The Promised Messiah Speaks

Claim To Mujaddadiyat

by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
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The Present Dark Age

Ye seekers-after-truth and the faithful lovers of Islam! you are fully aware of the fact that the present age in which we live, is so deeply steeped in darkness and disbelief that disruption and discord of a high degree has set in in all our affairs, no matter whether they relate to faith or to action; and a dreadful deluge of vice and wickedness has been blowing in every direction. The thing which is called faith has been set aside and replaced by a few lifeless words which are merely to be repeated by the lips; and matters which go by the name of good deeds, have been understood to be synonymous with the performance of certain ceremonies or acts of extravagance and hypocrisy, there being, of real righteousness and rectitude, complete ignorance and destitution. The philosophy and sciences of this age, too, stand strongly opposed to spiritual worth and welfare. The effects produced by them on the minds of their votaries have proved to be highly pernicious and perverted, leading them away to depth of darkness and obscurity. They have been found to quicken the vile and vicious matter in human beings, arousing thereby the sleeping Satan into action. People acquainted with these sciences often create such an acute aversion for matters of religion that they begin to rail at and ridicule the great principles ordained by God—prayer, fasting and other devotional practices. Even the existence of God carries neither any weight nor any worth in their faithless hearts, so that a large majority of them, having been dyed deeply in atheistic color, and infatuated fully with agnostic ideas, are at daggers drawn with religion notwithstanding the fact that they call themselves the sons of Islam.

No Honesty nor Integrity in the World

I have, so far, dealt with and discussed only one aspect which, in the present age, is overladen with the fruits of error and vice. But there are hundreds of more aspects besides which are no less abhorrent. Honesty and integrity, it is generally observed, have so disappeared from this earth as if they had never existed. Deceitfulness and fraud, for the purpose of gaining this world, have increased enormously; and the one who is the most wicked, is looked upon and considered as the most capable. Diabolical designs fraught with different kinds of falsehood and fraud, depravity and corruption, wickedness and villany, are on the rampage giving rise to monstrous habits, deadly disputes and inveterate hatred. A great storm as it were, of foul and filthy passions is raging all around; and the more the people become conversant and skilled in these sciences, the more the deterioration and decay in their natural traits of moral soundness and modesty, mercifulness and honesty.
EDITORIAL

THE SHARIAH COURTS OF PAKISTAN

Irrationality probably could not have gone farthest than constituting the Shariah Benches in the High Courts and the Supreme Court of Pakistan, commonly called the Shariah courts, and appointing theologians of a particular shade as Judges of these Benches, in quest of what is being claimed by the Government of Pakistan the Islamization of Pakistan. This gives rise to questions, answers whereto negate the very purpose for which these Benches have been constituted.

It is an open secret that consecutive Governments in Pakistan, inspite of their Un-Islamic nature and characteristics, have been claiming to be Islamic and Pakistan is styled and labelled as ‘The Islamic Republic of Pakistan.’ Thus, the first question that begs itself is as to ‘What is an Islamic State and does any of the Governments in Pakistan fit in it? Leaving aside the debate on the question of ‘the form and composition’ i.e., as to whether a Kingship, a dictatorship or a single party rule is or is not Islamic, we proceed to address to an all important condition for any Government to qualify as an Islamic Government and that is its complete and unqualified adherence to the teachings of the Qur’an( the word of God) and Sunnah( the practice and sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him) in the conduct of the Governments affairs in all fields of its Jurisdiction. Shariah is the name for the Laws based on the Teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Looking at the records of these Shariah Benches, one discovers that the workload entrusted to these Benches, compared to the total Judicial workload of the High Courts and the Supreme Court of Pakistan, is not even one percent of the whole. This fact alone speaks volumes about the character of the Government of Pakistan. What an irony; a Government whose nifty-nine percent judicial work is Non-Shariah, claims and styles itself as an Islamic State. Hypocrisy, it is said, has many ways of deceiving mankind and even one’s own self.

The second question that arises is as to whether the Judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court in Pakistan were not competent enough to understand and interpret the Shariah? If they were, then why were the theologians appointed to the High Courts and Supreme Court Benches? A glance through the history of the judiciary in India and Pakistan amply bears it out that the courts in the Sub-Continent have been dealing with the matters arising under the Islamic Law and had never lacked

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The Church Calumny

The teaching of the Church, also, has been forging various kinds of mines for the purpose of blowing into pieces the fine structure of truth and faith. Their propagandists have been painfully busy in cooking up subtle tricks of falsehood and fabrication which they make use of and employ on every conceivable opportunity for the extermination of Islam. New methods and means are ever invented to inveigle and beguile. Of that Perfect Man who was the Pride of all the holy personages, the dignified Diadem of all the chosen ones of heaven and the Lord of all the prophets of God, the Christians commit a criminal contempt. They stage plays in theatres in which mock and mimetic representations of Islam and its Holy Founder are shown, most wickedly, to revile and ridicule him. False charges have been fabricated to cast base aspersion on the good name of the Holy Prophet of Islam, and no rascality is spared to give them a wide publicity by means of pen, picture and platform.

The Providential Plan

Ye Muslims! now lend me your ears, and listen most attentively to all the intricate and deceptive invention of the Christian clerics to counteract and nullify the pure and wholesome effects of Islam; their spending of huge sums of money in spreading extensively the network of their cunning and crafty devices; and the employment of such shameful weapons against Islam, that it would be better not to pollute and defile the sublime subject of this book with their mention; all these are the treacherous tricks of trade which the worshippers of Trinity have been using with the success and skill of a conjurer; and until the Most High God shows His powerful Hand, having the might of a miracle behind it, to destroy the effect of this enchantment, it is impossible to think that the simple and guileless hearts can ever be emancipated from the influence of this Church jugglery.

The Most High God has, therefore, displayed this miracle before the true Muslims of this age by raising this humble servant of His to stand against and break the spell of the opponents, having endowed him with the gift of His revelation and special blessings and the fine and subtle knowledge of His way; and investing him with a large number of heavenly signs and wonders, and spiritual truths and excellences that he may with the aid of this heavenly hammer be able to smash into pieces the waxen idol raised up by the Church conjuration. Therefore, ye Muslims! the advent of this humble servant is indeed a miracle wrought by the Most High God to drive away and dispel the darkness of this spell. Was it not essentially necessary that miracle, as against magic, should also have come into the world? Is it a matter of impossibility in your eyes that the Most High God should, as opposed to all this cunning and craft which has reached the degree of real magic, show such a glitter and gleam of truth which has the power and effect of a miracle?

To spread and strewn the translations of the Holy Qur'an only ceremoniously by way of outward forms and rites, or to give currency to the religious books and Traditions of the Holy Prophet by rendering them into Urdu and Persian, or to inculcate the dry and abortive ways full of innovations as practiced by most of the present-day religious personages; all these matters are not os such character that they may in the true and strict sense, be called Revival of Religion. The last mentioned practice, on the contrary, is rather the renewal and restoration of the way of the Devil and a marauding raid upon religion. The propagation of the Holy Qur'an and the true Traditions of the Prophet in the world is doubtlessly a noble work; but the execution of this work merely by way of formalism without conforming one's life to the spirit of the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions, is only a pretentious service which any learned man can perform and accomplish. It has, however, nothing to do with the Divine mission of Mujaddadiyyat, the Revival of Religion. And all these matters are nothing but ostentious bragging in the sight of God who says: O you who believe, why say you that which you do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not (61: 2, 3); O you who believe, take care of your souls— he who errs cannot harm you when you are in the right way (5:103). How can the blind lead the blind, and the one himself infected with leprosy purify and cleanse other people? The task of the Revival of Religion is that pure phenomenon which, in the first instance, descends with the ardent and active zeal of love on that pure heart which has risen to the high stage of pure Divine Communion. Then its influence penetrates sooner or later, into other people. Those men who are invested with that office and power of Mujaddadiyyat, are not mere braggers, but they are, as a matter of fact, the true representatives and spiritual successors of the Holy Prophet; and the Most High God makes them to inherit all the blessings which are bestowed upon prophets and apostles. The words spoken by them proceed spontaneously from a supernatural impulse, and not from mere external

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IS RELIGION A THING OF THE PAST?

By Muhammad Asad

For many thousands of years—from the earliest, dim beginnings of human consciousness—religion was a mighty power which drove mankind on and on towards some unknown goal. It was not the only driving power. Hunger was another, and human ambition, yet another. But throughout man's history, religion was always in the foreground, for good or ill. Its name kingdoms were built and nations came to life and kingdoms were destroyed and nations made to disappear. Under its spell, men rose to the most sublime heights of love and self-sacrifice—while others committed, for its sake, the most cruel deeds of violence. It gave a great joy of living to many—and caused many others to despise life as an illusion of vanity. It filled some men with creative fervour and gave them strength to achieve imperishable cultural feats while in others it gave rise to superstition, obscurantism, and stupidity. But to all who followed it sincerely in this or that of its forms, religion gave, somehow, happiness.

Therefore, in spite of the great and painfully obvious diversity in the different religious faiths and views, something must have been—or must be—common to all of them. It must be a very important 'something' for it gave, and gives, happiness.

Obviously, this 'something' is the religious man's conviction of being in agreement with what metaphysics describes as the ultimate Reality, or the Absolute. Whatever the tenets of a religion, however sublime or primitive its teachings, whether monotheistic, polytheistic, or pantheistic, the innermost core of every religious experience is, firstly the conviction that all Being and Happening in this world is the outcome of a conscious, creative, all-embracing Power—or, to put it more simply, a Divine Will, and secondly, the feeling that one is, or he desires to be, in spiritual accord with the demands of that Will. On this conviction, this feeling and this desire alone, was and is based on, man's faculty to judge between Good and Evil. For, unless we presume that an absolute, planning Will is at the root of all creation, there is no sense in presuming that any of our aims and actions could be intrinsically right or wrong, moral or immoral. In other words, unless we believe in the existence of such a planning Will, we have no definite standard by which to judge our aims and actions. In the absence of a central belief, the concept of morality loses all its precision and resolves itself, into first instance, into a series of vague conventions—which, in their turn, become more and more subject to 'expediency,' that is, to the question as to whether an aim or an action is useful to a particular person (or to the community to which the person belongs), or not. Consequently, Right or Wrong become purely relative terms to be arbitrarily interpreted according to one's personal (or communal) needs and the changing requirements of time and economic environment.

These reflections on the role of religious thought in the realm of morality assume a paramount importance if we realize that the trend of our time is definitely antagonistic to religious thought. Everywhere and everyday, we are being told by a certain class of intellectuals that religion is nothing but a relic of man's barbaric past, now to be superseded by the 'Age of Science.' Science, they say, is about to take the place of the worn-out religious system; science, so gloriously and irresistibly growing, will teach man to live in accordance with pure reason and will ultimately help him to evolve new standards of morality without any metaphysical sanction.

