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

THE MESSAGE OF THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD TO EUROPE

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PUBLISHED BY
THE WOKING MUSLIM MISSION
AND
LITERARY TRUST
The Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, Surrey, ENGLAND

www.aaiil.org
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MUHAMMAD TO EUROPE.

A Muslim, whose destiny had led him to Europe, and who had spent many years in one of the capitals of Europe, asked an old friend of mine, a European and a Christian, to spend the evening with him on the occasion of the Birthday of the Holy Prophet. For years both had lived in close friendship with one another, and often discussed the serious problems of life together.

Never, however, had they touched on problems so fundamental as those which claimed their attention that evening, and it was the Muslim who started the discussion. He said that he had been engaged that day in the study of the holy scriptures of Islam—the Qur-an and the Sayings of the Prophet (peace be with him!)—and that, as a consequence, in spite of these hard times, was possessed of a deep tranquillity and serene confidence in life, for Islam means perfect agreement with the will of God, which is fate. His friend, the Christian, however, sat beside him, down-hearted, and full of care and sorrows; and these not all ascribable to his own personal anxieties.

"We Europeans," he said, "have at present to go through a crisis, the like of which our Continent has never seen, and it would be a great mistake to suppose that this crisis is only a passing phase of political and domestic economy. On the contrary, we all know that it is for us Europeans at once a crisis in our views both of life and religion. It seems to me that it has begun with religious faith and must end with disturbed credit—that is to say, with shattered faith in mankind.

"How many millions of Europeans have just not lost their old line of direction and are looking about anxiously for a new source of guidance among the ruins of their
erstwhile beliefs? Where do they find it? I fear that all their searching has been in vain. There is, however, an old saying: Ex Oriente Lux ("The light of revelation is from the East"), and there are, more especially at the present time, many people throughout the Western countries who are looking to the East for the satisfaction of their religious hunger. Will they find it there?"

The Muslim: "At the same time at which the Christian view of life crumbled to pieces in spite of the deep and great truths which it contained, the East began to display a new, hitherto unknown, activity, and this can be observed particularly among the Muslims. Learned and pious Muslims, devoted men, who do not permit their faith to be shaken by the dangerous atmosphere of Europe, are travelling to all countries of the West. These Muslims know, that the child-like human being is every whit as pious as the wise man: the one is so still and the other has become so again. Irreligion can only spread among those who have lost the child-like belief and are not yet wise."

The Christian: "If you say that nowadays many Muslims go to Europe, why, they always used to, but only for the purpose of studying European science and methods."

The Muslim: "That is quite true; for in both fields Europe has accomplished very much, and it is quite undeniable that the Muslim youth desires to profit therefrom—but with the necessary caution. He is grateful for being able to learn some of those lessons that Europe has to teach, but it is strange that the Muslims of the present generation not only visit Europe to learn and receive, but also desire to offer Europe something in return. What is it that they wish to offer? The best they have, namely, those teachings, which helped them 1300 years ago out of a tremendous crisis, and which have helped them since again and again in all their troubles. They think these
teachings are too little known in Europe and too often misunderstood, and that Europe could learn a great deal from them. Is it not remarkable that these two movements know nothing of each other: the struggle of the European for new guidance, which makes him listen attentively to the voice of the Orient, and the activity of the Muslim East, which is inspired by the fervent desire to make Islam better known in Europe—that Islam, which is called in the first Sura of the Holy Qur-an, 'the religion of the right way'?

"Remarkable, very remarkable, this meeting of the two tendencies, which, without being aware of each other yet supplement one another," said the Christian guest.

"Yet for a Muslim, quite comprehensible," replied his Muslim host, "at least to a deep thinking person. For it is our faith that God always sends His messages of good tidings to mankind at such critical times; for such messages are then most needful to mankind, and their need opens men's ears to the words of God. This, possibly, is the meaning of such a great crisis, that it brings us nearer to God and God to us. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be with him!) also came to the Arabs, when the conditions of Arabia were on the brink of a catastrophe."

"Do you really think that Islam can help us Europeans in our present condition?" asked the Christian.

Thereupon the Muslim said: "I should not like to answer your question with a 'yes' or a 'no,' but rather I would try to define the nature of the European crisis clearly, and then we shall picture to ourselves what Islam has to say concerning the different causes of the European malady, and how it would fight against them. We shall then find the answer to your question, perhaps without especially looking for it. Let us begin at the root. You gave me to understand that the European crisis, at the bottom,
was one of the view of life, yea, even a religious one: what did you mean by this?"

The Guest: "Let us begin with the view of life. I must take into consideration the fact, which is also known to you, that Christianity is the religion of miracles. It is impossible to think of the religion of Christ without these miracles; it loses its whole individuality—if the word is permitted. The great majority of the miracles of Christianity, however, are opposed to the findings of science, and we live in a scientific age. The soul of the European is therefore divided. His faith and his knowledge go different ways, and he cannot own up to his knowledge without disavowing his faith.

"It is generally known that Christianity has been built upon a dogma, that is to say, on assertions, which deal with a miracle. There is, for instance, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, which, however, is against the laws of nature. There is the dogma of the Trinity of God, which is against the laws of logic and thought. High above both towers the assertion that Christ was the Son of God. This is against the experience of natural science as well as against logical thinking.

"In contrast to these dogmas, natural science teaches us that all earthly events happen according to the clearly defined laws of Nature, which are the expression of God's eternal will. These laws are such as can never be suspended in favour of a miracle, not even in favour of those dogmas which Christianity teaches. You will now see, that a European must ever find himself in conflict either with his faith or with his knowledge. It is science to which Europe owes its whole prosperity, but its religion, Christianity, is altogether unscientific, seeing that it believes in dogma and denies the authority of the laws of Nature. The root of Europe's hegemony lies, in addition
to this, in the application of science to life, a process from which Christianity is averse, since it teaches flight from worldly things and estrangement from life.

