

# Excerpts from ‘The Preaching of Islam’ by Thomas Arnold

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Drawing upon hundreds of resources written in more than ten languages, British Orientalist scholar Thomas Walker Arnold (d. 1930) provides a picture of the spread of Islām different from that of modern loons and rabid Islām haters.

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## 1. Introduction

There is no moral and behavioural code which draws out perfection in human character in a more complete way than the code of Islām. If Muslims were to truly act upon this guidance, they would receive recognition and praise, as they often did in past centuries, when even warring enemies had to concede their moral and ethical superiority.

**Sir Thomas Walker Arnold** (d. 1930) was a knighted British orientalist scholar and historian of Islamic Art who wrote a book titled “**The Preaching Islām**” documenting the spread of Islām across the East and West. Drawing upon hundreds of resources written in more than ten languages, including those from centres of Orientalist studies such as Holland, Arnold provides a picture different from that of modern loons and rabid Islām haters.

In this report we provide numerous excerpts showing how the moral excellence and impeccable character of Muslims, alongside their justice led them to be welcomed by oppressed minorities and adherents of other religions, from the Jews, Christians and Magians.

## **2. Crusaders Accept Islām After Being Robbed and Cheated by Fellow Christians**

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

The history of the ill-fated second Crusade presents us with a very remarkable incident of a similar character. The story, as told by Odo of Deuil, a monk of St. Denis, who, in the capacity of private chaplain to Louis VII, accompanied him on this Crusade and wrote a graphic account of it, runs as follows.

While endeavouring to make their way overland through Asia Minor to Jerusalem the Crusaders sustained a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Turks in the mountain-passes of Phrygia (A.D. 1148), and with difficulty reached the seaport town of Attalia.

Here, all who could afford to satisfy the exorbitant demands of the Greek merchants, took ship for Antioch; while the sick and wounded and the mass of the pilgrims were left behind at the mercy of their treacherous allies, the Greeks, who received five hundred marks from Louis, on condition that they provided an escort for the pilgrims and took care of the sick until they were strong enough to be sent on after the others.

But no sooner had the army left, than the Greeks informed the Turks of the helpless condition of the pilgrims, and quietly looked on while famine, disease and the arrows of the enemy carried havoc and destruction through the camp of these unfortunates.

Driven to desperation, a party of three or four thousand attempted to escape, but were surrounded and cut to pieces by the Turks, who now pressed on to the camp to follow up their victory.

The situation of the survivors would have been utterly hopeless, had not the sight of their misery melted the hearts of the Muhammadans to pity. They tended the sick and relieved the poor and starving with open-handed liberality. Some even bought up the French money which the Greeks had got out of the pilgrims by force or cunning, and lavishly distributed it among the needy.

**So great was the contrast between the kind treatment the pilgrims received from the unbelievers [Muslims] and the cruelty of their fellow-Christians, the Greeks, who imposed forced labour upon them, beat them and robbed them of what little they had left, that many of them voluntarily embraced the faith of their deliverers.**

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co. pp. 75-76.

## 3. Crusaders Abandon Negative Perceptions of Muslims and Accept Islām After Interactions

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

The increasing intercourse between Christians and Muslims, the growing appreciation on the part of the Crusaders of the virtues of their opponents, which so strikingly distinguishes the later from the earlier chroniclers of the Crusades,<sup>[2]</sup> the numerous imitations of Oriental manners and ways of life by the Franks settled in the Holy Land, did not fail to exercise a corresponding influence on religious opinions.

**One of the most remarkable features of this influence is the tolerant attitude of many of the Christian Knights towards the faith of Islam—an attitude of mind that was most vehemently denounced by the Church.**

When Usāma b. Munqidh, a Syrian Amīr of the twelfth century, visited Jerusalem, during a period of truce, the Knights Templar, who had occupied the Masjid al-Aqṣā, assigned to him a small chapel adjoining it, for him to say his prayers in, and they strongly resented the interference with the devotions of their guest on the part of a newly-arrived Crusader, who took this new departure in the direction of religious freedom in very bad part.<sup>[3]</sup>

It would indeed have been strange if religious questions had not formed a topic of discussion on the many occasions when the Crusaders and the Muslims met together on a friendly footing, during the frequent truces, especially when it was religion itself that had brought the Crusaders into the Holy Land and set them upon these constant wars.

**When even Christian theologians were led by their personal intercourse with the Muslims to form a juster estimate of their religion, and contact with new modes of thought was unsettling the minds of men and giving rise to a swarm of heresies, it is not surprising that many should have been drawn into the pale of Islam.**<sup>[4]</sup>

The renegades in the twelfth century were in sufficient numbers to be noticed in the statute books of the Crusaders, the so-called Assises of Jerusalem, according to which, in certain cases, their bail was not accepted...<sup>[5]</sup>

**The heroic life and character of Saladin seems to have exercised an especial fascination on the minds of the Christians of his time; some even of the Christian knights were so strongly attracted towards**

**him that they abandoned the Christian faith and their own people and joined themselves to the Muslims; such was the case, for example, with a certain English Templar, named Robert of St. Albans, who in A.D. 1185 gave up Christianity for Islam and afterwards married a grand-daughter of Saladin.**<sup>[6]</sup>

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co. p. 77-78.
2. Guizot: Histoire de la civilisation en Europe, p. 234. (Paris, 1882.)
3. Usāma b. Munqidh, p. 99.
4. Prutz, pp. 266-7.
5. Assises de la Cour des Bourgeois. (Recueil des historiens des Croisades, Assises de Jerusalem, tome ii. p. 325.)
6. Roger Hoveden, vol. ii. p. 307.

