

Editorial: Religious Bigotry **2**

Tommy Kallon – UK

Notes & Comments: With Moderates Like These **4**

The so-called custodians of orthodox Islam in the UK leave much to be desired.

Waqar Ahmad Ahmedi – Birmingham, UK

Advent of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is Like the Coming of God **7**

An explanation of why previous prophets prophesied the advent of the Holy Prophet^(sa) metaphorically as the coming of God. Also, a discourse on the Holy Prophet's^(sa) station of intercession.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(gs) – Promised Messiah and Mahdi

Religions Drips With Blood **19**

The history of religion is one of destruction and bloodshed but does true religion teach violence or has religion always been exploited by corrupt religious leaders with ulterior motives?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(tu) – Khalifatul Masih IV

Blessings of Righteous Company **35**

If the company we keep influences our behaviour, there are blessings to be gained from associating with righteous company.

Kalim Anwer – London, UK

A Glimpse into some of the Qualities of Khilafat-e-Rashida **45**

A look at some of the qualities of the Successors to the Holy Prophet^(sa) who could not be corrupted despite the absolute religion and temporal powers they enjoyed.

Waleed Ahmad – Gillingham, UK

I Answer the Prayer of the Suppliant when he Prays to Me **58**

A convert recounts his experience of the efficacy of prayers.

Harris Maguire – London, UK

COVER PIC: Arabian Sunset – BACK COVER: Sultan Mosque, Singapore – (Shutterstock Photo Library)

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EDITORIAL

Bockarie Tommy Kallon– UK

Religious Bigotry

It was on Friday 7th October, the first Friday of the blessed month of Ramadhan 1426AH. Eager worshippers, young and old, bent upon winning the pleasure of their Lord had gathered for the dawn prayers in the Ahmadiyya Mosque at Mong in the District of Mandi Bahauddin, Pakistan. Incited by crazed Mullahs, gunmen on motorcycles arrived on the scene and opened fire with automatic firearms on the worshippers. Eight persons aged between 16 and 73 were killed, some instantly and about 20 others were injured, 3 critically.

Ramadhan is a sacred month in the Islamic Calendar yet even the sanctity of Ramadhan could not prevent such a heinous transgression. This is the level of religious bigotry which unfortunately we find obtaining in Pakistan today. The irony – a very sad one it must be added – is that a country whose founding was justified in terms of allowing Muslims to freely practise their faith, has today degenerated into one of the most religiously intolerant countries of the world. It is the denial of human rights to Ahmadi Muslims by successive

Pakistani governments for narrow political advantage that has encouraged such sectarian extremism and religious fanaticism.

Since 1974 when the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in collusion with orthodox religious clergy, declared members of the Ahmadiyya Community as non-Muslim and heretical to Islam, Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan have endured senseless persecution and discrimination. The anti-Ahmadiyya Ordinance introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq ten years later only served to further fan the embers of religious intolerance. This infamous ordinance made some most basic acts of worship by Ahmadi Muslims illegal. It completely undermined the crucial and basic human right to manifest one's belief. Not only did it marginalise a peace-loving community, it provided a legal framework for their systematic victimisation. Ahmadiyya mosques were demol-ished or desecrated and Ahmadi graves defiled. The property of Ahmadi Muslims was destroyed and their lives dispatched with impunity.

Self-serving Mullahs arrogated to

themselves the right to determine the worth of a person's life. Through provocative publications and inflammatory speeches, they indoctrinate their followers with the twisted belief that destroying the life and property of a supposed heretic is not only justified for a Muslim, it is his duty.

Pakistan purports to be a Muslim State but upholds laws which palpably represent a blight on Islam. It professes to be an Islamic Republic but allows the persecution of the very Community which promotes loyalty to one's nation and seeks sacrifice of life, wealth, time and honour on a global scale for the promotion and glory of Islam.

The current regime denounced the killings in Mong but should not ignore repeated calls for it to repeal the draconian laws which explicitly undercut the activities of religious minorities. It makes 'A Plea for Enlightened Moderation'¹ but should prevent Islam from being exploited by Mullahs and presented to the world as a medieval theocracy; it talks about Enlightened Moderation and should, therefore, take basic steps that would ensure freedom of conscience and stop the wanton slaughter of its citizens in the name of the Gracious God.

The shedding of blood by man in the name of his Creator is the theme of this month's feature article, an excerpt from *Murder in the Name of Allah* by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(rw). In *Religion Drips with Blood* – the introductory chapter – the author demonstrates, from a review of the history of religion, that religion has always been abused by fanatics and made an excuse for the spread of terror. He maintains, however, that true religion founded on Divine revelation does not preach violence and brutality. Those who perpetrate barbarity in religion's name are either anti-religious people or people whose religion has become corrupted. In confirming the true spirit of Islam, he writes:

'If the history of the world from Adam^(as), to the present day were ever lost – and with it the record of every persecution and of every charter of human rights – a glance at the life of the Prophet^(sa) would more than prove that true religion does not cause hatred, persecution, repression or the suppression of thought.'

1. President Pervez Musharraf in *The Washington Post*, 1st June 2004.

Notes & Comments

With Moderates Like These...

The message to the West was clear and emphatic: 'If you want a war on Islam, bring it on.' Had the call been made by Osama bin Laden or his fellow fanatics from a Kabul cave, few would have raised their eyebrows. But it came from a female British journalist... in Manchester.

'I thank Allah that I was captured by the Taliban and not by the Americans', continued Yvonne Ridley, the former *Express* reporter, convert to Islam and now presenter on the 'Islam Channel', speaking at the recent Muslim Unity convention.

In another affair, the outspoken chairman of the Birmingham Central Mosque in the UK Midlands also caused a stir when he doubted the existence of al-Qaeda, before likening Tony Blair's policies against terrorists to

Adolf Hitler's treatment of the Jews.

Since this is the rhetoric of prominent Muslim 'moderates', supposedly on behalf of the mainstream in Britain, it is of little wonder they are becoming less and less popular, not just in the eyes of non-Muslims but among Muslims themselves.

Many Muslims lack the ability to choose the right word at the right time. A lack of understanding of Islam has made them 'shoot from the hips' with the result that they say the most unkind things in front of the media.

The recent controversial BBC Panorama documentary criticising the Muslim Council of Britain for its duplicity also exposed the disturbing reality about the country's most powerful Islamic

body and illustrated how influential Muslims, despite posing as peaceful, can so easily lose credibility.

The Council, championed as the voice of orthodox Islam in the UK, still vociferously denies supporting extremists, yet its leadership admits being inspired by the notorious Maulana Maududi, whom they extol as ‘an important Muslim thinker.’

Such praise for the founder of *Jama'at-e-Islami* upset many Muslims who view the late cleric as a mischievous mullah who taught, among other things, that Islam should be spread with the sword and that Muslims who leave the faith should be put to death. The book *Murder in the Name of Allah*, by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru), is a must-read rebuttal of Maududi's twisted philosophy.

The Council also offended Jews by boycotting the Holocaust Memorial, claiming it wanted the event to highlight ‘the sufferings of all people.’ But if denouncing crimes against humanity everywhere is what the Council calls

for, why do its leaders not condemn the horrific persecution of other Muslims, like the Ahmadis, in Pakistan and Bangladesh?

And when a leading figure from the Muslim Association of Britain, one of the Council's major affiliates, implied that suicide attacks in Israel are justified, none of the Council leaders refuted him. With moderates like these, who needs militants?

Also in the same month, the writer Salman Rushdie wrote a piece for *The Times* in which he blasted the Council elite commenting: ‘If Sacranie is the best Mr Blair can offer in the way of a good Muslim, we have a problem.’

Given the Council's links to fanatical groups, Muslims have every right to mistrust it. And with their defence of radicals like Maududi and Yasin, their label as a moderate voice of Islam becomes even more questionable.

Far from being the best Islam here has to offer, there is already more reputable Muslim leadership in

Britain to which the ‘silent majority’ are turning for inspiration.

A perfect example is the Ahmadiyya Community, one of the first ever Muslim organisations to arrive on British soil, whose supreme worldwide head, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, lives in London. His followers are universally acclaimed for not just preaching but practising their message: ‘Love for All, Hatred for None.’

It is a global community that represents the very antithesis of the terrorists’ cause and is viewed

as the sole authority in Islam capable of bringing peace and unity among Muslims. With its exponential growth globally, that might well soon become a reality.

Waqar Ahmad Ahmedi–UK

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 *Rahemahullahu Ta’ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

Advent of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is Like the Coming of God Almighty – Part 2

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.

If it is asked that if the Messiah and I have attained to this rank then what rank is left for our lord and master, the best of the Messengers, *Khatam-ul-Anbiya*, Muhammad^(sa), the chosen one, the answer is that it is a high and exalted rank which is special to him, the appreciation of which is not possible for anyone else, let alone that any one else should be able to achieve it....

The degrees of nearness to God and love of God from the point of view of spiritual rank are of three

types. The lowest degree, and even that is very high, is that the fire of Divine love should warm the heart possibly to such a degree that the warmed heart might acquire the qualities of fire, but that it should lack the brightness of the fire. When the flame of God's love falls upon this degree of love the warmth generated by that flame in the soul is described as contentment and satisfaction and is sometimes named an angel.

The second degree of love is where the fire of Divine love,

which is generated by the union of two loves, warms the heart to such a degree that it produces a brightness which is not inflammatory. It is described as *Ruh-ul-Qudus* – the Holy Spirit.

The third degree of love is where a burning flame of Divine love falls on the eager ribbon of human love and sets it afire and, assuming control of all its particles, makes it a complete and perfect manifestation of itself. In this condition the fire of Divine love not only bestows a brightness upon the human heart, but simultaneously the whole being is set on fire and its flames illumine the surroundings like the bright day, and no darkness is left and the whole of the being is converted into fire with all its full qualities. This condition which is created by the union of the two loves like a flaming fire is known as *Ruh-ul-Amin*, the Spirit of Security, for it bestows security against every darkness and is free from every opaqueness. It is also called the strong faculty, for it is the most powerful revelation, stronger than which cannot be

imagined. It is also called the high horizon, inasmuch as it is the manifestation of the highest form of revelation. It is also described as: He saw what he saw; for an appreciation of this condition is beyond the imagination or thinking of the whole of creation. This condition has been bestowed upon only one human being who is the perfect man with whom the whole human system has come to an end and the circle of human capacities has been perfected. In truth, he is the highest point of the extended line of God's creation which is the ultimate of all grades of exaltation.

