



THE REVIEW of RELIGIONS

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European Edition

EDITOR: B. A. ORCHARD



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

HUMILITY

(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

“O God! Keep me humble while I am alive and keep me humble when I die and let my resurrection on the Day of Judgement be with the humble.”

(Prophet of Islam).

Humility is a cardinal virtue refined and practised to a marked degree by all God-fearing people. In no way is it an indication of weakness but rather it is a sign of spiritual strength and maturity. God Himself has commanded:

“And walk not on the earth haughtily.”

(Quran 17:38).

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) declared:

“Allah has revealed to me that that you should comport yourselves with humility towards one another so that no one transgresses against another, nor boasts of any superiority over another.”

Jesus also declared:

“He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

(Luke 14:11).

Pride kindles the displeasure and wrath of God. The Quran refers to numerous instances where individuals and nations were punished or destroyed for their arrogance:

“We afflicted them with poverty and adversity that they might humble themselves.”

(6:44).

The people of Noah were drowned in the flood for their arrogant mockery and rejection of God's Messenger:

“Do you wonder that an exhortation has come to you from your Lord through a man (Noah) from among yourselves, that he may warn you and that you may become righteous and that you may be shown mercy?”

But they called him a liar, so We saved him and those with him in the Ark and We drowned those who rejected Our Signs. They were indeed a blind people.

(Quran 7:64, 65).

Similarly Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the Red Sea for their arrogance and hard heartedness:

“And he (Pharaoh) and his hosts behaved arrogantly in the land without justification. And they thought that they would never be brought back to Us.

So We seized him and his hosts and cast them into the sea. See, then, how evil was the end of the wrongdoers!”

(Quran 28:40, 41).

Around the world dictators and arrogant rulers have and continue to topple into oblivion. How the mighty have fallen!

The higher we are placed the more humble we should walk.

Saint Augustine stated:

“Should you ask me what is the first thing in religion? I should reply: the first, second and third thing is humility.”

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam has written:

“I tell you truly that on the Day of Judgement, other than the association of anything with God, no vice shall rank as high as arrogance. This is a vice that humiliates a person in both worlds.”

(Aaeenahi Kamalate-i-Islam).

while on this earth; and to keep on course we must stand at the wheel of self-control as the captain stands at the wheel of his ship guiding it through tempestuous storms to its port of destination.

Self-control moulds the character of a happy life.

"He alone is happy who is free from hatred and malice and has his passions under control."

(Bhagwad Gita).

Self-control increases self-respect:

"Respect yourself or no one else will."

(Proverb).

Self-control also attracts respect:

"He who maintains self-respect is never degraded in the sight of others."

(Hazrat Ali).

"Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances."

(Thomas Jefferson).

Self-control develops the virtue of all virtues — patience:

"O you who believe be patient and enjoy patience and be firm and fear God that you may prosper."

(3:199).

Self-control fosters obedience without which no believer can make progress on the Right Path:

"O you who believe, obey God and obey the apostle and those in authority among you."

(4:59).

Developing the art of self-control ranks among the highest and most rewarding of educations; but it should be remembered that the best instruction can only be of help to the extent to which it is put into practice. Self-control is not a gift but an accomplishment; and the secret of accomplishment is concentration which transmutes strong desires and mental visions into physical realities. We are the architects of our own souls and God is our Guide and Helper.

Introduction to Islam

(Hafeez-ur-Rahman)

The Prophet of Islam was born in Mecca, Arabia, on 20th April in the year 570 A.D. In accordance with a dream of his mother, Amina, he was named Muhammad — one greatly praised. His father died a while before his birth and at the age of six his mother died leaving him an orphan. It was not the custom for middle-class women to suckle their children so nurses were acquired to bring them up during the early stages of their lives. He was entrusted to the care of a country woman called Haleema until the age of five. She proved herself a very gentle and affectionate foster-mother. Soon after he returned to his mother she died and he was looked after by his grandfather — Abdul Mutallib. He also passed away after two years and from thenceforth he was cared for by his uncle — Abu Talib.

Muhammad (peace be on him) was given to reflection and meditation from early childhood. He took no part in the quarrels and rivalries of others except in trying to settle them. He was ever keen to promote justice and orderliness. Three young men of Mecca had formed an association for the purpose of aiding persons in distress and suffering from unjust treatment. Muhammad (peace be on him) also became an active participant. They pledged the following undertaking:

“To help those who are oppressed and to restore to them their rights as long as the last drop of water remained in the sea. If they failed in any undertaking they would compensate the victim from their own assets.”

The life of the Holy Prophet is an open book with each phase of his life full of interesting details. Enough is known of his youth and early life to reveal that he was gentle, patient, obedient, respectful towards his elders, affectionate towards his companions and full of compassion for the aged, infirm, those in adverse circumstances and in need of help. As he grew to manhood his good qualities were recognised by his contemporaries who were impressed by his absolute integrity in word and deed. He became known as “Al-Ameen” or “The trusted one.”

By the age of twenty-five his reputation for integrity and fellow-feeling had spread throughout Mecca. People would point at him with admiration saying

“here was a man who could be trusted.” His reputation reached the ears of a highly respected and wealthy widow of Mecca called Khadeeja who sent him an offer of marriage through his uncle. The marriage was arranged. Despite the disparity of age between them the union proved one of unusual tranquillity and happiness. Khadeeja placed all her resources at her husband’s disposal who distributed the greater part among the poor and needy. He also freed all her slaves. Thus he voluntarily chose a life of poverty for himself and his wife. It speaks highly of Khadeeja’s deep affection for her husband and of her lofty character that she cheerfully accepted his choice.

After attaining the age of thirty the love of God and love of worship began to possess Muhammad (peace be on him) more and more. It became a regular practice with him to retire for several days at a time in a cave situated on one of the hills a few miles outside of Mecca. Taking with him some dates and a little water he would spend his days and nights in prayer and contemplation. He received his first revelation at the age of forty in the year 610 A.D. It would be well to remember that he was unable to read or write. It was on a Monday during the last ten days of the Islamic month of Ramadhan that while meditating in the cave an unfamiliar Presence suddenly appeared before him. It commanded him “recite” to which Muhammad (peace be on him) replied that he was unable to do so. Thereupon the Presence clasped him to his bosom and on releasing him once more directed him to recite but received the same negative reply. This was repeated once more after which the Presence directed:

“Recite in the name of thy Lord who created. He created man from a clot of blood. Recite, for thy Lord is most Beneficent, who has taught by the pen. Taught man which he knew not.”

(96:2-6).

The Presence then disappeared. Muhammad (peace be on him) was overpowered by the experience and immediately made his way home and told Khadeeja what had happened. She suggested he accompany her to her aged and almost blind Christian cousin — Waraqa, and relate his experience to him. On hearing the account of the incident Waraqa said:

“The angel which descended on Moses has descended on you. Would that I were stronger and could survive till your people will expel you from your home.”

Muhammad (peace be on him) was surprised and exclaimed: “Will they indeed expel me?”. Waraqa replied:

“Never has that come to any which has come to you but that his people have turned against him. If I survive till that time, I shall help you with all my strength.”

It is striking that the first verbal revelation which Muhammad (peace be on him) received and which is a part of the Quran, commanded him: "Recite in the name of thy Lord." Every chapter of the Quran commences with "In the name of God, ever Gracious, most Merciful."

He received no further experience of the same kind for a while. Then he began to receive revelations at intervals until at last he was commanded by God to denounce idolatry and proclaim His Unity. In the beginning his attempts to convey God's message in Mecca drew only four persons They were: Khadeeja, Ali his eleven-year-old cousin, Zaid a freed slave and his friend Abu Bakr. The Meccans derided this small group but as time passed more and more persons joined. The Meccans began to take a serious attitude and embarked upon a course of persecution which grew more cruel and savage as time passed. None was secure against persecution, not even the Prophet himself who was continuously subjected to all kinds of indignities and molestations. The worst affected were the converts from slavery. Sometimes stones were laid on their chests after being laid on hot sand in the scorching sun. Women were not even spared. One slave woman lost her eyes; another was cruelly murdered with a spear and others were subjected to shameless and unmentionable torture but they remained steadfast in faith. Muhammad (peace be on him) and his followers suffered persecution and severe hardship in Mecca for twelve years until they decided to migrate to Medina a town over two hundred miles north of Mecca where they were enthusiastically welcomed. Thenceforth Islam commenced to spread rapidly.

The Prophet arrived in Medina in 622 A.D. which marks the beginning of the Islamic lunar calender known as "Hijra" which means "migration". The suffix A.H. (after Hijra) is added after the year as Christians introduced the suffix A.D.

The progress of Islam after the Prophet's safe arrival in Medina set the stage for the Meccans to embark on warfare against the Muslims. He was responsible not only for the Muslims but for the whole of Medina which was under threat of attack and which was attacked again and again by the Meccans who were successfully repelled. Ten years after the migration to Medina, Muhammad (peace be on him) re-entered Mecca accompanied by ten thousand of his followers. Mecca was unable to resist and was taken without bloodshed. Muslims believe that this event fulfilled the following Biblical prophecy:

"He shined forth from mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them."