## 4. Native Christians Welcomed Muslim Rule to Escape Tyranny of Fellow Christians

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

**The native Christians certainly preferred the rule of the Muhammadans to that of the Crusaders,<sup>[2]</sup> and when Jerusalem fell finally and for ever into the hands of the Muslims (A.D. 1244), the Christian population of Palestine seems to have welcomed the new masters and to have submitted quietly and contentedly to their rule.**<sup>[3]</sup>

**This same sense of security of religious life under Muslim rule led many of the Christians of Asia Minor, also, about the same time, to welcome the advent of the Saljūq Turks as their deliverers from the hated Byzantine government, not only on account of its oppressive**

system of taxation, but also of the persecuting spirit of the Greek Church, which had with such cruelty crushed the heresies of the Paulicians and the Iconoclasts.

In the reign of Michael VIII (1261-1282), the Turks were often invited to take possession of the smaller towns in the interior of Asia Minor by the inhabitants, that they might escape from the tyranny of the empire; **and both rich and poor often emigrated into Turkish dominions.**<sup>[4]</sup>

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co. p. 82.
2. Prutz, pp. 146-7, 150.
3. The prelates of the Holy Land wrote as follows, in 1244, concerning the invasion of the Khwarizmians, whom Sultan Ayyūb had called in to assist him in driving out the Crusaders :—“Per totam terram usque ad partes Nazareth et Saphet libere nullo resistente discurrunt, occupantes eandem, et inter se quasi propriam dividentes, per villas et cazalia Christianorum legatos et bajulos præficiunt, suscipientes a rusticis redditus et tributa, quæ Christianis præstare solebant, qui jam Christianis hostes effecti et rebelles dictis Corosminis universaliter adhæserunt.” (Matthei Parisiensis Chronica Majora, ed. H. R. Luard, vol. iv. p. 343.) (London, 1872-83.)
4. Finlay, vol. iii. pp. 358-9. J. H. Krause: Die Byzantiner des Mittelalters, p. 276. (Halle, 1869.)

## 5. Christian Copts of Egypt Welcomed the Rule of Muslims to Escape Byzantine Oppression

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

Islam was first introduced into Africa by the Arab army that invaded Egypt under the command of 'Amr b. al-Āṣ<sup>[2]</sup> in A.D. 640. Three years later

the withdrawal of the Byzantine troops abandoned the vast Christian population into the hands of the Muslim conquerors.

**The rapid success of the Arab invaders was largely due to the welcome they received from the native Christians, who hated the Byzantine rule not only for its oppressive administration, but also—and chiefly—on account of the bitterness of theological rancour.**

The Jacobites, who formed the majority of the Christian population, had been very roughly handled by the Orthodox adherents of the court and subjected to indignities that have not been forgotten by their children even to the present day.<sup>[3]</sup>

Some were tortured and then thrown into the sea; many followed their Patriarch into exile to escape from the hands of their persecutors, while a large number disguised their real opinions under a pretended acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>[4]</sup>

**To these Copts, as the Jacobite Christians of Egypt are called, the Muhammadan conquest brought a freedom of religious life such as they had not enjoyed for a century.**

On payment of the tribute, 'Amr left them in undisturbed possession of their churches and guaranteed to them autonomy in all ecclesiastical matters, thus delivering them from the continual interference that had been so grievous a burden under the previous rule; he laid his hands on none of the property of the churches and committed no act of spoliation or pillage.<sup>[5]</sup>

**In the early days of the Muhammadan rule then, the condition of the Copts seems to have been fairly tolerable, and there is no evidence of their widespread apostasy to Islam being due to persecution or unjust pressure on the part of their new rulers.**



**Even before the conquest was complete, while the capital, Alexandria, still held out, many of them went over to Islam,<sup>[6]</sup> and a few years later the example these had set was followed by many others.**

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co. p. 87.
2. He was a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad(صلى الله عليه وسلم).
3. Amélineau, p. 3; Caetani, vol. iv. p. 81 sq. Justinian is said to have had 200,000 Copts put to death in the city of Alexandria, and the persecutions of his successors drove many to take refuge in the desert. (Wansleben: The Present State of Egypt, p. 11.) (London, 1678.)
4. Renaudot, p. 161. Severus, p. 106.
5. John, Jacobite bishop of Nikiu (second half of seventh century), p. 584. Caetani, vol. iv. pp. 515-16.
6. John of Nikiu, p. 560.

## 6. The Christians of Arabia Willingly Accepted Islām and Aided Muslims Against the Persians

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

**Accordingly it is not surprising to find that many of the Christian Bedouins were swept into the rushing tide of this great movement and that Arab tribes, who for centuries had professed the Christian religion, now abandoned it to embrace the Muslim faith.**

Among these was the tribe of the Banū Ghassān, who held sway over the desert east of Palestine and southern Syria, of whom it was said that they were “Lords in the days of the ignorance and stars in Islam.”<sup>[2]</sup>

After the battle of Qādisiyyah (A.H. 14) in which the Persian army under Rustam had been utterly discomfited, many Christians belonging to the Bedouin tribes on both sides of the Euphrates came to the Muslim general and said: “The tribes that at the first embraced Islam were wiser than we. Now that Rustam hath been slain, we will accept the new belief.”<sup>[3]</sup>

Similarly, after the conquest of northern Syria, most of the Bedouin tribes, after hesitating a little, joined themselves to the followers of the Prophet.<sup>[4]</sup>

That force was not the determining factor in these conversions may be judged from the amicable relations that existed between the Christian and the Muslim Arabs. Muḥammad himself had entered into treaty with several Christian tribes, promising them his protection and guaranteeing them the free exercise of their religion and to their clergy undisturbed enjoyment of their old rights and authority...<sup>[5]</sup>

In the battle of the Bridge (A.H. 13) when a disastrous defeat was imminent and the panic-stricken Arabs were hemmed in between the Euphrates and the Persian host, a Christian chief of the Banū Ṭayy sprang forward like another Spurius Lartius to the side of an Arab Horatius, to assist Muthannah the Muslim general in defending the bridge of boats which could alone afford the means of an orderly retreat. When fresh levies were raised to retrieve this disgrace, among the reinforcements that came pouring in from every direction was a Christian tribe of the Banū Namir, who dwelt within the limits of the Byzantine empire, and in the ensuing battle of Buwayb (A.H. 13), just before the final charge of the Arabs that turned the fortune of battle in their favour, Muthannah rode up to the Christian chief and said: “Ye are of one blood with us; come now, and as I charge, charge ye with me.”

