RAMAZAN

Allah's Own Month

Secularists whose vision and imagination cannot transcend the world of brick and mortar, say that man is of earth, earthy. He cannot rise above himself and thus he remains a slave of his bodily wants and carnal passions. It is this disgraceful view of man and his destiny, which has spelt disasters to human civilisation. The true aim of a true religion always is to redeem man from his corporeal self and cultivate and elevate the angelic qualities which are enshrined in his soul. It is Islam alone which has prescribed such devotions as enable man to feel that he is on the earth but not of it and that his destiny goes far beyond the earth. Salat (Prayer) guards man against reprehensible things and immunises him against soul-searing obscenities. Saum (Fast) deepens the roots of his peity by enabling him to exercise a rigorous control on all such desires as are likely to lead him astray. It is in the sacred month of Ramazan that a Fasting True Believer realizes that life is more than meat and body is more than raiment. By denying the fleeting sensuous pleasures, he enjoys the lasting pleasure of spiritual emancipation from the strangle-hold of materialism. Islam exhorts its followers to treat their body as the vehicle of the soul and not let it over-rule and over-ride the soul. The soul is the spark of Divinity. The Holy Quran says:

i.e. "The soul has been created by the command of my Lord." Thus a True Believer fasts not to kill his body but to subordinate it to the demands of the soul. A Hebrew Prophet has also said, "What does it profit a man if he gains the world but loses his soul." Thus soul by virtue of its destiny enjoys priority over the body.

True Believers abstain from food and drink during Ramazan and hunger and thirst to please Allah. As this devotion is known only to Allah, and as it sways their whole being, Allah promises the richest reward for this supreme self-denial. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says "The odour of the mouth of the Fasting Believer is sweeter in the eyes of Allah than the fragrance of musk.:

Ramazan is so replete with the divine blessings that Allah has called it as His Own Month. Its sanctity lies in the fact that it is expressly mentioned in the Holy Quran. It is also associated with the Holy Book. Allah says:

i.e. "The month of Ramazan is the month in which the Quran began to be revealed." (2:185). The purpose and the history of Fasting in this Month are also briefly but impressively stated thus: "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may (learn) God-fearingness." (2:183). In this verse it is made abundantly clear that Fasting has been a divine panacea for moral and spiritual purgation from time immemorial and that it is not an unprecedented "imposition" by Islam. Islam has humanized this immemorial devotion to make it practicable and uniform. In the ancient systems of Fasting, there was no uniformity. Moreover they entailed great hardships. The ideal religion of Islam has made Fasting ideally oriented to human nature. It is to this
effect that the Holy Quran says: "But whoso is ailing, (not being permanently incapacitated) or is on journey, should complete the reckoning by fasting on a corresponding number of other days. Allah desires ease for you and desires not hardship for you." (2:185). What a sublime humane touch in this otherwise rigorous devotion. In the ancient religions, such exemptions on grounds of illness and other human emergencies, did not exist. But they have been explicitly provided in the Islamic system of Fasting.

The grandeur and elegance of the Quranic phraseology lies in words and phrases which contain vast and profound meaning. In the beginning, we have dwelt on the aims and objects of Fasting. The transcendental sense of self-discipline is fascinatingly summed up thus:

God-fearingness is that state of mind when a True Believer achieves bio-spiritual renewal through Fasting in its true sense. Fasting confers such vitality on him as makes his mind an impregnable citadel of virtue and righteousness.

The sense and essence of Fasting is sincerity and whole-hearted surrender to the Will of Allah. If this aspect is absent, Fasting becomes a meaningless self-torture. This is why the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says, "He who abstains from food and drink during the period of Fasting, but does not strive to safeguard himself against moral lapses starves to no purpose." He forfeits his title to the benefit which Allah has promised for True Fasting: "It is for Me and I Myself am its reward."

It is a tragedy that with the dawn of the Month of Ramazan, prices are raised sky-high. The articles of consumption are withheld to force the people to buy them at abnormal rates. In true conformity with Quranic commands about the sanctity of Ramazan, the Muslim Society should make it a point to crusade against mal-practices in trade and thus earn divine pleasure. It is the Month for turning over new leaf in one's book. Fasting should act as a Baptism of Fire to cleanse the dirt and dross of all sorts of sins. If no such mood is visible and even Fasting people do not turn to self-purification then according to the Holy Prophet's saying quoted above, the whole hungering and thirsting is to no purpose.

THE LANGUAGE OF PRAYER
AND
THE TEN IDEAS THAT THE OPENING CHAPTER OF THE QUR'AN EMPHASIZES

By the late MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI

Could a worshipper use his own language while praying?

Naturally a man will unfold his heart before his Maker in the language in which he can most readily express his feelings, and this is fully recognized in Islam. The worshipper is at full liberty to open his heart before the great Maker of all in his own language and in any posture. The Qur'an speaks of the faithful as those "who remember God standing and sitting and lying on their sides" (3:190). Not only in private prayer but in the course of the public service as well, the worshipper is at liberty to pray to God in his own tongue, after or during the recitation of portions of the Qur'an, in a standing posture, or after utterance of words of Divine glory in that of bowing down or prostration, as
taught by the Prophet Muhammad. In the public service such prayers would undoubtedly be limited, since the worshipper must follow the Imam, but in private prayer they may be of any length.

**In public service Arabic language must be retained**

The question, however, assumes a different aspect when the public service itself is considered, for, unless the public service is conducted in a language which is common to all Muslims, there must again be a failure in achieving the great end for which prayer is instituted. It cannot be greatly over-emphasized that the unification of the Muslims through prayer is as much an end and object of prayer as to bring man into communion with God. It is prayer that gathers together, daily, persons of different callings and different ranks and positions in society, under one roof, and on a perfect status of equality, and these homogeneous units are again united by the more extensive gathering for the Friday prayers, or the still larger assemblies at "Id prayers, culminating in that mighty assemblage at Mecca of all nations and all races on the most perfect status of equality - European, Asian and African, king and beggar, all clad in one dress - the annual concourse of the pilgrims from the farthest corners of the earth.

Now all these various gatherings, from the great gatherings of all nations at Mecca down to the smallest gathering in a village or local mosque, are expressly for Divine worship, and if there were a babel of languages prevailing in these gatherings, the object of the unification of the human race through Divine service - an idea unique to Islam - would fail altogether. The bond of a common language is one of the greatest factors towards unification, and this bond Islam has established by the use of a common language at the Divine service. This language, it is evident, could be none other than Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. Anyone who realizes the grand object which Islam has set itself of unifying the human race through Divine service will at once appreciate the necessity of having that service in Arabic.

