

MANAGEMENT BOARD

- Mr Munir-ud-din Shams (Chairman)*
Mr Mansoor Shah (Secretary)
Mr Naseer Ahmad Qamar
Mr Mubarak Ahmad Zafar
Mr Mirza Fakhar Ahmad
Mr. Abdul Baqi Arshad

CHIEF EDITOR AND MANAGER

Mansoor Ahmed Shah

EDITORIAL BOARD

- Basit Ahmad*
Bockarie Tommy Kallon
Fareed Ahmad
Fazal Ahmad
Fauzia Bajwa
Mansoor Saqi
Mahmood Hanif
Mansoor Hyder-Hanif
Navida Shahid
Sarah Waseem
Saleem Ahmad Malik
Tanveer Khokhar

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

- Amatul Hadi Ahmad*
Farina Qureshi

PROOFREADERS

- Abdul Ghany Jahangeer Khan*
Shaukia Mir

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

- Tanveer Khokhar*

PUBLISHER

Al Shirakatul Islamiyyah

DISTRIBUTION

Muhammad Hanif

All correspondence should be forwarded to the editor at:

The Review of Religions
The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London, SW18 5QL
United Kingdom

Email:

editor@thereviewofreligions.co.uk

© Islamic Publications, 2007
 ISSN No: 0034-6721

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

CONTENTS

January 2007, Vol.102, No.01

EDITORIAL – The Concept of Limbo in Catholicism

If the Catholic Church decides to remove limbo from its teachings what will be the implications for Christian Holy Qur'an. 2

ESSENCE OF ISLAM – Part 15 –Bounties Received by Followers of the Holy Qur'an

A discussion of the many bounties and gifts from Allah bestowed on those who follow the message of the Holy Qur'an. 6

VEIL IS AN ISLAMIC COMMANDMENT

Address given by the he the Lajna UK ijtima 2006 on the importance of purdah for Ahmadi ladies in light of the recent discussion in the British media about the veil. 22

PARDAH – the Garment of Taqwa

An article by a convert to Islam discussing her thoughts about the role of the veil in a Muslim's life.
By Saliha Malik, USA 38

ABRAHAM'S^(AS) GREAT SACRIFICE – Significance of the Eid-ul-Adhia

A sermon by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) on the significance of Abraham's^(as) sacrifice for a believer's relationship with God 43

THE PURITY OF THE TEXT OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

A thoroughly researched analysis in response to a Christian writer proves that the Holy Qur'an is nothing else but the Word of God. 48

JALSA ADDRESS: By the President of the Republic of Mauritius

Delivered at 45th Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at on 16th Sept. 2006 in Mauritius. 55

SYNOPSIS OF ISTIGHFAR

A detailed understanding of Istighfar which is the act of seeking forgiveness.
By Professor Abdul Jaleel 55



Sunset in Mauritius: Photo from Dreamscape Photo Library

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Sarah Waseem – UK

Waiting in Limbo

Limbo is a concept found within the Catholic Church and refers to the idea of an intermediate state between heaven and hell. Limbo is derived from the Latin '*limbus*' and literally means 'hem' or 'border', as of a garment, or anything joined.

Limbo is divided into *Limbus Patrum*, the temporary resting place of the souls of good persons who died before Jesus' resurrection, and *Limbus Infantium*, the home of children who die without being freed from original sin. Original sin refers to the sin that all humans, according to Christianity, have inherited as a consequence of the sin committed by Adam^(as) as a result of which he was ejected from the Garden of Eden. It is through the ritual of baptism that one is cleansed of original sin. Baptism, whatever form it takes, symbolises the remission of sins, and the union of the believer with

Christ in his death, burial and resurrection so that he becomes one of Christ's faithful.

The concept of limbo entered Catholic teachings after the 13th century. Before then Catholic teachings suggested that all non-baptised people, including newborn babies who died, would go to Hell. This was because original sin had not been cleansed by baptism. Peter Abelard, a French scholastic philosopher, argued, however, that babies, not having any personal sin, did not deserve to be punished. He proposed instead that there was a state of existence where unbaptised babies, and those unfortunate, but just, souls born before Jesus, (eg. prophets) would not experience pain but neither would they experience the Beatific Vision of God until Christ's triumphant ascension into Heaven. This state was that of *limbo*.

Abelard's idea was accepted in the 13th century by Pope Innocent III and *limbo* itself was defined in 1904 by Pope Pius X in his catechism.

And so it was that after the 13th century the Catholic Church decided that babies who died before being baptised, would go to Limbo, where they do not enjoy God, but neither do they suffer, because, having Original Sin alone, they do not deserve Paradise, but neither do they merit Hell or Purgatory.

In 1984, Joseph Ratzinger, then Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, (now Pope Benedict XVI) announced in *The Ratzinger Report* that, as a private theologian, he rejected the claim that children who die unbaptised could not attain salvation.

Pope John Paul II is reported to have been deeply troubled by limbo and had it dropped from the church's 1992 catechism (a summary of its beliefs.) He also

asked the International Theological Commission, which advises the Vatican, to take up the issue.

In 1992 the Catechism of the Catholic Church stated that:

As regards children who have died without baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God, who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children, which caused him to say, 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them' [Mark 10:14, cf. 1 Tim. 2:4], allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy baptism.

A final decision on this matter is still awaited under Pope Benedict XVI. It is expected that the

International Theological Commission will recommend in their report that the doctrine that all children who die do so “in the hope of eternal salvation” be formally adopted, thus rejecting the theological hypothesis of Limbo.

To the writer’s knowledge the Pope Benedict has yet to make a firm decision. However, for many Catholic parents whose children have died prior to being baptised, such a ruling will come as a relief. No longer do they have to agonise about the state of their child’s existence in the next life.

Many argue however that instinctively it does not make sense that a baby can be capable of sinning as it has not acquired the ability to discern right from wrong.

Islam rejects the notion of original sin, teaching instead that we are all born sinless. Once we have acquired the maturity and ability to become accountable for our actions, we then choose to

sin or not to sin. Sin is not therefore hereditary and passed from generation to generation.

Now if the Catholic Church accepts that children can attain salvation without baptism, where does this leave the doctrine of original sin? The point of original sin is that it is only through baptism – i.e. the cleansing away of sins, that one attains union with Christ. If such union is possible without baptism and if children who die in infancy can attain salvation, what are the implications for original sin? Does it ‘descend’ on us at some later point in life?

The 1992 catechism talks about ‘... *the great mercy of God, who desires that all men should be saved*’ making it sound very much like the Islamic teaching that hell is a temporary state that God wishes people to move on from. Again this is at odds with the general Christian notion of hell which is seen as eternal.

There is a further doctrinal complication ahead. The whole

point of the resurrection was the that God loved mankind so much that he allowed His only begotten son to suffer the crucifixion and death. So Jesus^(as) took on the sins of the world in order to save them thereby allowing believers to rid themselves of original sin. Through his belief in the resurrection, a Christian attains salvation. If God, according to Catholic doctrine, now determines who gets into heaven and who does not, regardless of whether they have been baptised, where does that leave original sin, and what was the need for Him to send Jesus^(as) to save the world. Furthermore, there was no point in Jesus^(as) giving up the ghost during crucifixion, nor of his spending three days in the bowels of the earth, nor of his rising to sit on the right of God the Father.

The reality is that Christianity as it is now preached has introduced so many innovations into belief that it has become more implausible in its doctrine and practice. Limbo must go, but it will be very interesting to see

how Catholic theologians then address other consequent anomalies in belief, the greatest of all being the notion of Trinity.

CORRECTION:

The quote from Prophet Jesus^(as) from Matthew 6:19-20 on the back cover of the August 2006, should have read:

'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal.'

ESSENCE OF ISLAM:

Part 15 – Bounties Received by Followers of the Holy Qur'an

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.

The bounties that are bestowed upon the followers of the Holy Qur'an and the special gifts that they receive cannot be expressed in words, but some of them are of such great magnitude that it would be proper to mention them in some detail for the guidance of seekers.

Of these are the knowledge and insights which are bestowed on perfect followers. When a person adopts true obedience to the Holy Qur'an, commits himself wholly to its commandments, reflects upon its guidance with perfect

love and sincerity, and does not hold back in any respect, then his observation and reflection are bestowed a light, and he is equipped with a delicate sense of reason whereby he is informed of the wonderful fine points of Divine knowledge which are hidden in the Word of God. Fine insights descend upon his heart like heavy rain. These fine insights are given the name of wisdom in the Holy Qur'an as is said:

*He grants wisdom to whom
He pleases, and whoever is*

granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good; and none would be reminded except those endowed with understanding.
(Ch.2:V.270)

That is, wisdom comprises abundant good; he who is granted wisdom, attains abundant good.

This knowledge and understanding, which are called wisdom, being comprehensive of abundant good, are like a vast ocean which is bestowed upon the followers of the Divine word. Their observation and reflection are so blessed that high verities are reflected in their souls, as in a mirror, and perfect truths are disclosed to them. Divine support furnishes them with such means at the time of every research that what they set forth does not remain incomplete or defective and contains no error. So the knowledge and insights and verities and fine points and arguments and proofs that occur to them are so perfect and



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

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (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.

complete that it is a matter above the ordinary and other people cannot match them. They do not arise of themselves in their minds, but they are guided to them by a hidden understanding

and Divine support, and it is through the strength of that understanding that they alight upon the mysteries and lights of the Qur'an, which cannot be acquired in the smoky light of reason alone. This knowledge and these insights that are bestowed upon them, and the fine points and deep insights relating to the Being and attributes of the Divine and to the life after death which are disclosed to them, are in their nature spiritual, which in the estimation of the wise are higher, and finer than material wonders. In the estimation of the wise the value and rank of the men of God are determined by these extraordinary gifts. These are the ornaments of their high rank and are the beauty of their countenance.

It is a part of human nature that the awe of knowledge and true insights affects it most, and truth and understanding are dearer to it than everything else. If it were supposed that a pious person is granted visions, is given knowledge of hidden matters,

subjects himself to severe disciplines, and many extraordinary things are manifested by him, but that he is ignorant of the knowledge of the Divine so much so that he cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, is caught in wrong thinking and incorrect doctrine, and is weak and liable to error in every matter, he would appear as base and contemptible in the estimation of every sane person. A person who smacks of ignorance in the estimation of a wise one, and is disliked by those who hear him utter stupid things, cannot be respected by a wise one and appears contemptible, however pious and devoted he might be. This shows that spiritual wonders, that is to say, knowledge of the Divine and insights, are a necessary characteristic of the men of God and are special conditions for the recognition of the great wonders of the faith.

These conditions are bestowed in a complete and perfect manner upon those who follow the Holy Qur'an to the full. Despite the

fact that many of them are not learned and are not well versed in current subjects, they are so much in advance of their contemporaries in fine points and knowledge of the Divine that very often their opponents are surprised on hearing their speeches, or on reading their writings, and are forced to confess that their knowledge and insights belong to another world and bear the colour of Divine support. One proof of this is that if anyone, who is opposed to them, seeks to compare their speeches on subjects relating to the Divine with anyone else's speech, he is forced to confess, provided he is just and honest, that truth resided in their speeches. As the discussion proceeds and becomes deeper, many fine arguments emerge which would establish their being in the right, like a bright day. We are ready ourselves to furnish proof of this to every seeker after truth.

