

THE LIGHT

SUCCESS IN THE NEXT LIFE

Awake, therefore, and arise, and be watchful that you may not stumble and fall, and that you may not have to set out on your last journey in a state which may in reality be the state of unbelief and faithlessness. Know and understand it clearly that the hope of salvation and success in the next life does not entirely depend upon the acquisition of this ceremonial knowledge and learning; but there is an imperative need of the heavenly light which drives away and dispels all kinds of doubts and suspicions, and puts out the flames of greed and selfish desire, and draws toward the true love, devotion and obedience of the Most High God. . . .

It is really a matter for great regret that whatever zeal and enthusiasm you display in the propagation of these ceremonial activities and sciences, you devote not even a small fraction thereof to the heavenly dispensation. Your life has been devoted mostly to such matters which, in the first place, have no concern whatsoever with religion, and if there be any relation, it is of a very trivial and trifling nature, far behind and below the real object. If you have those feelings in you, and the fine wisdom which takes straight to the true goal, you should not take any rest unless you have attained to and achieved that real object.

Ye people, you have been created for the love, knowledge and obedience of the Most High God Who is your Creator and the true object of worship and adoration; and until this thing which is the prime purpose of your creation, be manifestly displayed in you, you will be lagging far behind the true salvation and success.”

— *Fath-i Islam* by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

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5-Usman Block, New Garden Town, Lahore-54600, Pakistan

Telephones: 042-863260, 042-862956

Editor: NASIR AHMAD

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HAZRAT AMEER DR. SAEED AHMAD KHAN SAHIB

By the grace of Allah Hazrat Ameer Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan Sahib is attending to the work of the Anjuman as usual.

During the third week of May he had two important visitors Brother Alim Shah from Guyana and Maulana Abdur Raheem Jaggoe from Holland. Brother Alim Shah president of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Guyana along with his wife visited the Headquarters of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the first time. We regret his visit was very short. Both our respected foreign guests had separate meetings with Hazrat Ameer and presented reports about their respective Jamaats.

Members are requested to pray for the continued good health of Hazrat Ameer.

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OUR REPRESENTATIVES

USA

Mr. Masud Akhter Choudhary
1376 Lytella St.,
Hayward CA. 94544

WEST GERMANY

Mr. Saeed Ahmad Choudhary
Brienner Strasse 7/8
D-1000, Berlin -31

ENGLAND

Sh. Sharif Ahmad
15 Stanley Avenue
Wembley, Middx HAO 4JQ

TRINIDAD

Mrs. Zarina Mohammad
106-A Old Southern Main Road
McBean, Couva.

SURINAME (S. AMERICA)

Mr. Mohammad Rashid Pierkhan
Zwartenhovenburg Straat 154
Paramaribo.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Osman Sydow
P.O. Box 112, Goodwood 7460

NEDERLAND

Mr. A.S. Abdul Santoe
Zevenetijddeklaver -5
3069 DK Rotterdam

INDONESIA

Imam Musa Projosiswoyo
P.O. Box 2535
JKT., Jakarta 10001

INDIA

Mr. Abdul Razak
Fatimabai Court, 4th Floor
Jacob Circle, 17 Maulana Azad Road
Bombay - 400011

GUYANA (S. AMERICA)

Moulvi Mohammad Rasheed
111 Regent Road
Post Office Box 10692
Bourda, Georgetown.

FIJI

Mr. Mohammad Amin Sahu Khan
12 Bau Street, Suva.

CANADA

Mr. Yaseen Sahu Khan
3181 East, 15th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5M -2L1

AUSTRALIA

Dr. A.H. Sahu Khan
9 Yasmer Avenue,
Haberfield, N.S.W. 2045

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RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY

“And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first”— The Holy Qur’an, 6 : 95.

Man is really born alone and alone does he depart from this world. The moment of his birth is of absolute loneliness and so is his moment of death, inspite of the whole world that witnesses this entrance and exit.

Nevertheless he is born in a world where he has to live his life in cooperation with millions of others like himself. He, moreover, inherits a tradition and a system left behind by millions and trillions of people that lived in this world before his arrival. He may, if he likes, contribute, in his own humble way, something to this accumulated tradition. That depends on him. So long however as he lives here he has to live in the company of others and act conjointly with them.

With the march of time, the more humanity is united and the more it realises the benefit of united action, the more closely is the individual man or woman bound to the society by various bonds of unity and sympathy.

In joint life the chances of gain and loss are always equal. It is, however, the hope of gain that creates the urge for such joint life. In every age, what we call civilization is the product of this joint life. So long as this joint life is inspired by trust and goodwill, it produces marvels. But the moment distrust and jealousy vitiate the atmosphere, the wonderful edifice of civilization built by generations of joint action falls to pieces. This sums up the history of the rise and fall of civilizations in the world.

How things thus go up and down in the formation and dissolution of a civilization is a question to which no reply has been attempted but in the Holy Qur’an. The determining factors, the Book asserts, with a challenge, is the society concerned. But as soon as we enter into the field of morals we enter into the life of the individual. Collective life has no mind, correctly speaking. It can be worked up to an active emotion and made to produce some work, sometimes a colossal one, but it cannot be made to think, unless it be by the process of indoctrination. The thinking has to be done always by the individual mind. Of course the results of thinking by one mind can at times be

communicated to a whole people and made a part of their view, but it cannot make a whole people think in the manner an individual does. By the very nature of the case, there can be no simultaneousness in the thinking of many. That is why some very enlightened nations are at times found to do very thoughtless acts in their collective life. A clever but a wrong-headed dictator can make his nation do a long series of such unwise acts though the nation may consist of very intelligent individuals. Collective life, to be sure, can be emotional but not rational. It can be rational only so far as it is influenced by individual thinking, and even this influence is very seldom effective, unless it is assiduously upheld as a principle and scrupulously observed in practice. Experience shows that such individual rational thinking influencing collective actions is a great safeguard against disastrous collective steps in a nation’s life. Hence the principle of democracy, which result of a long series of bitter experiences. It grows out of the realization that even the greatest and wisest man can at times make serious mistakes and act selfishly and also that a group of individuals can, under a collective emotion, may do foolish acts. So the habit of the individual to think independently is a safeguard both against autocracy and the extravagance of group emotion.

