

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,
and argue with people in the best manner.” (The Holy Quran, 16:125)

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for over eighty years

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆
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The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. *The Islamic Review* was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main object of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the *hearts and minds* of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words *La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that *no* prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
Guyana	

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: *Hazrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name *Ahmadiyya* after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name *Ahmad*.

1905: *Hazrat* Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of *Hazrat* Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981–1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996–2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

Promotion and Interpretation of The Holy Qur'an

By Maulana Kemal Hydal,
Imam of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam
Trinidad and Tobago

(Text of the Friday Sermon delivered at the Mission House, Wembley, London UK on 11th June, 2004.)

“The Beneficent taught the Qur'an. He created man, taught him expression. The sun and the moon follow a reckoning, and the herbs and the trees adore Him. And the Heaven, He raised it high, and He set up the measure, that you may not exceed the measure, and keep up the balance with equity, nor fall short in the measure. And the earth, He has set it for (His) creatures; therein is fruit and palms having sheathed clusters, and the grain with (its) husk and fragrance. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?” (55:1-13)

During the time when the Holy Qur'an was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and onwards, it became traditional to read and study the Holy Qur'an by means of dividing it into 30 parts, sections, and other kinds of divisions. Later on the Holy Qur'an became a book that was numbered in accordance with the various verses in a particular order in chapters. Later, when the Holy Qur'an was translated into other languages, it became customary to study the Holy Qur'an by means of chapters and verses, making references to the Holy Qur'an in the form of chapters and verses. And we have now commentaries that tell us about the various chapters, sections, and verses.

We will see now that in the new millennium, there needs to be a new approach to understanding the Holy Qur'an. This foresight of approaching the Holy Qur'an from a new perspective was harnessed and promoted by our late Maulana S. M. Tufail 40 years ago, when he started compiling the “*Dictionary and Concordance of the Holy Qur'an*”. And now that this has been published as the first real scholarly work in the Western Hemisphere, we must understand the role and importance of this work in the study of the Holy Qur'an; it is designed to encourage people to study the Holy Qur'an, not from the verses, not from the chapters, but from understanding its each word.

This new approach requires one to look at a word of the Holy Qur'an and try to understand its meaning in the context of other verses. Indeed, one can imagine the

Holy Qur'an as a web page in which you will find certain words or certain subject matters, and if you were to click on it, if the Qur'an were to be designed in a web page format, you would be able to get information further and further in different chapters, in different places and see the use of that particular word in different contexts.

Illustration of usefulness of “word” study

This can indeed solve lot of the problems in the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. Just to give you an illustration, in my recent visit to Holland, there was a lady who formerly was a Muslim and has now become a member of parliament and was very critical of Islam and its teachings and even of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). One of the objections she raised against Islam was the fact that Islam encourages wife-beating, that a husband could beat his wife in certain circumstances. And reference was made to chapter 4, verse 34 of the Holy Qur'an where the word *wadribu-hunna* derived from the Arabic word *daraba*, that means to strike or beat, is used in its imperative form, to indicate that husbands could beat their wives.

Of course, the correct translation of *wad-ribu-hunna* is that they should be chastised. But we have an additional problem here in that when Maulana Muhammad Ali 50 years ago translated the word *to chastise*, at that time it had a different meaning. It meant: “to chasten, to purify”. However, today the word chastisement has come to mean punishment and punishment even with violence. So the change in meaning of the word has caused some problems in the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. This problem was solved when we looked at the verse and the word *Daraba* in the context of its use at other places in the Holy Qur'an and I showed it to the people in Holland. So, if you look at the word in the “*Dictionary and Concordance of the Holy Qur'an*” you will see that the word is used in different places in the Qur'an, and one is able to get a meaning appropriate to the context. In this, the word in that particular context does not advocate that husbands should beat their wives, but speaks about how husbands should protect their wives and their rights in times of dispute and difficulty. And in chapter 18 verse 11 of the Holy Qur'an a derivative of this word *daraba*, *darabna*, is used and there the word is used in the context of *strike them on their ears*. And no commentator or translator of the Holy Qur'an takes this in the literal sense. The translation given is “to prevent them from hearing”. So the word *daraba* can be translated as “prevention, reprimand” for example, rather than chastisement. And

having come to understand this word in the Holy Qur'an in a different place and in a different context, the problem of understanding the verse of the Holy Qur'an that deals with the alleged wife beating was resolved.

There are other such instances in the Holy Qur'an. For example, the punishment for theft is often classified as cutting off the hands. Again if one were to look and consult the "*Dictionary and Concordance of the Holy Qur'an*" and see the use of this word in various contexts, we would see that there has been a problem among Muslim jurists as to whether when a person steals, he or she should have his hand amputated? What does cutting off the hands mean? A similar expression is used in chapter 12, verse 31 of the Holy Qur'an, where it is said that women were looking at Prophet Joseph and he was so beautiful that they in amazement just dropped their oranges or whatever it was and cut their hands. No one interprets that particular verse of the Holy Qur'an to mean that the women amputated their hands or cut it off completely. So cutting off the hands does not mean amputation. We have to find what it means with reference to its use in other places in the Holy Qur'an. And that was the purpose of the course that I ran in Holland.

Relevance of chapter "Ar-Rahman"

But my dear sisters and brothers! I have read to you verses from a very well known chapter of the Holy Qur'an entitled *Ar-Rahman*. It is an important chapter because it is beautiful in its diction, in its poetry, and most important in its meaning and especially because of its relevance to our day to day living. Now as members of the Ahmadiyya Movement, we believe and we promote, that in understanding the Holy Qur'an every chapter of the Holy Qur'an is connected to the other chapter, the one before and the one after it. Every section is connection in some way and so every verse is connected with the one before and after it. And looking at this principle we would see that the chapter that comes before chapter 55 which is entitled *Al-Qamar* (The Moon), is an indication to us that the moon is that object in the sky which reflects light. It reflects the light of the sun.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as it is well-known has been called *Siraj-an munira* i.e. the light-giving sun, and the Reformers, or *Mujaddidin*, in the Muslim Ummah were raised to emit the light of teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). But, equally his followers are also required to be like the moon, reflecting the light that has come from the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be

upon him). Now how can we do that? We do that by following the traditions and practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Again there is a problem within the Muslim community as to what exactly is the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). To many people the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is what we read in the books of Bukhari or Muslim and other collections of *Sihah Sitta* (six authentic collections of Tradition recognised among the Sunnis), and no doubt they have excellent records of the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). But the fact remains that all these books are not accepted by other Muslims or are not followed, for example, by the Shias. Again some sections of the Muslims give preference to particular collection of Tradition and some give importance to others. But whether you look at the sources and records of the Holy Prophet's practices within the Sunni community or within the Shia community, or the books of Bukhari and Muslim and the Shia books of Traditions, one thing we will note is that the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was that he would use his intelligence in interpreting the Holy Qur'an in a particular situation. As the Qur'an itself says "*afa-laa ya'qilun*" (ie. why don't you use your reason).

So the actual Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was to give a comprehensive look at the Holy Qur'an, analyse the circumstances and then apply it in his own age and time. And it is our responsibility and duty to follow that Sunnah, that is, to use our minds to study the Holy Qur'an, to understand it and to put it into practice. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an also teaches us that Allah has revealed the Qur'an to an Ummi Prophet, an unlettered, illiterate individual. This is an indication to us that you don't have to be a rocket scientist, you don't have to possess a Ph.D., you don't have to be a scholar in order to understand the Holy Qur'an. The simplest illiterate individual with common sense can understand the Holy Qur'an because it's a book from God and God can transcend any obstacles in human beings' understanding. Except, there is one condition as the Qur'an says, we must use our reason. If we don't use our reason then we are just like cattle - deaf, dumb and blind (The Qur'an 8:22).

By examining this chapter of the Holy Qur'an to see name we are to be like the moon reflecting the light of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), it must be asked how did the Holy Prophet actually get his light? It came about from the

Holy Qur'an itself. So the Qur'an tells us in this chapter, "*Ar-Rahman 'al-lamal Qur'an*", that is, Allah has been so beneficent to us to give us the Holy Qur'an.