Another of these bounties is sinlessness, which is also termed Divine protection. This is also

bestowed on the perfect followers of the Holy Qur'an as an extraordinary gift. By sinlessness, we mean that they are safeguarded against undesirable habits, thoughts, morals and actions in which other people are involved day and night. If they happen to make a slip Divine mercy soon sets them right. It is obvious that the station of sinlessness is very delicate and is altogether at a distance from the demands of the self that incites to evil, and that its acquisition is not possible without special Divine attention.

For instance, if an average person is asked that he should absolutely avoid telling a lie in every one of his affairs, statements, professions and occupations, it becomes difficult and impossible for him. Even if he makes every effort towards this, he is met with so many obstructions that in the end it becomes his principle that in the affairs of the world it is impossible to avoid falsehood. But for those fortunate ones, who seek to follow the guidance of

the Holy Qur'an with true love and eager determination, not only is it made easy that they should avoid telling lies, but they are also granted strength to give up everything undesirable. God Almighty, by His perfect mercy, safeguards them on all ill occasions that would lead them to ruin, for they are the light of the world and in their security lies the security of the world, and their ruin means the ruin of the world. For this reason they are safeguarded in respect of every thought, knowledge and understanding, wrath and passion, fear and greed, constriction and prosperity, joy and sorrow, and hardship and ease, from all unworthy actions, corrupt thoughts, wrong knowledge, improper conduct, misguided reflections and every excess of their ego. They do not take their stand on anything undesirable, for God Almighty makes Himself responsible for their training and whenever He observes a dry branch in their pure tree, He cuts it off with His benevolent hand. Divine support watches over them every

moment. This bounty of protection which is bestowed upon them is also not without proof. An intelligent person can satisfy himself in respect of it after keeping company with them for a short while.

Another great bounty is trust in God on which they are firmly established. This pure spring is not available to anyone besides them, but is made pleasant and agreeable for them. The light of understanding lends them such support that very often without there being any resources and finding themselves far away from normal means, they lead such cheerful lives and pass their days in such prosperity, that it is as if they possessed thousands of treasures. Their countenances display the freshness of wealth and the steadfastness of the rich. They have perfect trust in their Lord in times of hardship, with cheerful heart and complete certainty. They are given to sacrifice and the service of people is their habit. Even if the whole world were to become members of their family, they

would feel no constraint. They are grateful to God Almighty, Who covers up their shortcomings on every occasion. They are taken into the protection of the Divine before an unbearable calamity descends upon them, for God is their Guardian in all circumstances, as He has said Himself:

*Truly, my Protector is Allah
Who has revealed the Book.
And He protects the
righteous.*
(Ch.7:V.197)

Others are left to face the painful pursuit of worldly objects, and the extraordinary treatment that is accorded to these people is not accorded to anyone else. This characteristic of theirs can also be proved very soon by keeping company with them.

Another bounty is the personal love of God on which the perfect followers of the Holy Qur'an are established. Love of God so saturates every particle of their existence that it becomes the essence of their being and the

reality of their life. A wonderful love of the True Beloved surges up in their hearts and an extraordinary affection and eagerness takes possession of their pure hearts, which cuts them off altogether from all others; and the fire of Divine love is so lit up in them that on special occasions it becomes palpably perceptible to those who keep company with them. It becomes impossible for them to adopt any design or strategy to keep it hidden, just as it is impossible for worldly lovers to hide their love for their beloved from their companions and associates whom they yearn to see day and night. The love that penetrates their talk, and their looks, and their eyes, and their appearance, and their nature, and is manifested in every particle of their being, cannot be kept secret. Whatever they might do, some sign of it is betrayed.

The greatest sign of their sincerity is that they prefer their Beloved to everything else, and if they experience any hardships, they view them as bounties on

account of their overpowering love, and torment becomes for them a sweet drink. No sharp sword can bring about separation between them and their Beloved and no great calamity can restrain them from His remembrance. They regard it as their very life, and find all their joy in it, and deem its existence as their own existence and consider it as the purpose of their lives. They are fond only of Him and find comfort only in Him. They have only Him in the world and become wholly His. They live for Him and die for Him. They are in the world but are outside the world; and possessing self, they are selfless. They have no concern with honour, name, life or comfort. They lose everything for the sake of the One and give up everything to find Him. They are consumed by an unperceived fire and cannot explain why they are consumed. They are deaf and dumb to every admonition, and are ready to endure every hardship and disgrace, and find their delight therein.

عشق است کہ بر خاک مذلت غلطاند
 عشق است کہ بر آتش سوزاں بنشانند
 کس بہر کسے سر نہد ہد جاں نہ فشانند
 عشق است کہ ایں کار بصد صدق کنانند

*Love is what makes one roll
 in the dust out of disgrace.*

*Love is what makes one sit in
 the scorching fire.*

*No one offers his head, or
 sacrifices his life for someone
 else,*

*Love alone makes one
 perform this task with utmost
 sincerity.*

Another bounty is high moral qualities like generosity, bravery, sacrifice, high resolve, compassion, forbearance, modesty and friendship. All these qualities are displayed by them in the best manner, and through the blessing of the following of the Holy Qur'an they manifest them with fidelity till the end of their lives, and no constraint can restrain them from exhibiting these qualities. The truth is that

every good quality, whether intellectual or relating to conduct or morals, which is manifested by man, is not manifested by human power. The true cause of its manifestation is the Grace of God. As these people are the recipients of the Grace of God more than anyone else, God Almighty bestows all good qualities upon them through His endless grace. In other words, no one is truly good except God Almighty and all high moral qualities and all virtues centre in Him. Then to the degree to which a person, discarding his self and his will, acquires nearness to the Being Who is All Good, to that degree Divine qualities are reflected in his soul. Thus, all the good qualities and true culture that a person acquires proceed from his nearness to God. That is as it should be, for creatures are nothing in themselves. Thus, the reflection of Divine moral qualities is manifested in the hearts of those who follow the Holy Qur'an perfectly. Experience can show that the pure behaviour, and the spiritual eagerness, and the upsurge of

love with which high moral qualities are manifested by them, are not equalled anywhere in the world. Everyone can make a claim and can boast of himself, but these are the only people who can pass safely through the narrow door of experience.

Such good qualities as are manifested by other people are shown artificially by hiding their deficiencies and their diseases. They display a false culture and their reality is exposed on the occasion of every little test. They import artificiality and make believe in the exercise of moral qualities in order to maintain good order in their way of life; if they were to follow on all occasions their inner deficiencies, their way of life would be upset. Though they carry a seed of good qualities according to their natural capacity, it is suppressed under the thorns of the desires of their ego. It is not manifested purely for the sake of God and is mixed up with selfish desires and cannot attain to perfection.

This seed develops into perfection purely for the sake of God only in those people who are devoted wholly to God and whose souls are filled by God with His own pure qualities, as they are empty of everything beside God. He makes those high qualities as dear to their hearts as they are dear to Him. Through their devotion, they acquire such a high rank of adorning themselves with Divine qualities that they become an instrument in the hands of God through which He manifests His own qualities. Finding them hungry and thirsty, He gives them to drink of pure water from His special spring in which no creature, in its own right, is His partner.

Another great bounty that is bestowed on the perfect followers of the Holy Qur'an is the state of complete submission to God. Despite their own excellences, they keep an eye on their deficiencies and, in the presence of the greatness of God Almighty, pass all their time in humility, nothingness and

meekness. They appreciate as their true reality humility and poverty and indigence, and being full of faults and mistakes. They deem the excellences that are bestowed on them like the temporary light which the sun casts upon a wall, and which has no real relationship with the wall, and is subject to decline like a borrowed garment. They confine all good and excellence in God, and deem His Perfect Being as the fountainhead of all good. By the observation of Divine qualities, their hearts are filled with the certainty that they themselves are nothing, so that they are wholly lost to their own existence, desires and designs. The surging ocean of the majesty of the Divine so envelops their hearts that they experience a thousand types of nothingness, and they are wholly cleansed and purified of the least suspicion of associating anything with God.

Another bounty is that their understanding and recognition of God are carried to completion and perfection through true visions, inner knowledge, clear

revelation, converse with God and other supernatural experiences, so much so that between them and the second world is left only a thin and transparent veil across which they behold the facts of the other life in this very world. Other people cannot arrive at this perfect stage because their books are full of darkness and pile up hundreds of other veils on top of their own veils and cause their disease to grow till they arrive at death. Even the philosophers, who are in these days followed by the Brahm Samajists and the whole of whose religion depends upon reason, are deficient in their way. Their deficiency is disclosed by the fact that their understanding, because of a hundred types of mistakes, does not travel beyond perceptible reason and conjectures.

It is obvious that a person, whose understanding is confined to the visible and is subject to many mistakes, occupies a very low intellectual position in contrast with one whose understanding has arrived at the stage of the

self-obvious. It is quite clear that beyond the stage of observation and reflection, there is the stage of self evidence and certainty. Matters that are discovered through observation and reflection may become self-obvious and self-displaying through some other means. Thus, the stage of self-obviousness is possible according to reason, and though Brahm Samajists deny its existence they admit that if it is found externally it would doubtless be higher and more perfect, and that the deficiencies that are left in observation and reflection would be filled only at that stage.

Everyone can understand that a matter being established as self-obvious is a higher and more perfect stage than the stage of reflection. For instance, though by observation of the creation a wise and good-natured person can think that all this should have a Creator, yet the obvious and bright way of Divine understanding, which is a strong argument in support of His existence, is that His creatures

receive revelation, and before the end of the reality of things is disclosed they are made aware of it, and God responds to their supplications. God holds converse with them, the facts of the after-life are revealed to them in visions, they are informed of the true reality of reward and punishment, and many other types of mysteries relating to the life after death are disclosed to them. There is no doubt that all these matters carry certainty to a perfect and complete stage and carry one from the low-lying areas of reflection to the high minaret of obviousness. Converse with the Divine is the highest experience of this type, for through it not only does a person discover hidden matters, but he is also informed of all the favours that God bestows upon that humble servant, and he is afforded such satisfaction through a delicious and blessed converse and is informed of the pleasure of God Almighty in consequence of which he is bestowed great strength for combating the evil attractions of the world. He is bestowed

mountains of endurance and steadfastness. In the same manner, he is taught high degrees of knowledge and understanding of hidden mysteries, and deep fine points are communicated to him which cannot be discovered without special Divine teaching. If someone asks how can all these matters, concerning which it is said that they are acquired by perfect obedience to the Holy Qur'an, be established as existing in effect in Islam; the answer is that such knowledge can be gained by keeping company with those who have this experience.

