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European Edition

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THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the expected world reformer and the Promised Messiah. The Movement is an embodiment of true and real Islam. It seeks to unite mankind with its Creator and to establish peace throughout the world. The present head of the Movement is Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad. The Ahmadiyya Movement has its headquarters at Rabwah, Pakistan, and is actively engaged in missionary work.



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The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

A monthly magazine devoted to the dissemination of the teachings of Islam, the discussion of Islamic affairs and religion in general.

The Review of Religions is an organ of the Ahmadiyya Movement which represents the pure and true Islam. It is open to all for discussing problems connected with the religious and spiritual growth of man, but it does not accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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Guide Posts

SELF CONTROL

(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

“He is most powerful who has power over himself.”

(Seneca).

Reaching for the moon with outstretched arms will never bring that luminous satellite within man's grasp. Great laws of the universe have to be understood and mastered before the spacecraft can be built, launched and ejected into the depths of outer space on its speedy and silent journey to the moon bearing with it its load of scientific instruments and crew of astronauts for bringing that orb within the dominion of man.

God is not prepared to fulfill the desires and dreams of man by miraculously transporting him in the twinkling of an eye from the fertile landscape of the earth to the barren surface of the moon. He has, however, gifted man with intelligence and enabled him through diligent study, observation and experiment to discover and comprehend certain scientific laws enabling him, thereby, to achieve his goal — the conquest of the moon.

There are also spiritual laws which if recognised and observed can transport man from this mundane world to the blissful realm of heaven; but man must take the initiative if he wishes to succeed in this spiritual conquest, bearing in mind that God helps those who help themselves. Just as the successful flight of the spacecraft is dependent upon the control centre which directs its multifarious operations so does the spiritual flight of man depend upon that inner quality — self-control.

Self-control is the underlying factor which marks the character of man's conduct. It is the directing influence in character building and should therefore receive intent cultivation and maintenance. The power lies within man to elevate his character to almost limitless heights. He possesses the master-key but his progress or retrogression depends largely upon himself. True, all power rests with God but He helps those who help themselves:

“But I will write of him who fights
And vanquishes his sins,
Who struggles on through weary years
Against himself and WINS.”

(Caroline Le Row).

The object of existence is self-purification:

'Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself.'

(87:15).

A true believer yearns to find divine protection in the lap of God where he is no longer influenced by the power of Satan. The upward climb to this holy sanctuary requires self exertion and the assisting hand of God which He is ever ready to offer to those who strive to reach Him.

The Islamic way of life is a disciplined one calling for obedience, endeavour and constant watchfulness; and the backbone of discipline is self-control. The spiritual life of a Muslim should be a progressive one; and the greater the measure of self-control he cultivates the greater will be his progress; for this quality is indeed the balance wheel of life by which the whole character and conduct of a man is effected for the better or the worse.

Study the lives of the Prophets, saints and holy men of God and it will be seen to what great extent self-control was the directing power contributing to their spiritual poise and charm.

Self-control governed every act, word and movement of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him). He never swerved from his path of duty and exercised the utmost patience under the severest hardships and provocations. He was the embodiment of charm, patience, forbearance, truthfulness, honesty, courage, justice and all the other noble virtues of Islam. He was indeed — as Hazrat Ayesha declared — an embodiment of the Holy Quran.

The life and character of the Promised Messiah — Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement — was also spiritually poised and a delightful exhibition of perfect self control. Nothing ruffled his composure though no other man in his time was ever more abused and misrepresented; and the responsibilities on his shoulders were immense. He placed complete reliance on God and had absolute confidence in the ultimate success of his mission. He was not disturbed by temporary setbacks; nor was he ever inflamed by the enmity and derision of his opponents. He said:

“The feeling of mercy is influx in my heart and I have reduced the feeling of resentment and anger in my mental attitude.”

(Reported by Maulvi Abdul Karim).

Within ourselves we are but our own commanders. God has provided us with the guidance, given us the tools with which to forge our characters, and the promise of His help. It is for us to take command of ourselves, resist the forces of Satan, purify ourselves through righteous behaviour and constantly seek the help of God through prayer. This is the great task we have to tackle

“Everyone who looks down upon a brother because he esteems himself more learned, wiser or more proficient than him is arrogant inasmuch as he does not esteem God as the Fountainhead of all intelligence and knowledge and deems himself as something. Has God not got the power to afflict him with lunacy and to bestow upon his brother whom he considers small better intelligence, knowledge and higher proficiency than him? So also he who, out of a mistaken conception of his wealth, status or dignity, looks down upon his brother, is arrogant because he forgets that his wealth, status and dignity were bestowed upon him by God.”

“He who does not listen courteously to his brother and turns away from him partakes of arrogance. He who mocks and laughs at him who is occupied in prayer partakes of arrogance. He who does not seek to render full obedience to a commissioned one and Messenger of God partakes of arrogance. He who does not pay full attention to the directions of such a one and does not study his writings with care also partakes of arrogance. Try, therefore, that you should not partake of arrogance in any respect so that you may escape ruin and you and yours may attain salvation. Lean towards God and love Him to the utmost degree possible and fear Him as much as anyone can be feared in this life. Be pure-hearted and pure intentioned, meek and humble and free of all mischief so that you may receive mercy.”

What does humility require of us? We should attribute nothing to ourselves except the wrong which we commit. We should know full well that the source of all blessings is God — the Helper, Sustainer and Creator of the Universe. Prayerfully we should animate ourselves with the life of holiness and do nothing for the sake of self-esteem or praise but only for the glory of God; and always in a spirit of humble gratitude for the blessings and favours He bestows upon us.

Wealth and Charity

(Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan)

“The love of desired objects, like women and children and stored up reserves of gold and silver, and pastured horses and cattle and crops, appears attractive to people. All this is the provision of the hither life; and it is Allah with Whom is an excellent abode.”

(3:15).

The acquisition of property and wealth is not forbidden. All beneficent methods of acquiring property are permitted; trade, commerce, industry, mining, agriculture, etc., may be pursued intensively, by individuals, alone or in partnership, and by co-operatives and corporations. Non-beneficent methods are forbidden; for instance, gambling (5:91-2), bribery (2:189), lending money on interest (2:276-82) and all manner of falsehood and deceit (4:30).

Lawfully and honestly acquired wealth is a divine bounty and like all divine bounties must be beneficently employed. Islam recognises and safeguards the legal ownership of property, but makes it subject to heavy obligations, some of them compulsory with a legal sanction behind them and others to be voluntarily discharged for the purpose of winning the pleasure of Allah.

The purpose of the Islamic economic system is that wealth should be in constant circulation, should be widely distributed and should be so employed as to yield the maximum beneficence for the largest number of people. It should not circulate only among the well-to-do (59:8).

Attention may be drawn to some of the measures designed to that end.

Hoarding is forbidden as it withdraws wealth from circulation and is totally non-beneficent. “Warn those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the cause of Allah, of a painful chastisement on the day when it will be heated up in the fire of hell, and their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded therewith, and they will be told: This is what you treasured up for yourselves, so now suffer the torment in respect of that which you used to treasure up” (9:34-5). “Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve” (2:275).

All sources of wealth, the earth, its capacities and treasures, the sun, the moon, the planets, the winds that drive the clouds, rain, sub-soil water, rivers and oceans are all God's gift to mankind. They are not anyone's property. Wealth is produced by the application of human skill, capital and labour to these sources. According to Islam, produced wealth should be distributed not only between skill, capital and labour but a portion of it should be set aside for the community as a whole, as the beneficiary of the basic sources of wealth. In the Quran this portion is designated *Zakat*, meaning that which purifies and fosters. It is a capital levy to be collected by the state and devoted to the service of the people. It purifies produced wealth in the sense that once it is assessed and separated, the rest becomes lawful and permissible for division between skill, capital and labour. The application of the proceeds of the levy to the service of the community fosters the welfare of the community.

The incidence of the levy varies somewhat in the case of different types of commodities and incomes on which it is leviable, but on the average it is $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the capital value involved.

The beneficiaries of the *Zakat* include the poor and the needy, "those whose hearts are to be comforted", those held captive, those burdened with debt, wayfarers, those striving in the cause of Allah, those employed in connection with the collection and distribution of *Zakat* (9:60). Any purpose the benefit of which may accrue generally and widely to the community may be helped or promoted out of the proceeds of the *Zakat*.

The Islamic system of inheritance promotes a wide distribution of wealth. Property may not be tied up, except for a charitable purpose, which would by its very nature insure its beneficent use. By testamentary disposition a person may not control the devolution of more than one third of his property. The rest of it, after payment of his debts and satisfying any other charges upon it, must devolve upon his heirs according to their determined specified shares which may not be reduced or increased under any direction of the deceased. If a Muslim should die leaving surviving him a parent or parents, widow, sons and daughters, each of them would be entitled to a specified share in the inheritance. No heir in a particular category may receive preferential treatment over other heirs in the same category. Thus in each generation property left by a deceased person is distributed among a number of persons. Even those who are not included among the heirs should also receive something out of the inheritance. "For men as well as for women there is a share in that which parents and near relations leave, whether it be little or much, a share which has been determined by Allah. At the time of the division of the inheritance should there be present other relations and orphans and the needy, give to them something out of it and speak to them graciously" (4:8-9).

Property should be administered with care, and especially that which belongs to minors and orphans.

“Hand not over to those of immature mind your property which Allah has made a means of support for you; but make provision for them out of it and give them good advice. Check up on the orphans till they attain the age of marriage; then if you find them sensible hand over their property to them, and consume it not in extravagance and haste against their growing up. Whoso is rich let him abstain altogether; and whoso is poor, let him make use of as much as is fair. When you hand over their property to them, call witnesses in their presence. Allah is Sufficient as a Reckoner.”

(4:6-7).

“Those who would be anxious if they should leave behind them helpless offspring, should be mindful of their obligation to Allah in respect of orphans and should speak and act in a straightforward manner.”