Divine Wisdom having started the creation from the lowest point carried it to this highest point, the name of which is Muhammad^(sa) and the meaning of which is greatly praised, that is to say, the manifestation of perfect excellences. As by his nature the station of this Prophet^(sa) was at the highest, so externally also he was bestowed revelation and love at the highest level. This is the high station

which neither Jesus nor I can reach; its name is the station of getting together and the station of perfect Unity. The previous prophets who have prophesied the advent of the Holy Prophet^(sa) have mentioned this station. As the station of Jesus and myself is such that metaphorically it can be described as sonship, in the same way, the station of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is so grand that past Prophets have metaphorically described the appearance of the Holy Prophet^(sa) as the appearance of God Almighty and his coming has been described as the coming of God Almighty.

(Taudih-e-Maram, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 3, pp. 62-64)

It is not only Jesus who has described the advent of the Holy Prophet^(sa) as the appearance of God Almighty, but other prophets in their own prophecies have used similar terms and have metaphorically described his advent as the appearance of God Almighty, and because of his being the perfect manifestation of God, have called him God. In Psalms of David it is said:



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 (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

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

‘Thou art fairer than the children of men; Grace is poured into thy lips; Therefore God hath blessed thee forever’ (i.e., You have

been granted the station of Khatam-ul-Anbiya)

‘Gird thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty; with thy glory and with thy majesty.’

‘And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.’

‘Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.’

‘Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.’
(*Psalms 45*)

The words: ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of Thy Kingdom is a right sceptre,’ are metaphorical; the purpose

being to display the spiritual glory of the Holy Prophet^(sa).

A similar statement appears in Isaiah, where it is written:

‘Behold My servant whom I uphold; Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth Judgement in the Gentiles.’

‘He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.’

‘A bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth Judgement unto truth.’

‘He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set Judgement in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law....’

‘The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war.’
(*Isaiah 42:1-4, 13*)

The words: ‘The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man,’ are a metaphorical description of the awe-striking advent of the Holy Prophet(sa). (See Isaiah, Chapter 42). Many other prophets have used this metaphor in their prophecies concerning the Holy Prophet(sa).

(Taudih-e-Maram, Ril~An-i KhazYin, Vol. 3, pp. 65-67 footnote)

Holy Prophet’s(sa) Station of Intercession

The question of salvation and intercession is a grand religious subject and the whole purpose of following a religion culminates in it. For testing the truth of a religion, it is a clear and open criterion through which it can be known with full satisfaction that such and such religion is true and from God. It is absolutely correct that a religion which has not set forth this question properly or which is unable to show among its followers with clear distinction present samples of those who have attained salvation, needs no other argument to establish its falsehood; but the

religion which has correctly displayed the true reality of salvation and has put forth such men in its present stage, into whom the spirit of salvation has been fully breathed, has set a seal on its being true and from God.

It is obvious that every human being naturally feels in his heart that because of hundreds of neglects and veils, and eruptions of the ego, and stumblings and weaknesses, and ignorances and darknessees at every step, and continous fears and doubts, and on account of diverse types of calamities and trials, he needs a strong hand which should safeguard him against all these ills, inasmuch as man’s nature is weak and he cannot for one moment trust his ego that he can, of himself, emerge from the darkness of the ego. This is the evidence of human conscience. Besides, reflections shows that sane reason also feels that it needs an intercessor for salvation, for God almighty is in the highest station of Holiness and Purity, and man is in the extreme pit of darkness and sinfulness,

and on account of lack of relationship and resemblance, the average human person is not fit that he should attain salvation by receiving Divine grace direct. Therefore, Divine Wisdom and Mercy demanded that some perfect individuals, who possess a special purity in their nature, should serve as a means of approach between mankind and God Almighty. They should be people whose natures should have taken on a portion of heavenly qualities and a portion of earthly qualities, so that on account of the appropriateness of their heavenly qualities they should receive Divine grace, and on account of their earthly qualities, they should convey this grace which they have received from above to mankind.

It is quite correct to say that men of this type, on account of the perfection of their heavenly and earthly qualities, possess a special distinction among men. They are in a way a different kind of creation. The eagerness which they possess for the manifestation of God's glory and

greatness, and the faithfulness with which their hearts are filled, and the upsurge of sympathy for human beings that they are bestowed, is such an extraordinary matter that it is difficult for others to imagine. It needs to be remembered, however, that all these persons are not equal in rank and that some are at a high level of the natural superiorities, and others are at a lower level and still others at a level which is even lower.

The pure conscience of a person who possesses sane reason believes that the question of intercession is not an artificial one, but that there are illustrations of it in Divine dispensation. The root word for intercession in Arabic (*shuf'a*) means a pair. So intercession (*shafa'at*) indicates that a necessary quality of an intercessor is that he should be related to both sides. On one side, his soul should have a strong relationship with God Almighty as if through perfect union he formed a pair and a connecting link with the Divine,

and on the other, he should also be closely attached to mankind as if he were part of their limbs. In short, for intercession to take place, both these elements are necessary.

That is why Divine Wisdom created Adam in such manner that from the very beginning he established these two relationships in his nature. One relationship was established with God as is said in the Holy Qur'an:

When I have perfected him (Adam) and have breathed into him My spirit, do ye all angels fall down in prostration at once.
(Ch.15:V.30)

This shows that with the creation of Adam, God established a relationship with him by breathing into him of His spirit. This was done so that man should have a natural relationship with God. In the same way, it was necessary that Adam should have a natural relationship with mankind; as they

would be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, they would partake of the spirit which was breathed into Adam and thus Adam would naturally be their intercessor. It is necessary that a person who has descended from him should partake in the righteousness which has been bestowed upon Adam by the breathing into him of the spirit, as is obvious that the young of an animal partake of the qualities and actions of their father. This is also the essence of intercession that a natural heir should partake of the qualities of his ancestor. As we have explained, the root word for intercessor in Arabic derives from pair, which also means consort. Thus, a person who is by nature the consort of another will partake of the qualities of the latter.

This is the basis of the inheritance of qualities. A man's child partakes of human qualities and the foal of a horse partakes of the qualities of a horse. In other words, this inheritance is deriving benefit from intercession. As the essence of

intercession is the relationship of consorts, a person who desires to benefit from the intercession of another must have a natural relationship with that person so that he should be given whatever has been bestowed upon the nature of the other. This relationship subsists in human nature as a gift that one person is part of another, and it can also be promoted by acquisition. When a person desires that there should be an increase in the natural love and sympathy that he has for mankind such increase can be achieved in proportion to the circle of his nature. In the same way, love surges up in the heart of one person for another and increases to such a degree that the lover can find no comfort without the company of the beloved, and in the end the intensity of his love affects the heart of the other person also. He who loves another to the extreme is the one who wishes him well sincerely and in a perfect manner.

Thus, love is at the root of intercession when it is accompanied by a natural relationship, for

without a natural relationship the perfection of love, which is a condition of intercession, is not possible. In order to invest human nature with this relationship, God Almighty did not create Eve separately from Adam, but created her from Adam's rib as is said in the Holy Qur'an:

and created therefrom its mate...

(Ch.4:V.2)

Which means that from Adam We created His mate Eve.

God created Eve as Adam's mate from Adam so that Adam's relationship to her and her progeny should be natural and not artificial. This was done so that the relationship and sympathy between the children of Adam should be lasting, inasmuch as natural relationship is lasting and non-natural relationship is not lasting for it lacks the attraction which characterises natural relationship. Thus, God created naturally both kinds of relationship which

Adam should have had, with God and with mankind.

It is thus obvious that the perfect man, who is capable of being an intercessor, must be one who partakes perfectly of both these relationships, and without this man cannot be perfect. After Adam also, the way of God was that both these relationships were considered necessary for a person who was to be an intercessor, that is to say, one relationship was that the heavenly spirit was breathed into him and God established such a relationship with him as if He descended upon him, and the second relationship was that of the consortship of mankind which was strengthened between Adam and Eve and mutual love and sympathy which shone forth between them more brightly than between others. It was because of this that these people were attracted to their wives. And this is the most apparent sign that they possess the spirit of sympathy for mankind. This is indicated by the *Hadith*:

خيركم خيركم لاهله

That is to say, the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives; that is to say, that one of you is most sympathetic and beneficent towards mankind who behaves well towards his wife. he who treats his wife harshly cannot possibly behave beneficently towards others, inasmuch as God having created Adam, made his wife the first object of his love. Therefore, he who does not love his wife or has no wife to love, cannot attain to the status of a perfect man and lacks one of the conditions of intercession. Even if he is sinless, he is not capable of intercession. He who marries a woman lays the foundation for himself of sympathy with mankind, for a wife becomes the means of establishing a wide circle of relationships and, when children are born, this circle is widened even more. The children in turn find wives and thus their children too come to have grand-mothers and uncles of their own. In this way, such a person becomes habituated towards love and sympathy and the circle of this habit being extended, his

sympathy is extended towards everyone. But those who are reared in celibacy, find no opportunity of extending this habit and their hearts are left dry and hard.

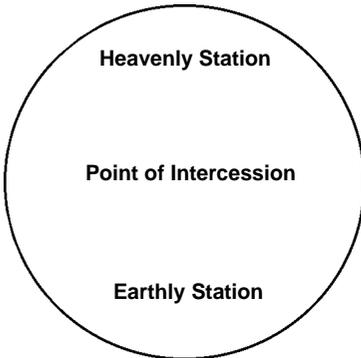
Sinlessness has nothing to do with intercession, because *'Ismat* – sinlessness – only means negation or avoidance of sin. The definition of sin is that a person should earn punishment by deliberately breaking the commandments of God. It is thus clear that sinlessness and intercession are not interrelated for minor children and congenital idiots are also sinless for they are not capable of wilful disobedience. Nor do they earn punishment in the estimation of God on account of any action of theirs. They are entitled to be considered sinless, but are they entitled to be intercessors for mankind and to be called saviours?...

As I have just explained, it is necessary for an intercessor that he should have a deep relationship with God, as if God

‘ ...it is necessary for an intercessor that he should have a deep relationship with God, as if God has descended into his heart and his humanness having died he has become the subject of heavenly manifestations, and his soul has melted and flowed like water towards God and has arrived at the extreme point of nearness to Him. ’

has descended into his heart and his humanness having died he has become the subject of heavenly manifestations, and his soul has melted and flowed like water towards God and has arrived at the extreme point of nearness to Him. It is also necessary for an intercessor that his heart should be overpowered with sympathy for the one for whom he desires to intercede, and the intensity of his agony should make him feel as if his limbs are separating themselves from his body and his senses are all scattered. His

sympathy should carry him to a stage which exceeds that of father and mother and every sharer in sorrow. When these two conditions are created in a person, he is united on the one side with the heavenly station and on the other with the earthly station. Then both sides of the scale are in balance, that is to say, there is a perfect manifestation of the heavenly and also a perfect manifestation of the earthly and he is thus suspended midway between the two.



