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EDITORIAL

By Bockarie Tommy Kallon

The purpose of man's creation, according to the Holy Qur'an, was not just to create a consciousness but ultimately to nurture, improve and enhance that consciousness so that, realising the consummate beauty of God as reflected in His creation, man submits to his Creator and shapes his life according to His Will.

For this reason man is created in the image of God meaning he has been endowed with all the faculties and potentialities to enable him, through acquiring godly attributes, to become as perfect as he possibly can. It is not a fixed goal for as God is boundless in His attributes, so every journey towards Him remains limitless. The nearer man becomes to God, the stronger becomes the bond between man and God.

It is a noble objective even if its fulfilment is not an easy task. It

calls for the highest degree of self-discipline and self-restraint in the face of temptations and evil inclinations. It demands steadfastness and fortitude in the face of trials and tribulations. It requires that man, in adversity and prosperity, remains in humble prostration at the threshold of God Almighty supplicating His succour and guidance. Man must remain conscious of his Creator at all times and associate nothing in His worship so that he can achieve communion and union with Him.

At a time when much of the world has inverted the proper relationship between man and God or considers it merely an adventitious extra, the theme of this edition is the need to cultivate a true relationship with God and the rewards to be realised therefrom. Ever since Divine Wisdom bestowed upon him the mantle of Khilafat,

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, has been admonishing members of the community towards reformation for the sake of Allah and living their lives in accordance with His Commandments. In his Opening Address on the occasion of the 37th Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Tanzania, he talks about the Purpose of Attending Annual Conventions. The objective should be to increase religious knowledge, undergo a spiritual transformation and to foster a relationship with Allah Almighty.

In 'Allah – Friend of the Believers', the author discusses the special situation where, out of sincere obeisance and deference to His Will, Allah confers His friendship upon His true servant. The article also outlines paths by which others can tread and become friends of Allah.

Glimpses into the Qur'anic Concept of the Environment continues the discussion on how

surrounding conditions affect the physical, moral and spiritual states of man. The author advocates losing oneself in complete obedience to Allah and self-purification so that one's soul may be transformed to a new spiritual life.

Continuing on the subject of self-purification, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(sa), the Promised Messiah and Mahdi identifies this as a necessary condition for one who seeks to find God. He outlines the signs of God's love for a person in one who has succeeded in achieving this goal which, inter alia, include the humbling of those who oppose him, acceptance of his prayers in matters ordinarily beyond hope and his being honoured with His converse and communion. As a reward, the latter is arguably the best of all and it is at this stage that man can truly claim to have fulfilled the purpose of his creation.

The Need for Purification - part 12

This series sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as), Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa) and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad Sahib, Allah have mercy on him and reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, may Allah be pleased with him, and is quoted from *The Essence of Islam*, Volume 1. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.

He will indeed prosper who purifies his soul.
(Ch.91:V.10)

He who loves the Holy One, must purify himself in order to find Him.

Every people claims that there are many among them who love God Almighty, but what needs to be known is whether God loves them or not. The proof of God's love is that first He removes the veil that prevents a person from believing with certainty in the existence of God. Because of this veil man admits the existence of God with

dark and blurred understanding and very often at the time of trial denies His existence altogether. The removal of this veil cannot be achieved except through converse with God. A person drinks of the fountain of true understanding on the day when God addresses him and conveys to him the good news: I am present. At that stage man's understanding does not remain confined to conjecture or argumentation. He comes so near to God as if he sees Him. It is entirely true that perfect faith in God is achieved only when He informs a person of His Own existence.

The second sign of God's love is that He not only informs those dear to Him of His existence, but manifests especially to them the signs of His mercy and grace, by accepting their prayers concerning matters which are apparently beyond hope and informing them of it through His revelation and His speech. This reassures them that their God is Powerful Who hears their prayers and informs them of it and delivers them from difficulties. They then understand the mystery of salvation and are convinced of the existence of God. By way of awakening and warning, other people also might occasionally have the experience of true dreams, but the experience of the converse of God is something entirely different. It is vouchsafed only to those who are His favourites. When such a one supplicates God Almighty He manifests Himself to him with His glory and causes His spirit to descend upon him and intimates to him the acceptance of his prayer in His loving words. He who has this experience very frequently is called Prophet or *Muhaddath*.

(*Hujjat-ul-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.6, pp.42-43*)

A servant displays his sincere love for God by his good behaviour, but God's response is astonishing. In response to the rapid advance of the servant, God rushes towards him like lightning and displays signs for him on earth and in heaven and becomes the friend of his friends and the enemy of his enemies. Even if five hundred million people oppose him God humiliates them and makes them helpless like a dead insect. He destroys a whole world for the sake of that one person and makes His earth and heaven the servants of such a one. He blesses his words and sends down a rain of light on his dwelling. He puts a blessing in his clothes and his food and even in the dust upon which he treads. He does not let him die a failure and Himself answers all objections raised against him. He becomes his eyes with which he sees, and becomes his ears with which he hears, and becomes his tongue with which he speaks, and becomes his feet with which he walks, and becomes his hands with which he deals with his enemies. He personally takes on the enemies of His friend, draws His sword against the wicked ones who persecute

him, and makes him victorious in every field. He conveys to him the secrets of His decrees. The very first purchaser of his spiritual beauty who comes forward after his good behaviour and personal love is God Himself. Then how unfortunate are the people who should live in such an age and such a sun should rise upon them and they should continue to sit in darkness. (*Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya Part V, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.21, p.225*)

After perfection of the spiritual structure, the flame of the personal love of God falls upon the heart of a person like a spirit and bestows upon him the condition of being ever present before God. Spiritual beauty manifests itself at its fullest when such a one arrives at his perfection. This spiritual beauty which might be called good behaviour far exceeds the beauty of countenance by virtue of its strong attraction. The beauty of countenance can only win the mortal love of one or two persons and soon declines. Its pull is very weak. But the spiritual beauty which has been called good behaviour is so strong in its pull that it draws a whole world to itself so that every particle

of heaven and earth is pulled towards it. This is the philosophy of the acceptance of prayer.

When a person possessing spiritual beauty who is penetrated by the spirit of Divine love, supplicates for an impossible or very difficult object and carries his supplication to the limit, then on account of his spiritual beauty, every particle of this universe is drawn towards him by the command of God Almighty, and such means are provided as are adequate for his success. Both experience and the Book of God establish that every particle of the world has a natural love for such a person and his prayers draw all particles towards him as a magnet draws iron, and extraordinary matters come to light on account of this attraction which are not mentioned in physics or in philosophy. Ever since the Creator has fashioned the world of bodies from particles, He has invested every particle with that attraction and every particle is a sincere lover of spiritual beauty and so also is every good soul because that beauty is the manifestation of truth. It was that beauty on account of which God commanded the angels:

'Submit to Adam', and they all submitted except Iblis.
(Ch.2: V.35)

There are many today like Iblis who do not recognise that beauty, but that beauty has accomplished great things.

The same beauty was in Noah^(as), out of regard for which the Lord of Honour and Glory destroyed all his enemies by the torment of water. Then Moses^(as) appeared with the same spiritual beauty, and he, after suffering for a few days, became the occasion for the ruin of Pharaoh. Then last of all the Chief of the Prophets and the best of mankind, our lord and master Muhammad, the chosen one^(sa) appeared with a grand spiritual beauty in praise of which it is enough to cite the verse:

Then he drew nearer to God; then he came down to mankind, so that he became, as it were, one chord to two bows or closer still.
(Ch.53: Vs.9-10)

This means that the Holy Prophet^(sa) drew closer to God and then leaned towards mankind and



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

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^(sa) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claims constitute the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

thus discharged fully that which was due to God and that which was due to man and demonstrated both kinds of spiritual beauty.
(*Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya Part V, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 2I, pp.219-22I*)

In the article that was read out in the meeting, it was stated that Permashwar is free from anger, rancour, hatred and envy. Perhaps the meaning of the speaker was that in the Holy Qur'an the word anger has been used with reference to God. In contrast, he desired to convey that the Vedas is free from any affirmation that God becomes angry. But this is his mistake. It should be borne in mind that no undue tyrannical wrath is attributed to God Almighty in the Holy Qur'an. All that is meant is that, on account of His Holiness, God possesses an attribute which resembles wrath and that attribute demands that a disobedient one who persists in his rebellion should be chastised. God also possesses another attribute which resembles love and that demands that an obedient one should be rewarded for his obedience. The first attribute has been named wrath for the purpose of illustration, and the second one has been termed love. But neither His fury is like human fury, nor is His love like human love. God Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

There is nothing whatever like unto Him.

(Ch.42:V.12)

That is to say, there is nothing like God or His attributes.

We enquire from the speaker why does Permashwar, according to the Vedas, punish sinners, so much so that He degrades them from the status of humanity and makes them dogs, swine, apes and cats, etc. One has to admit that He possesses an attribute that demands such punishment. This attribute is described in the Holy Qur'an as God's wrath....

If Permashwar does not possess an attribute that demands that He should punish sinners, then why does He incline towards punishment? He must possess an attribute that demands recompense and that attribute is called wrath, but that wrath is not like the anger of man, but is suited to the dignity of God. That is the wrath that is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.... When God bestows His bounty upon those who act righteously, it is said that He loves them. When He punishes those who act viciously, it

is said that He is angry with them. Thus as wrath is mentioned in the Vedas so is it mentioned in the Holy Qur'an; the only difference being that according to the Vedas the wrath of God in its severity can turn men on account of their sins, into insects, etc. but the Holy Qur'an does not carry God's wrath to such extremes. The Holy Qur'an says that despite punishment God maintains the humanity of a person and does not condemn him to some other existence, which shows that according to the Holy Qur'an God's love and mercy are greater than His wrath, and according to the Vedas the punishment of sinners is unlimited and Permeshwar is all anger and has no trace of mercy. It appears clearly from the Holy Qur'an that a time will come when God will have mercy upon all the dwellers of hell. (*Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, pp.46-50*)

Kingdom of God Encompasses Heaven and Earth

The Gospel directs us to pray: 'Our Father that art in heaven hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily

bread, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and put us not in temptation, but save us from evil for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever.' (*Matthew 6:9-13*)

But the Qur'an says that the earth is not empty of God's Holiness which is proclaimed not only in heaven, but also on earth. As it is said:

...There is not a thing but glorifies Him with His praise...
(Ch.17: V.45)

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah...
(Ch.62: V.2)

These verses mean that every particle of earth and heaven glorifies and proclaims the Holiness of Allah and everything in them is engaged in His glorification and praise.

The mountains remember Him, the rivers remember Him, the trees remember Him and many righteous ones are occupied with His remembrance. Whoever fails to

remember Him in his heart and by his tongue and does not humble himself before God is compelled to humble himself by being put through diverse types of torment by Divine decree. Whatever is recorded of the angels in the Book of God that they are completely obedient to Him, the same is said of every leaf and every particle in the earth. Everything is obedient to Him, not a leaf can fall without His command, no medicine can heal without His command, nor can any food prove agreeable without it. Everything prostrates itself at the threshold of God in extreme humility and worshipfulness and is occupied with His obedience. Every particle of the earth and mountains, every drop of the rivers and oceans, every leaf of trees and plants and all particles of men and beasts recognise God, obey Him and are occupied with His glorification and praise.

