Another objection raised against the Holy Quran is that it says that the universe was created in six days with the Divine Command ‘Be’, and on the seventh day God rested, while Geology has proved that the creation of earth took hundreds of thousands of years. Our reply is that there can be no doubt that creation was due to “Be” or the Divine Command. Whether it takes hundreds of thousands or millions of years to create a thing, it first requires the Divine Command. Any one who believes in God cannot deny that every action is due to His command. However, an atheist would contend that all creation takes place by itself, without any need of a command. But when God’s existence, and that nothing can happen without His Will, are proved every honest person must admit that nothing can happen without His intention. No force dare act without His permission.

The verse which contains the word ‘Be’ is this: “His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, ‘Be’, and it is.” (36:82) That is, God’s Command takes the form that when He says “Be”, so it is. It must not be thought that it takes place forthwith without delay because the verse does not use the word “forthwith”. The verse shows intention which means if He so wishes He may cause it to happen soon or He may delay it. As can be seen from the laws of nature that some things come to pass speedily while others take time. Therefore, this is not a place for objection.

As regards the objection that God created the heavens and earth in six days, and rested on the seventh, let it be clear that the word “rest” does not occur in the Holy Quran. However, it is found in the Old Testament. Though this may be a metaphor, to clear any misunderstanding the Holy Quran has used another term: That is “And certainly We created heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days, and no fatigue touched Us.” (50:38) This refutes the suggestion that God rested on the seventh day. For if it (the Old Testament) is taken literally it does mean that God tired. The point is that only he who tires, rests. However God is free from tiring because no defect is to be found in Him.

As regards the statement that God created the heavens and earth in six “days”, the Holy Quran tells us that God’s day does not equal that of man. At one place it says that God’s one day equals one thousand years, and in another fifty thousand years of man (22:47 and 70:4). Therefore, we cannot say what duration is meant by these “six days”. However, we can be sure that they do not mean six days as measured by man. It is obvious that when the sun and the moon and the earth and the heavens did not exist, human days could not exist either. And when God Himself has clearly laid down that His days are different from man’s, such an objection can only be based on either ignorance or mischief.

Apart from this, geological research does not bear the seal of absolute truth. Its theories are mere guesses, nay only suspicions, and they change by the day. The conclusions of the Greek philosophers in these matters have been discredited by modern science, there now remaining not a trace of them. Similarly, today’s research will be overshadowed by that of the future. The scientific conclusions that have appeared so far have sometimes suggested that it is the heavens that revolve, and sometimes that it is the earth. Perhaps the future may reveal a third view.

Chashma-i Ma’rifat
EDITORIAL

“The Chosen People”

According to a press report the Carters (Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Carter) have written a book about the Middle East with specific reference to the three religious communities of the area, namely the Israelites, the Christians and the Muslims. Amongst the causes of conflicts, the Carters have counted the fact that the adherents of all the three religious denominations consider themselves as “the chosen people of God.” As for the Israelites, “the Cult of the Chosen” is the basis of all their religious as well as political thinking. Various churches in the Christian world also preach this to their followers — though indirectly — by guaranteeing washing away of their sins through the price paid by Jesus Christ for the Sins of Humanity. Only faith in Redemption guarantees entry in the Kingdom of God. Probably centuries of persecution of the Jewish community at the hands of European Christians was due to this conflict of the Claim of Chosen people by each one of them.

Talking of Islam, it will not be fair to allege that Islam inculcates the concept of Chosen people. Islam, rather, dealt a severe blow to the concept of Chosen people by proclaiming “The most honored with Allah is the one who is righteous.” Islam gave a concept of God to humanity which was not hitherto known to mankind. According to the Quran, Allah (God) is the Creator of the Universe. He is the Creator of Man, and Mankind if the best and the finest creation of His — whom He created in His own colors. He gave guidance to all nations and people through His Messengers and there is no people in whom a Messenger was not raised. There is no difference between His Messengers. Islam makes belief in all the Messengers of Allah and whatever was revealed to them as an essential part of the belief of a Muslim. How can a Muslim, who is enjoined upon to have belief in all the Messengers of Allah (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad [peace be upon all of them] all being amongst those Messengers) without making any distinction between them think of the cult of ‘Chosen People’?

Secondly, Islam does not attach any importance to more professing of belief. Mere professing of faith in any dogma does not avail — according to the teachings of Islam — every man is to be judged by his deeds, and even an atom of good done by any person irrespective of his color, creed or station in life will be rewarded tenfold in this worldly life and hundred fold in the Hereafter. According to the teachings of Islam, Hell will be lying empty one day, meaning thereby that all mankind will one day find its abode in Heaven — or putting it in other words — each and every member of human society will one day enter the Kingdom of God.

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THE PEACE OF ISLAM
by Lord Headley

IF WE FAIL to recognize that God can suspend or alter any of the Laws He has established we cannot believe in His omnipotence, and we must at once place all the miraculous happenings we have read of in the Bible under the heading of Fairy Tales. Walking on the water, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, feeding a multitude with a few loaves and fishes, and many other equally supernatural events, firmly believed in by all good Christians, could not have taken place but for a suspension of the ordinary laws of Nature. When the children of Israel passed dry-shod on the sea bed, when Moses performed other miracles, when Christ followed with His miracles, and when Mahomet was miraculously carried to Heaven, and when other wonders were performed, the Hand of God was there in each and every case directing and guiding. If He wished, He could stay the movements of the earth and all the planets around the sun, and that without any of the disasters learned men assure us would ensue on the slightest checking of the annual or diurnal movements.

Of the universal law of gravitation it has been truly said:

“That very law which moulds a tear and bids it trickle from its source—
That law maintains the Earth a sphere, and guides the planets in their course.”

But as God made all the solar system and established the law, so He can arrange matter and the laws governing that matter in such a way that no disastrous results follow on any new arrangements He may select.

There is a story told of a very devout old lady—a most earnest and zealous Christian—whose feelings had been very much harrowed by a clergyman’s description of the sufferings of Christ and His followers—exclaiming, “Ah, well, it’s a long time ago; let us hope it is not true.” This is just the point. For many hundreds of years there have been no miracles, and men’s minds have become used to ordinary every-day happenings; but if suddenly a Divine Message were revealed they would be so much surprised and upset that they would refuse to give any credit to the manifestations, and would probably try to make away with the medium as an uncanny and dangerous person.

In this fast moving age religion is looked upon as rather a bore, and men are either atheists or blind followers of dogmatic lines of thought which their reason rebels against, but which they outwardly profess because they think it looks well and they find it pays. One of the best men I ever knew—an excellent husband and father—assured me he was an atheist, and that he looked forward to nothing but annihilation. Yet he was perfectly happy, and nothing I could advance had the slightest effect in making him change his terrible belief. Another man I heard of took religion in quite a cheerful spirit. He was very rich, and a friend once remonstrated with him on his rather free mode of life, and asked him if he ever thought of the future state, and what would become of his soul in the next world. He replied, “Not I. Why should I worry about such things? I pay my doctor so much a year to attend to my physical health, and the priest gets about £600 a year for looking after my spiritual wants. Why should I bother my head?” This man, too, was quite happy in his own way, and had reconciled himself to the payment of a certain annual sum, for which he was relieved of all “bother.”

So much has been written, thought, and spoken for ages past on the all-absorbing and all-important subject of religion, that it may well be that there is nothing fresh to be advanced from any human quarter. That there is good in all religions must be admitted, as also that some forms are better than others.

If it were only possible to get a sound “non-professional” opinion in the selection of our religion it would be a grand step in the right direction. If we go to the priests or monks, or others, who make it their business to supply a particular kind of article of which they approve, we cannot get much assistance because the various tenets or dogmas are so diametrically opposed to one another.

Take the Christian Church alone—we shall have such bewilderingly different directions to Heaven from the Church of England, the Church of Rome, and the Nonconformists, that we shall gain nothing at all. What we want is the assistance of some outside and unbiased onlooker who has had opportunities for contemplation, and who has nothing whatever to gain by an openly expressed and honest opinion.

What we really want is a religion which will recognize and support the laws of the country. In these days the law is constantly brought into ridicule: there is abroad an unhealthy and maudlin sympathy with nearly every form of wrong-doing and crime. A just sentence has but to be pronounced and it will call forth shrieks from the sentimentalis for remission or reprieve. Let there be full justice in religion; as it is, the backbone of the country is being softened by this soppysentimentalism, which is not by any means humane or likely to improve the character of the nation. “Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill, applies to all this sympathy with wrong-doing, and though we may feel the deepest sorrow for the criminal whose upbringing and miserable environment have led to the trouble, we must punish in order to deter others and prevent repetitions. It is often the most cruel action to “turn the other cheek”—cruel because it encourages the evil-doer in his course of crime, and other members of society suffer through our misplaced kindness. Unless I am much mistaken, the milk-and-water justice we often see dispensed in the present day in this country is responsible for half the evils we so bitterly complain of. It would be far better to go back to the old “Lex talionis” than go on as we are now doing.

We cannot quite look upon Christ as a Law-giver. He presented to the world gentle and beautiful precepts, but the Devil, as he walks abroad today, will not be put down by soft answers and turnings of the other cheek: nothing short of the strongest measures should be used with all emissaries of the evil one. Moses was a law-giver, and Mahomet was a law-giver, and we now need something of the firmness and absolute justice of the Holy Prophet—stern but altogether free from the savagery of Old Testament vengeance. Successions of party Governments, playing for power rather than to the good of the nation, have brought us to such a pass that we cannot even look after and keep in order our own women folk! A truly shocking state of affairs for descendants of the Vikings and citizens of the grandest Empire the world has ever seen.

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The laws we have are good enough if they were only enforced. Truculent to vice only leads to further vice. We don’t want any return to the methods of torture or of any form of cruelty, nor would we shed one drop of blood to enforce our views on religion or politics, but we should like to see the laws obeyed and justice meted out to all. I firmly believe that if the teachings of Mahomet through the Koran were carefully followed there would be far less difficulty in governing the country, and it would not be very strange either, since more than half His Majesty’s subjects in his vast Empire are Mahomeds. The age has altogether passed when it will be sought to establish any religion by force of arms and, even if they had the power to do so, I am certain that the Muslims — who are all loyally inclined — would never attempt to establish Islam by any violent methods. Sedition and rebellion are absolutely forbidden by the Koran. “Let there be no violence in religion” is one of the maxims of the Muslim faith.

To secure attention and fair hearing is all the Mahomeds want; and I feel certain that, if the people of England fully grasped what Islam really means — common sense, and the natural desire we all possess to have appeals made to our reasoning side, as well as to our feelings — would help to put away the shameful misunderstandings which at present exist. Europeans very commonly look upon Mahomedanism as barbarism — when they learn all that Mahomet did to mitigate the savagery and barbarism he met with in Arabia they will alter those opinions. It is the Christian missionaries who have spared no pains to misinterpret the Muslim faith; this is greatly to their discredit, though according to their lights they may mean well, and it has often occurred to me that if they would talk a little less about salvation and a little more about the importance of veracity, they would meet with more favour and be more respected. What a contrast is there between this wilful suppressio veri and the manner in which the Muslim missionary approaches his work!

The Governments of this country have often been sadly harassed by having to accede to the demands of religious bodies. The Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Nonconformists, and many others, all have to be considered, for they all have power, and all want more.

