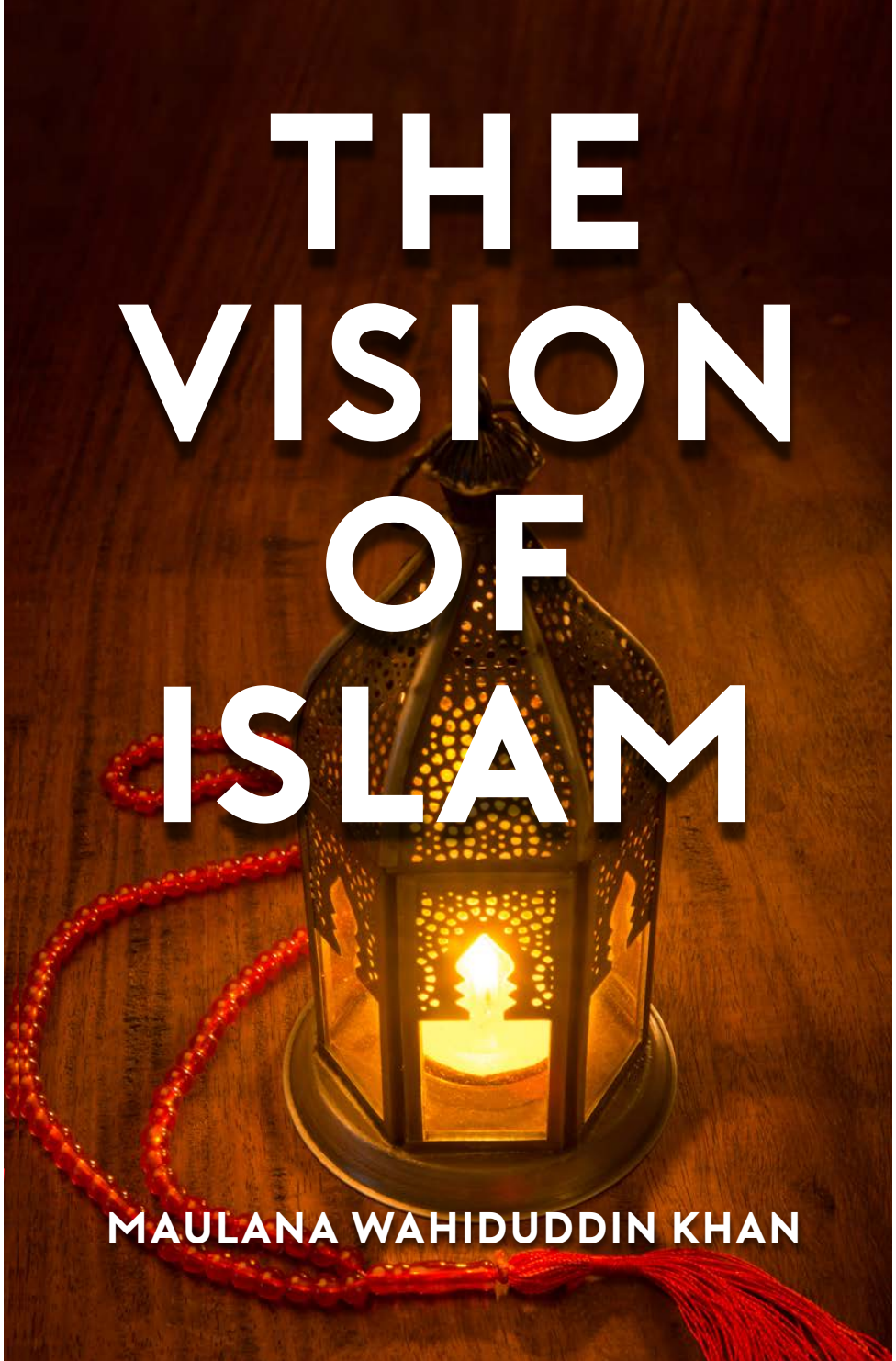


THE VISION OF ISLAM

A glowing lantern with a lit candle inside, surrounded by red prayer beads, set against a dark wooden background. The lantern is ornate with a perforated metal body, and the light from the candle creates a warm, golden glow. The red beads are strung in a loop around the base of the lantern.

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

**THE
VISION
OF
ISLAM**

THE VISION OF ISLAM

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

Translated by
Prof. Farida Khanam

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FOREWORD

In *Story of an African Farm*, Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) a noted South African novelist, recounts the story of a hunter who goes in search of the beautiful White Bird of Truth. All he had seen of it was its reflection in a lake, once while he was out shooting. He tried to catch the bird in the snares of credulity and the cage of imagination, but he realized that the bird of truth could be obtained only through truth. He left the valley of superstitions and started climbing up the Mountain of Truth. He continued climbing till he reached a high precipice. He started cutting rocks and making steps in the stone. He continued doing this for years, old and wizened, he managed to reach the summit. But, on arriving there, he found another range higher than the previous one. Here, overwhelmed by old age and weariness, he laid himself down to die, but as he lay dying, a white feather fell close to him from above. Now he felt sure that the bird he sought existed on the next range. Even though he could not reach the bird of truth, he died with the solace that those who followed him would not have to cut the first steps. His last words were:

“Where I lie down, worn out, other men will stand young and fresh. By the steps that I have cut they will climb. They will never know the name of the man who made them...

But they will mount and on my work. They will climb and by my stair. They will find truth and through me.

Perhaps there can be no better allegory for the present work than the above.

I was born on January 1, 1925. My father, Fariduddin Khan, died on 30th December 1929, when I was just five. Then I was brought up in my family home, in Azamgarh (U.P., India) in a traditional, religious atmosphere. My circumstances demanded that I look at everything with a curious eye. When I came of age and learnt that the religion which, “in the old days”, had ruled human thought for one thousand years, was languishing in every respect in modern times, I felt that this was an issue on which I should do some research. I then began to make a regular study of the subject.

Many people regard me as a University educated person. But the truth is that my formal education was confined to studies in an Arabic school, after which I learnt English on my own. The result of a regular study of books in English was that the modern style came to influence my writing.

My educational and intellectual background had given me only a traditional knowledge of Islam, which was obviously insufficient for an understanding of Islam in relation to the modern world. In 1948, therefore, I decided to go directly to the sources of modern thought in order to increase my understanding of it. At the same time, I started to study the Quran and the *hadith* and related subjects, in order to have a fresh understanding of Islam. If the first 15 years

of my life were engaged in traditional education, the next 25 years were taken up by the above-mentioned research. Today, now that I am over fifty, I have the good fortune to be able to offer to the world this book which is the result of my long research. Having cut steps out of the theoretical rock, I was confronted with another range: now it was necessary to give a practical shape to my Islamic endeavours in the light of the discovered truths.

I feel that I have exhausted my strength. The hard struggle of the past which this work entailed has aged me before my time. I have spent all my life in cutting 'theoretical steps': but how to cut the 'practical steps' now? Yet it is satisfaction enough for me that I have found truth, at least theoretically. Perhaps now I may die, saying: "Those coming after me will not have to cut the first steps!!!"

September, 1975

Wahiduddin Khan

FOREWORD FOR THE ENGLISH EDITION

I wrote the first foreword of my book in September 1975. According to the circumstances of those times, I felt that with this book my mission had come to an end. This thinking was reflected in my first foreword. But subsequently there was a change of circumstances and by special divine succour a full-fledged mission came to be launched on the basis of the ideology I had presented in my book *Al-Islam*.

Now when I am writing these lines in June 2013, by God's grace, this mission has become universal in its scope with the establishment of Islamic Centre in 1976 and Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS) in 2001. The literature of this mission has been published on a large scale in different national and international languages. This book, the English version of *Al-Islam*, is a part of this mission.

This book offers an explanation of the teachings of Islam in a contemporary style and aims at providing such an interpretation of Islam as will address the modern mind. In 1975 there was just this one book. But today, by God's

grace, a wide range of Islamic literature, written in a contemporary style, has been prepared, which is being disseminated in different languages.

New Delhi

Wahiduddin
Khan

June 15, 2013

CHAPTER ONE

THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

*The only true religion in God's sight is complete submission to God.
And those who were given the Book disagreed only out of rivalry,
after knowledge had been given to them—he who denies
God's signs should know that God is swift in His reckoning.*
—The Quran, 3:19

Worship

What God most earnestly desires from human beings is worship. The Quran says: “I have not created jinn and mankind except to worship Me.” (51:56) There are numerous such verses in the Quran which elaborate on how the prophets were sent for this very purpose, that is, to warn or to remind man of this responsibility. (16:36). This is so important a matter that if a man cannot find opportunities for worship in his own country, he is enjoined to leave it for some other place (4:97).

The dictionary defines worship as bowing before someone and humbling oneself. “The essence of worship is fearfulness and humility,” says *Lisan al-Arab*. The dictionary meaning of the word is also its

canonical meaning. Abu Hayyan says: “Prayer means humility: this is the consensus of religious scholars” (*Al Bahr al Muhit*, Vol. 1, p. 23). That is why the Quran uses the word “arrogance” as the antonym of worship. It says, “Those who are too arrogant to worship Me will certainly enter Hell.” (40:60).

Although worship’s real connotations are humility and fearfulness, when the word is used in relation to God, it also includes the concept of love. Ibn Kathir writes: “According to the dictionary, worship stands for lowliness. In the Islamic Shari‘ah it is used to express a condition of extreme love coupled with extreme humbleness and apprehension.” (*Tafsir al Quran*, Vol. 1, p. 25). Ibn Taymiyah says: “The word worship expresses a mixture of extreme humility and extreme love.” (Pamphlet on *Ubudiyah*, p. 28) Ibn Qayyem also writes:

“There are two components of worship: extreme love and extreme humility” (*Tafsir Ibn Qayyem*, p. 65).

The essence of worship then is the adoption of an attitude of humility before God. In the Quran, this is expressed by different Arabic words, such as *Khashiyyah*, *Tadhurru*, *Ikhbat*, *Inabat*, *Khushu*, *Khudu* and *Qunut*, etc. Enshrined in each of these words is the concept of God-consciousness. To worship God means utter prostration of oneself before Him. The Being before whom the act of worship is performed is no tyrant or tormentor but an extremely kind and compassionate Being, to whom we owe limitless

blessings. So this expression of lowliness before Him is necessarily tinged with love.

The relation of man to God is the relation of extreme humility with an extremely beloved Being. At the very moment when man is shivering in awe of God, when his eyes fill with tears at the thought of Him, his best feelings are even then reserved for his Lord, and he draws closer to God in great attachment. Man, then, finds himself rapt in a love of the greatest poignancy. Though his humility in the presence of God is undoubtedly the result of fear, this fear is not of the kind produced by the sight of a fearful object. It is a feeling which no single word can properly convey. It is a mixed feeling of extreme hope and extreme apprehension, and man is never able to decide which of the two is to be preferred—hope or apprehension. It is a situation of love and fear in which man runs towards the very Being he fears, hoping to receive from Him His divine blessings. It is a state of mental anguish, yet at the same time it is a state of complete solace.

Thus we learn that prayer is basically a psychological experience rather than an external event. Man, in the last analysis, is a sensitive thinking being: so in its definitive form, prayer in relation to man, is the expression of an inner state rather than of an external happening. The Prophet has clearly stated that “righeousness is a thing of the heart.” According to the Quran, the essence of worship is to be God-fearing. This finds expression in a hadith. Once the Prophet observed pointing to his heart,

‘The fear of God lies here,’ (*At Taqwa ha huna*) (Bukhari).

The Quran states: ‘O men, serve your Lord Who has created you and those who have gone before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil’ (2:21).

Worship, in terms of external expression, means bowing before the Sustainer, while in its inner sense it stands for that deep realization of and strong attachment to God in which man is so involved that he can experience the very presence of God. The Prophet is reported to have said, “Pray to God as if you are seeing Him.” (*Mishkat*, Chapter on Faith). According to this saying, the most sublime form of worship is that in which the worshipper is so lost in thoughts of God that he finds himself very close to Him. His apprehension of the divine presence should be as keen as if God were actually seeing him. This state of psychological proximity is the most sublime state of prayer.

All rites of worship are aimed at arriving at that state. The postures to be adopted in the performance of these rites are ordained by God Himself. Anyone who asserts that it is possible to pray to God independently of these God-ordained rites, is making a false claim. Without performing these rites, no one can become a worshipper, in the real sense of the word. Although man is another name for that particular soul which is not visible to us, it is also a fact that man’s existence cannot be conceived of in this world without a human body. Similarly, worship may be a psychological reality, but it cannot be conceived of without external, God-ordained religious rites.

Although the word ‘worship’ covers the entire Shari‘ah, in the sense that it embraces whatever man does to follow God’s commandments and to seek His pleasure, it is his adoration for God which provides the stimulus for all of his actions. Basically and primarily, worship (*Ibadat*) denotes this particular relationship between man and God. When a man is saying *salat* he is directly engaged in the worship of God. He bows before the Almighty Who has no equal. Whereas, when he obeys God’s commandments relating to moral and social dealings with his fellowmen, he fulfils his duties in relation to his fellowmen. From the point of view of performance, these requirements are as obligatory as particular acts of worship. But the difference in nature between the two must be kept in view, for otherwise the true concept of religion cannot be properly understood. While human duties are always contingent upon circumstances, religious duties are absolute.

Let us take an example to clarify the above statement. If, according to God’s law, it is the duty of a Muslim to distribute to certain entitled people whatever he receives in inheritance, this does not mean that everyone must strive to acquire property so that this religious obligation may be fulfilled. It means rather that if a Muslim should receive an inheritance—some property or wealth—his faith demands that he deals with it according to the commandment regarding inheritance. It is a duty which is obligatory only on having inherited something, far from it being incumbent on every individual in an absolute sense, as worship is.

This explanation of worship makes it clear that the relationship of love and fear of God is not just to serve as an “incentive” in practical life, but is rather the actual goal that we must strive to achieve in this world. All our acts have one aim—to become the means to the psychological discovery which is known as ‘entering into a relationship with God’ and ‘reaching God.’ That is to say that the relation between God and man is not just one of supposition (e.g. if we repeat certain words and actions, God in heaven will be pleased with us). Far and beyond this there is a direct link between God and man. This attitude of adoring servitude, in its external form, is obedience to God’s commandments, but its inner reality means carrying man to the point where he can ‘meet’ God, where he may whisper to his Lord, where he may cry and break down in His presence, where he may feel that he is prostrate at the feet of his Creator. To find God thus in this life is the highest and most sublime reality of religion. The aim of all rites and commandments of religion is to raise man to this level. One who finds God thus in this world, will surely find Him in the next world; one who has failed to find Him on earth should not expect to find Him in the world hereafter.

What are the signs of having found this spiritual wealth? One of the signs is that man begins to receive divine provision (20:131). In complying with God’s commandments, whatever you do is apparently a matter of your own choice: you may or may not carry them out. But

during the performance of these acts, or rites of worship, one experiences particular inner feelings which are not a matter of one's own choice, that is, one cannot produce them on one's own.

Then where do these inner feelings come from? These actually come from God. This is 'food' for the believer without which his spiritual personality could not be developed. It is like the divine provision which Mary received directly from God when living in the care of the Prophet Zakariya (Quran 3:37). When you observe a religious practice, you become aware of a special kind of feeling within you. This feeling is a reward from God for your good deeds. God does not give His best reward on credit! He gives it on cash payment. The believer receives it the very moment he makes himself deserving of it. When our Lord accepts any of our deeds, we surprisingly experience spiritual, nay angelic, feelings within ourselves. This is the introduction to Paradise that God has promised to righteous believers. It is the fragrance of the Garden of Paradise which believers find in this world. Although these inner feelings take the form of a spiritual anguish, they are more piquant by far than anything in this world. They cannot be compared with worldly delights. Intuition tells us that these inner feelings are reflections of that superior, divine reward which is called Heaven. It is said, therefore, in the Quran that the Heaven into which the believers will enter in the Hereafter will be a "known provision" (37:41) to them. It will not be a thing unknown, but a thing with

which they were already acquainted in the life of this world:

“He will admit them to Paradise He has made known to them” (47:6).

According to Abu Saeed Khudri, the Prophet once said: “The man who goes to Heaven will recognize his home even better than he recognized his house on earth.” (Bukhari).

When men give charity “with their hearts filled with awe...” (23:61); when they are able to recite the Quran in such a way that their eyes are “filled with tears” (5:86); when, while intensely remembering God, they “forsake their beds to pray to their Lord in fear and hope” (32:16); when they experience such painful moments as realizing the truth of what is stated in the Quran: “...and the love of God is stronger in the faithful” (2:165); when they have the most sublime spiritual experiences; when some hidden truths are unveiled before them; when, with restless hearts and quivering lips, they call their Lord with such inspired words as had never before come to their lips, then they are actually receiving divine provision from their Lord. They are tasting one of the many fruits that their Lord has reserved for them. In this world these fruits take the form of spiritual experiences; in the next world they will take the form of heavenly rewards. Then the faithful will feel that these are the very things of which they had been given a foretaste on earth: “Whenever they are given fruit to eat,

they will say: ‘This is what we were given before,’ for they shall be given the like.” (2:25)

What the people of Paradise are going to receive in the life hereafter has already been introduced to them in the life they left behind. How foolish it would be if they imagined that in the next life they would be introduced to tastes, with which they had been previously unacquainted. Similarly, if in this life you have not previously passed through phases of feeling yourself to be nearer to God than to all others, how can you expect proximity with God in the Hereafter? Surely, prayer deserves such a great reward as will cool the eyes of the worshippers in the Hereafter. But this reward will be shared only by those who had known in the world such prayers as had been alluded to by the Prophet: “I found the balm of my eyes in worship” (*Nasai*).

The Demands of Worship

What God desires of man, first and foremost, is that he display humility in His presence. It is this attitude which is called worship. But man has not been created in a vacuum; he has rather been placed in a world full of diverse circumstances. It is necessary that this spirit of worship should be evinced, no matter what circumstances he faces in this world.

1. The first aspect of this relates to his own person. In the course of normal living, whenever he is faced with two options, one path leading to God and the other leading to self, his spirit of worship compels him at that point

to renounce the latter path and take the one which is pointed out to him by God. This happens when he has surrendered his being in all respects, in the physical as well as the spiritual, before the God to whom he has already bowed psychologically. This manifestation of worship is related to one's own self, another name for which is submission. Occasions for such submission will occur at home, in the office, in the market, and in all other such places where the faithful may be faced with making a choice between godly and ungodly ways.

2. The second aspect of worship relates to the external world, that is, to non-Muslims. The precarious conditions of all those inhabitants of this world who have not yet established contact with their Lord, and, as a result, are drifting to a dangerous end in the hereafter, forces the believer to bring them to that path of worship which he has chosen for himself. It is the aspect of worship which manifests itself in relation to the common man. Another name for this duty of the believer is bearing witness to the truth or conveying the message of the Lord. The faithful are expected to obey the commandments of God so far as they themselves are concerned. And in relation to non-Muslims they are responsible for conveying God's message to them.

Now let us take the first manifestation of worship, i.e. submission. It can be divided into two major categories: the individual and collective (or social). Individual obedience means obeying God in those matters which

are related to the personal lives of the faithful. It covers all those commandments which pertain to morals and dealings with others, like speaking the truth, keeping one's promises, being honest and trustworthy, upholding justice and equality, being humble, giving full measure, paying everyone his due, being a well-wisher of all, in short, all those virtues which are related to man's personal life and all those situations in which man must make his own decisions. In all such cases, compliance with divine injunctions means submitting individually, surrendering to the will of God in one's own personal affairs. A Muslim is not allowed to disobey God once he knows God's commandments in relation to his personal life, and once he is in a position to obey them. The Quran states:

It is not fitting for a believing man or woman to exercise any choice in his or her own affairs once God and His Messenger have reached a decision upon them. Anyone who disobeys God and His Messenger is in manifest error (33:36).

This individual obedience to God is an obligation which every believer must fulfil. No man can ever be regarded as a worshipper in the eyes of God unless in his practical life he obeys the commandments imposed upon him by God which relate to his life and his circumstances. If "worship" in essence means submission of the inner self then, in external respects, man is required to make a complete surrender to God of his outward self. In other words, man should mould his external life entirely on the pattern

indicated by God. It is the duty of all believing men and all believing women to reject other inducements and to submit totally to God in all matters that they face in this life:

O believers, submit all of you wholeheartedly, and do not walk in Satan's footsteps; he is your sworn enemy (2:208).

The second category of commandments, for which we have chosen the title *Ita'ah* (submission), may be termed social commandments. These are commandments the obeying of which does not depend upon the will of an individual believer. These can be carried out only when the whole of society is prepared to accept them. That is why such commandments have always been sent by God only when the believers had already established a political organization among themselves, and when they were in a position to enforce such social laws. Thus the social laws of the Shari'ah are addressed to any Muslim society which is invested with authority, rather than to individual believers who have no political power.

We find in the history of the Israelites that so long as they were under the rule of the Copts of Egypt, they were not given the legal commandments which appear in the Old Testament. Only when they had left Egypt for the Sinai desert and acquired the status of an independent, authority-invested group, did God send His laws to them (Exodus 15:25). Exactly the same course was adopted in Arabia. During the Makkan period, when the faithful were a minority with no authority, only the basic part of the

Shari‘ah was revealed, for the establishment of which no political power was required. Every Muslim could adopt those laws in his life by his own personal decision. The rest of the Shari‘ah continued to be revealed according to the circumstances. That is to say, detailed commandments regarding social life were given in Madinah once the faithful had acquired temporal authority there.

The order in which these laws arrived shows that ordinarily the faithful are bound to follow only those Islamic laws which were revealed before their having reached political power. The carrying out of the rest of the laws becomes obligatory only when the faithful can, from the seat of government, enforce these laws with authority. The revelation of the Shari‘ah laws, in accordance with the gradual expansion of the Islamic field of activity, itself shows that these laws are not required to be obeyed in the absolute sense, but only in relation to circumstances. These are always determined in relation to the actual circumstances of the individual or group addressed.

The truth is that social and political commandments are directed only at those groups of believers who are in a position to carry them out. Believers with a limited sphere of power are not required to enforce religious laws on a social or national level. A system can be implemented in practice only by those who have already accepted it. This implementation, moreover, will be according to their capacity of acceptance.

One clear principle of the Shari‘ah is that “God does not

charge a soul with more than it can bear” (2:286). That is to say, no one is charged with a responsibility which is beyond his capacity to fulfill. To assign responsibility to anyone which is beyond his capacity is not God’s way. Then how can believers be asked to obey laws, which they are not in a position to comply with? If, taking into account all the details of religious laws, the claim is made that it is obligatory for believers to carry out and enforce all these laws in all circumstances, it will amount to saying, for example, that it is the responsibility of each and every Muslim to try to acquire all those financial assets on which *Zakat* (almsgiving) has been fixed, so that he may carry out the duties in relation to *Zakat*.

All the commands of religion are of equal value in terms of form, but their applicability is determined by circumstances. For instance, one command of the Quran is to “pray regularly,” another is to ‘pay *Zakat*.’ Apparently both these commands are equal in importance just as both are in the imperative tense. But their relevance to different individuals is not always the same. The command to pray regularly is an absolute command which is obligatory on each and every believer, while the command regarding *Zakat* is conditional, that is, it is obligatory only when one possesses enough wealth to come under the law of *Zakat*. That is, if a person possesses items taxable under *Zakat* law, this obligation to pay *Zakat* will be applicable to him in the absolute sense, just as the order to pray is obligatory for all. But a person who is not in possession of

items taxable under *Zakat* is neither required to pay *Zakat* nor is he ordered to acquire taxable items so that he may be able to obey the law on *Zakat*. What is desirable is that the believer should be active in carrying out duties which are applicable in the present rather than engaging in such activities which may be applicable to him in the future, in different sets of circumstances.

We learn, therefore, that there are a number of religious duties that are not to be enforced in the absolute sense, being applicable only in relation to circumstances. As the circle of believers goes on expanding, so also do the demands of religion. If there were only one single believer, only that part of religion would be obligatory upon him which related to his person. In this instance, the sole object of divine commandments would be his own person. When the believers increase in numbers to one or several families, then this whole group will be the addressee of the divine commandments. And when a group of believers attain the status of an independent, autonomous society, then it becomes the duty of the whole society to fully carry out the commandments of God regarding social matters. Since such commands cannot be carried out without authority at the social level, whenever these social commands become applicable to a society of believers, it becomes the duty of the believers to select a political leader in order to carry out the divine laws governing social life under his leadership.

All Islamic commandments are the expression of some inner reality. When faith is rooted in the heart, it reflects

on the human personality. Yet its external expression is in proportion to the scope offered by external circumstances. Interrelationships between believers is also of a similar nature. Though it is not possible to structure them in a hierarchical way, they may still be broadly divided into three main stages, for the sake of understanding it.

The first stage is that of exhortation. The crux of it is that every Muslim should have in his heart sincerity and well-wishing for every other Muslim (*Bukhari, Muslim*). In the words of the Bible, he should become his brother's keeper. (*Genesis, 4:9*).

A Companion named Jarir once came to the Prophet. The latter said, "O, Jarir, extend your hand." Jarir asked him the reason. The Prophet said: "So that you may surrender yourself to God and be a well-wisher to every Muslim." (*Kanzul Ummal, Vol. 1, p. 82*).

That is, your attitude in social intercourse should be beneficial to your brother in both the present world and the hereafter. And you should avoid any such act as could possibly lead to division and dissension among Muslims.

It is this attitude which is alluded to in the Quran in chapter 103 (revealed in Makkah): 'Exhort one another to truth and patience.' This exemplifies the spirit of worship which marks one Muslim's dealings with another. Thus God has highlighted two important aspects of this demand made by faith. One is that we induce believers in Islam to opt for the courses of action which God finds desirable. The other is that we unite so that we may staunchly face any worldly

hurdles which could bar our carrying out the will of God or our remaining steadfast on the path of God, regardless of the difficulties.

The second stage is that of organization. That is, Muslims should not remain like scattered groups, but, to the degree possible, should establish discipline among themselves, and regulate social matters by consultation. We find one example of this in the course taken by the Prophet Moses. On reaching the Sinai desert, he divided the Israelites into twelve tribes with a leader (*naqueeb*) for every group. During the early Makkan days, this social organization existed around the person of the Prophet, Dar al-Arqam (the house of Arqam) being its centre. The same system was adopted for the Ansar of Madinah before the Emigration. At the time of the second oath of allegiance (623 A.D.), when 75 people of Madinah (73 men and 2 women) came to the Prophet and accepted Islam, they were told by the Prophet to appoint twelve leaders (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. 3, p. 160). So they chose twelve responsible persons from among themselves. Three belonged to the Aws tribe and nine to the Khazraj tribe. Then the Prophet addressed them thus:

“You are the guardians of the believers of Madinah” (*Zarqani*, Vol. 1, p. 382). The leadership of Jafar, who was appointed leader of the emigrants to Abyssinia was also of this nature (*Seerat ibn Hisham*). Similarly, whenever Muslims spread out from Arabia across the world, they endeavoured to establish their social structures. In addition

to leading an Islamic life and calling others to Islam, they gave basic importance to organization, so that they were able to perform their religious duties under one leader.

The last stage of Islamic organization is the formation of a political setup which, in religious terminology, is called *Nasb-e-Imamat*, the appointment of an Imam. According to all schools of religious thought, the establishment of a political and social leader of Muslims is obligatory. This matter is so important that there is not a single book on religious law and creeds which has not dealt with this issue.

It is specially stated in *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, *Sharh Maqasid* and *Aqaaide al-Nasafi* that it is compulsory for Muslims to have an *Imam*. With one minor exception, no group disagrees over this issue. Ibn Hazm writes:

All Sunnis, Murjea, Shia, and Khawarij (except the now extinct Najdat sect) agree on the obligatory nature of the *Imamat* (*Al Melal wa al Nehal*, p. 72).