Now this naive optimism with regard to science is in reality not at all "modern," it is extremely old-fashioned—namely, an uncritical copy of the Occident's naive optimism of the 18th and 19th centuries. At that time (and particularly in the second half of the 19th century), many Occidental scientists believed that a solution of the mysteries of the Universe was "just around the corner," and that henceforth nothing could stop man from arranging his life in God-like independence and reasonableness. The thinkers of the 20th century, however, are much more reserved not to say sceptical on this subject. They have found that deterministic science is unable to fulfill the spiritual hopes attached to it in the recent past; for the mysteries of the Universe become more mysterious and more complicated the more our research advances. Everyday it becomes more obvious that it will never be possible to answer by purely scientific means the question as to how the Universe came into being and how life originated in it—and, therefore, also the question as to the true nature and purpose of human existence. But so long as we are not in a position to answer the later question, we cannot even attempt to define "good" or "evil" simply because these terms have no meaning at all unless they are related to a knowledge (real or imaginary) of the nature and purpose of human existence. And so long as we are not in a position to define "good" and "evil," there is no sense in talking about standards of morality.

This is just what really advanced scientists are now beginning to realize. Faced with the impossibility of deciding metaphysical questions by means of physical research, they have given up the childish hope of the last two centuries that science could ever provide directives in the field of ethics. Not that they distrust science as such, on the contrary, they do believe that it will lead mankind to ever greater marvels of knowledge and achievement but, at the same time, they realize that science has no direct connection with man's moral life. Science can, and does guide us to a better understanding of the world around us and in us; but, being solely concerned with the observation of the facts of Nature, and with the analysis of the laws that appear to govern the inter-relations of those facts, science cannot be called upon to deliver a verdict as to
the purpose, if any, of human life, and thus to create moral consciousness in us. No amount of enthusiasm for scientific thinking can hide the fact that the problem of morality is not within the scope of science. It is, on the other hand, entirely within the scope of religion.

It is through religious experience alone that we can arrive rightly or wrongly—at standards of moral and ethical valuation independent of the ephemeral changes in our environment, at the recognition of a moral good worth striving for, and of a moral evil that must be avoided. I have said, “rightly or wrongly” for, by all objective canons, there is always the possibility of a religion (any religion) being mistaken in its metaphysical premises, and therefore our acceptance or rejection of any religion must, in the last resort, be guided by our experience and our reason, which tell us how far that particular religion agrees with man's ultimate needs, physical and spiritual. But this necessity of exciting our critical faculties with regard to religion does not detract anything from the fundamental proportion that it is religion alone that can endow our life with a meaning, and can thus promote in us the urge to conform our behaviour to a pattern of moral values entirely independent of the momentary constellation of our existence. To phrase it differently, it is religion alone that can provide a broad platform for an agreement, among large groups of men, as to what is good (and therefore desirable) and what is evil (and therefore to be avoided). And could there be any doubt that such an agreement is an absolute, indispensable requirement for any sort of order in human relations?

Considered from this viewpoint, the religious urge (taking the word “religion” in its widest sense) is not a mere passing phase in the history of man's development but the ultimate source of ethics and morality; not the outcome of cheap credulity which any age could “outgrow” but the only answer to a real, basic need of man at all times and in all environments. In another word, it is an instinct.

Religion Today

Nevertheless, there is no going away from the fact that religion is tremendously on the decline in our days. Not because man's nature has become “depraved,” it is intrinsically as good or as bad as it always was—liable to rise to the greatest heights of selflessness and idealism or to descend into the deepest abyss of cruelty and greed. Nor is there any sign that man has lost his instinctive desire to coordinate his individual life with larger, spiritual interests, which transcend the material interests of one's private existence: for, what other explanation is there of the semi-religious fervour underlying such modern movements as communism or nationalism? That these movements are but meagre substitutes for religion in its true sense does not in the least disprove our contention that modern man feels the need of religion exactly as the thousands of generations before him have felt it. But he goes in for substitutes because the real thing is denied to him.

Yes, because it is denied to him. The official “guardians” of religion—of every religion—have miserably failed in their most cardinal task: to show man how to arrange the practical side of his life in conformity with religion's moral appeal; and many of the conventional religious beliefs have thus become estranged from the problems and perplexities of present-day life. And because, from the social and economic viewpoints, our time is essentially a time of confusion, the failure of the religious leaders to lead us in the business of our life is fraught with truly catastrophic consequences.

Owing to the rapid development of science and its practical application to industry, communications, warfare, labour conditions, and so forth, the conventional systems of social cooperation have been thrown out of gear all the world over. The most elemental problems of life: bread and clothing, poverty and security, work and education, have become so complicated that they now constitute problems in the fullest and most baffling sense of the word. Not that there ever was a period when these things were less important than they are now. People always needed bread and clothing, poverty was always a bitter worry, and security always the aim: but in previous epochs, when society did not possess its present complexity, all such problems were comparatively easy of solution and did not therefore occupy men's minds as desperately as they do now. By virtue of its stupendous progress in recent time, science has entirely changed the conditions of our existence. It has opened new, unexpected vistas—with all the attending complications—in almost every branch of human activities. It has made possible many things (some of them creative and full of promise for the future, some of them destructive and full of terror) which had not been dreamed of by previous generations: and precisely because these things had not been dreamt of (that is, had not been anticipated in the social concepts evolved in the past) the majority of people had, intellectually and morally, not been properly prepared for them—with the result that now we possess neither the requisite economic technique nor the ethical maturity which could adequately cope with the new situation. The intensity of mankind's search for new ways and means to resolve this perplexity is mirrored in the emergence of the many social ideologies which are now warring for predominance; and their widely conflicting claims make us realize that the very basis of our conventional thought—the assurance of stability in our social forms and in the relations between man and man—has broken down entirely.

This turmoil of socio-economic views did not—and could not—remain confined to the purely material side of our affairs. It has invaded our beliefs as well. Naturally so, for the confusion of our politics and economics gives rise to a very far-reaching criticism of the ethical and religious convictions on which those politics and economics have hitherto rested: the more so as our religious leaders have so far been accustomed to take every convention for granted, and have contributed precious little towards a solution of the perplexities with which modern life is beset. And so the political and socio-economic unrest of our days has its counterpart, and accompaniment, in a deep unrest on the ethical plane.

It is not difficult to see that the question as to what is good or evil in a relative, socio-economic sense (in other words, what form of social
nationalism. As already mentioned, the cult of nationalism—so characteristic of our time—has an emotional, almost mystic coloring which makes for its superficial resemblance to religion; but, unlike religion, which starts and ends with the concept of absolute Good and Evil (however different this concept may be in each particular religion), nationalism denies, in its very essence, the existence of absolute Good and Evil. It recognizes these terms only in a relative sense; namely, in relation to what is, or seems to be, good or evil for the development of a particular nation; and thus it destroys the very basis of ethics and morality.

From whatever angle we look at this problem, we must not forget that throughout man’s history ethics was derived, directly or indirectly, from religious thought. So far, no alternative source of ethics has been discovered—nor is there the slightest indication that “non-religion” ethics is possible at all (for whatever today goes by this name is in reality a subconscious heritage of past religious thought). And because there is no such indication, that space of human life which was once filled—and filled to satisfaction—with religious beliefs and hopes, is now gradually being transformed into a gaping void, an emptiness in which nothing can thrive but despair: unspoken despair as to the future of man, as to the purpose and spiritual justification of his life, as to whether there really are such values as Good and Evil.

The bitterness of the struggles, physical and moral, that now shake humanity; the helpless ferocity—dictated mainly by fear—with which nations, and groups within nations, compete with each other for power; the universal disregard for right and justice, the ruthless exploitation of the weak by the strong, and everybody’s distrust of everybody: all these are but symptoms of the ethical frustration from which the majority of modern mankind is suffering—a frustration that is ultimately responsible for all the wars and all the civil strife of our time and causes untold misery in body and mind to untold numbers of people. The feeling not only of social but also of moral insecurity, the feeling that our affairs are rushing wildly, like a river that has burst its banks, into unknown and unpredictable directions, is steadily mounting among the more aware of our generation.

Religion and the West

This holds good for the world of Islam as well. We, like all the others, live in the midst of a whirling flood. For us, as for all the others, the time of moral confusion has come. Our society is in a ferment. Many of its time-honored conventions—some of them irrelevant to Islamic life, but many of them indispensable to it—are now dissolving under the pressure of Western cultural influences and of economic necessities arising from our submission to those influences. Inspite of all the slogans raised in our days in the name of Islam, in spite of the enthusiasm (prevailing especially in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent) for a re-orientation of Muslim political and economic thought in the direction of Islam; in spite of all this, the fact remains that to the majority of present-day Muslims the appeal of religion is becoming increasingly theoretical, and less and less individuals are prepared to apply the principles of Islam (in distinction from Islamic slogans) to their personal behavior and their social endeavours.

Our westernized “progressives” do not even bother to deny this. Most of them maintain, with a self-satisfied smirk on their faces that “the spirit of the time is against religious thought.”

Now this is perfectly true. The spirit of the time is against religious thought—but it is, a spirit born and bred in the West, relevant only to the historical experiences of the West, and entirely irrelevant to the problem of Islam. For, if Western thinkers turn against religion they can be understood and excused on the grounds of their experiences with their own religion, namely, Christianity. No such excuse is, historically speaking, valid for the Muslims. The Islamic concept of, and Muslim experiences with, religion are of a different nature—so different that only extreme density can prevent a person from realizing that not religion as such has been discredited, but only the peculiar form it had attained in the West.
Broadly speaking, Christianity has failed because, from the very beginning it had divorced itself from the worldly aspect of man’s existence, formed his bodily life, his physical needs and desires, his economics, and his politics. It drew a dividing line between “that which is God’s” (or, ethics and morality) and “that which is Caesar’s” (or, the realm of government, economic and social organization): a logical outcome of Christianity’s central teaching which postulates a gulf between the alleged evil of the “natural” life in this world and the good of “supernatural” spirituality.

In the Christian theology, spirit and matter are entities, essentially opposed to one another. Matter is essentially a domain of Evil, and man’s attachment to it is synonymous with his attachment to Evil. Consequently “redemption” is conditional upon man’s spirit freeing itself from the entanglements of matter and returning to its ideal state from which it has lapsed by an incomprehensible act of perversity, called Original Sin. According to St. Paul, the real founder of Christian metaphysics, the source of all sin is the “flesh.”