There is, as far as one can see, no class in the Mahomede religion or Church which bids for the temporal power. The grandeur of Islam is un-influenced by any such sordid considerations. Every true follower of the Holy Prophet looks to a reward which is as far above mere mundane advantages and riches as the light of the sun is above that of the ignis fatuus. There are no popes, no bishops, and no ministers requiring large endowments and emoluments, for God Himself is the Head of this Church of the Spirit. History tells us of Christian churches making heavy bids for the temporal power, and we can point to the sale of indulgences and the not always impartial distribution of fat living to show how terribly matters which should only be connected with the highest aspirations of the soul have been mixed up with sordid considerations of purely worldly profit. It is not going too far to say that the vast majority of so-called Christians regard “religion” as a good, respectable, Sunday institution, which offers exceptional opportunities for showing off their best clothes and talking about their neighbors. This curious religion is also going to take them to some heaven — the position in that heaven depending in many cases on the amount paid, just as certain coins admit to the boxes and stalls, and others to the pit and gallery of a theatre.

Much of the religion of the West is the outcome of the superstitions of mediæval times — a relic, indeed, of the Dark Ages, and not much in sympathy with the teachings of Moses or Christ. In those cloudy and troublesome times — say between the third and fifth centuries and later — when Europe was the vast arena over which hordes of wild and warlike races vied with each other and spread terror and desolation on all sides, the great rulers of States, like the warlike barons or lords in England, were often men more conspicuous for their prowess with sword or battle-axe, wielded in defense of their estates, their hearts and homes, than they were for any book learning and culture. In order to keep things going at home they had to employ clerks or clerics, who were able, by means of their superior learning, to maintain a sort of stewardship over the establishments, to keep records of current events, &c., &c. These clerics in time became necessary adjuncts to large establishments, and exercised great power, and had great influence. Opportunities then often occurred for increasing this influence by using the mysteries of the unknown as a fulcrum against which to place those astonishingly long levers — dread of hell and terrors of future punishment. Skillful handling of these terrors produced in the minds of the credulous a feeling not far removed from panic, which was, however, soothed and smoothed down by the assurance that, on embracing a certain form of religion and swallowing some craftily evolved dogmas, salvation might be gained. But it was somehow contrived that absolute security as regards a safe and high place in the next world could not be obtained unless by very handsome gifts to “the Church,” and these gifts took the form of large grants of land, palaces, cathedrals, and rich endowments. Here we saw the birth of sacerdotalism, and the determined bids for temporal authority have been very noticeable ever since, and right up to the present day. The advent of Mahomet, some six hundred years after Christ, exposed the unreality of all such ideas as atonements, priestly interventions, supplications to the saints, and those other cumbersome and involved methods of approaching the Almighty. However grand the Mosaic laws, however beautiful the gentle and forgiving precepts of the Holy Prophet of Nazareth, it must be admitted that the Mahomede teaching contained the most sublime message, over-riding by its very simplicity all obstacles in the way of the believer on his path to God.

In Chapter IX of the Koran lines occur which leave no doubt as to their meaning and applicability to all who are under sacerdotal domination and insist on taking human beings as their guides.

“They take their priests and their monks for their lords, besides God, and Christ, the son of Mary, although they are commanded to worship one God only: there is no God but He, far be that from Him which they associate with Him.” — O true believers, verily many of the priests and monks détour the substance of men in vanity, and obstruct the way of God.” [The italics are the writer’s.]
Peace of Islam

The religion of Christ is not quite the religion of St. Paul, who seems to have added to it and altered it very considerably, and various authorities have interpreted these later teachings and varied them from time to time. There is, in fact, not much uniformity in so-called Christianity, but we find in Islam that which should satisfy the longings of the created to be at one with and return to the Creator—the ever-present and omnipotent protector of all creatures. According to Islam there is only one God we may worship and follow. He is before all, above all, and no other, however holy and pure, may be named in the same breath. Indeed, "it is surprising that human beings with brains and intelligence should have been so foolish as to allow dogmas and the tricks of sacerdotalism to obscure their view of Heaven and their Almighty Father, Who is always approachable by each one of His creatures, whether human or saintly (i.e., Divinely inspired). The key to heaven is always there, and can be turned by the humblest or most miserable human being without any help from prophet, priest, or king. It is like the blessed air we breathe, free to all God's creatures, and those who try to make mankind think otherwise are probably guided by interested motives, e.g., salaries and stipends, which keep professions going, or some other worldly advantages."

My chief object is not so much to attack any particular branch of the Christian religion as to point out the beauty and simplicity of the Muslim faith, which, in the writer's humble opinion, is free from the objections so apparent in many other religions. Granting, for the sake of argument, that Islam is free from sacerdotalism with its attendant dogmas and greed for power, we must concede that the government of a nation or empire would go on more smoothly if such a peaceful religion were universally adopted. It seems impossible even to imagine the government of, say, the British Empire under such conditions, though 'tis "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

It is, indeed, a much-to-be deplored fact that "religion" has been responsible for more bitterness, cruelty, and shedding of blood than any other cause we know of. Is it possible, then, that a religion can be found which can ever bring all mankind to be unanimous in the simple worship of the One God who is above all and before all? Imagine for a moment if everyone in the British Empire became a true Mahomedan in heart and spirit—a Utopian idea, indeed! Government would be much easier, because men would be actuated by true religion and there would be no Church parties to consider, no dissenters to conciliate, and no heavy bills to pay the toils on the path to heaven. There is some simplicity in religion as taught by Moses, Christ, and Mahomet, but the confusion which has been brought about by others who have tried to improve on God's Holy Revelations is inextricable and hopelessly bewildering to the single-minded and earnest inquirer for truth.

One form of religion incited the Crusades, in which our ancestors sacrificed tens of thousands of human lives—for what? An unseemly quarrel over a sepulchre in which it is believed Christ laid for a short time. Was it worth while? Another form of religion taught us to burn alive and otherwise torture those who did not agree with us on quite minor points of religion. Was it worth while? Another very common form is that of those whose intolerance is so great that they consign all their fellow-creatures to everlasting perdition if they will not swallow certain dogmatic ideas. Is it worth while? Is it desirable to show a want of charity which must be hateful to the God of Mercy, and which either Christ or Mahomet would condemn in no measured terms? General Gordon said: "I do not see the sect of Pharisæes among the Mussulmans. Whatever they may think they never assume, as our Pharisæes do, that A and B are doomed to be burned; and you never see the unamiable features which are shown by our Pharisæes." Gordon had lived long amongst the Mahomedans in the East and the beauties of Islamic teachings had not escaped his notice, and there seems to be no doubt that in writing the above he truly felt that there was more real Christian charity in Islam than there was at home. In much the same spirit, he wrote: "No comfort is equal to that which he has who has God for his stay, who believes not in words but in facts, that all things are ordained to happen and must happen. He who has this belief has already died, and is free from the annoyance of this life."

In reply to the above it will probably be advanced that Eastern ideas do not blend with Western ideas, and there can be no "fusion," so to speak, and that to attempt to govern the nations of the West whilst an Eastern religion was recognized and influenced men's minds and actions would be quite incongruous and out of the question. Well, in reply, the writer wishes to point out that for nearly two thousand years every country in Europe has been governed under the religions of the East—i.e., Jewish and Christian.

The spirit of Islam soars far above petty jealousies and the racial distractions of East and West, and if Eastern Christianity led by the great Prophet of Nazareth has gone so far towards enlightening mankind, there seems to be no valid reason why the more extended and simpler Islamic faith expounded by the great Prophet of Arabia should not continue the good work. There is a great similarity between the characters of the leaders as anyone will find out inquiring into Mahomet's life. Also a study of the Koran will reveal the fact that there is nothing antagonistic to previous revelations—Mahomet's instructions, as laid down in the book, completely back up the Bible teachings, extending them to suit the requirements of the time. On the principle that it is unfair to condemn a man unheard, so it is unfair to do what 99 out of every 100 Christians do—i.e., condemn the Mahomedan faith without even finding out the meaning of the word Islam. The laisser faire principle is often applied by those who do not want to be enlightened; being enlightened means being worried, and they would rather remain in darkness than stretch out a hand to open the door letting in light. "What I've got is good enough for me; I don't want to look at anything else," they say in effect, thus refusing to make an effort to advance even in the knowledge of God and His messages to mankind.

For years past, one of my chief thoughts has been, how can the Muslim faith be "Westernized" so as to bring it into practical touch with the nations of Europe? Or, in other words, how can we Westerners apply ourselves so as to gain a better comprehension of what Islam really means? Then followed a second thought: How is it that we do not com-

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plain about the nationality of Christ, Who we must believe was a swarthy Asiatic? His mother, the Virgin Mary, was an Asiatic, and Moses and nearly all the inspired Prophets were Easterners. The Holy Prophet Mahomet was, like the others, an Easterner, and was given his instructions from on high: the Holy Koran contains the Word of God like the Bible and other inspired works, and confirms the Bible and previous revelations. The Koran gives additional teachings, emphasizing the importance of those teachings, and above all insists on the abandonment of all that savours of idolatry; the SPIRIT of the revelation being that no other name should be even mentioned along with the holy name of Allah our All-Mighty Father — the All-Seeing, the All-Merciful.

"Then Mahomet, Thy chosen son, Inspired by fire Divine. Laid down the law, the greatest one, Which must for ever shine. That Thou alone most merciful, Our Father dear dost reign, And that we must all time throughout From other gods refrain. No other must approach to Thee, However great and pure, No savour of idolatry Can Thy dear heart endure. Thy ways are not our ways, O God, Thou' near Thy mercy seat Are many souls of purity Thy loving eye to greet."

The spirit of praise is the essence of the Muslim creed — the main supplication is for Divine direction and guidance. Though my gratitude for God's favours and loving care has been profound from my earliest youth, I cannot help observing that within the past few years, since the pure and convincing faith of the Muslims has become a reality in my heart and mind, I have found happiness and security never approached before. Freedom from the weird dogmas of the various branches of Christian churches came to me like a breath of pure sea air, and on realizing the simplicity, as well as the illuminating splendour, of Islam, I was as a man emerging from a cloudy tunnel into the light of day.

"For Moses, Christ, and Mahomet Did each Thy love proclaim,
And we must not their words forget, Or judge them not the same; For though their words have twisted been By those who Thee profess, Their revelations can be seen In simple blessedness. Of human birth they all proclaim, In happy language clear, Thy one eternal glorious name, Which is to us so dear. Contention should not rise between The followers of these, The greatest prophets ever seen Who lived but Thee to please. They gave in all humility Thy messages of love, That all mankind might clearly see, Nor from Thy precepts rove."

The above quoted simple lines were written many years ago by one who was always at heart a follower of Mahomet, though at the time of writing he was almost entirely ignorant of the main features of Islam.

Having definitely decided that no comfort could possibly be obtained from dogmatic teaching, the thought came to me that God certainly watches and controls every desire and every action. He has always done so, no doubt, but the teaching gleaned from the pages of the Koran have enabled me to grasp that wonderfully comforting thought in a way previously impossible. If every move in life is directed by the Almighty there may be true comfort for those who are not only sore let and hindered in running the race of life, but are heavily weighed down by sorrow for their many foolish and evil actions. All such may have hope that God will — in His infinite wisdom and goodness — use them as an example for others, showing them what to avoid. It is a rather terrible thought, but the true believer will face any trial, any disgrace, or any degradation in God's service. His ways are not our ways. The spirit of Islam points to salvation for the unfortunate, the unhappy, and the wicked when there appears repentance, and obedience, and resignation, and desire to assist our fellow-creatures to the greatest possible extent. Even through the greatest suffering we should feel happy in having been allowed to be the instruments to carry out Divine instructions.