It has been said that the best form of government is a benevolent autocracy. Now, the question is: How can you trust a man with absolute powers unless he has completely subdued his own ego? The fact is that none but the Prophets and Prophet-like saints who have annihilated their human ego can be trusted with such absolute powers. It seems the idea of benevolent autocracy has been suggested to our modern political philosophers by the lives of Prophets like Moses and Muhammad. For other men of power there must be considerable checks to their authority. And such a check can come only from the vigilance of the individuals comprising the nation. The individual citizen must, accordingly, be in the habit of examining all events connected with national life.

The question, however, that still remains to be settled is how to make man think independently and unselfishly. Obviously to make a democracy successful, the individual man should think not for his own good but for the good of all. As a matter of fact, the best thinking is that which is done even at the cost of one’s own benefit. Democracy becomes

ideal when there are this kind of thinkers in the society in large numbers. A materialistic philosophy of life will indeed try in vain to inspire individuals to think like this. The most such philosophy can teach man is enlightened selfishness, if it can do even this much. It can by no means infuse the spirit of independent thinking as a virtue by itself. Such thinking is possible only when man rises above himself and is able to see things from an altruistic point of view. And there comes in the question of religion. It is only when man feels that he has a life entirely his own,

with a destiny all his own, beyond and above his connections with other individuals comprising humanity, that he can think in real independence. Any feeling short of this must make him servile and circumscribed in thought, an intellectual position which tends to make for the totalitarian conception of social life and paves the way for absoluteism. It is thus the fundamental aloneness of the human being on which all religions unitedly stress that forms the basis of a really democratic form of Government.

FULFILMENT OF PROPHECIES

By Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad

1. Prophecies require interpretation

The critics of the Ahmadiyya Movement are constantly raising the objection that some sign or other of the coming of the Messiah or the Mahdi has not been fulfilled by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, or that some prophecy or other has not been fulfilled through him. These objections would not have been raised if the critics had known of the coherent and well-defined philosophy in Islam relating to prophecies and their fulfilment. We deal with this subject in case the objectors are really unaware of the logic underlying prophecies and of the fine and subtle points taught by Islam in this respect.

By way of introduction, *to prophesy* means to give information in advance of some event to happen in the future. The Arabic word for prophecy is *naba-un*. *There are two kinds of prophecies: Warnings and glad tidings. Prophecies bringing good news are called wa'da* (lit. promise), while those delivering a warning are known as *wa'eed* (lit. conditional threats). *Wa'da* strengthens one's faith by conveying good news that are then fulfilled. The purpose of *wa'eed* is to warn people of the grave consequences of their evil deeds, so that they may turn to God and mend their ways. Hence the aim of prophecies is to create living faith in God in the hearts.

Prophecies received through spiritual, not physical, senses

The first point to note is that when God informs His chosen ones and other righteous servants of

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

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

1. Joseph's own dream is mentioned in the following words:

"I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon, bowing down before me." (The Holy Quran, 12:4)

This prophecy, which indicated the greatness to which Joseph was to rise, was not unravelled until Joseph had risen to become the head of the Treasury in Egypt. When he attained that honour, he said: "This is the interpretation of my dream of old which my Lord has made to come true" (12:100). Hence the significance of the dream was that great and powerful men would obey him, not that anything would literally bow down to him.

2. A fellow-prisoner of Joseph had a dream which he related as follows:

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"I saw myself carrying bread on my head, and the birds were eating of it." (12:36)

Joseph interpreted the dream in this way: "He shall be crucified so that birds will eat from his head" (12:41).

3. The king of Egypt, the country where Joseph was imprisoned, had a puzzling dream as follows:

"And the king said, I saw seven fat kine which were being devoured by seven lean ones, and seven green ears and seven others which were dry." (12:43)

In interpreting this dream, Joseph took "seven fat kine" to be seven years of good harvest and "seven lean ones" to be seven years of drought.

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

Besides the above examples from the Holy Quran, the Hadith books contain numerous instances of dreams and visions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, which he related, and which were interpreted by him or his followers in a metaphorical sense. A few such examples are given below:

1. "I was asleep when a cup of milk was brought to me. I drank of it until its freshness could be seen coming out of my nails. Then I gave what remained to Umar ibn al-Khattab. People asked, What did you take it to mean, O Messenger of God? He said, Knowledge." (*Bukhari*, Book 3: *Kitab al-Ilm*, ch. 22)
2. "While I was asleep I saw people brought before me wearing shirts, some of which extended as far as their chests, while others were shorter than this. Umar was brought before me, and he was wearing a shirt which was [so long that it was] trailing. People asked, What did you take it to mean, O Messenger of God? He said, Religion." (*Bukhari*, Book 2: *Kitab al-Iman*, ch. 14)
3. "I was asleep when I saw two gold bracelets on my hands. I was perturbed by them. Then a revelation came to me in my dream to blow on them. I did, and they blew away. I took them to mean the two liars to arise after me, the first Aswad Ansi, and the second Musailima, the liar of

Yamma."

(*Bukhari*, Book 92: *Kitab al-Manaqib*, ch. 25)

4. "I saw in a dream that I moved my sword and the leading part of it broke. This was the misfortune to befall the Muslims on the day of [the battle of] Uhud." (*Bukhari*, Book 92: *Kitab al-Ta'bir*, ch. 44).
5. "In a dream I saw cows being slaughtered. These were the Muslims on the day of Uhud." (*ibid.*, ch. 39)
6. "I saw, as it were, a black woman with dishevelled hair, leaving Madina till she reached Mahya'a which is called Juhfa. I took it to mean that the pestilence of Madina had shifted there." (*ibid.*, ch. 41)
7. "The Holy Prophet said: I saw [in a dream or vision] a spotted dog putting his mouth in the blood of members of my family. This was taken to mean Shimr [the assassin of Imam Husain] who had leprosy."
8. "Imam Husain, peace be upon him, said that he heard his father [Hazrat Ali] say: I heard the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say that a ram would violate the sanctity of the Ka'bah so I wonder if I am that ram." The commentators of Hadith have written that this prophecy applied to Abdullah Ibn Zubair.
9. "It is related from Aishah that the Holy Prophet said [to her]: You were shown to me in a dream twice [before marriage]: A man was carrying you wrapped up in a silk cloth saying. This is your wife, look at her face. So when I opened it up, it was you. I said, If this is from God it shall be fulfilled." (*Bukhari*, Book 92: *Kitab al-Ta'bir*, ch. 20)

These hadith show that dreams and visions usually stand in need of interpretation.