(Deuteronomy 33:2).

Despite the enormities the Meccans had inflicted upon the Prophet and his followers he forgave them. Such was his magnanimity. He breathed his last in 632 A.D. with these words on his lips: "To my friend the highest of the high —

to my friend the highest of the high." His death was a severe blow to the Muslims and his intimate companions were overwhelmed with grief. Hassan, a poet of the early days of Islam, expressed his grief in these words:

"Thou wast the pupil of my eye. Now that thou hast died my eye hath become blind. I care not who dies now for I feared only thy death."

Muhammad (peace be on him) was a human being and in the Quran has been commanded by God to proclaim:

"Tell them: I am but a man like unto you; it is revealed to me that your God is one God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord work righteousness and let him associate no one in the worship of his Lord."
(18:111).

He appeared at a time when the world was in need of a universal and comprehensive spiritual guidance. History bears out that this was the darkest period of the dark ages. Many historians and religious authorities have endorsed this fact. A European orientalist — L. Dermengham has written in his book "Life of Mohomet":

"Mohomet appeared on the scene at one of the darkest periods in all history."

The scene in Arabia was to change in a short period of time and by 650 A.D. a large part of the world had changed for the better. S. P. Scott writes in his book "History of the Moorish Empire in Europe":

"If the object of religion be the inculcation of morals, the diminution of evil, the promotion of human happiness, the expansion of the human intellect, if the performance of good work will avail in the great day when mankind shall be summoned to its final reckoning, it is neither irreverent nor unreasonable to admit that Muhammad was indeed an Apostle of God."

Muhammad was a man of peace; but his enemies would allow him no peace. They compelled him to take up arms in defence of freedom of conscience — the most fundamental human right. George Bernard Shaw declared:

"I believe that if a man like Muhammad were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving the problem in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness."

Islam is the religion propogated and established by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and is today professed by over seven hundred thousand Muslims the world over. Its message is contained in the Holy Quran which is a verbal revelation vouchsafed to Muhammad (peace be on him) in small portions from time to time during the twenty-two years of his ministry. It contains the whole of the law, doctrine, philosophy, moral precepts and other teachings of Islam.

Islam means “submission to the Will of God” and “Peace”. It is not named after Muhammad (peace be on him). All followers of Islam, including the Prophet himself, are called Muslims i.e. those who submit themselves to the will of God and exert themselves in establishing universal peace. The Quran states that those who submit themselves to God and are the doers of good shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.

Islam is the simplest religion to profess and to practise. It is sufficient to believe and proclaim one’s belief. The cardinal principle of Islam is:

“There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is His Prophet.”

Whoever declares this profession of faith becomes a Muslim who is also required to believe in the following articles of faith:

- Belief in the Unity of God.
- Belief in all revealed books.
- Belief in all Prophets.
- Belief in angels.
- Belief in the Day of Resurrection.

A particular belief is in the original truth of all the revealed religions revealed by God prior to the advent of Islam thereby laying the basis for a harmonious relationship among mankind. No doubt there may exist differences of views but they should not lead to rancour and enmity.

Islam calls for practical belief and not mere lip service. The Quran constantly refers to true Muslims as those who not only believe but also do good. Correct belief should be nourished by good deeds. Islam emphasises that it is not only conviction of the truth of a proposition which is required but also its translation into practice.

The Islamic prayer comes first among the fundamental principles of action. Prayer is the outpouring of one’s inner feelings, a sincere supplication to God and a reverential expression of spiritual yearnings. Prayer is a means of self-purification which is an essential requisite for attaining communion with God. The offering of prescribed prayers five times a day in a particular manner is obligatory upon every Muslim. A Muslim may pray alone in any place which suits his convenience. He prays to God direct and does not confess his sins to any one other than to Him. The names and timings of the prayers are:

1. Salat-ul-Fajr or the morning prayer which is offered between dawn and sunrise.
2. Salat-ul-Zuhr or the early afternoon prayer which is offered when the sun begins to decline; and its time extends to the next prayer.
3. Salat-ul-Asr or the late afternoon prayer which is offered when the sun is about midway on its course to setting and its time extends to a little before sunset.

4. Salat-ul-Magrib or the evening prayer is offered just after sunset.
5. Salat-ul-Isha or the early night prayer which is offered after the red glow in the west has disappeared. Its time extends to midnight.

Prior to the offering of prayers it is necessary to wash those parts of the body which are generally exposed. This ablution is called "Wudu". Prayer is the spiritual diet of a Muslim which he partakes five times a day; and those who think it is too frequent should bear in mind how ready they are to take their daily meals at various times of the day to nourish their physical bodies. Is not spiritual growth much more essential than physical growth? Is not the soul of greater value than the body? If food is needed and taken several times a day to minister the needs of the body is not the soul in need of spiritual nourishment?

Jesus is recorded to have said:

"Man shall not live by bread alone"

(Luke 4:4).

Contributing the Poor Rate known as "Zakat" is another principle of action. All religions advocate charity. Islam has made it obligatory and binding on Muslims through payment of Zakat. It is a tax paid in cash or kind by Muslims of means who possess for one complete year money, gold, silver or cattle. The annual rate is 2½% of the value of their holdings which is used in assisting the poor.

Fasting is another fundamental teaching of Islam. All revealed religions have prescribed fasting in one form or another. In some cases it is almost symbolic such as the Christian observance during the forty days of Lent when Christians are encouraged to deny themselves some little pleasure of their choice during that period. The way of fasting as taught in Islam is quite different to that practised by other religions. Muslims have been commanded to fast for a main purpose:

"O ye who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous."

(2:184).

The ordinances relating to fasting are clearly stated and defined in Islam with permissible exemption for certain classes of people. One of the months in the Muslim Calendar is called Ramadhan and throughout this month all able-bodied Muslims are commanded to fast daily from the first flush of dawn until sunset. During this period nothing of any kind in the way of food or drink may be taken. A person who is unwell is excused from fasting and also a traveller providing the nature of the journey is not the usual routine of his work such as a pilot or an engine driver. The number of fasts which may be missed during the month for permissible reasons must be observed later on within the year before the next month of fasting comes around. During the

month of fasting one is also required to pay particular attention to one's behaviour. The Prophet of Islam has said:

“He who abstains from food and drink during the period of the fast, but does not restrain himself from uttering a falsehood starves himself for no purpose.”

The fast is not an empty and meaningless imposition. It is a means of physical, moral, social and spiritual development. The physical body is apt to run wild like an untamed horse unless held under rigid control. Our passions rule us and we are inclined to gratify every desire of the flesh thus affecting our words and actions. Through successful fasting one demonstrates one has the ability to resist temptations of the flesh when one makes up one's mind to do so. Whilst fasting, one is able to understand and sympathize with one's less fortunate brethren who are starving or undernourished.

Medical science has disclosed that fasting is one of the most effective forms of treatment for cleansing the body of toxic poisons and for many diseases. It cleanses the body of impurities.

Pilgrimage to Mecca is another fundamental injunction of Islam. It is known as “Hajj”. Every Muslim is commanded to make the Pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime provided he can afford to do so and is in good health. It is performed during the Islamic month called “Zulhajj”, the last month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The pilgrims wear one type of simple dress consisting of two seamless sheets and leaves his head uncovered. All distinction of rank, wealth, colour and nationality disappear; even royalty is indistinguishable from the peasant.

In the centre of Mecca is a small house of worship known as the Kabah. Muslims believe it was the first house of worship built for the glorification of God dating far back into antiquity. During the passage of time it fell into ruin but was restored by Abraham who instituted pilgrimage to the holy site. Pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the pillars of Islam incumbent upon Muslims to observe at least once in their lifetime.

Islam aims at reforming society through purification of the soul and body. The physical state of man is closely connected with his moral and spiritual state, so much so that even his modes of eating and drinking play a part in the moulding of his moral and spiritual qualities. It is because food and drink play an important role in the formation of character that the Quran forbids eating the flesh of swine and the drinking of alcohol. Furthermore in order to safeguard mankind from social evils Islam forbids gambling and also the lending of money on interest as this tends to accumulate wealth within a limited circle. The free intermingling of the opposite sexes is also not permissible. Everyone is aware of the moral depravity that exists in a promiscuous society.

The Roman Attitude

(Nasir Ward)

The Roman government made little distinction between the Jews and the Christians; as both were following the same practices there was no need for them to do so. Outwardly, there was no visible difference to the Roman eye, but the Christian element began to attract attention through its activities of vigorous proselytising, especially when this concerned the ruling classes. To change religion, for a Roman patrician, was to renounce his ancestors and his Roman past; to reject the very basis on which the state was founded, or so it seemed to officials. This action was tantamount to subversion, or at least approaching treason; not only were Roman principles rejected, but also the complete background of Hellenic culture. Such an attitude was bound to bring the charge of world hating against all those who objected to the very existence of the contemporary form of society.

