جِهَاتُ الإِسْلَامِ
JIHĀT-UL-ISLĀM
RESEARCH JOURNAL
HEC Recognized Journal (Y Category)
Faculty of Islamic Studies
University of the Punjab, Lahore
p-ISSN: 1998-4472
e-ISSN: 2521-425X
OPEN ACCESS HJRS
Email: jihat.is@pu.edu.pk

Constituents of Islamic Civilization: A Critical Review of Meredith Townsend's Thoughts in the Islamic Paradigm

1. Hafiz Muhammad Naeem (Corresponding Author)
Associate Professor, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, GC University, Lahore, Pakistan.
Email: dr.naeem@gcu.edu.pk
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9207-9703
2. Muhammad Iqbal Awan
PhD Scholar, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, GC University, Lahore, Pakistan.
Email: iqbalawangcu@outlook.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3129-1552

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE *

Naeem , Hafiz Muhammad and Muhammad Iqbal Awan. "Constituents of Islamic Civilization: A Critical Review of Meredith Townsend's Thoughts in the Islamic Paradigm." *Jihāt-ul-Islām Research Journal*, Vol. 19, Issue 03 (Jan –Jun 2026), 01-16.

Abstract

This critical study expounds the viewpoint of journalist turned Orientalists Meredith White Townsend (1831–1911 AD) regarding the constituents of Islamic civilization. It is reprehensible that he would willfully ignore the authority of Islamic law as revealed in the Glorious Qur'ān and harbor disparaging views of its exegetes, likening them as 'disgrace for humanity'. Meanwhile, Meredith set aside Qur'anic legal verses, e.g. family laws, trading and retributive justice like Qisās. Furthermore, Meredith held Islam responsible for the unchecked malfeasance of slavery,

*Received: 27 Oct 2025; Revised: 24 Nov 2025; Accepted: 26 Jan 2026; Published online: 26 Mar 2026

INDEXED / ABSTRACTED PUBLICATION & ETHICS STATEMENT BY
IRI Islamic Research Index | AUSTRALIAN ISLAMIC LIBRARY | ISSN INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER | RESEARCHBIB ACADEMIC RESOURCE INDEX | اردو اشاریہ جرائد

Copyright © The Author(s). No conflict. CC BY 4.0 license.
Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

despite its numerous efforts for its abolition. After a long career as a journalist, Meredith was unable to devote time to studying Islam, which led to the formation of his false beliefs. This same career also made it easy for him to publish books that were based on false information. In order to emphasize the true perspective, a thorough catechism is always required after the publication of an irrational narrative. This paper aims to accomplish this task. Using an analytical approach, this study critically cross-examines the narratives Meredith Townsend erected to either contradict, belittle or degrade Islamic values; his attempt to mimic the Christian doctrine of 'Original sin' calqued in Islamic practices is highly contextual and is expounded.

Keywords: *Asbāb al-Nuzūl, Nāsikh, Mansūkh, 'Āmm, Khāṣṣ, Muṭlaq, Muqayyad*

Introduction

The narratives of a Western scholar, Meredith White Townsend (1831–1911 AD), regarding the constituents of Islamic civilization have become one of the significant topics in the field of Islamic history and civilization. A critical and analytical approach is employed to uncover the truth about his thought process. According to popular opinion, he was bewildered about many things while endeavoring to integrate Christian beliefs into Islamic principles. Meredith ignores whether Islamic law, which is derived from the Qur'ān, points out specifics regarding a number of legal issues, including family law, criminal procedure, and trade regulations. He ignores the larger Islamic legal tradition, which bases its legal system on the Qur'ān but also draws from Ḥadīth (the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad), *Ijma* (consensus), and *Qis*ās (analogical reasoning). All of these sources work together to deal with legal intricacies, including the issues Meredith raises. Meredith showed disrespect for the exegetes by accusing the Qur'ānic commentators of misguiding people. Historically, much like biblical scholars who interpreted the Bible in Christianity, Qur'ānic exegetes, or Mufassirun, have been instrumental in interpreting and elaborating on the divine message. A misinterpretation or rejection of Islamic interpretive traditions, which seek to contextualize and explain the teachings of the Qur'ān to fit different situations and eras, is the source of Meredith's criticism. His labeling these endeavors as "misleading" is a dismissal that ignores the depth of scholarship and range of opinions that go into Islamic interpretation. Islam, according to Meredith, is unable to address the problems of concubinage and slavery. The historical setting in which Islam originated, as well as the actions it took to address these practices, are not taken into account in this critique. Laying the foundation for the ultimate abolition of slavery, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him) instituted reforms that greatly improved the conditions of slaves and promoted emancipation as a morally righteous deed. Although slavery was allowed by the Qur'ān, it was allowed within the preexisting social structure, with many stipulations and encouragements toward emancipation. Islamic teachings strongly support the emancipation of slaves as a charitable deed and a way to achieve spiritual purity. Islam also limits the

circumstances in which slavery can occur, for example, by forbidding the enslavement of free individuals and supporting the humane treatment of slaves. Meredith offers an incomplete and biased critique by emphasizing the existence of slavery in Islamic history while ignoring the efforts made to eradicate it. Islam's strategy of gradually outlawing slavery differs from more immediate abolitionist movements, but it was still a major ethical development at the time.