We have stated it several times, and repeat briefly in order to disclose it to every opponent, that this great wealth is found in Islam and is not found in any other religion. For a seeker after truth we make ourselves responsible for furnishing proof of it. If a person who is inspired by goodwill desires to carry out a research with patience and steadfastness, these matters can be disclosed to him according to his capacity and ability, if he will

keep company with us.
(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 1, pp. 532-545, sub-footnote 31)

The Holy Qur'an, on which depends obedience to the Holy Prophet^(saw), is a Book by following which signs of salvation are manifested in this very world. That is the only Book which, through overt and covert means, perfects defective souls and delivers them from doubts and suspicions.

The overt way is that its statements are so comprehensive of verities and fine points that it refutes, through reasonable arguments, all the doubts which prevent people from reaching God, and being involved in which, hundreds of false sects are flourishing and hundreds of false doctrines are occupying the hearts of misguided people. All the light of the true and perfect teaching, which is needed for the darkness of the present age, shines forth in it like the sun, and the remedy for all the ills of the soul is set out in it and the

exposition of all true insights is contained in it. There is no point of the knowledge of the Divine which might be disclosed at any time in the future, which has been left out of it.

The covert way is that following it truly, man, being purified wholly of inner vices, establishes a relationship with the Lord on High and the lights of his acceptance by God begin to descend upon him. He is so encircled by Divine favours that when he supplicates God in times of difficulty, God Almighty responds to him through His perfect mercy and compassion. Sometimes it happens that when he is surrounded by his difficulties and sorrows, even if he supplicates a thousand times, he receives a loving response from his Gracious Lord every time in eloquent, delicious and blessed words. Divine revelation descends upon him like rain and he finds his heart so filled with the love of God as a transparent glass phial is filled with a delicate perfume. He is bestowed such pure delight of affection and

eagerness which, breaking the strong chains of his ego, pulls him out of this smoky condition and bestows new life upon him every moment with the cool and comforting breezes of the True Beloved. Even before his death, he witnesses the Divine favours for witnessing which other people set their hopes on the life after death.

All these bounties do not depend upon any monastic exercises or discipline, but are bestowed in consequence of following the Holy Qur'an and every true seeker can achieve them. For their achievement, however, perfect love of the Holy Prophet^(saw) is a condition. In consequence of the love of Allah's Prophet^(saw), a person partakes of these lights according to his capacity which have been bestowed in their perfection on the Holy Prophet^(saw). Thus, there is no better way for a seeker after truth than to embrace this faith through someone possessing insight and understanding and, by following the Divine Word and developing love of the Holy

Prophet^(saw), to witness the truth of our statements with his own eyes. If he turns to us with a sincere heart for the achievement of this purpose, we would be ready, trusting in the grace and bounty of God, to point out the way to him, but both the grace of God and personal capacity would be needed.

It should be borne in mind that true salvation is like good health. As good health is a condition in which all the signs of health should be apparent and there should be no disorder affecting health, in the same way true salvation is that which shows the signs of the attainment of salvation. That which is proved to exist should exhibit the effects and conditions of such existence, for without these effects and conditions its existence cannot be established. As we have pointed out several times, for the establishment of salvation the conditions are that withdrawal towards God and the supremacy of the love of God should reach such a perfect stage that, through the company and attention and

prayers of that person, these qualities should be produced in other persons also who possess the capacity. In his own personal condition, his insight should be so illumined that his blessings should be self-obvious in the sight of a seeker after truth; and he should possess all the specialities and be honoured with the converse of the Divine which are the signs of those who are close to God.

No one should be misled by the prophecies of astrologers and soothsayers, and it should be remembered that these people have no relationship with the lights and blessings of the men of God. We have written before, that human instruments have no relationship with powerful prophecies and benevolent promises which are the very truth and which convey the good news of victory and help and majesty and honour. God Almighty has bestowed such natures upon men of God that their looks, company, attention and prayers possess the qualities of a sovereign remedy, provided that the beneficiary

should possess the requisite ability. Such people are not recognised only through their prophecies, but through their treasures of understanding, their extraordinary trust, their perfect sincerity, their steadfastness, their love of God, their eagerness, their extreme humility, the purity of their souls, their discarding the love of the world, the numberless blessings which descend upon them like rain, their having the support of God, their matchless steadfastness, their fidelity of a high degree, their peerless righteousness and purity, their grand resolve and the expansion of their minds.

Prophecies are not their true purpose. The purpose of their prophecies is that by mentioning in advance the blessings that are about to descend upon them, and upon those connected with them, they should assure people that they are the objects of special attention from God. The communications that they receive from God are intended as a conclusive and certain proof of their truth and their being from

God. Those people on whom these holy blessings are bestowed in abundance are such concerning whom the law of Divine power of eternal wisdom has determined that their doctrines should be true and pure, and that they should be established in the true faith, and should have a strong relationship with God, and should be completely withdrawn from the world and all that it contains.

Their nature leans towards Divine lights and the true faith. It would be the height of stupidity to compare their highly qualified selves, which comprise all blessings, with unfortunate astrologers and soothsayers, for they have no relationship with contemptible worldly people. On the contrary, they are heavenly lights like the sun and the moon and the eternal light of Divine wisdom has created them so that by coming into the world they should illumine it. It should be borne in mind that as God has created certain remedies for physical illnesses and has brought into the world excellent

things like antidotes, etc. for diverse types of pains and disorders and has invested these remedies from the beginning with the characteristic that when a diseased person, whose illness has not gone beyond remedy, uses these medicines with proper care, the Absolute Healer bestows to some degree health and strength upon the patient according to his capacity and ability, or restores him fully to health; in the same way, God Almighty has, from eternity, invested the pure spirits of these accepted ones with the characteristic that their attention, prayers, companionship and high resolve are the remedy for spiritual ills. Their souls become the recipients of diverse types of grace through visions and converse with the Divine, and that grace manifests a grand effect for the guidance of mankind. In short, these men of God are a mercy for the creatures of God.

As it is the Divine law of nature in this world of causes and effects that a thirsty one slakes

his thirst by drinking water, and a hungry one satisfies the pangs of hunger by eating food, in the same way, by Divine law Prophets and their perfect followers become the means of the healing of spiritual ills. Hearts obtain satisfaction in their company, defects of humanness are reduced, darknesses of the ego are dissipated, eagerness of love for the Divine surges up, and heavenly blessings are manifested. Without them, none of this can be achieved and these are their special signs by which they are recognised. So ponder over this matter and be not heedless.

(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyyaa, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.I, pp.345-356, sub-footnote 2]

Verse references to the Holy Qur'an item count 'Bismillah...' (In the Name of Allah...) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted and should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in *The Review of Religions* will be found at one verse less than the number quoted.

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(saw)' or 'saw' 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*' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. 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.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations of names of places are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

Veil is an Islamic Commandment

English rendering of an address by the Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya community, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, given at the Annual Lajna Imaillah UK 2006 Ijtima (gathering) rendered into English by Shermeen Butt.

Today you have gathered here to hold your Ijtima, today being its concluding day. These Ijtimas are held for the purpose of providing an opportunity to Ahmadi ladies and girls to sit together for religious education and training by listening to educational and reformative speeches and instructions so that they may overcome their inner weaknesses. Younger and older girls may also get the opportunity, along with reformation, to further enhance their educational prowess by participating in various educational activities. Here a specific environment is provided in which they may identify more and better ways for their improvement and ponder over this matter. The future generation of a nation is never wasted nor does it ever experience decline when little

girls, older girls and ladies gather at a location for the sole purpose that being in a purely religious and spiritual environment, they wish to participate in programmes and wish to spend time and actually do spend time.

In the current time, if any woman joins an assembly purely for the sake of Allah, for these virtuous objectives, it is the Ahmadi woman.

Therefore, always be mindful of this status of yours. Benefit from the educational and spiritual repast that you have obtained from here and are still obtaining; for in it lies your salvation, in it is the salvation of your next generations and in it is the honour and salvation of your families.

One should never be selfish and only concerned about oneself, one's own needs, and one's own feelings. Rather one should also be concerned about others and should make sacrifices for the needs of others. One should also consider the feelings of others and not just be aware of one's own honour, but instead always be mindful of the honour of one's family and the community.

One should also be always mindful that 'my' God is All-Seeing, Who watches over me at all time, that I have an All-Knowing, All-Aware God Whose deep sight has knowledge of my inner-most recesses. He is aware of everything about me and that is why nothing can stay hidden from Him. He has sight of everything and He is aware of everything, He is aware of every single moment of mine, be it overt or covert. So when you declare that you are an Ahmadi Muslim woman, you should always be mindful that you need to constantly focus on those matters that Allah the Exalted conveyed to us through His

beloved Prophet Muhammad^(saw) If ever, for any reason, we lapse in remembering these matters, then, whenever we are reminded of them, we should respond in the manner that God's good people do, about whom Allah the Exalted states:

And those who, when they are reminded of the Signs of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat.

(Ch.25:Vs.74)

Certainly an Ahmadi woman, who has a core of goodness in her heart that has so far kept her firm on Ahmadiyyat and who is a personification of sincerity, who has a devotion for faith, who has a connection of love and affection with the Ahmadiyya Khilafat, does not respond like the deaf and the blind when she is advised and counselled providing that she is a true Ahmadi – and this is what is expected of each Ahmadi when she is advised. So, as I have just said the outlook of each Ahmadi should be that she has have to focus on the matters that Allah

and His Prophet^(saw) have taught us. In this is the identity and dignity of a believer. You make your pledge but always be mindful of this pledge. When the Holy Prophet^(saw) took the pledge of allegiance from women, he included some additional matters for women in it compared to the pledge of allegiance by men. This is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an where it draws attention to avoid *shirk* (*associating partners with Allah*) and avoid wickedness, it draws attention towards moral training of children and it is stated:

...nor disobey thee in what is right... (Ch.60:Vs.13)

There is no compulsion by Allah the Exalted that the pledge should be taken from everyone. However, if they become Muslim then it is obligatory to abide by the conditions that are essential for coming into the fold of Islam. The Promised Messiah^(as) also enjoined the same to women whenever taking the pledge of allegiance from them.

It may cross someone's mind that 'we are free', especially in this environment, in today's society everywhere. Well, remember that you are free up to a limit. However, as far as the commandments of the *Shariah* are concerned, you are not free. If you have joined the community then you are bound, in any case, by the conditions, which are essential for an Ahmadi.

You see, in the time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) when these ladies took the pledge of allegiance the society was totally free. It had no rule of law and exceeded the present age in vices. There was a lack of education; there were just a handful of people educated to an elementary level. There was no concept of the existence of God, they only knew idols. They had no idea of an All Seeing, All-Knowing and All-Aware God. However, when they took the pledge of allegiance they brought about a revolution in their lives. Having come out of the darkness of ignorance and having gained

knowledge, it was a woman who became the means of spreading the light of knowledge. Fulfilling all the requisites of *pardah* (veil), matters of faith were taught to the high and the mighty and this seal of authority was attained from the Holy Prophet^(saw) when he said that if you wish to acquire one half of the knowledge of faith, learn it from Ayesha.