Bigotry and fanaticism have wrought havoc in the contending Christian churches, but this cannot be said of Mahomedanism, which is a united church, save only for some minor disputes as to the descendants of Mahomet. How much better, then, would it be if we in the West made up our minds to abandon the complicated forms of religion at present obtaining, and to adopt Islam?

Some years ago the rulers of a very enlightened nation in the Far East had serious doubts as to whether their form of religion was the right one or not, so they appointed certain wise men to examine all the leading religions of the world and report thereon. The wise men deliberated and came to the conclusion that their own religion was as good as any of the others, and they therefore declined to advise any changes. Following up this idea I firmly believe that if all the best intellects of Europe could be brought into play in a search for a religion which should be based on worldly reason or common sense, no less than on the inspired writings of Divinely inspired prophets, the unanimous selection would be in favour of Islam, the simplicity and grandeur of which is quite without question. Is it not a blessing to be very grateful for to have the chance of embracing a religion which appeals to the reason as well as to the heart and inward longings of mankind, and is at the same time free from sacerdotalism and other complications?

There are those at present living on this earth, both in the East and in the West, to whom revelations establishing the truth of Islamic teaching have been made in the clearest manner, and it is possible that the time may not be far distant when God will allow these revelations to be made clear to all His children on earth; but this is a matter for Divine guidance, for no man knows the appointed time of God.

In an age of scepticism like the present, if one of the divinely inspired Prophets were to now re-appear in the person of any ordinary individual and repeat the statements or utter truths at all similar to those he uttered when on earth hundreds of years ago, he would be immediately regarded as insane, and be either imprisoned or placed in an asylum.

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The many "churches" of Christianity are so much at variance one with the other, and their "Divines" have made such an inextricable tangle of Christian teaching, and the dogmas are so hopelessly bewildering, that the clear reasoning mind and open ingenuous heart of man both crave for a religion which is tangible and convincing, as well as simple.

"The dogmas of the Christian Church—I care not whether Roman Catholic or Protestant—have repelled me ever since earliest childhood, and I do not know whether my boyish distrust of the Creed as laid down by St. Athanasius was less strong than is my contempt today for the man who lays down the law from a pulpit and consigns millions of his fellow-men to everlasting perdition because they do not agree with him. It has always seemed to me very remarkable that educated gentlemen should be found who, in order to get into the Church, will cheerfully subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles and that horrible Creed, well knowing in their hearts that they do not and cannot believe one half they put their names to. After forty years of thought and prayerful effort to arrive at a correct view, the dominant idea in my mind is that the whole fabric of so-called religion is of man and not of God. I must also confess that visits to the East have filled me with a very deep respect for the simple faith of the Mahomedans, who really do worship God all the time, and not only on Sunday, like so many Christians."

The above extract from a little book entitled "Thoughts for the Future" probably finds an echo in the more inward feelings of many who consider the question of religion and the future state.

Islam is the religion of grand simplicity; it satisfies the noblest longings of the soul, and in no way contravenes the teachings of Moses or Christ.

**Footnotes**

1. Jesus said to the young man who asked what he could do to inherit eternal life: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God."


3. The word 'son' is not here used as the Christians use it when alluding to Christ. Mahomet claimed Divine inspiration, but never claimed Divinity. He was a man and, as such, a son of God—God's creation.

CAN JESUS CHRIST be an exemplar and a model for our lives? Did he preach the importance of education? Did he even hint at the existence of any science? Did he utter a word about or in favour of industry and economy? Did he do or say anything to better our condition in this world? Did he teach anything about: (a) duties of man to man; (b) duties of nations to nations; (c) duties of the sovereign to subjects and subjects to sovereign? Did he teach anything about the rights of man? Did he preach anything about the sacredness of marriage and family life? Did he give any legal, social, moral, economic and political systems? Certainly not.

He never married? He wandered homeless from place to place with only a few disciples who "forsook him and fled" (Mark 14:50) during the final hours of his worldly life. We know nothing as to how he and his disciples earned their living. It does appear that they lived on alms.

We find nothing in the teachings of Jesus that can be of any practical value in our day-to-day life. Can he be our exemplar? Jesus was sent to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). He was not sent to the whole humanity but was only a national prophet (Mark 7:27; Matthew 7:6).

Besides being a national prophet he admitted that his teachings were not complete: "I have yet many things to say unto you but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). He further advised: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you unto all truth" (John 16:13). For that reason alone he cannot be our exemplar.

The "Spirit of Truth" (John 16:13) was none other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) who was, undoubtedly, an "excellent exemplar" (Quran 33:21). He passed through various stages of life. "Events of diverse nature arose in the course of his career which demanded the manifestation of various characters. At every step he was weighed, but was never found wanting. We need a perfect model suitable to our needs in our several walks of life, and the life of the Sacred Prophet in itself eloquently promises such a model. A king, a statesman, a warrior, a general, a law giver, a judge, a conquerer, a proscribed fugitive, a tradesman, a friend, a son, a father, a husband, a neighbour—all these characters are mirrored in most beautiful colours in his life."¹

The prophet was the best specimen and perfect model. "Head of the state as well as of the church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope's pretentions and Caesar with the legions of Caesar. Without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue, if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right Divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the power without its supporters. He would do his household work with his own hands, would sleep upon a leather mat, and his menu consisted of dates and water or barley bread, and after having done a full day of multitudinous duties, he spent the hours of night in prayer and supplication until his feet got swollen. No man under so vastly changed circumstances and conditions had changed so little."²

"Serious or trivial, his daily behaviour has instituted a canon which millions observe at this day with conscious memory. No one regarded by any section of the human race as Perfect Man has been imitated so minutely. The conduct of the Founder of Christianity has not so governed the ordinary life of his followers. Moreover, no founder of a religion has been left on so solitary an eminence as the Muslim Apostle."³

The Holy Prophet, Muhammad (peace be on him), is the only historical personality who meets every requirement of being our best model. Truly, he was an excellent exemplar.

Footnotes
¹ Khwaja Kamadhin, The Ideal Prophet, Woking 1956, pp. 138-139.
We praise Him and seek His blessings for His exalted Messenger.
In the words of the Founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib:

1. “The gist and the essence of our religion is: There is no God but Allah and Muhammad (peace be on him) is the Messenger of Allah.” (Izlah-i-Auham, p. 137)

2. “The Prophets come with the purpose of changing the religion, changing the Qiblah (direction in which people pray), cancelling some of the (existing) commandments and introducing some new commandments. But in my case no such revolution has been claimed. The same Islam exists as it has been in the past, so does the same Holy Quran prevail. Nothing has been omitted from the original faith that it should cause so much bewilderment. The claim to be “The Promised Messiah” could have been hard to accept, and fit to be pondered over carefully, if (God forbid) it had entailed changes in the commandments of the Faith, and if in the practical life there had been some difference from the other Muslims. When such is not the case and the issue under dispute is only the life or death of the Messiah, and the claim to be the Promised Messiah is in fact only an offshoot of this issue, and this claim does not imply any practical revolution nor does it adversely affect the Islamic beliefs, then is there any need, before accepting this claim, to demand a great miracle or a miraculous performance, which had been the old habit of people when faced with a claim to apostleship? Is it difficult for a fair-minded and God-fearing person to accept a Muslim whom God has sent in support of Islam and whose objects are that he make manifest to the people the beauties of Islam, and prove that Islam is free from the objections of modern philosophy, and make the Muslims lean towards the love of Allah and the Messenger?

If the claim of being the Promised Messiah entailed any imperatives which adversely affect the commandments and beliefs of the Shari'ah, that indeed would have been horrible. What ought to be looked into is what Islamic truth have I transformed by my claim, and which are the commandments of Islam in which I have increased or decreased even by a dot? True, I have interpreted a prophecy in a manner revealed to me by the Almighty Allah in this age. The Holy Quran is witness to the truth of this interpretation, and so are the reliable traditions of the Holy Prophet. Why is there then so much hue and cry?” (Aina-i-Kamalat-i-Islam, p. 239)

3. “It is preposterous to imagine that in accepting my claim there is any fear of damage to the Faith. I fail to understand what could cause that damage? There would have been damage only if this humble servant (of Allah) had compelled people to follow new teachings, opposed to the teachings of Islam, e.g., I had declared a lawful thing to be forbidden or vice versa, or had introduced any changes in those beliefs of the Faith which are essential for salvation, or had introduced any increase or decrease in matters of fasting, prayer, pilgrimage, poor-rate (Zakat) etc., which are duties prescribed by the Shariah (Islamic law). For instance, if I had prescribed ten or two prayers in place of the five daily prayers, or prescribed two months of fasting in place of one month, or fasting for less than a month, then there would have been total spiritual loss, rather disbelief and destruction! But when the situation is this that this humble servant (of Allah) repeatedly says only this, ‘O brother, I have not brought any new religion nor any new teaching, but I am one of you and, a Muslim like you, and for us Muslims there is no other book to follow except the Holy Quran, nor is there any other revealed book to which we invite others to follow, and when I affirm that except for the Arabian Ahmadi, the last of the Prophets (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) there is none to guide us and none to be followed by us, and none whom we would like others to follow, then where lies the risk for a religious Muslim to accept my claim which is based on revelation from Allah?’ (Izlah-i-Auham, pp. 181-2)

4. “Who does not know this that it is a very delicate matter to declare as Kafir someone who is a unitarian Muslim and Ahl-i-Qibla (i.e. accepts Ka'bba as the Qibla) especially when that Muslim declares repeatedly by his writings and lectures that he is a Muslim and that he believes in Allah and His Messenger and in the angels and books and apostles of Allah, the Exalted, and in life after death as has been made manifest by the Exalted Allah and His Messenger (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) in their teachings; and in addition he is bound by all the commandments pertaining to fasting and prayer as explained by Allah and His Messenger, on whom be peace and blessings of Allah. To declare such a Muslim as Kafir, nay a big Kafir, and the Anti-Christ is the work of those people who do not guard against evil and do not fear God, and who are not in the habit of taking a charitable view of others.” (Aina-i-Kamalat-i-Islam, p. 33)

5. “It ought to be understood why a Muslim is called a Muslim. A Muslim is one who says that Islam is true, Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah on him) is the Prophet, Quran is the heavenly book. It is implied that he accepts that he will forsake this creed neither in belief nor in worship nor in deeds and, that all his sayings and deeds shall be confined within it.” (Roohani Khazain II, Vol V, p. 163)

6. “Everything whose trace and sign are not found in the Holy Quran and Hadith, rather it is contrary to these, is in my opinion transgression and disbelief. But only a few get to the bottom of the Holy Word and understand the subtle secrets of Divine prophecies. I have neither added to, nor taken away, anything from the religion (of Islam). Brothers, my religion is the same as yours, the same noble Prophet is my leader as is yours, and the same Holy Quran is my Guide, my beloved and my testament, belief in which is incumbent on you too.” (Majmoo 'ah-I-Ish-ti-harat, Vol. I, p. 232)

