

SENTENCES

O F

A L I

Son-in-Law of

M A H O M E T,

A N D H I S

Fourth Successor.

(1st.)

Translated from an Authentick *Arabick* Manuscript in the *Bodleian* Library at *Oxford*,

By **SIMON OCKLEY, B. D.**

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L O N D O N,

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T O
THOMAS FREKE
Of Hannington, Wilts, Esq;

S I R,

 Presume to present You with these few SENTENCES, at whose Request I Translated them out of the *Arabick* Manuscript. Your Approbation of them, prevents my saying any thing more to You concerning them.

Only give me leave to add this, That there are few Persons of your Generous Temper, who, as You are pleased to say, value the *Arabians* purely upon the score of their *Sincerity*, and their being entirely *in Earnest* both in their Words and Actions. Certainly they were very much so; and it were heartily

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to be wished, that we who despise them, could learn, at least in that respect, to follow their Example.

Give me leave, Sir, here to acknowledge my Obligation to You, for Your kind Assistance, in promoting my *Second Volume of the History of the Saracens*. You were pleas'd first to invite me to that Work; and the Publick will be indebted to You, at least, that it was done so soon, if not that it was ever done at all.

I know, Sir, you hate Flattery, as inconsistent with that Simplicity of Manners which You so justly admire in the *Arabians*; wherefore I add no more, lest You should mistake me.

I am, SIR,

Your most obliged,

humble Servant,

SIMON OCKLEY.

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against the Impertinence of those who imagine that they know every thing, when in reality they understand nothing.

And to be more particular: The Folly of the Westerlings, in despising the Wisdom of the Eastern Nations, and looking upon them as Brutes and Barbarians; whilst we arrogate to our selves every thing that is Wise and Polite; and if we chance to light upon a just Thought, we applaud our selves upon the Discovery, tho' it was better understood Three Thousand Years ago.

This happens to us through want of good Reading, and a true Way of Thinking; for the Case is this, That little smattering of Knowledge which we have, is entirely derived from the East. They first communicated it to the Greeks, (a vain, conceited People, who never penetrated into the Depths of Oriental Wisdom) from whom the Romans had theirs. And after Barbarity had spread itself over the Western World, the Arabians, by their Conquests, restored it again in Europe: And it is the wildest Conceit that can be imagined, for us to suppose that
we

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we have greater Genius's, or greater Application, than is to be found in those Countries: If it be allowed that we have of late made greater Advances in the Sciences; that is not so much to our present Purpose, as the Consideration of Things of Universal Necessity, the Fear of God, the Regulation of our Appetites, prudent Oeconomy, Decency and Sobriety of Behaviour in all Conditions and Emergencies of Life; in any of which Articles, (which, after all, are the Grand Concern) if the Westerlings have made any, even the least Improvement, to the Eastern Wisdom, I must confess my self to be very much mistaken.

They have their Wisdom by Inheritance, derived from their Fore-fathers through numerous Generations. They are tenacious of their Ancient Customs, and retain the Precepts of their Ancestors; they couch more solid Wisdom under one single Aphorism, than some European Writers would put into a System.

They govern their Families with Prudence and Discretion. We make their Polygamy an Objection against them; but we must consider that they are not Christians, and there-

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therefore continue their Way of Living, after the Patriarchal Manner. But to say no more upon that Point, how would they abhor and abominate the horrible Instances which we have of European Lewdness!

How would they smile, to see a Man jangling it out with his Wife thirty or forty Years together, which of the Two should govern the Family! Others calling Riot and Excess, Impertinence and Rage, good Fellowship! Another bespeaking a New Suit this Week, lest he should be the Jest of the Town and Country, for being out of Fashion the next! And some cumbring One House with far-fetch'd and dear-bought Superfluities, at such an Expence as would provide decent Furniture for Fifty!

