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THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

The Muslim Law of Inheritance.



The question of the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the Muslim law of inheritance is no doubt a question of secondary importance from a religious point of view because it does not involve fundamental problems of the truth of Islam. But in this age of the dissolution of many faiths and doctrines there has arisen, apart from hostile critics, a class of professedly friendly critics in almost every religion, with the avowed object of reforming that faith to meet the advanced intellectual needs of its votaries. The fundamental principles of many of the important religions are, therefore, undergoing radical changes. The fundamental principles of Christianity, for instance, its doctrines of Trinity and the Divinity and Atonement of Jesus Christ, without which the Christian religion falls to the ground, have been seriously called into question by all advanced Christian thinkers, and have been formally given up by a large number of professing Christians. In Islam, it is not the fundamental principles, such as the Unity of God and the apostleship of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, that are questioned, but its social and civil institutions, matters which are only of secondary importance. And though the mere circumstance that the social and civil laws promulgated by a religion are not open to any serious objection may not be a conclusive argument of its truth, yet in the case of Islam, a study of even its social and civil institutions casts powerful side-lights upon its superhuman origin.

To the Muslims are given in the Holy Quran not only the most excellent codes of religion and morality, but also important and fundamental principles governing men's social relations and civil obligations. Other religious leaders too have tried to define some of such relations and obligations but whereas their followers have never tried to follow their injunctions in these respects, the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, have based their institutions on the principles taught by him. For instance, Jesus Christ promulgated a certain law of divorce, but notwithstanding that it is considered to have been uttered by God Himself, it is utterly rejected by the Christian nations. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery;" but how many Christian governments are there that care for this law? The following anecdote* regarding Count Tolstoy shows that even church dignitaries are conscious that the teachings of Jesus Christ were never meant to be carried into practice. "Count Tolstoy says one time he published the Sermon on the Mount for the use of the Russian peasantry. Before placing it in the hands of those for whom it was prepared, he had to get the Censor's consent. To that end a copy was placed in the hands of that functionary. When it came back, the passage 'Take no thought for the morrow' was obliterated. Tolstoy applied to the priest who was officiating as Censor, and represented that the direction was by Jesus himself, was a part of the Bible, and as sacred as any other part of it. 'Oh, yes,' replied the priest, 'but what peasant ever got that far in the Bible? Nineteenths of them stop at Genesis. Now, you see, Count, if the peasant took that advice seriously, Russia would become bankrupt. The peasantry would only live for a day, he would save nothing; it would be impossible to collect taxes; the army would starve; the Government could not pay its employees; indeed we should be in a state of chaos. Really, I cannot let that verse go unblacked." But the commandments of the Holy Quran are all meant to be taken *seriously*. Its laws of divorce and marriage, of testament and inheritance, were given to be acted upon, and they are to this day in the main acted upon by the whole Muslim world. No doubt a voice

* Taken from the Agnostic Journal for May 26, 1906.

has, here and there, been raised against these laws from time to time, but it has soon been hushed up, and there has never been among the Muslims any strong faction promulgating views subverting the established institutions of Islam. The Muslims are a unique people in this respect, and there is no other people on the face of the earth who agree on so many and such important points of faith and practice.

Islam is blamed for its conservativeness, but its maintenance of its institutions and fundamental doctrines of faith through thirteen centuries and in varied climates and countries and under varying conditions of life is the very point which shows its superiority to all other religions. All other religions have promulgated doctrines and laid the foundations of institutions which even if practicable were only suited for a particular people in a particular age, but the doctrines, usages and institutions of Islam possess the excellence of universality and permanence with the merit of practicability. The Christian law of divorce could not be maintained and it has, therefore, been given up by the Christian nations. This does not prove the universality of Christianity but its narrowness, inasmuch as it shows that it inculcated laws which could not satisfy the needs of humanity in all ages. It is, therefore, clear that the Christian religion was meant for a particular people at a particular period in their history; and its boasted power of absorption is only a misnomer for its defectiveness and borrowing. But the laws and institutions of Islam have not been changed because they did not need to be changed. Not only have the Muslims of widely distant countries adhered to these laws and institutions for hundreds of years, but even the Christian nations have found it necessary to adopt many of them. For instance, most of the Christian nations are gradually accepting the principles underlying the Islamic laws of divorce and inheritance. It is only in the case of polygamy that the Christians show an aversion which it seems very hard to overcome by reasoning. But the great difficulty is that the Christian people condemn polygamy without knowing in what form Islam presents it. Polygamy is an institution which under Islam is only an exception to the general rule of monogamy, such as celibacy is an exception, and the result of the prohibition of polygamy is that the Christian nations have to submit to the most horrible evil that can degenerate human society, *viz.*, prostitution. It is strange to hear Christian moralists talk that they cannot tolerate

a single case of polygamy, while hundreds of thousands of prostitutes in every so-called civilized society are easily tolerated. Nay, prostitution is said to be a necessity. Any one who has an ordinary share of common sense will be able to see that the permission of polygamy in exceptional cases can considerably lessen the evil of prostitution. But no, the high ideal of marriage and sex relations which the West has is utterly inconsistent with the permission of polygamy in any case or under any circumstances however exceptional. In the Punjab, only one man out of a hundred Muslims, has a second wife according to the recent census report. But this is considered to be a horrible degradation of the marriage relations, while the existence of a hundred thousand prostitutes in the city of London, who must be the occasion of the vile practices of not less than a million men most of whom are no doubt married, does not in any way detract from the high ideal of sexual relations of the West. In other words, the polygamous marriage of one man out of a hundred is far more horrible than the adultery of one man out of every three or four.

As I said above, however, there are critics, professedly belonging to the religion of Islam who are questioning the reasonableness of some Islamic institutions and laws and have a desire to change them for some of the institutions and laws of the Western people. It is the remarks of some of the critics of this school that I shall consider in this article. The law of inheritance is no doubt not a fundamental principle of the religion of Islam, and the number of those who question its justice is so small that they are quite a negligible fraction of the Muslim community, but these considerations alone do not refute the attack thus made on laws promulgated by the Holy Quran. Among those who have come under the influence of the material civilization of the West, it has become almost the fashion to attribute the degeneration of the Muslim community and the deterioration of their civilization to certain principles of the Muslim religion. These gentlemen who must necessarily assume the rôle of guides and reformers are so hasty in their diagnosis of the disease which affects the Muslim community that they never pause to reflect that the very laws and institutions which are supposed by them to be the cause of the downfall of the Muslims were once the secret of their success. It cannot be denied that there was a time when the torch of Muslim civilization lighted the whole world, when that community was the

most advanced of all the communities of the world, and yet these very laws and institutions which are now decried as causes of the decline of Islam governed the life of the Muslim nation at that time. It is impossible that laws and institutions which at one time raise a community from the depth of degradation to the height of greatness and civilization should at another time be of themselves the means of bringing it low. On the other hand, most of the features of the institutions of the West are the same to-day as they were in the middle ages when Cimmerian darkness spread over the whole of Europe, and the only ray of light was that which was shed by the distant torch of Muslim light. It is, therefore, clear that there is neither inherent defect in the laws and institutions of Islam so that we may be justified in drawing the conclusion that by discarding them the Muslims would prosper again, nor is there any inherent virtue in the laws and institutions of Christianity so that by adopting them the Muslims should hope to rise once again. Nor can it be reasonably asserted that though the laws and institutions of Islam were formerly helpful in raising the Muslim people to eminence, they have now a contrary effect, or that though the laws and institutions of Christianity were once the cause of the degradation of the Christian people they have now acquired the power of making that people great.