The importance of "expression"

"*Khalaqal insana 'al-lamahul bayan*" i.e. He created man and taught the Qur'an. Now one of the things that we have to understand is that Allah has been revealing His Divine scriptures from time immemorial. He has given scriptures to other prophets, other people and other nations, and we are required to believe and accept these. But if we ask ourselves the question: what are the reasons or the circumstances for which revelation from Allah became necessary? Or what were the reasons, for example, that the Bible was revealed, or what were the reasons that the Geeta was revealed or for that matter any other divine scripture. Do they tell us what is the purpose of these revelations? It is only the Holy Qur'an that indicates to us that human beings have hidden faculties and hidden qualities that God has created in us to manifest. And that is why the Qur'an says, *Khalaqal insana 'allamahul bayan*. And in order for the human being to be perfect, to purify himself, he has to manifest these qualities within him. So again if we were to refer to the "*Dictionary and Concordance of the Qur'an*" you will see *Bayan* means "a manifestation or disclosure of the state of something, an expression of something that is speech, writing, explanation, commentary, achievements, a means of expressing ourselves". How do you know what is in an individual except that individual's expression, either facial expression or expression in thought or expression in art or culture or poetry etc? We cannot know what is in an individual unless that individual expresses himself to others. So we cannot know of nations of the past unless we see the expression in their architecture, in their language or literature that they have left behind.

Now one of the things that we must clearly understand is, in order to know the mind of an individual, to read the thoughts of that individual, that individual must express his thoughts. If you want to know what Shakespeare thought on some subject of history or whatever, you read the writings of Shakespeare. If you want to know how Einstein thought, you read his theories and his books. If you want to know how Allah thinks we read His book, the Holy Qur'an. So the Qur'an is an expression of the thought of God, how God thinks, how He wants us to understand Himself, how He wants us to understand the world in which we live, how He wants us to understand our own selves, how He wants us to understand our relationships with one another.

The Holy Qur'an points this out to us when it tells us that Allah is *Ar-Rahman*. The word *Rahman* comes from *raham* which means the womb. And there is an indication here in this particular chapter of the Holy Qur'an that a human being is created from *raham*, not the physical *raham* or womb, but the spiritual *raham*, in other words the womb of the Holy Qur'an. It is by studying the Holy Qur'an that we can grow and develop, that we can express ourselves truly. Our best expressions are the expressions in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. And this is what the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did. This was his Sunnah, and that is why when his wife, Hazrat Ayesha, was asked about the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), she said: You read the Holy Qur'an. It is the best expression of the perfect man, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Expressions of "love" and "hate"

Just as we cannot know the past of any nation except through their expressions, as I said, in history and archaeology etc., similarly we cannot know the expression of an individual except through his emotions of love and hate. This will determine how they think and how they function. Similarly we too cannot convey our thoughts, ideas, and abilities and so on to someone else except through expression. So the Qur'an is telling us the importance of the expression, *khalaqal insana 'allamahul bayan*. Our expression can be violent or non violent, and this is where we see nations express their power or their weakness by virtue of war, terrorism, fighting or sometimes through negotiation, through peaceful talks, trying to come to a common understanding. And expression is also important in husband and wife relationship, in parent/child relationship. Teachers can convey their ideas through expression in the classroom. We have a multimedia format of expression now. We have the internet in which we can express so much information all over the world in so many different languages and in so many different formats.

So the Holy Qur'an is pointing out to us that we cannot benefit from one another's knowledge or be guided by one another's words, or follow one another's practices unless they are expressed. And so it is the responsibility of Muslims not merely to have the Holy Qur'an and be a Muslim, but to express the teachings of the Holy Qur'an in our daily lives. In fact this is how Islam was spread in the Eastern world. Not by armies that went from Arabia or Syria or Iraq, but by traders, by people who lived Islam in their daily lives and communicated with people. That is how it spread in Indonesia

and in China. So the Holy Qur'an, when it says "He created man and taught him expression", is speaking about the creation of man through expression. Human beings create other group of human beings through communication and expression. And this is one of the tasks we expect to achieve by means of the publication of the "Dictionary and Concordance of the Holy Qur'an" in that we will be creating a group of people who will now study the Holy Qur'an by means of the words of the Qur'an, to look at the use of these words in various places in the Holy Qur'an, rather than just looking at it from subject matter and saying, I want to look up Jihad, or I want to look at the subject of divorce or polygamy or marriage or fasting etc. They will try to study the Holy Qur'an through a new format now, which is the format of the words of the Holy Qur'an as they have been used and what meanings they conveyed at various stages of human development and history.

The Holy Quran: the most perfect Divine expression

So the Holy Qur'an is indicating to us in this particular chapter that in order for Allah to produce the perfect human being, He communicates Himself through the Holy Qur'an, which is the most perfect expression of Divinity. No other divine scripture gives us the mind of God. So Allah has expressed His will to mankind through the Holy Qur'an. So the purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to manifest the perfect nature of the human being through its guidance. It has been given as *hudal lin-nasi wa bayyinat-i minal huda*, i.e. "Guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance", indeed a guidance for humanity. And when we examine and we see through the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), we find him as the perfect expression of the Holy Qur'an in action, in thought and in behaviour.

Now in order to create ourselves as good human beings we must know that there are certain laws at work. Everything works in accordance with laws. Without laws human beings cannot really function. And so the Holy Qur'an says: *ash-shamsu wal-qamaru bihusban, wan-najmu wash-shajaru yasjudan*, i.e. "The sun and the moon follow a reckoning, and the herbs and trees adore Him." (vv. 5,6). Look at the sun and the moon, look at the vegetation that we see around us and we will see certain realities dawning upon our mind. The Holy Qur'an speaks about *al-laa tatghaw fil mizan wa aqimul wazna bil-qisti wa laa tukhsirul mizaan*, i.e. "That you may not exceed the measure. And keep up the balance with equity, nor fall short in the measure." (vv. 8,9). It speaks of the measure and the standards. We know that no society can live without laws. If they do not follow the law of God they invent their own laws via

constitution. Even the United Nations has its charter and its laws. All human beings have to function in accordance with some set of laws. No one wants to live in a lawless society, so the Qur'an is telling us even long before law came in as an integral part of society, that laws are necessary for the welfare of humanity.

But, law requires certain standards. If you want to put up a building, you have to follow the law, you have to get certain permission, you have to know the locality and other construction requirements. There are certain distances you have to keep from the road and there are certain restrictions with regards to the size and the height of the building relative to the land, and so many other things. Then there are also standards. The kind of material you use in the structure of the building is important. If you fall short of the standards then the building can collapse, as perhaps may have been the reason why a wing of the airport in Paris collapsed some time ago. We see today that mankind is searching for standards - international standards. Everything has to be standardised. All our products should maintain certain standards and quality, because standards are important. We have to measure these standards. So the Holy Qur'an indicates to us that if you look at the sun and the moon we find our entire existence is dependent upon the laws of the lunar and solar system. The planting of crops, for example, is done at particular seasons and all the laws of nature are necessary for us.

But then the Qur'an tells us: "And the herbs and the trees adore Him" (v.6). *Najm* (ie. Herbs) is that kind of vegetation that does not have trunk, for example vines, and it depends on others for support. The *shajar* (ie. trees) is a tree or vegetation that can stand on its own. The Holy Qur'an is indicating to us here that for growth and development sometimes we need to have different seasons, different occasions in which we can express our thoughts and our ideas. There will be times of peace, for example, and there will be times of war. How do we manifest best the excellence of our personality and character in these situations? What kind of environment should be in our home with our children or parents, or neighbourhood or at our work place? Should it be hostile or peaceful and amicable? We see the Holy Prophet Muhammad's life being manifested in all facets of life - a time of war and a time of peace. How did he conduct himself? So the Holy Qur'an is indicating to us here the different seasons in our lives, different environmental conditions that will require our personality development depending upon these kinds of conditions, whether they are positive or negative.