The Persians fell back before their furious onslaught, and another great victory was added to the glorious roll of Muslim triumphs. One of the

most gallant exploits of the day was performed by a youth belonging to another Christian tribe of the desert, who with his companions, a company of Bedouin horse-dealers, had come up just as the Arab army was being drawn up in battle array. They threw themselves into the fight on the side of their compatriots; and while the conflict was raging most fiercely, this youth, rushing into the centre of the Persians, slew their leader, and leaping on his richly-caparisoned horse, galloped back amidst the plaudits of the Muslim line, crying as he passed in triumph: “I am of the Banū Taghlib. I am he that hath slain the chief.”<sup>[6]</sup>

**The tribe to which this young man boasted that he belonged was one of those that elected to remain Christian, while other tribes of Mesopotamia, such as the Banū Namir and the Banū Quḍā'ah, became Muslim...**

**From the examples given above of the toleration extended towards the Christian Arabs by the victorious Muslims of the first century of the Hijrah and continued by succeeding generations, we may surely infer that those Christian tribes that did embrace Islam, did so of their own choice and free will.**<sup>[7]</sup>

The Christian Arabs of the present day, dwelling in the midst of a Muhammadan population, are a living testimony of this toleration... Many of the Arabs of the renowned tribe of the Banū Ghassān, Arabs of the purest blood, who embraced Christianity towards the end of the fourth century, still retain the Christian faith, and since their submission to the Church of Rome, about two centuries ago, employ the Arabic language in their religious services.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co. p. 44.
2. Mas'ūdī, tome iv. p. 238

3. Muir's Caliphate, pp. 121-2
4. Caetani, vol. iii. p. 814 (§ 323).
5. Caetani, vol. ii. pp. 260, 299, 351.
6. Muir : Caliphate, pp. 90-4.
7. "Gli Arabi nei primi anni non perseguitarono invece alcuno per ragioni di fede, non si diedero pena alcuna per convertire chicchessia, sicchè sotto l'Islām, dopo le prime conquiste, i cristiani Semiti godono d'una tolleranza religiosa quale non si era mai vista da varie generazioni." (Caetani, vol. v. p. 4.).
8. W.G. Palgrave: Essays on Eastern Questions, pp. 206-8. (London, 1872.)

## 7. Christians Preferring the Justice and Toleration of Islām to Escape Persecution by Christians

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

**If we turn from the Bedouins to consider the attitude of the settled inhabitants of the towns and the non-Arab population towards the new religion, we do not find that the Arab conquest was so rapidly followed by conversions to Islam.**

The Christians of the great cities of the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire seem for the most part to have remained faithful to their ancestral creed, to which indeed they still in large numbers cling.\*

\* Arnold notes that Arab conquest over the Christian lands did not lead to large-scale conversions. Conversions happened afterwards, and they were willing conversions after Christians saw the justice and toleration of Islām. Rather, they preferred the rule of Islām over that of their fellow Christians. Arnold goes on to explain how Christians, fearing that they might be persecuted by other Christians on grounds

of centuries old sectarian differences that had arisen, willingly and eagerly received government by Muslims:

Arnold continues:

But Heraclius shared the fate of so many would-be peace-makers: for not only did the controversy [about the nature of Christ] blaze up again all the more fiercely, but he himself was stigmatised as a heretic and drew upon himself the wrath of both parties.

Indeed, so bitter was the feeling he aroused that there is strong reason to believe that even a majority of the orthodox subjects of the Roman Empire, in the provinces that were conquered during this emperor's reign, were the well-wishers of the Arabs ; they regarded the emperor with aversion as a heretic, and were afraid that he might commence a persecution in order to force upon them his Monotheistic opinions.<sup>[2]</sup>

**They therefore readily — and even eagerly — received the new masters who promised them religious toleration, and were willing to compromise their religious position and their national independence if only they could free themselves from the immediately impending danger. The people of Emessa closed the gates of their city against the army of Heraclius and told the Muslims that they preferred their government and justice to the injustice and oppression of the Greeks.**<sup>[3]</sup>

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co. p. 44.

2. That such fears were not wholly groundless may be judged from the emperor's intolerant behaviour towards many of the Monophysite party in his progress through Syria after the defeat of the Persians in 627. (See Michael the Elder, vol. ii. p. 412, and Caetani, vol. ii. p. 1049.) For the

outrages committed by the Byzantine soldiers on their coreligionists in the reign of Constans II (642-668), see Michael the Elder, vol. ii. p. 443. 3. Al-Balādhri, p. 147.

## 8. Patriarch of Antioch (1199 AD): Muslims Sent by God to Establish Justice Among Christians

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

Michael the Elder [1199 AD], Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, writing in the latter half of the twelfth century, could approve the decision of his coreligionists and see the finger of God in the Arab conquests even after the Eastern churches had had experience of five centuries of Muhammadan rule.

After recounting the persecutions of Heraclius, he writes:

**‘This is why the God of vengeance, who alone is all-powerful, and changes the empire of mortals as He will, giving it to whomsoever He will, and uplifting the humble — beholding the wickedness of the Romans who, throughout their dominions, cruelly plundered our churches and our monasteries and condemned us without pity — brought from the region of the south the sons of Ishmael, to deliver us through them from the hands of the Romans.**

And, if in truth, we have suffered some loss, because the Catholic churches, that had been taken away from us and given to the Chalcedonians, remained in their possession; for when the cities submitted to the Arabs, they assigned to each denomination the churches which they found it to be in possession of (and at that time the great church of Emessa and that of Harran had been taken away from us); nevertheless **it was no slight advantage for us to be delivered**

**from the cruelty of the Romans, their wickedness, their wrath and cruel zeal against us, and to find ourselves at peace.'**<sup>[2]</sup>

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), p. 54.
2. Michael the Elder, vol. ii. pp. 412-13. Barhebræus, about a century later, wrote in a similar strain. (Chronicon Ecclesiasticum, ed. J. B. Abbeloos et Lamy, p. 474.)