The fact is that no other religion has ever raised a people to that eminence to which Islam raised its followers. Other people might have become great by their own efforts, but the Muslims were made the leaders of the world by their religion. In other words, they became great by following the principles which were taught to them by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The truth of this assertion is so clear that it does not need any evidence to prove it. The Muslims became the conquerors of the world, the bearers of the light of civilization to the darkest corners of the earth, the leaders of intelligent thought, the possessors of light and learning, the models of purity and of the loftiness of moral character, great, in short, in all things that deserve to be designated great, within a quarter of a century after the Holy Prophet, and they retained this eminence of moral and temporal greatness for many centuries, so long in fact as they faithfully followed the principles which had been taught them, but when with the lapse of time these principles came to be neglected

the Muslims also fell from the eminence to which they had been raised by Islam. Take the case of Christianity now. Its followers never rose to any eminence during the first three centuries. It was after this that Christianity attained to some power, but notwithstanding that it continued to spread in Europe during the next thousand years and held vast temporal power in its hands, the Christians did not attain to any eminence worth the name during this time. They remained involved all this while in the darkest superstitions and ignorance, and the principles which Christianity taught them never breathed that new life into them which was breathed by Islam into the Muslims. The advance and progress of the Christian nations is comparatively recent, and it dates from the time when the hold of Christianity on the minds of its followers became very feeble. Their material greatness is the result of their bending low upon the mean cares of this world and their utterly forsaking all the higher things. They have served mammon and mammon they have found.

Progress, then, may be made along two different lines. One kind of progress is instanced in the history of Islam, and another in the history of the Western nations. The Holy Quran itself alludes to these two kinds of progress in the chapter entitled *Beni-Israil* where it says : *من كان يريد العاجلة عجلنا له فيها ما نشاء لمن نريد ثم جعلنا له جهنم ومن اراد الآخرة وسعى لها سعيها وهو مؤمن فأولئك كان سعيهم مشكورا* "Whoever desires the transitory things of this life, quickly do We bestow on him therein that which We please on whom We choose ; but then We will appoint hell for him. But whoso chooses the next life, and strives after it as it should be striven for, being also a believer, the strivings of such shall meet with acceptance. To all, both to these and those, will We prolong the gifts of thy Lord, and the gifts of thy Lord are not confined to one class of men, exclusively of the others." (xvii : 19-21). The essential difference between the eminence which the Muslims attained once and that which the Christians have attained now is that pointed out in this verse. The former strove after righteousness as the primary object of their lives, but since an effort in God's path does not remain unblessed even in this life as the verses quoted

above show, they were granted even the good things of this life in abundance. The Christians on the other hand are striving solely for this life, and they have been granted many of the dainties, comforts and luxuries of this life. Writing on the present state of religion in the West, the Rev. C. H. Monahan writes in a recent issue of the *Harvest Field*:—

“For well-nigh two decades the religious life of England had shown ominous signs of declension. Mammonism seemed to be supreme in the nation. The large increase in the comforts of life, the additional conveniences in the homes of even the poor, the insane craze for sports, the hunt for pleasure, these were all signs that the world was too much with the English people. Above all there was the feverish haste to be rich, in order to be able to enjoy as many as possible of the good things of this age. Add to this the strain of commercial competition and the rush of life in general, and you will see how hostile to religion was the trend of events. Men had no time to be holy, no time to keep the family altar in repair. The general laxity of the time was only too clearly reflected in the life of the Church. Other-worldliness seemed to have completely disappeared. The world was too much with the Church and is so still. There was a dangerous mixture of religion and worldliness.”

The writer of this paper thinks that during the last five or six years there has been a change in the blind love of this world displayed before by Christendom. But the wish of the reverend gentleman is the father to the thought. The fact is that the mad love of the world is daily increasing. Even in circles where faith is talked of, there is much more hypocrisy than sincere faith. Some of the passages of the Sermon on the Mount too clearly show that the modern advancement of the Christians is not as Christians but as atheists. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth,” said Jesus Christ, “where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I

say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Let any Christian ponder if Christendom is seeking righteousness first and all the things of this world are being added to it, or if like "the Gentiles," it is seeking only the things of this world. The Christians have no occasion to be proud of the material advancement which they have made, because it is through the service of Mammon and through striving solely for the things of this world that they have attained it. The Muslims should beware of imitating the methods of Christendom. The goal they should keep in view is not material prosperity and worldly comfort alone. They must strive for righteousness, and prosperity will come to them of itself. It was thus that the early Muslims became the leaders of the world, and it is thus that they can again rise to eminence and greatness. The methods of the people who are solely given up to worldly pursuits are not adaptable to their case. This is the error which the so-called advanced Muhammadans are making. They want to make the Muslims walk in the footsteps of a Mammon-worshipping people, not knowing that the mission of Islam is opposed to mere worldliness.

The condition of Muslims when the star of their prosperity was in the ascendant and when they were the leaders of the civilization of the world further emphasizes the difference that I have pointed out above. In the height of their power, they were never as a whole as ungodly as the leaders of the civilization are to-day. For a long time indeed their piety and learning went hand in hand with their material prosperity, and even when they made a departure from the pure principles of faith, they never went so low in many aspects of morality as some of the modern civilized nations have gone. In the height of their power, nay, even in their downfall, the three great curses of the Christian nations, *viz.*, drunkenness, gambling and prostitution, never prevailed in the Muslim nations to the extent to which they now prevail among the Christians, whose centres of

civilization are acquiring a unique notoriety for the spread of these evils. When they rose in material prosperity, religion still was the guiding principle in many aspects of their lives. They still prayed to God and humbled themselves before Him five times a day, the king and the beggar standing in the same place on a platform of equality five times a day. The irreligion which now prevails in Europe and America never prevailed among them. There is no doubt that as with the lapse of time they forsook many of the higher principles of Islam, and ignored the spirit of its teachings, they fell from their eminence, but even then they did not fall so as never to rise again, as was the fate of many other people whose sole pursuit was this world. Islam is yet destined to rise once again so as to become the predominant religion of the world, and this happy news was given by him who foretold all that has already happened to the Muslims. The Holy Prophet foretold clearly that the Muslims (his own companions included) would rise to eminence and become a great nation ruling land and sea, but that after some time they would depart from the true faith and consequently fall down from the eminence to which they attained, and that after their fall, Islam would once more be triumphant and as a religion supersede all other religions. But as the Muslims rose before, even so can they rise again, *viz.*, by striving for true righteousness and purity of heart which object, the prophecies tell us, would be brought about by the advent of the Messiah and Mahdi.