Thus, Christian ethics rests on a condemnation of the physical, sensual aspect of man’s life. Whatever modern Christian theology may have made or is trying to make of its original attitude in this respect, there can be no doubt that contempt of sensual life is at the root of its teachings. In the Middle Ages, when the Church was the only fount of the Europeans’ ethical concepts, the correctness of this attitude was never questioned, and the life of the body, with all its sensations and desires, was regarded not only as inferior but as opposed to spiritual life. And even in our days, when Christianity has lost a good deal of its influence on the Western mind, and the rights of the body tend to be more and more exalted (and even exaggerated), the derogatory meaning still attached in all European languages to the word “sensuality” bears ample evidence to its ethical background. An example thereof can be seen in the naive assumption, so popular in the West, that the Prophet Muhammad “could not have been a person of high spirituality” because he enjoyed—and advised his followers to enjoy—the most intense of all sensual experiences: sexual-life. No apologetic, modern interpretation can hide the anti-sensual and anti-physical attitude of Christianity, and none of the concessions which Christian theologians are now obliged to make to the changing mentality of the Occident can alter that historical fact.

The bitterness of the dilemma which Christianity imposed on the minds of its believers can be fully gauged if we remember that the most elemental of all sensual urges—the meeting of man and woman—is, in the teachings of the Church, the direct cause and the eternal symbol of Original Sin. But, as was only to be expected, the Church could not achieve the impossible. It could not in reality eliminate the “urges of the flesh” from man’s life. Similarly, in spite of its insistence on the “devilish” aspect of the world of Matter, the Church could not suppress man’s natural interest in worldly affairs and his desire for material progress. And so, quite early in the Middle Ages, a compromise was reached between man’s ineradicable tendencies on the one hand, and the teachings of the Church, on the other. The Church made it silently understood that all those vital aspects of the human nature are some sort of “necessary evil” and, further, that they need not always run counter to the demands of religion, but have simply nothing to do with religion. By thus delegating all practical concerns of life outside the realm of religion, the Church gave birth to that typically western idea that religion and worldly affairs belong to different compartments of life.

It is, therefore, not due to a moral defect on the part of Europeans or Americans that in practice they never conformed to the principles of Christianity—beginning with the demand to “turn away from this world” and ending with the exhortation, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” They never could conform to these principles. Nor did the Church, in point of fact, ever seriously insist on a practical application of its teachings; it was, always, fully satisfied with merely postulating them as a theoretical, unattainable ideal. And even modern Christian thinkers seem to be quite in agreement with this attitude of the Church as can be seen from the following quotation:

“These absolute standards explicitly affirmed in the New Testament are indeed the ideals towards which the Christians are under an obligation to strive, but which nevertheless are unattainable... The way from the moral teaching and absolute principles, and from all the recorded events in the Gospels to our everyday concerns is not that of direct application.” (E. Barker and R. Preston, Christians in Society, London 1939, pp. 28f. The italics are mine.)

To a Muslim, nurtured on quite a different concept of religion, it may sound strange that men could ever have been satisfied with ethics as something apart from the practical problems of life: but this is how ethics was always, with very few exceptions, conceived in Christian society.

The moral and social collapse of present-day Occidental civilization is intimately bound up with this tragic dualism into which Christianity has forced it. For more than fifteen hundred years, the ethical and moral ideology of the Occident was derived from Christianity: that is to say, for more than fifteen hundred years the Occidental was systematically taught that moral convictions are not a matter of “practical application”—in other words, that ethics need not interfere with “real” life. All the catastrophes which are now shaking the Western world are, in the last resort, traceable to that dualistic habit of mind which draws a sharp line between moral convictions and “expediency”—that splendid excuse for doing anything immoral so long as it serves the interests of the doer or those of his class or community. Inspite of all the assertions to the contrary, none of the Western economists or politicians would ever allow his moral convictions to overrule “expediency”: for, fifteen hundred years of Christianity have taught them that ethics and morality deal with beautiful ideals, fit to be discussed in edifying sermons in the church, but—“business is business”.

Because Christianity was the Occident’s only religious experience for so many centuries, the Occidentals
have grown accustomed to identify it with "religion" in general; and their modern, obvious disappointment with Christianity has assumed the color of disappointment with the religious people as such. In reality, however, they have become disappointed with the only form of religion they had ever known.

They have become, or are rapidly becoming, disappointed with a religion which promises justice and happiness in the world to come, but has nothing to offer for the bitter needs of this world: a religion which cannot make the slightest contribution towards the establishment of social equity, but confines itself to an ineffective preaching of morals: a religion which has brought forth a Church—that is, a set of beliefs, dogmas and transcendental hopes but not a positive program of individual and social life. And at the same time they remember that the Church only too often lent a helping hand to oppression and exploitation: namely, to secular power-holders anxious to keep intact social conditions that were manifestly unjust to the many but very profitable to the power-holders themselves. What wonder then, that to many Occidentals the very name of religion has become suspect—simply because of their fear that religious interest might once again be used as a cloak for the forces of darkness and oppression?

What about Islam?

But if, as I have said, Western thinkers have ample reason to be disappointed with and suspicious of religion, Muslim thinkers have no such valid reason. For where Christianity has failed most glaringly, Islam has succeeded.

First, Islam knows nothing of a division of human life into "physical" and "spiritual" compartments, and has never reduced religion to a mere spiritual cult. The system which our Holy Prophet enunciated in the twenty-three years of his ministry refers not only to matters spiritual, and aims not only at individual righteousness, but provides a framework for all our individual and social activities as well. It embraces life in all its aspects, moral and physical, individual and communal; the problems of the flesh and of the mind, of sex and economics, of morality and aesthetics have—all side by side with problems of worship and theology—their legitimate place in the Prophet's teachings. We have been offered by him the vision of an equitable society, and of the type of man which such a society presupposes. We have been given the outline of a political scheme (the outline only, because the details of man's political and economic needs are time-bound and, therefore, variable) as well as a scheme of individual rights and social duties in which all possibilities of historical evolution are duly anticipated. And as there is no division of reality into "physical" and "spiritual" compartments, there is no possibility of dividing it into "natural" and "supernatural" planes. To a Muslim, everything that is or happens is within the natural sphere: for Nature is the sum total of all Creation, visible and invisible, concrete and abstract; and the so-called laws of Nature are the way in which the Will of God becomes manifest. In such a scheme of things, there can be no conflict between the moral and physical aspects of man's existence; they are inseparable, and therefore equally justified.

Secondly, the credible role which the Church has so often played in the social history of Europe has never had a counterpart in the history of Islam. Almost without a single exception, the great exponents of Islamic theology and jurisprudence were the most zealous guardians of human rights. It is they who always stood up—frequently at the cost of great personal sacrifice, and sometimes even martyrdom—against tyranny and oppression, and thus imposed the most severe checks on such power-holders' will to exploit. It is entirely to the credit of such 'ulama of the past and of the religion which inspired them that the Muslim nations were spared the indignity and the miseries which were the common man's lot in Europe for many centuries.

Thirdly, while there are always a conflict between Christianity and science manifested, on the one hand, in fantastic, irrational dogmas and, on the other, in the most atrocious persecution by the Church of scientific thought and of scientists down to modern times we are unable to discover the slightest trace of a conflict between Islam and science, be it in the teachings themselves or in the attitude of Muslim 'ulama towards scientists.

This latter point has an important bearing on our discussion: for it is undeniable that the main Occidental objection to religion is Christianity's otherworldliness in general, and its historic opposition to the march of science, in particular. If we add to this the severe strain which most of the Christian dogmas impose on the intellect, we can only understand the current slogan, "Religion is opposed to Science." But Occidental thinkers never stop to inquire whether the outlook and the attitude of the Christian Church are symptomatic of religion as such—that is, of every religion. With the same arrogance with which they assume that Occidental civilization is the summit of all possible civilizations, they take it for granted that Christian ethics (although never followed by themselves in practice) is the highest that religion could ever dream to attain; and their exclusive concern with the doings of the Christian Church implies that the behavior or misbehavior of that Church offers a criterion of religion in general.

Now Christianity has admittedly opposed scientific thought for a long period, and begins only in our days—under a compulsion born out of defeat—to discover that "there is no conflict between science and religion." But it is not possible that other religions may have arrived at the same conclusion not under the stress of a cultural defeat but from their very inception? Is it not possible, moreover, that other religions—such another religion—may have been built on the idea that there is no conflict between science and religion?

I am referring, of course, to Islam. In point of fact, Islamic history shows, with regard to science, a picture quite different from the one offered by Christendom. Not only was Islam never opposed to science, it even conferred on science, and on intellectual endeavors generally, something of the sanctity of worship. In glaring contrast with the record of the Christian Church the burnings and torturings of scholars, the ruthless destruction of so many works of
science, the suppression of independent thought in every sphere of life—in contrast with this frightful record of the Church, history does not furnish a single instance of a scientist (of whatever description) having been persecuted under Muslim rule because of his scientific findings. Persecutions of theologians there have been: occasional attempts at suppression of men who deviated from the "orthodox" theology of the day: but of scientists, never: simply because Islam inculcated in its followers the greatest respect for learning and made "the search after knowledge the sacred duty (faridah) of every Muslim." No accident, therefore, that many of the Muslim pioneers of science whose names are now household words all over the world, were, at the same time, outstanding theologians and fuqaha. They had only to turn their eyes to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet in order to find that by acquiring scientific knowledge they would truly worship their Lord. When they read the Prophet's saying (quoted by al-Bukhari), "God sends down no disease without sending down a cure for it as well," they understood that by searching for unknown cures they would contribute to a fulfillment of God's will; and so medical research became invested with the holiness of a religious duty. They read the verse, "We have created everything out of water" (surah 21:30), and in their endeavor to penetrate the depth of these words they began to study living organisms—and established the science of biology. The Qur'an pointed to the harmony of the stars and their movements as witnesses of their Creator's glory—and thereupon the sciences of astronomy and mathematics were taken up by the Muslims with the fervor which in other religions is reserved only for prayer. And in the same way they took to physiology, and chemistry, and zoology, and to all the other sciences in which the Muslim genius was to find its most lasting monument.

In those far-away times every Muslim was accustomed to the view that "the scientist walks in the path of God," as the Prophet had so beautifully expressed it; and instances of the highest honors awarded by Muslim rulers and Muslim society to seekers after scientific truth, and of the greatest practical encouragement given to scientific research, and beyond counting. Throughout the whole creative period of Muslim history—that is to say, during the first five centuries after the Hijrah—science had no greater champion than Muslim civilization, and no home more secure than the lands in which Islam was supreme. In a word, it was Islam that gave an incentive to cultural achievements which constitute one of the proudest pages of the history of mankind: and it gave that incentive by saying Yes to life and No to asceticism, Yes to the intellect and No to obscurantism, Yes to action and No to quietism.

An Objection Analysed

And now let us see how a contemporary Western thinker formulates the modern objection to religion:

"It must be admitted that the modern criticism of the great world religions is not altogether devoid of foundation. Their intellectual absolutism and their concentration on metaphysical conceptions have tended to turn men's minds away from the material world, and from practical social activity. But this preoccupation with the Eternal and the Absolute and the spirit of 'other worldliness' which it generates in antipathetic to the modern mind, since it seems ultimately to destroy the value and significance of relative knowledge—that is to say of natural science and of human life itself. The present age seems to demand a religion which will be an incentive to action and a justification of the material and social progress which has been the peculiar achievement of the last two centuries." (Christopher Dawson, Progress and Religion, ed. 1938, p. 251)

Now if we analyse impartially this indictment of religion we find that it applies perfectly, word for word, to Christianity and other mystical religions but certainly not to Islam. Indeed, the quotation confirms, indirectly, everything that Islam stands for.

