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The Christian approach to

THE MUSLIM

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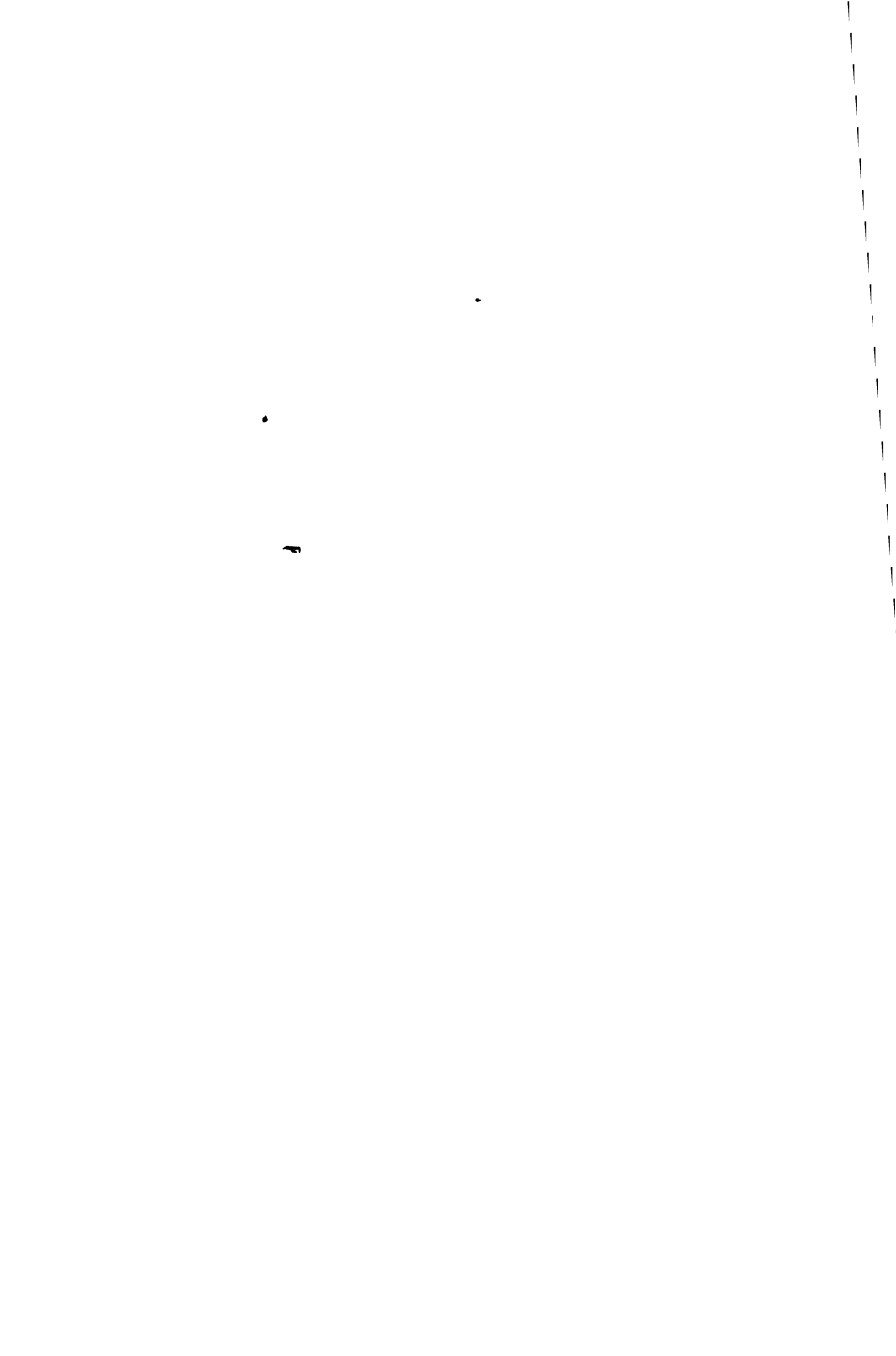
G. E. MARRISON

THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH
TO THE MUSLIM

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THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH
TO THE MUSLIM

by
G. E. MARRISON

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CHRISTIAN APPROACH SERIES

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The great religions of the world are in encounter with each other as never before. People move swiftly; news and views travel in a matter of seconds; films and television give us an intimacy with people of all nations.

Religions have been stimulated to new life by nationalism and the desire of statesmen of countries newly independent to find a basis of unity and a source of inspiration for their independent existence.

People everywhere are conscious that the world is in a mess. The followers of this or that faith are eager to prove that their religion can direct the world to sanity and peace; other men, despairing of traditional beliefs, hope to solve the world's problems through Communism or through education and humanism.

It is not only in the countries of origin that the religions of Asia are exercising their missionary dynamic. We in the West may be tested by an encounter with Buddhism, Islam or Hinduism as representatives of these faiths come to our shores.

In other parts of the world Animism, the religion of primitive man, is still strong, often stronger than the faiths by which it is overlaid.

This series of short books is intended to give an objective and sympathetic account of other religions with a view to promoting deeper understanding of them. The writers will try to indicate the particular relevance of Christianity to each, how in fact the Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in reference to the ultimate value of a particular faith. There will be no attempt to evade the challenge to Christians of these other religions—in thought, interpretation or living.

All religions ask fundamental questions about man, the universe in which he lives, his origin, purpose and end; his need of forgiveness and strength; his attempt to live the good life; his desire to get on terms with whatever final reality there may be; his longing for immortality. These questions are matters of life and death. In stressing the vital importance of religion, it is hoped that these books will be read by men of many faiths, and that they will find in them both truth and charity.

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

I HOPE this little book may be of some interest and use to new students of Islam. The most important part is the bibliography, which is why I have made it a little more full than is usual in a book of this size. I have gained most help for the text from Richard Bell's translation of the Qur'an, from Kenneth Cragg's *The Call of the Minaret* and from T. W. Arnold's *The Preaching of Islam*. This last is a classic written from a point of view with which few would now agree, but the mass of material it contains and the insights into Muslim psychology on which it is built make it indispensable for any serious student.

I should like to acknowledge with gratitude the studentship I had from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for work on Islamics at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and to thank the Rev. Eric Bishop for much gracious help and encouragement in working on the Arabic Qur'an, and Miss Barbara Sullivan of Edinburgh House for all her advice and patient assistance in writing this book.

S. Timothy's, Sheffield.

G. E. MARRISON

November, 1958.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

WE acknowledge with thanks permission from T. & T. Clark to use extracts from *The Qur'ān Translated* by Richard Bell as the basis for the quotations from the Qur'an which appear in the text.

The numbering of the verses follows Bell's translation, which in turn follows G. Fluegel's Arabic text. This differs somewhat from the oriental editions, but a table of differences between Fluegel and the official Egyptian edition is given on pp. ix-x of Bell's *Introduction to the Qur'ān*.

INTRODUCING ISLAM

THE Middle East in ferment ; Pakistan beset ; Indonesia in turmoil ; North Africa in unrest—the whole Muslim world turned upside down—such is the picture at the present day. How are we in the West to understand what is going on ? And, more particularly, of what concern is it to us as Christians ? For the ferment in Africa and Asia is part of the unsettled condition of the world at large ; and that ferment has been stimulated, whether for evil or for good, largely by what the West has been, and by what the West has done.

Every Muslim country is involved in this rapid change. But what part has the Muslim religion had in it all ? If we look back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, we find that by then Islam had become a closed system—not only of religious, but also of social, political and cultural life. Over the centuries it had developed as a powerful, rigid machine, tending to conserve ways of thought and action which had grown up in the Middle Ages, and were very resistant to change. Then the West broke in violently to disturb this state of pause, with imperial adventures, with new learning in science and technology, with two world wars, with the scramble for oil, and with the fears and uncertainties of the atomic age.

New tensions arose within the House of Islam. Some men were driven to defend the old order. Others attempted to reinterpret Islam in the light of new conditions. None could be content to let things go on

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quietly as before. But for all the onslaught of the West, there was no desire on the part of Muslims to abandon their ancient faith: rather a new sense of patriotism, loyalty and superiority was born. As in recent years dependent territories have become free, they have looked first to Islamic ideals to inspire them. The new Muslim countries are engaged in a struggle to establish themselves as nations with a dignity and destiny of their own.

Here then is the first challenge to our concern. The end of the First World War saw the rise of Arab states from the ashes of Turkish rule in the Middle East. The end of the Second World War saw millions more Muslims from further afield freed from the colonial rule of Britain, France and the Netherlands. Now these new Islamic states are helping to fashion the destiny of the world. Their power and influence affects not only their lives, but ours as well.

But Christians have a further reason to seek an understanding of the Muslim faith and the Muslim peoples. Because Christ came to save all men, so he is the Saviour of every Muslim. He is indeed already known to them as a great prophet, of whom they speak with great reverence. But his redeeming work and his revelation of God as loving Father is something outside Muslim experience.