In short, the Muslims should strive to attain to eminence again by following the methods which were the source of their success first and they should not follow the ultra-worldly ways of the Western nations because these are utterly inconsistent with true religious spirit. Not only does the Holy Quran say so, but Jesus Christ himself said it. The world might consider it strange that prosperity follows in the train of righteousness, but this is the experience of all righteous men. Jesus himself preached it though his followers did not heed his words. But the history of Islam bears clear testimony to it. No reader of the Holy Quran will be otherwise than impressed by the stress which the Holy Book lays on purity and righteousness of heart. There is no commandment in the Holy Quran which is not coupled with an injunction of piety. Not only is it a peculiarity of its religious ordinances, but its social, civil and

criminal laws are all expressed in language which would convince a careful reader that its first and chief object is not the sanctioning of certain institutions or the promulgating of certain laws, but to make men attain to righteousness and purity of heart. Consider, for instance, the following verses which give some hints as to the procedure in divorce cases: "O Prophet! when you divorce women, divorce them at their special times. And reckon the time, and walk righteously before God your Lord. Put them not forth from their houses, nor let them go forth, unless they have committed a proven adultery. This is the precept of God, and whoso transgresses the precepts of God, injures his own self. The man who divorces his wife knows not whether, after this, God may cause something new to occur (which may bring them together again). And when the women (whom you mean to divorce) have reached their set time, then either keep them with kindness, or in kindness part from them, and take upright witnesses from among you and offer straightforward witness for the sake of God, and whoso walks righteously before God, for him will He open a way for getting out of the difficulty, and will provide for him, whence he reckoned not upon it; and for him who puts his trust in God will He be all-sufficient, verily God attains His purpose, verily for everything God has appointed a measure. As to such of your wives as have no hope of the recurrence of their times, if you have doubts in regard to them, then reckon three months, and let the same be the term of those who have not yet had them. And as to those who are with child, their period shall be until they are delivered of their burden. And God will make His command easy to him who walks righteously before Him. This is God's command which He has sent down to you, and whoso fears God, his faults will He forgive and will increase his reward." (lxv: 1-5). Is there any thing comparable with this in human codes of laws?

The reader will see from this how nobly and beautifully the Holy Quran interweaves its social and civil laws with ordinances of righteousness and piety. In fact it was in the combination of these two elements along the lines chalked out by the Holy Quran that the secret of the success of the early Muslims lay, and it was by their divorce that their downfall was brought about later on. Righteousness was the basis on which stood all the Islamic laws, institutions and usages, and accordingly these laws and institutions

contributed to the greatness and prosperity of the Muslims so long as the basis on which they stood remained firm. But when the foundations were weakened, the superstructure could not stand, and thus those laws and institutions could no more sustain them in the eminent position which they had attained. The vital power in these laws and institutions was purity of heart and righteousness, and, therefore, when the life departed the pillars fell. Let those who are earnestly and anxiously seeking the causes of the decline of the Muslims ponder on this point. It is undeniable that following the injunctions of the Holy Quran and the excellent model of the Holy Prophet, the early Muslims rose to greatness and eminence because of their striving for righteousness. It is equally undeniable that after about three centuries after the Holy Prophet, the Muslims fell, as he had prophesied, from that high standard of morality and righteousness and with it began to decline their power and prosperity. There was not any great change in the laws and institutions which governed them before their downfall and after it. The only change brought about was that the vitality of these laws and institutions had departed. It is by the restoration of this vitality that the Muslims can rise again: would that they were alive to this necessity before their condition became more deplorable. The institutions of Islam are no doubt free from faults, but without the vital power of righteousness they are of no avail. These institutions as they now govern the Muslims are spiritless forms. It is not by destroying even the forms that we can make the Muslims again a great people, but it is by the re-breathing of the spirit into these forms that real good can be done to this once heaven-favored community.

After these brief preliminary remarks, I will consider first the Islamic law of inheritance and its reasonableness and then the objections to it and the proposed changes suggested by the advanced Muslim critics. The fundamental principle of the law of inheritance is thus expressed in the Holy Quran:—

“Men ought to have a part of what their parents and kindred leave, and women a part of what their parents and kindred leave, whether it be little or much, let them have a stated portion.” (iv: 8).

This principle of the Muslim law of inheritance recognises the right of women to inherit along with men, and this was a remark-

able improvement not only upon the pre-Islamite inheritance laws of the Arabs, but also upon those of Jews, Christians, and other civilized communities. It not only gave a right to the wife to inherit her husband, but gave the same rights of inheritance to all female relatives of the deceased as it gave to the male relatives of the same degree. This important change introduced by the Muslim law of inheritance is alone sufficient to entitle this law to claim a universality. At the period at which this law was given, the rights of women to inheritance were not recognised in Arabia, and the perfect footing of equality to which Islam thus brought women with men is still not recognised even among the most advanced Western nations. Neither the Jewish nor the Christian law recognised such rights. Islam substantially raised the position of women by this healthy reform concerning their rights, for there is no doubt that position depends to a great extent upon the possession of property which brings with it all the rights and duties of a civil person. The wife was no longer the chattel of the deceased which passed with his property to the male heirs as she did among so many nations of antiquity, but she was now herself included among the heirs. The shares of the inheritors are thus described in the Holy Quran after stating the principle of the law of inheritance referred to above:—

“With regard to your children, God commands you to give the male the portion of two females; and if they be females, more than two, then they shall have two-thirds of that which their father has left: but if she be an only daughter, she shall have the half; and the father and mother of the deceased shall each of them have a sixth part of what he has left if he have a child; but if he have no child and his parents be his heirs, then his mother shall have the third: and if he have brethren, his mother shall have the sixth, after paying the bequests he shall have bequeathed, and his debts. As to your fathers and your children, you know not which of them is the most advantageous to you. This is the ordinance of God. Verily God is Knowing, and Wise.

“Half of what your wives leave shall be yours, if they have no issue, but if they have issue, then a fourth of what they leave shall be yours, after paying the bequests they shall bequeath, and debts.

“And your wives shall have a fourth part of what you leave,

if you have no issue ; but if you have issue, then they shall have an eighth part of what you leave, after paying the bequests you shall bequeath and debts.

“ And if the man's or the woman's property be inherited by a kinsman who is neither parent nor child, and he have a brother or sister, then let each of these two have a sixth; but if they are more than that, let them share in a third, after payment of the bequests he shall have bequeathed, and debts, without loss to any one. This is the ordinance of God, and God is Knowing, Gracious ” (iv : 12-16).

It will be observed that according to this law of inheritance not only has the woman the right to inherit and hold property on her own account, but she has without any interference on the part of her husband or any relative the same rights with respect to property as a man has, for she is allowed to contract debts and to bequeath her property in the same manner and to the same extent as the man is allowed. The law makes no difference between the movable and immovable property of the deceased, nor does it make any difference between relatives of the same degree, except that the male relative takes double the share of a female relative. So far as the liberty of

~~the individual to bequeath his property is concerned, this law adopts~~

the middle course. It allows him to bequeath a part of his property, but at the same time it requires him to leave a part for his relatives who are entitled to succeed him as heirs. Muslim lawyers have on the basis of certain traditions generally considered the limit of bequeathal to be one-third of the property, the remaining two-thirds to be divided among the relatives. Thus the individual can neither out of caprice deprive his nearest relatives,* nor is he restrained from disposing of a part of it in accordance with his choice. As for the relatives of the deceased one is not made rich at the expense of others, but they all receive their stated portions. This is the only reasonable law of inheritance, for it aims at a just distribution of property. Islam is opposed to the doctrine that the wealth of the country should be in the hands of the chosen few, and though it does not inculcate the extreme socialistic doctrines aiming at an equal distribution of wealth, it lays down principles which strike at the root of the accumulation of wealth in a few hands, while it recognises the right of the individual to hold his property in his own hands without any

*A person is allowed to disinherit any one of his children on sufficient grounds.

interference on the part of the state.