The only difference of opinion on this matter is that the people of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al Jama'a* take this to be a canonical order, while some other groups, such as *Zaidiya* and *Mutazela*, consider it necessary as being the demand of reason. But, as mentioned above, the matter of appointing a political leader is relevant only in a Muslim society which has acquired an independent status as a social group and, as such, is in a position to set up its own separate political organization. The question just does not arise of appointing a political leader over a scattered group of believers. That is to say, this commandment is not absolute. It means simply

that when a group of Muslims has a social organization, it is incumbent upon it to organize its social life on the foundations of religion and to appoint a political leader in order to lead an organized life under his leadership. Political leadership is a manifestation of the social authority of a definable group. Where no social authority exists, on what basis can one be ordained to carry out the commandment of *Imamat*?

The above statement has been made from the point of view of the feasibility of enforcing commandments. But there is an equally important requirement of Islam: the principle of gradualness to be observed when enforcing the commandments.

Viewed from this angle, a Muslim minority, however religiously aware, is not required to begin launching its Islamic mission as a campaign for the enforcement of Islamic laws. The same will hold true for a Muslim society which has degenerated into religious apathy, if not apostasy. Such a campaign as a first step would be tantamount to a deviation from the Islamic method of gradualness.

The correct way to reform a Muslim society is to spread the basic teachings and initial commandments of religion, so that to the necessary extent, Islam's legal and social laws become generally acceptable. Only after this stage will the time be ripe for starting a movement for the enforcement of God's commandments.

The importance of gradualness in enforcing commandments is stressed in a famous tradition of the

Prophet's wife 'Aishah, according to which gradualness was so essential in the eyes of God that, in many instances, He did not send the believers His commandments in their full and final form. On the contrary, most of the commandments were sent in instalments. The principle of *Naskh* (abrogation) came into operation due to this concession as mentioned in the Quran (2:106, 16:101). According to Hudhaifah, it is impermissible for anyone who is not conversant with this principle of *Naskh* to preach or to explain the verses of the Quran.

Witness to Truth

Our responsibility towards non-Muslims is to bring the truth to them in the form of the message of Islam. God's message must reach all His creatures, so that none may say in the Hereafter that he was left in a state of unawareness of the truth.

Man has been placed in this world so that he may be tested. The Quran says: "He created life and death that He might put you to the test and find out which of you acquitted himself best. He is the Mighty, the Forgiving one" (67:2).

This is a very serious situation, for it means that man's end in the hereafter will depend on his attitude in his worldly life, his end being either Heaven or eternal Hell. Owing to the seriousness of the situation, God made two special arrangements to warn mankind. First, He gave everyone the ability to discriminate between right and wrong. "And inspired it (man's soul) with knowledge of right and wrong." (91:8).

This consciousness of Truth was instilled into man's nature on the very first day of creation:

When your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of Adam's children, and made them testify themselves, (He said): 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied: 'We bear witness that You are.' This He did lest you should say on the Day of Ressurrection: 'We had no knowledge of that' (7:172).

Then after this initial measure at the level of nature He sent to mankind a series of prophets, so that a knowledge of reality might be conveyed to every man by a human being who had been chosen by God for this purpose. These prophets were "messengers who brought good news to mankind and admonished them, so that they might have no plea against God after their coming." (4:165).

This chain of prophets started with the beginning of life. Adam was not only the first man but also the first prophet. In the seventh century A.D., God willed that the chain of prophethood be terminated. Muhammad, on him be peace, was the last of God's messengers. But so far as the delivering of God's message is concerned, it is still as essential to do so as before. For this task now the followers of Muhammad on him be peace, have been chosen. As the Quran says, "He has chosen you... He has given you the name of Muslims so that His Messenger may testify you, and that you yourselves may testify your fellowmen" (22:78). The final prophet has borne full witness to the Truth, and now it is our responsibility to follow in the

footsteps of the Prophet, in testifying to the Truth to the nations of the world, until the Day of Judgement.

This is not a subsidiary task but the very *raison d'être* of the Muslim *Ummah*. According to the Quran, the establishment of Muhammad's prophethood rested in the eyes of God on the fact that he scrupulously fulfilled his duty, i.e., he conveyed the message of God to his hearers. Had the prophet failed to perform this task, the duty of prophethood would have been left incomplete.

“O Messenger, proclaim what is revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not, you will not have conveyed His message” (5:67). This responsibility which the Prophet bore, is also the responsibility of his followers (12:108).

Just as the establishment of Muhammad's prophethood rested on his conveying God's guidance to the people, similarly the followers of Muhammad are entitled to be called *Ummah* of the Prophet Muhammad only if they continue to pass on God's message to posterity. So we shall deserve the title of being the Prophet's *Ummah* only if we continue to perform his task, i.e. carry his message from generation to generation till the Last Day. A believer must follow Islam (submission to God) till his last breath. Failing to do so tantamounts to risking hellfire. This not only compels one to follow the true religion oneself, but also gives one the zeal to struggle to save other human beings from this danger. Ibn Abd Al-Bar relates that, according to Muawiyah ibn Heeda Qushayri, when the Prophet invited the latter to Islam, he also said:

“Why should I have held you by the waist to save you from the fire if not that my God will call me and will surely ask me, ‘Did you convey My message to My servants? Then I shall be able to say, ‘Yes, my God, I conveyed it to them.’ Listen, those of you who are present must convey this message to those who are absent.” (*Al-Istiab*)

The most important responsibility of the followers of Muhammad (on whom be peace), is to end all kinds of differences. According to Miswar bin Makhrama, Tabarani relates that:

“The Prophet came to his companions and said, ‘God has sent me as a blessing to all mankind. So you people—may God have mercy on you—fulfil this obligation on my behalf and do not have differences as did the followers of Jesus (on him be peace).”

Just as the Prophet was ordained by God for this purpose, likewise the Muslim *Ummah* has been ordained till Doomsday to perform this duty. During the Caliphate of Umar Faruq when Rabi ibn ‘Amir was sent as the representative of Islam to the court of the Iranian rulers, a part of the conversation recorded is as follows: ‘The latter asked him why they (he and other Muslims) had come to their country? Rabi ibn ‘Amir replied: “God has sent us so that He may take away those whom He likes, from the worship of His creatures to the worship of the Creator; from the narrowness of the world to its vastness. Thus God has sent us with His religion to His creatures, so that we may invite people to come to Him.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*)

That this responsibility is a universal one, which does not stop at any geographical boundaries is illustrated by the speech Noman bin Muqrin gave in the Court of Caesar. Here is an extract from the speech where Noman answers one of Caesar's questions:

“When Islam had spread in Arabia, the Prophet commanded us to go to the neighbouring nations and invite them to justice, so we invite you to Islam. What is good has been described by this religion as good, and what is bad has been described by this religion as bad” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. 7, p. 41).

This responsibility was quite clear to the companions of the Prophet. During the Caliphate of Umar Faruq, when ‘Amr ibn al ‘As invited the religious leaders of Egypt to enter the fold of Islam, he said: God has sent our Prophet with a message for mankind. He has fully carried out his responsibility, and has left behind a clear example, according to which we have to convey the divine message to mankind.” (*Ibn Jarir*, Vol. 4, p. 227)

First and foremost, the aim of sending prophets into the world is to inform people of the message of Truth in public and in private (71:9). This is to enable them to learn about the scheme of creation of the universe and its ultimate end; so that what is unseen they may have foreknowledge of before the present world comes to an end, when the unseen will become the seen. It is our responsibility to make people aware of the life hereafter, and to warn them—they being the creations of the one God—that all

of them are bound to appear before Him to give an account of their deeds.

Some people believe in presenting Islam to non-Muslims as a better worldly system. But this assumption is based on false premise. For, if Islam were presented fundamentally in the form of a better worldly system, acceptance of Islam would appear to the addressee as simply a way of solving the problems of this world. That is to say, the aim of Islam would appear to be to offer the means to save people from political and financial sufferings, whereas what the prophets actually came to do was to make people aware of God's Creation Plan for man.

“He lets the spirit descend at His behest on those of His servants whom He chooses, that He may warn (them) of the Day of Meeting.” (40:15)

The final stage of this *Dawah* task, from the point of view of the *mad'u* (congregation) is his acceptance of the invitation and his moulding of his life accordingly. But from the point of view of the *da'i*, the final stage of his task is his delivering the divine message to the people and, his conveying the truth with complete clarity to his listeners so that there should be no excuse left for anyone to plead ignorance. Thus the standard criterion for the fulfilment of *Dawah* work for the prophets was only this. They were not held responsible for anything further. All those nations who are mentioned in the Quran as having rejected the message of the prophets and as having incurred the punishment of God for their disobedience, were those very nations

to whose subjects the Prophet had particularly addressed himself through speeches, and by interacting, with both individuals and groups.

Beyond conveying the message to them, nothing further was attempted. That is why all the expressions, used in the Quran for the order to convey God's message fully, are synonymous with making them aware of God's Creation Plan for man. (Quran 15:94, 16:44, 21:109, 7:79, 7:35, 17:106, 29:51, 34:28, 3:193, 61:7, 5:67, 14:5).

Baihaqi relates that, according to Mughira ibn Shuba, one day when the Prophet was explaining Islam to Abu Jahl, the latter said: "Muhammad, won't you stop criticizing our idols? What you want is that we testify to the fact that you have conveyed the message, so we do bear witness that you have conveyed it!"

The Prophet repeatedly asked his companions to bear witness to the fact that he had fully conveyed God's message to them. Imam Ahmad relates that, according to Tha'alaba bin Ibad Al-Abdari, once when the Prophet stood up to give a speech, after praising God, he said:

"O, people, I ask you on God's oath to point out to me if I have fallen short, to any degree, in conveying God's message to you.' People stood up and said, 'We testify that you have delivered God's message to us. You have done full justice to the task as a well-wisher of your *Ummah*, and you have fulfilled your responsibility."

The *da'i* starts his *Dawah* work in this very spirit, keeping in

view all the requirements of wisdom and well-wishing. He wants to convey his message to the people to the maximum possible extent. The events that unfold subsequently do not depend on the *Dawah* work but depend rather on the response of the *madu* for whom this task of bearing witness has been performed. This is why we cannot determine what sets of circumstances will prevail after the *Dawah* work has been done. Neither can we hold any particular example to be the absolute model for bearing witness. The *da'i* may breathe his last, having invited people to accept the Truth all his life, without achieving any positive result.

There may also be a confrontation between the *da'i* and *mad'u* (congregation), and the latter may, individually, or with the aid of some political power, contrive to destroy the *da'i's* movement. Another possibility is that God may create such circumstances as may help either the *da'i* or his successors to acquire authority in the land. Then acquisition of authority may take various forms. It may be just political control; or the movement may receive such extensive support from the public that an organized society may come into existence on the basis of Islam. All the above results are probable, and instances of all of them are recorded in the long history of the *Dawah* struggle of the prophets.

However, none of these forms serve as a condition for bearing witness to truth or a standard formula for it. The only valid form of bearing witness is communication of God's message to the people in total honesty and sincerity

(7:68) and in such a manner as to touch the heart (4:63). This conveying of the message has to be continued, whatever the hurdles which may arise. Whatever follows after that, will be the worldly results of the *Dawah* struggle or, to put it another way, the outcome of the history of *Dawah* which assumes different forms in different circumstances. Thus, all that is required of the preacher is that he should convey God's message to the fullest possible extent and that he should continue to perform this duty all his life. Any further developments depend upon the response of the *madu*. It is obvious that no fixed list of the outcomes of *Dawah* can be foretold nor can difference in the nature of the response determine the completeness or incompleteness of the work of the *da'i*.

The next important consideration is that, in the carrying out of *dawah* work, there is no need to present all aspects of the religion on a single occasion to non-Muslims. The proper way is to start with the basic teachings of Islam. God, prophethood, the Life Hereafter are the concepts which are first put to non-Muslim addressees. And these are matters which have to be regularly explained to them from various angles. Effective logical explanation has to be resorted to solve any problems they may face in understanding these points and, once they have come to accept these concepts, they are taught the remainder of God's commands for the faithful. In the tenth year of Hijrah, when the Prophet sent Mu'adh ibn Jabal to Yemen to call people to Islam, he told Mu'adh that he would meet a number of people of the Book, and that he should first

explain to them the article of faith i.e., the concept of the oneness of God, and when they had accepted this, then he should gradually teach them how to say prayers and observe other commands.

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas relates that the Prophet said to Muadh ibn Jabal, before sending him on a *dawah* mission to Yemen: “You are going to a nation who are People of the Book. When you reach there, first ask them to testify to the oneness of God and to Muhammad being His messenger. When they have accepted this, tell them further that God has ordained that they worship five times a day. After they have accepted this also, explain to them that God has made almsgiving obligatory and this *zakat* will be taken from their rich and distributed among their poor. When they agree to that also, you should refrain from showing any interest in their most valued possessions.” (*Bukhari*)

That is why the prophets were given only basic teachings at the initial stage, so that they propagated these teachings for long periods. Thereafter, such detailed instructions were revealed as were consistent with the prevailing circumstances. It has never happened that a prophet has introduced in the first stages of *Dawah* work the whole social and cultural system to any community, and demanded that they establish an Islamic state immediately or enforce all Islamic laws in all spheres of life.

Although all of the commandments, in the above mentioned Hadith, had already been revealed, the Prophet advised the

da'i not to impart all of them to the *mad'u* at the same time, but rather to put them to the people gradually, according to their circumstances. This reveals the fact that just as the commandments were originally sent by God gradually in instalments, even now it is desirable that they be presented with gradualness. The order of their revelation tells us that they are meant to be presented to people step by step at all times. It would be wrong to say that although they were originally revealed gradually, after the completion of their revelation, the policy of gradualness had been discarded, and that they should now be presented all at one time in their entirety.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOUR PILLARS

I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me.

—The Quran, 51:56

After belief in God and the Prophet, four practices enjoy the status of pillars of Islam—fasting, prayer, *zakat* (almsgiving) and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah). In essence, these are the four parts which make up the whole that is called Islam.

Fasting means not just abstaining from food and drink, but rising above the material world so that man may come in contact with God. Prayer, in spirit, is remembrance of God. *Zakat*, in reality, is a form of sacrifice meant to underline those ethical values which are known in Islam as *Huqu qul Ibad*, that is, fulfilment of one's responsibilities towards others. Hajj, a re-enactment of the missionary life of the greatest preacher of truth, the Prophet Abraham, also necessarily entails sacrifice in the cause of God. Understanding and acceptance of these four pillars, as symbols of the fundamental parts of Islam, prepare one to adopt Islam fully in one's life.

Each of these four acts of worship is imbued with a particular

spirit, yet is so designed that its performance, as well as fulfilling its basic purpose, may achieve other important ends. The pillars of Islam may, in this respect, be likened to human limbs, each having a separate function, but inseparably attached to the body.

1. One significant aspect of these acts of worship is that, even if their basic aim, that is, bringing believers closer to God, is not being served, they are bound in some measure to benefit from them. For example, even if prayer and fasting do not bring worshippers closer to God (96:19), these practices may at least make them God fearing, and they consequently keep themselves away from indecency and evil (29:45). Fasting, in the words of the Prophet, will teach them to refrain from falsehood, promise-breaking and loud talk; it provides them with a shield against the onslaughts of the devil.
2. Each act of worship has been so designed that, as well as fulfilling its own specific purpose, it is closely and meaningfully linked with other acts of worship. For example, the real aim of *hajj* is to prepare the pilgrim for a missionary life—that of calling people to God. But the form it takes in the process is that of visits to sacred places and the performance of the rites of *hajj*, as a result of which the pilgrim receives a special share in the love of God and a heightened awareness of the life hereafter. He returns purified after this act of worship, and is able to lead a fuller and better religious life.
3. Every act of worship is aimed, essentially, at bringing

the worshipper into close contact with God. But the different forms of its performance have been so designed that they meet other requirements of life as well, or, at least, strengthen man's will to achieve other worthy goals. For example, prayer in congregation and the worldwide gathering for *haji* serve as a platform for Muslim unity; similarly, fasting is beneficial for physical health and *zakat* makes for a well-organised economic system.

Fasting

The Arabic term for fasting is *sawm*. In essence, it is the same as *tabattul ilallah* i.e. detaching oneself from the world and devoting one's life entirely to God (Quran, 73:8). Fasting, along with most of the other rites of worship, was prescribed on a regular basis after the Prophet's emigration to Madinah (2 A.H.), but it had been practiced even before Islam in one form or the other. According to Aishah, the Prophet's wife, the Quraysh used to fast on the day of Ashura, in their days of Ignorance (before Islam) and the Prophet would also fast on that day (*Sahih Muslim*). So one might say that fasting marks the entrance to an Islamic life, if the Prophet's stay in the cave of Hira, before his receiving prophethood, is taken into account.

When God decided to give His scriptures to Moses, He asked him to go to Mount Tur where, remaining apart from his people, he was to spend forty days in fasting and

abstinence. Moses did so for forty days continuously. Only then did God speak to him. This is mentioned in verse 143 of Chapter 7 of the Quran.

Before commencing his prophetic mission, the Prophet Jesus had fasted for forty days in the desert. Only then was the word of God revealed to him. This is recorded in the Bible as the Sermon on the Mount (*Jewish Encyclopaedia*). Likewise, the Final Prophet used to go to the cave of Hira before receiving his prophethood. There he would fast in seclusion, engrossed in a world of worship and contemplation. Only after a long period of this inner purification did the time come for him to be visited by an angel, so that he might receive the word of God.

In the Islamic shari'ah, fasting is known as *sawm*, a word which means to abstain. Literally, it means to abstain from meeting people, speaking, eating and drinking. A horse that has been detained at a stable and denied fodder is called *al-Khail as-Saim*, in Arabic. That is why the Prophet called the month of Ramadan a month of patience. Harith ibn Malik, describing one of his fasts to the Prophet, said, "I withdrew from the world and was thirsty all day." The outer sign of fasting is abstention from food from morning till evening. But, in its real essence, it is to withdraw from all worldly attachments, and reduce all mundane necessities to a minimum. While fasting, one devotes much less time to conversation, social activity and other such worldly activities. This reaches a climax during *Itikaf*, a total retreat conducted during the last ten days of Ramadan. In

Itikaf one is totally cut off from these pursuits. One retires from the human world and enters the world of God. The contact which the believer thus establishes with God should remain with him throughout his life. This is what the Prophet termed *Zuhd* (detachment from the world) and has been made obligatory in the form of fasting during the month of Ramadan. This renunciation, or *Itikaf* during the last days of the month of fasting is considered an extremely desirable form of worship. In *Itikaf*, one distances oneself completely from the world and turns to God. *Itikaf* is the most complete fulfilment of Islam's requirements during the month of Ramadan, but, it is required to be practiced less strictly as concession, during the first part of the month.

What are the benefits sought in fasting? Its aim is to weaken the material aspect of man and strengthen the spirituality in him, so that he may enter the higher realms of faith.

Two things make up a man: his body and his soul. While the material part of man, the body, is indispensable for the performance of mundane tasks, it is his soul which will take him to the higher realities. The soul or the mind—as psychologists prefer to call it—must, therefore, be preserved in its pristine state. That means that just as the body requires physical nourishment, the soul must be nourished spiritually.

When one lifts oneself up from the material world and becomes attached to the spiritual world, one is astonished to apprehend a new door of truth opening before one.

All those realities that were formerly invisible beneath a veil of matter now become plain for one to see. One reaches the loftiest station—the final stage in the ascent of man.

This is explained in a tradition of the Prophet:

When a person has elevated himself from the world, God endows him with wisdom, which emanates from his lips. He is shown the ills of the world, and their remedies. He is brought safely to the abode of peace. (*Mishkat*)

There comes a point on this path when one passes so far beyond the veil of matter that one can see realities exactly as they are. Then one “worships God, as if one were seeing Him.” (*Bukhari*)

A common man can also elevate his soul to this degree. Prophethood, however, is the final stage of this path. The difference is that a prophet is one chosen by God. There is no obscurity in his vision of the divine world; it appears before him in absolute, certain form; it actually becomes a part of his consciousness. The prophet is thus in a position to say: “I know that I know.” While a common man can never reach this stage, because he is not ‘chosen.’ Unlike the prophets, his contact with the divine world is neither absolute nor conscious.

Of the verses of the Quran prescribing the fast of Ramadan, there is one which does not apparently seem to deal with fasting, but it is in this verse that the significance of fasting has been explained:

And when My servants question you concerning Me, tell them that I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls upon me. (Quran 2:186)

The prophets, because of their being chosen, are in direct contact with God through angels. For others, the Quran takes the place of the angel Gabriel. By fasting and abstinence, the prophets cleansed and purified their souls or minds of all material stain, thus detaching themselves inwardly from the world. It was then that God's angel descended to them and directly communicated to them the word of God. Others who hope to attain God through the Quran must also engage in fasting and abstinence in order to understand what they read. Although the Quran is with us today, preserved in written form as it was revealed, it enters one's heart only when one is spiritually prepared to receive it by living a life of fasting and devotion.

The fact that Ramadan fasting was prescribed in the month when Quranic revelations began is an indication that the purpose of fasting is to prepare the individual mentally and physically for becoming a recipient of the Quran, in the true sense of the word.

Just as the Prophet had to fast in the solitude of the cave of Hira in order to receive the Quran, so shall other believers have to do the same. Otherwise they will be, in the words of the Quran, like donkeys, "laden with books" (62:5). The Book of God will not have entered their hearts.

The Quran is the law of the universe, it is the voice of nature. One who is submerged in the depth of its meanings

begins to hear its message in every heartbeat. Every particle in the universe starts conveying its message to him. He eventually comes to see the Quran and nature as counterparts of one another: "But the Quran is a revelation that is clear to the hearts of those endowed with knowledge. Only the evil-doers refuse to acknowledge Our revelations." (Quran 29:49)

Man's prior and most important needs are food and drink. Abstinance from these things cannot but inconvenience him. Fasting, by its very nature, is sure to result in physical discomfort. The fact that God has said in the Quran that He desires your well-being, not your discomfort (2:185), shows indirectly that there is bound to be some physical inconvenience involved in fasting. Why, then, has it been called a path to ease and well-being?

Yusr, the word used in this verse, is the Arabic for ease, or well-being. It is used when an individual becomes so well-prepared for any task that he finds it easy. The meaning of this verse is that fasting might appear to cause discomfort, but God has nothing to gain from causing unnecessary trouble to human beings! Man has been created in such a way by God that he must necessarily satisfy his material needs, but if he is to discover the Quran on a truly intellectual level, it is also essential, at least for a few fixed days, to retire from the material world in order to develop the spiritual part in himself, so that he may see far and beyond all material veils: only then will he be able to receive the word of God. This is the relevance of fasting

to the Quran, because of which the month in which the Quran was revealed has been decreed a month of fasting.

Some think that the most important thing about fasting is the breaking of it, so the whole day is spent in arranging for a variety of dishes and drinks. Others consider it to mean staying hungry all day, and reciting the whole of the Quran each day without stopping to ponder over its meanings. But such acts only serve to turn a purely Islamic kind of worship into a form of Christian monasticism. As for what is mistakenly called *dhikr bil Jahr* (loud remembrance of God)—repetitive recitation of this contradicts the very purpose of fasting, which is spiritual seclusion. The true aim of fasting is withdrawal from everything except essential subsistence and vital responsibilities. During this period, one should reduce conversation, social life, and all kinds of worldly activity to a minimum. For a certain time, one should lead a life of quiet devotion, reading the Quran and pondering over its meaning.

Abstinence from food symbolizes not only the eschewing of those forbidden things which a believer should give up for his entire life, but also the renunciation of lawful things for the duration of the fast. In seeking nearness to God, the believer must cut himself off from all worldliness.

Although fasting, in its specific and definite form, is prescribed just once a year, the fasting engaged in for this one month should be a continuous, permanent stage, if it is to be done in the correct spirit. Fasting is cutting oneself off from the world and turning to God not in a physical sense,

but in one's consciousness, one's spirituality. The supreme state of faith is for one's heart and mind to be continually directed towards God, whatever one's bodily activity. Spiritually, one's whole life should be a form of retreat at all times. Through not understanding this reality, people have fled to mountains and jungles in order to perfect their faith. But the perfection of faith results from one fulfilling one's obligations in the turmoil of the world, while remaining in a state of inward "retreat" and remembrance of God. Abdullah ibn Masud, one of the Prophet's closest companions, addressed his contemporaries in these words:

"You fast more than the Companions of the Prophet; you pray more than them, and strive more than them; but still they were better than you." People asked him why. "They were totally disinterested in this world, they were extremely eager for the next," was Ibn Masud's reply. (*Hilyatul Awliya*, Vol. 1, p. 136)

Prayer (*Salat*)

The essence of prayer is remembrance of God (Quran, 20:14). The Arabic word for remembrance is *dhikr*. It means to bring something to mind. One might say, for instance, *dhakkartuhu fa tadhakkara* (I reminded him and that brought it to his mind). God requires man to remember Him. Time and time again, His greatness, wisdom, creativity and sovereignty should spring to mind. Prayer has, therefore, been prescribed as an obligation to bring about this state of constant remembrance.

The Quran states that everything in the universe is constantly engaged in praising God. When God placed Adam in charge of the earth, and commanded the angels to bow down before him, the angels replied: “We continuously sing Your praises and sanctify Your name.” (2:30) This shows that the angels thought that to be worthy of this trust God placed in man, one had to be continually praising God. According to Bukhari, the number of prayers initially decreed on the Prophet’s heavenly journey was fifty. Clearly, if one prayed fifty times in a 24-hour day, one would spend almost all of one’s time in prayer. In order to lessen the burden on people, this number was later reduced by God to five, although fifty remained the ideal.

Prayer is an acknowledgement by God’s servant of the divinity of the Almighty. So many are the aspects of His divinity and so countless the forms in which it is made manifest to man that, even if one lives in a constant state of remembrance of God, one cannot do all of them justice; one is obliged to admit that one’s worship of God can never be commensurate with His blessings. Ideally, man should always be in a worshipful state; he should remain in eternal supplication before his Lord.

Five specific times of prayer have been ordained by a merciful God, Who does not wish to tax us beyond our capacity. Prayer, as the Quran says, is a duty incumbent on the faithful, to be conducted at appointed hours (4:103). Prayer at other times takes no specific form. But whether

performed at the appointed hours or at other times, the purpose of prayer is remembrance of God (20:14). Remembrance of God has even been called the highest form of prayer (29:45). If one keeps this reality in mind, the meaning of those verses which enjoin remembrance of God in the various circumstances of life will become clear. Although prayer, in a specific form is obligatory only five times a day, one should, in reality, be praying at all times. One is required to remain in a prayerful state even when engaged in what seem to be purely worldly pursuits. One should be like the “men whom neither trade nor profit can divert from remembering Him.” (24:37).

When the Quran refers to the people of Paradise as having been “in constant prayer” (70:23), prayer is meant in this vast, all-embracing sense. This constant prayer, or remembrance of God, does not consist of the repetition of any set words. True remembrance is expressed by spontaneous utterances, not by fixed formulas. When one becomes aware of higher realities, one becomes immersed in thoughts of God; one’s whole being shares in this divine state. The words which one then addresses to the Lord spontaneously are the stuff of true remembrance. In the words of the Prophet, it seems at that time as if one were grazing in the pastures of paradise: Whoever would like to graze in heaven’s pastures should remember God much (*Tabarani*).

The Quran has divided prayer into two kinds:

1. Humble prayer (23:2)
2. Unmindful prayer (107:5)

The first type of prayer entitles one to paradise, but the second type can only lead to doom:

Woe to those who pray but are unmindful of their prayer (107:4-5).

On one occasion, when the Prophet was seated in his mosque in Madinah, a man entered, prayed without much concentration, and then came before him. The Prophet told him to go back and pray again, “for you have not prayed.” On another occasion the Prophet said:

The closest man comes to his Lord is in the act of prostration during prayer (*Muslim*).

The difference between the two kinds of prayer does not relate to outward appearances, or to the performance of certain rituals. It is entirely dependent upon the inner state in which the prayer is performed. Unmindful prayer is simply an empty ritual during which one is not conscious of what one is doing; one goes through the formalities of prayer, but, inwardly, one does not participate in the prayer experience. Anas gives us the Prophet’s description of the hypocrite’s prayer: “He sits and watches the sun go down. Then when it has become pale and yellow (i.e. when the time is almost up), he gets up and prays in the manner of a chicken pecking at the ground. He remembers God but little in his prayer.” (*Nasai*).