(4:10).

Within the framework prescribed by the Holy Quran Muslim jurisprudence has elaborated a whole pattern of regulations to make the framework effective. For instance: “Render to the kinsman his due and the needy and the wayfarer, and squander not thy substance extravagantly, for the extravagant fall into evil company and misuse the bounties of their Lord” (17:27-8) is an exhortation with a moral sanction behind it. The jurists, however, devised a civil remedy for the first part. Certain categories of kinsmen are, as we have seen, entitled to share in the inheritance of a deceased kinsman. The jurists have defined as part of the “due” of a kinsman that should a person become indigent and be unable to maintain himself he might call upon those who, in case of his instant decease, would be his heirs, to contribute towards his maintenance in the proportion in which they would have inherited any property he might have left. In case of their failure to do so, he would be entitled to a judicial order to that effect.

The division and administration of inheritance is a matter of civil rights, but even in respect of civil rights which are judicially enforceable the ultimate sanction is a spiritual one, winning the pleasure of Allah through compliance, incurring the displeasure of Allah in case of default.

“These are the limits set by Allah. Those who obey Allah and His Messenger, will He admit to Gardens through which rivers flow; therein shall they abide. That is the great triumph. Those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress the limits set by Him, will He cause to enter a fire wherein they shall abide, and they shall have a humiliating punishment.”

(4:14-15).

While benevolent loans are charity and are encouraged, lending money on interest is considered unsocial, as exploiting the need of a fellow being and also as tending to concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands, and is forbidden.

“O ye who believe, devour not interest, for it goes on multiplying itself; and be mindful of your obligation to Allah that you may prosper; and safeguard yourselves against the Fire which is prepared for the disbelievers. Obey Allah and the Messenger that you may be shown mercy.”

(3:131-3).

“Those who devour interest stand like one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. That is so because they keep saying: The business of buying and selling is also like lending money on interest; whereas Allah has made buying and selling lawful and has made the taking of interest unlawful. Remember, therefore, that he who desists because of the admonition that has come to him from his Lord, may retain what he has received in the past; and his affair is committed to Allah. But those who revert to the practice, they are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.

“Allah will wipe out interest and will foster charity. Allah loves not confirmed disbelievers and arch-sinners. Those who believe and act righteously and observe Prayer and pay the *Zakat*, shall have their reward with their Lord. No fear shall come on them, nor shall they grieve. O Ye who believe, be mindful of your duty to Allah and relinquish your claim to what remains of interest, if you are truly believers. But if you do not, then beware of war from the side of Allah and His Messenger. If, however, you desist you will still have your capital sums; thus you will commit no wrong, nor suffer any wrong yourselves. Should a debtor be in straitened circumstances, then grant him respite, in respect of the repayment of the capital sum, till a time of ease. But if, in such a case, you remit the capital sum also as charity, it will be the better for you, if you only knew. Be ever mindful of the day when you shall be made to return to Allah; when every one shall be paid in full that which he has earned and they shall not be wronged.”

(2:276-82).

It is worth mention that the term *riba* used in the Holy Quran is not altogether co-extensive with “interest” in its connotation. Interest is used as a rough equivalent of *riba*.

But this is not all. It is a characteristic of Islam that it observes a certain gradation in all that it prescribes. We have just noticed that *riba* is altogether forbidden. But in the case of the capital sum itself there is an admonition that if the debtor is hard up he should be granted respite “till a time of ease”, and this is followed by a persuasive urge: if in such a case you should remit the

capital sum altogether as charity, it will be the better for you, if you only knew!

The minimum indispensable is made obligatory in every sphere, spiritual, moral, material and then there is a strong urge towards voluntarily striving after a higher level of achievement. The congregational part of the five daily services is obligatory, while there are parts of the service that are performed individually and are voluntary. The Holy Prophet got up during the latter part of the night for the same purpose and sometimes repeated the practice during the early part of the forenoon. His example is followed by many. Then there are supplications by way of prayer that might well up at any time from the heart, and there is the remembrance of Allah, which should be a constant leitmotif. The fast of Ramadhan is obligatory upon all healthy adults, subject to certain exemptions. In other months the Holy Prophet often observed a fast on Tuesdays and Thursdays and on certain special days. A large number of Muslims follow his example.

The Pilgrimage to Mecca at its appointed time is obligatory once in a lifetime upon every Muslim who can afford it, but may be performed more often. *Umra* (sometimes called the Lesser Pilgrimage) is a voluntary exercise which may be performed at any time. "Whoso does good voluntarily, beyond that which is prescribed, should know that Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing" (2:159).

In the economic sphere we have noticed that certain undesirable methods of acquiring wealth are barred, hoarding is forbidden, circulation of wealth is urged and the payment of *Zakat* is obligatory. In addition great stress is laid on voluntary sharing between those who can spare and those who are in need. This is urged in a variety of ways. No amount is prescribed, nor is a proportion suggested, but the emphasis is kept up throughout the Holy Quran.

Attention may be drawn to one or two general directives. "They ask thee how much should they spend in the cause of Allah. Tell them: That which is spare. Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to you that you may reflect upon this world and the hereafter" (2:220-1). Every person would have his own yard-stick for determining what he or she can spare. So many factors would affect the determination, the pressure of one's own needs, the relative importance of competing obligations, the means readily available, the example of the Holy Prophet and his companions and the persuasive effect of the need to be filled or the cause to be served, etc. In the last resort the decisive factors may prove to be the temperament of the person to whom the appeal is made and the degree of his trust in Allah. It should, however, be remembered that Islam approves of a simple style of living and of moderation in all things. Extravagance is severely condemned, and one is constantly reminded that those in need have the *right* to share in one's substance, be it much or little (51:20; 70:26). Thus in the case of a Muslim there should always

be something to spare. "Let him who has an abundance of means spend of his abundance, and let him whose means of subsistence are straitened spend out of that which is beyond what Allah has bestowed on him. Soon will Allah bring about ease after hardship" (65:8).

It is a curious phenomenon that in this matter of spending in the cause of Allah, which means spending in the service of one's fellow beings, those who have less are generally readier and more eager to spend than those who have more, though, of course, there are exceptions both ways.

When one has in fact nothing to spare one can at least express sympathy in a kindly way: "On occasions when thou must turn away from any of those who should be the objects of thy benevolence, while seeking thy Lord's mercy for which thou hopest, then speak kindly to them. Do not hold back altogether out of miserliness and render thyself blameworthy, nor spend without restraint and exhaust thy substance, thus becoming thyself an object of charity. Thy Lord enlarges His provision for whom He wills, and straitens it for whom He wills. He is well-aware of all that relates to His servants and sees it all" (17:29-31).

Who should be the objects of one's benevolence and in what manner is one's obligation towards them to be discharged so that it may find acceptance with Allah? The essential requisite is that the matter must be approached in the spirit of service to be rendered which is due from one, an obligation to be discharged, cheerfully and joyfully, solely for the sake of Allah and to win His pleasure. Any other motive would render the whole effort vain and may incur the displeasure of Allah as it may savour of courting something beside Allah which is the unforgivable sin.

"Worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and be benevolent towards parents, and kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and the neighbour who is a kinsman, and the neighbour who is not related to you, and your associates and the wayfarer, and those who are under your control. Surely, Allah loves not the proud and boastful, who are niggardly and enjoin people to be niggardly, and conceal that which Allah has given them of His bounty. We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating chastisement, and for those who spend their wealth to be seen of people and believe not in Allah nor in the Last Day. Whoso has Satan for his companion should remember that he is an evil companion.

"What harm would befall them, if they were to believe in Allah and the Last Day and to spend out of that which Allah has given them? Allah knows them well. Allah wrongs not any one even by the weight of the smallest particle; and if there be a good deed, He multiplies it and bestows from Himself a great reward.

“How will it be when We shall bring a witness from every people, and shall bring thee as a witness against these? On that day those who have disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish they were buried in the ground and the earth were made level above them, and they shall not be able to conceal anything from Allah.”

(4:37-43).

Voluntary spending has to be urged persuasively. Here is an excellent example.

“The case of those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah is like that of a grain of corn, which grows seven ears, and in each ear there are a hundred grains. Allah multiplies it even more for whomsoever He pleases. Allah is Lord of vast bounty. All-Knowing. Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, then follow not up that which they have spent with reproaches or injury, have their reward with their Lord. They shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is Self-Sufficient, Forbearing.

“O ye who believe, render not vain your alms by reproaches or injury, like one who spends his wealth to be seen of people and believes not in Allah and the Last Day. His case is like that of a smooth rock covered with earth, on which heavy rain falls and washes it clean, leaving it bare and hard. Such people shall not secure for themselves aught of that which they earn. Allah guides not the disbelieving people.

“The case of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to gain inner strength is like that of a garden on elevated ground, on which heavy rain falls, so that it brings forth its fruit twofold. Even if heavy rain does not fall on it, a light shower suffices. Allah sees well that which you do.

“Would any of you desire that having a garden of date-palms and vines with streams flowing beneath it, which brings forth for him all kinds of fruits, he should be stricken with old age while his children are small, and a fiery whirlwind should sweep through his garden consuming it all? Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to you that you may reflect.

“O ye who believe, spend of the good things that you have earned, and of that which We produce for you from the earth; and do not select out of it for charity that which is useless, when you would not yourselves accept the like of it, save with reluctance. Know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Worthy of Highest Praise. Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you that which is indecent, whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. Allah is the Lord of vast bounty, All-Knowing. He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is

granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good, and none takes heed except those endowed with understanding.

“Whatever you spend in the cause of Allah or vow as an offering, surely Allah knows it well, but the wrongdoers shall have no helpers. If you give alms openly that is indeed good, but if you give them secretly to the poor, it is even better for your own selves; thereby will He remove from you many of your ills. Allah is aware of what you do.