"This process is, indeed, one of those gigantic powers, which are, like the powers of Nature, in themselves neither good nor bad. It may, therefore, be used for the benefit of humanity, but it can also be a curse to it. Moral progress must therefore grow hand in hand with technical progress, and morality must always be strong enough to control technical achievements and turn them to good account; for technical progress provides mankind also with materials for killing each other. How can Christianity develop a code of morals capable of guiding so tremendous a power to do good, if it is its principle to turn away from earthly things? A part of the present world-crisis lies in the fact, that the application of science to life has, in consequence of the collapse of the Christian religion, loosened the reins of morality. Science ought, therefore, looking at it from a moral standpoint, to sell only so many labour-saving machines as it can bring out new inventions for employing human labour. Let us, however, go back to our starting-point, the conflict between faith and science, in which is included the conflict between morality and the application of science to life. The same conflict surely exists, with the same acuteness, in Islam."

The Muslim: "You are mistaken, my friend. Before I say any more about it, I would observe that we Muslims show the greatest esteem for the Prophet Christ (peace be with him!), but we do not identify him with modern Christianity; and my argument is, therefore, not intended against his holy person if I reply. This is the first and principal merit which I ascribe to Islam as compared with Christianity, for Islam does not recognize any conflict between faith and science, it puts the human intellect and
not miracles in the centre of the system of religious teaching. Islam, therefore, does not acknowledge a single sentence which science or logic would have to contradict, and Islam particularly sees in the laws of Nature themselves eternal miracles of God so that one must say that it is of all religions which have ever been the one which is most friendly to science and, therefore, the most modern. You yourself say that we are living in a scientific age. The Holy Prophet (peace be with him!), places science and research on a very high pedestal. He teaches that “An hour of research work is better than many hours of praying” and that “The ink in the pen of the scientist is more holy than the blood of a martyr” or “Go to the furthest parts of the world, even to China, if you are bale to gain knowledge thereby.” The Holy Prophet Muhammad could speak with such emphasis on learning, only because Islam does not acknowledge any principle which is not known to any of the other religions. Islam does not confine the revelations of God to those holy promulgations only which the Almighty brought to the ears of mankind by His Prophets, but for Islam Nature itself is a revelation of God and research is nothing else but a reading in this dumb and yet so eloquent second revelation. In this way, however, the research work, which to Christianity has become an enemy of religion, assumes quite a religious aspect in Islam. For the Muslim, therefore, knowledge is surrounded by a radiance which cannot be surpassed. If God is the light which permeates all things, even the darkest and most distant, with its brilliancy and elucidates them, the importance of the human being lies in the fact that he spiritualizes his human surroundings with his own intelligence (compare the verse in chapter “Light”). Islam, however, takes the argument for its worship of God also from logic and knowledge. It constantly reminds us of
the infinitely wise arrangement of creation and sees therein the evidence of God's Almightyness and Infinite Goodness. It reminds us of the eternally regular way of the stars and of the real miracle, that in the universe each individual serves the other and receives services in return. It also never forgets to point out that each individual develops a constantly rising self-perfection by this service to other creatures. Islam emphasizes, therefore, instead of the anti-scientific miracles of the early Christian era, the eternal miracles of Nature and life itself, in which one does not need to believe blindly, but of whose existence one can convince oneself daily.

"Does not, however, the knowledge that all things have been created for the purpose of serving others, already contain the principle of charity, which forms the pillar of the Muslim morality? For the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him!) teaches as the highest principle of religion 'Love God and His creatures.'"

At these words of his host, the Christian guest jumped up from his seat in astonishment, "I did not know that charity is the highest principle of Muslim morality as well? I always thought that Christianity was the only religion which demands charity of mankind, and that for this reason particularly, Christianity was irreplaceable in the world, and that its mission was to convert all people of the globe to its practice."

The Muslim: "I can also point out a second kind of progress which, if I am right, Islam has made in advance of all former religions. We, Muslims, are not at all astonished that Christianity also preaches charity and that we are not the first and only ones to profess charity. On the contrary, I, as a Muslim, am of the opinion that all religions must necessarily already contain this principle in some form or other. As a matter of fact, the Jewish Rabbi, Joshua
Sirach, taught even so early, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' According to the Muslim conception God has not revealed Himself to humanity only once, but again and again at various times and through various nations. Islam recognizes all great teachers of mankind as prophets (peace be with them!), whether they be called Confucius, Buddha, Moses or Christ. I say, God spoke at different times and to different nations through the mouth of some one or other of His Prophets; whenever the memory of mankind had become dull, and whenever the holy teaching of God was in danger of being forgotten by mankind, He spoke through an elect human being to mankind. If God, however, spoke through the mouth of each one of those Prophets, then they ought all to proclaim the same principles and their principles ought all to harmonize with each other; or the Omniscient would be contradicting Himself in His various proclamations. You see that the circumstance which appears to you as amazing, viz., the conformity of all nations in their supreme rules of life, is to Islam the natural outcome of the unity of God, Who cannot contradict Himself. Islam is the first religion which discovers that we are all closer to each other than we know. That is the new fact about Islam that it does not profess to have set up a single new principle, but that it approves without prejudice all the great truths of mankind, that it even combines them all in itself. Islam is, therefore, the most tolerant religion in existence. It is in fact the religion of tolerance. If you wish to convince yourself of the truth of this assertion, then picture to yourself Christianity. For the Christian all human beings, who were born before the birth of Christ, all who did not hear of Christ's teaching, all who grew up in a different faith, are cast out and condemned for all time and eternity, because the real truth was withheld from them. One must make clear to oneself that by far the
biggest part of humanity, whether alive or dead, belong to these innocent outcasts, for only a small percentage of all human beings professes the Christian religion. How different is Islam in consequence of its faith that God manifests Himself at all times and to all nations. For Islam, all people of every period were capable of adopting the truth because God proclaimed this truth again and again, and whoever follows the truth is, according to the views of Islam, a Muslim, even if he has never heard anything of Muhammad and his teachings. He only needs to act like a good, sensible, warm-hearted and charitable being, and he acts in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be with him!), and may be regarded as a Muslim. Therefore, all good people of all countries and periods were and are Muslims, and Islam is already a world-religion, because it is the religion of all good people in the whole world, of all good people who ever lived and shall live on this planet.”

