

Vol. V.

No. 9.

THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

SEPTEMBER 1906.

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QADIAN,

DISTRICT GURDASPUR, PUNJAB, INDIA.

Annual Subscription ... Rs. 4. | Single Copy As. 6.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

Historical Evidence of the Reliability of Tradition.



Hadees or Tradition in Islamic theology signifies the sayings and the practice of the Holy Prophet, Muhammad, the Founder of Islam. Its value as an exponent of the principles and doctrines of Islam as inculcated in the Holy Quran is very great, while after the Holy Quran it is the chief source from which material can be drawn for a life of the Holy Prophet or early history of Islam and the chief repository of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet. Its very importance is, therefore, a strong reason that a searching inquiry should be made into its credibility. An impartial inquiry of this nature becomes the more necessary when it is seen that the Western critics of Islam, on account of the prevailing bias of their minds towards Christianity which has generated in their hearts a deep-rooted hatred for Islam, have made grave errors in judging the true value and credibility of Tradition, and graver errors still in giving a preference to unreliable, weak and unauthentic over the more reliable and authentic traditions when they had to draw their material from Tradition. In this respect there is such a strange inconsistency in their conduct that no careful reader of the lives of the Holy Prophet written by Christian writers can go through them without noticing it. Sir William Muir's "Life of Mahomet" is acknowledged in the West to be the standard work of its kind in the English language, but in judging the trustworthiness of tradition, and then in drawing his material from the traditional lore, he has gone to two extremes and his inconsistency is a marked feature of his work. Thus in the

introduction to his famous Life, he is so little disposed to accept even the traditions which the most laborious and searching inquiries of the collectors of Tradition have shown to be authentic that after stating that Bukharee, the highest authority on Tradition, selected only 4,000 traditions out of a total of 600,000, he adds, endorsing Dr. Weil's view, "And of this selected number, the European critic is compelled, without hesitation, to reject at least one-half." But strangely enough, the European critic, so strict in formulating his principles, entirely ignores them himself when he has to make use of Tradition, and instead of drawing his material with great care even from Bukharee, he descends to accept without hesitation traditions contained in works like that of Waqidee which have been rejected by all Muhammadan critics. This tendency is not confined to Muir alone, but it is observable among all the Christian writers on Islam. They look with groundless suspicion upon trustworthy traditions when forming their rules of criticism, but rely with blind faith upon the weakest tradition when it can serve their purpose. Consider a man rejecting half of Bukharee without hesitation in his introduction, but unscrupulously following in the body of his work the traditions of Waqidee without giving any reason for this preference ! No one who has even an elementary knowledge of Tradition can have the slightest respect for a critic whose introduction so glaringly contradicts his own work.

The most important consideration bearing on a right solution of the question of the credibility of Tradition is whether measures were taken at an early time for its preservation and safe delivery to others. If any such arrangements were made by the Holy Prophet himself or by his companions and their immediate followers, the question of the reliability of Tradition stands on a basis too firm to be shaken by the mere suspicions of hostile critics. This question has not been directly faced by either Muir or Sprenger though the former incidentally answers it in the negative when he asserts that the sayings and the practice of the Holy Prophet had no importance for his companions in his life-time, for the Holy Prophet was himself bound by Divine revelation as contained in the Holy Quran, and that *sunnat*, i.e., the sayings and the practice of the Holy Prophet, was recognised as supplementary to the Holy Quran afterwards on the expansion of the Muslim Empire, because "new and unforeseen

circumstances were continually arising, for which the 'Coran had made no provision." Muir thus seems to hold that Tradition was not recognised as a source of guidance by the companions and the sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet were not followed by them in his life-time, but that it was an after-thought on the part of the Muslims when with the expansion of the Muslim Empire the increased needs of the enlarged Muslim Society could not be supplied by the Holy Quran. This is a wholly distorted view of the Muslim Law which as a matter of fact was based from the beginning on the Holy Quran and the sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet as explaining the holy word. For instance, the Holy Quran enjoined the Muslims to pray, but it was the Holy Prophet who taught them by his example as well as precept the ways of purity and humility which they should adopt in approaching their Divine Master in their prayers. The same is the case with the other injunctions and commandments contained in the Holy Quran. Hence we see that by supplying the necessary details and explanations, the sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet had from the beginning acquired an importance in the Muslim Law. The Holy Prophet, Muhammad, was not only a preacher of morality, but he was also a law-giver, and this claim he announced in the beginning of his ministry. He was not a follower of any old law, and accordingly his words and deeds had an importance attached to them from the beginning, as it was in these that the companions found rules for their guidance.

The truth of what I have said above is clear not only from general considerations, such as those referred to above, but the Holy Quran itself bears testimony to it. It tells the Muslims in clear words to "Obey God and His Apostle" (v: 93). Obedience to God means only obedience to His commandments as contained in His Word, *i.e.*, the Holy Quran. What did then obedience to the Apostle of God mean? Certainly it indicated something besides the Holy Quran, because it is mentioned along with the obedience to God. From this verse we may safely conclude that the Holy Quran itself enjoined the Muslims to follow the commandments of the Holy Prophet as contained in his sayings and practice. Elsewhere the Holy Quran also says: "O ye who believe, obey God and obey the Apostle and those among you invested with authority; and if you differ in aught, refer it to God and the Apostle if you believe in God and in

the latter day" (iv : 62). Now referring a matter to God means referring it to the Holy Quran, that is to say, seeking the injunction of the Holy Quran on that point. But besides this, the believers are also enjoined to refer to the Holy Prophet all those matters concerning which any difference arises. This verse also shows that the Holy Quran looks upon the sayings of the Holy Prophet as a part of the Muslim Law. In still plainer words and more forcible accents the Holy Quran lays down the following injunction : *فلا وربك لا يؤمنون حتى يحكموك فيما شجر بينهم ثم لا يجدوا في ا نفوسهم حرجا مما قضيت* "And they will not—I swear by thy Lord—they will not believe, until they set thee up as judge on points where they differ, and when thou hast given thy judgment, they find not in their minds any difficulty regarding its acceptance and submit with entire submission." Now when the Holy Quran required unconditional submission to the orders of the Holy Prophet, what Muslim could there be who should not have looked upon his words as an inestimable treasure to be stored in the heart and who should not have considered the imitation of his deeds as the best, nay the only, means of attaining to a union with God ? In fact, as already pointed out, the very claims of the Holy Prophet were such that those who followed him were bound to notice with the utmost minuteness all his words and deeds. Not to say anything of religious ordinances which to the their companions were dearer than their lives, for whose sake they left homes, gave up their properties, suffered the hardest persecutions ~~and at last sacrificed their lives, we find them imitating the Holy~~ Prophet in the most ordinary circumstances of daily life. When he made a ring with a certain impression upon it, they all made and wore rings of the same kind. When in the course of a sermon he ordered certain men in the audience to sit down, a man who was passing by in a street adjoining the mosque sat down even there, lest, as he said, he should die before entering the mosque and thus leave the world without obeying an order of the Holy Prophet which had reached his ears. The reason of this absolute submission was that the Holy Quran enjoined them to obey the Holy Prophet in all things. It also enjoined them to take the Holy Prophet as an exemplar and follow his footsteps, in order to attain to righteousness : "An excellent pattern have you in God's Apostle for all who hope in God and in the latter day, and who oft remember God" (xxxiii : 21).