**Reasons for maintaining the practice of retaining Arabic in public service**

It is only shortsightedness, intensified by ignorance of the wider issues of unification and civilization, that makes some men think that Divine service must be held in the language proper to each nation, and that a service held in any other language will not fulfil the purpose of worship. In the first place, the Islamic prayer does not consist of mere words of praise of the Divine glory and majesty, or the mere expression, in words, of the inner feelings of the heart. That no doubt is an important part of prayer, but even more important than this is the attitude of mind, the inner feeling itself, of which the words are meant to be an expression. Now this attitude of mind is produced, in the first place, by the atmosphere about the worshipper and by the particular postures of reverence which he adopts. The mood, more than words, generates a true spirit of humility, and the first condition of a prayerful mind is humility, as the Qur'an itself lays down: "Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers" (23:1-2). Suppose there is a man who takes part in a public service without understanding a word of Arabic. It would be entirely wrong to say that prayer does not benefit him, for there are the movements of his body, the raising of the hands to the ears, the standing up with folded hands, the bowing down, the placing of the forehead on the ground, the sitting down in a particular attitude of reverence, which all go a long way towards producing in him humility and consciousness of the Divine presence. He may not understand the language used, but here he is himself giving expression to his inner feelings in the language of his bodily movements. In fact, his whole self is expressive of what the words convey. It will indeed be more highly beneficial if he understands the spoken language also, but it is absurd to say that the language of movements has no meaning for him.

Now let us come to the language of words. The oftest repeated expressions in the Islamic service are *Allahu Akbar*, *Subhanna Rabbiiy-al-'Azim*, *Subhaha Ribbiy-al'Ar'Ala*, and the opening chapter of the Qur'an, called *al-Fatiha*. Now as regards the first expression there is hardly a Muslim in the world, whatever language he may speak, and whether educated or uneducated, young or old, male or female, who does not understand the meaning of *Allahu Akbar*. It is with this expression that a man enters into the Divine service and it is with it that he changes one posture of the body to another, so that with the very entrance in prayer, the mind receives an impression of the glory and majesty of God and assumes an attitude of prayerfulness to God and of humbleness before Him, and this impression on the mind is renewed at every change of movement, and thus the contemplation of Divine glory and greatness is the one occupation of mind during the service.

Take the second expression, *Subhaha Ribbiy-al-'Azim*, the expression repeated when the worshipper is bowing down, and *Subhaha Rabbiiy-al-'Ar'Ala*, repeated in the state of prostration. Even if a man does not understand their meaning, he does realize, when bowing, that he is bowing before the great God, and does realize when lying down prostrate that he has laid his forehead on the ground.
before Him Who is the Highest. Yet, even a child would not take more than half an hour to learn these phrases or learn their meaning. And similar is the case with the opening chapter of the Qur'an, which is so often repeated in prayer. A child, whatever language he may be speaking, can easily learn the seven short sentences of the Fatiha in a week, giving half an hour daily, and perhaps not more than half that time is needed to learn their meaning. Even if one were to conduct Divine service in one's own language, still one would have to spend some time in learning it, and the learning of the significance of the Arabic words is not more than a week's or, at the most, a month's work. And, keeping in view the grand object of unifying the human race through Divine service, a week or one month's time thus spent represents the most usefully spent period of a man's life.

Other advantages of maintaining Arabic in Divine service

There are two other considerations which make it necessary to maintain the Arabic language in Divine service. The Qur'an, parts of which are recited in Divine service, was revealed in the Arabic language, and it is a generally admitted fact that a translation can never fully express the ideas of the original. And when the original is the word of God, and the ideas expressed are those relating to God's majesty and glory, it is still more difficult to convey the full significance in a translation. Again, there is a music in the original which no translation can possibly retain. The music of the Qur'an is not simply in its rhythm but also in its diction. Now music plays an important part in producing an effect on the mind, and the recitation of the Qur'an thus serves the purpose of communicating grand and beautiful ideas to the accompaniment of music. Hence it is that the Islamic service has never stood in need of the artificial music of the organ, having within itself the true music of the human soul. Now even if a translation could convey something of the grand and rich ideas of the Qur'an, it could not convey the music which, along with the idea, exercises such a potent influence on the mind of man. Professor Palmer remarks in the Introduction to his Translation of the Holy Qur'an:

"The Arabs made use of a rhymed and rhythmical prose, the origin of which it is not difficult to imagine. The Arabic language consists for the most part of triliteral roots, i.e., the single words expressing individual ideas consist generally of three consonants each, and the derivative forms expressing modifications of the original idea are not made by affixes and terminations alone, but also by the insertion of letters in the root ... A sentence, therefore, consists of a series of words which would each require to be expressed in clauses of several words in other languages, and it is easy to see how a next following sentence, explanatory of or completing the first, would be much more clear and forcible if it consisted of words of a similar shape and implying similar modifications of other ideas. It follows then that the two sentences would be necessarily symmetrical, and the presence of rhythm would not only please the ear but contribute to the better understanding of the sense, while the rhyme would mark the pause in the sense and emphasize the proposition" (pp. liv, lv).

Mr Stanley Lane-Poole says in his introduction to Selections from the Kur'an:

"The language has the ring of poetry, though no part of the Kur'an complies with the demands of Arab metre. The sentences are short and full of half-restrained energy, yet with a musical cadence. The thought is often only half-expressed; one feels the speaker has essayed a thing beyond words, and has suddenly discovered the impotence of language, and broken off with the sentence unfinished. There is the fascination of true poetry about these earliest soorahs; as we read them we understand the enthusiasm of the Prophet's followers, though we cannot fully realize the beauty and the power" (p. civ).

Thus Sale, in the preliminary discourse to his Translation of the Holy Qur'an, speaking of the style of the Holy Book, says:

"And in many places, especially where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent; of which the reader cannot but observe several instances, though he must not imagine the translation comes up to the original, notwithstanding my endeavours to do it justice" (p. 48).

The Fatiha or the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an

It will be seen from the above two quotations that even Western writers who have read the Qur'an in the original recognize that a translation of the Qur'an in the original recognize that a translation of the Qur'an can convey neither the elements of music in its recitation, nor yet the full significance of the original. Let us take the opening chapter of the Qur'an as an example. This chapter, the Fatiha, is the most essential part of the Islamic prayer. The seven verses of this chapter must be recited in every rak'ah of every prayer, whether private or public; while to it is added in certain rak'ahs any other portion of the Qur'an. Take the recitation first. A reference to the transliteration and translation, given further on, will show that the translation has in it nothing of the musical cadence of the original, and the effect upon the ear of the mere recitation of words is quite lost
in the translation. But even more important than this is the inability of any language to convey the exact significance of the short words of the original, even in long sentences. Take, for instance, the word Rabb, which occurs here first of all as an attribute of the Divine Being, and is the most frequently repeated of attributes in the whole of the Qur'an. In English it is generally translated as Lord, but that word does not at all convey the real significance of the Arabic word, Rabb, which carries with it the idea of the fostering of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion. It is a word composed of but two letters, ra and ba, yet the significance which it carries is so vast that even a whole sentence in any other language could not convey it fully. The word Lord or Father does not express that idea at all. The same is the case with the next following attributes, Rahman and Rahim, which are both derived from the same root rahma signifying tenderness requiring the exercise of beneficence, and are closely related in meaning; the former indicating that quality of love and mercy which comes into operation, even before the creation of man, by providing for him things which are necessary for his life; and the latter that which comes into operation when man makes use of these things and has thus done something to deserve it. No words in any other language can faintly express these great ideas and this fine distinction. Similar is the case with 'ibadah, used in the middle verse, which is rendered in English by worshipping, but which really carries the meaning of obedience coupled with the utmost submissiveness. The word ihdi, occurring in the fourth verse, is rendered guide; but hidaya, the root from which it is derived, means guiding and leading on the right way with kindness until one reaches the goal. How could these ideas be expressed in small and simple words, suitable for a prayer, in any other language? Indeed, this petition, which is of the essence of the whole institution of Islamic prayer, would lose its real significance by being translated into any other language.