Methodology

The critical, analytical and qualitative research methods have been used in this work to uncover the details of Meredith Townsend's observations regarding Islamic customs and culture. For this reason, his biographies, articles, and corpus have all been examined. His literary masterpiece "Asia and Europe" and various articles that he published in the Calcutta Spectator are closely examined. Thus, in this sense, his accounts of Islam are critically examined from every aspect.

Literature Review

To unveil the novelty and originality of this study, we examine a number of the author's life experiences that have been covered in previous articles. Similarly, Charles Larcom Graves discusses Meredith White Townsend's biography in the 1912 AD "Dictionary of National Biography" Supplement and the 1912 AD "preface" to Meredith's book "Mahommed the Great Arabian," both published by the Houghton Mifflin Company. In the piece "Meredith Townsend" that appeared in "The Spectator" on November 3rd, his struggle as a journalist was exposed in the 1928 issue. However, some of his political and current affairs writings were included in the "Review of Asia and Europe by Meredith Townsend, which was published in "The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art" No. 92(1901 AD). However, this study would be a better answer in this regard because it has not yet addressed his religious beliefs regarding Islam and its customs.

Meredith's Oeuvre:

As is well known, Meredith Townsend[1] had a lengthy career as an article writer[2] covering regional political, economic, and cultural issues. His book "The Great Governing Families of England (1865 AD)" embodies the cultural and social aspects of his writings. With the assistance of John Langton Sanford, he shed some light on the history of the English administrator families (1824-1877 AD). Under the heading "Asia and Europe," a few more essays[3] concerning the conclusions regarding the relations between Asia and Europe were published[4] in 1901 and archived at the Spectator's archive. In addition, Townsend penned "Mahommed, The Great Arabian",[5] a brief biography of the Holy Prophet (Peace and greetings of Allah be upon him) that included details about the circumstances

of Muslims and some earlier Islamic history seen through the lens of his ideology and notions.

Interest in World Polity

In terms of analysis, the global polity typically provides a framework for understanding global relations, structures, and practices. The various racial systems across the world are essentially based on social and cultural systems. Meredith Townsend has lived among a variety of social groups in various parts of London, Serampore, Calcutta[6] , including Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and others. Public and current affairs became a major area of interest for Meredith Townsend as he grew with it. In particular, his interest in the social, cultural, and political dynamics of Muslim, Christian, and Hindu communities was evident in the many newspaper columns and articles he authored. Townsend frequently offered commentary on the political and social structures of Islam as well as the cultural norms and social systems within these communities. He engaged with both current issues and historical perspectives as he critically examined how Islam shaped governance and societal organization. Due to his extensive participation in public discourse, Townsend became known as a publicist who examined and questioned religious practices, customs, and societal rituals in addition to reporting on them. His observations extended beyond straightforward criticism to include evaluations and analyses of the interactions between politics, culture, and religion—particularly the Islamic realm in which he lacked training or expertise. He established himself as a public intellectual who actively shaped public opinion, relying on this analytical approach in addition to his prolific output.

***Idée fixe* of 'Original Sin'**

Meredith White Townsend, a Christian, aspires to impose Christian doctrine on Islam. Christians hold that all people are sinful beings[7] who have inherited this sinful nature from their ancestors[8], all the way back to Adam, the father of humanity. Islam does not address this kind of inherited sin, which is why Meredith thought it was highly negative. As he put it, Mohammedanism is too negative, fails to meet the inherent sense of sin[9]. Islam, on the other hand, does not hold people accountable for the transgressions of others. It solely takes into account and audits an individual's responsibilities. As stated by the Holy Prophet (Peace and Greetings of Allah be upon him), "Every child is born with a nature (of not having any stain of sin on him) but his parents who convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Paganism" *(ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*: 1358), therefore, every newborn is regarded as innocent. The underlying idea here is that no one should have to suffer the consequences of the sins of another, which is against the fundamental principles of justice. As a result, the idea of inherited sin is false; no

one inherits their parents' moral shortcomings from birth, even in circumstances when they were born out of marriage (a condition known as illegitimacy) and out of any wedlock.

