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Editorial

From the micro to the macro there is a very refined system of balance in our universe. This balance, like the universe itself, is not the product of chance but is a reflection of a quality of its Creator. One of God's characteristics is that he is 'al-Adl' i.e. 'The Just' and this forms the fountainhead of absolute justice for the heavens and the earth. The nature of this justice permeates every sphere of creation and every law of nature, for without this there can be no balance or harmony.

In this issue of *The Review of Religions* two articles examine the balance created within man and review its impact on man himself. It seems that if there is a disregard for justice at one level and if this remains unchecked, then action is taken at a different level to remedy it. In the human body, for example, the mercy of God has allowed man some flexibility in the way he looks after his health. However, persistent excesses are ultimately punished and disorders such as diabetes and heart disease are an outcome of man's disregard for the natural limits.

The balance also reflects an in-built system of crime and punishment

where the punishment is meted out by a force beyond man's control. Interestingly enough the punishment acts as a warning as well as being an action in the interest of man himself, as it seeks to limit the wider damage that could result. If man rectifies his behaviour he may live on, perhaps with some restrictions, but the objective of justice would have been served. If he continues to ignore the warning signs then he may suffer even more. Such justice is required to maintain balance and order within the body otherwise it would cease to function, and to be effective it must operate independent of the will of man.

This is a good reflection of the system that operates at every level in life and man should be ever wary that his actions never go unnoticed, and if he ignores the principle of absolute justice then he will, without exception, be made accountable for this neglect.

Fareed Ahmad

Notes and Comment

Food for Thought

Twenty years ago it seemed as if a moment of sanity had swept across the world as it responded to the cry of the dying people in Ethiopia. With governments either unable or unwilling to act, people responded to the plight that was broadcast to their living rooms. Hundreds of millions of dollars were donated to alleviate the suffering of those in the famine-ridden country and perhaps also to alleviate the donors' guilt of not having taken any interest beforehand. The noble efforts were welcome and saved up to two million from death, but as a recent BBC report¹ made clear, it was not enough; at best it was a palliative measure rather than a longer term cure. Sadly, twenty years on the situation for the poor in Ethiopia is no better with more people facing starvation now than in 1984.

The aid that reached Ethiopia was valuable in sustaining life for millions but there was no real large-scale development investment in the country. The result of this is that its agricultural capacity has weakened and hopes of reviving the country's ability to be self-sufficient in food are disappearing as fast as its dusty topsoil. Its food production has

dwindled. On average each year nearly six million Ethiopians are still kept alive by international aid (although this figure was a staggering 14 million in 2003).

Ethiopia's predicament, however, is not an isolated one but it does act as a stark reminder of the invisible plight of the poor and destitute whose lives are nothing more than a daily struggle for survival. The figures make shocking reading – compare the six million in Ethiopia with the 900 million or so worldwide who live in chronic and persistent hunger – that is one person for every seven on the planet. There are one billion people surviving on less than one dollar per day, and every day nearly twenty-four thousand die of hunger.² Although the vast majority of this crisis is faced by the Third World, it is by no means exclusive to it. Those who find themselves living in the margins of society in the developed world also suffer the same torments of hunger and poverty.

Yet, as many economic studies have shown, the problem of hunger is not due to there being insufficient food in the world. Even now, as noted by the UN's World Food Programme, there

is enough food in the world not just to keep people alive but to allow them to lead healthy and productive lives. This is despite a huge population increase in the latter half of the twentieth century. This abundance of food is in line with the Islamic teaching that God, Who is *ar-Rahman* and *ar-Razzaq* i.e. The Gracious and The Provider, has created man and provided ample resources so that no person should go hungry. So where is all this food? Some is stockpiled in the developed world and some is exported by the third Third world World to finance its debts, wars or corruption – or in extreme cases all three. However, it is also disturbing to note that some is simply consumed in excessive amounts as a result of greed and indifference.

In this respect it is rather perplexing to see that as one part of the world is dying as a result of little or no food the other is dying due to too much food. Obesity and its related problems are on the increase worldwide, but especially in the developed world. Furthermore, the findings of a recent study by the US based National Research Council show that it is not just people that are becoming overweight but also their pets. The study reveals that twenty-five per cent of dogs and cats in the western world are obese and at risk of diabetes, heart

disease and other health problems³. How strange this must seem to those hanging on to life.

Is this not a reflection of the cruel disparity of the modern world? Often we hear that a key to solving the problems of the Third World is education, so that the poor can learn and apply their knowledge for self-advancement. It would seem that the developed world could also benefit with a few sharp doses of education as well – for the sake of their own health and the health of the 900 million who suffer the pangs of hunger every day. For them, the additional amounts spent by people on overfeeding themselves and their pets would be enough to make the difference between life and death.

Fareed Ahmad – UK

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2. *World Hunger: 12 Myths. By Frances Moore Lappe, Institute for Food and Development Policy Backgrounder Summer 1998, Vol.5, No.3.*
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The Need of Righteousness

On 8th January 1903, after *Maghrib* prayers, three people took the Oath of Allegiance at the hand of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. The three included Sheikh Noor Ahmad Sahib from Abbotabad and Sayyed Hamid Ali Shah Sahib of Baddumalli and one other person. After the Initiation, the Promised Messiah^(as) addressed the assembled group. Presented below is a translation of that address delivered in Urdu. The original text of this address has been taken from *Malfoozat*, Volume 4, pp 395-402.



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

[Translator's Note: The English translation of the Holy Qur'an, presented in italics, is by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali Sahib^(ra). Where the Promised Messiah^(as) has himself stated a certain interpretation of the Arabic verse, this is incorporated in the main body of the text].

(Translated by Amatul-Hadi Ahmad)

It is essential for our Community in these troubled times when the wind of misguided neglect and divergence from the guided path is blowing all around, that it should adopt *Taqwa* (that is, righteousness). There is no reverence for the commandments of God in the world today. There is no consideration for rights and covenants. There is an indulgence

in the material world and its concerns to an extreme degree. Upon suffering even the minutest material loss, people are prepared to abandon the religious aspects and squander the rights of God. All these things can be observed in the cases that regularly come before the courts and those that are disputed at the time of sharing of inheritance. The treatment of others is motivated by greed. People are found to be very weak in controlling emotional outbursts. They do not dare to commit sins until such time as God imposes upon them a state of weakness but when they regain strength and they find an opportunity to commit sins, they immediately indulge in sin. Today, in this age you may search everywhere but you will find that it is as if true righteousness has been lifted out of this world and there is no sincerity of faith anywhere. However, because God Almighty does not desire that the seed of true righteousness and faith should go to waste, whenever He sees that the 'crop' is about to be destroyed completely, He creates a new 'crop'.

The same fresh Qur'an exists about which God Almighty had stated:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ
وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.

(Ch.15: v.10)

A large portion of *Ahadith*, the traditions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam, with its blessings is also in existence but there is no faith within hearts nor is there the practice of goodness. It is for the purpose of regeneration of these qualities that God Almighty has appointed me [as the Reformer]. God saw that the field is vacant but the demand of the attribute of His Divinity is such that it did not like the fact that the field should remain vacant and people should remain so distant. Hence, by way of a challenge, God Almighty now wishes to create a people who are [spiritually] alive and our preaching is for this purpose that the life of *Taqwa*, that is, righteousness may be achieved.

There are many different types of people. There are some who take great pride in the bad deeds they commit whereas it is not something that can possibly be considered worthy of pride. Even the act of merely avoiding the bad is not a deed that can be included under acts of virtue nor can it be termed true virtue as even animals can learn similar behaviour. Mian Hussein Beg who was a merchant had a dog that had been trained to guard over bread and it did so [without ever daring to eat it]. We have heard of a cat that had been similarly trained. Some people wished to test the cat and it was shut up in a room with a few items such as milk, meat and sweet halwa that might tempt it. After a couple of days when the door was opened the cat was found dead without any items of food having been touched. One ought to be ashamed at the fact that being animals they obeyed human command in such a good manner and yet there are human beings who do not obey the command of God. There exist many such examples that can act as a reprimand for a person's inner self. There exist many faithful

dogs but regrettable is the case of the person who does not possess even the standard of a dog. He should then tell us what it is that he asks of God? God has granted to man such faculties that have not been granted to any other creation. However, the capacity of avoiding the bad [in obedience to a command] is so basic that it is shared by the beasts. Some horses are seen to pick up the whip from the ground, should it drop from the master's hand and give it to the master. Similarly, they lie down, sit or arise at the command of their master and they show full obedience. Hence, it cannot be the cause of pride for man that he avoids a handful of sins that may be related to his hands, feet or other physical parts. Those who actually commit such sins are like beasts. Just as dogs and cats put their mouths in a vessel that may be left around uncovered and they eat whatever they see lying around, so these people are the same [in committing sins] – they are like dogs and cats. Ultimately they get caught and end up in prison. You should go and see how the prisons are full of such 'Muslims'.

There is now an opportunity [for rejuvenation] and these are the days when there is a surge of God's [mercy]. There are some periods that are the time of God's mercy in which people find the capacity [and power to attain spiritual progress]. The present is such a time. We do not suggest that the business of worldly affairs should be abandoned altogether. What we wish is that efforts for worldly affairs should be made up to a point and the world should be earned with the intention that it should become a servant of religion. It is not at all right that a person should become so engrossed in the world that he forgets the aspect of faith altogether when he is neither aware of fasting nor of *Salat* as is the condition of the people these days. Take for example the mass gathering at Delhi where it is said nearly one hundred and fifty thousand people were gathered - in my view all of them are only interested in worldliness.

It has been stated in a *Hadith*, [that is, tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) of Islam], that God dislikes kings the most because,

like a great goddess, the closer one gets to them the harder the heart becomes. We do not prohibit anyone from carrying on trade to the extent that it be given up altogether but we say this that people should reflect upon the question as to where their forefathers are now? They should consider how we have those who are very dear to us and then they slip out of our very hands when death creates a great distance between them and us.

سال دیگر راکہ مے دانہ حساب
تا کجا رفت آن کہ با ما بود یار

Who knows the account of the year ahead

Where are the friends who were with us the year before?

At the present time the scourge of the plague is upon the land and it is said that it spans a period of seventy years and nothing is of any use before it – all effort is useless – and it comes for the purpose of reinforcing the belief in the existence of God. Hence, know that He does truly exist and that nothing can save one from the affliction that comes from God except God. You

should adopt true righteousness in order that God may be pleased with you. When a human being becomes like a rebellious horse, he suffers punishment. Those who are distinguished understand a hint just as a trained horse does. Such good people are recipients of revelation from God - they receive *wahi* and a very fine point here is this that the meaning of *wahi* is also given as 'indication' or 'hint'. However, when the time of receiving punishment passes, the time for *wahi* begins and this is necessary because this matter is not easily resolved. *Taqwa*, righteousness, is not such an easy matter that it can be achieved merely through some verbal utterances, rather it contains within it a share of the satanic sin. Its example is like that of a sweet of which even a tiny amount can attract countless ants. The same is true of satanic sin and it informs of human weakness. If Allah had so willed He would not have placed such weakness in man but Allah desires that man should know that the fountainhead of all power is Allah's Being. No Prophet or Messenger has the power to grant this capacity to others. However, when Allah grants this power to

man, there is a transformation in him but to attain it prayer is essential. *Salat* alone is such a good act that its performance removes the satanic weaknesses and it is this that is termed 'prayer'. Satan desires that a human being should stay weak in its observance because he knows that when a person reforms himself, the person achieves such reform by himself. Hence, it is a condition that one should become clean and pure – Satan loves man as long as there is filth attached to him.

Respectful reverence is essential before one can request favours of God. The wise always keep in view the respect due to a king before seeking something from a king. This is the reason why God has taught, in the Chapter *Al-Fatiha*, the manner in which a prayer should be offered and it is taught that:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

*All praise belongs to Allah
who is Lord of all the worlds
(Ch.1: v.2)*

الرَّحِيمِ

The Gracious.
(Ch.1: v.3)

that is One Who gives without begging or asking.

الرَّحِيمِ

The Merciful.
(Ch.1: v.3)

that is the One Who bestows upon man the best fruit of his true effort.