Balance and proper measurement required

But at the same time, sometimes we depend upon others, and sometimes others depend upon us, so we should stand on our own two feet. And that is where the likeness to the *Najm* and the *Shajar* is indicated in the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an wants us to understand also that if we exceed the law we can run into problems. Let us look at the "sun and the moon" for "a reckoning" or "a measure". The sun and earth stay at a certain fixed distance apart, of course, because of the turning of the earth. Some parts of the earth are a little nearer to the sun at certain times of the year and it can be extremely hot or extremely cold. But if the earth were to move a couple of degrees more towards the sun or away from the sun, we will have everything either burnt and scorched or we will have everything extremely cold, another ice age coming upon us. So if anything affects our ozone layer, for example, we will find greater heat of the sun coming. And the Holy Qur'an has given us this indication. It's a very modern book in the sense that it tells us that our life is dependent upon the laws of nature at work. And if we exceed the measure, if we exceed the laws, we can suffer certain consequences.

We also find that in life we have among human beings, independent and dependent people. You have the rich and you have the poor, you have the rulers and you have those who depend upon them. You have the employer and you have the employee. You have the leader and you have the followers. Just as *najm* and *shajar*, the vine also depends upon a tree for its survival, and similarly, the tree provides a function for birds and for others who depend upon it, and for human beings who depend upon the fruits of that tree. So the Qur'an is pointing out to us here, *Aqimul wazna*, we must keep up this balance, we must keep up this measure.

There are many people who look at this measure and this balance in the literal sense, especially when it comes to the Day of Judgement when there will be a scale and we will be accountable for our deeds. Somehow they think that good deeds will perhaps be on one side, and bad deeds on the other side. This is the concept they have of balance. But the Holy Qur'an is telling us something different. It is indicating to us that everything in life has a measure. And depending upon the thing that you are measuring the scale would be different. There are different measurements. You don't measure hours or time by means of kilometres. You don't measure temperature by means of grams. So everything that has a particular measure has a particular scale. If you are measuring time, you use hours and minutes. If you are measuring distance, you use yards and feet or metres as the case

may be. If you are measuring weight, it is different, if you are measuring heat and cold it is different. So everything has its own measure.

When it comes to our behaviour, the Holy Qur'an says there is also a measure and that measure is simply: if you do one good deed it counts as if there are 10 or in some cases the action maybe such that it counts as 100 or even more than that but, if you perform one evil deed the measure is the like of it. So the Holy Qur'an is indicating to us, yes, when you perform one evil deed, the measure of it is the same, but when you perform one good deed the measure is such that it has an action that goes on and on and that can multiply.

Balance and measure manifested in relationships

So the Qur'an indicates to us that things function in relation to one another. And we find that things are dependent upon relationships. We have family relationships, we have Jama'at relationships, we have social relationships, and we have international relationships. We have relationships between human beings and animals and the rest of it. But the Qur'an tells us that *was-sama' rafa'a-ha*, i.e. "the heaven We have raised it up". And this is a very important message for each and every one of us. When Allah tells us that He has raised the heaven high for us, it's something that we should think about, because when we look at the earth that is under the control of human beings and we see the kind of problems human beings have on earth. We say, thank God, the heavens have not, at least not yet, been under the control of human beings. On earth we find that human beings are fighting one another, there is antagonism, there are restrictions, there is monopoly and manipulation of affairs. The world has never been without some kind of war and killing. All the advantages that we have developed has not allowed us to really live in peace and harmony except in times when Allah has sent His prophets and messengers who had to involve themselves in very difficult circumstances to establish peace on earth.

So the Qur'an is indicating to us that growth and development in nature is uniformly predictable because there is a balance in nature due to uniform laws. And now scientists are recognising what the Qur'an has said here 1500 years ago, that in the world there is a balance, and if you upset that balance, if you damage the rain forests, if you get rid of all the wild animals – they perform a function and if you just destroy them – then you're going to destroy your own selves. So human beings are now coming to prove the truth of the Holy Qur'an. Likewise the Qur'an is indicating to us that for the growth and development of human beings in any

nation, in any country, there has to be standards and measurement and a balance. There is poverty, there is freedom, there are people who are in prison, there are people who are diseased, and there are people who are very rich, extremely rich. But human beings have always progressed because of standards. And just as we have standards in the material world, we need to have moral and spiritual standards, which is something the world has really not attempted to focus on.

Key significances of chapter “Ar-Rahman”

So in this particular chapter of the Holy Qur’an, every word has a very important meaning and a lesson for us. We can glean certain things, we can come to certain conclusions. And what are these conclusions? The Holy Qur’an indicates to us quite clearly and says: *fee-haa faakihatun wan-nakhlu zaa-tul akmam* (v.11), meaning that in His creatures, especially human beings, there are fruits and there are palms with cluster and seeds with husk and musk – that is fragrance – and quality. It says to us *’asf-i war-rayhan* (v.12), that is, husk and fragrance. In other words it is telling us that it is the intention of Allah that through the Holy Qur’an human beings can really have standards of morality and spirituality, and can develop themselves to be excellent human beings, as was said by Prophet Jesus before the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), that “by their fruits you shall know them.” How we can know human beings is by looking at the fruit of their actions. Now we see that in the world we have different kinds of trees and different kinds of fruits. You have palms for example growing in desert and sandy or barren soil, but they are so useful in so many other ways. Then there are other trees whose fruits are useful but the leaves and trunks are useless, they perhaps are just thrown away, discarded or used as fodder for animals. Then you have banana, for example; it has a sweet fruit, but then the stalk and everything is just thrown away or destroyed. Every year you have to cut it. So the Holy Qur’an is pointing out to us that as there are certain types of trees, similarly there are certain types of human beings who provide certain fruits. And not only the fruits of their actions are beneficial, but their entire life, their whole surrounding are also beneficial. And there are some people who may perhaps give an action or two that is beneficial, and the rest of their life you cannot see any kind of contribution that they are making to humanity.

Here the Qur’an tells us about *akmam*. It means the fruit covering, the skin, a bunch or pulp of a fruit. It also speaks of *’asf*, which means cut leaves or straw, or dried vegetation. In chapter 105 verse 5 the word *’asf* again is

used. And this is how we can use the “*Dictionary and the Concordance of the Holy Qur’an*”, and can look at these words and their meanings at different places in the Holy Qur’an. But the Qur’an speaks of *rayhan*, which means fragrance as well as provision, and this word is also used in chapter 56, verse 89, the very next chapter in sequence. The Qur’an describes fruits as also having husk, the seed covering as it were, and also musk, that is the fragrance that comes. So it is indicating to us here that human beings should possess these two qualities, that is, husk and musk. Husk meaning that there must be some harvest in human beings. You must see firmness in the way in which they follow the laws, not that they are overtly strict, but that there must be some standing on principles. There must be certainly principles that we stand by. But at the same time you cannot be so harsh in your principles, so rigid that no one likes you, they think you are a terrorist, they think you are a dictator, so there must be some kind of musk or fragrance. Fragrance is a perfume that attracts others, that appeals to others. So the Qur’an is telling us here that in the development of human personality there must be firmness but there must also be attractiveness. We must act in a manner that people will be drawn to us, that people will be attracted to us, not merely that we should be so strict to the letter of the law that people are turned away from us.