Prayer as index of Muslim mentality

The ten ideas that the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an emphasizes

Thus the Fatiha, being the only essential portion of the Qur'an which must be repeated in every rak'ah of a prayer, may rightly claim to be the guiding principle of a Muslim's life, the one idea which rules all his other ideas, and therefore a true index of his mentality. The main principles underlining the Fatiha may be considered briefly here. These are, firstly, the desire to give praise to the Divine Being in all circumstances, for the chapter opens with the words "All praise is due to God". The Muslim has to come to prayer five times a day whatever the circumstances may be. There may be occasions when he is in distress, has suffered a reverse or a defeat, has a friend or near relative in distress, when someone very dear to him has just passed away and he is under the burden of a great bereavement, yet in all these conditions he is required to give praise to God Who brings about all these conditions, just as he would do had he received a blessing or some great benefit from God. The attitude of mind thus produced is to live in perfect peace with one's environment, neither to be carried away by joy, nor give way to dejection or depression. It is an attitude of mind which keeps a man steadfast in pleasure as well as pain, in joy as well as sorrow.

The second and third main ideas which determine a Muslim's mental attitude towards things are contained in the words Rabb al-'Alamin, the Nourisher unto perfection of all the worlds or all the nations. The Nourisher unto perfection brings him the comfort of knowing that whatever may happen to him, it is still for his perfection; whether he received a blessing or faces disaster, he must still be sure that it is being led on to perfection through these different stages. The addition of the words al-Alamin, all words or all nations, opens up his mind and widens the sphere of his love and sympathy towards all men, to whatever nation or creed they may belong, nay even to the whole of God's creation, to the dumb animals as well as to man. The man who recognizes that God is the Nourisher unto perfection of all men cannot bear hatred towards them. He must recognize in fact that God is much more to all men than is a father to his sons.

The fourth main idea is carried in the words Rahman and Rahim. God is Loving and Beneficient; He has provided man with everything necessary for his development, physical as well as moral and spiritual; but still that development depends on the right use of outward things as well as of the inner faculties which are meant for this object. The choice is man's whether he takes advantage of those means and reaches the goal, or rejects or ignores them and suffers the evil consequences thereof.

The fifth and sixth great ideas contained in the Fatiha are those conveyed in the words Maliki yaumi-l-din or Master of the Day of Requital. God is here called the Mālik or the Master, and not Malīk or King. The two words are almost alike, but there is this vast difference between a Mālik and a Malīk that the latter is bound to give to each what he deserves, but the former may if he likes forgive an offender altogether. There are some religions that lay so much stress on Divine justice that they refuse to recognize a God who can forgive offenders without having some compensation. Such a
narrow view of Divine justice has a corresponding effect on the morals of a man. The word Mālik rejects this idea, and shows God to be a Master Who can forgive if He likes, however great the offence may be. The addition of the words Yaumi-I-din, the Day of Requital, is by way of reminder that man must face the consequences of his own deeds. There is no deed, good or bad, that is without a consequence, and if these consequences are not seen by man in this life, there is still a Day of Requital, even after death.

The seventh idea is contained in the words iyāka na‘budu, the idea of rendering obedience to God with entire submission. This is meant to create in man the mentality of obedience to the Divine commandments, even when such are opposed to the commandments of some temporal authority or his own wishes. They do not only create this mentality but also give man the strength to carry out the commandments.

The eighth idea is contained in the words iyāka nasta‘in (Thee do we beseech for help). The mental attitude which it is sought to create by these words is that of entire dependence on God and never despairing of the attainment of an object, for even if outward means have failed, there is God, the Controller of all means, Whose help will not fail the man who depends on Him.

The ninth idea is contained in the words Iḥdi-nā. This signifies the soul’s inner desire - prayer being nothing but the expression of the soul’s inmost desire - of being led on and on to the goal, such being, as has been already shown, the significance of hidāyah. That the mentality of being content to live in perfect peace with one’s environment is not a negation of action is shown by these words. The Muslim attitude towards the world is not one of inaction or listlessness; on the contrary, it comprises both the desire to remain in peace with his environment, and the desire to move on and on so as to reach the great goal. He gives praise to God at every step, yet this is not a stationary condition; he is not the slave of his environment but for ever struggling and striving to master it; he does not stand for peace without progress, nor yet for progress without peace, but for peace and progress combined.

The tenth idea ruling the Muslim mentality, as disclosed in the Fatiha, is the longing to walk in the footsteps of those who have received Divine blessings of any kind, temporal, moral or spiritual, and the desire to be able to avoid the errors of those who have been the objects of Divine displeasure or those who have gone astray. The latter are the followers of the two extremes, while those who have received the Divine favours are those who keep to the middle path - which is the straight path.

With these ten ideas ruling man’s mind (and this is what is aimed at by the frequent repetition of the Fatiha as prayer), a man is armed with the best weapons both for happiness and success.

Does prayer lull initiative and effort?

It is sometimes said that prayer leads to idleness and indolence, because it causes a man to depend on his supplications for what he wants instead of working for it. This is, in fact, one of the chief arguments of the anti-religious movement. The objection is, of course, due to a complete misconception as to the nature of prayer. Prayer to God does not mean that a man has simply to entreat the Divine Being to grant him this or that favour and do nothing himself towards attaining it. Prayer is, in fact, a search for means and is thus an incentive to action. The Fatiha is the most important Muslim prayer, yet, as already shown, its central idea is one of action or being led on to action, for here the supplicator does not ask for certain favours but only to be guided on the right path. The prayer is contained in the words iḥdi-na-l-sirat-al-mustaqim, i.e., guide us on the right path, or, as shown with reference to the meaning of hidāya, lead us on to the goal by keeping us on the right path. Prayer is thus only the means of leading a man onwards and to discovering the path by walking thereon he may attain the goal. It is a search for means to attain to a goal, and a yearning to walk on a certain path. In face of this clear teaching, it is a mistake to suppose that prayer for any object negatives the adoption of human means to gain it. Elsewhere the acceptance of prayer is spoken of as rewarding a man for the hard work he had done: "So their Lord accepted their prayer, saying, I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other". (3:194).