Islam stands in a unique relationship to Christianity. It alone of the great world religions is later in time. It alone knows something of the person and mission of Christ. It alone speaks of Christian doctrines, and knowing them, rejects them. So ever since the time of the Prophet Muhammad himself, there has been a tension between Christianity and Islam, and that tension is unresolved even yet. The Christian faith has sought

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to draw men by showing the love of God in action. But the relations between Christian and Muslim nations and communities have fallen grievously short of this ideal—they have been marred by generations of hatred, fear and contempt. A new approach is needed by men of sincere faith on both sides, for we all stand in equal need of God's redemptive grace and love.

For us Europeans, two acts of will are needed : firstly to get rid of any idea of our superior worth ; and secondly to give up that type of thinking which too readily writes off any system with whose leading tenets it is unable to agree. We cannot dispose of Islam by calling it a ' problem '. We cannot ignore, though we may disagree ; rather we have to see how far we can understand Islam, live with it and redeem it. To do this, we need to find out what Islam stands for, not from hostile sources, but from the claims of the Muslims themselves.

In these troubled days, when fear and distrust between man and man seem almost unsurmountable, anything we can find in the way of common sympathy, common aspiration, common truth, ought to be sought out diligently. If the following pages succeed in showing forth briefly a Christian view of Islam in that spirit, they will have gone a good way towards achieving their purpose.

II

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

WHEN, you will ask, did Islam begin? Our Arab friend has an unexpected answer—it is as old as time, it is as old as God's creation, as old as Adam and Abraham and Moses. Was not Abraham himself a Muslim, and his son Ishmael the father of the Arab race? Did not Hagar find water for Ishmael at the well Zamzam in Mecca, which was one day to be the very heart of the Muslim world? Does not the Qur'an contain the eternal and unchangeable word of God, which was revealed in the Arabic tongue?

All this is part of orthodox Muslim belief. But if we are to find what is distinctive in the Muslim religion, then we must look, first and last, to the person, character and career of the Prophet Muhammad himself.

The Prophet claimed, with force and sincerity, to have come to restore and confirm the eternal faith which God had delivered to the patriarchs of old. We can see this in the Qur'an, where many ideas reflect Jewish and Christian traditions. His claim was that the Qur'an was the word of God himself, delivered to him from time to time by the archangel Gabriel, through whom he received God's command to write. Muhammad held himself to be the last of God's prophets, amongst whom he reckoned not only those of the Old Testament, but also John the Baptist and Jesus. Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets, and the faith he was commanded to teach was of God's majesty and unity, and his own final and

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unique mission to men : ' There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet.'

Concerning the life of the Prophet much has been written, but much less is known for certain. After his death some of his more enthusiastic followers thought of him as a saint, and attributed all kinds of wonderful works to him. Others saw in him the model of the good man, and tried to copy his manner of life down to the last detail. In time a vast collection of sayings attributed to him grew up, as well as descriptions of his manners and personal habits, which became a guide to his faithful followers. It is the task of the historian to separate from this extensive pious tradition the main facts of his life, which alone concern us here.

Muhammad's birth-place was the city of Mecca, which had for a long time enjoyed great importance both as an emporium for the caravan trade in Western Arabia, and also as the principal pagan sanctuary and place of pilgrimage in the peninsula. Many of the Arabs worshipped idols as well as trees and stones and heavenly bodies. They did indeed have a vague notion of a presiding deity, whom they called Allah, but he was remote and certainly not the principal object of their worship. But in Mecca there were also small communities of Jews and Christians, and other members of these faiths came as travellers and traders.

Muhammad was born about A.D. 570 of the tribe of Quraish, of the line of Abraham through his son Ishmael. His father died before his birth, and his mother when he was six. He was brought up first by a grandfather, and then by an uncle, and, when he was old enough, began to accompany trading caravans into Syria. His earliest contacts with Judaism and Christianity in Mecca

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were thus reinforced, and they profoundly influenced his later religious development. At the age of twenty-five he married a wealthy widow named Khadija, for whom he had been acting as agent on these trading missions. His marriage gave him security and status : this helped him to develop his resourcefulness and judgment of men and affairs, which stood him in good stead when in later life he was called upon to organize and lead his own community.

Muhammad's life continued in this manner until he reached the age of forty. Then he began to experience visions which convinced him of his being called by God to a special mission. He was in the habit of going to a cave on Mount Hira, outside the walls of Mecca, to meditate and it was here that he was first visited by the angel Gabriel, with the message :

*Recite, in the name of thy Lord, who createth,
Createth man from a clot of blood :
Recite : and thy Lord is the most bounteous,
Who teacheth by the pen,
Teacheth man what he knew not.* (Sura 96, vv. 1-5.)

Muhammad rose up to preach God's warning to men. His wife and a few of his nearest friends and relations believed. But the idolatrous and materially minded men of Mecca scorned and rejected him. Still Muhammad received further visions, with messages which were recorded in short passages of rhymed Arabic prose. They speak of God's majesty, of the futility of idolatry and of the certainty of the coming judgment :

*O thou clothed in the mantle, rise and warn :
Magnify thy Lord, purify thy garments, flee from the wrath.
Show no favours to gain a following, but wait patiently for
the Lord.* (Sura 74, vv. 1-7.)

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Six years after the beginning of his mission opposition to Muhammad had reached such a state that many of his followers had to flee from Mecca. They found refuge in the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. Progress was difficult and slow : another six years had to pass before Islam could enter on its triumphant career. Then a change of fortune occurred. Muhammad had gained a few adherents from Medina, north of Mecca, and now the people of Medina invited him to come to them to be their leader, and to bring his followers with him. This event is known as the *hijra*, that is the migration, and marks the first year of the Muslim era (A.D. 622).

Muhammad was now no longer the captain of a small band of persecuted followers, but a man of substance and importance, chosen to be the ruler of a large and influential community. Now we see the development not only of his religious genius, but also of his power and ability in organizing and administering a state. Many men became Muslims. Others, both Jews and Christians, became his respected allies, and the esteem in which he held them is shown in his choice of Jerusalem as the direction towards which men were to face when they prayed. But later on friction developed, and as Muhammad consolidated his own position he gradually became more independent and opposed them. This was marked by the command to his followers to face Mecca in future, instead of Jerusalem, at prayer times.

Life in Arabia had always been hard and precarious. The land was largely infertile : there were a few products like dates, and incense, and the nomads had their herds, but survival depended upon the trade of the cities with the outside world, while the desert wanderers regularly plundered the caravans. Muhammad showed himself to

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be a successful leader in this activity too—and also in what followed from it—large-scale warfare on behalf of his own community against those who opposed themselves to his authority. By stages this led the Muslims to conquer or to force the whole of Arabia into capitulation.

The chief opposition was from the inhabitants of Mecca. Being the most important religious centre in Arabia, it was protected by its sanctity from outside attack. This held the Prophet back for a long time, but eventually he made the bold move of attacking it, and he re-entered his birth-place in the character of a conqueror. This event shattered the last effective opposition to Muhammad's superiority and the final three years of his life were marked by the submission of distant tribes. In this way he succeeded both in establishing the religion of Islam on a permanent basis, and also in becoming the first man to unify all the Arabs into one people.

From the time that Muhammad was established in Medina in A.D. 622 till his death ten years later, his rôle as a ruler is reflected in the revelations in the Qur'an. Now the short half-poetic passages become less frequent, and in their place longer pieces, which contain not only preaching about God, idolatry and judgment, but also much in the way of moral guidance and laws for the new Muslim community. Now we find directions concerning marriage and inheritance, debts and injuries, warfare and a host of other practical matters relating to personal conduct and the affairs of state :

God indeed commands justice and kindness, and giving to kindred, and forbids indecency and disreputable conduct and greed. He exhorts you, perhaps you may take heed.

(Sura 16, v. 92.)

The Qur'anic revelations of the Medina period lay

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down the basis of Islamic family life. Their effect was to regularize and in some ways to ameliorate existing Arab custom. Thus polygamy was permitted, but only up to four wives at one time, and at that on condition that the husband should treat them equally. The Prophet however was exempted from this limitation, a state of affairs which probably reflects the normal privilege of a head of a state and also the Prophet's desire and need of a male heir, a gift which in the end was denied to him, and became the source of later divisions within the house of Islam.

The Prophet carried out his mission with energy till the end of his days, and having consolidated his position in Arabia was planning an expedition into Byzantine Syria, when his last illness overtook him. He died in A.D. 632 at the age of sixty-three and was buried at Medina, where his tomb continues to be a place of pilgrimage.

The Muslim religion bears the stamp of the powerful and original character of its founder. He was hospitable, and valued the virtue of brotherliness amongst his followers. In his person, dedication and vision were combined with a practical outlook on the world and its affairs. He was resolute and uncompromising in dealing with defection and opposition. He associated spiritual aims with political authority, trade and warfare, and was successful in them all. The later history of Islam shows a remarkable conformity to these characteristics of its own Prophet.