## 9. Christians of Syria and Jordan Welcoming Muslim Armies With Profound Respect

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

When the Muslim army reached the valley of the Jordan and Abū 'Ubaydah pitched his camp at Fihl, the Christian inhabitants of the country wrote to the Arabs, saying: **'O Muslims, we prefer you to the Byzantines, though they are of our own faith, because you keep better faith with us and are more merciful to us and refrain from doing us injustice and your rule over us is better than theirs, for they have robbed us of our goods and our homes.'**<sup>[2]</sup>

**The people of Emessa closed the gates of their city against the army of Heraclius and told the Muslims that they preferred their government and justice to the injustice and oppression of the Greeks.**<sup>[3]</sup>

Such was the state of feeling in Syria during the campaign of 633-639 in which the Arabs gradually drove the Roman army out of the province. And when Damascus, in 637, set the example of making terms with the Arabs, and thus secured immunity from plunder and other favourable conditions, the rest of the cities of Syria were not slow to follow. Emessa,

Arethusa, Hieropolis and other towns entered into treaties whereby they became tributary to the Arabs. Even the patriarch of Jerusalem surrendered the city on similar terms.

The fear of religious compulsion on the part of the heretical emperor made the promise of Muslim toleration appear more attractive than the connection with the Roman Empire and a Christian government.

**Further, the self-restraint of the conquerors and the humanity which they displayed in their campaigns, must have excited profound respect<sup>[4]</sup> and secured a welcome for an invading army that was guided by such principles of justice and moderation as were laid down by the Caliph Abu Bakr...**

NOTE: These principles being referred to are mentioned in a report from al-Ṭabarī in his Tārīkh, wherein Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (رضي الله عنه), the first Caliph, advised the leader of the Muslim army, Usāmah bin Zayd (رضي الله عنه) with the following:<sup>[5]</sup>

O people, stop [for a moment], I advise you with ten:

- 01** Do not be treacherous (with secret violation of agreements).
- 02** Do not take spoils of war dishonestly.
- 03** Do not be treacherous (with open violation of agreements).
- 04** Do not mutilate (those who die in battle).
- 05** Do not kill a small child, an old man, or a woman.
- 06** Do not cut-down or burn the date-palm tree.
- 07** Do not cut fruit-bearing trees.
- 08** Do not slaughter any sheep, cow or camel unless it is for eating.
- 09** You will come upon a people who have isolated themselves in monasteries, so leave them alone and what they have preoccupied themselves with.
- 10** You will come upon people who come to you with vessels of various types of food. If you eat anything from them, mention the name of Allāh over them.



## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), p. 49.
2. Azdī, p. 97.
3. Balādhurī, p. 137.
4. For the outrages committed by the Byzantine soldiers on the other hand, on their co-religionists in Cappadocia, in their reign of Constans II (642-668), see Michel le Grand, p. 234.
5. Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī (2/463).

## 10. Islām Saved Christians From Self-Destruction and Oppression and Gave Them Security and Justice

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

**Indeed, so far from the development of the Christian Church being hampered by the establishment of Muhammadan rule, the history of the Nestorians exhibits a remarkable outburst of religious life and energy from the time of their becoming subject to the Muslims.**<sup>[2]</sup>

Alternately petted and persecuted by the Persian kings, in whose dominions by far the majority of the members of this sect were found, it had passed a rather precarious existence and had been subjected to harsh treatment, when war between Persia and Byzantium exposed it to the suspicion of sympathising with the Christian enemy.

**But, under the rule of the caliphs, the security they enjoyed at home enabled them to vigorously push forward their missionary enterprises abroad.** Missionaries were sent into China and India, both of which were raised to the dignity of metropolitan sees in the eighth century; about the same period they gained a footing in Egypt, and later

spread the Christian faith right across Asia, and by the eleventh century had gained many converts from among the Tatars.<sup>[3]</sup>

If the other Christian sects failed to exhibit the same vigorous life, it was not the fault of the Muhammadans. **All were tolerated alike by the supreme government, and furthermore were prevented from persecuting one another.**<sup>[4]</sup>

In the fifth century, Barsauma, a Nestorian bishop, had persuaded the Persian king to set on foot a fierce persecution of the Orthodox Church, by representing Nestorius as a friend of the Persians and his doctrines as approximating to their own; as many as 7800 of the Orthodox clergy, with an enormous number of laymen, are said to have been butchered during this persecution.<sup>[5]</sup>

Another persecution was instituted against the Orthodox by Khusrau II, after the invasion of Persia by Heraclius, at the instigation of a Jacobite, who persuaded the King that the Orthodox would always be favourably inclined towards the Byzantines.<sup>[6]</sup>

**But the principles of Muslim toleration forbade such acts of injustice as these: on the contrary, it seems to have been their endeavour to deal fairly by all their Christian subjects: e.g. after the conquest of Egypt, the Jacobites took advantage of the expulsion of the Byzantine authorities to rob the Orthodox of their churches, but later they were restored by the Muhammadans to their rightful owners when these had made good their claim to possess them.**<sup>[7]</sup>

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1913), p. 68-69.
2. A Dominican monk from Florence, by name Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, who visited the East about the close of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century, speaks of the toleration the Nestorians had

enjoyed under Muhammadan rule right up to his time: " Et ego inveni per antiquas historias et autenticas apud Saracenos, quod ipsi Nestorini amici fuerunt Machometi et confederati cum eo, et quod ipse Machometus mandavit suis posteris, quod Nestorinos maxime conseruarent. Quod usque hodie diligenter obseruant ipsi Sarraceni." (Laurent, p. 128.)