Humble prayer is the prayer of submission, an experience

in which one's whole being shares. Uqbah ibn Amir reports this saying of the Prophet:

One who performs his ablutions well, and then prays two *rakat* in which, inwardly and outwardly, he is concentrating fully on his prayer, is assured of paradise (*Muslim*).

On another occasion, the Prophet said as reported by Usman ibn Affan that whoever performed his ablutions as he had demonstrated, then prayed two *rakat* without thinking of anything else, would be forgiven all previous sins (*Bukhari* and *Muslim*).

One fundamental requirement of prayer is adherence to specific outward forms, which the Quran calls "attending to prayer" (70:34). There are certain actions by means of which one enters the world of prayer. The lifting of the hands at the beginning of the prayer is a sign that one is leaving one's environment and going to another world. One then becomes lost in the supplications one makes and the praise that one offers to God. One should, in fact, become oblivious of one's surroundings, just as one would when totally engrossed in some captivating worldly pursuit, for prayer is a meeting between man and God.

The various actions of prayer are stages in that meeting. Finally, the worshipper looks to his right and left and says the words: "Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God." When he says this, he feels as if he is coming back from another world. He is returning to his old surroundings and greeting those who are there to meet him.

Fiqh (Islamic law) divides prayer into various parts. It makes some things obligatory, some essential, and some voluntary. It emphasizes some things more than others. But, in the world of reality, there is no such division in prayer. Prayer which goes no further than this classification is but the mouthing of a robot; it is not the prayer of a human being, a robot can copy the actions of prayer exactly; ritually, its prayer can come up to any standard laid down by Islamic law. But human prayer is more than just a ritual, for it is full of feeling. It is a spiritual experience that cannot be divided into legal compartments, and cannot be explained in legal terms.

Submission to God in prayer should become a sign of submission in practical life. When the Prophet Shu‘ayb pointed this out to the people of Midian, and urged them to worship God and obey His commandments, they replied: “O Shu‘ayb, did your prayers teach you that we should renounce the gods of our fathers and not conduct our affairs in the manner we pleased?”

In prayer, which “restrains one from indecency and evil” (29:45), one repeatedly bows and prostrates oneself before God. This is a sign that one is ready to accept and act upon God’s commandments. The Quran makes it clear that to succumb to one’s desires is to neglect the true spirit of prayer. The generations who succeeded the early Israelites “neglected their prayers and succumbed to their desires. These shall assuredly be lost” (19:59).

The most sublime state of prayer occurs when remembrance of God has become ingrained in one's nature. That is when one feels that one is truly drawing nearer to the Almighty. The Quran says, "Prostrate yourself and draw nearer" (96:19).

"Worship your Lord until certainty comes to you" (15:99). Some commentators take this stage of 'certainty' mentioned in the Quran to refer to the most sublime state of prayer. But this does not mean that when one reaches this stage, one should stop praying. This feeling of 'certainty' only marks the beginning of prayer in its highest form. How can prayer end at that point? It is, in reality, a description of the ultimate state of prayer. Having reached this state does not mean that prayer is subsequently rendered unnecessary.

The true nature of this state of "nearness" and "certainty" cannot be explained in words. When one crosses that threshold, it is as if beholding, with absolute certainty, an unseen reality. Something which was infinitely remote has, it appears, drawn very near. Love wells up inside one for that most awesome of beings. Prostration is the physical expression of the ultimate state of prayer in which the believer is in the closest proximity to God.

But, seen in its true light, it is a posture which expresses man's helplessness before his Maker, and his total surrender to Him, the Infinite and Perfect Being. When one places one's forehead on the ground, it is as if one has formed an indissoluble bond at the psychological level with the Almighty.

What is meant by the constant remembrance of God which true prayer entails? It is not something which can be materially analysed. Remembrance is a reciprocal act, with man at one extreme and God at the other. When one thinks of God, standing and sitting, sleeping and waking (3:191), one merits God's attention, and that is when He engenders in one the state of true remembrance. He inspires in one the words with which to express this remembrance. In fact, one is constantly receiving spiritual replenishment from the Lord. As Mary said, "God gives without measure to whom He will" (3:37). Clearly, we are dealing here with spiritual experiences which cannot be categorized and listed. Nevertheless, the Quran has described some of the signs of the state of remembrance.

1. The thought of God is so all-pervasive that every event serves to remind one of Him:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of sense; those that remember God when standing, sitting and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth saying: 'Lord, You have not created all this without purpose. (3:191)

2. One is so overwhelmed by the greatness of God that the hairs of one's body stand on end:

The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble for fear of Him. (39:23)

3. Mention of God fills one with awe:

The true believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God (8:2).

4. One weeps on hearing the word of God:

When they listen to that which was revealed to the Prophet, you will see their eyes fill with tears as they recognize its truth (5:83).

The true believers have always followed the Quranic edict: “Fortify yourselves with patience and prayer” (2:45). Hudhaifa tells how the Prophet, in times of distress, would get up and pray. Likewise, when the great theologian, Ibn Taimiyya, was unable to solve some problems, he would go to some desolate mosque, cast himself before God and pray: “Teacher of Abraham, teach me.” Abdullah ibn Mas’ud once said: As long as you are praying, you are knocking on the Lord’s door. And whoever knocks on His door will have the door opened to him (*Abu Nu’aim*).

For the true believer, prayer is an oasis in the desert of life. When one is blessed with this state of prayer, it becomes the dearest thing one has in life. The Prophet once said:

Prayer is the balm of my eyes (*Nasa’i*).

One day the Prophet called on Bilal to deliver the *adhan*. These were the words that came to the Prophet’s lips:

Bilal, make ready for prayer; and comfort us thereby (*Abu Dawud*).

The ideal way to pray is not by reciting the entire Quran once, or even twice in the course of the prayer. The most important feature of prayer is one’s pondering over the

verses of the Quran as one recites them. One who treats recitation of the Quran as an outpouring of feeling for God, who remembers God as he repeats His words, cannot possibly recite the whole of the Quran once or twice in a day. Only one who mechanically repeats words learnt by heart can do that. Sometimes the Prophet would spend one whole night reciting a single chapter of the Quran. It is related by 'A'ishah that when the Prophet was told about certain people who recited the whole Quran once or twice in a single night, he replied, "They recite, but they do not really recite at all." (*Ahmad*). "I used to stay up the whole night with the Prophet," 'A'ishah continues. "He used to read the chapters Al-Baqarah, Al-Imran, and An-Nisa only. When he reached a verse in which there was some warning, he used to seek refuge and invoke God's protection. When he reached a verse which contained good tidings, he would show eagerness and pray to God."

Zakat

Zakat, in essence, is a form of sacrifice. Its purpose is to fulfil God's desire for a society in which people are ready to give rather than take; in which people seek opportunities to benefit rather than exploit others; in short, everyone should feel responsible for the welfare of his fellow men. *Zakat*, designed to create a spirit of social co-operation, makes each individual fully aware of his having duties rather than rights in this world.

The great importance of *zakat* in the religious system is

evident from an exchange which took place between the Prophet and one Bushair ibn Khasasiya. The latter had come to the Prophet to express his readiness to swear allegiance to the true faith. But first he was anxious to know on what conditions he could do so, and what he should have to surrender. When the Prophet specified what he would have to accept on becoming a Muslim, Bushair said that two of the precepts, *Zakat* and *Jihad*, would be difficult for him to follow, and requested that he be exempted from them. The Prophet, who had extended his hand to receive Bushair's pledge of faith withdrew it saying: "O Bushair how can you enter heaven without *Zakat* and *Jihad*?"

The apostasy which grew after the Prophet's death arose out of resistance to the payment of *Zakat*. The ancient Arabs had very limited economic resources, and many tribes, therefore, wanted *zakat* to be excluded from Islamic obligations. On the plea that "the man who brought divine grace to the Muslims has left this world." (*Kanzul Ummal*, Vol. III, p. 142), these newly converted Muslim tribes made it plain that they no longer felt obliged to obey the economic orders of the Islamic government. But they did not object to anything other than the payment of *Zakat*. They still called themselves Muslims, and even observed the rituals of prayer and fasting as enjoined in the Quran. Even so, the first caliph said "By God, I will fight those who make a distinction between *Salat* and *Zakat* (prayer and almsgiving) because *Zakat* is wealth to which God has a right." (*Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad*)

There are many verses of the Quran which emphasise that

“all wealth is God’s” (24:33) and that all bounties come from God (67:15), (17:20). This being so, had God held all goods and wealth to be His share, He had the right to do so. But He called only one portion His and left the rest to His servants. The Quran says: “Pay the due thereof upon the harvest day.” (6:141)

Canonically, *Zakat* was enforced in the fifth year after the Hijrah, although in an unspecified form. Having been considered desirable right from the beginning of the Prophet’s mission, it is mentioned even in those verses that were revealed in Makkah.

In the same year a group of Muslims migrated from Makkah to Ethiopia. There, when they introduced Islam in the court of King Najashi, their leader, Jafer bin Abi Talib, laid emphasis on the payment of *Zakat*: “He (the Prophet) ordered us to worship God, establish *Salat* as a rite and pay *Zakat*.”

Chapter 23 of the Quran, entitled ‘The Believers’ begins: “Blessed are the believers who give alms to the destitute,” while chapter 42 gives a warning to the unbelievers: “Woe to those who give no alms.” (41:7)

In the beginning, it was a general commandment. Later, the frequency of payment, the amount and individual items of *Zakat* were fixed, so that alms had to be collected on behalf of the state like a tax. But since the payment of *Zakat* is not just tax-payment in the ordinary sense, but is also an act of worship, no upper limit has been set to it. It is, therefore, left to individual’s discretion to how

much should be expended on *Zakat* in order to please God. According to Fatima bint Qays, the Prophet once answered a question about how much should be given as *Zakat* by saying, “Truly, God’s share in men’s possessions is more than *Zakat*.” (*Tirmizi*). The Quran enjoins man to spend whatever is left after providing for his own needs – ‘what you can spare.’ (2:219)

There are two forms of *Zakat*, or spending for the sake of the Lord: (i) Charity and (ii) what is called the ‘goodly loan.’

Those that give alms, be they men or women, and those that give a generous loan to Allah, shall be repaid twofold. They shall receive a noble recompense. (57:18)

Charity means feeding the hungry (Quran, 74:44) or, in a more general sense, providing for the needy. Giving a ‘goodly loan’ means spending for the cause of God as a measure of support to the faith. The spreading of faith is greatly desired by God. Dedicating one’s life and property to this end is considered to be deserving of great rewards. As this activity is not solely to provide for the material needs of the people, but is also for the sake of God, God has called it making a loan to Himself.

The amount to be given in charity has been fixed in the form of *Zakat*, but the amount to be given as a ‘goodly loan’ has no upper limits. Whoever wishes to be included in the first rank of God’s servants, i.e. *da’is*, must surrender all of his possessions to the Almighty.

‘Allah has purchased from the faithful their lives and

worldly goods in return for paradise.’ (9:111) Man is enjoined to give generously for the cause of God. (57:10) Any other course would lead to self destruction.

If Muslims did not strive for the cause of Islam, they would not receive the divine blessing. It is for this reason that spending for the cause of God has been promised a seven hundred fold rewards, nay even more (2:261). For those who spend on the cause of God, such precious blessings lie in store as would completely surpass human knowledge and imagination.

To all appearances, *Zakat* is a tax, but, in essence, it is a form of worship. This means that even if the government makes its payment compulsory (as in the case of government taxation) the giver cannot properly benefit from it in terms of the reward he will receive in the hereafter, unless he experiences the feelings special to an act of worship when he makes the payments.

1. When the believer expects a good reward from God for his charity, he should be prepared to give away good things. The Quran states:

O believers, give in alms of the wealth you have lawfully earned and of that which We have brought out of the earth for you; not worthless things which you yourselves would only reluctantly accept. (2:267)

Aishah once intended to give stale meat in charity. Then the Prophet said: “You are giving in charity what you yourself cannot eat.” (*Musnad Ahmad*)

2. Whatever is given should be given with fear in one's heart.

Believers should "give alms with hearts filled with awe, knowing that they will return to their Lord." (23:60). "Although they hold it dear, they give sustenance to the poor man, the orphan and the captive, (saying): 'We feed you for God's sake only; we seek of you neither recompense nor thanks: for we fear from our Lord a day of anguish and woe.'" (76:9-10)

3. Whoever is given charity should not be reminded of it, nor should anything be said to hurt his self respect. "Those who give their wealth for the cause of God and do not follow their almsgiving with taunts and insults shall be rewarded by their Lord." (2:262)
4. Givers should not consider their donations either a financial loss or a burden. They should "give away their wealth from a desire to please God and to strengthen their own souls." (2:264)
5. According to the Quran it is better to give alms to the poor in private rather than in public. The Prophet's companions, therefore, took special care to keep their almsgiving secret. There is the story of Abdur Rahman bin Sabit Jamhi who, when he received his stipend, would buy essential food for his family and give away the rest of his money in alms. If his wife asked him about the remainder of his earnings, he would reply that he had lent it to someone. Such actions often created many delicate situations in the household. How the *Sahaba*

(followers of the Prophet) dealt with such situations is illustrated by the following incident.

Hassan bin Atiya narrates that when Caliph Umar dispatched Saeed bin Amir to Syria as governor, the latter set out with his wife, a bright-faced Quraysh girl. But he was very soon in dire need of money. When Umar heard of this, he sent him one thousand dinars. Saeed brought the money home to his wife and said that Umar has sent it for them. His wife suggested that he had better store food and other necessities with that money. He offered a better suggestion, that they entrust the money to someone who should bring it to them when they were in great need, that is, in the Hereafter. (*Abu Nuaim, Hilyatul Auliya*, Vol. 1, p. 244)

The narrator goes on to say that Saeed then quietly gave away all the money in charity. When the wife came to know of this, she started crying, and the family was faced with the kind of delicate situation which arises on such occasions. Saeed tried to make her understand with great difficulty. Finally the wife agreed with him.

Abu Dhar Ghafari had sage observations to make on the importance of almsgiving.

There are three partakers of wealth. First there is fate, which will not consult you before taking all your possessions away from you, whether this be good or bad, or whether this ruins or kills you. Second, there is the heir who while waiting for your burial, so that he may take possession of your wealth, regards you as expendable. The third is you yourself, and if you do not wish to prove the

weakest of the three, you must give to charity, because God has said that, “you shall never be truly righteous until you give away what is dearest to you.” (3:92). (*Hilyatul Auliya*, Vol. I, p. 163)

According to Anas, once, when Aisha was at home in Madinah, she heard a commotion and was told, on enquiry, that it was the caravan of Abdur Rahman ibn Auf which was returning from Syria with seven hundred camels laden with merchandise. Aisha said that on this occasion she heard the Prophet remark: “I see Abdur Rahman entering heaven on his knees.” When Abdur Rahman bin Auf heard this, he said, “If I can, I shall walk into heaven.” Having said this, he gave away all the animals and all the goods for the sake of his Lord.

Abdur Rahman bin Sabit Jumahi reported the Prophet as saying: “When God gathers the people together to be held to account on the Day of Judgement, the poor believers will come hopping like pigeons. They will be asked to stay to give an account of themselves. They will say, ‘We have no accounts to give, neither did you give us any. Then God will say, ‘My servants have spoken the truth.’ Then the gates of paradise will be opened for them, and they will enter heaven seventy years ahead of the others.”

Pilgrimage - Hajj

Hajj in essence is sacrifice. The journey undertaken to perform the pilgrimage means a sacrifice of time and money,

and the animal offered to God symbolizes the sacrifice of life. The rites of *Sa'i* (movement between the two hillocks) and *Tawaf* (circumambulating the Kabah) means that the pilgrim diverts his attention from all worldly matters in order to devote himself to the one and only God.

What is that divine mission in the course of which the believer must offer all these sacrifices? It is, in effect, to proclaim the glory of God on earth: “And when you have fulfilled your sacred duties, remember God as you remembered your forefathers or with deeper reverence” (2:200).

The Prophet said: “The acts of *Rami Jamar* (throwing of stones at the devil) and the walking between the hills of Safa and Marwa are for the proclamation of God’s name” (*Mishkat, Kitab Al-Manasik*).

The message of Hajj has been handed down from generation to generation through the repeated re-enactment of the life history of the greatest missionary, the Prophet Abraham (c. 1985-2160 BC) who dedicated his entire life to perform the role of a *da'i*. The full extent of Abraham’s dedication was demonstrated by his readiness to sacrifice even his own son for God. But God was satisfied that Abraham, by showing his willingness to perform the sacrifice, had passed the test of loyalty to his Creator. God, therefore “ransomed his son with a noble sacrifice and bestowed on him the praise of later generations” (37:107-8). Every rite of Hajj reminds us of the life of this great *da'i*.

The pilgrim (Haji) symbolically ‘relives’ certain historic

events in the life of Abraham, whose entire existence was dedicated to *dawah* (the call to religion). He makes a pledge to God that he will similarly dedicate his life to the propagation of the Truth, irrespective of the circumstances, and even when it entails passing through all the stages of Abraham's ordeals in this mission.

The Prophet was once asked who a Haji was. He replied: "One who has disheveled and smelling hair." Asked which Hajj was the best, the Prophet replied: "The one in which a person is covered with dust and bleeds" (*Mishkat, Kitab al-Manasik*).

That is to say that the disordered life and the frantic acts of Hajj are not mere soulless rituals unrelated to the real life of men. The pilgrim, in fact, leads an extremely dedicated life, and is the picture of purposefulness with his expression of the determination to go to the extent even of sacrificing his life for a religious purpose.

During the acts and rites of Hajj, it is as if the servant of God has given himself up to his Lord to the ultimate extent. The undertaking of the journey entails the sacrifice of time and money; the wearing of *ihram* is the symbol of having renounced everything but his barest needs; *tawaf* and *sa'i* portrays total surrender to the Lord of the Kabah; *rami jamar* is a demonstration of the fact that far from adopting an attitude of compromise or cooperation with the devils, he will put up a stiff resistance to them; the animal sacrifice is a pledge of self-sacrifice to God; staying out on the open plain of Arafat is symbolic of the

assembly, on Doomsday, of all men in the presence of God. Thus the various practices of Hajj aim at giving men the lesson of surrendering before God, fearing God, and awareness of the Day of Judgement. A strong love of God is thus developed, which leads the believer to fulfil like one possessed the Lord's commandments.

The four pillars of Islamic worship are the source of developing, from four different sides, the one common state in which man is totally attached to his God and considers fulfilling His will to be the only purpose in life. Fasting aims at achieving this state within the framework of physical needs. *Salat* achieves this through bodily movements. *Zakat* achieves this purpose through monetary expenditure and the same desired aim is achieved in Hajj by the pilgrim symbolically reenacting the history of the Prophet Abraham.

Hajj as an act of worship dates back to the time of Abraham. He was born in Ur, a city in ancient Iraq, where his father was the Chief of the Idol House. Abraham, believing in the only God, broke the idols, criticised his father, proclaimed the Truth to the King and warned the people against their waywardness. These acts turned everyone against him. Consequently, he had to leave his hearth and home. He left his motherland along with his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot. He did not renounce the propagation of faith. Instead, the work of propagation, which was originally confined to Ur, was now organised on an international scale. He sent his nephew, Lot, as a preacher to the area of Sodom,

which is now known as eastern Jordan. He established his younger son, Isaac, for this same purpose in Canaan, now known as Palestine. The elder son, Ishmael, was appointed to Makkah in Hejaz, where he founded a centre for Islam, the House of God, in Makkah. Abraham, after settling his son in that barren land, prayed to God to send to the descendants of his son Ishmael a prophet who “shall declare to them His revelations and instruct them in the Book.” (2:129). It was in answer to this prayer of Abraham that the last Prophet was born to the Ishmaelite branch of his family.

The Prophet Abraham lived for 175 years. His life of preaching from Ur to Makkah extends over a century. The various stages that Abraham passed through during his preaching life are symbolically repeated over a short period during the Hajj. Arriving at the centre of Islam after undertaking a journey, circumambulation of the House of God, running between Safa and Marwah, setting out for Mina, staying at the plain of ‘Arafat, passing the night at Muzadalfa, casting stones at the devil in Jamarat, sacrificing an animal in Mina—all these are symbolic of the historic stages in the preaching life of Abraham, which we all repeat as a matter of religious training. God has made it obligatory upon Muslims of all ages to renew their pledge to propagate the Truth by re-living these occasions. The Prophet Muhammad, on whom be peace, said, “Stay at your *mashair* (place of stay during Hajj) for you are the inheritor of what your patriarch, Abraham, has passed on to you” (*Mishkat, Kitab al-Manasik*).

According to the Quran, when Abraham had passed all the tests set by God and remained committed to the mission of Truth in every circumstance, God accorded to him a position that in His Omniscience He had pre-ordained:

“When Abraham was tried by His Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled, He said: ‘I will make thee an Imam (leader in religion) to the people’” (2:124).

The conferring of this *imamat* upon Abraham was not to invest in him political power but rather to place him in a position which would enable him to continue to pass on the message of God to the people. At one place, referring to Abraham, Lot, Isaac, and Jacob (peace be upon them), the Quran says:

We ordained them leaders to guide at Our behest, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds (21:73).

This religious leadership, that is, prophethood, was thenceforward continued through Abraham’s descendants. In the beginning, the prophets came from among the offspring of Isaac to inform people of God’s will. The last prophet of this line was Jesus. After that Muhammad (570-632), from the family of Ismael, son of Abraham, was ordained Prophet. This chain of prophethood ended with him, and the faith, in a fully preserved form, was entrusted to the followers of Muhammad. Thus the *Ummah* of Muhammad was made responsible for continuing to inform people of God’s will till the Last Day (22:78).

The gist of the divine scriptures given to Abraham was that no soul shall bear another’s burden and that each

man shall be judged by his own labours; that his labours shall be scrutinized and that he shall be justly requited for them; that all things shall in the end return to Allah (53:38-42).

In the eyes of God this is the greatest concern of mankind. All the prophets were, therefore, obliged to take a pledge that they would inform man of this Truth at all costs:

“And remember We made a covenant with you as We did with the other prophets; with Noah and Abraham, with Moses and Jesus, the son of Mary. A solemn covenant We made with them, so that Allah might question the truthful about their truthfulness. But for the unbelievers He has prepared a grievous chastisement.” (33:7-8)

The last Prophet was ordained for this very purpose in fulfilment of Abraham’s prayer (2:129). He was given the Arabic Quran and was entrusted with the task of conveying the message of God to the Makkans and to the inhabitants of other Arab lands surrounding Makkah:

Thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Quran, that you may warn the Mother City and those who dwell all around it; that you may forewarn them of the Day of Gathering which is sure to come: when some will be in Paradise, and some in Hell (42:7-8).

The people of Arabia were directly given the Quran in their own language and other people who joined them in faith were indirect recipients. The Quran says:

It is He who has raised among the unlettered people a messenger from among themselves who recites His

revelations to them, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom, for they had formerly been clearly misguided—and to others also, from among them, who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise One. That is God’s grace; He bestows it on whom He pleases; for God is limitless in His grace. (62:2-4).

A part of the prayer of Abraham, which he made at the time of the Kabah’s construction was “to make this place the centre of the worshippers” (14:37). During Abraham’s own time, therefore, it had been decreed as a matter of Divine Will that Makkah should be the centre of annual worship (22:27). Ibn-e-Kathir writes in his commentary on this verse of the Quran that when the House of God was constructed, God asked Abraham to announce to the people that God had appointed a centre for them to which they should flock. The aim of gathering at this centre was the same as that of every prophet, and it is this same aim which is the very *raison d’être* of the *Ummah* of Muhammad, that is, taking God’s message to the people of the world:

“The first House ever to be built (as sanctuary) for men was that at Bakkah (Makkah), a blessed place, a beacon for the nations” (3:96).

To this end, the Kabah was made the centre for the gathering of all Muslims:

“We made the House (Kabah) a resort and a sanctuary for mankind. Saying: ‘Make the place where Abraham stood a house of worship’ (2:125).

It is this central position of the Kabah which has been described in the Quran as *Qiyaman Linnas*, a means of support (5:97). This is fundamental to Makkah being the international meeting place of Muslims. It has been thus appointed so that Muslims from all over the world may gather there, worship their God and a universal campaign to convey the message of God be organised. That is the real status of the House of God. The other things are thus subservient to this main object.

People, therefore, have been enjoined by God to return from Hajj with the feeling of celebrating God's glory, a feeling very different from that of describing the glory of their ancestors, which had been their practice prior to Islam.

Those who consider Hajj only a 'pilgrimage' and who regard the increasing number of pilgrims as a matter of prestige should pay heed to what Abdullah bin Abbas had to say about this (as recorded by Abu Nu'aym):

"I love to look after the members of a Muslim household for a month, or a week, or so long as God wills, more than I love to perform one Hajj after another." (*Hilyatul Auliya*, Vol. 1).

To ensure the continuity of the actual purpose of this work (of propagating the message of God) this world Muslim centre has been made a protected place. It was ordered that the House would be only for those who promised faith in God.

“We covenanted with Abraham and Ishmael that they should sanctify My House for those who walk round it, or use it as a retreat, and who kneel and prostrate themselves (therein in prayer).” (2:125)

For the material needs of the community, Abraham prayed to God: ‘Lord,’ said Abraham, ‘make this a land of peace and bestow upon its people an abundance of the earth’s fruits.’ (2:126) God answered this prayer, and this city has remained prosperous for four and half thousand years in spite of the surrounding land being unsuited to agriculture. The modern Arab wealth deriving from oil proves that the Master of the Universe has also arranged in fulfilment of Abraham’s prayer that even in the industrial age this area may obtain, from its “own resources” not only abundant provision for local needs but also pay the cost of fulfilling propagational requirements, i.e. bear the expenses of performing *Dawah* work of the highest standard. Geologists regard Arabian oil reserves as an accident of geography, one third of the world’s oil resources being stored beneath the area now known as the Middle East. But, in actual fact, this is the outcome of the prayer of Abraham—the prayer in which he had requested God to provide for the inhabitants of that land the fruits of the earth, so that they did not depend on others and might have the means and resources to carry out, in every age, the responsibilities laid upon them by God.

When God bestowed upon Abraham religious leadership, and declared the House constructed by him as ‘guidance

to the world' and the 'centre for mankind,' He ordered Abraham to announce to the world that the faithful should come to this centre from all over the world, be present there for their spiritual good (22:28) and worship their God. Moreover, all the faithful should gather once in the year at this central House of God, give thought to their religious duties and return to their homelands, prepared and determined to revive the mission of Abraham.

The worship during Hajj is a means whereby believers may draw close to God and avail of His succour. The real purpose of Hajj is that the Muslims of the world should gather at one place to look after their spiritual good and to take stock of their pledge and thus prepare themselves to follow this path with renewed interest. The Prophet Muhammad, who had come to revive the people of Abraham, not only set right the perversions that had crept into the rites of Hajj, but also made it into a religious pivot from where he could announce matters of special religious import and explain duties of a religious order. It was during Hajj that the acceptance or cancellation of national agreements were announced; it was on the occasion of Hajj that the Prophet took the last testimony from his people when he asked them after his *Khutba* (sermon): 'Have I conveyed it (i.e. the truth) to you?' The people replied, 'Yes, O Prophet of God!'

The Prophet has been reported as saying: Religion will take refuge in Hejaz (Makkah and Madinah) just as the snake returns to the snake hole (*Mishkat*).

The Quran says that the Israelites were exalted above the nations (2:47). Similarly, the people of Muhammad are called the “best nation,” the Quran says: You are the best nation that has ever been raised up for mankind.’ (3:110)

Before the Ismaelites the Israelites were chosen to inform people of the truth. “The particular duty of the Israelites was to call people to the Oneness of God and to carry on a crusade against the sun, moon, and star worship of the heathens.” (*Jewish Encyclopaedia*, VI, pp. 3-5).