Islamic prayer: an analogy of balance

One of the beauties that we have, one of the best ways for the development of human personality is *Salah* or the prayer. And in the prayer, which plays an essential part in the human development - moral and spiritual development - we see that Allah has given us certain principles. These principles are very significant. When a Muslim prays, first and foremost, he or she stands erect in the position of *Qiyam* and that is a reminder to us that we must always stand upright in our lives. We must always stand on principles, we must always be firm. The Holy Qur’an says in another place that the right religion is standing firm and standing upright. But then we can be so upright that we refuse to look at the views of other people. And so we have the position of *Ruku’*, which shows that at times we have to bend a little. We have to be a little flexible. We can’t just impose the letter of the law. And sometimes we have not only to be merely flexible but we have to be submissive. We have to give some of our rights and privileges, for the sake of peace and harmony, and this is what the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did as we do in our position of *sajdah*. It indicates our utmost surrender and humility, making ourselves extremely small rather than being arrogant and swell headed. And we see this in the case of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace

and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he signed the Truce of Hudaibiyya. He signed a treaty which was disgraceful to the Muslims, but for the sake of peace he signed it. This is why this man has been called *Rahmatul lil-'alamin*, (ie. a mercy for all the religions and all the nations of the world). And then we find in a position of *qa'da*, the abasing of oneself. In other words we have to stand on certain principles. In English we don't say "to sit on principle", but rather "to stand on principle". That is we are rigid, we are firm, we are operative, yes, but we are flexible, we are humble, but at the same time that is the base of our religion, that is righteousness. And the base of all of this is *assalamu 'alaikum wa Rahmatullah* i.e. peace and blessings on the right; *assalamu 'alaikum wa Rahmatullah* or peace and blessings on the left, that is we foster peace for every one by means of this kind of attitude.

So the attitude of Muslims must not be that of hostility and belligerence, that is always wanting to fight for religion using certain violent methods, or sometimes using violence not by means of bombs and guns, but even in their intolerant attitude showing hostility by calling others *kafirs* (disbelievers). All of this is against Islam because Islam is a religion of peace. So whenever we pray we must always remember that we need to stand upright, we need to be flexible, we need to be humble, but at the same time all of this is for the sake of peace. We address the world for the sake of peace. To the right we look at the world and say "I am at peace with you", and to the left, "I wish you all peace". ■

Call For Papers!

The *Light and Islamic Review* welcomes submissions of articles for publication. Preferably, articles should be between 5-10 pages long, single-spaced, in *Microsoft Word* format and be submitted via e-mail. Authors from all faiths and denominations are welcome, the subject matter of the paper, though, must be substantively related to Islam. Please contact the Editorial Board for more information on Editorial Guidelines.

Muhammad: Sinner or Savior

By Fazeel S. Khan, Director, AAAIL (USA)

(This article was originally presented at the AAAIL (USA) Annual Convention 2003 held in Columbus, Ohio, and has since been modified for publication in this periodical.)

For Muslims, upon hearing the name "*Muhammad*" the emotions of admiration, praise, gratitude and allegiance are instinctively generated. Contrary to this, the name "*Muhammad*" creates in the western mind images of war and oppression, sexual exploitation of women, and above all, the inspiration for terrorism. This drastically diverse impulse is primarily the result of a concerted campaign to promulgate the view that the Prophet Muhammad was, God forbid, a sinful man who did not possess the qualities required of a prophet. The validity of this opinion, unfortunately, is sustained by propaganda linking un-Islamic acts by some who claim to be Muslims to the character of the Prophet Muhammad. A comparative analysis of the fictitious Muhammad being instilled in the psyche of the west, with the factual Muhammad evidenced by history can aptly be characterized as contrasting a sinner with a savior. The recipients of this recent informational-crusade, launched by the resurrected Christian Evangelical Movement in America, are sadly provided with a confusingly unsound theory to accept; that being, that a man who was a sinner, as Prophet Muhammad is portrayed to have been, was able to produce the greatest spiritual reformation the world has ever known, as is evidenced by history. Logic and reasoning alone demand discontent for such a supposition. Accepting the status of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as a "*savior*" is the only means in reconciling the acceptance of this man's historical existence with the precedent setting transformation brought about through him in the Arabian Peninsula 1400 years ago and which continues to induce spirituality into one in every five persons on earth today. This true status of the Holy Prophet is historically sound and is expounded in various intricate ways in the Holy Quran.

The distinctiveness of one prophet, that is Muhammad

As Muslims, we firmly believe that not only Prophet Muhammad, but all prophets of God to have been sinless, righteous, noble men, without exception, raised for the purpose of furthering spiritual advancement of man. We respect and honor them all on this basis equally. However, where a distinction can be made between the

prophets is in the scope and success of their respective missions. This is hinted at in the Holy Quran in the following words: “and some of them (i.e. messengers of God) He exalted by (many) degrees of rank” (2:253). The possessor of this exalted degree of rank is meant the Holy Prophet Muhammad. His mission was not for a specific people under particular conditions nor was he sent for a certain, limited period in history. As the Quran testifies: “and We have not sent thee but as a mercy to all nations”(21:107). The reference to “all nations” signifies the expansiveness of the mission, neither being confined by space nor time.

The transformation affected by the Holy Prophet was the greatest spiritual conquest in the history of mankind, as admitted by independent sources. For example, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* concludes: “Of all the religious personalities of the world, Muhammad was the most successful”. An often over-looked fact by western critics when analyzing the life of the Prophet Muhammad is that he ended his mission triumphantly. The Prophet Muhammad lived to see the results of his reformative undertaking, witnessing his very opponents and persecutors transform their hatred and vengeance for him into love and admiration. No other reformer can be named whose advent was at a time of such great need, whose departing was after the victorious fulfillment of that need, and whose opponents eventually bore witness to their own disobedience and misconduct. We see in the example of Prophet Moses that he was sent to rescue his people from the tyranny of Pharaoh and guide them on the straight path. This in itself is proof that he was not concerned with the spiritual corruption of the world as a whole. Moreover, although Prophet Moses was a savior to his people in that Pharaoh was eventually destroyed, he was unable to rescue them from the destructive effects of polytheism and they continued being disobedient to him embellishing in impurity till Prophet Moses died while they remained in that condition. As for Prophet Jesus, it is verified in the Gospels that he was sent only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the Gentiles were not his concern. He accumulated a handful of disciples and even among them were those who betrayed him for minimal worldly gain.

How distinctive is the conclusion of the Holy Prophet’s mission who departed from the world at a time when hundreds of thousands of people had abandoned paganism and idol worship for the belief in the Unity of God and the straight path all under his lead. Our critics must sincerely be asked: could this possibly have been the accomplishment of a sinner? Does common sense not dictate that this could only be the achievement of a savior?

Prophet Muhammad as the embodiment of a perfect submitter to the Divine

The obvious question resulting from these facts is: how was it possible for the Holy Prophet to have been so successful and to have been blessed with such Divine support, more so than any other reformer? The answer, in a simple form, is that far from resembling anything sinful (which means being in a state detached from God), the Prophet Muhammad had the closest relationship to God, acquiring all the perfect attributes and being a reflection of the Divine on earth. We are told in the Holy Quran that Prophet Muhammad had declared: “I am the first of those who submit” (6:164). Thus, he was the most subservient to God, acquiring closeness with the Divine on the most intimate level. We are also told in the Quran that the Holy Prophet had prayed: “My Lord, increase me in knowledge” (20:114). Hence, he was also constantly in search of the perfect knowledge of God’s greatness, understanding and attributes. The Quran indicates the vastness of the Prophet’s knowledge by stating: “And Allah has...taught thee what thou knewest not, and Allah’s grace on thee is very great” (4:113). This verse reveals that the Almighty taught the Holy Prophet what man could not have possibly learnt on his own and that by Divine grace he was blessed more than any other. The Prophet Muhammad had exceeded everyone in his knowledge and understanding of the Divine and the Almighty had blessed him in return with a spiritual status unmatched by any other – and that status comprised of being a manifestation of God’s perfect attributes on earth.

It may be difficult to comprehend how only one person in all of creation is granted this blessing and how only one person’s essence is of such magnitude as to obtain the complete Divine impress and reflect those qualities fully to others. However, if we reflect upon the system God has created in our material universe, we find the whole of creation compiled as if in a straight line; from the smallest insignificant particle at one end, to the largest, most resourceful body, the sun, at the other. So too, in the spiritual realm, do we find at one end defective souls who in their conduct, mentality, and significance resemble lower animal life and at the other, the Prophet Muhammad who resembles the perfect attributes of God and is above all mankind. The Quran in fact eludes to this analogy by referring to the Holy Prophet as a “light-giving sun”(33:46).