II. Errors in interpreting dreams and visions

1. Sometimes errors are made in interpreting various matters related to a prophecy, such as the time when it is to be fulfilled. The Holy Quran says: "God indeed fulfilled the vision of His Messenger: you shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if God please, in security, your heads shaved and hair cut short, not fearing." (48:27)

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was in Madina when he saw in a dream that he had entered Makka and was performing the *Tawaf* (circuits) around the Ka'bah. So he and his Companions marched forth towards Makkah, being certain that the vision would be fulfilled that very year. However, this could not come about, and the Muslims had to return, having concluded the peace treaty of Hudaibiyya. A few of the Companions began to wonder why they had failed to achieve their goal, so much so that Hazrat Umar asked the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, if he had not said that they would go to the Ka'bah and perform the *Tawaf*. The Holy Prophet said, "Yes, but did I also say that it would be this year?" They said, No. He then told them that they would certainly go to the Ka'bah and perform the *Tawaf*. This proves three points:

- i. The Prophet or other holy man who is the recipient of the prophecy from God is not informed of all the details relating to its fulfilment.
- ii. The recipient of the prophecy can commit an error of personal judgement in interpreting the prophecy.
- iii. It is in order for the prophesier to take some legitimate course of action on the basis of his own interpretation of the prophecy (as in this instance the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, attempted to go to Makkah to perform the *Tawaf* on the basis of his dream, to fulfil the prophecy).

2. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, related:

"I saw in a dream that I was migrating from Makkah to a place having date trees. So I thought that this would be Yamama or Hajar, but it turned out to be Madina."

(*Bukhari*, Book: Qualities of the Companions, 63:45).

3. It is related from Aishah:

"Some of the wives of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, asked him, Which one of us shall join you first after your death? He said, The one with the longest hands. So they compared their hands before him, and it was Sauda who had the longest hands. But we learnt afterwards [upon the death of the first one of his wives to pass away after him] that it meant the length of the hand in giving charity, and the first one to join him after his death was Zainab, who loved to give in charity." (*Mishkat al-Masabih*, Book of Dreams)

III. Delay and abrogation of prophecy

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

1. "The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said, I was asleep and the keys to the treasures of the earth were brought before me till they were placed in my hands. Abu Hurairah said, The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, departed from this world, and you [O Muslims] are bringing forth those treasures." (*Bukhari*, Book 92: *Kitab al-Ta'bir*, ch. 11)
2. "Ismaili said: People who interpret dreams say that the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, saw in a dream that Usaid ibn Abi al-Ais, was the Chief of Makkah, having become a Muslim. However, he died while still a disbeliever, and the dream was fulfilled in his son Uttab who became a Muslim."

It is not necessary that all the prophecies made by a prophet or other appointed one of God should be fulfilled within his lifetime. The Holy Quran, addressing the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, on the subject of the promised destruction of his opponents, says in this regard:

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

In accordance with this, countless prophecies made by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, have been coming to pass since his death even upto today, and will continue to find fulfilment till the end of the world.

Prophecies can sometimes be abrogated, as the Holy Quran says:

"And it is not in the power of a messenger to bring a sign except by God's permission. For every term [of fulfilment of a prophecy] there is a command, God effaces what He pleases and establishes what He pleases." (13:38)

IV. Prophecies of Chastisement

In case of *wa'eed*, i.e. a prophecy of death, destruction or doom, the fulfilment is conditional upon the subsequent behaviour of those against whom the warning is directed. The prophesied

punishment may come to pass, or it may be mitigated or even set aside altogether, depending on their reaction. The Holy Quran has given three types of examples in this regard.

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

The second kind of people are those who, while not repenting fully upon hearing the warning, are frightened by it temporarily. In this case, even if they do not make their inner fear openly known, God will still grant them a period of respite to turn to Him, so that the punishment can be averted. If, however, they abuse this respite to continue their opposition to the Divine cause, God sends down His punishment upon them. A case in point is that of the Pharaoh and his people who opposed Moses. Every time an affliction from God befell them, they would go to Moses and say: "O enchanter, call on your Lord for us, as He has made the covenant with you; we shall surely follow the guidance" (43:49); but then, "when We removed from them the chastisement they broke the pledge" (43:50). When the punishment would again come, they would say: "Our Lord, remove from us the chastisement, for surely we are believers" (44:12). In reply God says: "We shall remove the chastisement a little, but you will surely return to doing evil" (55:15)

Finally, there are those who are so frightened by the prophecy of doom that they turn fully to repentance and seeking of forgiveness from God. Speaking of Jonah's nation, the Holy Quran says:

"And why was there not a town which believed, so that their belief should have profited them, except the people of Johah? When they believed, We removed from them the chastisement of disgrace in this world's life." (10:98)

Classical commentators make the following observations about this case:

1. "Jonah told them that their time-limit was forty nights. They replied, If we see the omens of destruction we shall believe in you." (*Tafsir Kashshaf*, p. 599)
2. "Jonah was sent to Nineveh from Mosal. The people of Nineveh denied him and persisted in this [denial]. Then Jonah promised them the punishment to befall in thirty, or some say forty, nights." (*Baidawi*, vol. p. 186)
3. "Jonah told them, Your time-limit is forty nights." (*Tafsir Kabir*, vol, p. 42)
4. "It is related from Ibn Mas'ud and others that God sent Jonah to the people of Nineveh in the land of Mosal. They rejected him, He then promised them the coming of punishment within an appointed period, and left them angrily." (*Fath al-Bari*, vol, vi. p. 325)
5. "After thirty-five days had elapsed, a terrifying, dark, smokey cloud appeared. It enveloped the city and turned surfaces black. So they put on sackcloth and went out into the field along with their women and children. . . and they manifested faith, repentance and humility. So God had mercy on them and removed their punishment from them. This happened on a Friday on the day of *Ashura* [i.e., 10th *Muharram*]."

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

"A washer of clothes passed by Jesus and a company of his disciples. Jesus said to them, Attend his funeral at mid-day today. However, he did not die. When the angel Gabriel appeared, Jesus asked him, Did you not give me the news of the death of this washer of clothes? He said, Yes, but afterwards he gave in charity the pieces of bread, and was therefore reprieved." (*Ruh al-Bayan*, vol. i, p. 257)

V. Summary

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

These principles also apply to the prophecies of

the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, relating to the latter days when, according to these presages, the world was to turn away from religion, become a stranger to spiritual matters, and be heedless of Divine commandments. The tribulations of the Dajjal were to have been at their height, and at this juncture a man having the characteristics of Jesus was to have been sent to the world for its spiritual regeneration. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, having received intimation from on High, told Muslims of the dramatic events to happen after the

appearance of the Dajjal and of the signs of the coming of the Messiah, explaining to them all the details of these happenings. All these prophecies are dominated by metaphorical descriptions for the simple reason that the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was shown these scenes of the future through his spiritual, not physical, senses. The metaphors require interpretation according to the established criteria for prophecies, and cannot be taken literally.