Some Persons of Understanding have been of Opinion, that the Wisdom of a Nation may be judged of, by the Sententiousness of their Proverbs and Sayings in common Use among them: In this the Arabs excell all Nations. As for their Proverbs, strictly so called, in which there is Allusion to some History, Animal, Vegetable, or
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the like, they cannot be understood without a Comment, and do not come under our present Consideration. What we here present the Reader with, is a little Collection of Wise Sentences, calculated for the Direction of a Man's Conduct in Affairs of the greatest Consideration, and are of the same Nature as the Proverbs, and Ecclesiasticus.

They are called the Sentences of Ali the Son of Abu Taleb. The whole Book is, as near as I can guess, not much less than our New Testament. I shall not add any more concerning Ali in this Place, because I have written his Life at large: It is the First in the Second Volume of the History of the Saracens, which, by the Blessing of God, shall be put to the Press with all convenient Speed.

*But I am far from Believing that Ali was the Author of all these Sentences. He might Collect them, for ought I know, and add some more of his own; but this I am sure of, that they savour of much greater Antiquity than the Time in which he lived; because he was Contemporary with Mahomet, who flourished in the Year of our
Lord*

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Lord Six hundred and twenty two. Perhaps there are some who will not allow the Arabians to have had so much Learning among them at that Time, as to be able to undertake such a Work: But I shall not enter into that Dispute at present.

The Book is a Venerable Piece of Antiquity, and it is Pity but we had it all Translated; which would be difficult to be exactly performed, unless by a Person who hath had the Advantage of Travelling into the Eastern Countries.

To criticise upon it in the proper manner, One ought to have regard not only to Precepts of that kind, contained in the Old Testament, but whatsoever else can be found that is Jewish, either in Ecclesiasticus, the Talmud, Sentences of Ben Syra, or any other Rabbinical Records. Not that I Believe that the Arabians derived their Knowledge from the Jews, but that they were Collateral with them in that respect; and that there are a great many things which they derived from Abraham and Ismael. The same is to be conceived of the Idumeans, Moabites, and Ammonites, of all which there is no question but there are Remains in Arabia, though now undistinguished.

Which

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Which that I may not seem to suggest without any Reason at all, give me Leave to offer this for the Present; That the Contest, before the Time of Alexander the Great, lay between the Eastern Powers and the more Western Parts of Syria, Palestine, Ægypt, and Æthiopia. The Peninsula of Arabia being conterminous, and yet quite out of the Way of those numerous Armies; it is reasonable to suppose that the distressed Inhabitants, thro' whose Country these Forces were to pass, retired thither. And it was their Custom always, either at the Parting with their Children, and especially upon their Death-Beds, to recommend to them some few Precepts founded upon their own or their Fore-fathers Experience, which afterwards encreasing, were collected into Volumes by Wise and Learned Men. After the same manner Ecclesiasticus was written, as appears by the Preface of it, and this Arabick one of ours, without all question; but how, or by whom, remains yet undiscovered.

*The Sentences are full, and to the Purpose: They breathe a Spirit of pure Devotion, Strictness of Life, and express
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the greatest Gravity, and a most profound Experience in all the Affairs of Human Life. It is not expected that there should be a Turn, as we call it, in every one of them, nor that we need be surprized at every Line, when we knew from the Divine Books the Contents of it before.

All that I say, is, That there is enough, even in this little Handful, to vindicate, in the Judgment of any Man of Sense, the poor injured Arabians, from the Imputation of that gross Ignorance fastned upon them by Modern Novices.



SENTENCES

OF

ALI, Son-in-Law

OF

MAHOMET,

AND HIS

Fourth Successor.

I.

FEAR God, and thou art secure
from every one else.

II.

Contradict thyself, and thou shalt find
Rest.

B

III. The

III.

The Fear of God brightneth the Heart.

IV.

The best part of Riches, is that which is spent in God's Way.

V.

Acquiescence in the Divine Will, is the Healing of the Heart.

VI.

The Disease of the Heart is in Concupiscence.

VII.

A Man's Behaviour is the *Index* of the *Man*; and his Discourse is the *Index* of his Understanding.

VIII.

The Covetous Man's Peny is a Stone.

IX.

IX.

