

Letter Opposing the English

by Moulavy Syad Kutb Shah Sahib

Section 4

During British imperial rule in the 19th century, many Indians believed that the British were trying to force them to convert to Christianity. In a letter, Muslim leader Moulavy Syad Kutb Shah Sahib issued a warning to Hindus and Muslims in order to protect them from the British. The following excerpt from his letter reflects Indians' resentment toward the British because of religious differences. What course of action did Moulavy Syad Shah recommend Indians should take?

The English are people who overthrow all religions. You should understand well the object of destroying the religions of Hindustan; they have for a long time been causing books to be written and circulated throughout the country by the hands of their priests, and, exercising their authority, have brought out numbers of preachers to spread their own tenets: this has been learned from one of their own trusted agents. . . . [The English] ordered the Brahmans and others of their army to bite cartridges, in the making up of which fat had been used. The Mussulman [Muslim] soldiers perceived that by this expedient the religion of the Brahmans and Hindus only was in danger, but nevertheless they also refused to bite them. On this the English now resolved on ruining the faith of both. . . . It is now my firm conviction that if these English continue in Hindustan they will kill every one in the country, and will utterly overthrow our religions. . . . Under these circumstances, I would ask, what course have you decided on to protect your lives and faith? Were your views and mine the same, we might destroy them entirely with a very little trouble; and if we do so, we shall protect our religions and save the country. . . . All you Hindus are hereby solemnly adjured, by your faith in Ganges, Tulsī, and Saligram; and all you Mussulmans, by your belief in God and the Koran, as these English are the common enemy of both, to unite in considering their slaughter extremely expedient, for by this alone will the lives and faith of both be saved. It is expedient, then, that you should coalesce and slay them. The slaughter of kine [cows] is regarded by the Hindus as a great insult to their religion. To prevent this a solemn compact and agreement has been entered into by all the Mahomedan chiefs of Hindustan, binding themselves, that if the Hindus will come forward to slay the English, the Mahomedans will from that very day put a stop to the slaughter of cows, . . . but if the Hindus will not

gird their loins to kill the English, but will try to save them, they will be as guilty in the sight of God as though they had committed the sins of killing cows and eating flesh. Perhaps the English may, for their own ends, try to assure the Hindus that as the Mussulmans have consented to give up killing cows from respect for the Hindu religion, they will solemnly engage to do the same, and will ask the Hindus to join them against the Mussulmans; but no sensible man will be gulled by such deceit, for the solemn promises and professions of the English are always deceitful and interested. Once their ends are gained they will infringe their engagements, for deception has ever been habitual with them, and the treachery they have always practised on the people of Hindustan is known to rich and poor. Do not therefore give heed to what they may say. . . . I trust you will all write answers approving of what has been proposed herein. This letter has been printed under the direction of Moulavy Syad Kutb Shah Sahib, at the Bahaduri press, in the city of Bareilly.

from Selections from the Records of the Government of Punjab and its Dependencies, New Series, No. VII (Lahore: Punjab Printing Company, Ltd., 1870), 173-175. Reprinted in Peter N. Stearns, ed., Documents in World History, Vol. II (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 70-72.

Discussion Questions

Clarifying

1. According to this letter, why were the English a threat to Indians?
2. What course of action did Moulavy Syad Shah believe Indians should take against the English?

CHAPTER
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PRIMARY SOURCE

In Favor of Imperialism

Speech by Albert Beveridge

Section 5

While running for the Senate in 1898, Indiana's Albert Beveridge gave a campaign speech in which he explained why the United States should keep the Philippines. As you read this excerpt, consider his arguments in favor of U.S. imperialism.

It is a noble land that God has given us; a land that can feed and clothe the world; a land whose coastlines would enclose half the countries of Europe; a land set like a sentinel between the two imperial oceans of the globe, a greater England with a nobler destiny. It is a mighty people that He has planted on this soil; a people sprung from the most masterful blood of history; . . . a people imperial by virtue of their power, by right of their institutions, by authority of their heaven-directed purposes—the propagandists and not the misers of liberty.

It is a glorious history our God has bestowed upon His chosen people; a history whose keynote was struck by the Liberty Bell; a history heroic with faith in our mission and our future; a history of statesmen who flung the boundaries of the republic out into unexplored lands and savage wildernesses; a history of soldiers who carried the flag across the blazing deserts and through the ranks of hostile mountains, even to the gates of sunset; a history of a multiplying people who overran a continent in half a century. . . .

Therefore, in this campaign, the question is larger than a party question. It is an American question. It is a world question. Shall the American people continue in their restless march toward the commercial supremacy of the world? Shall free institutions broaden their blessed reign as the children of liberty wax in strength, until the empire of our principles is established over the hearts of all mankind? . . .

God bless the soldiers of 1898, children of the heroes of 1861, descendants of the heroes of 1776! In the halls of history they will stand side by side with those elder sons of glory, and the opposition to the government at Washington shall not deny them. No! They shall not be robbed of the honor due them, nor shall the republic be robbed of what they won for their country. . . .

Hawaii is ours; Puerto Rico is to be ours; at the prayer of the people, Cuba will finally be ours; . . . at the very least the flag of a liberal government is to float over the Philippines, and I pray God it may be the banner that Taylor unfurled in Texas and Frémont carried to the coast—the stars and stripes of glory.

The march of the flag! . . .

Think of the thousands of Americans who will pour into Hawaii and Puerto Rico when the republic's laws cover those islands with justice and safety! Think of the tens of thousands of Americans who will invade mine and field and forest in the Philippines when a liberal government . . . shall establish order and equity there! Think of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who will build a soap-and-water, common-school civilization of energy and industry in Cuba when a government of law replaced the double reign of anarchy and tyranny. Think of the prosperous millions that empress of islands will support when, obedient to the law of political gravitation, her people ask for the highest honor liberty can bestow, the sacred Order of the Stars and Stripes, the citizenship of the Great Republic!

from Thomas B. Reed, ed., Modern Eloquence, Vol. XI (Philadelphia, 1903), 224–243.

Discussion Questions

Clarifying

1. Whose hand did Beveridge see in America's destiny?
2. According to Beveridge, what would Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba gain from their association with the United States?