Disregard to Qur'ānic Legal Maxim

Meredith's limited understanding of Islam led him to believe that the laws of human existence are unrelated to the Holy Qur'ān. "The living law of Muhammadanism is not to be found in the Koran", he declared[10]. There are almost 80 verses only about the trading matters in the Qur'ān *e.g.* لَاتَأْكُلُوٓااَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ (Q4:29). This law forbids taking someone else's property with the assistance of unethical methods. Once more, we come across the legislation that is in place to prohibit the two most common socially destructive crimes of the capitalistic and Imperialistic system to which Meredith belonged and his community suffers the most: fraud and forgery. وَاَحَلَّ اللهُ الْبَيْعَ وَ حَرَّمَ الرِّبٰوا (Q 2:275). This is yet another important law aimed at building a better society. Only orderly and transparent trading is permitted by Allah Almighty, who prohibited charging interest, usury, or marking up on actual currency. The Holy Qur'ān has around thirty verses that address criminal legislation. The Qur'ān establishes principles that include the prohibition of killing, mockery, ridicule, and humiliating any individual, all of which make up today's social media-infested global society. The Qur'ān also contains revelations regarding rules on the prevention of terrorism, which is another manifestation of its modernistic supremacy over all codices, as everyone is fully aware of the challenge that humanity endures in the modern era. A very illustrative manner is used to disclose the definitions of crimes, prohibitions, and their associated penalties and punishments. Just like the penalty of murder as كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِى الْقَتْلٰى-اَلْحُرُّبِالْحُرِّوَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْاُنْثٰى بِالْاُنْثٰى (Q 2:178). This is the place where the law of retributive justice or 'Qisas', which is declared as the "life" of society, has been imposed. A further revelation of 70 verses about family laws, 13 verses concerning the law of evidence, and 25 verses exclusively covering laws on international affairs, war and peace, and dealing with other nations, were revealed in the Qur'ān. Thus, it is clear from all of the aforementioned examples that Islamic law with regard to social and personal issues is derived directly from the Holy Qur'ān. Massimo Campanini (1954–2020 AD), one of Meredith's fellow orientalist, acknowledged all these facts when he stated that the Qur'ān has normative features and is not only religious but also a system of rules[11] Thus, a wealth of Islamic law is found in the sacred text of Islam, which was given to its beloved Prophet (Peace be upon him) directly from the Almighty.

Meredith's views about Exegetes

The Qur'ān, a book of faith, is the foundation of numerous aspects and factors that contributed to the development of Islamic civilization. The exegetes, or interpretive experts, extracted these rules and precepts as a significant intellectual undertaking. Concerning these academics, Meredith Townsend takes a fairly unconventional stand, branding them[12] "a set of the most vicious scoundrels". He didn't understand the original status of these exegetes, who used to interpret the will of God for the masses. Since God himself decreed that his message be delivered to the populace as لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ (Q 16:44). The word of God has two kinds: some have visible meanings, and certain ones have inner meanings. Exegetes strive to decipher these implicit hermeneutic meanings.

When the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about the passage لَمْ يَلْبِسُوْٓا اِيْمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ (Q 6:82) "do not mix up their belief with injustice", he became the first person to expound its meaning. The *Ṣaḥābah* took it upon themselves and were worried that none of them is free from some sort of injustice or even a minor crime (the Zulm). Thus, the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) extracted the answer from the verse اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ (Q 31: 13) "associating partners with Allah is a very grave injustice". He explained that they shouldn't be worried since the (zulm) is employed for those who assign deities to God. Hence, the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) responded to the major difficulty by interpreting and clarifying the word of God. Meredith failed to point out where, in fact, the disgrace of mankind occurs in these exegetical efforts, as the author argued; instead, exegetical efforts revered humanity. In a similar spirit, numerous Biblical exegetes have interpreted the Bible for the general public, including Augustine (354–430 AD), Maximus the confessor (582–662 AD), Peter Lowbard (1096–1159 AD), Martin Bucer (1491–1551), John Wesley (1703–1791), John Stott (1921–2011 AD), and numerous others. Remarkably, Meredith ignored all of these Bible interpreters, but he detested the Muslim commentators more than anyone else, which is hardly a fair attitude.

Islamic Concept of Polygamy and Meredith's Views

Akin to many other facets of Islamic politics, the author criticized marriage laws in Islam by alleging that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was 'heaping up wives'[13] and resorting to use derogatory language in his book: [14]

> *He fixed a limit to the number of wives, but it was not intended as a moral protection, for he formally assigned all females slaves to the mercy of their Masters. He left a monstrous evil without a remedy, and for so doing, he is doubtless to be condemned.*

To evaluate Meredith's earlier expressed perspectives, we must first conduct an exhaustive investigation to fully comprehend the Islamic perspective on enslavement and concubinage, as well as the historical roots of polygamy across various religions.