Perhaps the earliest mention of action taken against Christians by the Roman government is recorded by Tacitus,¹ though it is not certain exactly what is meant. Pompinia Graecina, wife of Aulus Plautius, the conqueror of southern Britain, was accused of “foreign superstition”, and handed over to her husband for trial, as was the custom. This was in 57 A.D. What exactly was meant by “foreign superstition” is not clear, but the term has been used many times to describe Christianity. Presumably it was irenious enough to bring an accusation against this woman of high birth, from one of the most noble families in Rome. Her husband found her innocent, but she lived in reclusion for the rest of her life. It is possible she had become a Christian, a surmise which is based on 3rd century A.D. Christian inscriptions referring to the family of Pomponia — the “gens pomponis”, but it is impossible to be certain.

The major blow came from Nero in 64 A.D. Again Tacitus records the events, following the fire of Rome:

“Accordingly, arrest was first made of those who confessed (to being Christian), then on their evidence, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of hatred of the human race.”²

1. Tacitus — Annals 13:32.

2. Tacitus *Ibid.* 15:44.

Tacitus, a senator writing in the reign of Trajan, is quite a reliable source. There would appear to have been large numbers of Christians in the city, enough to make a spectacular show in the arena and gardens as Nero cruelly had them put to death, a procedure which aroused the sympathy of the populace for them. If, as in the life of Apollonius, Demetrius the Christian had actually denounced the practice of bathing in Nero's newly opened baths, it is little wonder that the Christians were selected as scapegoats. Having denounced bathing, a pillar of Roman customs, when the baths and other buildings were destroyed, the Christians would be the first ones to be suspected. Philostratus tells us that Demetrius acted on his own account, but Apollonius was suspected of inciting him. Perhaps the hot-headed words of one "Christian" caused the whole episode to be laid at their door. In any case, the results were catastrophic. The government may have had the Christians under observation for some time, using the familiar practice of informers (*deletores*), but presumably they could be identified in some way by their clothes and appearance. Again, Apollonius is accused of wearing long hair and unusual clothes, no doubt it would be customary among the Jews and Essenes.

Suetonius, after mentioning that there had been disturbances in the time of Claudius "at the instigation of Chrestus,"³ also refers to the Neronian persecution, but makes only a passing reference in mentioning a list of Nero's public spending cuts:

" . . . punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a set of men adhering to a novel and mischievous superstition."⁴

Following the successful conclusion of the Jewish War, where, if Apollonius is to be believed, Vespasian and Titus learnt of the Essene-Christian movement and may have received some form of co-operation from it. The Christians began to distance themselves from the rebellious Jews, and the Jews in turn anathematized the "Nazarenes," instituting a prayer against them in the synagogue worship, thereby debarring them from attending. A growth of churches resulted, as the Christians began to think in a more non-Jewish line.

During the reign of Domitian (82-96 A.D.) the Christians again seem to have been persecuted. Flarius Clemens, of consular rank, was executed, possibly because he was a Christian, though more likely because he had been conspiring against the Emperor. His wife, Domitilla, gave her name to the Catacomb on the Appian Way, where however, the graves of the "Christians" appear to be wholly Jewish in nature at this time. If the Christians had been implicated in a conspiracy it would explain the hostility of the government towards them. Domitian was murdered by Stephanos, a

3. Suetonius — *Life of Chouduid* 25:4.

4. Suetonius — *Life of Nero* 16.

former wrestler, who had previously been employed by Domitilla. Apollonius had foreseen the moment of the assassination at Ephesus, the vision augmented by a "stephanos", "halo" or "crown", round the sun. Perhaps this is no more than a reference to Stephanos, the first martyr.

In the brief reign of Nerva (96-8 A.D.) there was little to trouble the Christian community, now spreading fairly rapidly in the east, particularly Asia Minor. Trajan, though, was a somewhat different case. Contemplating war with Parthia, where there were large numbers of Jews, he did not like to feel there was going to be any trouble in his own realm. The problem of the Christians was becoming familiar, but not familiar enough for Pliny, the governor of Bithynia (c.112 A.D.) to know how to tackle it. He wrote to Trajan to ask advice on how to proceed against them.

" . . . Whether the name itself, even if innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes attaching to that name."⁵

He outlines the procedure for those brought before him as Christians:

" . . . I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist I sentence them to death. For I do not doubt that, whatever kind of income it may be to which they have confessed, their perspicacity and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished."

It seems it was their attitude, rather than any crimes they had committed, which provoked Pliny's anger. As soon as the population heard of the prosecution, people began to accuse individuals of Christianity on a wide scale. Pamphlets against the Christians were published anonymously, but those who denied the charge were dismissed:

" . . . because they called upon the gods at my dictation and did reverence, with incense and wine, to your image which I had ordered to be brought forward for this purpose, together with the statues of the deities; and especially because they cursed Christ, a thing which, it is said, genuine Christians cannot be induced to do."

Here lay the nub of the matter. Emperors, on their death, were given divine honours. A living emperor was entitled to worship, either in the official temples dedicated to him or privately in front of his image. This was a test of loyalty in a system of governmental succession which was based on nomination by a predecessor or armed revolt. Very rarely was the Senate able to elect an emperor, though of course, they were required to ratify the "fait accompli."⁶

5. Pliny — letter X to Trajan; 96.

6. *c/f* the oath of allegiance sworn to Adolf Hitler personally by the German army.

The Christians would not do this, and so they were open to the charge of treason against the emperor.

It appears that many of the accused denied the charge or claimed that they had recanted some years previously on reflection. These latter described their practice, which seemed to be quite innocuous:

“ . . . On an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn, antiphonally to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, not for the commission of any crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery and breach of faith, and not to deny a deposit when it was claimed.”

They then left, before meeting again to eat a communal meal. Pliny found, “nothing but a depraved and extravagant superstition,” when he examined two deaconesses. Christianity had spread from the cities to the countryside, but Pliny felt confident he could arrest it. A revival of Pagan Practices had been produced in opposition to the Christians by the local population.

There is, of course, no mention of any belief in the divinity of Christ, no mass or any later innovations, but there is a great similarity with the Essene community at Qumran — the prayer or hymn before dawn, the pledge of moral behaviour really a watered down version of the ten commandments for converts — and the communal meal.

In reply to Pliny’s letter, Trajan commends him for his action, adding that the Christians are not to be sought out, but if they are rightly informed against they should be punished. If they deny the charge, no proceedings are to be taken against them. Nor was it only the government which viewed the Christians with alarm. The mass of the population had formed their own opinions as to what went on at their meetings.

“ . . . They gather together ignorant persons from the lowest dregs, and credulous women⁷ . . . and organize a rabble of unholy conspirators, leagued together in nocturnal associations⁸ and by ritual fasts and barbarous foods . . . a secret tribe that shuns the light, silent in public but talkative in secret places.⁹ They despise the temples as if they were tombs, they spit upon the gods, they ridicule our sacred rites. . . . This plot must be rooted out and execrated,¹⁰ they recognize one another by secret signs and tokens;¹¹ they love one another almost before they are acquainted. Everywhere a kind of religion of lust is associated with them, and they call themselves promiscuously brothers and sisters. . . . I hear

7. Many 2nd-century converts appear to have been from among the lower classes, women in particular seemed attracted to the new religion. (See Lucion’s satires.)

8. The evening and night prayers, as at Qumran.

9. Following the practice of Jesus, they met in quiet, secluded places, with a central place being a house or cave (grotto).

10. The obvious implication.

11. The Jews were also accused of this; (see Tacitus; Histories v.iii.4iv.3).

that in some absurd conviction or other they consecrate and worship the head of an ass.¹² . . . Others say that they reverence the private parts of their director and high priests.¹³ An infant covered with a cloth to deceive the unsuspecting is set before the one to be initiated in the rites.¹⁴ The neophyte is induced to strike what seem to be harmless blows . . . and this infant is killed by his random and unsuspecting blows. Its blood, oh shocking, they greedily lap up; the limbs they eagerly distribute¹⁵ . . . and by this complicity in crime they pledge themselves to mutual silence.¹⁶ . . . On an appointed day they assemble at a feast with all their children.¹⁷

“ . . . There, after much feasting, when the banquet has become hasted and intoxication has inflamed the drunken passions of incestuous lust, a dog which has been tied to a lamp is incited to rush and leap forward after a morsel thrown beyond the range of the cord by which it was tied.¹⁸ The telltale light is upset and extinguished and in the shameless dark they exchange embraces indiscriminately, and all, if not actually, yet by complicity are equally involved in incest. . . . Furthermore, they threaten the whole world and the universe itself and its stars with fire, and work for its destruction¹⁹ . . . they say they are reborn after death from the cinders and ashes, and with unaccountable confidence believe in one another’s lies.²⁰ . . .

