

QUARTERLY

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The Message

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O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil. (H.Q. 2:183)

Chapter 81 *Al-Takwir* - (The Folding Up)

by Dr. Basharat Ahmad (Translated by Kalamazad Mohammed, BA, Dip. Ed.)

This chapter, *Al-Takwir* (The Folding Up), is one of the early chapters revealed to the Holy Prophet. In this, a new line of argument has been used to highlight the fact that our ultimate recompense in the hereafter depends upon our deeds. In the beginning of this chapter, some great and grand prophecies have been made, prophecies that were to be fulfilled prior to the coming about of the great and final day of Judgement, at a time when materialism and atheism would be rampant. At that time also, there would be a very emphatic and widespread denial of the Day of Judgement as well as a non-acceptance of the belief what we would be rewarded or punished according to our conduct in this life.

Obviously, the said time is this very age in which we are living. By clear and beautifully disclosing fourteen hundred years ago the knowledge of the unseen, a knowledge lying hidden in the folds of the future, the argument has been brought home to

the antagonists, that the same God Who is giving the news of the future, news fully true, is also giving notice of the fact that there is no doubt that we will be judged according to our acts and recompensed accordingly.

Eventually, a day will come, the Last Day, when a complete result of our acts will be determined, and none will remain outside this reckoning. And if these prophecies that contain news of the future turn out to be true, then the other news about the final reckoning of our deeds is also true and certain.

It must be remembered that these prophecies always contain a hidden aspect, and this hidden aspect is disclosed at the time of their fulfilment. In other words, the events of life lift the veil of secrecy from the face of these prophecies, and then the said prophecy, when fulfilled, begins to shine like the breaking of the day, and becomes a source of fortifying the faith of the believers and of driving the argument home to

PASS ON THE MESSAGE

the antagonists.

This hidden aspect is usually stated in a metaphorical way. This metaphor, on the one hand, puts a veil of secrecy on the prophecy, and on the other, it lends forcefulness, eloquence and elegance to the statement. For example, Prophet Joseph (*sas*) was shown in a vision that the sun, the moon and eleven stars were making obeisance to him. What a fine and delicate metaphor it was. For, what finer metaphor can be devised for indicating to someone that he was going to inherit a spiritual legacy than by revealing to him the heavenly bodies bowing obediently before him.

Similarly, even in this chapter, *Al-Takwir*, there are to be found prophecies containing very subtle and wonderful news of future events, and along with these it is full of such fine metaphors that when the events foretold unfold themselves, the soul of the reader begins to throb with ecstasy as he realises the grandeur, the greatness and the profound knowledge contained in these verses.

At this point, a question arises: Why is there this hidden aspect to a prophecy? The answer to this is: to give clear proof that this knowledge of the unseen future is from God and not the outcome of a human brain. For, when the recipient of the prophecy and divine revelation himself cannot comprehend the reality disclosed therein at the time of the revelation, and until the events that are foretold in the prophecy manifest themselves, he, himself, has no knowledge of the real purpose and meaning of the prophecy, and if such a prophecy is true, then it can clearly

be seen that the fountainhead of this news of the unseen is some All-Knowing and All-Wise Being, and not the brain of the recipient of divine revelation.

For instance, the Holy Prophet saw in a dream that after his death that the wife, who had the longest hands would be first to join him. All his wives measured their hands in the presence of the Holy Prophet and he did not stop them from doing so. As a result, it was taken to mean at that time that Hazrat Saudah would be the first to die. But when the first to die turned out to be Hazrat Zainab (‘the mother of the destitute’), then it was realised that by the longest hands was meant the one who was foremost in generosity and charity, and Hazrat Zainab was the most fitting in this respect because she was the most generous of all. The news was absolutely correct, but the veil of secrecy that had been thrown on it through the use of a metaphor was lifted when the event itself unfolded. The fact that the recipient of this revelation himself was unaware of the actual import of the prophecy indicates that this news of the unseen was not a product of the recipient’s brain. Rather, it had come down from some All-Knowing Entity.

The second useful aspect of this secrecy surrounding a prophecy is to debar any impostor from making himself the fulfiller of the prophecy, one who, by fabricating and rigging up some circumstances in conformity with the apparent wording of the prophecy, might try to deceive people. That is why this news of the unseen has a hidden aspect to it, and the real significance of this mystery is not disclosed to anyone but the true

claimant, that is, the actual person in whom the prophecy is fulfilled. This is a lengthy topic and this is not the occasion to go into it; the gist mentioned above should be sufficient. In order to fix the timing of the events that have been prophesied and portrayed in this chapter, events that would presage the coming of the Final Day of Resurrection, it was first necessary to portray the atheism and materialism of those times. Hence, Allah, the High, says at first: “*When the sun (the fountainhead of divine light) is folded up, and when the stars (that are lit up with the divine light) become dust-coloured or faded.*”

This metaphor is to be found elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an. For example, the Holy Prophet has been called a light-giving lamp (*siraj munir*). The aptness of this metaphor lies in the fact that just as the real sun is the fountain-head of heavenly light, so, too, are the personalities of the prophets, especially the Holy Prophet — a personality who lit up the darkened hearts of the people through the light sent down by Allah in the form of the Holy Qur’an — the fountain-head of spiritual light. And these darkened hearts, when lit up by this divine light, become perfect persons who begin to shine like stars in the spiritual heaven and are thus likened to the stars, as the Holy Prophet himself has said: “My Companions are like the stars.”

Hence, anyone who is enlightened by this spiritual light, whether a Holy Companion of the Holy Prophet (*sas*) or a saint or a God-gifted scholar of religion, is a star of the spiritual heaven. How beautifully have the present epoch’s atheism and

materialism been portrayed here. Allah says that the fountainhead of the spiritual light will be folded up in that age (that is, the knowledge of the Qur'an and compliance with its injunctions will disappear), and the darkness of atheism and deviation from the straight path will engulf the world. The persons enlightened by this spiritual light, the righteous and the scholars, would have either departed from this world, or if any were still left, they would have no trace of resplendent light in them, or if there were some light, it would be very dim. What an exact portrayal is this of the religious condition of these times!

After depicting the religious degradation of the world, Allah, the High, portrays the material progress of these times. Culture and civilisation are pre-requisites for material progress, so that the distances between the villages and the cities are shortened and any hindrance to travel is removed, and such means of transport are made available that would facilitate travel and save time. This is so in order that people may benefit from one another's knowledge, and through exchange of ideas, they may travel on the road to scientific, industrial and professional progress, and through mutual commerce and trade, they may partake of financial progress. Therefore, Allah, the High, first of all mentions these very things. As a result, He divides those factors that are obstacles to mutual interaction and exchange between people, obstacles that, once removed, clear the way to progress and perfection, into four parts: firstly, the presence of mountainous barriers on land, secondly, the long distances,

thirdly, ignorance and barbarity, and fourthly, the impediment in the form of the oceans.