3. J. Labourt: De Timotheo, Nestorianorum Patriarcha, p. 37 sqq. (Paris, 1904.)

4. E. von Dobschütz, p. 390-1.

5. Michael the Elder, vol. ii. p. 439-40.

6. Makīn, p. 12. J. Labourt: Le Christianisme sous la dynastie sassanide, p. 139 sq. (Paris, 1904.)

7. Renaudot, p. 169.

## 11. Christians Rushed to the Purity of Islāmic Monotheism From a ‘Bastard Oriental Christianity’

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

**In view of the toleration thus extended to their Christian subjects in the early period of the Muslim rule, the common hypothesis of the sword as the factor of conversion seems hardly satisfactory, and we are compelled to seek for other motives than that of persecution...**

Many Christian theologians<sup>[2]</sup> have supposed that the debased condition—moral and spiritual—of the Eastern Church of that period must have alienated the hearts of many and driven them to seek a healthier spiritual atmosphere in the faith of Islam which had come to them in all the vigour of new-born zeal.<sup>[3]</sup>

For example, Dean Milman<sup>[4]</sup> asks, “What was the state of the Christian world in the provinces exposed to the first invasion of Mohammedanism? Sect opposed to sect, clergy wrangling with clergy

upon the most abstruse and metaphysical points of doctrine. The orthodox, the Nestorians, the Eutychians, the Jacobites were persecuting each other with unexhausted animosity; and it is not judging too severely the evils of religious controversy to suppose that many would rejoice in the degradation of their adversaries under the yoke of the unbeliever, rather than make common cause with them in defence of the common Christianity. In how many must this incessant disputation have shaken the foundations of their faith! **It had been wonderful if thousands had not, in their weariness and perplexity, sought refuge from these interminable and implacable controversies in the simple, intelligible truth of the Divine Unity, though purchased by the acknowledgment of the prophetic mission of Mohammed.**”

Similarly, Caetani sees in the spread of Islam, among the Christians of the Eastern Churches, a revulsion of feeling from the dogmatic subtleties introduced into Christian theology by the Hellenistic spirit, “For the East, with its love of clear and simple concepts, Hellenic culture was, from the religious point of view, a misfortune, because it changed the sublime and simple teachings of Christ into a creed bristling with incomprehensible dogmas, Pull of doubts and uncertainties; these ended with producing a feeling of deep dismay and shook the very foundations of religious belief; **so that when at last there appeared, coming out suddenly from the desert, the news of the new revelation, this bastard oriental Christianity, torn asunder by internal discords, wavering in its fundamental dogmas, dismayed by such incertitudes, could no longer resist the temptations of a new faith, which swept away at one single stroke all miserable doubts, and offered, along with simple, clear and undisputed doctrines, great material advantages also. The East then abandoned Christ and threw itself into the arms of the Prophet of Arabia.** <sup>[5]</sup>

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1913), p. 69-71.
2. Cf. in addition to the passages quoted below, M'Clintoch & Strong's Cyclopædia, sub art. Mohammedanism, vol. vi. p. 420. James Freeman Clarke : Ten Great Religions, Part ii. p. 75. (London, 1883.)
3. Thus the Emperor Heraclius is represented by the Muhammadan historian as saying, “Their religion is a new religion which gives them new zeal.” (Ṭabarī, p. 2103.)
4. History of Latin Christianity, vol. ii. pp. 216-17.
5. Caetani, vol. ii. pp. 1045-6.

## 12. Islām Spread Swiftly Through Removal of Superstition, Corruption and Injustice

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

Again, Canon Taylor<sup>[2]</sup> says:

“It is easy to understand why this reformed Judaism [meaning Islam]<sup>[3]</sup> spread so swiftly over Africa and Asia.

The African and Syrian doctors had substituted abstruse metaphysical dogmas for the religion of Christ: they tried to combat the licentiousness of the age by setting forth the celestial merit of celibacy and the angelic excellence of virginity—seclusion from the world was the road of holiness, dirt was the characteristic of monkish sanctity—**the people were practically polytheists, worshipping a crowd of martyrs, saints and angels; the upper classes were effeminate and corrupt, the middle classes oppressed by taxation,**<sup>[4]</sup> the slaves without hope for the present or the future.

As with the besom of God, **Islam swept away this mass of corruption and superstition. It was a revolt against empty theological polemics;**

**it was a masculine protest against the exaltation of celibacy as a crown of piety. It brought out the fundamental dogmas of religion—the unity and greatness of God, that He is merciful and righteous, that He claims obedience to His will, resignation and faith.**

**It proclaimed the responsibility of man, a future life, a day of judgment, and stern retribution to fall upon the wicked; and enforced the duties of prayer, almsgiving, fasting and benevolence.**

**It thrust aside the artificial virtues, the religious frauds and follies, the perverted moral sentiments, and the verbal subtleties of theological disputants. It replaced monkishness by manliness. It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature.”**

## **Footnotes**

1. The Preaching of Islam (1913), p.71-72.
2. A paper read before the Church Congress at Wolverhampton, October 7th. 1887.
3. Meaning to say that Islam is a correction or reformation of an errant Judaism.
4. For the oppressive fiscal system under the Byzantine empire, see Gfrörer: Byzantjnische Geschichten, vol. ii. pp. 337-9, 389-91, 450.

## **13. 20,000 Jews, Christians and Magians Accepted Islām After Death of Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal**

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

“On the other hand, the influence of the more orthodox doctors of Islam in the conversion of unbelievers is attested by the tradition that twenty

thousand Christians, Jews and Magians became Muslims when the great Imām Ibn Ḥanbal died.”<sup>[2]</sup>

Commentary: The great Muslim scholar, Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 855) was respected and revered greatly by non-Muslims. He was treated by a Christian physician once. When the Christian entered upon him, he said: “I have desired to see you for many years. Your presence is not only rectification for the people of Islām, but for the whole of creation. There is to be found none amongst our Christian associates except that he is pleased with you.”<sup>[3]</sup>

As has preceded in earlier parts of this series, Christians received justice, moderation and tolerance from the Muslims, and they recognised the role of Muslim scholars in encouraging and admonishing their rulers to abide by justice and fairness. This was after they had faced centuries of persecution from their co-religionists, as Christians had been torn apart by religious dogmas and controversies and were slaughtering and oppressing each other.