When the Israelites were entrusted with this responsibility in the time of Moses (c. 152-1400 B.C.) God also made special provision for them in the form of *mann wa salwa* (manna and quails), which they received in abundance at their halting places. They were enjoined to fulfil their needs by means of this special arrangement and to spend their time working as hard as they could for the divine mission. But they failed to understand the wisdom behind this arrangement. They started recalling the comforts of city life, and craved delicious foods, etc. They began to prefer a low to a high spiritual condition. At last they were deposed from their place of eminence, for their attitude was, in the eyes of God, synonymous with the rejection of divine signs. (Quran 2:61)

The oil wealth of the Arab world was given to it for exactly the same purpose as the manna and quails were given to the Israelites, i.e. for ‘bearing witness to the religion of God.’ The wealth deriving from oil is meant to ensure the

maintenance of the highest standards in the conveying of God's message on a universal scale.

The establishment of the Kabah in the Arab world means that this place has been made a permanent centre of invitation to Islam. On the one hand, it has a historical appeal, so that people from all over the world flock to it every year; on the other hand, it has been regarded as the *sanctum sanctorum* and a place of safety, i.e. it has been so arranged that this area always remains under Muslim jurisdiction; no outsiders will ever be able to have political or administrative control over it. Besides the first two arrangements, amazingly indeed, a third arrangement has been made to lay the economic foundation of this territory on very firm ground, so that the people of this area are never dependent upon others for their material needs and so that they may never have to stint upon the proclamation and exercise of their *Dawah* duty.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STRAIGHT PATH

*Is he who walks grovelling upon his face better guided,
or he who walks upright upon a straight path?
Say, 'It is He who brought you into being, and made ears
and eyes and hearts for you, yet you are seldom grateful.'*
—The Quran, 67:22-23

What is the Straight Path?

We learn from the Quran that God has laid down a fixed path for the entire universe. A path which the entire universe is following strictly, even the honeybee (16:68-69). Just as for the proper functioning of everything in the universe it is essential that they follow the divine path appointed by God in total submission, similarly the secret of success for man also lies in following the same.

But since man is in a state of trial, he has only been told the right path and he has been given the chance to follow this path or reject it. (76:3). Once God has shown man the straight path, man ought to follow it with total trust and adopt it with total conviction, as being the only path that leads to success (14:12). If man, under the influence of some

temporary temptations strays in some other direction, he will lose his foothold on God's path and when he loses that he will meet with nothing but failure in this world (6:153).

A true human being in the eyes of God is one who keeps to this straight path. One who deviates from it descends to the level of animals: "Is he who walks groveling upon his face better guided, or he who walks upright upon a straight path? Say: it is He who brought you into being, and made ears and eyes and hearts for you, yet you are seldom grateful" (67:22-23)

Thus we learn from the Quran, that adhering to the straight path means, that man makes proper use of the powers of hearing, sight and heart. Now what are these powers? These are the things which distinguish man from other creatures. It is these powers which raise man from a level of a mere creature to that of a human being. The animals on the contrary—though they too are living beings—but lack these powers of feeling and reasoning which man has been specially endowed with. Humans who misuse these God-given capabilities degrade themselves to the level of animals. Such men have therefore been likened to dogs (7:176); to donkeys (62:5); to cattle (25:44). The most degraded among them are referred to as monkeys and pigs (5:60) and even worse. "The worst creatures in God's eyes are those who are deaf and dumb, and who possess no understanding." (8:22)

Things that can be easily understood by reason, yet treating that subject as if it was beyond the powers of

human intellect and understanding, such response makes one blind and dumb in the eyes of God.

According to the 95th chapter of the Quran, God created man in the best of mould, then he cast him down to the lowest of the low. Only those are exceptions who believe and do good deeds (95:4-6). By the former is meant the human level and by the latter is meant the animal level. God created man with the status of humans, but cast them to the animal state. This is the trial that man must go through; he must raise himself from the lowly state of an animal to the heights of humanity.

“If it had been Our Will, We could have used these signs to exalt him, but instead he clung to the earth and followed his own desires—he was like a dog that pants whether you chase it away or leave it alone. Such are those who reject Our Signs. Tell them this story so they may reflect.” (7:176)

Such verses as have termed people blind, deaf and dumb are not meant in the physical sense. Neither they were lying in some abysmal state of insanity. These people who are called deaf, dumb and blind were actually men of great learning and wisdom of their times. They built great houses and forts and were experts in business, agriculture and the cultivation of orchards. They were leading their nations.

In connection with the above verse (7:176) the name of Arabia's Umayyah bin Abi al-Salt is referred to. He was famous not only for his leadership and generosity but also

for his poetry and wisdom. Similarly, a man of the later days of Moses, Bala'am, Son of Beor, is described in such terms, although he was one of the most distinguished men in Iraq, in learning and piety. According to Ubadah ibn As-Samit, this verse was also applied to the leaders of Quraysh, who were, in effect, leaders of the whole of Arabia, being custodians of the Kabah.

That being so, why were they called blind and deaf. To understand this one should study the difference between man and animal. Apparently, animal has all that a man has and can do all that a man does. He moves about, eats and drinks, sees and hears, and feels pain and happiness. Wherein lies the difference? Biologists tell us what differentiates man from animal is his capacity for conceptual thought. That is to say that animals don't possess this capability. This explains the difference between the human and the animal level. The animal state is to remain unmoved except by material realities, that is material loss and material gain. On the contrary, human level is that once the truth of something is established at the intellectual level, that should be accepted and life should be planned accordingly. The Quran says: This is the Book: There is no doubt in it. It is a guide for those who are mindful of God, who believe in the unseen' (2:2-3)

That is, the Quran cannot be a guide for those who are never moved by anything other than material reality, material utility and the avoidance of harm. The Divine Book will guide only those who are ready to accept such

truths as have no force of external reality to back them, their importance existing wholly in the mind. In other words, the state of animality is characterized by belief in the seen while the state of humanity is characterized by belief in the unseen.

According to a tradition, the Prophet said of Abu Bakr's acceptance of Islam: "Whenever I invited someone to Islam, he would show some doubt or hesitation. The only one who did not do so was Abu Bakr, who accepted the faith without hesitation or second thoughts as soon as I talked to him of Islam." (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. III, p. 27)

In his evaluation of a thing purely on its merits, Abu Bakr attained to the highest point of humanity. There were some who accepted Islam because of the Prophet's charisma, or the miracles, or the ineffable style of the Quran, or the conquest of Makkah, or the material gains brought by Islam; but Abu Bakr Siddiq had reached such heights of conceptual thought that he could accept or reject a thing purely on merit.

When, at the time of his death, Abu Bakr nominated Umar Faruq to the Caliphate, there was a general feeling of unrest. Talha ibn Ubaidullah came to him and said: "The people have sent me to you as their messenger. They say that you have seen all along how strict Umar has been with us. When you pass on your office to him, what then will become of us? And then, if God questions you about this choice, what answer will you give Him?" But one who has

attained to such a high state of humanity could see beyond appearances: he knew that Umar's strictness was not for his self but for religion. He knew that his God-fearing heart was the greatest surety of his firm stand on matters of truth. Uthman ibn Affan pointed out that they should not look at what was on the surface, but should consider what lay beneath, for what was inside him far surpassed his exterior. Abu Bakr also held the same opinion about Umar.

The man on the straight path develops the highest capacity for acceptance. When the Quraysh heard the Prophet recite the Quran, they exclaimed: "This is the work of a poet!" They did not of course, use the word poet in any derogatory sense; yet, even so, to God this conveyed only underestimation, not total faith. (69:41). If they called it the work of a poet, it was merely to indicate their assessment of it as a literary achievement in which the teachings of the ancient Abrahamites were presented in a novel way. Interpreted as such, they thought that the Quran merely deserved to be acknowledged as a literary masterpiece. But the Quran ought rather be regarded as an expression of the Higher Truth and should be accepted with total conviction.

Just one day before the entry into Makkah, when the Prophet asked Abu Sufyan to bear witness to the Islamic faith, the latter said, "By my parents, you are undoubtedly very forbearing, very tolerant, nobler and of higher derivation than others, yet I still have some qualms about

your prophethood.” Later, the Prophet’s uncle Abbas apprised Abu Sufyan of the critical situation, whereupon he recited the article of faith and became a Muslim. It had been easier for Abu Sufyan to acknowledge the Prophet’s nobility and perseverance than to concede that he was a genuine Prophet; because in accepting his moral worth he had the psychological satisfaction that the difference between him and the Prophet was one of personal worth, and not that his beliefs had been wrong vis-à-vis the Prophet’s. No doubt acceptance of moral worth is far easier than the recognition of the superiority of another’s ideology.

The Straight Path of the Individual

The Quran has very explicitly indicated the straight path of God, both for the individual and for society, as against the paths of deviation which human beings are faced with at all times.

A section of the sixth chapter of the Quran reads: say: ‘Come, I will tell you what your Lord has made binding on you: that you shall serve no other gods besides Him; that you shall show kindness to your parents; that you shall not kill your children because you cannot support them; We provide for you and for them; that you shall not commit foul sins, whether openly or in secret; and that you shall not kill—for that is forbidden by Allah—except for a just cause. Thus Allah exhorts you, that you may discern.

‘Do not touch the property of orphans, but strive to improve their lot until they reach maturity. Give just weight and full measure; we never charge a soul with more than it can bear. Speak for justice, even if it affects your own kinsmen. Be true to the covenant of Allah. Thus He exhorts you so that you may take heed.

‘This path of Mine is straight. Follow it and do not follow other paths, for they will lead you away from Him. Thus Allah commands you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil.’ (6:152-53)

This is the one straight path for the individual’s life. It can be summed up in these words: belief in the oneness of God, good behaviour towards others, reliance on God, avoidance of evil, respect for life, avoidance of oppression, honesty in social dealings, adhering to justice regardless of circumstances, fulfilling as God’s creatures the pledge of obedience to Him, adopting the path of taqwa (fear of God) in all matters.

Those on the straight path are the people blessed by God (Chapter 1) and brought from darkness, into light (14:1) They have a special share in the mercy and bounty of God (4:175), (48:2). Obviously, people with such divine endowments cannot lead the lives of ordinary men. These blessings will surely be made manifest in various forms in their lives.

1. First of all, they are in a higher state of realization. It is said that Abdullah ibn Rawaha once suggested to his

hearers that they should ‘bring (revive) faith in God for a while.’ At this they became indignant and said, ‘Aren’t we the faithful?’ Ibn Rawaha replied that they were, no doubt, the faithful, but that every time they remembered God, their faith increased. Then one of them went to the Prophet and complained against Ibn Rawaha, saying, “Ibn Rawaha is a strange person: he is inclined to momentary faith as opposed to the faith received from you.” The Prophet replied, “God bless Ibn Rawaha! He likes sittings of which even angels envy!” In fact, what Ibn Rawaha suggested was an expression of a deeper realization which they failed to understand.

2. Faith to such as Ibn Rawaha means total surrender to God. The apprehension of life away from the path of God is agony to them. On the revelation of the verse, ‘...They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God, unto them give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom,’ (9:34). The Prophet said, “Woe to gold! Woe to silver!” This proved hard on the companions and they said among themselves, “What then should we keep?” Then Omar went to the Prophet and laid this matter before him. The Prophet then said, ‘Let each one of you take a tongue that remembers God, a thankful heart and a wife who helps one to faith!’ (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 2, p. 351).
3. Such people have a perfect capability of acknowledging

the worth of others. The following incident illustrates this. A companion of the Prophet, by the name of Jabir Ibn Azraq Ghaziri, once came on his she-camel to join the Prophet on one of his journeys. On the way the Prophet halted at a certain point and went inside his leather tent. A crowd gathered at the tent door. A man tried to push Jabir aside, but the latter said: "If you push me now, I shall beat you." At this, the other said, "O worst of men!" Jabir replied, "By God, you are worse than I!" The man said, "How can you say such a thing? I have come from Yemen to hear the words of the Prophet and to convey them to my people on my return, and you are barring my way!" At this Jabir's anger cooled, and he exclaimed, "Yes, you are right. By God, I am worse than you!" (*Kanzul Ummal*)

4. They are more interested in their duties than in their rights. Imam Ahmad quotes the Prophet's wife, Umme Salma's story of how two men once brought a case regarding some inherited property before the Prophet. Both claimed it as their rightful property, but neither had any concrete proof. The Prophet said, 'You bring your cases to me; but I am only a human being and may give my verdict in favour of the one who impresses me with his greater eloquence. Just remember that if I were to give anyone his brother's share, that share will prove to be a flame of fire on the day of judgement. Hearing this, they both wept and said, "Give my share to my brother! Give my share to my brother."' (*Musnad* Imam Ahmad)

5. Following the straight path creates such breadth of vision in an individual that he even looks upon his juniors as if they were his seniors. During his reign as the first Umayyad Caliph of a vast empire, Amir Muawiya once sent five hundred dinars to an Ansari (Madinan Muslim). The latter, taking this to be a trifling amount, asked his son to take the money, throw it at Muawiya and say, "O leader of the believers, my father has thus commanded me, and I dare not disobey him." When the young man told this to Mu'awiya he said, "Do as your father has commanded you, but be lenient to your uncle." The boy felt ashamed and, throwing the dinars away, he took his leave. (*Al-Fakhri*).
6. True faith develops such a sense of realism in an individual that even an ordinary man may surprise those in high places with high confidence. During the war in Iran under the caliphate of Umar, there was an exchange of messengers between Saad ibn abi Waqqas, the Muslim commander, and Rustam, the Persian commander. When the Arab messenger, with his very plain, ordinary accoutrements, reached the splendid court of Rustam, he appeared quite insignificant to the Persian commander. Pointing to the messenger's spear, Rustam said, "What is this spindle-like thing in your hand." The messenger replied with confidence, "A flame is a flame, howsoever small it may be." (*Al-Fakhri*).

It is people who follow the straight path who are promised the ‘greatest reward’ (65:5) and for whom evil will be turned into good (25:70). The fact is that all believers and non-believers alike—are liable to err. But the man who has attained real state of obedience to God, will turn with a redoubled intensity of feeling towards God if he ever commits a mistake. Thus his misdemeanour becomes the means of his attaining to a state of greater faith. On the contrary, the unbelievers remain engulfed in the darkness of their own misconduct. And, instead, their wrongdoing simply renders them even more hard-hearted instead of providing them with fresh food for faith.

“When any evil suggestion from Satan touches those who fear God, they are instantly alerted and become watchful; but the followers of devils are led relentlessly into error by them. They never desist.” (7:201-202)

The Straight Path of Society

Just as the Prophet taught us the way of worship and fasting so also did he teach us how to launch an Islamic mission, how to face the challenges, and how to convey the message of Islam to the world. In other words, just as there is a straight path for the individual, so also is there a straight path for society. The treaty of Hudaibiyyah (628 A.D.), the most important happening in the collective Islamic struggle has been referred to in the Quran in these words: “So that He may make it a sign to true believers and guide you along a straight path.” (48:20).

The revelation of the above verse in the context of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah makes it clear that just as there is a straight path in worship and ethics, so is there a straight path in matters of peace and conflict resolution.

One who is on the straight path, who has attained to a state of humanity in which decisions are made according to the powers of the ear, the eye and the heart, uninfluenced by obstinacy or reaction, acquires great depth of vision, which takes him beyond all emotional incentive and superficial considerations, and penetrates the heart of the matter. With this sense of realism, his planning is far-reaching and definitive. He becomes invincible, his aim never being off the mark. There is a saying of the Prophet: "Beware of the wisdom of the believer, for he sees by the light of God." (*At Tirmizi*, Hadith No. 3419)

The signing of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah is one such important instance. Clearly this treaty was accepted under duress: one of the 'animal' level, however, would never agree that in spite of the presence of fifteen hundred valiant companions of the Prophet, a treaty could be signed which accepted all the demands of his opponents. But one at the 'human' level, capable of seeing reality in its unadulterated form, would see that it was truly a 'signal victory' (48:1).

Thus a straight path (or God's way) has been shown for all the problems of the Here and the Hereafter. The universe follows this straight path without the slightest deviation from its course, the path of man's success and salvation is also the same. The only difference being that while the universe has no choice but to follow God's path, man

must of his own free will make this choice of treading this straight path.

Just as the Quran has marked out the course for the individual to follow, so also has it laid down a straight path for society. To provide examples it has cited actual happenings. After describing the wisdom behind the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the Quran states: "And He shows you the straight path." (48:2). Certain basic principles which encompass most practical matters have also been described. Man has only to rise from the state of animality to that of humanity, and then he can never err in taking the right path in social matters—the path destined to lead him to earn divine succour and success as a result.

The first basic principle in this regard is never to take a step under the influence of negative mentality: Social planning should always be made with a positive approach to matters: "O believers, be dutiful to God and bearer of just witness. Do not allow your hatred for other men to turn away from justice. Deal justly! Justice is nearer to true piety. (5:8).

History shows us that most failures were due to reactionary steps goaded on by obstinacy, jealousy, irritation and opposition. Whenever individuals or groups allow their actions to be coloured by such negative emotions, they will surely drift on to the wrong path. If, however, God's fundamental guidance were kept in view, so that man succeeded in raising his thinking from the 'animal' to the 'human' level, it would not be possible for such negative emotions to gain the upper hand: men would then surely

base their planning on positive foundations—a sure formula for success.

The above basic principle of the straight path in social matters is very clearly mentioned in connection with the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah: “And while bigotry—the bigotry of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) reigned in the heart of the unbelievers, God sent down His tranquillity on His Messenger and the faithful and made the word of piety binding on them, for they were most worthy and deserving of it. God has knowledge of all things” (48:26).

That is to say that the way to keep Islam’s social activity on the straight path is to hold to piety in spite of the very blatant expression of bigotry on the part of the opponents. In other words, no step ought to be taken as a result of, or in reaction to the behaviour of the opponents. Instead, our social programme should be based on positive psychology and carried out in the light of specific principles with permanent aims in view. We should always keep our eyes on the future rather than on the present.

Another vital principle of social guidance is to follow the path of God. (16:69). In this regard the Quran gives us the example of the tree. The tree first establishes its roots deep below the surface of the soil. Then it slowly raises its head towards the skies. Similarly, in the making of a community, their inner strengthening and consideration must be given first preference. No outward step should be taken before the work of consolidation has been completed. The Quran advises us to build our nations as nature builds its trees:

“Do you not see how God sets forth a parable that the good work is like a good tree whose root is firm and its branches are in the sky, yielding its fruit every season by Allah’s leave? Allah gives parables to men so that they become mindful. And the parable of an evil word is like an evil tree torn out of the earth and has no stability. God will strengthen the faithful with (His) steadfast word, both in the life and the Hereafter. He leaves the wrongdoers in error. God accomplishes what He pleases.” (14:24-27)

On reflection, it becomes obvious that wherever one is holding another responsible for one’s failures, it is a clear indication that he had cultivated an evil tree. If the work of social construction had been patterned on the ‘good tree,’ the need for lamentations would not have arisen at all that his ‘tree’ had been pulled out by someone.

The Principle of Divine Succour

The man who is on the right path has been promised divine help: “That He may guide you to the right path and bestow on you His mighty help.” (48:2)

Just as divine succour is certain, it is also certain that God’s help does not come to one who does not deserve it. It is the way of God and the way of God does not change. (35:43).

If a man is in a state of helplessness, a call to God is enough to draw divine help:

“Who answers the oppressed when they cry out to Him and relieves affliction.” (27:62)

That is, if a man is in a state of utter helplessness he becomes entitled to divine help: he need only say words of prayer and he receives it. This is the only condition for him. But for individuals or groups who are not similarly afflicted, besides prayer there is one more condition that his actions should be consistent with his prayers: That is, if a man prays that the wisdom of the Quran be made known to him, it will befit him to exert himself in pondering upon the Book of God (38:29). The Quran has this to say: “To Him ascend good words, and He exalts righteous deeds.” (35:10). If a man asks for help in earning his living, he shall have to make every possible effort himself to do so.

The other pre-condition for deserving divine help is patience, even in the face of stiff opposition from those against whom divine aid is sought (14:12). Patience is a positive reaction to negative acts. This means that no impatient step should be taken against the opponent. There should be no retaliation against his opponents. They should simply be borne; instead of making complaints about the suffering inflicted, the latter should be met with silent self-restraint and endurance.

No doubt the kind of patience and tolerance shown by the companions of the Prophet towards their opponents would ensure God’s help to any group who possessed these qualities to the same degree. Divine help, in fact, is just another name for success.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEERAH AS A MOVEMENT

*It is He who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon,
each gliding in its orbit.*

—The Quran, 21:33

Biographers of the Prophet usually treat their subject as if he were a person endowed with great magical powers, one who by mysterious means brought the whole of Arabia under his wing. These books read like fairy tales; even events which have no miraculous content have been given a fanciful, miraculous interpretation. Take the case of Suhaib ibn Sinan's migration from Makkah to Madinah. When some Quraysh youths blocked his path, Suhaib pleaded with them: "If I let you have all my wealth, will you let me go?" They said that they would. Suhaib had a few ounces of silver with him. He gave it all to them and carried on to Madinah. According to a tradition in Baihaqi, Suhaib said that when the Prophet saw him in Madinah he told Suhaib that his trading had been very profitable. Suhaib, according to the tradition, was astounded, for no one had arrived in Madinah before him who could have brought the news. "It must have been Gabriel who told you," he said to the Prophet.

But the same event has been related by Marduya and Ibn Sa'ad. According to them, Suhaib told his own story in these words:

“I carried on until I reached Madinah. When the Prophet heard about my handing over my wealth to the Quraysh in return for their permission to migrate, he said: Suhaib’s trading has profited! Suhaib’s trading has profited!”

The entire life of the Prophet was nothing but a human event, that is why it serves as an example to us. According to Bukhari, he was hurt like anyone else. Indeed, the reason that his congregation refused to believe that he was the receiver of divine revelation was the very fact that, to all appearances, the Prophet appeared just like any normal human being:

“You do transactions in the town. You seek a livelihood just as we do.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*)

The truth is that the greatness of the Prophet’s life lies in its being a human event rather than a far-fetched tale of inimitable miraculous actions. The Prophet was God’s humble and very human servant, and, having been chosen by God to spread His message, he was supported by Him at every critical hour. In this sense his success was miraculous, but the Prophet himself was in no way endowed with superhuman powers.

The Beginning of *Dawah*

When, at the age of forty, the Prophet of Islam received his first revelation, he reacted as any normal human being

would in such a situation. He was staying in the Cave of Hira at the time. Apprehensive, he returned home to his wife Khadija. Being an impartial judge, she was in a position to view the situation objectively.

“It cannot be,” she said. “God will surely never humiliate you. You are kind to your relatives; you always give the weak a helping hand; you help those who are out of work to stand on their own feet again; you honour guests. When people are in trouble you give them assistance.” (*Bukhari and Muslim*)

This is how the historian Ibn Kathir describes an incident that occurred at the beginning of the Prophet’s mission:

“Ali, son of Abi Talib and cousin of the Prophet, came into the Prophet’s house while he and Khadija were saying their prayers. He asked his cousin what they were about. The Prophet told him that this was God’s religion, the path that God had chosen Himself. It was to call people to this path that He had sent His prophets to the world. ‘Believe in one God,’ the Prophet said. “He has no partner. Worship Him alone. Forsake the idols, Lat and Uzza.’ ‘I have heard nothing of this nature before. Ali replied. ‘I cannot make a decision until I have talked the matter over with my father, Abu Talib.’ But the Prophet did not want anyone to know about his secret until the time had come for it to be made public. ‘Ali,’ he said, ‘if you are not ready to become a Muslim, keep the matter to yourself.’ Ali waited for one night, then God made his heart incline towards Islam. He went back to the Prophet early in the morning.

‘What was it that you were telling me yesterday’ he asked. ‘Bear witness that there is none worthy of being served save God. He is One. He has no partner. Forsake Lat and Uzza, and disown all those who are set up as equals with God.’ Ali did this and became a Muslim. Then, in fear of Abu Talib, he used to come and see the Prophet secretly. Ali kept his Islam a secret; he did not tell anyone about it.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. III, p. 24)

Similarly, when the first Muslims among the tribes of Aws and Khazraj returned to Madinah, they followed the same policy. According to the historian Tabarani, “They returned to their people and invited them, secretly, to embrace Islam.”

Throughout his entire public mission, the Prophet was very careful not to take any initiative until he was quite sure that he possessed the necessary resources. Aishah, wife of the Prophet and daughter of Abu Bakr, tells how, when the Prophet had gathered 38 followers around him, Abu Bakr urged him to publicize his mission. Abu Bakr was of the opinion that the Prophet and his companions should go out into the open, and publicly preach Islam. But the Prophet said to him: “No, Abu Bakr, we are too few.” The same thing happened in the sixth year of the Prophet’s mission, when Umar accepted Islam. He protested to the Prophet: “Why should we keep our Islam a secret, when we are in the right? And why should others be allowed to publicize their faith, when they are in the wrong?” The Prophet gave Umar the same reply that he had given Abu Bakr several years earlier: “We are too few, Umar.”

One thing is quite clear from biographies of the Prophet. When the task of public preaching devolved upon him, he became very conscious of the greatness of this task, realizing that it would require his complete and single-minded attention. He hoped that his family would look after him financially so that, freed from having to look for a livelihood, he would be able to concentrate on his preaching work. He called Abdul Muttalib's family together in his own house. There were about thirty family members at that time. The Prophet told them that he had been granted prophethood by God. He asked for their support, so that he would be free to discharge his duties. This is how Imam Ahmad describes the incident, on the authority of Aisha:

“Bani Muttalib,’ the Prophet said, ‘I have been sent to you in particular, and to the whole of mankind in general. Who will swear allegiance to me and become my brother and companion? Who will fulfil my debts and my promises on my behalf? Who will look after my family affairs for me? He will be with me in heaven.’ Someone spoke up: ‘Muhammad, you are an ocean. Who can come forward and accept such responsibility?’”

The Prophet's own family were not ready to accept responsibility for him. Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle, was financially in a position to look after his nephew. Yet even he remained silent, for fear that this responsibility would devour his wealth. God, however, helped His prophet, first through the Prophet's wife, Khadija bint Khuwailid, and later on through Abu

Bakr, whose wealth saw the Prophet through the years in Madinah.

The Prophet displayed boyish enthusiasm in his efforts to communicate the faith to others. The historian Ibn Jarir tells, on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas, how the nobles of the Quraysh had gathered around the Kabah one day, and called for the Prophet. He came quickly, thinking that they might be feeling some leanings towards Islam. He was always eager that his people should accept the guidance of Islam. The thought of their doom was a great distress to him.

It transpired, however, that they had just wanted to pick a quarrel. Acceptance of Islam was the last thing on their minds. The Prophet talked to them at length, then went away in distress. According to Ibn Hisham,

“The Prophet returned to his home sad and disillusioned, for the hopes that he had for his people when they called him had been dashed. He had seen how far people were from accepting his message.” (*Tahzeeb Seerat ibn Hisham*, Vol.1, p. 68)

When the Prophet’s uncle, Abu Talib, lay dying, people came to him and asked him to settle matters between his nephew and themselves before he died. “Take an undertaking from him on our behalf, and one from us on his behalf, so that he should have nothing to do with us, nor us with him,” they said. Abu Talib called his nephew, and asked him what he wanted of the people. The Prophet replied that he just wanted them to testify that there was

none worthy of being worshipped save God, and forsake all other objects of worship. His people, however, were unwilling to accept this. When everyone went away, Abu Talib said to his nephew: “You know, I don’t think it was anything very difficult that you asked of them.” On hearing his uncle’s words, the Prophet’s hope soared that perhaps he would accept Islam. “Uncle,” he said, “then why don’t you testify to the oneness of God, so that I may be able to intercede for you on the Day of Judgement.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*). The Prophet was sorely disappointed that his uncle never accepted Islam.