History mentions a lady by the name of Hadhrat Khaula who set an example in the battlefield. Maintaining the sanctity of her *pardah* (veil), she displayed great courage and bravery and freed her imprisoned brother from the Roman army. When Madinah was attacked by the disbelievers, the men dug up a ditch and thus protected the town. The women took the responsibility of the protection of the homes and when the Jews sent one of their men to spy and find out from which direction they could attack, no man came to contend with this spy, but it was a woman who thrashed him, tied him up and threw him out.

When the Muslims retreated in the Battle of Uhud, it was the women who played an exemplary role for the honour of the faith and for the love of the Holy Prophet^(saw). They were a model of sincerity. This bravery, courage, knowledge and sincerity was inspired by following the teaching of Islam and by practising it in their daily lives. Therefore, always remember that if you selflessly adopt the teaching of your faith and try and follow all the commandments of Allah, and concentrate on the worship of Allah, honour of faith and sincerity will be inculcated in you and you will be free from all sorts of complexes. If you do not, then having submerged yourself in the razzle-dazzle of this world you will be lost like materialistic people.

So, just as the women of the time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) brought about a revolution in themselves in that they became true Muslims, became *muminaat* (believing women), became *qanitaat* (obedient women), became *ta'ibaat* (women who are

pure and chaste), became *abidaat* (devout women who worship Allah); you too have to follow in their footsteps and in following in their footsteps you will have to adhere to the teaching of Islam. If you do not adhere to it then you cannot be acknowledged as Muslims. If you do not strengthen your faith and do not protect yourself from the ills of the society then you cannot be called *muminaat* (believers). If you do not set high examples of obedience then you cannot be called *qanitaat* and if you do not focus on worship of God at all time, then you cannot be called *ta'ibaat* and *abidaat*.

Therefore self-reflect on what you claim and what you actually do, carry out some self-assessment. Always have the objective of the creation of man in the forefront of your mind. Seeking of Allah's pleasure should be your goal, set out great big targets and goals for yourself; identify those high objectives that you need to move towards. Once you have big targets in sight, you will truly endeavour to

reach them. Mothers should reflect on and assess themselves; in this way you can improve yourself as well as reform the next generation and can morally train them in a good manner.

Today society is attacking Islam from all directions; today each Ahmadi little girl, each older girl and each woman needs to actively participate in its defence just as the women of earlier times did. Otherwise you will be held accountable over what you did about the task that was entrusted to you and as to your claims and your actions.

Today Islam is being attacked with reference to women. The great issue that is being raised these days is that of *hijab*, scarf or *burqa*. No matter what lengths men go to in order to explain and clarify why there is *pasrdah* (veil) in Islam, no matter how many justifications they present, if anyone can rightly and correctly respond to this, it is a practising and pious Ahmadi woman. So, rather than being entangled in any sort of complex,

convey this like a courageous Ahmadi woman to your surroundings and your society with your practice and in practical terms and rationale, saying that this Qur'anic commandment is for our respect and is there to restore our esteem and is not an imprisonment.

Note the state of these people! On the one hand they object against Islam that it compels and is harsh and on the other hand they themselves interfere in the personal matters of others. If a woman wishes to take a [head] scarf, wishes to wear *hijab*, what problem do they have? Currently the majority of Muslim women who have not accepted the Promised Messiah^(as), with no practical remnants of faith, do not observe *pardah* (veil). Islam does not penalise them in any way, there is no law to punish them. However, what right have people of other religions to opine that laws should be made against the observance of *pardah* (veil), of [head] scarf, head covering of those who do so in compliance with religious teaching? They

may say in future that your attire is not quite right, do not wear *shalwar* and *kameez*, wear dresses or jeans or a long skirt or something like that, because we have an objection. Then there will be further objection and they could say wear shorter dresses, wear mini skirts and then finally go naked.

These people have no right to trifle with the honour of any woman. It is you who have to respond to them in that. Who are they to interfere in the private matters of others? It should be conveyed to them that this too is a matter of denying one's freedom. One's clothes are a personal matter. Why are they trying to deny one the freedom of choice of clothes? However, as they are in government and have power and are in authority, they consider their unwarrantable and foolish point of view as great wisdom.

Be prepared! The Ahmadi woman has to maintain her honour as well as respond to each of such objections.

Why do some women, despite being Ahmadis, suffer from some complex or the other? Someone has informed that a woman said that if my daughter does not wear a scarf or wears jeans and other such clothes, do not say anything to her, she is most decent. How is she decent? She does not befriend boys, she is independent and knows what is good for her and what is not. Well, this is tantamount to damaging the moral training of children. Today if she does not befriend boys it could happen tomorrow. Today if she is not involved in any bad habit, then taking advantage of the freedom she has, she may get involved in something bad. If she is independent, knows what is good and bad for her and is independent in the matter that she does not have to observe *pardah* (veil) according to Islamic teaching then the Community too is free. The administration of the Community is also free. The Khalifa of the day possesses the right, more than the rest, to expel from the Community those who are not

going to obey the basic Qur'anic commandment.

Even when you join a worldly club, its membership has its own rules and regulations, and if these are not complied with, one's membership is terminated. Faith is a bond with God, it's a pledge of allegiance and if you act against its obvious and clear teaching and refuse to practise its teaching and if you or your daughter has the right not to observe *pardah* (veil) then I too have the right, borne out of the right you have, to expel such noncompliant [people] from the Community. I would be doing so because of the commandment of Allah and for this reason no one should have any complaint.

Here I advise the administration that the first step in this should be to review that no girl, no woman, who does not observe *pardah* (veil) is an office-holder. If there is no *pardah* (veil) – observing person in a *majlis* (branch) then such a *majlis* should be attached to a nearby neighbouring *majlis* or if it has someone who has little

knowledge but observes *pardah* (veil), work should be entrusted to her. If there is no one who practises *pardah* (veil) according to the Islamic commandment – that is covering the head and the hair – and there is no neighbouring *majlis* then such a *majlis* should be closed down altogether. I am hopeful however that this frightening situation, the worst case scenario of which I have mentioned, would not exist anywhere, Insha Allah.

With the grace of Allah the Community has numerous ladies who excel in piety. If not among the older women then I notice that from among young women there are those who are free from hypocrisy, who do not indulge in any form of hypocrisy. There are some who have been affected by their home environment but there are many others who are firm on piety more than their elders. They try and observe *hijab*. A programme has been made for MTA [Muslim Television Ahmadiyya] which has not been shown yet but I was watching the recording. In it one of our young

women who is also a teacher said that as far as her job is concerned she covers her head in school because she does not wish to impart to the children that she has a hypocritical attitude and has double standards in that children would see her with a scarf outside and would wonder why she does not wear it in the school. In any case *pardah* (veil) is an Islamic commandment. In a discussion it was mentioned that one of our teachers of small children does not cover her head in school. That is fine, there is no harm where the children are young and there are women around, one does not have to cover one's head. However, it is possible that the young woman who said that she covers her head in the school as well has older children in the school.

Anyway *pardah* (veil) is an Islamic commandment as well as the dignity of an Ahmadi woman and young woman and it is their sanctity as well. The sanctity of the Ahmadi woman is upheld through this and it is essential to maintain it. However, remember

that along with the scarf, the lower garment should also be loose because the commandment is that beauty not be displayed. Some young women outside the Community can be seen with the scarf, perhaps as a reaction to why they are prevented from wearing it, but they wear jeans and blouse. There is no point in this *pardah* (veil). This is hypocrisy. *Pardah* (veil) should be such that it is a covering and is dignified as well.

I have been informed that some women were sitting somewhere and an office-holder said to the other that due to the current state of affairs they should now somewhat relax their *pardah* (veil), that so much severity should not be maintained. That is fine, you may relax, just as I said before, they may exercise their right and I will exercise my right. It cannot be that you go on exercising your right but tell me that I should not exercise my right. Regardless, I have to put into effect the commandment which Allah the Exalted has given us in the Holy Qur'an. If

not, then the door is open, as I said, whoever wishes to leave, may do so.

I do not understand; what is the reason for this complex, what is it, why is it? There are the local British women. Elsewhere in Europe they become Ahmadis as well. There are young women coming in the fold of the Community. They have started waering the scarf and have started covering their heads. However, some among you suffer from an inferiority complex. A young English woman came to meet me who has recently become an Ahmadi. She would not have been used to the scarf or *hijab*, yet she was wearing a decent *hijab*. These people are accepting this beautiful teaching to put it in practice while some of our ladies are prone to inferiority complex. What more other than *Inna lillah* can be said on this!

If someone entertains the thought that with this kind of strictness the Community will decrease, that people will start fleeing the Community, then remember that

the Community will never decrease. Even if all such women leave it is Allah's promise and in accordance to it He will grant new people. The British women who have joined are very sincere and in future too you will see that it will be from these people that love will exude. They will love Islam and Islamic teaching. There are many others, like the one I just mentioned who met me yesterday, who are present here in front of me who have become Ahmadi of their own accord and have gone on to develop in their Ahmadiyyat. Here you have your Sadr Sahiba. She too is not a Pakistani, she is German. But she observes *pardah* (veil), wears *burqa* and does not have any complex.

So, as I said this lady is probably an office-holder who wants relaxation in *pardah* (veil). The fact is, the way I understand it is, basically she wishes to object to my being strict about *pardah* (veil). People like these who speak in ambiguous words, are hypocritical! Take hold of yourself. To the new Ahmadi

who are coming in from these nations I say do not look up to those who are born into Ahmadiyyat yet do not want to abide by the Islamic teaching. You should come forward and be models for these people. Come forward and spread the beauty and merits of Islam and Ahmadiyyat in this environment.

Pardah (veil) and modesty has always been the teaching of each religion in each age. The Qur'anic mention of the two women of Mosaic time who stood to one side and did not take their animals to drink water did so out of modesty in that they would go forward when men would be done. Consider chastity a part of faith and that is what we have been taught. Christian women used to cover up in early days. They wore modest clothes. The Bible mentions the teaching of *pardah* (veil) in many places. If today the Christians do not observe *pardah* (veil), and you are being influenced by them, well, they are forgetting their religion. If they remembered their faith and practised it then

many evils which are now common among these people would end. Here I will give a few references from the Bible for the satisfaction of those who have a complex, you might have heard these before, but here they are again.

‘A woman must not wear man’s clothing nor a man wear woman’s clothing for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this.’
(*Deutronomy Ch.22:Vs.5*)

‘Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, but the woman who feareth the Lord shall be praised.’
(*Proverbs Ch.31:Vs.30*)

Then it is written:

‘I also want women to dress modestly with decency and propriety not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes but with good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God.’
(*Timothy Ch.2:Vs.9-10*)

‘Any man who prays or prophesies with anything on his head, he disgraces his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head. It is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. For if a woman will not veil herself then she should cut off her hair, but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. For a man ought not to have his head veiled since he is the image and reflection of God but woman is the reflection of man.’
(*Corinthians Ch.11:Vs.4-7*)

Whereas they object against Islam, incidentally it appears that it is they who consider men superior to woman for man has a status while woman has none. Anyway this was just a digression and cannot be discussed here now.