One *Fault* is a great Matter ; but the *Remembrance* of Divine Things, and a thousand *Obediences*, is but a small Matter.

X.

The Remembrance of Youth is a Sigh.

XI.

The Sight of a Friend brightneth the Eye.

XII.

Reverence thy Father, and thy Son will reverence thee.

XIII.

The Enjoyment and Delight of Life consisteth in *Security*.

XIV.

The Order of a Wife Man is the Highest of Orders.

XV.

Thy Lot, or Portion of Life, is seeking after *thee*; therefore be at rest from seeking after *it*.

XVI.

The restraining the *Soul* [or *Self*] from the *Appetite*, is the greatest *Holy War*.

XVII.

Attend diligently to the Consequences, and thou shalt escape from Slips.

XVIII.

The Favour of God, is the nearest of all Ends to be obtain'd.

XIX.

XIX.

The Favour of God, He be Prais'd, is
join'd to the Obedience towards him.

XX.

Thy Delight in thy self, is from the
Corruption of thy Understanding.

XXI.

Thy Delight in the World, is from the
Badness of thy Choice, and the Misery of
thy Labour.

XXII.

He delights in Contempt, who open-
eth his Grievance to another.

XXIII.

The shewing Mercy to the Afflicted,
bringeth down Mercy.

XXIV.

He delights in Disappointment, who de-
pends upon bad Men for his Subsistence.

XXV.

I delight more in the *Determination* [or *Opinion*] of a * *Religious*, than in the *Strength* of a *Man*.

XXVI.

The *Riding* (*i. e.* *Governing*) thy *Appetite*, will procure *Riches*.

XXVII.

The *Riding* the *Appetites* cuts off *Mens Observation*.

XXVIII.

A *Man's Advice* is the *Balance* of his *Understanding*.

XXIX.

Every *Man's Portion* is as much determined as his *Latter End*.

XXX.

A *Man's Advice* is according to the *Measure* of his *Experience*.

* *In the Arabick it is Asfheick, which signifies a Professed Doctor, that liveth up to the Strictness of the Law.*

XXXI.

A Man's Subsistence is according to what he proposeth, i. e. according to his Management; because every Action of his Life tends to something or other which contributes either to the encreasing or diminishing him. Not that this can be affirmed of every Action considered abstractedly, but as it connects those Actions together, which necessarily tend to the Determining a Man's Condition of Life.

XXXII.

A Man's gentle Behaviour and Liberality make his Enemies love him.

XXXIII.

A Man's Messenger is the Interpreter of his Meaning; but his Letter is of more Efficacy than his Discourse.

XXXIV.

The Apostles of God, He be Praised, are the Interpreters of the Truth, and the

Ambassadors between the Creator and the Creature.

XXXV.

The *Delight* of the * *Servant* in *himself* is joyed to the *Displeasure* of his *Lord*.

XXXVI.

Consider before thou doest any thing, and shalt thou not be blamed in what thou doest.

XXXVII.

The glittering Ornaments of the World spoil weak Understandings.

XXXVIII.

Liberality is the *Cause* of *Love*,

XXXIX.

Performing a *Man's Promise*, is the *Cause* of *Unity*.

By * *SERVANT* is meant the Creature ; by *LORD*, the Creator.

XL.

Abstinence is the Cause of Pure Religion.

XLI.

Concupiscence is the Cause of certain Destruction.

XLII.

Trust in God, is the Cause of Pure Faith.

XLIII.

Desire is the Cause of the Destruction of the Understanding.

XLIV.

The Love of the Present World is the Cause of Misery.

XLV.

Infidelity is the Cause of the Removal of God's Blessings.

XLVI.

XLVI.

Following one's Anger is the Cause of Destruction.

XLVII.

Good Education is the Cause of a refined Disposition.

XLVIII.

Gentleness of Behaviour is the Cause of Reverence.

XLIX.

The Power of Religion is the Cause of Abstinence.

L.

Thankfulness is the Cause of Increase.

LI.

For the Soul to be employed about what shall not accompany it after Death, is the greatest Weakness.