“Thou are not charged with guiding them to the right path; it is Allah Who guides whomsoever He pleases, Whatever of your pure wealth you spend in the cause of Allah, and undoubtedly you spend it to seek the favour of Allah, its benefit accrues to yourselves. Whatever of your pure wealth you spend, it shall be paid back to you in full and you shall not be wronged.

“These alms also are for the deserving poor who are detained in the cause of Allah and are unable to move about in the land. Those who lack knowledge of their circumstances consider them to be free from want because of their abstaining from soliciting alms. They can be known from their appearance. They do not importune people. Whatever of your pure wealth you spend, Allah has full knowledge thereof. Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve.”

(2:262-75).

The concept of charity has, along with many other values, been mechanised and impersonalised in the West. A contribution towards charitable purposes is regarded as a somewhat tiresome obligation imposed on one by one's position as the obligation to pay the income-tax is imposed on one by one's income. Once the cheque is mailed the obligation is discharged and one may relapse into complacency. Such is not the spirit of 'spending in the cause of Allah', so insistently called for by Islam.

The "spending" is not to be only of money and material objects. The righteous are those "who spend out of whatsoever We have bestowed upon them" (2:4). "O ye who believe, spend out of whatever We have bestowed upon you before the day comes wherein there is no buying or selling, nor friendship, nor intercession. Those who reject this admonition are the ones who wrong themselves" (2:255). "Say to My servants who have believed that they should observe Prayer and spend out of whatever We have bestowed upon them, secretly and openly, before there comes the day wherein there will be neither bargaining nor mutual friendship" (14:32). "Spend out of that with which We have provided you before death comes upon one of you and he should say: Lord, why didst Thou not grant me respite for a while, that I could give alms and be among the righteous! Allah will not grant respite to one when

his appointed time has come. Allah is Well Aware of that which you do" (63:11-12).

The capacity to be able to spend, of money, goods, intellect, emotions, indeed of self, and the invitation to do so are privileges conferred upon His creatures by the Benign Creator, so that by taking advantage of them man may truly enrich himself. "Hearken, you are those who are called upon to spend in the cause of Allah; but of you there are some who hold back, and whoso holds back, does so only against himself. Allah is Self-Sufficient; it is you who are needy. If you turn away, He will bring in your stead another people who will not be such laggards as you" (47:39).

It is the giving of self that is of the essence of this spending, and the spending is not a favour done to the donee but a divine favour bestowed upon the donor. If one is not at the time able to comply with a request one can at least give kindness and sympathy (17:29). But one has not to wait to be asked. One must provide for the needs of those also who do not ask (2:274) or are unable to give expression to their needs (51:20; 70:26). One is made responsible for all. We are all brothers and we are all each other's keeper.

For instance, one's neighbour has certain claims upon one which must be acknowledged and honoured even if the neighbour does not give expression to them. The Holy Prophet has said: "So much has God impressed upon me what is due to a neighbour that I began to think a neighbour would be included among a person's heirs." He also said: "How can a person go to bed filled when his neighbour is hungry! It is not difficult to share even one's little with a neighbour. If one only has some broth, it is easy to add a cup of water and to share it with one's neighbour." His wife, Ayesha, inquired of him: "If I have a little that I can send to a neighbour, and I have two neighbours, which of them should have priority?" "The one whose door is nearer to your door," he made answer.

The orphan should be the object of our special concern.

"They ask thee concerning orphans. Tell them: The promotion of their welfare is very meritorious. There is no harm in your living together with them, for they are your brethren, and Allah well knows him who seeks to promote their welfare and also him who seeks to do them harm. If Allah had so willed, He would have put you to hardship. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise."

(2:221).

On one of the two festival days the Prophet passing along the street saw some boys playing together and noticed one little fellow standing all by himself. The Prophet went up to him, patted him on the head and inquired why he did not join the others. The boy explained that his father had died, and being an orphan he could not afford new clothes to wear on the festival day as

the other boys were wearing and thus felt shy of sharing in their merry-making. The Prophet took him along with him to his wife, Ayesha, and said to her: "Ayesha, you have wished for a son. Here is your son. Wash him and get him new clothes to wear, and then let him go and play with his fellows."

The Prophet has said: "He who is gentle with an orphan and takes good care of him will be as close to me in Paradise as my index finger is close to my middle finger."

Orphans are a precious asset of a people and a sacred trust. Due care and upbringing of orphans is a source of manifold blessings. The Prophet has said: "Richly blest is a home in which an orphan enjoys a happy upbringing."

One of the writer's most delightful and moving memories is of a visit to a girls' boarding school in Algiers ten years back. The school was housed in a lovely villa above the sea and took care of the schooling and upbringing of a number of girls, children of patriots who had laid down their lives during the struggle for independence. They were not called orphans, but children of martyrs. Everything pertaining to the establishment was of a very high order indeed. We were invited into a dormitory. As soon as we entered the occupants, ten to twelve years of age, shrieked with delight and abandoning whatever they were occupied with rushed up to us and took possession of us as our rightful owners. They were obviously a happy, cheerful lot, confident that they were loved and cherished. One understood that such establishments, for boys and girls, were scattered all over the country.

The Arabic word *miskeen*, translated as needy, also connotes humility. Humility has its own needs; it may be in need of a boost of confidence. A labourer shook hands with the Holy Prophet. The latter clasped the callused hands in both of his own and massaging them gently exclaimed: "These hands are very dear to God; these hands are very dear to God."

Zahir cultivated vegetables in a small way in the vicinity of Medina and once or twice a week carried his produce into the town where he put up a stall by the side of a street to dispose of it. He was in the habit of presenting the Holy Prophet with some of it, and the latter would in return provide him with some article or the other that he might be in need of. The Prophet often said: "Zahir is our countryside and we are his town."

On one occasion the Prophet happened to pass by Zahir's stall at noon. The sun was hot and Zahir who was standing with his back to the street was perspiring profusely. The Prophet stepped up to him softly, unperceived by him and, as children often do in fun, stretching out his arms clasped Zahir in them and covered Zahir's eyes with his fingers. The Prophet's hands were very soft and Zahir, on touching them guessed who was holding him captive. Taking advantage of the situation he stretched his own arms backwards and clapping the Prophet tighter started rubbing his perspiring torso against him.

The Prophet began to laugh and called out: Will anyone buy this captive? Thereupon Zahir let go of the Prophet and turning towards him explained ruefully: "Sir, what could anybody do with such a worthless creature as I am!" The prophet immediately comforted him with: "No, no, you are very precious in the sight of Allah, you are very precious in the sight of Allah."

It is such giving of self that is more precious than silver and gold and rubies, and each one of us has it in his power to bestow it lavishly.

Derision and Back-biting

"O ye who believe! let not one people deride another people, who may be better than they, nor let women deride other women who may be better than they. And defame not your own people, nor call one another by nick-names. Bad indeed, is evil reputation after the profession of belief; and those who repent not, even though warned, are wrong-doers.

"O ye who believe! avoid most of suspicions; for suspicion in some cases, is a sin. And spy not, nor back-bite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother who is dead? Certainly you would loathe it. How then would you like to back-bite your brother? Fear Allah, surely Allah is oft returning with compassion and is Merciful."

(Quran: 49:12,13)

Manifestation of Divine Love

It is my personal experience that to obey the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, with a sincere heart and to love him, ultimately makes a person beloved of God. God creates in his heart a burning for His Own love and such a one, withdrawing his heart from everything else, leans towards God and his affection and desire remain only for God Almighty. Thereupon a special manifestation of Divine love falls upon him and bestowing upon him the full colour of love and devotion pulls him towards itself with great force. He then overcomes his passions and from every direction extraordinary works of God Almighty appear as signs in his support and to help him.

(Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad)

Wisdom of the Ages

Do not esteem an action because it is done with noise and pomp; for the noblest soul is he who does great things quietly.

Be resolute, and direct an even and uninterrupted course; so shall your foot be upon the earth, and your head above the clouds. Though obstacles appear in your path, do not deign to look down upon them, but proceed with resolution, guided by right, and mountains shall sink beneath your tread. Storms may roar against your shoulders, but they will not shake you. Thunder will burst over your head in vain: the lightning will but serve to show the glory of your soul.

(Dandemis)

Times of great calamity and confusion have ever been productive of the greatest minds. The purest ore is produced from the hottest furnace, and the brightest thunderbolt is elicited from the darkest storm.

(Colton)

Let no man presume to give advice to others that has not first given counsel to himself.

(Seneca)

No civilisation is complete which does not include the dumb and defenceless creatures within the sphere of charity and mercy.

(Queen Victoria)

What is beauty? Not the show of shapely limbs and features. These are but flowers that have their dated hours to breathe their momentary sweets, then go. It is the stainless soul within that outshines the fairest skin.

(Hunt)

The less people speak of their own greatness the more we think of it.

(Bacon)

Never does a man portray his own character more vividly than in his manner of portraying another.

(Richter)

Character is the product of daily, hourly actions, and words and thoughts: daily forgiveness, unselfishness, kindnesses, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others, struggles against temptations, submissiveness under trial. It is these, like the blending colours in a picture, or the blending notes of music, which constitute the man.

(Macduff)

Hinduism

(Nasir Ward)

I recall reading on one occasion that if anyone wanted to know what the old Graeco-Roman was like, they should go to India. Hinduism, the main religion of the sub-continent, is an amalgam of gods, goddesses and beliefs bound together by a framework of myth and legend. Although Hinduism may date from remote antiquity, it must not be thought that the Hinduism of today represents in its entirety the Hinduism of the ancients. Being one of the older religions, Hinduism has been prone to more additions and adjustments than most, an effect produced by the religion and culture of those who have erected a military and political influence over the Hindus. Just what original Hinduism was like, what theory and teaching lay behind its tenets we cannot say with any certainty. The Hindus, no more than the Buddhists, were capable of establishing adequate chronology and what is sometimes passed off as reliable dating by Hindus to add antiquity to their scriptures, should not be given too much credulity. The original texts of the Vedas are no more in existence than the original texts of the Buddha's teaching. No one can say with any hope of certainty who was Krishna, Rama or any other of the Hindu pantheon. When they lived, if at all, is equally impossible to prove. Like all early Indian history it can only be dated by occasional reference to outside events.