Having seen all this you should feel stronger. Derive greater strength in that you practice your

teachings, which are the beautiful teachings of Islam, which connect one to the Living God. Whereas the Western world is bereft in terms of religion as it has forgotten the guidance of its religion, you should say to them that rather than speak against us, write articles about us, make laws, give statements, pay heed to yourself. Rather than uncover our heads which we cover happily, cover the heads of your women in accordance with your teachings. I reiterate that rather than say that there should be relaxation in *pardah* (veil) or to say to me in ambiguous words that I am strict in the matter of *pardah* (veil), get rid of your inferiority complex. Practise the teaching that God has given us. God has asked both men and women to avoid what is bad. The teaching is for men to restrain their looks first before enjoining women to do so. As compared to woman, man is bolder in nature. That is why women are enjoined, that, although both are commanded to restrain their looks and guard their private parts, however, due to man's

nature, it is better for you to cover your beauty so that you may be protected from the covetous eyes of men.

Some people also raise the objection that earlier Khalifas were not so strict in terms of *pardah* (veil). So I shall read our some references for your assurance.

The Promised Messiah^{as}) stated:

‘As in Europe, people are urging for uncovering. However, most certainly it is not appropriate. This very freedom in women is the root of disobedience and indecency. Just consider the moral state of the countries that have allowed this kind of freedom. If due to their freedom and uncovering, their chastity and piety have increased then we shall concede that we are in the wrong. However, the matter is clear that if man and woman are young and there is freedom as well as an absence of *pardah* (veil),

how dangerous their comingling would be. It is in human nature to look covetously and to be often overcome by passion of the self. If even within *pardah* (veil), excesses happen and disobedience and indecencies committed, what would happen where there is freedom?’

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) said in this regard:

‘The *pardah* (veil) according to the *Shariah* which is confirmed through the Holy Qur’an is that a woman’s hair, neck and face including the ears are covered. *Pardah* (veil) can be observed in compliance with this commandment, in accordance with local situation and clothing in different countries.’

He then says:

‘The entire part upwards of the joint of the hand is included in *pardah* (veil)’

There is a most severe statement by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih III^(ru). Listen to it attentively. During an address to Lajna in Norway he said:

‘I ask those ladies who do not consider [observing] *pardah* (veil) necessary here, what service have they rendered Islam by abandoning *pardah* (veil)? Today some say that they should be allowed not to observe *pardah* (veil) here. Next they will say that they should be allowed to bathe in the sea and lie on the sand unclothed. Next they will say that permission should be given to procreate before marriage. I shall say then be prepared to enter Hell. Put yourself right before Allah’s wrath descends.’

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) said:

‘I felt that in most parts of the world *pardah* (veil) is disappearing as if it never existed. The resultant, most

horrific destruction stands staring the nation in the face and there is no awareness of this destruction. Parents, with their misdeeds and negligence, are casting the next generation in a social hell and there is no one who cares for them. This situation is getting so critical in the entire world that I thought if the Ahmadis do not take on the banner for the defence of Islam most promptly in their hands, the matter could exceed all limits.'

He also said:

'Then there are ladies who have to go out but they go out with make-up on. What relevance has make-up with work/employment?'

He said:

'Women think that in this world where *pardah* (veil) is diminishing, if they go to their friends wearing *burqa*, they will say that they

belong to old times, that they are crazy, have gone mad, for this is not the age for *burqa*! Men too are troubled by this although they forget that self-respect and respect from others is borne out of one's own character and clothes have no significance in respect of the world. If one has high character one's respect is generated and this respect should at first be generated in one's own self.'

He also said:

'Girls who are brought up here [this is a London sermon or address to Lajna] are mentally confused. They think that it is outdated to cover one's hair and is a huge backwardness. For this reason they move towards Allah half-heartedly rather than whole-heartedly. In actual fact they are saying that 'O God accept us in this way alone. We have a *dupatta* (*scarf*) on but it is the way that Jews wear their skull cap (the *kippah*).

Please accept this incomplete step in Your direction'. If you do every-thing for the sake of God then all this is inappropriate. Remember that the most attractive feature of a woman is her hair, in particular when it falls to the front. I have observed some girls pull their *dupatta* on the heads in a way that makes the hair fall to the front.'

He also said:

'Consider whether you care more about Allah the Exalted or people.'

So these were the statements by the Promised Messiah^(as) and various Khalifas. This notion has developed among certain people that such and such Khalifa did not say so and such and such Khalifa is saying it. The first thing is that you are making negative conjectures about Khalifas without knowledge, implying that, God forbid, they did not want to implement Allah's basic commandments. I

have read out the statements of all the previous Khalifas. Those of you who had this misunderstanding and suspicion in their minds, even if it was in the mind of just one person, it should be removed.

Secondly, in certain situations one Khalifa lays stress on one issue while the other on another issue. Therefore to maintain that an earlier Khalifa said this about this matter and you should also do the same is restricting Khilafat and is discourteous to it. It shows that you made your bai'at (pledge) only under pressure of the society, parental pressure, pressure from husband or pressure from children and that it is not from your heart. If it was from your heart then the pledge you make to obey all good decisions would be apparent to you and you would never have cause to say why is this decision made and why is not that decision made.

Let me make it clear once again that if you wish to be associated with the Community of the

Promised Messiah^(as) – I particularly address those few people here who say such things – then adherence to the Holy Qur'an and the clear commandments of the Holy Prophet^(saw) will be required. Then, just as the Promised Messiah^{as} said, duplicity will not do; either fear Allah or fear people.

Today it is the requisite of each Ahmadi woman's honour that rather than be scared of people in today's society when hatred against Islam is being generated, when mischief is afoot, she declares over and over again that no matter how many restrictions they may place, they cannot take away this beautiful teaching from our hearts, our faces and our practice.

If you people are distancing yourselves from religion, are falling in the pit of destruction, we are not prepared to fall in this hell with you. Rather we pray that God saves humanity from its bad deeds and their dreadful conclusion. Come and join us and having joined us try and seek

Allah's pleasure by adhering to His commandments for therein is inner peace for you and the salvation of your future generations.

I hope that each honourable Ahmadi woman whose heart has ever entertained the slightest doubt about any Divine commandment shall claw it out of her heart and shall join in with the true *muslimaat*, *mominaat*, *qanitaat*, *ta'ibaat* and *abidaat*.

May Allah make it so. Ameen

PARDAH

The Garment of Taqwa

By Saliha Malik – Boston, USA

When I first became interested in Islam, Pardah was the one issue I could not accept. I thought ‘modern day women are liberated and cannot possibly present themselves in this way’! I was reading books like ‘Essence of Islam’ and ‘Our Teaching’ every night before I went to sleep and I was entranced. If only the problem of Pardah could be removed! Then I had a dream. Because of this dream I accepted Islam and then began my journey of Pardah. Recently in a meeting with Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, I recounted this dream to him when he commented on my Pardah. He said: ‘I wish every Ahmadi woman would have this dream.’ My dream was very simple. It was that I was wearing a full Burkah and Hijab with veil – and I experienced complete peace in that garment. In the morning I was so surprised, both by the dream and the power of the dream. I could not put it from my mind.

In that dream was the seed to my Islam. I took it as an encouragement from Allah. I did not actually properly begin to observe Pardah until I was given a local office a few years later when I was told that anyone who holds an office is expected to observe Pardah. Since then I have understood things about women and myself as a woman that I could not have perceived before. That journey is ongoing and I am truly grateful to Allah for constantly putting things in my path to keep me on my journey.

I realised that observing Pardah, reminded me not to fall into my cultural ways. It became the vehicle for me to understand myself as a woman not as a product of culture.

And when it is said to them, ‘Believe as other people have believed,’ they say, ‘Shall we believe as the foolish have

believed?’ Remember! it is surely they that are foolish, but they do not know.”

(Ch.2:Vs.14)

This was the verse that would pop into my mind when facing a struggle related to Pardah on many an occasion. Having come from the ranks of disbelievers I could see both sides. Here I am feeling foolish, going against my own culture in my scarf and coat, while my friends remain coolly casual in skimpy clothing of all kinds! They must think I’ve gone crazy. Then Allah’s reassuring words:

‘it is surely they that are the foolish, but they do not know.’

Why is Pardah so important?

There are many answers to this question. We could simply say because Allah and His Messenger^(saw) have said we should wear it. Or we could speak about chastity - it is your protection against sexual abuse. Both are grave and powerful reasons, which should stop us in our tracks, but sadly they do not. The answer I wish to dwell upon today is –

Pardah is so important because it is the dress of Taqwa.

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) in his address to Lajna USA on the occasion of Jalsa 1991 gives the best explanation:

‘The dress one wears serves two main purposes. One is in relation to the wearer, the other is in relation to society in general.’

He explains.

‘The personal requirements are mostly about seeking protection from the influences of climate – exposure to heat and cold. They also serve the purpose of hiding one’s body to satisfy cultural and religious requirements.

In relation to society in general, it is the ego of a person, which is intended to be served primarily, and not her genuine personal requirements. Most of the expenses incurred with regards to clothing relate to this pur-

pose. Those who are devoid of Taqwa righteous-ness tend to wear clothing of a style not to hide their attractiveness, but to display and highlight it.

The dress of Taqwa in itself does not have any ethnic, geographical or national identity. It is neither Arabic nor non-Arabic. It could be as much European or American. All dresses worn by the nations of the world could become the dress of Taqwa or the dresses without Taqwa. The question is only decided in relation to the viewing eye. If it is only for the sake of winning human appreciation and pleasure and applause of the society in general and to show off the contours of one's body, to catch the eye of the opposite sex, then such a dress will continue to be denuded of all traces, colors and hues of Taqwa. But if the wearer is constantly aware of her standing with God and it is not the human eye of which she is conscious but is also mindful of the sight of God, then her dress can safely be

described as the dress of Taqwa.

If you dress only to please people, the whole of your life will be governed by that dominating factor. You will be gradually led away into a materialistic pursuit of vain pleasures. But if you are attired in the dress of Taqwa then whatever you wear, whether beautiful or not, whether fashionable or not, will still have an air about it that will separate you and make you distinct from ordinary society.'

Viewed in this light the subject of Pardah becomes your journey towards Allah. It is the garment of your Islam.

Taqwa – a mixture of love and fear.

Taqwa, which Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) describes is 'Love, which begets doubts and fears. A lover always lives in a world of fears and premonition and doubt about the response of his beloved'; he says: 'At every gesture of one's beloved one keeps wondering

whether it is a gesture of love or one of displeasure.’

On my own journey of Islam and Pardah – I view the two one and the same journey, I remember being prompted further on in my practice by feelings such as these. I had decided to accept Islam, and I began observing Pardah except while I was teaching. Then one day I imagined that Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) came into my class. I felt the true hypocrite. What kind of a promise had I made at his hand? How was I an advocate of Islam in this situation? I began to wear a loose coat in my class.