**Islām literally saved them from them self-destruction and brought them security, justice and even invigoration.**

The funeral of Imām Aḥmad was attended by close to 900,000 people and this had a deep impact on Jews, Christians and Magians who were subjects under Muslim rule, enjoying its justice and moderation. Seeing the effect of belief in the Divine Unicity (Tawhīd) and the Qurʾān upon the character of the Muslims, tens of thousands accepted Islām, willingly, without compulsion.

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1913), p.74-75.
2. Ibn Khallikān, vol. i. p. 45.
3. In the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad (p. 79) with checking of Aḥmad Shākīr.

## 14. What Attracted Christians to Islām and Led Them to Conversion

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

While there was so much in the Christian society of the time to repel, there was much in the character and life of the [Muslim] Turks to attract, and the superiority of the early Ottomans as compared with the degradation of the guides and teachers of the Christian Church would naturally impress devout minds that revolted from the selfish ambition, simony and corruption of the Greek ecclesiastics.

**Christian writers constantly praise these [Muslim] Turks for the earnestness and intensity of their religious life; their zeal in the performance of the observances prescribed by their faith; the outward decency and modesty displayed in their apparel and mode of living; the absence of ostentatious display and the simplicity of life observable even in the great and powerful.**<sup>[2]</sup>

The annalist of the embassy from the Emperor Leopold I to the Ottoman Porte in 1665-1666, especially eulogises the devoutness and regularity of the Turks in prayer...

Many a tribute of praise is given to the virtues of the Turks even by Christian writers who bore them no love ; one such [Alexander Ross] who had a very poor opinion of their religion, speaks of them as follows :

‘Even in ... Alcoran you shall find some jewels of Christian Virtues; and indeed if Christians will but diligently read and observe the Laws and Histories of the Mahometans, **they may blush to see how zealous they are in the works of devotion, piety, and charity, how devout, cleanly, and reverend in their Mosques, how obedient to their Priest,**



**that even the great Turk himself will attempt nothing without consulting his Mufti; how careful are they to observe their hours of prayer five times a day wherever they are, or however employed. How constantly do they observe their Fasts from morning till night a whole month together; how loving and charitable the Muslemans are to each other, and how careful of strangers may be seen by their Hospitals, both for the Poor and for Travellers; if we observe their Justice, Temperance, and other moral Vertues, we may truly blush at our own coldness, both in devotion and charity, at our injustice, intemperance, and oppression; doubtless these Men will rise up in judgment against us; and surely their devotion, piety and works of mercy are main causes of the growth of Mahometism.'**<sup>[3]</sup>

The same conclusion is drawn by a modern historian , who writes:

‘We find that many Greeks of high talent and moral character were so sensible of the superiority of the Mohammedans, that even when they escaped being drafted into the Sultan's household as tribute-children, they voluntarily embraced the faith of Mahomet. **The moral superiority of Othoman society must be allowed to have had as much weight in causing these conversions, which were numerous in the fifteenth century, as the personal ambition of individuals.**’ End of quote from Arnold.

### **Comment:**

There is no doubt that in history fanatical Christians showed disdain for Islām and its adherents based upon either pride and arrogance or misconceptions. However, this did not prevent them from being truthful about observed realities which could not be denied with the senses.

As you can see from some of the quotes above, Islām-haters of the past had the decency to be truthful and just about the tremendous good they saw from Muslims, despite their hate and religious fanaticism.

This shows the difference between Christians of the past (and no doubt there are many like this that still exist today) and the dishonest and fraudulent such as Tommy Robinson and the unintelligent riff-raff of the EDL, Britain First and others posing as Christians, trying to incite their crusade.

They compare not to those hateful Christians for whom at least some respect can be given if only for the virtue of truthfulness in speech regarding the matter at hand. What is enraging them is that educated Christian people [the majority of them women too] are accepting Islām precisely because of the reasons given in the quote from Alexander Ross. Go and read it one more time.

So what they are doing is using the actions of sinful, evil Muslim criminals [which Islām condemns and for which it specifies capital punishment] to spread lies about Islām and Muslims as a means of hindering others from learning about Islām objectively, out of pure envy, jealousy and hate, all concealed under the alleged banner of opposing and fighting radical Islām.

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1913), p.74-75.
2. Turchicæ Spurcitiaë Suggillatio, fol. xiii. (b); fol. xv. (b); fol. xvii. (b); fol. xx. (a). Veniero, pp. 32, 36. Busbecq, p. 174.
3. Alexander Ross, p. ix

## 15. The Spread of Islām to Persia: Zoroastrians Welcome Muslims as Deliverers From Tyranny

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

In order to follow the course of the spread of Islam westward into Central Asia, we must retrace our steps to the period of the first Arab conquests.

By the middle of the seventh century, the great dynasty of the Sāsānids had fallen, and the vast empire of Persia that for four centuries had withstood the might of Rome and Byzantium, now became the heritage of the Muslims.

When the armies of the state had been routed, the mass of the people offered little resistance; the reigns of the last representatives of the Sāsānid dynasty had been marked by terrible anarchy, and the sympathies of the people had been further alienated from their rulers on account of the support they gave to the persecuting policy of the state religion of Zoroastrianism.

The Zoroastrian priests had acquired an enormous influence in the state; they were well-nigh all-powerful in the councils of the king and arrogated to themselves a very large share in the civil administration. They took advantage of their position to persecute all those religious bodies—and they were many—that dissented from them. Besides the numerous adherents of older forms of the Persian religion, there were Christians, Jews, Sabæans and numerous sects in which the speculations of Gnostics, Manichæans and Buddhists found expression.