—(English translation by Dr. Zahid Aziz, UK)

THE UNITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF GOD.

by Kalamazad Mohammad, Trinidad

Concept of God

The concept of God in Islam is that He is a loving God Whose beneficence embraces every atom in the Universe and whose grace extends to all mankind without the slightest discrimination. He is also the most powerful and His command is total and ever-present. "Allah, there is no god but He, the Ever-Living, the self-subsisting by Whom all subsist. Slumber overtakes Him not nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth." This is what the Holy Qur'an says in Chapter 2 verse 255 which is known as the Throne Verse or the Verse of Knowledge.

Further, in the very beginning of the Holy Qur'an we read: "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord (*RABB*) of all the worlds or the nations." (1:1)

The Arabic word *Rabb* signifies much more than the English word "Lord" by which it is translated. It connotes firstly, fostering, bringing up or nourishing; and secondly, regulating, completing and accomplishing. According to Imam Raghīb, a famous lexicologist of the Holy Qur'an, *RABB* means "the fostering of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of perfection."

So we see, therefore, the purposeful development of everything in the universe from the lowest to the highest stage, not automatically, but through the intense ever-present love and direction and nurturing of God Almighty.

Process of Evolution

And how is this process of evolution brought about? The Holy Quran answers:

"Glorify the name of the *Rabb* (or Lord) the Most High Who creates and makes complete, and Who measures, then guides." (87:1-3).

According to Maulana Muhammad Ali the full meaning of *Rabb* is explained here: "He creates things and brings them to perfection; He makes things according to a measure and shows them the ways whereby they may attain to perfection. The idea of evolution is fully developed in the first two actions, the creation and the completion, so that everything created by God must attain to its destined completion. The last two actions show how the completion or evolution is brought about. Everything is made according to a measure, that is to say, certain laws of development are inherent in it; and it is also shown a way, that is to say, it knows the line along which it must proceed, so that it may reach its goal of perfection. It thus appears that the creative force is not a blind force but one possessing wisdom and acting with a purpose. Even to the ordinary eye, wisdom and purpose are observable in the whole of the Divine creation, from the tiniest particle of dust or blade of grass to the mighty spheres moving in the universe on their appointed courses, because everyone of them is travelling on a certain line to its appointed goal of completion." (*The Religion of Islam* P. 114).

In fact, the word *RABB*, according to *Lisan*

al-Arab and *Taj al-Urus*, the two most authentic Arabic lexicons, comprises seven connotations: 1. *Maalik* (master or Owner,) 2. *Sayyad* (Master or Chief), 3. *Mudabbir* (Regulator), 4. *Murabbi* (One who Nurtures), 5. *Qayyum* (All-Sustaining), 6. *Mun'im* (Bes-tower) and 7. *Mutammin* (Perfector).

Of these seven, three refer to the personal grandeur of the Almighty. Of these one is *Malik*, which connotes that He owns the universe and can use it as He likes and His ownership of it is not shared by any other. This word in its true meaning cannot be applied to anyone save God Almighty, inasmuch as full control and complete power of disposal and perfect rights cannot be attributed to anyone except God Almighty.

Sayyad is one who has subordinate to him a large number who should serve him out of sincere eagerness and natural obedience. The distinction between a sovereign and *sayyad* is that a sovereign subdues people by his might and the strictness of his laws, and the followers of a *sayyad* obey him voluntarily out of their sincere love and eagerness and inclination and call him their chief out of sincere affection. A sovereign can be obeyed in that spirit when he becomes a *sayyad* in the estimation of his people. This word can also not be used for anyone beside God Almighty, inasmuch as true and eager obedience which has no personal purpose in view cannot possibly be accorded to any beside God Almighty. He is the only One before Whom the souls prostrate themselves, for He is the true source of their creation. That is why every soul naturally bows down to Him. The worshippers of idols and of men have also the same eagerness for His obedience as a righteous believer in His Unity, but they fail, on account of their error and faulty desire, to recognize the true spring of life, and on account of their blindness they direct their unique eagerness towards a wrong object. That is why some of them deify stones, or Ram-chandra, or Krishna, or the son of Mary, under the mistaken belief that the object of their worship is the true God. They ruin themselves by investing creatures with Godhead. In the same way those who pursue their own desires have been misled in their spiritual search for the True Beloved and Sayyad. Their hearts also sought a beloved and a true Sayyad, but having failed to recognize the true desire of their hearts, they imagined that the True Beloved and Sayyad, whom the souls seek and whom they are eager to obey, are worldly wealth and properties and delights. This was an error on their part. The true inciter of the spiritual desires, and the true source of pure connotations, is the Being Who has said: I have

created men, high and low, so that they may worship Me (51:57); meaning that He alone is the purpose of the creation of man and all his faculties, which have all been created so that God should be recognized and worshipped. This verse indicates that man by his very creation has been invested with the search and recognition and obedience of God. Had man not been invested with these, there would have been no pursuit of passion, no idol-worship, and no worship of men in the world, inasmuch as every error results from pursuit of the discovery of truth. Thus God alone is the true Sayyad.

Another of these attributes is *Mudabbir*. This means the keeping in mind, with reference to every enterprise, the whole system of events in the past, and of consequences in the future, and the putting of everything in its proper place having regard to that system, and not to embark upon anyone beside God Almighty, inasmuch as perfect planning demands knowledge of the hidden, and that belongs to God Almighty alone.

The remaining four names – *Murabbi*, *Qayyum*, *Mun'im* and *Mutammin* – indicate those bounties of God Almighty which are bestowed upon men on account of His Perfect Mastership, His Leadership, and His Planning. *Murabbi* means he who nurtures, and perfect nurture means that all aspects of man, like his body, soul, faculties and capacities, should be nurtured and the system of nourishment should extend to the climax of man's physical and spiritual progress. The manifestation of the point at which the name of humanness or its elements begin, and its features begin to move from nothingness towards existence, is also nurture. This shows that in Arabic idiom *rububiyyat* has very wide connotations, and that it covers the whole expanse from the point of nothingness to the climax of perfection. The names Creator and the like are derivatives of *Rabb*.