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Master of the Day of Judgement.
(Ch.1: v.4)

that is, all matters of judgement are in His hand – He can punish or forgive. The judgement of the other world as well as of this world, all is in His hands. When a person praises God this much, he becomes aware of the Greatness of God who is *Rab*, *Rahman* and *Raheem* (the Lord, the Gracious and the Merciful One). A person had hitherto thought

of God as being the unseen but now he considers Him to be present and he calls out to Him:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

*Thee alone do we worship and
Thee alone do we implore for
help. Guide us in the right path*
(Ch.1: Vs.5,6)

..the path that is absolutely straight without any flaws. There is a path of the blind in that they make strenuous efforts without achieving any desired outcome. After this, [the prayer taught in *al-Fatiha* continues]:

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

*the path of those upon whom
Thou has bestowed blessings.*
(Ch.1: v.7)

and this path is exactly that path which leads to the reward of [special] blessings for those who tread upon it. After [this it states]:

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

That is, *not [the path] of those who incurred thy displeasure nor of those who have gone astray.*

(Ch.1: v.7)

[The prayer contained in verse 6 of *al-Fatiha*], *Ihd-e-nassirat-al Mustaqim*, *Guide us in the right path*, applies to the way of all things – worldly or religious. For instance, until a physician finds the ‘straight path’ [to a patient’s illness] he cannot cure a patient. Similar is the case of lawyers and all other professions. There is a straight path for all knowledge and occupations – upon finding this path everything becomes easy.]

[At this point someone raised the question as to why Prophets are in need of this prayer when they are already on the straight path to which the Promised Messiah^(as) replied that] they supplicate with this prayer in order to attain greater progress and a higher station. This prayer *Ihd-e-nassirat-al Mustaqim* is a supplication that the believers will make even in the other world because just as there is no limit to God so there is no limit to the level

and station to which one can progress.

[Returning to the main topic of righteousness, the Promised Messiah^(as) continued], in order to become righteous, it is necessary for a person that he should become steadfast in abandoning and abstaining from such sins as adultery, theft, meanness, haughtiness, usurping the right of others and demeaning others. However, it is also essential that while one becomes steadfast in abstaining from the bad characteristics, one should at the same time inculcate the noble characteristics such as kindness, graciousness and sympathy for others and should show sincere loyalty and be true to God. A person should seek to serve in such a manner that it would earn him the lofty station of praise from God. It is through such means that a person is called a *Muttaqi*, that is, a righteous person and those who are the embodiment of such qualities collectively are the truly righteous, (that is, the term *Muttaqi* is only fully applicable when the noble characteristics are collectively found in a person and

not if these qualities are found individually). It is for such [truly righteous] people that [the Holy Qur'an states]:

لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ

And no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.
(Ch.2: v.63)

After this what else could they possibly want? God becomes the guardian of such people as is stated:

وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ

And He protects the righteous.
(Ch.7: v.197)

It is stated in a *Hadith* that God becomes the hands with which a person holds, the eye with which he sees and the ear with which he hears and the feet with which he walks. It is narrated in another *Hadith* [that God states] 'he who is an enemy of My friend, I say to him be ready to face Me'. In another place it is stated that when someone attacks a friend of God,

God swoops down on him as a lioness pounces upon whoever may dare to snatch away her cubs.

The true principle of gaining benefit from the fountainhead of God's Mercy is [to remember that] it is a distinctive characteristic of God that [His attitude to a human being reflects the action of that human being] – if a person takes a step [towards God] then God, too, moves [towards that human being]. However, the special Grace and Mercy of God is not with every one and for this reason when these are bestowed upon someone they are referred to as being a sign for them. [Its example can be seen in the life of the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam]. The opponents of the Holy Prophet^(sa) did their utmost to defeat him but their efforts came to nothing. They even planned to take his life but ultimately they were defeated. Such is the [nature of goodness and trust] that is proposed by God [in order to be the recipient of His special grace]. The special efforts that are made [for the attainment of God's special grace] should be presented before God and not before us. Let your hearts flow

THE TRUE PRINCIPLE OF GAINING BENEFIT FROM THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF GOD'S MERCY IS [TO REMEMBER THAT] IT IS A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD THAT [HIS ATTITUDE TO A HUMAN BEING REFLECTS THE ACTION OF THAT HUMAN BEING] – IF A PERSON TAKES A STEP [TOWARDS GOD] THEN GOD, TOO, MOVES [TOWARDS THAT HUMAN BEING].

with the love of God and with the acknowledgement of His Greatness and for the attainment of such a state there is nothing greater than *Salat*. Compulsory fasting comes but only once a year for a month and *Zakat* is only for those who possess wealth but *Salat* is such that each one of every condition has to perform it five times daily and you should not waste it at all. It should be repeated often and it should be performed in such a way that one feels that one is standing before the most powerful Being Who can, should He so desire, accept one's prayer there and then – in that state, at that moment even at that very second. Worldly rulers are dependent upon material wealth, hence, their concern about the depletion of their wealth but God's treasury is always full. All that is required when a person stands

before God is certainty that he is standing before the most powerful Being Who listens and knows and Who could grant there and then should He so desire through kindness. One should supplicate with deep felt emotion without becoming disheartened. A persistence in such practise would lead a person to see (the pleasure of) it very soon and other blessings of God would also be with him and he will eventually find God. This then is the method that should be practised with steadfastness. However, it is the case that prayer of the cruel transgressor does not find acceptance because such a person is neglectful towards God. Should a son not care about his father and have no sense of his obligations to his father, the father, too, would not care about the son. Then why should God care about such a person?

[Here someone raised the question as to how was it that the prayer of Bal'am Ba'our was accepted to which the Promised Messiah^(as) replied] that was a trial not a prayer and in the end he was destroyed. Prayer is the supplication of those who are dear to God. Otherwise it is the case that God listens to [the prayers of all mankind including] the Hindus, for instance, and some of their wishes are fulfilled but the word for that is trial not prayer. For example, if such a person were to ask for bread, would God not give him bread? He has made a promise to this effect [and the promise is contained in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an]:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ
إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَرْزُقُهَا

there is no creature that moves in the earth but it is for Allah to provide it with sustenance.

(Ch.11: V.7)

Dogs and cats too fill their bellies.
Worms and insects also find their

sustenance but the [Arabic] term 'Astafeena' is for special instances [where special favours are sought].

PLEASE NOTE:

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(sa)' or 'sa' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for 'Salallahu alaihi wassalam' meaning 'Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him'. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or 'as' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'Peace be upon him' derived from 'Alaih salato wassalam' for the respect a Muslim reader utters.

The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for 'Radhiallahtala' and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun)

Also ru or (ru) for *Rahemallahu Ta'ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

Was Islam Spread by the Sword?

A Friday Sermon delivered by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V on 20 June 2003 at the Fazl Mosque London, transcribed and translated by Saleem Malik, published at its own responsibility by *The Review of Religions*.



After *Tashshhad* (bearing witness to the Unity of Allah and the affirmation that Muhammad^(sa) is His Messenger) and *Taudh* (seeking refuge from the accursed Satan) and reciting the *Surah Fatiha* (the opening chapter of the

Holy Qur'an), Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, recited the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.
(Ch.2: V.257)

Hadhrot Khalifatul Masih V stated:

‘Nowadays, the whole of the Western world is busy imputing that Islam is a religion of violence. It is because of the fundamentalist practising violence that *Jihadi* organisations [organisations that mistakenly believe that Muslims should engage in a holy war and

either ask non-Muslims to accept Islam or put them to the sword: Ed] are operating in the Islamic world.

All Ahmadis are fully aware that this is slanderous and an indecent imputation on Islam. Islam is a religion that teaches love, affection and brotherhood. The stress that Islam places on the basic human rights cannot be found in any other religion. Unfortunately, some extremist groups that have no relation with the true teachings of Islam, have, for the sake of the satisfaction of their own ego, created a dreadful image of Islam by associating Islam with *Jihadi* organisations. This has distorted the beautiful teachings of Islam. This is not a service to Islam. On the contrary, this has brought Islam into disrepute. The translation of the verse that I have recited from the Holy Qur'an just now is:

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress and believes in Allah has surely

grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.
(Ch.2: V.257)

Commenting on this verse, Hadhrat Musleh Maud, Khalifatul Masih II ^(ra) says:

'It is strange that Islam is criticised for teaching that faith should be spread by force. Islam prepares Muslims to be ready for *Jihad*, as Allah says: '*Fight in the way of Allah those who fight with you*' (Ch.2: V.191). On the other hand, Allah says *There is no compulsion in religion* meaning that the injunction about fighting does not mean that the use of force is permitted to convert people to Islam. In fact, the order to fight is to remove the mischief and eliminate the wicked designs of the enemy. Had compulsion been permitted, how could the Holy Qur'an require the Muslims to fight and yet in the same Chapter enjoin that compulsion is not permitted in religion? Is it not but obvious that Islam does not permit the

use of force in matters of religion under any circumstance? Therefore, this verse not only clearly states that the use of compulsion is unlawful but also the placing of this verse at that particular point in the Holy Qur'an clearly shows that Islam is totally against compulsion. The allegation of Christian orientalist that Islam orders the use of sword to bring non-Muslims in the fold of Islam is totally untrue. The fact is that Islam is the first religion that presented the teaching to the world that everyone has full freedom of conscience and that there is no compulsion in religion.'

(Tafseer-e-Kabir, vol.2, pp 585 – 586)

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih I^(ra) states:

'There is no compulsion in religion': There is a way of the prophets and there is a way of the kings. It is not the custom of the prophets to use force, oppression or compulsion. However, kings use both force

and compulsion. The police can arrest someone who has committed a crime, but religion deters you from the intention of sin. Therefore, when man accepts the rule of religion, then there is no need for police to safeguard it. Allah the Almighty says that force and compulsion have no bearing with religion; therefore, do not coerce anyone because one who is not a believer at heart, is a hypocrite. According to *Sharia* (Law), hypocrites and non-believers are in the same pot. It is by mistake only that stories have been given currency that Islam was spread by the use of sword.

'It is also alleged that the Emperor Aurangzeb was cruel and forced people into Islam. This is a fallacious statement. The Chief of his army was a Hindu. A large part of his life was spent in fighting his brothers, even his death occurred when he was fighting Tana Shah. Also, Islam is not responsible for the actions of the kings. Muslims made a terrible mistake when they accepted the accusations of its

THEREFORE, IT IS A DUTY OF THE AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY TODAY TO LAUNCH A WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN TO PRESENT THE BEAUTIFUL TEACHINGS OF PEACE AND HARMONY THAT ISLAM COMMANDS ALL MUSLIMS TO FOLLOW. THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SHOULD EXPLAIN TO THE WORLD THAT ISLAM HAS BEEN THE DEFENDER OF JUSTICE AND EQUITY FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

objectors even though Islam means sincere love and acceptance of truth with candour. That is why there is no compulsion in Islam.’ (*Haqaiqul Furqan, vol.1, p.391*)

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih I^(ra) further comments:

‘In *Kitabe Maghaazi* (however unreliable it may be), we find no example whatsoever where the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) used force or employed the sword to bring into Islam any person, any family or any tribe. Sir William Muir clearly states that out of thousands not even one person was forced to become a Muslim in the city of Madinah and that, in Makkah

as well, the attitude and behaviour of the Holy Prophet of Islam^{sa} was exactly the same. When we read through the unbiased history, we cannot find even a single instance when the great emperors (Mahmood Ghaznavi, Sultan Salahuddin, Aurangzeb) ever forced a single person to accept Islam. On the other hand, people of other religions found favour with them on merit and held many prominent offices in the administration of these Muslim rulers. This is an abundant proof that with the exception of the sword being used for the defence of the nation, the sword was never employed for the spread of Islam.

‘According to the Islamic laws, subjects of other faiths in Islamic empires had full religious freedom. The verse *There is no compulsion in religion*, (Ch.2: V.257) is a clear proof that Islam allows full freedom in matters of faith and religion and enjoins Muslims to use compassion when dealing with non-believers.

