different communities.

Alhaj Maulana Mohd. Salim, H.A., Ahmadi Missionary, (formerly of Near and Middle East and Burma), in course of a learned speech stated how Islam taught members of different communities to live in peace. Proceeding the speaker said, Islam opposed Imperialism and envisaged a League of Nations for prevention of aggression and just settlement of international disputes; and advocated a general policy of 'forgive and forget' in respect of defeated foes.

Mr. Sailajananda Bhattacharjee, representative of Satsangha, associated himself with the tributes and stated that the Holy Prophet taught people the message of universal religion through complete self abnegation to the will of Allah, and the message of unity.

Rev. B. C. Mukherjee, M.A., stated on behalf of the local Christian community, that the Ahmadiyya movement had provided this common platform which may be called a place of pilgrimage and associated himself with the tributes.

Mr. D. A. K. Khadim, Secretary Dawat-o-Tabligh, Anjuman Ahmadiyya Calcutta, in course of his speech referred to the post-war condition of the world—a warning camp of nations flying at one another's throat and stated that this was the result of materialistic conception of history and politics such as alleged racial

superiority, nationalism, Bolshevism etc. The remedy, in the opinion of the speaker, lay in the message of unity of God and unity of humanity, as preached by the Holy Prophet. Proceeding the speaker said, the Holy Prophet taught us how by following Islam a man can receive Divine revelation and get all his doubts about God's existence removed.

Mr. Abdul Khaleque Mehta, Petroleum Expert, thanked the President, the speakers and audience.

The meeting was largely attended by members of different communities. Ahmadi ladies also attended under purdah arrangements. The meeting terminated at about 7-30 p.m.

The proceedings of the meeting were published in "Advance", "Morning News," "Nationalist," and "Eastern Express".

D. A. K. KHADIM

Secretary, Dawot-o-Tabligh,
Anjuman Ahmadiyya,

1, Wellington Square,

Calcutta.

Darut Tabligh, 8th Nov., 1945.

True Copy

From

*Kh. Ghulam Nabi Gilkar, President Ahmadiyya
Community, Srinagar.*

To

His Excellency Viscount,
Lord Archibald Wavell,
Viceroy of India.
Viceregal Camp, Srinagar.

May it please your Excellency,

Your Excellency has honoured this State with a visit and I am certain that where your Excellency will be pleased to attend to mundane matters, your Excellency will be pleased not to let this opportunity slip by without giving a little time to matter of the spirit.

In this connection I take this opportunity to bring to your Excellency's notice the fact that Jesus Christ, the prophet of God and Son of Mary in his quest for the lost sheep of the house of Israel came into Kashmir and here died and lies buried in *Mohollah Rozobal Khanayar, Srinagar.*

I am also having the honour of presenting for your Excellency's kind perusal a booklet entitled "Jesus in India" written by the Promised Messiah Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib of Qadian, the Promised Reformer of this age.

I do appreciate that your Excellency's time will be well occupied during your Excellency's stay in Srinagar but I am confident that your Excellency will be pleased to visit the Sepulchre where rests "Son Of Man" to whom millions of people owe spiritual allegiance.

I have the honour to be
Sir

Srinagar.

The 7th October 1945.

Your Excellency's Most Obedient

Servant

GHULAM NABI GILKAR
President Ahmadiyya Community
Srinagar (Kashmir).

JESUS AND HIROHITO

Recently frequent articles have appeared in Christian papers and magazines ridiculing the Japanese faith and the belief which they hold with regard to the divinity of their emperor. The Japanese believe that their emperor is divine and is a descendant of God. He is referred to as the Son of Heaven and often as Akiture Kami (The living God) Christian critics deplore the depth of ignorance into which the Japanese have sunk.

Certainly it may be described as a deplorable state of affairs. However before these Christian critics pass judgement on Japanese let them first analyse their own belief. Have they not set up a man called Jesus as a descendant of God and even say he was both the son of God and God Himself? So they not worship him as though he were God Himself despite the fact that Jesus never claimed divinity and always taught that the Father was greater than he and he could do nothing without the Father?

Can these Christian critics produce better authority for ascribing divinity on Jesus than the Japanese can for ascribing divinity on Hirohito?

BURIAL *VERSUS* CREMATION

By M.M. SIDDIQUE, AHMADIYYA MISSIONARY, BO.

A few days ago, the question of 'Burial of the dead' was discussed in the *Daily Guardian* and it was alleged that cremation is more suitable than earth burial. On the ground that our precious lands are too dear to be wasted in that way, and we need them for more useful purposes than devoting them for cemeteries; and that cremation is comparatively more hygienic, cleaner, more decent, more economical and a civilized method.

I beg to say in this connection, that the earth burial has so far been the general practice of the world and is indeed an earlier custom than cremation, and close study of it will reveal the fact that on the whole it is the best and most suitable method for the disposal of the dead.—The following points will prove that it must, under all circumstances be preferred to cremation :—

(1) It is wrong to call cremation more hygienic and cleaner. To the contrary, it is more insanitary than burial.