Referring to the Holy Prophet's^(sa) station of intercession, the Holy Qur'an affirms his status as the perfect man by saying:

*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) ascended towards God and approached as near to Him as was possible and acquired all the perfections of nearness and partook fully of the heavenly station, and then leaned perfectly towards the earthly station and arrived at the extreme point of service and worship and partook fully of the pure essentials of humanness, namely love and sympathy for mankind, denoting earthly perfection. Thus, he arrived at the point of perfection on the one side in the love of God and, on the other, in the love of mankind. As he approached God fully and then approached mankind fully it became the case of one chord between two bows and thus fulfilled the condition for intercession. In His word, God bore witness for him that he occupied a place between God and mankind like a common chord between two bows.

At another place, describing his nearness to God, the Holy Qur'an says:

Say 'My Prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'

(Ch.6:V.163)

That is to say the Holy Prophet^(sa) was commanded to inform people that he had become completely freed from himself and that all his worship was wholly for God....

This verse indicates that the Holy Prophet^(sa) had become so devoted to and lost in God that every breath of his life and even his death had become wholly God's, and that his ego and the creation and means had no part in his being, and that his soul was prostrated so sincerely at the threshold of God that nothing else had the slightest share in it...

As the love of God, and arriving at a high station in nearness to Him, is a matter of which other people cannot be aware, God

Almighty made manifest such of the actions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) as show that he had adopted God in preference to everything else, and that every particle of his was so saturated with the love and greatness of God that his being was like a mirror for the full observation of Divine manifestations. The effects of the perfect love of God, which can possibly be imagined, were all displayed in the Holy Prophet^(sa).
(*Review of Religions – Urdu, Vol.1, pp. 175-1841*)

Religion

Drips *with* **BLOOD**

Part One of the book Murder in the Name of Allah by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(rw), Khalifatul Masih IV. Reproduced in view of relevance of the current debates on Maulana Maudud's philosophy that force can be employed for the purpose of religion.

Did our history begin with the curse of Cain? It is a gory tale of murder, assassination and torture in any event. So much blood has been spilled throughout history that the whole world could be painted red with it – with plenty to spare. When will man stop killing his fellow men? When will his thirst for blood ever be quenched?

Abel was the first man to be killed, by his brother, for no reason. The story of that murder has been preserved by the Qur'an and the Bible as a lesson to us all – it will remain as an example till the end of time. Study history, and one thing becomes clear: that man is an aggressive creature. His aggressiveness has been untamed by the growth of civilisation. Man is as cruel

today as he was thousands of years ago. The story of his ruthlessness, his tyranny and his aggression is long and painful. The fire of human aggression has not been quenched even after thousands of years of savagery.

Assassination of individuals and the annihilation of whole groups of peoples are a repetitive theme of history. States have attacked states; countries have fought against their neighbours and against nations far from their borders. Hordes of people living in the steppes and deserts conquered nations with ancient civilisations; blood was shed by Caesar and by Alexander, Baghdad was destroyed by Hulagu and Gengiz; the soil of Kurukshetra ran red with the blood of Kauravas and Pandavas.

Sometimes blood was spilled in the name of honour, sometimes in the name of revenge for supposed wrongs. Sometimes angry hordes overran peaceful lands in search of food, sometimes in search of world domination. But more often the blood of man – created in God’s image – was shed in the name of his Creator. Religion was used as an excuse for mass murder. Seeing this aspect of human nature makes one wonder if mankind is not the basest and most ruthless species on earth. One expects religion to teach man to be civilised, yet religion itself drips with blood. This fact recalls the incident which took place at the time of the creation of Adam^(as) described by both the Qur’an and the Bible. The Qur’an says.

And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am about to appoint a vicegerent in the earth,’ they said, ‘Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it and shed blood? – and we glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy

holiness.’ He answered, ‘I know what you know not.’
(Ch.2:V.31)

This dialogue between the angels and God is baffling because any book on religious history would seem to prove that the angels were right. If so, why did God refuse to accept their ‘advice’ or uphold their objection to His plan? It was, in fact, an objection to prophecy itself and ultimately to the prophethood of the Seal of Prophets, Muhammad^(sa).

The history of religion in any part of the world at any time is the history of torture, repression, execution and crucifixion. It is disappointing indeed to find that religion, which is supposed to be the last refuge of peace in a world of war and conflict, is a cause of destruction and bloodshed. Religion itself is *not* the real cause of mass murder, however, and it is a mistake to think it is. Religion was not given to man to encourage killing.

When one discovers, with mixed feelings of satisfaction and surprise, that God did not make religion for this purpose, one receives a ray of hope. The vicegerent of God, whose creation the angels questioned, was really a great reformer. The religion he preached was named Islam – the religion of peace. The question remains: why, at first glance, does history create the impression that religion sanctions bloodshed and murder in the name of peace? The Qur'an points out very clearly why a cursory glance at history can lead one to such a conclusion. It cites the past to show that those who perpetuate brutality in religion's name are either anti-religious or people whose religion has been corrupted. There are also religious leaders who have no warmth, compassion, mercy or piety. To be honest, they are hypocrites with a lust for power – cruelty is their ruling passion. It would be a great mistake to associate religion with the misdeeds of such men. The real truth is that God – the

Fountainhead of Mercy – does not allow the followers of any religion to oppress His people.

The Qur'an quotes many historical examples to prove this point. The early part of the prophets' lives is given by the Qur'an as a standard for religious reform or for preaching. If physical force had been allowed by God, then surely it would have been permitted by the founders of religions. It is quite clear that force is forbidden. Those followers who came long after the prophets and preached by force either inherited a religion corrupted by time or were themselves corrupt. They used force in the name of religion, yet their religion opposed the use of force.

The Qur'an's religious history is full of examples of force and violence used in the name of religion by people who had no religion. People were tortured in the name of Allah by those who had not the faintest clue about God. Noah^(as) who called people to righteousness and piety, was

not an oppressor – those who wished to suppress his voice were in the wrong. On hearing Noah's^(as) message they said: *'If you don't desist; O Noah, you shall surely be one of those who are stoned.'* (Ch.26:V.117)

The history of religious persecution, as told by the Qur'an, clearly shows that followers of true religion are the victims of violence. The Qur'an gives the example of Abraham^(as), who called the people to God by using love, sympathy and humility. He had no sword ... not a single weapon. But the elders of his people did exactly what the anti-religious opponents of Noah^(as) had done. Abraham's^(as) father, Azar, said: 'If you do not desist from your belief I shall stone you.' The words used by Azar were virtually identical to those used by Noah's^(as) enemies. Both Noah^(as) and Abraham^(as) were insulted and humiliated, both were beaten and tortured, yet both accepted it all with patience and fortitude. Having lit the fire of oppression and mischief, the tormentors of

Abraham^(as) tried to burn him alive.

Those who opposed Lot^(as) knew nothing whatsoever about religion. Yet they were his enemies and opposed him and his followers in religion's name. They threatened him with violence; they warned him that he and his followers would be banished. They did their best to stop him teaching his religion.

The persecutors of Shuaib^(as) did the same and told him: *'Assuredly we will drive you out, O Shuaib, and the believers with you from our town or you shall have to return to our religion.'* (Ch.7:V.89)

By citing these examples, the Qur'an proves there is a pattern of conversion to true religion and also to the force used by the enemies of truth against such conversion. Shuaib's^(as) reply to the threats typifies the attitude of all God's prophets. He said: *'Even though we be unwilling?'* Is it possible to change hearts by force, can a man be reconverted

to a religion he has discarded after discovering it to be false? And can he be reconverted after he has discovered the truth of a new religion?

No dictator has ever been able to escape this logic. The historical fact is that the sword has never ruled and will never rule men's hearts. If the human body can be subdued by force, then the soul cannot. Belief is a thing of the heart. It is human nature which never changes. Innocent people who are sentenced to death in the name of religion by those who do not understand it will continue to raise their voice against this injustice. They will forever pose the question: 'Do you want us to stick to the beliefs our intelligence has rejected?' Whenever this question has been asked, enemies of religion across the world have accused the prophets of apostasy and sentenced them to death. Inhuman torture and punishments were invented... the story of violence is one which never ends.

Moses^(as) and his followers met the same fate at the hands of the so-called religious heads of the time – Pharaoh, Haman and Korah – who said: '*Slay the sons of those who have believed with him and let their women live.*' (Ch.40:V.26) Conversion from one religion to another was not punished by the prophets, yet they and their followers were punished for the so-called apostasy. After Moses^(as), Jesus^(as) endured similar torture and violence which culminated in an attempt to kill him on the Cross. Bloodshed and violence have always been carried out in religion's name: their victims have throughout time been those found guilty of apostasy. Yet not a single revealed book sanctions the punishment of those who changed from one religion to another. If the texts of revealed Books have been altered by dishonest people, one can hardly blame the Books themselves. By their very nature, Books revealed to God's prophets cannot teach violence.

Making reference to the history of religions, the Qur'an proves

that the prophets and their followers were victims of violence; victims who, nonetheless, accepted brutality with patience. It is beyond one's belief that people who change faiths can be tortured in the name of religion, and prophets of God, who are sent to convert us, cannot accept it either. It makes nonsense of their own mission. The Qur'an also tells how a prophet's followers are punished for conversion not only during his life, but for hundreds of years after his death. Such oppression has no sanction from God.

Then there is the Qur'anic story of the people of the cave. These Christians were persecuted for 300 years, and I have seen the places where these poor people were tortured – the amphitheatres intended for gladiatorial combat with bulls and lions. It was in these places that naked Christians were thrown to hungry wild animals. The animals howled and made short shrift of the defenceless Christians. Sometimes these 'apostates' were thrown to bulls which had

So the Qur'an totally rejects the use of force to suppress religious freedom. It declares that though such suppression takes place, true believers never use force to preach the name of Allah.

been starved for several days. The starving creatures bellowed and snorted and, with hissing screeches, attacked. The Christians were gored or trampled to death. And after this festival of blood, the laughing Romans returned joyfully home. The 'apostates' had been fittingly punished. But while the Christians' legs trembled, their hearts beat strongly with faith in God.

Their persecution went on intermittently for three centuries. And when they found no place to hide, they fled underground to the catacombs. These long labyrinths exist today and they remind us that the Christians could live with insects, scorpions and snakes but

not with religious leaders in their fine clothes.

As well as those people who fled underground – *Ashabi Kahf* – the Qur’an also mentions other Christians who believed in the Unity of God and were burned alive for their pains. God says:

By the heaven having mansions of stars and by the Promised Day, and the testifier and the one who testifies, cursed be the people of the trenches – the fire fed with fuel – as they sat by it and they witnessed what they did to the believers. And they hated them not but because they believed in Allah, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy, to Whom belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is Witness over all things.

(Ch.85:Vs.2-10)

The enormity of these atrocities is made worse because of the so-called religious protectors who actually prevent worship of Allah; their victims feel a greater

anguish from being prevented from worshipping than they do from torture itself. The Qur’an says:

And who is more unjust than he who prohibits the name of Allah being glorified in Allah’s mosques and seeks to destroy them?