One or two pieces of information can be gleaned from the general confusion. For example the placing of Yavonas (Greeks) among the heroes of the Aryans indicates this was more likely to have been done after substantial contacts with the Greek kingdoms in the 2nd century B.C. Tracts referring to astrology are also likely to have been produced after this date as the Indian astrological charts are merely copies of the Greek, as we have seen previously. A religion which was so decayed in the 6th century B.C. when Buddha felt compelled to inaugurate his own to replace it, cannot have existed as an independent entity up to the present day in its original form. For some time it received vitality from the teachings of the Buddha and from those of the Greeks in North-West India, but this could not long preserve the ritualistic formalism into which dying religions tend to fall. The letter of the law replaced the spirit. In this description, of course, we are talking about the

general level of religious observance of the Hindus rather than changes which occurred in the theory of Hinduism as such. Yet, with the coming of Jesus to India, Hinduism was able to graft onto its trunk a new branch which eventually dominated the tree. The religious system which we know in the present day is not that of the first Hindus. It was derived mainly from the teachings of Christ, who like the case of the Buddha, was accepted by many of the Hindus of that era. As in all cultural transference, Jesus was reduced to an Indian setting by a Hindu mentality which thought it recognised something of its own in him.

The main books of the Hindus consist of the Vedas, which probably formed the basis of the original teaching of Hinduism, though they have obviously been added to considerably over the years; the Ramayana, an epic story in the Greek mould, and the Mahabharata, a collection of stories and tales, in which is to be found the epic poem Baghavad Gita. There are others, naturally, but these represent the main religious texts. However, one thing must be borne in mind when dealing with these; as in the instance of Christianity, the Hindus have personified their concepts into gods. The ignorant have contrived to produce several thousand of these by now and have reduced the metaphorical and allegorical meanings attached to their lives into a literal explanation. The common mind, unable to grasp metaphysics, considered these concepts as physical entities, so producing by this process an amalgam of nonsensical jibberish. To evince any semblance of meaning from Hinduism, the stories and identities of the gods should be treated in the same way as the Greek mystery cults. They were enactments to create a visual effect for a symbolic meaning and were not meant to be taken literally which idea the Hindus proceeded to do in ignorance.

The hero of many Hindu stories is Krishna, a word which means 'dark' according to some authorities, "pure or sacred" according to others. Krishna is not far from being Christna or Christ, a word which would have the second of the given meanings. Whether there was an original Krishna we have no way of knowing, but there certainly was a second or original one, at the time of Christ. The reasons for this we shall come to in a moment. First let us look at the effect the Greeks had on Hinduism, some of which we have seen already.

The Ramayana, a collection of stories dealing with the life of Rama has several similarities with the epic poems of Homeric times, though naturally it is not an exact copy. One or two examples may suffice to show a reasonable comparison. Rama is sent for by the king to see if he is worthy of marrying his daughter Sita. To do this he must draw and fire the huge bow which no-one had proved capable of firing before. Rama draws the bow, surpasses the other claimants who are discomfited in the process, marries Sita as a reward and eventually acquires a kingdom. In this there is more than a passing similarity to Odysseus, who returning to his home in disguise discovers various princes in his house attempting to win the hand of Penelope, his wife. Without revealing

his identity he strings his great bow, which only he could do, and despatches the suitors one after the other, finally revealing himself to Penelope and re-claiming her as his wife, together with his kingdom. Allowing for cultural differences and the work of the centuries, the story is essentially the same.

In another part, Sita has been carried off as a prisoner by the rather unpleasant god, Ravana. She is held captive in a forest and during her captivity the processes of nature cease to function. The natural laws do not operate. Hanuman, the monkey god, went by Rama, flies through the air and effects of rescue of Sita, whereupon the world is put to rights once more.

This seems to be a copy of the story of Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, who was kidnapped by Pluto, the god of the underworld and held captive in his kingdom. Demeter, goddess of the earth, mourns her daughter's loss, ceased to perform her duties and the natural laws no longer operate. Eventually she is told where her daughter is and is allowed by the gods to reclaim her. The earth then returns to normal when Persephone returns.

The lesser gods of the Hindus, therefore, appear to be little more in the main, than copies of the Olympians acquired through contact with the Greek kingdoms and Greek traders on the Alexandrian run. No culture has proved itself unable to resist the Greeks, whether it is Roman Christian, or Hindu. It was only to be expected that along with Greek architectural skills, military expertise, astronomy and astrology, coinage and language, the Indians should have taken the Greek religious system. It has, however, been considerably extended since that time. The original so called Vedic gods, have been superseded and transformed by the later trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva with Krishna assuming a greater importance, if in fact he existed as such before. The stories themselves are usually of a primitive and bloodthirsty nature, but occasionally we glimpse a spark of truth through the jungle. However, it is with the later trinity that we should concern ourselves at the moment for these were produced in this form by the direct teachings of Jesus assimilated into Hinduism.

Briefly, the Hindu system comprises Brahman, the Supreme Being, the Lord of All; from him emanate three spirits, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Vishnu is from time to time manifested, or incarnated in various forms. Generally speaking, ten Avatars or manifestations as people are described. These are:

1. Matsya, as a fish-man. This will also be his last manifestation according to some.
2. Kurm, as a tortoise.
3. Varaha, as a boar.
4. Nara-Sing, as a man-lion.
5. Vamuna, as a dwarf.

6. Parasu-Rama, as a hero, but imperfect man.
7. Rama-chandra, a hero and perfect man.
8. Krishna—Son of the Virgin Devaki, manifested by Vishnu.
9. Buddha—another incarnation of Vishnu.
10. One yet to come.

Whether or not these Avatars existed as real people is problematical, but for the sake of argument let us assume they did. These people then, were manifestations of Vishnu, one part of the Hindu trinity, virtually an exact copy of the Gnostic-Essene cosmology. In the Hindu system Brahman corresponds to the Unknown God whom no man has seen according to the Gospel of John. From the Unknown God, or Supreme Being emanate the Christian Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Father being the Creator. Christ, the Son, or Christos the Spirit, manifested himself in Jesus, those causing a union between the heavenly and the earthly man. Throughout history Christos has been incarnated in various persons and was in existence before the creation of the world. This was the belief of Eusebius and the early Christians. It was not Jesus, but the spirit Christos who had existed from all time and was of the same substance as the Father. It was not Jesus, but Christos who descended from heaven to become incarnated. The later Christians confused the two and reversed the order, so that to their mind Jesus had been pre-existent. This made a nonsense of not only the whole metaphysical system but of the concept of God. Unfortunately it continues with us to the present day. Krishna and the Avatars are manifestations within the same system, learned through the teachings of the incarnated Christos when he appeared among them in India.

If we study the list of Avatars, a symbolic representation appears quite clearly. The first manifestation was that of Matsya, the fish-man. Curiously, this name is not unlike Messiah, also recognised as the fish. Not only was Jesus the one who taught his disciples to be fishers of men, his own symbol was Ichthyos, a fish. In the catacombs this is the main representation of Christ before the Christians degenerated into image making. His own sign was that of Jonah who was swallowed by the fish, returning from it alive and going back to his own people. The fish-man, Jesus, was also a symbolic representation of the Gnostics seen in an earlier chapter.

If we take these Avatars as symbolic representations, then we can deduce some meaning from them. The first one is the fish, denoting the primitive level of man or mankind, swimming in the celestial ocean, or primeval soup. From it came the tortoise-man, a reptile crawling lowly on the earth, followed by a boar, a quadruped. After this came an Avatar who was half man, half lion showing the development from animals to human beings; then the dwarf, a primitive form of mankind, succeeded by an imperfect man, a perfect man and Krishna the heavenly man. Last of all is the Buddha.

If we take it in this sense, then the manifestations are meant to show a kind of evolution, physical and spiritual. If Matsya is also the final Avatar, although some consider it to be Kalki, on a white horse, the whole of mankind will have returned to where it started to being a new cycle, or to reach its rightful home. Considering it as a metaphysical system, it shows in the same way as the Gnostics and Buddhists, the stages of purification of the soul, from the celestial ocean to matter which gradually becomes cast off, allowing the spirit or soul to return to its heavenly home. If this is the case, the Avatars are not all to be taken as real people. More likely they refer to one or two people only. However looking at the table or manifestations, it is obvious something is seriously wrong. Krishna, or Christos, is the peak of this system; he is the perfect human being, perfect physically and spiritually. There is no improvement to come after him. Yet we see the next Avatar is the Buddha. This cannot be correct; the system ends at its peak - Krishna. It cannot produce anyone higher than him. How then is the Buddha placed after him? If it refers to the original Buddha, then obviously those Hindus who accepted him as an Avatar, which is now a universal admission, would have left the Hindu religion and joined the Buddha, who broke away from it. They would in fact all have felt compelled to become Buddhists and Hinduism would have ceased to exist. That they did not, means that they did not at that time accept the Buddha as an Avatar. Unless they are now prepared to follow his teachings they still have not accepted him, except in name only. The original Buddha cannot come as an Avatar after Krishna for this very reason, nor is it possible in this system of spiritual development. To say the Buddha was higher than Krishna means Buddhism is higher than Hinduism and better at producing spiritual elevation in its adherents.

What is referred to here is the second Buddha—Jesus. This is why the Hindus did not become Buddhists and why he appears as the last manifestation. Next to him in order is Krishna, the epitome of the system. Just as Jesus was the second Buddha, so too was he the second Krishna, the heavenly man of the Gnostics, and Paul or Marcion. He was the Adam Kadmon of the Kabbala, the manifestation of the divine, though not himself divine. This is why the Buddha is placed after him. The Hindus knew he had been recognised as a manifestation of the Buddha and to them he was the manifestation of Vishnu-Krishna. They had to recognise one with the other. Were it not so, the system would have finished with Krishna, its highest point, and we know the Hindus did not become Buddhists, in the main.