7. “We believe: There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” I believe in Allah, the angels, the apostles, the revealed Books, paradise and hell and the Day of Resurrection. I accept the Holy Quran as the Book of Allah, and Muhammad (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) as the true Prophet. I lay no claim to prophethood. And I do not allege (God forbid) that there is any addition or subtraction to the Holy Quran as given to us by the Holy
Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah on him). And I bear witness that he is the last of the Prophets and the greatest of all the prophets, and an intercessor for the sinners.” (Anwar-ul-Islam, p. 34)

8. “And brethren, you know that the certificates of disbelief (against me) were not based on proper investigation and did not contain even an inkling of truth. Rather all those certificates were sheer fabrications based on deceit, cruelty and falsehood, out of personal jealousy. These people knew very well that I was a believer and they saw with their own eyes that I was a Muslim, that I believed in the One God with Whom there is no associate, that I professed the Kalimah: ‘There is no God except Allah,’ that I accepted the Book of Allah, Quran, and His Messenger Muhammad (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) as the last of the Prophets, that I believed in angels, the Day of Resurrection, heaven and hell, that I offered prayers and kept fasts, that I belonged to the Ahl-i-Qibla (those who face towards the Holy Ka'ba in their prayers), that I considered unlawful all the Holy Prophet had declared unlawful and lawful all that he had declared lawful, that I neither added to nor took away anything from the Shariah, not even to the extent of an atom, and that I accepted all that had reached us from the Messenger of Allah (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) whether I understood its secret, or did not understand it, and that by Allah’s grace, I am a believer and a unitarian.” (Nur-ul-Haq, Vol. I, p. 5)

9. “This is a sheer fabrication of Muhammad Husain that he attributes to me as if I deny the miracles of the prophets on whom be peace, or that I myself lay claim to prophethood, or that, Allah forbid, I do not consider Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (the leader of the Messengers), on whom be peace and blessings of Allah, as the last of the prophets, or that I do not believe in the angels or in the basic beliefs of Islam like resurrection, etc., or that I belittle the foundations of Islam such as fasting and prayer or consider them unnecessary. No, the Mighty Allah is witness that I believe in all these, and consider someone who disbelieves in these beliefs and deeds as accursed and loser in this world and the Hereafter. If these are the points under dispute which stand in the way of my acceptance in accordance with my claim then I repeat loudly over and over again that my beliefs are what I have stated here.” (Anjam-i-Atham, p. 45)

10. “However much our adversary theologians create hatred against us among the people and declare us Kafir and devoid of faith, and try to make the Muslims believe that I, along with my entire following, have deviated from the Islamic beliefs and foundations of the faith, these are all fabrications of those jealous theologians. No one with even a grain of fear of God in his heart can dare to be guilty of them. All the five fundamentals of Islam are our faith too. We hold fast to the Book of Allah to which one is commanded to hold fast. We believe that none is to be worshipped except Allah and that our leader Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) is his Messenger and the last of the prophets and we believe that angels, raising of the dead, the Day of Resurrection, heaven and hell, are all truths. We believe that whatever Allah the Exalted has said in the Holy Quran, and whatever our Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) has stated, are all true as stated above. We believe that whoever takes away from or adds to the Islamic Shariah even to the extent of an atom, or discards what is obligatory and permits what is forbidden, is without belief, and has deviated from Islam. I admonish my people that they should believe in the pure Kalimah from the bottom of their hearts, namely, that there is no God except Allah and Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger, ever till they die, that they believe in all the prophets and all the revealed books whose authenticity is established from the Holy Quran, and that they accept as obligatory fasting, prayer, poor-rate (Zakat) and pilgrimage and all that has been prescribed as obligatory by the exalted Allah and His Messenger, and that they accept as forbidden all that has been forbidden and thus follow Islam in the true sense. To sum up, it is obligatory to believe in all those matters on which there was consensus in belief and practice of the pious ones of the olden days of Islam, and which are considered to be Islam by the consensus of Ahl-i-Sunnat. I call the heaven and the earth to witness that this is my faith, and whoever attributes to me anything against this religion, he forsaking fear of God and honesty is committing fabrication against me; and on the Day of Judgement I shall have my claim against him as to when he cut open my bosom and saw that instead of my above statements I am at heart opposed to these statements. Beware! Indeed the curse of Allah is on the liars and fabricators.” (Ayyam-us-Sulh, pp. 86-87)

11. “You who have taken the oath of fealty to me should understand that you have pledged to give preference to religion over the worldly life. So remember that this pledge of yours is with Allah. As far as possible be firm on this pledge, stick to prayer, fasting, Hajj, the poor-rate (Zakat), the commandments of Shariah, and avoid evil and resemblance of sin. Our Jamaat should be a pure model for others. Lip professions are meaningless if not accompanied by appropriate deeds.” (Roohani Khazain II, Vol. V, p. 453)

12. “These people deceive the masses and lead them into mistakes of thinking that we have invented a new Kalimah or a new prayer. What reply can I give to such fabrications? By similar fabrications they placed a humble human being in Trinity. Look, we are Muslims and belong to the Ummah (followers) of Muhammad. With us fabricating a new form of prayer or turning away from the Qibla are acts of kufr (disbelief). We accept all the commandments of the Holy Prophet and believe that disregard of even a minor commandment amounts to mischief. My claim is subordinate to the Word of Allah and the word of the Holy Prophet. We have not introduced a new Kalimah, a new form of prayer, a new Hajj or a separate mosque of our own in disregard to the obedience of the Holy Prophet. Our mission is the service of this religion (Islam), making it overcome all other religions, and following the Holy Quran and the traditions which are proved to have emanated from the Prophet of God. We consider it necessary to follow even a weak Hadith if it is not against the Holy Quran. We consider ‘Bukhari’ and ‘Muslim’ (the two compilations of Hadith) as the most reliable books after the Book of Allah (the Holy Quran).”

continued on page 10
13. "Our religion is the same Islam. It is not new. There are the same prayer, same fasts, same pilgrimage, same zakat. But there is this difference that these duties had (by now) assumed outward forms only, without any true spirit in them; we want to infuse in them the spirit of sincerity. We want that these duties be performed in a manner that they produce results which are missing at the moment." (Roohani Khazain II, Vol. IX, p. 312)

14. "Efforts were made in all manner to destroy and obliterate me. Different sorts of documents of kufr (disbelief) were prepared for us. We were considered worse than even the Christians and the Jews although we believe, with our body and soul, in the Kalimah Tayyaba: 'There is no God except Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Messenger.' We consider the Holy Quran as the Exalted God's true and perfect book, and accept it with all sincerity of heart to be the last of the Books, and with all sincerity of heart we believe the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah), to be the last of the prophets. We say the same prayers, face towards the same Qiblah, fast in the month of Ramazan in the same manner. There is no difference in our Hajj and Zakat. It is not understood then what were the reasons for which we were declared worse than even the Jews and the Christians. Abusing us day and night was considered to bring heavenly reward. After all there is some such thing as nobility of character. Our vilifiers' path is followed only by those whose faiths have been snatched away and whose hearts have turned black." (Commentary of Surat-i-Fatiha, pp. 297-298)

15. A man from the North West Frontier Province inquired, "What shortcoming had remained in the religion that you came to complete it?" Reply: "There is no shortcoming in the commandments. Our prayer, Qibla, Zakat, and Kalimah are the same. After the lapse of some time, listlessness creeps in after a hundred years. About a hundred thousand Muslims had already turned apostate. You think no one is needed yet? People are forsaking the Holy Quran. They have nothing to do with the Sunnah of the Prophet. They consider their customs to be their religion. Still you think, nobody is needed?" (Roohani Khazain II, Vol. X, p. 451)

16. "Remember our path is exactly the same as was that of the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) and of his venerable companions." (Roohani Khazain II, Vol. X, p. 107)

17. "I make it known to the general public that by the exalted Allah I am not a disbeliever (kafir). It is my faith that there is no God except Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's Messenger; I believe in the verse of the Holy Quran that Muhammad is a Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets. On the truth of my above mentioned statement I invoke as many oaths as are the pure names of the Exalted Allah, and as many oaths as there are the letters of the Holy Quran, and as many oaths as there are the excellent achievements of the Holy Prophet in the eyes of the Exalted Allah. None of my beliefs is contrary to the commandments of Allah and the Holy Prophet. Whoever considers me a Kafir even now and does not desist from takfir (calling me a kafir), let him remember for sure that he shall be questioned (about this) after death. I swear by the Exalted Allah that I hold such belief in Allah and the Holy Prophet that if all beliefs of this age were placed in the balance against my belief, then by the grace of the Exalted One, my belief will be the heavier." (Karamat-us-Sadequeen, p. 25)

18. "If all the Books of the Exalted Allah are looked into carefully, it will be found that all prophets have been teaching this: 'Believe in the Exalted God to be One, none to be associated with Him, and also believe in our apostleship.' That is why the entire Ummah (body of all the Muslims) was taught the gist of Islamic teaching in these two sentences: 'There is no God except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.'" (Haqiqat-ul-Wahy, p. 111)

19. By distorting and changing the meanings of my books, like the Jews, and by introducing a lot of extraneous matter, hundreds of objections have been raised against me, as if I lay claim to real prophethood, as if I abandon the Holy Quran, as if I abuse the prophets of God and insult them, and as if I deny the miracles. So I lay my entire case before the Exalted Allah and I know for certain that by His Grace, He will decide in my favor because I am the one wronged." (Chashma-i-Ma'arifat, p. 319)

20. "People did not understand my saying and declared that I lay claim to prophethood. Allah knows that this saying of theirs is sheer falsehood and it does not contain even a semblance of truth, and that there is no reality in it. They have concocted this calumny to incite people to declare me kafir disbeliever), to abuse me, to curse me and to show hostility towards me, and to create dissension among the believers. By Allah, I believe in Allah and His Messenger, and I believe that he is the last of the prophets." (Humamul-ul-Bushra, p. 81)

These are the beliefs which were written by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib in his books, all his life from beginning to end, and expounded to the people of the world. Are these beliefs Islamic or not? We leave it to your sense of justice. As Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad said in one of his poems:

'We hold to the religion of the Muslims,
We are the servants of the Last of the Prophets with all our hearts,
We abhor associates with Allah and innovations in the Faith,
We are but dust in the path of Ahmad, the Master,
We have surrendered our heart (soul) to him already,
the body of dust remains.
Would that this also is sacrificed for him.'
IN THE EARLIEST PREACHINGS of the prophet as much stress was laid on prayer to God as on service to humanity, perhaps more on the latter. In fact, prayer to Him was meaningless if it was not accompanied with service to humanity. It would be a mere show, severely condemnable. One of the short, earliest chapters is devoted entirely to this:

Hast thou considered him who gives the lie to religion? That is the one who treats the orphan with harshness, and does not urge the feeding of the needy. So woe to those who pray, who are heedless of their prayers, who make a show of their prayers, and refuse small acts of kindness (to their fellow-beings). ¹

Prayer, therefore, had no value if it did not lead to the service of humanity. Of the two, prayer to God and service of humanity, the latter was the more difficult task. It was an uphill road:

And (have We not) pointed out to man the two conspicuous ways? But he would not attempt the uphill road. And what will make thee comprehend what the uphill road is? It is the setting free of a slave, or the giving of food in a day of hunger, to an orphan near of kin, or to the needy one lying in the dust.²

The orphan and the needy were not only to be helped; they were to be honoured:

Nay! But you do not honour the orphan; nor do you urge one another to feed the needy; and you eat up the heritage, devouring it indiscriminately; and you love wealth with exceeding love.³

Wealth was not given to man for amassing; the needy had a right in the wealth of the rich:

And in their properties is a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied (the fortunes of life).⁴

In a very early revelation, the possessors of wealth who do not help the poor are threatened with destruction:

We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden when they swore that they would cut the produce in the morning; and were not willing to set aside a portion for the needy. Then there encompassed it a visitation from thy Lord while they were sleeping; so it became as black, barren land. And they called out to each other in the morning:

Go early to your tilth if you would cut the produce. So they went, saying in low tones one to another: No needy one shall enter it today upon you. And in the morning they went, having the power to prevent (the needy). But when they saw it, they said: Surely we have gone astray; Nay! we are deprived of everything.⁵

From his early life the Prophet was a staunch supporter of the cause of the weak and the oppressed. When quite young, he became a member of the Hilaf = Fudzul, an alliance formed to vindicate the rights of the weak and the oppressed against tyranny. Each member of this alliance was bound in honour to defend the helpless against all manner of oppression. The credit of taking the lead in the formation of this humanitarian organization belonged to the Prophet and his family, the Banu Hashim.