Prophet Muhammad’s unmatched nearness to God

Only the person who may radiate God’s attributes in its full resplendence is worthy of this final and supreme

point in creation; one that may be so attached to the Divine that he loses his own identity and become as if God Himself were on earth. In the Quran, we find that there are three grades of nearness to God that man may attain and these are illustrated by three types of associations or relationships. The first type is that of the relationship of “servant and master”, as the Quran states: “those who believe are stronger in (their) love for Allah” (2:165). Thus, the believers, or obedient servants, love Allah above everything else and wish only to serve and please the Almighty. The love progresses to such a degree that one sacrifices all of their own interests for the cause of their Master. The second type of nearness to God resembles the relationship between “father and son”, as the Quran states: “And...laud Allah as you lauded your fathers, rather a more hearty lauding” (2:200). Here, the remembrance of Allah is done more eagerly than that of remembering one’s own father. Not only does a son obey and want to please his father (like a loyal servant to a master), but a son does this while not comprehending the service to be a prescribed duty, and rather performs out of genuine love for him. And just as a son resembles his father in many ways, so too does the believer acquire the qualities and characteristic of God. The third type of nearness resembles one’s very own reflection. Here, one’s entire being is perfectly duplicated and it becomes as if there is no difference between the original and the reproduction. Accordingly, this type of nearness, being a perfect replica, is greater than the two previously mentioned. This degree of nearness can neither be acquired by obedient service nor by being a son. It can only be achieved by one who is placed equally between servitude and Divinity and is so close to both that he loses his very own existence, as if he was a mirror between the two. This mirror obtains the impress of the Divine by way of reflection and conveys it to mankind under the appropriate circumstances.

The Holy Prophet, being named *Muhammad* meaning the “most praised” due to his manifesting the divinity on earth and *Ahmad* meaning the “most praising” due to his perfect service and obedience to God, had attained this ultimate degree of closeness to God and became the intermediary through whom all could find the Almighty. It is also for this reason that Prophet Jesus cannot be considered the intercessor for mankind for his life and teachings were deficient of a full range of conditions, emotions and trials. For instance, although Prophet Jesus had taught lessons of “forgiveness”, he was not able to reveal its practical implementation for he was never in a position of authority over his persecutors, which is essential for one to truly develop this faculty. Although reaching the high stage of being a “son

of God” in a spiritual sense, he was insufficient in attaining the highest position of being a true reflection of the all-encompassing Divine attributes.

Prophet Muhammad as the ultimate “intercessor” between God and man

The word for “intercession” in Arabic is based on the root word meaning “pair”. Thus, a necessary pre-condition of an intercessor is that he be related to both sides. Accordingly, not only is an intercessor to possess that extreme close connection with God, but he is also to have such an overpowering passion for those on whose behalf he is interceding that he sacrifices his very being for them more so than even a parent would for their own child. The Holy Prophet’s yearning for the reformation of mankind and for their salvation is recorded in the Quran as it states: “Perhaps thou wilt kill thyself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they believe not in this announcement” (18:6). Substantiating the view that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is in fact this perfect intercessor, the Quran provides a beautiful analogy, which states: “One Mighty in Power has taught him, the Lord of Strength. So he (i.e. Muhammad) attained to perfection, And he is in the highest part of the horizon. Then he drew near, drew nearer yet, So he became as a chord between two bows or closer still” (53:5-9). What is meant here is that the Holy Prophet ascended towards God and approached as near to Him as was possible and acquired all the perfect attributes of the Divine then leaned perfectly towards the earthly station and partook fully of the pure essentials of humanness, namely love and sympathy for mankind, and became as it were a chord between two bows. If we try to conceptualize this analogy in material terms, we see wholeness, or completeness, being symbolized by a circle and the Holy Prophet being a chord or a line in the center of the circle, dividing it into two halves or two bows and thus perfectly fulfilling the condition of a true intercessor occupying the central point between the two sides of Divinity and mankind.

Prophet Muhammad as the Manifestation of the Divine on earth

The Holy Quran reveals that the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad, being a reflection of God’s perfect attributes, was as it were a manifestation of God on earth. For instance it is written: “those who swear allegiance to thee (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) do but swear allegiance to Allah” (48:10). The implication being that there was no difference between the Holy Prophet and God Almighty for the Prophet had become a manifestation of God’s attributes. Thus, accepting the Holy Prophet was in essence accepting the One true God.

Clearer still, we read in the Quran: “Say: O my servants who have been prodigal regarding their souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether” (39:53). The Quran being written throughout in the first person reveals that this verse implies that the Holy Prophet and the Almighty are as one; for, the verse does not tell Prophet Muhammad to say: “O servants of Allah” but rather “O my servants” (i.e. Prophet Muhammad’s servants). The verses deeper significance lays in the illustration of how high a rank the Messenger of Allah has attained by perfect obedience so much so that he has acquired all the Divine attributes in their perfection and has become one with the Almighty and this being all due to the expansive mercy of God. The Prophet Muhammad’s advent being referred to as a manifestation of God is not only indicated in the Holy Quran, but is in fact referenced in prophecies in previous religious scriptures. One example is found in Deuteronomy, the fifth book of Moses, in which we read: “The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; and he shined forth from mount Paran” (33:2). This declaration by Prophet Moses confirms that the manifestation of the Lord reached its climax at Paran, shining forth in its full glory. Paran, being a mountain of Mecca as evidenced by the Torah itself, authenticates the application of this prophecy to no other than Prophet Muhammad.

Prophet Muhammad as the Seal of the Prophets

It is argued in many of the recent anti-Islamic publications that Prophet Jesus is afforded the respect of being named “Word of God” and “Spirit of God” in the Quran and this, their reasoning suggests, is proof furnished from the Quran itself of Jesus’ superiority over Prophet Muhammad. Without going into the merits of this allegation, it should be noted that the Prophet Muhammad is provided a distinction in the Quran that is above and far beyond all other designations provided to any other reformer. And this is the incomparable distinction of being *khatam an nabiyyin* or “seal of the prophets”.

The Quran states: “Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets” (33:40). The primary significance being that Prophet Muhammad was to be the “last” of the prophets, for, with his advent, religion became complete and there was, therefore, no need for any prophets after him. This in itself reveals the magnitude of the Prophet’s status; it was this “finality of prophethood” through which God “perfected” His religion. However there is a secondary significance; the term *khatam an nabiyyin* reveals that prophethood itself had been “perfected”. Thus, Prophet Muhammad was

the final as well as the most perfect prophet. Being a perfect reflection of the all-encompassing Divine attributes is what is being implied. Understanding this secondary significance allows one to fully appreciate this verse’s implications on the Holy Prophets’ status. The verse states that “Muhammad is not the father of any of your men”, meaning he does not have any sons or heirs as such to pass on his qualities, as already touched on earlier, like a father does to a son, “but”, the verse continues, “he is the Messenger of Allah and the last and most perfect of the Prophets”. The latter part of the verse reveals, by the grammatical use of the word “but”, which necessitates some sort of logical rebuttal or persuasive alternative, that even though he does not have any physical sons, he will be granted innumerable spiritual heirs for it is only through him that man can appreciate the complete religion of God and reach one’s spiritual potential. The verse indicates that Prophet Muhammad is the “savior” without whom one cannot truly know God; without whom one cannot see God’s true reflection; without whom one cannot observe the manifestation of the Divine attributes; and, without whom one cannot establish the intermediary link between mankind and the Divine. This is the grand status of the Holy Prophet as expressed in the Quran. It is also in fact the greatest proof of the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet, for the Muslim nation has in every generation been blessed with saints who reveal Divine signs solely due to their following him. The continuance of Prophet Muhammad’s spiritual children who manifest the Divine qualities, like the moon reflecting light on earth solely due to borrowing it from the sun, is in fact a promise by God implied in the term “*khatam an nabiyyin*”.