The dedication with which the Prophet applied himself to his task was total, all his mental and physical energy being channelled into it. Not only his time, but his property as well, went into the furtherance of the Islamic cause. Before the start of his mission, the Prophet had become quite rich by virtue of his marriage to the wealthy Khadijah. At the beginning of the Makkan period, the Quraysh sent ‘Utbah ibn Rabiya to talk to the Prophet. As Ibn Kathir explains, he soon found himself being won over, an event which was misinterpreted by his kinsmen as being due to the love of the Prophet’s wealth:

“Afterwards Utbah stayed at home and did not go out to see anybody. ‘Fellow Quraysh,’ Abu Jahl said, ‘It seems to me that ‘Utbah has become attracted towards Muhammad. He must have been taken by the food that Muhammad offered him. This can only be due to some need of his. Let’s go and see him.’ So off they went. ‘Utbah,’ Abu Jahl

said, ‘we have come to see you because we are sure that you have taken a liking to Muhammad and his religion. Look, if you want, we can accumulate enough money to ensure that you will not have to go to him to be fed.’ ‘Utba became angry, and swore that he would never speak to Muhammad again!’ (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. 3)

The Prophet, was financially very well placed when he commenced his mission. But when, after 13 years, he emigrated to Madinah, it was a very different story. He had nothing left, and had to borrow some money from Abu Bakr for the journey.

The Language of *Dawah*

Looked at from a logical point of view, the Islamic call consists basically of certain constant, recurrent factors. It is the same points—the oneness of God, the inevitability of the life after death, the need for man to understand his position as God’s servant, and live as such according to the prophetic pattern—which are stressed again and again. When these points come from the tongue of the preacher of God’s word, they take on the hue of the preacher’s own person; this makes the message of the *da’i* a living act. This addition means that the message of Islam, far from being a repetition of set texts, is expressed with irresistible vitality and spontaneity. One in meaning, it becomes diverse in the forms it takes to the point of its being impossible to compile a rigid list of them.

The heart of the preacher of God’s word is full of fear

of God; it is his ardent desire to bring his audience on to the path of right guidance. He knows that if he can bring God's servants close to God, God will be pleased with him. These factors spur him on in his task. They ensure that his words, far from being repetitive and monotonous, have a spiritual content about them. The preacher of God's word thinks first and foremost of his congregation. More than anything, he wants them to find right guidance. This means that he gives full concession to the mindset of every individual that he is addressing, and casts his words in a mould that will be understandable to them.

We find this method of *Dawah* in a perfect form in the life of the Prophet of Islam. Night and day, he was busy preaching the word of God. But his preaching was far from a bland repetition of certain set speeches. He used to take into consideration the nature of his congregation in formulating his message.

On one occasion, in the early days in Makkah, the Prophet preached Islam to Abu Sufyan and his wife Hind. This is how he framed his address:

“Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Hind bint ‘Utba. You are going to die, then you will be raised up. The good will then be admitted into heaven, and the wicked will enter hell. I am telling you the truth.”

The historian Ibn Khuzaima has recorded the following conversation between a member of the Makkan nobility, Haseen, and the Prophet Muhammad. “Tell me, Haseen,” the Prophet said, “how many gods do you worship?” “Seven

on earth and one in heaven,” Haseen replied. “Whom do you call on when you are in trouble?” the Prophet asked. “The one in heaven,” Haseen answered. “And whom do you call on when you have suffered loss of wealth?” the Prophet asked again. “The one in heaven,” came the same reply. “He alone answers your prayers,” the Prophet said, “Then why do you set up others as His equals?”

After he had reached Madinah, however, when he sent a formal invitation to the people of Najran, he presented his message in yet a different manner:

“I call on you to serve God rather than men, and to acknowledge the sovereign power of God rather than that of men.”

The Quran itself provided an important basis of the Prophet’s preaching work. Whenever the Prophet met anybody, he would recite a passage of the Quran to him. Often phrases like, “He made mention of Islam, and read some of the Quran to them,” or “He presented the message of Islam before them, and recited to them a passage of the Quran,” recurred in traditions concerning the Prophet’s preaching mission. The Quran possessed extraordinary magnetism for the Arabs. Even some of the direst enemies of Islam used to steal up to the Prophet’s house at night, put their ears to the wall, and listen to him reciting the Quran. The sublime style of the Quran used to have the most profound impact on the Prophet’s people. Take the case of Waleed ibn Mughira, who once came to the Prophet on behalf of the Quraysh. When the Prophet read him a passage of the Quran, Waleed was so impressed that he went back to the Quraysh and told them that the Quran

was a literary work of such unsurpassable excellence that it overshadowed everything else.

Recitation of the Quran was, in those days, a common method of preaching Islam. When Mus'ab ibn Zubair was sent to Madinah as a preacher, he used to "talk to people, and recite a passage of the Quran to them." That was why people came to know him as "Al-Muqri," the reciter of the Quran.

During his time in Makkah the Prophet's preaching was always conducted on a purely rational level based on highly logical standard set by the Quran. The Prophet's opponents, on the other hand, could offer only abuse and opprobrium in reply. Sensible people in Makkah could not help but come to the conclusion that Muhammad's opponents had nothing concrete to offer in support of their case. According to Ibn Jarir, it came to the point where some of the nobles of the Quraysh even planned to call a meeting to talk to the Prophet, their intention being "to excuse themselves as far as he was concerned." That is, to assure him that they had nothing to do with the base tactics employed by the Prophet's direst enemies.

The Aptitude of the Arabs

The result of *Dawah* work depends on the response of the audience. However untiring the efforts of the preacher, and no matter how accurately he presents the true message of Islam, it is more the response of his audience that determines whether his call is accepted or not. The character of the Arabs was a valuable factor which contributed towards their acceptance of Islam. They were children of nature,

brought up in simple, natural surroundings. Despite their seeming stubbornness, they reflected the qualities of their environment. Thirty million square kilometers of desert, the hot, bare, hard country in which they lived, was the ideal breeding ground for the most lofty human values. The average Arab had just one source of income—his camel. But, if he had guests, he would sacrifice this invaluable beast in order to provide them with food. If a victim of oppression took refuge with an Arab in his tent, he knew he had a friend who would give his own life in defence of the wronged. Even plunderers did their looting in a chivalrous manner. If they wanted to steal clothes and jewelry from a tribe's womenfolk, they would not snatch them off the women's bodies with their own hands: instead, they would tell the women to handover their valuables, while they themselves would look in the opposite direction to avoid seeing women undressing themselves.

It would be misleading to think of the desert Arabs as simpletons. They were a highly aware people, of penetrating intelligence.

Seven Muslim converts came to the Prophet from a certain tribe. They told him that they had learnt five things during the time of ignorance that preceded Islam. They would adhere to these principles, they said, unless the Prophet gave them other instructions. The Prophet then asked them what these principles that they had inherited from the time of ignorance were. "Thankfulness in times of affluence," they answered, "and patience in times of difficulty.

Steadfastness on the field of battle and resignation to fate. We learnt not to rejoice over another's setbacks, even if it was one's own enemy that was afflicted." "These people are intellectuals, men of letters," the Prophet said when he heard this. "They are cast in the mould of prophets. How wonderful are their words." (*Kanzul Ummal*, Vol. I, p. 69)

Dhamad, a practising exorcist belonging to the tribe of Banu Azdashaawa, once came to Makkah. People there told him about the Prophet. "He is possessed by an evil spirit," they said. Dhamad went to see the Prophet, thinking that he might be able to cure him. But when he heard the Prophet's words, his attitude changed. "I have heard soothsayers and conjurors," he said. "I have seen the works of poets. But I have never come across anything of this nature. Give me your hand," he said to the Prophet. "Let me swear allegiance to you." As was his custom, the Prophet did not give a long talk on this occasion. Actually this was all he said:

"Praise be to God. We praise Him and seek help from Him. One whom God guides, no one can send astray, and one whom God sends astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is none worthy of being served save God. He has no equal." (*Muslim*)

In these few words Dhamad found a wealth of meaning. "Say that again," he requested the Prophet. "Your words are as deep as the ocean." (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. III, p. 36)

For an Arab there was no question of any discrepancy

between words and deeds. He himself was true to his word, and he expected others to be the same. As soon as he comprehended the truth of a matter, he accepted it. According to the Prophet's biographer, Ibn Ishaq, the Banu Sa'ad tribe sent Dhaman ibn Tha'alaba to the Prophet on their behalf. He arrived in Madinah, set his camel down near the gate of the mosque and tied it up. Then he went inside. The Prophet was sitting there with his companions. Dhamam was a brave and intelligent man. He stood in front of the gathering and asked: "Who among you is the son of Abdul Muttalib?" "I am," the Prophet replied. "Muhammad," Dhamam said, "I am going to ask you a few questions, and am going to be quite severe in my questioning. I hope you won't mind." "Not at all," the Prophet replied. "You can ask what you like." "Will you swear to me by the name of your God and the God of those before you, and the God of those who will come after you that God has sent you as His prophet?" "By God, yes," the Prophet replied. "Will you swear to me," Dhamam continued, "by the name of your God, and the God of those before you, and the God of those who will come after you, that God has told you to exhort us to worship Him alone and ascribe no partners to Him; that He has commanded you to tell us to forsake idol-worship, and all the things that our forefathers used to worship?" "By God, yes," the Prophet replied. "I ask you to swear to me," Dhamam said once again, "by the name of your God and the God of those before you, and the God of those who will come after you that has God commanded that we should

pray five times a day.” Dhamam then asked about *Zakat*, Fasting, Hajj (Pilgrimage), and all the other injunctions of Islam, framing each question in the same manner. When he had finished his questioning, and the Prophet had given him the same simple answer to every question, Dhamam spoke these words:

“I bear witness that there is none worthy of being served save God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God. I shall discharge these obligations, and I shall avoid the things you have prohibited. I shall do no more and no less.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. V)

He mounted his camel and rode away. When he reached his people, he told them what had happened. Before a single day had passed, all the men and women who had been awaiting his homecoming, had accepted Islam.

There was not a trace of hypocrisy in these people. They knew only acceptance or denial—nothing in between. When they made a promise, they fulfilled it, come what may. No threat of loss of life or property could prevent them from converting their words into actions. Such was the nature of the Arab temperament. Historians have described the speeches of both the Aws and Khazraj—the two tribes of Madinah—on the occasion of the Second Oath of Allegiance as having all the lustre which distinguished their race. Abbas ibn ‘Ubaida had this to say:

“People of Khazraj, do you know what you are committing yourselves to, swearing allegiance to this man? You are committing yourselves to war with men of all races. Think

about this. If, when you incur loss of life and property, you are going to send him back to his people, then it is better that you do so now. If you do so later on, it will mean humiliation for you in both this world and the next. But if you think you will be able to keep your promises, however much loss you incur, and however many of your leaders are killed, then take him with you to Madinah. This will be better for you in both this world and the next.”

Everyone said in unison that they would take the Prophet with them, no matter what loss of life and property they incurred. “What will we have in return if we keep our word?” they asked the Prophet. “Paradise,” he replied. “Hold out your hand to us,” they cried out. He extended his hand and accepted their allegiance.

These were not mere words on the part of the Ansar; they were words borne out by actions. Even when the Muslims became dominant, they did not demand any political compensation for the sacrifices they had made. They were quite willing to let the Caliphate remain in the hands of the Makkans. They did not seek reward in this world, but were content to leave this world to others and to look forward to their reward in the next world from God.

The Universality of *Dawah*

The Prophet’s biographer, Ibn Ishaq, tells how the Quraysh nobility once gathered at the house of Abu Talib, the Prophet’s uncle. Among those present were ‘Utba ibn Rabiya, Shaiba ibn Rabia, Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, Umayya

ibn Khalf and Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, all outstanding leaders of the Quraysh. Through Abu Talib, they asked the Prophet what it was he wanted of them. “Just one thing,” the Prophet replied. “If you accept it, you will become lords over the Arabs. Even the people of Asia will capitulate to you.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. II, p. 123)

Monotheism is more than just a doctrine. It is the secret of all forms of human success. To believe in one God is to give true expression to human nature. That is why this faith lodges itself in the depths of the human psyche. It even finds a place in the hearts of one’s enemies. Khalid ibn Walid became a Muslim just before the conquest of Makkah, but he had been conscious for quite some time before that of the truth of the message of Islam. Later on, he told of his early conviction that Muhammad, not the Quraysh, was in the right, and that he should join forces with the Prophet of Islam. “I participated in every battle against Muhammad,” he said. “But there was not one battle from which I did not go away with the feeling that I was fighting on the wrong side.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. IV)

Many people are reported to have had inclinations towards Islam long before they accepted the faith. Some even had dreams about Islam. One such person was Khalid ibn Sa’id ibn-ul Aas. He saw himself in a dream standing on the edge of an enormous pit of fire. Someone was trying to push him in. The Prophet Muhammad came and rescued him from the pit of doom.

Dawah activity appears to have no relation with economics. Yet indirectly it is a great economic activity as well. When a person becomes a Muslim, all his resources are automatically put at the disposal of the Islamic cause. The first person to provide the Islamic movement with financial assistance was Khadija, the Prophet's wife. Then Abu Bakr, who had accumulated 40,000 dirhams from his trading, put all his capital into the service of Islam. When he and the Prophet emigrated from Makkah to Madinah, he took 6000 dirhams with him—enough to finance the entire expenses of the journey. Uthman donated 10,000 dinars towards the expedition of Tabuk in 9 A.H. On one occasion alone AbdulRahman ibn Awf gave 500 horses, to be used in the service of the Islamic cause. So it was with others who accepted Islam. Just as they themselves entered the Islamic fold, so did their properties become part of the Islamic treasury.

Belief in one God is the only creed which does not allow for any social distinction or racial prejudice. For this reason the masses flock to join any movement which rises on the basis of this creed. They realize that under the banner of monotheism all men become equal in the real sense. As humble servants of one great God, they all become true human beings with a right to human dignity.

By finding their true place in the world, they achieve the greatest position that man can aspire to. When Mughirah ibn Shu'bah entered the court of the Iranian warrior, Rustam, he made a speech to the courtiers gathered there.

As Ibn Jarir explains, his words had a devastating effect on all who heard them:

“The lower classes said: ‘By God, this Arabian has spoken the truth.’ As for the upper classes, they said, ‘By God, he has attacked us with words which our slaves will find irresistible. God damn our predecessors. How stupid they were to think lightly of this community.’” (*Tarikh al-Tabari*, Vol. III, p. 36)

When, in the thirteenth year of his mission, the Prophet arrived in Madinah with Abu Bakr, about 500 people came to meet him. They greeted the newcomers with these words:

“Welcome! You are both safe with us. We accept you as our leaders.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. III)

It was the Prophet’s preaching alone which had made him leader of the people of Madinah. The first inhabitant of Madinah to whom the Prophet preached Islam was probably Suwayd ibn Samit al-Khazraji. When the Prophet had given him an outline of the teachings of Islam, Suwayd said: “It seems that your message is the same as mine.” “What’s your message?” the Prophet asked. “The wisdom of Luqman,” Suwayd replied. When the Prophet asked him to explain the wisdom of Luqman, Suwayd recited a few poems. “I have the Quran,” the Prophet said, “which is far superior to this.” He then recited a few verses of the Quran, and Suwayd immediately accepted Islam. He went back to Madinah and preached the message of Islam to his own tribe, but they killed him. (*Tarikh al-Tabari*, p. 232)

After this, a chieftain of Madinah, Abul Haisam Anas ibn Rafe', came to Makkah. With him was a group of youths of the Banu Abdul Ashhal tribe. They had come to Makkah to make an alliance with the Quraysh on behalf of the Khazraj, one of the main tribes of Madinah who were embroiled in a conflict with the other main tribe, the Aws. On hearing that they were in Makkah, the Prophet went to see them and said: "Shall I tell you about something even better than what you have come for?" He then went on to explain to them the meaning of belief in one God. There was a youth among them called Ayaz ibn Mu'az, who told his people that what the Prophet had told them was much better than what they had come for. The delegation, however, did not agree. "Leave us alone," they said, "we are here on other business." They returned to Madinah. Soon afterwards the vicious and devastating battle of Bu'ath was waged between the Aws and Khazraj.

According to Khubaib ibn Abdul Rahman, two people from Madinah, Sa'ad ibn Zarara and Zakwan Ibn Qais, came to Makkah and stayed with 'Utba ibn Rabi'ya. When they heard about the Prophet, they went to see him. The Prophet called on them both to accept Islam and recited to them a passage of the Quran. They accepted the Prophet's invitation, and became Muslim. Rather than return to the house of their host, 'Utba, they went straight back to Madinah after seeing the Prophet. They were the first to communicate the message of Islam to the people of Madinah. This was in the tenth year of the Prophet's mission, three years before the emigration to Madinah.

In the following year, six people from the Khazraj tribe came to Makkah for Hajj. They became Muslim, swore allegiance to the Prophet, and then returned to Madinah to propagate Islam there. Then, in the twelfth year of the Prophet's mission, twelve people came to swear allegiance to the Prophet. The oath that they took, at Aqaba near Makkah, is famous in Islamic history as the First Oath of Aqaba. There followed another pact, in the same place, the next year, in which 75 people participated.

Contrary to what happened in Makkah, the eminent people in the city of Madinah accepted Islam at the very outset. According to tribal custom, people in those days used to follow the religion of their leaders. Islam, then, spread quickly in Madinah. Soon there was not a single home into which Islam had not entered. It was only natural that, as the Muslims achieved a majority in Madinah, they should become influential in the city's affairs. And so it was that, as Tabari has reported, "the Muslims were the most influential people in the city." (*At Tabarani*)

Factors Working in Favour of *Dawah*

There are always some who resist the corruption of the world they live in, and remain attached to their own true natures. This is true of every day and age, but it was especially true of the Arabs when the Prophet commenced his mission. Besides the simple way of life to which they were accustomed, there was the legacy of the religion of Abraham, which made many inclined to seek out the

truth, and turn away from idol-worship. Such people were commonly known as Hanif, or upright. Qus ibn Saida and Waraqa ibn Naufal were among these “hunafa.” So was Jundub ibn ‘Amr ad-Dawsi. During the period of ignorance that preceded Islam, he was known to have said: “I know that there must be a Creator of all this creation, but I do not know who He is.”

When he heard about the Prophet, he came with 75 of his fellow tribesmen and accepted Islam. Abu Dharr Ghafari was another such person. As soon as he heard about the Prophet, he sent his brother to Makkah to find out more about him. One sentence of the report that Abu Dharr’s brother later submitted ran as follows:

“I saw a man whom people call irreligious. I have never seen anyone who more resembles you.” (*Muslim*)

People such as these had no trouble in understanding the truth of the Prophet’s message.

The preacher of God’s word is like a planter who goes out to sow seeds. If sometimes his seeds fall on barren ground, there are other times when they fall in places which produce a good yield, without the planter even knowing it.

Certain people took a considerable time to accept Islam. This does not mean that the truth of Islam finally dawned on them all of a sudden. The Prophet lived a life of the highest moral calibre. Moreover, he spent his whole life preaching the word of God. Even the opposition to the Prophet proved to be a factor in his favour: it meant that his

personality and his message were topics of conversation. All these things had contributed to planting the seed of Islam in the minds of many Arabs.

Adherence to tribal tradition, and ancestor worship were still extant, which sometimes made it appear that there was stiff opposition to Islam, but, in fact, in people's hearts the seed of Islam was silently growing. It is generally thought that Umar's acceptance of Islam, for instance, came all of a sudden, under the influence of a certain event. It would be more accurate, however, to say that it was this event which put the final seal on his faith, which had been developing for some time within his soul.

Well before Umar accepted Islam, when he appeared to be in the forefront of the opposition to the Prophet's mission, some Muslims emigrated to Abyssinia. Umm Abdullah bint Abu Hathma was one of them. She tells her story in these words:

"We were setting off for Abyssinia. My husband, 'Amir, had gone to collect some of his belongings. All of a sudden 'Umar ibn Khattab, a man who had subjected us to untold suffering, came and stood next to me. He had not up to that point accepted Islam. 'Umm Abdullah,' he said to me, 'are you going away somewhere?' 'We are,' I replied, 'for you people inflict such suffering upon us, that we must go and seek a place for ourselves in God's land. We will keep going until God releases us from our affliction.' 'May God go with you,' Umar said, as he was talking. I had never seen him act like this before. Then

he went on his way, and he was certainly very sad to see us leave Makkah.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. III, p. 79)

In every day and age some ideas take root in the popular psyche. Unless these ideas are banished no new message, however rational it may be, can become acceptable. The opposition which the Arabs first presented to the message of Islam was not just the result of stubbornness or expediency on their part. Rather, it was genuinely difficult for them to understand how any religion which differed from that of the patrons of the holy Kabah could be the true religion. Arab tribes living in the vicinity of Jewish areas were generally free of such restrictive creeds. They had often heard from the Jews that it was written in their scriptures that a prophet would come among the Arabs. As the historian Tabarani explains, that was why it was easier for the people of Madinah to see the truth of Islam:

“When the Ansar¹ heard the teachings of the Prophet, they remained silent. Their hearts were satisfied that what he preached was true. They had heard from the People of the Book² what the Final Prophet would be like. They recognized the truth of his message. They confirmed his teachings, and believed in him.”

When the Prophet went to the fair of ‘Ukaz and, entering

1 The Ansar were the people of Madinah who helped the Prophet and his companions after their emigration to Madinah.

2 The Jews and the Christians.

the tent of the Banu Kanda, explained his teachings, this is what one youth had to say in reply:

“My people, let us hurry and be the first to follow this man, for, by God, the People of the Book used to tell us that a prophet would arise from the Sacred Territory, and that his time has drawn near.” (Abu Naim Fi *Ad-dalail*)

The Aws and Khazraj had become mentally prepared, then, for the coming of an Arab Prophet. When he came, it was comparatively easy for them to accept him. But as far as the people of Makkah were concerned, and most of their compatriots along with them, the truth could only be seen in terms of who controlled the Kabah, the House of God in Makkah. In ancient Arab tradition, the Kabah was thought of as a King’s crown. In fact, its symbolism was of a higher order even than that of a crown, for the latter brings with it only political power, whereas one who held sway over the Kabah was heir to a wealth of spiritual tradition as well. The following conversation between Dhu’l Jaushan Al-Dhubbai and the Prophet shows the simplicity of the Arabs’ thinking:

“Why don’t you accept Islam,’ the Prophet said to Dhu’l Jaushan, ‘so that you may be counted among the first to have done so?’ Dhu’l Jaushan said that he would not. The Prophet asked why. ‘I have heard that your people are after your blood,’ Dhu’l Jaushan said. ‘Have you not heard about their defeat at Badr?’ asked the Prophet. Dhu’l Jaushan said that he had. ‘We are only showing you the path of guidance,’ said the Prophet. Dhu’l Jaushan said that he

would not accept Islam, until the Prophet had conquered Makkah, and won control of the Kabah. 'If you live, you will see this happen,' said the Prophet. Dhu'l Jaushan says that later he was with his family in Ghaur when a rider came up. Dhu'l Jaushan asked him what was afoot. 'Muhammad has conquered Makkah and taken control of the Sacred Territory,' he said. 'Woe betide me,' said Dhu'l Jaushan. 'If only I had accepted Islam on that day: if I had asked Muhammad for an emerald, he would have given it to me.'" (*Tabarani*)

Reaction to the Message of Islam

When the Prophet of Islam commenced his preaching mission, he met with exactly the reaction one would expect from a society hearing a new message. People were at a loss to grasp the meaning of his teachings. Once the Quraysh nobility sent 'Utba ibn Rabi'ya as their representative to the Prophet. He embarked on a long denunciation of the Prophet and his teachings. When he had had his say, the Prophet asked him: "Have you finished?" 'Utba said that he had. 'In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful,' the Prophet began, and then went on to recite the first thirteen verses of chapter forty-one of the Quran entitled '*Ha Mim As-Sajdah*.' 'Don't you have anything else to say?' 'Utba asked indignantly. The Prophet said that he did not. When he returned to the Quraysh, they asked him what had happened, 'I said whatever you would have wanted me to say,' replied

‘Utba. They asked whether Muhammad had given any answer. ‘Utba said that he had, but that the proofs he offered were incomprehensible. All that he had gathered was that he was warning them of a thunderbolt like that which had overtaken Thamud and Ad. ‘What has become of you?’ the Quraysh asked. ‘How is it that a person speaks to you in Arabic, and you do not understand what he says?’ ‘Really, I didn’t understand anything,’ ‘Utba insisted. ‘All I gathered was that he mentioned a thunderbolt.’ (*Baihaqi*)

To those who are familiar with religion in a particular, conventional form, to them, the message of the Prophet just appeared to be disparaging their elders. Dhamad once came to Makkah to perform ‘Umra (the lesser pilgrimage). He had occasion to sit in a gathering along with Abu Jahl, Utba ibn Rabi’ya and Umayya ibn Khalf, where the following exchanges took place: ‘He (Muhammad) has caused a split in our community,’ Abu Jahl declared. ‘He thinks we are all fools, and considers our ancestors woefully astray. He insults our idols.’ ‘He is insane, without doubt,’ Umayya added. (*Al-Isaba*, Vol. II, p. 210)

When ‘Amr ibn Murra Juhni preached Islam among his own tribe, the Juhaina, one of them spoke up: ‘May God make you taste the bitterness of life, ‘Amr. Do you want us to forsake our idols, disunite our people, and contradict the religion of our righteous ancestors? The religion that this Qurayshi from Tahama preaches has no affection, no graciousness to it.’ (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. II) He

then went on to recite three verses, the last of which went like this:

‘He seeks to prove that our forefathers were fools. One who acts thus can never prosper.’

A number of people were prevented by jealousy from accepting the message of Islam. The Prophet proclaimed the fact that he was sent by God. But people always find it very difficult to accept the fact that someone else has been given a knowledge of reality that they themselves have been denied. Baihaqi relates, on the authority of Mughirah ibn Shu’bah, that Abu Jahl one day took Mughira aside and said to him, ‘By God, I know full well that what he says is true, but one thing stops me from believing. The Bani Qusayy say that they are the gatekeepers of the Kabah, and I agree with them. They say that it is their job to bear water for pilgrims, and again I agree. They claim a place in the Darun Nadwa, and I agree that they have every right to it. They say that it is their responsibility to carry the standard in battle, and again I agree. Now they say that there is a prophet among them. This I cannot accept.’ (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. III).

For some people it was the threat of financial loss which prevented them from accepting the message of Islam. The House of God at Makkah had been turned into a house of idol worship before the coming of the Prophet. People of every religion had placed their idols there. There were even statues of Jesus and Mary within the walls of the Kabah, which had thus become a place of pilgrimage for

people of all denominations. This was why four months had been made sacred—so that people would be free to visit the Kabah during that time, without fear of being harmed or attacked on the way. During the four months that people used to flock to Makkah, Makkan traders did exceptionally good business. Were the idols to be removed from the Kabah, people would stop visiting the city, and its inhabitants would suffer immense losses. So there were many people with a vested interest in the continuance of polytheistic practices. They feared that if monotheism were to spread in the land, Makkah would suffer drastically; that this uncultivable valley would be totally ruined.

Moreover, as patrons of the Kabah, the Quraysh, had come to assume a position of dominance over tribes far and wide. Their caravans used to travel east and west, far beyond the boundaries of the peninsula. In accordance with long-standing pacts, they had been doing business with tribes as far afield as Persia, Abyssinia and the Byzantine Empire. The Quraysh now thought that their accepting Muhammad as a prophet could only result in neighbouring tribes—in fact all the polytheists of Arabia—breaking off the commercial agreements they had made with them. That would spell economic ruin for the people of Makkah; it would also be the end of their hegemony over the Arabs. Hence the verse in the chapter of the Quran entitled, “*Al-Waqi’ah*” (‘The Event’): Do you make its denial your means of livelihood (56:82). The allusion is to the Quraysh’s notion that, by denying the Prophet Muhammad, and the

monotheistic religion he taught, they thought they were saving themselves from financial ruin.