The rule has been laid down in the Qur’an in several places that no end can be gained without making a hard struggle for it: "Certainly We have created man to face difficulty" (90:4). "And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for; and that his striving shall soon be seen; then shall he be rewarded for it with the fullest reward" (53:39-41). "O my people! work in your place I am a worker" (39:39). The question may, however, be asked what is the need for prayer if man must work for an end and avail himself of the means to gain it? Here, again, is a misconception as to the capabilities of man. It often happens that, notwithstanding the hardest struggle, a man is unable to gain an end, and finds himself quite helpless. In such a case prayer is a help, a source of strength, to the worker. He
does not lose heart nor does he despair, because he believes that, though the means at his disposal have failed, though all round there are difficulties and darkness, though his own strength is failing, yet there is a Higher Power with Whom nothing is impossible, Who can still bring a ray of light to dispel the darkness and Who remains a perpetual source of strength for him in his helplessness, and that by praying to Him he can still achieve what seems otherwise quite unattainable. That is the function of prayer, and it is thus one of the means to gain an end when all other means have failed, and a source of strength to man in moments of utter weakness and despair.

That such is the true function of prayer and that it is only a source of greater energy and greater strength to enable man to face difficulties and achieve an end, is shown by the early history of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad and his Companions were undoubtedly the greatest believers in prayer - they are spoken of in the Qur'an as spending two-thirds of the night, half the night or one-third of the night in prayer (73:20), and yet this was the very band of men whose love for work knew no bounds, whose energy was inexhaustible and who faced the most embarrassing difficulties with an iron determination. Surely the men who in ten years conquered two of the most powerful empires of the world, who with but the scantiest of resources, faced armies double and treble and, on occasions, ten times the size of their own, whatever other charges may be brought against them, cannot be said to have been idle and inefficient. And it is a fact of history that, whenever the great Muslim conquerors were faced with the most critical situations, they fell down in prostration before God, seeking strength from the Source of real strength. Prayer, in fact, transformed the neglected race of the Arabs into the most distinguished nation which history can show, turned an idle and inefficient people into the most zealous and untiring workers for the progress of humanity, in all phases of its advancement. Truly prayer is meant to awaken, and does awaken, the latent energies of the human soul.

THE MESSAGE AND THE ROLE OF THE LAHORE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

By Al-Hajj Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, Ameer & International President, Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-i-Islam, Lahore (Pakistan)

A Revivalist Islamic Movement

At the very outset, let me emphasize that the Ahmadiyya Movement is not a new religion in any sense at all. It is, on the contrary, the revival of Islamic faith in its original and pristine purity. Not only is the Movement not a new faith but, if properly appraised, it does not even represent a new sect in Islam. As a matter of fact this Movement represents a Divine scheme to inaugurate the struggle for dissemination of the true teachings of Islam in the modern world. It is a campaign to establish the truth and superiority of the principles of Islam and to revive the conquering forces of the faith.

Quran and Sunnah - the Pivotal Centre for Revival

As I have said before, this Movement stands for the revival and renaissance of Islam in its pristine purity. The two great and original sources of Islam are the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. There can be no difference of opinion about these sources being the two main foundations on which is built the faith of Islam. Any belief, tenet and teaching traceable to the Quran and the Sunnah must be accepted to form part of the Islamic faith; while anything proved to be repugnant to these two sources must be rejected. These two sources form the basis of the brotherhood of all Muslims all over the world. In matter of detail and interpretation, Muslim schools of thought may differ from each other. However, as long as they accept and adhere to these two basic sources, they are Muslims, irrespective of their minor differences. Members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement do unequivocally declare that the Quran and Sunnah form the basic pillars of Islamic faith, and that the neglect of this vital principle by Muslims is mainly responsible for disunity, divisions and sectarianism. The Founder of
the Ahmadiyya Movement was the first person in this age to raise his voice loud against the nefarious practice of takfeer, i.e., calling brother Muslims as heretics and unbelievers. The Founder also emphasized reversion to the Divine Book, the main pivot around which revolves the progress and unity of Islam. The Holy Quran has itself stated "Hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited" (3:102). This covenant of Allah is nothing else but the Quran as indicated by a saying of the Holy Prophet.

The message of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement to the Muslims in general, therefore, is to return to the Word of God and learn to understand and imbibe the exact spirit of the Quran and Sunnah and not to be satisfied with mere verbal repetition, formalism and ritual ceremonialism.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya - the Greatest Revivalist Movement in Modern Age

That the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement has been able to revive this basic fundamental of Islam, is admitted by eminent Muslim scholars. To quote only one instance, Mr Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, the great English convert, scholar and a translator of the Holy Quran commenting upon Maulana Muhammad Ali's book, The Religion of Islam, says, "No living man has done longer or more valuable service to the cause of revival of Islam than M. Muhammad Ali of Lahore. His writings, together with those of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, have given fame and distinction to the Ahmadiyya Movement. In our opinion the present volume is his finest work. It is a description of Al-Islam by one well-versed in Sunnah, who has on his mind the shame of the Muslim decadence of the past five centuries and in his heart the hope of its revival of which signs can now be seen on every side. Without moving a hair's breadth, from the traditional position with regard to worship and religious duties, the author shows a wide field in which changes are lawful and may be desirable, because here rules and practices are not based on an ordinance of the Quran or an edict of the Prophet (peace be on him).

I have quoted the above to show that according to accredited Muslim scholars, where Muslim traditions are not based on the Quran and Sunnah, even changes are lawful for the revival of Islam, according to the needs of the times. The very idea of faith connotes that the followers have, somehow or other, deviated from its true teachings. The need for the advent of a renovator (Muhaddid) arises only when the fair face of the faith has been distorted. Moreover, new needs demand new orientation. That is exactly the position in Islam claimed by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

Islamic Jihad in the Modern Changed Conditions

The complete message of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement is, however, not only "Back to Quran" but also "Onward with Quran". In the completely changed conditions of the present times, the true teachings of Islam must be widely disseminated and broadcast to an ignorant world. Under the urge of scientific inquiry and research the criterion of sifting truth has undergone a total revolution. Blind following and bowing to unreasonable authority have been replaced by an urge for cogent reasoning, convincing proof, conformity to natural laws and fulfilment of needs of mankind. The accepted criterion now is that the faith which can satisfactorily solve the modern problems of humanity shall be the future faith of mankind. Ahmadiyyat maintains that Islam and the Quran, and these alone, can solve the problems of today's world. The Founder of the Movement held the Holy Quran above everything else and directed the attention of the Muslims to the great work of Jihad with the Quran (Jihad bi'l Quran). It is a great injustice to accuse the Founder of having abrogated the Islamic doctrine of Jihad. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Founder of the Movement and all Ahmadies believe in every single word of the Holy Quran and the doctrine of Jihad is as valid for them as for any other Muslim. What the Founder rejected was not the doctrine but its orthodox interpretation which had given rise in the West to grave misconceptions and the wrong impression that the word Jihad was synonymous with war undertaken to force the religion of Islam upon non-Muslims. The Muslims themselves laboured under a similar delusion. The belief in the advent of a warrior Mahdi found currency amongst the Muslims because of the false impression that conversion at the point of sword was also permissible. The result was that they absolutely forgot the importance of jihad with Quran. It was the task of the Founder of the Movement to remove all erroneous views on the subject and to put things in their proper perspective. He laid great emphasis on jihad with the Quran not only in theory but also in practice. By his personal example he demonstrated how jihad with the Quran should be carried out, and he instilled the same zeal in his followers. In this way he established the superiority of Islam in the world and showed the way how Muslims, inspite of being weak from the point of view of worldly power, could bring the stronger nations under the yoke of Islam, if they would just make the correct use of the weapon which had been given to them in the form of the Quran. Jihad with Quran and the preaching of Islam (Isha at-i-Islam) are identical expressions. How far Ahmadiyyat has succeeded in the revival of these ideas can be gauged from the fact that, until recently when
someone talked about preaching of Islam, he was immediately identified as being an Ahmadi. Muslims were completely oblivious to the great power which lay with them in the form of the Quran, until Ahmadiyyat awakened them to this supreme reality. Jihad is indeed obligatory on all Muslims under all circumstances, but this is the same Jihad which the Holy Prophet and his companions carried on under all circumstances and conditions, whether they lived at Makkah or Madinah. The bringing home of this great truth to the Muslims has been one of the foremost tasks of Ahmadiyyat.