It is clear from the above that the attitude of the companions of the Holy Prophet towards his sayings and practice was not one of listlessness. Had it been so, had the words of the Holy Prophet apart from what he gave out as the divine revelation, had no importance in the eyes of his companions, suspicions and misgivings that ~~Tradition may not have been preserved in its true form and safely~~ transmitted to the next generation would in that case have some weight, because it is difficult that words which are not heeded, listened to with attention and preserved in memory at the time of their utterance, should be reproduced years afterwards in the same form, or that any description of circumstances and events which are not noticed at the time of their occurrence should be faithful when given years afterwards. But such was not the case of Tradition. The sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet were rules of guidance for his companions, guidance which they had bought by giving away their properties, their nearest relatives and their very homes, guidance which they had chosen at the risk of their lives. To them the Holy Prophet's sayings and practice were the most precious treasure which they had on earth, and every word and movement of his they noticed with the utmost attention.

Let us now turn to Tradition itself and see if it furnishes internal evidence of its faithful preservation and safe delivery by the companions. In the first place, we should see what the Holy Prophet himself enjoined concerning the preservation and transmission of his words. Bukharee relates that an embassy of the tribe of Abdul Qais came to the Holy Prophet and complained to him that they could not visit him oftener than once a year in the sacred months because their way lay through the hostile Quresh. The Holy Prophet taught them the most important principles of faith, the Unity of God and the Apostleship of Muhammad, the saying of prayers, the keeping of fasts, the paying of the legal alms and refraining from intoxicating liquors and then added *احفظوه واخبروا من وراءكم* "Remember these and inform of them those who are behind you." Here we have a plain injunction from the mouth of the Holy Prophet himself to his companions to remember his sayings and to inform of them others not present at the time of their utterance. This is clear evidence of the preservation and safe transmission of Tradition. Similarly Malik, son of Huwairis, is reported to have said that the

Holy Prophet said to him and his companions : "Return to your homes, and teach your people (what I have taught you)" (Sahih Bukharee). It also appears from numerous statements contained in the traditions that the Holy Prophet always used to send one of his companions to teach a people when they were newly converted to Islam. It can be easily seen that the object of sending such a teacher was not simply to teach them the Holy Quran, but also to teach them how to observe the different religious ordinances. For this purpose it was necessary that the messenger chosen should be himself acquainted with all the important points of law as explained by the Holy Prophet, because the converts could not follow him in aught for which he had not either the authority of the Holy Quran or that of the Holy Prophet. Such messengers were, therefore, necessarily acquainted with the sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet, and of these they informed the people to whom they were sent as messengers. Thus we have not only the Holy Prophet's injunctions to his companions for the preservation and transmission of the knowledge which they obtained through him, but we also see that the conversion of different tribes isolated from each other and from Medina had rendered it necessary in the life-time of the Holy Prophet that a knowledge of what he said or did should be conveyed to others through reporters of traditions. And as this knowledge was conveyed in the presence of the Holy Prophet himself, there is every reason to believe that transmission in these cases was absolutely faithful. Had there been the least aberration from the sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet, it could not have remained undetected, because we find every kind of complaint brought to the notice of the Holy Prophet. For instance, where an Imam rehearsed only the longer chapters of the Holy Quran while leading prayers, the Holy Prophet was apprised of the inconvenience thus caused to working men and the trouble to the weak and the old. Thus in the Holy Prophet's sending out missionaries and teachers to the newly converted tribes, we have the first conclusive testimony of the faithful preservation and transmission of Tradition by the companions of the Holy Prophet.

The Holy Prophet often enjoined in the most emphatical terms all those who listened to his words to convey them to those who were absent. In one tradition narrated by Tirmizi and Ibn-i-Maja, the

Holy Prophet is mentioned to have remarked: "May God prosper that person who heard my words, and faithfully delivered them to others, for there might be many among the latter who might better preserve my words than the person who has heard it from me." This tradition lays down an obligation upon all those who heard the sayings of the Holy Prophet to deliver the same faithfully to others who did not hear them. Bukharee also relates a tradition to the same effect: "Abu Bakr reports that the Holy Prophet sat on his camel, its nose-rein being in the hands of another person, and said: What day is it? We remained silent till we thought that he was going to give it some other name than the one which it had. Then he said: Is it not the day of sacrifices, (*i.e.*, the tenth day of the month of Zul Hijjah)? We said: Yes. Then he asked: What month is this? We assumed silence till we thought that he would give it some other name than the one which it had. Then he said: Is it not the month of Zul Hijjah? We said: Yes. Then he said: Verily, your lives and your reputation and your properties are sacred (*i.e.*, safe from violation) between yourselves in the same manner as this day is sacred in this month and in this city. Verily let the one who is present deliver my word to the one who is absent, for it may be that he delivers the message to a person who can better preserve it than himself." The latter part of this tradition again shows that the Holy Prophet not only wanted his companions to act upon his sayings, but he also enjoined them to remember his sayings and to deliver them to others, who might possess better retentive memories, and so, if the original hearers of the word forgot any part of it, those who heard it from them might transmit it to posterity in its true form. In these oft-repeated injunctions of the Holy Prophet we have the second conclusive testimony that the Holy Prophet himself made arrangements for the faithful delivery of his sayings to the coming generations.

We also learn from various traditions that the Holy Prophet used to repeat the more important injunctions three times. Bukharee relates several traditions to this effect. In one of these it is stated that the object of the repetition was that the hearers might clearly understand him. On the other hand, some of his companions used to question him repeatedly concerning things which they did not understand the first time. Bukharee reports from Ibn-i-Abi-Muleika

that Ayesha, the wife of the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, did not hear from the Holy Prophet aught, regarding which she did not question him repeatedly if she did not understand it, until she was sure of what it meant. Now we see on the one hand that the Holy Prophet himself was anxious that his words should be reported rightly and hence we find him repeating them thrice so that they should be impressed upon the minds of the hearers; and, on the other, we see that the companions were also anxious to report him rightly and that they did not hesitate to address him repeatedly when they did not understand his words. This anxiety on the part of both the speaker and the hearers is a clear evidence that the sayings of the Holy Prophet were reported correctly by his companions. Thus repetition on the part of the Holy Prophet coupled with desire on the part of his companions to understand him was the third safe-guard against the corruption of Tradition in that early age.

The fourth measure for the safe and faithful delivery of Tradition consisted in the threatening of severe punishment given by the Holy Prophet to those who should represent his words wrongly. Tirmazi relates on the authority of Ibn-i-Abbas that the Holy Prophet said: "Convey to other persons none of my words except those which you know of a surety. Verily he who purposely utters a falsehood concerning me should look for his abode in hell." Muslim also reports a tradition to the same effect: "Samrah, son of Jundab, and Mughira, son of Shubah, related that the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said, whoever communicates my words to others knowing them to be a lie, is one of the liars." Bukharee reports Ali saying: "The Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said: "Do not report untrue statements concerning me for whoever reports words from me which are *kizb* (untrue or erroneous) shall be in fire." According to another tradition, also narrated by Bukharee, Salama is reported to have said: "I heard the Holy Prophet say, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, whoever reports words from me which I have not uttered, let him look for his abode in fire." Traditions to the same effect are reported by Bukharee from Zubeir, Anas and Abu Huraira. Now all these traditions are got from different companions through different channels. The reports of so many

different companions, all to the same effect, show that the Holy Prophet often warned them of the evil consequences of reporting untrue words from him. The evidence of ten different men who agree in the main and whose evidence has been brought to us through as many different channels shows at least this much that the Holy Prophet had given his companions a serious warning with regard to the communication of untrue and erroneous statements.