(Fasalul Khitab, second edition; vol. 1; pp.83-84)

Therefore, it is a duty of the Ahmadiyya community today to launch a worldwide campaign to present the beautiful teachings of peace and harmony that Islam commands all Muslims to follow. The members of the community should explain to the world that Islam has been the defender of justice and equity from the very beginning. The events 1400 years ago fully testify to that assertion when the tribe of *Banu Nadhir* was exiled from Madinah. It included many children of the Ansar (Muslim inhabitants of Madinah). When the Muslims showed their intention to detain their descendants, the Holy Prophet of

Islam^(sa) refrained them from their action on the very basis that ‘*there is no compulsion in religion*’. The background to how these children had begun to live amongst the Jews goes back to the pre-Islamic days of ignorance when some Arab families who had no male children used to pledge that if the next child were male they would make him a Jew. Thus such Arabs used to hand over their male children to Jewish families. So this is the beautiful teaching of Islam that once you hand over your own son to someone else and that someone else makes your descendant an adherent of another faith, you cannot take him back by force.

Another unique example is what happened at the time of the peace treaty signed at Hudaibiyya. The Quraish laid down some strict and unfair conditions and as a result many Muslims felt humiliated and some even demonstrated their unwillingness to accept the treaty. But the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) had unshakable conviction that the victory would ultimately belong to Muslims because the All-Hearing, All-Knowing God had promised him that the victory would be his.

Allah had heard his supplications and the time of acceptance of these prayers was near. With absolute belief, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) accepted all the conditions and taught his companions that the victory of Islam would not come by fighting wars, but by peace, goodwill and by acting on the true commandments of Allah.

God willing, the victory of Islam in this age will also come about by following this principle. It is important that Muslims also understand clearly that although the eventual victory of Islam is certain, it will not come about by force. The victory of Islam will only come by the sheer blessings and Grace of Allah and by the Muslims following the commandments of Allah and by following the example and the teachings of our beloved Prophet Muhammad^(sa).

As Allah explains in the verse that when you left the ways of error and joined the ways of Allah, it is as though you have got hold of a strong handle which knows no breaking. But merely uttering the words 'I believe' are not

sufficient. You will only succeed if you firmly hold on to the commandments of Allah and His Prophet^(sa). According to the prophecies of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa), the Promised Messiah^(as) is that strong handle today that presents to you the true interpretation of the Divine commandments. He is the one who reiterates to you the true teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa). You will only succeed if you act on these instructions. Because of their sad conditions, Muslims remained distressed for a long time and kept on waiting for the Messiah and Mahdi to appear so that they could join him and witness the victory of Islam. Those who truly cared for Islam kept on praying and supplicating. But, what happened when the advent of this Promised One took place? A large number refused to accept him simply because he had brought the message of peace, harmony and brotherhood.

Then, in his commentary on Ch.2: V.257 (quoted at the beginning), Hadhrat Musleh Maud, Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) expounds:

‘In this verse, acceptance and belief means that one rejects the evil of *Satan* and accepts the command of Allah. Such a person is described as *‘has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking.’* (Ch.2: V.257) ‘*Urwa*’ also means a handle by which you hold a pan; a thing that can be trusted; anything towards which one turns at the time of need; that which is everlasting and cannot be diminished; and can also mean the best wealth. If the meanings are taken as a handle then this verse would mean that Allah the Almighty has compared faith to subtle contents contained in a pan and which is safe or preserved and someone has taken possession of this pan firmly by the handle.

‘*Urwa*’ in this verse also points to the fact that faith is what one uses as a support when one is afraid of falling, just as one holds on to a rope when climbing a ladder. Similarly, religion is also a support like that rope and one holds on to it when one is afraid of falling.

‘By stating ‘*Urwa*’ man is also informed that if he holds it firmly, it will help him at all times of difficulty.

‘*Urwa*’ also points to the fact that religion is the only really beneficial possession that will help both in this world and the next. All other relationships are temporary and are cut off one by one at the time of need. Although man certainly considers his relations and friends as his best companions yet ‘a friend in need is a friend indeed’ and they can show weakness and disloyalty at times. Only then he finds out that the real relations were those based on religion as they bestow the real blessings.”
(*Tafseer-e-Kabir, Vol.2; pp.587–588*)

Addressing the Muslims, the Promised Messiah^(as) says:

‘According to your belief, Messiah the son of Mary will descend from Heaven and joining forces with the Mahdi will start a war to convert everyone by force to Islam.

This preposterous belief brings Islam into disrepute. Where in the Holy Qur'an is it mentioned that compulsion is permitted in religion? On the contrary, the Holy Qur'an says, '*There is no compulsion in religion*'. (Ch.2: V.257). How, then, will Messiah the son of Mary be given the right to use force? That is to say to use force to such an extent that accept Islam or be killed, so much so that even the option of *Jizya* [(a tax imposed on non-Muslims guaranteeing their protection and not requiring them to be part of the Muslim army)] will be cancelled? From which part or chapter of the Holy Qur'an is this contention supported? The whole of the Holy Qur'an keeps saying repeatedly that there is no compulsion in religion. It is evident that the wars that the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) conducted against various adversaries were as a punishment for their crime of the massacre of Muslims in large numbers and sending others into exile and inflicting cruelty upon them. As Allah

the Almighty says, '*Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged – and Allah indeed has power to help them*' (Ch.22: V.40) – i.e. those Muslims against whom the infidels are fighting are permitted to confront them because they have been oppressed and Allah is Mighty and has the power to help them. Then, there were those wars that were fought as defensive wars. Either the enemies were advancing with aggressive designs to exterminate Islam or they were using torment and inquisition on Muslims in their countries to stop the spread of Islam. The wars were fought with such enemies for protection, or for obtaining independence in defence or to create freedom in a country. Except for the three scenarios mentioned above, neither the Holy Prophet of Islam^{sa} nor the revered Khalifas of the Holy Prophet^(sa) fought any wars. In fact, Islam suffered inquisition and persecution at the hands of

foreign nations with such patience that you would not find another example amongst other people.

‘What sort of persons would then be Jesus the Messiah and the Mahdi who would start the killing instantly so much so that he would refuse to accept *Jizya* even from the people of the Book; and would thus abrogate the verse of the Holy Qur’an which enjoins, ‘*Until they pay the Jizya (tax) with their own hand submissively and acknowledge their subjection.*’ (Ch.9:V.29). What sort of supporter of Islam would he be that he would even abrogate the verses of the Holy Qur’an that had not been abrogated in the times of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and despite this revolution the issue of *Khatme Nabuwwat* would be unaffected? In this age, after 1300 years of the prophethood have passed and Islam itself has been divided into 73 sects, the duty of the Messiah should be to win the hearts not by the use of sword but by arguments and persuasion. His duty

should be to eradicate with true proofs the false beliefs of crucifixion instead of going around smashing the golden, silver, bronze or wooden crucifixes. If you use compulsion, then your force only testifies that you have no convincing argument about your truth. Whenever any fool or tyrant runs out of arguments, he resorts to the gun and the sword. But a religion that needs sword for its propagation can never be from God Almighty. If you do not refrain from such *Jihad* and, in anger, call the righteous by the names of impostors and heretics, then I end my discourse with the words, – ‘Say! “O ye disbelievers! I worship not that which you worship”’ (Ch 109: V.2-3).’

(*Tafseer, Hadhrat Masih Maud*^(as), Vol. 1; pp. 747-748)

The Promised Messiah^(as) further says:

‘Whatever Allah the Almighty does, He does for the sake of teaching and training. Since the period of glory lingers on,

and Muslim power and glory had prevailed over a long period and their conquests stretched to the far corners of the world, some fools began to think that Islam was spread by force although its teaching is *There is no compulsion in religion* (Ch.2: V.257). To prove its truth, Allah the Almighty sent his Khatamul Khulafa (the Most Perfect of Vicegerents) and by giving him the task of ‘*Yadha’ul Harb*’ (ending wars) gave him the second task of ‘*Le Yudhhirahu ‘aladdeen-e-kullihi*’ (that He may make it prevail over every other religion Ch.9: V.33). In other words he would bring about the victory of Islam by evidence and arguments and would remove fighting and wars. Those who are waiting for a blood-thirsty Mahdi and blood-thirsty Messiah are in great error’.

(*Al-Hakam*, vol. 6; No. 24; 10 July 1902; p.3)

Again, the Promised Messiah^(as) states:

‘There should be freedom in matters of faith. Allah the Almighty says that, ‘*There is no compulsion in religion.*’ (Ch.2: V.257) You will not find such a sentence anywhere in the Holy Bible. People have misunderstood the true cause of wars. If war was the commandment, then the Holy Prophet^(sa) wasted thirteen years of his life when he did not lift the sword once. The permission is granted to fight only those who fight with you. It has never been the principle of Islam to initiate wars. Allah Himself has explained the reason for war by saying ‘*Dhulimu*’ (*because they have been wronged* Ch.22: V.40). When Allah saw that His people are oppressed and persecuted, only then did He permit them to fight in self-defence. Allah never declared that now the time for the sword has come and you should convert people to Islam by force. Instead, Allah enjoined that since you are victims of oppression, you should fight back. In fact, all laws of the world permit victims of

oppression to fight for their life’.

(*Al-Badr*, Vol. 2; No. 1-2; 23 January 1903)

In this context, the Promised Messiah^(as) further elaborates:

‘The opinion of Nawab Siddiq Hassan that in the time of the Messiah, people will be compelled to become Muslims, is incorrect. God Almighty says, *There is no compulsion in religion*. (Ch.2: v.257) Yes, once, Christians used to use force to convert others to Christianity. But ever since the advent of Islam, Islam has been against the use of force. Only those who possess no Divine sign resort to force. But Islam is an ocean of Heavenly Signs. No prophet ever showed as many miracles as were shown by our Holy Prophet^(sa). The miracles of the earlier prophets died with their death, but the miracles of our Prophet^(sa) are still being manifested today and they will continue till the Judgement Day. Whatever is being demonstrated in my support are, in fact, the miracles of the Holy Prophet^(sa). Where are those priests or Jews or

other people who can show comparable miracles. They will never, never, never come forward! They will never be able to show even one miracle even if they die trying. Their gods are artificial. They do not follow a true God. Islam is an ocean of miracles. Islam has never used any compulsion nor has there been any need for it’.

(*Appendix to Haqiqatul Wahy*; pp. 35-36)

The Promised Messiah^(as) states further:

‘In their foolish ignorance, these illiterate clerics promptly declare that Islam was spread by the sword. The obtuse Christian clergy is also wedded to these doubtful ideas. There can be no bigger lie than to accuse a religion whose first teaching happens to be *There is no compulsion in religion*. (Ch.2: V.257) of compulsion and the use of force. The battles that our beloved Prophet^(sa) and his companions had to fight were purely to defend themselves and to create peace. Those who pick

up the sword to stop the faith have to be stopped by the sword’.

(Tiriyaqul Qaloob, p.16)

The Promised Messiah^(as) continues:

‘The true Muslims of the past never believed in the use of sword for propagating Islam. Instead, Islam spread all over the world because of its own attributes. Therefore those who call themselves Muslims, and know only that Islam should be spread by the use of sword, do not know of the beauties of Islam. Their actions are no better than the actions of beasts’.

(Tiriyaqul Qaloob, footnote p.167)

Therefore, it is a duty of every Ahmadi today that he should take this message to the whole world that the true teaching of Islam is the one that has been given to us by the Promised Messiah^(as). They should take the message of love, peace and brotherhood; and declare to the whole that Islam was not spread by the sword but

by the excellence of its teachings. Tell those who are associating Islam with the sword that they are following the wrong course. Explain to them and pray for them because they come in the category of ‘*Inna hum La Ya’alamoon*’ – *Verily, they do not know*. It is the crying need of the time to convince the world that Islam spread during the time of the Holy Prophet^(sa) because of his prayers and supplications; and in this age, God willing, this will happen only by presenting the true teachings of Islam as expounded by the Promised Messiah^(as), the true devotee and servant of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa).

Balance Within Man's Body

This article is an extract from the book *Absolute Justice, Kindness and Kinship: The Three Creative Principles*, in which the author, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad – Khalifatul Masih IV, elaborates on the three stages of human relations; namely Adl (Absolute justice), Ihsan (to grant someone more than his due) and Ita'I Dhill-Qurba (to treat someone with such grace and overwhelming benevolence as one would treat one's kindered).