When deputation after deputation of the Quraish went to Abu Talib to persuade him to deliver the Prophet to them to be put to death, Abu Talib sang his praise in the memorable words which have come down to us in one of his poems. What! said he, shall I make over to you one "who is the refuge of the orphans and protector of the widows."

And when on receiving the Call, Muhammad trembled for fear that he might not be able to achieve the grand task of the reformation of humanity, his wife consoled him in these words:

Nay, I call Allah to witness that Allah will never bring thee to disgrace, for thou unites the ties of relationship and bearest the burden of the weak and earnest for the destitute and honourest the guest and helpest people in real distress.⁶

Human sympathy was implanted in the Prophet's very nature, so that he had not only a deep concern for the physical ills of humanity, but a still deeper concern for its moral degradation and spiritual fall. The Holy Quran bears clear witness to this:

Perhaps thou wilt kill thyself with grief because they do not believe.⁷

Maybe thou wilt kill thyself with grief, sorrowing after them if they do not believe in this announcement.⁸

When he rose to kingship, one of his first reforms was the suppression of the iniquitous law which deprived orphans and women of their share in inheritance. The Arabs had a strong tradition that "only he could inherit property who smites with the spear." In a country where fighting was going on day and night, the value of such a tradition cannot be over-estimated. Yet it was at the very time when the Prophet stood in need of defenders of the community and the faith, that the law was laid down which abolished all such discriminations against the weak and the helpless, and placed the woman and the child on a par with the soldier who fought for their protection:

Men shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and women shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether there is little or much of it: a stated portion.⁹

And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless things for their good ones, and do not devour their property as an addition to your own property; this is surely a great crime.¹⁰

I may add a few out of a large number of the Prophet's sayings which impressed upon his hearers that the service of humanity was a great goal of life:

Whoever does the needful for his brother, Allah does the needful for him; and whoever removes the distress of a Muslim, Allah removes for him a distress out of the distresses of the day of Resurrection.¹¹

Thou wilt see the faithful in their having mercy for one another and in their love for one another and in their kindness towards one another like the body — when one member of it ails, the entire body ails.¹²

Your slaves are your brethren; Allah has placed them under your control; so whoever has his brother under his control, he should feed him from what he eats and should give him clothes to wear from what he wears; and do not impose on them a task which should overpower them; and if you do impose on them such a task, then help them in the doing of it.¹³

One who manages the affairs of the widow and the needy is like one who exerts himself hard in the way of Allah, or one who stands up for prayer in the night and fasts in the day.¹⁴

I and the man who brings up an orphan will be in paradise like this. And he pointed with his two fingers, the fore-continued on page 12
MUHAMMAD'S TEACHINGS
continued from page 11

fingers and the middle finger.\textsuperscript{15}

Allah has no mercy on him who is not  
merciful to men.

He is not of us who does not show  
mercy to our little ones and respect to  
our great ones.\textsuperscript{16}

He had a tender heart even for  
animals. It is related that he passed by a  
camel that had grown extremely lean;  
so he said:

Be careful of your duty to Allah  
regarding these dumb animals; ride  
them while they are in a fit condition,  
and eat them while they are in a fit  
condition.\textsuperscript{17}

A prostitute was forgiven; she passed  
by a dog panting with its tongue out, on  
the top of a well containing water,  
almost dying with thirst, so she took off  
her boot and tied it to her head-covering  
and drew forth water for it; she was  
forgiven on account of this.

His companions asked: Is there a  
reward for us in doing good to beasts?  
He replied: "In every animal having a  
liver fresh with life, there is a reward."\textsuperscript{18}

Footnotes
\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item[2] 90:11-16.
  \item[4] 51:19.
  \item[6] Bukhari, 1.1.
  \item[8] Mishkat, 24:15.
  \item[9] Abu Dawood, 15:43.
  \item[10] 4:2.
  \item[12] ibid., 78:27.
  \item[14] ibid., 69:1.
  \item[16] ibid., 69:1.
  \item[17] Mishkat, 6.6.
\end{itemize}

EDITORIAL
continued from page 1

Putting all the above teachings to-  
gether, one can easily conceive that the  
'Cult of Chosen people of God' is alien to  
Islam and unfortunately someone is  
preaching this in the name of Islam,  
then the sublime teachings of the Quran  
have gone above his head.

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THE THEORY OF ABROGATION
Criticism Against Maulana Muhammad Ali and Our Reply

A BOOK ENTITLED Ulam al-Quran  
— An Introduction to the Sciences of  
the Holy Quran has recently been pub-  
lished (January 1984) by the Islamic  
Foundation, Leicester, England. Written  
by Mr. Ahmad Von Denffer, a  
Research Fellow at the Foundation, it  
deals with various topics connected  
with the study of the Holy Quran, and is  
largely a summary of the traditionally-  
received views on the subject. A copy of  
this book was sent to us by the pub-  
lishers for review, and our review  
appears elsewhere as a separate article.  
Here we shall deal with the section of  
the book on abrogation in the Quran  
(see Al-Nasikh Wa al-Mansukh, pp.  
104-113), which we are prompted to do  
because it contains criticism of Maula-  
na Muhammad Ali's treatment of the  
subject.

Von Denffer notes that some scholars  
hold the view "that there are no genuine  
reports available on this issue, going  
back to the Prophet, while those going  
back to the Companions contradict  
each other." (p. 111). At this point, a  
footnote is added referring to Maulana  
Muhammad Ali's Religion of Islam,  
and it quotes his argument against  
abrogation as follows:

"...in most cases, where a report is  
traceable to one Companion who  
held a certain verse to have been  
abrogated, there is another report  
traceable to another Companion,  
to the effect that the verse was not  
abrogated."

It is then attempted to prove in this  
footnote that the three examples cited  
by the Maulana in support of this  
point are not correct.

First Example

The first example given by the  
Maulana concerns the verse 2:180,  
telling Muslims to make wills if they  
leave wealth behind, which is held to be  
abrogated by verses 4:7-9 which specify  
the heirs and their shares. Von Denffer  
comments:

"His first case concerns Sura  
2:180. It has certainly been super-  
seded by other verses, e.g., 4:7-9  
and that is probably all that is  
meant, when saying it is mansukh."

The Maulana has cited this as an  
example of a verse which is called  
mansukh in one report, and not  
mansukh in another, hence showing  
that such reports are contradictory.  
This example is certainly not disproved  
in any way by Von Denffer's explana-  
tion. He has not made clear what he  
means by a verse being "superseded,"  
but if it means (as it must) that the  
injunction contained in 2:180 is no  
longer to be obeyed because there are  
other later verses to be applied in its  
place, is that not abrogation and  
cancellation of the command in 2:180?

Second Example

The second example given by Maula-  
na Muhammad Ali concerns the verse  
2:184 in connection with fasting, which  
allows those who are too weak to fast  
to give food to the poor instead of fasting.  
In some reports this concession is  
considered as having been abrogated by  
the next verse in the words: Whoever  
witnesses the month of Ramadaan, let  
him fast therein. In another it is held to  
be not abrogated, but still in force. Von  
Denffer quotes the Maulana's words:

"2:184 is considered by Ibn Umar  
as having been abrogated while  
Ibn Abbas says it was not."

and then criticizes it in the following  
inexplicable words:

"See below, where I have quoted  
this very hadith from Ibn Abbas  
where Ibn Abbas himself explains  
why he does not hold it as  
abrogated" (italics in original).

We cannot understand this objection at  
all. As he says, he has quoted the  
hadith in which Ibn Abbas, after saying "This  
verse is not abrogated," has explained  
why it is not abrogated. The point made  
by the Maulana is exactly that Ibn  
Abbas does not regard this verse as  
abrogated! What is the objection?

As to Ibn Umar's view, it is found  
recorded in Bukhari, Book of Fasting  
(Book 30), chapter 39. The heading of  
this chapter tells us that Ibn Umar and  
some Salama Ibn Aku regarded this verse  
(2:184) as abrogated by the next verse  
(which begins "The month of Ramadaan...")). A hadith in this chapter says  
that Ibn Umar recited this verse and  
said: Hiya mansukha, i.e., it is abro-  
gated. In the hadith giving Ibn Abbas's  
opinion, as quoted by Von Denffer, it  
is recorded that Ibn Abbas said: Laisat bi-  
mansukha, i.e., it is not abrogated.
Maulana Muhammad Ali is, therefore, perfectly correct in citing this as a case in which one Companion says that a verse is abrogated while another says that it is not. As a matter of fact, the very next hadith in Bukhari after the one Von Denffer has quoted about Ibn Abbas, records Salama Ibn Aku as saying that the verse 2:184 was abrogated by the verse which follows it. If our critic had just glanced at these two hadith together, he would have found the truth of the Maulana’s argument staring him in the face—that one source calls a verse “abrogated” while another says the opposite.

Third Example

The third example cited by Maulana Muhammad Ali is verse 2:240, according to which Muslim husbands should make a bequest in favour of their wives for maintenance and residence for a period of one year after the husband’s death. The Maulana writes:

"2:240 was abrogated according to Ibn Zubair, while Mujahid says it was not.”

Quoting these words of the Maulana, Von Denffer retorts:

“This is wrong, see Sahih Bukhari, VI, Nos. 53 and 54, where both Ibn Zubair and Mujahid hold the verse to be abrogated. Furthermore, both Ibn Zubair and Mujahid are tabi’un, and not Companions.”

Earlier in his text in another connection, he has actually quoted the hadith referred to as No. 56 above, in which Mujahid has commented on the verse 2:240. In giving references and quotations from Bukhari, Von Denffer has used the English translation of Sahih Bukhari by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, and we think that in quoting this particular hadith he has been misled by following the English translation. He has not looked carefully at the original Arabic text, which is to be found printed opposite the English translation in Dr. Muhsin Khan’s work.

This hadith report consists of a number of statements ascribed to various authorities, in the following sequence:

1. An explanation (by Mujahid) of the meaning of 2:240.

2. A statement commencing “Ata said: Ibn Abbas said: ...”

3. A statement commencing with just “Ata said: ...”

4. A statement commencing “Ata added: ...”

5. A statement ascribed to Ibn Abbas, commencing with the words, “Ibn Abbas said: ...”

Of these five statements, the first is clearly an explanation by Mujahid of the meaning of 2:240, to the effect that God entitiled the widow to be bequeathed one full year’s maintenance and residence, and she could avail it or leave her late husband’s house and remarry (after the compulsory period of waiting). Obviously, this shows that Mujahid held 2:240 to be in force, and not abrogated.