III

THE QUR'AN

THE first revelation of the Qur'an on Mount Hira marks the beginning of Muhammad's ministry. Throughout his career, the Qur'an had the central place. It holds the same central place in the hearts and lives of his followers down to the present day. In this, the Muslims are like the Jews and the Christians: they are people of a book, and that book they believe to be the Word of God.

Of course the whole history of Islamic religion and culture is something wider than what is contained within the pages of the Qur'an: but the Qur'an remains the foremost, best and most accessible source available to us, from which we can gain some idea of the inner life of the Muslim peoples. It is something tangible, something authoritative, something final.

The Qur'an compares in length with the New Testament. It was said to have been delivered piecemeal to Muhammad by the agency of the archangel Gabriel. With the exception of the first sura, or chapter, which is a prayer addressed to God, it is God himself who is the speaker, and not the Prophet.

As God's Word is true and unchanging, so every word of the Qur'an is precious, authoritative and unalterable. The pious Muslim is a literalist, a fundamentalist, and the Qur'an holds a place of exalted reverence within his heart. Its language is Arabic, so Arabic is the holy language which God himself speaks. And the speakers

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of God's language have a special prestige in the eyes of the Muslim world.

Like the Bible, the Qur'an ranges over the whole of life: from God's creation of the world and of mankind, through our own particular situation in history, and on to the resurrection and the Last Day. Like the Bible, too, it enfolds many aspects of religious experience: the glorious vision of God in his unity and majesty and justice and might; the wonder and understanding which come from contemplating God's activity in creation and the world of nature; the consciousness of God's working in the world through the lives of chosen men down the ages; the folly and wickedness of mankind in opposing his prophets and following idolatry; the necessary guidance for man in his daily conduct; the visions of heaven and hell, of death and of judgment.

But the Qur'an is also unlike the Bible in many ways. It came to be written down, humanly speaking, through one man over a short period of time. The wider vision it contains is not the record of events as they happened, but rather an individual summing up of the accumulations of past experience. Though the Qur'an is a unity in the way it came into existence, it is not a unity within itself, but a mixture of assorted materials, in which the present arrangement does not follow either their chronology or their subject matter. Such unity as the Qur'an does possess lies in the spirit which it breathes, which reflects the personality of one man convinced of his unique mission and special relationship to God.

The Qur'an is divided into 114 chapters called suras, arranged roughly according to length—a system which was adopted by those who edited the Qur'an after the Prophet's death, in default of more precise criteria for

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arranging the materials. Moreover, as each verse in any chapter contains the same rhyme (or one of two or three rhymes), it may have sometimes happened that subjects not otherwise connected have been brought together in the first instance for this reason alone.

The first sura is a prefatory prayer :

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate : Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds, the merciful, the compassionate, the Lord of the Day of Judgment. It is thee we serve, and to thee we call for help : Guide us in the straight path, the path of those on whom thou hast bestowed good, not on those on whom anger falls, or those who go astray.

This sura is used in the daily prayers of Muslims, and has a similar place in Islamic life as has the Lord's Prayer in our own.

Sura 2 is the longest, and those towards the end of the book are the shortest. It happens, however, that the earlier revelations were also the shorter ones, and so the arrangement of the chapters may be said to be very roughly in the reverse of chronological order. The short, more poetic suras were mostly revealed to Muhammad during his earlier ministry at Mecca, while the longer ones belong to his Medina period, when he became a successful leader of men, and had to lay down principles and rules for the guidance of his community.

The early suras bear some comparison with psalms in their length, subject matter and rhythmic form. They differ however in approach, as they represent not the aspirations and strivings of the human heart towards God, but rather God speaking to man, and using the Prophet as a mouth-piece. As his ministry progressed, so the Prophet was confronted with opposition in Mecca, which drew out the necessity for him to justify his

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position. This is reflected in the next group of suras, which are cast in sermon form, and reveal the Prophet's manner of preaching. These suras usually begin with praise to God or sometimes with a reference to the authority of the Holy Book, and then go on to treat of divers matters which would concern an assembled congregation: now the eternal verities, now allusions to some event which had just taken place, then warnings to the slack, denunciations of the wicked and of those who opposed Islam, and encouragement to the faint-hearted. Sometimes a point is made by the use of a familiar story; indeed in many cases the body of the sermon is the relation of how God sent his prophets in former times, how they were spurned and how God punished the unheeding people—all this no doubt reflecting Muhammad's own struggle for recognition.

In most cases the suras end with high thoughts which carry the hearer beyond his individual petty situation to a contemplation of God's power and majesty, the certainty and terror of the coming judgment, the damnation of sinners and the rewards of the faithful. The beauty of language, the skilful use of allusion and repetition, of metaphor and spiritual overtones, all combine to have a powerful emotional effect on the understanding hearer.

The latest suras of all belong to the time of Muhammad's established power in Medina. They contain revelations which were to help mould the form of the early Muslim community and so deal largely with social, moral, legal and civil matters.

A good example of one of the longer chapters is Sura 20. Verses 1 to 7 speak of God's purpose in revealing the Qur'an; verses 8 to 101 recount the story of Moses; verses 102 to 113 contain a warning of judgment; verses

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114 to 127 give the story of God's covenant with Adam, and his expulsion from the Garden of Eden ; verses 128 to 134 contain reassurances about the fate of disbelievers and of the need for Muhammad to endure discouragement and practise piety. This bringing together of seemingly unconnected topics in one chapter is typical of most of the Qur'an.

A few suras have one single theme, such as Sura 12, which relates the story of Joseph, or Sura 26 which contains a series of short accounts of former prophets, their messages and the reaction of the people to them, all of which leads up to an appeal to Muhammad's own hearers to believe in the truth of the message which he had to bring. Sura 55 is a long poem on the character and activity of God as revealed in nature and in religious experience, brought together by the frequently repeated refrain : ' Which then of the mercies of your Lord will ye deny ? '

Like the Bible, the Qur'an is a difficult book, which came into existence in a remote age in a faraway land, in a society far other than what we know in the West. There is much in it which appears strange to us, and some things hard or well-nigh impossible for us to accept. But there is no denying the greatness of the book, or of the mind which lies behind it, or of the influence which it has had over successive generations.

Within the pages of the Qur'an there are some pearls of very great price. Two quotations must suffice : first, Sura 24, verse 35 (which has become known as the ' Verse of Light ') :

God is the light of the heavens and the earth : his light is like a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp in glass, and the glass like a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive

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neither of the East, nor of the West, whose oil would break into light, though no fire touched it. Light upon light : God guides to his light whomsoever he wills : God makes parables for his people : God knows everything.

Such words as these belong to the highest realms of the spirit, and it is such thoughts as these which have inspired our Muslim brethren throughout the ages, and have helped the Muslim religion to endure. We can picture how the pious worshipper entering the courts of the mosque at evening tide, with the stars overhead and the lamps within the precincts, would be brought to a close realization of God's majesty as he heard or recited this verse, and perhaps like S. John in the Revelation would be granted a glimpse of the worship in heaven :

And thou shalt see the angels circling round about the throne, giving glory in praise of their Lord, and judgment will be given between them with the truth ; and it shall be said : ' Glory be to God, the Lord of the Worlds.'

(Sura 39, v. 75.)

IV

MUSLIM BELIEF

ISLAM is a complex structure, Semitic in background, which grew out of the prophetic experiences of one man into a religious system affecting every aspect of life for great communities of people in different parts of the world over many centuries. It is concerned with God, his unity, justice and power, with the creation of man and of all living things, with the regulation of society on earth, with directions for worship, and with final judgment and salvation.

In all these aspects, Islam may be compared both with Judaism and with Christianity. But there are great contrasts in what these religions teach about the character of God, and consequently about every other aspect of religious life. A striking feature about Islam is that it does not separate the religious and secular sides of life, so that a man living in a Muslim community cannot disregard or fail to be affected by his religion, even though he may not have strong convictions of his own. For a man to elect out of Islam would be to cut himself off from the society of his fellow men, and it is consequently easier to make an outward compliance, rather than to defy or ignore one's religious obligations.

A few verses from the Qur'an will illustrate the Muslim teaching concerning the character of God: firstly, the famous Throne Verse (Sura 2, verse 256):

God—there is no God but him, the living, the eternal; slumber does not affect him, nor does sleep. To him belong

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whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth : who is there that will intercede before him, except by his permission ?

He knows what is before them and behind them, and they comprehend nothing of his knowledge but what he wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth : to guard them does not weary him : he is the exalted, the mighty.

In Sura 2, verse III, we are told of God's creative activity :

The maker of the heavens and of the earth, when he decides upon a thing, simply says ' be ', and it is.