This section follows a discussion of one meaning of verse nine of Surah Al-Shams ('And He revealed to it what is wrong for it [fujoor] and what is right for it [taqwa]'), and focuses on another aspect of its meaning.



The Inbuilt Criterion for Good and Bad

God has endowed the human physiology with intrinsic potentials to distinguish disease from health and creative phenomena from destructive phenomena. This system of discrimination works without the knowledge of human consciousness and as an ongoing self-flowing phenomenon. In fact this applies not only to human beings but to all forms of life as well. Each species, whether elementary or advanced, is well equipped with that inbuilt ability which informs each individual belonging to any species of what is

good for it and what is bad for it within its own tiny world of the barest form of existence. Even the amoeba has its limitations of health and disease, what it should endeavour to possess and what it should avoid and evade. But in man it is so highly developed and complex, that even a cursory glance at its function is absolutely astounding.

The process of selection and rejection is observed in perfect operation at every level of human existence; the following simple illustration will help elaborate the case in point.

IN SHORT, IN TERMS OF HUMAN PHYSIQUE, THIS VERSE OF SURAH AL-SHAMS INDICATES THAT HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY AND ANATOMY AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM AND THE PORTAL SYSTEM, INTRAVENOUS SYSTEM AND GLANDULAR SYSTEM, AND THE IMMUNE SYSTEM ARE ALL WELL EQUIPPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS GOOD AND BAD FOR THEM, AND HOW TO AVOID EVIL AND ADOPT A HEALTHY COURSE.

The appetite in man creates in him the awareness of the requirements of energy. The sense of sight, smell, touch and taste, and even in some cases the sense of hearing, all immediately begin to take an active part in determining what is good and what is bad, and to what extent something is good and to what extent something is bad for the man in need of some form of energy. Then if a morsel of something is introduced into the mouth, the taste buds and heat buds and the sensory organs relating to touch etc., the teeth and salivary glands and jaw bones and the nerves attached to the teeth, muscles of the jaws and circular fibres around the oesophagus and trachea, all begin to play a perfectly balanced role, as if dancing in perfect harmony in step with the music of life. Then, when at last something is swallowed, the selection process begins to play a more profound role in disintegrating the food into its

constituent materials and purifying it from alien matters not needed by the body and purifying it from bacterial or viral impurities and breaking it into such chemical elements as can be readily assimilated by the system and recycled into other more complex organic materials after having being introduced into the bloodstream of man.

These are but a very few oversimplified examples of how the human body is equipped to create a balanced diet for human consumption. If the balance is disturbed, then the quality of human life and health is adversely affected. The balance needed within the system of life in human beings is so perfectly measured and precisely proportioned, that even a slight disturbance in mutual proportions can turn life into death.

Here it would be logical to translate *Fujoor* as changes threatening the healthy progress of life, and *Taqwa* as measures of the potential ability to avoid the dangers which may lead to illness and death. This also has a connotation of protective capabilities or defensive measures.

In short, in terms of human physique, this verse of Surah Al-Shams indicates that human physiology and anatomy and the nervous system and the portal system, intravenous system and glandular system, and the immune system are all well equipped with the knowledge of what is good and bad for them, and how to avoid evil and adopt a healthy course. A minute study of just one of the systems alluded to would virtually require volumes to be written; yet by no means would the subject be exhausted. To say that this magical and wonderful would be naive. To compare the intricacies and the tiers upon tiers of mysteries with which human life is endowed is like placing Alice in Wonderland. In comparison to the wonders of human creation all fiction relating to mystery and wonder is paled into nothingness.

When we study the scientific explanation of how the human body functions, we are amazed to notice how perfectly they verify the relevant

Qur'anic statements. There is an amazing balance between man's propensity to fall ill and catch diseases and his potential ability to cure himself from all forms of disease of which he may be stricken. Even cancers can be cured without intervention of physicians or oncologists. In fact there are some terminal cases of cancer which are duly recorded in medical history where the patient made a complete recovery, defying the scientific understanding of how it could have happened. The specialists' know-how is disregarded when terminally ill patients begin to recover and return to life without any understandable cause. The scientists are in unanimous agreement however that the intricacies of the human immune system are as yet superficially understood. Yet only this much we can say with certainty, that our defence system is provided with limitless possibilities.

Despite its perfection no defence apparatus in man can bring him eternity. In each system that man is endowed with there is an inherent counter system which works in measured tones for its ultimate destruction. Everything is precisely measured and proportioned. The estimated duration of the life of each cell of the human body is

predetermined by the most intricate dominant and recessive characteristics etched onto the genes. It is also clearly predetermined as to how long the growth rate for certain organs would move at a faster pace than the death rate of the same organ. Also it is clearly predetermined as to the age at which the pace of growth and destruction would remain perfectly matched, and again it is also predetermined as to the time after which the rate of death would outpace the rate of growth. None of these is accidental.

Physical Growth

Let us study by way of illustration the simple example of the growth of teeth. The milk teeth as we know them are governed and are being constantly monitored in the rate of growth and decay, so that for some years the rate of growth outpaces the rate of decay. For some years the balanced stage is reached where the rates remain constant. Then suddenly the balance is tilted in favour of death and decay, and the days of the milk teeth are numbered. After that begins the age of the adult teeth. The rate of growth in the beginning is much faster in this case than the rate of the wear and tear. Up to a certain stage, when they reach their predetermined size of length, breadth and thickness, the balance in favour of growth

remains intact. After a pre-calculated size is reached, suddenly a perfect balance between the rate of growth and the rate of wear and tear is delicately maintained, so leaving injury through disease and accident aside, they remain in a perfectly healthy and balanced state with no apparent changes occurring in their length and size.

Ordinarily people think they have grown and stopped growing, and that is all that there is to it. This naive concept is farthest from the truth. If they had stopped growing they would have ground into nothingness in a matter of weeks and months. If on the other hand, the rate of growth continued to remain the same as was operative in the initial stages, they would have continued to grow longer and longer till the lower teeth would have jugged out of the top of the human skull and the upper teeth would be seen hanging below the jaw.

So it is not an unmeasured, uncontrollable phenomenon that we are observing. All the factors responsible for measuring growth to a certain period and the change in the rate of growth after a certain period of time and the mutual balance between the rate of growth and decay, are an extremely complex set of instructions specifically and clearly written into

the blueprint of human creation. When they act in detail, it is mind boggling to realise how the blueprint of human design and engineering unfolds itself and works in such an amazing and intricate manner.

The safe removal of the waste products through the human excretory system is also a system in itself which astounds human understanding. Here of course the principle of *Adl* is applicable with no awareness on the part of the human mind. Only when he treats the teeth with injustice does he begin to realise the outcome of his folly through the damage that he himself inflicts on his own teeth. And within a small sphere he begins to observe another form of justice in play, that is the justice operative in the phenomena of crime and punishment.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a common disease which can be used to illustrate the mysteries of balances. Among other things, diabetes is caused by imbalances in the secretions of some vital glands in the human assimilative system.

The pancreas produces two types of secretions or chemicals. One is called insulin and is largely responsible for the assimilation of sugar into all parts of the organs of the body, which

constantly require sugar as a source of energy for their survival. There are so many glands involved in this complex task. Even if the animal does not eat sugar directly, various forms of carbohydrates he consumes in the forms of starches, powders, fruits and vegetables etc., are broken down into sugar by certain glands in the body. This sugar, or any other sugar directly consumed by an animal is a ready source for all his requirements of energy, but it cannot be directly utilised by any human organ or part of the body without the help of insulin. But if insulin is produced in excessive quantities, a disease which is the opposite of diabetes can be caused and this is called hypoglycaemia. In this disease, the sugar level is so lowered by over-consumption or by other factors, that if it is not immediately rectified it can result in sudden death or a deep coma which is damaging for the brain and other vital organs.

To keep a counter check on production of insulin there is a complex signalling system at work in the body which sounds an alarm as if announcing the fact that all the insulin that was needed has been produced and no more is required. This counter insulin secretion is also produced in the same area of the glandular system which is responsible for the production of insulin. When secretion

is released the production of insulin suddenly halts and the animal seems to enter a state of perfect satiation. Tilt the balance to either side and the health will be adversely influenced to some degree.

But this is not all to the story of insulin and measures created by God to keep it in check and balance.

Each human organ requires insulin for the assimilation of sugar, but also other rare elements and secretions are needed to support this complex system. Every cell in the bloodstream constantly needs energy. After the consumption of energy, the waste product needs to be thrown out. For this, adequate measures are taken whereby the waste product and toxins etc. are secreted out of the system.

All the above functions are performed through the agency of the bloodstream. Talking of the bloodstream, this in itself offers limitless wonders. The problem with the bloodstream is that it can be self-destructive. The medium of liquid in which blood cells of different types are suspended can destroy the nucleus of the cell immediately if it is permitted to flow into the cell freely. To counter this danger there is a bi-layered envelope around each cell which cannot be penetrated directly by the liquid

electrolyte system in which the cells are suspended. This bi-layered envelope provides a very effective preventative cover to each cell. But it creates its own problems.

Sugars are found dissolved in the bloodstream and the same double cover preventing the solution of blood from reaching the nucleus also prevents sugar from reaching the nucleus where it is vitally needed for survival. Also, a well-proportioned amount of insulin must somehow be transported into the cell. So to keep perfect balance between both requirements and provide effective measures against both dangers (either side), God has designed the two covers of the cells to meet the situation perfectly. Both covers have certain pores through which a molecule of sugar is transported with an attached molecule of insulin into the heart of the cell where it is immediately consumed. The waste products are carried back through the pores of the same covers to the bloodstream where they are washed out to the porous skin in the form of perspiration, or highly complex mucous membranes in the kidney etc. This transportation of sugar into the cell and the expulsion of waste product occurs at unbelievably high speeds.

This is the energy transportation

system; but this again is not all. There is far more to it. Each human organ, including cells in the bloodstream, requires a certain amount of sugar constantly for survival. But of course there are priorities, the priority of the brain is supreme over all the organs of the body. If the sugar level in the bloodstream sinks, the brain must somehow be guaranteed a constant supply till the entire reserve of sugar is depleted. If every organ and cellular tissues of the body had equal access to the consumption of sugar, there would always be a danger of the brain being deprived of its vital supply of sugar because of over-consumption elsewhere. Hence to keep the balance between various priorities, glands also create other secretions which direct the consumption of insulin in a complex and controlled manner.

If the sugar falls below a certain level where the supply to the brain could be threatened, the relative glandular secretions would stop all supply of insulin and sugar to other organs of the body including blood particles. The entire stock will be stopped for the survival of the brain. The balances are not only in one place. Tier after tier of extremely delicate balances are created and maintained. In short, this is absolute justice which works unconsciously in man at different

levels of existence. Hence they may not be referred to as absolute justice, but one cannot escape the fact that justice and perfect balance are two names for the same phenomenon. In other words, we can say without fear of contradiction that perfect health is another name for absolute justice.

To understand the issue of balance in relation to sugar in the human body, let us discuss the specific example of how much sugar is needed, and what are the minimum and maximum levels. For each 100 ml of blood, there must always be at least 60 mg of sugar available for consumption. But on the other side of the equation the sugar level must not exceed 180 mg per 100 ml of blood (*Textbook of Medical Physiology*, Arthur C. Guyton, 5th Edition, Saunders, 1976, Chap, 78.). If it exceeds that level then the state of imbalance is referred to as blood sugar.

To keep the balance correct if the insulin fails to maintain the balance, the excess sugar in the blood is washed out by the kidneys so that the excessive presence of sugar in the blood may not corrode the cellular tissues of the body. When the excess is passed out into the urine what we have is a case of diabetes with the unwarranted presence of sugar in the urine. Sometimes the threshold of the

kidneys is high and the excess of sugar in the blood is not washed out, resulting in dangerously high levels of sugar in the blood. This has a corrosive effect on some organs; the heart valves can also be eaten up by the excessive flow of sugar through them (like acid corroding the channels it flows in). The extra sugar is somehow deposited where the flow of the blood is slow, in places like the capillaries, causing many types of irritation and damage. When this happens in the blood capillaries of the eyes, the person may suffer from cataract and glaucoma and other types of eye diseases. It can slow down the impulses carried through the nerves and create dangers directly resulting from this lethargic state of transport through the nerves.