The story of Krishna is compiled in the form of an epic poem, the Baghavad Gita—the Song of the Lord. This has been placed in the Mahabarata, probably an older collection of other stories, but it is quite different from it, dealing as it does with the intellectual theory of Hinduism, whereas the rest of the stories are purely narrative. It seems quite likely that this was originally a

separate work, placed in the Mahabarata at a later date, chronology in India being an inexact science.

"I am the soul which exists in the heart of all beings; and I am the beginning and the middle, and also the end of existing things," says Vishnu to Arjuna.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, . . . I am the first and the last," says Jesus to John (Rev. 1, 6, 17).

The banyan tree, like that of the Buddha, was the tree under which Vishnu in one of his incarnations sat and taught his disciples the heavenly knowledge. It is the Arasa-Maram, the tree of knowledge and of life. In the Essene spiritual concept this same tree was placed in the middle of the garden, surrounded by the other trees. Foh-tchou, the teacher of the Buddha's doctrines, sat under the tree Sung-Ming-Shu, the tree of knowledge and of Life to perform his miracles. This tree is on top of the mountain Kouin-long-sang on the border between China and Tibet.

In the Biblical/Gnostic garden was the serpent, the symbol of wisdom, the earthly serpent being symbolic of earthly wisdom. To the Ophite Gnostics Jesus was represented as a serpent which had seven vowels over its head, standing for the seven heavens or layers through which the soul must pass to be purified. Vishnu rests on Amanta, the serpent with seven heads; Vishnu who manifests himself in the world as a representation of the divine light or essence, who manifests himself in some being whenever the world is falling into matter of ignorance.

"He who follows me is saved by wisdom and even by works . . . As often as virtue declines in the world, I make myself manifest to save it," as it says in the Baghavad Gita. This is why another Avtar is expected, why another Buddha is to come, why Jesus speaks of the Paracletos who will instruct his followers in higher things.

If Krishna was not crucified, he at least suffered a comparative fate in Indian terms. A hunter, pursuing his occupation, had the misfortune to pin Krishna to a tree with one of his arrows, thereby causing the death of the Saviour. Realising his mistake, he begs forgiveness of the dying Krishna, who replies,

"Go through my favour, to Heaven, the abode of the gods." . . . then the illustrious Krishna, having united himself with his own pure, spiritual, inexhaustible, inconceivable, unborn, undecaying, imperishable and universal Spirit, which is one with Vasudeva, abandoned his mortal body.

Not only is the idea of being nailed to a tree, it would appear this is the gist of Christs' forgiving the thief on the cross, who would that day be with him in

paradise. To complete the analogy, Krishna is often shown as a shepherd or surrounded by shepherds and was born of the virgin Devaki.

In Moones' "Hindu Pantheon," the author made a collection of photographs and drawings taken from Hindu temples. Dr. Lundy in his "Monumental Christianity" also dealt with some of these plates. In Fig. 72 he shows Krishna apparently crucified, on in the position of crucifixion without the cross. There are nail marks in the hands and feet and a coronet with seven points on the head, while in others he is shown like Apollo, as the good shepherd, or holding the "chank" in the form of a crucifix, which was not prevalent in Indian culture. Crucifixion was not used as a form of punishment in the sub-continent, therefore the cross has been omitted but the marks remain.

The miracles of Krishna have in some places a strong resemblance to those of Jesus. In Mark and Luke there occurs the story of "Jairus's daughter who had apparently died. Jairus begs Jesus to restore her to life which he does.

In the Hari-purana, the daughter of King Angashuna is bitten by a snake and dies. Amid the mourning father and courtiers, Krishna approaches and is shown the body.

"Why do you weep," he asks, "do you not see she is only sleeping? she is sleeping I tell you . . . see, she moves, Kalavatti! Rise and walk!" Whereupon she recovers.

Looking at the prophecies embodied in the Book of Revelations, we find the verses referring to the prophet who will come at the end of the present system of those who were writing:

"I saw heaven opened, and saw a white horse, and he who sat upon the horse was called faithful and true And the armies of heaven followed him on white horses."

(Rev. 19, 11, 14).

The Saviour of the Persian system, Sosiosh, will also appear upon a white horse, followed by his army of good spirits also riding white horses. He will appear when the forces of darkness seem to have engulfed the world. Compare with this Vishnu, who manifests himself when evil spreads in the world and threatens to overcome goodness. He will appear in his tenth manifestation riding on the white horse Kalki and will save the world, and on his head he wears several crowns.

" . . . and on his head were many crowns."

(Rev. 19, 12).

As a matter of interest this figure to come in Revelations cannot be Jesus himself as he is the one who is making the prophecy. This other prophet would come at the end of the world, or at the end of the Kalying in Hinduism, which

means simply the end of that spiritual system in both cases. He would appear when corruption had spread, spiritually, throughout the world, or more prosaically, the religious systems of the time were all decadent. Thereafter he would bring to an end the old order and institute another one, superior to it. Just as Christos, Krishna, or the Christ-Buddha was the end point of the old system, he who was to come would be the founder of a new one. It cannot be Christ, Krishna or Buddha physically, except for those who turn spirits into human beings. It had to be someone greater than they as a new order was to be introduced, with increased knowledge. That being, or manifestation was to be associated with, perhaps, horses, or more likely armies denoted by the followers of Sosiosh, the military picture of Vishnu and in Revelations, where a sword comes from the mouth of this divine manifestation. As the teachings of Buddha were to last 500 years, so too perhaps were those of the second Buddha. Each person, I am sure, can adequately form his or her own opinion as to this individual.

Returning once again to the Book of Revelations, we find in the vision, round the throne, the four living creatures with multiple wings, one with the head of a lion, one an ox, one a human face and one like an eagle, praising the name of the Lord. (Adonai).

Turning to Ezekiel, we find the same four creatures mentioned in his vision with the face of a lion, ox, man and eagle. Assuming Ezekiel and the compiler of the second part of the Book of Revelations are not the same person for the moment, these four creatures should have some significance. Carved on many Hindu temples we find the same four appearing in the same form with a slight variation. The creature with the human face is given the name of the goddess Adanari, surrounded by heads of the lion, ox, and eagle.* Once more, this is an anthropomorphised mistake. In Ezekiel and presumably Revelations, these four entities were in the wheel of the Adonai, whereas in Hinduism, with a slight variation in pronunciation, they have become creatures of Adanari; a case of turning concepts and words into gods.

This vision has more than a passing significance. Ezekiel is said to have seen it in Iraq; he was instructed to go to the Israelites, who had rebelled against their lord, and bring them back to the true religion. This, by coincidence, was also the mission of Jesus, who according to the Book of Revelations, had the same vision of the creatures, and went to Iraq to the Israelites, there. Following his journey to India we find the same vision represented on Hindu temples, turned into a fictitious goddess Adahari, culled no doubt from the teachings of Christina, or by a twist of pronunciation, Krishna, to the Jews of that area.

This is the same Krishna who was brought up by Shepherds, and whose birth was kept secret from the wicked king Kansa. The king, learning that the

* Instead of four wings, Adanari has four hands.

child, Krishna, will be born, kills all the children and cowherds in an attempt to stop Krishna supplanting him. All this is done in true Herod style, whose personality in its essentials, comes out quite clearly—he killed children (Herod killed his own) banned the worship of Vishnu (the true religion) and extended his kingdom by conquest, committing many crimes in the process. Krishna tells his father to take him to the house of Nanda, where he will be safe, or Egypt as the gospels state, while Kansa tries to find him. Krishna, the manifestation of Vishnu, was pursued by the tyrant of Mathura, performing miracles there. Christos, flees from Herod to Matarijah and performs his first miracles there in the Infancy Gospels. Krishna was later worshipped at Mathura. The rather mischievous exploits of Krishna are similar to those of Jesus in the infancy gospels, which of course are meant symbolically. It is Krishna who dies, accidentally shot under a tree, or pinned to it, who forgives his killer and who warns that the city will soon be destroyed advising the Yadavas to leave, or on that day they would see Jerusalem encircled by armies. It was Krishna, whose mother was an immaculate virgin, but who had eight children before she bore him; Mary, the immaculate bore several children as well as Jesus. The Hindus, recognising Jesus as a son of God, learnt their more recent metaphysical system from him, with Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva becoming changed into the present Trinity. Jesus was the physical manifestation of Vishnu, of the Spirit Christos, and through him they accepted also the Buddha.

Give Thanks

Have you anything to be thankful for:

Friendship?	A holiday?
A happy home?	Love of beauty?
Work?	A fault conquered?
Promotion?	Forgiveness received?
Wider usefulness?	Difficulties overcome?
Success in examination?	Being able to help anyone?

Thank God for any of these things now.

(My Prayer Book)

Obligations of an Ahmadi

(Sayyed Hasamuddin Ahmad)

The word Ahmadi is a very wide term embracing within it the qualifications of a man with which he is born and he is expected by his Creator to manifest them by actions from his cradle to the grave. According to the Islamic teachings, every child that is born on this earth is born as a Muslim but no sooner does he touch this planet with his frame of flesh and blood than the environments of his life to which he plunges suddenly let him dive deep into it and every hour, every minute of his earthly existence begins to create new impressions on him socially, and intellectually in shaping his future career.

An Ahmadi may call himself as such as one in the truest sense of the term when he attains the position of realising the very object of his creation to fulfil which God has sent him on earth and chalks out a definite and unselfish programme of life for himself and follows it to the last moment of his existence.