The Christian: “That is a wonderful idea, the union of all good people of the world in one joint faith. Do not, however, get cross, if a doubt occurs to me which I feel I must express. Where was the need of Muhammad if God had already made Himself known by the mouths of Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses, Christ and many other Prophets?”

The Muslim: “I am glad you have put that question to me. It was my intention at any rate to talk in detail about this very point. For God has not spoken to all generations in the same language, but He has, on the contrary, told each nation at each time only as much as corresponded with the mental capacity of their period. God’s instructions had, therefore, to be repeated constantly whenever a new civilization broached new problems. God’s proclamation, although always the same in its fundamental idea, constantly extended its scope. Notably,
in the days of Muhammad there sprang into existence a
decisive new era in culture, in my opinion the most
striking turning-point in modern history, which resulted
from the fact that humanity left the pre-scientific and
entered the scientific age, and it became aware of this for
the first time in Islam and its culture; that is to say, Muhammad (peace be with him!) stands at the entrance
of the modern age to which we also belong, and he has
been sent as the Prophet of modern times. It is, therefore,
no mere accident that mankind should have matured in
his day to such an extent that it could record the holy
teachings, which he proclaimed at once, in written
characters, and so for the first time, fix, as it were, the
word of God completely and without omission so that it
should be, thenceforward, free from any possibility of
clouding or doubt. Muhammad is, in fact, the first
Prophet whose sayings were written down during his
lifetime, to be collected immediately after his death;
while, for example, 120 years went by before the teachings
of Christ (peace be upon him!) became the subject of
literary interpretation, and there do not exist any direct
records of Christ’s sayings. One may lay down the
following, as a general rule, the more remote the millenium,
the longer time elapses between the life of the Prophet
and the writing down of his teachings, out of which,
therefore, there can only arise a deceptive picture of his
revelations. For, on the one hand, many sayings of such
a Prophet are missing and have been forgotten, and, on
the other hand, much is ascribed to him which he never
said.

“We, therefore, get, by such a belated collection of
his sayings, much less and much more than he really said.
And herein lies the singular position of Muhammad among
the Prophets. It is a wonderful dispensation of Providence
and yet quite comprehensible that he, who was sent to humanity as a guide of the modern, that is to say, the scientific era, at the same time benefits by the advantages of the scientific era—his teachings have been preserved and collected with scientific exactness. These teachings contain the authentic word of God, and because God has proclaimed Himself by the mouth of the Prophet it is possible for the messenger of God to wipe out for ever any cloudiness, which has been caused in the older revelations by the dust of time, and to fill up vacancies which have been occasioned by the inadequate transmission of the sayings of his predecessors. To put it plainly Muhammad (peace be with him!) has been sent definitely to rectify all former revelations of God. He, therefore, recognizes the Holy Prophet Jesus (peace be with him!) at once as what he is, to wit, one of the greatest of the messengers of God; but he destroys the erroneous belief that he was the Son of God. He considers that the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is a fairy tale and not even a pretty one; and at the same time he restores the natural state of affairs by declaring that Joseph was the real father of Christ. All his corrections, however, as shown by these examples, lie in the direction of a scientific judgment and modern ideas, and I should like to draw your attention to the fact that the Qur-ān not only corrects facts but also moral motives. What questionable morality does the Old Testament attribute, at the very beginning, to the Almighty by saying that He forbids Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge, only because Adam would in this way become omniscient and could be able to compete with Him, the Lord of the worlds in all-wisdom. A human being may be liable to such considerations, but not the sublime Creator of the Universe. Muhammad (peace be with him!) teaches us otherwise. It was not the tree of knowledge, but the tree of discord whose fruit God forbade Adam to eat. The interdiction, therefore, was not imposed for the
protection of God against mankind but for the good of mankind itself, it being the duty of man to live in harmony with each other. Judge for yourself now how much nearer to us this Qur-anic judgment brings this story of the Bible, how much more modern it appears to us in Muhammad's wording, how much more comprehensible, how much more sensible. In this way, however, Muhammad evolves everywhere moral teachings from the Old Testament stories and turns the un tarnished historical facts of the Bible into finger-posts for moral guidance. But I think that we have wandered a little from the actual theme, for we intended to throw light upon the crisis of Europe and determine in what way Islam could help."

The guest: "No, we have not wandered from it. We can continue at once from the point where we left off, for I intended to speak of morality and its present situation in Europe. We had already agreed on the love of mankind as the nucleus of morality. The essence of the love of mankind demands, however, that we put it into action; for what good are the most beautiful sayings to our neighbour if he continues to suffer? Love of mankind is, however, for us Europeans for the most part only a saying and is seldom translated into action; for, while our words are full of the love of mankind, as religion demands, our deeds are dictated by selfishness. In this way arises the second terrible disagreement, namely, that the deeds of the European are at complete variance with his words. Europe preaches peace, and engages in terrible wars; Europe insists that it must carry to other nations the benefits of culture and civilization, but it sucks those nation dry without mercy. Europe talks of the economic union of all nations, but each State puts up against the other ever-rising custom barriers. One speaks in Europe of the League of Nations, but each nation desires to get its own special benefits in the council of nations, and that
statesman only is considered a patriot, who refuses to sacrifice a single claim of his own nation, and does not even sacrifice anything if an agreement on a large scale among all nations can be arrived at by this sacrifice. The same state of affairs, which exists among the different nations, also exists within each separate nation. One speaks in every country of Europe of the fact that each citizen of the State ought, first and foremost, to be the servant of the State. How far are we from this ideal? On the contrary, the individual citizens, who have the same interests, form groups and parties, and each group and each party, without any consideration for others, upholds its own selfish interests at the expense of the general public.