The warnings of the Holy Prophet were not without their effect upon his companions. They were so mindful of these warnings that they reported with great hesitation even those traditions which they knew to be correct and never reported any tradition of the truth of which they were not certain. Anas, who lived long after the Holy Prophet and to whom people used to go from great distance to listen to the traditions of the Holy Prophet, said on one occasion that the only thing which restrained him from reporting a great number of traditions was the warning of the Holy Prophet who said that whoever should report words from him without being certain of their truth should look for his abode in hell (Bukharee). Consider how careful the companions were in reporting the words of the Holy Prophet. They did not report a tradition unless they were certain of its truth. A similar anecdote is preserved of another companion. Zubeir was asked why he did not report traditions like such and such other companions of the Holy Prophet. He replied that the reason of his not reporting many traditions was, not that he had not been in the company of the Holy Prophet, but that he feared error and he had heard the Holy Prophet say that whoever reported untrue or erroneous words from him should look for his abode in hell. Of course, Zubeir did not mean to cast aspersion upon those who related a large number of traditions, but only stated that he was cautious that any word should not escape his lips which was not uttered by the Holy Prophet. It should be borne in mind that the word *kizb*, which occurs in all these traditions, does not only indicate a statement which the speaker of it knows to be false or which he does not know to be true, but it also signifies a statement which is untrue by mistake or unintentionally. Therefore what Zubeir feared was error in any statement which he might make, for a man can avoid purposely making an untrue statement, but error cannot be avoided unless a man is perfectly certain of what he says. It was, therefore, the

absence of absolute certainty that held back Zubeir and Anas from reporting many traditions which they remembered, but of which they did not consider themselves to be absolutely certain. There is another evidence here that the sayings of the Holy Prophet were faithfully delivered by his companions.

There is no doubt that some of the companions could better realize the truths conveyed in the sayings of the Holy Prophet and therefore more faithfully deliver them; some had more retentive memories than others, and all of them could not always live in the company of the Holy Prophet. They had also to do their business and consequently they could come to the Holy Prophet only in their leisure hours. Some of them had made special arrangements among themselves to be kept apprised of the new revelations that came to the Holy Prophet, of his sayings and the circumstances in connection with the growth of the new movement. Such an arrangement Omar had made with one of his neighbours from among the Ansar, as he himself tells us: "I and one of my neighbours from among the Ansar living in one of the superbs of Medina used to go by turns to the Holy Prophet, each of us remaining in his company for a day. When I went to the Holy Prophet, I brought to him the news of that day relating to revelation and other things, and when he went there he brought me the news." Men who were so anxious to keep themselves acquainted with Divine revelation and the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet could not allow errors or alterations in Tradition to be spread in their presence. Some of the companions were, however, so excessively solicitous of guarding tradition that they passed all their time in the company of the Holy Prophet. Of these was Abu Huraira who has reported a large number of traditions. The Holy Prophet himself was aware of his zeal to commit every one of his sayings to memory. When Abu Huraira asked him a certain question, he replied: "I was sure, O Abu Huraira, that no one would question me regarding this before thee, since I know thy excessive desire regarding traditions." (Sahih Bukharee). Abu Huraira himself thus gives the reason of his being able to deliver a larger number of traditions than any other of the companions of the Holy Prophet: "Verily people say that Abu Huraira reports many traditions, and ~~had it not been for two verses in the Word of God~~ (referring to ii: 154, 155 which speak of the sin of concealing the guidance) I would

not have related a single tradition. Verily our brethren from among the Refugees were detained by their bargains in the market, and our brethren from among the Helpers were held back on account of their employment in their works, and verily Abu Huraira used to stick to the Holy Prophet so long as there was something to satisfy his stomach, and he was, therefore, present to notice circumstances when others were absent, and retained in his memory what others did not retain" (Sahih Bukharee). This account of Abu Huraira's keeping constant company with the Holy Prophet as given by himself is supported by others. Hakim reports in his Mustadrak and Bukharee in his History that Tulaiha, son of Obeidulla, said: "I have no doubt that he (*i.e.*, Abu Huraira) heard from the Prophet what we did not hear, the reason of this being that he was a poor man, having no property to look after, and he was a guest of the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him." Again Bukharee in his History and Baihaqi agree in reporting Muhammad bin Ammara bin Hazam saying that he sat in a company having more than ten of the great companions of the Holy Prophet. In this company, Abu Huraira began to narrate certain sayings of the Holy Prophet which some of the companions did not know. So they questioned him repeatedly concerning these until he satisfied them. The narrator Muhammad adds that he became certain that day that Abu Huraira remembered more traditions than anyone else from among the companions of the Holy Prophet. Tirmazi and Ahmad also report Ibn-i-Omar saying to Abu Huraira: Thou didst keep the company of the Holy Prophet more than any body else and thou hast better knowledge of his sayings and practice than anyone of us." All these traditions point conclusively to the fact that Abu Huraira from whom the largest number of traditions has been reported had really the best knowledge of Tradition. So great was his love for guarding and delivering traditions that, even in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, some men used to say that, Abu Huraira reported many traditions. On meeting one of these men Abu Huraira asked him if he remembered the chapter which the Holy Prophet recited in leading the prayer of the nightfall the day before. The man replied that he did not know it. Abu Huraira asked him if he was not present at the prayers, to which he replied that he was. Then Abu Huraira told him the chapters that the Holy Prophet had recited, thus convincing him that he (Abu Huraira)

being more mindful of every circumstance concerning the Holy Prophet remembered more traditions than any body else did (Sahih Bukharee).

All these circumstances prove conclusively that the diffusion of the knowledge of Tradition had begun in the life-time of the Holy Prophet himself and before his eyes, and that the most stringent orders had been given by him for a correct circulation of the reports. It was a consequence of these strict orders that the companions of the Holy Prophet, as shown above, were extremely cautious in delivering his sayings to others, and their fear lest any error should creep into any saying dissuaded them from reporting any tradition except that of whose truth they were absolutely certain. They refused to relate traditions regarding which they had the slightest doubt. Men who were so scrupulous, as history shows them to be, in delivering the words of the Holy Prophet could not be guilty of fabricating traditions and spreading them in the name of the Holy Prophet. The remarks of Muir on this point are groundless assertions. He says that the companions of the Holy Prophet when on active service in the field must have diverted their leisure hours by inventing stories concerning the Holy Prophet and reciting them to their fellows. If this is the correct method of reasoning, all history can easily be shown to be a fable. To misrepresent facts, to ignore history and to advance groundless assertions are the chief tactics of Christian writers when their subject is Islam or its Founder. A plausible theory cannot controvert solid historical facts. It is a fact as I have shown by quotations from reliable and authentic works that the companions of the Prophet were most scrupulous in delivering his word, but that they may have invented stories to impress upon their hearers the greatness of the Prophet is itself a fabrication, "an unchecked effort of the Imagination" of Sir William Muir, for he does not even pretend to give an argument that it was actually so. The invention of stories of the greatness of a man is necessitated when there are no facts to establish his greatness, but when a man is triumphant and successful in an extraordinary manner, his followers do not stand in need of inventing stories of his greatness. An example would better illustrate the truth of these remarks. Jesus Christ, as the Gospels tell us, passed away without achieving any of the objects to fulfil which he claimed to have come. Had his followers