Need for a Heavenly-Ordained Revivalist Movement in Islam

Before I proceed further, I would like to place before you some extracts from the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyyat Movement. His first book Barahin-i-Ahmadiyyah, gives an idea of his passion for the spread of Islam. The very purpose of his being raised as a Mujaddid was to establish the pre-dominance of Islam over other religions. He says:

"The spiritual triumph of the religion of Islam which would be brought about by conclusive arguments and clear proofs, whether it happens in my life-time or after my death, is destined to be accomplished through this humble servant. Though the religion of Islam has been triumphant from the beginning on account of its strong appeal to the human mind and though from the earliest times its opponents have met with disgrace and discomfiture, its conquests over the different religions depended on the coming of a time which, by opening the ways of communication, should turn the whole world into a kind of united states."

"Thus God intends, by raising me in this age and by granting me hundreds of heavenly signs and visions of extraordinary matters relating to the future, and deep knowledge of truths and by giving me knowledge of hundreds of sure arguments, to spread and propagate the knowledge of the true teachings of the Quran among all nations and in all countries."

(Pp. 498-502)

In his book Fath-i-Islam, which, as its name indicates, deals with the triumph of Islam in the world, the object of his advent is described thus:

"Do not wonder that God the Most High in this time of need and in the days of this darkness has sent down a heavenly light and, having chosen a servant of His for the good of mankind in general has sent him to make supreme the religion of Islam and to spread the light brought by the most excellent of His creatures, viz., the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and to strengthen the cause of Muslims and to purify their spiritual condition." (P. 5)

And again he says in the same book:

"The truth will win and the freshness and light of Islam which characterized it in its earlier days will be restored and that sun (of Islam) will rise again which rose in its full resplendence before. But it is necessary that Heaven should withhold its rising till our hearts bleed with labour and hardwork and we sacrifice all comfort for its appearance and submit ourselves to all kinds of disgrace for the honour of Islam. The life of Islam demands a sacrifice from us and what is that? That we lay down our lives in its way. And on this our death, depends the life of Islam, the life of Muslims and the manifestation of the Living God. This in other words is called Islam. And the revival of this Islam is the will of God, the Most High." (Pp. 8, 9)

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prolific writer, and throughout his books and all other writings, as well as in most of his Persian and Urdu poems, is reflected the great passion which he had for the propagation of Islam; and his writings are full of hope, prayers and the glad tidings that the days of triumph of Islam are drawing nigh. It is quite astonishing that, while living in a village absolutely cut off from all modern movements, neither having knowledge of the English language nor any contact with the Western world, he particularly set before himself the task of propagating Islam in the West. In one of his books published as early as 1891 he writes, "This humble servant has been shown in a vision that the rising of the sun from the West signifies that the Western world shall have the light of Islam." He then records a vision in which he saw himself speaking from a pulpit in London and explaining the truth of Islam in a well-reasoned address in the English language; and afterwards he saw himself catching a large number of white birds. Then he interprets this vision to mean that though he may not personally go there, his writings would spread among these people and they would embrace Islam. He had great faith and a firm conviction on this point. He says, "At this critical moment a man
has been raised by God and He desires to manifest the beautiful face of Islam to the Western world and open its ways to the Western countries." (Izalah Auham pp. 515, 516)

Contributions made to Islamic Thought

The contributions made by the Founder of the Movement of Islamic thought are multifarious and numerous and it is not possible to deal with them all in a limited time. I will only mention some of the salient features. Before doing so, I would like to point out, firstly, that all matters in which the Founder gave a new direction to Muslim thought are closely connected with Islam's advancement in the world; they have nothing common with the sectarian differences among Muslims but they are vital to the existence and advancement of Islam as they are meant to wipe off certain blemishes which were ascribed to it. Secondly, it should be remembered that religion was made perfect in Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the last of Prophets. Therefore, any revival of the faith can only be a revival of the great truths taught by Islam i.e., an interpretation of the Holy Quran and the Sayings of the Prophet. It is as such that the Ahmadiyya Movement has given prominence to many important religious truths, some of which I would like to mention now.

For common people the question of Jesus Christ's death is perhaps the only distinguishing feature of the Ahmadiyya Movement. This, however, is not wholly correct. There is no doubt that the Founder has laid great stress on this point, as it was an obstacle in the way of the propagation. But the greatest distinguishing feature of Ahmadiyyat is that it has revived the almost dead concept of God's communication with man. The foremost task to which the Founder devoted his attention was to demonstrate this truth once more to the world that God still spoke to his righteous servants and that this in no way interfered with the finality of Prophethood. The real claim of the Founder was that of being a Mujaddid, a renovator, and a muhaddath whom God appoints to uphold the cause of religion, and who is not a prophet though God communicates with him frequently. For the revival of faith in religion the first point is to prove the authenticity of Divine communication with man, as this is what has been vehemently denied in this age. The concept of a mechanical God, as the Ultimate Cause, is even admitted by a materialist, but the foundation of religion was and is, on the fact of God's communication with man. The basis of almost all religions is the phenomena of Divine revelation. But there is no religion except Islam that advocates that even now God communicates with man. Yet this concept became extinct even amongst Muslims. Wahabism was a strong movement in Islam before that advent of the Ahmadiyya Movement, but its followers, called Ahl-e-Hadith, also believed that God's communication with man was meant for times gone by, although in authentic traditions it is clearly mentioned that there would be persons in this ummah who would not be prophets and yet God would speak to them. Under the influence of modern education, Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh (India) went so far in this respect as to reject entirely the concept of God's revelation to human beings. It was left to the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement to establish this point from the Quran and the Hadith that Divine Communication had not come to an end. He presented his own self as a proof and claimed to be the recipient of such favours of God. In his books he has mentioned many of his prophecies which was to come true and has also made forceful assertions that it was only in Islam that Divine Communication was continued and therefore Islam was the only living religion in the world.