“But you (Christians) . . . do not attend the shows; you take no part in the processions; fight shy of public banquets; abhor the sacred games, meats from the sacrificial victims, drinks poured in libation on the altars.”²¹

In short, the writer either has misunderstood the rituals of the Christians or has deliberately confused them to arouse anger and opposition. Feeling threatened by the growing numbers of the new religion, the Roman attitude was to attack. Normally the official practice was one of toleration, unless, as in this case, it was felt to threaten the very fabric of Roman society; a society which no longer possessed belief in its own religious values; one which consisted of rituals and public displays only, maintained to bolster the rulers of the time. The growth of irrational belief was widespread, filling the vacuum

12. At least one church in Italy claims to have the circumcised foreskin of their founder.

13. The fish, the sign of Jonah.

14. Possibly a cloth covering the food for the communal meal.

15. A misunderstanding of the words at the last supper concerning the bread and the wine.

16. The pledge to the teachings of Moses in the ten commandments as mentioned by Pliny.

17. The Sabbath, or possibly the Messianic banquet as at Quran, depending on whether it was one or more days a year.

18. Unclear, but *c/f* the Holy Quran — Al Kahf for references to a dog. A guard dog. This probably the “agape” — “the love feast” though it is obviously not meant in the literal sense. At the end of the ceremony the worshippers greeted each other with a kiss — see Justin Martyr (First Apology lxi, lxxv–lxxvii).

19. The Day of Judgement and return of Jesus.

20. Some Christians misunderstood the concept of the next life; they believed they would have the same physical bodies.

21. Minucius Felix — Octavius viii. 3–xii.6.

created by the decline of the official religions. Magic and superstition were commonplace, and rather than a system of training, of growth and development in each individual, a personal, simple answer was sought, a saviour who had no need for formalised religion. Christianity had to fill this gap in the minds of the population.

Not everyone, though, was prejudiced against the Christians. The true state of affairs, perhaps is reflected by Galen, the Greek scientist (c.130–200 A.D.) who wrote in his summary of Plato's "Republic,"

"Now we see the people called Christianas . . . acting in the same way (as Philosophers). For their contempt of death . . . is patent to us every day, and likewise their restraint in cohabitation . . . and they also number individuals who, in self discipline and self-control in matters of food and drink, and in their keen pursuit of justice, have attained a pitch not inferior to that of genuine philosophers."²²

Galen was a Greek, not a member of the ruling Roman classes, and here the difference lay. He did not share their fear of being overthrown from office, or as Nero and Domitian had done, used persecution as a means to bolster their own failing popularity. As an intellectual he could take a more objective view and his partiality to seeing every moral code in the light of philosophy indicated the key to Christianity's success among the educated classes. The official policy remained the same as that expounded by Pliny and Trajan, with most of the prosecution against the Christians taking place in the provinces. Hadrian, however, refused to encourage the trade of informers against the Christians and insisted there should be formal charges which could be substantiated in a court of law. Slandorous accusations were to be severely dealt with.²³

The second century generally seems to have been fairly quiet for the majority of Christian communities. Apart from persecutions in Asia and Gaul, the Roman government seems not to have actively sought them out. Significantly, this was at the time when the Empire was at its height economically and politically, ruled by emperors inclined to Greek culture, such as Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. The dynasty of the Severie in the first quarter of the third century (193–23) seems to have continued the policy of *laissez-faire*. Septimius Severus maintained prosperity by debasing the coinage in order to keep the soldiery happy, but could not stem the drainage of precious metals to the east, and only managed to postpone the evil day when the Empire was faced with the bill. Julia Domna and her circle encouraged philosophy and esoteric religion, the result of which can be seen in the works of Philostratus. Severus Alexander, the last of the dynasty, reputedly kept busts of Moses, Abraham, Jesus, Orpheus and

22. Quoted from R. Walzer — Galen on Jews and Christians p. 15 (Oxford).

23. See — Rescript of Hadrian to Caius Minucius Fundanus, Proconsul of Asia c. 152 A.D.

Apollonius for his personal adoration, the latter three being synonymous. He therefore showed a marked predilection for the Judeo-Christian religion.

After his death, the Empire began to go downhill economically. The army could not be relied upon to remain loyal any longer, and in order to receive an increasingly larger bribe from the newly established emperor, took to the practice of removing him themselves at increasingly shorter intervals. Political control passed quickly from one hand to another, with the army acting the part of the kingmaker. Frequently it was a sentence of death to be proclaimed by the troops; central control began to disintegrate as more and more rebellions took place. The old senatorial families lost their dominance as the succession of emperors emerged from the ranks. The need of the hour was for a warrior, not a lawyer-cum-statesman and as the economic and political climate deteriorated, the need to find an explanation of it became greater. The traditional gods of Rome had been neglected and in their place, the new religion of Christianity was spreading. This happened to coincide with the decline of the Empire and superstitious minds sought out a likely explanation. The Christians' refusal to join in the social life of the Empire, coupled with their failure to enlist for military service only encouraged the authorities to believe they were actually helping to bring about the Empire's collapse.

Consequently, a new wave of persecution was ordered, but it was to be the storm before the calm. The Edict of Decius (250 A.D.) required provincial governors and magistrates to superintend sacrifices to the gods and the genius of the emperor by the whole population on a fixed day. This universal test did not produce the desired effect. Aimed at the Christians, some refused, but many did not, thereby causing great controversy in the Christian communities. There was a split between those who claimed they had forfeited their rights to remain as members of the church by performing the sacrifices, and those who were willing to re-admit them after they had performed a suitable penance. Other Christians managed to buy certificates indicating that they had completed the sacrifices; widescale avoidance, perhaps connived at by sympathetic officials seems to have occurred. Decius fell from power the following year so the duration of the persecution was short.

The respite was to prove equally brief. Valerian (253-60) initially employed many Christians in his palace, but a change to the old policy soon followed. Sacrifices, as under Decius, were ordered to be performed by priests and bishops; Christians were forbidden to assemble or to use their cemeteries, the punishment for violation of the law being death. A second rescript ordered Roman senators and equites who were Christians to be degraded and deprived of their possessions: a further persistence in Christian belief entailed death; matrons were deprived of their property and suffered banishment; any member of the Imperial household confessing to Christianity was to have his

or her property confiscated and to be sent to forced labour on the Imperial farms.

Valerian's measures were repealed by his successor, Gallenius, in 260. The churches were re-opened, along with the cemeteries and freedom of worship was granted. A succession of Illyrian soldier-emperors claimed the throne after this, bringing with them a wave of support for religions which were popular with the army. Of these, Helios, or Sol-Irviclu gained prominence. This involved worship of the sun as the embodiment of the Divine Being. It was largely monotheistic in nature, but centred on the power and purity of the sun. It proved difficult to separate the inclination of the people towards the religion of Helions and their inclination towards Christianity when the latter had become the state religion. A compromise was to allow the populace to celebrate the birthday of the sun and the birthday of the son on the same date — 25th December.

Mithras also achieved considerable popularity. To become initiated into the religion, one had to descend into a pit, above which a bull was slaughtered. Accompanied by suitable liturgy, the blood of the sacrificial victim dripped onto the initiate below, thereby washing away his sins. This has rather obvious connotations which do not need elucidating here except to say that St. Peter's Cathedral in the Vatican is built over the site of a Mithraum. Details of the excavations can be ascertained by those who wish to satisfy their curiosity further.

One of the main worries of the authorities at this time was the organisation of the Christian churches themselves. Although still only a small minority, Christianity constituted a separate society, another state within the state, with loyalties apparently not to the emperor but to their own beliefs. This at least was what it must have seemed in the eyes of the government. At a time when the very existence of the empire was threatened by secessionist movements within and by invasion from without, infiltration into the army was a very serious matter. A case from Tingis (Tangier) in 298 involved a centurion, Marcellus, who had become a Christian. He was brought before the court for interrogation. Marcellus had renounced his oath of allegiance and thrown away his arms. A report of this from the governor, Fortunates, was read out, whereupon Marcellus admitted the offence, in what could be construed as an excessive zeal for martyrdom.

Agricolanus, the interrogator, asked,

“Did you throw away your arms?”

Marcellus replied, “I did. For a Christian, who is in the service of the Lord Christ, ought not to serve the cares of his world,” whereupon he was ordered to be executed.²⁴

24. R. Knaff — *Ausgewah Martyrerakten*, 3rd ed (Tubingen, 1929).

The main concern was no longer with accusations of bestiality as in the time of Trajan. The Roman authorities knew exactly who and what the Christians were, but their main concern was the attitude of some Christians not only towards the government, but the Empire itself in its hour of trouble. A wave of persecution followed under Diocletian, in all parts of the Empire, lasting from 303 to 311. It proved the most severe of all. The Empire had been divided into four quarters for military purposes, with an eastern and a western half being sub-divided. Each half had an Augustus and a Caesar under him to rule over it.

Many servants in the Imperial household had become Christians, as had the wife and daughter of Diocletian himself. During the first part of Diocletian's reign, Christianity had made great strides throughout the Empire, but then came a change of heart and policy on the part of the emperors. According to Lactantius,²⁵ it was Diocletian's colleague, Gallenius who was responsible for influencing him towards persecution. Gallenius's edict was repealed and Valerian's laws re-enacted. Churches were demolished, scriptures destroyed, church officials imprisoned; the population was again ordered to make sacrifice to the gods and the emperor. The temples were re-built and priests re-appointed, with a high priest nominated for each province. It proved of no avail. Galerius, on his death bed, was compelled to admit failure. He issued the famous, 'Edict of Toleration', which explains the attitude of the emperors considerably; this was in 311.