“One would, however, be making a great mistake if one thought, that we Europeans were content with such a state of affairs; on the contrary, this difference between our sayings and our doings causes us the greatest distress, for this conflict has been at the root of our unbelief, seeing that we cannot put any belief into our own words. Nobody slips more easily into superstition than does the unbeliever, for it is but a step from unbelief to superstition. That is the reason why Europe is to-day so full of false doctrines. Among these, however, there is one view to which one cannot deny the courage of honesty. This view seeks to put an end to the difference between verbal charity and actual selfishness in such a way that the human being should own up unconditionally to his selfishness and say openly that each individual must mind his own business only in this world, and not that of humanity. This is meant for the individual as well as for whole nations. What do you think of it? And what does Islam particularly think about this so-called ‘holy egotism,’ which desires to eternalize the fight of all against all?”

The Muslim: “I too know this doctrine, and I respect its motives in so far as they have their root in the
desire to escape out of the mendacity of the present day civilization. I consider, however, that this doctrine is wrong; for the truth is not so simple as these good people, who do not wish to approve any longer of anything because they wish to remain truthful, believe it to be. The truth, however, lies in the middle course of a rightly understood selfishness and charity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be with him!) seems to me to have been the first among the great teachers of mankind to put us on the right way, the middle course, between selfishness and charity, and who has shown us at the same time wherein lie real selfishness and real charity. Herein he appears to me to be generally much more modern and closer to life than any of the former founders of religions, and in particular, more modern than Christianity, which takes a one-sided view of charity and withdraws itself too far from the facts of real life by favouring a high ideal which does not take into consideration the nature of human beings. We ought not, however, to be unjust towards Christianity; for, if we wish to understand it aright, we must remember that the Holy Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him!) suffered death by crucifixion in his early manhood and before he attained power. He did not become the king of the Jews, as he apparently desired, so that he himself could then, as the responsible leader of a nation, put his doctrines to the test; but he remained all his life in opposition and the opposition is always radical because the simple doctrine without practice always remains a simple theory. If a doctrine, however, really got the upper hand in any part of the world, it transforms itself from theory into practice, from mere word into deed, and in doing so purifies and perfects itself. It would be of deep interest to learn how the Prophet Jesus Christ (peace be with him!) would have developed if he had been granted the privilege of a longer life and if the noble, but visionary radicalism of his essentially very true doctrine did not bring about
his early death. He may, perhaps, have had to oppose the radical selfishness of his contemporaries, like the Pharisees, by an equally radical call to self-denial. It was at any rate assigned to the Holy Prophet Muhammad to be what the Holy Prophet Christ endeavoured to be in vain, namely, the leader of a whole State, so that he could put God's word in a human community into God-moulded deeds, which means at the same time to assist in obtaining for the preaching of charity, its realization in daily life. In this respect, however, we may look upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad as the fulfilment of the mission of Jesus Christ (peace be upon both Prophets!)

"Because Christianity has remained since its very beginning only word and doctrine, it has that peculiar trait in its character, that for the Christian the principal weight lies in his disposition towards charity, but the charitable disposition does not go hand in hand with the charitable action, and where it does manifest itself in everyday life, that manifestation remains a single beautiful and isolated occurrence. On the other hand, the Christian dispensation is not able and does not try systematically to combat the misfortunes and needs of mankind as Islam has always done. An example of this is the story of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament. This excellent inhabitant of Samaria, who finds a man seriously ill, by the roadside, who puts him at once on his mule and takes him to the nearest hostelry, is worthy of all praise. This good man not only takes him there, but he also pays the inn-keeper for nursing him and promises that he will pay more when he returns, if the sick man's expenses should exceed the payment already made. There is no doubt that this deed of the Good Samaritan with its friendly care for a complete stranger, not only for the moment but for the future is an incomparably beautiful one. We all feel that each one of us ought to act like this, and we are grateful to the Good Samaritan for what
he did to the poor sick man nearly 2,000 years ago, as if he had done it for ourselves, indeed, he has really done it for us, since we are still able to delight in and draw consolation from his action. But still there remains a chance that a man like the Good Samaritan should happen to be passing by while the sick man lay helplessly by the roadside. What would have happened if this chance had not materialized or if this man with his good heart had not had the means to care as he did for the unhappy wayfarer? The patient would have died. This deed, therefore, does not yet lead us to the final solution of the problem of the care for the poor, needy and sick, which is rather to be found in Islam. Islam takes the step from the single charitable deed to the organization of charity. In Muhammad’s State, which is a state of welfare, the streets are regularly patrolled to ensure the safety of the people and to see that everything is in order, especially also to help the poor, the sick and the tired wanderer. The Prophet of Islam (peace be on him!), does not leave anything to chance; yea, the Holy Prophet himself, and also the great Omar as the head of the administration of charity used to walk through the streets of Makka or Madina, to look personally after the poor. Wherever they found poor and sick people or perhaps a mother, sitting with her children beside the dead fire weeping, they themselves did not mind fetching from the public grain stores a bag of grain to feed the poor hungry creatures. Briefly, Islam created the first State in which the social deed was developed into an organization. By this step which Islam takes, from the charitable feeling to the charitable deed and, on the other hand, from the occasional to the organized deeds, it towers above all former creeds and becomes the direct forerunner of all modern social organizations of charity.

“The State of Muhammad is, however, not only a forerunner, it also remains the eternal example of that
State, the laws and regulations of which have not yet lost contact with the laws of God. What that means, present day Europe, where often enough the powers from below, the powers out of the depths, have sucked at the public life, teaches us, for you yourself say: In Europe the very beneficial procedure of organizing has proceeded on the wrong road; because we no longer organize for the benefit of the whole nation, or for humanity, as the word of God ordains, but for separate groups of the same interests or parties within the nation. Priests and State-officials, land-owners and manufacturers, merchants and manual labourers, clerks and workmen organize themselves. Organized too, are the advocates, medical practitioners, bakers and butchers, in short, a new system of caste has been developed. The basis for such organizations is the collective egoism of each group, and the instigation for joining it is, that promises are made of manifold personal advantages to each member. The leader of such a group himself benefits by his position, and can often only keep it if he procures special benefits for his electors and, over and above that, makes promises to them which he cannot possibly keep. The leader of the group is, therefore, absolutely dependent on the powers below, namely, on those whom he leads, and he goes in fear and trembling lest they drop him, if he does not supply them with sufficient advantages. The political parties, like the groups, do not take into consideration the welfare of the whole nation but only that of their group, and special advantages for their group can only be obtained at the expense of all the other groups of the population, that is to say, instead of being an instrument of mutual understanding and a just equalization, the organization has become, by reason of the different groups, a tool of selfishness and a source of quarrels everywhere. The group is only in the right so far as it serves the purpose of providing equality of rights to a group, which is being universally oppressed, and
takes care that the members of this group are never wronged. The organization of the party ought, however, not to serve the purpose of providing its members with unjustifiable special advantages, for, by doing this, such an organization harms, nay, even undermines the whole, and a group which harms the whole of the populace, is itself sawing through the trunk of the tree on the branches of which it is sitting. The principle of organization, which is full of blessings, has been led into wrong paths in modern Europe and has there caused cancerous growths, for what else does the eternally ravenous and selfish cancerous swelling do, but grow and grow at the expense of the other parts of the body until this latter, and with it the cancerous growth itself, at last dies. Herein lies another reason, and assuredly not the least harmful, for the European crisis.