Prophet Muhammad in the *Kalima Shahada*, or “profession of faith”

The Holy Prophet’s status is further revealed and clarified in the *kalima shahada*, or profession of faith. It is mandatory for one accepting the religion of Islam to affirm that “*there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah*”. The 2-part formula demonstrates the high status of the Prophet Muhammad by making the acceptance of the Holy Prophet as essential as the acceptance of the One true God. It is an indication at the very outset of the Holy Prophet being so attached to the Almighty as if the two were inseparable. It is a further indication that one cannot truly appreciate the Unity of God, or even the very Existence of God, without faithfully accepting the Holy Prophet as one’s guide. The Prophet Muhammad being a reflection and a manifestation of the Divine is clearly implied here as well. However, and just as importantly, the formula also

clarifies that no matter how high a status the Holy Prophet attained, he is ONLY a Messenger and that only Allah is the One true God, for no matter how perfect a reflection may resemble the original, the reflection can never be the real thing and does not have an existence without the original source. Thus, the kalima also serves as a precautionary measure in that it guarantees that Muslims will not mistake the Divine reflection of the Prophet for Divinity itself, as followers of previous prophets had done. And finally, the *kalima*, like everything else in Islam, provides man with not only an “objective”, but also the “means” needed to achieve it. The acceptor of Islam is provided in the first part of the formula with the objective of Islam, which is knowing and serving the One true God, and is forthwith also provided in the second part with the means required in achieving it, and that is by becoming a faithful follower to the example of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet’s status of being the true “intercessor” between man and God is the underlying significance.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Holy Prophet Muhammad is regarded in Islam as the savior of mankind in that it is only through following him, that one may know God in the complete and perfect sense. As we read in the Quran, the Holy Prophet had announced: “If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you, and grant you protection from your sins” (3:30). This status of the Holy Prophet needs to be conveyed to the world. This can be done by explaining from the Quran the true essence of his being. This can also be done by refuting the particular allegations leveled against him by Islam’s critics. Moreover, as touched on earlier, there is also another way in which all Muslims may reveal the status of the Holy Prophet being a savior to mankind; and that is by becoming his spiritual heir and shining the Divine attributes obtained from his reflection to all persons we come in contact with each day. As trees are always, and quite reasonably so, judged by their fruit, it is imperative that each and every Muslim conduct themselves in a way that discloses the noble character of our savior, the Prophet Muhammad. May Almighty Allah guide us all in this most essential endeavor. ■

Dowie: A sign to America and the World

By Muhammad Sadiq, Columbus, Ohio

(This article is comprised of a series of Jummah Khuthas (sermons). As future segments become available, we will, insha Allah, continue to publish them in this periodical.)

“Whoever then disputes with thee in this matter after the knowledge that has come to thee, say: Come! Let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our people and your people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and invoke the curse of Allah on the liars” (Sura 3, Verse 60).

This verse was addressed to a delegation of 60 Christian men from Najran who had come to Medina in 10 AH. They were housed in the Holy Prophet’s mosque and, after they had fully discussed the status of Jesus with the Prophet, God tells them that they can ascertain whose beliefs are true by invoking the curse of Allah on those who hold the false beliefs. At first, the delegation seemed ready to accept this challenge but they later backed out.

This prayer duel is known in Arabic as “*mubahalah*” and is meant to let God decide who is right and who is wrong on an important religious issue. It is a kind of arbitration after there has been full discussion of the issue. It assumes that God answers prayers, as was very much believed in the time of the Holy Prophet by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. That the Christians of Najran refused to take up this challenge speaks volumes of their faith in their doctrines concerning Jesus, which included the belief that Jesus was the Son of God.

There is a hadith from Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi regarding this incident. The Prophet reportedly said: “If the Christians had accepted the challenge of *mubahalah* and agreed to pray to God to send His punishment on the lying party, God would have surely destroyed the liars before a year had passed.” (Ahmad, Bashir, p.411). The purpose of this “curse of Allah” is to reveal the truth by cutting off the limb with the gangrene (the spiritual disease) so that the body can be saved. The few are sacrificed for the many in the interests of truth.

Dowie and Zion City: the basis of a new Mubahalah

In the last century, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad engaged in a similar spiritual contest with John Alexander Dowie.

“On June 2, 1901, in the newly founded city of Zion, north of Chicago, John Alexander Dowie declared himself to be Elijah, the Prophet. This assertion by Dowie represented the culmination of a movement launched in the United States. This Movement captured the fancy of the Americans and prestigious papers like *“The Century”* and *“Independent New York”* published articles and features on the emerging figure.”

“Dowie claimed the divine power of healing and his fame spread so fast that it caught the imagination of many credulous and wealthy Americans. The progress was so tremendous that soon his Apostolic Church had its own bank, its own printing plant and thousands of people were flocking to this movement” (Ahmad, Hasanat, p.1).

A pamphlet from Zion Historical Society states:

“A precocious youth, Dowie, born in Scotland in 1847, gave early evidence of his religious zeal. He not only had read the Bible through when six years of age, but had already taken the abstinence pledge. In 1872, at the age of twenty-five, Dowie was ordained as a Congregational Minister to serve a small church near Adelaide, Australia” (Cook, p. 1).

“As Jesus and his disciples healed the sick and as it had been declared that “Greater things than these shall ye do,” so it should be continued. Healing was possible. And when numerous healings did occur after the Congregationalist’s prayers during an epidemic in 1878, he was assured that God was rewarding his faith healing and holy living emerged to characterize his ministry” (Ibid, p.2).

“On various occasions the cleric had stated his belief in his Divine Mission to restore the ‘full gospel’ of salvation, healing and holy living. His interpretation of the scriptures led him to conclude that the second manifestation of the Prophet, Elijah, was John, the Baptist who should be referred to as Elijah II. References in the Holy Book alluded to yet another appearance of the Elijah of the Old Testament. The Head of the Zion Church was convinced that his own experiences, and especially his healing victories, made it evident that he was verily Elijah III. Apparently his followers accepted this assertion proclaimed to them on numerous occasions ... It was impossible to forget the great numbers of miraculous healings at his hands. That fact was undeniable.

The other compelling factor was the reality of Zion City and all that it represented. In understanding the success of the Zion movement, one must deal with the essential fact that through the years of its establishment and growth, it represented a practical Christianity. With great devotion toward the man of God who had endured many arrests as well as other persecutions in the world, his followers were little disturbed by his claim to being a seer” (Ibid, pp. 9, 10).

Syed Ahmad adds the following:

“Elated with this unprecedented success, fond of drama and pageantry, Alexander Dowie fixed the midnight of December 31, 1899, the turn of a new century, as the zero hour for the formal launching of his movement - the Zion City to be located along the beautiful Lake Michigan....”

“On July 15, 1901 ... the gates of this holy city were formally opened. Nine months later, on March 31, 1902, Zion became a legal entity. Alexander Dowie was the Genghis Khan of this city. His word was law. Banks, stores, hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, industrial areas, factories and mills, all that was in the town, belonged to Dowie - the Elijah....”

“The Elijah of the modern times enjoyed the most robust health, claiming that being a ‘messenger’ of God, no disease could touch him. He arrogated to himself the much attributed power of Jesus Christ and claimed that he could heal all kinds of diseases.”

Furthermore:

“The success of this movement became established so early that Dowie was planning to raise up many cities like Zion” (Ahmad, Hasanat, pp.1-3).

“In 1902, one of the issues of *Leaves of Healing* [The official organ of Dowie’s Movement] carried a prophecy of John Alexander Dowie that all the Muhammadans living on the face of the earth would be destroyed unless they bowed before the cross. He further prophesied:

“That nation, that people and that kingdom that will not recognize him and the Christian Catholic Church of Zion as the forerunner of the Church of the living God, that nation and that kingdom will perish because God has said it so” (Ibid, p.3).

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad: a dialogue begins

Hazrat Ahmad, living in far off India, in the totally unknown and inaccessible town of Qadian, took note of Dowie’s dire prophecy of the destruction of all Muslims

worldwide unless they accepted Dowie's beliefs and claims. In the September 1902 issue of the English magazine, *The Review of Religions*, he wrote:

"Since Dr. Dowie is the messenger of the powerful deity who was crucified by the Jews, I would entreat him to refrain from destroying the whole body of Muhammadans living on the face of the earth. If they do not take the son of Mary for their God, the fault is not theirs. Where is the requisite proof of Jesus' deity and how can they be convinced of the divinity of one whose very tomb has been discovered in this very country. Nay, more than this, they have in their midst the promised Messiah whose appearance is in accordance with the Prophetic promises, at the close of the sixth and on the commencement of the seventh thousand year and with a host of heavenly signs".