"Among our other regulations to promote the lasting good of the community we²⁶ have hitherto endeavoured to restore a universal conformity to the ancient institutions and public order of the Romans; . . . to bring back to a right disposition the Christians who had abandoned the religion of their fathers . . . many of them were brought to order through fear, while many were exposed to danger. Nevertheless since many still persist in their opinions, and since we have observed that they neither show due reverence to the gods nor worship their own God, we therefore, with our wonted clemency in extending pardon to all . . . allowing Christians the right to exist again and to set up their places of worship; provided always that they do not offend against public order. . . . In return for this indulgence of ours it will be the duty of Christians to pray for our recovery, for the public weal and for their own; that the state may be preserved from danger on every side, and that they themselves may dwell safely in their homes."

This freedom of conscience was confirmed by Constantine and Licinius in the Edict of Milan in 313. Sporadic persecution continued in the east for a few more years. Under Constantine church property was restored and the clergy

25. Lactantius — On the death of the Persewitors 12-14.

26. "We" is not the royal "We" of today; it refers to two of Galerius' colleagues. The fourth, Maximin Daza, ruler of Egypt and Syria, refused to sign.

were even granted a state subsidy towards expenses, at least in the African provinces. Constantine suppressed the soothsayers and inaugurated the state recognition of the day of the Sun — Sunday as a day of rest. His mother, Helena, later St. Helena, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and returned bearing fragments of 'the true cross', thereby helping an already advanced industry producing religious artefacts and souvenirs to transfer to Christianity. However, Constantine did not discourage worship of the Imperial cult, and some scholars have doubted that he ever became a Christian at all, at least until shortly before his death. Bishop Hosuis of Gordova was his adviser and under his guidance Christianity became the official state religion. Instead of being given divine honours, on his death, Constantine was made a saint. His body was allowed to remain sitting on the throne for several months with secretaries bringing the daily correspondence as if he were still alive. When the body became too decomposed it was removed for funeral rites.

Thus Christianity, which the emperors had striven intermittently to suppress for three centuries, in the end succeeded not only to freedom of toleration, but to power. Now the bishops began a struggle for their own beliefs and supporters to gain predominance, for although Christianity was supreme, it was by no means unanimous in what it believed. By the age of Constantine, the Roman Empire had changed almost unrecognisably from its foundation by Augustus. Noble families had died out or had been supplanted; the old institutions had fallen into decay, the old beliefs had long since disappeared or had become modified. With the passage of time a new Empire had been created with new rulers; the Ancient World was dying and the Middle Ages were about to begin. A Christian background replaced the old Graeco-Roman philosophy and culture, yet if the Empire had changed, so too had Christianity; time cannot march on the same spot, and as it progresses new individuals with new ideas must build on the old.

Wisdom of the Ages

He who has righteousness as his ideal has the hardest person softened and the remotest strangers attracted. (Hazart Ali).

Only he is most honoured among you who most forgives the transgressions of his brother; and unfortunate is he who remains obdurate. (Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad).

We take nothing out of this world except our characters. (Stanley Jones).

Strong characters, like the palm tree, seem to thrive best when most abused. (O. S. Marsden).

My only desire is to improve myself in order to be worth a little more every day and enable me to look within myself without displeasure. (Taine).

You will at all times be the result of your thinking. (M. Strabo).

One can get ill from over-eating, but never from under-eating. (Napoleon).

Do right, whatever may come of it. (Lord Shaftsbury).

Strive for good and shun evil, and say of others that which you would like to hear said of you when you leave a gathering and do not say of others that which would displease you if it were said of you. (Prophet Muhammad).

The best charity is to promote goodwill between people. (Prophet Muhammad).

Always bear in mind your death stands very near. You have no idea when that hour will come. (Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad).

Its worth a thousand pounds a year to look on the bright side of things. (Dr. Johnson).

Want but a few things and complain of nothing. (Marcus Aurelius).

The only educated man is the one who has learned to abandon his own will and do God's will instead. (Thomas A. Kempis).

He who does God's will faithfully each day makes his life a song. (J. Miller).

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Apostle Paul).

Avoid making yourself the subject of conversation. (Bruyere).

Give a mild answer to an angry man, for it is like water on a fire. (Dandemis)

The burden becomes light which is cheerfully borne. (Ovid).

Inner sunshine warms not only the heart of the owner, but all who come in contact with it. (Fields).

When your parents utter words of reproof, they are spoken for your own good; so listen to their admonitions, for it does not proceed from malice, but is provided by love. (Dandemis).

We should ever have it fixed in our memories that, by the character of those whom we chose for our friends our own is likely to be formed, and will certainly be judged by the world. (Blair).

Contentment consists not in great wealth, but in few wants. (Epicurus).

Do not boast of yourself, for it brings contempt upon you. (Dandemis).

A failure establishes only this: that our determination to succeed was not strong enough. (Bovee).

You should forgive many things in others; but nothing in yourself. (Ausonius).

The only way to have a friend is to be one. (Emerson).

Hatred is the madness of the heart. (Byron).

Our life is simply what our thoughts make it. (Marcus Aurelius).

Life is a quarry, out of which we have to mould and chisel and complete a character. (Goethe).

The men whom I have seen succeed best in life have always been cheerful and hopeful men, who went about their business with a smile on their faces. (Kingsly).

The surest way not to fail is to determine to succeed. (Sheridan).

Significance of Physical Postures in Prayer

(Afzalur Rahman)

It is a pity that so much effort is being wasted in transcendental meditation to revive human consciousness (the soul) to the supreme reality of the universe. A cursory study of history shows that this technique was never really effective even in the old days and was only confined to a few hermits and rishis. It was an intellectual exercise of the mind which was practised by a very few individuals of very high calibre to quench their thirst for the Divine Union and was practically beyond the comprehension of the common man in the street. It is a mental exercise which quietens the mind so long as the person is in that state of meditation but has no permanent effect which can give an individual peace of mind in a practical way.

Transcendental meditation without any conscious objective cannot bring permanent peace of mind. It is a negative approach to human problems and history bears witness to the fact that such intellectual and mental exercises have never achieved anything permanent. It has, however, a temporary effect. It is true that one experiences a soothing effect when in the state of transcendental meditation, but this effect is not confined to this method alone. Any kind of mental exercise in any form, will affect the body's physiology and thereby cause changes in an electroencephalogram (E.E.G. or brain waves) and produce similar effects; but it is yet to be proved that such changes do produce any effect of a permanent nature. The human mind is affected by various kinds of creative mental exercises (based on the science of creative intelligence) but such exercises have long been confined to intellectuals or hermits among Hindus or Christians. They are beyond the comprehension of ordinary individuals. Moreover, mental exercises which provide some temporary comfort to an individual cannot be effectively used to solve the complicated problems of mankind.

Above all, it is a mental exercise in a vacuum without any conscious objective or goal. One practises transcendental meditation without any clear goal before him going from nowhere to nowhere and such an exercise cannot really be expected to produce fruitful and beneficial results of any permanent value. In the olden days, rishis and hermits did practise it, but they had a clear

vision of their objective. They wanted to achieve nearness to their Creator through creative reflections (meditations). It was not an exercise in a vacuum, like modern transendental meditation but even this did not achieve very encouraging results for it remained an intellectual luxury of the few and was never considered a recipe for the ills of mankind.

Now the question arises whether we need such mental exercises for fun, or momentary excitement and comfort, or something which may provide a real solution to our problems? Obviously mankind is in need of something positive, practical and realistic that may help to secure peace, and happiness at individual as well as at national level. People have lost peace of mind through over-indulgence in pleasures and neglect of their celestial and spiritual needs. A philosophy of life which can bring proper co-ordination and understanding between the physical and spiritual needs of man could solve many of the problems that face him today. Man has lost his relationship with the Creator and is now wandering around in the wilderness of abstract thinking in search of peace. Surely he can regain his peace of mind through re-establishing his link with his Creator. And the shortest route to renew their relationship is to open dialogue with Him through prayers.

It seems very likely that there exists a very intimate relationship between the performance of prayer and Divine favours. Presumably the physical postures and movements of prayer have a deep significance and important function in revitalising and reigniting the potential of enlightenment and energy inherent in every man. Prayer is composed of four main postures or movements of the body, i.e., *qiy'am*, *ruku*, *sajdah* and *qaadah*. It is very important that these four movements in the prayer are performed exactly in the same manner as taught by the Messenger of God. We offer our prayer to God because the Holy Prophet told us to do so. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that it must be performed in its every detail in the way it was performed by the Messenger of God himself.

Prayer is an obligatory duty and mere performance of it will no doubt absolve a believer of his duty to God, but if he wants to nourish and develop his self and soul, he must perform it in the way it was performed by the Messenger of God himself. The Holy Prophet laid great emphasis on the right performance of every act of prayer. *Qiy'am* must be performed properly; one must not bend forward or backward or lean sideways but stand straight with eyes fixed at the place of *sajdah* and not looking around. *Ruku* must be moderate, neither too low nor too high but in line with the body as taught by the Holy Prophet. There must be a reasonable gap between *ruku* and *sajdah* and between the two *sajdahs*, as advised by the Holy Prophet.