Once the Prophet started to preach his message, his person became the subject of general curiosity. According to the historian Abu Ya'ala, people who saw him used to ask one another: 'Is this the man?' He might be travelling among a large number of people in a caravan, but he would be singled out for mention. Anyone who came to Makkah would, among other things, take back news of the Prophet. 'Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, has laid claim to prophethood and the son of Abu Qahafa (Abu Bakr) has become his follower,' they would say. The Quraysh used to call the Prophet *Muzammam*, meaning blameworthy, instead of Muhammad, meaning praiseworthy, and accused him of insulting their ancestors. Once, as the Prophet's biographer Ibn Hisham has related, when the Prophet noticed the litter which his fellow Quraysh had put in the street on which he was passing, he said in dismay: 'What bad neighbours the Banu Abd Manaf are.' (*Tahzeeb Seerat Ibn Hisham*, p. 86)

While the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, was alive, his enemies were unable to take any action against him, for, according to tribal custom, aggression against the Prophet would have amounted to aggression against his whole tribe—the Banu Hashim. Before he accepted Islam, Umar ibn Khattab once set off with a sword in hand with the intention of killing Muhammad, on whom be peace. It was only sufficient for someone to say to him, 'How are you going to live with the Banu Hashim if you kill Muhammad?' for Umar to change

his mind. The same question faced anyone, in fact, who sought to harm the Prophet. Persecution in Makkah was mostly directed against slaves who had become Muslim—people who had no tribe to protect them. According to the Prophet’s close companion, Abdullah ibn Mas’ud, in the early days in Makkah only seven people publicly declared themselves to be Muslim: the Prophet himself, Abu Bakr, Ammar, Sa’id, Suhaib, Bilal and Miqdad. ‘As for the Prophet, God protected him through his uncle. As for Abu Bakr, his tribe looked after him. The rest would be seized by the idolaters who would put coats of armour on them, and lay them out in the boiling sun.’ (*Ahmad*)

When the chief of the Banu Hashim, the Prophet’s uncle, Abu Talib, died, an uncouth member of the Quraysh threw dirt at the Prophet and it stuck to him. When the latter reached home, one of his daughters brushed the dirt off him. ‘The Quraysh did nothing nasty to me like this before,’ the Prophet commented. It was only after the death of Abu Talib that they are emboldened to commit mean, aggressive acts of this nature. As the Prophet’s companion, Abu Hurayra, has pointed out, “the Quraysh used to treat the Prophet very harshly after the death of his uncle.” ‘Uncle, how keenly I have felt your loss’ the Prophet once lamented.

The Quraysh even started planning to do away with the Prophet. It was during this period that Abu Jahl threw the intestines of an animal on to the Prophet’s head, and ‘Uqba ibn Muait tied a sheet around his neck and pulled

it tight in what fortunately proved an abortive attempt to strangulate him.

Now that Abu Talib was dead, it seemed as if there was nothing to stop vicious attacks on the Prophet's person. The only thing that held people back was that nothing of this nature had ever happened before in Arabia; for a member of the Banu Hashim to be attacked and killed by his own fellow Quraysh would have been an action without precedent. Moreover, there were still people among the idolaters whose consciences pricked them, who in their heart of hearts supported the Prophet. The first time that Abu Jahl made a murderous attack upon the Prophet, Abu'l Bukhtari heard about it. He took a whip and went to the Kabah, where Abu Jahl was sitting triumphantly with his associates. Abu'l Bukhtari first made sure that Abu Jahl had really attacked the Prophet in this way, and, when it turned out that he had, he took his whip and struck Abu Jahl so hard on the head that the latter roared with pain.

One can see from the history of various religions, how polytheism has always been super-sensitive to criticism against itself. But in ancient times polytheism was more than just a creed; it provided the very foundation of the structure of social system. Political reasons too therefore accounted for the strong adherence to polytheism. This was the situation in Makkah, and it was for this reason that the preaching of monotheism in the Prophet's time was such a supreme test of patience. Only a handful of people believed in him during the first three years of his mission.

The town of Makkah was as devoid of supporters who would help the Prophet as it was of shade-giving trees. Only four people managed to remain close to him—Ali, Zayd, Abu Bakr and Khadija—five if one includes the first person who was born a Muslim, the daughter of Abu Bakr.

This situation remained unchanged for three full years. When the Prophet left his house, he was greeted with derisive jeers in the street, as if he were a madman. One day—at the instigation of Abu Jahl—a group of people started abusing the Prophet. A passerby, who was unable to put up with the sight of a person from a noble Quraysh family being treated in this manner, went straight to the Prophet's uncle, Hamza. 'Have you lost all sense of honour?' he asked. 'You are sitting back while people are disgracing your nephew.' This was enough to ignite Hamza's sense of Arab pride. He had an iron bow which he took with him and went to see Abu Jahl. Striking the Prophet's tormentor, he said: 'I have adopted Muhammad's religion as my own. If you have it in you, do something about it.' (*Tabarani*)

Hamza was famed as a fighter all over Arabia. After he took this action, people gained new courage and the number of Muslims went up to thirty. At this time there were two highly influential people in Makkah—Umar ibn Khattab and Abu Jahl ibn Hisham. The Prophet offered a prayer to God: 'Lord, strengthen Islam by means of Umar ibn Khattab or Abu Jahl ibn Hisham.' This prayer was accepted in the former's case. In the sixth year of

the Prophet's mission, Umar ibn Khattab accepted Islam. Along with him, several other people converted, and the number of Muslims increased to forty. During this period the Muslims had a hideout in Dar Arqam. According to the historian, Ibn Kathir, thirty-nine people used to gather there. But such a small number could not combat the might of the conventional system, which in numbers and resources was far stronger. It was not long before, the oppression of the Muslims started again. The Prophet was subjected to every form of persecution, but all attempts to kill him failed. The tribal system was still protective of the Prophet. No one could dare to take his life, for to do so would have been to declare war on the whole of the Prophet's tribe. He was not the only Prophet to be defended in this way. The Prophet Shu'ayb's people also refrained from killing him for the same reason, despite their desire to do so:

“They said: ‘O Shu'ayb, we do not understand much of what you say to us. And we see you weak among us. But for your tribe, we would have stoned you. You are not dear to us.’” (Quran, 11:91)

The Quraysh once presented a demand to the chief of the Banu Hashim, the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, that he should expel his nephew from the tribe. Only then would they be able to slay the Prophet. Abu Talib's honour prevented him from taking this step. When Abu Talib, at the Quraysh's behest, asked his nephew to stop criticizing their gods, the Prophet became concerned that his uncle was going to hand him over to the Quraysh. But Abu Talib

immediately put his nephew's mind at rest. 'By God, I will never hand you over to anyone,' he told him. (*Tahzeeb Seerat Ibn Hisham*, p. 60)

When all else failed, the Quraysh decided, in the seventh year of the Prophet's mission, to ostracize the Banu Hashim. Abu Talib took his nephew, and the whole of his family, out of Makkah, and they took up their abode in a ravine known as Sheb Abi Talib. Except for a few wild trees, there was nothing in this mountain pass. For three years Abu Talib's family lived on the leaves and roots of these trees. Their only respite was during the four sacred months, when the Banu Hashim used to come to Makkah. They would take back animals of sacrifice and live for a few months on the dried meat that they prepared.

After three years, in the tenth year of the Prophet's mission, the pact that the Quraysh had made among themselves to ostracise him came to an end. The Banu Hashim were now able to return to Makkah. But the strain of the time in exile had been too much for Abu Talib, and he died in the same year (620 A.D.). Abdul Uzza, otherwise known as Abu Lahab, became chief of the Banu Hashim. The arch enemy of the Prophet now occupied the seat of the judge. He took the decision that Abu Talib had held back from: he expelled the Prophet from his tribe.

Expulsion from the Tribes

To expel an Arab from his tribe in those days was like putting him among a pack of wolves. There was no

government in those days responsible for the safety of its citizens. There was only the tribal system, and one could only live under the protection of a tribe. In the pilgrims' tents in Mina the Prophet once preached his message to a certain tribe, but they refused to accept it. Still, one can tell from what one of their number, Maisira ibn Masrooq al-Abbasi, had to say, that the Prophet's word had made an impact on him. Ibn Kathir explains how the Prophet's hopes were raised with regard to Maisira when he said, 'How well you have spoken, and how enlightening your words are. But my tribe is opposed to your message, and one cannot go against one's tribe.'

What a grave matter it must have been, then, to be expelled from one's tribe. The Prophet now had nowhere to go in his own land. There was no other option but to seek the protection of some other tribe. To make his first attempt in this direction, he journeyed to Taif. Later on he explained the whole episode to his wife Aishah, saying that he had 'presented himself before 'Ibn Abd Yaleel.' In the words of Urwah ibn Zubayr, 'When Abu Talib died, and the Prophet's affliction became more intense, he took himself to the Thaqeef tribe³ in the hope that they would grant him asylum and support.' But one can judge what savage treatment the Prophet received at their hands from this prayer that he made on his return to Makkah:

"Lord, I complain to You of my weakness and helplessness.

3 The Thaqeef were the tribe that inhabited Taif.

How vulnerable I am among men, most Merciful One!”

While coming back from Taif, the Prophet said to them, “Let the news of your behaviour to me not reach Makkah, otherwise they would become more audacious. The Prophet, unable to live within the city, stayed outside, and sent messages to various people, asking them to take him under their personal protection so that he could return to the city. Eventually Mut'im ibn Adi agreed to extend protection to the Prophet, who, shielded by the swords of Mut'im's sons, once again entered the city walls.

Fairs, attended by tribes from all over Arabia, used to be held in various places in those days. The Prophet would attend these and speak to different tribes, in the hope that one of them would agree to extend him protection. He explained his plight to his uncle Abbas. “I am not safe here with you and your relatives. Will you take me to the fair tomorrow, so that we can visit people in their tents and talk to them?”

The Prophet would then go into people's tents and presenting himself before them, would enquire what protection they could afford him. He would tell them that his people had rejected him and expelled him from their midst. ‘Protect me and grant me refuge so that I can continue to preach the faith that God has revealed to me.’ Historians have mentioned the names of fifteen tribes that the Prophet approached individually, only to meet with one refusal after another. Although it was considered a shameful matter for someone to seek refuge with a tribe,

and his request not be granted—in fact, this was the first notable example in Arab history of a person spending several years looking for a tribe to take him in—no one was prepared to shoulder this responsibility in the case of the Prophet. When a group from one tribe felt inclined to take pity upon the Prophet, one of their elders rebuked them: “His own tribe has expelled him and you intend to grant him protection. What do you want to do? Wage war upon the whole of the Arab nation?” He knew that to offer refuge to a person who had been disowned by his own tribe was to declare war against that tribe.

It was the Quraysh that had expelled him, and the Quraysh were leaders of the entire Arab peninsula. To grant asylum to one expelled by them amounted to declaring war on the whole of Arabia. That was why, when the Ansar were swearing allegiance to the Prophet, Abul Haitham ibn al-Tayhaan warned them: “If you take pity on him, the whole Arab nation will descend upon you with one accord.” (*Tabarani*)

Added to this there was the fact that Arab border tribes had made pacts with neighbouring foreign powers. These tribes were afraid of repercussions if they took pity on a controversial personality like the Prophet. As Ibn Kathir has explained in *Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, the Prophet once went into the tent of the Banu Shayban ibn Tha'alaba in Makkah, and talked with their elders. They were impressed by the Prophet's words but finally decided that their position, on the border of Persia, was too precarious

for them to take responsibility for the Prophet. As their spokesman, Hani ibn Qubaisa, put it, they had made pacts with the Persian emperor, and ‘it might be that kings will not take kindly to the message that you preach.’

The Prophet was desperate to find a tribe that would afford him protection, for there was no other way that he could continue his mission. Once he went to see a tribe which went by the name of Banu Abdullah. After the Prophet had, as usual, called them to accept Islam and presented himself to them, in the hope that they would grant him asylum, he said: ‘Banu Abdullah, what a beautiful name your forefather had.’ But they were untouched by his evident good will and rejected his proposals.

The last three years of the Prophet’s time in Makkah were spent among various tribes, looking for one which would grant him asylum. Yet despite his untiring efforts, not a single tribe was ready to take him in. Some of the people he approached used to taunt him, saying, ‘Isn’t it high time that you despaired of us?’ Eventually God gave the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, which hailed from Madinah, the courage to extend their support to the Prophet. There was one special, psychological reason for their decision. There were Jewish tribes living in their vicinity—the Jews of Khaybar, who had possession of the most fertile land in the area; they also had control of the region’s commerce. A large proportion of the Aws and Khazraj made a living for themselves working for these Jews.

The Jews' economic domination, and their exploitation of those beneath them, led the two groups often to wars. The Jews used to tell these Madinan tribes that soon a prophet would come among the Arabs. When he came, they would join forces with him, and eliminate the Aws and Khazraj completely. This warning of the Jews is referred to in a verse of the Quran:

“From of old they had prayed for victory against those without faith.” (2:89)

When the Aws and Khazraj heard the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, they recognized him as the prophet the Jews had mentioned, and made haste to accept him, before the Jews did so. Besides this, there were other historical and social reasons which made it comparatively easier for the Aws and Khazraj to understand the message of the Prophet Muhammad, and believe in him, than it was for other tribes. It did not take much deliberation before they swore allegiance to him.

So the time which for years the Prophet had been awaiting finally came. He had found a place in which, under tribal protection, he would be able to continue his struggle effectively. The fact that the majority of the people of Madinah accepted Islam made it easier for the Muslims' scattered resources to be brought together in one place, and used more effectively for the furtherance of the Islamic cause. When the Aws and Khazraj swore allegiance, the Prophet quickly returned to his companions. “Praise God,” he told them, “for today Rabia's offspring have as good as overcome the Persians.”

The Prophet began to make preparations for emigration to Madinah. He was to take six months after the conversion of the Aws and Khazraj to do this. All this while he attempted to maintain the utmost secrecy, but still the idolaters, the Quraysh, learnt of his plans to leave. They heard about the refuge granted to him in Madinah, and the protection extended to him by the Ansar. They learnt also of the Ansar's acceptance of Islam, and that the Muslims were gathering in Madinah. Plotting against the Prophet, they decided to take him captive at the moment of his departure and then either kill him or keep him prisoner. But their plans came to nothing. When all his arrangements were complete, he succeeded in slipping away quietly for his new abode. (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. 3, p. 145)

Emigration

The assistance given by the tribes of Madinah to the Prophet is one of the most extraordinary events of history. Because of this, they came to be known as the Ansar—the Helpers. Usually when people give something, it is in return for some favour, or it is in order to ingratiate themselves with someone. There are also those who give offerings to 'holy men,' because they think that to do so will cause blessings to descend on their families and possessions. But the emigration of the Prophet is perhaps the sole example in the annals of history of people opening their doors to destitute and forlorn refugees when they themselves had nothing to gain and probably a great deal

to lose by doing so. The action of the Ansar was based entirely on their dedicated commitment to the cause of Islam. Not only did they accommodate the emigrants in their homes, they treated them as brothers and sisters, and shared their possessions with them. And they did all this, fully conscious of the fact that their action involved much more than economic sacrifice. They knew full well that what they were doing would arouse the hostility of the most powerful factions in both Arabia and Persia. There are no words more fitting than those of Ali to describe them: "They were true to their word, steadfast in adversity."

When the Emigrants forsook their own country for Madinah, every one of the Ansar was eager to extend hospitality to them. They drew lots among themselves for the privilege of being able to entertain such noble guests, and even went to the extent of handing over the better part of their properties to them. And all this despite the fact that, in the oath of allegiance they took, it was specifically laid down that others would be given priority over them. Though they had made the most extreme sacrifices in the path of Islam, they did not show the slightest disapproval of this clause. (*Seerat ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 111)

Despite all the assistance that was afforded him, the Prophet's life in Madinah was not an easy one. Apprehensions that the whole of Arabia would unite against the Muslims proved only too true. This is how Ubayy ibn Kaab, a companion of the Prophet, describes the situation: "When the Prophet and his companions arrived in Madinah

and the Ansar gave them asylum, the Arabs united against them. The Muslims used to remain in their armour, night and day.” (*Kanzul Ummal*, Vol. I, p. 259)

The Quraysh declared economic sanctions against the people of Madinah. All Arab tribes, following the Quraysh’s lead, severed links with the city. Internal resources ran far short of providing for the considerably increased population of Madinah, and the expense of defending the city pushed the economy to its very limit.

Umar says that the Prophet was restless with hunger all day in Madinah. There were not even enough rejected dates for him to eat his fill. In later years someone asked Aishah if they had a lantern. “If we had had oil to burn in a lantern,” she said, “we would have drunk it.” The Muslims used to go out on expeditions they made with the Prophet. On one occasion, there was only one camel between six of them. They used to take turns to ride on it. The skin began peeling off their feet from incessant walking, and they used to bind them with rags. That was why the expedition came to be known as *Zatul-Riqah*, *riqa’ah* meaning rags or patches. Food rations ran so low that people would suck dates rather than eat them. Acacia leaves and locusts would make up the rest of their diet. Added to this the Emigrants had to contend with a drastic change of diet. In Makkah they had been used to consuming meat and milk. In Madinah dates constituted the major portion of their diet. One day, according to Tabarani, when the Prophet came to take the Friday congregational prayer, a Makkan

Muslim called out to him: “Prophet of God, these dates have burnt our intestines.”

The emigration to Madinah was a watershed in Islamic history. From a practical point of view, Islam emerged from a purely missionary phase and entered a period of active confrontation. During the period when he was solely concerned with preaching, the Prophet used to work according to one hard-and-fast principle. He used to steer clear of all controversial political, economic and tribal issues and concentrate entirely on giving good news of the joys of paradise, and warning of the punishment of hell. When he preached the message of Islam to the Bani ‘Amir ibn Sasa’a tribe in the fair of Ukaz, he assured them at the same time that all he would do was pursue his preaching work in a peaceful manner; he would not raise any extraneous issue. “I am God’s prophet,” he said. If I come amongst you, will you protect me so that I can continue to communicate my message? I will not force you on any matter.” (Abu Na’eem, *Dala’il Al-Nubuwwah*, p. 100)

In Madinah preaching work still remained the basic purpose of the Prophet’s mission. But the spectrum had broadened, and now Islam had to take account of social issues as well. The policy adopted by the Prophet at this juncture was aimed at softening people’s hearts towards Islam, so that the purpose of his mission could be achieved without conflict.

The second way in which people were brought closer to the faith was by ‘conciliating people’s hearts.’ (Quran, 9:60).

The generosity that the Prophet showed to win people over to his cause was without parallel. No one before or after him can lay claim to such boundless munificence. After the Muslim conquest of Makkah, Safwan ibn Umayya, a noble of Makkah, went and hid himself in a mountain ravine. The Prophet extended an amnesty to him, and asked to see him. After the Hawazin had been subdued at the battle of Hunain, 8 A.H., the Prophet was overseeing the distribution of spoils at Jir'ana, and Safwan ibn Umayya was with him. As yet he had not accepted Islam. Standing on the side of a gully, he gazed in wonderment at the goats and camels swarming beneath him. "Abu Wahab," the Prophet enquired on seeing him, "would you like all these cattle?" Safwan said that he would. "They are all yours," the Prophet told him. "No one but a prophet could be so generous," Safwan replied. He immediately accepted Islam, and testified that there was no one worthy of being served save God, and that Muhammad was His servant and Prophet. (*Kanzul Ummal*, Vol. V, p. 294).

The Prophet's several marriages were also part of his policy of gentleness in approach to the issue of conciliation of the hearts. The prime importance attached in the tribal system to relationships through marriage, explains the rationale behind the marriages entered into by the Prophet after his emigration to Madinah. Through them bonds were established with countless people, whose hearts then mellowed towards his mission. The Prophet's first marriage was with Khadija, a widow almost twice his age. Except for that one alliance his other marriages were

entered into for the political and missionary advantages that accrued to Islam from them.

The year after the Peace Treaty of Hudaibiyyah (628 A.D.), the Prophet—along with 2000 Muslims—went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Kabah. During his three-day stay in Makkah, he married a widow by the name of Maymuna bint al-Harith. She had eight sisters, all of whom were married into distinguished Makkan families. By marrying her, the Prophet became related to all these eight families. Khalid ibn Walid was Maymuna's nephew, whom she had brought up as a son. So Khalid, the Quraysh's greatest warrior, became the Prophet's stepson. After this Khalid did not join in any hostilities against the Muslims, and before long he himself entered the fold of Islam. After his marriage to Maymuna the Prophet had arranged a wedding reception for the people of Makkah, but the Quraysh reminded him that—according to the terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah—he was only allowed to remain in Makkah for three days. His period was up and he would have to leave the city immediately. The wedding reception, which was aimed at softening the hearts of the people could not take place. Khalid ibn Walid and 'Amr ibn al-'As became Muslim together. Someone who saw them on their arrival in Madinah exclaimed: "With these two in the bag, Makkah has been tamed."

Umm Habiba, the daughter of Abu Sufyan, a prominent member of the Quraysh, and her husband Ubaidullah ibn Jahsh accepted Islam and emigrated to Abyssinia. There, however, the husband became a Christian. Not

long after that he died. Hearing of this, the Prophet made arrangements to marry Umm Habiba by proxy. After the death of Abu Jahl on the field of Badr, Abu Sufyan had become the most prominent leader of the Quraysh. The Prophet would now be his son-in-law. The marriage had to be completed by proxy, for it was feared that if Umm Habiba returned to Makkah, her father would not allow the marriage. The ceremony was then conducted by Najashi, king of Abyssinia, and the bride left immediately for Madinah. With this relationship now established, Abu Sufyan could no longer be at enmity with the Prophet, and he converted to Islam one day before the conquest of Makkah.

The other aspect of this policy was that of “striking terror” into the hearts of the enemies of Islam. This consisted of mustering up enough strength and making such a show of it that there would be no need to use it.

The defeat of the Muslims at Uhud (3 A.H.) could have turned into a rout if Abu Sufyan had followed up his victory with another attack, instead of turning back to Makkah. Indeed, when he reached Roha, he realized his mistake, and made plans to turn once again on the Muslims’ stronghold. But even at this time of utter disarray, the Prophet’s information system was still working very effectively. He heard about Abu Sufyan’s intention and decided to go out to meet him. Immediately he reassembled his shaken army and set off towards Makkah. Contrary to his normal practice, which was to maintain

a veil of the utmost secrecy over military manoeuvres, this expedition was given a fanfare of publicity. When the Muslims reached Hamra al-Asad, eight miles from Madinah, Abu Sufyan heard of the pursuit. Thinking that fresh reinforcements must have arrived, he gave up his idea of attacking Madinah and returned to Makkah. The Prophet turned back to Madinah once he was sure of the withdrawal of Abu Sufyan's army.

One year after the Battle of Muthah, which occurred in the month of Jumada al-Awwal, 8 A.H., the Byzantine emperor started gathering his forces on the Syrian border. The Ghassanids, along with other Roman allies among Arab tribes in the region, followed the emperor's lead. In response, the Prophet advanced to Tabuk with an army of 30,000. The expedition to Tabuk was really a military pre-emptive strike designed to awe the enemy, so that they would lose heart and abandon their hostile intentions. When the Prophet reached Tabuk, he heard that Caesar was no longer advancing to meet the Muslims but, instead, was beginning to withdraw his forces from the frontier. There was now no question of a battle, and Caesar's very withdrawal had assured the Prophet of a moral victory, which he decided to turn to his own political advantage. During his 20-day stay in Tabuk, he established contact with the neighbouring Arab tribes, who were at that time under Roman influence. The Christian chieftain of Daumat al-Jandal, Ukaidir ibn Abdul Malik Kindi, Yohanna ibn Ruya from Ayla, along with Christians of Maqna, Jarba

and Azruh, agreed to pay *jizya*, a tax paid by non-Muslim states as a sign of submission to the Muslim rule, and to buy protection and freedom to practice their religion and culture.

The same reason lay behind the expedition under Usama, undertaken soon after the death of the Prophet. Except for the tribes of Madinah the whole of Arabia had risen in revolt when the Prophet died. Suddenly the Muslims found themselves at odds with all their Arab countrymen. It appeared expedient at the time to preserve all strength in Madinah, in order to counter the enemy within. But rather than do this, Abu Bakr acted on a decision taken by the Prophet. A force of 700 men was sent to the Roman front under Usama. Abu Hurayra explains the impact that this expedition had on the rebellious Arab tribes:

“When Usama’s force passed those tribes who were on the verge of apostasy, they would exclaim: ‘If the Muslims did not have great reserves of strength, they would never have dispatched a force like this. Let us leave them to fight against the Romans.’ The Muslims fought against the Romans and defeated them, returning safely after doing battle with them. Seeing this, those who had been thinking of apostasy became firm in Islam.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. VI, p. 305)

When the Prophet reached Madinah there were, besides a small minority of idolaters, two main communities living there—the Jews and the Muslims. These two communities were split up into several small groups. Neither was able

to present a united front. People were just waiting for someone who would organize and unite them. When the Prophet realized that this was what people wanted, he issued a decree in which Jews and Muslims were recognized as communities in their own right. "The Jews are a community along with the Muslims... They shall have their religion and the Muslims theirs." No encroachment was made on the customary rights and responsibilities of either Jews or Muslims, and acceptable concessions were made to the sentiments of both communities. A clause was added, however, which read as follows:

"Whenever there is a disagreement about something, the matter should be referred to God Almighty and to Muhammad." (*Tahzeeb Seerat ibn Hisham*, p. 129)

This decree amounted to a political initiative which, in the most tactful and ingenious manner, introduced Islamic constitutional government to the city of Madinah.

The Prophet's departure to Madinah, instead of appeasing the Quraysh, aroused their anger to new levels of intensity. They saw that the Muslims were all gathering in one place, and becoming stronger in the process. Only two years elapsed before the Prophet had to decide whether to meet the Quraysh army outside the city, or allow them to enter Madinah and cast the newly built nest of Islam into disarray. The Quraysh had 950 men in their army, while the Muslims numbered only 313. But the Prophet's insight told him that the Quraysh were moved by solely negative impulses. Hatred of the Muslims, and jealousy of

the Prophet, lay behind their aggression. The Muslims, on the other hand, were moved by the most positive and noble instincts. They had faith in God to spur them on, as well as the certainty that they were fighting for a true cause. The Muslims, then, were immeasurably more strongly motivated than their foes. Besides this, Arab warfare was an individual affair. Every warrior sought to make a name for himself by exhibiting his own bravery. Faith in God had removed this weakness from the Muslims. The Prophet was the first person in Arab history to command his forces to pursue a united course of action, and fight in ranks. He stressed the importance of fighting, not as individuals, but as a unit. The believers were urged to destroy the Quraysh's individual strength with the strength of solidarity:

“God loves those who fight for His cause in ranks as if they were a solid cemented edifice.” (61:4)

It was faith and the Muslims' ability to fight as one that brought about the first victory of Islamic history—the Battle of Badr.

Victory of Islam

Defeat at Badr had the effect of further provoking the Quraysh and several battles, notably that of Uhud (3 A.H.), ensued within the space of a few years. The Muslims ran into severe difficulties during these campaigns. The 800 who participated in the Battle of the Trench had to suffer extreme cold, hunger and exhaustion. So much so that when the Prophet asked for someone to volunteer

for a spying foray into the enemy camp, no one stood up. Eventually the Prophet personally delegated this task to Huzaifa.

In the year 6 A.H. the Prophet, acting under divine inspiration, set out for Makkah along with 1300 companions. He made it absolutely clear that the Muslims had no intention of fighting anybody, and were going for Umra (the lesser pilgrimage). The sacrificial camels which the Muslims took along with them provided further proof of their peaceful intentions. The camels were even given the sacrificial emblem (*qalada*), so that the people of Makkah could be quite sure that they were meant for sacrifice. This journey was also aimed at allaying the fears of the Quraysh that the Muslims intended to destroy the Kabah's religious and commercial status.

As expected, the Quraysh advanced to prevent the Muslims from entering Makkah. The two parties met at Hdaybiyyah, some eleven kilometers from Makkah. Anxious to avoid hostilities, the Prophet set up camp then and there. Then having impressed it upon his envoys that they had not come to fight anybody, he sent a message to the Quraysh, suggesting a peace treaty between the two sides. "We have come as pilgrims. War has weakened the Quraysh and caused them to suffer great losses. If they wish, I am willing to make a truce with them: they shall not come in between myself and the people⁴ during that time.