**In all of these, persecution had stirred up feelings of bitter hatred against the established religion and the dynasty that supported its oppressions, and so caused the Arab conquest to appear in the light of a deliverance.<sup>[2]</sup> The followers of all these varied forms of faith could breathe again under a rule that granted them religious freedom and exemption from military service, on payment of a light tribute...**

To the distracted Christian Church in Persia the change of government brought relief from the oppression of the Sāsānid kings, who had fomented the bitter struggles of Jacobites and Nestorians and added to the confusion of warring sects.

Some reference has already been made to earlier persecutions, and even during the expiring agony of the Sāsānid dynasty, Khusrau II, exasperated at the defeat he had suffered at the hands of the Christian emperor, Heraclius, ordered a fresh persecution of the Christians within his dominions, a persecution from which all the various Christian sects alike had to suffer.

These terrible conditions may well have prepared men's minds for that revulsion of feeling that facilitates a change of faith. 'Side by side with the political chaos in the state was the moral confusion that filled the minds of the Christians; distracted by such an accumulation of disasters and by the moral agony wrought by the furious conflict of so many warring doctrines among them, they tended towards that peculiar frame of mind in which a new doctrine finds it easy to take root, making a clean sweep of such a bewildering babel and striving to reconstruct faith and society on a new basis.

**In other words the people of Persia, and especially the Semitic races, were just in the very mental condition calculated to make them welcome the Islamic revolution and urge them on to enthusiastically embrace the new and rugged creed, which with its complete and virile simplicity swept away at one stroke all those dark mists, opened the soul to new, alluring and tangible hopes, and promised immediate release from a miserable state of servitude.<sup>[3]</sup> But the Muslim creed was most eagerly welcomed by the townsfolk, the industrial classes and the artisans, whose occupations made them impure according to the Zoroastrian creed, because in the pursuance of their trade or occupations they defiled fire, earth or water, and who thus, outcasts in the eyes of the law and treated**

**with scant consideration in consequence, embraced with eagerness a creed that made them at once free men, and equal in a brotherhood of faith.**<sup>[4]</sup>

Nor were the conversions from Zoroastrianism itself less striking : the fabric of the National Church had fallen with a crash in the general ruin of the dynasty that had before upheld it; having no other centre round which to rally, **the followers of this creed would find the transition to Islam a simple and easy one, owing to the numerous points of similarity in the old creed and the new...**

That this widespread conversion was not due to force or violence is evidenced by the toleration extended to those who still clung to their ancient faith. Even to the present day there are some small communities of fire-worshippers to be found in certain districts of Persia, and though these have in later years often had to suffer persecution,<sup>[5]</sup> their ancestors in the early centuries of the Hijrah enjoyed a remarkable degree of toleration, their fire-temples were respected, and we even read of a Muhammadan general (in the reign of al-Mu'taṣim, A.D. 833-842), who ordered an imām and a mu'adhdhin to be flogged because they had destroyed a fire-temple in Sughd and built a mosque in its place.<sup>[6]</sup>

In the tenth century, three centuries after the conquest of the country, fire-temples were to be found in 'Irāq, Fārs, Kirmān, Sijistān, Khurāsān, Jibāl, Ādharbayjān and Arrān, i. e. in almost every province of Persia.<sup>[7]</sup> In Fārs itself there were hardly any cities or districts in which fire-temples and Magians were not to be found.<sup>[8]</sup> Al-Sharastānī also (writing as late as the twelfth century), makes mention of a fire-temple at Isfīniyā, in the neighbourhood of Baghdād itself.<sup>[9]</sup>

**In the face of such facts, it is surely impossible to attribute the decay of Zoroastrianism entirely to violent conversions made by the Muslim conquerors.**

The number of Persians who embraced Islam in the early days of the Arab rule was probably very large from the various reasons given above, but the late survival of their ancient faith and the occasional record of conversions in the course of successive centuries, render it probable that the acceptance of Islam was both peaceful and voluntary

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), p.177 onwards.
2. Caetani, vol. ii. pp. 910-11. A. de Gobineau (1), pp. 55-6.
3. Caetani, vol. ii. p. 910.
4. A de Gobineau (2), pp. 306-10.
5. Dosabhai Framji Karaka: History of the Parsis, vol. i. pp. 56-9, 62-7. (London, 1884.) Nicolas de Khanikoff says that there were 12,000 families of fire-worshippers in Kirmān at the end of the 18th century. (Mémoire sur la partie méridionale de l'Asie centrale, p. 193. Paris, 1861.)
6. Chwolsohn, vol. i. pi 287.
7. Mas'ūdī, vol. iv. p. 86.
8. Iṣṭakhrī , pp. 100, 118. Ibn Ḥawqal, pp. 189-190.
9. Kitāb al-Milal wa1-Niḥal, edited by Cureton, part i. p. 198.

## 16. The Spread of Islām to Spain: Warmly Welcomed by Persecuted Jews, Down-Trodden Slaves and Social Classes

Arnold writes:<sup>[1]</sup>

In 711 the victorious Arabs introduced Islam into Spain: in 1502 an edict of Ferdinand and Isabella forbade the exercise of the Muhammadan religion throughout the kingdom.

**During the centuries that elapsed between these two dates; Muslim Spain had written one of the brightest pages in the history of medieval Europe.**

Her [i.e Islam] influence had passed through Provence into the other countries of Europe, bringing into birth a new poetry and a new culture, and it was from her that Christian scholars received what of Greek philosophy and science they had to stimulate their mental activity up to the time of the Renaissance.

But these triumphs of the civilised life—art and poetry, science and philosophy—we must pass over here and fix our attention on the religious condition of Spain under the Muslim rule.

When the Muhammadans first brought their religion into Spain they found Catholic Christianity firmly established after its conquest over Arianism. The sixth Council of Toledo had enacted that all kings were to swear that they would not suffer the exercise of any other religion but the Catholic, and would vigorously enforce the law against all dissentients, while a subsequent law forbade any one under pain of confiscation of his property and perpetual imprisonment, to call in question the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Evangelical Institutions, the definitions of the Fathers, the decrees of the Church, and the Holy Sacraments.