This law was given thirteen hundred years ago in a country where the light of civilization had never before shone, where the woman instead of being an inheritor was herself a part of the inheritance and was claimed as such by the heirs of the deceased. Consider, from what depth to what height did Islam raise the woman. Christendom even after 1900 years of its much talked of civilization cannot claim to have given the same rights to woman. For those who are in the habit of denouncing such Muslim institutions as the seclusion of women, there is much food for reflection in the healthy law which Islam introduced to raise the position of woman. It gave her all the rights which could practically be of advantage to her, but it prohibited the free intermingling of the sexes because such a step could not have raised but would have lowered the position of woman. It did not prohibit women from having recourse to any profession, trade or employment, it placed no obstacle in the way of their acquiring education and learning, rather encouraged it, by precept as well as by example, but it restrained the two sexes from mixing with each other with extreme freedom, because it looked upon such a course as dangerous to the sexual morality of the nation. Nor does the experience of the West in allowing the free intermingling of the two sexes point to a different conclusion.

There have been long discussions on the Muslim law of inheritance, but the only objection that has been brought against it is that it enjoins a sub-division of property into small shares, and thus makes the existence of powerful nobles impossible in Muslim countries. These powerful nobles are, it is asserted, the only guarantee for the stability of an empire because they are as it were a link connecting the monarch with the masses, and exercise a restraint upon arbitrariness of the monarch's power. It is to the absence of a powerful nobility in Islam that the downfall of the Muslim empire is attributed by these critics. There are many considerations which show the erroneousness of this view. In the first place Islam is not opposed to the existence of a nobility, but its test of nobility is different from the materialistic test of Christendom. Cash and acres are not recognised by Islam to be the true test of nobility, nor does the Holy Quran say anywhere that the richest man

is the noblest of all and the most honored among men. It only says that "the most honored among you is he who is most righteous in the sight of God." Such is the nobility which Islam favors. It makes righteousness and moral worth and not money the true test of greatness, and I leave it for the detractors of the Muslim laws to ~~say which class of nobility is better calculated to benefit the~~ masses. The baron holding a vast estate from the monarch would be in danger of losing it in expressing his opinion freely if it is opposed to the interests of the monarch, but not so the man who possesses a treasure of which no one can rob him. Again, if power is exercised by a man merely on account of his having inherited a great estate, he cannot be expected to do much good to society, whereas if a man of actual worth rises to importance and wields power, he will be in a much better position to do good to the people. Moreover, inherited greatness is as far removed from the masses as monarchy itself, and, therefore, it cannot serve as a link between monarchy and the masses. In the history of the Muslim empires we find that so long as the nobles became nobles by their own worth and intelligence, the empires remained prosperous, but when nobility came to be associated with ~~the possession of wealth and estates, the stability of the empires~~ was shaken. The name of the feudal nobles even in England is associated with the blackest horrors of dark ages, and it is astonishing to find a well-read Muslim advocating the cause of feudalism in this advanced stage of society. It is not a step to reform the Muslims, but one to hurl them into the darkness of Medieval Europe. Even in the age in which the feudal system existed, the feudal barons did not generally side with the masses against the tyranny of an absolute monarch, and even when they headed insurrections against the monarch, it was not in the cause of liberty and equality that they rose but only out of motives of self-interest.

The sub-division of property according to the Muslim law of inheritance does not necessitate an actual parcelling out of houses and lands, for the shares given to the inheritors only represent the value of the property, and any one may acquire the whole landed property if he can pay to the others the value of their shares. Again, as property undergoes the process of sub-division into parts, it goes

on accumulating at the same time, for though a person does not inherit the whole estate of one deceased person, he inherits several parts from many and thus the accumulation of property goes on simultaneously with its sub-division. And further the Holy Quran does not prohibit that great estates which partake more of the nature of public than private property, whose maintenance may in fact conduce to the public good, should not be subjected to the ordinary law of sub-division, and accordingly the existence of a class of powerful nobles is not impossible among the Muslims under the Quranic law of inheritance. Moreover, the Islamic law of inheritance allows *waqf* of property with such limitations upon it as the person constituting it *waqf* may think necessary. The Caliph Omar constituted his property *waqf* in favour of his posterity and some charitable purposes. Large estates may, therefore, be preserved against division into parts and parcels by constituting them *waqf*, the income being divided into such shares as the owner of the property thinks fit. Thus the Islamic law provides for preservation of estates where it is thought necessary by the owner, and it is the fault of the Indian legislature that it refuses to recognise such rights.

The feudal system has not only politically done more harm than good in countries where it has prevailed, but its effect where it has been taken as the basis of the law relating to land has also been pernicious. It is in England and Scotland that this law is still followed and the result is that land in these countries is becoming the property of a smaller and smaller number of people day by day. Thus it has been estimated that out of the seventy-seven million acres of land in the United Kingdom, more than half the area, *i.e.*, over forty million acres, is owned by only 2,500 persons. The result is that a very large percentage of the population of England have no land and no homes of their own, and it is literally true that they have not where to lay their heads. Another result of the proprietorship of land falling into fewer and fewer hands is that the number of those employed in agricultural employment is steadily declining, and in the last half century it has decreased from nearly two millions to less than a million. These facts are taken from Mr. Money's "Riches and Poverty" who contrasts the state of England with that of France where the feudal system in ownership of land has long been discarded. "Looking at the industry of our people as a whole,"

says Mr. Money, "the main fact which stands out is want of security of employment. Nearly the whole of our industrial workers are earners of weekly wages, and of our sparse agricultural population, but a small proportion are owners. Compare the position of France. There, fully one-half the population are attached to the soil by virtue of ownership and 'secure in the mother-earth which nourishes them. They may be poor, many of these peasant proprietors, but at least they are not constantly on the verge of hunger, at least they have the glorious privilege of independence.'"

The practice of primogeniture which was once common throughout all the Western countries has now been abolished everywhere except in the United Kingdom and thus feudalism has been almost entirely superseded on the continent. It has also been rejected in the United States of America because it is opposed to all sense of justice. As Europe emerged out of the darkness of the middle ages, it saw that however useful in some of its aspects feudalism might be, it was not in consonance with laws of justice. Even in England where the rule of primogeniture is still a law, it is now looked upon with disfavour, and the reasonableness and fairness of the rule has been seriously called into question. The rule of primogeniture is not in fact based on any principle of equity and justice, but is a remnant of a system of family religion which prevailed among the barbarous ancestors of the Aryan nations. The following account of the origin of this custom is given in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* :—

"We are told in the laws of Manu that the eldest son had his very being for the purpose of accomplishing the rites of the family religion, of offering the funeral cake, and of providing the repasts for the spirits of the dead ancestors. 'The right of pronouncing the prayers belongs to him who came into the world the first. A man must regard his elder brother as equal to his father. By the eldest at the moment of his birth the father discharges his debt to his progenitors; the eldest son ought, therefore, before partition to manage the whole of the patrimony' (Laws of Manu). This view seems to account for the widespread usage that the eldest son should keep the house, or hearth place, or the parents' furniture as part of his share of the inheritance. It is said that among the Hindus the right to

inherit a dead man's property is exactly co-extensive with the duty of performing his obsequies."