In every day experience we find that some diabetic patients remain unaware of pain they should feel as a result of spasms around the heart. By missing these signals they may be taken by a surprise heart attack. So talking of the balance of justice is not just an academic luxury. The persistent lack of justice or disproportion in balance is unlikely to go unpunished in nature. Alas, this lesson is ignored by man and he lives under the illusion that he can escape the consequences of injustice. But that we will turn to later.

Protection Against Disease

Let us now turn our attention to certain other examples of balances created by God for the healthy maintenance of human life. Not only human life of course, the entire universe of innumerable species of life are firmly controlled and run under the absolute and unwavering principle of justice. Where violated, inadvertently or intentionally, one will never fail to discover the presence of disease.

There is an amazing system of balance within our bodies. Any imbalance may cause complications, eventually leading the patient to death. If we know how this intricate system of balance, which God has created in our bodies, works we will only appreciate it more. How unfortunate is the case of man, otherwise such a proud animal, conscious of being at the head of all evolutionary achievements of life, being equipped with the most complex faculties of thinking and computation, yet he remains unaware of the most complex system of balance God has provided him with. This in itself is an injustice. In fact there is a vast internal universe of innumerable correlating factors, suspended in perfect balance and harmony constantly taking care of life in every aspect of its requirements.

This micro-universe of symphony in man is the greatest wonder that God has created. Man is the masterpiece of God's creation and is so naively unaware of his own creative wonders that he consequently remains oblivious of the gratitude he owes to his Creator.

But there is more to it than just *Adl*. God in His extreme beneficence has taken measures to provide an additional system of cushioning and resilience to the working of the human body, which strictly speaking does not belong to the realm of *Adl* and justice. It is something extra, as if unearned, granted to the body entirely by way of special kindness. Looking at it from another angle, one can say that in view of human faults, excessive negligence and even accidents, a system of compensation is provided by God. When viewed from the vantage point of conscious human actions, it appears much like the term *Ihsan* in action, as we have previously discussed at same length.

The benefaction of *Ihsan* and *Ita'i Dhil-Qurba* are granted to protect the system of justice. For instance, if man was provided with digestive juices sufficient to meet the daily requirements of food, that would imply that each animal eats exactly what he requires with there being no

room for excess. This is only the dictate of justice. But God has provided animals with far greater possibilities to meet the eventualities of excessive eating on their part. With some effort of course everyone can digest twice the amount of food required for healthy living. When that is exceeded, then the domain of punishment begins. When one begins to become a habitual violator of justice a breakdown follows at long length. This is a very primitive and simple example of the provisions of *Ihsan* in all functions of human and animal life.

The Production of Insulin

In order to illustrate this point further we look at the example of the daily requirements of sugar of every animal and see how the factors of benevolence perform rescue operations and shield the patient's health from the bad affects of indulgent eating. For instance, if the insulin produced by the pancreas was in exact proportion to the daily requirements of sugar by an animal then this would only fulfil the requirements of *Adl* and benevolence would have no part to play. But God has granted the pancreas the capability to produce more insulin than is the ordinary requirement. If a healthy man consumed ten to twenty times more sugar, his metabolism

would not allow him to suffer from diabetes. Also, if the pancreas is damaged by disease or accident, so that only one-seventh remains functional, still the daily requirements of the insulin supply could be maintained.

It is interesting to note here that if the pancreas produced less insulin than the required amount, this too would violate the principle of justice. It would be befitting here to elaborate this discussion a little further for the benefit of the lay people, who normally do not understand the workings of the scientific phenomena.

The production of insulin is not in any way accidental. When we say it can produce insulin matching exactly the need for insulin, we do not mean that automatically the pancreas produces a certain amount of insulin irrespective of the presence of sugar in the body system. That would be extremely unjust. The intake of food in all animals is not measured or regulated to ensure that every animal takes the exact amount of needed sugar, directly or in the form of carbohydrates. Animals have no knowledge of what they require, only a vague craving for eating, which compels them to eat whatever satiates their hunger and is palatable to their

taste. The amount of food consumed is such a variable factor that no regular measured intake could be guaranteed to suit each individual animal. Yet scientifically it can be determined as to how much average intake of food is required by each animal of certain weight, size and physique. So when we talk of daily requirements we talk in terms of averages, while the actual intake of food may change almost daily.

The pancreas is not only equipped to produce the average need of the animal, but the production system is so well regulated and monitored that somehow messages are delivered to it, informing it of the exact measures of insulin needed at a certain time.

Hence every time the animal requires insulin for the breakdown of sugar intake, the pancreas produces the exact amount that is needed. First of all, the point worthy of note is the fact that no blind accidents seem to take place in creation. Otherwise in some animals the pancreas would always fail to produce the daily requirement of the animal and such animals would ultimately die due to lack of energy. In other animals it is possible for the pancreas to overwork and overproduce insulin which would result in another unhealthy state. This chaotic behaviour could

result from their being provided by more or less potential than needed. Also it could result from lack of a monitoring system.

What we observe in real life, however, is the most beautifully balanced state of affairs. The size and production of pancreas in each animal is exactly made to measure. When there is less need for the production of insulin, or no need at all, the pancreas slow down or cease functioning accordingly. The pancreas would constantly receive signals which would will it to sleep. When the intake of sugar requires production of insulin, immediately the entire factory will begin to function at maximum capacity until the need is met. Then suddenly it will receive signals transmitted from somewhere, ordering the pancreas to cease to function at once. What we are talking about by way of illustration is that the provision of *Ihsan* is beyond the discussion of genuine demand and supply.

We are talking about accidental or intentional over-pumping of sugar into the system. If only the system of justice had been operative, the principle of crime and punishment would continue to punish the animal forthwith for all excesses committed. But God, the most Beneficent and

Merciful, has taken into account the accidental or intentional excesses on the part of animals, particularly in the case of man. Hence, potentially, human beings are provided by so many times more pancreatic material so that even if a person were to consume so many times more sugar, this crime would be overlooked and he would not be immediately punished for such occasional excesses. But if he continues to disregard the dictates of justice and if he constantly violates the principles of healthy living by eating disproportionately to his requirements, then a time may come when the hand of *Ihsan* would be withdrawn, and pure and simple justice would take over. The pancreas would break down and cease to work the extra load; such transgressors would then suffer from what we call diabetes.

Even at this stage we find the elements of *Ita'i Dhill-Qurba* coming to the rescue of such sufferers. If the sugar level were to then rise to a dangerous level in the bloodstream, the kidneys would be ordered to start excreting extra sugar to the maximum capacity. Here again we observe the fascinating display of balance and preference. The kidney suffers of course, but by way of sacrifice for the more vital organs. It suffers because it can take more of the suffering.

If the kidney were designed to excrete blood sugar automatically as a routine function, no sugar in the blood would be left for the normal consumption of the human body. It would constantly leak out into the liver if so. On the other hand, if the kidneys were designed never to excrete sugar from the complicated and highly designed membranes, then every diabetic patient would hasten to his end faster. In the case of those whose kidneys excrete excessive amounts of sugar, this over and extra kindness above the routine benevolence of *Ihsan* can be linked to *Ita'i Dhil-Qurba*. When the kidneys take the load of excreting sugar, it is a self-sacrifice on their part. But the kidneys themselves are a marvel of creation.

All the human waste in the bloodstream which is constantly produced through metabolic activities is channelled out of the human system through various organs. It is not the normal function of kidneys to excrete sugar; the normal function of kidneys is to excrete waste products of metabolism. If the human body is healthy and enjoys a balanced diet, the metabolic waste would require a certain size and weight for the kidney to perform its function of excretion. If the kidneys are only made to measure in accordance with this requirement, one-eighth of the size of the human

kidney would be sufficient, and it would require no extra cushioning in case of accidental disease or excesses by gourmet eaters. It is a fascinating display of *Ihsan* and *Ita'i Dhil-Qurba* together.

The kidneys are fashioned to take eight times more load than the ordinary requirement of the day-to-day bodily functions. That is to say that if there is a constant disregard towards the dictates of justice and towards the beneficence of God, and if man were to lose seven parts of his kidneys out of his eight parts, still he could survive as a normal healthy person, provided he learns his lesson and returns to a normal balanced life.

Thus we see that absolute justice and benevolence in most situations can flourish together without one interfering with the other. However, if there is a danger of a clash occurring between the two, then benevolence is not permitted to play a role and absolute justice must prevail. If the coming into play of benevolence requires the sacrifice of justice, that is to say if favours can only be shown at the cost of justice, then the course of benevolence cannot be permitted to function. As long as benevolence coexists without interfering into the domain of justice it will be permitted to survive and function. Although

benevolence is a thing of a higher order, justice is more fundamental in its nature and fundamentals are never sacrificed on the altar of what is extra and optional.

We shall now consider the above mentioned example in the light of a tradition of the Holy Prophet^(sa) that:

‘A non-believer may eat seven times more, in comparison to a believer.’
(*Muslim Kitab-ul-Ashreba, Ch. 34, Hadith 182, 184.*)

This tradition so accurately demonstrates the minimum maximum capacity of the digestive system.

However, this subject is vast and requires a deeper study to reach the intricate workings of the mechanism of digestion of sugar into the system and the maintenance of the relevant balances. Again, the subject is so complex that by no means could it so accurately be kept in poise and balance through accidental creation. Insulin is just one factor which is largely involved in the transportation of sugar from the blood system to the areas of requirements. But hundreds of other factors are responsible for perfect balance of insulin-related activities. Hence it is possible for a patient to suffer from diabetes despite

the pancreas working normally. So far, scientists have discovered hundreds of possible factors which play a role in the maintenance of the complex sugar absorption system in the body. Yet, in the final analysis, the emphasis is on perfect balance, or an absolute justice, as it has also been referred to.

Calcium

Calcium also plays an important role in keeping man's health in good order. His health is at a great risk if the balance of calcium is somehow disturbed even ever so slightly. In this respect, the margin between health and disease is much narrower than that which exists in the case of the glucose level in the blood. A healthy body needs a minimum amount of 9.2% calcium and a maximum of 10.4% calcium (*Textbook of Medical Physiology, Arthur C. Guyton, 5th Edition, Saunders, 1976, Chap. 79.*). Any rise or fall in the proportion of calcium may cause severe damage to health, even resulting in sudden death. A study of a disease not uncommon among cattle would be helpful in demonstrating how important it is for calcium to be present in the body in exactly the right proportions.

Sometimes due to viruses or environmental factors, the cattle

begin to show signs of sudden loss of energy which is perplexing for the farmer, as there is no outward reason for this to happen. A cow, perfectly healthy the night before, suddenly buckles in at the knees and drops like a dead weight and simply cannot rise again. There is no fever and no sign of any disease, just a slump into death. A capable veterinary could of course save the cattle by the injection of readily soluble calcium which would miraculously inject life into the dying cattle. This is how important it is for calcium not to drop below the minimum required level.

Sometimes persistent progressive debility amongst humans is traced to the gradual decrease in calcium. So far, the principle to understand is that the delicate levels of calcium should not be disturbed, as this would be dangerous for human health. Generations of scientists working on this may not have quite understood all the factors responsible for maintaining this delicate balance.

Its role in the composition of the human body is a complex one. Calcium phosphate gives rigidity to the human skeleton and the calcium salts provide the hard structure of the bones and teeth and give hardness to the membranous tissues covering the cell.

The poor condition of the cells and teeth and excessive irritability are among the symptoms possible for indicating a shortage of calcium, whereas too much calcium may result in mental confusion and the lethargic condition of the body.

Inside the cell is the living protoplasm which is surrounded by a tough membrane. Any deficiency of calcium in the membrane removes its toughness, consequently making the cell weaker. This may result in the protrusion of protoplasm. Among humans, the intake of calcium varies according to what they consume and where they live. Thus any deficiency of calcium or its excessive intake can make their lives vulnerable to diseases. An imbalance of calcium in the bone tissue and bloodstream can be responsible for the following disorders:

- Vasodilation resulting in a drop in blood pressure.
- Reduced contractility of the heart muscles.
- The change in bone tissue which results in rickets.
- Serious osteoarthritis where the ratio of calcium is disturbed and also involves angina attacks. The

drop in the calcium level is because of the drop in the blood pressure and causes serious and permanent damage to the brain and tissues.