The importance of the proper performance of each part of prayer is emphasised by the Holy Prophet. Anas reported God's Messenger as saying, "perform the bowing and the prostration properly, for I swear by God that I

can see you behind me". According to Abu Masud Al Ansari the Messenger of God said, "A man's prayer does not avail him unless he keeps his back steady when bowing and prostrating himself." Abu Qatada reported the Messenger of God as saying, "The one who commits the worst theft is he who steals from his prayer." When asked how one could steal from his prayer, he replied, "By not performing his bowing and prostration perfectly".

There are details of *qiy'am*, *ruku* and *sajdah* in the *hadith* to help the believers to offer their prayer perfectly. According to A'isha, "God's Messenger used to begin prayer with *takbir* and the recitation of *Surah Fatiha*. When he bowed, he neither kept his head up nor bent it down, but kept it between these extremes; when he raised his head after bowing he did not prostrate himself until he had stood erect; when he raised his head after prostration he did not prostrate himself again until he was in the proper sitting position."

If there is any slackness on the part of a believer in performance of any part of prayer, his prayer becomes void and he does not gain anything from it. According to Abu Hurairah, a man entered the mosque when the Messenger of God was sitting in it and offered his prayer. He then came and said, "peace be upon you" and God's Messenger replied, "peace be upon you. Go back and offer your prayer, for you have not prayed." He returned and prayed, then came and said, "peace be upon you." The Messenger of God replied, "And peace be upon you. Go back and pray again, for you have not prayed." On the third or fourth occasion he said, "Teach me, Messenger of God." So he said, "When you turn to the *qibla* and say, '*Allahu Akbar*,' then recite a convenient portion of the *Qur'an*; then bow and remain quietly in that position; then raise yourself and stand erect; then prostrate yourself and remain quietly in that position; then raise yourself and sit quietly."

This *hadith* confirms our assumption that performance of each part of prayer properly and perfectly as taught by the Holy Prophet is essential.

This great emphasis on the proper performance of prayer, even in minute details, is a testimony to the fact that there is a close relationship between the various postures and movements in prayer and the acquisition of Divine favours and enlightenment. The Holy Prophet emphasised again and again the deep significance of the actual performance of the different parts of prayer. It must therefore be performed exactly in the way it was taught by the Holy Prophet, otherwise it will not be a prayer but an exercise of the body performed to please yourself or just an habitual act.

There seems to be an intimate relationship between the movements of prayer and Divine blessings. If it is offered perfectly, then it helps man to benefit from his inner potential energy in the development of his self and his soul. In daily prayer, God has given man the shortest and the quickest method of obtaining His Grace and Blessings. People in the past have spent ages, and

sometimes, all their lives, to obtain a glimpse of His Glory and many have failed and died in the wilderness of disillusionment. A very few have received some form of enlightenment after years of hard and strenuous effort. People have starved themselves to annihilate their physical self in order to strengthen their soul and receive Divine enlightenment, but without success. Some have spent all their lives with very little food and water in the jungles and in the valleys of mountains in the hope of rekindling and rejuvenating the dying light in their souls but with no, or only partial, success.

Prayer is a wonderful gift of God. There is no need in Islam to go to the mountains or jungles to kill your physical self in order to obtain *dhyān* (unbroken concentration) and through these forms of self-annihilation to reach for salvation. Prayer provides all the essential requisites for preparing the mind and transforming it into an extraordinary state capable of receiving Divine Light. It provides physical as well as mental exercise in such a balanced way that neither is ignored or over-emphasised. This harmonious functioning of body and mind at the correct level and in the most balanced way is achieved only through prayer. All the movements of the body from the standing position to the prostrating position, are the expression of the extreme humility of the body before the Supreme Being. It is, in fact, total submission of the physical self before the Supreme Authority. Recitation of Divine words and praises of God in prayer have a cumulative effect on the mental powers of man. And in this process of submission of the body and the mind to the Divine Will through the synchronisation of movements and recitation of the *Qur'anic* verses in prayer, the spiritual power of man becomes stronger and gains full control over the physical self and gradually lifts it up to the Supreme Being.

This process of the total submission of the body and the mind before the Ultimate Authority is explained in the words of the *Holy Qur'an*:

“When you threw (a handful of dust), it was not your act, but God’s.”
(8:17).

The action of the Holy Prophet in throwing stones at his enemies was entirely in obedience to the Command of God and there was no personal motive or any realisation of his own physical self. In fact every action of the faithful servants of God, performed in obedience to His Command, can be ascribed to God Himself.

According to Abu Hurairah, the Holy Messenger said:

“God says, ‘My servant becomes closer to Me by performing those deeds which are obligatory on him. And he gets close to Me through constant observance of optional (*nafla*) prayer until he becomes My beloved. When he becomes My beloved, I become his ears through which he hears, his eyes through which he sees, and his hand with which he holds, and his feet with which he walks.’”

This *hadith* shows that all the powers of his body and mind come under the guidance of God and man attains very close relationship with his Lord.

This harmonious working of the body and the mind helps in concentrating and thereby activating the latent energies of the physical self. This process gradually transforms the centrifugal (out-going) forces operating in mind and body into centripetal (inward-going) and unifying forces which lift man from the world of matter into the world of spirit and show him glimpses of the boundless spiritual world. In the course of the transformation of the concealed energies of the physical self into active unifying forces, the mind is slowly but surely released from the limitations of the physical self and is then able to conceive and grasp the meaning of the manifestations of the Supreme Being.

At this stage, man is fully prepared and ready, provided he maintains the standard of performance of his prayer, to receive the blessings and favours of the Supreme Power. In other words, he has reached the stage where he is in a position to establish close communion with God. And why not? After all, man represents the two important aspects of God's Creation, as stated by the *Holy Qur'an* in these words:

“That which I have created with both My Hands.”

(38:75).

“Both hands” refers to the two aspects of God's Creation. He has a physical body, which makes him one of the animals, and he has a soul, which makes him supreme over all other creation, including angels. When he is at his best in prayer, he leaps towards his spiritual world and establishes close contact with his Lord. And this is confirmed by a *hadith*, according to which a Muslim achieves audience with God (*hudhur*) in prayer: “Prayer is Miraj of the believers.” Muslim jurists have taken this *hadhur* to mean the presence of angels in prayer.

This may be explained in another way. The harmonious working of body and mind helps to awaken the spiritual or super-sensory powers in man. The greater the harmony between the former two forces of man, the stronger the awakening of the super-sensory power in man. The proper balance between the triangular forces of body, mind and spirit acts like an electrical wire, which transfers the necessary electrical current from the main generating station to the electrical lamp. Just as it is unthinkable to transfer electricity direct from the main power house to a small electric lamp, similarly it is inconceivable to receive Divine light or communion with God without proper harmony between the aforesaid forces.

It may, therefore, be said that an harmonious functioning of the triangular forces in man is absolutely necessary before any progress can be made in this direction. Unless body, mind and the soul are properly functioning in

harmony, it is not possible for man to rekindle his soul from the light of the Power of God or to achieve any sort of close communion with Him. People have in the past adopted various methods to achieve this harmonious functioning of the triangular forces within the self but have often taken years for very little or partial success.

Islam has given man a very short but effective recipe in the form of prayer to achieve the required harmony between the triangular forces within him. Just study the form and the words of the prayer and how it is performed, and you will notice the wonderful combination it provides for body, mind and soul which no other religion or system has yet suggested. This process of the activation of spiritual or super-sensory powers in man can also be explained in this way. Man is a psychosomatic organism — he has a body, which is the external part of him and a mind, which is the internal part of him. His body is composed of matter which, in the ultimate physical analysis, consists of atoms. His mind represents the entire world of ideas, beliefs, hopes, fears and aspirations. All these belong to the world of consciousness, i. e., the inner side of man. This consciousness (mind) of man play a vital role in relating the soul of man to his environment. In other words, it is a vital factor in relating spirit to matter.

There are thus two worlds in man: the physical, represented by body and, the spiritual, represented by mind. The latter belongs to the invisible world which exists side by side with the visible world disclosed by perception. The latter is dimensional while the former is extra-dimensional. Internally man belongs to the invisible world, that is to say, his soul or spirit belongs to that world, externally he belongs to the visible world, that is to say, his body belongs to that world, but through consciousness man is related to both the worlds. If a man looks within his self he moves towards higher levels of consciousness and a deeper understanding of spiritual values. If, on the other hand, he devotes himself to the external world of matter, he tends to move away from the higher spiritual values to the lower values of the visible world.

Regular prayer helps to attain the right equilibrium between the spiritual and the material worlds of man. He lives in the world of matter, works in it for his livelihood and satisfies all his material needs, but, at the same time, he keeps his link with the spiritual world and further strengthens it. Prayer enables him to develop and widen his perception of the extra-dimensional spiritual world to such an extent that he is able to perceive and understand the things of a higher level of consciousness which he could hardly visualise before. Establishment of prayer will strengthen the extra-dimensional powers of man to such a degree that he will be able to establish close relationship with the Ultimate Power.

It must, however, be emphasised that this link cannot be maintained without the establishment of regular prayer. Prayer is the means as well as the

end. It helps man to establish and maintain his link with God. If the institution of prayer or its proper performance is lost, the link with the spiritual world will automatically be cut off. Man has not yet known any other effective means of establishing and then maintaining his relationship with God. It is like a wire, as explained before, connected with the main generator. As soon as the wire is disconnected from the main source of power, the light goes off, and all is darkness again. This wire is prayer.