First of all He mentions the mountains: "*And when the mountains will be made to pass away*" (or will become tourist resorts). Since man has to make his settlements on land, the first hurdle in the way of mutual interaction and co-operation are the mountains. Indeed, take the case of Afghanistan: its separate identity and defence are mainly due to its mountain ranges that are like walls. "*Mountains shall be made to pass away,*" says Allah. Now, see how most of the mountains of the world have been made to *pass away*. Roads have been built and tunnels dug — which mountainous height is there that has not been traversed by *Gog* and *Magog*, that is, the European nation? In fact, the mountains are no longer the obstacles that they used to be; rather, these have become tourist resorts. Efforts are underway to scale the highest peaks not yet conquered by man, and it will certainly come to pass that all of them will be conquered, for Allah, the High, says: "*Even when Gog and Magog are let loose, and they sally forth from every elevated place*" (21:96).

No obstacle in the way of interaction and commerce between cities and towns will remain, says He, and even the mountains will be made to give way, and travel and interaction between communities shall be made possible by digging tunnels through them and building roads over them, and the green meadows and pastures in the mountains will become tourist resorts. 🕒

(To be continued.)

From the Founder

THE BEAUTIES OF SURAH FATIHAH

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Allah, the Most High, has taught such an excellent way of prayer that a better is not possible. It comprises all elements needed for the stimulating heartfelt fervour for prayer. Eagerness and fervour are indispensable factors for the acceptance of prayer. A prayer that lacks fervour is mere verbal patter and not genuine prayer at all. At the same time, it is obvious that fervour in prayer is not at the command of a person at all times. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that all the factors that generate fervour in the heart should be present in the mind of the supplicant at the time of prayer. Every sensible person knows that there are only two incentives towards heartfelt enthusiasm. First, the realisation that God is Perfect, Mighty and the embodiment of all excellences and that His mercy and His benevolence are indispensable for one's being and one's survival from beginning to end, and that He is the Source and Fountainhead of all grace. Secondly, estimating oneself and one's fellow beings as humble and poor and utterly dependent on His help. These are the two incentives to fervour in prayer, and they are the perfect means for arousing enthusiasm for prayer. For, enthusiasm in prayer is induced only when one sees oneself utterly weak and helpless and in need of Divine help, and believes with firm faith that He is the Almighty in the highest degree and the Lord of universal providence and Gracious and Compassionate and the Master of Requital and that it is only in His power to provide for all human needs. 🕒

DEATH OF PROPHET JESUS (AS) – III

Conclusive Proof Based on Thirty Verses of the Holy Qur'an

By Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam

[The following is a further excerpt from the book *Izala-e Auham* by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Mujaddid* of the fourteenth century (AH), *Mahdi*, and Promised Messiah, in which he gives arguments from the Holy Qur'an establishing the death of Prophet Jesus (as).

The first part appeared in the March 2005 issue and the second in the June 2005 issue.]

Gradual development, decay and death of all human beings

The Eleventh Verse: “*And peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised to life*” (19:33).

This verse highlights the momentous events of Prophet Jesus' life and only three things are mentioned: his birth, death, and resurrection. However, if his physical ascension to heaven (*raf'a*) and his second advent are authentic occurrences, then mention of them should have been made. Or, may Allah forbid, is it that his time and place of descent are not deserving of the peace of Allah, Most High? Thus, the fact that Allah, Most High, has ignored mention of the supposed physical ascension and second coming of Prophet Jesus (as) – a belief that has found root in the hearts of Muslims – is adequate testimony that such a conviction is false and contrary to facts. On the other hand, that elevation (*rafa'*) to the next life (*yauma amootu* – the day I die) and his alleged descent from the heavens at a later date is completely spurious.

The Twelfth Verse: “*And of you is he who is caused to die, and of you is he who is brought back to the worst part of life, so that after knowledge he knows nothing*” (22:5).

In this verse, Allah, Most High, says His way operates in two ways in

relation to human beings: some die early in life, whilst others complete a full span of life until they reach the worst part of existence so much so that after knowledge they have nothing and become like mere infants. This, too, serves as proof of Prophet Jesus' death, for it establishes the fact that if man is blessed with a very long life, then day by day he undergoes deterioration until he regresses to the stage of childhood after which death inevitably follows.

The Thirteenth Verse: “*But the devil made them slip from it, and caused them to depart from the state in which they were. And We said: Go forth, some of you are the enemies of others. And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time*” (2:36).

In this verse, ascension to heaven with a physical body is debarred, for here the conjunction *lakin* (but) which lends special signification to the statement clearly proves the point that an earthly body can never go to heaven for it originates from the earth, lives on earth, and will be returned to the earth.

The Fourteenth Verse: “*And whomsoever We cause to live long, We reduce to an abject state in creation. Do they not understand?*” (36:68).

In other words, man's strength and powers begin to forsake him – his senses suffer deterioration and his intellect declines. If we were to assume that Prophet Jesus (as) is still alive in his physical body, then we will have to accept the reality that after a long period his human capacities will degenerate to such an extent as will necessitate death. Thus, we will definitely have to conclude that he must have died a long time ago.

The Fifteenth Verse: “*Allah is He Who created you from a state of weakness, then He gave strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and hoary hair after strength. He creates what He pleases, and He is the Knowing, the Powerful*” (30:54), also provides clear evidence that no human being is exempt from this Divine law and that every creation is subject to the decree that time takes a toll on it to the point where it is made useless and decrepit and finally dies.

The Sixteenth Verse: “*The likeness of this world's life is only as water which We send down from the clouds, then the herbage of the earth, of which men and cattle eat, grows luxuriantly thereby; until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes adorned, and its people think that they are masters of it, Our*

command comes to it, by night or by day, so We render it as reaped seed-produce, as though it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We make clear the messages for a people who reflect” (10:24). It discloses to us that man’s creation resembles that of land and its vegetation: first, it advances towards maturity, then it begins to decline. Is the Messiah, son of Mary, immune from this universal Divine law?

The Seventeenth Verse: *“And certainly We create man of an extract of clay, Then We make him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place, then We make the life-germ a clot, then We make the clot a lump of flesh, then We make (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothe the bones with flesh, then We cause it to grow into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators! Then after that you certainly die”* (23:12-15).