In Sura II2, verses 1 to 4, we hear of God's unity, the denial of other gods, and the horror of associating anything with him :

*God, he is one : God, the eternal :
He brought not forth, nor has he been brought forth ;
There has never been anyone co-equal with him.*

In all these verses it will be noted that the emphasis is on God's majesty and power and exaltation above mankind. The last quotation shows a quite different conception of God's purpose and plan of salvation from the Christian understanding of God's love in sending his son to share in human suffering and redeeming it by humiliation and self-sacrifice. The Muslim idea of salvation is like that of other aspects of God's activity : God simply speaks, and all is done.

But there is nevertheless another side to the Muslim understanding of God. Though he is high above us, yet he is also near us, and because his will alone controls the course of events, so God enters into every activity that a mere human may be concerned in. This sense of the nearness of God was especially developed by the Sufis, or Muslim mystics. Over the centuries, these thinkers were

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influenced by Christian mystics, and by Persian and Indian adepts. The bolder spirits departed from the stricter tenets of Islam, but there is an element of mystical perception to be found in the Prophet himself. The Sufis' favourite verse from the Qur'an is Sura 50, verse 15 :

We have created man, and we know what his soul whispers within him, for we are nearer to him than his own jugular vein.

The Sufis love to meditate upon God with the help of a rosary :

To God belong the most beautiful names, so call upon him by them. (Sura 17, v. 110.)

From this verse has grown up the traditional list of the *Ninety-nine Beautiful Names* of God, such as the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Omnipotent, the Judge, and so forth, the greater number of which have been culled from the pages of the Qur'an, and are now reverently told upon the beads.

The Muslim teaching about man is in many respects similar to that of the Old Testament. God created man as his deputy upon earth, but he fell from this position by sin, and his natural condition is now one of perversity and ingratitude. Nevertheless, it is through sinful man that God's revelation has been made. God sends signs for man's consideration, and God is merciful and desires man's salvation. Man's deeds are recorded in heaven, and he is answerable at the day of judgment for his conduct here upon earth. But all this is conditioned by the overbearing conviction of God's predestination : man's ultimate reward will depend upon his conduct, but good and evil alike come from God, and so man's responsibility is diminished, for he cannot alter the course of fate.

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There are some deep spiritual insights into the springs of human conduct in the Qur'an. When Joseph was being questioned about his affair with Potiphar's wife, he replied (Sura 12, verse 53) :

I declare not myself innocent : for the self habitually urges to evil, except in so far as my Lord has compassion.

Again in Sura 33, verse 5, we hear :

There is no fault in you in regard to mistakes you have made, but in regard to what your hearts have intended.

For the ordinary conduct of human affairs, Islam has laid down a detailed code. The spirit of this goes back to the revelations vouchsafed to the Prophet while he was organizing the young Muslim community in Medina. But what was included there did not cover every contingency, especially when the Islamic empire grew up and embraced new lands with a different type of civilization from the one known to the Prophet and his immediate followers. These gaps in the Islamic code were filled by appealing to traditions about the Prophet, and his own conduct was taken as the standard wherever possible. In the course of time, these traditions were gathered together, classified and their reliability tested, and from this activity grew up the whole body of Muslim law. This covered not only the regulation of worship and the moral code, but also rules about trade, inheritance, food, clothing, hygiene and a host of other details.

The most fundamental part of this code is what has become known as the Five Pillars of Islam : the obligation of every Muslim to believe, to pray, to give alms, to fast, and to go on pilgrimage. Belief is summed up in the short creed : ' There is no god but God, and Muhammad

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is his Prophet.' Prayer is prescribed at five specified hours during the day, and when the *muezzin* calls from the mosque, the faithful will perform his prayer wherever he may be by spreading his mat, and making a number of prostrations towards Mecca, whilst repeating set prayers. In the conditions of modern life, this obligation is sometimes put aside, but the public prayer at midday on Fridays is much more generally observed. The same ceremony and ritual is then used, but it takes place at the mosque, with a leader, and a sermon is given. The duty of alms-giving is well recognized; the sense of brotherhood in Islam is strong and deep. There is an obligation to give a proportion of one's income, which varies according to the sources from which it comes, but is not less than a fortieth part. Above this, hospitality and piety prescribe kindness to the poor and the needy.

The principal fast is kept throughout the month of Ramadhan, during which no food or drink is taken in the hours of daylight: meals are prepared at night, and the month is given over to special devotions in public. This common participation in an act of self-discipline, which requires considerable restraint and sometimes hardship, has an important effect in helping to bind together the Muslim community into a strong fellowship. The duty of pilgrimage likewise strengthens this brotherly feeling, for once in a lifetime, every Muslim who has the strength and means to go is expected to visit Mecca, where in company with brother Muslims from all parts of the world, he makes the round of the holy places according to an ancient prescribed ritual. The experience of the long journey in the name of religion, with its hardships and its moments of elation, makes the brotherhood of faith a living reality, and it is the returned

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pilgrim who is most likely to be the enthusiast for religious revival in his homeland, whether in Central Asia, Indonesia, Pakistan or the heart of Africa.

And to what does all this tend? To the Muslim, man's encounter with God is a lively one, overshadowed by graphic visions of judgment—hell for the idolaters, disbelievers and sinners, but heaven for the faithful, and those who fight in the name of God: and at that, a heaven with crystal streams, with wine that does not inebriate, with trees and fruits and beautiful women, and the gift of eternal youth with which to enjoy them.

All that we have described concerning Muslim belief and religious practice can be found in the Qur'an. Over the centuries, these basic ideas were developed and systematized by successive generations of theologians, such as the great al-Ash'ari (died A.D. 935) and his even greater successor al-Ghazali (died A.D. 1111). Variations of teaching grew up in different centres, and according to the temperament and influence of individual theologians. But the main lines were clear, because the Muslim religion was based upon a revealed book which enjoyed permanent and supreme authority over all religious matters.

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ISLAM is essentially a missionary religion : Muhammad looked upon himself as the Seal of the Prophets, and modern apologists for Islam emphasize the fact that it was the last of the great religions to appear, and so was meant to supersede those that had gone before. Muhammad's own breadth of vision had the makings of a universal creed : to be sure there was a strongly localized element in it—the pride of place given to the Arabic language, to the Arab way of life, to the Arab sanctuary at Mecca : but the stuff of the Prophet's preaching, of God's majesty and justice, of man's destiny and the final day of judgment all had a wider application and force than any merely tribal cult could have had.

How then did Islam spread ? First of all, there was the overpowering personality of the Prophet himself, who by his achievement of Arab unity succeeded in deflecting his people's attention from internecine strife both to a higher ideal and to an outward-looking vision. This direction and release of Arab energies resulted in the establishment within a generation of Muhammad's death of a huge empire, stretching through North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Iraq to Persia. But the success of the Muslims was partly due to the weakness of their neighbours ; both the Sassanid empire in Persia and the Byzantine empire in the Levant were declining, while Christianity in the eastern patriarchates had become involved in bitter, futile and unceasing controversy.

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Islam has recognized two legitimate methods of gaining adherents to its creed—by force and by persuasion. The Prophet himself was a man endowed with the qualities of a ruler and a warrior, and justified the use of these in extending his cause. But though at first Islam gained its chief successes through war, centuries of established Muslim dominion have given greater prominence to its more peaceful aspects. From the first, the Muslims were influenced by the concept of a holy war, known as *jihad*. The unity of God is the most sacred article of belief, and the Muslim could not tolerate opposition to or denial of this most fundamental tenet, and was especially offended by the practice of polytheism.

In theory, it was incumbent upon a Muslim ruler to establish Islamic rule over neighbouring non-Muslim territories, while within his own dominions he had the duty of promoting Islam, maintaining peace and justice, and protecting those non-Muslim minorities who had been accorded a special status. These minorities consisted of the Christians and the Jews, whom Muhammad recognized as People of the Book, having a privileged place as being the recipients of God's earlier revelations. They were allowed to maintain their religion in Muslim lands on the payment of a poll-tax and the acceptance of an inferior rank of citizenship. This system created a strong economic advantage in joining the ranks of Islam, and over the centuries many ancient eastern Christian communities have had their numbers thinned where sacrificial faith has not always been strong enough to stand up to economic pressure and social inferiority.

On some occasions in Muslim history further accessions to the Muslim religion were made through bought conversions. This was a prominent feature in the spread of

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Islam in India. The history of the Arab slave trade had something of this aspect also. Raiding inland from the coast of East Africa was sometimes labelled holy war, while the captives, when they reached their destinations were absorbed into Muslim households and Muslim armies, and conformed to Muslim practice and belief.

The history of the expansion of Islam is too long and complex to discuss in detail here, involving as it does the story of such widely separated regions as the Middle East, North and Equatorial Africa, Persia, Central Asia, India and Indonesia, over a period of many centuries. But a few dates will indicate the chief stages in the process.