only told the truth about him, he could not have been accepted just as he was not accepted by any but a handful of men during his life. To make his religion going, therefore, it was necessary that he should be represented to be what he actually was not. A man who was prosecuted and crucified like a criminal could not have prospered as a religious leader, and hence stories were invented in which he was represented to be a God. But the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, attained to such actual greatness and eminence in his life-time that he did not need the support of forged stories to be made great. Endowed with supernatural power he actually was and, therefore, he could not gain, he did not stand in need of gaining, anything by the alleged contemplations of his followers. He was a solitary man when he first announced his Divine mission, a poor and helpless man, and the whole country turned against him and rose to annihilate him. What but supernatural power could save him under these circumstances, and what but supernatural power could bring the whole of Arabia in subjection to him? He, therefore, *was* a great man and did not need like Jesus to be *made* a great man, and the alleged invention of the stories of his greatness by his companions is only the invention of an ingenious Christian brain. What could be the motive, I ask, of the companions in inventing stories of his greatness when there were numerous facts, historically true facts, which pointed to his greatness? Did they fear that his religion would not be accepted unless they spread forged stories about him? Certainly not, because they had seen with their own eyes how his hardest enemies had at last been convinced of his truth by the lucid proof that was given them. They were aware that as the whole of Arabia had at last bowed its stiff neck in submission to him, so would other people. The absence of any motive on the part of the companions of the Holy Prophet to invent stories concerning him, and the absence of any historical evidence which should support this groundless assertion, are two strong reasons to condemn the assertions of Muir as shameful lies invented to cast aspersion upon Islam.

It is a most preposterous assertion that the companions of the Holy Prophet forged traditions. None but a mind blinded by prejudice could conceive that men who had sacrificed everything, even their lives, for the sake of truth could debase themselves by telling

lies about their prophet. We have numerous instances showing their zeal and love to know the truth. In the life of the Holy Prophet they referred all their differences to the Holy Prophet and sought judgment from him, not only in religious, but also in their mundane affairs. After his death they still exerted themselves to their best to know how the Holy Prophet would have decided a certain matter, and with this object they set themselves to find out analogous instances in which the Holy Prophet had given a decision. This spirit to act as the Holy Prophet had said or acted is seen influencing their whole lives by any one who reads early Islamic history. The desire that pervaded their minds was that they should not go beyond the limits that the Holy Prophet had traced for them by his sayings and practice. It was this same spirit that inherited from this first Muslim generation influenced the later Muslim theologians to base the whole Islamic law, religious as well as temporal, upon the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet. In short, none of the companions of the Holy Prophet can be shown to have been guilty of intentionally representing the sayings or practice of the Holy Prophet wrongly.

Even if it be supposed for the sake of argument that any one of the companions circulated a false report, it could not have gained a currency among the Muslims. The period of the alleged fabrication of traditions by the companions to which Muir refers was the period of the conquests of the Muslims. As he says: "The tedium of long and irksome marches, and the lazy period from one campaign to another, fell listlessly upon a simple and semi-barbarous race. These intervals were occupied, and that tedium beguiled, chiefly by calling up the past in familiar conversation or more formal discourse. Here was the material out of which Tradition grew luxuriantly." These campaigns to which Muir refers took place in the reign of Omar and to some extent in the early part of the reign of Othman, that is to say, within about fifteen years after the death of the Holy Prophet. Therefore according to Muir's argument, if such nonsense can be called an argument, the great number of traditions had been fabricated within twelve or fifteen years after the death of the Holy Prophet when thousands of the companions were still living. In that case the whole body of the

companions must be held to be culpable for allowing the circulation of these lies. A more preposterous assertion was never made !

We may, however, look more closely into Muir's position, since the more clearly the utter absurdity of his theory is shown, the more weight the credibility of Tradition gains. He tells us that the traditions were fabricated by the companions of the Holy Prophet during intervals between campaigns, when the older men related to their younger companions false stories regarding the Holy Prophet to while away their time. To judge whether this assertion is a real historical fact backed by historical evidence or only the invention of an ingenious brain whom strong bias has led to such extremes, we have to see whether the great number of traditions is reported by men who took part in these fights or by men who followed the more peaceful occupations of life or were engaged in literary pursuits. The more important men among those who took part in fights are Khalid i bn Walid, Abu Obeida Ibn-ul-Jarrah, Abu Sufian, Yazid bin Abu Sufian, Ikrama bin Abu Jahl, Zirar Ibn-ul-Azdar and some others. The leading men among those who did not take part in fights or followed literary pursuits were Abu Huraira, Anas bin Malik, Abdulla bin Omar, Abdullah bin Abbas and the four caliphs themselves. If we were to seek traditions reported by the former as given in any authoritative work on Tradition, we would find that the traditions reported by them count as nothing when compared with the traditions reported by the latter. As an example, I will take the traditions collected in the Sahih Bukharee. Ignoring repetition there are only two thousand, six hundred and two traditions which are traced to the Holy Prophet, and one hundred and fifty-nine not traced to him, thus giving a total of two thousand, seven hundred and sixty-one of all kinds of traditions, repetitions not being counted. Of this total, Khalid, Zirar, Abu Obeidah, Yazid and Ikrama do not report a single tradition, and Abu Sufian reports only one, that relating to Heraclius whose truth has been made clear by the discovery of the Holy Prophet's letter to Maqauqis. Take, on the other hand, the traditions related by the companions who did not take part in wars, Abu Huraira reports 446 traditions, Anas bin Malik, 268 ; Abdulla bin Abbas, 217 ; Abdullah bin Omar, 270 ; Ayesha, the Mother of the Faithful, 242 ; other women, 83 ; Omar, 60 ; Ali, 29 ; Abu

Bakar, 22 ; and Othman, 9. Thus against a single tradition narrated in Bukharee on the authority of the chief men who took part in active life in the field of battle, we have at least 1,646 traditions narrated by men who never went to the field of battle to relate stories in "long and irksome marches" and "the lazy period from one campaign to another." What respect can one have for these biased critics who are ready to sacrifice every historical fact for the sake of a single plausible theory, however absurd it may prove to be when read by the light of history. And the pity is that such works are looked upon as standard works on Islam !