That is, Allah, Most High, first causes us to advance step by step to the fullness of life after which decay sets in until death overtakes us. In other words, that is the way the Creator has ordained for all of us and no human is excluded from it. How is it that that an exception to the all-encompassing law has been made in the case of Prophet Jesus (*as*)?

The Eighteenth Verse: *“Seest thou not that Allah sends down water from the clouds, then makes it go down into the earth in springs, then brings forth therewith herbage of various hues; then it withers so that thou seest it turn yellow, then He makes it chaff? Surely there is a reminder in this for men of understanding”*

(39:21). It also draws a visible analogy between man and the earth’s vegetation which fulfils its existence by slow degrees until it finally dies.

All prophets were human beings, they lived and died as human beings

The Nineteenth Verse: *“And We did not send before thee any messengers but they surely ate food and went about in the markets. And We make some of you a trial for others. Will you bear patiently? And thy Lord is ever Seeing”* (25:20).

I have already produced ample Qur’anic evidence to prove that one of the essential ingredients of earthly existence is food. So the fact that all the prophets no longer eat food proves that they are all dead and the Messiah is, of course, included among them – a reality which the Holy Qur’an has greatly emphasised.

The Twentieth Verse: *“And those whom they call on besides Allah created naught, while they are themselves created. Dead (are they), not living. And they know not when they will be raised”* (16:20-21).

See how clearly these verses establish the death of Prophet Jesus (*as*) as well as of all those human beings whom the Jews and the Christians and several Arab sects consider as their gods and to whom they make petition (*du’a*). If Muslims should still cling to the belief that Prophet Jesus (*as*) is alive, why do they not come out in the open and proclaim that they have a doubt in their belief in the Qur’anic verses? Is it the practice of people of devout faith to listen to the verses of

the Holy Qur’an and yet fail to stand firm to them?

No prophet after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*sas*)

The Twenty-first Verse *“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things”* (33:40).

This verse, too, provides conclusive evidence that after our Holy Prophet (*sas*) no prophet will come into the world. It is thus confirmed with perfect clarity that the Messiah, son of Mary, cannot return to earth as a prophet for the simple reason that he was a prophet, and embedded in the nature and essence of a messenger is the fact that he has to receive divine knowledge through the agency of Angel Gabriel. However, it has been proven that now prophetic revelation to a messenger has been cut off even unto the day of Resurrection. Thus, we have no choice but to accept that the Messiah, son of Mary, will never return to earth and this necessarily leads to the conclusion that he has died. To rebut this with the view that he will return to life after death is of no value, for, even if he comes alive again, the fact that he is a messenger, and this rank is intricably bound up with him, precludes a second advent – except of course, as I have been explaining all along, that the coming alive of the Messiah after death is not like what the people commonly believe, but instead it is in accordance with how the martyrs receive a new life through which they attain higher grades of perfection and closeness to Allah, Most High. The Holy Qur’an

speaks of this kind of life in several places, as, for example, the words of the Prophet Abraham (*as*) in 26:81: “*And Who will cause me to die, then give me life.*”

This death and life is not restricted merely to physical death and life, but from this death and life there are signs which the spiritual pilgrim experiences as he travels along the diverse stations and stages of his spiritual journey. For example, his innate love for created things dies and a personal love for the real Creator is born in him; again, his natural love for his near and dear ones suffers a demise and the natural love for his true Friend on high comes alive; further, inherent love for his own self dies and is replaced by a deep, personal love for his true Beloved. In this way, he tastes many deaths and enjoys many lives until he reaches the stage of perfect life. Thus, that perfect life of bliss which he receives after leaving this base and contemptible world is not a physical one but is one of surpassing honour and glory, as Allah, Most High, says: “*And the home of the Hereafter, that surely is the life, did they but know*” (29:64).

Examine the scriptures of “The People of the Book”

The Twenty-second Verse: “*And We sent not before thee any but men to whom We sent revelation — so ask the followers of the Reminder if you know not—*” (16:43).

It invites Muslims to examine the writings of the People of the Book. That is, if Muslims are ignorant of certain matters which have arisen among themselves, they should turn

to the People of the Book and consult their scriptures so that the truth may be disclosed to them. So, according to the command of this verse, I turned to the books of the People of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians, in order to ascertain whether that same prophet came back or whether there was some other meaning to those passages in their scriptures. I then discovered that there was a case similar to the one under discussion in which the Messiah, Prophet Jesus (*as*), son of Mary, himself gave a clear verdict which is in complete agreement with mine. For further reference, Muslims can read these two books of the Bible – *Kings* and *Malachi* – and read for themselves the explanation given in the Gospel by Prophet Jesus (*as*) about the return of Prophet Elias (*as*) and his descent from the heavens.

The Jews held the belief, like Muslims of Prophet Jesus (*as*), that Prophet Elias (*as*) was taken up alive to heaven and would one day return in person to restore their former glory. Prophet Jesus (*as*) explained that Prophet Elias (*as*) had indeed come but in the person of Prophet John (*as*) who was his spiritual likeness (just as Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement has claimed that he was the spiritual counterpart of the first Messiah, Prophet Jesus). The following are the words of Prophet Jesus (*as*): “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come” (Matthew 11: 13-14).☪

THE ISLAMIC PENAL SYSTEM AND THE CONCEPT OF PUNISHMENT IN MUSLIM JURISPRUDENCE

By Ms Habiba Anwar, LL.B.

Morality and Ethics

Islam recognises that morality and ethics are the roots of every good society. *Shari‘ah*, the Islamic Law, is the body of rules used to govern a Muslim society and to control the behaviour of its members to ensure safety and peace in the society. In modern societies, authorised bodies, such as a legislature or a court, create the law. While this is also true in Islam, however, the basic rules of *Shari‘ah* are divine in nature.

Islamic Penal System is based on Divine Revelation

Unlike Islam, Christianity came to birth under the Roman Empire. Social and political order were already established. Prophet Jesus’ main concern was to bring about spiritual discipline. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) on the other hand, had to build a society from point zero. Besides establishing the spiritual aspects, he had to erect the social and political aspects as well. Hence, the affairs of the state, the civil, social and political aspects of Muslims’ lives are guided by divine injunctions as well spiritual practices. This makes obedience of the rule an act of worship for which the individual will be rewarded.

Generally, the penal laws of Islam are limited to punishment for crimes mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. Other

punishments are left to the discretion of *Imams* and rulers. And the crimes spoken of in the Holy Qur'an all affect society in some way or another. Specifically, these are murder, dacoity, highway robbery, theft, adultery and fornication.