By the time of the death of the Prophet in A.D. 632, all Arabia had been unified under his command, and Medina was the seat of government. From 632 to 661, the leadership of Islam devolved upon relatives or close associates of the Prophet: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali, under whose reigns Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Persia were brought under Muslim sway. This sudden expansion brought problems of administration and so gave the first impetus to the development of the Muslim system of government. Moreover, Islam became the heir both to Byzantine and to Persian culture, and these influenced the whole later character of Islam in its artistic and political achievement, in its method of thought, and in the development of its theology.

'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and the fourth of his successors in the Caliphate, failed as a leader, and in his person Muslim political and theological unity was shattered. Hence there arose the main division in Islam between the large body of Sunni Muslims (whose final authority is custom, *sunna*, based upon traditions of the Prophet, *hadith*), and the Shi'a,

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or partisans of 'Ali, for whom religious authority is enshrined in the person of 'Ali's successors in the office known as the Imamate. In 661 the rule of the Muslim world fell into the hands of 'Ali's opponents, who set up a dynasty with its capital at Damascus, and who were called Umayyad after its founder's tribe. These rulers, or Caliphs, maintained a unified control of the Muslim dominions till A.D. 750. At its widest, the Umayyad empire included Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Iraq, Persia, Transoxiana and Sind.

In A.D. 750 the Umayyads were overthrown, and a new dynasty of Caliphs, the 'Abbasids, came into power and soon made their capital in Baghdad. Islamic culture now became strongly Persianized, and reached its highest point of achievement in the reigns of Harun al-Rashid and Ma'mun, at the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth centuries. The 'Abbasids continued as Caliphs till A.D. 1258, but already by the middle of the ninth century their power had been made nugatory by the rise of adventurer dynasties in Persia, Central Asia and North Africa, against which the unwieldiness of the Muslim empire and the growing luxury and degeneration of the court and central administration were unable to stand.

By the end of the tenth century, Central Asian Turks had begun to rise into prominence, and they eventually gained power both in the old homelands of Islam, and also in India, where the great raid of Mahmud of Ghazna on Somnath in A.D. 1024 foreshadowed the overthrow of the old Hindu kingdoms, which came about at the battle of Tarain in A.D. 1191. With this, Muslim power was established in India, and the Delhi sultanate founded, which with its successors, including the great Mughal

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empire of the sixteenth century, was the chief power in India until British times.

We have already observed that much of the early Muslim expansion was at the expense of countries once Christian. In the Middle Ages, an attempt was made by western Christians to recover some of these losses, including especially the Holy Land. The Crusades, which began in 1096, and ended with the fall of Acre in 1291, did not in the end materially alter the balance of power between the Christian and the Muslim, but only served to perpetuate the bitterness between them, and also caused embarrassment and further deterioration in the relationship between Christians in the West under the leadership of Rome, and Christians in the East, most of whom had to maintain a difficult existence as tolerated minorities in lands governed by Muslim rulers.

In the thirteenth century, the rise of the Mongols in Central Asia turned the Muslim world upside down. In 1258 Hulagu Khan, with his nomad horsemen, swept into Baghdad, pillaged the city, and brought the 'Abbasid dynasty to an end. But this disaster did not check the expansion of Islam. It seems as if this disturbance at the centre of things fired new enthusiasms for compensating the Muslim losses. Within half a century, the Mongols in Persia had themselves become Muslim, while Muslim power was considerably extended in India. In the fifteenth century, the 'Uthmanli Turks rapidly extended their power and became the leaders of Islam: the fall of the Byzantines in Constantinople in 1453 to the Turks is rightly regarded as one of the decisive dates in world history. Under the 'Uthmanlis, the Caliphate was revived as an instrument of Turkish leadership in the Muslim world.

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So far we have considered the expansion of Islam through political and military power. It would give a false picture to suppose that this was the only means by which the Muslim religion gained adherents, or that even in those lands which had been overcome by force, there were no purely religious influences at work. The story of Sufism, the mystic path in Islam, has much to its credit for the teaching of the Muslim faith by peaceful means, albeit often in the wake of Muslim armies, in India, North Africa, and other outlying regions.

But in some places Islam even gained a footing without any governmental or martial power to support it. This was the pattern in the overseas regions, where Muslim traders, often of great daring and enterprise, brought with them their Muslim culture and faith, and established small Muslim communities. The traders gained a hearing from local rulers, to whom they brought commercial advantages and, by their superiority of bearing, were able to impress their often primitive and unsophisticated hosts, who allowed them to establish trading posts, granted concessions to them and permitted them to marry local women.

Muslim sea trade extended from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, down the coast of East Africa as far south as Sofala, and eastwards to India, Ceylon, Malaya, Indonesia and China. In all these regions small but prosperous Muslim communities grew up, and by the end of the fifteenth century the Muslims had gained a monopoly of the Indian Ocean trade and controlled most of the commerce of its hinterlands. In one region—Indonesia—Islam became the dominant religion, having been established in northern Sumatra at the end of the thirteenth century, from whence it spread to Malaya,

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Java and the other islands of the East Indies by the sixteenth century.

The next great key date in the story of Islam is 1497—the year of the arrival of Vasco da Gama by sea in India. His coming marked the beginning of the intrusion of the West into the Muslim world, which led to the final subjection of the Islamic powers of India, South-East Asia, the Middle East, North and Central Africa by Portugal, Holland, Britain and France. The story of European colonization is closely linked with later developments *within* the Muslim world, with the succeeding phases of degeneration, stagnation, revival, national aspiration, and independence, all of which provide the context within which we have to consider the later and most recent developments in Islam.

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LET us look for a moment at the state of the Muslim world at the opening of the sixteenth century: it was the beginning of an era in the fortunes of Islam which came to an end only with the First World War. Up to 1497 there had been constant and often hostile contact between Christian and Muslim powers in the eastern Mediterranean region. The Muslims had held their own against Christian advance, and had absorbed Christian populations and relegated them to a subject status, had dictated terms of commerce to European traders, and had barred their way from penetrating into Asia and Africa.

Now, by the successful intrusion of the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean, all this was changed. Their navigators and colonists bypassed the Middle East, gained access to the wealth of the Indies and systematically set about destroying the Muslim powers who controlled it. It was the policy of Affonso d'Albuquerque, the greatest of their empire builders, to conquer the strategic centres of Muslim sea trade in the East—Goa, Malacca, Ormuz—and to favour non-Muslim populations in the regions where the Portuguese settled. Once again, the old embittered relationships between Christian and Muslim were brought into play, and a situation created which was to last for more than four centuries. Albuquerque had demonstrated a fact which was exploited by all subsequent colonizers from western Europe: that

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the superior energy, enterprise and equipment of the West could be used to break the Muslim power, to alienate the wealth of the Orient and to build up empires of such grandeur and magnificence as had never been dreamed of. Muslim distrust of the West was further reinforced, and although for centuries it was unable to express itself effectively, it was nursed in secret and helped to feed the fires of nationalism when they had a chance to blaze forth in the present century.

What the Portuguese had begun was soon followed up by other western powers—the British in India, the Dutch in the East Indies, the French in Africa: and these nations became the subjugators and successors of many Muslim rulers. Moreover, the political and commercial relationships between these colonial powers and their Muslim subjects compromised from the very beginning any hope of a fruitful approach on the part of Christians to the Muslims of the region. Missions indeed there were, but Muslim converts nearly none, for the European missionary came to be looked upon as but another agent of the intruding powers, who had taken away their trade, their independence and their pride.

These same centuries saw a corruption and decline within the house of Islam in its earlier homelands. The long dominance of Persian civilization now gave way to Turkish overlordship, which reached the height of its power under Sulaiman the Magnificent, who came to the 'Uthmanli throne in Constantinople in 1520. In its very early days, Islam had crossed the frontiers of the Arabian peninsula and the Arab way of life. Persian and Turkish ideas were accommodated by the growing influence of the Sufi mystics, while the Turkish genius for administration made its mark on many aspects of Middle Eastern

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life. However, autocratic rulers often arose, who were determined to go their own way, even in the face of criticism from religious leaders ; while on a lower level widespread corruption and defection of state officials led to the gradual degeneration of the Islamic state.

By the eighteenth century, the Arabs were reacting strongly against their now enfeebled Turkish rulers. So it came about that the first of the modern movements within Islam was born—that of the Wahhabis, which was a puritan reactionary outbreak, beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, when Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhab initiated a campaign against the worship of saints, adopting the teaching of Ibn Hanbal, the narrowest of the four traditional teachers of Muslim canon law. Muhammad succeeded in conquering much of central Arabia, and finally captured Mecca in 1806. Twelve years later, the 'Uthmanli rulers broke the Wahhabis' power, but the impact of the movement continued to stir the Arab world, and when the Turkish power was finally broken in the present century, the Wahhabis provided the leadership for the modern state of Saudi Arabia, which controls the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

The nineteenth century witnessed a revival of Islam due to two foremost causes—the reappearance of Arab nationalism as a reaction against Turkish rule, typified by the Wahhabi movement ; and a wider reaction to the impact of western colonization, trading and technology, against which the unreformed mediaevalism of orthodox Islam found itself unable to stand.