LII.

LII.

To depend upon every one without Distinction, is Weakness of Understanding.

LIII.

That is the Man of *Understanding*, that overcometh his *Appetite*, and will not sell HIS WORLD TO-COME, for HIS PRESENT WORLD.

LIV.

He is the *Cunning* Man, that neglects other People, and looks narrowly after himself.

LV.

Fear with-holds the Soul from Sins, and restrains it from Transgressions.

LVI.

He is an Understanding Man that refrains his Tongue from Detraction.

LVII.

LVII.

He is a *Believer* that purifieth his Heart from *Doubt*.

LVIII.

Riches are a Damage to the Owner, except that Part of them which he sends before him.

LIX.

The World is the *Shadow* of a *Cloud*, and the *Dream* of *Sleep*.

LX.

The *truly Pious*, their Works are pure, their Eyes Weeping, and their Hearts Trembling.

LXI.

The *truly Pious*, their *Souls* are contented, and their *Appetites* dead ; their Countenances *cheerful*, and their Hearts *sorrowful*.

LXII.

LXII.

The *Believer* always remembers God, and is full of *Thought*: He is *Thankful* in *Prosperity*, and *Patient* in *Adversity*.

LXIII.

Partnership in Possession leadeth to Confusion: Partnership in Counsel leadeth the Right Way.

LXIV.

KNOWLEDGE calleth out to PRACTICE; and if it *answereth*, [WELL:] If not, it goeth away.

LXV.

Things (or the Affairs of Human Life,) go by *Divine Decree*, not by our Administration.

LXVI.

There are two sorts of Patience; the one, by which we bear up in Adversity, which is fine and beautiful; but that Patience

tience whereby we withstand the Commission of Evil is better.

LXVII.

A Man's entertaining a mean Opinion of himself, is a Demonstration of the Gravity of his Understanding, and a Branch of the Abundance of his Excellency.

LXVIII.

A Man's admiring himself, is a Demonstration of his Deficiency, and a Branch of the Weakness of his Understanding.

LXIX.

He that is certain of (or firmly believeth) a Future State, is the most melancholy Man, upon his own account, of all Men in the World.

LXX.

He that perishes, is one that busies himself beside himself; and whose **TO-DAY** is worse than his **YESTERDAY**.

LXXII.

LXXI.

He is thy true Friend, that takes care of thee as himself, and prefers thee to his Riches, Children, and Wife.

LXXII.

He is a Wise Man who can govern himself both in his *Anger*, *Desire* and *Fear*.

LXXIII.

Weeping out of the Fear of God, enlightneth the Heart, and fortifieth against the Return of Sin.

LXXIV.

Opportunity is swift of Flight, slow of Return.

LXXV.

To make one good Action succeed another [constantly,] is the Perfection of Goodness.

LXXVI.

LXXVI.

Patience in Poverty, with Credit [or a good Reputation,] is better than a plentiful Maintenance with Contempt.

LXXVII.

A Wise Enemy is better than a Foolish Friend.

LXXVIII.

A Man's Affliction is the Fore-runner of his Prosperity.

LXXIX.

Men are more like the Time they live in, than they are like their Fathers.

LXXX.

A Man that knoweth the just Value of himself doth not perish.

LXXXI.

LXXXI.

The Value of every Man, is the Good which he doth.

LXXXII.

He that knows himself, knows his Lord.

LXXXIII.

A Man is hid under his Tongue.

LXXXIV.

No Praise with Pride.

LXXXV.

No Innocency with Covetousness.

LXXXVI.

No Rest where there is Envy.

LXXXVII.

It concerns thee more to fly from thy self, than from a Lyon.

C

LXXXVIII.

LXXXVIII.

He that hath no Courage, hath no Religion.

LXXXIX.

A Wise Man is never Poor.

XC.

There is no Generosity in a Lyar.

XCI.

He that is fearful, will be secure at his Journey's End.

XCII.

No Health with Gluttony.

XCIII.

No Generosity of Spirit with a bad Education.

XCIV.