Syed Ahmad writes of Dowie's reaction to Hazrat Ahmad's letters:

"His followers drew his attention to accept the invitation. In the issue of December 27, 1902, of the *Leaves of Healing*, he replied in great contempt:

'In India, there is a foolish Messiah who writes me often telling me that the tomb of Jesus Christ is in Kashmir and the people sometimes say to me, why do you not reply to this and that or other things. Reply! Do you think, that I shall reply to these gnats and flies. If I put my foot on them, I would crush out their lives, I give them a chance to fly away and live.'"

You can see Dowie's confidence in himself and his mission and his utter contempt for Hazrat Ahmad and his followers by comparing them to lowly, impotent and insignificant "gnats" and "flies" who he would generously allow to "fly away and live". This greatly esteemed religious figure of the 19th and 20th centuries, showed his ignorance of Islam, perhaps an intentional "ignorance" by writing the following in the *Leaves of Healing*, Vol. II, No. 5, May 26, 1900:

"I think of the falsehood of Muhammad with great contempt. If I were to accept those falsehoods I would have to believe that in this gathering and indeed in any part of God's earth that there is no single woman who possesses an immortal soul. I would have to acknowledge that you women are but wild animals which can be used for an hour or a day as playthings and that you have no eternal existence, and that when those who are dominated by bestial passions have satisfied their lust with

you, you would die the death of dogs. This would be your end. This is the religion of Muhammad"

This is NOT "the religion of Muhammad". Not even the worst critic of Islam today would say that it is the belief of Islam that women do not have souls. Alexander Dowie, pretended apostle of the All-Knowing God, propagated this myth from the Middle Ages as the truth. This, in itself, showed his claim to prophethood to be false. If he was lying about this, he did not have the moral fiber that prophethood requires. If he was just ignorant about the teachings of Islam on this subject, he could not claim that God spoke to him because God, of course, knew the truth about this and would not have misguided him in such an important matter.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad puts forth a challenge

Hasanah Ahmad has this response from Hazrat Ahmad to Dr. Dowie's inflammatory statements:

"Without threatening the whole body of Muhammadans with destruction, he should choose me as his opponent and pray to God that of us two, whoever is the liar may perish first. I look upon the son of Mary as a weak human being, although I recognize him as a Prophet of God, while Dr. Dowie takes him as Lord of the Universe. Which of us is on the right path is the real point at issue. If Dr. Dowie has the courage to accept the challenge, he will hereby open a way for all others to follow and accept the truth. Dr. Dowie fixes the appearance of the Promised Messiah within the next twenty-five years, while I give him the tidings that the Promised Messiah has already appeared. Let Dr. Dowie, like an honest gentleman, obtain permission from his Lord to accept the challenge and take his stand against me. I am an old man of 66 years (Dowie was 55) and therefore on grounds of age he need not have any apprehension. Moreover, I am suffering from various diseases and my life does not depend on health but the Will of God. If the self made deity of Dr. Dowie has any power, he shall certainly allow him to appear against me and procure my destruction in his lifetime, and he will have in his hand a clear manifestation of his mission"(Ahmad, Hasanah, p.5).

Dr. Dowie's God was prepared to annihilate millions of Muslims if they did not accept Dowie's claims. Surely it would be much more merciful for the God of Alexander Dowie to destroy this aged Indian Muslim as a sign to other Muslims of the truth of Dowie rather than to destroy every last Muslim on this earth! The chal-

lenge was reasonable and fair and was published in numerous American newspapers. No one can charge that Hazrat Ahmad did not challenge Dr. Dowie or about the nature of that challenge because they are documented in 19 or so American newspapers, relatively neutral observers of this chapter in American history. Doubters can look up these old newspapers for the facts in this affair. Here is a list of some of the newspapers that carried Hazrat Ahmad's challenge (from Ahmad, Hasanat, p.5, 6):

1. The Chicago Inter Ocean - June 28, 1903
2. The Telegraph - July 5, 1903
3. The Literary Digest - June 20, 1903
4. The New York Mail & Express - June 25, 1903
5. The Herald, Rochester - June 25, 1903
6. The Record, Boston - June 27, 1903
7. The Advertiser, Boston - June 25, 1903
8. The Pilot, Boston - June 27, 1903
9. The Pathfinder, Washington - June 27, 1903
10. The Detroit English News - June 27, 1903
11. The Democratic Chronicle, Rochester - June 25, 1903
12. The Burlington Free Press - June 27, 1903
13. The Albany Press - June 25, 1903
14. The Baltimore American - June 28, 1903
15. The Buffalo Times - June 25, 1903
16. The Groomshire Gazette - July 17, 1903
17. The Houston Chronicle - July 3, 1903
18. The Richmond News - July 1, 1903
19. The Argonaut, San Francisco - Dec 1, 1903

You can see that most of America was exposed to the publicity about Hazrat Ahmad's challenge to Dr. Dowie at the time it was made and that most of America TODAY has access to one or more newspapers in their localities that carried this story. After all, it WAS and IS even today, a sign for America, in particular. Allah saw to it that this challenge was widely publicized.

Sir Zafrullah Khan translates this about Hazrat Ahmad's comments about Dr. Dowie in the Urdu version of the *Review of Religions*, Vol.1, No.9, p.342-348:

"Dowie ... deifies Jesus and calls himself His Apostle and says that the prophecy mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:15 is fulfilled in his advent and that he is himself Elijah and the Apostle of this Age ... Dowie has clearly proclaimed in the revelation alleged to have been received by him that it is not enough to acknowledge Jesus as God unless Dowie is also acknowledged as Elijah and an Apostle for the Age ... They [The Christians] would not be saved unless they acknowledge all this, in default of which they would be destroyed ... God Who is Jealous, has urged me towards this confrontation ... I am the

Promised Messiah who is awaited by Mr. Dowie ... Mr. Dowie says the Promised Messiah will appear within twenty-five years and I proclaim that he has appeared already and that I am that person."

"Mr. Dowie boasts that he has healed thousands of sufferings through his attention. We retort, why then was he not able to heal his own daughter and let her die, and still mourns her loss?"

Syed Ahmad relates further:

"On August 23, 1903, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad made a further announcement:

"It should be borne in mind that Dr. Dowie has not given any reply to my challenge made in September last (1902) nor has he even so much as mentioned it in his paper (i.e., *Leaves Of Healing*). For an answer to my challenge, I will wait for a further period of seven months from this day (i.e., August 23, 1903) if he accepts the challenge within this period and fulfills its conditions, as published by me, and makes an announcement to the effect in this paper, the world will soon see the end of this contest. I am about 66 years of age, while Dr. Dowie is about 55 years. Therefore, compared to me he is still quite young. Since the matter is not to be settled by age, I do not care for this great disparity in years. The whole matter rests in the Hands of Him, Who is the Lord of the Heaven and Earth, and Judge over all the Judges and He will decide it in favor of the true claimant. But, if Dr. Dowie cannot even now gather courage to appear in the contest against me, let both continents bear witness that I shall be entitled to claim the same victory as in the case of his death in my lifetime. If he accepts the challenge, the pretension of Dr. Dowie will be settled. Though he may try hard as he can to fly away from the death which awaits him, yet his flight from such a contest will be nothing less than a death to him and the calamity will certainly overtake him in Zion for he must face the consequences of either acceptance or its refusal'" (Ahmad, Hasanat, p.6).

Thus Hazrat Ahmad predicted Dowie's certain doom whether he accepted his challenge or not. Dowie had been too abusive of Islam, the Muslims, the Holy Prophet and Hazrat Ahmad and his followers to be spared and he was leading many astray by claiming to be Elijah III along with his great eloquence and purported ability to heal. Only complete renunciation of all his false claims might have let Dowie off the hook but he was too proud, arrogant and power mad to do that. He was in the prime of his evangelistic career and younger

and much healthier than his opponent, Hazrat Ahmad. What did he have to worry about in this challenge from an obscure Indian religious man in a far off country with many fewer followers than he? Hazrat Ahmad and his followers were mere “gnats and flies” in his estimation and not to be taken seriously.