While there is undoubtedly a lot of "intellectual absolutism" in Christianity with its insistence on dogmas that are difficult or even impossible of comprehension (for instance, the Dogma of Trinity or of Vicarious Atonement), we find nothing of the kind in Islam. On the contrary, all its ethical concepts are based on an appeal to common sense: reason and not mystic emotion is postulated as the legitimate way of religion (notwithstanding what some of our esoteric Sufis may say): for, God is the Perfect Ratio. Further, Islam is not "concentrated on metaphysical conceptions" but, on the contrary, restricts all metaphysics to the single teaching that God exists—in complete self-sufficiency and omnipotence, justice and mercy. All other speculations as to his "qualities" are mere smoke and childish play. They may have seen an intriguing pastime for Muslim theologians in the past millennium, but are certainly not in the least relevant to the genuine teachings of Islam.

We know, further, that Islam does not tend "to turn men's minds away from the material world and from practical social activity" but, on the contrary, insists that this material world is a positive aspect of creation, and makes consequently, social activity—that is, men's endeavour to improve their living conditions—an integral part of its religious postulate. Not be "pre-occupied" with the Eternal and the Absolute, Islam places—as we have seen—the greatest emphasis on the value of relative, scientific knowledge and of human life itself: and thsu it furnishes that "incentive to action and justification of the material and social progress" which the writer quoted above describes as the cardinal demand of the present age, and which—in a gross misinterpretation of history—he believes to be the "peculiar achievement" of the modern West!

In short, there is not, and never was, a conflict between science and Islam—for the simple reason that there is no conflict between human nature and Islam. Its teachings place a positive accent on all manifestations of life—life of the body, of the mind, of the social organism—and so they provide the strongest possible stimulus to man's striving after the truth and happiness.

The cry, "Religion is a Thing of the Past," is, in its innermost, a cry of the Western World. In the world of Islam, it has no meaning at all. Only the shortsightedness of people who have

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MONOTHEISM IN ITS PUREST FORM

It is a well-known and an undeniable fact that Muhammad, and Muhammad only and no one else, established monotheism in its purest form. The worship of One God, Who was neither begetter nor begotten, nor had any associates with Him in His Godhood, was taught in the most unequivocal terms. Before Muhammad, the world worshipped everything in the universe. The Sun, the Moon, the Stars, clouds, water, winds, fire trees, rivers and stones, egg-shells and many a God-incarnate man, were his deities. The Holy Prophet brought down all these man-made gods from the pedestal of divinity.

OBJECT OF MONOTHEISM

It was not because his God was a jealous God, as the writer of Exodus would make him. He is above the passion of envy, and His glory would not suffer if the whole world became idolatrous, nor would it be added to a jot if everyone worshipped Him in the right way(1). It was for his own edification that man was taught by Muhammad to observe a strict faith in the Unity of God(2). Man is the chief actor and vicerogent(3) of God on earth to work out the great scheme of creation, and inasmuch as the said scheme has to work in certain ways—ways that have been indicated by the very names and attributes of God—his actions and his ways must reflect and be in imitation of Divine ways in order to bring the scheme to its desired end. In this sense we have to live the Religion of Unity. This is what is meant by the baptism of God, in the Qur-an. Our mind has to work in, and conduct, our little world the human body—just as the Great Mind works in the universe. We are co-workers with the Great Designer in our humble ways, and have consequently to walk humbly with Him. The Holy Prophet thus creates in us a new zest for Religion. Religion is no longer a scheme exclusively for the betterment of life after death, or for gaining entrance into the kingdom of God in heaven, but a scheme to do something in every moment of our life for the furtherance of the Divine Purpose which is, in fact, our own purpose. This new perspective of Religion changed entirely the meaning of Divine worship and glorification. It showed that God was not to be glorified only by the singing of hymns and the saying of prayers—they were means to an end but by our actualizing such potencies as have been reposed in us and in things created to minister to us. The very first ordinance in the Qur-an puts this perspective of Religion before us in the following words:—

"O men! serve your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may guard(against evil).

"Who made the earth a resting-place for you and the heaven a structure, and (Who) sends down rain from the cloud, then brings forth with it subsistence for you of the fruits; therefore do not set up rivals to Allah while you know(4)."

Any other conception of worship—as, for example, to please the Deity, to win His favors—would encourage polytheism, as it has done already in the world. This Divine favouritism, if the expression may be permitted, is at the root of Pluralism in Religion.

(1) Holy Qur-an, xxxi 12.  
(2) Ibid.  
(3) Ibid., ii, 30  
(4) Ibid., ii, 21 22.

GOD NOT IMPERSONAL

Similarly, it was taught in the clearest terms, for the first time, that God was not an impersonal one, as one clothed with human passions, that the pleasure or anger of God were not His passions(1); they involved an assumption under which His pleasure became expressed when human faculties became fully fledged, but if they became stunted through our wrong doings and lost their purpose, it indicated His wrath.

(1) "There is nothing like him" (Qur-an, xl. 9). "Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends all visions." (vi.) 104.

HUMAN CAPABILITIES AND SINLESSNESS OF NATURE

The world had very erroneous conceptions of human capabilities. Evil had been taken as its backbone; nothing sublime or beautiful was in humanity. If some religions, like Christianity, declared evil and sin to be the sole furniture of the human mind, others taught that human life was full of trouble and tribulation, and that salvation lay in annihilation, seeing that this world was thought to be full of nothing but misery and evil, as I said before. Muhammad, for the first time, declared that human nature was potentially perfect—a truth established today by biology; he taught that it was free from any taint of evil. Sin, he declared, was an acquisition, an after-acquirement and not a heritage. Human nature, as the Qur-an says, was capable of unlimited progress, but with inclination to degradation as well; man could soar to the highest of the high, but can go to the lowest of the low, and the Religion Muhammad brought was to work out the former and check the latter.

THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL

The problem of good and evil was a great puzzle. Its misapprehension not only gave rise to wrong notions that created divergent ethics, but it also produced a disastrous effect on human character. The theory of sin by inheritance, for instance, and many others like, reduced man to the role of automation, as a helpless, passive and unconsenting instrument of evil. The
Holy Prophet simplified the problem. God is the source of all good. As the Qur'ān says: “Everything that comes from Him is good; human nature is pure and perfect. The mishandling or abuse of things creates evil. Opium and arsenic used for the purpose for which they have been created are blessings of God, but their abuse makes of each a curse.”

Fire, the course of comfort and happiness, plays havoc with property and life if ignorance or inadvertence permit it to function in undesirable ways. Excess in drinking even such a harmless thing as water brings on drops, and extravagance in diet causes indigestion, with its train of numberless diseases. Everything has got its ordained measure and its prescribed occasion. If we transgress the given limits or put things to a use for which they are not intended, the good changes into evil. Laxative and costive medicines stand in contrast. Which of the two is good and which is evil? Both of them do immense good, if properly used. Both will prove harmful, if used to excess or on wrong occasion. In short, everything, used in its defined measure, is good. It becomes evil when mishandled or misapplied. The Holy Qur'ān draws our attention to this basic principle of measure, that regulates the whole universe:

“The Beneficient God ... created man.... He made the measure that you may not be immoderate in respect of measures and keep up the balance with equity, and do not make the measure deficient.”

UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD
Man must live in society. He cannot be happy without it. Best as we are with numerous behests and cravings, our inability to satisfy them by individual effort demands the formation of society. We must look to each other’s need. We must serve others and be served by them. But the self-seeking nature in us, if not properly controlled, makes havoc among us, and creates all the trouble around us. Oppression, persecution, crimes, offences, disputes, war—all these are the outcome of this peculiar medley of self-seeking tendencies and the sociable nature in man. We need some sort of sacrifice in favour of those around us. We need to cultivate a spirit of brotherhood to improve the said tendency. In this respect, Muhammad can rightly claim to have discovered the specific remedy. He laid down principles of universal brotherhood, and succeeded in establishing it, in his own lifetime. Through this institution he purged Arabia of all its troubles.

For the first time, the world received broad principles from Muhammad which will establish the universal brotherhood of man in the world. Jesus had such a desire; but it remained only a dream, and the history of Christendom has never shown a spirit of universal brotherhood. Islam saw that brotherhood which welded high and low, rich and poor, white and black, into one fraternity. The world of today goes after universalism, but if that universalism ever becomes a reality, it will be on the principles of Islam. And in this connection I may refer to the conception of Muslim Godhood. The Pre-Islamic God was a tribal God everywhere whether in the East or the West. He was the God of Abraham and Jacob, He was the Mazda of the renowned ancestors in Persia, but the Qur’ān speaks of a Rabbul Alameen God, The Creator. The Nourisher and The Sustainer of all the worlds, of all the nations and races, and Who made no distinction between man and man.

(1) Towards Islam, by the same author
(2) Islam and Zoroastrianism, by the same author
(3) Holy Qur’ān, lv. 1-9

Prayer and Three Ways to Success—Continued
of Prophet Abraham. Two prayers contained in Darūd are: (1) may the hearts of Muslims be filled with the light of Islam and (2) may the non-Muslims also partake of this light.

Darūd in favour of the Holy Prophet aims at creating a desire in man firstly, that the misfortunes befalling Islam and Muslims may come to an end and, secondly, that the light of Islam may illuminate the dark corners where infidelity reigns supreme.

The attainment of progress by the Muslims through prayer is an historical fact. Even today what the Muslims need most is the strict observance of prayer so that they rise to the highest degree of progress. As a nation, the Muslims rose to a position unparalleled in the history of the world. By their message of truth and righteousness and by their religious zeal, Muslims superseded all the religions of the world within a century. When a nation becomes a conscientious observer of prayer, Allah raises it to the highest pinnacle of secular and religious glory. The contact which the Holy Prophet of Islam established between man and his Creator by means of prayer is the foundation-stone of how the Holy Prophet Muhammad is by far the most successful of all the religious leaders of the world. Similarly unique are the conquests of the companions of the Holy Prophet in the world history and the rapid spread of Islam from one corner of the world to the other. Divine laws are unalterable. Even if today Muslims get linked with Allah through prayer we can regain our departed glory.

Promised Messiah Speaks—Continued
stimulus or self-acting. Their hearts are illuminated by the brilliant light of Divine Revelation, and in every difficulty and embarrassment they are instructed and taught by the Holy Spirit. Their words and deeds are not vitiated and defiled by the touch of worldliness, for they are perfectly purified, and completely detached and weaned.