That is why God Almighty has said:

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah...

(Ch.62: V.2)

That is to say, everything in the earth glorifies Allah and proclaims His Holiness as does everything in heaven.

Then how can it be said that God is not glorified in the earth? Such a sentiment cannot be expressed by a person of perfect understanding. Of the things of the earth some obey the commandment of the law and some are obedient to Divine decrees and some are occupied with obedience of both. The clouds, air, fire and earth are all devoted to the obedience and glorification of God.

If any human being disobeys the commandments of Divine law, he follows the commandments of Divine decrees. No one is outside the ambit of these two commandments. Everyone bows down to the heavenly kingdom in some form or the other. It is true that having regard to the purity and corruption of human hearts, heedlessness and remembrance of Allah prevail in the earth by turns, but this ebb and flow does not occur by itself, but only in obedience to the Divine will. That happens which God wills. The

alternation of guidance and error proceeds like the alternation of day and night according to the light and command of God and not by itself. Despite this, everything hears His voice and glorifies Him. But the Gospel says that the earth is empty of the glorification of God and the reason is indicated in the sentence that follows, namely, that the kingdom of God has not yet arrived on the earth. That is why God's will has not been put into effect on the earth as it operates in heaven. The teaching of the Qur'an is altogether contrary to this. The Qur'an states clearly that no thief, murderer, adulterer, disbeliever, disobedient one, rebellious one or offender can commit any evil upon the earth unless he is authorised from heaven. Then how can it be said that the kingdom of heaven does not operate upon earth? Does some adverse possession stand in the way of the enforcement of God's command on the earth? Indeed not.

God Himself made one law for the angels in heaven and another one for man on the earth. In His kingdom of heaven, God has given

no choice to the angels. Obedience is inherent in their nature. They are not able to disobey. They are not subject to error or forgetfulness. But human nature has been given the choice of obedience and disobedience. As this choice has been given from above, therefore, it cannot be said that because of a disobedient person, God's kingdom has been excluded from the earth. God's kingdom is in operation all the time and in every way. Yet it is true that there are two systems of law. One for the angels in heaven, which is the law of Divine decree which the angels cannot disobey, and there is another law which is in operation on earth that man has been given the choice of good and evil. But when a person supplicates God for power to overcome evil, then with the support of the Holy Spirit he can overcome his weakness and can safeguard himself against sin, as is the case with the Prophets and Messengers of God.

In the case of those who have been guilty of sin, asking for forgiveness can deliver them from the consequences of sin and they are spared chastisement in respect of

it, for when light comes darkness is dispelled. Those offenders who do not beg for forgiveness suffer punishment for their offences. In these days, the plague has also descended upon the earth as punishment and the rebellious ones are being destroyed. Then how can it be said that the kingdom of God does not operate upon the earth?

Do not be misled by the thought that if there is a kingdom of God upon earth then why is any sin committed? Sins are also subject to the Divine law of decrees. Although the offenders put themselves outside the law of Shariah they cannot put themselves outside the law of decrees. Then how can it be said that sinners do not bend to the yoke of the Divine kingdom?

If Divine law were to take on extreme harshness and every adulterer were to be struck down by lightning, and every thief were to be afflicted by some disease whereby his hands would become rotten and fall away, and every rebellious one who denies God and His religion were to die of the

plague, then before the expiry of a week the whole world would put on the garments of righteousness and good behaviour. Thus, there is God's kingdom on earth, but heavenly law has bestowed this much freedom that offenders are not immediately seized with punishment. Yet, punishment is also continuously in force. Earthquakes happen, lightning strikes, volcanoes erupt and destroy thousands of lives, vessels sink, many lives are lost in railway accidents, storms are encountered, houses fall, snakes bite, wild beasts rend, epidemics spread and not one, but many doors of destruction are open which Divine law has appointed for the punishment of offenders. Then how can it be said that God's kingdom does not operate upon earth?

The truth is that the kingdom is there. Every offender has handcuffs around his wrists and chains around his feet, but Divine Wisdom has softened its law to a degree that the handcuffs and the chains do not manifest themselves immediately. But if an offender persists in his wrongdoing they

carry him to hell and push him into a torment in which he neither lives nor dies.

In short, there are two systems of law, one is that which relates to the angels, which is that they have been created for obedience and their obedience is a characteristic of their bright nature. They cannot commit sin, but also they cannot make progress in goodness. The second system of law relates to mankind, which is that by their nature they can be guilty of sin, but they can also make progress in goodness. Both these natural laws are unchangeable and as an angel cannot become man, so man cannot become an angel. These systems of law are eternal and are not liable to change. The law that operates in heaven cannot operate on earth, nor can the law that operates on earth operate in respect of angels. If human defaults end in repentance, man can be much better than angels for angels cannot make progress in goodness. Human sins are forgiven through repentance. Divine wisdom leaves some individuals free to commit sins so that thereby they should become

aware of their weakness and may be forgiven through repentance. This is the law that is appointed for man and it is suited to man's nature.

Error and forgetfulness are characteristics of human nature and they are not characteristics of angels. Therefore, the law that regulates angels cannot be put in force in respect of men. It is an error to attribute any weakness to God Almighty. It is the consequences of the operation of law that are manifested upon the earth. Is God so weak that His kingdom and power and glory are limited to heaven or is it that there is some other god who is in adverse possession of the earth? The Christians should not emphasise that God's kingdom operates only in heaven and is not yet in operation on the earth, for they hold that heaven is nothing. If heaven, where God's kingdom should operate, is nothing and God's kingdom has not yet arrived upon earth, this would mean that God's kingdom does not rule anywhere. Whereas we observe with our own eyes that God's kingdom is in operation on the

earth. According to His law, our lives come to an end and our conditions change continuously. We experience hundreds of types of comfort and pain. Thousands of people die by God's command and thousands are born, prayers are accepted, signs are displayed and the earth produces thousands of types of vegetables, fruits and flowers by His command. Then is all this happening without the kingdom of God? Heavenly bodies seem to continue in one condition and no outward change is felt with regard to them, which should indicate the existence of a Being Who brings about change. But the earth is continuously undergoing change. Every day millions of people pass out of the earth and millions are born and in every way the control of a powerful Creator is felt. Then is there still no kingdom of God on earth?

The Gospel puts forward no reason why the kingdom of God has not arrived on earth. It is true that Jesus prayed for deliverance all through the night in the garden and as it is recorded in Hebrews 5:7, that prayer was accepted, yet God did not have the power to

deliver him. This according to the Christians, can be a reason for affirming that at that time there was no kingdom of God upon earth. But I have experienced greater trials and have been delivered from them. How can I deny the kingdom of God? Was that case in which I was, at the instance of Martyn Clarke, charged with conspiracy to murder in the court of Capt. Douglas, less grave than the case which was brought by the Jews against Jesus in the court of Pilate, on account of religious differences and not because of any charge of murder? But as God is the King of the earth as He is the King of heaven, He informed me in advance of that case that such a trial was coming and then He told me that I would be discharged. This was announced to hundreds of people in advance and in the end I was discharged. It was the kingdom of God which delivered me from this case which had been brought against me at the joint instance of Muslims, Hindus and Christians. Thus not once, but scores of times, I witnessed the kingdom of God upon earth and I had to believe in the verse:

His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth...
(Ch.57: V.3)

And I had to believe in the verse:

Verily His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be!', and it begins to be
(Ch.36: V.83)

This means that heaven and earth obey Him and when He wills a thing and He says to it: Be; it happens.

Then He says:

And Allah has full power over His decree, but most men know it not.
(Ch.12: V.22)

That is to say, God's command over His will is supreme, but most people are unaware of His wrath and Omnipotence.

So much for the prayer taught in the Gospel which takes away man's hope of God's mercy and makes Christians forgetful of His *Rububiyyat* and they do not

consider God capable of helping on earth till His kingdom should arrive upon the earth. As a contrast the prayer that God has taught to the Muslims in the Qur'an teaches that God is not helpless in the earth like one dethroned, but that His system of *Rububiyyat*, *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* are in operation on the earth and that He has the power to help His worshippers and can destroy the offenders with His wrath. That prayer is as follows:

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds. The Gracious, the Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgement. Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help. Guide us in the right path – the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, those who have not incurred displeasure, and those who have not gone astray.
(Ch.1:Vs.2-7)

(to be continued)

Purpose of Attending Annual Conventions

The Opening Address delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, at the 37th Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Tanzania on 9th May 2005.

Today, by the grace of Allah, the 37th Jalsa (Convention) Salana of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Tanzania is starting. As you perhaps know, this is the first visit by me to this country and the first time that I am addressing you directly.

I am very pleased that I am seeing the members of this lovely Community of the Promised Messiah^(as) in this country of East Africa also. These members established their link with the Promised Messiah^(as) only for the sake of Allah. I am seeing the spiritual light shining on the faces of these people who joined the Community of the Promised Messiah^(as) so that they could fulfil the prophecy of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) and true to the Holy Prophet's directives, convey to the Promised Messiah^(as) the *Salam*

(salutations of peace) of the Holy Prophet^(sa).

The meaning of conveying the *Salam* is to accept that pursuant to this prophecy, the peace and well-being of the world lies only in you. Therefore, we who convey the Holy Prophet's^(sa) *Salam* to the Promised Messiah^(as) and have entered his Community, make this promise that in addition to conveying this *Salam*, we will help the Promised Messiah^(as) in all those tasks which he has been commanded by Allah Almighty and for which Allah commissioned the Promised Messiah^(as).

So remember that to convey the *Salam* is not an easy thing. This *Salam* is your pledge to the Messiah of Muhammad^(sa) that the Islamic teaching with which the Holy Prophet^(sa) was sent, which

was forgotten by the world with the passage of time or which had begun to be incorrectly interpreted or which had suffered from arbitrary meanings and whose true knowledge was given in this age to the Promised Messiah^(as); we promise that we shall do our utmost to conform to those teachings so as to spread true Islam around the world. You have come together today with the aim of making pious changes in yourselves and also to try and set your future generations on the right path.

The gatherings that take place in the Community are also a part of the programme for *Tarbiyat* and *Islah*, that is, religious training and reformation, and making wholesome changes and these Jalsas (Conventions) have been held ever since the time of the Promised Messiah^(as).

In the beginning, people gathered in Qadian where the Khalifa (Successor to the Promised Messiah^(as)) of the time was present. But such conventions are held today in many countries of the world.