The scriptural consequences of Dowie’s claims

And if he had fabricated against us certain sayings, We would certainly have seized him by the right hand. Then cut off his heart’s vein. And not one of you could have withheld Us from him (Holy Quran, 69:44-47).

These verses refer to allegations of the disbelievers that the Holy Prophet was a false prophet. Commenting on verse 47, Maulana Muhammad Ali writes:

“This verse and the three preceding it show that one who fabricates divine revelation does not prosper. Compare Deut. 18:20 ... ‘But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak ... even that prophet shall die.’ Jesus’ words in Matt.7:19: ‘Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire’, after comparing a false prophet with a corrupt tree that does not bring forth good fruit, points to a like effect” (Ali, Muhammad, Holy Quran commentary, p.1096).

One would then expect from Christian and Muslim scriptures that, if Dowie was a false prophet, God would destroy him. That is exactly what happened.

Alexander Dowie was a faith healer. He permitted neither doctors nor drugstores in Zion. In his Dec. 10, 1904 *Leaves of Healing*, on page 243, he wrote:

“He [Jesus] healed the sick who trusted in him in order to show us that he came to die not only for our sins, but for our sicknesses, and to deliver us from both ... diseases of EVERY [my capitalization] kind are the Devil’s work and his work can never be God’s Will since the Christ came for the very purpose of destroying ‘the works of the Devil’. (1 John 3:8) ... What should a Christian then do when overtaken by sickness? A Christian should obey God’s Command, and at once turn to Him for forgiveness of the sin which may have caused the sickness ... I have myself laid hands upon many hundreds of thousands of persons, and I have seen the Lord’s Power manifested in the healing of great numbers, of whom are living witnesses in many countries who have testified publicly before thousands...”

Regarding Dowie’s healing, the *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism* tells us:

“Unlike other faith-healing advocates, Dowie believed his apparent ability to heal was his own unique gift, signifying a special prophetic status. He also never moderated his views on why some were not healed, steadfastly claiming that all such people continued in sin (which could include both using medical means and disagreeing with Dowie). Ultimately the deaths of several of his followers resulted in his arrest and unsuccessful prosecution for practicing medicine without a license ... Dowie’s followers ultimately rejected his prophetic claims in 1906” (Brasher, p.210).

Dowie believed that sin, as defined by him, and lack of faith caused illness. Sickness was the work of the Devil and he was the best of healers, having laid hands on “hundreds of thousands” of sick people, according to his testimony. Yet these claims were belied and many of his followers deserted him when he himself was repeatedly struck down by a myriad of illnesses (that, according to his teachings, were caused by sin) and when he was unable to save his beloved daughter, Esther, from the effects of severe burns.

A biographer of Dr. Dowie relates the circumstances when, on May 14, 1902, Esther:

“... was curling her hair by the means of an iron heated with an alcohol lamp. Her father, who never had any use for alcohol no matter what it was used for, had forbidden it ever to be brought into his home. Esther had always been known as a sweet dutiful daughter, but this time she had disobeyed. Somehow, on that fateful morning, she upset the lamp so that the fluid poured on her dress and carpet ... Her rescuers were too late. She had suffered burns that had destroyed the skin on nearly three fourths of her body.”

“Dowie sent a message to his daughter telling her ‘to hold on to God, that Father is praying for her and that Father and Mother will come as quickly as steam and horses can carry them.’”

“But the Father and those who attended her were not deceived; they knew that nearly three fourths of her skin was gone, and in the natural order of things, she could not last long unless a great miracle was wrought ... At nine o’clock that evening to the utter grief of her parents, she passed away” (Lindsay, pp.214-216).

At the funeral oration, he blamed her death on the

Devil and on his daughter's disobedience in having the forbidden alcohol in the house. Dowie pronounced:

"I told her that God was not hearing her prayer, and that a succession of miracles would have to be wrought, which God was not apparently going to work ... She said, 'I understand, I must die unless God works an almost impossible succession of miracles'" (Lindsay, p. 217)

Signs of Divine neglect

Dowie did not dispute this last statement of Esther, meaning he agreed that "an almost impossible succession of miracles" would have to be wrought by God to save her. What had happened to Dowie's much vaunted "prophetic healing" ability? He, who had laid hands on hundreds of thousands of people and cured so many, could not cure his own beloved daughter. Now we hear about her impending death, despite the fervent prayers of her and her father. We hear about the need for "an almost impossible succession of miracles" for her restoration to health! Is God unable to wrought any miracles that He wishes? What kind of miracles comprise "an almost impossible succession of miracles" that are too hard for God to perform? According to Dowie's beliefs, Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead. Dowie's daughter was still alive and to save her should have been easier than the restoration of Lazarus to life when he was a corpse that was stinking, according to the Bible. God intentionally did not answer Dowie's prayers as a sign that Dowie was not a prophet nor healer but a fraud. The "physician" could not heal his daughter for these reasons, nor himself, a few years later.

On August 23, 1903, Hazrat Ahmad had predicted the death of Dr. Dowie within Hazrat Ahmad's lifetime. God would show by this that Dowie was a false prophet and Hazrat Ahmad true in his claims of being the Promised Messiah. Only 2 months after this particular prophecy, God showed a sign to the world of Dowie's impending destruction. For about 10 months, 3000 of Dowie's followers worked very hard preparing a great rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Dowie believed that conversion of millions of New Yorkers was possible and that this would be the springboard for a great expansion of his mission nationally and internationally. It was a costly affair but he anticipated that the rewards would be immeasurable. On Oct. 18, 1903 the mass rally was held. Madison Square Garden was packed and overflowing. Fifty bands were playing music in various parts of the arena. Hasanat Ahmad describes the event:

"With measured and majestic gait, Alexander Dowie approached the rostrum, his followers eagerly awaiting that charm and magic for which

he was so well known. But lo! that charm and magic which was his sole asset suddenly left him."

He made a false start, and then made another effort to cast his magic spell. The mammoth crowd was eager to hear him speak, but before hundreds of thousands of people of New York and among some of his closest followers, he stood there speechless! It had never happened before. People who had eagerly been waiting to listen to Alexander Dowie now had begun to stir and then slowly started moving to leave the arena. Dowie asked the Zion Guards to close the doors, but it had a reverse effect. More people left and eventually it developed into a stampede ... Next morning (October 19, 1903) the leading daily of the time, *The New York American* carried the news of the rally with the banner reading: "New York-The Waterloo Of The Elijah". Another leading daily, the *New York Times* carried the news with the heading: "Massive Gathering Deserts Elijah" (Ahmad, Hasanat, p.8, 9). Anyone doubting this can look up these publications. The *New York Times* should be particularly accessible.

We read in *The Dictionary of American Biography* an article written about Dowie by Ernest Sutherland Bates:

"During all these years in Australia his sincerity seems to have been unquestioned: his pronounced egotism had not yet passed into megalomania, and his later craving for power, luxury and notoriety had not yet developed ... Forty-two miles from Chicago he had built up the most amazing town in America, Zion City ... Every industry in the town, its bank and its college were owned and entirely controlled by Dowie. With his accounts unaudited, Dowie's private income became considerable. He now kept two expensive homes, one at Zion City and one near Montague, Mich., and lived with an ostentation unbefitting a second Elijah. His church claimed 50,000 members scattered in various parts of the world; its publications were printed in half a dozen languages; missionaries were beginning to be sent out. In the fall of 1903, however, Dowie met his FIRST CHECK [my capitalization]. Having determined upon the conversion of New York City, he and 3000 followers on ten special trains invaded the metropolis, and held meetings during a part of October and November, but without permanent result. New York was at first amused, then disgusted, and finally bored ... the trip had cost \$300, 000 and there were murmurs in Zion City..." (*Dictionary of American Biography* under "John Alexander Dowie")

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