Then another time a student of mine came into the class wearing a scarf and I felt jealous of her. Here she was pleasing Allah more than I, and I was the one who wanted to be a companion of the Holy Prophet^(saw), and I was the one who had signed the Bai’at of the Promised Messiah^(as), and my Khalifa^(ru) had explained to me about Taqwa, and she did not know. I began to wear my scarf in the class as well.

I realised through these and many other experiences when I took the next step in Pardah, that the problem is not what the others think, but that it was my own ego that was the stumbling block! My own ego had prevented me from being true to my pledge. My students or the others did not seem to care.

The Journey of Pardah uncovers Islam

Now I became attached, and one decision led me to the next. I found that as I struggled in Pardah, I struggled against my own self. Vanity, the need to be like the others rather than stand for my own values, fear of being criticised – these were among the stumbling blocks to my progress in Pardah.

The journey forces me to evaluate my capacity to practise what I believe and have promised to practice, to be comfortable in it and to do it out of love for Allah and His Messenger^(saw), and out of obedience to the Khalifa of the time.

When we accept Islam, we become refugees in a way, displaced from

our own culture. Sometimes the way Allah wants us to live seems unattainable, because we ourselves are standing in the way. We need courage. We have to strive against our own ego voices. We need prayers.

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV^(ru) explains:

‘So Allah tells you that when you appear before Him, remember that you only go to Him because you love Him.

If this is not so, then your going to meet Him is meaningless. When you love Him, of course, it is natural that you want to be loved in return, so make the best of yourself. Decorate yourself with the quality of inner beauty and loveliness, which would generate love in the heart of your beloved God.

I hope and beg of you to wage a Holy war of Islam, not with swords nor against human beings, but with wisdom and beauty and with truth against insanity, ugliness and falsehood.

Turn to God. Be godly. Be armed with Taqwa and get attired in the most beautiful garment of taqwa and all the rest will be just smooth sailing. You will be liberated and you will have the power to liberate others. The society here is completely enslaved by Satan. Whatever is your concept of Satan, whether Satan pervades your inner being or speaks from without, I am referring to whatever is wrong, and whatever is ungodly. This society has been almost completely enraptured by all that is evil. You cannot liberate them without first liberating yourselves. Allah bless you and may you carry this message in your heart and may you transform it into your actions.’

(Khalifatul Masih IV’s^(ru) address to Lajna Imaillah, USA, Jalsa 1991)

Abraham's^(as) Great Sacrifice

Significance of the Eid-ul-Adha

(The following is an abbreviated English version of the sermon delivered on 'Id-ul-Adha on February 22, 1937 by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih^(ra) II.

'The Id-ul-Adha reminds us of the sacrifice of the most tender sentiments of man. The principle of sacrifice is universal, but the sacrifice of one's offspring is the hardest of all. There may be men for whom it would be easier to sacrifice their offspring than forego their pleasures, but such persons are an exception, and are unfit on account of their perverted nature to be counted among human beings. The essence of human nature may be discovered from humanity as a whole. Ninety-nine percent of people, rather more will be found to be sacrificing themselves for the good of their children. The sentiment constituting man's solicitude for his offspring has prevailed in the human race

regardless of time and place, of caste, colour, creed and language, of one's learning or ignorance. It is an astounding fact of life, enduring through the ages and has no other sentiment to equal it. Only an insane person or a human outcast may be devoid of it; otherwise everyone is possessed of it and acts in accordance with it, either merely because of the instinctive urge or because of the desire to win the pleasure of God.

Strongest sentiment

The Id, therefore points towards sacrifice of a sentiment which is the strongest and the most universal of sentiments of man. Thousands of years ago, today, Abraham^(as) was com-

manded by God to sacrifice for Him that which was held to be the dearest thing by all mankind and for whom fathers and mothers of the world live their lives. Abraham^(as) got ready at once, stopping not to enquire whether as it appeared it was an unnatural command, being against human sentiment vouchsafed by God Himself to man, and whether it would not injure beyond retrieve, the motherly feelings of one whose hopes and love centred in that one child. Abraham^(as) was unmindful of his own feelings and those of Hagar; he forgot the cherished hopes of his ancestors who through him had yearned for the perpetuation of their progeny. Abraham^(as) got ready to sacrifice in his old age his only son, when, humanly speaking no more issue could have been expected – he asked no questions, begged for no explanations, had not the slightest hesitation, nor worry for the why and wherefore of it; as if there was nothing extraordinary in the incident, or as if it was an ordinary happening in the day to day life of man. He asked his

only son to lie down on the ground and taking up the knife in his hand, proceeded with great zest, to do that which was apparently against human nature, but which he thought constituted the highest objective of man. One is simply lost in wonder at Abraham's^(as) decision. Because of the remoteness of the time, a worldly man, ignorant of Abraham's^(as) traits of character might perhaps think him to be a mad man, to be devoid of tender feelings, callous and heartless. This is because he got ready to make a sacrifice which even the course nature of an ignorant rustic would not have permitted. But the Qur'an says that Abraham^(as) was a wise, tender-hearted, godly person, that is the least painful incident affected him, brought tears to his eyes, made him sigh and rendered him restless. A proof of his tender-heartedness was to be found in his fervently praying for the rejecters of the Prophet Lot^(as), imploring to spare the people the punishment which God had intended to inflict upon them, and desisting only when he had

the painful realisation that the enormity of the people's misdeeds had barred the door against all intercession.

Abraham^(as) therefore, was neither mad, nor devoid of sentiment. His feelings at the time when he offered his son can best be compared with the most tender parental feelings of the most loving father or mother. But while he was so very much pained when he came to know that Lot's^(as) people would be punished by God that he spent the whole night imploring the Almighty to spare the punishment, he did not ask any questions when under the Divine command he had to sacrifice his own son.

When the Hajj pilgrims go from the *Ka'aba* to Mina, chanting 'Here I am, here I am, there is no equal to Thee O Lord, "they present a visible representation of the readiness of Abraham^(as) to abide by the command of Go. And our chanting frequently "*Allah-o-Akbar*" in Id prayers is a sign of our glorification of the

sacrifice of Abraham^(as) and is a verbal admission on our part that in his sacrifice we have witnessed the glory and greatness of God.

It is a pity, however, that we do not wish to realise God's glory and greatness in our own selves. We can very well sing aloud '*Allah-o-Akbar*' and thus affirm the greatness of the sacrifice of Abraham^(as). But we do not desire that we too might do the deeds which might for us resound with '*Allah-o-Akbar*' from godly persons, echoes of which might fill the heaven and earth just as they are filled with the praises of God sung by all objects of nature. This is not something impossible. It is not that with Abraham^(as) was a real son and we are stepsons of God. God does not fail; it is we who fail.

In this world of ours, lovers yearn for their beloveds. But the world of spirit is a strange world. There the Beloved awaits you – His lovers. This, however does not make Him any the poorer in His Kingdom. He advances

towards you but your indifference does not lessen His greatness; for He has no defects and is above weakness of all kind. Man cannot fathom His attributes, and human words cannot express His love which is stronger than mundane love, more tender than the delicate feelings of father and mother, more fervent than the sentiment of friend for friend. Notwithstanding that, man's indifference does not affect Him in the least; it does not lessen His greatness. He is the seeker and man the sought, yet He is greater than man; man is a puny little creature, yet man turns away his face from Him.

God's solitude for man, however, is not the solitude of want but of compassion. His longing is not the longing of weak emotion, but that of knowledge and kindness. But man does not notice all this. He makes no advance towards Him. He is accustomed to see spurious and artificial kingly splendour in theatrical plays, but is unaware of the crown and robes of glory given to him by

His Maker. Alas for such a man! Would that he had not been born, for his life is a blot on humanity – nay it is a shame even to the animals, for not being gifted with reason, yet they praise their Maker; but man being gifted with thinking faculties yet turns away from Him. He is given eyes but he does not utilise them. He is given ears but he makes no use of them; he is offered the sweet love of the Divine Being but he prefers the poison of this world. Yet God does not despair of him. How great God must be for He says in His Holy Word: man denied My prophets yet man's denial did not make me desist from sending them. I send prophets even now and shall continue to send them. Let man deny them; I would not give up calling man; I would yet call him away to Myself for I have created man so he might serve Me; My paradise would be a desolate place without its dweller. Man must enter and occupy it, whether direct or through the purgatory of Hell. Man would in any case have to come to Me and I would not leave him till I bring

him away and settle him near Myself.

True stories of History

Such is our loving God. Abraham^(as) had a tender heart, but its Creator was the selfsame God that is ours. All mercy and all good is from Him. All beauty is His and all goodness comes from, and returns to, Him. He is, and all else is not. No story can stand without a central point. As long as our story revolves around this central point, it is a true and real story. When it breaks away from it, it becomes fiction – unreal and ephemeral. Try, therefore to make your lives true stories of history just as Abraham's^(as) life has become a true and historical story. Do not remove yourself away from God and do not thus waste away yourselves in small insignificant affairs of the world. For, the life that lasts is the real life and the ephemeral existence of this world is only an animal existence. The world experiences do not change by the death of a person who in life does not, like Abraham^(as) go around the Divine

Light in utter devotion.

Grant, Lord, that we might learn a lesson from this Id, and our hearts might hover round the seat of His Love, saying: 'I am here, O Lord, I am here till the Divine Light burns and consumes us – its devotees – in itself, and our life, becoming one with the Light, furnishes a clear proof of the Oneness and Absoluteness of God'



*We wish our
readers a very
happy, peaceful
and prosperous
New Year*

The Purity of the Text of the

HOLY QUR'AN PART 3

From The Review of Religions, 1907

The circumstances attending the collection of the Holy Qur'an in the time of Abu Bakr^(ra) also show that every verse of the Revelation had been written down in the presence of the Holy Prophet^(saw). Thus we read of two verses which in spite of Zaid's knowledge that they formed part of the Holy Qur'an were not written until a written copy of them was found with one of the companions. This is clear from the words of Zaid as recorded in the Bukhari: 'So I searched the Qur'an...until I found the last portion of the chapter entitled 'Repentance' with Abu Khazima, one of the Ansar" (see Bukhari, chapter on the 'Collection of the Qur'an'). In explaining the tradition, part of which has been quoted here, the famous commentator of Bukhari, the author of the Fath-ul-Bari, says:

'Abu Bakr did not order the writing of anything (i.e., any verse) which was not already written, (i.e., in the life-time of the Holy Prophet^(saw)), and it was for this reason that Zaid hesitated to write the concluding portion of the chapter Baraat (Repentance) until he found it written, though it was known to him and to those who are mentioned with him.'

And a little further on:

'And the whole Qur'an was written in manuscripts, but the manuscripts were dispersed and Abu Bakr collected them in one volume.'⁽¹⁾

Another report by Ibn-i-Abi-Daood is also mentioned

according to which:

‘Omar publicly announced (when the collection of the Qur’an was taken in hand by Abu Bakr) that whoever possessed any portion of the Qur’an which he had directly received from the Messenger of God^(saw) should bring it, and they used to write these on paper and tablets and leafless palm branches. Nothing was accepted from anybody until two witnesses bore witness.’