Qayyum means one who safeguards the system. *Mun'im* means one who bestows all bounties, which man or any other creature can receive, according to its capacity, and is desirous of obtaining, so that it might arrive at its climax, as is said: Our Lord is He Who has bestowed upon everything a perfect creation and has then guided it towards greater perfections (20:51). Thus everything was bestowed all the faculties that it needed, and was furnished with the guidance needed for achieving its climax. *Mutammin* means that the system of beneficence should not be left deficient in any respect, and should be carried to its climax in all its aspects. Thus *RABB* comprises all the diverse connotations that we have

set out briefly above. (*Mina al-Rahman*, pp. 17-20).

So, according to the Imam of the Age, "God is the Lord and Master of all that is in the universe, and all that appears and is seen or felt or is perceived by reason, is His creation and that true existence belongs only to God Almighty and to nothing else. In short, the universe with all its components is created and is the creation of God. Through His perfect Lordship God Almighty controls and rules over every particle of the universe. His Lordship is in operation all the time. It is not that after having created the world God has withdrawn from its control and that He has committed it to the law of nature so that He Himself does not intervene in any way. It is not as if like the maker of a machine He has no concern with it after it has been made. . . . As the world depended upon His Lordship for its coming into being, it is equally dependent upon it for its continuation and sustenance. It is He Who supports the world every moment and every particle of the universe is kept fresh and flourishes because of Him."

Universality of God

The God of Islam is not a partisan God having a favourite nation or race to the exclusion of others. He is the God of the East and the West, Light of the heavens and the earth as the following verses of the Holy Quran attest:

"Say: to God belong the East and the West." (2:142).

"To God belong the East and the West, and to whichever side you turn your faces, God will be there" (2:115).

"Lord of the East and the West, there is no god but He, therefore take Him for protector" (73:9).

"God is the light of the heavens and the earth. A likeness of His light is as a pillar on which is a lamp — the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as it were a brightly shining starlit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof gives light though fire touch it not — light upon light. God guides to His light whom He pleases. . ." (24:35).

As regards differences of colour and language, these are superficial and only of the wonders of God and are not in any way connected with the measure of a person's worth in the eyes of the Almighty for the Holy Qur'an says:

"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Surely there are signs in this for the learned" (30:22)

For mankind is a single species, and God is the *RABB* (Lord) of us all and one law — His law — pervades the entire universe:

"O People keep your duty to your *RABB* (Lord) Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same kind, and spread from these two many men and women. . ." (4:1).

"And surely this your community is one community and I am your *RABB* (Lord) so keep your duty to Me."

"And He it is Who is God in the heavens and God in the earth. And He is the Wise, the Knowing." (43:84).

ISLAM THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION-I

By Mrs. Ulfat Samad

The Christianity of Jesus Christ was not meant to be a universal religion. Though as far as its fundamental teachings were concerned, the religion of Jesus was not different from Islam, yet it did not contain complete guidance for all aspects of human life and for all nations and ages. During the countless centuries of human history, when the different races of mankind were living in more or less complete isolation and there were no swift means of communication between the nations, God was sending different prophets to the different nations. Jesus was

one of these national prophets. He was the Messiah of the people of Israel. This is what C. J. Cadoux writes about this restricted (national) scope of Jesus' mission:

"The office of Messiahship with which Jesus believed himself to be invested, marked him out for a distinctly national role: and accordingly we find him more-or-less confining his preaching and healing ministry and that of his disciples to Jewish territory, and feeling hesitant when on one occasion he was asked to heal a Gentile girl.

Jesus' obvious veneration for Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Scriptures indicate the special place which he accorded to Israel in his thinking: and several features of his teaching illustrate the same attitude. Thus, in calling his hearers 'brothers' of one another (i.e. fellow-Jews) and frequently contrasting their ways with those of 'the Gentiles', in defending his cure of a woman on the sabbath with the plea that she was a 'daughter of Abraham' and befriending the tax-collector Zacchaeus 'because he too is a son of Abraham', and in fixing the number of his special disciples at twelve to match the number of the tribes of Israel — in all this Jesus shows how strongly Jewish a stamp he wished to impress upon his mission."¹

Each nation having been separately guided to the truth by the 'national' prophets, the time was ultimately ripe in the plan of God to raise the World-Prophet and reveal the Universal Religion. And so, when the world was on the eve of becoming one, God raised the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, to re-present the essential message of all the prophets, shorn of all that was of temporary or limited nature and purged of all the later accretions and misinterpretations. He amalgamated the religious traditions of the different nations into a single universal faith and brought together the people of all races and lands in a single world-wide brotherhood. He gave the world the perfect religion and a complete code of life for all mankind.

To establish the truth of his religion, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, did not resort to miracles, which may win over the few who witness them but fail to carry conviction to those of subsequent generations. The appeal of his religion is to the reason and conscience of man. To carry the truth home to us he draws our attention to the phenomena and laws of nature, the lessons of history, and the teachings and experiences of the prophets of various nations. There is nothing in Islam which is of significance or value only to the people of a particular region or age. The Quran enjoins nothing which is not uniformly inspiring and edifying to the people of all lands and does not provide adequate guidance to man in all stages of a changing and advancing society. It meets the religious, spiritual, moral and social needs of all nations and ages. The teachings of Islam are of universal nature.

In considering the proposition that Islam and not Christianity is the universal religion, the readers must bear the following facts in mind:

1. The mission of Jesus was for the people of Israel alone, but the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, came with God's message for the whole of mankind. Jesus clearly stated:

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).

He chose twelve special disciples to match the number of the tribes of Israel and he expressly told them:

"Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6).

On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, from the very beginning of his ministry addressed himself to the entire humanity. It was revealed to him:

"We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a mercy to all the nations" (The Quran 21:107)
 "Say (O Muhammad): 'O men! surely I am the Messenger of God to you all, of Him, Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no God but He'" (The Quran 7:158).

2. Christianity believes that the people of Israel are God's Chosen People. God has sent His prophets and revealed books to them alone. The Christians accept only the prophets of Israel. All other claimants to prophethood they regard either as self-deluded or as impostors. But Islam says that it would be a denial of the universal providence of God to say that prophets were raised in one nation only. According to the Quran, God is the Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds. He has not discriminated between nations in sending down His revelations. He has raised prophets with His messages among all the peoples of the globe. The same religion was revealed to people all over the world through different prophets. The Holy Quran says:

"To every nation was sent a Messenger" (10:47).
 "Surely We have sent you (O Muhammad) with the Truth as a bearer of good news and a warner; and there is not a people but a warner has gone among them" (35:24).

"The same religion has He established for you (O mankind) as that which He enjoined on Noah — and that which He has revealed to you (Muhammad) — and that which He enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus. So, you should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein" (42:13).