An Ahmadi in the broadest sense of the term means one who calls himself a Muslim living a life consecrated quite in keeping with the sacred teachings of the Holy Quran supported by the edicts of the Holy Traditions as evinced by the life and work of the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (may peace of God be upon him). He dedicates his life entirely to the service of God and man. His mission of life is shaped according to the teachings of the Holy Quran given in the verse:

“Verily my Prayers, my worship, my existence and my death are all meant for the Sustainer of the universe.” (6:163)

The first and foremost duty of an Ahmadi either born or embracing the fold of Ahmadiyyat during the intervening period of his life, is to accept and follow the teachings of Islam as inculcated in the Holy Quran and translated into action by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and subsequently preached and practised by the Promised Messiah Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian in this age.

Volumes have been written and spoken on the duties and obligations of an Ahmadi from the press and the platform. But I shall attempt through this

short article to give in a nutshell some of the main and principal duties of an Ahmadi that are primarily expected of him.

An Ahmadi is expected to be an embodiment of the teachings of Islam. The moment he begins to realise he is within the fold of Islam, his duty begins.

His duties are multifarious but they may broadly be classified as social, moral and spiritual. As a man he owes certain duties to his fellow beings, no matter to whatever class, creed or colour they may belong. All his efforts in the performance of his duties should be concentrated towards creating a brotherly spirit and helping to cement the bond of eternal relation between the Creator and the created.

The social duties of an Ahmadi may briefly be defined as follows:

He has to look upon all mankind as his own kith and kin irrespective of caste, creed and colour. He has to share pleasures and pains in every sphere of life as far as possible according to his own limited circle. He must always be taking account of his own activities done overtly or covertly and see that his actions and speech do not in any way place anyone else's welfare, whether temporal or spiritual, at a discount. He should be making constant endeavours to live for others. Sacrifice for personal interests for the sake of doing good to society should be the motto and *summum bonum* of his life. Service to mankind always means service to God. He should always try by his own example to reform and set right all sorts of undesirable things that might be found existing in his society.

The moral duties may be summarised as follows:

Truth, the whole truth and nothing but the whole truth should permeate his words and deeds. Abhorrence towards untruth should be prominently expressed in whatever he does or speaks. An Ahmadi must fight for the truth and its cause even at the cost of his own life and property, without caring for the loss that might occur to the interests of his dearest and nearest kith and kin thereby.

He should always harbour catholic ideas. Sympathy for others and a strong sense of fellow-feeling in every field of action should characterise his career. An Ahmadi should always keep in view the good of mankind proving himself as the only proof and support of the entire structure of the creation with a conviction that by the least jerking on his part it may crumble down to pieces. The moral duties are extremely onerous but he is expected by God to bear them. He has to infuse the spirit of perfect submission to the will of God into all human beings illustrating it first in himself, then in his own family and lastly among his neighbours and countrymen. Not a word, not a syllable should escape his lips against the decisions of God.

Spiritual duties are manifold. They should be given the first preference in all his dealings. Man, unfortunately, more often than not neglects this aspect of his life and does not give adequate attention towards its development. Whatever an Ahmadi does, whenever he thinks of anything, he must keep in mind that everything happens on heaven and earth according to the decision of God predestined by Him. Nothing done by him should savour of the slightest scent of displeasure at the decisions of God in every sphere of his life. He should realise with a confirmed belief that whatever is done by God is all for the good of mankind here and hereafter. His life-long work should be aimed not in the hope of attaining for himself the bliss of heaven or saving from the torments or perdition of hell, but it should be directed towards merging his own individuality in attaining Divine love.

The most important part of an Ahmadi's life is his Prayer which he should observe in the daily routine of his life whether at home or abroad. Prayer observed in congregation or individually should precede all his actions in order to invoke the grace and blessings of God for their success. Prayer and nothing but prayer performed formally or informally is the only means whereby one can lead a successful spiritual life here on earth. An Ahmadi has to take shelter in the haven of prayers from all sorts of tempests and turmoils that often make his life miserable and not worth living.

An Ahmadi has to take into account daily his words and deeds while retiring to bed and satisfy himself whether the day he spent was engaged throughout in service done in accordance with the will of God and if he detects any flaw he should try to amend for it.

Last but not the least the duty for an Ahmadi is to keep himself always ready for the sacrifice of his wealth, movable and immovable, for the sake of the propagation of Islam and for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. May the Almighty God grant us all power and strength enough to discharge the duties enjoined upon Ahmadies to His entire satisfaction. Amen!

The Golden Mean

(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

Four thousand years ago the tribes of Israel laboured in captivity under the iron rule of the Pharaohs. They were employed in the building of the pyramids which stand as monuments of Egypt's ancient rulers. It is said that one hundred thousand men were engaged for thirty years in the construction of the great Pyramid of Cheops; and some idea of the sweat and labour put into the construction of this massive memorial may be realised from the fact that two million, three hundred thousand blocks of stone weighing two and a half tons each were used. In addition, fifty-six gigantic blocks of granite with an average weight of fifty four tons each were used for the roofing of the burial chamber; and they had to be brought from distant quarries.

Suppression permeated the dynasty of the Pharaohs; but while man proposes, God disposes. The decline of the might of the Pharaohs and the freedom and rise of the Israelites awaited only the decree of God. It was near at hand. God then bestowed upon Moses the mantle of prophethood and commanded him to go to the Royal Court and demand the release of the Israelites; but Pharaoh was derisive and obstinate; he would not hearken to the solicitations of God's Messenger; thereupon God manifested His displeasure in the form of terrible visitations that scourged the land. Famine, plague and death followed one upon the other until Pharaoh, shaken and tremulous, reluctantly conceded to Moses's demands. And so the great exodus from Egypt began. For forty years they wandered and dwelt in the wilderness before they beheld the Promised Land; and it was during that period that the Law of Commandments was revealed to Moses for their guidance.

The Israelites had been living in bondage for hundreds of years; but now a promising future lay before them. Almighty God showered His blessings upon them and showed them the way of salvation. It must, however, be borne in mind, that the Law of Moses is not a universal one; nor was it intended to serve the Israelites for all ages. It was revealed for the guidance of the Israelites only and in accordance with the peculiar exigencies of that epoch. That is why some of the commandments are extreme in nature:

“An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

(Deutr: 19:21).

Fourteen hundred years later God raised up from among them the Prophet Jesus; and although he did not bring a new law (Matthew 5:17), he permitted a temporary relaxation on certain precepts which the Jews had abused. This was to curb their excessive, revengeful and unjust infractions of the Law. Thus the opposite extreme was taught by Jesus:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

(Matthew 5:38, 39).

Now, both Moses and Jesus foretold the coming of a greater prophet than themselves who would bring a complete law; and he was the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him) to whom was revealed the Holy Quran which contains a perfect, complete, universal and everlasting law. The following prophecy was revealed to Moses regarding the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him):

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.”

(Deutr. 18:18, 19).

This prophecy refers to the coming of a prophet who would resemble Moses; and the most distinctive mark of Moses was his being a prophet bearing a new law. It is, therefore, wrong to believe that the prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Jesus because he categorically stated that his mission was only to fulfil the Law of Moses and not to change it:

“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them.”

(Matthew 5:17).

Jesus stated that he had not conveyed all truths necessary for the spiritual development of man; and that after him another would come:

“I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

(John 16:12, 13).

The one to come was the same one about whom Moses had spoken. The prophecy does not refer to the Holy Spirit which is one of the three Christian gods; rather it refers to the noblest and best of all men—the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him).

One of the beauties of Islam is that it presents a middle path of conduct. It does not teach either of the two extremes promulgated by Moses and Jesus:

“And the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoso forgives and his act brings about reformation, his reward is with Allah. Surely, He loves not the wrongdoers.”

(42:41).

The teaching neither insists upon retaliation nor upon unconditional forgiveness. Both may be meritorious acts if they befit the occasion. If forgiveness might result in the reformation of the offender then it would be all for the better; but if the adoption of such magnanimity is likely to encourage the offender to continue his misconduct then he should be punished appropriately.

The poised mind

Islam is the most tolerant and broad-minded religion in the world. It has been revealed for all ages; therefore it guides mankind along a middle path, and as an outcome the mind of a Muslim should be poised; and if the mind is poised, the actions of the body are also poised, because man is what he thinks. The body obeys the mind. Unclean thoughts crystallise into unclean habits and physical degradation; righteous and uplifting thoughts crystallise into noble habits and physical purity. Likewise a poised mind crystallises into composed and dignified habits and physical control.

The mind of a Muslim should be open and flexible. The obstinate and closed mind is never in poise; but this is the mental condition of the great majority of Muslims to-day. Islam is the elixir of life but on account of Muslims giving paramount attention to worldly interests, they have failed to absorb the bright essence of their faith. They do not enjoy the delightful experience of an open and peaceful mind; and this mental defect is as prevalent among the learned and religious leaders as it is among the others.

The poised mind is more precious than the largest pearl or the finest gold. It is cool, serene and calm. It is never indifferent, vindictive or frustrated; nor is it controlled by the emotions; instead it is master over both the body and the nerves; and it is a force of tremendous magnetic power. Who is not attracted towards the tranquil yet energetic mind? It does not matter what inconveniences or misfortunes beset the possessor of such a mind. He is always composed, patient and courageous. Light always brightens his face. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah possessed a poised and heavenly temperament regarding which one of his closest disciples Maulvi Abdul Karim has penned his observations:

“One day he said, ‘I have such control over my passions and God has made myself so submissive to me that even if a man goes on abusing me in

my face for one year, he would at last himself feel ashamed and will have to admit his failure to move me even a little.' . . . His steadfastness and strength of will, like those of the Great Prophets (may peace and the blessings of God be upon them) are not affected at all by threats or by any fearful spectacle. No awful incident or painful disaster can distract his attention or make him forgetful of his duty. I know from personal experience and from the testimony of others that the composure of mind and coolness of temper and gentle behaviour which characterise him during his health also characterise him during his illness. The Holy Quran says:

'Allah establishes those who believe with an established word in this world and in the world to come.' The establishment spoken of in this verse is the very stability of temper possessed by the Promised Messiah. The perfect man whom the fire of this world—the fire of the misfortunes and hardships of this life—cannot affect, is the very believer whom the hell says, 'O believer pass on for thy light has extinguished my fire'."