4 Other tribes in and around Makkah at that time.

If I emerge successful, and they so wish, they can accept the religion which others have accepted. If I do not emerge supreme, they will have the right to do as they please. If the Quraysh refuse this offer, I will fight with them in support of my cause, even at the risk of losing my life. And what God wishes will come to pass.” (*Bukhari*)

The theme of this message shows that the Prophet was appealing to a soft spot in the Quraysh’s own psyche. Actually, during the early period of Islam, when the Prophet first commenced his public mission in Makkah, ‘Utba ibn Rabiah once came to meet the Prophet on behalf of the Quraysh. When he returned to his people, this is what he had to say to them:

“Leave this fellow to carry on with his work for, God knows, he is never going to give it up. Do not prevent him from preaching to the Arabs. If he wins them over, then his honour will be your own. If they prevail over him, then, thanks to others, you will be free of him.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*)

The Prophet’s appeal couched in terms which were consistent with the Quraysh’s own thinking, brought him supporters for his peace initiative within the enemy camp.

The Prophet sent the Quraysh this message, and at the same time took various steps to influence them. For example, when the Prophet heard that one of the Banu Kinanah was on his way from Makkah to Hudaybiyyah to ascertain the Muslims’ intention, he told his followers of the Banu Kinanah’s reverence for sacrificial camels, and directed

them to take these camels with them when they went out to meet him. They did so, at the same time chanting the prayer of pilgrimage—"We are here at your service, Lord..." The Quraysh's envoy was extremely impressed. On his return to Makkah, he told the Quraysh that he was quite sure that the Muslims had come on a pilgrimage and for no other reason, and should be allowed to carry on.

The very spectacle of 1500 Muslims displaying their faith in God also made a deep impact on the Quraysh. When one of their envoys came into the Muslim camp, he found the Muslims all praying in ranks, lined up behind the Prophet. He was highly impressed by the organization and discipline of the worshippers.

When he returned to the Quraysh, he told them that the Muslims worked in unison: when Muhammad made a move, all his followers did likewise. Another envoy saw that when the Prophet performed his ablutions, the Muslims rushed to catch the water he had used in their hands before it could touch the ground. He noticed the hush which descended upon them when the Prophet was speaking, the reverence which prevented them from looking him straight in the eye. When this envoy reported back to the Quraysh, they were deeply impressed by his description of the Muslims' loyalty and affection for their leader. 'Urwah ibn Mas'ud asked them: "Are you not as my fathers and sons?" The people told him that they were indeed. "Are you suspicious of me in any way?" he asked them. They said not. "Well," 'Urwa continued, "this man

(Muhammad) has made a fine proposal to you. Agree to it, and let me go to confer with him.” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*)

The Prophet made clear his intention to accept any demand the Quraysh made, as long as it did not contradict the law of God. The Quraysh displayed all manner of bigotry while the treaty was being compiled. They removed the words, ‘Muhammad, Prophet of God,’ from the draft and inserted “Muhammad, son of Abdullah,” instead. Taking offence at the words, “In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful,” they insisted on “In Your Name, O God,” being written. They added a clause saying that any Quraysh who joined the Muslims would have to be returned. The Quraysh, on the other hand, would not have to do the same with any Muslim who came to them. They also refused the Muslims permission to enter Makkah for their pilgrimage that year. These clauses were more than the Companions could bear. ‘Urwah ibn Mas’ud even commented that those whom the Prophet had gathered around himself would desert him. ‘Urwah’s remark was too much for the normally placid Abu Bakr. Angrily he said, “So you think that we will leave the Prophet on his own?” But the Prophet himself refused to be provoked. He accepted all the Quraysh’s demands, and completed a ten-year truce with them. As long as the truce lasted, the Quraysh were prevented, directly or indirectly, from participating in any hostilities against the Muslims.

This treaty weighed so heavily on the Muslims that, after it had been completed, no one responded to repeated calls

by the Prophet for sacrifice of the camels they had brought with them. It was with heavy hearts that finally they rose to make the sacrifice. So deep was their sorrow, that when they shaved their heads afterwards, it seemed as if they were going to cut one another's throats. But this truce, the terms of which appeared so unfavourable to the Muslims, was destined to reap incalculable benefits for them later.

The treaty of Hudaibiyyah was however a temporary solution. The Prophet knew that the Quraysh would one day violate the treaty. Therefore, this matter demanded a permanent solution. The Prophet's intuition told him to wait until they broke the treaty before doing battle with them. Knowing the negative sentiments that spurred the Quraysh on in their fight against the Muslims—jealousy, hate, greed and arrogance—the Prophet reckoned that they would stop short of no immoral or unreasonable action in pursuit of their aims. His estimate proved correct. In Sha'aban 8 A.H., fighting erupted between the tribes of Khuza'a and Banu Bakr. The Banu Bakr were allied to the Quraysh and the Khuza'ah to the Muslims. In blatant contradiction of the terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the Quraysh provided their allies with clandestine support, thus enabling them to attack the Khuza'ah. This incident occurred just two years after the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. During this time the number of people with the Prophet had risen from 1500 to 10,000. Along with them, the Prophet secretly set out for Makkah. So wise and diplomatic was his strategy that Makkah was conquered with next to no bloodshed:

“God has promised you many future gains, and thus He has given you this beforehand, and He has restrained the hands of men from you.” (Quran, 48:20)

At the time the Treaty of Hudaibiyah was signed, the Prophet had been preaching for twenty years and the message of Islam had spread throughout the Arabian peninsula. In every tribe, there were people in whose hearts the Prophet’s religion had found a place. But they still looked up to the Quraysh as their leaders, and, for fear of arousing their ire, many who realized the truth of Islam were unable to proclaim their faith. They knew that their public acceptance of Islam would have amounted to a declaration of war against the mightiest tribe in Arabia. Now they heard that the Muslims and the Quraysh had agreed to curtail hostilities for ten years. The Quraysh would no longer be able to take reprisals against people becoming Muslims. There was nothing now to stop people from accepting Islam. It was as if a large crowd had gathered at its gates. With the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, those gates were thrown open and the crowds flocked in.

As Ibn Shahab al-Zahri and others have pointed out, the Muslims gained more from the Treaty of Hudaibiyah than from any of their campaigns. The Prophet returned to Makkah two years later with 10,000 men, whereas, previously, the Muslims had numbered no more than 3,000. This was the direct outcome of the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of Islam—the anger and hostility of the Quraysh which would result from such conversions.

Bara'a was one of the Muslims present at Hudaibiyyah. Bukhari relates how he used to say to latter-day people, who considered the Conquest of Makkah to be the great victory of Islam, that the Companions of the Prophet considered the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah as the victory.

The economic blockade of Makkah was now lifted. Caravans from that city were now permitted to pass freely through Makkah. But Abu Jandal, Abu Baseer, and others who had accepted Islam, had to be returned to the Quraysh under the terms of the treaty. Before long, however, they escaped and took refuge in Zul-Marwa. So many Muslim converts assembled in that place that it became a new, flourishing centre of Islam. From there they used to play havoc with the Quraysh's trading caravans. Finally the Quraysh were forced to give up insisting that anyone deserting the Quraysh for the Muslim camp would have to be returned to them.

The great lesson of Hudaibiyyah is that one should avoid impatience and should not judge solely by appearances. The outwardly unfavourable Treaty of Hudaibiyyah held great opportunities for the Muslims, which only people of insight could perceive. Abu Bakr commenting on the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, observed: "It was the greatest Islamic victory, though on that day people were too shortsighted to realize the divine wisdom behind this agreement. People are impatient but God is not. He lets matters take their course, until they reach the stage that He intends." (Recorded by Ibn 'Asakir). It is realism which

brings success in this world; but people want instant success, and are unwilling to go through the lengthy stages it takes to achieve it.

Now the Prophet began to make preparations for another campaign. The target he kept secret even from Abu Bakr. Only in Ramadan 8 A.H., when the Muslim army was actually directed to set out towards Makkah, did people realize where they were heading. So stealthy and discreet was their advance that they reached Murr'uz-Zahran without the Quraysh knowing that the Muslims were upon them. The Prophet had prayed before he set out that "the spies and informers of the Quraysh" should be restrained until the Muslims entered the city of Makkah.

The Prophet went to amazing lengths to keep preparations for the campaign of Makkah secret. He gave orders that Madinah should be cut off from the rest of Arabia: no one was to be allowed to enter or leave the city. A party, of which Ali was in charge, was sent to guard the roads leading to Madinah. It was they who arrested Hatib ibn Abi Balta's messenger, who was taking a letter to the Makkans to warn them of the danger to their city. As Tabarani reported on the authority of Ibn Abbas, "Every tribe provided manpower and weaponry in full measure." No one was left behind. The army of 10,000 was divided into groups of several hundred men. Each division marched in ranks, led by a commander bearing a standard. The Prophet asked his uncle Abbas to let an old opponent of his, Abu Sufyan, witness the Muslims' march.

Abu Sufyan watched from beside a narrow mountain pass as, row upon row, the Muslim army filed past. He could hardly believe his eyes. "Who has the power to confront this army?" he exclaimed. "I have never seen anything like it!" The Prophet thus went to great lengths to impress Abu Sufyan. At the same time he announced that anyone entering Abu Sufyan's house would be safe. The result was that Abu Sufyan himself appealed to the people of Makkah to capitulate to Muhammad, for no one was strong enough to fight him. Events which followed the conquest of the city prove conclusively that the extensive preparations had not been aimed at causing bloodshed: their purpose was to awe the Makkans into submission, so that the city could be captured for Islam without any need for fighting. As the Muslim army neared Makkah, one of its leaders, Sa'ad Ibn 'Ubadah, called out: "Today is the day of battle!" The Prophet told him that it was not the day of battle; it was the day of mercy. Sa'ad was then told to step down and the standard was handed over to his son instead.

There were some engagements after the Conquest of Makkah. But now that the Muslims had gained control of the capital of Arabia, it took only some minor skirmishes for all Arabia to capitulate, and accept the Prophet as their leader.

CHAPTER FIVE

CALLING PEOPLE TO TREAD THE PATH OF GOD

*Who speaks better than one who calls to God and does good works
and says, 'I am surely of those who submit'?*

—The Quran, 41:33

The Significance of Calling People to Tread the Path of God

No calamity or affliction, howsoever serious, can wipe out the Muslim community, for their continuing existence is part of the divine promise enshrined in the Quran (15:9). Just as the final Book of God must remain in existence till the last day, so also will the preservers of that Book continue to exist until the last star is snuffed out, and the scales of Divine Justice are put in place.

But it should be borne in mind that this promise, made by the Lord of the universe, relates only to the existence of the followers of Muhammad on earth, and not to their salvation in the Hereafter. Man's salvation in the Hereafter depends entirely upon his own actions in this life. God's law in this regard is so inflexible that, let alone the Prophet's

followers, not even the Prophet's wives and children are exempted from it.

What does 'action' imply? It implies the fulfilment of God's demands on us in two capacities in this world: firstly, as the servants of God and, secondly, as the followers of the last Prophet. In the first capacity, every Muslim, individually, is expected to be a 'righteous man,' thus testifying to his bond with God, while as one of the believers in the last Prophet, he must feel inspired by the necessity of acting as the Prophet's representative, i.e. he must convey his message to the people. God said: "I have imposed the same duties on the followers of Muhammad as I imposed upon My messengers and prophets." (Wahab ibn Munabbih)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was ordained Messenger of God for the whole world, and his followers were similarly ordained on his behalf for the communities into which they were born. The ordainment of the Prophet was to be kept alive after his death by his people. Mas'ud bin Makhrama relates that the Prophet came to his companions and said: "Verily, God has sent me as a blessing for all peoples. Convey this on my behalf to other people." (*Tahzeeb Seerat ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 141). When Rustam asked Rabi bin Aamir why they had come to his country, the latter said: "God has sent us here so that we may, to whom He wills, show the path leading away from the worship of man, and towards the worship of God, from the insufficiencies of this world to divine abundance, and from the tyranny of religions to the justice of Islam." (*Tabari*, Vol. III, p. 33).

The conveying of this message is so important that all other interests can and should be sacrificed to it. For example, in the sixth year of the Hijra (628 A.D.), when the treaty of Hudaibiyyah was concluded, one of the conditions laid down by the Makkans in this treaty was that when they had to pass through Madinah to carry on their trade with Egypt, Syria and Iraq, their safety would be guaranteed (*Bukhari* and *Muslim*). That is to say that the Prophet thus allowed the enemies of Islam full freedom to carry out their trading activities within Islamic territory. This, and similar provisions, were, in a sense, economic and political concessions designed to pave the way for his *Dawah* work.

If we fail to warn those around us of the Imminent Day, we must live in fear of being held responsible. This applied even to a prophet if he failed to carry the message to the people to whom he was sent. God did not accept even the 'fast and worship' from a prophet who left his people in the grip of polytheism or in a state of unbelief and did not convey the divine message to them. Then how can our individual observance of Islam be acceptable when we have around us millions of people who have never been told the truth of life, or the ways they must adopt in order to achieve real success in the life to come.

A prophet who failed to fulfil his responsibilities in the world was doubly at risk of divine retribution (17:75). This was because a prophet had two distinct duties: one, to become a believer himself and, two, to proclaim God's message to people throughout the world (5:67). With the end of the prophethood, the people of Muhammad must

now act in his stead, having been selected by God (22:77) to carry His message to mankind. Thus, Muslims have two duties: one, to live to the full a life of belief and, two, to testify to God's truth among mankind. According to the Quran, the followers of the Prophet are duty-bound to call people to the path of God, just as the Prophet was so bound. (10:108). The hadith says: "You are God's witness on earth." (*Bukhari*)

As we all know, when a man dies, he does not cease to exist, but is transported to another life where there is eternal heaven or eternal hell. This is a very serious state of affairs: for, if one remains unaware of God's creation plan in this present life, and dies in ignorance, without having followed God's will, one will suddenly, after death, find oneself doomed to everlasting torture, with no possibility of escape. Worldly people may find other things more important, but truly, the most important thing in God's eyes is for man to learn this truth.

To save man from this horrifying danger, God began the chain of prophets since the time man was created. Every human settlement and every community received God-sent 'warners' who arrived in succession (23:44). The purpose of sending prophets was so that mankind might have no excuse before God. (4:165). It was not enough, therefore, for the prophets to obey God's commandments in their personal lives; it was also essential for them to convey God's message to the whole of mankind. The Prophet Yunus communicated God's message to a hundred thousand people in Nineveh (Iraq), but he inadvertently

committed the error of leaving his people before his task was fully completed. God considered this mistake so grave that he caused a fish to swallow him, and he was not released until the realization finally came to him that he must return to his people.

The truth is that a prophet's prophethood is not genuinely established until he has performed the duties of prophethood to the letter. (5:67) Similarly, a community (*ummah*) will be entitled to be called the people of a prophet only if they become his representatives, passing on God's message to the world as brought by the prophet. There is no doubt that the followers of the prophet have the same responsibility as the prophet has: the only difference is that the prophet is responsible as an individual, while his followers are responsible as a group. The prophet has personally to bear the burden of such responsibility.

It is not incumbent upon each individual from amongst his followers to perform the duty of calling upon people to accept the Truth. If a group sets itself calling people to the path of God then the rest of the people may be exempted from this task. But these people will certainly be required to support the *da'i*, in whatever way possible. If they, far from supporting the *da'i*, create obstacles in their path, they will certainly be punished by God.

The Quran asks: "Why, then, does not a party from every group come (to the Prophet) in order to acquire a deeper knowledge of religion and to warn their people ..." (9:122)

The responsibility of bearing witness to the truth before

the world, under the guidance of the Prophet, is clearly established by the Quran:

“Thus We have made you a middle nation, so that you may act as witnesses for mankind, and the messenger may be a witness for you.” (2:143/22:78)

On the Day of Judgement when all human beings are gathered in the Divine Court, these people (*da'is*) will be brought as witnesses before those to whom they had conveyed the divine message. This is expressed thus in the Bible:

Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear and say, “It is truth.” “You are my witnesses,” says the Lord, “and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.” (Isaiah, 43:9-10)

The Prophet was so deeply involved in his responsibility as a witness to the Truth that God had to say:

“It may be that you will destroy yourself with grief because they will not believe.” (26:3).

Similarly, if Muslims were to become conscious of the fact that, after the Prophet, it is they who have been ordained to work in his stead, they would, with this realisation, be unable to sleep soundly at night or to rest properly during the day. For a duty of this nature implies that either they

fulfil it, in which case they must bear witness to the Truth before all the nations of the world, or be apprehended as defaulters by God on the charge of having failed to inform people of what they will have to face in the next, eternal life. It would be correct to assume that if Muslims do not proclaim the Truth that God intended for the good of mankind, they definitely incur the risk of having the Quranic decree—such as was applied to the previous keepers of the divine books—applied likewise to them. As the Quran states:

Those who conceal the evidence of the truth and the guidance We have revealed, after We have made them clear to people in the Scripture, will be rejected by God and so do others. But from those who repent and mend their ways and make known the truth, I will certainly accept their repentance. I am the Ever-Relenting, the Most Merciful.” (2:159-60)

If God’s will is what He has expressed in His Book, the Quran, it can be concluded without doubt that if Muslims individually do not reform themselves, and do not ask for forgiveness from God and fail to communicate God’s religion to non-Muslims—to their own compatriots as well as to people at the global level—they will not be able to escape divine retribution, even if they continue to worship day and night and never miss their additional morning afternoon prayers. The notion that the way to heaven does not pass through God’s creatures is highly erroneous. It should be clearly understood that the gates

of heaven cannot be opened to us unless we have tried our best—even at the risk of undergoing the most undesirable trials—to close the doors of hell to the millions of non-believers who live around us.

As we learn from the Quran regarding the prophets and their followers:

Do you think that you will enter Paradise without having suffered like those who passed away before you? Affliction and hardship befell them and so shaken were they that the Messenger and the believers would exclaim, ‘When will God’s help come?’ (2:214)

The following has been stated in the Quran in the words of the Prophet: ‘This Quran has been revealed to me so that through it I may warn you and whoever it reaches.’ (6:19)

Those who shall warn the people of the Day of Judgement in this world, will stand as God’s witnesses against them ‘on that Day’ (40:51). Now the question arises as to who today stands witness to the peoples of the world, so that he may, as a follower of the Final Prophet, bear witness in the Divine Court that he had warned the people of the reality of life. Is there any group in the whole Islamic world which can be said to be performing the task of warning the nations of the world? If this is not the case, then does it mean that God has dispensed with the sending of His witnesses to the nations so that He may decide the future of these nations on the basis of the witnesses’ testimony? Certainly, God’s *sunnah* can never be abrogated.

Content of the Call

What is the message we must convey to the people? In a phrase, it is 'the oneness of God,' that is to say, to believe in one God and make Him the centre and pivot of our lives. According to the traditions, when Makkah was conquered and all kinds of people, young and old, men and women, thronged to the Prophet, for the oath of allegiance, he accepted their oath on two counts: Islam and *shahadah*. (Baihaqi).

Aswad relates that on the day of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet was taking the oath of allegiance. He asked him what is meant by *shahadah*. The Prophet replied, 'To bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger.' (Baihaqi)

The concept of monotheism is not just a philosophical issue, but is a test paper for man. In this respect the Hereafter becomes an essential part of the call of monotheism. When a preacher tells people of the oneness of God, he also informs them that God will not always remain invisible as He is today. After death, we shall have to present ourselves before our Master to hear His judgement of our actions in this world, where we will be held accountable to God for all our actions in this world.

In the matter of the call of Islam, it is vital to keep in view the delicacies of the interrelationship of the different parts of religion, otherwise we shall not be able to do it justice. Under normal circumstances, making a direct

call to accept Islam would appear to be unwise. That is why those who want to work in this field have different opinions regarding the question of the method of the communication of the message: some people think that Islam could be presented to non-Muslims as a scheme of social reform, or as a better system of communal living; others think that Islam should be presented as the upholder of universal truths, common to all religions; yet others have attempted to give it a philosophical form, that is to say, man's moral awareness should serve as a basis for proving the necessity for divine law, etc. But all these approaches have a common deficiency; none of them exempt us from the obligatory duty of testifying to the truth, for the most important aspect of bearing witness is to warn people of the Day of Judgement.

The reason for the question arising as regards the method of *dawah* work, is that we seek its answer from history, rather than from the life of the Prophet. Psychologically, we are the inheritors of post-Islamic history, in which the regular call to accept Islam used was 'Accept Islam! O People.' That is why the moment we think of the call of Islam, this form of address comes to our mind. But, in the Prophet's *dawah* life, we find a clear gradation in his approach to *dawah*. The direct call to accept Islam was first used during his stay in Madinah. Prior to this, in Makkah, the wording of the call was as follows: "O people, say, 'There is no god but God,' and you will succeed," "I have come to warn you of the coming day of horror," etc. All his addresses made in Makkah were cast in this mould. His later style of address,

“Become a Muslim, and be saved,” was adopted only in Madinah. In the early Makkan days, when he made his appeal to Abu Bakr, he said: “I am God’s Prophet, I invite you to come to Him.” But then after the Fall of Makkah, he made the same appeal to Abu Bakr’s father, Abu Quhafa, in these words: “O Abu Quhafa, become a Muslim, and be saved.” That is to say, the invitation to join an organized religion started in Madinah after the general introduction to Truth had been accomplished in Makkah and Islam had been placed on a sound footing. Prior to this, the essence of religion, rather than an organized form of religion, had been the basis of the Prophet’s call.

If this basic point about the form of address is kept in view, all doubts come to an end. Without fear of any psychological complication on the part of the *madu*, the creation plan of God, in principle, may be presented as the essential element in the call to accept the Truth. According to the creation plan of God, man shall have to give an account of himself ‘whether you disclose what is in your minds or keep it hidden.’ (2:284), when ‘men’s hearts will leap up the throats and choke them,’ (40:18). This day has also been referred to in the Quran as ‘the Day of Gathering’ (42:7), and ‘the Day of Meeting.’ (40:13). This is the subject that dominated the verses revealed in Makkah, that is, during the *dawah* period.

1. We cite below some examples to show the difference between calling people to accept the essence of a religion and inviting them to join an organized religion. Chapter

102 of the Quran revealed in Makkah reads: ‘Greed for more and more distracted you [from God] till you reached the grave. But you will soon come to know. But you will soon come to know. Indeed, were you to know the truth with certainty, you would see the fire of Hell. You would see it with the eye of certainty. Then on that Day you shall be questioned about your worldly favours.’ It was this chapter which had initially made an impact on the German neo-convert Leopold Asad.

2. When the Prophet was ordained by God to invite people to accept Islam, according to the Arab custom, he climbed the Mount Safa and addressed those who had assembled there. According to Ibn Abbas, the speech was as follows: “Tell me, would you believe me if I were to say to you that there is an army behind this mountain, heading towards you to destroy you?’ The people gathered there exclaimed, ‘Yes!’ Then the Prophet said, ‘I warn you of the imminence of a severe punishment.’” (*Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, Vol. III, p. 38)

Once the Prophet conveyed the message of Islam to Abu Sufyan ibn Harb and Hind bint Utba in the following words: “By God, there will come a day when you shall die. You will be thereafter raised from your graves: the virtuous will then enter heaven and the evil will go to hell. What I have said is the truth, and you two are the first among those I am warning.” (Ibn Asakir, from Muawiyah)

3. Umar Farooq once said: “Woe to the ruler on earth on the day he meets the Ruler in heaven. Only he shall be

spared who decides with justice and truth and not in self-interest, or in the interests of relations, or out of fear or greed, and who keeps before him the Book of God like a mirror.”

Fortunately, this subject has acquired a new significance in the present age, giving rise to the new discipline of thanatology, which makes a scientific study of the subject of death. Not so long ago, discussions regarding death formed the subject matter only of particular kinds of religious books. Suddenly, the topic of death has become exceedingly popular, and has even become a subject for academic specialization. The university of Minnesota takes pride in having established a centre for thanatological studies and the U.C.L.A. has established a laboratory for the study of life endangering circumstances. In gatherings, the subject of death as a topic of conversation has surpassed even the evergreen subjects of sex and politics. A review which appeared in the American monthly, *Atlantic*, says that thanatology has given us a whole new literary genre. Given these new circumstances, there can be no better way of calling man to accept God than to warn him about death and the Hereafter.

The warning about the Hereafter should be considered the central point in *Dawah*, for that is man's greatest problem. The fact that man, after death, shall have to face the consequences of his deeds on an eternal time-scale, makes death and the life after death the most vital of issues on which his attention should be fully focussed.

Dr. Billy Graham (b. 1918) writes of how a man—one of the richest men in the world—sent him an urgent invitation to come to his home. From the letter of invitation it appeared that no time should be lost. Dr. Graham accepted this invitation and left for his home immediately. After dinner, his host took him aside and said, “While at the moment I am in good health, my age tells me that I do not have long to live. I have never thought much about death before, but now I find my mind preoccupied with it, and the idea frightens me. I need help. I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?” (*Reader’s Digest*, December, 1972).

This is the greatest personal problem for all human beings, for everyone has to die. The experience of thousands of years has produced no exception to this rule. There being no appointed time for death to take place makes the problem even more immediate. Even a man with the greatest riches at his disposal knows that he can neither postpone his death—regardless of his resources—nor buy success in the next world. And this makes him frightened. This niche in human nature is the best vantage point from which to go straight to people’s hearts with the invitation to accept the Truth. This is the unguarded door which is always left open. Whenever a *da‘i* knocks this door, he will find it open.

CHAPTER SIX

MODERN POSSIBILITIES

*We shall show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves,
until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough
that your Lord is the witness of all things?*

—The Quran, 41:53

Bradley (1846-1929) observed: ‘The world is in need of a new religion. We want a creed to recognize and justify in due proportion all human interests, and at the same time to supply the intellect/consciousness with that to which man may hold on with confidence.’ (*Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 446)

The need for that new religion was expressed by the English philosopher in the first quarter of the twentieth century, and thereafter, a French scientist, Du Nouy’s (1883-1947) renounced atheism, announced his return to religion, and published his famous book, entitled *Human Destiny*. These were indications of the fact that the process of man’s return to religion had started. Now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this state of affairs has gained greater prominence.

After materialistic theories have been embraced and

experiments have been carried out with the materialistic way of life, the impetus towards a return to religion is becoming stronger. After the failure of man-made laws and worldly strategies for social reform, the mentality of antagonism towards religion has perforce softened.

Today, all over the world, a kind of religious renaissance has set in. The young generation of America, whose parents found their creed in the theories of Darwin and Freud, are trying to find solace in the Jesus Revolution and in Krishna consciousness. After having reached the pinnacle of material progress, the Japanese have begun to miss spiritual values and say that theirs is a merchant culture which gives them nothing but merchant values. Religion is raising its head even among the new generation of the U.S.S.R., even although they have been brought up in a totally atheistic society. At a meeting in Moscow of the anti-religion department of the Soviet Union, one of its officers commented on the slowness of their endeavours to stamp out religion. 'Our movement against religion is going along at the speed of a steam engine. A colleague capped this with: 'Steam engine? Even the wheel hasn't been discovered yet!'

All the theories advanced against religion in the nineteenth century have become suspect in the light of later discoveries. The theory of evolution, which at one time had come to be regarded as an alternative to the theory of creation, appears to have lost the support of logic. For instance, procedures have been discovered by which the earth's age can be accurately calculated. But its age, reckoned by this method, falls incredibly short of what it would have to be, for the life forms at present extant

to have taken their present shape through evolution. Two eminent micro-biologists have presented a startling theory which runs counter to the supposition of evolutionary existence. Nobel prize winners, Francis Crick and Leslie Orgel, have in their joint research pointed out causes which rule out taking life as an evolved form of earthly matter. One of these is the particular role of molybdenum, which is found in all organisms and on which most enzyme systems are necessarily dependent for their activity. Even though molybdenum is extraordinarily important, it represents only 0.02% (i.e. two in ten thousand) of the metals found on earth. Other metals like chromium and nickel are very similar to molybdenum in their properties and likewise make up 0.02% of the metals found on earth, yet they have no importance in the biological system. According to Crick and Orgel, the chemical formation of the earth should have been reflected in the life-forms taking shape on earth, but since this is patently not so, they suppose that life was sent to the earth by some more advanced civilization from outer space. This study has offered a new scientific base for the panspermia concept of the Swedish chemist, Arrhenius.

Innumerable discoveries of a similar nature in modern times have brought science (or modern thought) very close to religion. These discoveries have done 99% of the tasks, now there remains only 1%.