At the end of the first statement, the following words occur in the Arabic text: Zama dhulka an Mujahid—“Thus did he relate from Mujahid.” That is to say, a reporter of this hadith, one Ibn Abi Najeeh, related this part of the report from Mujahid. These words are not to be found in the English translation in the opposite column. Apparently, from this omission Von Denffer has got the impression that the entire extract is a narration from Mujahid, and hence he has placed the words “Narraed Mujahid” as the heading to the entire hadith. But in fact the rest of the report, after the first statement, has been reported by Ibn Abi Najeeh, not from Mujahid but from Ata, the latter also reporting from Ibn Abbas.

As regards the other four statements contained in this report, three of them, namely, nos. 2, 3, and 5, far from declaring 2:240 as abrogated, actually speak of this verse itself as abrogating something else! All they say is that 2:240 has cancelled the requirement that the widow should spend the period of waiting after her husband’s death in his house, and that she can choose to spend it there or elsewhere.

It is only statement no. 4 which appears to suggest that the ordinances relating to inheritance have cancelled the requirement mentioned in 2:240 to provide the widow with a year’s residence. This, however, is the view of Ata, and cannot be ascribed to Mujahid. Hence Maulana Muhammad Ali is perfectly correct in writing that Mujahid did not consider this verse to be abrogated, as is evident from the first statement in this hadith report.

Von Denffer does, however, agree with the Maulana that Ibn Zubair is recorded as having said that 2:240 was abrogated. We therefore put him a highly illuminating point arising out of that particular hadith. This report is as follows:

Narrated Ibn Zubair: I said to Uthman (while he was collecting the Quran) regarding the verse: Those of you who die and leave wives... (2:240), “This verse was abrogated by another verse, so why should you write it (or leave it in the Quran)” Uthman said: “O son of my brother! I will not shift anything of it from its place.” (Bukhari, Kitab al-Tafsir, quoted from Dr. Muhsin Khan’s English translation of Bukhari, vol. vi, hadith no. 53, pp. 40, 41).

The question ascribed to Ibn Zubair is the very obvious one which comes to mind regarding abrogation—why is a verse still included in the Quran when it has been abrogated by another? If this question is asked today, the followers of the conventional ulsum al-Quran, such as Von Denffer, immediately give the reply: “the ordinance contained in the verse has been abrogated, but not the recitation of its text.” Uthman, presumably not being so accomplished in the technicalities of Quranic studies as are even ordinary-grade Muslim scholars today (!), gave the logical reply that he could not exclude any verse from the received text of the Quran on the alleged ground that it had been abrogated.

Another mistake Von Denffer claims to have discovered is that Maulana Muhammad Ali has cited the views of Ibn Zubair and Mujahid as being reports from Companions, whereas these two were not Companions but from the next generation. It is true that Mujahid was not a Companion, but no one can really fault the Maulana’s basic argument on this basis, especially as the same text in the Religion of Islam mentions not only the Companions but also later authorities as disagreeing among themselves on the abrogation of particular verses. And what about Von Denffer’s own clear error here in assert-
ing that Ibn Zubair was not a Companion. He is listed among the Companions in the Sahih Muslim, Kitab Faza’i Ashab an-Nabi (Book on the Qualities of the Companions!)

General Comments

Having dealt with his attempt to refute Maulana Muhammad Ali’s argument against the doctrine of abrogation, we turn to Von Denffer’s own treatment of this subject. It is just full of inconsistency, contradiction, confusion — and even plain nonsense. At the outset of the section he strongly supports this doctrine, yet in his summary at the end (pp. 112, 113) he is forced by common sense to effectively retract all his assertions on the previous pages.

At the beginning he says that knowledge of al-nasikh wal mansukh (i.e., knowing which verses are abrogated, and by which ones) is very important, indeed “It is one of the important preconditions for explanation (tafsir) of the Quran...for understanding and application of the Islamic law” (p. 105). However, the number of verses which are said to be abrogated (this number presumably reflecting the “importance” of the knowledge of nasikh-mansukh) keeps on diminishing as we progress through the text of this chapter. Starting from Ibn Salama’s figures, from which we deduce that the number of abrogated verses is well above 65, Von Denffer ends up with Shah Wallullah’s conclusion that there are only 5 such verses. This would hardly suggest that the knowledge of nasikh-mansukh is of much importance. And as a much greater number of verses have been, as one may put it, de-abrogated over the course of centuries, the knowledge of how all these came to be reconciled with the supposed nasikh (abrogating) verses is certainly much more vast and important than the knowledge of the five remaining ones!

At the outset, Von Denffer states that information about abrogated verses “must be based on reliable reports, according to ulum al-hadith, and should go back to the Prophet and his Companions” (p. 105). Yet nowhere does he disclose the crucial fact that there is no report at all, reliable or otherwise, according to which the Holy Prophet himself declared a verse as abrogated.

And as regards the reports of abrogation, traceable to secondary authorities, which he has quoted as examples earlier, he himself goes on to question their reliability in his ‘Summary’:

“Aisha alone reported that 10 or 5 sucklings had been part of the Quranic recitation, and only Umar reported that the ‘verse of stoning’ had been included in the Quranic text. These legal rulings are not included in the Quran precisely because they were not considered reliable, being based on one witness only. Similarly, other examples about Nashk, based on the words of Ibn Abbas or Muja-hid alone, are to be judged by the same measure” (pp. 112, 113).

Words such as ‘alone’ and ‘only’ above have been italicized in the book itself. Why are these examples given when they are admitted to be unreliable? The absurd and ridiculous position taken by Von Denffer here is that, on the one hand, these reports speaking of abrogation were not considered reliable so as to be taken into account in the actual collection and compilation of the Quranic text, but on the other hand, they relate factual and historical examples of abrogation. Thus the ‘verse of stoning’ was not put in the Quran because the report mentioning it is not reliable, but the report is true that there was such a verse, so says the author apparently.

In his very last sentence in this section, Von Denffer is reduced to the following position:

“However, as mentioned there remain a small number of verses which, as far as can be ascertained from the internal evidence of the Quran, have been superseded by other verses in the Quran.”

So all his parading of reports and the “knowledge of al-nasikh wal-mansukh” collapses to just this! The only “internal evidence” he cites, viz. 2:106, refers to the abrogation of previous religious scriptures by the Holy Quran. If this passage is considered as referring to abrogation in the Quran itself, then as it speaks both of revelation which had been abrogated and revelation which had been forgotten, it would mean that some Quranic verses had been forgotten, which is not held by any Muslim.

The final point we deal with is Von Denffer’s general criticism of the section on ‘abrogation’ in the Religion of Islam in the words: “It may be pointed out that Ali’s treatment of the subject is not very thorough.” In that treatment, Maulana Muhammad Ali has not only disproved abrogation on the basis of the wider Quranic principles, but he has refuted every argument advanced in favour of this doctrine, and actually dealt with specific verses supposed to be abrogated, showing how they can be reconciled with verses which are thought to have superseded them. Other authors have drawn on his research in this connection given in the Religion of Islam. Interestingly enough, Von Denffer has briefly noted that Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi also takes the naskh spoken of in 2:106 as referring to the abrogation of previous scriptures by the Quran itself. As the Islamic Foundation and Von Denffer himself in his book Ulum al-Quran have a very high reverence for Maudoodi, who is their spiritual founder, so to speak, they should compare his treatment of this issue with that of Maulana Muhammad Ali and see which of the two, in reaching the same conclusion, has been more thorough. We would be most interested in such a comparison being published.

Von Denffer has also made the following comment regarding what he calls the “knowledge of al-nasikh wal-mansukh” (i.e., knowledge of which verses are abrogated and by which ones): “Tafsir (explanation of the Quran) or legal ruling is not acceptable from a person who does not have such knowledge” (p. 105). Does this standard apply to the late Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi, in the light of his views on abrogation?
THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECIES  
and the laws governing them as expounded by 
the Holy Quran, Hadith and classical Muslim scholars

By Hafiz Sher Muhammad

I. Prophecies received through 
spiritual, not physical, senses

The first point to note is that when 
God informs His chosen ones and other 
righteous servants of events of the 
future, or shows them a scene with 
physical happenings, the recipient 
receives this information not through his 
physical senses such as the eye, but 
through his spiritual senses in a dream 
or vision. Furthermore, all religious 
scriptures and all the religious savants 
of Islam are agreed that most dreams 
and visions need to be interpreted, there 
being only one prophecy in a hundred 
which may be fulfilled literally.

The Holy Quran, in its account of 
Joseph's history, mentions three dreams 
containing prophecies which were inter-
preted and fulfilled metaphorically:

1) Joseph's own dream is mentioned 
in the following words: "I saw 
eleven stars and the sun and the 
moon, bowing down before me" 
(The Holy Quran, ch. 12, v. 4). 
This prophecy, which indicated the 
greatness to which Joseph was 
to rise, was not unravelled until 
Joseph had risen to become the 
head of the Treasury in Egypt. 
When he attained that honour, he 
said: "This is the interpretation of 
my dream of old which my Lord 
has made to come true" (12:100). 
Hence the significance of the 
dream was that great and power-
ful men would obey him, not that 
anyone would literally bow down to 
him.

2) A fellow-prisoner of Joseph had a 
dream which he related as follows: 
"I saw myself carrying bread on 
my head, and the birds were eating 
of it" (12:36). Joseph interpreted 
this dream in this way: "He shall 
be crucified so that birds will eat 
from his head" (12:41).

3) The king of Egypt, the country 
where Joseph was imprisoned, 
had a puzzling dream as follows: 
"And the king said, I saw seven fat 
kine which were being devoured 
by seven lean ones, and seven green 
ears and seven others dry" 
(12:43). In interpreting this dream, 
Joseph took "seven fat kine" to be 
seven years of good harvest and 
"seven lean ones" to be seven years of 
drought.

From these three examples, it will 
have become obvious that while the 
words of a prophecy may say one thing, 
they are taken to mean something 
different. It will also be seen that even 
sinners and disbelievers can have true 
dreams.

Besides the above examples from the 
Holy Quran, the Hadith books contain 
numerous instances of dreams and 
visions of the Holy Prophet Muham-
mad which required to be interpreted. 
A few such examples are given below:

1) "I was asleep when a cup of milk 
was brought to me. I drank of it 
until its freshness could be seen 
coming out of my nails. Then I 
gave what remained to Umar ibn 
al-Khattab. People asked, 'What 
did you take it to mean, O Messen-
ger of God?' He said, 'Knowledge' " (Bukhari, Book 3: Kitab al-
ilm, ch. 22).

2) "While I was asleep I saw people 
brought before me wearing shirts, 
some of which extended as far as 
their chests, while others were 
shorter than this. Umar was 
brought before me, and he was 
wearing a shirt which was (so long 
that it was) trailing. People asked, 
'What did you take it to mean, O 
Messenger of God?' He said, 
'religion' " (Bukhari, Book 2: 
Kitab al-Iman, ch. 14).