Islamic Concept of Punishment: Deterrent and Reformatory

The central issue regarding punishment is the moral justification for its enforcement. Punishment involves the intentional infliction of some type of harm or restriction and hence infringes upon an important part of a person's life. Thus, if it is to take place, it must be justified. In the UK, researchers point to two main theories of punishment.

On the one hand, there is the Retributive theory, which is based on the notion that the offender deserves to be punished. Punishment according to this notion of justification involves looking back in time and is therefore almost a form of revenge.

Conversely, we have Reductivism, which is a forward-looking theory. It seeks to justify punishment by referring to the good consequences that it will bring in the future. This is a theory with its roots in the philosophical school of thought known as Utilitarianism. According to its expounders, moral actions are those that produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. Therefore, if punishment does indeed reduce the future incidence of crime, then the pain and unhappiness caused to the offender may be outweighed by the avoidance of crime.

In modern-day Britain, human rights are more established than ever before. The criminal law of the UK keeps on evolving with more and more recognised defences being made available to offenders. In such a society, Utilitarianism is quickly losing value. The idea of sacrificing an individual's autonomy for the greater good of the community is being replaced with models of reform and rehabilitation.

However, at the same time, prison rates are soaring both in the USA and the UK. Whilst there is increased talk on adopting psychological methods such as behavioural therapy in order to combat crime, in practice the scene is quite different. During the course of my dissertation, I asked whether political motives were governing sentencing decisions. Is the need for the government to show that they are doing something to fight crime resulting in an unmanageable number of imprisonments? And if imprisonment is the answer, then why are crime rates still relatively high?

Whilst for the Western world these are serious questions - questions that have been debated for decades now - we as Muslims are at an advantage. We have the divine light and guidance given to us in this regard by our Creator in the Holy Qur'an.

Basis of Punishment in Islam

The Holy Qur'an outlines punishable crimes and directs us as to how to punish them. Punishment is only inflicted in those cases where there is violation of other people's rights and that violation bears a negative effect on society as well. Therefore,

a negligent attitude towards one's prayers or fasts is not punishable by penal laws. On the other hand, murder, dacoity, theft, adultery and fornication most certainly are.

Today, the greatest crime recognised by all societies is murder - the taking away of the life of another. And when the Holy Qur'an was revealed, it was denounced in the earliest revelations. Take for example 17:33: "*And kill not the soul which Allah has forbidden except for a just cause.*"

The punishment for murder was expounded as the law of retaliation in the Holy Qur'an: "*O you who believe, retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; the free for the free, and the slave for the slave and the female for the female. But if remission is made to any one by his (aggrieved) brother, prosecution should be according to usage, and payment to him in a good manner. This is alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. Whoever exceeds the limit after this, will have a painful chastisement. And there is life for you (in the law of) retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves*" (2:178-179).

The Holy Qur'an explicitly limits retaliation to cases of murder. However, it has been mentioned in some traditions that the Holy Prophet (*sas*) had ordered retaliation in cases of wounds as well. That is why commentators of the Holy Qur'an have reasoned that this was due to the fact that he had followed the earlier law until he received an express commandment to the contrary. However, following the revelation of 2: 178, Muslims are required to observe retaliation only

in the case of the slain.

Upon examination of the verse itself, we find the words “the free for the free, the slave for the slave and the woman for the woman”. Maulana Muhammad Ali, the well-known Translator and Commentator of the Holy Qur’an points out in his book, *The Religion of Islam*, that these words have often been misunderstood as meaning that if a free man has been murdered, another free man should be murdered in his place. Before the advent of Islam, an old Arab custom existed through which when a person of noble descent was killed, the execution of others besides the murderer took place. The words of the verse were meant to abolish such traditions, and the principle of retaliation does exactly that. It is made clear that whoever the person in question may be, the murderer himself must be slain, whether it be a free man, a slave or a woman.

The verse even allows for mitigation in cases where the person suffering from the death of the murdered person makes a remission and is satisfied with blood money. Blood money is also accepted instead of a death sentence in cases of unintentional killing.

Here we may consider another verse of the Holy Qur’an where cases of unintentional murder have been specifically dealt with: “*And a believer would not kill a believer except by mistake. And he who kills a believer by mistake should free a believing slave, and blood money should be paid to his people unless they remit it as alms*” (4:92).

Here unintentional murder or murder committed under provocative situations or cases where repentance can bring about positive change are also implied. Similarly, the verse immediately following the verse dealing with punishment for adultery or fornication provides for awarding punishment less than of flogging if the person repents and assures of positive change in his behaviour: “*Except those who afterwards repent and act aright; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*” (24:5).

All such provisions are there to show that Islamic punishments are not harsh in the sense that it does not provide opportunity to the criminals to reform themselves and become good citizens.

Blood Money or Compensation in Cases of Murder

One should note here that blood money is often objected against and criticised in the West as being an insensitive gesture. However, is the concept of crime and injury compensation not the same thing? The UK courts are quick to offer money as a form of reimbursement to sufferers of all sorts of losses, including psychiatric damage, yet the same country is quick to be critical of blood money for murder.

The death sentence has also been awarded in Islam for dacoity. The Holy Qur’an speaks of dacoity as waging war against Allah and his Apostle. In 5: 33, it says: “*The only punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be put to death or crucified, or their hands and*

their feet should be cut off on opposite sides, or they should be imprisoned; and this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement.”

Commentators accept that because four kinds of punishments have been prescribed by this verse, the punishment chosen will depend upon the circumstances of the particular case.

Punishment for Theft

Theft is also spoken of in the Holy Qur’an as a punishable crime: “*And as for the man and the woman addicted to theft, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment from Allah, and Allah is Mighty, Wise. But whoever repents after his wrong-doing and reforms, Allah will turn to him mercifully. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*” (5:38).

This particular punishment has often raised debate between Muslims and non-Muslims. Whereas the death penalty is not always deemed unduly harsh probably because it is a recognised punishment in many societies today, punishment for theft on the other hand is far stricter in Islamic *Shari’ah* than others. Maulana Muhammad Ali scrutinised the verse to explain the application of this punishment properly. Firstly, he asserts that the cutting off of hands may be taken metaphorically. He gives the example of an Arabic phrase that literally translates to mean he cut off his tongue. But the phrase actually refers to someone silencing another. Similarly, cutting off the hands of a thief may be understood

in the same way, and may be referring to incapacitation as a punishment, which is the temporary or permanent physical restraint upon another, for example, through imprisonment.