"Let us now look at the Muslim State and its organization during the leadership of the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!), and during that time in which the leaders acted strictly in accordance with the law of the Holy Prophet.

"In the early days of Islam there existed neither groups nor parties; on the contrary the State was the common organization of all Muslims, and everyone stood up for everyone else. It was only just for the individual Muslim to suffer if all Muslims were suffering. If the individual Muslim lived in good circumstances, he could be sure that all Muslims were in the same position, for the State saw to a just arrangement. This was made particularly obvious by a certain tax, which Muhammad introduced, the one called "Zakat" or poor-rate. To pay this was one of the most binding religious obligations. In this way the "Zakat-rate" was a religious one, and it was at the same time a public and social system, for from this source of income the State of Muhammad derived the means by which the poor could get the organized, not the
arbitrary or casual, help which Islam materialized for the first time in the history of mankind. The 'Zakat-rate' which the propertied classes paid for the benefit of those who were suffering shows that there was no preference in favour of separate circles and groups, but general social adjustment, and that this is the mark of distinction of the Moslem organization, which herewith proved to be a healthy and not a parasitic and egoistic organization.

"Now what about the leader of the State, the Holy Prophet himself (peace be on the messenger of God)? Just as the Muslim State is the reverse of a group of interests, Muhammad is the direct reverse of a party-politician in a typical frame. I should here like to dispel any existing prejudice. It is a mistake to think that religion and politics have nothing to do with each other, or that religion is only a tool in the hand of the politician whereby he may influence the masses. On the contrary, politics, as a German saying goes, easily corrupts the character of a human being, and therefore religion is used again and again as a means to put right the character of the politician and to prevent him from getting spoiled by politics. Religion reminds him constantly of the eternal aim of politics, which is not a low one, directed toward selfish advantage, but the loftiest imaginable,—the welfare of the whole community. That politician only, of whom it is known for a verity that he really serves the whole community, that is to say, the religious politician, can acquire such a well-founded authority that his adherents follow him even if he has, at times, to take unpopular measures. This is the supreme proof of the value of a politically trained human being; his followers forsake a party politician, the moment he makes unpopular demands upon them, while they remain true to the religious politician in spite of such demands.

"Muhammad (peace be with him!) is himself the best proof of the correctness of these assertions. His followers,
at the beginning, only a few dozen in number, but destined to increase so as to comprise a whole nation, would not have selected this holy man as their leader for him to bow to the will of the ignorant masses, but rather that he should lead them, lead them on to the 'right road,' the road to God. What did God command? God commanded him to act in such a way as would benefit the whole nation, nay, the whole of humanity, and last, but not least, each individual creature. Such action sometimes demanded burdensome sacrifices, not only from the messenger of God himself, but also from each individual follower of his. Muhammad, indeed, had often to demand burdensome sacrifices from his companions. One only needs to remember the battles of Badr and Uhud! How joyfully did his companions obey his commands! Muhammad often had to act in a manner very different from that which his adherents would have preferred at the moment, but they gladly yielded to his demands, for they knew that the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) never lost sight of the welfare of the whole, the welfare of the State, the welfare of humanity, and his authority was such that his adherents willingly accepted and carried through even his unpopular measures, as, for example, that amicable agreement he concluded at the end of his career, with the Quraish, which at the moment looked like a defeat of Islam and yet turned out to be its most beautiful victory.

"Muhammad (peace be with him!) is, therefore, the symbol of the religious politician, the politician as he should be in contrast to the party-politician, who at present holds sway in Europe. The party-politician cares for the selfish interests of his group and always looks back to that group for approval. The religious politician looked to the interest of the whole nation, the whole of humanity, and he follows God's supreme law, the law of love towards all creatures. The party-politician obeys those who have chosen him and allows himself to be led by them. The
religious politician leads those who have elected him, and by his authority obtains their obedience. There are in the Europe of to-day in all leading positions party-politicians. Perhaps they have got their position by the help of a group to which they are therefore, indebted; perhaps, they are mentally too closely connected with their nearest sphere of interests, and cannot look beyond its limits because their horizon is not wide enough. If the large banks of the gold centres constantly lent money to the nations, which were weakened by the war, and if the banks of the weakened nations took much more money on loan than they ought to have taken in the interests of a thrifty world-economy, then these directors of the banks only thought of the advantages which the banks would derive from their credits during an otherwise stagnant time of business. That was quite comprehensible, but, nevertheless, a case of thinking too narrowly and only of individual benefits. If they, on the other hand, had taken into consideration the well-being of the whole of humanity, and had thought far ahead, they would have kept these credits within their necessary limits and Europe would not now be going through this terrible crisis of credit, which has also hit the guilty banks themselves.* What, on the other hand, did Abu Bakr—a very reserved but in the highest sense honourable man—say about 1,300 years ago, when he was selected to be the successor of the Holy Prophet? He said: 'My good people, support me if I do what is right, but put me on the right track when I err. Obey me, if I obey the Allah and the Prophet, but do not obey me if I am disobedient.' Putting it plainly it means: you shall obey me if I act as a religious politician and take into consideration the well-being of the whole nation, nay, of the whole of humanity according to the command of God and the instructions of the Prophet; but refuse to follow me if I turn away from this road and lapse into the

*The article was written at the time of the great economic world depression following the World War No. 1. Perhaps we shall not have to wait long to see a similar situation confronting humanity again!—Publishers.
narrow route of party-politics. If Europe had had more religious politicians of the type of the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!), of the type of Abu Bakr, instead of its party-politicians, it could speedily have removed the terrible crisis of the present-day."