Claim of Being The Promised Messiah, read in next issue.
PRAYER AND THREE WAYS TO SUCCESS
By the Late Maulana Muhammad Ali, M.A., LL.B

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Surely We have given thee abundance of good. So pray to thy Lord and make a sacrifice. Surely thy enemy is the one cut off (from good).

(108:1-3) This shortest surah of the Holy Qur'an is known as Kausar. It means abundance of good. It is pointed out here as to how one could achieve abundance of good. To make a mention of the highest good and to point out the way of its attainment is one of the great achievements of the Holy Qur'an.

There are three verses in this surah: first and last verses consist of a brief sentence, while the middle one contains two. In the first verse, it is said: surely, We have given thee, O Prophet, abundance of good, and in the last—thy enemy who is out to crush you, will himself be obliterated and deprived of all good. In the middle verse, there are two commandments in two short sentences, 'pray to thy Lord' and 'make a sacrifice.' These are, so to say, the two ways of attaining abundance of good.

Aim of Religion and means to attain it

In this surah, the real aim of religion as also the ways of its attainment are both briefly laid down. The religion is described therein to aim at introducing abundance of good in the world. It should, however, be noted that not only the lexicographers but also the early commentators of the Holy Qur'an have taken Kausar to mean abundance of good. On being questioned as to the meaning of Kausar, Saeed bin Jabir stated: “God the Great bestowed upon the Holy Prophet all good in abundance.” When some one pointed out to him that Kausar was a canal, he replied that it was a canal and over and above that it was secular and religious good. In Lisan al-Arab, under Kausar, it is laid down that in respect of ‘good’ one is given that which is beyond one’s computation. It is a matter of fact that no Prophet was so instrumental in diffusing ‘good’ in the world as the Prophet of Islam. And so every Muslim can attain abundance of good through prayer and sacrifice.

Apparently, in this surah, the Apostle of God (peace be upon him) alone is addressed. But it should be remembered that in this address every follower of the Prophet is also included. In the Holy Quran, second person singular invariably means not only the Apostle of God but every follower of him—a fact which is further elucidated by the commandment that prayer and sacrifice are incumbent both on the Prophet and his followers. In other words, it amounts to this: God has granted man through His revelation abundance of good which he can acquire through prayer and sacrifice. And it is through prayer and sacrifice alone that one occupies such an exalted position as cannot be attained by any other means. In these two commandments which throw open to man paths of success, Divine bounties are obtainable by God’s guidance towards the means of their attainment. And thus God has opened the doors of Kausar for the Muslims to gain access to it.

Prayer: fountainhead of human progress

The world has, after a long spell of experience, admitted that no nation can progress without making sacrifice; and the more the individual members of a nation possess the spirit of sacrifice, the more it progresses. In the Holy Quran, however, sacrifice is subordinated to prayer, and we find it mentioned in the very beginning of the Holy Quran. All this indicates that, in the matter of attaining abundance of progress, prayer must necessarily precede sacrifice. How prayer constitutes a means of human progress and why it should precede sacrifice, is only made known to the world by the Quran. Let it be made clear here that the abundance of good or the high stage of progress to which prayer guides begins from this very life.

Sacrifice is an act and apparently the attainment of good or progress depends upon human action, i.e. man will reap whatever he will sow, and it is a principle which is mentioned in the Holy Quran itself: “Man can have nothing but what he strives for” (53:39). All human actions are the outcome of man’s thought and desire, no matter whether the actions are good or bad. If we look carefully, we find that man commits no act without the desire for it. There is some motive behind every act of man. But motives actuate man to bad acts and vice versa. A person murders a lonely wayfarer. This act is the outcome of a sordid motive of his. Another person, when he finds a fellow being in trouble, is filled with the noble desire of alleviating his suffering even at personal discomfort. Thus every human act is the outcome of some desire and in his actions man is a slave to his desires. A man whose mind is occupied by a low and sordid motive, falls prey to bad acts while one who entertains high, noble thoughts performs good deeds. It, therefore, follows that all human progress depend on the suppression of low and sordid motives, and the attainment of high and noble desires, and it is the prayer that paves the way for it.

Importance of prayer

Before I state as to how this object of noble thought is accomplished, I wish to point out that the Quran and the Prophet alone have drawn our attention to this matter. Says God in
Undoubtedly, there also exist other means of suppressing sordid motives and developing high aspirations in man. This end is also partially achieved, to a certain extent, by sound training, good education and suitable environments. Prayer is the means by which this end is gained to its perfection, the reason being that in prayer man’s mind becomes conscious of the existence of ‘Allah the Great’. Here, he feels that he is in the presence of his Allah and nothing stands in between. In case a man’s mind is fully conscious of the presence of Allah his (i.e. man’s) nature is thrown open to him in all nakedness and all such curtains as obstruct the light of his nature are removed. Human nature and its creation are most intimately connected, to which the Quran has referred in these words: ‘Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit’ (32:9) i.e. God elevated man to a point of perfection and infused His spirit in him. The light of human nature therefore exhibits itself at its height only when man’s mind becomes conscious of the existence of God. Without this consciousness the light of nature acquires no radiance, and the greater the consciousness the brighter is the light. All the means of creating this consciousness in its perfection are embodied in prayer. Man indulges in the prayer to God not only through his tongue and singing songs of His Greatness but also adopts such physical gestures as conform to what he utters, and theory combined with practice produces an extraordinary effect on the mind.

Chief utterance in prayer

The most repeated utterance in the prayer is Allah-o-Akbar, i.e. ‘God is Great’. With this begins the prayer. It means that on entering the Divine Court, man professes that all greatness sinks into insignificance before God. If, by appearing before a great man or a king, a man’s mind can be, and certainly is, occupied by a feeling of greatness, then by appearing before the God the Greatest of all, the feeling of His Greatness will surely crop up in man’s mind. Again in the course of prayer when man changes positions — at times he bows down and at times he lifts his forehead on the ground in a most submissive manner — each time the words ‘Allah is Great’ escape his lips and the feeling of Greatness of Allah becomes more and more intensified.

Prayer creates a feeling of Greatness of Allah

For the first time, after uttering the words ‘Allah is Great’, when man stands with his hands folded and adopts a reverential attitude he commences his prayer with the following words: ‘Glory to Thee, O Allah! and Thine is the praise, and blessed is Thy name, and exalted is Thy majesty, and there is none to be served besides Thee. I seek the refuge of Allah from accused evil.’

Human mind is so constituted that if it is once impressed by the greatness of a certain object it never thinks otherwise of that object. Those who are convinced of the greatness of their religious leader never run counter to his commands. Similarly those who are impressed by the greatness of a ruler would never act against his orders. Islam has inculcated a mode of prayer which impresses the Greatness of Allah on one’s mind. The external gestures of bowing down, prostrating and sitting in a reverential attitude are designed to inspire men with the Greatness of Allah. Again, the division of prayer into five times in the course of day and night brings home to man repeatedly this feeling of the Greatness of Allah. When man busies himself with some task the underlying idea in diverting his attention to the remembrance of God is that he may have the feeling of that greatness when he reverts to that task.

Preference to individual progress

I have already remarked that prayer paves the way both for individual and collective progress. In the matter of prayer, however, collective progress is subordinated to individual progress. After impressing the Greatness of Allah on the mind, the opening of the prayer indicates the point wherefrom individual progress begins and the ending of it marks the climax of individual progress. Right in the midst of prayer, when man adopts an attitude of extreme humility of prostrating, there lies the way of the attainment of individual progress.
There are several reasons for attaching so much importance to individual greatness. In the first place, the real object of man’s birth is fulfilled only by the attainment of individual perfection. The object referred to is ‘Union with Allah’ which concerns only man’s own individuality. The question of collectiveness does not arise in the matter of ‘Union with Allah.’ Besides, the advantage of virtuous acts only accrues to man’s own self and the punishment of evil deeds too is inflicted on him alone. He who does not exert himself, cannot attain to a position of eminence by obtaining the support of others. Nor can he seek protection of others when he is subjected to any punishment. In a description of Doomsday, therefore, it is pointed out that neither wife nor parents, nor offspring, nor riches will be of any avail. Man’s first responsibility to Allah will be his personal responsibility.

Collective Progress

Collective progress is, in the first place, impossible without individual progress and if there is a semblance of collective progress, it cannot be enduring. In case the individual members of a nation are weak, the nation itself will be weak, and if they are strong, the nation will be strong. If the members of a nation do not possess virtue in their individual capacity, it does not become a source of good but a source of destruction for others. A nation’s progress in the political sphere is defective in so far as it totally ignores individual good. Those nations, therefore, that have made political progress their chief concern, no matter whether they belong to Europe or America or Africa or Asia, ultimately become a source of destruction not only for the world but also for themselves. Islam has first insisted on man’s reforming his individual self and unless the individuals are reformed, the nation’s strength would lead not to any good but to harm. The fact that Muslims of the world are today blindly following other nations and are doing their utmost to gain political power is leading them to the same abyss in which other nations have fallen.

First step towards individual progress

After a description of the greatness of Allah and His Praise, the prayer commences with the proposition of what the first step of human progress is. In all those prayers, therefore, which preceed the Fatiha and which are included in the Prophet’s traditions, man makes a confession of his weakness and prays for rising above them. It should be borne in mind that Islamic prayer is a prayer in its entirety. Before mention is made of that particular prayer which is connected with the forgiveness of sins, it may be pointed out that prayer does not mean repetition of certain words but rather it is the creation of an earnest desire in one’s heart. It is, in fact, a desire which rises from the heart and the words which escape one’s lips are only a vehicle of giving expression to that desire and this vehicle is employed because it lends force to the said desire. It is true that the Omniscient Allah is fully aware of the desire that occupies a man’s heart. What is the use of prayer then?—We pray to Allah not that He might be acquainted with our earnest desire but that a force be lent to our earnest desire. All the powers which have been ingrained in man grow weaker if they are not brought into use by means of limbs. The more these powers are brought into use by means of limbs, the more they grow. External powers and the power of man’s heart are one and the same. When a man expresses the earnest desire of his heart by means of his tongue, his desire acquires a force. If we express our desire in the presence of others it is possible that it may sound as a mere show and this element of show might weaken the desire. On the other hand, when we express this earnest desire to our Lord in solitude, our nature brightens up and our natural desire acquires force. This is a radical change which takes place in our inner world. But we acquire a force from outside also and it is Divine force which illuminates man’s heart. Prayer does not constitute an earnest desire for the heart alone, it is also invoking the help of the Lord. Many people down here perhaps do not understand this point. But it is a fact that Allah does help man when he invokes His help and this glaring truth is amply borne out by the lives of all those great men whom a major portion of the world acknowledge as their religious divines.

Beginning of the Prayer

In connection with the Islamic prayer, first of all, a prayer is taught the introductory lines of which are: “O Allah! Who are the King, none is to be served but Thee”!

