



(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.)

WORSHIP & SACRIFICIALISM

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WORSHIP AND SACRIFICIALISM.

The instinct of adoration has been placed in our nature for higher ends ; but it misses its object when it becomes confined to bowing down and prostration. There are three instincts in us which work together, and are sure to produce the best of results if conscientiously followed. We are naturally attracted by things which please us in some way, and by the possession of such things the passion ripens into love for them and assumes the form of worship when accompanied by certain gesticulations and words of praise for the thing we adore. We then are led to imitate them. These three instincts—love, worship and imitation—will bring our latent faculties to perfection if we can only find the best morality for their development. Unfortunately, however, our lower instincts obscure our judgment, and their requirements are apt to become in the long run the object of our adoration. Fear and hope play a great part in this process, for it is they in reality that clothe our own low desires in a divine garb. Sometimes certain elements in Nature are taken by us as the source of our profit or loss, and fear and hope goad us to place them on the altar of Divinity. Various fetishes are given the same exalted position, but it has been our low desires which have

always predominated in our choice of gods. We find them in the deities of ancient Greece and India. These divinities are the creatures of our own imagination. We see that they take pleasure in those things which usually delight our physical senses. Places of worship are elaborately and profusely adorned. There is music and singing, incense, with the perfume of the smoke arising from the burning of sweet spices, all this to please Divine taste, which is also supposed to love the blood of sacrifices, especially when the sacrifice is burnt. Thus the real object of worship becomes lost, and one of the noble instincts in us grossly abused.

Men of wisdom and virtue arose from time to time to show mankind where it had erred and to divert this noble instinct to its right use. These men declared themselves to be the Messengers of the Lord, and whatever may be the value of their claim, history establishes the following facts concerning them:—

- (1) They appeared at times when men were at the verge of destruction.
- (2) They spoke of a Being Who was the Creator, Nourisher and Sustainer of the world.
- (3) They preached obedience to that Being and made such obedience the religion of the people.
- (4) They encountered bitter opposition.

- (5) Those who listened to them prospered; while their opponents suffered adversity.

These are the patent facts borne out by history everywhere, and the reasons for them are obvious. If the whole universe has had a Creator, and its maintenance follows certain Laws made by Him, obedience to those Laws must ensure happiness and comfort. The Creator ought to be the object of our love, and consequently of our worship and emulation. Man is sociable by nature. He must live in some form of society, and needs some basic principles by which various individuals may be welded together so as to constitute such a society. The Messengers framed laws which made the worship of the Deity the central figure of their creed. But the baser instincts of human nature could not fail to manifest themselves even in such a simple thing as worship. Temples and shrines were again decked out. Singing, music and the burning of incense once more took their places as acts of devotion.

The Mosaic dispensation furnishes us with the best illustration of this. None can deny the greatness of Moses. He is the supreme nationalist, the liberator of his people from their Egyptian bondage. He is a law-giver and a nation-builder. He finds his people as slaves and serfs and makes of them a nation of soldiers—possessors of kingdoms and empires. He appears as a Messenger from the Lord, and on the liberation of his people he gives them ten simple Commandments that are the real basis of all legislation. He bids them worship the Lord, and, for that purpose makes a simple tabernacle:

An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me.....And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.¹

At the command of the Lord, Moses goes to Mount Sinai, and there he spends forty days and forty nights, fasting, while God speaks to him as man to man. God orders him to accept from the Children of Israel offerings of "gold and silver and brass," of "blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen and goat's hair and ram's skins and badger's skin and shittim wood, of oil, spices for anointing oil and sweet incense," and of various other things. These things are to be lavishly used in constructing an ark with a crown of gold round about it, with rings and corners and staves all overlaid with beaten gold. A "mercy seat" of pure gold is also made, having two cherubims of gold at the two ends thereof. The "mercy seat" is to be placed upon the ark, and in the ark is to be deposited the testimony given by the Lord. This is the place, as it is said, to meet the Lord.

We read also, besides the ark, of a table made of pure gold with a crown of gold round about it. On the table we find dishes, spoons, bowls and the like. On the table is shewn bread placed there, as if placed before the Lord. Then again, there are candlesticks of pure gold with shafts, branches, bowls, knops and flowers. There are lamps, tongs, snuff dishes, curtain coverings, veils, boards with their sockets of silver, bars, pans,

¹ Exodus. 20 : 24—25.

shovels, basins and fleshhooks. In fact, it is amazing to consider the wealth which has been lavishly expended in building the House of God, with the best of taste. Even the garments of gold, blue, purple and scarlet and fine linen are specified for the priest. In fact, some ten chapters in a revealed Book like the Exodus, have been devoted to the details of these decorations.