But he also argues that even if the verse is taken literally, then it certainly does not imply cutting the hands of thieves for every type of theft. Looking back at the punishment for dacoity, four types of punishments were revealed. Those were: death, crucifixion, cutting off the hands and feet of the perpetrator, or imprisonment. Obviously, theft is not as serious a crime as dacoity. Thus we would not expect the minimum punishment for theft to be severer than the minimum punishment for dacoity. As the minimum punishment for dacoity is imprisonment and the next higher is cutting off of limbs, we would expect the punishment for theft to fall between these two, depending on the facts of the case and the judge's discretion. Tradition has showed different applications of this punishment. For example, Abu Dawud narrated: "I heard the Messenger of Allah say: Hands shall not be cut off in the course of a journey."

Although at first this punishment seems harsh, great latitude has been shown in its application. The following example was given in the *Religion of Islam*: "Marwan, the Governor of Madinah, imprisoned a slave for stealing palm trees from the garden of another man. He intended to cut off his hands, but the master of the slave related to Marwan that he had heard of the Prophet (*sas*) saying that there was to be no cutting off of the hand in the case of theft of

fruit."

Punishment for Adultery or Fornication

The next punishable offence mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is adultery. It is stated in 24:2 as follows: "*The adulteress and the adulterer, flog each of them (with) a hundred stripes, and let not pity for them detain you from obedience to Allah if you believe in Allah and the last day, and let a party of believer witness their chastisement.*"

The only other verse in the Holy Qur'an speaking of the punishment for adultery is 4: 25. With regards to slave girls, it states: "*Then if they are guilty of adultery when they are taken in marriage, they shall suffer half the punishment for free married women.*"

Here, again, it is implied that circumstances other than the act of murder are to be considered by the judge in determining punishment of killing in retaliation in cases of murder, such as blood money or compensation of any form mutually agreed between the parties. The word "halved" is of particular significance here. Clearly, the punishment for adultery must physically be capable of being halved in the first place. However, the popular view is that Islam prescribes stoning to death for adultery. Allegedly, the Holy Prophet's practice was to flog a person committing fornication, which takes place when the guilty person is not married, and stoning to death for adultery. This raises a slight complexity. How can stoning someone to death be halved?

If we examine the verses alone, it is clear that the Holy Qur'an only speaks of flogging as a punishment. It may be reminded that 24: 2 states: "...*Flog each of them with a hundred stripes....*"

Flogging was carried out during the time of the Holy Prophet (*sas*) and was a punishment aimed more at disgracing the culprit than torturing him. It involves hurting the skin only. Use of a whip should be inflicted in a manner that it does not hurt the skin too much. During time of the Holy Prophet (*sas*) there were no whips and therefore sticks, hands or shoes were used instead. The culprit was required to take off any thick clothes, but was not stripped naked altogether. But some authorities say that it was preferable to give strokes on different parts of the body so that no severe harm should result to any one part. This may be due to the fact that there were no regular courts and prisons and, for that matter, no system had been evolved on how to inflict punishment or imprison a convict. It was during the time of Hazrat 'Umar, the Second Caliph, that administrative and other systems started taking shape.

Many commentators agree that a death sentence or stoning to death cannot be conceived of as possible punishment in the case of adultery as it cannot be halved, whereas imprisonment or flogging are punishments of the sort that may be halved. Thus they are the only types of punishments envisaged by the Holy Qur'an and applicable to this crime.

Punishment for False Accusation

Unlike Western penal policies, in

Islam, false accusation against someone, especially a woman in the case of adultery or fornication, has been also declared as punishable crimes: “*And those who accuse free women and bring not four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and never accept their evidence*” (24:4).

Therefore, although the punishment for adultery or fornication is often seen as harsh, it is only inflicted when the strongest possible evidence is produced.

Punishment for drunkenness

Another crime spoken of in the Holy Qur’an is drunkenness. However, the Holy Qur’an does not speak of any punishment for this crime. But Traditions show that the Holy Prophet (*sas*) did inflict punishment in such cases. A certain person was brought to the Holy Prophet (*sas*) in a state of intoxication. The Prophet (*sas*) was distressed at the sight of him, and he ordered those who were in the house to give him a beating. He was therefore beaten with shoes and sticks. Similarly, in other incident it was said that hands, shoes and garments were used to beat a person who had drunk wine. This remained the practice during the time of the Holy Prophet (*sas*). After his death, Hazrat Abu Bakr continued to inflict this punishment, but Hazrat ‘Umar introduced flogging as a punishment, giving between forty and eighty stripes. Commentators agree that this increase in punishment must have been for disturbing the public peace by drunkards.

Punishment as a Means of Deterrent

In the words of the Holy Qur’an and in its commentaries, there is much to suggest that punishment in Islam is justified on its deterrent effects. Deterrence as a justification for punishment falls under Reductivism. Despite its criticisms, deterrence takes place every day. For example, drivers almost always slow down when they see a speed camera. When we walk past a policeman, most of us recompose ourselves as if we should be seen as model citizens, even though we have not done anything to feel guilty about. The evidence of punishments being effective deterrents cannot be denied. So what may seem to be an intolerant and harsh punishment under Islamic penal law is in fact much more effective than people realise.

For example, let us go back to the punishment for theft. As already mentioned, the maximum punishment is cutting off the thief’s hands. Although the facts of the case will determine whether or not the maximum punishment will be given, the existence of the punishment itself raises so much fear in one’s mind that they would not dare to steal anything. For this reason, in Saudi Arabia, shopkeepers leave their shops unattended when they hear the call to prayers, and go to the mosques to pray. They might put a loose rope across the doorway to signify the shop is closed, but generally the goods of the shop will be easily accessible. Yet very few incidents of theft actually take place. The punishment for stealing is therefore a highly effective deterrent.

In England, however, theft is an everyday occurrence. The majority of people in this room today will have

been the victim of some sort of theft at some point in their lives. The maximum punishment on conviction is seven years imprisonment. However, it should be noted that this is the maximum punishment and most sentences will be a lot less. In order to determine whether a theft has taken place, The Theft Act of 1968 gives the following guidance: “A person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it.”

So, five facts must first be proved to lead to a conviction. *Firstly*, there must have been an appropriation (that is an assumption of the rights of the owner). *Secondly*, the property involved must be accepted in common law to be property capable of being stolen. *Thirdly*, it must be proved that the property belonged to the other person. *Fourthly*, there must have been an intention to permanently deprive the other of the property, and *finally*, that intention must have been dishonest.