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of

Allah be upon him, had come to complete, not to abolish or destroy, the work of the earlier prophets. He told his followers to have faith in the prophets and revealed books of all religions and nations:

“Say: We believe in God and in that which has been revealed to us, and in that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the various tribes, and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and in that which was given to all the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them (i.e. the prophets) and to Him do we submit” (The Quran 2:136).

“And certainly We sent Messengers before you — of them are those We have mentioned to you and of them are those We have not mentioned to you” (40:78).

Islam is the consummate form of all religions. By accepting the prophets and scriptures of all religions and nations, Islam declares its faith in the unity and universal providence of God and in the universality of Divine revelation and prophethood, and seeks to unite all mankind in a single all-embracing faith and world-wide brotherhood.

3. Islam, and not Christianity, gives complete guidance for all aspects and conditions of life, individual as well as social, national as well as international. Jesus Christ himself admitted that he had not come with the final or complete divine message for mankind, for the time was not then ripe for it:

“I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:12-13).

Five centuries after him the Spirit of truth appeared in the person of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, to convey the whole truth to mankind. God revealed to him:

“This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion” (The Quran 5:3).

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is thus the Last Prophet and the message which he brought from God is the final and complete message for mankind. The reforms that he introduced cover all aspects of life. On the other hand, the mission of Jesus was only for a small nation and limited period. He was the Messiah of the Jews. He introduces reforms in the teachings of the earlier Israelite prophets where he felt such reforms were due. He reinterpreted some of the pre-

cepts and commands of Moses to bring them in line with the needs of his age, but others he left as they were. The so-called Old Testament of the Bible advocates massacre, condones polygamy, accepts slavery and orders the burning of witches. Jesus, who had come “not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them”, apparently had no time or opportunity to do away with these evils. For, he said or did nothing to humanise the ‘Mosaic’ laws of war or to abolish slavery or to raise the status of women. He said nothing to abolish or restrict polygamy. The result of this has been, in the words of Bertrand Russell:

“You find as you look around the world that every single bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step towards the diminution of war, every step towards better treatment of the coloured races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized Churches of the world. I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its Churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world.”²

Let us compare some aspects of Islam and Christianity to see why we regard Islam and not Christianity as the perfect religion for all mankind.

Women in Islam and Christianity

There is nothing in the reported sayings of Jesus which might serve as an incentive to raise the status of women. His whole attitude towards the female sex was one of distrust, as is clear from his treatment of his own mother. The polemic against the family in the Gospels is a matter that has not received the attention that it deserves.

St. Paul, who is the real founder of Christianity, regarded Woman primarily as the temptress; he thought of her mainly as the inspirer of impure lusts. He laid the entire blame for the fall of man and genesis of sin on woman. In his Epistles, which are included in the Bible as holy scriptures, he wrote:

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (I Timothy 2:11-14). “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because

of the angels." (I Corinthians 11:8-10).

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands" (Ephesians 5:22-24).

The combined influence of the Old Testament writings, and of the Epistles of Paul in the New Testament (both of which are included in the Holy Bible), was shown in those fierce invectives against woman which form so conspicuous and so grotesque a portion of the writings of the Christian Fathers and saints, — of which the following is a fair sample:

"Woman, you are the devil's doorway. You have led astray one whom the devil would not dare attack directly. It is your fault that the Son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and in rags" (Tertullian).

"Adam was led to sin by Eve and not Eve by Adam. It is just and right that woman accept as Lord and master him whom she led to sin" (St. Ambrose).

"Among all savage beasts none is found so harmful as woman" (St. John Chrysostom).³

Woman had no separate identity, no legal status, in Christianity. In England, which was the most advanced Christian country, "up till the 1st of January 1883, it was true to state that, as a general rule, the contract of a married woman was void." She could not sue or be sued apart from her husband. The Married Woman's Property Act, giving her the right to possess property in her own name, was passed in England as late as 1882.

As regards marriage, the teaching of Christianity has been, and still is, that celibacy is best. "To the unmarried and the widows I say," writes St. Paul, "that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (I Corinthian, 7:8-9). It was in the same spirit that St. Jerome wrote "Let us take axe in hand and cut off at the roots the fruitless tree of marriage." Nevertheless, the Bible has nowhere made polygamy unlawful for the average Christian believer.⁴

When we turn from Christianity to Islam, we find that the Quran clears woman of the responsibility for the fall of Adam and vindicates her honour and dignity. It raises the status of woman to make her man's equal. Islam gave woman the same rights as

those of man:

"And women have rights similar to those against them in a just manner" (The Quran 2:228).

The modern man recognises that there can be no true freedom and dignity without economic rights. Fourteen hundred years ago Islam gave woman the right to inherit the property of her father and husband and to acquire, own and dispose of wealth as she liked. The Quran says:

"For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn" (4:32).

"For men is a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and for women a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether it be little or much — an appointed share" (4:7).

In marriage woman is considered by Islam to be an equal and free partner. Marriage in Islam is a sacred contract between a man and a woman and the consent of both the parties has to be taken before marriage can take place. The Quran describes woman as the companion of her husband — an object of love and source of peace and solace to him, as he to her:

"And of His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect" (30:21).

Islam is the first religion to put restriction on polygamy. It allows a man to marry more than one wife in rare circumstances and under conditions which make it a well nigh impossibility. "If," says the Quran, "you will not do justice then marry only one" (4:3). And a little later it adds: "You cannot do justice between wives, even though you wish it" (4:129). From this it is clear that Islam disallows polygamy to men in normal circumstances. However, in abnormal circumstances as after a devastating war, in which numerous men have died, leaving behind homeless widows and orphans and an excess of female population — Islam allows conditional and limited polygamy. It does this to provide homes to homeless women, to protect them from being exploited by men, and to save the society from moral corruption.

To impress upon his followers the exalted position of the mother and sacredness and dignity of womanhood, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, declared: "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother." He said: "Wo-

men are the twin-halves of men" and that men and women are made of the same essence and have the same soul. Islam makes no distinction between them as regards their intellectual, moral and spiritual capabilities and rewards:

"The believers, men and women, are friends one of another. They enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and obey God and His Messenger. As for these, God will have mercy on them. Surely God is Mighty, Wise" (9:71).

"Whoever does good, whether male or female, and has faith, We shall certainly make him (or her) live a good life, and We shall certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did" (16:97).

"Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard and the men who remember God much and the women who remember — God has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward" (33:35).