The second major area of contribution to the Islamic thought, or revival of the great truths taught by Islam, was in respect of Islam's relationship with other religions. The Founder emphasized the original broad and liberal outlook of Islam towards other religions, which, in course of time, had entirely been lost sight of. Through misrepresentations and misunderstandings Islam had come to be looked upon as a most intolerant religion while it is, as a matter of fact, extremely liberal. Never in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet was any person converted to Islam by force. Nor was any war waged by him against a nation for the purpose of spreading Islam amongst them. Yet European writers had drawn this very picture of Islam and its Founder to create hatred against Islam. The western domination in the world helped to spread this distorted view far and wide. On the other hand the concept of a warrior Mahdi among Muslims themselves gave support to this misunderstanding. The correction of this fundamental mistake is a distinctive feature of Ahmadiyya thought, and the Founder's claim of being the Mahdi was to root out this false notion from amongst Muslims themselves. This, in other words, means that Islam does not stand in need of force for its propagation.

The Founder also removed the misconception that a Muslim who renounces Islam should be immediately put to death. Ahmadiyyat has made it clear from the Quran and Hadith that it is neither lawful to convert a person to Islam by force nor to keep him within the faith under threat of sword, and has thus removed this stain from the beautiful face of Islam that it had no spiritual force to keep itself alive.
Emphasis by the Ahmadiyya Movement on the point that sword has nothing to do with the propagation of Islam has led many people to falsely accuse its Founder of having abrogated the Islamic doctrine of Jihad. I have already commented upon this. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib has thrown ample light on this subject and pointed out that there is a Jihad which one can always carry on for Islam (i.e. exerting oneself spiritually in the way of God and doing one’s best to preach the message of Islam to others) and there is a Jihad with sword which can be resorted to only under specific conditions for the defence of Islam. He declared preaching of Islam to be the Jihad of this age. Other spiritual leaders prescribe for their disciples different adhkar and mujahadaat, i.e., recitals and certain hard exercises for their spiritual advancement, which could not be traced to the ways of the Prophet and his Companions. On the other hand the Founder, while taking baiat, would ask his followers to strive hard in the cause of propagation of Islam.

The third major distinctive feature of the Ahmadiyya Movement is that the Quran must be given precedence over everything else. While all Muslims agree that the Quran is the real source of guidance for Muslims, in practice they attached more importance to Fiqh (jurisprudence) over the Quran and Hadith, and the Divine Book was relegated to the background. Principles of religion or portions thereof were referred to one of the four Imams according to Ahl-i-Sunnah and to the traditions of the Prophet according to the Ahl-i-Hadith. With the attaching of greater and greater importance to Fiqh the natural beauty and simplicity of Islam was lost in the labyrinth of arduous and nerve-wrecking questions which ultimately sapped the energies of the Muslim nation. Books depicting the teachings of Islam by Christian writers were chiefly based on works of Fiqh and they tried to excite hatred against Islam among Europeans by presenting before them a confused and complicated picture of the simple doctrines and beliefs of Islam. To remove these misunderstandings and to clear the ground for the preaching of Islam, it was essential that the original simplicity of Islam be restored. This was the work which the Founder of the Movement accomplished by laying due stress on a first-hand study and knowledge of the Quran in a Muslim’s life, and by explaining the right place of the Holy Quran as compared with the Hadith and Fiqh. The founder used the Quran as his chief instrument for the reformation of Muslims and for the propagation of Islam among non-Muslims. Although the Ahmadias fully respect the Hadith and after that the ijihad of the Imams, and they refer to these (in that order) as two sources of information on religious matters after the Holy Quran, yet their main energy is spent in disseminating the knowledge of the Quran which was the real source of life for the Muslims before, and which is still capable of giving them a new life.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in all his writings, whether in support of Islam or in repudiation of others’ false doctrine, used to base all his arguments on the Divine Book. In important discussions and controversies, and indeed before writing a book on any subject, his normal practice was to go through the Quran from beginning to end and derive all his inspirations and his conclusions from it. While debating with non-Muslim missionaries and religious leaders he used to lay down the condition that whatever claims or arguments were advanced, should be based on their respective religious scriptures, a principle which he used to follow himself scrupulously even though his opponents could not. In this way too he established the glory and supremacy of the Quran.

Besides this Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad cleared many other misconceptions about the Qur’an which the Muslims erroneously adopted. For instance it was generally believed that there were certain verses in the Quran which had been abrogated by other verses. By accepting such a view it had to be admitted that there were discrepancies in the Holy Book. This erroneous doctrine was removed by the Founder of the Movement, who made it clear that there was no verse in the Quran which had been abrogated by another verse.

Moreover, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib, by declaring that the door to Ijtihad (exercise of judgment) was open, encouraged the use of intellect and reasoning in the interpretation of the Quran. He himself gave a lead to his followers by laying down a healthy relationship between intellectual and spiritual truths, by interpreting the Quran both in a scientific and literary manner, by disregarding the fanciful and imaginary stories which were then being treated as an essential part of interpretation of the Quran, by fighting against the ignorance and narrowmindedness of the ulema, and by laying down the principles that while interpreting the Quran, the Quran itself should have priority over everything else and then should come Hadith (both reports dealing with stories should be accepted after great caution and scrutiny) and that care should be exercised in selecting that meaning of words which does not go against history, human intellect or experience.

Denial of a claim to Prophethood

Before I conclude, I would like to clarify the position of the Founder of the Movement vis-a-vis the allegation that he claimed to be a prophet.
I have already referred to his claim as basically being that of the Mujaddid of the 14th century of Hijrah. This announcement was made in his first and renowned book, the Barahin-e-Ahmadiyyah, a work in five volumes, in which the truth of the teachings of Islam was established by forceful arguments, and in which was emphasized the necessity of Divine revelation and the fact that revelation was not a thing of the past but God also spoke to his chosen ones in this ummah. In this connection he referred to his visions and inspirations and mentioned the fulfilment of some of these. The publication of this book made a deep impression on the Muslims. Praises were lavished upon him for his righteousness and piety, his services to the cause of Islam and his bold stand against the opponents of Islam. It was some years later that he announced that it was disclosed to him that Jesus, son of Mary, was dead, and the Messiah whose advent was promised to the Muslims would be a Mujaddid of this ummah, and that the prophecies relating to the advent of the Messiah were fulfilled in his own person. He further made it known that reports relating to the appearance of a Mahdi also related to the coming of the Messiah, who would spread Islam, not by sword as was commonly believed, but by arguments and reasoning. With these claims, the man who was considered by the ulema of the time to be the champion of Islam came to be regarded as its enemy. One of the charges which was levied against him was that, by claiming to be the Promised Messiah, he claimed prophethood for himself. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad emphatically denied this and in doing so explained that the word "prophet", used for the second coming of Isa, son of Mary, in the tradition of the Holy Prophet, was to be taken in a literal sense, i.e., a person who makes a prophecy on receipt of Divine Communications. Moreover a Muhaddath who receives Divine Communication can, in a metaphorical sense be called a Nabi, I give below some quotations from his books:

"The coming Messiah, on account of being a Muhaddath is also called metaphorically a prophet." (Izalah Auham, p. 340).

"In a metaphorical sense God has the right to speak of an inspired servant (Mulham) as a prophet or a Mursal (the sent one)". (Siraj Munir, p. 3).