Ever since God Almighty has bestowed upon me the robe of Khilafat, I have been conscious of the fact that a vast majority of the Community comprises those who cannot participate in the Central Convention. Therefore, I have decided that as far as possible, I should participate in the national conventions where the strength of the Community is sizeable, even if some country's turn comes up after several years. However, as a result, the Community also gains recognition in the world because of the presence of the Khalifa and sentiments of affection and relation of the Khalifa are enhanced. This is indeed the grace of God Almighty on the Community whose parallel we cannot find anywhere else in the world. As I have said, by direct encounter this relation of affection is greatly fostered. May Allah make these relations with the Khilafa ever stronger and may the relations between the members also grow stronger and the bond with Allah and the true knowledge about Allah increase.

The Promised Messiah^(as) states:

Amongst the objectives of these conventions, the primary objective is also so that every sincere person should get an opportunity to derive religious benefit, face to face and at first hand, so that their religious knowledge should broaden and their true comprehension should begin to progress.

(Ayena Kamalat Islam, Ruhani Khazain Vol.5 p.606)

So, as the Promised Messiah^(as) has said, the only purpose of your gathering at such conventions should be so that your religious knowledge should improve and the biggest aim should be so that you should cultivate a relationship with Allah and should recognise Him. If you have come here because others have come here and your attitude is: 'Let me go and also see what is going on, I shall also take part in the show and enjoy the gathering', then there is no use in coming to this Convention. The intention of coming here and the objective of this Convention will be only served when you listen to the programmes with full attention and try to make them an integral part of your lives.

Then during these days of the Convention and in this special environment, a special spiritual change should emerge within you. A special relationship with Allah should grow in you. A voice within you should testify that this Convention has drawn me nearer Allah and I am marching forward towards righteousness and that all of us are marching forward. Only then can the purpose of your attending this Convention be served.

Now we see what is righteousness? Righteousness means that the fear of God should be created in one's heart in such a way that there is the consciousness that if I do such and such bad or evil things, then God would be displeased with me. My love for God should never tolerate that God should be displeased with me. When you develop such a concept in your mind, then you will try to continue to avoid many evils.

In this regard, the Promised Messiah^(as) states:

'Of all the commandments in the Holy Qur'an, there is great emphasis on righteousness and

abstaining from evil. The reason for this is that righteousness grants one the strength to avoid every evil and propels one towards all good deeds. The secret behind so much emphasis on righteousness is that righteousness is like a talisman or a good luck charm for peace in all matters of man and a fortress to protect one from all types of mischief and disorder. A righteous man can be saved from many petty and dangerous disputes in which others get caught, occasionally perish, and, because of their haste and suspicions, cause discord amongst people and cause opponents to raise objections.’

(Ayamus Sulh p.105, Ruhani Khazain Vol.14 p342)

So, as the Promised Messiah^(as) has said, righteousness enables one to save oneself from every kind of evil. This strength is gained because the righteous person is convinced that the Master of all powers is God Almighty. If one is certain that God is the Master of all powers,

then instead of fearing worldly kingdoms and worldly authorities, one would be afraid of God Almighty alone. Man will only do that which God has commanded and abstain from that which God has forbidden. He will have the extreme urge that he wants to do everything that God has ordered. When he tries to do these good deeds, then apart from peace and tranquillity and love and brotherhood, there would be nothing else. Therefore, every Ahmadi should try and tread the path of righteousness and shun all types of evil. If we try in this way, only then would we fulfil the purpose of the advent of the Promised Messiah^(as). And, if anyone previously had any bad habit, then as a result of the spiritual environment of this gathering, he should try and get rid of it.

Purpose of creation and righteousness

Remember, a person cannot remove these bad habits by his efforts alone unless Allah’s grace accompanies him. And to gather His grace, it is important to bow before Him, to worship Him in the manner He has taught us, and to

observe the five daily obligatory prayers because without these there is no purpose of human life. God created man so that man may worship Him. When man prays, his righteousness will also progress. Allah likes those whose righteousness increases and in fact He loves them as He says:

Surely, Allah loves those who are righteous.
(Ch.9:V.4)

And what else does a man whom Allah loves need? All his needs have been fulfilled. Whenever such a man needs anything then because of Allah's love for this man Allah would cater for it. Allah says that out of obedience to My command and because of his relationship with Me, this man treads the path of righteousness, commits no wrong, fulfils his obligations of worship to Me and is also mindful of My commands about social matters. Then, as a result of the relationship, Allah, Who is the Most Faithful of all the faithful ones and Whose friendship has no equal, Allah, of course, takes care of His righteous servant.

We observe that if an affectionate friend sees his companion in pain, he becomes extremely anxious and tries his utmost to help this companion. Then God, Who is better at discharging the obligation of friendship than anyone else, will He not fulfil the rights of friendship with His special persons and servants? Most certainly He will. Allah says that those people who adopt righteousness towards Me, I take so much care of them that at times of difficulty, I bring them in My protection.

Allah says:

But Allah is the Friend of the righteous.
(Ch.45:V.20)

Discharging the trust of friendship, Allah brings into protection such of His servants who adopting righteousness, obey His commands and worship Him. So what else does the person who falls in the protection of Allah need? What greater guarantee can there be for success in this life and the Hereafter?

Each Ahmadi should, therefore, be engaged in this serious thinking as to what he needs to do in order to gain nearness to Allah, to attain His happiness, to fall in His protection and to make Allah his companion and friend. However, to help us in this effort, Allah has also Himself shown us the way.

One method, as I have said earlier, is the worship of Allah. This worship has been made obligatory for us in the form of the five daily prayers. Then if we travel the path of righteousness, the next stage are the *Nawafil*, that is, the voluntary prayers. There are voluntary prayers for the night and for various parts of the day. They enable us to increase in virtue and good deeds.

Then there are human rights. We should discharge the rights that we owe to others cheerfully. Sometimes quarrels start on small issues. Each Ahmadi should refrain from this. An Ahmadi's capacities should be very wide. He should have greater endurance and tolerance. Do not think that to tolerate something or to treat someone softly will lessen your value in the sight of someone or

will lower your respect in the view of anyone but they will enhance your status. When you do this for the sake of Allah, even if in the eyes of people your position slips somewhat, in the sight of Allah, your status will be raised. One whose status is raised in the eyes of Allah is among those people who are the friends of Allah.

In one Hadith, it is narrated that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said that Allah is kind and likes kindness and the reward He bestows for kindness is greater than any other reward. So while being tolerant and responding to anything harsh with kindness and with a soft word, you are earning Allah's reward and with great abundance. Then what else can be greater than that?

In another Hadith, it is related that once the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) asked, 'Shall I tell you one who the fire will not touch? Fire will not harm any person who lives close to people', that is to say, does not hate or despise anyone, treats them kindly, removes their difficulty and grants them ease and facilitates them.

Then after tolerance, he will advance one step further when he realises that he has to treat others with kindness and has to create an atmosphere of love and affection. No tribe, no clan or family should cause any problem or as you say in Kiswahili, if my pronunciation is correct, any *matata* for another tribe, clan or family. If one party has used force, then an Ahmadi should be exemplary in his behaviour and say that I am not going to exceed the limits because I have believed in the Imam of the age and my hands will harm no one.

Then there is also the well-to-do man who is the owner of some business. If he takes care of his employees, is kind to them and shows them affection and compassion, an atmosphere of love and understanding would be created. On the other hand, there is the worker or employee. If he tries to cause his boss any harm because of the boss' ill-treatment, then that worker is not creating an atmosphere of kindness but one of hardship and hatred. Therefore, instead of retaliating against his boss, an Ahmadi worker or

employee should remain silent. If the Ahmadi submits his pleas to God Almighty, then because of his good behaviour, the attitude of his boss may automatically change for the better. Or if the attitude does not change because of this silence God Almighty would reward the person.

There are other workers also in the offices and other places of work. Because of something or some reason, they may become your opponents and try to cause you harm. So even against such people, one should not resort to haste in adopting a harsh attitude. In this manner hatred multiplies. Instead one should try and explain and even if after that the other person does not stop or refrain from causing harm, then the appropriate officer or owner should be informed. It is no Ahmadi's job to take the law in his own hands. He should not involve himself in any quarrel or dispute as this will only cause further trouble and spread hatred which is against Ahmadiyyat's true teachings of Islam.

Moreover, people have come to this Convention where so many

people are assembled and some things can happen which others dislike as a result of which envies and jealousies can grow in the hearts of some people. Some people may think that the administration has taken care of people from such and such an area but have been indifferent towards them. Such complaints can also adversely affect *Tarbiyat* or religious training. Ahmadis must of course remain pure of any complaints or accusation and should always be happy and have this feeling in their heart that they are a very fortunate Community who have been granted the opportunity by Allah to accept the Muhammadi Messiah. Because of the teachings that the Promised Messiah^(as) has given us, we are members of that fortunate Community and have to make good and wholesome changes within ourselves, in our wives and our children and we should never nourish any complaints nor harbour any petty matters in us. United as one Community, we should try to get the world to bow before its One and Only Lord. Because of these wholesome changes in us, we have to prove in

our country that this change and this progress in our condition has come about only because we have believed in the Promised Messiah^(as). So if you also seek everlasting happiness, come and believe in him through whom a reformation within you can occur. If, on the other hand, you have taken the *Bai'at* (pledge of initiation) but have caused no change to occur within yourself and have not abandoned all small or big bad habits and evil deeds and have not started performing all good deeds, of which I have mentioned one or two today – because it is impossible to talk of all of them in such a short time – then there is no use of a *Bai'at* that causes no change in you.

So may this Convention cause this feeling in us that we are a strong Community that has firm belief in the existence of Allah Almighty. We worship Him and in obedience to His commands we adopt all good moral values. Each one of us will *Insha'Allah* (God willing) be an example for this country so that we accomplish the mission of the coming of the Promised Messiah^(as).

What does the Promised Messiah^(as) require of us? Let me read a translation of an extract of his. He says:

‘Try and additionally seek the strength and courage from God Almighty that your heart’s pure intentions, and pure thoughts, and pure emotions, and pure desires, should become manifest and come to a conclusion through your limbs and all your might so that your good deeds should attain perfection, because any matter which emanates from the heart but is confined to the heart can lead you nowhere. Establish the Greatness of God Almighty in your hearts and maintain His Glorious Majesty in front of you. And remember that there are some five hundred commandments in the Holy Qur’an... the person who puts off or turns away from any one of these commandments, I tell you honestly that he will be called to account for it.’

So as the Promised Messiah^(as) has said, seek Allah’s help and His strength at all times and for

everything because He alone can grant every kind of power. And why do you have to ask for Allah’s help and His power? It is not to attack anyone, nor to take your revenge against anyone, nor to establish your own personal government. But you should seek help as such: O Lord, Thou Who hast made me a person, given me eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet and other limbs; Thou hast given me a brain with which I can distinguish between good and bad; Lord, help me now and grant me the strength that I should use them in accordance with Thy teachings and Thy commandments. Pray: O Lord! Purify me from everything unclean, remove all Satanic inclinations and let there be no thought in my mind of harming anyone or hating anyone. Purify my mind in every way and remove all foul things from it so that apart from searching for ways of attaining Thy pleasure no other thoughts should cross my mind.