The Guest: "I cannot but admit that you are right, and I shall very carefully consider your words, which do not only represent your personal opinion but the mighty thousand-year-old voice of Islam itself. But let me speak from the bottom of my heart. As far as I can see there are other centres of crisis in Europe over and above those mentioned; they exist with regard to a number of special questions of culture. There, is for instance, the completely antiquated position of marriage in Europe, there is also much that is quite out of date in public opinion, in racial prejudices, in criminal law and in education. These, however, are all spheres which were, to a great extent, under the influence of the Church and which are not yet completely free from that influence. I, therefore, ask myself—Is it not in a way a tragedy of all religions that their great teachers proclaim laws, which at first assist the world’s progress immensely; but during the centuries following their death the conditions change so completely that the same laws, which formerly helped humanity to advance, now hinder and cripple progress? These laws then lead to the fossilizing of culture. Such fossilized laws still influence Europe to a great extent; they hinder its progress by the ballast of a millennium and do so in fatal contrast to the rapid development of life’s conditions. You will see by my confession that we Europeans do not as yet lack the courage of self-criticism. Is it not quite reasonable that such a severe crisis should make us critical of ourselves? I, however, ask myself now: "Does Islam stand more solidly in this respect?"

The Muslim: "I can assure you, my friend, Islam, the youngest and last of the great world religions, will
never become fossilized, for the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) had already thought of such a change and had taken a very decided step to prevent it, which will surprise you. One of his most beautiful sayings shows how he proceeded with regard to this question by observing that: ‘The wrangle of opinions is the grace of God,’ for is it not this difference of opinion which prevents any fossilization, any formation of unchangeable dogmas and opens out a way for progress? We learn to use our common sense in these differences of opinion, and so new aspects of the truth come to light. Differences of opinions make clear what is right and unassailable among our spiritual possessions, and what is assailable and fragile. This is the reason why progress lives by the differences of opinions. In the former religions, however, one opinion only is tolerated, which hardens into dogmatic fossilization, and differences of opinion are absolutely forbidden. Herein lies the fundamental difference between the Prophet of the scientific age, Muhammad, and the former religious systems. I have characterized with pleasure the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) as the knight among the messengers of God. This view is confirmed again by the above. The Holy Prophet is also a knight of the spirit, he does not fear the spiritual fight, and he does not need to tremble for its truths; for they can only establish themselves more securely by this wrestling.

“You can see incidentally from the words of the Prophet quoted above, what is equal to a revolution in religious life. How many results, fraught with blessings, can radiate from a single quotation? Does not the sentence about differences of opinions also sanction freedom of opinion, and is not freedom of opinion the same thing as tolerance? It is the same tolerance, which speaks to us in the following words of the Qur-an: “In religion let there be no compulsion.” Does not tolerance, on the other hand, mean peace and friendship,
so that one can dwell comfortably and at ease in the tent of Islam? And is not the fact that every one may freely express the opinion of the heart, a democratic feature of Islam—again a modern characteristic?

"But let us get to the main thing: The Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) proclaims emphatically, that each century will produce a reformer, who will harmonize the eternal truths of the Divine Revelation with the conditions existing in his time. He will lead mankind back to pure morality, if they have departed from it, and he will show how the new questions and problems, which arise at all times, can be solved according to the eternal word of God; for it is not the eternal truth which is outstripped in time by the thinking humanity, but only that chaos of interpretations and prejudice, which gradually accumulates in every religion. To remove these the Holy Prophet proclaims an indefinite series of future reformers. Praise and glory be to Muhammad, who looked so far ahead. For if we speak of world-religion we think, as a rule, only of its spatial expanse across the whole length and breadth of the globe, not of the changing times and their needs. Islam, as the religion of eternal self-renewal, is not only valid for all space but for all time.

"Discussing progress in Islam we must not forget that Islam already carries within itself the conception of development which Europe only discovered fully a thousand years later, and which is almost identical with the idea of progress. Development is an inner progress, the thought of development is, however, contained in the words of the Qurân, that the human being already prepares by its own deeds its paradise and hell in this life. For whatever the human being does, arises out of that which it produces from its instinct and the gifts with which nature has provided it and the manner in which these are developed. This again is an example of how Islam leads us on the "right way," the middle course.
which is equally distinct from the extremes. An extreme is exemplified in the unbridled state of sensuality and spiritual drift which we find among the so-called civilized nations, and also among the decadent populace of the cities of Europe, which cannot deny itself any pleasure. Christianity also demands an extreme, which, on the contrary, seeks to exterminate human nature and its sensual passions. Islam stands in the middle. It does not permit the natural passions to grow rankly, nor does it allow them to wither away. Islam bids us to develop our passions and gifts and, at the same time, to curb them and keep them in check, so that they may be beneficial to ourselves and to others. In the curbed self-expansion of our nature and in the blessings which results therefrom for us personally lies the true self-complacency, of which Islam approves. This self-complacency, however, does not stand in contrast to, but is in harmony with, charity, for our completely developed and yet controlled gifts are also of use to others. But the solution which Islam offers by demanding that we must think of ourselves and at the same time of others, and that we must develop our passions and at the same time curb them, is not so simple as the thesis ‘one must think only of one-self,’ and the counter-thesis ‘one must think only of other people.’ How nearly, however, does it with this highly intellectual contemplation approach to the demands of real life? For have we not to consider our own interests, and the interests of others, in all conditions of life, and are not strong and yet curbed passions necessary everywhere? Think of the connection between human beings which occurs to us most readily, the marriage-tie. The foundation of every good marriage is this, that both parties show the greatest love to each other and yet keep a constant self-restraint towards each other. This is the only way in which a harmonious and, for the husband as well as the wife, equally happy companionship in life is possible.”
The Guest: “In this way we arrive automatically at the most important problems which form a part of the European crisis. Of these the problem of marriage is the most pressing. You know that Christianity really does not even recognize marriage, but demands of the human being complete abstemiousness and monastic renunciation.”