"I have been called a prophet of God by way of metaphor and not by way of reality" (Haqiqat al-Wahy, supplement Istifta, p. 65).

The last quotation is from a book published in 1907 and shows that from the beginning to the end, his attitude on this point had not changed.

On the other hand, from the beginning to the end, all his writings are full of clear, unambiguous and unequivocal denial of ever having claimed to be a prophet. Let this distinction be very clear. In the quotations given above and many other similar ones, he was explaining away the use of the word Nabi in the tradition of the Prophet or in some of his own revelations. But in all his works he never himself claimed to be a prophet. A few more quotations from his works:

"We also curse the claimant to prophethood" (Majmuh Ishtiharat, p. 224).

"After our Lord and Master, Muhammad Mustafa (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) - the last of the messengers - I regard any claimant to prophethood to be a liar and an unbeliever." (Ishtihar 2nd October, 1891 C.E.)

"I look upon him who denies the finality of Prophethood to be a heretic and outside the pale of Islam". (Taqrir Wajib al-I-Ian at Delhi, 23rd October, 1891 C.E.)

"It does not behove me that I should lay a claim to prophethood and go outside the pale of Islam and join the party of unbelievers." (Hamamatul Bushra, p. 79).

Such quotations from his writings could be multiplied manifold. As against the denial of a claim to prophethood, there is an admission to the claim of Muhaddathiyat, and a clear declaration, and I quote: "the claim of being the Promised Messiah is not in any way greater than claim of being a recipient of Divine Communication or a Mujaddid from God" (Aina Kamalat Islam, p. 340).

It is beyond the scope of this speech to go into greater details on this matter. But one other point requires clarification. While in all his books the Founder has not even once claimed to be a prophet, and while the denial of such a claim has been made again and again in clear terms, yet first his opponents and later a section of his followers declared him to be a claimant of Prophethood. This bears an interesting resemblance to the position of Jesus Christ. Christ never claimed that he was God or the Son of God, though he used the term Son of God in a metaphorical sense. Yet, not only did the
learned among the Jews charge him with blasphemy and unbelief because in their view he had claimed Godhood, but also his extremist followers coined the doctrine, later on, that he did indeed make such a claim. Only a small section, the Unitarians, stuck to the correct belief that he never claimed to be a God or Son of God. The Quran, revealed six hundred years after the death of Jesus Christ, confirmed the belief of this small section as true, and the belief of Jews and other Christians to be false. Similar is the case with the Messiah of the Muslim nation. When he claimed to be the Promised Messiah his opponents straightway declared him to be a heretic, on the wrong assumption that he claimed to be a prophet. After his death, a large section of his followers, led by a person who had no Divine authority, adopted the doctrine that Mirza Sahib was in fact a claimant to Prophethood. The other section, although much smaller in number, adhered to the belief that he never claimed to be a prophet and this in fact is the right course. In the case of Jesus Christ a prophet was raised to the pedestal of Divinity, and in our age a mujaddid was raised to prophethood.

Conclusion

The true conception of the Ahmadiyya Movement is only this, that it is a Movement for the defence and propagation of Islam in the world, and all the distinguishing features it possesses are means to achieve this end. The acceptance of the claims of the Founder is also a necessary means to achieve the object of the spread of Islam. With the acceptance of these claims one feels in one's self a strong and invigorating faith, as is evident from the lives of the great men who came into direct contact with the Founder, and not only became fully convinced that Islam was going to prevail over all other religions but also, in actual practice, became great missionaries of Islam. It is the spiritual contact with the Founder which stimulates in an Ahmadi an active faith. For him, no longer do such mysteries exist as the second advent of Christ, the tribulations of Dajjal (Anti-Christ) the prevalence of Gog and Magog, the coming of Mahdi etc. There is a tremendous difference between the attitude of an Ahmadi and a non-Ahmadi. The latter is waiting for somebody else to come and advance the cause of Islam, and the former is convinced that it is his own work, and he has the power to do it. Those who enter into fealty with the Founder know it fully well that the prophecies of the Holy Prophet have been fulfilled. It was foretold that the days of the first glory of Islam would be followed by a period of decline, poverty and misery for the Muslims, but again Islam would rise in its full splendour and conquer the world with its spiritual force, and that is the age when the prophecies relating to the resurgence of Islam with the advent of Messiah are going to be fulfilled. It is our duty now to carry the message of Islam to the corners of the world. The power to conquer hearts is inherent in Islam. But we have to work and sweat for its success.

"O Allah help those who help the religion of Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and make us from among them."

"O Allah, forsake them who forsake the religion of Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and do not make us from among them."

Ameen!

ISLAM'S EMPHASIS ON KNOWLEDGE

There was no distinction between secular education and religious education in the great days of Islam. All education was brought into the religious sphere. To quote a recent European writer: "It was the glory of Islam that it gave to other sciences the same footing which it gave to the study of the Holy Quran and the Hadith and Fiqh (that is, Muslim Jurisprudence) a place in the Mosque." Lectures on chemistry and physics, botany, medicine and astronomy were given in the Mosque equally with lectures on the above-named subjects; for the Mosque was the University of Islam in the great days, and it deserved the name of University, since it welcomed to its precincts all the knowledge of the age from every quarter. It was this unity and exaltation of all learning which gave to the old Muslim writers that peculiar quality which every reader of them must have noticed, the calm serenity of orbed minds.

In Islam, there are no such terms as secular and religious, for true religion includes the whole sphere of man's activities. The distinction drawn in the Holy Quran is between good, that which is helpful to man's growth, and evil, that which is detrimental and noxious to it. Islam is a rational
religion. It has no place for the man who can say, with St. Augustine: "Credo quia absurdum est" - "I believe because it is incredible." Again and again does the Holy Quran denounced irrational religion as religion evidently false. Again and again does it appeal to men to use their reason and especially their common sense in matters of religion. All historical experience goes to prove that a large measure of free thought is absolutely necessary to human progress, and at the same time that nations which lose faith in God, deteriorate.

Are the two things, the living faith in God and the large measure of free thought, incompatible? A considerable school of thought in the West seems to think that they are incompatible. Islam has proved that they are perfectly compatible. In the early, the successful, centuries of Islam an intense faith in God was combined with free thought upon every earthly subject; for Islam held nothing upon earth so sacred as to be immune from criticism. There was only one Supernatural, only Incomprehensible, Whose Unity, having been accepted, admitted of no further discussion. He was One for all, Beneficent and Merciful towards all alike, and He had bestowed on man the gift of reason, which is extolled by Muslim writers as the highest gift, to be used quite freely in the name of Allah - that is to say, with the purpose of pursuing what is good and eschewing what is evil, for which the Sacred Law affords guidance and safeguards.

There is no priesthood in Islam. All the prerogatives and responsibilities, which in other religions have been arrogated to a priesthood, in the system of Islam are vested in the individual mind. So the most wise and learned men became the natural leaders.