The fact is that the Muslim law of inheritance is so reasonable a law that all the Western nations with the exception of the English only now base their laws of inheritance on principles similar to those on which the Muslim law is based, and it is the height of absurdity on the part of the so-called advanced Muhammadans to propose the introduction of a custom among the Muslims which is rejected by all civilized nations of the day, and to abolish one which is being adopted by them. With respect to movable property there are no two opinions, for the rule of primogeniture in England only affects landed property. It is a mistake to consider the rule of primogeniture to be necessary for the stability of an empire. The empire of Islam remained at the height of its power for hundreds of years, and even in these days empires other than the British are not less stable than it because of their rejection of the rule of primogeniture. The principle is in fact opposed to laws of justice and remains only for a time as a remnant of a very ancient superstition which will certainly be swept off with a little more progress of the intelligent thought of the world. Even if it be supposed for the sake of argument that the rule of primogeniture served some important political purpose in evolving a constitutional government, it serves no such purpose now and is quite out of place in the present state of society. But Islam never needed such a measure for the evolution of a constitutional government, for the government which it established was itself a highly constitutional government. It partook more of the nature of a republic than a monarchy, and therefore it did not need any such evil as feudalism. As regards the check upon the arbitrariness of the later sovereigns, the learned were in a much better position to fulfil this purpose than the rich. Learned and intelligent men were highly respected in the courts of the Muslim monarchs, and their voice which was always in the cause of liberty and in that of the weak and the oppressed carried much more weight with the Muslim ruler than did that of the feudal baron with his liege-lord. Islam, therefore, never needed for its governments a class of powerful nobles to serve as intermediaries between the crown and the masses, and no government of modern times needs such a class. What a good

government needs is wise counsellors endowed with great brain powers, and a true spirit of sympathy for their country, while the spendthrift nobles who waste their lives in idleness because they have large estates to support them are quite out of place in a constitutional government.

It may not be out of place to compare here the Muslim law with other laws of inheritance prevailing before it in order to show the mightiness of the reform introduced by Islam in this respect. For this comparison I will consider the right of woman to inherit the property of the deceased husband or relative. The Muslim law on this point has already been explained. Among the ancient nations, in Arabia which was the birth place of Islam and its cradle, the wife was considered a chattel of the deceased husband and was actually taken possession of by the heir, which evil custom was abolished by the Holy Quran in the words, "Forbidden are to you your mothers." Even according to the Jewish law the wife did not inherit her husband, nor the daughter her father. But when there was no male issue, then the daughters inherited according to Nu. xxvii : 8-11. The Christians had no law of their own. They were governed at first by the Jewish law, and afterwards by any which they adopted. The Roman law contained a provision for the female sex, but in practice it had no effect. "A daughter who had passed into the hands of a husband during her father's lifetime of course could have no share in the latter's inheritance, for she had ceased to be a member of his family. One who was *in potestate* at his death, and thereby became *sui juris*, did become his heir, unless he had prevented such a result by testamentary arrangement. But even then it was in the hands of *gens* to prevent risk of prejudice to themselves. neither could she without their consent alienate any of the more valuable parts of it, nor, even with their consent, could she make a testament disposing of it in prospect of death. Her inheritance was therefore, hers in name only ; in reality it was in the hands of her guardians." (Encyclopædia Britannica).

Such was the state of the inheritance laws of the world when Islam introduced its salutary reforms, giving to woman an complete rights of inheritance, of testament and of contracting debts with all

their obligations, and all this without any interference on the part of her husband or any other relative. To every one who could naturally be deemed heir, it gave a share in the property of the deceased, thus making it possible for all to have some property and to start in life with some capital, however small, leaving it to be increased by his labor and diligence. Islam did not like, Christianity preach, extreme socialistic doctrines because these were, as the case of Christianity has shown, quite impracticable. But it gave to the Muslims laws which were calculated to make the relatives of a person share in his fortune after his death and thus provided them with some capital which they could increase by their exertions. Other laws often gave the whole property to an undeserving person, while the more deserving heirs were deprived and left destitute. But Islam made all start from the same point, leaving it to a man's exertions to thrive on the capital thus provided. It thus gave an impetus to labor while the law of primogeniture brings with it idleness and sloth and in their train dissipation and weakening in the case of the eldest son, and a deprivation of birth-rights in the case of the other issue, male or female.

Agnosticism and the Future.

In the *Agnostic Journal* for 26th May 1906 appears an article under the heading "An Agnostic's View of the Future." The writer quotes the opinions of several other Agnostics, and some of these extracts are given below :—

Eliza Lynn Linton writes : " We know nothing of the hereafter, absolutely nothing. But, freed as we are from the trammels of superstition and the strangulation of fear, we deny the eternal Hell and the Omnipotent Devil, formulated by the old world ignorance and terror. For us, the life of man is emphatically his life in the present He does not presume to foretell the state of the evening, or the conditions of the night that follows after, into which he cannot peer. Whether that night is to be starless or brilliant with those many mansions of light, must be left to time to settle."

Samuel Laing says : " There is nothing in Agnosticism to negative the possibility of a future state of existence But if any

one attempts to define this future state and say we shall have spiritual bodies, live in the skies, sing psalms, and wave palm branches, we say at once: 'This is partly unknowable, and partly known to be impossible.' Nothing but the morbid appetite for the supernatural combined with the most absolute ignorance of the laws of evidence, could induce some people to believe that, if a corner of that mysterious and awful veil were lifted which separates the living from the dead, we shall discover what?—spirits whose vocation is to turn tables and talk twaddle."

Emerson says: "Higher than the question of duration is the question of our deserving and *he who would be a great soul in the future must be a great soul now.*"

I take these three views as illustrative of the Agnostic position in general with regard to the future. From this it would appear that Agnosticism does not deny the possibility of a future state of life, but only requires a proof of it. It further argues that the actual existence of a future life cannot be proved so long as the future remains unknown to us, for how can a man discover anything regarding a state of existence after death when he cannot say what may happen the next moment in this very life. Thirdly, the future state cannot be defined and no details of it can be given. And fourthly, a man must have greater concern for his present life than for a future life of which nothing is known. Nothing has done a greater harm to the cause of true religion than Christianity. The doctrines it teaches are quite repugnant to reason and, therefore, all intelligent men have found it necessary to reject them. As the writer of the article remarks: "Still more strange appears to us the announcement that by self-murder and murder of others, the gates of eternal life are opened." But in rejecting these dogmas, it is unwise to reject the deep truth which underlies them, *viz.*, the fact of a life after death. Apart from other proof, human nature itself furnishes intuitive evidence of this fact. All erroneous doctrines are not only repugnant to reason but they are also revolting to human nature. The followers of a particular creed may submit to them for a while, but they are never acceptable to mankind in general. The doctrine, for instance, that by the crucifixion of one man millions of his fellow-men steeped in sin are admitted to an eternal life of happiness, while

millions working righteously in the sight of God are doomed to eternal punishment, is repulsive to human nature, and without demanding any proof of such an absurdity a sensible person would at once reject it. But the doctrine of a life after death is not revolting to human nature. There is no such absurdity about it, as about the dogma of blood atonement, and it is only rejected because of the absence of the requisite proof in the eye of those who question its truth. The universality of this doctrine shows that it is implanted in human nature, while we do not find it revolting even to an Agnostic because his denial is not based on the repulsiveness of the doctrine, but on the absence of any proof as it is presented by the Christian theologians.

As regards the proof that is needed of the existence of a state of life after death, every reasonable person must admit that if nothing can be revealed to us of the future in this life, it is idle to pretend that we know anything about a still deeper future, the future that extends beyond the grave. The demand of proof that something about the future in this life should be revealed to us is, therefore, quite a reasonable demand, and this is the only direct proof of the existence of an after-life. This cannot be denied even by a Christian, but he asserts that such a proof was given by Jesus Christ and his disciples and that it cannot be given now. But, an Agnostic would retort, there is no reliable historical record of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, and there is none of his prophecies whose fulfilment may be witnessed in this age. Therefore, the alleged proof fails to convince any reasonable person. This proof is met with in Islam where we have the clearest evidence of a life after death. Not only can we see in it persons in this age to whom the secrets of the future are revealed, but all along in its history do we witness the fulfilment of prophecies uttered by its holy Founder, and even this age has witnessed the fulfilment of a number of them.