(Ch.2:V.115)

So the Qur’an totally rejects the use of force to suppress religious freedom. It declares that though such suppression takes place, true believers never use force to preach the name of Allah.

So far we have told the story of the persecution of prophets who came before the time when God’s light was to illuminate the world. But eventually the sun of eternal truth rose on the skies of the Arab peninsula and the world was soon to bask in the light of Muhammad’s^(sa) message.

For thousands of years the world had awaited the greatest prophet. One hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets had lived and

‘ If the history of the world from Adam^(as), to the present day were ever lost – and with it the record of every persecution and of every charter of human rights – a glance at the life of the Prophet^(sa) would more than prove that true religion does not cause hatred, persecution, repression or the suppression of thought. ’

died in the hope of welcoming this Seal of the Prophets. The man for whom the whole world was created finally appeared, reflecting the full glory of his Creator. He was greater than all the prophets, his religion was complete. But he, too, was persecuted and his persecution was without precedence. Our Master and Lord, Prophet Muhammad^(sa), endured every conceivable form of punishment, torture and torment suffered by the earlier prophets and their followers.

Early Muslims were laid out in the blazing sun. Burning stones were put on their chests; they were dragged through the streets of Makkah like dead animals. They were shunned, and kept hungry and thirsty. They were thrown into dungeons, their

belongings were seized and their families were broken up. Pregnant women were thrown off camels, their inevitable deaths the cause of merriment. Their dead bodies were cut asunder – the liver of the Prophet’s^(sa) uncle was even eaten. They were cut down with swords and pierced by arrows. The Prophet^(sa) was stoned by ruffians and vagabonds and was chased and pelted by urchins till the cobblestones of Taif ran red with his blood. And at the battle-ground of Uhud the Prophet^(sa) was seriously wounded.

This bloodshed took place in the name of religion, because Muslims said *Rabbunallaha*, our Lord, is Allah. This persecution and torture was perpetrated in the name of religion because, according to the polytheists of

Makkah, the Prophet^(sa) and the Muslims were apostates. The polytheist called the Prophet^(sa) and his followers ‘Sabi’ – people who discard their ancestral religion and adopt a new one. In order to put down this ‘evil’, the Makkans adopted methods of torture and suppression which had been used by their predecessors. Muhammad^(sa) and his followers suffered patiently and with fortitude for a long time to prove that evil is caused by anti-religious people and not by followers of the truth.

The Prophet^(sa), exalted by Allah to a position with no equal, showed his persecutors only unsurpassable love, mercy and forgiveness in return for their evil. When victory finally came and the polytheists of Makkah were subdued by the Prophet^(sa), he ordered a general amnesty. There was no massacre and no punishment for his persecutors. No arrests were made. No executions took place. Instead of retribution there was the Qur’anic proclamation:

Let no reproach be on you this day. May Allah forgive you. He is the most merciful of the merciful.
(Ch.12: V.93)

That day the most cruel of the cruel were pardoned. Those who had tormented helpless slaves on the burning sand were forgiven. Those who had dragged Muslims through the streets like dead animals were absolved. Those who had breached the peace were pardoned, as were those who had stoned defenceless Muslims – even the woman who had eaten the liver of the Prophet’s^(sa) uncle.

If the history of the world from Adam^(as), to the present day were ever lost – and with it the record of every persecution and of every charter of human rights – a glance at the life of the Prophet^(sa) would more than prove that true religion does not cause hatred, persecution, repression or the suppression of thought.

But the Prophet^(sa) did not confine his teachings to calling for religious tolerance. Since the

Religion is a metamorphosis of hearts. Religion is not politics and its adherents do not make up political parties. Neither is it a nationality with limited loyalties, nor a country with geographical borders. It is the transformation of hearts – transformation for the good of the soul.

Prophet of Islam^(sa) is ‘A mercy for the universe’ (Ch.21: V.108), a general proclamation is made by the Qur’an: *There shall be no compulsion in religion. Compulsion is unnecessary because, Guidance and error have been clearly distinguished* (Ch.2: V.257) and there is no possibility of confusing the two. On the face of it, this proclamation seems unusual and anomalous. On one hand there was an arbitrary authority, hell-bent on wiping out a small group of people because of their ‘apostasy’ with every means at its disposal. And when this group of ‘apostasy’ gained power, it was told by the Qur’an to proclaim that:

There shall be no compulsion in religion, for guidance and error have been clearly

distinguished, so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle – one which knows no breaking.
(Ch.2.V.257)

But it must be noted that this proclamation is made in the second chapter of the Qur’an, *Al-Baqarah*, which was revealed in the first two or three years after the Prophet’s^(sa) arrival in Madinah, a place where Muslims were not only free from Makkan persecution but also held power. What could be a more human and generous proclamation of peace from a prophet who, only a year or two earlier, had been persecuted for ‘changing his religion’?

People who persecute in the

name of religion are totally ignorant of the essence of religion. Religion is a metamorphosis of hearts. Religion is not politics and its adherents do not make up political parties. Neither is it a nationality with limited loyalties, nor a country with geographical borders. It is the transformation of hearts – transformation for the good of the soul. The home of religion is in the depths of the heart. It is beyond the sway of the sword. Mountains are not moved by the sword, nor are hearts changed by force. While persecution in the name of religion is the repetitive theme in the history of human aggression, freedom of conscience is the Qur'an's repetitive theme.

The Prophet^(sa) was asked again and again to proclaim: *This is the truth from your Lord; let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.* (Ch.18:V.30) Truth is obviously a matter of the heart; it has nothing to do with force. Once it has been, seen it cannot be blotted out by any power. Hence

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the Qur'an's assertion that once truth is known it is our choice to accept or reject it. Yet, elsewhere, the Qur'an says: *Verily, this is a Reminder: so whosoever wishes may take to the way that leads to his Lord.* (Ch.76:V.30) No charter of human rights can surpass the clarity of the Qur'anic phrase ‘*faman Shaa*’ (whosoever wishes). The word ‘whosoever’ is all inclusive. It is surprising that after such a clear declaration anyone could possibly think that Islam supports the use of force.

Again, in the 39th chapter of the Qur'an, the Prophet^(sa), is ordered to tell unbelievers: *It is Allah I worship in sincerest obedience.* Now, as far as you are concerned, *Worship what you like besides Him.* (Ch.39:Vs.15-16)

Since freedom of conscience – freedom to believe and to preach – is the cornerstone of religion, and repression of religious heresy is the aim of anti-religious forces, the Qur'an lays great emphasis on the freedom of conversion. The last line of Chapter 109 of the Qur'an sums up the basic principle of a true religion. *For you, your religion and for me, my religion* (Ch.109:V.7) In an earlier passage, God refers to the same principle by asking a rhetorical question. Addressing the Holy Prophet^(sa), He says: *If thy Lord had enforced His will, surely all those on earth would have believed, without exception? Will thou, then, take it upon thyself to force people to become believers?* (Ch.10:V.100). In the scheme of creation, man must have complete free will to believe or reject; there is no compulsion;

a man must use his reason and understanding. After all, faith is a gift given by God to those He thinks deserve it.

One hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets were sent by God and showed, by their teaching and example, that the bearers of the Divine message are the oppressed, not the oppressors. The prophets won over hearts by moral and spiritual strength, not by physical force. It is a great tragedy that the ordained priests and the turbaned Mullahs with their flowing robes of 'piety' became the tormentors of the innocent in the name of oppressed prophets. They monopolised religion, yet they knew nothing of it. They claimed to protect the honour of their prophets by maligning others, by spreading malicious lies and, above all, by perpetrating crimes of violence which shamed humanity. They did it before the birth of the Holy Prophet^(sa). They do it still.

In medieval Europe, the so-called followers of Christ^(as), –

the popes and the prelates, cardinals and canons, and the elders of the Church – wrote a chapter of terror into the history books. St Augustine called it ‘righteous persecution which the Church of Christ inflicts upon the impious.’¹ Today’s Christian historians admit that this ‘righteous persecution’, inflicted in Christ’s^(as) name, was a disgrace to the Church.

Madame Tussaud’s waxworks museum in London has a strange, moving and terrifying exhibition of this persecution. The museum was originally founded in Paris in 1770 and moved to England in 1802. Its halls are lined with waxworks of famous and infamous people. Its Chamber of Horrors is a kind of underground dungeon. The figures there have been modelled into such uncanny likenesses that you can almost see them breathing. Many visitors there have stopped to ask directions from a friendly looking curator, only to find they have been talking to a dummy! On display are the death-masks from the guillotined heads of

Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, which were personally cast by Madame Tussaud. There is an authentic gallows with other instruments of torture: pillory, stocks, whipping-post, ducking-stool, iron maiden rack, galleys, bed of Procrustes, cross, gibbet,

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halter and many others. Some exhibits are so gruesome that they are covered with screens to keep them away from children and squeamish adults.

It is a strange world where a man can rise to the heights of prophethood and talk with his Creator, then sink to the depths of becoming a priest and

questioning Joan of Arc about her visions of angels. He can sink even lower and become an inquisitor. The instruments of torture shown at Madame Tussaud's tell the tragic story of the Spanish and French Inquisitions. Innocent people were tortured for their so-called apostasy; they were forced to confess that they had recanted from the true religion. When they refused, they were whipped and flogged, put on the rack, lynched, impaled, pilloried, branded and burned. The victims either confessed or died a miserable death. These dignitaries of the Church in all their finery, who tortured innocent Christians, remind one of Christ^(as) with his crown of thorns, bleeding on the Cross and crying with a loud voice: 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' (Matthew 27:46). These were the people who symbolically consumed the flesh and blood of Christ^(as) at Communion services, yet could not recall that the Pharisees had asked Pontius Pilate to crucify Christ^(as) because he had 'apostatized' and abandoned the religion of his

forefathers. But the crucifixion of Christ^(as) pales into insignificance when compared with the Inquisition of medieval Christians. It is with a sense of relief and, indeed, pride that Islam, with its declaration of 'no compulsion in the matter of belief', has finally closed the door on such atrocities in religion's name. But this sense of relief and pride is only short-lived. Any Muslim will lower his head with shame when he sees today's *ulema* (clergy) vying with what the Christian priests of medieval Europe did to devise new ways of suppressing freedom of thought and conscience. And yet these are the very *ulema* who claim to protect the honour of the Holy Prophet^(sa) whom the Qur'an describes as a 'mercy for the universe.'