Since an unenlightened mind would be a sorry lamp to light the steps of any man or woman, this exaltation of reason carried with it the command for universal education. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) himself said: "To seek knowledge is a duty for every Muslim (male) and every Muslimah (female)". Universal education both for men and women thus became the Sacred Law of Islam thirteen centuries before it was adopted by the civilization of the West. He also is reported to have said (though the saying is not well-authenticated): "Seek knowledge, though it be in China"; and the following well-authenticated saying shows the importance not only of acquiring knowledge but of spreading knowledge among the people:

"Verily Allah doth not keep knowledge as a thing apart that He withholdeth from His servants, but He doth keep it in the grasp of men of knowledge, so that it shall, cause not a man of knowledge to remain, mankind will take foolish heads, and they will be questioned and give Fatwas, and they will err and lead others into error." The picture is too clearly of the present condition of Islam, when we have plenty of narrow theologians, for us to doubt but that the meaning of the word 'knowledge' as here used is something wider and more human than the knowledge they possess.

He said: "The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr." He said: "An hour's contemplation and study of God's creation is better than a year of adoration."

He said: "He dieth not who seeketh knowledge." "Whosoever revereth the learned, revereth me." "The first thing created was reason." "Allah hath not created anything better than reason." "The benefits which Allah giveth are on account of it, and understanding is by it; and Allah's displeasure is caused by it, are rewards and punishments." He said: "To listen to the words of the learned and to instil into others the lessons of science is better than religious exercises."

"He who leaveth his home in search of knowledge, walketh in the path of Allah."

"Acquire knowledge. It enabyleth the possessor to distinguish right from wrong; lighteth up the path to Heaven. It is our friend in the desert, society in solitude, our companion when friendless. It guideth to happiness, it sustaineth in adversity. It is an ornament among friends, and an armour against enemies."

"Lo! the angels offer their wings to the seeker of knowledge."

"Are those who have knowledge on an equality with those who have no knowledge?"

"The preferment of the learned man above the devotee is as my preferment above the lowest of you."

He said that a man may have performed payers, fasting, alms-giving, pilgrimage and all other religious duties, but he will be rewarded only in proportion to the common sense which he employed.
And he said that he who has learning but knows not how to apply it to the conduct of life is "like a donkey carrying books."

Neither the Holy Quran nor the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) ever contemplated the existence of an ignorant Muslim. Indeed, "ignorant Muslim" is a contradiction in terms. In the great days of Islam, an ignorant Muslim, like an indigent Muslim, could hardly have been found.

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall

**THE TRUE AIM OF TRUE RELIGION**

*As Revealed in the Holy Quran*

Islam brought religion back into its proper sphere of action, which is daily life. The light of Allah, spoken of in the Holy Quran, is known to everyone who follows Allah's guidance, for it is the light of every day transfigured and glorified by the knowledge of His eminence. The aim of religion is no far distant object, situated in a future life; it is present here and now, in service of our fellow-men. The idolaters of Arabia kept asking the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) for some miracle that might enforce the truth of what he said:

"And they say: What manner of a messenger of God is this who eats food and walks in the bazaars? Why is not an angel sent down to be a warner with him? Or (why is not) a treasure bestowed on him? The evil-doers said: Ye are but following a man bewitched."

And Allah answered the evil-doers in words which plainly show that miracles are not a proof of the Divine Messenger, who must appeal to men's reason, not their senses or their curiosity.

"We sent not before thee any messengers but such as verily did not eat food and walk in the bazaars."

That is to say, all those Prophets of old whom the people thought as supernatural beings had been men appealing to the minds of others in God's name.

Miracles, according to the teaching of Islam, are not the proof of divinity, much less do they violate the laws of nature which are themselves divine, being ordained of God. They are evidences of a certain stage of human progress towards the Goal, at which laws hidden from the multitude become apparent.

Many miracles are related of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (God bless him) but no Muslim would think of quoting them as a proof of his divine mission. The message and the work achieved - the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet's preaching and their consequences - speak for themselves, and are above all miracles.

It is, of course, a fact that the majority of professed Muslims are ignorant and superstitious today, accepting a vast mass of legends and absurd beliefs; but where man's mind is so exalted in the standing order of the community, vain beliefs are always threatened with the sword of scepticism. Indeed a large proportion of this mass legend and superstition merely represents the science of a by-gone day. The spirit of Islam expects it to be superseded by the science of today; for the Muslim's mind is free in all affairs of earth, provided that he complies with certain rules of conduct imposed with a view to his bodily, mental and spiritual health; and it is his duty to explore the science of his day, and to accept what his mind approves of - aye, even though it dissipates beliefs or fancies long accepted among Muslims. It cannot touch his creed: "There is no God except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah - a creed which that grand old sceptic, pronounced to be "Composed of an eternal truth and a necessary fiction." Even he had to confess that the "fiction" had been justified in the historic sequel.

There is a great and growing tendency in the Muslim brotherhood to distinguish once for all between the living body of Islamic teaching and the folklore which has been thrown about it like a
garment of an antique fashion. How little the discrimination of the faith will astonish only those critics who, misled by the practice of Christianity, have identified the latter with the former: which Muslims never did.

In the Holy Quran, men are bidden to observe the phenomena of nature, the alternation of day and night, the properties of earth and air and fire and water, the mysteries of birth and death, growth and decay - evidence of a law and order which man never made and which man can never bend or alter by a hair's breadth - as proof that man is not the sovereign of this world; his province of free-will, research and fruitful efforts is but a delegated power within an absolute sovereignty; which absolute sovereignty belongs to Allah the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, the Lord of all the Worlds. Man does not, as a rule, realise the marvels of his natural condition and of the Providence surrounding him, because they never fail him. Surrounded by a wonder of creative energy which never fails; placed in a universe subject to a code of laws which are never broken; manifestly subject, being unable to inhale a breath, or lift a finger, or speak a word or think a thought without obeying laws he never made; man in general thinks but little of such matters, absorbed in the interests of his own restricted sphere of energy, like any insect. Idolising his own restricted sphere, he looks for a Providence which will back him in this special aim, oblivious of the needs of the Creator.

Obviously, if we admit that there is a Creator and a purpose, we must not expect special treatment, but must seek to conform to the divine will and purpose in creation; then only can we hope for success.

"Nay, verily man is rebellious."

"That he deemeth himself independent."

"Verily unto the Lord is the return."

Some years ago there appeared a book written by a Scottish divine - not a very interesting book - which made a little stir in the English-speaking world. It was called "The Natural Law in the Spiritual World." I only mention it on account of the title, because the revelation of Islam might be more aptly described as: "The Natural Law in the Spiritual World and in the Social World and in Political World." It is to the natural laws which govern man's physical existence that Islam appeals for proof of Allah's actual Kingship, and then goes on to show how laws precisely similar govern man's spiritual and collective life.

All the miracles related of all the Prophets and saints are held so unimportant that belief in them is not obligatory. All that is obligatory is belief in Allah's universal sovereignty and in the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may God bless and keep him) and all other Prophets as His human messengers. It was this natural and reasonable basis of Islam which made the greatest of German poets, Goethe, exclaim, after reading a translation of the Quran: "If this is Islam, then every thinking man among us is, in fact, a Muslim."

Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall