

"Arabs of the desert say, 'We believe,' Say thou, 'You believe not, but rather 'we have submitted' (Islamized, *aslamna*) for the faith hath not yet found its way into your hearts' . . . The true believers are those only who believe in Allah and his Apostle, and afterwards doubt not; and contend with their wealth and their persons in the path of Allah. Those are the sincere" (xlix:14).

A tradition quoted by Muslim which may throw some light on the gradations among followers and allies is as follows:

"When the Apostle of God appointed a leader over any army or marauding band, he gave him orders regarding his special duties concerning the fear of Allah and the welfare of those Moslems who were with him. After that he would say, 'Go forth to war in the name of Allah in His path; fight with those who disbelieve in Allah. Go forth to war. Do not use deceit or break a covenant, or mutilate, or kill children. And when thou meetest thine enemy, the polytheists, then invite them to three states or conditions. Then whichever of the three they give an affirmative answer to, accept it from them and withdraw from them. First, then invite them to Islam; and if they give an affirmative answer to thee, then accept it from them and withdraw from them. After that, invite them to remove themselves from their homes to the homes of the refugees, and inform them that if they do that, then they shall have what is given to the refugees; and their responsibilities are the same as those of the refugees. But if they refuse to change from their homes, then inform them that they will remain as the desert Arabs who have embraced Islam. (cf. Sura ix: 98-100.) The commands of Allah will be obligatory upon them which are obligatory upon other believers; but they will get nothing of the plunder and spoils unless they go to fight along with the other Moslems. But if they refuse (to become Moslems) then ask from them the poll-tax (*jizya*). And if they answer thee in the affirmative, then accept it from them, and withdraw from them. But if they refuse, then seek help from Allah and fight them.'"²⁰

The people of the world, according to Islam, are generally considered as divided into believers, who pay the alms (*zakāt*); *dhimmi*s who are of the "people of the Book" and pay the tribute or poll-tax (*jizya*), for the privilege of retaining certain liberties; and the unbelievers upon whom war is made until they receive the true religion or are exterminated.

The tradition which we have quoted from Muslim, if true in all its details, shows that the offer of paying of the *jizya* or poll-tax was made to the polytheists as well as to the Christians and Jews. We learn from Balad-

²⁰ Muslim, II: 62

huri²¹ that on one occasion at least the Prophet allowed the Magians at Bahrain to take advantage of the offer of the poll-tax. Some of the Arabs disapproved, saying: "The Prophet pretended that he would accept poll-tax from none outside of the Book, but here he is accepting it from the Magians of Hajar, who are not people of the Book." And when Al-Mughira interviewed Rustam, the Persian general, and presented terms of surrender, he offered him, among the alternatives, the privilege of paying the poll-tax, quoting a verse from the Koran directed especially to the people of the Book. By stretching a point the Persians as Zoroastrians might be called a people of the Book, but when India came under the sway of Islam during the later years of the Umayyad régime, idolatry was tolerated. On the condition of prompt payment of tribute, heathen temples were left standing. The worldly Umayyads are reputed to have cared little about the propagation of the faith of Mohammed. They are censured for thinking first of amassing fortunes. But this tradition and others seem to show that Mohammed and the early Khalifas had given them precedents enough to demonstrate the importance of the tribute, in contrast to other factors in the development of an empire.

There are traditions which might be interpreted to mean that Mohammed commanded his followers to carry on general warfare against all those who differed in faith,²² but this statement of policy to his commanders permits a very loose sort of allegiance to those who would pay the required alms. The outstanding tie of homage to Allah was the financial consideration. Shortly after the Prophet's death, some Arab tribes apostatized from Islam entirely; others said that they would observe prayer, but not pay *zakāt*. And Abu Bakr, the newly chosen Khalifa, threatened to fight them if they withheld so much as the tether of a tithed camel.²³

Military expediency even counselled sometimes that

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 79. "Origins of Islamic State," p. 121

²² Baladhuri, *op. cit.*, 257, "Origins of Islamic State," I: 412

²³ Muir, "Caliphate," p. 13

in order to win tribes they be permitted to pay alms instead of poll-tax:

"The Christian Arab tribes Taghlib, Iyad, and Namir objected to the poll-tax. Omar consulted his colleagues. They pointed out that as Arabs they would never be content to pay the tax, and that having it in their power to do the Muslims damage, they ought not to be tempted to help the foe. This agreed with Omar's own opinion, who made them pay alms like the other Muslims, only stipulating that they should not Christianize their children."²⁴

In studying the spread of Islam beyond Arabia, one is struck by the rare mention on the part of early historians of the invitation to Islam by the Arabs to the inhabitants of conquered lands. The agreements between the victorious generals and the peoples concerned often do not mention any offer of Islam.

Khalid before Damascus submitted the following terms:

"In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is what Khalid would grant to the inhabitants of Damascus, if he enters therein: he promises to give them security for their lives, property and churches. Their city-wall shall not be demolished; neither shall any Moslem be quartered in their houses. Thereunto we give to them the pact of Allah and the protection of his Prophet, the caliphs and the 'Believers.' So long as they pay the poll-tax, nothing but good shall befall them."

When the inhabitants of Palmyra sought to surrender, Khalid guaranteed them their safety, on condition that they be considered *dhimma* people, that is, that they be subject to the tribute.²⁵

Amr ibn al-As seems to have made no offer of Islam to the people of Egypt. Some state that he had a covenant with them, but he is also reported to have said:

"I have occupied this position, and am bound to none of the Egyptian Copts by covenant or contract. If I want, I can kill; if I want, I can take one-fifth of the possessions; if I want, I can sell captives. The people of Antabulus are excluded, because they have a covenant which must be kept."²⁶

In spite of such facts there are those who make much of the world program of early Islam. Does not Arnold

²⁴ Margoliouth—"Zaidan, Umayyads and Abbasids," p. 31

²⁵ Baladhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 111, "Origins of Islamic State," I, p. 171

²⁶ Baladhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 217, "Origins of Islamic State," I, p. 342

greatly over-emphasize peaceful penetration during the first forty years of the Hejira? In his opinion, any signs of persistent Christianity in lands that became Mohammedan are usually due to the toleration of the rulers, and any abandonment of Christianity for Islam is the result of missionary activity. He fails to give enough emphasis to the wholesale migrations of Arab families into Irak, Syria, and Egypt. Kufa, Basra, and Fostat were camps of Arab soldiery. Any teaching of Islam that was done, was largely in these fortified cities. Here they did not at first aim to gather converts about them, but rather were on hand to maintain order, to collect the taxes and tribute, and uphold the Arab supremacy. Any great desertion of the inhabitants from their own religion to Islam was to be discouraged, for it meant a decline in the tax receipts. Nor do those who attribute the rapid spread of Islam to religious zeal give sufficient weight to the part played by the clients of the Arabs, who were mostly captives taken in war and manumitted in compensation for a change in religion. Thereby the client was more dependable in the capacity of ally than as slave, for he could still be depended on to contend for clan, party, or faith. Easily the Koran might say, "There is no compulsion in religion," but the social and economic pressure exerted on captives, slaves, and subject peoples, is incalculable.

However, the Arabs never conceived for a moment that conversion raised the client to the level of the Arab. The golden days of simple democracy, which later tradition pictured, were largely legendary. The brotherhood of early Islam was more or less of a misnomer. Yet Islam owes much to these clients, for although of inferior standing because they were not Arabs, they produced a great number of the jurists, commentators, poets, and scholars. "The more the *Mawali* (or clients) increased in importance," says Becker, "and the more they permeated the Arabian tribes, so the universalistic, i. e. democratic tendency of Islam was bound in a correspond-

ing degree to force its way into wider circles.²⁷ The shaping of the doctrines of Islam under the Abbasids was influenced by their party, and it is not surprising that they proclaimed a more democratic theory of relationship, and widened the horizon of Islam until it included the whole world.

Arnold admits the lack of any evidence in regard to conversions in the first century, but bases his calculations upon the downward curve of receipts from taxes. Other possible factors, the ravages of war, the lavish squandering of wealth by the rulers, and the gross mismanagement of affairs by the Arabs, are almost entirely ignored. Lane Poole²⁸ states that

"Ninety years after the conquest of Egypt, a governor despairing of any considerable accession of native Egyptians to the Moslem ranks, was driven to import five thousand Arabs into the Delta."

"It was only by very slow degrees and after much intermarriage and many partial immigrations that Egypt became Moslem, and for a long time the Arabs were practically confined to the large towns."