Clearly, this list of requirements leads to many practical problems. Not only are they interconnected and often difficult to separate, but if a single one of them is disproved, then a conviction for theft cannot take place. In court, a lawyer will take either one of these facts and could easily argue that it was absent in the case at hand. For example, if A stole B’s wallet, then he could argue that he did not intend to permanently deprive him of it, or that he was not being dishonest but was playing an innocent prank on him. And he will be let off.

Punishment in Islam Brings Relief

to the Injured

In Islamic penal laws, there are fewer loopholes. Indeed, the law serves to bring justice to the victim and to deter others from following the same path in life. In Western societies, it is common to see the law as being protective of the offender instead, and Criminal Law, in particular, evolves upon defences available to the offender.

Therefore, Islam is often wrongly criticised as being harsh in its punishments. However, relaxing or stiffening a penalty for a particular violation is an integral part of the Islamic Law. Penalty in the Islamic Law is dependent on the nature of the crime. Factors such as severity of damage, the background of the violator, his or her intent and repeatability, all play a major role in determining the extent of the penalty. The maximum sentence of any violation of law is not applied in every case.

Furthermore, in 42: 40 of the Holy Qur'an, it is stated: "*And the recompense of evil is punishment like it, but whoever forgives and amends, he shall have his reward from Allah.*"

This golden rule has been rephrased and repeated in many verses of the Holy Qur'an. Allah is All-Knowing, Wise, and Merciful. In this respect, we cannot compare Islamic penal policies to Reductivism today. The latter is willing to sacrifice an individual by punishing him for the greater good of society. But in Islam, Allah is Forgiving and we have been assured in the Holy Qur'an itself that upon true repentance, we will be forgiven. 🌟

Berlin Mission report

(The following report was sent by Brother Akbar Abdullah from the USA.)

From 27 June until 2 July, Brother Abdul A. Santoe, accompanied by Br. Rasul Rogan, Br. Naeem Nasrullah, and his nephew, Faran Nasrullah, visited our Mission at Berlin. Br. Santoe, besides resolving pressing problems at the Berlin Mosque, accomplished some commendable contacts to further our *Jama'at's* influence in Berlin.

Meeting with Member of Parliament

On Wednesday 29 June, Br. Santoe and his party, together with Imam Ch. Riaz Ahmad, were invited by a Member of Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition Conservative Party, to meet him in his office at the Parliament. Tourists generally form long lines, usually waiting for nearly three to four hours before they could enter the Parliament, but the Member of Parliament came outside to meet Br. Santoe and his party and led them to his office. The Member of Parliament at one time led a German delegation to Suriname, and considered that country, with its diverse ethnicity, an example of a most tolerant nation. When he learned that Br. Santoe hailed from Suriname, he extended his invitation. Afterwards, he gave Br. Santoe and party a complete tour of the German Parliament. Addresses were exchanged to maintain their contacts in order to foster further communications and exchange of ideas to their mutual benefits. *Jazak Allah!* This is a great opening for our

Jama'at in Berlin.

Visit to the Iranian embassy

On Friday evening, 1 July, the Cultural Attaché from the Cultural Division of the Iranian Embassy invited Br. Santoe and his party to attend a lecture on Islam rendered in English and Farsi. After a half an hour's lecture, a session of formal talks took place. Thereafter, the group broke off to engage in informal conversation with other members of the audience. Br. Santoe's participation is a good example to further the influence of our *Jama'at* in Berlin. *Jazak Allah!*

Khutba in German at Berlin mosque

In nearly 18 years, perhaps this is the first time a member of our Anjuman rendered the *khutba* entirely in German. Well, Br. Santoe braved it and took the initiative to deliver the Friday sermon completely in the German language. Those members of the congregation who had not yet entered the Mosque thought that a German national was delivering the *khutba*. One visiting Turkish Professor complimented Br. Santoe on his delivery and said he saw no contradiction to Islam in his message when earlier he had heard negative things about our *Jama'at* from Sunni groups. Since the *khutba* in German was well appreciated by the congregation, Br. Santoe agreed to visit Berlin to render a series of *khutbas* in German. 🌟

In Memory of



Haji Mohamed Rashid
Pierkhan
(10 January 1938 – 13 July 2005)
Managing Director,
Rapar Broadcasting Network (RBN)
President,
Surinaamse Islamitische Vereniging
(SIV)

The late Bro. Haji Mohamed Rashid Pierkhan inherited his business acumen, foresight and love for media work from his father, the late Bro. Noer Pierkhan. The foundation for the Pierkhan's media empire was established when Bro. Noer Pierkhan, under the name of *ACME Service*, started a radio programme in Sarnami Hindi on 10 March 1957 on *Radio Paramaribo (Rapar)*. This programme soon became very popular. The number of advertisements received encouraged Mr. Noer Pierkhan to start his own advertising agency, which he did under the name of *First Indian Advertising Agency*.

Bro. Rashid Pierkhan went through a very difficult time when his father suddenly passed away in 1966 at the age of 48. In that same year, he also lost his mother, his grandfather and his grandmother. As a result, Bro. Rashid Pierkhan, who was a Civil Servant and at the time was also studying at the Suriname Law School, had to shoulder the addition burden of running the business, as well. Consequently, he

resigned from the Government Service, left his studies at the Law School, and joined *Rapar*.

He was supported very well by Mr. Wilfred Lionarons, Director of *Rapar* in those days. In 1974, Bro. Rashid Pierkhan purchased the rest of the shares of the company and, with his business skills, succeeded in expanding the company.

Bro. Rashid Pierkhan did not like publicity and preferred working behind the scenes, from where felt he could better manage and monitor his company. He did some radio talk shows, amongst which was the very popular *Kal Aaj aur Kal* (Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow), a programme with very high listening ratings and the active participation of a large number of listeners from the public.

In addition to the electronic media (radio and television, with several frequencies in Paramaribo and Nickerie), Bro. Pierkhan started broadcasting information and public views via the written media. Among the popular publications that can be mentioned are the daily *Dagblad Suriname* and the weekly *Bollywood Masala*.

He was also successful in the social, educational and cultural fields. As director of *Cultural and Art Promotion*, he invited several leading foreign artists to Suriname and was able to promote and strengthen the cultural bonds of Suriname with Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and India.

Besides his other activities, he managed to spend considerable time in his hobby, undertaking small-scale agriculture projects.