Historicity of Polygamy

This discussion raises a scholarly question: Is it Islam that created polygamy? There is a need to expound on the annals of religious history to answer this query. In actuality, polygamy was prevalent in ancient religions all over the world centuries before Islam. In China, Europe, the Indian subcontinent, and the Middle East, polygamy was common. Semitic countries have historically been major players in the polygamy scene. Hebrew Scriptures mention multiple marriages taken by prophets like Abraham, Jacob, and David. According to the Bible, "After he left Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem and more sons and daughters were born to him" (2 Samuel 5:13). The king and the Prophet Solomon was also said to have hundreds of wives as written, "he (the Solomon) had 700 wives of Royal birth and the hundred concubines ..." (1 Kings 11:3)[15]. Additionally, the Gospel of Matthew (25:1–12) narrates the Parable of Ten virgins and reflects that Christ may have up to ten wives at once[16], which had been authenticated also by some other Christian theologians like Luther and Bucer[17]. It is also evident from Hinduism scriptures that Rama's father, King Darasht, had multiple wives[18]. It can be concluded from some of these historical facts about humanity that polygamy was an old custom and religious rite that predated Islam and was not introduced during the Islamic era.

Polygamy in Islam- True Context

It is a common dictum that there are three types of commandments in Islam *i.e.* obligatory, recommended and permissible or allowed. Allah says in Qur'ān: (Q 4:3)

وَ اِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ اَلَّا تُقۡسِطُوۡا فِی الۡیَتٰمٰی فَانۡکِحُوۡا مَا طَابَ لَکُمۡ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثۡنٰی وَ ثُلٰثَ وَ رُبٰعَ-
فَاِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ اَلَّا تَعۡدِلُوۡا فَوَاحِدَۃً اَوۡ مَا مَلَکَتۡ اَیۡمَانُکُمۡ-ذٰلِکَ اَدۡنٰۤی اَلَّا تَعُوۡلُوۡا

> *If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four: but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then (marry) only one, or (a captive) that your right hand possesses. That will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice.*

The verse regarding polygamy that was previously mentioned belongs to the third category because it permits Muslim men to marry more than one wife only if they so choose. For instance, they have to refrain from indulging in non-sexual pleasures or keep growing their family. This authorization is also contingent upon stringent limitations on justice. The man is only able to have one woman in the

absence of this justice, which seems to demonstrate the application of "sanctions" against polygamy. There has never been a restriction like this in any other religious text, including the Bible, Talmud, Vedas, Ramayana, Geeta, etc[19].

So Meredith's true law of chastity for a man towards a woman, which he believed was laid down in a revelation older than any book[20] , had not been written down in any of the religious writings mentioned above. It is only Islam that sanctions a man over a single woman by implementing the condition of justice. If one cannot maintain justice between his spouses, it is said, "Then (marry) only one". Meredith's alleged words about "heaping up women" to the Holy Prophet also seem to be under the obsession of his critical views on the chastity and nobility of the prophetic *persona*. Whereas at another place in the same book, he explicitly articulates[21] "he [the Holy Prophet] was not licentious…We hear of no seduction, no adultery, no interference in the families of his followers". It is not possible to view the marriage of all ten widows or divorcees of eleven wives as an accumulation of wives. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) spent a long twenty-four years living with just his elderly and single wife, Khadija. Subsequently, he got married again because of various social, political, and global circumstances[22].

Concubinage according to Islam

As far as the pre-Islamic historical existence of this inhuman institution of slavery and concubinage[23] is concerned, it is thankfully posited by Meredith that the world before Islam conceived this great curse of the curses in which the world was a world of slaves and Masters[24]. Back then; this system was the only foundation of the global economy. Not even the greatest thinkers and philosophers, like Aristotle (d. 322 BC) could fathom human society's socioeconomic existence without it, they had come to regard it as a natural institution[25]. Men and women are treated only as means of production. Their equal human rights meant nothing to anyone. The Arab peninsulas and the streets of medieval and early European states were both the sites of this social curse before the arrival of Islam[26]. Given that slaves formed the foundation of the country's economic system, what can a sensible person do in this abhorrent situation? They were abundantly employed in the homes and in the fields. They used to transport business goods to other areas for purchase and sale for their masters. There exist many methods dealing with the problems, but there are two types of solutions for every issue: immediate and gradual. All of those slaves who were forced to labor would have been instantly declared free and unemployed if the immediate solution method had been used to solve this issue, and all slavery establishments had been swiftly outlawed. Since revolutionary reforms frequently eradicate one evil while creating ten more, the well-run economy will also be

destroyed, and a large number of those slaves may turn into beggars, dacoits, thieves, and prostitutes to meet their own basic needs. In the second option, problems are now resolved gradually. The method of gradual abolition, in this case, was employed in Islam by first banning new slavery, then enacting emancipation laws, and finally abolishing concubinage, and it proved far more effective. As a matter of historical fact, by the time concubinage was finally abolished in Islam, in Europe, it was still a profitable business.