XCIV.

A Man governeth his People by doing them good.

XCV.

The Tongue of a Wise Man lieth behind his Heart.

XCVI.

The Heart of a Fool lieth behind his Tongue.

XCVII.

The Complaisance of a Fool is like a Garden in a Dunghill.

XCVIII.

Impatience is more irksome than Patience.

XCIX.

He that pursueth that which is not convenient for him, loseth that which is convenient for him.

C.

A Man that is given to Jestings, will never fail of Hatred nor Contempt.

CI.

Despair is a Freeman, *Hope* is a Slave:

CII.

The Opinion of a Wise Man is *Divination*, [or an Oracle.]

CIII.

Enmity is Business enough.

CIV.

A Covetous Man doth not live.

CV.

His Life is long, whose Labour is short.

* So long as a Man is in Expectation, his Thoughts are in Suspence, and he is in a slavish Condition; but as soon as he gives over his Pursuit, he is free, and at Liberty.

CVI.

CVI.

The Pursuit of good Education, is better than the Pursuit of Riches.

CVII.

His Grief is long, whose Hope is short.

CVIII.

Happy is he that hath no Family.

CIX.

It is better that Kings should be Unjust, than Mean-spirited.

CX.

The Thirst after *Wealth*, is greater than the Thirst after *Drink*.

CXI.

He cheats you, who makes you angry about a Trifle.

CXII.

A Man's Glory from his Virtue, is greater than his Glory from his Pedigree.

CXIII.

Your Victory over your Enemy, is your Forbearance.

CXIV.

The *Freedom* of a Man consists in speaking *Truth*. *

CXV.

The *Strength* of the *Heart*, is from the *Soundness* of the *Faith*.

CXVI.

The Word of God, is the Medicine of the Heart.

* Not that a Man is obliged to speak every Truth that he knows or believes; but that an Habit of speaking Truth, as it flows from, so it naturally supports a Generosity and Freedom of Spirit.

CXVII.

Death will rid you of the Faults of the World.

CXVIII.

There is a Cure for all Enmity, but the Enmity of the Envious Man.

CXIX.

Being acquainted with bad Men, is going to Sea.

CXX.

He that holdeth his Peace, doth not repent.

CXXI.

He that gives a listning Ear to Reproach, is one of those that deserve Reproach.

CXXII.

Your being angry, is reproachful before God.

CXXIII.

The Praise of a Man, is under his Tongue.

CXXIV.

The Conversation of Young Men is destructive of Religion.

CXXV.

A Learned Conversation is the Garden of Paradise.

CXXVI.

The Destruction of a Man is the Vehemency of his Temper.

CXXVII.

The Forgetfulness of Death, is the Rust of the Heart.

CXXVIII.

The Light of thy Heart is in Prayer in the Darknes of the Night.

CXXIX.

CXXIX.

The Greyness of thy Head, is the
* News of thy own Death.

CXXX.

Trust in God, is the Believer's Castle.

CXXXI.

Holy Wars † are the Pillars of the Religion, and the Highways of the Happy: And to those that are engaged in them, the Gates of Heaven shall be open.

CXXXII.

Repentance purifieth the Heart, and washeth away Sin.

* That Word which is here translated News, is used in a very particularly Emphatical manner; for it signifies the Report of any Person's Death.

† That is, Wars undertaken for the Support of the Religion, i. e. Mahometan.

CXXXIII.

Men, or Mankind, is divided into Two Parts or Sorts: The One seeketh, and doth not find; Another findeth, and is not contented.

CXXXIV.

The Good Man liveth, tho' he be translated to the Mansions of the Dead.

CXXXV.

The Declining from Evil, is better than the Doing Good.

CXXXVI.

Knowledge is the Ornament of the *Rich*, and the Riches of the *Poor*.

CXXXVII.

He that omitteth Practice, doth not sufficiently believe the Reward that is annexed to it.

CXXXVIII.

CXXXVIII.

Clemency in Power, is a Defence against the Vengeance of God, his Name be Praised.

CXXXIX.