In a discussion on the Future two points must be especially borne in mind; firstly, that it is not ordinarily within human power to have the slightest knowledge of the future, and secondly, that such knowledge is granted by Almighty God to His messengers and chosen servants as a proof that their utterances with regard to a future life are also true. To this Divine law the Holy Quran refers

in the chapter entitled the *Jinn* where it says : *عالم الغيب فلا يظهر* : "God is the knower of secrets, and He does not divulge His secrets to any except to such of His apostles as He is pleased with." These words are given in the Holy Quran as a proof of the resurrection. They first mention the undeniable law that the future is absolutely unknowable to man, and then mention an exception in the case of the chosen messengers of heaven who are sent to this world to bring about a certainty as to the existence of God and a future state of life. Such certainty could not be brought about unless some secrets of the future were revealed to the prophets which were unknown to all others. It is not the proper place to enter here into the details of all those wonderful prophecies which were announced and fulfilled in the life-time of the Holy Prophet and of which the most reliable historical proof can be furnished, nor of the mighty predictions whose fulfilment has been witnessed from time to time in the history of Islam and is still being witnessed after thirteen centuries, nor yet of the grand disclosures of the deep secrets of the future which are made to the chosen messenger of heaven in this age who has come in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet. Such prophecies have occasionally been mentioned in these pages, and any one who is desirous of following the subject may refer to the back issues of this paper.

One point I may however mention in connection with the proof of a future life given by the Holy Quran. With every promise of blessings in a future life given to the faithful it also gives a promise concerning this life, and with every threat of punishment in a future life given to the unbelievers, it gives a warning of punishment which should overtake them in this very life, and thus makes the fulfilment of the promises and threats of this life a proof of the fulfilment of the promises and threats of after-life. To the followers of the Holy Prophet it promised great blessings in the next life and great victories in this. These promises were given at a time when there were only about a dozen Muslims, and these too were so bitterly persecuted that they could not hope to outlive the cruel persecutions of their enemies. They were every moment in danger of being swept off by the mighty current of opposition, but the Quran gave them the promise that they would be made a great people and triumphant over the very enemies who persecuted them. Similarly when the

opponents of Islam were in the height of their power and trampled the Muslims under their feet, the Holy Quran warned them of sore punishment in the next life, and foretold their failure and defeat in this life. When it is borne in mind that man is quite helpless against the circumstances that may affect his future life, and that his knowledge in such a case cannot extend beyond the present, no doubt is left that the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the success of the faithful and the defeat and failure of their opponents afforded a conclusive proof of the truth of the promises and warnings given them concerning the next life. By making the faithful realize the promises and the unbelievers the threats given concerning this life, the Holy Quran made both its followers and opponents certain of the truth of the promises and threats of the next life. This was the reason that when the Arabians saw the fulfilment of the former class of promises, they became convinced of the truth of Islam, and in large numbers entered the religion which they had so long rejected, as the following verses show: "When the help of God and the promised victory arrived, and thou sawest men entering the religion of God by troops" (cx).

The third point raised by Agnosticism is that the details of a future life cannot be given. But the question is, are the required details necessary? So far as the life after death can affect our life here, it is sufficient for us to know the connection between the two, and this point the Holy Quran has explained with clearness. It tells us that the deeds we do in this life resemble the sowing of seed, and that it is out of these that our life after death would develop. The spiritual effect of our good and bad deeds in this life will assume a form in the next, and the spiritual blessings and tortures which a man witnesses even here shall be embodied in the next life. The other world is only a continuation of this but essentially different from it. So far as the things of this world are concerned, the next life is entirely different from this, but so far as the deeds done by responsible beings are concerned there is no gulf which separates life on this earth from life after death. It is only this connection between the present life and the life to come that governs our attitude towards the latter, and accordingly it is absolutely unnecessary for us to trouble ourselves about any further details. Moreover, the Holy Prophet has told us that the blessings of the next life are such as no eye

has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive them. The Holy Quran also says that "no soul knoweth the blessings and joys which have been kept secret for it" (xxxii: 17). In fact so different is that world from this that a man of the world cannot conceive the true nature of the blessings of the next life. It is only the man who has made considerable spiritual advancement that can approach the realization of their true nature, because such a man gets even in this life the senses by which he can perceive them. In fact, the blessings of the life to come are so entirely different in their nature from the good things of this life that except those who are made to taste of them in this life none are able to understand their true nature.

The fourth point raised by Agnosticism is that we should have greater concern for this life than for the next. In this respect Christianity does not differ from Agnosticism, but it has not the moral courage to say in words what it follows in practice. The Christian nations are all bent low upon the mean cares of this world and they have no time to look to the next, but they would not say it. The truth is that though Christian preachers now and then mention the life after death in their sermons, the clergy and the laity are as utterly regardless of that life as the staunchest Agnostic. The reason of this indifference is that there is no certainty in their minds with regard to a future life, and therefore, they cannot give up the certain comforts and luxuries of the present life for the uncertain blessings of the next. It should be borne in mind, however, that it is a mistake to consider that our concern for the next life impedes in any way our progress in this or lessens its usefulness. Such is not at least the teaching of Islam. Islam is opposed to asceticism. The life it wants us to lead is a life of dutifulness to God and usefulness to our fellowmen. And since our life hereafter, according to teachings of the Holy Quran, is only an image and a representation of our life on this earth, the more useful we make this life, the happier would our next life be.

Downfall of Dowie.

Important circumstances have come to light concerning Dowie since April last. Stricken by paralysis he went away to Mexico a

few months ago to regain his health, but without gaining it he lost everything that he had. In his absence it transpired that Dowie had squandered enormous sums of Zion's money, and that his conduct was impeachable in many other ways. His love-letters written to a rich heiress of Switzerland, Miss Hofer, were made public by his son, and other facts came to light showing that he was at the same time making love to several other women. His private rooms were stored with the choicest wines, though he denounced all intoxicating liquors as the work of devil. All these facts were made public by his followers in the Zion City, and in the very tabernacle where he was once recognised as Elijah, the forerunner of Christ, he was publicly denounced as an impostor and a cheat. A shortage of over two and a half million dollars was laid to Dowie's charge by the new Zion leader, Voliva, \$ 35,000 out of this sum being presents to young women. And all these damnable and dirty doings have been done in civilized America for years without any disclosure. The Dowites of other countries are following the example of their brethren at Zion, and Dowie is everywhere being denounced as a scoundrel of the worst type by his own followers.