The mind which is closed and obstinate is always out of poise; while the mind which is open and flexible is an indication of poise.

The see-saw mind which is always running the gamut from one extreme to the other is never in poise. It is the mind that rules from the point of balance which is in poise.

The mind of the savage is never in poise; and when the mind is not in poise, the impulse of the savage and pre-historic man begins to take control. Only a thin thread separates these two conditions of mind; a little pressure and the thread snaps. Poise escapes as fast as gushing water rushes out of a breached dam. Then the inherent savage impulses manifest their coarseness and brutality.

The seed of man contains the physical history of his ancestors as well as the physical history of his offspring. Embedded in that seed are the traits of his parents; and the traits of his parents are coloured with the traits of his grand-parents; there is in fact an unbroken chain of seeds tracing back to his pre-historic relatives who were characterised with wild and cruel dispositions which have lain latent in the seed of mankind ever since; and they will continue to lie latent in the seed of all of mankind to come. Poise of mind will prevent them from being roused into physical manifestation.

Here is a highly respected preacher who has devoted his life to the service of God and humanity. His inspiring expositions of the Good Life and his charming personality win the general admirations of his flock. One day, while he is sitting at home preparing a sermon, the children of the house create an uproar and their strident voices scatter his thoughts to the wind. The muscles of his face harden into an expression of vexation; he commands them to be

quiet. There is a hush for a brief moment; but no sooner has he returned to the preparation of his sermon, pandemonium again breaks out. This is more than he can tolerate; he jumps up with blazing eyes and cuffs a child across the head sending it sprawling on the floor; and he utters words that shock his wife. In this case he lost his poise and the head-strong impulse of the savage was roused and took possession of him; and it was an exhibition of the normal tendency of his ancient ancestors who roamed the forests and dwelt in caves.

The characteristics of the savage reveal themselves to a greater or lesser extent in the lives of 99% of human beings. The purpose of life demands that man should prevent these latent impulses from being roused into savage action; and he who develops a poised mind, masters himself. This is therefore as good an occasion as any to quote the golden maxim: "He who is unable to master himself is unable to master others."

A transformation may be brought about in the life of a person by constantly holding in mind the characteristics of holy men; and if the preacher who struck the child had made it a practice of frequently focussing in mind mental pictures of poised persons, then in all probability he would have mastered the savage impulse which caused him to stumble.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, always maintained a cool demeanour amidst the constant noise and disturbance created by the children in his home. Hazrat Maulvi Abdul Karim has rendered an immense service by sketching some beautiful descriptions of the heavenly heart of the Promised Messiah;

"He possesses wonderful coolness of temper, composure of mind and extraordinary serenity and forbearance. However great tumult and noise there may be — tumult which distracts the mind and compels everyone to turn his attentions to it — he will not even feel it and his mind will not be disturbed by it in the least. It is this very state of mind which the servants of God hanker after and pray for with tearful eyes.

"I have seen the Promised Messiah engaged in writing on difficult subjects and even composing Arabic works of unparalleled linguistic elegance in the midst of a great tumult and uproar. Reckless children and simple-minded women are quarrelling all around him, screeching and screaming and even grappling with one another and performing all the follies which little children and foolish women are apt to do and he goes on writing as if he were sitting in a place of solitude. It is in such noisy rooms that all the great and unparalleled works in Arabic, Persian and Urdu have been written."

There is no doubt that the Promised Messiah was favoured with an abundance of Grace. He and God were one in the sense that he reflected the attributes of God; and they shone through him more brightly than through any

other person since the life-time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him). He was the Chosen One of God; he was purified by Divine Grace; his heart was free from the taint of sin; and his whole being imparted the fragrance of the bloom of heaven.

Man can advance forward but can not reach the state of perfection solely by his own efforts. It is the Grace of God which crowns his endeavours with success and casts around him the mantle of absolute purity and righteousness. In the eyes of the sinner a devoted servant of God may appear to be as pure as an angel; but if Divine Grace has not lifted him up into the earthly realm known as "Heaven on earth" then he is aware of his impurities. Whoever yearns for this spiritual condition on earth should know that he should prove himself worthy to be the recipient of this divine blessing through sincere endeavour to obey all the commandments of God and to live a righteous life. The Promised Messiah enjoyed the protective Grace of God and regarding this precious gift he has written:

"Many are the chains and fetters with which a man is bound, and his own exertions, however hard, are not sufficient to liberate him from them. He desires that he may become purified, but his efforts without the helping hand of God are of no avail, and sometimes he does stumble. To purify one from sins is the work of God only and there is no other power on the earth's surface which can bring about that object."

Great heights of advancement may be attained within the spiritual sphere when the desire and will to progress are intense and indomitable. Those who at one time may be living in the lowest condition of ignorance and degradation are not denied access to these spiritual heights. When the light of Truth dawns upon them there is nothing to hold them back; and it may well be that they will overtake their teachers on this Royal Road. History contains many instances of virulent enemies of God's Laws and Messengers whose spiritual faculties later became awakened and they died in the bosom of God. Their lives altered for the better from one extreme to the other. Although we are advocating the avoidance of extremes, there is an exception to the rule in the cultivation of love for God.

It should be understood and appreciated that the desire to outstrip one's fellow beings in virtue is a commendable urge. If the feeling is absent then it is an indication that little or no spiritual force throbs within the heart.

This competitive spirit has been encouraged in the Holy Quran:

"... Vie, then, with one another in good works."

(2:149).

In the affairs of this world there is a principle which leads men to the top rungs of success. It is the fire of desire and resolution; the fight to outstrip

their competitors in their fields of endeavour. The same principle is efficacious in the affairs of the spirit and it is a healthy and fruitful one in every respect.

Mr. Henry Ford who founded the Ford Motor Company in 1903 is considered to be one of the most powerful industrial magnates who has ever lived; yet he had only an elementary education and his early years were passed in poverty. He left school at the age of fifteen and became an apprentice in a machine shop working ten hours a day for two dollars fifty cents a week. His board and lodging alone cost three dollars fifty cents a week so in order to make up the deficit he earned an extra two dollars a week working from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. in the employment of a jeweller. Such was the humble beginning of Mr. Ford's life. By 1940 the motor company which he had founded in 1903 had produced twenty eight million vehicles! And when he died in 1947 his personal estates were valued at two hundred and fifty million dollars.

If men can rise from the lowest to the highest rungs in worldly achievements, men can also rise from the depths of spiritual degradation to the state of holiness. The savage can become a saint; and let it not be supposed that savages only live in the jungle. Today there are thousands of savages living in all the great cities of the world; and rare indeed is the person who is not from time to time ruled by one or more of the savage impulses of his forefathers. These inborn tendencies come to the surface of life even in the lives of those who are deemed, and even deemed by themselves, to be righteous men.

Progress has no room for those weak-minded persons who make no serious effort to master their savage impulses and who excuse themselves on the plea that they are irrevocable traits of their nature. Here is a man who is constantly irritable and impatient and one of his friends endeavours to defend his weakness with the apology: "It is his nature to be so. There is nothing that can be done about it." Nothing could be further from the truth. If a person is in real earnest to improve himself in any field of endeavour, there is absolutely nothing whatsoever to prevent his progress. Students of psychology, the science of the mind, know that the art of positive thinking can totally transform a person of bad habits into a person of good habits. In fact a person is what he thinks. The person who is continually souring his and other people's lives with his irate temper, has the capacity within himself to develop a tranquil and sweet-tempered demeanour; but, of course, if he allows himself to drift through life without endeavouring to master himself, then he is what he is because he makes no effort along the right lines to shake off his shackles. Life is a battle ground. Everyone can become the general of his own destiny; and if at the same time he seeks the help of God he will have a resounding victory.

Islam is the path of peace; it directs one along the central road of life; so one who is truly imbued with the light of his faith, should be impregnated with the power and charm of a well-balanced poised temperament. Not only should he be charged with the spirit and power of Islam but he should manifest it through controlled channels. The zealous and enthusiastic Muslim who talks on and on without a break and who is not a patient listener, is out of poise; so is the zealous defender of Islam who becomes irritated and excited in the presence of his critics; also may be included those preachers and speakers who shout and make more noise than a good impression.

The descriptive sketches which now follow have been written to awaken the mind to the beauty of poise.

The satellite

The earth is a satellite of the sun and it travels at a speed of eighteen and a half miles per second on its annual circuit.

What is the subtle power which keeps it in orbit? It is the precise speed at which it travels whereby it is able to resist the magnetic pull of the sun and also the pull of centrifugal force. If it travelled at a slower speed, it would be drawn into the sun and destroyed; and if it travelled at a greater speed it would fly off its orbital course and disappear into the depths of space.

The earth orbits the sun in perfect poise; any digression would destroy all life.

Queen of the ocean

Poise is seen in every movement of the luxuriant liner from the moment she sets sail to the time she docks at her port of destination.

The gangway is removed; mooring ropes unfastened, and the engines begin to purr in the depths of her frame. Slowly and steadily, inch by inch she moves away from the wharf and with majestic grace silently moves down the estuary towards the open sea. Onlookers by the water's edge and peasants on the grassy slopes gaze with awe and admiration upon the stately vessel. There is no noise, no effort, as she glides through the water. There is only an indescribable presence of power and grandeur in perfect repose.

Now she is in open sea encircled by the distant sky line. The sky is grey and the water rough. Large waves smash against her sides and spray falls across her decks. But the great ship ploughs ahead seemingly unconscious of the efforts of the turbulent sea to disrupt her progress. On and on she goes while below deck all is calm and quiet. At last land is sighted and the features of a coastal port become clearer and clearer as the ship draws nearer. A little pilot boat rushes out over the choppy sea to meet her and a rope ladder is lowered for the pilot to clamber aboard and guide her into port. As the great monarch

of the ocean moors besides her berth, a church clock chimes the hour heralding her arrival on schedule.