Always remain pressed in this endeavour and pray that whatever desires arise in the heart, it should be for the benefit of the whole world and not ones which serve

your personal interests but usurp the rights of others. Good feelings should always arise for both near ones and others so that a society that loves peace can be established in the world. When such thoughts and these supplications would begin to emerge from the hearts and every effort would begin to be made to act on all types of good deeds, then we would be able to reap the benefits of God's endless blessings and bounties. Only then can we be the ones to establish the Lord's Kingdom on earth.

In these few days, may Allah enable all of you to create wholesome changes in yourselves through your prayers, your reflection and your deeds. For this purpose, put special emphasis on prayers during these days. May Allah enable you to do so!

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 '*Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*' 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 '*Alaihis salatu wassalam*' for the respect a Muslim reader utters.

The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for '*Radhiallahu Ta'ala anhu*' and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally, 'ru' or (ru) for '*Rahemallahu Ta'ala*' means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

Muhammad^(sa) *in the Bible*

By Dr. Khalil Ahmad Nasir

The world today looks for rational and historical evidence to prove the truth of a person who claims to be from God. These criteria fully support the truth of our Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa).

Rational Test

Rational thinking indicates that the world was in dire need of revelation, of water from the fountain of spiritual guidance, at the time when the Holy Prophet^(sa) appeared. He led an ideal life, a perfect example to be followed throughout the future. He started his mission against immense difficulties. He and his followers met strong persecution and opposition. But he was protected and helped by God in miraculous ways. Before his death his mission was firmly established all over Arabia and was rapidly spreading to other countries.

He worked miracles. He foretold the future, and his prophecies were fulfilled not only in his lifetime but continue to be fulfilled in our time as well. He brought a teaching which has attracted countless adherents since he appeared. In short, all rational tests prove that the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was truly from God.

The Historical Test

There is also another test, the historical one, which our present day world requires of a messenger of God. A notable American Bishop of the Catholic Church wrote in a nationally famous magazine that the test of history available to all men, all civilisations and all ages can be applied only to Jesus^(as) because:

There were no predictions about Buddha, Muhammad, or anyone else – except Christ.

Others just came and said "Here I am, believe me." Christ alone steps out of the line and answers: My coming was foretold, even to the smallest detail.

This statement is quite challenging and requires attention. We Muslims believe that Jesus^(as) was a true prophet of God. We also accept his advent as having been foretold in the previous scriptures.

But what about Muhammad^(sa)?

We find that his coming was foretold in clear and precise terms not only by Jesus^(as) himself but by Moses^(as) and other Biblical Prophets as well. In fact it seems from whatever words of Jesus^(as) are available to the world, that the bringing of glad tidings of a great coming prophet was one of the chief objects of his mission.

Again and again, Jesus^(as) said that he was sent to the world only to give as much guidance as the people of his own time could bear. As for complete teaching which would stay forever with mankind, he said:

‘But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’

(John 14-26)

Only the prophet of Islam^(sa) could have fulfilled this prophecy of Jesus^(as). Muhammad^(sa) was truly sent in his name because he bore testimony to his truth. The Holy Qur’an says:

The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger. All messengers before him have passed away.

(Ch.5:V.76)

The Holy Qur’an reports that the angels told Mary:

‘O Mary, Allah gives you glad tidings of a word from Him; his name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honoured in this world and hereafter, and of those who are granted nearness to God.

(Ch.3:V.46)

The Holy Prophet^(sa) testified to the truth of Jesus^(as) as a divine and honored Teacher and Prophet, and declared those who thought him accursed mistaken and misguided. The Holy Qur'an described his teachings as 'guidance and light.' Elaborating the same prophecy, Jesus^(as) 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 unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement. ... I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. How be it when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.. and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.' (*John 16:7-14*)

This prophecy clearly lays down that:

1. The Comforter will come after the departure of Jesus^(as).
2. When the Comforter comes, he will reprove the world of sin, truth and justice.
3. He will guide the world into all truth.
4. The book revealed to him will contain no human word.
5. He will foretell things to come.
6. He will glorify Jesus^(as) and clear him of all charges.

Now when we take this prophecy point by point, it is unmistakably proven that it applies to none else but the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). He came after Jesus^(as). The Comforter was supposed to reprove the followers of Jesus^(as). Obviously, he could not be a Christian or a Jew. The prophecy must relate to one who belonged to another people but respected Jesus^(as) and promoted reverence for him. The Holy Prophet^(sa) was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was an Ishmaelite. But he defended the honor of Jesus^(as). Thus the Qur'an says:

[...Whereas the Jews] slew him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them

like one crucified, and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it: they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture; and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty; on the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself.
(Ch.4: V.158)

Here the Holy Qur'an specifically says that Jesus^(as) was saved from that accursed death designed for him by his enemies. However, they only suspected that they had succeeded in crucifying him. But Allah had not only saved him but admitted him to the circle of His favored ones.

Of the promise, 'He will show you things to come,' we need only say that no other prophet has told the world of things to come as much as has the prophet of Islam^(sa).

The prophecy said that 'he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak.' This description can only apply to the Prophet Muhammad^(sa). The New and Old Testaments do not contain a single book in which

man's word has not been mixed with God's. The Qur'an is nothing but the word of God from beginning to end. Not a word even of the Prophet^(sa) is to be found in it.

When Peter appeared before the people of Jerusalem, his words were: 'Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you.' John starts one of his conversations with 'I, John, who am your brother.' On the same lines we read the utterances of Philip, James and others in the Bible.

About the Holy Prophet^(sa), the Qur'an says:

Nor does he speak out of his own desire. It is nothing but pure revelation that has been revealed by God.
(Ch.53:Vs.4-5)

The prophecy had said: 'He will guide you unto all truth.' Again Muhammad^(sa) was the only prophet who claimed to have brought a universal and perfect law. The Holy Qur'an says:

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed

My favour upon you.
(Ch.5:V.4)

How clearly has the prophecy been fulfilled in the person of the Prophet Muhammad^(sa) in all of its details. Sometimes an unsuccessful attempt is made to dim the glory of this marvelous prophecy by claiming that this Comforter was the Holy Ghost who came after Jesus^(as) to his disciples. One wonders how this claim can be harmonised with the fact that the person foretold in the verses is described with the pronoun 'he,' which could not possibly refer to a spirit. Then, was not the Spirit of Truth supposed to come only after the departure of Jesus^(as)? Should it be then assumed that the Holy Ghost was not with Jesus^(as)? Obviously no devoted Christian will accept this assumption. One can also inquire where that truth is which is not found in the New Testament but was later brought by the Holy Ghost.

A Prophet From Thy Brethren

The fact is that before Jesus^(as), Moses^(as) had also foretold of a great prophet in clear and precise words. When Moses^(as) went to

Mount Horeb under the command of God he addressed the Israelites saying:

‘The Lord thy God will raise unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken.’ (Deuteronomy 18:15)

And again, God’s words to Moses^(as):

‘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 shall 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.’ (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

It is evident from these verses that Moses^(as) foretold a Law-giving Prophet who was to appear after him, and who was to be from among the brethren of Israel.

That he was to be a Law-giver and

not an ordinary Prophet is obvious from the words ‘like unto Moses,’ since Moses^(as) was also a Law-giver. The promulgation of ‘a new Law’ means the initiation of a new movement, a new nation. A prophet with a new Law is obviously no ordinary teacher or reformer. He has to present a comprehensive teaching, incorporating fundamental principles as well as detailed rules. Was Jesus^(as) such a prophet? Was he a Law-giver? Did he bring a new Law into the world to replace an old one? The answer, in his own words is:

‘Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.’

(Matthew 5:17-18)

And the followers of Jesus^(as) went so far as to declare:

And the Law is not of faith:
but, the man that doeth them

shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.

(Galatians 3:12-13)

Jesus^(as) laid no claim to a new Law; his disciples regarded the Law as a curse. It was the Holy Qur’an which announced from the very outset that:

This is the (complete and perfect) Book, there is no doubt in it. It is a guidance for the righteous. (Ch.2:V.3)

The prophecy also said that the Promised One was to be raised not from among Israel but from their brethren. Muhammad^(sa) was from the brethren of the Israelites, the Ishmaelites.

It also told that God would put his words in his mouth. The New Testament gospels do not consist of words which God put in Jesus’s^(as) mouth. They only tell us his story and what he himself and his disciples said and did.

The Holy Qur’an, on the other hand, says:

Say, (O Muhammad), I am only a man like unto you: but I have received the revelation that your God is only One God.
(Ch.18: V.111)

The prophecy spoke of ‘words which he shall speak in my name.’ Strange as it may seem, there is not a single example of words which Jesus^(as) may be said to have received from God with the command to pass them on. The Holy Qur’an, on the other hand, specifically claimed to be the word from God.

The words of the Lord had announced that the Promised One would be a prophet. Jesus^(as), according to the Christian evangelists, did not claim to be a prophet. Matthew reports that he asked his disciples, ‘Whom do men say that I the son of man am?’ Peter replied that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:13-16)

Thus Jesus^(as) denied being either John the Baptist^(as) or Elias^(as) or one of the prophets. Muhammad^(sa) was proclaimed as not only a prophet but also as ‘like unto

Moses^(as),’ when the Qur’an said:
Verily, We have sent to you a Messenger, who is a witness over you, even as we sent a Messenger to Pharaoh.
(Ch.73:V.16)

In short, one thousand nine hundred years before the advent of the prophet of Islam^(sa), Moses^(as) declared that his own Law was, in the divine scheme, not the last Law; that the world was to have a fuller Law later on; and that, God would send in the latter days another Messenger of His. This Messenger was to teach all truth; it was he who was to mark the last stage in the spiritual advancement of man. The world had to wait for another Book and another Prophet.

If, therefore, the Qur’an and the Holy Prophet^(sa) have come after the Bible and after the Prophets Moses^(as) and Jesus^(as), and if they claim to have come from God as guidance to man, their claim must be treated as just and true. It must be taken as the fulfillment of ancient prophecies. The revelation of the Qur’an was not a gratuitous revelation, a redundant in the pre-

sence of other revelations. Indeed, if the Qur'an had not been revealed, promises made by God through His messengers would have gone unfulfilled, and the world would have become afflicted with doubt and disbelief.

Divine Light From Paran

The prophecies of the Bible had even led its followers to that part of the world where the great Prophet was to appear. Thus it was said:

‘And he said, the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; and shined forth from Mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.’
(*Deuteronomy* 33:2)

In this verse Moses^(as) is promised three manifestations of the glory of God. The first of these appeared on Sinai in the time of Moses. Time passed. The second manifestation promised in the prophecy was to take place at Seir, a part of the world near where the miracles of Jesus^(as) took place. ‘Rising up from Seir,’ therefore, meant the advent of Jesus^(as).

The third manifestation of divine glory was to take its rise from Paran, and Paran (Arabic Faran) is the name of the hills which lie between Makkah, the birth place of Muhammad^(sa), and Madinah, the town where he died. According to the Old Testament, Ishmael, the ancestor of Muhammad^(sa), lived in this part. Thus we have in the Bible:

‘And God was with the lad (Ishmael): and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran.’
(*Genesis* 21:20-21)

Historical and geographical evidence shows that the descendents of Abraham lived in Arabia. All of them held Makkah and Ka’aba, the house of worship built by Abraham^(as), in great reverence. His son Ishmael first settled in Makkah. Genesis gives the names of twelve sons of Ishmael including two named Tema and Kedar. (Genesis 25:13-16) This is further supported by the testimony of Isaiah where we read:

‘The burden of Arabia. In the

forest of Arabia shall ye lodge,
O ye traveling companies of
Dedan. The inhabitants of the
land of Tema brought water to
him that was thirsty, they
provided with their bread him
that fled. For they fled from
the swords, from the bent bow,
and from the grievousness of
war. For thus hath the Lord
said unto me, Within a year,
according to the years of an
hireling, and all the glory of
Kedar shall fail: And the
residue of the number of
archers, the mighty men of the
children of Kedar, shall be
diminished: for the Lord God
of Israel hath spoken it.’
(*Isaiah 21:13-16*)

This prophetic passage is a picture of the Battle of Badr which took place about a year after the Holy Prophet’s^(sa) migration from Makkah to Madinah. In this battle the sons of Kedar, the people of Makkah and the territories around, unable to withstand the fierceness of Muslim swordsmen and archers, sustained disastrous defeat. God made a handful of men, poorly armed and without provisions, the means of inflicting

this humiliation on an army led by experienced generals.

The battles with the Makkans continued against heavy odds until such time that the Prophet Muhammad^(sa) entered Makkah after a struggle of several years. This was the time when ten thousand saints accompanied him. The Holy Prophet^(sa) declared that the message of God had been completed in the form of the Holy Qur’an. Thus the prophecy of Moses^(as) was fulfilled that the Lord would shine forth from Paran with ten thousand saints, with a fiery Law in his right hand. Thus also the prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled that the spirit of Truth ‘will guide you unto all truth.’ His fiery Law, the Holy Qur’an, consumed all impurities of flesh and turned the impure hearts into pure ones.

Could Jesus^(as) have fulfilled this wonderful prophecy? He did not rise from Paran. He had only twelve disciples and not ten thousand saints. Isaiah had spoken of one that fled; the flight of Muhammad^(sa) is such an important part of Muslim history that the

Islamic calendar starts from the very year of migration.

‘The Earth Was Full Of His Praise’

This advent was also prophesied by Habakkuk several centuries before Jesus^(as). Thus we have:

‘God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah, His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hands: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and the burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.’

(Habakkuk 3:3-7)

This again shows that the third manifestation mentioned earlier was going to be by one who would

appear from the land of Tema and Mount Paran. The earth was going to be full of his praise. It is not a mere accident, then, that the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) was named Muhammad, which literally means, the Praised One. Only a man with a name as beautiful as his personality and character could answer to the description of *Habakkuk*. The enemies of Muhammad^(sa) suffered destruction, pestilence and humiliation of ‘burning coals’ in encountering him in spite of overwhelmingly stronger and larger forces.

Moses^(as) died while he was still fighting his enemies. Jesus^(as) was put on the Cross. The prophet^(sa) who beheld and drove the nations asunder, as mentioned by *Habakkuk*, could be, therefore, none else but Muhammad^(sa). His enemies who looked like ‘everlasting mountains and perpetual hills’ with their immense power were completely routed. Later ‘the tents of Cushan’ and the ‘curtains of the land of Midian,’ that is, the land of Canaan then under the Roman Caesar, also found their salvation in surrendering to the servants of the

Holy Prophet^(sa) in the time of that Caesar's successors.

The Prince Of Peace

In Isaiah we find many passages about a coming prophet which can be true only of Muhammad^(sa). We are told of a time when a man would call the nations of the world who would swiftly answer his call and gather around him (*Isaiah* 5:26-30). We are told that the followers of the Promised One would be obliged to take part in wars. We are told that the advent of this prophet would be at a time when even the light would be darkened by the sin and corruption of land and sea. *Isaiah* also tells us that at the time God would turn away His face from the house of Jacob (*Isaiah* 8:13-17).

‘And then: For unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his

kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.’

(*Isaiah* 9:6- 7)

The prophecy gives promise of a king who will have five titles:

- (1) Wonderful
- (2) Counsellor
- (3) The Mighty God
- (4) The Everlasting Father and
- (5) The Prince of Peace.

Was Jesus^(as) ever a King? Were the names enumerated in this prophecy ever applied to him? Wonderful he might have been called, because of peculiar birth, but while his deniers regarded his birth as illegitimate, his supporters were in doubt about his ancestry. He gave no exhibition of the might that is mentioned in the above verse. Nor could he be called Everlasting Father, because he himself had mentioned another one coming after him. He neither became king nor could he ever bring peace to the world. He remained oppressed by his

opponents until he was put on the Cross. He could not, therefore, be rightly called the Prince of Peace. He never attained to any government and, therefore, the words, 'of his government there shall be no end,' have no meaning in terms of his life. These signs mentioned in Isaiah apply only to the Prophet of Islam^(sa).

It was he who had to shoulder the responsibilities of a state, and thus, quite against his will, had to be called king.

Muhammad^(sa) was Wonderful both in his name and achievements. Jesus^(as), in his parable of the vineyard, speaks of the householder who let his vineyards to husbandmen. These wicked men not only beat, killed and stoned his other servants but also his son. The Lord, says Jesus^(as), will come himself, destroy these wicked husbandmen and render the vineyard to those who 'shall render the fruits in their seasons.' This will be so because:

'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; and this

is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.'
(*Matthew 21:33-44*)

This is the way in which the 'Wonderful' one had to appear. When the son would be slain, then the other one would be sent who would prove to be the head of the corner. And he would seem 'marvelous' in the eyes of Jesus^(as) and the whole world.

And about his wonderful achievements we may quote Thomas Carlyle. He writes:

'To the Arab nation it was a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first become alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world, a hero-prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe: see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has grown world-great; within one century afterward, Arabia is at Grenada on this hand, Delhi on that, glancing in valor and splendor and the light of genius, Arabia shines through long ages over a

section of the world. Belief is great, long-living. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. These Arabs, the man Mahomet and that one century-is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark, on a world of what seemed black, unnoticeable sand, but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada. I said, the great man was always a lightning out of heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel and then they too would flame.

(Thomas Carlyle *in Heroes And Hero-Worship*)

The second name of the Promised One is Counsellor. This again applied to the Holy Prophet^(sa). A nation turned to him for advice. He, in turn, held regular consultation with his people, and made it obligatory on the State to consult the people in all important matters. The Holy Qur'an tells us that his companions sought his consultation regularly.

The prophecy had also described him as mighty God. The Bible has

often mentioned the prophets as God himself. (Exodus 7:1 and 4:16)

Whenever a human being is spoken of as a 'like of God' it can only mean that he is a manifestation of the Almighty. The Holy Prophet^(sa), again, answers the description of the prophecy. There are several references relevant to this in the Holy Qur'an. At the Battle of Badr, the prophet^(sa) took a handful of gravel and threw it at the enemy. This proved a signal for a dust storm which discomfited the enemy and contributed to his defeat. Of this, God says to the Holy Prophet^(sa):

...And thou threwest not when thou didst throw, but it was God who threw...

(Ch.8:V.18)

Again it says:

Verily those who swear allegiance to thee indeed swear allegiance to Allah...

(Ch.48:V.11)

Thus came the manifestation of Almighty God, the Holy

Prophet^(sa), who was able to subjugate all his enemies in his lifetime and smash all opposition.

The fourth name in the prophecy is Everlasting Father. Jesus^(as) was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and, therefore, could not possibly have an everlasting character. On the other hand, the Holy Prophet^(sa) was referred to in the Qur'an as 'a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner for all mankind'. (Ch.34:V.29). He was promised that his teaching would abide forever with the people because at the end of days, the Promised Messiah^(as) would appear from among his followers and would revive the teachings of Islam and prove conclusively that the spiritual dominion of the Prophet of Islam^(sa) was everlasting and there would be no heavenly teachers then except from his followers.

The fifth name in the prophecy is Prince of Peace. Can Jesus^(as) be truly called such? He did not become a sovereign in his life. He did not ever gain power to administer forgiveness to his enemies, and therefore, there was

not much occasion for him to perform what he preached. On the other hand, the very religion of Muhammad^(sa) is called *Islam*, meaning peace. As for the performance of peace and forgiveness in Muhammad's^(sa) life we have ample evidence.

Through thirteen long and weary years the prophet of Islam and his little band of devoted followers bore with calm dignity and patience the bitterest persecution at the hands of the Makkans. Starvation, flogging, scoffings, humiliations, degradations and outrages of every description were the order of the day. When the Prophet^(sa) took refuge in Madinah, even there he was not left in peace. Over a period of seven years of sustained and brutal persecution the Prophet of Islam^(sa) appeared suddenly on the heights of Paran, at the head of ten thousand saints, with no battle fought and not a drop of blood shed, when any penalty inflicted upon these Makkans would have been light in comparison to their long record of misdeeds, the Prophet^(sa) announced, gently and mercifully:

THE said, 'No blame shall lie on you this day; may Allah forgive you!...'.
(Ch.12:V.93)

Is it the same way that the Christians treated their enemies when they came to power? Who should then be called a true Prince of Peace, Jesus^(as) or Muhammad^(sa)? Jesus^(as) could not afford peace to others. His followers were able to afford it, but they did not give it. The prophet of Islam^(sa) had the power to punish his enemies but he chose to forgive. Muhammad^(sa), therefore, was the Prince of Peace of Isaiah's prophecy. It was he again who also attained government and thus could fulfil the last part of this prophecy saying, 'Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.'

Conclusion

These are just a few of the many prophecies found in the Bible about the advent of that great prophet^(sa) who was going to lead the world into all truth.

Muhammad^(sa) was going to be, in the words of Solomon, 'altogether

lovely' which in Hebrew is expressed as *Mahamadim*. (Song of Solomon 5: 10-16) He was the fulfillment of the 'stone' of Daniel's dream. (Daniel 2:34-35) He was the coming of the lord of the vineyard himself as foretold by Jesus^(as).

True, there are some prophecies about Jesus^(as) as well in the Old Testament but it is also a fact that there are many which cannot rightly be applied to him. These could be fulfilled in the person of the one who was coming with a Law and whose mission was to be not just to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' but to the whole world, one who was spoken of by Jesus^(as) as the Comforter and Spirit of Truth. The predictions about Muhammad^(sa) in the Bible are clear and precise.

The door to the Kingdom of Heaven has been opened by the fulfillment of these prophecies. Blessed are those who accept the call of the Lord of Heaven and Earth to enter His Kingdom and receive His communion.

Allah – *Friend of the Believers*

By Hadayatullah Hubsch – Frankfurt, Germany

As we experience in our daily life, friendship is something which must prove its value in the communication of those who are friends, which means that the friendship is sometimes tested. In good times and especially in bad times the one who is a friend to another person will bless him always with his sweet company, he will comfort him and encourage him when he encounters difficult situations and he will send him gifts when he has achieved some success.

To a greater degree, a believer who Allah has chosen out of His incomparable Grace and Mercy as His friend witnesses the same. He guides those who long for Him and burn out of themselves everything which might offend their friendship.

So, for example, in the Holy Qur'an, Allah explains to mankind that His most beloved friend, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) does

not speak out of desire. This means that out of the sacred mouth of the Holy Prophet^(sa) no word was uttered which was mixed with any kind of selfishness, egoism or wish for worldly or private advantage. And, of course, his behaviour and actions were accordingly honest and truthful up to the highest standard man can think of and born out of the best of intentions. Instead of caring for himself, he was lost in care for all human beings. So much so, that Allah says in the Holy Qur'an that he might grieve himself to death for sorrow over their disbelief. But he did not only worry about the spiritual welfare of people.

Once, for example, some farmers asked him how to handle their crop. He told them what to do but later on they complained that the effect of his advice was not as desired. The Holy Prophet^(sa) replied that his saying was due to his own understanding. It was not a Word of God. The lesson to be

drawn from this incident might be twofold:

1. A prophet, being one with God, is not God.
2. Even when it seems that he made a mistake, it proves to be a blessing in disguise.

The blessing is that one learns out of failures and this is a universal law. Without it there is no progress. This is why Allah says in the Holy Qur'an that He turns the wrong a believer has done into good. Another lesson for the believers from this Tradition is that one should not compel a Prophet or *Wali*, that is, a friend of Allah, to say something about worldly matters. They are in the world but not of the world. If out of their pity for man they put themselves to the trouble of helping them in worldly matters, this does not mean that they leave the heavenly sphere they live in. It is only due to their hope that people may be guided through this to thankfulness and praise to their Lord. Their real task is to lead man to godliness and prepare them for the life in the Hereafter. Whereas

God is limitless, they are not perfect in the sense that they cannot progress anymore. While they are perfect teachers, they too are taught by the One who Alone is All-Knowing, All-Wise and the Guide for the entire creation. This means that the perfection of a *Wali* always has room for improvement.

In this connection, I may cite the Fourth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru). Some people mentioned to His Holiness that the Pope is claimed to be without mistakes. Then they asked His Holiness if his case was the same. He replied that he does make mistakes sometimes but God would give him the chance to correct such mistakes thereafter. So whatever a *Wali* does, it will be crowned by success ultimately and there is no one who can change this decree.

These two incidents lead to a notable remark. To witness that somebody has become a friend of Allah is not for everyone. Often Allah attires His holy friends in something which makes them appear in the eyes of the worldly-

mindful people and the hypocrites as afflicted.

Being unaware of the spiritual world they measure everything with their limited mind. If they see something which does not fit their thinking outwardly, they discard it as not worth pondering about. God keeps them safe from those greedy people who love to profit from them. The friends of Allah who happen to have received such a distinction understand its inner meaning and blessing.

So a friend of Allah must not look like an imposing personality, while, of course, he can. The fact is that it is not necessary that a *Wali* is known as a *Wali* to everyone. So the manifestation of being a *Wali* could be something made known only to the *Wali* himself, and, of course, those to whom Allah reveals the status of a person.

The Promised Messiah^(as) gave to the seekers of truth in his unmatched book *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya* an account of what a person could witness if Allah chooses him as a friend. A *Wali*

often experiences signs from the Unseen, from the world behind the screen of the four-dimensional world. For example, he may be informed about the inner feelings of another person. The senses of a *Wali* could be so refined that he could be aware of things happening thousands of miles away from him. As promised in the Holy Qur'an by Allah, angels descend upon him and talk to him. Sometimes Allah puts on the tongue of a *Wali* words which are not his own but words of the Almighty. Sometimes he sees prophecies in a vision in symbolic language. In his dreams Allah reveals to him many secrets, either about Himself or about dear and near ones or even about conflicts, solutions of problems regarding the earth or times to come. It is also possible that the *Wali* hears loudly the voice of Allah coming from the outside, or meets people who died with whom he can sit and talk as if they were still alive. The higher the degree of a *Wali*, the more miraculous are the signs vouchsafed to him by Almighty Allah.

Though these experiences are

mostly witnessed by the *Wali* himself, while other people have no share in them except that the *Wali*, with the permission of Allah, discloses them, it is also possible that due to the holy influence of a *Wali* those who are around him may witness the miracle too. A touch with his hand may heal, his clothes may have a healthy influence for a person, his nearness may purify and make people aware of the right path. But most of all, it is the acceptance of prayers which are a witness of a true *Wali*. It is not that all his prayers are heard. As it is with all sincere prayers, it could be in his case too that instead of literally fulfilling a request by prayer, Allah might give something else. But most often the prayer of a *Wali* proves to be so effective that one may think that his prayers are like an order. So sometimes it seems as if Allah Himself is manifesting Himself within a *Wali* so that his word becomes Allah's Word.

On one occasion, for example, the Third Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad^(ru), was sitting with dignitaries of the Community

in one room to discuss an important matter. It so happened that an insect found its way into that room and started to disturb the gathering. Suddenly the Khalifa said in a very majestic tone to the insect that it should leave the room. Immediately the insect obeyed and flew away.

So in a certain way a *Wali* could become a manifestation of God Himself as if he is given power above the whole world. On one occasion, for example, the Promised Messiah^(as) had to appear in court. In the past and in our days too the prophets and *Walīs* of Allah had been molested by mischievous elements who tried to put them down with their mean worldly and cunning plans by misusing judicial authority. During the course of the hearing of the court, the judge wished to see some sign of the prophethood of the Promised Messiah^(as). The Promised Messiah^(as) did not reply for a short time, as he was praying. Then he said to the judge that he may demand any sign, whatever it might be and he would show it. But the judge did not avail of this chance to witness a heavenly proof

of the truthfulness of the Promised Messiah^(as) and kept silent.

Let us now turn to the question of how to become a friend of Allah.

In the beginning one should have the great desire to make heaven one's home. Simple thoughts lead to the conclusion that evolution and expansion of consciousness cannot end with physical death. As science teaches no energy is lost but only transformed. One becomes aware of the need to prepare for the life Hereafter. Similarly, an observer of daily affairs may understand easily that there is a law of action and reaction or, in the terminology of religion, punishment and reward. For a man, whose conscience is not completely blackened by his selfish endeavours, self-criticism, therefore, leads to thinking over how to improve for the sake of not getting engulfed by suffering. As heaven is on the mind, and true happiness lies in the peace one may enjoy in the heart, consequently one may look for ways to achieve lasting paradise. Man usually knows that nothing comes from nothing. The mind begins to

ponder over the idea that there must be a Creator of everything. It is in this state of awareness that the spiritual journey begins. If one starts to study the different ways which offer salvation, one point can never be neglected. It is experience and not the idea alone which leads to the power of certainty. When, therefore, your goal is God and not to achieve mental faculties, however fascinating they may be, then prayer must be your first and lasting resort.

To become ultimately a friend of Allah, the Lord and Master of the universe, is accordingly in the first instance possible only by the most humble and constant prayers. To exemplify this, one may reflect how one would try to win the love of a certain person who is so intelligent not to fall prey to tricks, actions of show or alluring of any kind. That heart one may win only by being worthy of its company which means to be as beautiful as it is.

If one tries to win the pleasure of Allah by chanting certain words until one gets unconscious or mad,

or if one tries to misuse Allah's Holiness by thinking of Him as some kind of dream machine which fulfils one's own egoistic wishes, or if one prays to Allah in a certain state of absent-mindedness, one may only incur the wrath of Allah. Allah wants to bring man up to a higher level of being which is not possible without man's effort to use his faculties to understand his final destination.

As love generally seems to be accepted as the biggest motor of man's longing, and as friendship is based on love, one accordingly should act like a lover of God in order to win His friendship. Real love means to prefer the beloved above oneself.

Of course, Allah is not an ordinary friend. Being the source of all good, He is to be requested for love too. The Holy Prophet^(sa) taught us the prayer:

O Allah, grant me Thy love and the love of those who love Thee and the love of the deeds which will enable me to attain to Thy love. O Allah, make

Thy love dearer to me than my own life, my family and even dearer than cold water (to a man dying of thirst in scorching heat).
(*Tirmizdhi*)

So one should beseech Allah constantly that He may fill one's heart with His pure love so that one may live. Another important duty of the believer is to mould himself into that state where Allah wishes him to be. Or, in other words, if one does not meet the pure and lovely wishes of the friend, how could one enjoy his company? So pray accordingly, saying, 'O Allah put my body and my thoughts in accordance with Thy Will.'

In this connection, the advice of the First Khalifa of the Promised Messiah^(as), Hadhrat Maulvi Nuruddin^(ra) could be related. He was once asked how it happened that he had become such a holy personality. He replied that this was due to his mother's recitation of *Durood Sharif* – a prayer invoking Divine blessings on the Holy Prophet^(sa) – while she was breast-feeding him. Then the

people asked him what they could do if their mothers did not do that. He replied that one should recite *Durood Sharif* while eating.

We find the most blissful key for a believer who wishes to become a friend of Allah. It is the strict observance of everything one may learn from the *Sunna*, that is, the practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa). The closer one follows him, in letter and spirit, the sooner one may reach the point where one's ego is overcome by one's piety which is a precondition for becoming a friend of Allah.

The Promised Messiah^(as) has explained in his book *Kishti-e-Nuh* how one may proceed in order to become an inmate of paradise. He says:

‘Blessed are those who for the sake of their Lord wage a war against their own self; but really narrow-minded are those who for sake of their lower self wage a war against their Lord and refuse to transform themselves obediently according to His Will. Whoever for the sake of his own self flouts

an order of God, will never go into heaven. Therefore strive for the utmost that not a single letter or syllable of the Holy Qur’an might be a witness against you, and to this aim be dedicated completely.’

The result of this *Al-Jihad-ul-Akbar* – the biggest exertion in the way of Allah – is a pure heart. To achieve it, the Promised Messiah^(as) taught us the prayer:

‘O Allah, show me the way by which the righteous find Thee and safeguard me against the ways of passion, hatred, envy and worldly desire.’

And Allah revealed to the Promised Messiah^(as) the prayer:

‘My Lord, take away all kind of dirt from me and make me completely pure.’

He stated furthermore that to get purified one does not need to have recourse to ascetism or hardship. What is required is wisdom, understanding, will-power to suppress anger and harshness, overcoming oneself by displaying

true love and affection, and sustaining a zeal to acquire knowledge and wisdom.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, that only those who know do fear Him. To fear Allah, in other words to have *Taqwa*, means to avoid everything which may incur the displeasure of Allah and to do everything which hopefully may win the favour of Allah. Everything done with *Taqwa* brings some kind of reward.