Among these complex influences, a few only may be mentioned as specially important. The invention of the steamship not only hastened western colonial penetration into many regions of Muslim population ; it also made it

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possible for many more pious Muslims to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, and so fostered growing fellowship amongst Muslims throughout the world at a time when they felt threatened by the extension of western colonial power. Again, the great development of oriental studies in western countries revived an interest in scholarship within the Islamic community, who now found new inspiration in the history and religious development of the early days of their religion. European education was taken up enthusiastically, and the political, scientific and literary ideas which it fostered encouraged a spirit of self-criticism and reform within the house of Islam. A striking instance of this is the appearance of a Muslim feminist movement, demanding a better status for Muslim women, and a reinterpretation and amelioration of orthodox ideas of marriage, polygamy and divorce.

The nineteenth-century reforming movements even influenced the ancient and conservative Azhar University in Cairo. This great centre of Islamic learning had functioned for many centuries, but had become set in a mediaeval routine, out of touch with the needs of the Muslim community. But a young liberal reformist, Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) arose in Egypt, and with devotion and pertinacity endeavoured to modernize the Azhar University, and although it continues to be a conservative institution, it has had widespread influence in all Muslim countries in modern times.

In India Muslim unrest was marked by the Indian Mutiny in 1857. A modernist Muslim movement was led by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), who endeavoured to show that Islam is in harmony with present-day scientific, educational and political thought. He founded the Muslim college at Aligarh, at which Muslim youth were

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fitted to become leaders after his pattern. A more reactionary movement was that of the Ahmadiyya, led by Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (d. 1908). Although this group was disavowed by orthodox Muslims, its teachings were no more strange than those of many Muslim sects of the past. But the Ahmadiyya movement has a special significance, because in recent times it has been the chief agency for bringing Islam to western countries, and most of the European followers of the Prophet have some link with one of its two divisions. The movement is also active in countering the work of Christian missions to Muslims in certain parts of Africa and Asia.

In spite of the material progress achieved under the colonial governments of Britain, France and the Netherlands, those Muslims who lived under their rule became increasingly restless. Indeed, it was through this very progress, which had brought improved standards of living and access to new political thought and technology, that Muslim leaders arose who were determined to regain political independence for their peoples, and were fitted for dealing with their western rulers. At the close of the nineteenth century, many Muslims pinned their hopes on the idea of a united Islamic world under the leadership of the 'Uthmanli Caliphs. This was known as the Pan-Islamic movement. But the Turkish empire was so degenerate that it was quite unable to give the lead required of it, and its disappearance at the close of the First World War put an end to the Pan-Islamic dream.

The fall of Turkey as an imperial power marked the end of an age, and a new pattern of Islamic power and aspiration emerged. Egypt, Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, with all their vicissitudes, have not only come

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into their own as sovereign states, but have largely shaken off the hold of the West, and have shown themselves to be disposed to retaliate against the real or imagined injustices of the past. The two World Wars undermined the imperial power of Britain, France and the Netherlands, and their Muslim colonial territories have now become independent. Pakistan came into being in 1947 as the realization of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's dream of a state based upon the ideals of Islam, and is now one of the most populous Muslim countries in the world. Indonesia, though passing through a period of intense difficulty and influenced by many non-Islamic ideas, is nevertheless another region of large Muslim population (probably exceeding Pakistan), which has also become independent and a voice in the world within the last few years.

Within less than half a century, three-quarters of the Muslim world has freed itself from the West, and is not merely content to go its own way, but is also determined to influence the future destiny of the world, and perhaps exact retribution from those whom it chooses to see chiefly in the character of tormentors and subjugators over the past four centuries.

So we stand at a point of time when the world of Islam challenges us of the Christian West. The challenge is a double one. In the first place, the relationships which have to be re-established between eastern and western countries demand a new assessment on our part of Islamic aspirations and the nature of Islamic society, if we are to maintain any kind of contact with our Muslim brethren at all. It is required of us to show the greatest respect, sympathy and patience, and a willingness to take Muslim claims seriously.

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Secondly there is the more specific challenge to us as Christians. Christ came to be the Saviour of all men, not least of the Muslims. Conditions have never been favourable to bringing this fact home to the Prophet's followers, and they are not favourable now. But this only gives edge to the challenge. What can we do? In our final chapter we shall attempt to assess the Christian approach to Islam in the past and to see what new methods and aims are required of us in the present and in the time to come.

VII

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SO far we have endeavoured to find out what Islam is, and how it has developed. But Christian concern demands that we do something more than just consider another religion in isolation. The universal and unique claims of Jesus Christ require us to define our own attitude to Islam; and, when we find in the religion which Muhammad initiated comparable universal and unique claims, then we are confronted with a situation of tension which needs to be resolved. Let us then consider the relationship between Christianity and Islam both in past history and in future prospect.

As we have seen, Islam grew up after Christianity, in a land where something of Christ's religion was already known. From the beginning there was mistrust and bitterness. This is one of the great tragedies in the history of the world, for the Muslim misunderstanding of Christianity had its origin in the unsatisfactory nature of the contacts that Muhammad and his followers had with the Christians of Arabia and Syria. False teachings within the Churches, unscriptural traditions, a divided Christian community, all these prevented effective contact, and even necessitated the rise of a new religion to meet the spiritual needs of the day. The very aspirations of Muhammad and his people could best have been met by a vital Christian faith, proclaiming in deed as well as in word the redeeming power of the love of God as manifested in the Body of Christ.

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But the picture, which appears in the pages of the Qur'an of the Christian Church of Muhammad's day, is something far other than any Christian would want to defend. The sad thing is, however, that this picture still strongly influences the Muslim's idea of what orthodox Christianity is even today. The Qur'an accuses the Jews and Christians of altering their sacred scriptures (see Sura 2, vv. 70-73, Sura 4, v. 48, Sura 5, v. 16 and v. 45). Hence the Muslim believes that the Christian is the follower of a false tradition, and is unwilling to give serious consideration to Christian claims on any basis of the Christian scriptures themselves. This attitude is linked up in the Muslim's mind with Muhammad's own claim to have come to restore the pure and ancient religion of the Patriarchs, and undoubtedly reflects the corruption of the Christian tradition with which he did have personal contact.

The internal evidence of the Qur'an suggests that the Prophet had no direct access to the canonical Christian scriptures, but that he gained a hearsay knowledge of the Bible from both Jewish and Christian informants. Moreover he heard many later traditions from these same informants, and was unable to discriminate between them. It was these mixed influences which helped to build up the Muslim misinterpretation of Christianity and its claims.

It is however possible to analyse the echoes of and allusions to the Bible to be found in the Qur'an, and from them to gain some picture both of the agreement and also the disagreement with and misunderstanding of Christianity. The parts of the Bible best represented in the Qur'an are the historical books of the Pentateuch, I and II Samuel, I Kings, Job, the Psalms and Jonah from

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the Old Testament. There are also certain phrases and arguments which might be held to echo passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. From the New Testament, parts of the Gospel story are known, but the allusions in the Qur'an more often agree with the apocryphal gospels than with the authentic ones. The story of the formation of the Christian church as told in the Acts is not known, neither the person of S. Paul, though there are occasional echoes of a Pauline phrase, which must have reached the Prophet by chance from Christian lips. The subject matter of the Revelation is akin to much of the material of the Qur'an, and interesting parallels might be drawn between the pictures of heaven and hell, death and judgment, without proving any direct influence.

Let us consider what the Qur'an has to say about Jesus Christ. He is indeed accorded an honourable place in Muslim devotion, but it is something short of that supreme place which our faith requires, and it is based upon the rejection of the most fundamental Christian doctrines.

Of the many references to Jesus in the Qur'an, the longest is in Sura 3, vv. 30-56. In this section the birth of the Virgin Mary is described, but she seems to be confused with Miriam, the sister of Moses. The birth of John the Baptist, and the Annunciation have much material based on the details of S. Luke's Gospel. At Sura 3, v. 40, the Qur'anic account continues with the angelic greeting as follows :

' O Mary, God giveth thee tidings of a Word from himself, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, an eminent one in this world and the Hereafter, one of those brought near ; and he will speak to the people from the cradle as a grown man, one of the upright.' She said : ' How shall I have a child, seeing that no man hath touched me ? ' He said : ' So

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shall it be, God creates what he wills, when he decides upon a thing, he simply says " be " and it is ; and he will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.' He is a messenger to the Children of Israel, saying, ' I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I shall create for you from clay the form of a bird, and I shall breathe into it, and it will become a bird by the permission of God, and I shall heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead to life by the permission of God, and I shall announce to you what ye may eat, and what ye may store up in your houses : verily in that is a sign for you if you are believers.'