3) "I was asleep when I saw two gold 
bracelets on my hands. I was 
perused by them. Then a 
revelation came to me in my 
dream to blow on them. I did, and 
they blew away. I took them to 
mean the two liars to arise after me, 
the first Aswad Ansari, and the 
second Musailama, the liar of 
Yamama" (Bukhari, Book 61: 
Kitab al-Manaqib, ch. 25).

4) "I saw in a dream that I moved my 
sword and the leading part of it 
broke. This was the misfortune to 
befall the Muslims on the day of 
(the battle of) Uhud" (Bukhari, 
Book 92: Kitab al-Ta bir, ch. 44).

5) "In a dream I saw crows being 
slaughtered. These were the Mus-
lims on the day of Uhud" (Ibid., 
ch. 39).

6) "I saw, as it were, a black woman 
with disheveled hair, leaving Ma-
dina 'til she reached Mahya which 
is called Juhfa. I took it to mean 
that the pestilence of Madina had 
shifted there" (Ibid., ch. 41).

7) "The Holy Prophet said: I saw (in 
a dream or vision) a spotted dog 
putting his mouth in the blood of 
members of my family. This was 
taken to mean Shim (the assassin 
of Imam Husain) who had lep-
rosy."

8) "Imam Husain, peace be upon 
him, said that he heard his father 
(Hazrat Ali) say: 'I heard the Holy 
Prophet say that a ram would 
violate the sanctity of the Kaaba, 
so I wonder if I am that ram.' The 
commentators of Hadith have 
written that this prophecy applied 
to Abdullah Ibn Zubair.

9) "It is related from Aishah that the 
Holy Prophet said (to her): 'You 
were shown to me in a dream 
twice (before marriage). A man 
was carrying you wrapped up in a 
silk cloth saying, 'This is your 
wife, look at her face.' So when I 
opened it up, it was you. I said, 
'If this is from God it shall be 
fulfilled.' " (Bukhari, Book 92: 
Kitab al-Ta bir, ch. 20).

These hadith show that dreams and 
visions usually stand in need of inter-
pretation.

II. Errors made in the interpretation 
of dreams and visions

1) Sometimes errors are made in 
interpreting various matters re-
lated to a prophecy, such as the 
time when it is to be fulfilled. 
The Holy Quran says: "God 
indeed fulfilled the vision of His 
Messenger: You shall enter the 
Sacred Mosque, if God please, in 
security, your heads shaved and 
hair cut short, not fearing" (48:27). 
The Holy Prophet was in Madina 
when he saw in a dream that he 
had entered Makkah and was per-
forming the Tawaf (circuits) a-
round the Kaaba. So he and his 
continued on page 16
companions marched forth towards Makkah, being certain that the vision would be fulfilled that very year. However, this could not come about, and the Muslims had to return, having concluded the peace treaty of Hudaybiyyah. A few companions began to wonder why they had failed to achieve their goal, so much so that Hazrat Umar asked the Holy Prophet if he had not said that they would go to the Kaaba and perform the Tawaf. The Holy Prophet said, “Yes, but did I also say that it would be this year?” They said, ‘No.’ He then told them that they would certainly go to the Kaaba and perform the Tawaf.

This proves three points:

a. The prophet or other holy man who is the recipient of the prophecy from God, is not informed of all the details relating to its fulfillment.

b. The recipient of the prophecy can commit an error of personal judgement in interpreting the prophecy.

c. It is in order for the prophesier to take some legitimate course of action on the basis of his own interpretation of the prophecy (as in this instance the Holy Prophet attempted to go to Makkah to perform the Tawaf on the basis of his dream).

2) The Holy Prophet Muhammad related: “I saw in a dream that I was migrating from Makkah to a place having date trees. So I thought that this would be Yammama or Hajar, but it turned out to be Madina.”

3) “It is related from Aishah: Some of the wives of the Holy Prophet asked him, ‘Which one of us shall join you first after your death?’ He said, ‘The one with the longest hands.’ So they compared their hands before him, and it was Sauda who had the longest hands. But we learnt afterwards (upon the death of the first one of his wives to pass away after him) that it meant the length of the hand in giving charity, and the first one to join him after his death was Zainab who loved to give in charity.”

III. Fulfillment of a prophecy at the hands of someone else

Sometimes the prophecy made by a godly person about himself is actually fulfilled after him through his followers. Traditions record:

1) “The Holy Prophet said, ‘I was asleep and the keys to the treasures of the earth were brought before me ‘til they were placed in my hands. Abu Hurairah said, ‘The Holy Prophet departed from this world and you (O Muslims) are bringing forth those treasures’” (Bukhari, Book 92: Kitab al-Ta bir, ch. 11).

2) “Ismaili said: ‘People who interpret dreams say that the Holy Prophet saw in a dream that Usaid ibn Abi al-As was the Chief of Makkah, having become a Muslim. However, he died while still a disbeliever, and the dream was fulfilled in his son Uthman who became a Muslim.’”

IV. Delay in fulfillment of prophecy ‘til after Prophesier’s lifetime

It is not necessary that all the prophecies made by a prophet or other appointed one of God should be fulfilled within his lifetime. The Holy Quran, addressing the Holy Prophet, says in this regard:

“Be patient; surely God’s promise is true. Whether We [God] show you some of those things with which We threaten them [i.e. the opponents], or cause you to die [before the fulfillment], in any case they will return to Us” (40:77).

In accordance with this, countless prophecies made by the Holy Prophet Muhammad have been coming to pass since his death even up to today, and will continue to find fulfillment ‘til the end of the world.

V. Abrogation of prophecy

Prophecies can sometimes be abrogated, as the Holy Quran says: “And it is not in the power of a messenger to bring a sign except by God’s permission. For every term (of fulfillment of a prophecy) there is a command. God effaces what He pleases and establishes what He pleases” (13:38).

VI. Prophecies of chastisement

In case of wa‘eed, i.e. a prophecy of death, destruction or doom, the fulfillment is conditional upon the subsequent behaviour of those against whom the warning is directed. The prophesied punishment may come to pass, or it may be mitigated or even set aside altogether, depending on their reaction. The Holy Quran has given three types of examples in this regard:

1) Those who do not heed the warning of the coming doom and destruction cannot escape the punishment. The Quran cites the instance of the prophet Salih who warned his people as follows: “This is the she-camel of God, a sign for you. So leave her alone to pasture in God’s earth, and do her no harm; otherwise a punishment shall afflict you” (7:73). However, their reaction was: “Then they hamstrung the she-camel and revolted against their Lord’s commandment, and said: ‘O Salih, bring us the punishment with which you threaten us, if you are a messenger (of God). So the earthquake seized them, and they were motionless bodies in their houses” (7:77,78).

2) The second kind of people are those who, while not repenting fully upon hearing the warning, are frightened by it temporarily. In this case, even if they do not make their inner fear openly known, God will still grant them a period of respite to turn to Him so that the punishment can be averted. If, however, they abuse this respite to continue their opposition to the Divine cause, God sends down His punishment upon them. A case in point is that of the Pharaoh and his people who opposed Moses. Every time an affliction from God befell them, they would go to Moses.
FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECIES
continued from page 16

and say, “O enchanter, call on your Lord for us, as He has made the covenant with you; we shall surely follow the guidance” (43:49); but then “when We removed from them the chastisement, they broke the pledge” (43:50). When the punishment would again come, they would say: “Our Lord, remove from us the chastisement, for surely we are believers” (44:12). In reply God says: “We shall remove the chastisement a little, but you will surely return to doing evil” (44:15).

3) Finally, there are those who are so frightened by the prophecy of doom that they turn fully to repentance and seeking of forgiveness from God. Speaking of Jonah’s nation, the Holy Quran says: “And why was there not a town which believed, so that their belief should have profited them, except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the chastisement of disgrace in this world’s life” (10:98). Classical commentators make the following observations about this case:

a. “Jonah told them that their time-limit was forty nights. They replied, ‘If we see the omens of destruction we shall believe in you’” (Tafsir Kashshaf, p. 599).

b. “Jonah was sent to Nineveh from Mosal. The people of Nineveh denied him and persisted in this (denial). Then Jonah promised them the punishment to befall in thirty, or some say forty, nights” (Badawi, vol. iv, p. 186).


d. “It is related from Ibn Masud and others that God sent Jonah to the people of Nineveh in the land of Mosal. They rejected him. He then promised them the coming of punishment within an appointed period, and left them angrily” (Fath al-Bari, vol. vi, p. 325).

e. “After thirty-five days had elapsed, a terrifying, dark, smoky cloud appeared. It enveloped the city and turned surfaces black. So they put on sackcloth and went out into the field along with their women and children . . . and they manifested faith, repentance, and humility. So God had mercy on them and removed their punishment from them. This happened on a Friday on the day of Ashura (i.e., 10th Muharram).”

Another example of doom being averted from someone because of their turning to good deeds is recorded in a commentary of the Quran as follows:

“A washer of clothes passed by Jesus and a company of his disciples. Jesus said to them, ‘Attend his funeral at mid-day today.’ However, ‘Did you not give me the news of the death of this washer of clothes?’ He said, ‘Yes, but afterwards he gave in charity three pieces of bread, and was therefore reprieved.’” (Ruh al-Bayan, vol. i, p. 257).

Summary

The chief points to bear in mind about prophecies have been noted above. Critics who lack this knowledge stumble here due to their prejudice and hostility. But a study of the Holy Quran, Hadith, and other classical Muslim literature shows that the whole subject of prophecies is a veritable science the terminology of which is composed of metaphors and allusions. Some measure of ambiguity and uncertainty are necessarily to be found in a prophecy, as has been shown here.

These principles also apply to the prophecies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad relating to the latter days when, according to these predictions, the world was to turn away from religion, become a stranger to spiritual matters, and be heedless of Divine commandments. The tribulations of the Dajjal were to have been at their height, and at this juncture a man having the characteristics of Jesus was to have been sent to the world for its spiritual regeneration. The Holy Prophet, hav-
THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD—
his message for character building

By Maulana Muhammad Ali Mallb

ONE OF THE EARLIEST works to which the prophet applied himself was the building up of character. His heart ailed, as we have already seen, for the physical ills of humanity; the slave, the widow, the orphan, the needy, the one in distress, the oppressed and the wronged, had a very high place in his heart, and he would do what he could to help them and to make others feel for them as he himself felt. But moral considerations had a still higher place in his programme of reformation, and long before he introduced any reforms in regard to social relations, sex problems and state policy, he was engaged in the moral uplift of man. All wrongs had to be redressed, later on, by means of laws and regulations, but he was aware that even good laws could benefit humanity only when they were worked out by men standing on a high moral plane. It was, therefore, at Mecca and in very early days that, while introducing the high ideals of One God and One Humanity and applying himself to lead men to prayer and charity, he was equally devoted to raising men to a very high moral level.

The Prophet was recognized by friend and foe as the most truthful of men. When Abu Bakr was told that his friend Muhammad claimed to have received revelation from on High, he remarked that he must be true in his claim because a man who had never uttered a falsehood against men could not utter a falsehood against God. It was in the very early days of his mission, when he received the commandment to warn his “nearest relatives,” that he called out all the different families of the Quraish, now his opponents, at Mount Safa; and when they had all gathered together, he asked them if they would believe him if he told them that a mighty army was lying in wait at the back of the hill to attack them. They all replied with one voice:

Yes, we would; we have never known anything but truth from thee.3

On another occasion, his chief opponents gathered together to come to an agreed decision as to what was wrong with the Prophet. All kinds of questions were freely asked and answered. Was he a soothsayer? Was he a dreamer? Was he a poet? Was he a liar? And the answer to this last question was unanimous: “We have never known him to tell a lie.”