Banning New Slavery

Islam first prohibited the creation of new instances of this evil. As we previously discussed, the greatest period of human freedom exploitation occurred before Islam. The wealthy elite of the society used to enslave the impoverished tribes to satisfy their opulent desires. The strangers and headless, destitute travellers were ensnared in a slave system. The fact that parents used to frequently sell their kids only as a result of poverty was another factor in slavery. These kinds of slaves were all offered for sale in the marketplaces[27]. Islam immediately closed down all of these factories that produced slaves and, as the Qur'an states, adopted a lenient stance toward prisoners of war: (Q 47: 4)

فَاِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِۗ-حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَثْخَنْتُمُوْهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَۙ-فَاِمَّا مَنًّۢا بَعْدُ وَ اِمَّا فِدَآءً حَتّٰى تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ اَوْزَارَهَا

So when you are to fight against the (warring) disbelievers, strike their necks till when you have killed a good many of them, then tie (their remaining prisoners tightly), thereafter, either set (them) free as a favor or free them for ransom till the warring (hostile army) lays down its weapons

By addressing this vital matter, Islam appears to be devoted solely to the elimination of this heinous social challenge. Along with ending slavery, it also put an end to the common excuse that a war would cause it. In a show of favor, it is mandated to release the war captives (slaves, both male and female) or take something from them. "Freedom of slaves" is mandatory in all of the aforementioned situations, as demonstrated by the Badar battle, in which the release of the war prisoners was contingent upon their teaching some Muslim children. Analogously, in a *Ḥadīth Qudsī*, the Divine Messenger delineated the decree of Allah that, on the day of judgment, He will oppose three individuals, one of whom is the one who sells a free person (as a slave) and bears the cost (*Sahīh Bukhārī*: 2227)[28]. Therefore, Islam completely bans the new production of slaves in any circumstances.

Emancipation

The problem of current or former slaves and concubines needed to be addressed after slavery was outlawed. These should all, first and foremost, be publicly announced. As it strives for their freedom first and offers great rewards for this good deed, Islam here also demonstrates that it is the religion of nature, as stated concerning the true righteousness: (Q 2: 177)

وَاٰتَى الْمَالَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ ذَوِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِۙ-وَالسَّآئِلِيْنَ وَفِى الرِّقَابِۚ

He spends his wealth on the kindred, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarers and those who ask for help and for freeing slaves

At another place, Allāh ordained that righteousness is not only to turn your face to the east or the west but the thing, after the detailed faith in Allāh, is to spend wealth also for the freedom of slaves. As on another point it is said فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ (Q 90:13) "It is the freeing of the neck (of a slave)". Therefore, the decree granting the slaves their freedom was made very wisely. The Holy Prophet said: "If somebody liberates a Muslim slave, Allah will liberate his all body from the fire of hell" (Sahīh Bukhārī: 6715). Hence, the primary purpose of freeing the already existing slaves and concubines is dealt quite insightfully. Islam also emphasized freeing slaves (males and females) as compensation of the mistakes and sins. In case of a mistakenly committed murder, the first retributive measure is to free a slave or a concubine, as it is ordained: (Q4:92)

وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَـًٔا فَتَحْرِيْرُرَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ

And whoever kills a believer by mistake, then the freeing of a believing slave (is required)

This enjoinment has a very meaningful significance, as the killer deprived society of an individual, must give his alternative to society in case of freeing a slave[29]. The atonement of freeing the slave and concubine is not compulsive only in the result of the murder of a believer but also in the case of a non-believer's murder. The liberation of the slaves and concubines is also placed as one of the expiations of perjuries, as said اَوْ تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍۗ (Q5:89), breaking the fasts, and *Zihār*, and during the crucial times of solar and lunar eclipses as well. Such as ordained in the *Zihār* case (Q 58:3):

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآىِٕهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا فَتَحْرِيْرُرَقَبَةٍ

And those who separate their wives by Zihār, but they seek to go back on what they have said, setting free a neck (a slave or concubine) is obligatory.

Islam places a strong emphasis on social justice and the dignity of all people, which includes the moral and ethical imperative of releasing slaves. Islam aimed to gradually abolish the institution of slavery by supporting the release of current

slaves and concubines, guiding society toward a more just and compassionate social structure.