In these lines there is a mention of the absolute power of Allah the Great which He exercises over the creation.

This is followed by a reference to the relation between Allah and man: (Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.) This relation points out that when man considers himself to be a slave of Allah and a servant is bound to give as wide a publicity to the name of his Lord as possible and to treat his belongings as those of his Lord), the Lord sustains His servant to the utmost degree. Further the prayer runs as follows: I have been unjust to myself and I confess my shortcomings, so forgive Thou all my shortcomings, for none forgives the shortcomings but Thou!”

This is, so to say, the real prayer. This is the same earnest desire which is sought to be created in the heart of man in the beginning of prayer so that he may make a confession of his shortcomings, drawbacks and try to rise above them and seek the help of Allah in getting rid of sins and failings.

There is another similar prayer: “O Allah! Keep me as apart from sins as East is apart from West. Cleanse me, O Allah, from sins as a white cloth is washed of dirt. Wash off my sins, O Allah! with water, snow and hails”(1).

In prayer the first and foremost desire is that man should “not commit sin.” The first earnest desire which prayer is calculated to create in man is that he should not commit sin. His higher self and sins should be poles asunder. He should be as free from sins as a white cloth is cleaned of all dust and dirt. If he has ever committed any sin, Allah, out of His grace, may wipe it out.

The first stage in the progress of human soul is that it should be free from sin. Man cannot make progress unless his soul is free from all sins. The Holy Quran has repeatedly drawn attention to this fact thus: “He is indeed successful who purifies
himself” (91:9). When a man is absorbed in this prayer, his heart is seized with the earnest desire that he may remain immune from aggression, sin and impiety, immoral practices and sordid motives. For the attainment of this object, not only he makes a personal effort and endeavor to keep himself away from sins and launches a campaign against the devil but Allah also helps him because he betakes himself to Him with this earnest desire.

**Bowling and prostrating**

After this preliminary stage which is calculated to create an earnest desire in the heart to free the soul from all sins, and which is the foundation of progress, the real stage of individual progress is the one at which an earnest desire to attain to a position of sublimity and exaltation occupies human mind. In prostration, man bows before Allah and in extreme humility falls to the ground. He places his forehead on the ground and there is no greater form of extreme humility than this. In a state of prostration the words which are often repeated are as follows: “Glory to my Lord the Great!” In bowing, the words which are often repeated are as follows: “Glory to my Lord, the Most High”!

Apparantly there is no prayer here, rather there is a confession of the sublimity and exaltation of Allah. The fact, however, is that the nature of the relation between Allah and man is such that when man makes a confession of the sublimity and exaltation of Allah, not only by the tongue but also by physical gestures, the Divine qualities are boundless but a limited reflection of those qualities is cast on the limited human mind. It is, of course, essential that human mind should be susceptible to them and, in order to acquire this susceptibility, man makes a confession of the sublimity and exaltation of Allah by his tongue on the one hand and bows and prostrates before Him on the other. The deeper the voice of confession emanates from human mind, the deeper the impression he receives from his Lord.

It is not merely a proposition of philosophy but a fact of human experience that greater a man has bowed down before Allah the more elevated position he has gained. A voice emanating from the heart is like a ball which bumps with the same force with which it falls on the ground. The deeper this voice will rise from the heart the higher it will go and catch a reflection of the effulgence of Allah. But it should also be remembered that by the addition of the words: ‘My Lord’ in connection with this sublimity and exaltation, a humble entreaty is also introduced. When a man bows down before Allah with the words that his Lord is exceedingly Sublime, he professes His Greatness on the one hand and makes the following entreaty on the other in an humble manner with the words that Allah Who sustains him is leading him to the attainment of perfection by steady progress: O Allah! Thou art the Lord of sublimity, save me form a state of helplessness and raise me to a position of eminence! When Thou, O Allah, art my Sustainer and the Master of sublimity, save me from a state of helplessness and raise me to a position of eminence! When Thou, O Allah, art my Sustainer and the Master of Sublimity, how can I, who am Thine ward, remain in a state of baseness? It is a fact that greater is the Sustainer the better in effect grows the object He sustains. The more expert is the manufacturer the more excellent is the article manufactured. Why can not a work of art executed by the Lord of sublimity and exaltation, which is also His masterpiece, attain excellence and eminence? Prayer is food for soul.

As has already been said, facts about prayer are not just philosophical discussion but an outcome of human experience. In his teachings which the Apostle of Allah imparted to his followers, Prayer occupies the most important place. In the Holy Qur’-an, after a belief in the unseen, there is a direct reference to the saying of prayer which has been characterized as food for the soul: “The sustenance of thy Lord is better and more abiding” (20:131). Similarly it points out: “Seek assistance through patience and prayer” (2:153). It also holds prayer as an instrument for the suppression of low and sordid desires. “Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil” (29:45). It points out the way of achieving religious and secular success: “Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayer” (23:1,2). Whether we examine the training-ground of the Companions of the Holy Prophet which was none other than mosque or look into their conduct of life in which prayer gained precedence over every other thing during the hours of day and night, we find that prayer alone was the chief source of comfort and peace for them.

What a position of sublimity and exaltation man attains through prayer! Allah, through prayer alone, has elevated the Muslim nation to a position of sublimity and exaltation which no other nation of the world has attained at one and the same time. This is a fact which is admitted by the world so much so that Europe which on the one hand portrays the Prophet of Islam in a biased manner, admits on the other, that of all the religious leaders Muhammad (peace of God be upon him) possesses the most successful personality and the revolution which he brought about could not be caused by any other person of the world.

The Arabs were a most illiterate, depraved and backward nation in the whole world. But in twenty-three years’ time they attained to a position of greatness so as to dominate the whole world within a century. On the moral and religious side also, they became a foremost nation of the world and earned the title of “World teachers”. They acquired this position of sublimity and greatness through prayer. They were not given any lesson except one of prayer. No school or college was established to guide them to prayer. They were not helped to promote trade nor improved methods of agriculture were taught to them. They took their cue from Islam only, and thus attained to a position of greatness and sublimity.

**Difference between Sublimity and Exaltation**

There is a difference between the recitation at the times of prostrating and bowing. In prostration there is a mention of the sublimity of Allah while in bowing His exaltation in on the lips. A manifestation of the
Greatness of Allah is traceable in men by the elevation of their worldly status while that of His exaltation by their rising above sordid motives or by their pious religious and moral standards. Men of such standards attained greatness and enjoyed exalted positions in the world too. They achieved worldly power and worldly riches. But neither the love of wealth nor the worldly power made them so arrogant as to encroach upon the rights of others or to exterminate them. They grew opulent, but love of riches never turned them blind. They became kings but as such they continued toiling like laborers. These two qualities that one should attain worldly greatness and should also rise above the low and sordid motives, hardly combine in a single individual. The Companions of the Holy Prophet of Islam, however, combined in them both these qualities at one and the same time. On the one hand, the nations of the world submitted to their secular power and, on the other, people bowed before their high moral character. Thus, sublimity and exaltation were simultaneously combined in them because their hearts vibrated with these words.

Again, sublimity and exaltation differ so far as their attainment is concerned. In every raka of prayer bowing occurs only once while prostration occurs twice. This illustrates that worldly greatness is of secondary nature as compared with religious sublimity. The attainment of sublimity is easy while that of exaltation is difficult. People can acquire sublimity by human efforts but exaltation is not attainable except by establishing contact with Allah. Only that greatness is laudable which combines itself with twice as much desire for the attainment of spiritual exaltation.

Prayer intervening the postures of prostration is a prayer in which Allah’s help is invoked for progress.

Again, there is a recitation in the form of prayer intervening the postures of prostration: “O Allah! grant me protection and have mercy on me and grant me security and guide me to the right path and grant me sustenance and set right my affairs and exalt me”.

This recitation contains the following words also: “O Allah! guide me and exalt me” denoting a desire for the attainment of the highest point a man can aspire to. Those who take the word Rafa’ as it is used in connection with prophet Christ to mean that he was lifted to the Heave should think over this word in the present context. Exaltation is the highest desire of the heart of every Muslim. Similarly exaltation does not represent a high position in term of body; nor does elevation mean that a man is bodily removed from this earth to heaven. Exaltation and elevation both are used in a spiritual sense.

As stated above, prayer opens with the earnest desire on the part of man for his individual progress and ends with the same desire—a fact which seeks to prove that the individual progress of man is the be-all and end-all of all progress.

Final prayer

The following is the final prayer: “My Lord! make me keep up prayer and from my offspring (too), our Lord! and accept my prayer. Our Lord! grant me protection and to my parents and the believers on the Day when the reckoning comes to pass” (14:40,41).

The lesson given in this prayer is that when man concludes his prayer, his mind should be occupied with the carnet desire that he should persevere in the path of prayer. This desire is so genuine and sincere that the acceptance of the prayer offered is particularly emphasized upon man inasmuch as prayer constitutes the very foundation of all virtues. Yet another desire is added on to it: Our Lord! grant me protection, and to my parents also the true believers.

Posture of standing during prayer

The other kind of progress for which prayer paves the way is collective progress. This Invocation which is recited in the posture of standing is held to be an integral part of prayer. For individual progress the postures of prostrating and bowing are particularly meant inasmuch as this kind of progress can only be made if man prostrates and bows before Allah. If, however, man fails to create this mood of prostrating and bowing, his progress leads him to degradation. The posture of standing is particularly made the basis of collective progress because this kind of progress creates in man the desire for the power of steadiness. High morals which are the very foundation of individual progress are not achieved without adopting an attitude of humility and prostration. On the other hand, the formation of an organized body depends upon perseverance and steadiness. It should, however, be made clear that man is not at all debared from invoking the blessings of God for collective progress while prostrating. Man is free to say any prayer to Allah for any kind of progress any time provided it emanates from his heart. By prayer, as it is, contains certain recitations which conform to certain physical movements. These movements are more suited to progress, individual or collective, and the recitation and movement of limbs go together. It is given in the Tradition of the Holy Prophet that, while prostrating, man should invoke as many prayers to Allah as he can, because it is then that man is very near to Allah.

An important prayer during the posture of standing is the Fatiha, with which the Holy Qur’an opens and which, let the Muslims alone, is held even by the non-Muslims to be a prayer of a very high order. It is divided into four parts: The first part opens thus: “(All) Praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds” (1:2).

Allah extends His spiritual patronage to the whole world. Allah’s patronage is in a physical form. But the patronage which is particularly mentioned here in the Holy Qur’an relates to the guidance of mankind because the real object of the Holy Qur’an is to guide mankind and help them attain human perfection. By characterising Allah as the Lord of the Universe, it is implied that the Holy Qur’an is not meant for the guidance of a particular nation only but also for the guidance of the entire human race. The Holy Prophet, therefore, remarked, simultaneously with the revelation of the Holy Qur’an, that he had been sent by God for the guidance of both the Arabs and the Persians and it was his conviction that the human race will eventually attain perfection, of course gradually, as is implied by the word “Allah will extend His spiritual patronage to
human race as He had been extending it in physical form.