Such discoveries have been made today in all branches of knowledge as provide astonishing proof of the veracity of Islamic beliefs. They are such as to have thoroughly shaken the human mind. The ancient Arab opponents of the

Islamic creed of monotheism so tortured the believers that they could not even sit straight. They even forced them to say, “*Lat* and *Uzza* are gods besides God!” Today the progress of knowledge has itself proved the baselessness of such a concept. Modern science finds it meaningless to admit of many gods in the universe. There is simply no room for polytheism in scientific realms. To those with unbiased minds and a thorough knowledge of our times, religion can be proved right on such an elevated plane that all contemporary thought systems would appear dwarfish in comparison.

The most important scientific discovery of modern times from the Islamic point of view is that of methodology. Up to the beginning of the 20th century, for an argument to be considered valid, it was thought necessary to have the same kind of link between a claim and the thing about which that claim was being made as exists between an electric lamp and its switch. That is to say, for a theory to become established, it had to be demonstrable. But now this concept is no longer subscribed to. The latest academic stand in this regard is that if such facts exist as may enable a scientist to infer a theory therefrom, the theory thus inferred will be accepted as a scientifically established fact. According to this same modern criterion, evolution has been claimed to be an established fact for, even if it cannot be demonstrated, biologists hold that such facts have been discovered as prove evolution through scientific inference. This method of reasoning being validated by modern scientific discoveries is highly significant from the Islamic

viewpoint. Fifty years ago, it was not possible to prove religious beliefs on the basis of scientific criteria, for science at that time accepted only demonstrable truths. It gave no credence to inferred truths.

But now the Quranic method of reasoning, explaining the unseen world with reference to the seen world has become, in principle, an argument which is scientific in nature. Half a century ago, no one was willing to accept this argument as scientific.

Now with this new development, we can formulate an effective theology (*al-Kalam*) in favour of Islam.

The intellectual framework of the time of Averroes (1126-1198) was based on the Aristotelean system of logic (syllogism). When Averroes saw the universe within the framework of hypothetical logic, he did not know how to reject the eternity of matter. He thus accepted matter as being primordial and based his divine philosophy thereon. If matter is taken as eternal, i.e. never having had a beginning, then there remains no real basis for divinity. To accept matter as having existed for all time is to openly reject God as the Creator of all things. Then God, at best, is equated with the 'First Cause.' In modern times, however, such discoveries as the second law of thermodynamics have quite finally rejected the notion of matter being eternal. Innumerable truths of a similar nature have provided us with very firm grounds for presenting Islamic beliefs on a strong rational basis.

This had been a great, unsolved problem which engaged the human mind for thousands of years! Intellectuals and

philosophers had done their utmost to unravel the mysteries of the universe through reason, but had ultimately been forced to admit defeat. That is why philosophy, until now, has not led men to any positive creed, but has rather plunged them into scepticism. As the Quran has put it, “Little indeed is the knowledge vouchsafed to you.” (17:85) It has been conceded that man’s intellect on its own can take him only part of the way along the path to truth; it cannot take him right to the ultimate reality. Whenever man attempts to go beyond his limits, he will certainly fail. His approach would be more realistic if he were to rely upon that knowledge which has been given to man through revelation. In the past, both these viewpoints had been dealt with only by speculation. But now, in modern times, science has—astonishingly—given its judgement in favour of the Quran. Science has discovered that through reason man can achieve only partial knowledge. A scientific illustration of this is the black hole theory, which tells us that only three percent of matter is physically observable, the other 97 percent remaining beyond the limits of human observation. Modern scientific discoveries have enabled us to establish revealed knowledge as authentic by adhering to modern scientific standards.

It would take a whole encyclopaedia to do justice to all of the facts now accepted by modern science. For our immediate purposes, we list below just a few of the more salient points:

1. The process of general research into an investigation of nature has uncovered secrets of nature which give

amazing proof of there being a Mind behind it, which created it, and which continues to control it. The universe discovered by science is so extraordinarily meaningful and organised that there can be no explanation for it but the existence of a Creator and Master of the universe.

2. Islam has had the greatest difference with other religions over the question of polytheism versus monotheism. People in general have favoured polytheism because they found it difficult to believe that the multifaceted world could have only one God. But this scientific discovery has given its final verdict in favour of Islam's concept of monotheism, it being in complete consonance with the oneness of the universe as postulated by science. It has been established as a valid concept, not just because the universe functions under one universal law, but because matter itself demonstrates that sameness in its being analysable into a single basic unit, the atom, or unobservable electronic waves.
3. Science, in the last analysis, has finally established that the means of acquiring knowledge at our disposal gives us only partial knowledge of the universe. It can never fully encompass the whole truth. This is true, not only on account of our inadequate means of observation, but also because the nature of reality is such, that with our limited natural capabilities we could never observe the truth in toto. This makes it understandable that in order to understand the universe of fact, which is unlimited, man needs some source of knowledge other than mere

sensory perception, which is limited. Due to this discrepancy, we are permanently incapable of reaching the final reality.

4. Science has discovered that reality, in its final form, is unobservable. We can only infer it from its manifestations. We cannot directly see it. This reinforces the Islamic standpoint that man's inability to see either God or the world Hereafter in his present life does not disprove the existence of either, and that if he will but ponder over the signs of nature, he will certainly find proof therein of God and the Afterlife.
5. To ancient philosophers the most cogent basis for rejecting religion was the concept of the eternal quality of matter. That is to say, the belief that the universe had always existed; that, in fact, it had never had a beginning. Where then was the need to believe in a Creator? But modern science has proved that the life of the world is limited, and this settled the problem once and for all. But then the theory of evolution—as opposed to creation—was advanced. Even here, however, it has been scientifically proved that man could not have evolved to the biological level he is at today, because the earth itself is not old enough for such a lengthy, complex process to have taken place.
6. Science has proved that direct argument is not applicable to the facts of the universe. We can only arrive at the reality by making inferences from our perception of certain appearances. It is only through inference that

we can know about any fact. Thus science has proved the validity of the indirect method of reasoning on which the foundation of religious methodology rests.

One thing which has to be fully understood is that the age of science was essentially the age of Islam. The fact that scientific development led to atheism is explainable in terms of incidental mistakes, particularly its clash with Christianity, which has been subjected to human interpolations.

What is science? It is the study of nature. Nature and the religion of Nature (Islam) are two aspects of the same reality. That is why the Quran prophesied that science would not pose any danger to Islam, but would rather be a means of clarifying the Truth.

“We will show them Our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until they clearly see that this is the truth.” (41:53)

The age of science started not in Europe, but in Spain and Sicily in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. There is no historical record of any clash at that time between science and religion. During Muslim rule, scientific development and Muslim intellectual development went side by side, without any clash. But when the Turks expelled the Byzantine scholars from Astana and Constantinople in the fifteenth century, they migrated to Italy, then the work of research and investigation into nature shifted from the Muslim world to Europe, thus making the history of science take an entirely new turn. Now science was

faced with a world where Christianity was in a dominant position.

In essence, the teachings of Moses and Jesus were similar to those of the Prophet of Islam. But what we know today as Christianity has actually been subjected to human interpolation. It has been reduced to a religion in which the divine teachings are adulterated with human interpolations. In its present form Christianity does not offer a true representation of religion. That is how it came about that science, which had no clash with religion in Baghdad and Cordova, was declared to be the enemy of religion in Italy and France. Muslim experts in astronomy had proposed the theory that, contrary to the Aristotelian hypothesis, there was the greater possibility of the earth going round the sun. But no Muslim of that time regarded this theory as being against religion. On the contrary, when Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) said the same thing, he was prosecuted by the Inquisition, because such a supposition was considered an affront to Jesus, the "son" of God, in that it relegated his birthplace to a position inferior to that of the other heavenly bodies.

Similarly, when Ibn Muskuwayh (d. 1030) supported the Greek theory of biological evolution, religion was not deemed to be threatened; but when Charles Darwin (1809-1882) presented the same theory, there was a great agitation in the Christian world. Both the Quran and the Bible stated that God created the world in "six days." But this discovery of science, that the birth of the earth had

come about over long periods of time was never seen as being in conflict with the Quran. This is because it is clearly mentioned in the Quran that “six days” meant six divine days, not human days.

Contrary to this, the wording of the Bible due to human interpolation was such as denoted six human days lasting from morning to evening. This was why those who believed in scientific discoveries were held to be heretics in the Christian world.

There are innumerable incidents of this kind which prove that the supposed antagonism between science and religion was actually between science and Christianity. If the later development of science, like its initial emergence, had taken place in the Muslim world, it would have had a very different history today.

The Quran and the universe are two aspects of the same reality. The Quran is a statement in words of God’s revelations, while the universe is a practical demonstration of God’s scheme of things—“He ordains all things.” Science is nothing other than a study of the divine manifestation of the universe. Furthermore, since this divine management expresses itself through the laws of nature, which always function in strict uniformity, it is essential to engage in exact thinking of a mathematical kind in order to understand and apply these laws. While, literature and rhetoric tend to exaggerate, science on the contrary produces precision of thought and a realistic approach which are indispensable to an understanding of

the workings of the universe. Science comes to the support of Islam in two ways: first, it makes man study the wonders of God—the only direct means of the realization of God in this world; and second, it produces scientific thinking, which is exactly what is desired by the Quran.

It must be conceded that the ‘rebellion’ of science against religion was a matter of chance. That is why, within less than a century, the inner logic of science asserted itself in order to make science revert to its original position.

The first demonstration of this reversion, from the Islamic point of view, took place in the form of a change in orientalism.

After the Crusades (1099-1270), the literature produced by orientalists in Europe poisoned Western literature with anti-Islamic thinking. After the failure in the Crusades, they took their revenge on the Muslims with their old weapon of pious fraud against Islam, the religion of their adversaries. Since they were dominant in the entire Europe they managed to fill the books of history, religion, and literature with anti-Islam views. Even the dramas of Shakespeare and Milton were not immune from this. In the modern age, since all the books were being published in the West, this Western orientalism influenced not only the European mind but also the educated mind of the whole world.

But, according to the Quran, ‘God has power over all things,’ (12:21). By the end of the nineteenth century, objective thinking reigned supreme under the influence

of science, all over the world. The first effect of this onslaught on orientalism is distinctly apparent in Carlyle's (1795-1881) book, *Heroes and Hero worship*. This effect was to continue for a considerable period of time. Finally, just as the storm of modern democracy replaced kingship as something outdated, similarly the mindset of pious fraud too lost its relevance.

The ancient orientalism, promoting the abuse of the religion of others and intentionally distorting their history and teachings, died a natural death.

Another example of this change is that modern intellectual movement which is wrongly called "anti-science." In actual fact it is anti-materialism rather than anti-science. However, like orientalism, this thinking has not become a clear, conscious movement.

It is, on the whole, a reactionary rather than a positive movement. For instance, one of the results of industrialisation and women's liberation has been the disruption of the family. The relationship between husband and wife has been divested of its former religious sacredness and brought down to the level of a mere means of personal satisfaction. This has resulted in divorce, the incidence of which is on the increase, leading to the ruination of family life and the children, deprived of parental guardianship, have tended to become criminals. Even homes that have escaped divorce have undergone a drastic change. With both parents at work, the children are now put into a 'day care centre.' Thus, human beings, at this tender age, are

deprived of parental affection and are instead entrusted to the care of hired employees who have no personal interest in their guidance or welfare. A recent American report cites this state of affairs as being responsible for a devastating disease which is on the increase among children. The experts call it autism. The children, apparently healthy and free from bodily diseases, are seen to be victims of strange mental disorders. Numerous problems of this kind have created in man such a distrust of industrial civilisation that the slogan, 'Return to nature' is now being raised.

Many of today's happenings in the western world are not indicative of any positive thought; they only point to the fact that man, aghast at the consequences of materialism, is now in pursuit of a more appropriate culture. Even long after the end of the second world war, the west Germans would say, "We have no problems so long as our factory chimneys keep on emitting smoke!" But today, industrial pollution has reached a point where it is considered only next in gravity to the expected outbreak of an atomic war. Dr. Anne Dubes of Rockefeller University, New York, has warned the world that industrial pollution is depriving man of many qualities, and that there is a danger of man being reduced in the future to an inferior form of life (*Life*, 24th July, 1970)

Such an outcome of the materialistic culture has deprived modern man of happiness and peace of mind—in spite of all his progress. Many books are appearing in the West today which acknowledge this fact. For instance, Walker

Kerr of the U.S.A. maintains in his 325-page book, *The Decline of Pleasure* (1962), that Americans are not happy today, even though the present American generation has leisure, luxury items, long life and all those things that their forefathers could not even dream of having.

The extraordinary progress in the industrial age had led the Americans to think that they would obtain everything that they desired, yet they failed to attain happiness and fulfilment. The resources of technology came to be misused for human destruction instead of human construction. (*Time*, January 18, 1971)

Having reached the final stage of our machine-age paradise, the growth of such extraordinarily critical problems was not a mere accident. It was quite in accordance with the way (*sunnah*) of God. He produces in the lives of the unmindful such circumstance as stand out like question marks before them.

God had produced favourable circumstances for the believers to perform their duty and disseminate the divine message to the people. The ground had been fully prepared by God to make the preserved divine religion acceptable to today's man. But our reformers were blind to this opportunity, and foolishly engaged themselves, on the contrary, in launching themselves on a collision course with the communities whom they should rather have invited to accept Islam.

When the colonisation of Muslim countries by European nations began in modern times, the whole Muslim world

had to consider how to grapple with this problem. The need of the hour was to make positive plans in the light of the Quran and precepts of the Prophet, and then to strive to implement them. But, far from doing so, the caravan of our crusaders set off on the obverse path of negative reaction.

There were two mainstreams of this reaction, one of which came into existence more or less as a defence mechanism. The leaders of this group engaged themselves in enthusing Muslims with the spirit of religion according to traditional ways, for instance, in the establishment of schools for religious education, the foundation of religious assemblies for teaching the Islamic creed and forms of worship, and the preservation of special privileges for Muslims, etc. The second group was more revolutionary and planned to launch an offensive. A large number of *ulema* (religious scholars) and thinkers of the Muslim world of the 18th and 19th centuries made unremitting efforts to enthuse Muslims with religious zeal in order to bring about a new revolution. Some of the most prominent of them were :

Muhammad bin Ismael al-Amir (Yemen)	1688-1768
Shah Waliullah Dehlavi (India)	1703-1762
Muhammed bin Abdul Wahhab Najadi (Saudi Arabia)	1703-1791
Shah Ismail Shahid (India)	1779-1831
Mohammed bin Ali As-Sanusi (Morocco)	1787-1860

Syed Ahmed Shahid Bareilavi (India)	1786-1831
Amir Abdul Qadir, (Algeria)	1807-1883
Jamaluddin Afghaani (Iran-Afghanistan)	1838-1897
Abdur Rehman Kwakabi	1849-1902
Muftí Mohd. Abduhu (Egypt)	1849-1905
Rashid Raza (Egypt)	1865-1933
Shakib Asralaan (Syria-Lebanon)	1869-1946
Dr. Muhammed Iqbal (Indian Subcontinent)	1877-1938
Hasan Al Banna (Egypt)	1906-1948

The writings and speeches of these thinkers ignited the whole world of Islam. The beginning of the 20th century saw such great movements as influenced whole nations and, at certain times, the whole of the Muslim world. The moving spirits behind these movements were, for instance, the Caliphate Committee, India (1914), the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (1919), Al-Ikhwān al Muslimīn, Egypt (1928), the Jammat Islami, India and Pakistan (1941) and the Majlis Shura Muslimi. Indonesia (1948), and so on.

The common target of these movements was the establishment of an Islamic state. Each of them gained extraordinary popularity, but not even one of them achieved its goal. The single, decisive cause of this failure lay in their having chosen politics as their field of activity. It was not only that it was theoretically divergent from the straight Islamic path and, as such undeserving of divine

succour, but it was also, rationally, a wrong course to adopt, for it challenged its opponents in a field in which the latter were in possession of the latest range of military equipment, while the former had only traditional and outmoded weapons to fall back on.

From both the theoretical and rational standpoints, first priority should have been given to *Dawah* as the chosen field of activity. It was in this field that they were clearly superior to their opponents. But, they failed to rise above their immediate circumstances. Such factors as western colonization on the one hand, and the change in political thinking throughout the world caused by democratic and socialist movements on the other, had the effect of converting Islamic movements into political movements. The reformers of the time saw fit to bolster up Islam with contemporary stimulants, (immediate temptations) instead of being content to travel with it along the straight and eternal path.

A century ago, Syed Jamaluddin Afghani had realised that there were great opportunities for Islamic success in the field of *Dawah*. He wrote:

“Europeans are willing to accept Islam if it is offered to them in the best way. They have made a comparative study of Islam and other religions and have found a great difference between the simplicity of creed and deed (code of conduct) of the former and the reverse of the latter. The nearest to accepting Islam are the Americans, for there is no hereditary or atavistic enmity and hatred between them and Muslim communities as there is between Muslims

and Europeans.” (Jamaluddin Afghani: Talif Mehmood Aburya, Cairo, 1966, p. 213)

Syed Jamaluddin Afghani’s special disciple, Mufti Mohd Abduhu,’ says that when he was in Paris, in 1884 with his master, he proposed to leave politics and propagate religion away from government eyes. Thus he expected result-oriented work within ten years while a political trial of strength was wasting their best powers. The reply of Jamaluddin was: “Yon are a defeatist” (Ibid., p. 50). This shows that perhaps Syed Jamaluddin was not as keen about *Dawah* work as he was about Jihad.

Two revolutionary occurrences of the nineteenth century are highly significant from the Islamic point of view. One was the correction of the 700-year old orientalism, which in fact amounted to the practical recognition, by the West, of the truth of Islam. The other was the birth of higher criticism, which virtually meant proving all religious books, except for the Quran, historically undependable. Thus the nineteenth century afforded a surprisingly favourable academic ground for Islamic *Dawah*.

It was at that same period that the movement of freedom of thought began in earnest in Europe. This was to end the ancient religious persecution forever. It now became possible for the first time in history to propagate the true religion in absolutely peaceful conditions. The Islamic call could have been taken up most effectively in this new set of circumstances. But it was during this period, in the 19th century, that all our reformers launched themselves, for

no apparent reason, into political battles with the Western nations. They even espoused the cause of nationalism (Jamaluddin Afghani's slogan was 'Egypt for Egyptians') thus erecting a wall of reactionary nationalism between Muslims and other communities. There were, of course, a few who did think of *Dawah* work, but their resorting to polemical opposition to other communities only aroused greater hatred in the latter's hearts, and led to a further distancing of Islam from the western world. There were other indications, too, in that age, of there being fresh opportunities to take up the call of Islam. For example, great scholars in the West, like Mohd Asad and Abdul Karim Jarmanus, etc., either accepted Islam or, like George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) openly acknowledged its superiority. There were also enthusiasts like Lord Lothian (1882-1940) who publicly urged Muslims to start the Islamic call, considering that there were greater possibilities of conversion to Islam at that time than there had ever been before in the world. But none of the above mentioned factors served as eye-openers to the Muslims, and they continued to consider sacrifices at the altar of politics to be the peak of Islamic perfection.

In spite of all their oft-repeated errors, there still exist innumerable possibilities for the propagation of God's religion. The latest such indication is the conversion to Islam of the President of Gabon in 1973, of Bucase, the President of Central Africa, in 1976, and of Watok, the Raja of Sarawak, in 1977. These events show us that at

what point and in what measure, we need to recommence our endeavours to change the situation.

It is a historical fact that leadership in thought can be claimed only by one who is prepared to pay for it in material terms. That is why intellectual leadership has always trailed in the wake of material leadership. If world leadership in thought remained in the hands of the Muslims from the 8th to the 16th century, it was because their political supremacy and trading strengths enabled them to pay its price. During that period, knowledge meant Muslim knowledge. Alvaro, the Bishop of Cordova, lamented the fact that Spain's Christian Muzarabes had forgotten their Christian tongue, Latin, because, generally speaking, the younger generation of Christian intellectuals took no interest in anything beyond Arabic language and literature. Later, when Europe discovered machine-power and, in consequence, acquired industrial superiority, leadership in thought passed from the Muslims to European nations. Intellectual leadership always follows material advancement.

Western Europe, and in particular, Britain, retained this leadership from the seventeenth century till the Second World War (1939-1945). During this period European nations became the academic focal point for all students all over the world. It took the Second World War to shift the material leadership from Europe to America. At present the U.S.A. is the accredited leader in world thought. This can be inferred from the fact that the majority of the books used in research in any field today are written by American

scholars.

There is ample evidence to prove, however, that the secret of western leadership had a twofold basis: colonisation and cheap fuel oil, the latter's sources being astonishingly located in eastern countries. Colonisation ended forever as a result of the conditions that came into being after the Second World War. The foundations of American leadership have likewise been badly shaken by the circumstances of the latter part of the twentieth century. Two happenings in 1973—The American defeat in the 10-year old Vietnam war and the devaluation of the dollar—indicated that the U.S.A. no longer had a monopoly over military and economic affairs.

Another unpleasant fact—indeed, one of the greatest problems of this modern age—has come to cast its shadow across the face of America, namely, modern man's loss of faith in the industrial culture. This culture has failed to provide man with the real basis of life; it has rather created many such complex problems as would appear to have no solution. War, economic exploitation, pollution, crime, the disruption of family life and other such problems are the product of an industrial culture which fails to provide solutions in modern civilisation. It is this failure which has driven modern man into scepticism. The general feeling now is that man needs a new system which will give him a sense of purpose in life and which will furnish the answers to his real demands.

This problem is not just confined to America but, because

America is the leader of contemporary industrial cultures, it naturally inherits a large share of the problem. This is clearly indicated by the fact that when Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902) travelled to America at the end of the nineteenth century, he could not find a field for his work there, whereas nowadays Indian Sadhus find millions of followers in the U.S.A. It is clear that modern Western man is thoroughly disenchanted with his culture and is desperate for something new. When the preserved Religion is not available to him, he pursues anything that glitters from a distance.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINAL WORD

God made a covenant with those who were given the Book to make it known to people and not conceal it. But they cast it behind their backs and bartered it for a paltry price: what an evil bargain they made!

—The Quran, 3-187

God has created man in freedom, but this freedom is not unlimited. The freedom of the individual is taken away at death. And, the freedom of the whole human race will be taken away on Doomsday. After the cessation of life in this world, a new life will begin in the Hereafter. There people will be divided into two groups: one who, having made proper use of their freedom, making it subservient to the will of God will enter into Paradise; the other group will be of those who, having been fearless of God in using the freedom granted to them, will be sent to Hell. This division will be eternal: the people of Hell will remain eternally in Hell, whereas the people of Paradise will remain in eternal bliss.

This means that about a hundred years of life in this world is going to end in an eternal fate for humans. And the end will be either a terrible punishment or the greatest

of rewards. This state of affairs makes the matter of life extremely grave. Despite this extraordinary gravity, all realities remain hidden from human eyes. God, the angels, paradise, hell—nothing is visible. As such, it was expected from man that when these realities were revealed, he would say, “God, I did not know that this was going to be the end of life. Why did You not tell us before?”

In view of the delicacy of this situation, God made an arrangement whereby, with the very creation of the first man, He began sending prophets to the world. In fact the very first man was also the first prophet. The prophets were sent revelations so that they could convey the divine message to mankind. This series of prophets continued from Adam to Jesus Christ. Finally God decided to send the Final Prophet to whom He would send him the last divine book which would be preserved for all time. This event in the seventh century ushered in a new age in human history, subsequent to which the Book of God was to remain in preserved state and no further prophets were to be sent by God.

Then the question arises as to what arrangement was made by God for conveying the Creation Plan of the Creator for all the human beings who are born after the cessation of prophethood. The community of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, the final prophet of God had the onus of conveying in full the divine message to the people. Subsequently these people were charged with conveying the divine message to every generation till Doomsday, so

that when the case of these people was presented before God on the Day of Judgement, the followers of the Prophet might stand up and say that they had conveyed the divine message to the people, and that in spite of this, they had not accepted it, and were therefore themselves responsible for their actions.

This is the task that has been referred to in the Quran as 'calling people to God.' It is an obligation devolving upon the followers of the Prophet. They can in no way be exempted from performing this task.

No amount of individual worship will save them from God's chastisement. If the followers of the Prophet do not perform this task of conveying God's message to the world, they too will be held accountable along with other communities in the Hereafter. If the other communities or peoples committed the wrong of not adopting a life in accordance with Quranic principles, the Muslims will be held responsible for not having conveyed God's message to them. The second case is in no way of a lesser degree than the former.

The Jews invited God's displeasure because they kept secret the religion that had been revealed to them by God and did not make people aware of its teachings. If the bearers of the Quran are guilty of the same wrong as the bearers of the Taurah, they shall in no way be shown any leniency.

Divine law will not spare them, just as it did not spare previous communities. God has no special relationship

with any particular community. Nothing is further from the truth than the belief that any group has a special relationship with God.

Muslims today have to perform for the benefit of the world the same duty of calling people to God, as was performed by the prophets for their communities. This is a duty which involves conveying the message of the Quran to them. Just as without the payment of *zakat* all the wealth of a person remains unlawful to him, similarly without performing this duty it is unlawful for us to spend our time and money on anything else. We can have no happiness or security until we devote ourselves to this cause.

The following are the points on which we have to focus our attention:

This work does not simply involve making speeches and writing books, but is rather the task of representing God. It has to be performed with the meticulous care and according to the highest standards which it demands. We have to do it with the same utmost sincerity and seriousness with which a government official conveys an important message entrusted to him.

Well-wishing and other demands as are expected of an earnest undertaker of a serious task, have to be combined together while performing this work. Moreover, it is also essential that the Hell of which one is going to warn people be a cause of great apprehension for one's own self, and one be oneself extremely desirous of the Paradise whose glad tidings one is conveying to others. If one's preaching

or *dawah* work is not marked by these characteristics it would be ludicrous to even think of undertaking it.

The greatest enigma of present history is how over the last two hundred years, in the entire Muslim world, innumerable great movements were set in motion which gave Muslims immense opportunities; to do their work, yet the actual results of their efforts were almost negligible. This failure came about in spite of the Muslims having all kinds of resources for the execution of their programme. There was nothing that was not abundantly available to them—in terms of learned and venerated persons, sincerity, numbers of great of people, sacrifice, quantity, material resources, etc. However, if the results of their tumultuous efforts are considered, it will become clear that they have actually driven the caravan of the *Ummah* backwards.

Those who do not believe in God or do not regard God as the Living Doer of all things, would be prone to give any self-styled explanation for the above failure. However, faith in God demands that we understand this whole event as being the result of God's Sunnah and consider it a divine matter in the complete sense.

If we look at it from this perspective and make the Quran our guide, then it is proved beyond doubt that the reason for the failure of our movements has been only one. And, that is, these movements have not performed the real task for which God promised divine succour for the community.

God promised divine succour on the condition that we help Him. Helping God means to engage ourselves in the divine mission of making people aware of the Creation Plan of God. Our movements should be aimed not at acquiring worldly rights through protesting and demanding, but rather should be Hereafter-oriented movements, in which our goal is to make man aware of what he will have to face in the next world. Thus, our movements should be *dawah*-oriented and not political or economic in nature.

This is the real reason for all our efforts in the present age having been rendered futile (Quran 2:217, 3:22). We launched movements based on worldly politics and that is why we were not eligible for divine succour. If now we want to save ourselves from destruction, the only way for us to achieve this is to stand up as *da'is* to the peoples of the world, abandoning any collision course on all counts—political and economic—and making the conveying of the Creation Plan of God the real issue of importance.

This is the only way of ensuring succour from God and unless we obtain God's succour we will not be able to achieve success of any kind—either in this world or the Hereafter.

Honour for the believers is a divine gift or blessing received as a reward for the performance of some special task. Then what is that special task to be carried out by the believers which enables them to receive this reward? It is the same as the objective of raising the Muslim community. That

is, conveying the message of God to man, making people aware of the divine will in order that no one may lay the blame on God on the Day of Judgement, for not having been informed of the Creation Plan. This is the act which makes believers deserving of the divine blessings. If we fail to perform this desired task, no other struggle can make us deserving of divine blessings.

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