Equal human rights for slaves/concubines

After banning the new production of slaves/concubines, and recommending the freedom of already existing or contemporary slaves/concubines, Islam now ensures the equal human rights and uplifting of these remaining people. For this kind of people, great morals are ordered as ordained: (Q 4:36)

وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّبِذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَالْيَتٰمٰی وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْجَارِ ذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ؕ

And treat the parents with moral excellence and (do good) relatives, orphans, the needy, the close as well as unacquainted neighbors, and your fellows and the wayfarers and those whom you possess (Slaves/Concubines)

The existing slaves and concubines were treated with high ethical behavior as they were also human. It was forbidden to call them "slaves" and to beat them in any case; rather, forgiveness was proclaimed to them. The Holy Prophet said in response to a question that you should forgive your servant 70 times a day if he constantly commits mistakes (*Abū Daūd*: 5164).

Special measures for concubinage eradication

In all the above prohibitive injunctions, the concubines are considered equal, but here are some extraordinary steps taken for the eradication of this curse. It is said in chapter *al-Nisā* (Q 4:25):

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ

And whoever of you cannot afford to marry free believing women, may marry those slave girls who are in your possession (under Islamic law)

Thus, in this context, marrying a slave girl is equivalent to instantly changing one's social standing to that of a respected and esteemed member of society. On another occasion, it is also said in chapter *al Nūr* (Q 24:32):

وَاَنْكِحُوا الْاَيَامٰی مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَاِمَآىِٕكُمْ ؕ

And marry those of your men and women who are leading an unmarried life, and also (marry) those of your male and female slaves

No other religion has ever taught anything similar to the lessons Islam has taught about protecting the less fortunate class. For this reason, Islam stressed treating slaves and concubines well and described how to break the cycle of slavery. The

Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) once more explains one of those tricks (*Sahih al Bukhārī*: 2544):

مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ جَارِيَةٌ فَعَالَهَا، فَأَحْسَنَ إِلَيْهَا ثُمَّ أَعْتَقَهَا وَتَزَوَّجَهَا، كَانَ لَهُ أَجْرَانِ

He who has a slave girl and educates her and treats her nicely and then manumits and marries her will get a double reward

Marrying a poor, destitute, or homeless girl is not only a humanitarian gesture; it is also, in many ways, the key to lifting the modern-day curse of concubinage. Owners of slave girls were instructed to either free them or marry them, or to marry them off to other men. Three slave girls, Rihanna[30], Juwayriyya[31]and Safiya,[32] were set free by the Holy Prophet, setting an example by treating them with high ethics and after that the Prophet himself married them.

The Continuance of Islamic Civilization

Meredith White harbored strong literary prejudices against Islam and his biased actions occasionally come across as incredibly haughty. His work gives a discussion of the concept of the universality of Islamic civilization:[33]

Mohammadanism has never made a nation great, nor have its civilizations endured long

A cursory look at Islamic history makes its depth and vastness very clear. Islam is connected to every corner of the world and not just to one particular area, race, or historical period. Islamic civilization has endured throughout history, demonstrating its adaptability, depth of thought, and cultural dynamism. From its cradle in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, Islamic civilization quickly spread throughout vast regions, including the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, Persia, and portions of Asia and Europe[34]. Not only were political and military forces responsible for this expansion, but art, architecture, science, philosophy, and medicine all flourished at the same time. Islamic scholars advanced and preserved knowledge that would later influence Europe's Renaissance, making significant contributions to a wide range of disciplines. The civilization's strength lay in its ability to integrate a diverse range of cultures, languages, and customs under a single framework of faith and law, all the while fostering tolerance and inquiry. Even in periods of decline or fragmentation, Islamic civilization has shown itself to be resilient, inspiring and influencing societies all over the world with its spiritual and intellectual traditions. This enduring legacy is demonstrated by the continued existence of Islamic law, philosophy, and cultural customs despite centuries of hardship and change. Its progression and evolution from the 6th or 7th centuries to the present can easily be observed by the following landmarks. First and foremost, by enforcing the "Pact of Medina", the Holy Prophet founded the first Islamic civilization of Arabs in Medina. Then, in a very wise and directed manner, the Islamic Caliphs brought

this up. Institutions that had just been established started to serve a robust, civilized society. The Umayyad, based in Damascus, controlled the advancement of Islamic civilization starting in 661 AD. Following that, the Abbasid capital, Baghdad, was considered an unparalleled hub of knowledge and wisdom for several centuries. From 711 AD to 1492 AD, or roughly eight centuries, the Islamic civilization flourished in Islamic Spain[35]. It is collectively referred to as the Islamic Golden Age. Another instance of the long-lasting endurance of Islamic civilization is the Ottoman Empire, which remained intact for almost 700 years.[36] Thus, in contrast to Meredith's assertion, all of these outstanding Islamic civilizations demonstrate their significant and enduring contributions to world history. Islam gave rise to great nations all over the world in this way.