Elimination of Slavery

Jesus said or did nothing to emancipate the slaves or even to improve their lot. In the Bible (in both the Old and the New Testaments) the slaves are told to completely submit themselves to their masters and to remain content with their lot, however miserable:

"Servants (i.e. slaves), be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle but also to the overbearing. For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly" (I Peter, 2:18).

Christianity failed utterly to abolish slavery or to alleviate its evils. The Church itself held slaves and recognized in explicit terms the lawfulness of this baneful institution. Under its influence the highly cultured Christians of America practised the cruellest inhumanities upon the unfortunate beings whom they held as slaves and shed torrents of blood for the maintenance of the curse of slavery in their midst.

The first religion to improve the condition of

slaves and to take steps for the total abolition of slavery is Islam. To begin with, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, made kind and brotherly treatment of the slaves obligatory on the Muslims. They were to be considered as members of one's family:

"Your slaves are your brothers. So if any one of you happens to have a slave, let him give him the same food that he himself eats, and the same clothing that he himself wears. And do not give them such work as is beyond their power to perform; and if you ever happen to give them such work, you should help them in doing it" (Hadith).⁵

The following are just two of the many verses of the Quran exhorting men to emancipate the slaves:

"And what will make you comprehend what the uphill road is? It is to free a slave, or to feed in a day of hunger an orphan nearly related, or the poor man lying in the dust. Then he is of those who believe and exhort one another to patience, and exhort one another to mercy" (90:12-17).

"It is not righteousness that you (perform rituals) turning your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in God, and the Last Day . . . and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free . . ." (2:177).

The institution of slavery being opposed to the Islamic teaching of the equality and dignity of men, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, prohibited the taking of fresh slaves in very strong words:

"God says, 'There are three persons whose adversary in dispute I shall be on the Day of Judgment: person who makes a promise in My name then acts unfaithfully, and a person who enslaves a free person, sells him and devours his price, and a person who employs a man to do a work and exacts full work from him but does not pay him his full remuneration'" (Hadith).

Finally, came the categorical command of God not only to emancipate the slaves but also to give them a part of one's wealth to rehabilitate them:

"And those of your slaves who ask for a writing of freedom, give them the writing, if you know any good in them, and give them of the wealth of God which He has given you" (The Quran 24: 33).

1. C.J. Cadoux, *The Life of Jesus*, a Pelican Book, pages 80-81.
2. Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London; page 15.
3. Simone de Beauvoir, *Nature of the Second Sex*, the New English Library, London, 1968; pages 121-122.
4. See John Miton, *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*; London, 1825, pages 231-124.
5. *A Manual of Hadith*, Arabic text, with English translation and explanatory notes by Maulana Muhammad Ali; Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam, Lahore.

NEWS AND VIEWS

GREAT YEARS OF HISTORY

In 1989 one of history's bigger mistakes began to be rubbed out. The institutions of Leninist communism — one-party rule, a "planned" economy — collapsed in much of Eastern Europe, looked pretty doomed in the Soviet Union, and were preserved in China only by the desperation of a communist party that had failed to read Dean Inge: you cannot sit on a throne of bayonets, not for ever. Half-noticed in the excitement about all this, one of the last outposts of an older and murkier mistake may also have started to crumble, as South Africa's new president took a new look at his country's chances of preserving one-race rule.

This is excellent. It makes 1989 even better than 1945, when Hitlerism was erased — better both because Hitler, unlike Lenin, did not claim world-wide applicability, and because removing Hitler was a far bloodier business. Yet 1989 and 1945 were clearing-out years, not creating ones. To understand the difference, look at a dozen or so of the dates in history that most people would agree were really top-ranking. No apology is needed for the fact that most of them are Euro-American dates. Today's world is shaped by the ideas that have emerged in Europe and North America in the past 500 years. On current evidence, tomorrow's world probably will be too.

"... politics was seen to need an understanding between rulers and the ruled, the arts crystallised, architecture began to float. It was as if, for the first time, man stood back and took a steady look at himself.

It was not happening only in Greece. In 524 BC or thereabouts Buddha sat under the bo tree, and in 501BC Confucius started practising his ideas about social relations in a Chinese provincial town. In several parts of the world, those 60 years or so introduced a new clarity into the previous blur. But neither Buddhism nor Confucianism ever won a global audience. Some of the things that came out of classical Greece did. Put down 457 BC as Year One of the world we know.

The next huge year, even for non-Christians, has to be 30 AD, the probable year of Christ's death. Christianity has three claims to every body's atten-

tion. It put together the things Buddha and Confucius had dealt with separately, and even the Athenians had not properly united — man's relations with God, and his relations with other men. It marked a new stage in the slow growth of human self-confidence: people who have been told that God became one of them, and let himself be crucified to help them, feel rather better about the human condition afterwards. And it was the first religion to make a plausible claim to universality, even if it never quite brought it off.

Nearly 2,000 years later, though Christianity is said to be in decline, it is striking how much its ideas still colour the modern debate. If communism's collapse does leave free-market democracy as the only sensible way of running a government, two different tendencies will still compete with each other inside free-market democracy — the one that puts the emphasis on efficiency and individual creativeness, and the one that leans towards compassion and shared responsibility. The latter will draw much of its language from Christianity. In 1989 some of the best excommunists in Eastern Europe (most of them agnostics) have been saying that Marx was just a well-intentioned stumble on a road that began in 30 AD.

....

While Europe was having its dark ages, enters Islam (622, when Muhammad fled to Medina). The Muslim religion brought to the region east and south of the Mediterranean the same sharpening of ideas that had already happened elsewhere. There is only one God, said Islam. A man's hope of heaven is part of the same subject as the way he behaves on earth. Let everybody be aware of his separate existence (a Muslim's chief religious duty is regular prayer to Allah, which needs no priestly help). Compassion is honoured, if not always practised.

Here too the notion of the importance of the individual was beginning to take shape, and the individual was encouraged to look at himself, and the physical world around him, with a new detachment. This detachment is called objectivity. It is a necessary condition of art, science, and philosophy.

Not surprisingly, Islam produced a stunning explosion of those things. While Europe was sitting in the dark, Islam was the firework display next door. This did not endure, because Islam as a culture did not discover how to go on renewing itself. Blame geography: until engines needed oil, the Muslim heartland did not have an economy that could sustain a culture. Yet Islam as a religion endures, passionately; and Islam has been an essential part of the development of the world west of India.