The Muslim: “Surely, surely. But demands which are too high often cause the contrary of what is intended, for they discourage the human being, who then, in his despondency, allows himself to drift. Remember, in this connection, that the ascetics especially are open to the greatest temptations, and many of them sin secretly. That, however, is not the desire of the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!), for complete asceticism is to him an ideal which lies far away and secluded from the world. He on his part considers that the human being needs love and not too little of it, as otherwise its soul withers away or surrenders secretly to vices; but also not too much of it, for the soul becomes dull and at the same time sensual through an excess of love. For this reason the Holy Prophet admits at the outset that marriage is the true centre between the too little and too much, which he is seeking everywhere, because it is the best for humanity on this earth.”

The Christian: “Marriage has in the end also found recognition from Christianity, but with an unrelentingly stern, nay, an extreme feature, which takes the form of a lifelong indissoluble tying-down from which there is no escape. By this ideal sternness it becomes again, like asceticism, the source of immorality, for even if the feeling of love is quite extinct, it yet compels the husband and wife to continue a union which has become unnatural, and the Christian, that is to say, the European human being is led astray and looks elsewhere for compensation for all the love that has been refused to him in married
life. Here you have again a centre of a crisis, which we call in Europe a marriage or sexual crisis.”

The Muslim: “The Holy Prophet also steers a middle course on the marriage question, a course which leads close to life instead of being, as it were, suspended above humanity like a brazen sign—a relentless warning. The Prophet (peace be with him!) shows the way in which all possible eventualities of the daily life are taken into consideration. Human beings should really be able to act according to his teachings, and need not talk in one way while they act in another. For this reason the Holy Prophet tries first to cure an unhappy marriage. How? As a mature person—a legislator should not be an enthusiastic youth—he knows that even a marriage can be heavily burdened by the imperfections of those by whom it is contracted. More than that, he pictures to himself, that the human being inclines to see among his possessions only that which is not as he would like it to be. Therefore, husband and wife often only discover each other's faults, and the result is an interminable dispute, or the disappointed husband or wife drops the objects of his or her former love altogether and looks for another person, more likely to come up to his or her expectations. He or she will, however never find such a person, seeing that such a person does not exist. All beings have their good and bad points; and we blindly take the good ones, which enrich our life, as a matter of course, and only see the faults. The Holy Prophet opens our eyes to the reverse view of the world with the following words: “If you do not like a certain characteristic of your wife, then look instead on another characteristic you like.” Forget what is wanting by looking to the excellent point. By this single instruction, I think, a great many unhappy marriages can be cured. Europe should, therefore, give heed to these words also with regard to its marriage crisis. For him who follows this advice, his companion suddenly
appears beautiful, although she has just provoked him, nay, the whole of life becomes more beautiful if we look at its bright side and thereby forget the dark side. It is worth our while to follow the words of the Prophet, for thereby we gain paradise on earth.”

The Christian: “But what will happen if the marriage is so unhappy that there is no remedy?”

The Muslim: “The Holy Prophet, in such a case, orders at first a short separation, and if this step does not bring husband and wife back to each other, he does not forbid a divorce. What does the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!), however, say, about the divorce? ‘Verily, of all permitted things divorce is the most detestable one.’ Where can one find such a beautifully balanced sentence in any of the other religions? Christianity decrees either ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and with regard to divorce ‘no.’ Christianity vouchsafes no limited permission, nor does it take exceptions into consideration. Muhammad (peace be with him!) is the first Prophet who does take exceptions into consideration, and thereby comes into close contact with life. One can really live, if one acts according to these words of the Qur-ân, for, to be sure, husband and wife should live together as long as it is possible. Matrimony is holy to the Muslim also, and he avoids a divorce as far as possible. Yet, at the same time, if it must come to a divorce, then it is one of the extreme cases in which permission is granted. Is this regulation not well-thought out, wise and valid for all times?”

The Christian: “What about polygamy, which is permitted to Muslims?”

The Muslim: “I had expected that question, for there is nothing about which Europe has a more erroneous idea than polygamy. One considers that polygamy is the rule, but in fact it is only an exception. The rule is the single marriage, that is to say, to have only one wife. Do you know at all how Islam came to countenance poly-
gamy? It was caused by an exceptional state of war. The warriors killed in the wars, left widows, who, with their children would have been alone and without means of existence, if the Holy Prophet had not recommended to the surviving Muslims that they should marry those widows so as to provide for them and their hungry little ones. I do not suppose you have thought, that it was the older women with a number of children, and not enticing young creatures, who found their breadwinner by this ill-famed polygamy.

"Besides polygamy there is a second point in which Islam has been completely misjudged. I shall mention it before you ask about it. It is said that Islam is the religion of the sword, and that the Prophet has requested his followers to spread Islam with the sword. Just imagine, how could he do such a thing, considering that Islam means peace."

The Christian: "Was there never a ruler among the Muslim princes who tried to spread Islam by the sword?"

The Muslim: "Whoever did such a thing violated the holy teachings of Islam, and was most harmful instead of helpful to the Faith. It is true that the Muslims have erred occasionally. They were not acting as Islam ordains, but as was customary in their brutal era. Christian kings have in former times also spread their creed by the sword, although Christianity is the religion of love."

The Christian: "What is really the position of the Prophet with regard to 'militarism or pacifism,' to express it in the modern European form, for that is the principle which is at stake just now? You know that in every part of Europe militarism and pacifism are fighting bitterly against each other, and that is a further cause of the European crisis."

The Muslim: "It is the same over and over again, friend. You Europeans seem to know only the simple,
illeconsidered catchwords like ‘militarism’ or ‘pacifism’ and for such a catchword you sell your soul. The Holy Prophet, on the other hand, solves this question also in a much better way. He makes a distinction between an offensive and defensive war, and he teaches us that we should never be the assailants, but we may well defend ourselves if we are being attacked. If there is, therefore, no attack, defensive war is automatically ruled out. We may, therefore, say: ‘If the world follows the advice of the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) there will be no more war in spite of the fact that a defensive war is permitted, and rightly permitted, for, if an attacked person were not allowed to defend himself, he would be an easy prey to a hostile attack and there would be no end to such attacks. Only a war against them who attack us, who disturb our peace, may be called a holy war. Only this is a justifiable war in the way of God, a war of which the Holy Prophet approves. If European militarists say: But war is the father of all things and an offensive war is sometimes good, then our Prophet answers: You confuse war and fighting. Fighting is the father of all things, viz., the honourable contest, for instance, the fight caused by the divergence of opinions, which is a blessing, not, however, the unchivalrous and brutal war of destruction, which is usually meant by the word ‘war.’ You see, that the Holy Prophet (peace with him!) is a truly wise man, not a popular speaker. He does not know any catchword, no thundering ‘yes,’ no unrelenting ‘no,’ but only a deep sympathy with each special case, like the abovementioned attack and defence, contest of opinion and war of destruction, and he forbids the attack and allows the defence, he disapproves of the war of destruction and loves the healthy contest.

"After telling you all this, you will admit that I am right in saying that Islam is indeed the religion of the thinking human being and, therefore, the religion which
humanity especially needs in its present difficulties. It hates blind thoughtlessness. It presupposes a refined use of common sense and a deeper insight into things. On the other hand, by the study of Islam our thoughts gain an extraordinary independence and power, for the Holy Prophet (peace be with him!) does not lay down a rule with only one interpretation, as for example, ‘Marriages are inseparable’ or ‘You shall never take up arms,’ but he shows us the law with its subtle individual differences according to which we must regulate our daily life as each individual case demands and according to which we can also decide what is right and what is wrong. Islam does not desire serfs, but free men, men of science, aristocrats, who are able to decide for themselves. Spiritual aristocracy, however paradoxical and mystical, the less is never the hypothesis for every true democracy; for democracy means that everybody may help with his advice and co-operation when the fate of the whole community is at stake, and that it is only possible, and holds out a promise of blessing, if all stand spiritually on a high enough level to judge for themselves, and if they have practical knowledge of the matter. Democracy, therefore, takes for granted that all members of the community are spiritual aristocrats, and Islam intends to be a ‘democracy of aristocrats.’ Is it not really the great task, which is put to each human being as a member of humanity, that we should be educated up to a democracy of aristocrats?"

The guest: “You do, indeed, show me the highest ideal which any religion has ever allowed me to look at, and I am more than astonished because it seems to me that the European spirit has wrangled continually about the same principles which Islam has already proclaimed in the clearest fashion and linked together into a complete religious system. It seems to me that Europe, in its greatest times and through its greatest men, has got so close to Islam as almost to shake hands with it, but only
again and again to get further away from it. There was perhaps in the European spiritual development no greater epoch than the end of the eighteenth century, the era of Kant and Goethe. I should like to verify my thesis by this era. At that time it was recognized and spoken of in Europe already that Jesus (peace be with him!) was admittedly one of the most noble human beings and teachers, but that he could on no account have been the son of God. This opinion, however, was forgotten again later on. In Germany, the eighteenth century created a so-called universal literature, that is to say, all works of all the people and times were collected and translated, in the same way as the universal Islam had made all holy scriptures of all people and times its own 1,300 years before. It was the eighteenth century which for the first time clearly enunciated the thought that religion must be considered in the light of common sense, that is to say, a practical common sense. It demanded that we should hold our sensuous desires in check, and that in all our deeds we ought to keep in view the happiness of the whole of humanity. The eighteenth century, generally speaking, looked on humanity as a big brotherhood, just as Islam did. At that time the term democracy began to take shape in Europe, which Islam had already materialized a long time before. The philosopher Fichte sees the goal of life of human beings in the fact that they learned how to form 'a community of people with a free will.' Is this, however, not the same as the 'democracy of aristocrats,' which Islam demands of us? With these democratic ideas, the ideals of tolerance and spiritual freedom were very closely connected. Both ideals were supported most zealously by the English philosophers Locke, Hume and Shaftesbury, also by the great Frenchman Voltaire, and in Germany by Lessing and Mendelssohn. Lessing looks upon Judaism, Christianity and Islam as three rings, each of which contains the truth—
how Muslim-like. None of them, however, was a better Muslim than the greatest man of those days, the German Goethe. Goethe already wrote, when a boy, an epic called ‘Muhammad,’ and later one of his most famous songs was called ‘Muhammad’s song.’ When asked about his religion, he answered: ‘Do not ask by which gate you have entered the city of God. The nature of God has shown itself to me likewise in Parseeism, Judaism, in Christianity and in Islam.’ Does that not sound very familiar, my Muslim friend? Does it not sound like the words of a real Muslim? In conclusion, Goethe remarks, on another occasion: ‘If Islam means resignation to the Will of God, in Islam we all live and die.’

“The best known writer of Europe is at present surely the Englishman Bernard Shaw. He says, that if any religion has the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe, within the next hundred years, it can only be Islam. Is this assertion a joke of the great satirist Shaw? In this satire, there is always some truth. The joke is the mask of his truth, and at the same time the thorn, the painful scratch of which makes it impressionable. What is it now that fascinates Shaw in Islam? He shares with Islam faith in the intellect as the light on the road into the future of humanity; he shares with it the ardent desire for progress, he hates the career of lip-service, which can only form beautiful words. His endeavour is to show practical deeds and he is the advocate of a democratic aristocracy. Shaw is, therefore, in deep earnest in his conviction that all the elements are existing in Islam, which qualify it to be the religion of the future for the whole of humanity. With these remarks, my friend, let us finish. I shall now return into the stillness of the night, and to my home, but I take with me a good deal to think about, and I shall always be grateful to you for this never-to-be-forgotten evening.”
Published by Khwaja Abdul Ghani, Secretary,
The Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Brandreth Road, Lahore.