Hence God has provided man's body with another protective system which keeps the balance of calcium in order. The factors responsible for maintaining the delicate balance in calcium are numerous and intricately interrelated. This monitoring and corrective system can be likened to the phrase in Surah Al-Shams, verse nine. *Taqwa*, in this context would mean, 'We have computed into the building material of life the instructions concerning the areas of dangers which should be avoided, as well as the detailed instructions of how they could be avoided.' Accordingly, the calcium balance also has many inherent monitoring systems which constantly guard over it and, whenever necessary, call for remedial measures. The call is immediately responded to by the complex glandular system, which is well equipped with the necessary mechanism to create the supply of the much-needed remedies.

A small amount of calcium is needed by the blood and soft tissues, the rest is stored in the teeth and bones. If calcium in the blood is in short supply it is replenished from the store in the bones.

The body adjusts its absorption rate according to the supply of calcium in the diet – a low dietary intake means the absorption is high, and a high intake means that the excess will be stored in the bones until an optimum is reached, and then the absorption from the gut is slowed down. The presence of Vitamin D increases the absorption of calcium. Hence, in tropical countries, even though the diet may be deficient in calcium, the high level of Vitamin D in the body (from exposure to the sun) will make the absorption of calcium more efficient.

Regulation of the calcium balance is under control of a hormone called parathormone, which is produced by the parathyroid glands. This works in conjunction with Vitamin D to adjust the absorption of calcium to meet the requirements of the body. Calciton is another hormone which plays a role in regulating the balance of calcium. If there is too much calcium in the blood, calciton takes the excess back to the bone. It also slows down absorption from the gut.

Sodium and Potassium

Let us illustrate the system of *Fujoor* and *Taqwa* from another angle. Sodium and potassium are two elements which are essential for the maintenance of human life, and a

balance has to be kept between them. However, the necessary sodium-potassium ratio varies with the different parts of the body. For example, the bones and the flesh require more potassium than they do sodium, whereas blood cells need more sodium than they do potassium. An imbalance between these salts can lead to dangerous consequences. The balancing of these two chemicals in all parts of the body is not accidental either, but is part of a well organised scheme.

Also, the health of the nervous system is largely dependent on both sodium and potassium, but the requirement of nerves for each chemical changes according to the situation. Nerve cells pass messages to other nerve cells in a chain, so that the messages eventually reach the part of the body that they are intended for. In the transfer of messages from nerve cell to nerve cell, sodium flows into the cell while potassium flows out. If this process is then not reversed immediately and potassium is not rehabilitated to its resting level then the result can be spontaneous death.

It is from this that we can deduce the meaning of the Qur'anic expression *Fa Sawwaka Fa Adalaka*. One short phrase summarises the entire complex system of balances and

counter-balances that exist in our bodies.

Cell Division

Similarly, the process of cell division is very interesting. Every seven years, each cell in the body is replaced under the highly complicated system of catabolism. Catabolism is the process whereby cells are constantly consumed and destroyed. However, we are not aware that this phenomenon is taking place as none of our physical features change radically.

It is possible that with the passage of time, one may improve in health and gain weight, or deteriorate and lose flesh, but the personality of one's physical being remains exactly the same. Each new-born cell which replaces the dying one is born almost in the image of its predecessor which is destroyed in the process of catabolism.

To illustrate this point perhaps the most commonly known example is that of fingerprints. The thumb impression of the newborn babe in its intricate pattern remains exactly the same as when he grows up to a ripe old age. The thumb impression does not change.

This subject is related to the system of

Adl in that the cells which replace the dead ones are born in accordance with the needs and requirements of the body. The body organs need a constant system of repair because every organ would diminish in size unless the cells lost in the process of its function are replaced. If the rate of supply of cells rises higher than the requirement, the organ will continue to grow beyond its designed size. If it is less than the needed rate, then the organ in question will diminish in size.

If human cells which are perpetually consumed for one reason or the other are not replaced by almost exactly the same number as those lost, an imbalance will occur causing serious disorder in the human physique. By applying this principle to any organ of the body one can easily visualise the abominable consequences. Take the eyeball, for instance. During the daily function of the eye, we are constantly using life cells in every part of the eye. If replacements are made at a rate faster than consumption, the eyeball will begin to grow out of its socket. If the balance is tilted on the other side, the eyeball would reduce in size until it becomes a mere dot before passing into nothingness.

To sum up, if the balance in man's body is disturbed, and fewer cells die

than are born, then man's physique would expand out of all proportion. On the other hand, if dying cells were not replenished at the required rate, man would fade out of existence.

A Look Into the Insect Kingdom

Although we are discussing human life, it should be borne in mind that this system of absolute justice encompasses all forms of life.

Justice, in application to the governing of life processes, means that everything is kept within its designed limits and is not permitted to transgress into others' areas of rights. If every cell of a living body, whatever the nature of the tissue it belongs to, has a definite function to perform the principle of absolute justice requires that the function of each must be confined within the limits of its design and should not be permitted to outgrow and run amok without any control.

In application to the insect kingdom, it becomes evident that it is this intricate system of control which keeps them within a limited level of growth. Each insect has a predetermined dimension, which could be disturbed to an unmanageable degree if strict controls were not applied against the overgrowth of its tissues. Insects constantly

consume certain types of food suitable for the maintenance of their life. If unchecked by the laws of nature they would grow to such gigantic sizes as to fill the earth from end to end. Why should their growth come to a halt at a certain stage? What are the forces which impose such limits? What is the system which keeps them within a limited level of growth? These are questions which are as yet to be understood by scientists. To let them grow would appear to be an act of kindness, but at what cost? At the cost of all other forms of life.

So balance, or absolute justice in human terminology, is not kept automatically, but is imposed and controlled by certain forces as yet not fully comprehended. Previously we mentioned the example of growth within each organ of the body. The mechanism which controls the growth of teeth and eyeballs etc. within every individual human being, also seems to be operative in relation to one species and the other.

Alas, man is ingrate. In spite of intelligence, he remains heedless of that Omnipotent Being, while every particle of the universe bears witness to His existence!

Imbalance and Disease

If man were to reflect on his true worth, he would realise that he is no more than a handful of dust. All that he is arrogant about is vain pride, while he possesses nothing. All belongs to Allah. Man has been granted such a perfect body, but when in health he fails to comprehend that he is dependent on a grand and intricate system of balances. When he falls ill, his discomfort, pain and suffering bring out the realisation in him of his frailty. It is then that his dependence on God begins to dawn upon him. It is God who prevents him from falling victim to the numberless diseases which hover around him. But he is protected from each by an inbuilt defensive mechanism which is constantly on the watch. Even a minute lapse here or there would make him a victim of disease.

The point to be highlighted here is that even if a small and insignificant part of the body is permitted to fall ill, while the remaining parts stay perfectly healthy, the diseased person suffers in totality. A small sore on the tip of a finger, a corrosion of a tooth, an infection in a part of the eyelid, can make one suffer so intensely that people are known to have taken their own lives in order to escape the agony caused by such apparently minor ailments. The growth of a gland in the

brain could make a person epileptic, a suffering not only to himself but to his entire circle of family and friends as well.

Only in such cases can the immense beneficence of God be fully realised; a beneficence which is constantly showered on every living creature. This realisation can only dawn on those who have the faculty to think and be grateful. Again in the final analysis, disease is nothing but the disturbance of balance which we term as absolute justice.

A mere imbalance in the elements of the body can cause a number of fatal diseases. Many a great man, king, philosopher and scholar, who commanded respect and earned great renown at various times in history, when afflicted with disease and suffering, lost all dignity and self-respect and stooped to the level of begging abjectly for help from those of their attendants who themselves had no power to help them ease their suffering. Great emperors who struck terror into the hearts of men far and wide, when afflicted with paralysis, or palsy or epilepsy, appeared so small and insignificant and meaningless, that the meanest of their servants and slaves would not exchange their slavery with the sovereignty of those moments.

Such was the treatment by Shakespeare of Julius Caesar when in one of the masterly strokes of his genius he shows Julius Caesar at the height of his glory and majesty at one moment, and writhing in pain and suffering under a severe epileptic attack-like a mere worm of the earth-in another moment

And when the fit was on him, I
did mark
How he did shake; 'tis true, this
god did shake;
His coward lips did from their
colour fly,
And that same eye whose bend
doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre;
Julius Caesar (Act I, Scene II)

But little do these observations make impression on the ego of man. The moment he returns to health, he completely forgets those trying moments of his life and loses no time in returning to his vanity. Epilepsy, which can make a person feel as if he had been robbed of his dignity, is in fact caused by a minor imbalance in the nervous system. The imbalance is so minor, that very often it is not possible to determine which part of the nervous system is affected, and how.

Guardian Angels

The path to progress is fraught with pitfalls and dangers. Each step towards advancement can, if carelessly taken, lead to destruction. There is no exaggeration in this. Even the minutest details of the workings of life and death seem to go hand in hand. Protection of life is a profoundly well organised mechanism which is still to be fully comprehended. But whatever of it has been understood, to a degree, is astounding.

Behind this apparently self-flowing mechanism, according to religious understanding, there are some invisible conscious forces who have different dimensions than ours and are known as angels. The entire universe is run by the laws of nature, which are governed, maintained and implemented in the minutest details by these governing agents – the angels. The same applies here. One can visualise for instance, any unit of life advancing in time. At every minute step it takes, there is always the attendant danger of taking the wrong turn to death. The angels of life guide each step of the components of life in the right direction, but when the moment of death is decreed it is the angel of death who takes over and every step of living is turned towards death.

The Excesses of Man

If given leave, man would transgress all boundaries. But it is a great bounty of God that he has little control over the enormous workshop which operates within his body. He is unaware of what goes on inside him and is incapable of manipulating his own internal mechanisms. An overwhelmingly large number of functions of human life run without conscious control of the possessor of life.

There are of course some limited areas where he is able to exert his influence. For example, excessive eating, indulgence in carnal pleasures, habits and lifestyles are the few areas where he is free to exercise his will. We know well the havoc he plays in the areas under his control.

Yet in spite of all the licenses he takes, and the excesses he commits against himself, there runs an innate system of well cushioned protection within his physical mechanism. This protective system is designed to bear with many a fault to a certain extent. But if man continues to commit mistakes, or takes suicidal steps beyond all limits, then the punitive system takes over. Even then, a struggle begins between disease and health, life and death, with each step

being provided with all of the requisite devices for prolonging this struggle against the destructive forces, with a fair chance of victory. What we understand in religious terminology as indecency or lax behaviour or decidedly abhorrent attitudes, or at a third stage, rebellion against all order, are in fact applicable to the physical world as well in all these three categories of progressive transgression. Of course we do not mean to apply the same terms to the physical counterparts of spiritual behaviour, but the similarities are so strong that one is tempted to use the same terminology.

To find appropriate descriptions for the three categories of transgression, perhaps we could coin our own terminology, with the first stage being that of carelessness and lack of responsibility in maintaining one's health. The second stage would be described perhaps as positive degradation from the principle of health with incautious indulgences. The third stage could of course be appropriately described as blatant rebellion against all norms and principles. Yet it should not be forgotten, that even at such extreme stages, the benevolence of God and His limitless mercy can still come to man's rescue.

From a study of the physical world, we can draw safe and dependable conclusions to guide our steps in the spiritual and religious world. Likewise man can draw his lessons by critically examining his social, political and economic behaviour. It is not difficult for him to discover that if he were to conduct himself carelessly in any area of his activity, he is likely to suffer the consequences of his digression from the path of justice.

Moderation in a Fattening World

By Manzurul A Sikder, MD – New York, USA

Although many concerned clinicians and activists have been warning the world about ‘fattening of humanity’, serious attention has been paid to obesity in the western society only recently. The present situation is in such a brink that some advocates have even brought lawsuits against fast food restaurants that serve greasy foods. Perhaps it is because of the overwhelming burden on the national economy that has finally triggered a response from the authority. Obesity is a risk factor of contracting a broad range of debilitating conditions, including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and cancer. In all, the cost of obesity in the United States alone is estimated to be \$99.2 billion annually.ⁱ

This once affluent-only illness is not limited to the western nations any longer. Obesity and its associated morbidities have fast crept into many parts of Asia and Africa in the past few decades. *Time* magazine quotes ten percent

of Chinese children to be overweight, with urbanized areas of sub-Saharan Africa not far behind.ⁱⁱ Without immediate intervention, our future looks bleak indeed.