Islamic Proselytism

Similar to the Orientalists of the 19th century, the author had numerous criticisms of the Islamic conversion system. He traveled throughout the subcontinent's regions and its environs to track the spread of Islam. Meredith cited the extermination of people, the establishment of Arabic colonial systems by Arab generals, the persecution of the conquered masses due to their creed, etc. as the causes of Islamic proselytism[37]. To reveal the refutations of all these allegations, only the ironic and contradictory views of Meredith White suffice, as he admitted the great soft advantage of Muslim missionaries as they were: [38]

More fervent Arabs, with their gift of eloquence and their habit of teaching after the long battle with the outside world had ceased, took to the work of proselytism with an ardor never displayed by modern Christians, and as fast as they made converts, they raised up new missionaries often by village at a time. Europeans habitually forget that every Mussalman is more or less of a missionary - that is, he intensely desires to secure converts from non-Mussalman peoples. Such converts not only increase his own chance of heaven, but they swell his own faction, his own army, his own means of conquering, governing and taxing the remainder of mankind.''

Paradoxically, Meredith Townsend addressed his own concerns about the spread of Islam in his own response. He indeed counted the qualities and attributes of Muslims since he saw them all as Islamic missionaries. Their exceptional eloquence persuaded and drew in adherents of other creeds. Since they did a very appealing job of representing Islam[39], they were very eager to make more and more converts by representing their noble Islamic character. All of this frequently led to simultaneous mass conversions of individuals. Similar to this, Meredith reiterated the admirable qualities of Muslims who accept newly converted people without bias, regardless of whether they are Europeans, Chinese, or Negros. When they got married, they used to give them their children without hesitation[40].

Thus, all of the author's ironic viewpoints disprove his own concerns about the forced spread of Islam. He acknowledged his inconsistent beliefs and soft proselytizing for Islam.

CONCLUSION

Throughout his life, Meredith White was immersed in the journalistic circles of 19th-century London and Calcutta, where he applied his unique knowledge of Islam to analyze Islamic rituals. For this reason, he was unable to accurately grasp the true meaning of Islam's message. He desired the Islamic system to reflect his Christian doctrines, such as 'original sin'. He failed to read the passages of the Holy Qur'ān that define law, and his argument that the Qur'ān contains no Islamic law are further indication of his lack of in-depth study of Islam. In a similar vein, he believed that Islam had not addressed slavery or concubinage, but he had not considered the Islamic teachings on the subject, which forbid new enslavement, encourage the liberation of current slaves and concubines, and provide extremely moral grounds for the surviving members of this community. There is absolutely no precedent in the history of other religions for this kind of methodical and thorough treatment. Regarding the spread of Islam, all of his charges are disproved by his own sardonic opinions, in which he acknowledged the qualities of Muslims, such as their eloquence, their avarice in trying to convert others, and their desire for significant rewards from their preaching. Thus, Meredith White Townsend's stories about the elements of Islamic civilization are all based on his unique insight and rumors about Islam.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

References

[1]Meredith White Townsend (1831-1911AD) was the former editor of news magazine "The Spectator" and a professional English journalist. Meredith Townsend was born to the Townsend land owners' family of Essex on April 1st, 1831 in London. As an orphan, he returned to her mother's native land Ipswich, where he got his initial studies. At 17, he was called to Calcutta by the editor of "The Friend of India" John Clark Marshman (1794-1877AD) in order to work for the paper. Later he became the editor of that paper. While remaining also the correspondent of the "London Times", Townsend began the quarterly journal "The Annals of Administration" in 1856 AD at Serampore. He worked for some other journals also like the Calcutta quarterly review "*SatiyaPradip*" and "The Times" etc. After 13 years in India, in London he bought "The Spectator" and ran it as a proprietor and editor in partnership of Richard Holt Hutton (1826-1897 AD) for almost 60 years, in which he must have written some 10000 articles in natural, prophetic and dogmatic style. He died on 21st October, 1911 and was buried in Surrey.

[2]Graves, L. Charles, *Dictionary of National Biography- Supplement/Townsend Meredith White*, Volume 3, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta: 1912.

[3]Editorial Team, "Review of Asia and Europe by Meredith Townsend", *The Saturday review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art,* Volume *92* (1901): 240-241.

[4] Townsend, M, *Meredith Townsend White*. *The Spectator Archive*, (November 3, 1928). Retrieved September 5, 2024, from https://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/3rd-november-1928/43/meredith-townsend

[5]Townsend, M, *Mahommed: "The Great Arabian",* Boston & New York; Houghton Mifflin company, 1912, 6.