**Spiritual and physical patronage**

Some people cherish the idea that if God had sought to extend His spiritual patronage to mankind, why did He not create spiritual awakening in the whole world all at once by sending His Apostle? This wrong notion is the result of lack of knowledge. God has gradually doled out to man the means of his physical progress. Water, air, fire, electricity, atom, etc. were in existence in the world since its creation. But man has been gradually bringing them under his control. It has taken thousands of years to complete the process. Even now no one can say that man has become fully conversant with the forces of nature and has gained a complete control over them. He has, on the other hand, yet to achieve a great deal in this direction. He has discovered many of the hidden secrets and has yet to explore many more. The spiritual perfection is far more difficult than to be acquainted with the physical laws of nature. The Divine patronage demanded that there should be a gradual process and a reference is made to this reality in the Holy Qur’an. Allah will certainly lead mankind to spiritual perfection, but just as it had taken very long to attain to physical perfection, spiritual perfection also will be achieved in a gradual manner. Of course, Allah laid down laws of the development of spiritual perfection, first by sending Prophets to different nations and lastly, by sending the Holy Prophet with the Holy Qur’an for the whole world. But a long time is needed to become conversant with these laws so that mankind many benefit form them after having understood them.

**Foundation-stone of collective progress**

The very first verse of the Fatihah, i.e., “Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds” is the foundation-stone of collective progress. When a man recites this verse, his mind becomes wide enough to accommodate the whole of mankind. His outlook does not remain confined to his own self, to his relations and to his own nation and country. In fact, he looks upon the whole human race as one unit. He equally feels for all human beings. He is anxious for the amelioration of all. If he observes Europe, or America, or Persia, or Afghanistan, or Pakistan steeped in sin and degradation, his mind revolts at it. He feels that Allah, Who is the Real Lord of all the creatures and is their Sustainer, may come to their rescue and raise them from this position of degradation to a position of sublimity. Of course, as soon as the verse comes on his lips, a spontaneous prayer shoots out from his heart—a prayer which emanating from the hearts of the prophets and the pious, has been the means of the reformation and guidance of innumerable peoples. Here is the prayer: O Allah! save Thy mankind from moral depravity and degradation and create in them an awakening by means of which they may know Thee Who art their Creator and Sustainer. O Allah! just as Thou are physically sustaining the mankind, have the mercy to sustain all of them spiritually also. O Allah! the mankind after severing its connection with Thee has not indulged in sin only but is heading to an abyss of destruction by internecine feuds. Have mercy on it! Illuminate the dark recesses of their hearts. Put life into these dead beings by Thy spiritual showers just as Thou reviveth dead earth by rains. Shed the light of Thy spiritual sun in their hearts in the same manner as Thou diffuseth light by the sun on earthly bodies.

**Three ways of sustenance**

The second part of this prayer is: “The Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Requital”. In the opening sentence there is mention of the sustenance of all mankind while in the next two verses it is indicated as to how Allah’s grace takes place. The first phase of Allah’s providence consists in His beneficence, viz., out of mercy He provides man with means of progress without man’s asking for it, such as His sending prophets for the guidance of mankind. The second phase of Allah’s providence consists in His giving man a munificent reward for his good actions. “Whoever brings a good deed will have tenfold like it” (6: 160). Similarly according to a saying of the Prophet, good brings from God a tenfold to a seven-hundred-fold rewards (B. 81: 33). This is His universal law. By doing one good act, man attains to a very high rank. There is a third phase of Allah’s providence. There are some who tread on the path indicated by Allah. There are others who do just the reverse and indulge in sin and aggression. Allah provides them with sustenance. This sustenance, however, is of a different type. It takes the shape of punishment. They are punished for their evil deeds, but this punishment is not inflicted in a spirit of vindictiveness: rather it aims at purging them of all contaminations. This punishment is sometimes meted out in this world, but in full measure it will be inflicted on the Day of Judgement, a day when the virtuous will be admitted to heaven while the evil-doers will be thrown into hell so that they are purified by fire. That is why, according to the teachings of Islam, all the denizens of hell will be taken out and dropped into the “River of Life.” In other words, they will be given a new birth and doors of hell will be slammed.

**Worship of Allah alone**

Now the third part of the Fatihah: ‘Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help”. In the first two parts there is a mention of Allah and His providence. In the second two there is a reference to a particular class of men whose chief distinction is that they worship the Lord of the worlds Whose attributes are mentioned above. They worship none else. The whole world has thus been divided into two groups. One of those who worship the only Allah and the others either couple the worship of Allah with the worship of those who are others than Allah or do not believe in Allah at all.

“Thee do we serve” specifically refer to that class of men who worship Allah alone and none else. That is, so
to say, the group of men who are the followers of the Prophet Muhammad; while “Thee do we worship” is indicative of their distinct feature. “Thee do we beseech for help” is indicative of an earnest desire of theirs. In other words, they seek the help of Allah in not finding themselves equal to the huge task that lies before them. They are a manifestation of the attributes of Allah as embodied in ‘The Lord of the Worlds’. They implore to Allah to extend His providence to other perople also. Although the prayer is addressed to Allah by one solitary individual, the use of plural number extends the scope of the prayer so as to include the whole class of the followers of Muhammad of which he is a member. Man becomes perfect only when he engenders the spirit of fellow-feeling. In this prayer, therefore, it is inculcated that one should seek the help of Allah not only for himself but also for other members of his class. This is the first stage of collective uplift.

Present condition of Muslims

Here is another fact worth remembering. Today as we take stock of the present condition of the Muslims, our mind shudders at the idea of uttering “Thee do we serve.” does worship mean only this much that one may offer prayer any time according to one’s sweet will and disobey other commandments of Allah as one likes? Worship implies obedience coupled with humility. Are the Muslims in general obeying Allah and His Apostle today? Are they, as a rule, observers of prayer? do they visit mosques and bow to their Allah even once a day? Not to speak of the rich, do the poor pay any heed to prayer? When such is our condition in the matter of prayer, with what face should we invoke the help of Allah for a people who openly defy the commands of Allah; whose object of worship today is wordly riches and power?

Prayer teaches to invoke help of Allah

The Muslims have a mode of worship that distinguishes them from other peoples of the world. The Muslim nations are not devoid of such individuals as give up work and rush to mosques on hearing the call to prayer, who wake up in the night, bow before dawn to Allah and shed tears, who sacrifice their all to propagate the name of Allah in the world, who sacrifice their lives to defend Islam against the onslaughts of the infidels, who feel pleasure at heart in obeying Allah and His Apostle. The number of such individuals is, of course, meagre but Allah has the power to immensely increase this number. He is All-Merciful and may forgive the vast number of defaulters through these pious ones.

Many Muslims tread on the right path

In the fourth and last portion of the Fatiha, it is sought to create in man an earnest desire not only for himself to tread on the right path but also for all fellow beings to take the right course: Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours; not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray. (1:6,7)

Just by using the plural number in “Thee do we beseech for help”, it is implied that although the prayer comes from one single individual it aims at invoking the help of Allah for the whole community or nation and not for oneself alone. Similarly, in “guide us” the use of plural number refers to the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad wherever they may be on the face of the earth.

What is the right path we desire for ourselves and for others? It is the path of the Prophets and the virtuous who feel for mankind, who make every effort to elevate fellow beings and who kneel down before Allah when they find their efforts failing. Everywhere in the world there has been a large number of such individuals whose life-object was to establish others’ contact with Allah and thus make their lives sublime. All the Companions of the Holy Prophet were exemplary such. Immediately on embracing Islam, they became keenly anxious to have others partake of this boon of Islam. Even today, the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad can attain to this exalted elevation. We should, therefore, pray to Allah to inebriate the present-day Muslims with the same love with which He has been inebriating His virtuous servants heretofore. There have been people in this world who committed excesses and Allah’s wrath visited them. There have been others whose evil deeds were not of a serious nature and they escaped punishment in this life. They, however, in the matter of belief considerably deviated from the right path. O Allah! save the Muslims from treading the wrong path!

Recitation of last prayer in Surah Baqar

During the standing posture it is ordained to recite some other portion, long or small, of the Holy Qur’an along with the Fatiha. In this connection special preference is given to the last two verses of Surah Baqar in the Traditions of the Holy Prophet. In a tradition of Muslim it is stated that it was conveyed to the Holy Prophet that the Fatiha and the concluding portion of Baqar are two lights with which no prophet was blessed before. I, therefore, desire that we should always recite these verses together with the Fatiha. These chapters claim preference because of the grand prayer which occurs at their end: “Our Lord! punish us not if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us. Our Lord, impose not on us (afflictions) which we have not the strength to bear. And pardon us! And grant us protection! And have mercy on us! Thou art our Patron, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people!” (2:286).

Progress of truth and righteousness

Individual progress is the concern of every Muslim while collective progress relates to a particular section of people or community or the Muslims as a whole. Apart from these, however, prayer opens path for a third kind of progress also. This is the progress of the Islamic religion, of truth and righteousness. Progress of an individual or of a community as a whole is incomplete without an earnest desire for the development of truth and righteousness along with it. Just as an individual progress, if not subordinated to collective progress, is imperfect, similarly collective progress not subordinated to truth and righteousness becomes a nuisance to the world. So many nations who failed
to subordinate their progress to truth and righteousness not only proved to be a source of trouble for the world, but eventually became a thing of the past. The fleeting progress of the Fascist and the Nazi parties bears testimony to this observation. They sacrificed all principles on the altar of brute force and wiped all thoughts of truth and righteousness out of existence. It is a fact that all efforts of progress today are concentrated on national progress and the development of the spirit of truth and righteousness is an empty talk. Islam has sought to instil deeply into the hearts of men a real desire for the progress of truth and righteousness or the progress of Islamic faith by means of prayer.

Prayers in the sitting posture

The last phase of prayer, viz. all the prayers offered in the sitting posture are devoted to the progress of Islam which is another name for truth and righteousness. The earlier portion of this prayer runs as follows:

“All services rendered by words and bodily actions and sacrifice of wealth are due to Allah. Peace be on thee, O Prophet! and mercy of Allah and His blessings. Peace be on us and on the righteous servants of Allah! I bear witness that none deserves to be worshipped but Allah, and bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Apostle.”

The word with which the prayer opens is the plural form. Its root-word means “life.” It seeks to wish life to others. The other word is also in the plural form. It conveys the meaning of “prayer” and Salat is a “prayer in action” and a “prayer in words.” In Salat man gets so absorbed in prayer that he becomes an embodiment of prayer. The third word is which is plural and is used in connection with “a good object, a lawful possession and a righteous person”. Here the word represents that which man offers by means of his well-earned wealth. In other words, devotions are in three manners: Those which are offered by words by different physical postures, and by monetary sacrifices. These three devotions, so to say, arc for the sake of Allah. Man’s words, his postures, and his belongings should be devoted to exalting the name of Allah in the world. We should subordinate our individual and collective progress to this task of elevating Allah and His name. Without it neither an individual nor a community can uphold the cause of justice and righteousness.