The burning of human flesh liberates gases which are peculiarly offensive to human olifactory senses. Although these gases can, admittedly be made less injurious to public health by adopting necessary precautions, such as electric cremation etc., but as such crematoriums cannot be established everywhere, for lack of facilities. It is impossible to practise cremation generally.

It may be argued that injurious gases escape from graves too. If however, that occurs, it can be remedied very easily and cheaply—partly by planting trees in cemeteries whose roots and leaves will help to destroy such gases, and partly by digging rather deep graves and by adopting certain other simple precautions. Burial

therefore is less injurious to public health than cremation.

(2) From an economic point of view also, earth burial is the best method, because burning is more expensive—for fire-wood alone cannot completely and quickly burn a human body, unless other fuel is employed; which poorer people cannot afford to procure, nor can it be expected that properly and safely constructed crematoriums be established everywhere. This is why, in those countries where cremation is practised, many half burnt dead bodies are seen in crematoriums, and the final stage is only completed by dogs and vultures.

(3) Nearly in all the religious and holy books of God, hell-fire is described to be the abode of the wicked in the next world, and unbelievers are threatened and particularly warned against a heavy chastisement in an ever lasting fire. Should they fail to abide by the commandments of God. If fire therefore, is going to be God's weapon in future through which He will punish His unfaithful and disobedient servants, it is not wise and fit for us to cast the bodies of our departed ones to fire as soon as they leave this world.

(4) It is said 'Dust thou art—to dust returneth.' Human beings are created from dust (The ovum passes through the different stages of evolution during its development, inside the womb by consuming blood derived from mother's food). As the source of all our food is the soil, man's origin is obviously from dust. After his death therefore, he should lie in peace under cover of the earth, whence he derived food during his life time. If man was created from fire, it would have been quite natural to burn him after death, but facts are against it.

(5) Nitrogen is essential for all forms of life. It is needed by plants and animals alike, and in order to produce nitrogen and to cause its cycle work, it is necessary that the dead animals and vegetable organic matter

should enter the soil. If instead of burying organic matter, we were to concentrate the nitrogen of the soil will get consumed and there being no fresh organic matter, to re-establish it, the nitrogen cycle will cease and consequently life will no longer exist.

(6) If due regard should be paid to human sentiments and feelings, the burning of human dead bodies would appear to be an unnatural process. That a person who, during the lifetime of his dear old father had deep love and reverence for him, should soon after his death be called upon to set fire to his body, and to crack his skull with a hammer to enable it to burn more easily, seems shocking in the extreme. On the other hand to bury the corpse of our dear and respected ones, solemnly and peacefully in the earth, evidently appears very humane, and natural and consols the distressed minds of the deceased's relatives and friends; for it gives them an opportunity to remember him, visit his last abode and to offer prayers in his memory there.

(7) Burial is the key stone to birth, development and future progress of the science of Archæology and evolution. The ancient practice of earth burial has proved an inestimable boon to the students of Archæology and Natural History alike. The practice of earth burial should therefore continue.

With regards to the matter of scarcity of land for cemeteries or for using such lands for other purposes, which are considered to be more useful for civil, social and domestic needs, I think to give place to the bodies of our dear elders (who cause us to come to this world to take their place, and during their lifetime devote all their energy to secure a happy life for us and who, on their departure, give up all their belongings in our favour) should unquestionably be regarded as our first and foremost duty, and there should be no more selfishness in the world than setting fire to the corpse of our dear parents, brothers, sisters and other beloved ones; for the sole purpose of reserving our lands for agricultural and other so called necessary requirements.

Yes, if at all, the demand for land for agricultural and building purposes becomes absolutely urgent and pressing, laws can be made to dig out the old graves after a reasonable length of time, which on the one hand should be sufficient for dissolving major parts of the human body, and on the other, according to a well known saying - 'Time heals all wounds', will have made the deceased's memory so dim and defunct that his relatives would no longer be in need of his grave nor would they be so anxious to visit it.

In view of the foregoing, we Muslims firmly hold that Earth Burial is a Natural, Biological, Sanitary, Economical and universally practicable method which also shows a due regard for human sentiments. Burning (Cremation) on the contrary, is insanitary, expensive, against the laws of Nature and Religion, and mercilessly outrages human sentiments and feelings. The Cremation of the body of the last Archbishop of Canterbury alone is insufficient to prove that cremation is not unchristian and irreligious. If we are going to prove that cremation is justified from a religious point of view we have to find out a definite proof from the original divine sources and holy books (If at all they are regarded divine and holy.)

An important matter such as cremation and its general application cannot be based on the action of one single religious individual (however much honoured and respected he may be) who was not a prophet nor divinely appointed messenger, and was more or less liable to mistakes like others.



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