The Reverence of God, blotteth out a great many Sins.

CXL.

Resignation to the Providence of God, makes the greatest Afflictions easy.

CXLI.

Quarrelling discovereth a Man's Folly, but addeth nothing to the Truth of his Cause.

CXLII.

Truth is the Conformity of *Speech*, to the End for which God ordained it.

CXLIII.

CXLIII.

A *Lye* is perverting Language from the End for which God ordained it.

CXLIV.

Adversity makes no Impression upon a brave Soul.

CXLV.

Trust in God, is a Castle of Defence to him that flieth to it.

CXLVI.

Impatience under *Affliction*, is worse than the *Affliction*.

CXLVII.

That Man hath a brave Soul, who declineth from Things unlawful, and keepeth at a Distance from what is criminal.

CXLVIII.

CXLVIII.

Covetousness is the Head of Poverty,
and the Foundation of Wickedness.

CXLIX.

A Deceiver's Tongue is *sweet*, and his
Heart *bitter*.

CL.

Perfection consists in *Three Things*; Pa-
tience in *Afflictions*; Moderation in our
Pursuits; and Assisting him that Asketh.

CLI.

A *Wise Man* knoweth a *Fool*, because
he hath formerly been ignorant himself:
But a *Fool* doth not know a *Wise Man*,
because he never was wise himself.

CLII.

CLII.

The *Believer* is always cautious of his Sins: He dreads *Temptation*, and hopes for the Mercy of his Lord.

CLIII.

The *Faith* (i. e. *Religion*) is a *Tree*, the *Root* of which is *firm Assurance*; the *Branch*, the Fear of God; the *Flower*, * *Modesty*; and the *Fruit*, *Generosity of Spirit*.

CLIV.

Anger is a Fire kindled: He that restraineth it, putteth it out; but he that letteth it loose, is the first that is consumed by it.

CLV.

Folly is an incurable Disease.

* *Modesty* is not here to be understood in Opposition to *Unchastity*; but as it signifies all Decent Behaviour.

CLVI.

They who are *Friends* in the *Most High God*; their *Love* remaineth as long as the *Cause* of it: But as for the *Friends* of this *Present World*, their *Love* is broken off as soon as the *Causes* of it cease.

CLVII.

A *Fool* doth not know what maketh him look little; neither will he hearken to him that adviseth him.

CLVIII.

Riches, without *God*, are the greatest *Poverty* and *Misery*.

CLIX.

Liberality and *Fortitude* are *Noble Things*; which *God*, whose *Name* be praised, giveth to him whom he loveth and maketh *Tryal* of.

CLX.

CLX.

That Man travels the longest Journey, that undertakes it in the search of a sincere Friend.

CLXI.

He is the greatest of all *Fools*, that doth no Good, and would yet be respected; and doth that which is Evil, and yet expecteth the Reward of the Good.

CLXII.

The most odious of Men to the *Most High God*, is he whose Thoughts are fix'd upon his Belly and his Lust.

CLXIII.

The most Happy Man, as to this Life, is he to whom God *Most High* hath given wherewithal to be Content, and a good Wife.

CLXIV.

CLXIV.

He is the most Just Man, that doth Justice upon himself, without any one else to judge him.

CLXV.

That Man best deserveth a Kindness, who when he is put off, beareth it patiently ; when he is refused, excuseth it ; and when he receiveth it, is thankful.

CLXVI.

The *Diligence* of the *World*, is *Idleness* ; the *Honour* of it, *Vileness* ; the *Height* of it, *Lowness*.

CLXVII.

He that walketh upon the * *Back* of the *Earth*, is going into its *Belly*.

* *By the Back* of the *Earth*, he means the *Outside* ; by the *Belly*, the *Grave*.

CLXVIII.

A Believer should be ashamed, when any Action passeth him which his Religion doth not oblige him to.

CLXIX.

Justice is the *Ballance* of God, which he hath set for *Men*; wherefore do not contradict him in his *Ballance*, nor oppose him in his *Dominion*.

F I N I S.