In the Holy Qur'an Allah says:

O ye who believe! Fear Allah and seek the way of approach unto Him and strive in His Way that you may prosper.
(Ch.5: V.36)

The ways of approach can be basically described as the five pillars of Islam – confessing *Tauhid* or the undividable Oneness of God, observing prayers, spending of one's wealth, fasting and performing Hajj. To elucidate these ways needs volumes of books. But in short we may say that true observance of them must rise from the heart and then step

by step fill each minute of one's life according to the need of the situation. So, for example, one may begin to feel that merely observing the obligatory prayers is not enough and ultimately reach spending every free second in the remembrance of Allah. And one may run to each nook and corner of life, trying to do good in the hope of catching through this frantic searching a glance of the illumined countenance of the Friend.

Such an approach leads to what we may call nearness to Allah, or the death of the ego.

And our last words are: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all worlds, and may He be pleased to send His choicest blessings and peace to the best of His Creation, Muhammad^(sa), the Seal of the Prophets.

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GLIMPSES INTO THE QUR'ANIC CONCEPT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

PART 2

By Maha Dabbous – UK

As the real object of man's life in this world is his spiritual advancement, it is beyond any doubt that if Allah has made ample provisions for his physical needs, He could not have neglected the provisions for man's spiritual needs also. And as man very gladly accepts and uses all the physical provisions made for him, he should also not decline to make similar use of Allah's spiritual gifts. A human being is comprised of a body and a soul. If Allah has provided man with the food that nourishes his body and keeps him fit and well, he must have provided him also with the spiritual food which nourishes his soul and raises it to the highest spiritual levels. As a person should be aware of his body's physical health, he should also be conscious of his soul's spiritual wellbeing. If

Allah has provided man with a suitable environment to maintain the best health of his physical body, He must have provided man also with the perfect spiritual environment to ensure the highest spiritual station of his soul. Hence, it is the duty of man that just as he should protect his physical environment, he should also take care of the purity of his spiritual environment.

To fully understand this, man must reflect on the physical objects in the universe because they symbolise spiritual aspects as well. The physical world materialises the spiritual one so as to make it easy for man to comprehend. The Holy Qur'an is full of illustrations to help us in this regard. It will suffice to cite a few examples here.

If we study what the Holy Qur'an has mentioned concerning the plants in the physical world, we will learn some amazing spiritual lessons. As a matter of fact, the Holy Qur'an has likened human beings somewhat to plants when Allah said:

And Allah has raised you from the earth like the raising of vegetation.

(Ch.71:V.18)

Allah also said about Mary – the mother of Jesus^(as):

So her Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance and caused her to grow an excellent growth and made Zachariah her guardian...

(Ch.3:V.38)

According to the physical laws of nature, a plant can grow in a land if a healthy seed is sown in its soil which happens to be rich and fertile. In the same manner, a human soul can develop spiritually if it is provided with the healthy spiritual seed of faith and the healthy spiritual soil in the form of a sincere heart that accepts the truth.

However, the power to make a seed

grow into a plant might be hidden in the soil, but it does not come into play unless the soil receives water from heaven. The latent powers of the soil to enable vegetation to grow together with the health of the seed that is sown in it will never produce anything without the help of water. Similarly, the latent and inherent powers and faculties of man fail to find their real spiritual development and growth without the help of the spiritual water. Life on earth depends on water which descends from heaven in the form of rain. In the same way, the spiritual life cannot exist without spiritual water which descends from heaven in the form of Divine revelation.

And He it is Who sends the winds as glad tidings before His mercy, and We send down pure water from the sky, that We may thereby give life to a dead land, and give it for drink to Our creation – cattle and men in great numbers.

(Ch.25:Vs.49-50)

The heart of a believer may possess the most excellent faculties and natural powers, but these cannot develop without the help of Divine revelation. Without the help of Divine revelation, human intellect

alone can never rise to full spiritual stature.

For this reason, since the creation of man, Allah has been sending His Messengers to the world to provide people with the spiritual sustenance that they need. These Messengers brought with them the Divine commandments and laws that people should follow so that they could be nourished spiritually and advance in their progress. With the help of these Divine provisions, the Messengers of Allah themselves emerged spiritually like the living green plants that grew into large trees producing fruits to be enjoyed by their true followers, who followed their examples and transformed themselves into further spiritual green plants as well, according to their capacities.

Yet as we reflect on the physical world, we find that Allah sends down rain although the rain water does not stay in the earth permanently. It disappears by evaporation or flows into the sea through streams and rivers. The earth again becomes dry and then fresh rain is needed to make it fertile.

The same is the case with the Divine messages. They powerfully influ-

ence the lives of men and bring about great changes in them for a certain period. Then they begin to be neglected, ignored and misinterpreted and hence fresh revelation is needed to revive them back to life.

Look, therefore, at the marks of Allah's mercy: how He quickens the earth after its death. Verily, the same God will quicken the dead; for He has power over all things.

(Ch.30:V.51)

This system of Allah came into operation with the life of man on this planet and it will remain in operation till the end of time. Allah continues through the ages to shower His spiritual rain on His Messengers and their true followers so that they can nourish the spiritual life on earth.

He brings forth the living from the dead, and He brings forth the dead from the living; and He gives life to the earth after its death. And in like manner shall you be brought forth.

(Ch.30:V.20)

But again, in the physical world, plants need sunshine and a healthy

surrounding atmosphere to develop and bloom and it is obvious that Allah did not ignore providing the world with the physical sun and all the other necessary conditions of a healthy atmosphere. Allah must have also provided the spiritual world with a sun and a healthy atmosphere to ensure the perfect spiritual development of mankind.

This spiritual sun reached its zenith with the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) who was described in the Holy Qur'an as a radiant source of light.

O Prophet, truly We have sent thee as a Witness and a Bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner, and as a Summoner unto Allah by His command, and as a radiant Lamp.

(Ch.33:Vs.46-47)

The word 'Siraj' – translated as lamp – that was used in the above verse to describe the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) was used in another verse as referring to the sun.

'And has placed the moon, therein as a light, and made the sun as a lamp'.

(Ch.71:V.17)

This spiritual sun of Islam and the surrounding healthy spiritual atmosphere have continued to bless the spiritual world and will continue to be a blessing till the end of time.

Just as the sun brightens the darkness on earth, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) illuminates the spiritual sphere and turns its darkness into manifest light. Allah has described his advent in the Holy Qur'an as the coming of light.

..There has come to you indeed from Allah a Light and a clear Book.

(Ch.5:V.16)

The light of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) materialises as the light of Allah Himself and, just as in the physical world the sun is the central point around which the other bodies rotate, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) is the central point in the spiritual realm. He is the sun in the firmament of Prophets and heavenly reformers who are like many celestial bodies revolving round him and who borrow light from him. Although he appeared in the world only fourteen hundred years ago, yet all the previous events that took place in the history before his advent, were paving the way for his

appearance and preparing the world to receive his blessed message. He planted the seed of the tree of Islam in the world. This tree is the tree of his own person. It is the tree of the true submission and love for Allah that sprouted from his own self when he appeared in the world and received the Divine message and completed the mission for which he was sent. Allah planned that this was to be the perfect and final tree which should yield its fruits in abundance and in all seasons, for all times to come. Allah mentioned this tree in more than one place in the Holy Qur'an.

Dost thou not see how Allah sets forth a similitude of a good word? It is like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches reach into heaven. It brings forth its fruit at all times by the command of its Lord. And Allah sets forth similitudes for men that they may reflect.
(Ch.14:Vs.25-26)

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a lustrous niche, wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a glittering star. It is lit from a blessed tree – an olive – neither

of the east nor of the west, whose oil would well-nigh glow forth even though fire touched it not. Light upon light! Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wills. And Allah sets forth parables to men, and Allah knows all things full well.
(Ch.24:V.36)

Surely, Allah was well pleased with the believers when they were swearing allegiance to thee under the Tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down tranquility on them, and He rewarded them with a victory near at hand.
(Ch.48:V.19)

Nevertheless, this tree needs to be nourished with continuous spiritual water and proper healthy surrounding conditions for its growth and development. The mere existence of the teachings of Islam is not enough to keep it as a living religion.

We see in nature that although water, which is so essential for life, is present in such abundance in the sea, it is unfit either for drinking or for irrigation purposes unless it is distilled by the process of evaporation and is made usable. In

the same way, the mere existence of moral and spiritual truths in the world can be of no avail to man unless they are continuously purified and presented so to suit his needs.

Allah has set the laws of nature in such a way that the sun sends its rays to the earth to evaporate the water in the seas and turn it to fresh rain water. In a similar way, the spiritual rays of light of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) continue to reach his true followers all the time to light up their hearts and to produce fresh Divine revelation that descends on them, according to their capacities. These true followers are the reformers who continue to appear from among the Muslims whenever the need arises. Allah sends them to the world to revive and refresh the teachings of Islam whenever they are corrupted. The fresh Divine revelation continues to descend upon their hearts to provide them with the guidance needed to purify the teachings of Islam and restore it to its original form. Their own souls continue to flourish into new spiritual plants filling the spiritual environment with fresh green vegetation all the time. This ensures the continuous restoration of the spiritual atmos-

phere to a pure and healthy condition.

Now turning to the celestial bodies in the universe, we will also find some illustrations concerning the spiritual kingdom. From the above, we have seen that the Holy Qur'an likened the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) to the sun upon which depends the life on earth.

However there always comes a time every day when we see in the physical world that the sun sets leaving us in darkness. The sun still exists, but as the earth turns round, the sun goes out of our sight for some time. For this reason, Allah has provided us with the stars and also with the moon that reflects the light of the sun, to light up our way and guide us through the dark night until the sun rises once more. In a similar way, when Muslims strayed away from the true teachings of Islam, they lost the spiritual light of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa), in spite of the fact that his light exists all the time. When spiritual darkness overcame the world, leaving Muslims wandering in ignorance and corruption, Allah first provided the world with the spiritual stars who borrowed their light from the Holy Prophet of

Islam^(sa) and guided the Muslims to the right path of Islam.

And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you may follow the right direction with their help amid the deep darkness of the land and the sea. We have explained the Signs in detail for a people who possess knowledge.
(Ch.6:V.98)

These were the companions and the true followers of the Holy Prophet^(sa) who were sent as reformers to the Muslims. The Holy Prophet^(sa) is reported to have said:

‘My companions are like so many stars; whomsoever of them you follow you will be rightly guided.’

But after some time, as the spiritual darkness increased and encompassed the whole world, Allah, out of His Grace and Mercy, provided the spiritual world also with the moon that would prevail over the darkness and reflect the light of the sun, until it rises once more and fills the spiritual world with brightness and warmth.

This spiritual moon was manifested

in the person of the awaited Imam Mahdi and the Promised Messiah^(as). He was the perfect follower of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa). He reflected in his person the noble qualities of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and thus became his perfect image who could guide the Muslims and revive them back to a new spiritual life. Hence he brought them out of darkness to light.

The Promised Messiah^(as) restored the tree of Islam back to life and left it now for his followers to look after it and nourish it until its green branches can spread to cover the whole world.