These *ulema* claim to be the very personification of mercy, but their hearts are without compassion. Instead, they are filled with anger. The use of force in the name of religion has now become part of their faith. In the name of God's holy water

– sent to cool our tempers – they kindle the fires of hatred and anger in the hearts of the innocent. The followers of the Prince of Peace^(sa), whose blood cleansed barbaric Arabia, are now being persuaded to murder helpless people. In the name of the protector of poor people’s unguarded homes his followers are encouraged to rob the homes of people who are powerless to defend themselves. In the name of the Prophet^(sa) who protected the honour of even ruffians’ wives, the happy and loving marriages of Muslim women are annulled and transformed into adulterous relationships. In the name of the builder of the first mosque in Madinah, who offered it to the Christians of Najran for Sunday services, and in the name of the Prophet^(sa) who taught his followers to respect the temples of other faiths, today’s *ulema* incite the masses to destroy the mosques of a small group of people whose lives are devoted to the spreading of *shahada*². The unjust acts the Prophet^(sa) condemned and banned forever

are now being perpetrated in his very name. What would the Holy Prophet^(sa) think if he could see the *ulema* of his *umma* (Community) falsely accusing the elders of other Muslim groups of all sorts of misdeeds and shouting abuse about women and housewives? How will an agnostic react to this demonstration of ‘religious zeal’? What Muslim could think, even for a moment, that our Prophet^(sa), would have advised the *ulema* of his *umma* to deliver provocative, disruptive speeches; or that he would have ordered them to deliver such fiery sermons that entire villages of poor and helpless people were set ablaze? Not satisfied with all this, could the Prince of Peace^(sa) have told religious leaders to treat as apostates all those Muslims whose understanding of Islam did not conform to their own? Would he have sanctioned the killing of them and their women and the destruction of their mosques – said to be the only Divine way to blot out apostasy?

“ Muslims hang their heads in shame and their souls cry out over today’s religious leaders who preach violence in the name of the Prophet^(sa). ”

These are the questions we should all think seriously about. Muslims should consider the attitude of these *ulema*. For suppression, torture, execution, arson and the razing of mosques are not the Prophet’s^(sa) tradition. Every stone in the streets of Makkah over which the so-called apostates were dragged bears witness to this. Every grain of burning Arabian sand where helpless people were tortured for accepting Islam does the same. The cobbles of Taif, where the blood of the Holy Prophet^(sa) was spilled, bear witness to the fact that our great Master – mercifully – did not teach that religious belief was compulsory, that he did not order the burning of houses of worship in the name of worship or the dishonouring of women in

the name of honour. Muslims hang their heads in shame and their souls cry out over today’s religious leaders who preach violence in the name of the Prophet^(sa).

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Blessings of Righteous Company

By Kalim Anwer – London, UK

There is an old West African proverb which states: ‘Life is when you are together, alone you are an animal.’¹ This proverb indicates that man should be with company and should not seclude himself as a hermit. However, the type of company one should spend one’s days with should be chosen with wisdom and not taken lightly. Failing to do this may have disastrous consequences on our lives and on our children’s lives.

The way we behave in our daily lives is shaped by factors of social influence or so a social psychologist might suggest. This can be illustrated in the context of hearing a joke. Consider, for example, a joke which is told among a group. If those who are present all laugh at the joke, whether one of the members in that group understands the humour of the joke or not, he or

she will also laugh. This phenomenon is known as behavioural contagion² in the discipline of psychology. The question is why do people conform in such a way?

A conformity study was conducted by a well-known social psychologist named Asch in 1952. Asch wanted to prove how the decisions made by a single person were influenced by those decisions made from the company he or she associates with. The way Asch tested his hypothesis was by gathering several individuals who, unknown to the single participant taking part in the study, were actually accomplices of the experimenter. The single participant was told the study was about something totally different and not aware that it was about conformity. The next step was to show everyone two cards. On

one card a straight line was drawn (see fig 1) and on the other card three straight lines were drawn, of which one of the lines was in equal length to the previous line drawn on the other card (see fig 2).

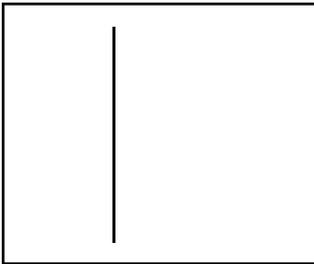


Fig 1

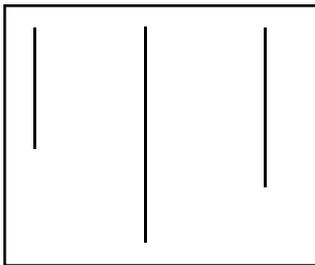


Fig 2

The experimenter then asked everybody in turn, making sure the single participant was asked last, which of the three lines is of equal length to the other line. The accomplices gave the wrong answer on purpose so that the experimenter would see whether the single participant would follow suit in giving the same

answer. The results showed that after all of the tests were conducted, one third of all participants who took part in the study gave the wrong answer and followed the answer of their counterparts³! Asch concluded from the conformity evidenced in the study that it may be due to the desire to fit in to the social group or norm.

What Asch's study tells us is that an individual's decision-making can be influenced by the company he keeps. The question now arises, what if it is a group whose members possess not one iota of righteousness in their hearts? Then if one makes a decision purely to fit into his or her company and that company is inclined to immoral activities, surely the consequences would be disastrous. What is interesting to note is that this phenomenon discovered in the mid-20th century by psychologists, was actually stated in the limitless treasures inherent in the Holy Qur'an approximately 1400 years ago. The Holy Qur'an has stated the benefits of keeping

righteous company and the dangers of being in the company of those who have gone astray. For example, it is stated:

And keep thyself attached to those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure; and let not thy eyes pass beyond them, seeking the adornment of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his evil inclinations, and his case exceeds all bounds.

(Ch.18:V.29)

The verse tells us exactly who the righteous are and it also instructs us to keep company with people of this calibre who pray continually and remember their Lord day and night. If we keep company with people of this nature, psychological evidence suggests that we will also conform to this type of behaviour though something much more is taking place that cannot be based upon psychology alone. A great

spiritual transformation is taking place in our hearts. By being in the company of the righteous, the blessings of Allah are showered upon us and His angels too descend to be within our company. Hadhrat Abu Hurairah^(ra) relates that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said:

‘When a company foregathers for the remembrance of Allah its members are surrounded by angels and are covered by mercy and comfort descends upon them and Allah makes mention of them to those around Him.’

(Sahih Muslim)

The latter part of the verse previously quoted tells us of the company of people who seek to attain greatness in this world without any heed to the eternal and ever-fulfilling Afterlife. They pay homage to materialistic designs and are heedless of the Sovereign Who created them and all that which is in the universe.

The Holy Qur’an speaks more specifically on the issue of being

in righteous company, as we are again reminded to be watchful and remain with the truthful:

O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with the truthful.
(Ch.9:V.119)

The verse indicates that belief is further enhanced by two components – by inculcating the fear of Allah to a degree whereby you are always conscious that He is right beside you and watching over your every action and also keeping company with the truthful. The Promised Messiah^(as) has further elucidated this principle, that is, keeping company with the truthful. He says:

‘The word Insan (human being) is actually derived from Unsan i.e. the collection of two affections. One affection of man is for God and the other is for human beings. Since a human being is closer to him and he finds him very near to himself and moreover he is his own species, he is very much

influenced by him – and very quickly too. That is why the company of a perfect and righteous person grants man the Light which makes him see God and he is thus saved from sin.’

(Malfoozat Vol 3, p.6 cited in So Said The Promised Messiah p.117)

If we, as followers of our beloved Holy Prophet^(sa), do not take heed of such a simple instruction, we will not only lose out on partaking of the blessings that Allah, the Most Merciful, rains upon us but something extremely dangerous will happen. As Allah, the Most Wise, tells us:

O ye who believe! Take not My enemy and your enemy for friends. Would you, offer them love, while they have disbelieved in the Truth which has come to you and drive out the Messenger and yourselves from your homes, merely because you believe in Allah, your Lord.
(Ch.60:V.2)

This verse has the intensity of

It is worthy of note here that the pull of the Holy Prophet(sa) was so great, that he managed to reform a nation with only his sublime character and heartfelt prayers. He not only revived the spiritually dead but raised them to such a lofty spiritual station that even they experienced revelation directly from Allah Almighty.

striking right at the heart. The intensity comes from the fact that Allah, the Most Gracious, speaks in the first person warning us not to be friends with those who have turned their backs on Allah’s law.

The verse tells us that an enemy of Islam is an enemy of Allah Almighty and thus an enemy of the righteous. Even associating with company of this nature will surely lead to our destruction, as we will be led astray and no guidance or mercy will be sent to us. We will be like those who are blind in this world and blind in the Hereafter. In complete contrast, those on whom Allah, the Most Merciful, bestows His favours are upon those who are righteous:

Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely,

Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

(Ch.49:V.14)

Thus we have two options. We could choose to associate with those who Allah dislikes and in turn ruin our own physical and spiritual beings or we can make friends with the righteous and as a result increase our own knowledge and love for Allah to the extent that we may be the recipient of His Divine favours. It is interesting to note that the two types of people can never mix as the vast wisdom of the Holy Qur’an states:

And the blind and the seeing are not alike, nor the darkness and light, nor the shade and heat, nor alike are the living and the dead...

(Ch.35:Vs.20-23)

The Holy Qur'an expresses so beautifully the notion that those who have gone astray can never merge with those who are truly righteous. Had all the great poets over the ages combined all their efforts, they could not even compete with the above verses from the everlasting treasure-trove of the Holy Qur'an. The verses above show a juxtaposition of various attributes. It cannot be said to be dark and yet be light. Thus when the Holy Qur'an tells us that the living are different to the dead, the living are being referred to as the righteous believers as Allah, the Most Merciful, has bestowed upon them a new life. Those who are dead are those who fail to recognise the truth which is the essence of life and thus bring about their own spiritual death; they are no different to those who are already in their graves.

A logical question which arises is how to decide what company one should associate with. In other words, what is and what is not righteous company. If you find that by associating yourself with

a certain companion or company, your faith, moral and spiritual qualities, resolution to perform good works and obedience to the injunctions and teachings of the Holy Qur'an are enhanced, then that companion or company is of benefit to you. If, other than inspire you to good and goodly things, a particular companion or company engenders in you an inclination towards evil and a propensity towards vice, then commonsense dictates that such companionship is bound to hinder your spiritual progress.

It is worthy of note here that the attraction of the Holy Prophet^(sa) was so great, that he managed to reform a nation with only his sublime character and heartfelt prayers. He not only revived the spiritually dead but raised them to such a lofty spiritual station that even they experienced revelation directly from Allah Almighty. The Promised Messiah^(as) comments on this great spiritual phenomenon in the following words:

'Our Holy Prophet^(sa) was a

great Reformer for the proclamation of truth, and restored to the world the truth that had been lost. No Prophet shares with him the pride that he had found the whole world in darkness and by his appearance that darkness was converted into light. He did not die till the people among whom he had appeared had cast aside the garment of paganism and had put on the robe of the Unity of God. Not only this, but they achieved high grades of faith and performed such works of righteousness and fidelity and certainty which are not matched in any part of the world. Such success was not achieved by any Prophet other than the Holy Prophet^(sa). It is a strong argument in support of the truth of the Holy Prophet^(sa) that he was raised in an age when the world had fallen into deep darkness and called for a grand Reformer. He departed the world at a time when hundreds of

thousands of people had abandoned paganism and idol worship and had adopted the Unity of God and the straight path. Such perfect reform was particular to him that he taught a people who were at the level of animals in the ways of humanity; in other words, he converted wild beasts into men, and then turned them into educated men, and then made them men of God, and breathed spirituality into them and created a relationship between them and the True God. They were slaughtered like sheep in the cause of God and were trodden under foot like ants, but they did not abandon their faith, and marched forward in the face of every calamity.'

(pp.4-7, *Lecture Sialkot* cited on pp.211-212, *Essence of Islam Vol I*, Alden Press)

Thus history bears witness to this testimony that the people around the Holy Prophet^(sa) were transformed from drunkards into

saints purely through the blessings of the righteous companionship of the Holy Prophet^(sa). Would that we could spend just one moment beside our beloved Master. May Allah shower His special blessings upon the Holy Prophet^(sa) and his followers!

Another aspect of attaining blessings from righteous company is the institution of marriage as our partners are companionship for us. It is a physical and spiritual law that Allah, the Most Beneficent, made everything in pairs so that we may prosper and increase in our love for the Creator. As it is stated:

Holy is He Who created all things in pairs...
(Ch.36:V.37)

Everything that exists in the universe, be it animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic, has a partner. Thus we too are blessed with companionship in the form of our spouses. As Allah, the All-Wise, says:

They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them.

(Ch.2:V.188)

We should be mindful of what sort of partner we choose to spend our lives with. Hadhrat Abu Hurairah^(ra) narrates that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said:

'Usually one marries a woman for four reasons. For her wealth, for her family, for her beauty or for her righteousness. Give preference to the one who is righteous. May you remain humble.'

(Sahih Bukhari)

Our beloved Holy Prophet^(sa) to whom we pledge allegiance and for whom we are ever ready to offer sacrifices, gave us such excellent advice with regard to finding a suitable companion. If one sticks to such advice and chooses a partner for his or her piety, he or she will surely attain blessings from Allah and the righteous union will shine through all trials and tribulations.

The Holy Qur'an gives us such a beautiful metaphor of marriage in terms of a garment. Just as a physical garment protects us from the elements of nature, similarly our spiritual garment, that is, our partners protect us from satanic insinuation. If one does not take heed of such advice, one will not prosper. What once was harmony in the beginning of the marriage will turn to discord. This Divine spiritual law is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

And marry not idolatrous women until they believe; even a believing bondwoman is better than an idolatress, although she may highly please you. And give not believing women in marriage to idolaters until they believe; even a believing slave is better than an idolater, although he may highly please you.

(Ch.2:V.222)

The Holy Qur'an emphatically states not to marry idolaters. What is idolatry? The inspiring

writings of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi^(as) tell us. Commenting on the verse: *Shun therefore the abomination of idols and shun false speech* (Ch.22:V.31), the Promised Messiah^(as) writes:

'Shun the abomination of idols and stay away from the telling of lies which is no less sinful than idolatry. Anything which turns you away from your true goal, that is an idol in your path.'

(*Roohani Khazain Vol.3: Izala-e-Auham*, Pt. 2, p.550 cited in *Selected Writings from the Promised Messiah*, p.36, Islam International Publications Ltd)

Thus idolatry can even take the form of materialism, as one's quest for materialistic desires takes one away from him quest for the truth. We should be ever wary in this day and age where materialism runs rampant that we choose a partner who we think possesses fear of Allah and not one in whose heart there is a yearning for the world.

The members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community should be ever ready to join with the righteous and forsake those who seek to blow out the light lit by its founder Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). For it is by these blessings of righteous company that Allah, the All-Powerful, will enable Islam to be restored to its full grandeur and glory. As Allah, the All-Knowing, has Himself decreed:

How many a small party has triumphed over a large party by Allah's command! And Allah is with the steadfast.
(Ch.2:V.250)

Thus keep righteous company and pay heed to the wisdom imparted by the Holy Prophet^(sa) who gave his followers the following advice:

The case of a righteous companion and that of an evil companion is like that of one who carries perfume and of one who blows into a furnace. The carrier of perfume might give you some as a gift, or

you might buy some from him, or at the very least you might smell his fragrance. As for the other, he might set your clothes alight and at the very least you will breathe the foul air issuing from the furnace.'
(Sahih Bukhari, cited on p.82 Gardens of the Righteous by Imam Nawawi, translated by Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Curzon Press)

May Allah have mercy on our souls and may He bestow upon us blessings of righteous company. Ameen.

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A glimpse of some of the qualities of ***KHILAFAT-E-RASHIDA***

By Waleed Ahmad – Gillingham, UK

The Holy Prophet^(sa) prophesied about the institution of Khilafat that was to follow him in the following terms:

‘Prophethood shall remain among you as long as God shall will. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of prophethood for as long as He shall will and then bring about its end. An unimaginative kingship shall then follow to remain as long as God shall will and then come to an end. There shall then be a cruel rule which shall remain as long as God shall will and come to an end upon His decree. There will then emerge Khilafat on the precept of prophethood... The Holy Prophet said no more.’

(Masnad-i-Ahmad as quoted by Mishqat in Babul Inzar-wa-Tahzir)

From this we can draw the conclusion that the Khilafat that was to follow the Holy Prophet^(sa) was to be in two parts. The first was to arise immediately after his demise. The second was to arise after a period of kingship and cruel rule. Both periods of Khilafat are in essence *Khilafat-e-Rashida* or rightly-guided Khilafat. The subject of this article is the first period of *Khilafat-e-Rashida* which lasted approximately three decades as prophesied by the Holy Prophet^(sa) when he said, ‘Khilafat shall reign for 30 years and then there shall be monarchy.’ (*Mishkat, Kitabul Fitn*)

The fact that this was a rightly-guided Khilafat is not only substantiated by the above statement of the Holy Prophet^(sa) but through the conduct of each and every incumbent of the office of Khilafat during this period. If we cast an eye on the behaviour of the *Khulafa-e-Rashida* we can easily conclude how they are fully deserving of this accolade of truly being the rightly-guided successors of the Holy Prophet^(sa).

One of the most striking characteristics of the *Khulafa-e-Rashida* was their firm trust in Allah and absolute obedience to the Holy Prophet^(sa). This aspect was displayed time and again by the *Khulafa-e-Rashida* not least by Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) who was the first successor to the Holy Prophet. Here it is related that when he first took office, there developed widespread disorder in the Arabian Peninsula. Certain tribes, on hearing of the demise of the Holy Prophet^(sa), began to rebel. Some refused to pay the *Zakat* while others began to pledge allegiance to false prophets like Musailma, Aswad

‘Ansi, Tulaihah bin Khuwailid and Sajah bint Al-Harith. This was a critical time. Madinah, the then capital of the Muslim State, could face attack from a number of quarters. The Holy Prophet^(sa) had already ordered for an army under Hadhrat Usama bin Zaid^(ra) to depart for the Syrian border but the army was still in the outskirts of Madinah when the news of the Prophet’s^(sa) demise reached them and they stopped to receive further orders.

It was at this juncture that senior Muslims advised Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) to recall the army and since the position of the Muslims still remained weak, not to inflame the rebellious tribes by insisting that they pay the *Zakat* for the time being. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was to have none of this. Having firm faith in Allah he said, ‘The marching of the army cannot be postponed even if Madinah becomes as lonely as beasts can enter into it and kill me. I cannot put the sword into the sheath drawn by the Prophet himself.’ He steadfastly ensured that one of the last instructions given by his

spiritual master were carried out and according to one tradition, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) himself accompanied the army to the outer limits of Madinah. On this issue of *Zakat* again his steadfastness on a matter of principle shone through when he announced:

‘Under the circumstances, if with reference to Zakat you withhold as much as a string to tie a camel, as the Khalifa of the Holy Prophet, it will be my duty to fight for it, whatever the consequences. I will be prepared to face all the risks but I cannot be a party to the compromising of any fundamental issue.’

Such conviction in Allah and determination of preserving the principles of the Islamic faith no matter what were a key characteristic of *Khilafat-e-Rashida*. In the case of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) his conduct bore ample fruit. The army sent to Syria returned intact. The rebellious tribes, uncertain of the true strength of the Muslims, dared not attack Madinah and they

were soon brought under control eventually after military intervention.

Khilafat is an office that is accorded to the incumbent by Allah and no man or woman has the right to take it away. This is a truth that was patently understood by all the *Khulafa-e-Rashida*. In the case of Hadhrat Uthman^(ra), when the insurgents were bent on deposing him and demanded his abdication, he rightly refused. In doing so he was not only following a basic principle associated with Khilafat but also a specific advice rendered to him by the Holy Prophet^(sa) who had once said to him:

‘Allah will bestow upon thee a garment which people will try to remove from thy person but take care that you do not allow them to do so.’

(Intrigues Against Khilafat-e-Rashida and their Impact, p.39, by Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad)

Sadly Hadhrat Uthman’s^(ra) brave efforts of defending this Divine

institution were of no avail. Rebellion and disrespect to the office of Khilafat had run deep among some groups who chose to first abuse the Khalifa in public and then succeeded in killing him. This event drove a death knell into the first period of *Khilafat-e-Rashida* and broke the unity of the Muslims. The words uttered by Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) moments before his murder ring true to this day: 'If you succeed in killing me, you shall never be able to remain united, nor able to offer your prayers or face the enemy in unity.' The unity of the Muslims broken and the very institution of Khilafat was lost within five years of this event.

This demonstrated that Khilafat is a Divine bounty. If one shows ingratitude towards it, Allah will remove it. As it is a reward to those who believe and do good works, it brings to the fore for the office such personalities that are truly benevolent to the masses; whose conduct and sense of duty is derived from their fear of God and who act solely for His sake. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) used to say, 'My

heart is hard and soft for the sake of Allah only.' It is, in fact, true of the entire conduct of the *Khulafa-e-Rashida* that each of their actions could be traced back to their fear of God.

Being God-fearing, the rightly-guided Khulafa were averse to the pleasures of this world. In this regard Hadhrat Ali^(ra) in warning others of the evil of pursuing the world used to say, 'The world is a carcass, he who wants to acquire it, should be ready to live with the dogs.'

It is this aversion of the world and the constant seeking of the pleasure of Allah that lay at the heart of the simplicity shown by the *Khulafa-e-Rashida*. It is stated of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) that he tried not to allow his own accession to the office of Khilafat to change his simple ways. For six months after becoming Khalifa he continued to live at al-Sunh, a suburb of Madinah, in a dwelling of palm trunks. He used to walk or ride to the Holy Prophet's Mosque in Madinah daily to fulfil his duties. It was

only as the affairs of the State took more and more of his time, that he moved his residence to his apartment in the Mosque.

Similarly of Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) it is related that there was no dearth of slaves and servants for him but he would often do his personal work himself. At night, he would manage to take water for ablution himself for his *Tahajjud*¹ prayer rather than give trouble to anyone else.

Hadhrat Umar^(ra), commonly given the title of 'the Great', for his outstanding achievements as Khalifa, was a personification of simplicity. His clothing consisted of a simple shirt made of coarse cloth. He would take bread, made of non-sifted flour generally with olive oil. Meat or any other good food would rarely be present on his dining spread. Once a companion, Utba bin Farqad, said that should he choose to take better food the exchequer will not be unduly affected. Hearing this Hadhrat Umar^(ra) replied, 'I am very sorry Utba that you want to induce me for worldly luxuries.'

Being Head of State, he had to meet foreign dignitaries and emissaries. He was advised to improve his clothing. He declined saying he could not forget and give up the way of life the Holy Prophet^(sa) had shown. The Holy Prophet^(sa) never enjoyed a comfortable and luxurious life so how could he? Perhaps his simplicity was best displayed when he was asked to sign the treaty on the fall of Jerusalem. Here it is said when he embarked on this journey he maintained a practice of humility and simplicity throughout. No great caravan was organised; no multitude of splendidly dressed guards were designated to accompany him. Instead the travelling party consisted of little more than a camel and a servant. When it came to the issue of who would sit on the camel, Hadhrat Umar^(ra), a stickler for absolute equality, insisted on the servant taking turns to sit while he walked and vice versa. He was simply dressed as an ordinary person of the day. When he was received at Jabia near Jerusalem by the Muslim Chiefs, he was offered a Turkish

horse and better clothes. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) declined saying ‘Allah has greatly honoured us with Islam and that is quite sufficient for us.’ It was in this simple austere state that he entered Jerusalem to formally take the city and sign the treaty.

This sense of simplicity was also mirrored by Hadhrat Ali^(ra). He too would take simple food and wear simple dress. He was known to mend his own shoes. He would always avoid rich food saying: ‘I do not want to make myself habitual of rich food.’ Once in a cold winter night he covered his body with an ordinary sheet but was shivering. People, seeing him in such a condition, asked why he did not fulfil his requirement from *Bait-ul-Maal*² adding, ‘You and your family also have some rights over it.’ In reply he said, ‘I do not want anything for myself from your shares. I have brought this sheet from Madinah.’

This reluctance of taking anything from *Bait-ul-Maal* was also shared by Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) before him who not only refused

to take anything from *Bait-ul-Maal* but even funded some public projects from his own pocket. Hadhrat Ali’s^(ra) reluctance to allow even a penny from *Bait-ul-Maal* to be spent on him and his family is demonstrated by another incident. Here it is related that once a tribute from Isfahan of honey and fat along with other items was received. Umme-Kalthum, one of the daughters of Hadhrat Ali^(ra) wanted some honey and fat and obtained this from the *Bait-ul-Maal*. When Hadhrat Ali^(ra) heard of this he ordered the immediate return of the casks. When it was noted that some honey and fat had been consumed from it, he paid for the difference from his own pocket.

This showed Hadhrat Ali’s^(ra) scrupulous honesty and it was a trait that was shared by Hadhrat Umar^(ra). Of him it is written that once, when he became ill, he was advised to take honey. There happened to be some honey in *Bait-ul-Maal*. Instead of obtaining it directly, Hadhrat Umar^(ra) waited till people gathered for

prayers in the mosque and asked them if he could do so. Only then did he take it. (*Kanz-ul-Ummal Vol VI, p354*)

How refreshing it is to learn of such honesty. Khulafa of *Khalifat-e-Rashida* were, for all intents and purposes, absolute rulers. They reigned over both the religious and temporal spheres of their people's existence. If they wanted to they could use and abuse any power at their disposal. Yet they chose not to. Inspired by the fear of God in their hearts, they were able to suppress all evil temptations and were driven to rule with responsibility, honesty and compassion. The genuine concern and compassion for others they displayed is heart rendering. Each one of the *Khulafa-e-Rashida* displayed countless examples of this compassion for the less fortunate.

For example, it is related that during the Khilafat of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) there lived an old blind woman in Madinah. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) would visit her daily but always found that

someone had anticipated his visit and supplied all her needs. One day he went early to the house and found the person who visited her was none other than the Khalifa of the time Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra).

This sense of compassion for others was in keeping with the character of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra). He was, it is said, by nature meek and tender-hearted and his eyes would frequently well up with tears at the news of anyone who was in need or suffering. He would go to the helpless and needy without hesitation. He would make people's cattle graze in the field and even milk their goats for them.

When he became Khalifa, a woman whose goats were milked by him, came and said, 'You have now become Khalifa who will milk my goats?' Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) comforted the lady and replied, 'You need not bother, the responsibility of the Khilafat cannot keep me away from serving the people.' Thus Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) continued to serve

this lady and others in this way personally.

This sense of duty of serving the people was vividly displayed by Hadhrat Umar^(ra). Tabari writes on the authority of Hudhaifah:

‘It was Umar’s daily routine to visit the home of soldiers who were on the battlefield and ask their womenfolk if they had to make any purchase from the bazaar he would do it for them. They would send their maids and Hadhrat Umar would make the purchases and hand over to them. When a message came from the battlefield, bringing letters from soldiers, the Khalifa would himself deliver them at their homes and tell the inmates that the messenger would return on such and such date, and they should keep their letters ready by that time. He would himself supply paper, pen and ink, and when there was no literate person in a family, he would himself sit outside the door and write to their dictation.’

It is known that so vigilant was he to ensure that everyone under his stewardship was looked after, that he frequently went round at night to tend to people’s woes. Aslam, Hadhrat Umar’s^(ra) slave, relates that once they came to a place called Sarar about 3 miles from Madinah. There Hadhrat Umar^(ra) saw a woman cooking something and her children crying around her. The woman said that she did not have any food and to help calm the children she was pretending to cook. There was nothing in the pot apart from water. The Khalifa was deeply moved. He immediately returned to Madinah, took a pack of flour, meat, butter and dates from the *Bait-ul-Maal* and told Aslam to load them on his back. Aslam offered to carry them for him. ‘Yes,’ replied the Khalifa, ‘but on the Day of Judgement you will not be there to carry my burden for me.’ So he carried the load himself and placed the provisions before the woman. She cooked and baked bread while the Khalifa tended to the fire. When the food was ready, the children ate and started to play about.

Hadhrat Umar^(ra) saw their joy and left contented. The woman thanked him and said, 'May God bless you! In truth you are better fitted to be a Khalifa than Umar.' (*Kanz-ul-Ummal Vol VI, p343*)

Once Hadhrat Umar^(ra) was feeding some people when he saw a man eating with the left hand. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) asked him to use his right hand upon which the man replied that he had lost its use in the battle of Yarmuk. The Khalifa was deeply touched. He sat down by his side, said a few kind words and then asked him if he needed any help on a daily basis. Accordingly, Hadhrat Umar^(ra) gave him a servant to wait upon him and attend to his needs of washing and dressing. (*Kanz-ul-Ummal Vol VI, p354*)

On another occasion, Hadhrat Umar^(ra) was once making his rounds at night when he saw a Bedouin sitting outside the door of his tent. The Khalifa sat down with him and opened a conversation when suddenly a cry issued from inside the tent. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) asked who it was

and was told that it was the wife in throes of childbirth. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) came home, took his wife Hadhrat Umme Kalthum^(ra) with him and, with the Bedouin's permission, sent her into the tent. A little later the child was born and Hadhrat Umme-Kalthum^(ra) called out, 'Ameer-ul-Momineen³ congratulate your friend!' On hearing the words 'Ameer-ul-Momineen', the Bedouin became startled and sat down in a respectful manner. 'Never mind', said Hadhrat Umar^(ra) 'come to me tomorrow and I shall give a stipend for the baby.'

This sense of duty to the people is also illustrated by another incident that took place in the Khilafat of Hadhrat Ali^(ra). Here it is related that one day while Hadhrat Ali^(ra) was walking on a road side near the market of Kufa, a man who had come from outside took Hadhrat Ali^(ra) for a labourer and asked him to carry his luggage. Hadhrat Ali^(ra) did so. As they progressed along the streets, someone recognised him and addressed him with the words 'Ameer-ul-Momineen.' The out-

sider, on realising his mistake, began to apologise but Hadhrat Ali^(ra) was to have none of it. He said, 'You need not apologise because I think it is my duty to help them who require help.'

This sense of selfless duty was deeply rooted in all the *Khulafa-e-Rashida* and was a key feature that made them such outstanding leaders of their day. Another prominent feature was their sense of justice. It should be noted that the Holy Qur'an does not advocate any specific system of Government. What it does advocate is that system of Government, in whatever form, to conduct itself fairly and with a high degree of justice. This sense of fairness and justice was not lost on the *Khulafa-e-Rashida*. They recognised that if fairness and justice was truly to be applied then they were no different to anyone else before the law. This was beautifully illustrated by an incident during the Khilafat of Hadhrat Ali^(ra). Here it is related that once a Jew stole Hadhrat Ali^(ra)'s armour. When the Khalifa later saw the offender with his

armour, he could have easily snatched it by force but this would have been unlawful. So Hadhrat Ali^(ra) chose to take the matter through the proper judicial process and made his claim before a *Qadi*⁴. The *Qadi*, in accordance with the law, asked Hadhrat Ali^(ra) for proof of ownership. Hadhrat Ali^(ra) could not produce any such proof and so the case was dismissed even though it was being made by the Khalifa of the time. Hadhrat Ali^(ra) had no option but to accept the verdict which he did. However, the Jew was so impressed with this sense of equality and standard of justice that he accepted Islam.

This same sense of justice was also displayed during the Khilafat of Hadhrat Umar^(ra). It is recorded that Hadhrat Umar^(ra) took great care to impress the principle of absolute equality of everyone before the law. He himself went to court on several occasions as a party to suits. Once he had a dispute with Ubayy bin Ka'b who lodged a suit against the Khalifa in the court of Zaid bin Thabit. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) appeared as a defendant. Zaid showed him

honour. 'This is your first injustice', said Hadhrat Umar^(ra) who then sat down alongside Ubayy. Ubayy had no proof and Hadhrat Umar^(ra) denied the complaint. According to usage, the plaintiff desired that Hadhrat Umar^(ra) take an oath. In view of the defendant's position as Commander of the Faithful, Zaid requested Ubayy to waive the right of oath. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) was annoyed at this partiality saying to Zaid, 'If Umar and any other man are not equal in your eyes, you are not fit for the post of a judge.'