Starting his career as an ordinary clergyman Dowie first attracted the attention of the American public as a Divine healer. When he had acquired some fame as a healer, he aspired to higher dignities, and assumed the titles of Prophet, Elijah, and First Apostle, after the year 1901. Within the short period of four years his career which had such a prosperous beginning has been brought to a most miserable end. No greater indignity and disgrace could overtake him than that he should be exposed, denounced and at last dethroned by his own disciples, by all those who were in his trust. Even his wife and son denounced him, the son giving evidence that his father was insane. As a healer, Dowie was never successful, but somehow or other the trade went on. Whenever his healing power was put to test, as in the case of his own daughter, it hopelessly failed, but notwithstanding this his dupes were not disillusioned, and they continued to pour their dollars into his pockets. He had a curious way of silencing the doubts of his followers, for on every occasion that he failed he cited the failures of Jesus Christ to hide his own. Some time ago he was proved to be a bastard, which fact he proudly

admitted, telling those who were in his confidence that even Jesus Christ was the illegitimate son of Mary and that he had a fleshly father other than Joseph. This blasphemy has now been made public by those to whom it was originally confided. He also said that he was the like of Jesus in being illegitimate. It is marvellous how in spite of all these circumstances he was not exposed earlier. Such an impostor could not have prospered anywhere save among the credulous Americans.

But after all within the short period of less than four years from the date of his more ambitious pretensions, Dowie has met the fate of an impostor. Almighty God does not leave His righteous servants without His witness, and the disgrace, downfall and destruction of false claimants to Divine inspiration is really the witness of God for His own messengers. At the appearance of Jesus Christ many false Messiahs had arisen, but now no one knows their names. Similarly false claimants appeared in the time of our Holy Prophet, but no one cherishes their memory. In accordance with this Divine law many false claimants have appeared along with the true Messiah, but they are all meeting a common fate. Dozens of Mahdis have appeared within recent times, but they have all ended their lives in disgrace and ignominy. Dowie in America and Pigott in England aspired to the dignity of Messiah, but brought only ruin and disgrace upon their heads by their own conduct. Chirag-ud-Din at Jammu pretended to be the apostle of peace, a messenger sent to bring about a union between Christianity and Islam, but met destruction within a year after the announcement of his claim. And the wonder is that these men met with little opposition, while the severest opposition raged against the true Messiah without doing any harm to the dispensation which he established. Herein lies the distinction between a true and a false prophet. The former is opposed and persecuted as none other is opposed, but opposition only becomes a source of support to his cause. No persecution, no plot to ruin him can do him the least harm. Thus the distinction between a true and a false claimant is very clear. The true one succeeds in spite of all opposition while the false one fails in spite of no opposition. The downfall of Dowie, the disgrace of Pigott, the death of Chiragh Din and the failure of scores of other claimants in

this very age have only attested the truth of the claim of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be the messenger of God whose claim to Divine inspiration has been in existence for more than thirty years, but whose cause is daily gaining ground notwithstanding the severest opposition of all other religions.

The downfall of Dowie is, however, a sign of the truth of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in more ways than one. In the year 1902 when Dowie first claimed to be the forerunner of Christ, he denounced the Muslims and predicted their destruction within a short time. On this the Promised Messiah challenged him to a *Mubahala*, i.e., the two praying to God that whichever of them was the liar should die in the lifetime of the other so that the world might be able to judge the false from the true claimant. On receiving this letter, the essence of which was published in a large number of American newspapers, Dowie assumed silence. About a year after another announcement was circulated by the Promised Messiah in America in which he foretold that even if Dowie did not accept the challenge, ~~he would not go unpunished, but that some great disaster would~~ overtake him and his Zion. This circular was again commented upon in the American Press, and the following words are taken from the New York Commercial Advertiser of 26th October 1903, being are a conclusive proof of their publication some three years before calamity actually befell Dr. Dowie. The same words were printed in many other American newspapers. The Commercial Advertiser wrote :—

“From far away India comes a printed circular from Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who writes from Qadian in the Punjab. He has issued a challenge to Elijah III. to make good his pretensions, but so far Zion City's own and especial Messiah has failed to reply.”

The following words of the circular are then quoted :—

“It should be borne in mind that Dr. Dowie has not given any reply to my challenge sent to him in September last, nor has he even so much as mentioned it in his paper. For an answer to that challenge, I will wait for a further period of seven months from this day, the 23rd of August 1903. If he accepts the challenge within this period and fulfils all its conditions as published by me previously, and makes an announcement to that effect in his paper, the world

will soon see the end of this contest. The whole matter rests in the hands of Him who is the Lord of heaven and earth and a Judge over all judges, and He will decide it in favor of the true claimant.

“ But if Dr. Dowie cannot even now gather courage to appear in the contest against me, let both continents bear witness that I shall be entitled to claim the same victory as in the case of his death in my life-time if he accepts the challenge. The pretensions of Dr. Dowie will thus be falsified and proved to be an imposture. Though he may try as hard as he can to fly from the death which awaits him, yet his flight from such a mighty contest will be nothing less than death to him and *calamity will certainly overtake his Zion, for he must take the consequences of either the acceptance of the challenge or its refusal.*”

The italicised words were written on the 23rd of August 1903, and were quoted besides the Commercial Advertiser by many other American papers. At that time Dowie was one of the most prosperous men in America and was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on building palaces for himself and furnishing them. His voice was obeyed like an oracle. Respectable men and women were turned out of Zion at his word. But mark the change that these thirty months have brought. He once lived like a king, he is now a mere wreck. He has been turned out of the city where his authority was once paramount. His followers have in a body deserted him as an impostor and cheat. Now the prophecy which I have quoted above has special claim of consideration on the Americans, for it was more than two years and a half before its fulfilment widely circulated in America and published in American Newspapers. America again knows the Dowie of the time of the publication of the prophecy and the Dowie of the time of its fulfilment better than any other country. The clear sign which has been manifested in the downfall of Dowie is a conclusive evidence of the truth of the Promised Messiah who foretold it beforehand. The following extract is only from one of the numerous cuttings which I have received describing the downfall of Dowie :—

“At last the modern Elijah, the greatest living impostor, the world has ever seen, has got his Waterloo and is now retired as a contemptible

and despicable insect into a shell which he should never have been allowed to escape from. Throughout his wicked and unscrupulous existence this smellful, sordid, but cunning clown has run the world for what is was worth, and has succeeded beyond his fondest anticipations in beating the weak-kneed and simpleminded people whom he has thrown his net over. Fired out of Zion by his own miserable pals as a polluted and scorned impostor, he has yet still a card up his sleeve to play the game of polygamy and invite a new religion. Is it not enough to turn the intelligent world upside down to think that a dirty, damnable derrypig of this fellow's class could go on for years gulling the people and enriching himself at their expense without being lassoed and choked by the authorities? It is one of the marvels of the age that he has gone through a fair span in ruffianism, robbing his fellows, and practising imposture without having the leg-ropes put on him and dragged to Hades.

"Aspiring to the position of a 'Divine prophet and healer,' he has failed on every occasion to justify his aspirations, but nevertheless he has been permitted to go on the even tenor of his way without hinderances and without a pull. It's marvellous. However, he is now passed down never to rise again, and he has retired with his skin intact and his pockets well lined with his dupes' dollars. He has beaten the world, and can afford to lay back and laugh at the simplicity of the units which fill it up and the success of his own contemptible cunning; but he passed out as a lump of beastiality, a liar, impostor, and cheating imp of the Devil whose presence in the world makes it stink."

Notes and Comments.