Prayer for the Prophet

The second phase of this prayer is: “Peace be on thee, O Prophet! and the mercy of All and His blessings!” Peace consists in saving him from all harms. Peace is followed by grace which conveys that Allah may shower His grace upon the Prophet both physically and spiritually. Then comes blessing which seeks to widen the scope of Allah’s favours on the Holy Prophet. This word is used with special reference to the Prophet. Prayer in favour of the Holy Prophet is, in reality, a prayer for the security, promotion and perpetuation of truth and righteousness which was established in the world through him and for the dissemination of which the Prophet lived.

Two eternal lives of the Prophet

“Peace be on thee, O Prophet! and mercy of Allah and His blessings.” Here the Prophet is addressed in a manner in which a living person is addressed. He is certainly having his everlasting life and is alive here also because of the truth and righteousness he established. The prayer of Allah’s safety upon the Holy Prophet made by every Muslim is conveyed to him through Allah’s angels. This prayer, as it emanates from our hearts, creates within us a sincere desire for the protection and propagation of truth and righteousness.

Prayer for safety of Muslim Nation

Then follows the prayer (peace be upon us, viz., on the followers of Muhammad and upon Allah’s virtuous servants). This includes the entire Muslim nation and particularly the virtuous servants through whom Allah’s religion is gaining strength, and truth and righteousness are making a headway in the world. Prayer is the long and short of Islamic religion. The present prayer is meant for the uplift and promotion of our great religion.

Two Portions of Darud Sharif

Here is another prayer:

“O Allah! exalt Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad as Thou didst exalt Abraham and the true followers of Abraham. Surely Thou art Praised, Magnified.”

“O Allah! bless Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad as Thou didst bless Abraham and the true followers of Abraham. Surely Thou art Praised, Magnified.”

The last portion conveys the sense of forgiveness and peace while the second signifies an increase in numbers. Darud Sharif, therefore, is a prayer whereby Allah is approached to help the Prophet and his followers in their worldly difficulties and to grant them strength to adhere to the principles of truth and righteousness. Darud is to invoke the blessings of Allah to increase the numbers of true followers of Muhammad.

Particularisation of Prophet Abraham

The particularisation of Prophet Abraham (God be pleased with him) in the aforesaid prayer throws open to view two historical facts. Firstly, the progeny of Abraham claims an unbroken continuity of the largest number of the virtuous and the pious for hundreds of thousands of years. Secondly, Prophet Abraham found favour with the people more than any one else. Even today, more than half the world professes Prophet Abraham to be truthful. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims are convinced of his righteousness. Prior to the advent of the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Abraham had a unique personality in the history of the world in the matter of Allah’s grace and forgiveness. In the aforesaid prayer, therefore, God is approached to single out the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the matter of His grace and forgiveness and to bless them with such virtuous and pious people as might guide them on the right path in the same manner as He did in the case continued on page 12
Whither Muslims?

Revivalist Associations Must Follow True Islamic Guidelines

By HADHRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD, The Promised Messiah and Mahdi

Islam made its rise and marvellous progress in the teeth of adverse circumstances; such was its superhuman power that it imparted a new life to, and worked a complete transformation in its adherents. It is to this exalted condition that the revivalist associations intend to raise it from the deplorable state into which it has fallen. But I request them to consider for God’s sake if they are, in doing so, following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet, and if the agencies which had been at work in the beginning are now being employed by them to give a new turn to the life of the people who have forsaken the higher principles of a true religion. It needs no demonstration to prove that the degeneration of the Mussalmans has passed all bounds and that they are now standing on the verge of the pit of fire from which a blessed and mighty hand had drawn them back at first. The same dissensions and disputes, the same division in the camp, which marked the pre-Islamic Arabs, are witnessed among those who claim to be following the banner of Islam. Success has already departed, and faith, religion and union, the moving spirit and the life of the nation, are gone. Luxurious habits, transgressions, drunkenness, gambling and laziness, evils from which the Mighty Magnetiser had granted them a deliverance, have again got the upper hand. Reverence for striving after the model of the Holy Prophet, the honour and respect due to the Holy Quran, awe and devotion for the grandeur and majesty of God, have been blotted out from all hearts. The evils which have wrought the destruction of the race find utterance, in sincerity or otherwise, from the lips of all speakers. The Mussalmans have fallen on evil days and such must be the fate of every people who in spite of the shining arguments of God’s existence depart from His ways.

The Mussalmans could fall into no greater error than to take as the standard of perfection and as a model for emulation, a people who are bent low upon the mean cares of this world, without ever raising their hand to heaven, and whose sole object in life is not to go beyond indulgence in the animal passions and carnal desires, and passing their lives in luxury and surfeiting. The Mussalmans are a people who were taught to take care of things relating to religion in preference to their worldly affairs, while the materialistic tendencies of Europe are well expressed in the verse: “There is no other than our life in this world, neither shall we be raised again.” How can a nation labouring day and night for the fleeting comforts and pleasures of the world, having its whole soul in the material inventions and manufactures, scheming and plotting day and night for subduing territories, in short, utterly abandoned to all sorts of low desires and earthly cares and utterly estranged from truth and light, serve as a model for a people whose goal is not earth but heaven. If there are persons among them who aspire to a higher aim and have pretensions of leading a heavenly life, their case is still worse, for they rest satisfied with a dead man as their God. We hear on all sides a cry for “High Education” but admitting its need, are we not justified in saying that the side of spirituality is utterly neglected and that intentionally or otherwise, no regard is paid to it. The first principle of all associations formed for the amelioration of the condition of the Mussalmans is, not to interfere with the irreligious course of life which a man may adopt. Sacred words are forbidden to be uttered within the precincts of their meeting-halls. In the volley of numberless resolutions, not a single word is ever said or allowed to be said, upon the observance of religious injunctions, constancy at prayers and fasting, refraining from ways of wickedness and transgression or making piety and righteousness as the guiding rules of life. There is a grand and solemn assemblage of robes and forms with every diversity of the inclinations and passions of the soul. A daring libertine may stand up as the champion of Islam and propose a resolution with the avowed object of restoring it to its original purity, and an equally dissolute gentleman flushed with wine may second it with tottering feet and reeling head! A man quite ignorant of Islam and contemptuously rejecting its holy injunctions, a Materialist or an Atheist, is some time chosen as a chief of an association so long as he bears the name of a Mussalian, though he is completely enslaved to the world.

—Translated by Maulana Muhammad Ali
choose to appoint the theologians to the High Courts and the Supreme Court Benches is not far to seek. It is a common practice in all the totalitarian regimes in all parts of the world and at all periods of history that, because of lacking support of the common man, it tries to woo and get support from the special interest groups. Since all the major political parties of the country, who enjoy the support of the majority of the population of the country, are not inclined to shake hands with a military dictatorship, therefore, the government of Pakistan had no choice but to woo and seek support of the religious groups, who in their quest after power, were registered as political parties. Secondly, Muslim theologians in most cases in Muslim countries, fashioning after the Christian priestly class and the Hindu Brahmans, claim monopoly of the religious knowledge of Islam. Tragic though it is, yet it is so. This monopolistic tendency on the part of the theologians is at the back of the common thinking being aired throughout the present Islamic world that an Islamic Order can only be established by and through the theologians. In other words, an Islamic State has essentially to be a theocracy. Theologians appointment to the High Courts and the Supreme Court Benches is a step in the direction of implementing the Rule of the Clerics for establishing Islamic Order. This view finds no support from the teachings of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the History of Islam. Where theologians have brought it form is a question deserving attention of the intelligentsia in the present-day Muslim world. Masud Akhtar

**OUR BELIEFS**

One who would like to be initiated into the Movement must pledge as follows:

Firstly, that until he is lain in his grave, he will shun all forms and shades of shirk (Polytheism)

Secondly, that he will guard against falsehood, fornication, evilsight, and every form of sin, evil, cruelty, dishonesty, disorder, and rebellion: and that in moments of passion he will do no account give in, however boisterous that passion may be.

Thirdly, that without fail he will say his prayers five times a day as enjoined by God and His Apostle and that, to the best of his power, he will say his midnight prayer, will invoke Divine blessings on the Holy Prophet, and will ask forgiveness for his sins and will with a truly loving heart, recall God's favours and glorify Him.

Fourthly, that he will do nothing in any way to injure his fellow human beings in general and the Musalmans in particular—neither with the tongue, nor with the hand, nor in any other way.

Fifthly, that he will show fidelity to God under all circumstances—alike in prosperity and adversity, in pleasure and adversity, in pleasure and pain, in time of bliss and affliction; that he will resign himself to God under all conditions and will cheerfully bear all hardships and humiliations in His way; that in the hour of calamity he will not turn his back but will step yet onward.

Sixthly, that he will eschew observance of evil customs or following the promptings of his lower nature; that he will thoroughly submit to the yoke of the Holy Qur'an; and that in every walk of life, he will hold the Word of God and that of His Apostle as his guiding principle.

Seventhly, that he will totally abstain from haughtiness and will live in humility, meekness and mildness.

Eighthly, that he will hold the honour of religion and sympathy for Islam dearer than everything else—dearer than his life, wealth, his honour, his children, his kith and kin.

Ninthly, that he will make it a rule of his life to show sympathy towards all human beings out of love of God and that, to the best of his power, he will use all his God-given faculties and blessings for the benefit of humanity.

Tenthly, that binding himself with me (Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad) in a fraternal bond in the way of Allah, he will obey me in everything good, and will live up to his pledge till his death in this fraternal bond he will show such sincerity as is not met with in cases of blood relations or other worldly connections.
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MUHAMMAD THE GREATEST MAN OF HISTORY

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? . . . Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: Is there any man greater than he?"

—Alphonse de Lamartine in Histoire de la Turquie

QUR’AN, THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL FORCE

"It is the one miracle claimed by Muhammad—his standing miracle, he called it—and a miracle it is."

—Bosworth Smith

"Never has a people been led more rapidly to civilization, such as it was, than were the Arabs through Islam. . . . And to it was also indirectly due the marvelous development of all branches of science in the Moslem world."

—New Researches by H. Hirschfeld

"Here, therefore, its merits as a literary production should, perhaps, not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Muhammad's contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. If it spoke so powerfully and convincingly to the hearts of his hearers as to weld hitherto centrifugal and antagonistic elements into one compact and well organized body, animated by ideas far beyond those which had until now ruled the Arabian mind, then its eloquence was perfect, simply because it created a civilized nation out of savage tribes, and shot a fresh woof into the old warp of history."

—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."

—George Bernard Shaw