What solutions can Islam present to this worldwide epidemic?

Experts agree that obesity, especially fat-eating habits learned in childhood, is associated with familial and socio-cultural factors. A recent article in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* suggested that, ‘Attitudes about food and eating are learned and reinforced within the home.’ⁱⁱⁱ If we are to, therefore, strike at the root of its cause, we must modify eating habits within the family at an early age.

The religion of Islam deals with every aspect of human existence. In providing man with a complete and perfect code of life, it has laid out numerous guidelines for his physical and spiritual progress.

The Qur'an teaches us, '*O children of Adam! look to your adornment at every time and place of worship, and eat and drink but exceed not the bounds; surely, He does not love those who exceed the bounds.*'^{iv} Eating and drinking are natural habits of man that are carried out in order to survive. But even in doing something as simple as eating, one must exercise excellent judgment. In this verse, God admonishes us to set certain limits: while we should keep our physical well being intact, we should also maintain social order and bear in mind the true purpose of our lives.

When done properly our eating and abstinence from food should be an extension of our worship, as we are told, '*On those who believe and do good works there shall be no sin for what they eat, provided they fear God and believe and do good works, and again fear God and believe, yet again fear God and do good. And Allah loves those who do good.*'^v Paying heed to our eating habits is our duty, it being a part of our state of righteousness. Even of those food items that *are* lawful, we are urged

to eat only the clean and wholesome portions,^{vi} lest it affects our relationship with the Creator negatively.

The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa), the personification of the code of living prescribed by the Holy Qur'an, reminds us, 'Whoever has food enough for two persons, should take a third one (from among them), and whoever has food enough for four persons, should take a fifth or a sixth.'^{vii} And: 'When your servant brings your food to you, if you do not ask him to join you, then at least ask him to take one or two handfuls, for he has suffered from its heat (while cooking) and has taken pains to prepare it nicely.'^{viii}

The Prophet^(sa) was very careful against excesses of food. Abu Huraira^(ra) narrated, 'The family of Muhammad^(sa) did not eat their fill for three successive days till he died.'^{ix} The Holy Prophet's pious consort Hadhrat Aisha^(ra) reported that the 'Prophet^(sa) died when we had satisfied our hunger with two black things: dates and water.'^x He admonished his companions, 'A Muslim eats in one intestine (that

is, he is satisfied with a little food) while an unbeliever eats in seven intestines (eats much).’^{xi}

Narrated ‘Umar bin Abi Salama^(ra), “I was a boy under the care of Allah’s Apostle^(sa) and my hand used to go around the dish while I was eating. So Allah’s Apostle^(sa) said to me”“O boy! Mention the Name of Allah and eat with your right hand, and eat of the dish what is nearer to you.”’^{xii}

At the end of meals the Prophet^(sa) used to pray, ‘Praise be to Allah Who has satisfied our needs and quenched our thirst. Your favour cannot be compensated or denied, nor can be dispensed with, O our Lord.’^{xiii}

Ramadan gave Muslims a timely opportunity to remember and abide by these golden guidelines. During that month, healthy Muslims all over the world abandon food and drink for a great part of the day, and along with spiritual benefits, look to attain physical cleansing. Fasting initiates mobilisation of stored fat. In the long run, it lowers our total blood cholesterol. It gives our

digestive tract a well-deserved rest. In addition, it boosts our immune system. Fasting also makes us conscious of worldwide suffering through hunger and thirst. It teaches us to curb our self-indulgence, and be mindful of our own eating while so many go without food. It fights against an astonishing statistic that “nearly 80% of all malnourished children in the developing world live in countries that report food surpluses.”^{xiv}

Short-term starvation, as in the case of fasting during Ramadan, has been shown to have many health benefits including increased insulin sensitivity, stress resistance, reduced morbidity, and increased life span.^{xv} Insulin resistance seems to play an integral role in many common human disorders such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, polycystic ovary syndrome and gallstone disease. As energy in the form of sugar becomes readily available due to obesity, cells become more and more resistant to this anabolic hormone. This in turn stores further body fat, and

the vicious cycle continues. Newer research also demonstrates that the once known metabolic disease of Syndrome X (combination of obesity, diabetes and hypertension, which often presents as heart attack) is mainly due to body's increasing resistance to insulin.

On the other hand, leptin and adiponectin, two fat-derived hormones, increase sensitivity to insulin, control body weight, prevent atherosclerosis and negatively regulate haemopoiesis and immune functions.^{xvi} A recent study conducted at University of Louvain Medical School in Brussels, Belgium demonstrated that plasma adiponectin levels were 30% higher in anorectic (food deprivation or fasting state) than in control subjects. When normalised for fatness, adiponectin values almost doubled in these subjects. Insulin sensitivity tended to be 40% higher in anorectic than in control subjects.^{xvii}

Heart attacks remain the number one killer of both men and women in the western world, and high blood pressure is the number one

cause of heart attacks. Although a salted diet appears to be a *sine qua non* for the development of essential hypertension, low salt diets often have a modest or even negligible impact on blood pressure of hypertensives. Therapeutic fasting, however, has been shown to put a limit on modern, rich diet, and subsequently lower elevated blood pressure.^{xviii} This again is thought to be related to the fact that fasting minimizes insulin secretion and has the potential to break the vicious cycle mentioned earlier. A meta analysis of multiple clinical studies concurred with these results: it was found that along with nearly 10% decrease in body weight and 9% drop in serum cholesterol, twelve weeks of energy-restricted diets were also associated with an 8-9% decrease in both systolic and diastolic blood pressures. Larger reductions in these values were observed with larger weight losses.^{xix}

In brief, food deprivation over time decreases insulin resistance, an identified culprit in many life-threatening illnesses.

The study conducted by the National Institute on Aging¹⁵ further illustrated that rats that were sustained on intermittent (defined as ‘alternate-day’) fasting had a ‘dramatic increase in life span’ in comparison to animals that ate *ad libitum*. They attributed this to the moderate decrease in blood level of insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1) achieved on intermittent fasting schedule.

Furthermore, several other well-designed experiments over the last three decades have demonstrated that dietary restriction reduces cancer formation^{xx,xxi} and kidney disease,^{xxii} and increases the resistance of neurons to dysfunction and degeneration in experimental models of Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases as well as stroke and seizure.^{xxiii,xxiv,xxv,xxvi} The last effect is thought to be due to increased production of ketone bodies as an energy source, which provide neuroprotection. Fasting increases the survival of CA3 and CA1 neurons in the hippocampus of the brain. Loss of these pyramidal neurons induce seizures in experimental mice. The researchers

concluded that, ‘Intermittent fasting schedule itself is neuroprotective independent of overall caloric intake.’

Although the next Ramadan is not due until October, the discipline and benefits of the last Ramadan should not be forgotten. Besides spiritual gains, one of the objects of Ramadan is to improve the physical well-being of a person. In a world that is suffering from excessive consumption, Muslims should take the lead under the instructions of the Qur’an and fight against excesses. Encouraging our youngsters to fast for a few days during Ramadan can lower their fat burden and help them achieve a leaner body. Ramadan promotes a sense of health, which will stay with them into their adulthood and will hopefully continue to the next generations. To fight the dangers of obesity and its related health problems, Islamic solution of conscientious moderation and abstinence in the form of fasting can certainly go a long way.

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The Prophet Promised Through Moses^(as); Jesus^(as) or Muhammad^(sa)?

An examination of the prophecy of prophet Moses^(as) regarding the advent of a great future prophet.

by Dr. A.R. Bhutta, published in The Truth, Nigeria, August 1986

Chapter 18 of Deuteronomy, the 5th book of the Bible, mentions in very clear and concise words, a prophecy about the advent of a prophet after Moses^(as). Moses^(as) is reported to have revealed this prophecy to the assembly of Israel after his return from the Mount Horeb. He told them:

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of assembly, saying, “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.” And the Lord said unto me, “They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I command him. And it shall come

to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.”

(Deut. 18:15-21)

The prophecy quoted above happens to be the most important and significant prophecy of the Bible. This is one prophecy which all the priests and prophets of Israel have been preaching and propagating among their people, right from the days of Moses^(as) down to the days of Jesus^(as) and his disciples. ‘For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.'

(Acts 3:22-24).

In fact one main theme of the whole Bible in general and of the New Testament in particular, has been to emphasise the importance of this prophecy and to prepare the minds of the people for its forthcoming fulfilment. Little wonder then, that the whole Biblical era resounds with the praises sung for the prophet promised in that prophecy and all the people of Israel have been eagerly looking forward to his blessed advent. The long wait and watch for that prophet came to an end when that prophecy re-echoed in the Holy Qur'an with a happy note that it has been fulfilled in the person of Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa).

This claim of the Holy Qur'an, however, was deeply resented and rejected by most people of the Book, because they found it quite inconsistent with their own views and wishes. If the Jews failed to accept that long awaited prophet, it could be because they were still lost in the heavens looking for their Elijah to

come, or because they were still confused and confounded by the appearance, and disappearance, of a Messiah who had eluded their death sentence and had vanished into thin air leaving an empty tomb. But for the Christians to reject that prophet was most unfortunate indeed. Since they could find no excuse for their refusal to accept that prophet they quickly retraced their steps back to the days of Jesus^(as), and came out with the explanation that this prophecy had already been fulfilled by the appearance of Jesus^(as) Christ and that they never expected any other prophet after him. This theory of the Christians now accepted and preached by them today is merely an afterthought and has no basis at all.

Little do they realise, that in their desperate bid to refute the Qur'anic version, they are actually renouncing the testimony of their own holy Book. In the light of their holy Book we examine that prophecy to ascertain who out of Jesus^(as) and Muhammad^(sa) really fulfilled that prophecy of Moses^(as). Before we take up the contents of the prophecy, we shall study its context first, because it can be grossly misleading to study any statement out of context, particularly when that statement is controversial and open to various interpretations.

Context Of The Prophecy

Let us start with the background of the prophecy.

1. From the Bible we learn that before Moses^(as) went up the Mount Horeb to receive the commandments, he ordered all the people of Israel to assemble near the mountain so that they could also see the glory of God and hear His voice. As these people stood at the foot of the mountain, thick clouds and darkness came over them and then they saw a big fire on the mountain and heard the voice of God coming out of that fire.

They were scared to death at this sight and even feared that they might be burnt to death. All the heads of their tribes, therefore, went to Moses^(as) and told him that they did not want to see the glory of God or hear His voice any more, lest they die. They told Moses^(as) that he should go up the mountain and hear for them what God had to say.

We are further told in the story that God was displeased at this impertinence of Israel and told Moses^(as) that He had heard what his people had said. Then God went on to reveal that prophecy to Moses^(as) in which the people of Israel were informed that according to their own desire, the next prophet like Moses^(as)

who shall receive His words, will be raised not from them but from their brethren. (Deut. 4:10-14; 5:23-28; 9:8,9; 18:15-18)

Now with this background in mind, it is simply impossible to believe that the prophet mentioned in that prophecy could be raised from the nation of Israel, because it was the refusal of the children of Israel to hear the word of God again that had prompted God to reveal that prophecy to Moses^(as). It is, therefore, clear that the prophet promised through Moses^(as) could never be a prophet from Israel and that it could only be from the brethren.

Now Jesus^(as) was a prophet raised from the Israel. He was born and bred as a Jew. He was baptised as a Jew and he was sent only to the Jews. He preached and practised the Law of Jews and in fact he was sent to fulfil that Law of Jews. He, therefore, could never be the prophet mentioned in that prophecy of Moses^(as). (Mat. 2:2-6; 5:17-20; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:21)

Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa), on the other hand, was a prophet raised not from Israel but from the Gentiles. He in fact is the only prophet who appeared from the Gentiles and who claimed at the same time that he had been sent according

to the prophecies of the Bible. As an immediate inference, therefore, we will have to believe that the prophecy of Moses^(as) was fulfilled in Muhammad^(sa), the prophet from the Gentiles and not in Jesus^(as), the prophet from the Jews.