In the religious field, Bro. Rashid Pierkhan was very a very devoted

person. He was President of the Surinaamse Islamitische Vereniging (SIV) for 21 years. The developments within the SIV during this period are quite significant, both in the construction work as well as in the expanding of the organisation. He was acting as co-ordinator for the Central Ahmadiyya Anjuman, Lahore (Pakistan) for the *Jama'ats* in Guyana and Trinidad. Under his presidency, several very successful international Ahmadiyya conventions were held in Suriname. During his business tours, he made it a point to visit various Ahmadiyya *Jama'ats* in various parts of the world and the Central Anjuman in Lahore, Pakistan. For his commendable services rendered to the Surinamese society, Bro. Rashid Pierkhan was awarded the honour of Grandmaster in the Order of the Yellow Star, and was made Knight. He was also awarded with the *Sitara-e-Ahmadiyyat* by the SIV.

His *Janaza salah* was offered at the SIV graveyard, Doekhiweg, Paramaribo. It was led by Imam Ghulam Nabi Orie. Glimpses of his funeral service were shown on the website of the daily newspaper, *Dagblad Suriname*, which is owned by Mr. Faried Pierkhan, son of the late Bro. Mohamed Rashid Pierkhan

Among his relatives and friends and the general public, he was known as "a ready helper." In his public welfare work, he received the full support of his wife, Helouis Indrawatie Somair, and their children, Nisha, Faried and Shireen.

With the demise of Bro. Haji Mohamed Rashid Pierkhan, Suriname has lost a great son and a devoted member of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. May Allah shower His choicest blessings and forgiveness on the departed soul.☪

Kyaa zindagee ka zauq agar woh naheen milaa

**Kyaa zindagee ka zauq agar woh
naheen milaa**

**La‘nat hai aise jeene pe gar is se
hain judaa**

**Us rukh ko dekhnaa hi to hai asal
mudda‘aa**

**Jannat bhi hai yehee keh mile
yaar-e aashnaa**

**Ai logo ‘aish-e dunyaa ko hargiz
wafaa naheen**

**Kyaa tum ko khauf-e marg-o-
khiyaal-e fanaa naheen**

**Dhoondo woh raah jis se dil-o-
seenah paak ho**

**Nafs-e danee Khudaa ki itaa‘at
men khaak ho**

Can there be any enjoyment in life if
we do not meet our Creator?
Indeed to live far from Him is an
accursed existence

A mere sight of His countenance is
the cherished goal of life
For heavenly life is gained through
meeting that beloved Friend

O people! Place no reliance on
worldly pleasures
Have you no fear of death, no thought
of leaving this world?

Search for that path which will
cleanse your heart and soul
And through obedience to God erase
the base desires of the ego. ❁

SAD DEMISE OF A NOBLE LADY

Mrs. Salima Faruqui passed away in Lahore

It is with profound sorrow that we inform our readers that Mrs. Salima Faruqui, wife of our honoured and learned elder, the late Mian Naseer Ahmad Faruqui, passed away on 23 July 2005 in Lahore, Pakistan after a month’s illness. “*We belong to Allah, and to Him we shall eventually return.*”

Mrs. Faruqui was a noble, humane, hospitable and distinguished lady who was devoted to the cause of Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement. She was also well-known for her social work towards the welfare and education of destitute women and orphan girls. She was the Founder-President of a premier charitable institution of Pakistan called *Behbood* (lit. welfare and care).

Our late learned brother, Mr. Naseer Ahmad Faruqui, was a distinguished officer of the Indian Civil Service, and after the creation of Pakistan, he rose to eminent positions in the Service. In spite of being the wife of a most privileged Civil Servant, Mrs. Faruqui led a simple and down-to-earth life and silently worked for the welfare of her husband’s subordinates and destitute women and she also took an active part in supporting many charitable institutions. It was only after her husband retired from the Service and settled in Lahore that she founded a proper charitable institution,

Behbood, for providing education, industrial skills and an honourable life to destitute women and orphan girls. For more than thirty-five years she devoted her time and energy in developing various sections of this institution to provide education, industrial skills in handiwork to destitute women and orphan girls so that they can live an economically independent and honourable life in society.

In order to create a sense of self-respect and independence, Mrs. Faruqui took special interest in developing small-scale industrial units and encouraged women and young girls to learn how to run them independently or in groups, so that in future they would not be dependent on anyone.

After the 1965 War, this institution provided commendable social work and financial support to the members of the bereaved families of soldiers who had laid down their lives in defence of their motherland.

At the moment, several schools, industrial homes and welfare centres are being funded and run by *Behbood*. Mrs. Faruqui, in spite of her failing health, continued her patronage to see this institution grow and extend its welfare programmes.

She took an equally active part in the activities of the Ahmadiyya Women’s

Organisation of Lahore and attended its executive and general meetings regularly. Her towering personality and zeal always inspired other ladies to continue their efforts for a noble cause. She was a very devout Ahmadi and contributed generously towards appeals made by the Central Anjuman from time to time. In accordance with the wishes of her late husband, she bequeathed a very valuable property in a posh area of Lahore to the Central Anjuman, Lahore, and thus proved that she sacrificed her time, energy and even her property for the cause of Islam.

Funeral prayers for Mrs Faruqui were led by Hazrat Ameer Prof. Dr. Abdul Karim Saeed at the Darus Salaam Masjid, New Garden Town, Lahore and her body was laid to rest in the Darus Salaam Ahmadiyya Cemetery. May Allah shower His choices blessings on the departed soul and grant her an honourable place in Paradise.☪



Say: My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are surely for Allah, the Lord of the worlds –

No associate has He. And this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit. (H.Q. 6:163-164)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ‘OPENING CHAPTER’ OF THE HOLY QUR’AN

Maulana Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad

“In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. All praise is due to God, the Lord of the worlds, The Beneficent, the Merciful. Master of the Day of Requit. Thee do we serve, and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray.” Ameen.

Casting aside all our misleading sense of achievements, and rising above the feeling of the apparent vastness and grandeur of creation, we stand with awe and humility before God, the One Invisible Author and Sustainer of all, to realise how in Him lie all strength awe and beauty, and how all abound in the Universe only by His sufferance. As we perceive in Him the Originator and Sustainer of life, all power, all comfort and all happiness, we perceive also how His power and control encompass the whole of possible existence; we feel how this immense diversity of the creation is held together throughout by His one beneficent purpose, and how, coming nearer to ourselves, the destinies of all the units of human society are guided from step to step with love and care by His overwhelmingly beneficent will.

We further realise that, but for the unceasing manifestation of His mercy, nothing can exist and thrive, and that, as He suffers everything and every system to exist and grow, He also consummates them at the end of fixed periods to make them fulfil some higher object of existence. We remember that He is the Author of all laws, and that the highest manifestations of His laws are beneficence and mercy.