It is clear from the above considerations that the charge of fabrication against the companions of the Holy Prophet is an utterly false charge for which there is no ground and not the least evidence in history. On the other hand, it appears from historical records that so long as the companions of the Holy Prophet lived, no false tradition was known by the Muslims. It is a fact that when traditions began to be forged which was after the time of the companions and even after that of their immediate followers called the *Tabi'in*, the learned among the Muslims at once saw the danger and the authentic traditions began to be collected. But we are unable to find any trace of a forged tradition among the companions or even in the time of the companions which may be roughly taken to extend to the end of the first century of Hejira. We meet with no saying of any companion of the Holy Prophet that forged traditions had gained a currency. Omar, son of Abdul Aziz, Caliph Omar II, wrote thus at the end of the first century of Hejira to his governor at Medina, Abu Bakar bin Hazm, himself a *Taba'i*: "Collect whatever thou canst of the tradition of the Apostle of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and write it down, for I fear the extinction of knowledge and the passing away of learned men, and nothing should be accepted except the traditions of the Holy Prophet, and it is necessary that the learned men should spread the knowledge and should hold meetings so that even the ignorant may have knowledge, for verily knowledge does not become extinct until it becomes a secret" (Sahih Bukharee). Abu Na'im says in his History of Isbihan that this order was sent not only to the Governor of Medina, but also to the governors of the other provinces under the Caliph. But whether the order was given to one governor or to several gover-

nors, it shows that what Omar II feared at the end of the first century of Hejira was the extinction of knowledge on account of the death of the learned men, and not the prevalence of forged traditions which should have been inseparably mixed with the true ones. He further directs that meetings of the learned should be held and the knowledge of traditions given to those who did not know that. It appears clearly from the orders issued by the monarch that up to the end of the first century of Hejira, forged traditions had not gained currency anywhere in the Muslim world, for, if they had, the Caliph would not have expressed his great concern for the extinction of knowledge, but for the spread of false traditions. To these he, however, does not even refer in his order. He no doubt says that nothing except the traditions of the Holy Prophet should be accepted, but this only means that the sayings of the companions or other men should not be mixed up with the traditions of the Holy Prophet. Here we have, therefore, clear evidence that the fabrication of tradition was not known till the end of the first century of Hejira.

Many other incidents preserved in history show that the companions of the Holy Prophet were most careful in accepting traditions, and undertook long journies attended with all the hardships of those days to ascertain the truth of what they heard reported. Jábir, son of Abdullah, undertook a journey which took one whole month to see Abdullah, son of Oneis, for the sake of a single tradition which he heard reported from him, both being companions of the Holy Prophet (Sahih Bukharee). Jabir himself thus relates the incident: "A tradition was brought to my knowledge of which the narrator was a man who had himself heard it from the Holy Prophet. So I bought a camel and set out on a journey and travelled for thirty days till I reached Sham (Syria). I went to the house of Abdullah, son of Oneis, and questioned him about the tradition which he related to me." Similarly Abu Ayyub al-Ansari undertook a long journey to see Aqba son of Amir, to make himself sure of a tradition which the latter narrated. Another companion went to Egypt to see Fazala bin Obeid, in connection with a tradition (Abu Daood). Khateeb reports Obeidulla, son of Adi, saying that he was told of a tradition being with Ali and so undertook a journey to Iraq where Ali then was to hear it from him personally. Malik tells us that Sa'id, son of

Musayyab, stated that he used to travel day and night for the sake of a single tradition. Such was the zeal and love with which the companions sought, preserved and transmitted tradition, and it is impossible that in the presence of all these precautions, any one should have ventured to fabricate a tradition while thousands of those who could easily detect the fabrication were still living. And the generation next to the companions was not in any way slackened in its quest of the true sayings and practice of the Holy Prophet. Khatib reports Abul Aliya saying that "we used to learn of traditions reported from the companions of the Holy Prophet, but we were not content with them until we listened to them directly from the original narrators." There is a large number of such anecdotes showing that the greatest care was taken by the first two generations of the Muslims in accepting traditions and then delivering them to others.

The greatest objection against the credibility of Tradition is said to be its oral transmission. "It cannot be asserted," says Muir "that the Arabs trusted so implicitly to their memory that they regarded oral to be as authoritative as recorded narratives." And he further on asserts that in addition to the frailty of memory to preserve Tradition correctly, a narrative transmitted orally is liable to be distorted by errors and exaggerations. Now, in the first place, it is not true that Tradition till the end of the first century had to depend entirely upon oral transmission. Abu Huraira tells us that Abdulla, son of Amru, used to write traditions in the life-time of the Holy Prophet (Sahih Bukharee). Ali also possessed at least one written tradition (Sahih Bukharee). In the year of the conquest of Mecca the Khuza'ah murdered a man from among the Beni Lais by way of retaliation. The Holy Prophet being informed of it read a sermon forbidding such a course. When it was finished, a man who came from Yemen requested the Holy Prophet to order the sermon to be written down for his use, and the Holy Prophet granted his request. This tradition is reported in the Sahih Bukharee on the authority of Abu Huraira. It, therefore, appears that some persons took notes of traditions in the life-time of the Holy Prophet. Muir has also to admit this: "But even admitting all that has been advanced, it would prove no more than that *some of the companions used to keep memoranda of the Prophet's sayings.*" But he adds that in the

collections of traditions which we now possess, there is nothing to distinguish the traditions transmitted orally from the traditions copied from such memoranda. That is, in my opinion, just as it should have been. The memoranda alone would have been useless and a reference to them quite unsatisfactory unless backed by oral testimony from one narrator to another that the memorandum had been made by such and such a person at such and such a time. The possession of a mere memorandum of a tradition by any person could not satisfy the collectors of the truth of that tradition unless oral testimony supported the tradition. And the truth is that those who kept memoranda of tradition kept them only for the sake of refreshing their memories. Hence it was unnecessary for the collectors to state that such and such traditions had been taken from memoranda.

The objectors, however, are not satisfied with a few memoranda of traditions, for the greater body of traditions, it would be asserted, remained only in the memories of the men till the end of the first century of Hejira. Tradition tells us that the Holy Prophet himself forbade the writing down of Tradition. But it appears that this prohibition was meant to check only the general habit of putting down to writing every saying of the Holy Prophet, because we find the Prophet himself allowing certain traditions to be written. The prohibition of writing traditions seems to have been made for the reason that the Holy Quran and traditions might not be confused, and therefore where such danger did not exist, the writing of tradition was not prohibited. Had the practice, however, been common in the time of the Holy Prophet of writing traditions, some men might have confused the traditions and the Quran. Moreover, written Tradition would have been more liable to the danger of fabrication afterwards than oral Tradition was. The case of the Holy Quran is entirely different, for there were many men who knew the whole of it by heart, and, moreover, it was recited publicly in prayers in the mosques. It was written as an additional measure of protection. It is not true that the collection of the written fragments of the Holy Quran was undertaken because memory could not be relied upon. The reason was, as Omar stated, that many of the men who knew the Holy Quran by heart had met death in the battle of Yemama. Hence the necessity arose of the collection of written fragments so that they might be brought into one volume for circulation in distant countries.

where Islam was spreading. The case of Tradition was different. There were traditions which it was necessary for all the Muslims to know, such as those which related to the practice or *sunnat* of the Holy Prophet in the observance of the religious ordinances. There were, however, other traditions which from the nature of the case could not come into the knowledge of all the companions. Moreover, no one was required to know all the traditions by heart and none did know them like the Holy Quran. It was this difference in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet that necessitated two different courses for their preservation. Of course it is not meant that the two courses were equally safe, but it is a fact that memory ~~could have safely relied upon as writing~~.