Another way of putting the same experience is this. Prayer and the Divine words and phrases recited during the various postures of prayer do have a tremendous radionic effect on the physical as well as spiritual powers of man. The discovery of the Delawarr Radionic Camera has shown us some wonderful results in this connection. Unlike 'Classical science' which studies matter in its secondary state, that is to say its sensorily perceptible state, radionics is concerned with matter in its primary state, or the fourth dimensional state, the presence of which cannot be detected through the agency of the five senses.

The radionic technologist, like the electrical technologist, knows a little about the behaviour, but virtually nothing about the essential nature, of the energy which to some extent he is able by means of his instruments to tap.

They took a photograph at the Delawarr Laboratories with a radionic camera of a water tap and then took another picture with the same camera after the water was blessed by the Rev. P. W. Eardley. The picture of the water tap after it was blessed was entirely different from that of the first picture of unblessed water. The pictures show that the blessing ceremony has done something to the water which immediately differentiates it from unblessed water. This effect of blessing on things or of prayer on man cannot be detected through the agency of the five human senses. But certainly Divine words used in blessing or in prayer do have their effect on things and human beings. The existing media for obtaining information about man are very much limited and do not help us much in understanding things or phenomena which fall beyond the scope of the human senses. But lack of knowledge of something does not necessarily mean it does not exist.

The Divine words spoken in prayer produce a radionic effect on man. They produce imperceptible energy in the human body which assists in activating the consciousness (i.e., the mind) of man to such an extent that he becomes spiritually conscious of God. The human mind is freed from the chains of the physical body and soars high up in the world of spirit. It gradually opens up invisible horizons of the spiritual world to the human mind which were quite unknown to it before. This is the first step to nearness to God. As a believer attains perfection in the performance of prayer, he is able to travel through unknown spiritual worlds and unveil some of the mysteries of this realm and gradually establish close communion with his Creator. In other words, prayer

sharpens the extra-dimensional powers of the mind to such an extent that it becomes capable of receiving information which was far beyond its comprehension before.

Thus prayer, through multifarious ways beyond human comprehension, acts and reacts on the human mind until the latter is enlightened spiritually with the Nur (light) of the Universe. As all men do not possess similar or equal power, their personal experiences may vary considerably. Each man gains this experience according to his own internal as well as external powers. But regular prayer does provide opportunities to every believer to develop his latent energies within his self according to his potentialities and thereby establish his link with God. The greater the perfection in the performance of prayer, the closer the relationship with God.

Communion with the Divine Being is attained when prayer is performed perfectly and properly in body, mind and soul as instructed by the Holy Prophet. This is why the Holy Prophet said that prayer was a *mi'raj* for believers. It provides an opportunity to believers to have a direct and close relationship with God as did the Holy Prophet during the night of the *mi'raj*. This is also explained by another *hadith* when the Holy Prophet said:

“When you perform prayer, think that you are standing in front of God and seeing Him with your eyes. And if it is not possible for you to see Him, at least think that He is seeing you.”

When one achieves this *mi'raj* in prayer, he is bound to rise far above the physical barriers of this corporeal world and enter into the world of the unknown, experiencing new and wonderful things which he could never think of in his ordinary state of mind. The Companions of the Holy Prophet often experienced this in their prayer.

Divine Origin of Islam

(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

The Holy Quran emphatically and repeatedly claims to be the revealed Word of God. It is not the composition of any particular person or persons. It was revealed in small portions from time to time to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) during the period of his twenty-two year ministry from 610–632 A.D. We read in the Quran:

“This is a Book revealed unto thee — so let there be no straightness in thy bosom concerning it — that thou mayest warn thereby and that it may be an exhortation to the believers.”

(7:3).

“We have revealed it — the Quran in Arabic — that you may understand. We narrate unto thee the best of narrative in that We have revealed to thee this Quran, though thou wast, before this, among those unaware of the truth.”

(12:3, 4).

“Surely it is We Who have revealed the Book to thee with truth.”

(39:3).

Similarly the Quran declares the Holy Prophet to be the appointed Messenger of God. He is commanded to announce:

“Say, ‘O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth’.”

(7:159).

Again we read:

“O mankind, the Messenger has indeed come to you with truth from your Lord; believe therefore, it will be better for you.”

(4:171).

There are many verses in the Quran stating it to be the revealed Word of God and the Holy Prophet to be His Messenger. It is a necessary that a Divinely inspired Book should claim to be so and that a Messenger of God should claim — on the basis of revelation — to have been Divinely appointed.

Divine Messengers are Prophets of God through whom He sends down His guidance where and when there is a need. They appear at a time when corruption prevails. It was for this reason that God raised Moses for the Israelites and revealed to him the Mosaic law. At that time Egypt was enveloped in spiritual darkness. The Israelites were subjected to barbaric slavery under the Godless and tyrannical regime of Pharaoh. Moses was a Prophet only for the Israelites. His mission was to deliver them from bondage and to educate them in the laws of God revealed to him for the needs of the time. Likewise the missions of all other Prophets from the time of Adam to the Prophet of Islam were restricted to particular tribes and nations. Jesus was no exception:

“And will send him as a Messenger to the Children of Israel.”
(3:50).

This fact was confirmed by Jesus in the New Testament:

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”
(Matthew 15:24).

The mission of Muhammad (peace be on him) was different. His mission was not confined to the Arabs. God appointed him with a Divine law for all the nations of the world and commanded him to declare:

“Say, ‘O mankind, truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah to Whom belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth’.”
(7:159).

The Quran describes the spiritual state of mankind at the time of the Prophet of Islam:

“Corruption has spread on land and sea because of what men’s hands have wrought.”
(30:42).

Historians tell us:

“In the fifth and sixth centuries, the civilised world stood on the verge of chaos. The old emotional cultures that had made civilisation possible, since they had given to man a sense of unity and of reverence for their rulers, had broken down, and nothing had been found adequate to take their place . . . it seemed then that the great civilisation which had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration, and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order was unknown . . .”

(Emotions as the Basis of Civilisation by S. P. Scott).

“Muhammad appeared on the scene at one of the darkest periods in all history, when all the civilisations, from Merovingian Gaul to India were falling to ruin or were in a state of troubled gestation.”

(Life of Mahomet by L. Dermenghem)

Such was the demoralising condition of the world when God raised the Prophet Muhammad for the guidance and generation of mankind. He found the Arabs at their lowest ebb. Idolatry was the “religion” of the day. Drunkenness, gambling, adultery, murder, infanticide and every kind of vice was rampant among them. Women were treated with contempt and possessed no rights.

The time was certainly ripe for the advent of a Messenger of God and in accordance with the needs of the time God chose His blessed servant Muhammad (peace be on him) to fulfil the task.

Miracles of multifarious kinds were now about to unfold and manifest the Divine source of the Holy Quran and the Spirit of God which worked through the Holy Prophet.

One of the numerous features of the Quran is the matchless elegance, style and diction of its Arabic text acknowledged by all to be unique. What makes it more miraculous is the fact that the Holy Prophet was illiterate; and yet no Arabic linguist has been able to produce the like of even a small portion of it. The Quran challenges:

“Say, ‘If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it.’”

(17:89).

“And this Quran is not such as could have been produced by anyone other than Allah. On the contrary, it fulfils that revelation which is before it and is an exposition of the perfect law. There is no doubt about it that it is from the Lord of all the worlds. Do they say ‘he has forged it’? Say, ‘Bring then a chapter like unto it, and call for help on all you can, apart from Allah, and if you are truthful’.”

(10:38, 39).

Similar challenges also appear elsewhere in the Quran. To this day the challenge has not been met. It’s eloquent standard and style of language is incomparable. It is a literary gem recognised by all scholars of Arabic as a masterpiece of unparalleled excellence in the world of Arabic literature. This is not the only miraculous characteristic of the Quran. There are many others of various kinds.

One of the greatest miracles brought about by the Quran and through the Holy Prophet was the spiritual metamorphosis which transformed a debased and idolatrous people into holy and righteous servants of God. This fact has been confirmed by Sir William Muir who was a staunch Christian:

“Never since the days when primitive Christianity startled the world from its sleep and waged mortal combat with Heathenism, had men seen the like arousing of spiritual life, the like faith that suffered sacrifices and took joyfully the spoiling of goods for conscience’ sake.

“The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty and vice. It was a common practice for the eldest son to take to wife his father’s widows, inherited as property with the rest of the estate. Pride and poverty had introduced among them (as they have among the Hindus) the crime of female infanticide. Their religion was a gross idolatry, and their faith rather the dark superstitious dread of unseen things, whose good will they sought to propitiate and whose displeasure to avert, than the belief in an over-ruling Providence. The life to come and retribution for good and evil were, as motives of actions, practically unknown. Thirteen years before the Hijra (July 2, A.D. 622), Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had those thirteen years produced! A band of several hundred persons had rejected idolatry, adopted the worship of One God and surrendered themselves implicitly to the guidance of what they believed to be a revelation from Him, praying to the Almighty with frequency and fervour, looking for pardon to His Mercy and striving to follow after good works, almsgiving, chastity and justice. They now lived under a constant sense of the Omnipotent of God and of His Providential care over the minutest of their concerns. In all the gifts of Nature, in every relation of life, at each turn of their affairs, individual or public, they saw His hand.”