If the Prophet bequeathed to his followers a world vision, even from the political standpoint, military strategy warned them against a too vigorous exercise of this vision. Umar, the second Caliph, wished on one occasion for a mountain of fire between the Moslems and the Persians, so that neither could get at the other. Similarly, he forbade the Moslems to cross the sea. He commanded that the camp cities be so situated in conquered districts that they would not be separated from Medina by water. He saw the value of a full treasury, but he feared that the empire might become so unwieldy that it could not be governed from Arabia.²⁹

The fact that the expansion of the Arab race was the movement of a hardy, war-loving people pressed by hunger and want, has been elaborated by Winckler. Caetani³⁰ after study of the historical geography of Arabia has re-emphasized this factor in the martial migration of the Arabs. Lammens considers the economic factor

²⁷ Cambridge Medieval History, II: 364

²⁸ "Story of Cairo," 60

²⁹ "Umayyads and Abbasids"—Margoliouth—Zaidan, p. 32

³⁰ Annali, Vol. II, 831-861

of importance." Even Arnold, the champion of Islam, agrees. Rustam, the Persian General, charged the Moslems before Mughira with this motive.

"I have learned that ye were forced to what ye are doing by nothing but the narrow means of livelihood and by poverty. We are ready to give you what will satisfy you, and to see you leave with certain things that ye choose."³²

The more positive phase was the prospect of rich booty. It was that, and not a spiritual experience, which Mohammed told his commanders to hold out as the special privilege of those who would leave their homes and follow him. This feature in his program drew men to the banner of Islam. Siyah, the leader of Asawira, after falling out with the Moslems, chides them, "We entered into this religion from the very beginning only as a refuge, and in the hope that your Allah was one who provides abundant sustenance."³³

We discover that in early Islam, even as Arnold admits:

"The spirit which animated the invading hosts of Arabs who poured over the confines of the Byzantine and Persian empires, was no proselytizing zeal for the conversion of souls. On the contrary, religious interests appear to have entered but little into the consciousness of the protagonists of the Arab armies."³⁴

He concedes that there is scant testimony during the first two centuries of the Hijrah to any proselyting efforts.

"The earliest document of a distinctly missionary character which has come down to us, would seem to date from the reign of al-Ma'mun (813-833), and takes the form of a letter written by a cousin of the caliph to a Christian Arab of noble birth and of considerable distinction at the court, and held in high esteem by al-Ma'mun himself. In this letter he begs his friend to embrace Islam, in terms of affectionate appeal."³⁵

So much has been made of holy war and compulsory conversion to Islam in later centuries, and persecutions have been so frequent, that Christians have been accustomed to think of these early conquests also as being

³¹ Berceau de l'Islam, pp. 120, 174

³² Baladhuri, *op. cit.*, 257, "Origins of Islamic State," I, 411

³³ Baladhuri, *op. cit.*, 373, "Origin of Islamic State," II, 106

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 46

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 84

carried on entirely because of the religious motive. Many Moslems pride themselves on the martial spirit of their faith. But history indicates that the armed hordes who overran Asia and Africa in the seventh century cared little for the spiritual welfare of the millions of souls in these continents, so long as the spoils were plentiful and the tribute promptly paid.

If we grant that it was other than a religious motive that drove them out to conquest, then we cannot but minimize the value of their religious conceptions. When the Koran says, "Who so desireth any other religion than Islam: it shall never be accepted of him, and in the next world he shall be among the lost," (iii: 79), we can only interpret it in the light of Arabian nationalism.

Islam expanded in time into a world religion, and Mohammed's place in the initiation of the enterprise was more than significant. But many years elapsed before the principle of universality was evolved. Unforeseen circumstances and numerous developments took place before the conception was clearly fixed.

And when one of the final verses of the Koran exalts the Moslem faith, "This day I have perfected your religion . . . and have chosen that Islam be your religion" (v: 6), we remember with Snouck-Hurgronje that these words are only a cry of jubilation over the degradation of the heathen Arabs by the triumph of Allah's weapons: and they have in no way the meaning of the exclamation "It is finished" of the dying Christ.³⁶ And one might add, that the statement of the Koran, "He hath sent his apostle with guidance, the religion of truth, that He may make it victorious over every other religion" (lxi: 9) and the encouragement of Jesus to his disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," or the command of the risen Christ, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations," are worlds apart.

Cairo.

E. E. ELDER.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 47