In this age when everything is reduced to writing and when instead of recalling the past from memory, we have simply to refer to a book, the wonders which memory worked in the early ages can be little thought of. Such a remark as that made by Muir that the Arabs could not implicitly trust to their memory shows nothing but the writer's sheer ignorance of that people. If Arab memory had been as defective as Muir represents it to be, we would have had no trace to-day of the Arabic poetry of the days of ignorance and early Islamic days. Arabic poetry, it should be borne in mind, was preserved to the time when it was written down in books through chains of narrators similar to those through which Tradition was transmitted. So long as it was not written, there were men who knew thousands of verses by heart with the names and histories of the poets to whom they belonged. Asma'i, one of the famous narrators of poetry, says that he knew twelve thousand verses by heart before he reached the age of puberty. (Iqd-ul-Farid). The transmitting of thousands of traditions orally only is not a matter for wonder with such testimony before us. An incident regarding Abu Zamzam, a narrator of poetry, is mentioned by Asma'i himself. Some youths went to Abu Zamzam and asked him to recite verses. He is reported to have recited on that occasion the verses of a hundred poets, all of them of the name of Omar. Shi'bi is reported to have said that as a reporter he was not in any branch of knowledge worse off than in poetry, and that notwithstanding this if he liked he could go on reciting verses for a whole month without repeating a single verse. Not only could thousands of verses be reproduced from memory, but the reporters could tell the stories of

incidents to which allusions were contained in the verses. If all these things could be safely preserved in memory, why could not several thousand traditions be thus preserved?

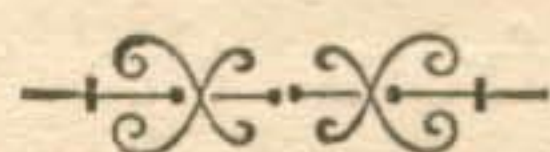
Now consider how great is the reliance placed upon the correctness of verses reported from great poets through oral transmission. The minutest rules of grammar and the subtlest questions of lexicology are based on these very verses, the truth of which is vouched by memory and memory alone. From the earliest times disputed points relating to the significance of words have always been decided on the authority of verses, and the practice was common even among the companions of the Holy Prophet. Not only men but women also used to remember large numbers of verses, and when these were reproduced from memory to decide any dispute regarding the significance of a word or any disputed question of grammar, such minute questions even as related only to vowel points, no one ever demanded a written authority for them, because memory in that age was at least as implicitly relied upon as writing is to day. Ayesha, the wife of the Holy Prophet, knew thousands of these verses by heart, and it is folly to assert that she could not reproduce three hundred traditions. Another great reporter of traditions is Ibn-i-Abbas. Omar, son of Abu Rabia, a famous poet, came to him with some of his verses to enquire whether they were good enough to be made public. Ibn-i-Abbas asked him to recite the verses and when he had done so, Ibn-i-Abbas recited them all a second time. Being asked if he knew them already, Ibn-i-Abbas replied in the negative and said: "Does it happen that a man hears something and then does not remember it?" So while others wondered how he could repeat nearly seventy verses only on hearing them once, he wondered how they could forget what they had heard once (Diwan-i-Omar bin Abi Rabia).

The circumstance that there is possibility of error and exaggeration does not detract aught from the value of traditions. Errors and exaggerations are equally likely to find their way in writings. Even in this age when accurate facts can be ascertained with but slight difficulty, errors and exaggerations are every where met with. Regarding the terrible earthquake which destroyed Kangra and Dharmasala last year, reports were published in the English newspapers

which described Kangra as an island near Bombay. The famous Hazel's Annual, a very reliable reference work, tells us that "a severe earthquake caused great and widespread damage throughout a vast district between Agra and Simla," thus locating Kangra between Simla and Agra. Another account of the earthquake in which several past earthquakes are also mentioned states that several hundred persons were killed in the earthquake whereas Government reports place the estimate at 20,000. The ancient manuscripts could be tampered with very easily, and it is simply absurd to accept every circumstance because some manuscript has been discovered which mentions it.

It is clear from the above that persons who could easily remember thousands of verses could also rely on their memories for a few traditions which they transmitted to posterity. Hence it was that even where traditions were written by a man, he delivered them to others in an oral form because memory was relied upon as the safest course of transmission. The reputed Bukharee knew six hundred thousand traditions by heart, and many of the scholars used to correct their manuscripts by comparing them with what he preserved in his memory.

I have shown above that we meet with no sign of any tradition having been fabricated till the end of the first century at least. The fabrication of traditions was not in fact possible so long as the companions of the Holy Prophet and their immediate followers lived. It was only after these two generations had passed away that the mass of fabricated traditions grew. The danger was at once perceived by the Muslim theologians, and a class of traditionists soon sprung up who devoted their lives to sift the true from false traditions when there was yet sufficient evidence to distinguish the one from the other. How they did this arduous task, I will try to describe in a separate article.



Fundamental Principles of Faith.

In the *Hibbert Journal* for July, Sir Oliver Lodge makes an attempt to bring the Christian creeds up to date. The old Church

catechisms are not found to accord with the principles of modern scientific knowledge, and, therefore, a new Christian creed is needed. The first principle of this new scientific creed is "the existence of higher beings and a Highest Being," for "it is hopelessly unscientific to imagine it possible that man is the highest intelligent existence." This is the first principle of the new creed, because it is really "the fundamental element in every religious creed." One reason for the existence of God, Sir Oliver finds in the answer to the question: "What caused and what maintains existence?" Sir Oliver Lodge's answer is that "of our own knowledge we are unable to realise the meaning of origination and maintenance, but we conceive that there must be some Intelligence supreme over the whole process of evolution, else things could not be as organised and as beautiful as they are." Another article of the new creed is put in the following words: "I believe that man is privileged to understand and assist the Divine purpose on this earth, that prayer is a means of communion between man and God, and that the Holy Spirit is ever ready to help us along the Way towards Goodness and Truth, so that by unselfish service we may gradually enter into the Life Eternal, the Communion of Saints, and the Peace of God." To the question, what is the duty of man? Sir Oliver gives the answer: "To assist his fellows, to develop his own higher self, to strive towards good in every way open to his powers, and generally to seek to know the laws of Nature and to obey the Will of God, in whose service alone can be found that harmonious exercise of the faculties which is synonymous with perfect freedom." And though the new Christian creed does not recognise Trinity, blood Atonement or the Divinity of Jesus Christ, yet according to it "the Divine nature is specially revealed to man through Jesus Christ."

If the last article of this new Christian creed is omitted, what remains represents not the Christian but the Islamic faith. The submission to the Will of God on which Sir Oliver lays so much stress and which he regards as synonymous with perfect freedom is the fundamental doctrine of the Islamic faith: it is what Islam actually and truly signifies, the literal significance of Islam being entire submission and perfect resignation to Divine Will. The last mentioned article is only a remnant in Sir Oliver's mind of the old

Christian creed, and to be consistent with the broadness of view manifested in the other articles of the new creed, it should be replaced by the belief that "God reveals Himself to the world through His righteous servants wherever they may be born." It is true that in the age in which Jesus was born, God specially revealed Himself to the Israelites through Jesus Christ, but it was a special revelation in the same sense in which the appearance of Krishna was a special revelation to the Hindus and the appearance of other messengers of God a special revelation to their people. But the special revelation of the Divine Being in the sense of being a revelation to all men in all ages is only to be met with in Islam, and the reasons of this assertion I give below.