The state express

The powerful locomotive stands on the line awaiting the signal to pull her dozen coaches out of the station. The signal falls, the whistle blows and slowly and steadily she edges forward as her pistons smoothly rise and fall. She does not shake or rattle; nor is any of her pent up power wasted; that which is not required at the outset is conserved for the gathering of speed. Soon the city is left far behind and she is speeding across the plains and through the valleys. She runs so smoothly that her passengers are gently lulled to sleep. She is a wondrous spectacle of energetic power in perfect control; and this is the secret of real poise.

Patience is a cardinal virtue of Islam which requires the exercise of a balanced temperament at all times. The Holy Prophet of Islam never allowed adverse conditions to get the better of him. On all occasions he conducted himself with composure and decorum even when a child. He was an orphan and brought up in the home of his uncle Abu Talib whose wife would sometimes direct prior attention to her own children than to Muhammad (peace be on him) in such matters as serving meals and other household affairs. Muhammad (peace be on him) never showed any indication of grievance. His face always reflected pleasure and contentment.

Later in life, accompanied by his friend Abu Bakr, he took refuge in a cave a few miles outside Mecca while being hunted by his enemies who were intent upon killing him. When the enemy approached the entrance to the cave Abu Bakr became perturbed but was consoled by the Prophet who said "Fear not, God is with us. We are not two in this cave. There is a third — God." The enemy decided not to search the cave and moved off.

On another occasion the Prophet was asleep unguarded and awoke to find one of the enemy standing over him with a drawn sword. "Who can save you now?" he mocked. Quite unflustered the Prophet replied "Allah." whereupon the sword dropped from the hand of his enemy.

Grief gives rise to feelings which can play havoc with emotions. The Prophet once passed a woman who was wailing loudly over the loss of a child and he gently admonished her. She retorted that he would feel and understand her heartache were he himself to lose a child. The Prophet replied that he had lost seven children then proceeded on his way.

Islam is not a religion of extremes but guides along the middle path; and the characteristic of a practising Muslim is that he comports himself with calm and dignity on all occasions never deviating to extremes in practical conduct.

“And as for those who strive to meet Us — We will, surely, guide them in Our ways . . .”

(29:70).

It is evident from the Quran that Jihad does not consist in killing and being killed but, rather, in striving hard to win the pleasure of God. Devotion of time and spending money in the service of Islam is also Jihad:

“Make Jihad with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah . . .”

(9:41).

“And strive in the cause of Allah as it behoves you to strive for it . . .”

(22:79).

Another proof that Muhammad (peace be on him) did not propound that Jihad and war are synonymous is that whereas he was advised to make Jihad against the disbelievers and hypocrites yet he never did fight against the latter.

The use of force in the propagation of one's faith is forbidden in Islam:

“There is no compulsion in religions.”

(2:257).

Real faith cannot be imposed by force. The most it can do is to turn a disbeliever into a hypocrite and according to Islam a hypocrite is worse than a non-believer. As already established, the Quran forbids conversion by coercion:

“And if thy Lord had enforced His Will, surely, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wilt thou, then, force men to become believers.”

(10:100).

“And We have pointed out to him the two highways of good and evil.”

(90:11).

The Arabic word “Al-Najdain” used in the second verse above means the two highways of good and evil, of truth and falsehood, of spiritual and material progress. God has provided man with all those means by which he can find out the right path and sift right from wrong and truth from falsehood. He is free to choose the course he likes.

The Rev. O. Leary, D.D. does not share the views of the detractors of Islam concerning this matter. He has written:

“History makes it clear, however, that the legends of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon the conquered races, is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.”

KEY TO REPENTANCE

(A. R. Chowdry)

Islam makes it clear that God is merciful and that His mercy encompasses His anger. On this point the Holy Quran says:

“O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls! despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives all sins. Verily He is the Most Forgiving, Merciful.”

(34:54).

The holy Prophet of Islam has said that if the unbeliever knew of the extent of the Lord's mercy, even he would not despair of paradise. It is true that the remission of sins depends upon the mercy of God but in order to earn His mercy it is essential that the sinner must repent and make amends. God lays down this condition in the verse thus:

“Their (i.e. sinners) punishment shall not be lightened nor shall they be reprieved, except those who repent thereafter and amend. And surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.”

(3:90).

This repentance is the keynote of the remission of sins. The repentance must be true, sincere and must come from within. God's forgiveness comes flying then. The holy Prophet Muhammad s.a.s. also tells us that whoever seeks to approach God one span He seeks to approach him one cubit; and whoever seeks to approach Him one cubit, He seeks to approach Him two fathoms, and he who walks towards Him, He runs towards him; and whoever comes before Him with the earth full of sins, and believes solely in Him, He comes before him with a front of forgiveness as big as the earth.

One objection that is often raised against this idea of repentance and forgiveness is that it might encourage the repetition of sins as the sinner knows that God through His grace would always forgive him. It should be noted that the essential point of any scheme of remission of sins is that there is not only the repentance on the part of the doer of wrong but such a person must make amends and do his best to avoid its repetition. Here one has got to strive hard to avoid the pitfalls in his life and then if any misfortune or vexation befell him

Hazrat Abu Bakr

Hazrat Abu Bakr was one of the very earliest converts to Islam and became the closest friend of the Holy Prophet. His devotion and piety were of a very high calibre and on the death of the Prophet he was elected the first Khalifa. He said:

“Whether you are alone or in the company of others, you should fear God for, he who fears God gets rid of hardships and troubles and God opens up ways for his livelihood in such a way that he could not even imagine. He who fears God gets his weaknesses covered up by Him and is granted a very great reward.”

“O ye people, ask for peace and security from God. After you have attained certainty, there is nothing better than peace and security. You should stick to truthfulness because it leads to virtuous deeds. Truthfulness and virtuous deeds takes one to paradise. You should shun from telling lies for lies make a man commit evil deeds. Lies and evil deeds push a man into hell. Jealousy, rancour and cutting oneself off from others should be avoided. You should not turn your backs on one another. You should become brothers to one another as God has commanded you to become brothers.”

“I urge you to fear God. Stick to the Laws of God. Listen to Him whomsoever God has entrusted your affairs—and obey Him, for He will get rid of his low passions, greed and unwieldy anger. Do not feel proud. It does not behove that he who is created from dust and has to go back to dust should display pride. He has to be devoured by worms. Today he is alive and tomorrow he will be dead. Every moment that passes carries him nearer to the time of his death. You should, therefore, count yourself among the dead people. Do good deeds for they will be accepted. Shun all things against which God has warned you and ask for His mercy without delay. Use your sense and reason. Be righteous through the fear of God. He has told you why people before you were ruined so be careful.”

“You should always keep the company of the truthful and righteous people.”

What is Islam?

Islam literally means *Peace, surrender of one's Will*; and to be in amity and concord. The significance of the name Islam is the attainment of a life of perfect peace and eternal happiness through complete surrender to the Will of God. The Quran — the Holy Book of the Muslims — interprets it to be the religion whose teachings are in consonance with human nature. Islam, as the Quran has stated (5:4), is the completion of the religion inaugurated by God in the beginning of the world, on His sending the Quran through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him). As a child is taught his alphabet, so God taught the religion to the world gradually and little by little, by sending His prophets at different times and to different peoples.

When the world reached that stage of understanding when it was ready for the final lesson, He sent the last and complete Book through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him). This Book not only corrects the errors which had found their way into various religions, but preaches the truths which have not been preached before, on account of special circumstances of the society or the early stage of its development. At the same time it gathers together in itself the truths which were contained in any Divine revelation granted to any people for the guidance of men (The Quran 98:4). Lastly, it meets all the spiritual and moral requirements of an ever advancing humanity.

This is Islam which is wrongly called Muhammadanism.

According to Islam, the object of man's life is its complete unfoldment. Islam does not support the idea that man is born in sin. It teaches that everyone has within him the seed of perfect development and it rests solely with a person himself to make or mar his fortune. *We created man in the best make* says the Holy Quran (95:5).

The cardinal doctrine of Islam is the Unity of Godhead. *There is none worthy of worship but the one and only God, and Muhammad is His Prophet.* He is free from all defects, Holy and Transcendent. He is All Good, All Mercy and All Power. He has no partner. He neither begets nor is He begotten, because these are the traits of frail and weak humanity. Furthermore, Islam helps us to establish a permanent relationship with God and to realise Him during our earthly life as our Helper in all our affairs and undertakings. This Unity of God is the first and foremost pillar of Islam and every other belief hangs upon it.

Islam requires belief in all the prophets, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius and Zoroaster. We regard them all (and many more not mentioned here) as heavenly teachers born to reform and regenerate man and lead him to God. Adherents of some other religions may consider it an act of piety to use disrespectful words and heap abuse on the prophets of other religions, but if a Muslim were to show the slightest disrespect towards the founder of any other faith, he does so at the cost of his own faith. He has to utter the respectful benediction *Alaihis-Salam* (peace be on him) after mentioning the name of every prophet. Thus Islam establishes peace between all religions.

The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

The Review of Religions is the oldest magazine of its kind published in the English language in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent. Its first issue was published in 1902 and it has been continuously published since.

It bears the distinction that it was initiated under the direction of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah himself.

During more than eighty-one years the message of Islam has been conveyed through this magazine to hundreds of readers and many fortunate persons have recognised the truth of Islam and accepted it through studying it.

The articles published in it deal not only with the doctrines and teachings of Islam but also set forth a comparative appreciation of the teachings of other faiths.

One of its outstanding features is the refutations of the criticism of Islamic teachings by orientalists and non-muslim scholars.

It also presents solutions in the light of Islamic teachings of the problems with which the Islamic world is from time to time confronted.

A study of this magazine is indispensable for the appreciation of the doctrines of the Ahmadiyya Movement and the teachings of its holy Founder.