The author of the *Fath-ul-Bari* adds:

‘And this shows that Zaid did not deem it sufficient that a verse was written until somebody bore witness who had heard it directly from the Holy Prophet^(saw)’s mouth though Zaid himself remembered it. This he did for greater precaution.’⁽²⁾

There is another tradition mentioned by Zohri which says:

‘The Messenger of God^(saw) was taken (i.e., he died) when

the Qur’an was written only upon leafless palm branches and skins.’⁽³⁾

After mentioning some of these reports the commentator adds:

‘And their object was that nothing should be copied except from what had been written in the presence of the Prophet, not from memory only.’⁽⁴⁾

All these reports point to the certain conclusion that every verse and chapter of the Holy Qur’an had been written by the direction of the Holy Prophet^(saw) in his own presence.

Against this mighty evidence, not a single tradition can be pointed out which might show that any part of the Holy Qur’an was not written. The author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur’an* who writes in a spirit of bitter animosity has made some very wild statements to throw discredit upon the writing of the Holy Qur’an in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet^(saw). He says:

‘Those who could read or write among the companions were so rare that we may say there was practically none who could read or write.’

Again:

‘Zaid was a mere boy who did not know how to handle the pen. Whatever work of writing had to be done for the Prophet was done by the Jews. Now tell us who wrote the revelations of the Quran fourteen or fifteen years before this?’

Then he names Abdulla bin Abi Sarh who afterwards became an apostate and adds:

‘Such being the paucity of scribes among the faithful, and so great being the failure to have the Qur’an written, it was deemed advisable that it should not be written at all and should be preserved only in the hearts of the faithful.’

I have not come across any decent writing containing so

many false statements in a single paragraph.

These allegations imply that among the companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) there was none who could write, with the exception of Zaid whose knowledge of writing was so defective that he did not know how to use the pen, and Abdulla who became an apostate, and that since scribes could not be found, therefore the writing of the Holy Qur’an was entirely dispensed with. The absurdity of these allegations is evident to any body who has the slightest acquaintance with the history of Islam, while the reader who has read the evidence produced above needs no other argument to condemn them as daring falsehoods. So strong and so convincing is the evidence as to the Quran having been written in the life-time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) that no sane author who has written on Islam has ever denied the fact.

I have already given the names of several scribes. There were so many men among the com-

panions who could write that as many as forty-two of these are related to have acted as scribes for the Holy Prophet^(saw). We have seen that copies of the different chapters of the Holy Qur'an were in common use among the faithful, a fact clearly borne out by the report of Omar's conversion. This shows that there was no paucity of scribes. Besides the Holy Qur'an, many other things were written. Some of the companions used to write the words uttered by the Holy Prophet^(saw) which were generally reported only orally.⁽⁵⁾ Letters were written by order of the Holy Prophet^(saw) to several potentates. The truce at Hudaibiyya was written by Ali. Correspondence was also kept up with the Jews in Hebrew.⁽⁶⁾ Not only could men read and write but even women were taught the art. Among the wives of the Holy Prophet^(saw), at least Ayesha and Hafsa could read and write, as many reliable traditions show. It is difficult to say whether the allegation that no one could read or write among the companions is due to sheer ignorance or intentional perver-

sion of facts, but the latter seems the more probable conclusion. The author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* has, it appears, intentionally omitted to mention all those historical facts which show absurdity of his allegations and has based his theory upon a single tradition whose meaning he has intentionally perverted.

The following tradition is cited by the author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* in support of the assertion that 'Zaid was a mere boy and did not know how to handle the pen':

'Zaid bin Sabit reported as follows: "The Messenger of God^(saw) commanded me so I learnt for his sake the Hebrew writing, and he said, 'In truth I cannot trust the Jews in writing for me.' So I learnt it, and only half a month had passed when I became skilled in it. So I wrote for him when he had to write letters and read out to him when a letter was written to him."

This plain statement made by

Zaid as to his learning Hebrew, as is admitted even by Sir William Muir in a footnote in his introduction to the *Life of Mahomet* (see page xiv,) is distorted by the clever author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* into an admission by Zaid as to his inability to write Arabic. The words '*Kitab Yahood*' meaning 'Hebrew writing,' he purposely mistranslates as meaning the 'writing from the Jews of the Hebrew people,' and thus the passage which really means: 'I learnt for his sake Hebrew writing' is rendered as meaning 'I learnt for his sake writing from the Jews.' Now any one who has any pretension to a knowledge of the Arabic language will see that '*Kitab Yahood*' does not and cannot mean 'writing from the Jews' It only means 'the Jewish or Hebrew writing.' Moreover, the context itself shows that Zaid was not speaking of the writing of the Qur'an, because the writing of the Qur'an was never trusted to the Jews by the Holy Prophet(saw). A great part of the Holy Qur'an had been revealed at Makkah where there were no

Jews and we know it for certain that written copies of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an existed and were in common use among the Muslims long before the Holy Prophet(saw) Flight to Madinah. Now the question is, who wrote all these copies, for Zaid had not yet become a Muslim and the Jews did not live in Makkah? In thus misinterpreting the plain words of the tradition, the author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* has made a most hopeless attempt to discredit upon incontrovertible fact of the Qur'an having been written by the direction of the Holy Prophet(saw) in his lifetime. The tradition under discussion only speaks of the Prophet's(saw) letters written to and received from the Jews and not of the writing of the revelation, as even the concluding words: 'I wrote for him when he had to write a letter and read out to him when a letter was written to him' clearly show. No honest writer could distort plain words in the manner in which the anonymous author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* has done it. Perhaps it was on account of his daring

misrepresentations that he concealed his name. Zaid's becoming skilled in writing Hebrew within such a short time is not at all surprising because Hebrew and Arabic are so closely related to each other that a knowledge of the one makes a knowledge of the other very easy of access. The misinterpretation of this one tradition is sufficient to reveal the character of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* and the spirit in which its author has written the book. It is a fact that the book has been written to assist the missionary propaganda by means of false statements concerning the Holy religion of Islam and it reveals a deplorable state of the missionary ideas of honesty and veracity and a deplorable attitude of the missionary minds towards other religions.

The above tradition is the only one which has been produced by the author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* as evidence against the writing of the Holy Qur'an in the life-time of the Holy Prophet^(saw), and from this the reader can easily see how futile are the attempts of the

Christian missionaries to discredit the unparalleled purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an.

Another objection of the same author is that the writing material which was used for writing the Qur'an was of such a nature that it could not be preserved for a long time. This writing material consisted of paper, stone-tablets, skins, palm branches and bones as various traditions tell us. It is admitted that the writing on papyrus reed on paper, skin and stone tablets was safe, but it is added that the writing on these three things was very scarce because these things were rare and that the greater part of the Holy Qur'an was written on bones and palm-branches which could not be safely preserved, and that therefore the greater part of the Holy Qur'an was lost. So after all even the author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* has to admit that the Holy Qur'an was written, but his ingenious brain at once assists him with the theory that the greater part was written on bones because skins, paper and stone-tablets were rare! What his

sources of information for this statement are, the learned author is too discreet to mention. Bones and branches are not less durable than paper, and though they are mentioned among the writing materials, yet it is easy to see that long chapters could not be written on such material. The copy of the twentieth *Sura* for instance used in Omar's sister's family was not written upon bones or branches, otherwise it could not be so readily concealed. Thus all considerations point out that the entire Qur'an existed in a written form in the life-time of the Holy Prophet^(saw).

in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet^(saw). Some other cases are also mentioned in the same chapter in which traditions were reduced to writing.

6. (This is mentioned in a tradition narrated by Abu Daoud under the heading 'Reports from Ahl i Kitab,' not 'Kitab ul Ilm,' as the author of the *Tawil-ul-Qur'an* thinks. This is the tradition referred to in the next paragraph.

References

1. See *Fath-ul-Bari*, Volume IX, page 10
2. *Fath-ul-Bari*, Volume IX, page 12.
3. See *Nihaya* by Ibn-ul-Asir under the root '*Asb*' (Arabic).
4. *Fath-ul-Bari*, Volume IX, page 12.
5. Bukhari tells us in the *Kitab-ul-Ilm* that Abdulla son of Amru used to write traditions

Address by the President of the Republic of Mauritius

The following address was given on the occasion of the 45th Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at on 16th September 2006 at Trefles, Rose Hill, Mauritius that was addressed by the Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community and reproduce in full in The Review of Religions earlier.

Ameer and President, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Distinguished guests, Brothers.

I am pleased to be in your midst this afternoon on the occasion of the Jalsa Salana which is being organised by the Ahmadiyya Community. I am thankful to the organising committee for giving me the opportunity to participate in this function and of addressing such a distinguished gathering.

My presence this afternoon among my brothers of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is to tell you that we are united in this gathering to derive Spiritual benefits, broaden brotherhood and strengthen mutual ties among ourselves and to

emphasise on the need to live peacefully with other ethnic groups in our plural and multicultural society.

The Ahmadiyya movement was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) in a small remote village called Qadian, in Punjab, India. Within a century, this movement has expanded extensively and reached the corners of the world with a membership of more than 200 million. This rapid growth is a result of the adoption of the benevolent message of peace, universal brotherhood and submission to the will of God, preached by Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) and his successors.

In Mauritius, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established as far back as 1915. Ahmadi Muslims are known to be law-abiding, peaceful and benevolent. They are as such constantly engaged in social and voluntary activities. Financial sacrifice is another line of action in which they are engaged. In so doing, they help each other and the poorer sections of the society. The Ahmadi Community runs schools and dispensaries on a free basis in various countries. The Community is always striving to stand on its own and thus, as preached by the Khalifas, does not accept subsidies from the Government.

Brothers, I deeply appreciate the motto that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has adopted which is 'Love for All, Hatred for None'. This expression is much needed in the tumultuous world we are living today where conflicts, natural disasters, violence and violent attacks against innocent civilians are daily highlights in the news. The Ahmadiyya Community is well

guided and trained to promote inter-religious faith in our society with its openness, generosity and good community relations. The Ahmadi Muslims endeavour to exert a constructive influence of Islam through peace and universal brotherhood, encouraging interfaith dialogue. They strongly reject violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. This motto should be best applied in our country which is a multicultural one. This will strengthen our model of peaceful coexistence. We all should work toward the same prime objective of building a peaceful community so that we can ensure a bright future for coming generations. I am confident that this inter-religious harmony will be safeguarded and will keep away negative influences from our shores.

Brothers, it is of central importance for our children and our grandchildren that these qualities of harmony and peace should be achieved and we create a society where people of different faiths and beliefs can live together, a

direction in which many countries are going. However, it is hard to believe that still there are some countries where those who share your beliefs are being persecuted. I pray that this persecution be alleviated and we make this world a haven of peace and goodness.

I am of the view that development and prosperity will flourish with solidarity and not when we are divided or care first for ourselves. Extending a helping hand to the poor and sharing our knowledge with others will only be beneficial to the small nation that we are. Our interest lies in being together, cementing our ties, working together in solidarity, tolerance and sharing.