The clergy had gained for their order a preponderating influence in the affairs of the state;<sup>[2]</sup> the bishops and chief ecclesiastics sat in the national councils, which met to settle the most important business of the realm, ratified the election of the king and claimed the right to depose him if he refused to abide by their decrees.

**The Christian clergy took advantage of their power to persecute the Jews, who formed a very large community in Spain; edicts of a brutally severe character were passed against such as refused to be**

**baptised;<sup>[3]</sup> and they consequently hailed the invading Arabs as their deliverers from such cruel oppression, they garrisoned the captured cities on behalf of the conqueror and opened the gates of towns that were being besieged.<sup>[4]</sup>**

**The Muhammadans received as warm a welcome from the slaves, whose condition under the Gothic rule was a very miserable one, and whose knowledge of Christianity was too superficial to have any weight when compared with the liberty and numerous advantages they gained, by throwing in their lot with the Muslims.**

These down-trodden slaves were the first converts to Islam in Spain. The remnants of the heathen population of which we find mention as late as A.D. 693,<sup>[5]</sup> probably followed their example. **Many of the Christian nobles, also, whether from genuine conviction or from other motives, embraced the new creed.<sup>[6]</sup>**

**Many converts were won, too, from the lower and middle classes, who may well have embraced Islam, not merely outwardly, but from genuine conviction, turning to it from a religion whose ministers had left them ill-instructed and uncared for, and busied with worldly ambitions had plundered and oppressed their flocks.<sup>[7]</sup>**

Having once become Muslims, these Spanish converts showed themselves zealous adherents of their adopted faith, and they and their children joined themselves to the Puritan party of the rigid Muhammadan theologians as against the careless and luxurious life of the Arab aristocracy.<sup>[8]</sup>

**At the time of the Muhammadan conquest the old Gothic virtues are said by Christian historians to have declined and given place to effeminacy and corruption, so that the Muhammadan rule appeared to them to be a punishment sent from God on those who had gone astray into the paths of vice...<sup>[9]</sup>**



The toleration of the Muhammadan government towards its Christian subjects in Spain and the freedom of inter-course between the adherents of the two religions brought about a certain amount of assimilation in the two communities. Inter-marriages became frequent,<sup>[10]</sup> Isidore of Beja, who fiercely inveighs against the Muslim conquerors, records the marriage of 'Abd al-'Azīz, the son of Mūsā, with the widow of King Roderic, without a word of blame.<sup>[11]</sup>

Many of the Christians adopted Arab names, and in outward observances imitated to some extent their Muhammadan neighbours, e.g. many were circumcised,<sup>[12]</sup> and in matters of food and drink followed the practice of the "unbaptized pagans..."<sup>[13]</sup>

**From such close intercourse with the Muslims and so diligent a study of their literature—when we find even so bigoted an opponent of Islam as Alvar<sup>[14]</sup> acknowledging that the Qur'ān was composed in such eloquent and beautiful language that even Christians could not help reading and admiring it...** What deep roots Islam had struck in the hearts of the Spanish people may be judged from the fact that when the last remnant of the Moriscoes was expelled from Spain in 1610, these unfortunate people still clung to the faith of their fathers, although for more than a century they had been forced to outwardly conform to the Christian religion, and in spite of the emigrations that had taken place since the fall of Granada, nearly 500,000 are said to have been expelled at that time.<sup>[15]</sup> Whole towns and villages were deserted and the houses fell into ruins, there being no one to rebuild them.<sup>[16]</sup>

These Moriscoes were probably all descendants of the original inhabitants of the country, with little or no admixture of Arab blood; the reasons that may be adduced in support of this statement are too lengthy to be given here; **one point only in the evidence may be mentioned, derived from a letter written in 1311, in which it is stated that of the 200,000 Muhammadans then living in the city of**

**Granada, not more than 500 were of Arab descent, all the rest being descendants of converted Spaniards.** [\[17\]](#)

## Footnotes

1. The Preaching of Islam (1896), p.177 onwards.
2. Baudissin, p. 22.
3. Helfferich, p. 68.
4. Makkarī, vol. i. pp. 280-2.
5. Baudissin, p. 7.
6. Dozy (2), tome ii. pp. 45-6.
7. A. Müller, vol. ii. p. 463.
8. Dozy (2), tome ii. pp. 44-6.
9. So St. Boniface (A.D. 745, Epist. lxii.). (pp. 531-2).
10. See the letter of Pope Hadrian I to the Spanish bishops : (Migne : Patr. Lat., tome xcvi. p. 385.)
11. Isidori Pacensis Chronicon, § 42 (p. 1266).
12. Alvar: Indic. Lum., § 35 (p. 53). John of Gorz, § 123 (p. 303).
13. Letter of Hadrian I, p. 385. John of Gorz, § 123 (p. 303).
14. Alvar: Ind. Lum.. § 29. (Migne : Patr. Lat., tome cxxi. p. 546.)
15. Lea, The Moriscos, p. 259.
16. Morgan, vol. ii. p. 337.
17. Id. p. 289.

## 17. Conclusion

What has preceded are only some examples from Arnold's book and there are hundreds more that could be extracted from other non-Muslim sources.

The intent behind them is to show that the pillars, commands and prohibitions of Islām and its morality and ethics have been shown to nurture human character to a level of perfection that is—even if

unwillingly—recognised by enemies and foes, even in the midst of conflict and war, and whose factual realities, even the most bigoted and hateful cannot dismiss.

It is from this angle that one can appreciate why Islām is winning large numbers and rapidly growing through conversions, despite all of the immense negativity.

**Those who interact with devout, upright Muslims who are upon an orthodox understanding of Islām find great disparity between how Muslims are presented in the media and what they have directly learned and personally experienced with Muslims.**

It is important to note that not all Muslim individuals, societies or nations may exhibit the types of ethics and qualities which have been exemplified above. To take drug-dealers, pimps, groomers, murderers, oppressors, extremists, terrorists and the injustices of localised cultural traditions as examples of what Islām is and what it calls to is from profound ignorance or pure dishonesty.

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