Still later, when opposition was at its highest and the Quraish were at war with the Prophet, Heraclius called Abu Sufyan, the Quraish leader of opposition, who was then in Syria for trading purposes, and asked him several questions regarding the prophet. One of these questions was:

Did you ever blame him for telling a lie before he said that he was a Prophet?

Abu Sufyan’s reply was, “No.”1 He himself so eminently truthful—and it was in fact on account of his truthfulness that he was called Al-Amin (the Faithful one) by his compatriots—he laid stress on truth as the basis of a high character:

Surely truth leads to virtue, and virtue leads to paradise, and a man continues to speak the truth until he becomes thoroughly truthful; and surely falsehood leads to vice and vice leads to the fire, and a man continues to tell lies until he is written down a great liar with Allah.4

He laid the basis of a society in which everyone was required to enjoin truth upon those with whom he came in contact, and to undergo every kind of suffering for the sake of truth:

Surely man is in a state of loss. Save those who believe and do good works, And exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance.5

Ja’far, describing the Prophet’s teachings before the Negus, said:

God raised a Prophet for our reformation…. He called us to the worship of God…. He enjoined us to speak the truth, to make good our trusts, to respect ties of kinship and to do good to our neighbours.

With truth, falsehood could be challenged and vanquished:

Nay, We cast the truth against the falsehood so that it breaks its head, and lo! it vanishes.6

The truth has come and falsehood has vanished, and falsehood is a vanishing thing.7

Truth was to be adhered to at all costs, even if it went against one’s own interests or the interests of one’s friends and relatives:

O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah’s sake, though it be against your own selves or your parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is most competent to deal with both; do not follow your low desires lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, Allah is surely Aware of what you do.8

The principle of truth was not to be deviated from, even if it went in favour of an enemy:

O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and fulfil your duty to Allah; Allah is aware of what you do.9

And even if one was called upon to speak truth in the face of a tyrant, he must do it:

The most excellent gihad is the uttering of truth in the presence of an unjust ruler.10

Only truth shall benefit in the final judgment:

This is the day when their truth shall benefit the truthful ones; they shall have gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide in them for ever. Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Allah; this is the mighty achievement.11

The Prophet enjoys the distinction that he made people walk in the ways which he pointed out. The quality of truthfulness was so ingrained in the hearts of his followers that they not only loved truth but underwent the severest hardships for the sake of truth. When about two centuries later, the critics laid down certain canons to judge the truthfulness of the transmitters of the Hadith, they all agreed on one point, that no companion of the Prophet had ever uttered a deliberate falsehood. In fact, one of the latest revelations of the Holy Quran itself bears evidence to this:

Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it beautiful to your hearts, and He has made unbelief and transgression and disobedience hateful to you.12

Faith includes all virtues taught by the Prophet, and truthfulness was one of the most prominent of these. Earlier,

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when the Prophet’s companions were fleeing to Medina to escape the persecutions of the Quraish at Mecca, the Quran bore testimony to their truthfulness in the following words:

And they who do not bear witness to what is false, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly. 13

Perseverance was another characteristic which shone prominently in the life of the Prophet. Persecuted on all sides, suffering the severest hardships, with no apparent prospects of success, he stood adamant when threatened with death. “Uncle,” he said, addressing Abu Talib who had hitherto stood between him and the Quraish, but who now wavered, saying that the responsibility was becoming too heavy for him, “Should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left in order to make me renounce this mission, I would not do it. I will never give it up until it shall please Allah to make it triumph or I perish in the attempt.”

Later, when temptations were offered, headship of the state, wealth and beauty, he spurned these and stood as firm as a mountain in the cause of the great reform to which he had set himself. Hemmed in narrowly for three years, he suffered all privations, but his faith was still as unshaken as ever. At the flight to Medina, hidden in the cave with a search party at its very mouth when a mere glance into the cave would have been sufficient to end his life, he still consoled his single companion, Abu Bakr, with the words: “Do not grieve, Allah is surely with us.” 14

Next to truth, the Prophet laid stress on the quality of perseverance. These two qualities are combined in a short chapter which I have already quoted, ch. 103 of the Holy Quran: “They exhort one another to truth and they exhort one another to endurance.”

Perseverance in the cause of truth brought down angels from heaven to console a man:

Those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then remain firm on the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying, Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the garden which you were promised:

We are your guardians in this world’s life and in the Hereafter, and you shall have therein what your souls desire and you shall have therein what you ask for. 15

It is the state of mind of the companions that is depicted in the following words:

And what reason have we that we should not rely on Allah, and He has indeed guided us in our ways? And we would bear with patience your persecution of us; and on Allah should the reliant rely. 16

Patience and perseverance were inculcated again and again in the early revelations as well as in the later ones:

To this then go on inviting, and go steadfastly in the right way as thou art commanded, and do not follow their low desires; and say, I believe in what Allah has revealed of the Book and I am commanded to do justice between you. 17

Continue then in the right way as thou are commanded, as also he who has turned (to God) with thee….And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you. 18

Patience and prayer are stated to be the two doors through which Divine help comes:

O you who believe! Seek assistance through patience and prayer for Allah is with the patient. 19

Be patient, surely the good end is for the righteous. 20

O you who believe! Be patient and vie with one another in endurance and remain steadfast, and fulfil your duty to Allah that you may be successful. 21

The persecution which the Prophet’s companions had to undergo, combined with the faith that their sufferings were in the cause of truth, developed the quality of perseverance in them to such a high degree that they considered no difficulty insurmountable.

Courage was another great quality on which stress was laid. The heart in which there was fear of God could not entertain fear of others than God, and this made the Muslims fearless in the face of the severest opposition:

Those to whom the people said, Men have gathered against you, so fear them; but this increased their faith and they said, Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector. So they returned with favour from Allah and His grace; no evil touched them and they followed Allah’s pleasure, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace. It is only the devil that causes you to fear from his friends, so do not fear them, and fear Me if you are believers. 22

Fear not; surely I am with you: I do not hear and see. 23

And I do not fear in any way those you set up with Him….And how should I fear what you have set up with Him while you do not fear that you have set up with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority to you. 24

Those who deliver the messages of Allah and fear Him and do not fear any one but Allah; and Allah is sufficient to take account. 25

Those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue on the right way, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. 26

Now surely the friends of Allah, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. 27

It was on account of their fearlessness and great moral courage that even without the weapons which the enemy possessed, they were told to fight double their numbers:

If there are a hundred patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there are a thousand they shall overcome two thousand by Allah’s permission, and Allah is with the patient. 28

But when they grew stronger in arms and as well-equipped as the enemy, they could fight ten times their number:

If there are twenty patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there are a hundred of you they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve. 29

Actually the Muslims fought against three times their number on the field of Badr, against four times their number on the field of Uhud, and against ten times their number in the battle of The Allies, and they won the battle on all these occasions. And in the battles which they had to fight against Persia and the Roman Empire, their numbers bore no comparison with the enemy forces, and they were almost always victorious. The courage which they

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showed on the battlefields was in fact due to their faith.
But while facing so boldly all opposition to the cause of truth, they were also required to develop the quality of humility:
And do not go about in the land exultingly, for thou canst not cut through the earth, nor reach the mountains in height. All this—the evil of it is hateful in the sight of thy Lord.30
And do not turn thy face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exulting overmuch; surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster. And pursue the right course in thy going about and lower thy voice.31
Thus does Allah set a seal over the heart of every proud, haughty one.32
Surely He does not love the proud.33
And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones.34
Humility became, in fact, deeply rooted in their hearts by the five daily prayers when all standing on terms of perfect equality bowed down before their Lord and prostrated themselves as one body. The Prophet’s own example was a beacon-light to them in this respect. In his dealings with others he never placed himself on a higher pedestal. He was their spiritual guide and their ruler, but he was just one of them, being true to his picture as portrayed in the Holy Quran: “I am only a mortal like you.” Out in the wood with his companions, the time came for the preparation of food. Everybody was allotted a piece of work, and the spiritual and temporal lordship of all undertook the picking up of fuel. He would never scold a servant for doing a thing or for not doing a thing. A Jew to whom he owed some money addressed him very harshly and rudely while he was sitting with his companions: “You, Banu Hashim, never pay back when you once get something out of another.” Instead of being offended with him, he paid him more than his due.
Selflessness was another great quality with which the Prophet armed his followers to fight the battle of life. God’s pleasure was to be the only motive of one’s actions, not one’s gain or loss:
And no one has with him any boon for which he should be rewarded, except the seeking of the pleasure of his Lord, the most High.35
Say, My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds.36
And hear and obey and spend, and whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, these it is that are the successful.37
They prefer others before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones.38
And among men is he who sells himself away to seek the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is Affectionate to His servants.39
Great stress was laid on faithfulness to agreements and trusts:
And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant.40
And fulfill the promise, for every promise shall be called in question.41
O you who believe! Fulfill the obligations.42
And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have made a covenant, and do not break the oaths after making them fast, and you have indeed made Allah a surety for you.43
Nations are particularly enjoined to fulfill their agreements, because they it is who, intoxicated with power, treat agreements as scraps of paper:
And be not like her who unravels her yarn, disintegrating it into pieces after she has spun it strongly. You make your oaths to be means of deceit between you because one nation is more numerous than another nation.44
True to the spirit of these teachings, the Prophet and his followers stood firmly by their agreements under the most trying circumstances. There is not a single instance on record in which they broke their agreement with any other nation. A very critical situation arose under the truce of Hudaibya. The agreement had just been signed, when Abu Jandal, a refugee from Mecca, appeared on the scene. He was a convert to Islam and had, on this account, been severely persecuted at Mecca. He showed the scars of his tortures to the Muslims. Under the conditions of the agreement, the Muslims could not give him shelter. The Prophet was moved and tried to secure an exception to the rigorous condition, but the other party did not agree to this, and Abu Jandal had to be sent back to his persecutors to be dealt with as they liked.
In the time of ‘Umar, the Muslim general, Abu ‘Ubayda, was obliged to evacuate the occupied territory of Him, which the enemy was now going to occupy; and he ordered that the tax received from the people as a condition for their protection should be paid back to them because the Muslims could not afford them protection any longer. Another example of such scrupulous regard for agreements can hardly be met with elsewhere.
One of the evils to which man falls prey easily is sexual indulgence. The Prophet’s own chastity is testified by his severest critics. Muir’s remarks have already been quoted. And chastity was one of the rare virtues on which he laid great stress. Fornication was pointed out to be one of the three heinous sins:
And they who do not call upon another god with Allah, and do not slay the soul which Allah has forbidden except in the requirements of justice, and who do not commit fornication.45
One was to keep at a safe distance from fornication:
... And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and evil is the way.46
He further pointed out the ways by walking in which a man could guard against falling into this evil. He directed both sexes to keep their looks cast down when in the presence of each other:
... Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their chastity; that is purer for them; Allah is Aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their chastity.47
But women were further required not to make a display of their beauty or ornaments:
... And not display their ornaments, except what appears thereof, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms.48
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—Dr. Steingass, Hughes’ Dictionary of Islam

THE BEAUTIFUL CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAM

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phases of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him—the wonderful man—and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the Dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness. I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today."

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