It may be mentioned here rather sadly, that the children of Israel were a very rebellious people, and they were afraid of hearing the word of God and had told Moses^(as) to go to his God and hear it for them. They were afraid of fighting for their promised land and had told Moses^(as) that he and his God should go and fight for them. Consequently they lost both the next Law of their God and the Land of their promise; one permanently, the other temporarily. (Deut. 18: 15-20; 1:26-40).

2. The second context of this prophecy is provided by the Gospel of John. We are told in this Gospel that when John the Baptist started his ministry, a delegation of Jews went to him to enquire from him, who he was. They asked him if he was Elijah; and he replied in the negative. Then he was asked if he was the Christ; and again he said he was not. Finally they asked him if he was 'the prophet'. Then the delegates asked him if he was neither Elijah, nor the Christ, nor the Prophet, then why was

he baptising the people. (John 1:19-25).

Now this conversation between the Jews and John the Baptist^(as) shows clearly that at that time the people of Israel were looking forward to the advent of three prophets according to the prophecies of the Old Testament. They were expecting Elijah, the Christ and 'the prophet'. All the reference books and the commentaries of the Bible agree that the prophet referred to in that conversation was the prophet promised in that prophecy of Moses^(as).

All these three prophets were expected to appear as three distinct personalities with different missions to perform. It is also clear from this conversation that three and only three prophets were expected to come at that time. No more, no less. No prophet other than these three was supposed to come and baptise the people; and no prophet out of these three could fail to come and disappoint the people.

Now we know that Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist^(as), and Christ came in the person of Jesus^(as), but what about that prophet? It is, therefore, clear from the above mentioned context that the prophet

promised in the prophecy of Moses^(as) who was still being expected at that time, had to appear apart from the Christ sometimes after the Christ; and that Jesus^(as) who appeared as the Christ could not be the 'prophet' mentioned in the prophecy of Moses. Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa), therefore, turns out to be the only prophet who could have possibly fulfilled that prophecy of Moses^(as).

A Baseless Argument

It is sometimes argued that the Pharisees and the Scribes of Jews might have misunderstood the prophecies about the advent of these prophets and might have been incorrect in expecting these prophets as three different personalities.

It may be noted in this connection that the Pharisees and scribes of Jews knew their holy Books very well and could not have been preaching about the prophets they were not very sure and clear about. Even Jesus^(as) had accepted and approved the authority of these Scribes and Pharisees as the teachers and preachers of the Law of Moses^(as). Jesus^(as) in fact had advised his disciples to do and observe what they preached and had condemned only their hypocrisy and evil practices (Mat. 23:1-15). The Jews, therefore, could not be mistaken in

looking forward to the advent of these prophets.

Moreover we know, and Jesus^(as) again confirmed, that the Jews were right in expecting the advents of Elijah^(as) and the Christ; therefore if they were right in expecting the first and the second prophet, why could they not be right in expecting the third one? (Mat. 16:14; 17:11-13).

The Jews, therefore, might have failed to accept and respect these prophets when they actually appeared, but they could not be wrong in expecting their appearance in the light of their Scriptures. This is particularly true of the prophet promised through Moses^(as) because there is Biblical evidence to show that all the prophets who came from Moses^(as) down to the days of Jesus^(as), had been preaching and proclaiming the advent of that prophet (Acts 3: 20-24). How could the Jews be confused and mistaken about a prophecy of prophets for more than a thousand years? How many more prophets did they need to understand the real importance of that prophecy?

It is, therefore ridiculous to think that all the prophets and priests of Israel were confused about the advents of the Christ and that prophet and that the real truth dawned only upon

Christians; and that too after the advent of Muhammad^(sa).

3. For the third context of this prophecy, let us see what we can learn from Jesus^(as) on this issue. If all the prophets from Moses^(as) down to Jesus^(as) had been talking about this prophecy, as Bible says they did, then Jesus^(as) could not have been silent on such a hot issue of the Biblical era. In fact, Jesus^(as) a prophet immediately before the advent of that prophet, had a primary duty to clear the air, if any, on this issue and prepare the ground for its forthcoming fulfilment; and Jesus^(as) actually did that duty very well.

There are many statements of Jesus^(as) recorded in the Gospels that directly or indirectly refer to this prophecy and its fulfilment, but I shall confine myself to only two of them.

(i) First and foremost, I refer to the statement of Jesus^(as) about the ‘Counsellor’ or a ‘Comforter’ that he said would come after him. This prophetic statement is very long and elaborate and again I shall refer to only a few important features of it.

(a) Jesus^(as) is reported to have said that when he is gone from this world, God would send another ‘Comforter’ into the world (John

14: 16).

The term ‘another Comforter’ used by Jesus^(as) shows that he too, considered himself to be a Comforter. Since Jesus came as a prophet, the coming of ‘another Comforter’ after Jesus^(as) can only mean the coming of another prophet after Jesus^(as). (Mark 6:4,15).

(b) We are told by Jesus^(as) that the Comforter would come and ‘teach the people all things’ and ‘guide them into all the truth, (John 14:26; 16:7-13).

This part of the statement clearly means that the world had not yet been ‘guided into all the truth’ and ‘taught all the things’ by Jesus^(as) and all the other prophets who came before him; and that the ‘whole truth’ the ‘perfect guidance’ was to be revealed through the Comforter. Now, we know that Jesus^(as) and all the other prophets who came before him had been teaching and preaching the Law of Moses^(as). Jesus^(as), in fact, had been sent to fulfil the Law of Moses^(as) (Matthew 5:17). All these prophets of God had done their best to teach and guide the people through that Law of God which Moses^(as) gave them.

If teaching and preaching of the Law of Moses^(as) by all these prophets could not guide the people into all the truth and teach them all the things, then, does it not automatically follow that the coming Comforter would have to bring something better than the Law of Moses^(as) if he were to guide the people into 'all the truth', and teach them 'all the things'? In fact, nothing less than a complete and perfect Law of God was required if he were to be such a perfect teacher as portrayed by Jesus^(as). After all, if the other prophets could not do a perfect job, it was not because they were inefficient but because the Books they were supposed to teach were deficient. They were not supposed to go beyond the limits laid down by the Law of God.

So we see that the 'Comforter' promised by Jesus^(as), was not only a prophet but also a prophet with a Law, and that too a Law far better than the Law of Moses.

- (c) Then we are told that the Comforter 'will not speak on his own authority but whatever he will hear he will speak' (John 16:13).

This feature of the Comforter is very important and significant. It makes it clear to us that the 'Word of God' given to that Comforter will not be in the form of written tablets or any other form but in the form of words of God, not on his own authority, but under the control and command of God.

Now if we can remember, this exactly is the feature of 'that prophet' mentioned in that prophecy of Moses^(as) (Deut.18:18).

- (d) Finally, Jesus^(as) is reported to have said:

'Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you'. (John 16:7)

This again is a very significant aspect of the advent of that Comforter. We are told that the Comforter would not come as long as Jesus^(as) was there in the world. For the Comforter to come, Jesus^(as) had to go. But why?

Two or more prophets have been preaching at the same time in the

past. Jesus^(as) and John the Baptist^(as) have been preaching at the same time and to the same nation. Why then was Jesus^(as) so incompatible with the Comforter?

The reason is not far to seek. Two or more prophets can appear at the same time and even work together if they are teaching and preaching the same Law. But if they have different Laws, obviously they could not be preaching together at the same time and to the same people. We have already seen above that the Comforter expected to come after Jesus^(as), was a prophet who was to come with a new Law, quite different from and far superior to, the Law of Moses^(as).

Jesus^(as) on his own part, was sent to preach and propagate the Law of Moses^(as) which was meant only for the nation of Israel. Naturally, therefore, the two could not be working together preaching different Laws. Jesus^(as) had to go, winding up the spiritual rule of Israel in this world and clearing the way for that Comforter so that he could come with his perfect Law and teach us 'all the things' and 'guide us into all the truth'. This evidently was to the advantage of the whole world as

Jesus^(as) rightly said.

In the same vein we can see that the Comforter could not be a prophet from the Israel because he had to come and abrogate the Law meant for Israel and establish a universal Law for the whole world.

A collective look at the various features of the Comforter makes it abundantly clear that the Comforter promised by Jesus^(as) could be no other person than the 'prophet' promised by Moses^(as); and the only prophet who appeared after Jesus^(as) and who can answer the description of the Comforter, in all its details, is the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa).

(ii) For the second testimony of Jesus^(as) on this issue, I refer to his parable of 'Vineyard and wicked tenants'. This parable is very clear and convincing in its moral and message which Jesus^(as) wanted the Jews to get; nevertheless, concluding his, parable, Jesus^(as) is reported to have told them rather candidly:

'Therefore I say unto you, that The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth fruits thereof'..

(Matthew 21:43).

This declaration by Jesus^(as), again is very significant. We are told that the

Kingdom of God was with the nation of Israel and that it was to be taken away from them and given to another nation.

What was so special about that nation of Israel that they were considered to be a ruling nation in the Kingdom of God?

The only answer is that on account of God's covenant with Ibrahim, Israel was reckoned as a 'chosen nation' of God. The Kingdom of God was established among them when God raised from them a great prophet, Moses^(as), and gave them His Law through Moses^(as), so as to guide and govern their lives. Naturally, as long as that Law of Moses^(as) was in force, the Kingdom of God was to stay with the nation of Israel. Now that we know the nature of the Kingdom of God and also how and why the people of Israel came to have it, we can understand the implication of that statement of Jesus^(as). When he declared that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from the Jews and given to another nation, he was simply trying to remind the Elders of the Jews that the time was near when the Law of Moses^(as) shall be abrogated, putting an end to their Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God will now be established afresh in another equally chosen people of God

when a 'new Moses' with a new Law of God will be raised from that nation.

Needless to say that this declaration by Jesus^(as) was simply a brief and modified version of the same prophecy of Moses^(as) about that prophet; and it was fulfilled when Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) was raised with a new Law from the other descendants of Abraham^(as).

4. For the fourth and final context of that prophecy of Moses^(as), let us go to the Acts of the Apostles and try to find out what the disciples of Jesus^(as) thought about the fulfilment of this prophecy. The testimony of the disciples, in fact, may prove to be a deciding factor in this case because if the disciples are found to be still looking forward to the fulfilment of that prophecy even after the advent of Jesus Christ^(as), then it will immediately clinch the argument in favour of Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa), and close that case against Jesus^(as) as the possible contender for that particular post mentioned in the prophecy.

In the 'Acts of the Apostles' we are told that one day Saint Peter, accompanied by Saint John, was preaching to a gathering of Jews. He

told them how Jesus Christ^(as) came and suffered at their hands and then he went on to say:

‘And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance – But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out – and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. Moses said, ‘The Lord GOD will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him –’ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days.’ (Acts 3: 17-24)

This short but comprehensive sermon of Saint Peter is very clear and hardly needs any comments. It emphasises two major issues which have been the focal point of all the predictions and preaching of the Biblical prophets.

Firstly, we are mistakenly told that Christ came and suffered as was foretold by the various prophets; then he went back from where he came.

Secondly, it is said that Christ had to

remain in heaven and could not come for the second time until all that was foretold by all the previous prophets was fulfilled; and what remained to be fulfilled was that prophecy of Moses^(as).

Saint Peter not only referred to that prophecy but also repeated it to the hearing of the Jews, warning them that they have to repent and accept that prophet if they wanted to see the Christ in his ‘second coming’. This statement of Saint Peter proves beyond any shadow of doubt that even after the appearance of Jesus Christ^(as), his disciples believed that the prophecy of Moses^(as) about ‘that prophet’ had yet to be fulfilled and that it was to be fulfilled sometimes before the Second Advent of the Christ.

One wonders how, in the presence of this testimony of Saint Peter, somebody can think, even remotely, of Jesus^(as) in that prophecy of Moses^(as). Since Jesus^(as) had been counted out of the race by his own disciples, that prophecy of Moses^(as), therefore, was fulfilled by the advent of Muhammad^(sa), and Muhammad^(sa) alone.

Continued next month

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