Brothers, to come back to the function of this afternoon, I hope that this occasion is once again a platform to strengthen ties between all the communities of this country, that we preserve and perpetuate the moral values as revealed by the Holy Prophet^(saw), and preached by his successors,

the Caliphs. I am impressed by the large audience attending this Convention today and I am sure that many of you have travelled from far away to be here, which is a clear sign of your commitment to the Ahmadiyya movement.

I thank you again for inviting me this afternoon. May there be peace throughout the world for all of us. I hope you enjoy this Jalsa Salana.

I thank you for your attention.

Synopsis of Istighfar

First reprinted in The Review of Religions, 1993.

By Professor Abdul Jaleel – London, UK

Istighfar means to cover up, protect or suppress. The primary connotation of Istighfar is to supplicate for the suppression of human tendency to fall into error so as to be safeguarded against error or sin. Its secondary connotation is to supplicate for suppression of consequences of error. Thus Istighfar might connote suppression of a person's tendency towards falling into sin or error, or his protection against the consequences of such errors or sin, or of the errors and sins of others.

On account of lack of knowledge of Arabic, the true significance of Istighfar has been lost to many. This word is derived from *Ghafar*, the other infinitive forms being *Maghfirat*, *Ghufran* etc. As given in all Arabic dictionaries, the word *ghafar* means to cover or to protect. Therefore the primary meaning of Istighfar is, seeking protection or a prayer of protec-

tion and support. All other meanings usually given to this word are derived or secondary.

To whom is the above prayer addressed and from what is the protection sought? Since we are discussing this subject from the Islamic point of view, the obvious answer to the first question is to none other than the One God, Allah. The common form of this prayer is *Astaghfirullah* i.e., *I seek the protection of Allah or I pray to Allah for His Protection* and this makes it conclusive that the Istighfar is addressed to the One God alone.

The answer to the second question is the most important point to be settled and is the main subject of this discussion. Is the protection sought simply from the punishment of evil which a man has wrought or is it sought primarily from the evil itself and subsequently from its consequences if

the evil has been done? For the correct answer, one has to go to the fundamental question of relation between God and His creatures. The God of Islam is not only the Creator but Supporter as well. Whatever has been made by Divine Hand is also supported by it. If, therefore, man needs the creating Hand of God to come into existence, it is equally true that he needs His supporting hand to be saved from corruption. The Divine attribute of creation required that man should be created in the image of God and the requirement of the Divine attribute of support was that what had been created in Divine image should not be given up to corruption and everlasting destruction. It is to denote these two Divine attributes that the adjectives *Al-Hayy*, *Al-Qayyum* are used in the Holy Qur'an regarding Allah, which means, the One Who brings into existence and supports that which He has created.

By nature, man needs support for his existence. This is testified in the Holy Qur'an by the verse: man has been created weak. He is a creature and as such is dependent upon his Creator,

resembling an infant that needs the assistance of its mother at every step. Thus we have in God, a supporter and in man, somebody who requires support.

Almighty God gives support to man in all matters in abundance without his asking. Yet as an intelligent being he must exercise his own will to avail himself of some gifts. Man is feeble in nature and as such is powerless to resist evil tendencies. If he, therefore, does not use his faculties to ask for aid from the Supporter against evil tendencies, he rejects the gift which he could have claimed by asking, and this leads him into evil. The Holy Qur'an teaches man how to ask for God's help in the opening chapter of the Book:

*Thee alone do we worship and
Thee alone do we implore for
help. (Ch.1:V.5)*

This is the real significance of Istighfar – seeking protection of God from evil. Hence the necessity of Istighfar by every person is obvious without any consideration of actual commission of

sin by him. In short, existence of sin is not a pre-requisite for Istighfar. There is a craving in the very nature of man to attain perfection. To satisfy this craving, he is guided to say Istighfar and this makes up for the deficiency of human nature by imploring strength from God.

Istighfar is also needed for protection from the punishment of the evil that has been done. Hence it is of secondary significance, the primary one being the protection from the evil itself, whether a sin has been committed or not. This leads us to the role of prophets who have been raised from time to time among various people. The primary object of their appearance is to deliver men from evil and not to pardon them the sin they go on committing. In this respect Prophet Muhammad^(saw) has an eminence not reached by any other prophet. He was raised at a time when darkness prevailed on the face of the earth and people had gone astray in doctrine and practice. The Arabs whom he addressed directly had sunk deep into vice. From this depth of

degradation he raised them to the highest pinnacles of civilization. But how did he bring about this revolution? Since God alone can support man against the forces of evil, it is obvious that the Prophet must have taught them to pray to God for this protection. It is Istighfar that he taught.

Istighfar, as seen in the Holy Qur'an, is the true and only means of drawing strength and support of God, the only course for attaining nearness of God and the only path by walking on which man may attain to sinlessness and salvation. The Holy Qur'an speaks of it as the highest accomplishment of good men. In chapter 51 we read:

But surely the righteous will be in the midst of gardens and fountains receiving what their Lord will give them; for they used to do good before that They used to sleep but a little of the night; and at the dawn of the day they sought forgiveness;
(Ch.51:Vs.16-19)

Verily the righteous shall dwell amid gardens and fountains with the blessings which their Lord has given them. This is a reward to them, for, before this they were the greatest doers of good, passed the greater part of the night in devotion to God and when morning came, they resorted to 'Istighfar', i.e., they sought the Divine strength and support.

As clearly seen here, Istighfar is described as a deed of righteousness and the effect of which is not that they were saved from the torment of hell fire but Divine blessings and favours were showered upon them in abundance. The Arabic word *Muhsin* translated as good man in the fore-quoted Qur'anic verse has been defined by the Holy Prophet^(saw) as one who worships God so sincerely as if he actually sees Him or at least the one who deems himself in the presence of God Who sees him. It should be noted that when a person reaches this stage, he cannot sin. Hence his Istighfar is not for the protection from the punishment of hell but is a part of his goodness.

Such a man keeps himself in the presence of God during the night, praying for Divine protection and support in the morning to keep him firm in His path and not to let him slip. He feels that without the strength and support of God, he would not be able to overcome the frailties of his nature and, therefore, prays constantly that he might not be deprived of heavenly bliss due to the weakness of his flesh.

Another Qur'anic verse which shows Istighfar as a highly commendable deed for righteousness is: the patient, the truthful, and the lowly and charitable and those who resort to Istighfar at morning times. (Ch.3:V.19) In this verse, the Istighfar is deemed as a necessity for good together with patience, truth, lowliness and charity. Here Istighfar clearly is indicated not only for saving from punishment but also for drawing blessings and favours of God.

Not only is Istighfar described as leading to virtuous deeds, but *Maghfirat* is also promised as a gift of God to those who lead a

virtuous course of life. We read in the Chapter Hud, thus:

..those who are steadfast and do good works. It is they who will have forgiveness and a great reward.

(Ch.11:Vs.12)

Here *maghfirat* is promised as a reward to those who do righteous deeds and does not mean pardon of sins, because the persons to whom it is promised are plainly described as being those who have been doing righteous deeds. In fact man always stands in need of *maghfirat* and *maghfirat* of God shall continue even in paradise. The Holy Qur'an attests to this in the words:

..in it (paradise) will they have all kinds of fruits and 'maghfirat' from their Lord.

(Ch.47:Vs.16)

Here *maghfirat* is plainly described as a reward which shall be granted to the good in paradise. In chapter Al-Tahrim of the Holy Book we read:

Those (who enter paradise) will pray:

Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us.

(Ch.66:Vs.9)

This unceasing desire for perfection and *maghfirat* shows clearly that progress in paradise will be endless.

From these two verses, it is plain that even after entry into paradise which will only be possible after obtaining God's pardon for those who have committed sins, the faithful will still have a continuous desire for *maghfirat*, or in another words, they will resort to istighfar, even though they shall have been saved from punishment.

What does *maghfirat* in paradise mean? As mentioned earlier, Istighfar is a requirement of the nature of man as a creature and of the attribute of God as the Creator and Supporter. The attribute of support of the Creator must remain constantly at work as long as there are creatures. Notwithstanding

continual progress in heaven, men will still be creatures and still be dependent upon God. Any degree of perfection they may attain in this world or the next cannot be equivalent to the perfection of the Creator. In paradise, the righteous will ever be ascending upwards and will regard every state as defective in comparison with the higher one to which he will aspire and will, therefore, pray to God for *maghfirat*. Since progress is endless, the desire for *maghfirat* will never cease. In spite of the fact that God has granted *maghfirat* to the Holy Prophet^(saw) for short comings, past and future (Ch.48:Vs.2), he has been advised to 'resort to Istighfar' and seek *maghfirat* from God (Ch.110:Vs.4) even after the assurance of God (Ch.48:Vs.2).

In short, Istighfar is the closest form of communion with God, the highest flight of the spirit of man towards the Divine Being. The man who resorts to Istighfar humiliates himself before God, admitting the weakness of his nature and dreads the Power and Glory of the Creator. His whole

delight, his very paradise, is in this fact that he should fly to that rock of strength, without Whose shelter he cannot live. His own self is annihilated and God alone becomes His objective. The man who constantly reforms to Istighfar, feels his own dependency and turns to God for help and aid and thus gives evidence that he has overcome the weakness of flesh and resisted the evil tendency because the strength of God is with him and His light descending upon him, has suppressed every infirmity of nature which could have led to sin.

Acknowledgments

- *The Review of Religions*, 1903, From writings of Hadhrat Ahmad^(as), the Promised Messiah and Mahdi
- *The Qur'an – Preface to the English Translation* by Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan.

Subscription

The Review of Religions

If you would like to order a copy of any issue published in 2004, please send £1.50 (or equivalent) providing us with your full name and address. Delivery will be on a first come, first served basis, and in the absence of a copy being available your money will be returned

-
- Are you a subscriber to *The Review of Religions*?
 - Have you renewed your subscription for the next year?

Why not sponsor a reader to *The Review of Religions* by subscribing for him/her and we will send the first edition on your behalf with your compliments

We hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of the magazine. *The Review of Religions* will continue to provide discussion on a wide range of subjects and welcomes any comments or suggestions from its readers.

To ensure that you regularly receive this monthly publication, please fill in your details below and we will put you on our mailing list.

The cost of one year's subscription is £15 Sterling or US \$30 for overseas readers (Please do not send cash). **Payments by US residents should be by check payable to "AMI" (US dollars 30) and sent direct to 'The Review of Religions', Baitul Zafar, 86-71 PALO ALTO ST, HOLLISWOOD, NY 11423-1203 (USA).** All other subscription payments should be made payable to the London Mosque and sent to the address below:

The Review of Religions
The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London SW18 5QL
United Kingdom

Please put me on the mailing list for the Review of Religions for 1 year. I enclose subscription payment of £15.00 or US \$30.00 (please see instructions above for US residents). OR if you wish to receive a CD of all the articles published in 2004, please tick the white box above and enclose payment of £5.00, please also add an appropriate sum for postage.

Name: _____

Address: _____