The following is an extract from the London letter of the *Civil and Military Gazette* published in its issue of
 ISLAM IN JAPAN. 3rd June: "A German paper states that the congress on religion, which the Emperor of Japan has convened, is expected to recommend the adoption of Muhammadanism as the Japanese State religion. There has been little expression of opinion on the matter in the English press, but the general view seems to be that, whatever the Congress on religion

may recommend, it is at least premature to discuss the intentions of the Mikado and his advisers. The German paper referred to asserts that the Japanese Government is quite clear in its own mind as to the immense political advantages it stands to reap as the result of the adoption of the religion of the Prophet. It would mean the revivification of Islam, which would become the most powerful ally of Japan in the realization of her political ambitions in Asia. The writer is evidently oppressed by the nightmare of the Yellow Peril, and it would be advisable to discount the certitude with which he predicts the adoption of a new religion by Japan for entirely political reasons. It has been understood for many years that the question of installing a new faith as the official cult of Japan has been before the Government of that country, but there is as yet little evidence to show that the authorities are in a hurry to come to a decision. There was at one time an idea that Japan would "round off" the process of Westernisation by formally adopting the Western religion. But whatever chances there may have been of such a development some years ago, they are not likely to have survived Japan's brilliant successes as a non-Christian power both in diplomacy and war. In Christian Missionary circles, I am told, there is neither expectation nor desire that Japan will adopt Christianity as a State religion; but there would be a not unnatural disappointment of the assertion if the German paper quoted were to prove to be well-founded."

In the "Muhammadian" of Madras for 28th May 1906, appears an article under the heading "The Messiah and Earthquakes," from which I take the following quotation regarding the prediction of another earthquake which has been attacked as being vague. The writer says :—

"Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claims to be the Promised Messiah, has recently published a prophecy regarding a mighty earthquake. It has been objected in certain quarters that it is a vague prophecy and that anybody could utter a similar prophecy. To remove this misconception, I write the following lines which show that it is not a vague prophecy. The following are the particulars of the prophecy :—

"1. The earthquake is to be of unprecedented severity, so severe that the world has never seen anything like it.

"2. It is to take place in the life-time of the Promised Messiah, who is now about 70 years old.

"3. India must be included in the range of the earthquake.

"4. It must be preceded by four other earthquakes. As the fifth and last earthquake is to be the most terrible that the world has ever seen, it is to be preceded by four severe earthquakes which will serve as warnings against the last and the most terrible earthquake.

"Such is the prophecy of the Promised Messiah and I now leave it for you to decide whether everyone can utter a similar prophecy. It must be remembered that the Promised Messiah proclaimed this prophecy at a time when Professor Omori assured the public that there would be no severe earthquake for 200 years."

The *Newzeland Herald* of 21st April and the *Auckland Weekly* publish the following under the heading "An Indian Prophet." "Some prophecies regarding severe earthquakes, which will be of particular interest in the light of the San Francisco calamity are contained in an article that appeared in the *Review of Religions*, an Indian publication, in January last. The writer is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the leader of a religious sect in India, and known as the "Promised Messiah." He claims to be inspired by Divine revelation, and after stating that the approach of his own death and the punishment of evil-doers has been foreshadowed in these revelations, he says: 'I have been informed that death will work havoc on all sides. There will be earthquakes so severe that they will present to the eye the scene of the day of judgment, and will, as it were, turn the earth upside down, and the lives of many would be embittered.' The same writer, in the issue of the same publication in April 1905, predicts a terrible shaking, which he says, 'will visit the world, and which on account of its severity, will deserve to be called the shaking of the day of judgment. . . . The disaster would certainly, sooner or later, overtake the world, and it would be more terrible in its effect than what the world has hitherto seen.' He claims that the severe earthquake which had just then occurred in India had been

foretold by him five months before it occurred, 'but,' he adds, 'the disaster that yet awaits the world is greater than this.'"

Mr. Hugh O. Pentecost addressed an American audience the other day on the "Hypocrisy of the Gorky incident" and exposed the great hypocrisy of the Western nations, especially the Americans, in

A NATION OF
HYPOCRITES.

their marital relations. Maxim Gorky is a Russian revolutionist who went to America to recruit his broken health. He had with him a woman whom he treated as his wife, but it afterwards turned out that Gorky had another wife with whom he could not live happily. The two therefore parted, not by divorce granted by a tribunal, because no tribunal in Russia could grant a divorce except on proof of adultery, but Gorky and his wife parted by a mutual arrangement and Gorky took another woman for his wife, whom he could not marry by the law of the Western nations. When these facts became known in America, Gorky was ill-treated and was turned out of hotels. It was on this ill-treatment of Gorky by the Americans that Mr. Pentecost had the boldness to speak face to face to the Americans regarding their hypocrisy in all such matters. He remarked:—

"I am going to ask you whether this Puritanism is hypocritical or not, and whether the title of my talk is fair or unfair. What is an hypocrite? A person who pretends to be, or who is looked upon by the public as a different sort of person from what he really is and I do not hesitate to say that this whole community, as a community, is hypocritical in its Puritanism Our statute books are covered with laws against gambling, and there is hardly an individual in the whole city of New York who is not a gambler. The stock exchange is nothing but a gambling hall, and it is positively the worst gambling place in the city. Just as many people blow out their brains as a result of gambling in Wall street as those who gamble at Monto Carlo. Life insurance and fire insurance companies are gambling institutions, and they are distinctly excepted from the operation of our gambling laws

"Our marriage law is an evidence of that same hypocrisy. The law says that any two people who are united together under a certain formula pronounced by a clergyman or certain public official or by the deposit of a certain certificate in the county clerk's office, are pure chaste people in their relations with each other; that this bond must hold until death, unless one of them ceases to be pure; and that when he or she acts outside of that marital relation, then he or she becomes unchaste Society, that makes that law, knows full well that it is violated in countless numbers of instances by both

parties to the contract, and society does not object in the least, providing it is not found out. The very upholders of the home and the marriage institution will tell you, 'of course there are circumstances when its conditions may be violated, but it must not be made public.' In Utah, where a man lives in marital relations with several women openly, where it is a matter of religion, of duty, and where he is not in the least ashamed, but proud of it, the American public says that the whole thing is a stench in our pious and moral nostrils, knowing at the same time that the very man who denounces the Mormon (who is honest and open and above board), has one wife and as many others on the outside as he pleases. That is not supposed to destroy society, though it is supposed that Mormonism does. Is there any possible interpretation that you can put upon such loose thinking except that of hypocrisy. We are a whole nation of hypocrites and it is not possible to dispute it."*

Such is the title given by an English traveller to San Francisco THE DISEASE-CENTER which he visited just before it was destroyed OF THE WEST. by the earthquake and fire, and which "an outraged but long-forbearing Providence has just finished." The following description of a Western beautiful city shows it to be morally the ugliest place on the surface of the earth, and the wrath of heaven descended upon it only as a punishment for its wicked doings:—

"We had no knowledge that human beings of European nature could sink so low in the depravity of vice, or that a civilized community could tolerate in its midst such a miserable centre of filthy traffic as existed, until the timely earthquake, in the heart of San Francisco. We have seen the *Yoshiwara* district in Tokio, have wandered through most of the large seaport towns of the world, but have never witnessed a parallel with that human market in China town. There are streets and streets of tiny cubicles, each of which contains a woman whose existence is a degradation of the laws of nature, and an outrage against civilization."

But more appalling than this is the description of a fashionable restaurant, "a refined sink of the most positive iniquity" which was haunted by the fashionable population with their wives and daughters. "There was little in that restaurant, from the copies of high art pictures upon the walls to the ornaments on the counter, that were not devised by the evil-minded directorate to act as stimulants to vice."

If such a place had been left without punishment, many doubts would have arisen regarding the Justice of God. The atonement of Christ could not save these transgressors in this world, nor can it bring salvation to them in the next.

*The Truth Seeker, 26th May 1906.

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