It was this kind of sincere, selfless, compassionate and just conduct by *Khulafa-e-Rashida* that exhorted praise even from their enemies. The tributes paid to Hadhrat Umar^(ra) for his excellence of leadership by non-Muslims is well documented. Of Hadhrat Ali^(ra), the following passage is relevant. Once Amir Muawiya, who had been an implacable foe of Hadhrat Ali^(ra) during his Khilafat, asked Zirar Sadayee about the qualities of Hadhrat Ali^(ra). In his reply Zirar replied:

'He was noble minded and powerful. Whatever he would say would be decisive. His decisions were always based upon justice. Light of knowledge would come out from his every side. He hated the world and its captivity. He used to live among us as we do. When we would ask something he would reply. He would keep us to him and would keep himself to us. He took care of the poor... He would respect the religious people. He never allowed the powerful persons to have lust for wrong and did never disappoint the weak in getting justice. I often saw him weeping alone at night and uttering 'O world thou cans't cheat me, thou art posing as if thou lovest me, but I know. I divorce thee thrice.'

Hearing these words, Amir Muawiya began to weep and said, 'May Allah have mercy upon Abul Hasan. By Allah he was exactly as you say.'

This then was the golden period of the early Islam surpassed only by the life of the Holy Prophet^(sa) itself. These Khulafa, through

their righteous conduct, demonstrated the true art of good leadership. They were absolute rulers and had absolute power. Power, it is said, corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. This may be true except in the case of Khilafat because here that absolute power is perfectly balanced by another absolute inherent in the incumbent – the absolute fear and love of God.

Were this not so, then Hadhrat Umar^(ra) would not have been driven to go out at night to ensure that his subjects were looked after, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) would not have milked the lady Bedouin's goats and were this not so then Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) would not have gladly sacrificed his life in defending the institution of Khilafat and Hadhrat Ali^(ra) would not have carried the luggage of an ordinary citizen when asked to do so.

This overarching sentiment of the fear of Allah that dominates every action of the Khalifa, was vividly expressed by the fourth successor of the second period of *Khilafat-*

e-Rashida, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru). In his first address after becoming Khalifa he said,

'It is true that I am not answerable to you, nor to anyone else, nor to any individual of the Community. But this is no freedom. For now I am directly answerable to my Lord. You can be unaware of my faults, for you have no access to my heart. You know neither the apparent, nor the hidden. But my Lord sees through the inmost depths of my heart. If any pleas are false, He shall not accept them. Only such decisions will be approved by Him which I take sincerely, with full faith in Him and regardful of His fear. So my neck, freed from the hold of weak mortals is now in the grip of the Sovereign Lord of this universe and is bent low before Him.

This is not a light burden. My whole being is trembling under its crushing weight. The idea that my Lord be pleased

with me overwhelms me. How I wish that He may let me live only to that moment until I am able to walk in the ways of His pleasure! How I wish that He may grant me power to desist from thinking and doing anything even for a moment which is against His pleasure and that such a notion may never cross my mind... ’
(Ahmadi Muslims p.123-124)

Khilafat is a reward from Allah to those believers who do good. A Divine reward for goodness cannot be one except infused with goodness itself. And so is the case with the reward of Khilafat. It becomes vested in such noble and saintly individuals whose duty to God compels them to lead with compassion, justice, scrupulous honesty and bring nothing but good to the people they serve.

That Khilafat-e-Rashida is with us once again and according to the Hadith cited at the opening of this article. It is to remain with us forever. This is because the Holy Prophet^(sa) did not speak of it coming to an end and instead

remained quiet after mentioning its advent. It is, therefore, incumbent on us to recognise the true value of this noble institution so that we and our future generations, can remain under its canopy and become the recipients of the innumerable blessings associated with this reward of Allah.

References

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I Answer *the Prayer of the Supplicant* when he Prays to Me

By Harris Maguire – London UK

This article is about the gracious acceptance of my prayers relating to the miraculous recovery of my father-in-law from a major illness. It is a testament to the beauty and power of prayer; that blessed mercy which Allah has bestowed on mankind.

It should be noted that I am by no means suggesting that my father-in-law was cured from what I did, as I was only one of many who performed such pious deeds as fasting, praying and giving alms. All the fasting, the alms and the prayers throughout the night that I did; none of these can equal the prayers that Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V offered for my father-in-law.

Recently my father-in-law, Mansur ul haq Khan Sahib was rushed to the Accident and Emergency,

Hillingdon Hospital, with a severe allergic reaction to a neurofen tablet taken the night before. As the days passed the reaction got worse and moved from a normal allergic reaction to Steven Johnson Syndrome, a severe allergy caused by an immune deficiency. Several times during the first two weeks when he was in Intensive Care on a ventilator (life support machine) we were warned that he was on the balance of life and death; that only time would tell which side he would fall. Everyday, a new hurdle came along which seemed to tip him towards the latter. However, by the Power and Grace of Allah, it has been overturned and he has been granted an almost full recovery. *Alhamdulillah*. (All praise belongs to Allah.)

I was at work on 6th May 2005 when my wife informed me that

her father had been rushed to Accident & Emergency with severe rashes all over the body, swelling of the lips and a very high temperature. The next day I began fasting by way of beseeching Allah to save my father-in-law, as I had found in the past great blessings from fasting in the hope of winning Allah's favour of acceptance of my prayer.

During that first week, I took time off work and from midnight till dawn when my fast would begin I would offer *nawafil* (voluntary prayers) one after the other. During my prayers I asked so many things of Allah, everything I could think of covering every possible situation. How I thought of all these things I am not too sure, how I had the energy and willpower to continue to pray for three hours each night I am uncertain but of course when people you care deeply for are unwell your life changes and so does the way you act.

I knew that Allah is the best Healer, that to Him do we belong and to Him do we return. I knew

that only He could restore my father-in-law's health. Looking through the *Bukhari* compilation of Traditions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) for an appropriate *du'a* (supplication) to use, I found the following which felt very apt.

Hadhrat Ayesha^(ra) relates that whenever Allah's Messenger^(sa) paid a visit to a patient or a patient was brought to him, he used to invoke Allah with these words:

'O Allah, Lord of mankind, take away the illness. Cure him as You are the One Who cures. There is no cure but Yours, a cure that leaves no disease.'

(Bukhari)

I also read another Tradition wherein Hadhrat Abu Hurairah^(ra) narrates that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said, 'There is no disease that Allah has sent down except that He also has sent down its cure.'*(Bukhari)*

On the 8th May, I got the call while at home that they had to perform a surgical procedure on my father-in-law which involved

inserting a tube down his throat into his lungs to clear them out. This was quite risky because if performed under general anaesthetic there could be possible brain damage and otherwise it would be very painful if performed without anaesthesia.

I prayed for Allah to guide the doctors to make the right decision. I also prayed for Allah to give them knowledge of the human body as He created man and is All-Knowing. I asked that the procedure be done so easily that even the doctors would be amazed and asked that father would have the strength from Allah to bear whatever burden he had to do.

Later I got the phone call from my wife to say everything had gone well, that my father-in-law had been extremely helpful and a very good patient. They managed to put the tube through the nose as the mouth was too swollen to do it that way. I was totally amazed and immediately offered prayers of thanksgiving. Everything I had spoken to Allah about and asked of Him seemed to have been granted. It was a truly amazing feeling.

But we were informed that an electrocardiogram had been done prior to this procedure which revealed that he had had a mild heart attack as there was some damage to his heart. As he already suffers from angina due to two narrowing arteries, this was another blow and yet another complication.

I was looking for further supplications to make which I found in the book *Welcome to Ahmadiyya, the true Islam* by Dr. Karimullah Zirvi in the form of the *Istikharah* prayer – a prayer of the Holy Prophet^(sa) when in need of Divine guidance. I performed two raka'ats of prayer and said the *du'a* in English, as my Arabic is quiet poor due to my inability to learn languages well. I did read the phonetic verse as best I could, hoping that Allah would see my intention and the fact that I was an English convert who had not been taught Arabic as a child. I went to sleep that night and did indeed get a response from Allah in the form of a dream. I saw my father-in-law come home well and he sat by me on the bed and told me that he had become a Sufi Ahmadi Muslim.

He explained to me his reason which was that an Iranian doctor had cured him of his disease.

As the days went by father seemed to get worse and worse and it looked out of place to even mention this dream to anyone as it seemed so unrealistic that he could walk home whilst seeing him in the Intensive Care Unit wired to all those machines and tubes, in pain and unable to talk or unable to breathe properly.

I found the following tradition narrated by Hadhrat Anas bin Malik^(ra) in which Holy Prophet^(sa) is reported to have said:

‘None of you should wish for death because of a calamity befalling him but if he has to wish for death, he should say: “O Allah! Keep me alive as long as life is better for me and let me die if death is better for me.”’ (Bukhari)

I said a prayer for my father-in-law along these lines adding that if his time is set then let it come quickly otherwise give him a speedy recovery.

The next day he was a lot better and was in better spirits. Again it seemed that my prayers had been answered.

On the 20th of May my father-in-law was finally moved from Hillingdon to Mount Vernon, a specialist hospital in burn victims. So when he was moved there we had hoped that now all would be cleared up. The next day he had four angina attacks, which Mount Vernon was unable to treat so that he had to be rushed back to Hillingdon via ambulance.

I prayed for him and his heart condition and for Allah to safeguard him and kept repeating, as I always did in every *raka’at* of every prayer, the *du’a* asking for Allah to remove the ailment completely. Also at hospital and at home I would read the Holy Qur’an from Surah Ya Sin (Chapter 36) onwards which was very apt to the situation and brought hope and understanding to this situation.

The next day his angina attack had ceased and on 24th May he was moved back to Mount Vernon and

there he made great recovery from his skin damage. It is amazing to think that he lost 60% of his skin and did not get any infection and has survived this ordeal. We were surprised when, within a week, they said he could go home. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the Worlds.

This is proof of the amazing blessings in following Allah's ways – fasting, giving alms and especially prayer – because for my father-in-law to survive all the health problems he experienced day after day to me is nothing short of miraculous.

I kept asking in my prayer based on what I believe I heard Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) say in a Question and Answer Session that converts should ask in their prayer for Allah to show them signs. I kept asking for Allah to show me, as a convert, a sign of His Power, to show all, how much can be done through prayer and fasting. I am amazed how much I have witnessed with my own eyes. As it says in the Holy Qur'an:

And when My servants ask

thee about Me, say, I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way. (Ch.2:V.187)

I chose the line, *I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me*, from the verse of the Holy Qur'an above as the title of this article because it is all about the acceptance of prayers. My heart cries from immense love that Allah shows to mankind when all man has to do is follow His simple and beneficial teachings. May Allah keep us all in the right path with sincere and constant prayers at all times as prescribed by Allah Himself and forgive us our faults. Ameen.

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