A study of the various religions contending for supremacy shows that there are points on which all the religions notwithstanding their manifold differences are in agreement. These common fundamental elements afford to the seeker after truth certain guiding principles with whose aid he can easily discover the true religion. Sir Oliver Lodge hits the nail on the head when he draws the conclusion of the fundamental truth of the existence of God from the fact that it is a common fundamental element in every religious creed, and had he applied the same rule to find out the other principles of his "New creed," he would have found himself nearer Islam than he now is, for the most important fundamental principles of Islam are such that their truth is not denied by any religion. It is a point whose importance cannot be over-estimated, and it is a unique feature of the religion of Islam. The fact that its basic principles are universally admitted shows that Islam recognises fundamentally only those principles which are as it were imprinted in human nature. The evidence thus supplied as to the truth of the principles of Islam is an important evidence which cannot be rejected so long as human nature remains what it is.

The two fundamental principles of Islam are the existence of God and the continual revelation of His Word to His righteous servants. The first of these principles has been recognised as true by every religion which any people have ever professed. Other religions have mixed up a great mass of error with this truth, and Islam only maintains the principle in its purity. Even in religions

which have remained in the darkness of superstition, the truth of the existence of a Supreme Being is not altogether denied. There is a faint idea, a dimlight as from afar, even in them that there are not only higher beings than man, but that there is also one Highest over them all. Men following superstitions are like those groping in the dark. Their souls also thirst for communion with some Higher power, and it is this Higher power that they search in this or that object. Attempts have been made to show that the idea of God or the Highest Being has been evolved from the more superstitious ideas prevalent among savage people, but it is a fact which cannot be denied that so far as history carries us back, the conception of a Supreme Power is met with in the history of every people, however distorted the idea may be. Moreover, in the history of most of the religions we observe that the latter generations have corrupted the true and simple conception of the Divine Being which the Founder of a religion being inspired by God inculcated. The words of Jesus uttered on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," and the words spoken to a young rich man, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God," are so clear as to the conception of the Divine Being which he had and as to what he considered himself to be, *viz.*, only a servant and not the equal of God, that they could hardly be mistaken by any sensible person, but the Christians read these words and still consider Jesus to be a God. Thus the case of Christianity shows that every religion had at the time of its rise a true conception of the Divine Being and that error were introduced into it and the conception distorted afterwards, and it is not improbable that idol-worship and fetish-worship may have grown afterwards like the worship of Jesus and Krishna while the true conception of the Divine Being became fainter and fainter. At any rate it cannot be denied that the idea of a Supreme Being is present in all the religions of the world of which any trace is preserved in history, and this is a strong and conclusive testimony that the God-idea is an idea rooted in human nature, and though the Atheist or the Agnostic may deny the existence of God because the religion presented to him does not afford sufficient proof of Divine existence, yet the God-idea impressed in human nature is not obliterated even in him for he cannot deny that there must have been a Prime or a First cause. In short, the God-idea being

a common fundamental element in every religion must form the first principle of the faith of a seeker after truth who seeks to discover the fundamental principles of faith by the help of His reason.

It may be asked, what is the peculiarity of Islam if every religion entertains a conception of God? This peculiarity I have already pointed out, *viz.*, that of all the religions of the world Islam is the only religion which preserves a true conception of the Divine Being, in which that conception is unmixed with the errors which have found their way into other religions. Islam is the only religion which maintains an untainted Unity of God, a principle which is the root idea of a true conception of the Divine Being. The unity and existence of God are hidden in other religions by dense clouds of errors, but in Islam they shine forth in their full effulgence. The idol-worshipper addresses his prayers to the idols, the worshipper of the phenomena of nature addresses them to those phenomena, the worshipper of Krishna to Krishna, the worshipper of fire to fire and the worshipper of Jesus to Jesus, but the Muslim is the true worshipper of God and he only addresses his prayers to God and seeks communion with Him. The true idea of God is hidden under the idea of Divinity of Jesus in one religion, under that of the Divinity of Krishna in a second, under the partial Divinity of idols, etc., in a third, and so on. Moreover, it can be easily seen that these minor gods invented by different people are their tribal gods, while the true God which the Muslims worship is the God of the World. The true God was worshipped in the world long before Jesus and Krishna were born and He will continue to be worshipped long after these supposed deities are brought back to their true place as human beings. The true God is the God who has always been known in all countries while Jesus was born on this earth of ours only about a couple of thousand years ago. The whole world remained ignorant of him for thousands of years before he was born and an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of this planet has not known him even after his birth. The very fact that these deities are tribal deities shows clearly that these are mere innovations and errors introduced into the true conception of the Divine Being which Islam alone preserves in the world.

The second fundamental principle of Islam is that Almighty

God has always been revealing His Word and Will to the world through His righteous servants and that He shall continue to reveal the same in the ages to come, the Divine laws which have prevailed in the past also prevailing in the future. The idea of revelation is also a common fundamental element in all religions. The Hindu admits that Almighty God revealed His Word and Will at one time in India, and thus admits the truth of revelation though he denies that revelation was ever granted to any other people or at any other time. The Jew says that revelation was continually granted to the Israelite prophets, and thus admits that revelation by God is a fundamental principle of his faith, but this truth is mixed with a serious error in the Jewish religion, *viz.*, that revelation cannot be granted to any people except the Israelites. According to the Christians revelation was discontinued after Jesus. This is also the case in other religions, *viz.*, the necessity of revelation is admitted everywhere. The common element in all these religions is that Almighty God reveals His will to ~~the world through His chosen servants, and the contention that~~ revelation was granted to such and such a person or that it cannot be granted to any one else is a peculiarity on which no two religions agree. The truth of the common element is undeniable, for widely differing religions taking their birth in times and places widely distant from each other agree upon it. Like the belief in God, the belief in Divine revelation is a universal belief, and being the common fundamental principle of all the religions of the world its truth cannot be questioned. Human nature bears testimony to it and its truth is rooted so deep in the human heart that it cannot be torn away from it. Human societies which had never had any relations with each other have equally recognised its truth. This common truth has again been preserved in its purity in Islam and Islam alone. Islam recognises the necessity of Divine revelation as other religions do, but it rises far above their quarrels and disputes with each other, and recognises further that Divine revelation was not only granted to the righteous servants of God in different countries and different ages in the past, but that it shall also continue to be granted to the righteous in future. This is again a peculiar feature of Islam which, as in the case of the principle of Divine existence, distinguishes it from every other religion. It is in these two fundamental principles of faith which Islam has preserved in all their purity while all

other religions have mixed up a mass of error with them that the chief distinction of Islam lies and that its truth shines out so clearly.



A New Muslim Missionary in America.

M. Abdul Haq C. F. Sievwright, who some time ago visited India and is therefore well known to the Muslim public of this country, has reached America and taken up his residence at San Diego, Southern California. From what he has been writing to me since he left Australia, it appears that he has undertaken this long journey with no other object than establishing an Islamic mission in the United States of America. That he should be able to carry on his work depends largely on the funds, and the only direction in which he can look to for aid is, I think, India. I have every hope that if Mr. Sievwright begins his pious work in true earnestness and if he is determined to work in the cause of Islam come what may, Almighty God will not leave his efforts unblessed, and his mission will be a great success. At the same time I must say that unless he is assisted with funds by the well-to-do Muslims who have the welfare of Islam at heart he will not be able to carry on his work long. It is much to be regretted that we have not got organized missions to preach the truths of Islam in foreign countries. Some Englishmen who have adopted Islam have made individual efforts, but there are numerous difficulties in their way, and the chief one is no doubt the want of funds. I do not think that the Muslims are quite indifferent to the propagation of their faith, and many of them would gladly assist missions for the propagation of Islam only if they knew it for certain that a mission had been begun in true earnestness and sincerity. One reason of their becoming indifferent to individual missionary efforts made in the cause of Islam seems to be that they wish their hopes to be realized too soon. It is an error to expect that within a year or two the results of the missionary work should be palpably seen. The missionary only sows the seed and it must be a long time before the harvest is reaped. At the same time I cannot help remarking that

the first necessity for one who undertakes missionary work is not only that he should be perfectly acquainted with the true principles of Islam, but that he should himself lead a truly godly life, for, example is a far better instructive than precept. I hope that the Indian Muslims would do their best to assist this new propagandic work. I shall be glad to publish any report of the progress of work made by Mr. Sievwright and to acknowledge any sums received for remittance to this new Muslim missionary. Those who wish to make any remittance directly should send it to M. Abdul Haq C. F. Sievwright, care of General Delivery Post Office, San Diego, Southern California, United States, America.