(Life of Mohemet).

The Divine magnetism of the Holy Prophet was irresistible and only the most hard-hearted were unaffected; but even some of his bitterest opponents later became his staunchest followers. Ikramah, an army leader, fought many battles against the Holy Prophet in an effort to exterminate Islam. When eventually the Holy Prophet accompanied by ten thousand followers captured Mecca without bloodshed, Ikramah took flight to Abyssinia but on learning that he had been forgiven he returned. He was so impressed by the magnanimity of the Holy Prophet that he accepted Islam and became a staunch and devoted Muslim. Likewise many other antagonists were eventually won to Islam by the holy influence of the Prophet. During the earlier years of cruel persecution a number of Muslims sought refuge in Abyssinia. One of them, Jafar-al-Tayyar, spoke to the king about the miraculous transformation which Muhammad (peace be on him) had effected among his followers:

“We were an ignorant and misled people; we worshipped images, ate dead bodies, were lewd, ill-treated our neighbours, and the strong despoiled the weak of their property. We had long been in this condition when God sent a Prophet to us from amongst our own people, whose

noble birth, truthfulness, honesty and righteousness were well known to us. He called us to God, to Worship Him, and Him only, and to leave off adoring the idols and stones before which our fathers and forefathers had knelt. He ordered us to obey God alone, and not to make anyone His equal. He made it incumbent upon us to offer up prayer, to give alms, to fast, when not sick or travelling. He commanded us to speak the truth, to give back safe and whole what is entrusted to us by others, to be affectionate to our relations and kind to our neighbours, to shun wicked acts, licentiousness and bloody quarrels. He told us not to bear false witness, not to deprive orphans of their property, not to impute bad motives to, nor be suspicious of women. We have taken his advice and admonition to heart; we have believed in his truthfulness; have followed all the orders which God has made known to us; and have believed in the Unity of God. We abstain from what is forbidden, and confine ourselves to what is permitted. Our people are infuriated at this change in our belief, thoughts and actions. They have persecuted us, and done their best to force us back to the idols, images and wicked acts which we have left. When it became impossible to live among them, and when persecution and torture became unbearable, we left our country, and, believing you to be a tolerant king, have taken refuge in your dominions.”

Beauty attracts! The Holy Prophet reflected the beauty of the Quran and those who associated with him were inwardly moved by the the beauty of his character.

Good Relations

You should shake hands and it will remove your rancour. You should exchange presents for it will add to mutual love, and feelings of enmity which may exist will be removed.

The best companion in the sight of God is he who is good to his companions and the best neighbour is he who is good to his neighbour.

(Holy Prophet of Islam)

Meaning of Jihad

(F. M. Quraishy)

Some people erroneously assume that the word "Jihad" is synonymous with war and has been responsible for the spread of Islam. Had they consulted an ordinary Arabic dictionary they would have learned that the word is derived from "Jahd" or "Juhd" which means ability and exertion of power, efforts, endeavours or ability, in contending with an object of disapprobation.

There are three kinds of Jihad: the carrying on of a struggle against the devil, against one's own evil desires and against the attack of an enemy.

Aggression is not allowed in Islam. Muslims are to fight only in self-defence. The Holy Quran says:

"Permission to take up arms is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged and Allah, has indeed power to help them. Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly, only because they said 'Our Lord is Allah. . . .'"

(22:40).

The verse permits Muslims to fight in self-defence for two reasons: those who have been wronged and those who have been driven out of their homes without a legitimate cause for no other reason than that they believed in One God.

After years of persistent persecution in Mecca the Muslims migrated to Medina in search of peace but even there they were pursued and harassed. It was under these highly unfavourable circumstances that they were permitted to take up arms to save themselves, their faith and Muhammad (peace be on him) himself from extermination. If there were any people who had a legitimate cause to fight then they were none other than the Prophet and his followers; yet they are wrongly accused of waging war on others!

The kind of Jihad which is binding on all Muslims to pursue with unabated zeal is the observance of the teachings of the Quran:

"So obey not the disbelievers and strive against them by means of the Qur'an with a mighty striving."

(25:23).

Charters of Human Equality

(Malik Saifur Rahman)

In the 4th year of Hijra, the Holy Prophet gave a signed guarantee of protection to the monks, priests and Christians of St. Catherine's Church near Mount Sinai. In this guarantee the Prophet laid down:

“It is the duty of Muslims to safeguard the Christian churches, monasteries and their holy places against trespass by the enemy and to protect the Christians fully from all harm and injury. They should not be unduly taxed, nor should they be forced to quit. No Christian Monk should be expelled from his monastery, nor should any pilgrim be stopped from visiting any holy place. No Christian church should be razed to the ground or occupied to provide accommodation for Muslims or their mosques.

“It is the duty of the Muslims to give unqualified and unconditional help to the Christians in the construction of their churches and shrines, and in any other religious matter in which they need help”.

Then addressing the Muslims, the Prophet said:

“Do not think that by doing the things mentioned in the guarantee, you participate in promoting their religion, because the real intent of this order is to remove any difficulty which they feel, and submission to these orders is in reality the submission to the orders of the Prophet of God which he has issued under Divine Command”.

He further advised the Muslims:

“Even in time of war, in fact when the Muslims are actually engaged in fighting against the Christians, do not harbour feelings of hatred and enmity against a Christian who lives among you. If any Muslim shows such behaviour towards a Christian, he will be considered an aggressor and a rebel”.

The Holy Prophet further declared:

“If any Muslim is guilty of violating any of the above given orders, he will be denounced as one who has broken the Divine Covenant, has violated

His express injunctions and who has humiliated and shamed the religion of Islam”.

Quoting this guarantee, a famous European historian and orientalist declares it to be a great Charter of “Human Equality and Freedom” and a “document of Human brotherhood which establishes the greatness of the guarantor”.

The sermon which the Prophet gave at the time of the last Pilgrimage to Mecca is a Masterpiece of Human Equality and Brotherhood, he said:

“O Men! Your Maker is One; you are the sons and daughters of one father, therefore no attempt at dividing you into high and low is acceptable; No Arab has any superiority to a non-Arab nor has a non-Arab any superiority to an Arab; neither the Whites are superior to the Blacks nor are the Blacks superior to the Whites. The only mark of excellence is the fear of God and an individual’s personal virtue and piety. Under an Islamic State race and colour have no distinction”.

Continuing the Prophet said:

“As you respect this day; this month and this land of pilgrimage, so shall you respect the life, property and honour of every human being, which, under the law, are as sacred and inviolable”.

It is not surprising that after such a declaration of human equality and brotherhood the Muslims were welcomed with open arms wherever they went and conquered more than half of the known world in a span of a few years. Needless to say that it was not a triumph of superior Muslim arms, but a victory of a superior law which appealed to the heart and won it.

Things which bring Peace

Endeavour to do the will of another rather than your own.

Ever choose rather to have less than more.

Always seek the lowest place, and to be inferior to every one.

Always wish and pray that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in yourself.

(The Imitation of Christ)

as a result of his committing any fault, then God promises to forgive it. If man again and again intentionally falls a victim to sin then God's grace is withdrawn and He ignores such a hardened sinner who repents but makes no amends.

The Holy Quran makes prayer as the master-key for opening the door of salvation from the worldly troubles. God has suggested a scheme of work by the adoption of which a person can make himself sin-proof.

“And when My servants ask thee about Me, say ‘I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me that they may follow the right way.’”

(2:187).

It is not only the prayer that fortifies man from the dangers of evil but Islam tells us of yet another important thing by which the evils could be warded off. It is the fear of God that can keep oneself safe from sin. For the Holy Quran says:

“O ye who believe! If you fear Allah, He will grant you a distinction and will remove your evils from you and will forgive you; and Allah is Lord of great bounty.”

(8:30).

Once the state comes when the sins have been forgiven by God there follows another distinctive thing in its trail. For the Holy Quran says:

“He removes from them their sins and improves their condition.”

(47:3).

Thus prayer and fear of God help to rescue the individual from being the victim of sins. They also act in a way as to improve his condition spiritually. Once he starts moving up in the spirit of a resurrected person after having received the Divine mercy and salvation God bestows his gifts and favours on him. The reward is unending and everlasting. He too receives the revelation of God and the door of Heaven is opened for the redeemed person. God says in the Holy Quran:

“As for those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah’, and then remain steadfast, the angels descend on them saying: ‘Fear ye not, nor grieve; but rejoice in the Garden that you were promised.’”

(41:31).

It should be noted that the Islamic teachings regarding the remission of sins are more easily acceptable as they can weigh well in the scale of reason and sense. No world saviour was ever sent onto this planet to save men from the task of saving themselves. The Islamic charter of salvation can stand the test of time and it alone gives a methodology which the human mind can grasp and accredit as harmonious with veritude.

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, Confucious 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.