In Leviticus we read of various offerings—burnt offerings, meat offerings, sin offerings, trespass offerings, consecration and sacrifice of peace. These offerings, consist of the killing of various creatures from the bull to the turtle dove, a portion of them to be burnt, their blood to be sprinkled and a portion of them to be eaten by the priests and others. And all this at the Commandment of the Lord. What a misconception of Revelation! Could not God be adored without these sacred absurdities? Could we give Him for a tabernacle a better house than that which has its canopy of the heavens decked with stars for its lamps? Could odour of sweetened oil and other spices—the things necessary in Jewish worship—vie with the fascinating odours and scents from Nature's own flowers? I was dumb-founded when I read of these things in the third or fourth Revelation of Moses; and I should have lost all respect for Moses, had not the Qur-an come to my rescue. If, on the one hand, the Holy Book speaks highly of Moses as a prophet, it also speaks repeatedly of the corruption which the followers of Moses caused in the Holy Scriptures.¹

¹ 2 : 79, 4 : 46, 5 : 30, 41.

Ordinary common sense would compel us to believe all that the Qur-an says concerning Jewish interpolations. If it is stated in the Exodus¹ in the clearest terms that in building the altar of God no tool should be used, that things must be used in their natural condition and all at the commandment of the Lord, how is it possible that the same Deity should be the Author of this book which give us the elaborate tabernacle details? ² No wonder the spirit of worship became dead and ritualism took its place. Exodus and Leviticus are not only responsible for ceremonialism but also for sacrificialism. We read of various kinds of offerings to expiate sin. These consisted in the killing of various beasts and birds, differing in their value according to the nature of the sin or the worldly position of the sinner. It has also been repeatedly said, especially in Leviticus, that these offerings act as an atonement for sin and pacify the Divine Anger. The ancient sacrifices were bound, in time, to ripen into human sacrifices, and we come upon a long sacrificial vista, running through generation after generation. National calamities, it was believed, could be averted by extensive sacrifices. Taboos came into vogue. Young men were fed and fattened for the purpose of sacrifice in the primitive days of civilization. The victim was slain to please the Lord, when the high priest would drive a stone knife into his breast and say, looking up to the heavens, "God, to-day, we have made this sacrifice to

¹ Exodus. 20 : 24—25.

² *Ibid.* 2 : 25—36.

please Thee.” These taboos became hallowed in the course of time, and the mere touch of them was deemed meritorious and able to wash away sin. Hindu India believed in such a miraculous touch before the advent of the British Raj. Widows were burned with their husbands as *satti*. The touch of the *satti* was a great thing. This belief also produced a number of Christs in the olden days before the Son of Mary. The Mediterranean Sea was a species of lake surrounded by some dozen of countries, each country with its own Christ as its God.¹ All these Christs were born of virgin’s womb. They entered into the world at the first hour of the 25th day of December, and history anticipated word for word all that we read in the Church story of Jesus Christ, which is, in fact, a replica of the story of a pagan God. These stories gave their religion to the Mediterranean countries. I here set down the names of the virgin-born Christs who were worshipped as Sons of God. All of them are accompanied by the same story. They are Mithra, Baal, Adonis, Bacchus, Horus, Osiris, Apollo and Quetzacoatl. When the Early Fathers saw that the religion of Jesus was neither acceptable to their own people, nor applicable to the heathen world, they applied this story to Jesus. On the one side, the Christian sword destroyed every pagan cult; on the other, everything that was believed of these pagan Christs was incorporated in the story of Jesus.

¹ The sources of Christianity by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din.

Thus, in my opinion, all that I read in the Exodus and Leviticus has been responsible for ceremonialism and sacrificialism in the Hebrew and Christian Churches. The ennobling principle that should work under the name of worship thus became extinct, and true Divine worship assumed the garb of fetishism.

A Few Salient Features of the Religion of Islam which are not Generally Known

- a.* It is absolutely monotheistic—no division in the God-head—prayers are addressed directly to the Invisible God. Muhammad is as much a Prophet of God as Jesus, Moses, etc., upon whom all be the blessings of God, but like all other prophets before him, he is every bit a human being. Islam has neither ritual nor priesthood.
- b.* It abhors warfare except in extreme cases of self-defence.
- c.* The position it has given to woman is still unapproached by the laws of the most progressive nations of modern world. According to Islam, there no difference between man and woman—materially, spiritually, morally.
- d.* It is the only religious outlook on life which can grapple with the disruptive forces at work in the world to-day.
- e.* It is a widely-admited and an unparalleled achievement of Islam, that it has created a world-wide brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.
- f.* Islam alone has succeeded in abolishing all unconscionable barriers of distinction, nationality, colour and language.

Attitude of Islam towards other Religions

“Every nation had an apostle” (the Qur-ân, ch. 10, v. 47).
No religion other than Islam recognizes this truth.

Some Popular Misconceptions about Islam

It is wrong to think :

that Islam was spread by the sword.

that Islam is synonymous with polygamy ;

that, according to Islam, woman has no soul ;

and that the Islamic conception of Paradise is sensual.

The Creed of Islam

There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His apostle.

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