[6]Townsend, *Mahommed*, 7-8.

[7]PSALM 51:5 King James Version, Australia: Cambridge Edition.

[8]See Loke, *Evil, Sin, and Christian Theism*, 1st edition, NY: Routledge, 2023 and Wiley, *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings.* NJ: Paulist Press, 2002.

[9]Townsend, *Mahommed*, 74.

[10]Townsend, *M. Mahommed*, 77.

[11]Campanini, M, *The Qur'ān: The Basics*, New York: Routledge, 2016, 55.

[12]Townsend, M. *Mahommed*, 77.

[13]Townsend, *Mahommed*, 79.

[14]*ibid*, 80.

[15] Solomon had a maximum of 90 to 100 wives as reported in the books of Ahādith like Sahih Bukhari and *Muslim*. As said: (The Prophet) Solomon son of (the Prophet) David said, "Tonight I will go round (i.e. have sexual relations with) one hundred women (my wives)". Similarly Sahih Muslim: 1654 restricted this number to 90.

[16]Sharif Chaudhari, Mohammad, *Women's Rights in Islam,* Lahore: Ashraf Printing Press, 1991, 92-93.

[17]Mohammed Aqil Kha and Hidayat ul Rahman, "Polygamy in Islam: A Critical Analysis.", *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences,* Volume 6, number 10 (2016): 139.

[18]Dr. Zakir Naik, *Polygamy*, Retrieved March 24, 2024, from Most Common Questions Asked: www.irf.net

[19]*ibid*.

[20]Townsend, *Mahommed*, 80.

[21]*ibid*, 79.

[22] Pir Karam Shah, *Zia-ul-Nabi,* 3rd edition, Volume 6, Lahore: Zia-ul-Qur'ān Publishers, 1996.

[23]For details see Syed Ameer Ali, *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammad,* London: Williams and Norgate, 1873, 249-262.

[24]Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East-An Historical Inquiry,* New York: Oxford University Press 1990.

[25]Aristotle, *Politics,* translated by B. Jowett, London: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1908, 32.

[26]Gilli-Elewy, Hend, "On the Provenance of Slaves in Mecca during the time of The Prophet Muhammad.", *International Journal of Middle East Studies, Volume 49,* number 1 (2017): 164-168.

[27]Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam,* Delhi: Islamic Book Centre, 2005, 405.

[28]The extract says

قَالَ اللَّهُ ثَلاَثَةٌ أَنَا خَصْمُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، رَجُلٌ أَعْطَى بِي ثُمَّ غَدَرَ، وَرَجُلٌ بَاعَ حُرًّا فَأَكَلَ ثَمَنَهُ، وَرَجُلٌ اسْتَأْجَرَ أَجِيرًا فَاسْتَوْفَى مِنْهُ، وَلَمْ يُعْطِ أَجْرَهُ

[29]Dr M Shamim Akhtar Qasmi, "Ghulamon Se Mutaliq Islam ke Rahnuma Ahkam.", *Monthly Dar ul ulum Deoband ,* Volume 95 number 1 (2011).

[30]Rihanna bint Zayd (d. 631 AD) was a Jewish girl from the tribe of *Banu Nuzayr*. Renowned Arab historian Ibn Sa'ad quoted that she was taken as captive during the battle of *Banu Qurayzah*.

Subsequently she was freed and converted to Islam and married to the Holy Prophet (Peace and greetings of Allah be upon him).

[31]Juwayriyya bint al-Harith (d. 676 AD) was the daughter of al-Harith Ibn abi-Dirar, who was the chief of the tribe Banu Mustaliq. They were also defeated and captured by the Muslims. Juwayriyya was widowed in this battle and among the captives of the war. After that she was freed and married by the Holy Prophet (Peace and greetings of Allah be upon him).

[32]Safia bint Hayyi (d. 670-672) was a Jewish woman from the *Bunu Nuzayr* tribe. She became captive of the Muslims during the famous Battle of Khaybar. After that she was freed and offered to marry the Holy Prophet (Peace and greetings of Allah be upon him), which she accepted.

[33]Meredith Townsend White, *Asia and Europe,* edition 2, New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1904, 62.

[34]Qadar Bakhsh Baloch, "The Islamic Civilization.", *The Dialogue* , Volume 37, number 56 2020: 37.

[35]Harvey, Leonard Patrick, *Islamic Spain 1250 to 1500,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 309 – 323.

[36]Edhem, Eldom, *Istanbul*, in Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire, 2010, 286.

[37]Townsend, *Asia*, 43-45.

[38]*ibid*, 46.

[39]See also William Wilson Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans,* Oxford: Trübner and Co, 1876.

[40]Townsend, *Asia*, 47.