The true Muslims today are responsible for keeping this blessed tree healthy and well at all times. They are responsible for protecting it from any danger that may affect its health and for weeding out the harmful weeds that may grow around it and choke it or cause corruption to it. They must ensure that the spiritual rain water which descends from heaven, remains pure and fresh, and continue to water this tree and provide it with the nourishment it needs. They must purify the spiritual atmosphere that surrounds it so that it can maintain its healthy condition and produce its

fruits in abundance at all times. They must taste its fruits and make use of this to sprout themselves into new saplings to surround the original tree. They must fill the garden of Islam with vegetation until the whole earth is covered with ever living green plants so that the earth is transformed into a paradise and everybody in the world can enjoy the taste of these fruits.

But one thing must be clearly remembered. It is not by any human effort that this spiritual environment will be protected. It is only by Allah's Grace that this can be achieved.

Say, 'Tell me, if all your water were to disappear in the earth, who then will bring you clear flowing water?'
(Ch.67:V.31)

It is only Allah Who can bring this pure running water to our help.

Or, Who created the heavens and the earth, and Who sent down water for you from the sky wherewith We cause to grow beautiful orchards? You could not cause their trees to grow. Is there a god besides Allah? Nay, they are a people who deviate

from the right path.
(Ch.27:V.61)

We have seen from the above examples that it is Allah Who provides for the means by which our environment is healed and maintained in a healthy state. As we see in the physical world, Allah has set the laws of nature in such a way that nature cures itself of the ill effects of the pollution resulting from human abuse. In a similar manner, Allah has set the spiritual system in such a way that it is revived and cured from any corruption through the Grace of Allah, Who declared:

Verily, We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.
(Ch.15:V.10)

This verse does not only mean that Allah will protect the text of the Holy Qur'an from any corruption. In its wider implication, this promise extends to all factors that bear upon the preservation of the Qur'an as the perfect source of Divine guidance for the whole of mankind, for all times. It means that Allah will continue to safeguard the benefits and effects of the Qur'an. It is also understood from this that

Allah will always safeguard Islam at the time of trials and dangers. This is done in accord with Divine practice, from time to time, through the appearance of reformers, who set forth from the Holy Qur'an the true guidance that may be needed by mankind at any specific time.

So whether we look after our environment or not, it will be healed through Allah's Grace.

But we will still benefit if we choose to make ourselves a part of the means by which our environment is healed. Doing this, we will definitely reap the good fruits thereof. Otherwise, the one who will detach himself from this living tree, and who will not care about its wellbeing, will deprive himself from its blessed fruits and will be destroyed in the same manner as a dry branch of a tree withers and dies away.

Allah has emphasised the importance of performing these duties in the Holy Qur'an when He described the true followers of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa).

...And their description in the Gospel is like unto a seed-produce that sends forth its

sprout, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and stands firm on its stem, delighting the sowers...

(Ch.48:V.30)

The Holy Qur'an informs us that this description is mentioned in the Gospels which implies that it refers to the true and sincere followers of the Promised Messiah of the Muslims whose advent has been prophesied in the earlier Divine scriptures as the second coming of Jesus^(as) in the latter days. This description teaches the Muslims the real essence of Islam. It urges them to be humble and submissive and obedient to Allah's orders. Just as a seed cannot sprout until it buries itself in the ground and mingles itself with the dust of the earth and loses its own identity, a Muslim will never transform his soul to a new spiritual life until he gives up all worldly interests and kills his personal ego and loses his own self through complete obedience and submission to Allah, as if he is prostrating at the feet of His Creator in readiness to sacrifice anything he possesses for the sake of Allah. He should be ready to encounter any difficulties that he might be subjected to in treading this path and he must occupy himself in

earnest prayers with complete humility. Then Allah will turn to him with mercy and will provide him with the means by which he can nourish and transform his soul to sprout into a new spiritual life. Addressing his followers, the Promised Messiah^(as) has explained this in the following extract from his writings :

‘Do not think that God will let you go to waste. You are a seed of the Hand of God which was sown in the earth. God says that this seed will grow and flower and its branches will spread in all directions and it will become a huge tree. So blessed is one who believes in what God says and does not fear the trials which he suffers on his way to God. For the coming of trials is essential so that God may try you to see who is true in his declaration of Bai’at and who is false. Whoever slips at a trial, he would do no harm to God whatsoever and ill-luck would take him to hell. Were he not born, it would have been better for him. But all those who remain steadfast till the end – they will be shaken with quakes of calamities, and storms of misfortune will batter them,

people will jeer and mock them, and the world will treat them with extreme hatred – shall at last come out victorious. And doors of blessings shall be open to them. God addressed me and said that I should inform my Jama’at that those who believed and their belief is not adulterated with worldly considerations and is free from hypocrisy and cowardice and is such as it does not fall short of any stage of obedience, these are the people who belong to those who are favorites of God. And God says that these are the very people who have a sure footing with their Lord.’

(Ruhani Khazain – Vol.20: Al-Wasiyyat, p.309)

Our life on this earth is limited to a certain period and once we die and leave this world, our physical bodies will be turned into dust and will exist no longer. But our souls will continue to live on. So looking after our souls and our spiritual advancement is the worthwhile effort in this world. Every person must exert all the efforts in his capacity to purify his own soul and ensure that it sprouts into a new spiritual life. Then he can join and unite his efforts with others who

achieved the same results to spread this spiritual greenness into the whole world and turn the earth into a real paradise.

This is what the religion of Islam teaches us. It emphasises the importance of the purification of the soul beside the physical body. As we have seen from the above examples, the purpose behind all the physical commandments and acts of worship is the spiritual progress of a person. The teachings of Islam regarding any physical action symbolise a similar action in the spiritual sense. So as Islam teaches the Muslim to clean his physical body and his environment, it implies that he should purify his soul and his moral and spiritual surroundings as well.

As the green plants on earth refresh the atmosphere and produce oxygen for the continuation of life on earth, Islam teaches its followers to purify their spiritual environment by producing new spiritual plants, so that all the souls in the world can be revived and purified. This will protect the blessed tree of Islam from any corruption that might affect its health. Then it can continue to live and yield more fruits to nourish all

the people in the world for all times to come.

This is the actual environment the protection of which should concern every Muslim. This should be the environment that concerns all human beings.

And the life of this world is nothing but a pastime and a sport, and the Home of the Hereafter - that indeed is Life, if they but knew!
(Ch.29:V.65)

Al-Azhar receives an Ahmadiyya Delegation

By Dr. Ibrahim Assad Odeh

An Ahmadi delegation succeeded in entering the Muslim ‘*Sunna*’ stronghold of Al Azhar and met Al Imam Al Akbar Sheikh Al Azhar (the Grand Imam), Dr. Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, in Cairo, Egypt.

I had been invited to attend a Seminar about Science and Technology in December 2004 in Alexandria Library in Egypt. The Seminar organised an excursion to different historical places such as the Pyramids, the Egyptian Museum or to the Opera. I opted to visit Al Azhar and to meet Al Imam Al Akbar (the Grand Imam).

I met Sheikh Al-Azhar Dr. Muhammad Sayed Tantawi in his chancellery in Cairo on 13 December 2004. He received me very politely, and after a small talk, I posed him the question, ‘What about

Ahmadiyyat, Your Highness?’ He kept silent for a while before saying, ‘Well, probably they made some mistakes. Anyhow Mashikhat Al Azhar deals only with the four main sects in Islam and less with the small Islamic groups, because there are many.’

I said, ‘Your Eminence, most Sheikhs who deliver the Friday sermon in the mosques, consider Ahmadiyyat as false and Ahmadis as non-Muslim and disbelievers. Your declaration about Ahmadiyyat would force all the Mullahs and Sheikhs to change their view and consider Ahmadiyyat as a Muslim sect.’ The Grand Imam said: ‘We consider anybody who declares “there is none worthy of worship except Allah, Muhammad is His Messenger” as a Muslim.’ He invited me to send him some books about Ahmadiyyat and that after assessment they would announce their position. The answer of the Grand Imam did not satisfy me and I pushed him further that as the scholars would take a long time to deliberate, if he would be ready to receive an Ahmadi official delegation in his office? Again after a brief silence, he welcomed the idea. It was as if all my dreams had been fulfilled. I thanked him for his

generosity and his readiness to receive an Ahmadi delegation and left for home.

The idea to ask for a meeting with Al Imam Al Akbar of Al Azhar needs bravery, courage, the right opportunity and an honest mediator. Although I had visited Egypt twice before, only on this occasion did I get the idea to ask the organiser of the seminar about my desire to meet the Grand Imam. It was equally courageous for the Grand Imam to receive an Ahmadi in his chancellery despite the hostility and hatred against Ahmadis.

Upon my return from Cairo and following permission from the Community, a delegation comprising Muhammad Sharif Odeh, Abdullah Assad Odeh, Munir Edelbi and myself was formed. On 8 February 2005, the Ahmadi Muslim delegation met the Imam Al-Azhar. He recognised me from the first meeting with him. We presented the principles of Ahmadiyyat and the differences between Ahmadiyyat and other Muslims who still consider Ahmadiyyat as a non-Muslim group. He asked, 'What are you doing against that? Anybody who declares the *Kalima Tayyaba* (the affirmation that there is none

worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger) is a Muslim.' At the end of the meeting, he guided us to his assistant Sheikh Fawzi al-Zafzaf, a representative to the International Interfaith Organisation and President of the Committee for Religious Dialogue, for further discussion.

The meeting with Sheikh Fawzi al-Zafzaf was very friendly and fruitful. He displayed good knowledge about Ahmadiyyat. But his information sources seemed to be one-sided. The discussion with Sheikh Zafzaf continued on two sessions on different days. After he heard from us the truth about Ahmadiyyat, especially from the founder, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, in his book *Anwar ul-Islam*, he was surprised and happy to know about the sources from the Ahmadi side. He asked us to prepare a short document including the accusations and their refutations. He promised that he would take it to the Permanent Committee for Religious Dialogue in Al-Azhar for discussion. The conclusion of the discussions would be brought to the Imam for his announcement.

Mr Abdul Momin from London

spent three weeks and with the help of some Ahmadi members prepared the required document and sent it to Al-Azhar.

When the scholars of the Permanent Committee of Al-Azhar discuss the document seriously and reach a positive conclusion about Ahmadiyyat, it would defeat those who oppose Ahmadiyyat. Even if the Committee

in Al-Azhar does not reach a conclusion about Ahmadiyyat this time, in my opinion, the event opens a very important door for dialogue with Al-Azhar. Moreover, the Al-Azhar Library will contain not only literature from those who oppose Ahmadiyyat but also books and literature written by the Ahmadis themselves.



Author left with the Al-Imam Al Azhar

*Ahmadi delegation with Sheikh Al-Azhar Dr. Tantawi.
From Left: Mr. Munir Adelbi, Muhammad Odeh, imam Al-Akhbar, Dr. Ibrahim Odeh, Abdullah Odeh and two aids to the Sheikh*



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