This passage typifies much of the Muslim attitude to Jesus and to the Christian religion : it contains ideas and traditions which could only have originated from Christian sources, but the picture is obscure and out of focus. Jesus' speaking from the cradle, and making birds from clay are stories which can be traced to the apocryphal gospels ; his healing the blind and the leper, and his restoring the dead we know for authentic ; but the real meaning of the person of Christ is missed altogether : here there is nothing of his work of redemption of all mankind, or of his showing forth the nature of God as a loving Father ; instead, though he is in some respects accorded a special position (so that, for instance, his miraculous birth is recognized), his mission is represented as being in line with that of the earlier prophets, namely, he was granted the revelation of a special book—the Gospel—to bring men in mind of God's laws.

Other parts of the Qur'an controvert the basic Christian claims. Our Lord's crucifixion is denied at Sura 4, v. 156, which states that another person was substituted for him upon the cross. Christ's divine sonship is many times denied, for instance at Sura 19, vv. 35-37, as is his divine nature at Sura 5, vv. 19 and 76.

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Jesus is said to be only a prophet (Sura 5, v. 79), only one of God's creatures (Sura 3, v. 52). The Christian teaching about the threefold nature of God is held to be false. Indeed, the Muslim word for theology, *tauhid*, means 'the unity of God.' So for instance in Sura 4, v. 169 :

O People of the Book, do not go beyond the bounds in your religion, and do not say anything about God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the Son of Mary, is only the messenger of God, and his Word which he cast upon Mary, and a Spirit from him : so believe in God and his messengers, and do not say ' Three '. Refrain, it will be better for you : God is only one God—glory be to him, far from him to have a son.

This original antinomy between the Muslim and Christian views of the Godhead has persisted in various forms down the ages, and in a large part explains the tensions which have always existed between the Christian and Muslim communities, not only in the religious, but also in the political sphere.

Once Islam had been established not only as a religion, but also as a state, its advance was largely at the expense of its Christian neighbours. The Christians whom they subjugated were permitted to worship in their own way only if they paid the poll-tax, wore special clothes, and accepted a position of second-class citizens, under the rule of their bishops, who were held responsible to the state for their good behaviour. They were not allowed to build new churches, nor to make converts to their faith. The long-term effect of this policy was twofold : in the end most of the Christians accepted Islam, not so much out of conviction as through political pressure and for worldly ends, while the minority of Christians who kept their faith became inward-looking,

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embittered and resigned, and hence inarticulate and unable to alter the situation.

The Christian losses in the face of Islam occurred chiefly in the centuries immediately following the Prophet, and for the most part in the Middle East and North Africa. But Muslim pressure on Christian Europe continued through the Middle Ages, and European reaction issued in the Crusades, in the resistance to the Moors in Spain, and in the later struggles with the Turks in Eastern Europe. When in the sixteenth century the western powers expanded overseas, once again it resulted in a clash with Muslims in the further East, a clash which was intensified in the nineteenth century with the rapid advance of colonialism, and this led to the rise of anti-western nationalism in the twentieth century. So in every age, Christian-Muslim relations have been bitter, and at the present day emotions have been too greatly conditioned by long-standing historical prejudices for any genuine mutual understanding to develop.

It is in this context that Christian missionaries to Islam have had to conduct their immensely difficult task. Those churches most directly in contact with Muslims have lived under long centuries of tutelage, which has confined their energies to the sole task of their own survival. Hence the Christian approach to Islam has been very largely in the hands of western Europeans, whose cultural outlook is so very different from that of the Muslims of the Middle East or of the remoter Muslim regions. Moreover, the western missionary is suspect as a representative of hostile political power. To abandon Islam is regarded as a renunciation of citizenship within the Muslim community; it is an act of disloyalty to Muslim nationalism, because religion,

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race, people, nation, all are one. The Muslim does not worship Muhammad as the Christian does Christ, but any change of heart involves a tussle of loyalties to the persons who are to be looked to for divine guidance. To become a Christian means breaking the old loyalty to the way of the Prophet, and identifying oneself with the western intruder or a racial minority.

In spite of these difficulties, there have always been some Christians willing and ready to go and proclaim the Gospel to the Muslim ; and there have always been small numbers of converts from Islam of sterling quality, who have often had to pay with their lives for the boldness of their loyalty to Christ.

In modern times, the Christian mission to Islam has been conducted on a *personal* basis, and has not brought any Muslim *community* as such into Christ's fold. This apparent impregnability of the fortress of Islam has channelled Christian interest and effort into two main directions. First it has evoked a profound and scholarly examination of the Muslim religion, culture and history by Europeans of wide sympathy and ability, amongst whom committed Christian scholars have had a large and honourable part. Their vocation is to interpret the two worlds of Christianity and Islam to one another, and to create the atmosphere in which tolerance, understanding, goodwill and mutual concern can replace that of fear, mistrust and violence which have characterized past history.

The Christian scholar's mission to the West must be to reveal Islam from within as a system worthy of our concern, held by peoples who are our equals in the sight of God, as much in need of salvation as we are, and who demand a more worthy destiny than to be played off

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against one another in the game of world power politics, in which the Middle East has been embroiled by the West.

The Christian scholar's mission to Islam must above all be to convince the Muslim that the claims of Christ and the power of his salvation have nothing to do with any thought of subjugation by the West, but are absolute, priceless and unique in themselves. Further, he must endeavour to persuade his Muslim brother to examine the Christian claims from Christian sources—above all to read the Christian scriptures and to realize that they are not corrupt. In recent years much has been done to improve the standard of translation of the Bible into Middle Eastern languages, and this, together with diligent and effective methods of distribution, supported by suitably prepared scripture commentaries, must be reckoned as an important instrument in the Christian approach to Islam, especially where direct preaching and open avowal of Christ are hindered by political barriers and religious intolerance.

The number of converts who will be made through intellectual conviction must ever remain few, but it is not along that line of approach that the Christian scholar's real task lies. His calling is to create the atmosphere and provide the tools, by which Christian and Muslim may be enabled to approach one another in really fruitful and sympathetic contact. He has also to find means to supply some measure of Christian fellowship to those intelligent enquirers who find themselves unable to live openly and unhindered in the sacramental fellowship of the Church.

The second way in which Christian missions have attempted to bring the Gospel to the Muslim is through works of charity, whereby Christian love can be shown

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forth in the midst of the Muslim community, even where direct preaching is impossible. So in the Middle East and in other Muslim regions, much of the Christian effort has been concentrated in providing schools and hospitals, whilst in more recent times, the Churches have helped alleviate the distress of Arab refugees who were displaced by the setting up of the state of Israel and the consequent hostilities with the Arab states. The Christian efforts have resulted in various reactions from the Muslims. They have undoubtedly earned respect and gratitude from the communities to which they have gone ; perhaps sometimes they are resented as intrusions, but at least have been tolerated as useful work by Muslim governments who would not permit any interference with the closed citadel of the Muslim worshipping community. Like the scholar, the doctor, nurse, school teacher and relief worker have made contacts and helped to provide an improved understanding between Muslims and Christians, even where they have not been able to win converts to the Christian faith.

The immense difficulty of making an effective witness for Christ to the followers of Muhammad is a problem which has led Christian workers to re-examine the whole basis of the Christian approach to Islam. But more than a human reaction against frustrated effort is required. It is not just that the Muslim will not readily respond to the invitation of the Christian missionary. The whole relationship between the Christian West and the Muslim East is a profound tragedy, calling for shame and penitence and the re-establishment of mutual respect and confidence.

There is moreover within the Muslim world a deep spiritual hunger, which in part at least has been stimulated

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by the impact of western political, physical and intellectual contacts. The leaders of the Muslim world are loyal to the idea of Islam as a political entity, as a community to which by birth and natural circumstance they belong. But they are no longer wholly satisfied with the inwardness of it. They have become largely secularized. They see themselves as deliverers of their peoples from encroachments from without, leaders of their own unenlightened masses towards a better and fuller life, and are themselves unwilling to be constricted by a closed system conceived in a different age, which no longer caters satisfactorily for the contingencies, distresses and challenges of the present day. They frequently use Islam as an instrument ready at hand, without surrendering their hearts to its spirit.

This restlessness in Muslim countries has issued in a void, for in the place of the solid structure of past experience and tradition, expediency and the chance opinions of the leaders of the day are all that is left. This has led to turmoil, faction and frustration amongst the Muslim intelligentsia. It has provided an opportunity for Communism, seemingly inconsistent with, and antagonistic to the ideals of Islam, yet feeding upon the unfulfilled hopes of those for whom Islam has not provided a looked-for salvation. Yet the things which the disenchanted Muslim leader most desires are just those things which Jesus himself pointed to and provided us with the means to have, could the Muslim but be helped to see and accept this tremendous truth.