As we realise all this, we feel that the only part we can play in the scheme of creation is to follow His will with all our faculties of body, mind and soul, and that therein alone lies our highest achievement, the fulfilment of the supreme object of our

existence. We have not created ourselves, nor do we know our destiny; our destiny is known only to Him, Who has created us. The knowledge of that destiny can come to us only by degrees, and only if we apply to Him with due humility of spirit.

It is in appealing thus to the Author of our destiny for knowledge of it that our spiritual life lies. The spirit of self-sufficiency in us is disastrous to our spiritual existence. The scheme of creation is irresistible. The Qur’an says: *“Everything submits to Him willingly or unwillingly”* (13:15). It is the willing submission to the Author’s scheme that constitutes spiritual life. The nearer this willingness of ours approaches perfection, the healthier we are spiritually, and the more cheerful, joyous and comprehending in our inner nature.

This effort towards willing submission should not, however, proceed from our assertive ego, which makes it appear as if the strength that the mind needs to overcome its own imperfections, including that strength willingly to submit to the course of destiny, lies in the mind itself. Let us recognise instead that our mind is itself a creation of God, and, as such, depends upon Him even for the ultimate strength of submission. It is this total, unreserved reliance on God at every step of our spiritual journey that will enable us to understand His will for us, and understanding, submit to it cheerfully. This is the straight and plain path to our destiny.

There are two other paths – one, the path of arrogantly questioning the wisdom of the Divine scheme, and refusing at every step to follow destiny, and the other, the path of self-sufficiency that urges the mind, instead of discovering the destiny appointed for it as a part of the whole, to give the individual self and the rest of creation a destiny from itself. This, indeed, amounts to a denial of any scheme of creation. Both these paths being wrong are

fraught with pain and suffering to our existence – both immediate and ultimate. May we be given light enough to eschew both these paths and understand not only that creation has a purpose, but also that that purpose is to give the grandest fulfilment to the object of our existence.

As the name itself signifies, *Islam* is the path of submission. The capacity for walking along this path, no doubt, lies dormant in every person, but the inclination to adopt one of the other two paths is very strong in man as he emerges into moral life. The higher nature of submission is found submerged in the lower nature of disobedience. According to the Qur'an, the self of man does not emerge into this world in a perfected or refined form. Like a noble metal, the soul of man is pushed forth from the physical to the moral world in a crude form mixed up with all sorts of dross. To use the words of the Book: “*And the soul and its perfection, so He intimated to it by inspiration its deviating from truth and its guarding (against evil). He will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it*” (91:7-10).

Our spiritual life, therefore, consists of a sustained effort to purify the original but latent spirit of submission in the soul from the dross of the spirit of rebellion. This is not a path strewn with roses. Like all real achievements, it is beset with difficulties. Like all real comforts, it has to be earned through discomfort. All the different aspects of life have to be harmonised; each and every faculty of ours has to be disciplined for the purpose of that harmonisation. It is indeed ‘an uphill road’, as the Qur'an would put it, but it is the only road. Difficult though the path is, the inexhaustible helpfulness of Divine beneficence not only promises, but assures us of the achievement of our goal.

His help comes first in the shape of revealed ordinances for the general guidance of our individual and social lives on all their different planes. These are accompanied by the example of the persons who receive this revelation for the rest of the people, and who are specially

purified by the Holy Spirit of God to serve that purpose. These persons are called *nabi* in Arabic, imperfectly translated into English by the word *prophet*, and they have appeared in all ages and among all nations. We should pay indiscriminate and unreserved homage to all of them, as this will open our minds to the universality of Divine Light in human society - a stepping-stone towards cosmic consciousness.

These two principles of universal Divine guidance through dispensation and appointed personalities are the lines along which our spiritual struggle should be carried on. The course of the struggle is a long one, and consists of innumerable stages, which can broadly be reduced to three. The first is the one in which the spirit of submission is practically non-existent, and the self manifests itself only in the overwhelming passion of insubordination and sin. The self at this stage is in its original crude form, and has not yet received the supporting light of God. In Islamic terminology, it is called *al-nafs al-ammarah* or *the commanding self*. The animal self of man holds sway over his whole consciousness and completely over-shadows his spiritual vision. It creates for him a false heaven of bestiality. The ignorant self wallows in and gloats because of it. The terms ‘morality’ and ‘moral standards’ are meaningless to it, and it does not follow such standards except in so far as it is compelled to do so by convention or by the physical power of others.

Then, by a prolonged effort, through patient prayers and disciplinary measures, one reaches the second stage of the spiritual journey. Here, the spirit of obedience and submission does make itself felt, but it is still too weak to have mastery over the other spirit of insubordination. To borrow a biblical phrase, “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”. In Islam, it is called *al-nafs al-lawwamah*, or *the chiding self*. Remorse, repentance, and what is called the pangs of conscience are the characteristics of this stage, during which the difficulty of the spiritual struggle is especially felt. Doubts and despair beset the path, and the pilgrim is,

spiritually speaking, almost bled to death in the course of this struggle. Indeed, at times he cries out in despair: “*Mata Nasrullah?*” (‘Where is the help of God?’). But just at these critical moments the voice of God rings in the soul, saying: “*Behold! The help of God is very near*” (2:214).

Thus, supported subtly, yet tangibly, by the hand of God and gradually overcoming the different weaknesses of the flesh, the self of man progresses till it reaches the third and final stage of its evolution, termed in Islam, *al-nafs al-mutmainnah* or *the self in repose*. At this stage, there is a complete harmony between the Divine purpose and the desire of the self. The soul is completely free from the rule of the restless and insubordinate flesh. Peace has descended on the soul. The self has entered into complete submission. May God lead our souls along the straight path to this submission and peace!

Prayer

“*Our Lord! Call us not to account if we have forgotten or erred in anything. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden heavier than we have the strength to bear. Wipe out the faults that we have committed, and cover us from any in future, and have mercy on us*” (2:286).

“O God! Thou art the Author of peace, and from Thee comes peace, blessed art Thou, O Lord of Glory and Honour! O God! Bring affection between us and reform us and open for us the paths of peace, and take us out of the spheres of darkness into light, and save us from overt and hidden sins, and bless us in what we hear, and in what we see, and in what we feel. And accept our repentance, for surely Thou art He Who accepteth repentance” (Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

“O God! We ask of Thee steadfastness in our pursuits. We ask of Thee the intent for good action, and power to thank Thee for Thy benevolence, and the power to render Thee devoted service. We ask of Thee the tongue that speaketh truth, and the heart that entertaineth no misgivings and the gift of fellow-feeling” (Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him). ☪

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The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion. So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. Allah desires ease for you, and He desires not hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you and that you may give thanks.

(H.Q. 2:185)