The Conciliatory Policy in Bengal.

Our readers must have read in the February issue of this Magazine "A Prophecy concerning Bengal." The words of the prophecy were, "Relating to the order that had been given concerning Bengal at first, they, (*i.e.*, the Bengalis) will be conciliated now." The prophecy was published in many newspapers at the time with or without hostile comment. At the time when this prophecy was published, the Bengalis were highly dissatisfied with the new order of things in Bengal, and agitations and disturbances prevailed everywhere. If any thing could be expected at the time, it was either that the government would suppress agitation with a strong hand or that the agitators would prevail and the order of the partition of Bengal would be cancelled. Under these circumstances the prophecy declared that the order of partition would not be cancelled, but that a conciliatory policy would be adopted by the Government.

All hopes of the order of partition being cancelled failed soon afterwards, and with these hopes of the friends of Bengal failed also the prophecies of Zadkiel and other astrologers, thus showing that these were mere conjectures. The partition of Bengal became a settled fact and thus one part of the prophecy of the Promised Messiah, clearly implied in the words of the revelation, was fulfilled, but the fulfilment of the other part, that relating to the conciliation of the Bengalis, seemed apparently to be impossible. Sir B. Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor of

the new province was a strong man and he was determined to suppress the agitation of the Bengalis with a strong hand. But all of a sudden he resigns his post and the Government of India accepts his resignation. The retirement of Sir B. Fuller has been made the occasion of the greatest rejoicings in Bengal, and in fact nothing less than his withdrawal from Bengal could have conciliated the Bengalis. It was the only step that could assuage the excited feelings of the Bengalis, and the only successful conciliatory policy that government could adopt. Another evidence of the adoption of a conciliatory policy by the Government of India is to be met with in the appointment of the new Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon'ble Mr. Hare, as the following two quotations show. Speaking of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a leading Bengali paper, says: "His high-handedness kept the national feeling alive. The *Swadeshi* movement owes its vigor to his pitiless policy of crushing it down. If he had remained, the Bengalis would have gained in every way. His departure, in one sense is thus a great loss to the national cause, and the people have no reason to rejoice at his resignation. The likelihood is that *his successor will follow a quite conciliatory policy*. Of course this is very desirable, but, at the same time, it may prove exceedingly injurious to our national growth, unless the people remain constantly on their guard." An English official who signs himself "Fifty years in India" writes in the *Civil and Military Gazette*: "But under our *regime* these school-boys have political potentialities so powerful that their action has compelled the resignation of a Lieutenant-Governor! *His successor has, no doubt, received and accepted a 'mandate' to deal in a conciliatory spirit with these Babu urchins.*"

The circumstances which have led to the resignation of Sir B. Fuller are a clear indication that the Bengalis are being conciliated by the Government even at the sacrifice of its own highest interests. The students of two schools having behaved riotously, the Lieutenant-Governor recommended the disaffiliation of the two schools after having satisfied himself that the teachers had instigated the boys. The Government of India asked Sir B. Fuller to withdraw his recommendation, upon which he tendered his resignation. Had not the Government been bent upon carrying out a conciliatory policy in Bengal at any cost, it could not have preferred the

resignation of a Lieutenant-Governor to the disaffiliation of two schools whose students and teachers had been guilty of gross misconduct. Could any one guess six months before the resignation of Sir B. Fuller that the Bengali agitators would be thus conciliated? There were no doubt men who entertained hopes that a Liberal Government in England may set aside the order of partition, but no one ever thought of the conciliatory policy that has been adopted by the Government. The prophecy of the Promised Messiah was unique in this respect, for it reveals a knowledge of the future which is far beyond the knowledge of man. No one can point out a single instance in which such an opinion should have been expressed on the basis of conjecture at the time when this prophecy was made public. Almighty God revealed this deep secret of the future to His messenger so that the world may know that it is He whose will is carried out in the world and that He reveals His will to His messenger, the Promised Messiah. I would like to see any remarks by the papers that laughed at the prophecy at the time of its publication.



Interpretation of the Second Advent.

The Examiner in its issue of the 25th August remarks on the claims of the Promised Messiah that "until Mirza Ghulam Ahmad comes like the lightning shining from the East even unto the West; until he sets the sign of Christ in the heaven for all the world to see; until he comes in the clouds in great power and majesty, we cannot accept him, since Christ himself tells us not to do so." Because he does not show all the signs for the coming of Christ, he considers him a false prophet. If the argument used by the reverend gentleman is applied to the claims of Christ, there is no reason for coming to a different conclusion. Here are some of the signs of the Messiah's advent as they were given to the Jews:—

"Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple. . . . For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn

as an oven ; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble : and the day that cometh shall burn them up. Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord ” (Malachi, 3 and 4). Let us now examine the credentials of Christ with the testimony of these prophecies before us. Did Elijah come before the advent of Jesus ? No. Could Jesus then be the Christ promised to the Jews ? Let the Christians answer this question. This important point which is really the point at issue is evaded by the Christians and they tell us to take John the Baptist for Elijah. But was John the Baptist Elijah ? If he was not Elijah, but another person, how can we take him for Elijah ? The reverend gentleman who has passed judgment on Mirza Ghulam Ahmad because he does not come like lightning is also requested to pass a judgment on Jesus without caring that the judgment he passes would seem severe to Jesus and the millions of the worshippers of Jesus.

It is a pity that our Christian friends are quite regardless of their own principles when they attack other religions and religious leaders. Consider some of the other signs of the advent of the Messiah : “ And the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark. And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea. and the Lord shall be king over all the earth.” Were all these signs literally fulfilled at the advent of Jesus that the literal fulfilment of similar signs is sought at the appearance of the second Messiah ? The fact is that the second advent of Christ means nothing more nor less than what the second advent of Elijah meant. There are two second advents promised in sacred history and both must be interpreted alike. The same promise has been made in both cases and its fulfilment must be expected in the same manner. The sign in the heaven has also appeared in the eclipse of the sun and the moon in the month of Ramazan, and the news of the appearance of the Promised Messiah have gone like lightning from the East to the West. If all the wonderful promises of the first advent of Christ could be fulfilled by the birth of a child in the straws of a manger, one fails to see why the promises of the second advent cannot be fulfilled by the appearance of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

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THE MANAGER,
"Review of Religions."

Qadian, District Gurdaspur, India.

Artistic Printing Works, Lahore.