How can this be brought to pass? It would be presumptuous on our part to suggest panaceas to those workers who have given their whole lives and have taxed every method of ingenuity, devotion and sacrificial

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loyalty to Christ to reach the Muslim's heart. But certain things, if not new, yet need to be said again and again. Jesus yearns for all; but he works through fallible men. While we in our homes and schools and parishes are slack in desire and devotion and service, how can we even begin to bring the Good News to the Muslim? Who in the Churches cares about the Muslim? Who prays for the Muslim? If we fail to convert the world, is it because we ourselves have still to be converted?

But enthusiasm without knowledge is not enough—that way leads to frustration. We need to understand the Muslim's background, his history, his manner of thinking. While not ignoring fundamental differences, we ought to seek out all those points of contact, of common belief and practice, which may provide a bridge between us.

To this end, we need to re-examine our own Christian theology, not merely in terms of book learning, but in relationship to the internal structure of the Christian community, and to the external and universal responsibilities of missionary strategy. The comparative failure of the Christian mission to Islam is a challenge to re-establish the fullness of the Christian faith. In the first place the weakening and destruction of the Christian experience of community due to secularization, apathy, sectarianism, and an over-emphasis on personal religion to the exclusion of any feeling for the necessity for the visible body of Christ in the local worshipping community has somehow to be overcome. In Malaya, for instance, the churches are so busily involved in ministering to the spiritual needs of their European, Chinese and Indian members, that there is no sense of incompleteness or loss that the Muslim Malay has no part in that growing

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fellowship. Keen Christians within the Churches are all too ready to shelve the problem as too difficult for spiritual or political reasons, and anyhow the Muslim is looked upon as a worshipper of God who can be safely left to go his own way. Until such attitudes as these within the rank and file of the Christian Church can be overcome, the efforts of the few experts and enthusiasts who are concentrating on the 'Muslim problem' will prove to be unavailing. The way has perhaps been indicated by the Church in Indonesia, which has come of age as an indigenous Church that is passionately concerned for the evangelization of the Muslim community in which it is set, and which has been blessed with considerable success.

Secondly, we need to re-examine and make use of the means of divine grace. The theology of Islam is weak in this respect—it lacks true mediation between God and man, and is defective in its understanding of God as the compassionate and loving Father. The Islamic concept is that God disposes his gifts of grace arbitrarily, and mediates them through the power of his Word. He simply says 'be' and it is. This attitude, though not Christian, is all too frequently met with amongst Christians also; it overlooks the necessity and power of the cross of Christ, the need for penitence, the effect of prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit, while secularized paganism in the West has no understanding of divine grace at all, and is lapsing into determinism, pessimism and despair. In our Christian approach to the Muslim our first step must be to seek out again the means of divine grace, through our own penitence, and the preaching of penitence to the Muslim, and the use of constant, devoted and informed world-wide prayer for the conversion of Islam. Perhaps we could begin by making the intention

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at our altars or the subject of our private prayers on Fridays (the day not only of our Lord's death upon the cross, but also of Muslim communal prayer) a petition to God for the conversion of the Muslim world.

Thirdly, we need to re-establish the importance of eschatology within our Christian life. The religious challenge of the Prophet Muhammad to his followers was reinforced and made immediate by his graphic preaching on heaven and hell, death and judgment. It is not that we as Christians should seek to provide a rival heaven with better attractions than the Muslim paradise can offer, nor that we should use the instrument of fear to instil religious beliefs in the unsophisticated. But our own thinking about the last things gives purpose and direction to our religious life here on earth. The reality and power of the resurrection, the transformed life lived in Christ glorified, are the saving truths of Christianity. But are these facts really operative in our own hearts and in our own Christian communities? We need to see that they are firmly established there first, before we can begin to help our Muslim brother.

In our missionary strategy we need to re-assess not only the basis of our belief, but also the method of approach. We ought not to impose a religious system, which however universal its claims, is foreign in its organization, psychology and spirituality. If Christianity is to grow in the lands of Islam, it must grow from the soil in which it is planted, it must be relevant to the experience of its devotees, and express itself in forms consonant with the temperament, culture and spiritual needs of those to whom it is brought. In all this, the long experience of the Eastern Churches who have dwelt, often as it were in exile amongst the tents of Islam, ought to be drawn

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upon. Accommodation there has been, antagonism sometimes, failure to recognize the missionary task, inward-lookingness and other weaknesses in the oriental churches. But for all this, their contacts and experiences, their mistakes and shortcomings, as well as their insights, cannot be ignored as irrelevant to the great task in hand.

Most especially Arab and other Christians, who have long lived in Muslim lands or who have originated from Muslim communities, have a special responsibility in correcting the westernness of the missionary effort. Their task is to separate what is basic and essential in their Christian life and thinking from what is accidental and non-essential and merely reflects the racial origin of the missionaries. More positively, they have the task of creating a stable Christian community with its own literature and culture growing up out of the experience of the community, and not derivative or wanly reflecting the imported product.

It is the same God whom we worship, though our apprehension of him is different. But that is not to say that our differences are irrelevant, or that they can be resolved by discarding what is not common to the two systems. We cannot be content to differ. We believe that Jesus Christ is God's only Son, that in him we and all mankind find our redemption. Our Lord gave himself upon the cross for this end. In this we cannot compromise, even to please our Muslim brother. But this is both the supreme gift and challenge we have to bring to him. Our responsibility is clear ; but the outcome is in God's hands.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

† Easily available books suitable for general study.

* Standard works, out of print, but available in good libraries.

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- † *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. By E. W. Lane. (London, 1836 (many later editions); Dent, Everyman's Library, 1958.)
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SOME LEADING DATES

A.D.

- 570 Muhammad born.
622 The Hijra—the migration of Muhammad to Medina,
and beginning of the Muslim era.
632 Death of Muhammad.
632–661 The Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (Capital, Medina,
then Kufa).
661–750 Umayyad Caliphs (Capital, Damascus).
750–1258 'Abbasid Caliphs (Capital, Baghdad).
1024 Mahmud of Ghazna invades India and raids Somnath.
1096 The First Crusade.
1191 Battle of Tarain. Islamic power in India—Delhi
Sultanate.
1258 Fall of Baghdad to the Mongols.
1280 About this time Islam first established in East Indies.
1291 Fall of Acre—End of the Crusades.
1453 Fall of Constantinople—Turks at the gates of Europe.
1497 Vasco da Gama sailed to India—End of Muslim
monopoly of Indian Ocean trade, and beginning of
European colonization.
1520 Sulaiman the Magnificent, 'Uthmanli Sultan in
Constantinople.
1806 The Wahhabis capture Mecca.
1857 The Indian Mutiny.
1918 End of First World War—Fall of Turkish Empire,
and setting up of Arab states in Middle East.
1947 Independence of Pakistan.
1950 Independence of Indonesia.

SOME ARABIC TERMS

The terms explained in this list are referred to in the text, or underlie certain translated expressions. For fuller definitions, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, or Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*.

Ahl al-Kitab People of the Book. A term applied to Jews and Christians as recipients of earlier revelation.

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<i>Dar al-Islam</i>	The region where Islam is established (contrasted with <i>Dar al-Harb</i> —the region of war—that is those lands not yet under Muslim sway).
<i>Du'a</i>	Intercessory prayer. The ritual prescribed prayers are known as <i>salat</i> .
<i>Hadith</i>	A tradition of what was said or done by the Prophet. On this is based the concept <i>sunna</i> —a custom derived from <i>hadith</i> .
<i>Hajj</i>	The annual pilgrimage to Mecca.
<i>Hijra</i>	'The migration'—the date of Muhammad's going to Medina (A.D. 622) and the beginning of the Muslim era.
<i>Islam</i>	Surrender to God.
<i>Jihad</i>	War in the name of religion.
<i>Jizya</i>	Poll-tax, paid by Jews or Christians who wished to continue to observe their religion.
<i>Ka'ba</i>	The central building of the mosque at Mecca.
<i>Kalima</i>	The Muslim creed—literally 'word'.
<i>Khalifa</i>	Caliph—'the lieutenant of God'—the successor of the Prophet.
<i>Masjid</i>	A mosque—'the place of prostration'.
<i>Nabi</i>	A prophet.
<i>Qur'an</i>	'Reading'—the title of the Muslim scriptures.
<i>Ramadhan</i>	The Muslim fasting month.
<i>Rasul</i>	An apostle.
<i>Sadaqa</i>	Alms voluntarily given. (Prescribed alms is <i>zakat</i>).
<i>Saum</i>	A fast.
<i>Shari'a</i>	Muslim Canon Law.
<i>Shirk</i>	'Association'—the unforgivable sin of associating anything with God.
<i>Sunni</i>	A follower of custom—title of the main body of orthodox Muslim 'partisans' or followers.
<i>Sura</i>	A chapter of the Qur'an.
<i>Tauhid</i>	'Unity'—theology.



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