It never quite made it into Europe, though. Muslims will please excuse the next pair of dates. In 732, at Poitiers, Charles Martel stopped Islam's left hook into Europe, by the Moors through Spain. Almost a millennium later, in 1683, at Vienna, Jan Sobieski stopped its right hook, by the Turks through the Balkans. These are not just European dates. If either of those battles had gone the other way, the great new firework display of politics, economics, science and popular culture that has arisen out of Euro-America in the past few centuries—which almost everybody else seems to want to imitate—might never have happened.

The biggest date in this period of rebirth, however, is not a matter of science. It is 1517, when Luther pinned up the case for free choice in religion on the church door at Wittenberg. That began his break with the Catholic church — the signal-gun for the Reformation and for the whole body of ideas much wider than religion, that came in the wake of the Reformation.

One way of looking at the history of the past 2,500 years is to see it as a slow, uneven but relentless focusing of human consciousness. Out of the tribal collective of the distant past, men started to become aware of themselves as separate individuals. Each individual had to make up his own mind about the big choices in life, and carry the responsibility for the choice thus made. If this is what had been taking shape since the fifth century BC, it was bound to collide with the sort of institution the Catholic church had become by 1517.

By the time Luther took his stand at Wittenberg, the church was suffering from all the symptoms of monopoly authoritarianism. It had stopped producing new ways of meeting its people's needs; its leaders were spending much of their time in a brutal competition for personal power; it was corrupt (Luther's breaking-point was the sale of indulgences). Two years after Wittenberg, Luther repeated his defiance in a famous debate at Leipzig, a city that

in 1989 has seen another bad case of monopoly authoritarianism defied by those who insist on deciding for themselves. So began the Reformation, which took much of Christendom out of the Catholic church, led the Catholics into a counter-reformation of their own, and changed the future of Euro-America.

Once this had happened in religion, it was going to spread into everything else. The other side of the coin to man's growing confidence in his own judgment was his growing confidence in his ability to examine, measure and predict the physical world around him. Examination and measurement led Galileo to conclude that the earth did indeed go round the sun; and although, in 1633, he recanted under threat of torture, kindly myth gave Galileo the muttered last word: *eppur si muove*.

Not long afterwards, in 1666, that falling apple at Woolsthorpe set similar processes to work in Newton's mind; the result was the theory of gravity. Between them, Galileo and Newton have as good a claim as anybody to be the fathers of modern science. The quality they shared was objectivity, an insistence on the right to refer any issue to detached inspection. Authoritarians loathe objectivity, because it deprives them of their claim to lay down the law.

A two-century cul de sac

The eighteenth century's other revolutionary year was 1789, when France revolted against king and nobles, but that revolution went off in a different direction. The eighteenth century, "the Enlightenment", was an eerily self-confident time. In some ways — in its music, its code of civilised conduct, its rather cerebral poetry and drama — it was a high point of European culture. But it was also the century that produced the Idea. By this time the liberation from pre-fifteenth century constraints on the human mind was so complete that some people, particularly in France, got over-confident. They thought they could work out, with the force of scientific certainty, a set of general rules for the well-being of mankind. Apply those rules, and a new world would have begun.

The 1789 revolution, after a generous start, soon degenerated into the madnesses of ideological certainty. Not everybody agreed what the new rules were, so the slow minded had to be coerced. This worried some of the makers of the revolution, so terror had to be applied to them too. By 1793 royal autocracy had been replaced by revolutionary autocracy. It was a process to become wearily fami-

liar again after 1917, when another revolution driven by a similar demon of an Idea took place in Russia. The chief difference in Russia was that Lenin had prefaced his revolution by announcing that it would all be done by a single, certain-of-itself party so the arrival of the new autocracy took no time at all.

France, and its neighbours, were luckier than Russia and its neighbours. The chaos of the 1790s made an impatient general think he had better get a grip on France, Napoleon turned out to be old-fashioned sort of dictator, and he also lost a war

a combination that helped France to struggle relatively soon out of the mess that 1789 had brought about. Russia and the empire it created had to wait for 70 years before it found a leader willing to admit to second thoughts.

The upheaval of 1989 is the beginning of the end of Lenin's 1917 revolution. It may also be the end of the wider error that began exactly two centuries ago: the notion that politics is a science, that people can be governed out of a laboratory.

— *The Economist*, December 23, 1989.

BOOK REVIEW

THE RELIGIONS OF MAN by Huston Smith, pp. XIV+509, Perennial Library; Harper and Row, Publishers, New York. (Reissued 1989). \$5.95.

Since the closing years of the nineteenth century many books have been published in the West on the great religions of the world. Some of these were "popular" works: superficial, journalistic, meant to satisfy the idle curiosity of persons who were neither in search of truth nor seriously interested in the subject. Examples of such books are Horace Shipp, *Faiths that Moved the World* (London: Evans Brothers, 1946) and Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills, *The Great Religions by Which Men Live* (New York: Fawcett Publications 1950).

But there were other books, of scholarly nature, written by men who occupied chairs of learning in distinguished universities of Great Britain, Europe and America. The authors were held in great respect as authorities on world religions, but they were not genuine scholars. They were Christian theologians and missionaries, who were interested not in finding out the truth about the various religions, but in proving the superiority of Christianity to all other religions. They wrote about Christianity from inside, but the non-Christian religions they presented from outside, without any attempt to find out what they really meant to the people who believed in them. They compared the best in Christianity with the worst in other religions, based mostly on misrepresentation and distortion of facts. To this category belong, among others, E.E. Kellest, *A Short History of Religions* (London: Gollancz, 1933), Richard A.

Gard (editor), *Great Religions of Modern Man*, 6 Volumes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), John R. Hinnels (editor), *A Handbook of Living Religions* (London: Viking, 1984), and A.C. Bouquet, *Comparative Religion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1942).

Books of this category continue to be published, but since the end of the second World War a new class of books on the great religions of the world has also appeared. This class is more civilized in its manners, more polite in its language, more subtle and ingenious in its approach and treatment. They continue to propagate, in less offensive language, of course, the usual misinterpretations and slanders, but combine them with what they consider to be truths and things admirable and edifying even in non-Christian religions. In this way they try to create the impression of being balanced, objective and fair. Among the best known books of this kind are John B. Noss, *Man's Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), Ruth Cranston, *World Faith* (New York City: Harper and Brothers, 1949), Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), and W. Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York: New American Library, Mentor Books, 1964). Perhaps better and less biased than these, though still in the same category, is Edward J. Jurji (editor), *The Great Religions of the Modern World* (Princeton University Press, 1947).

Huston Smith's *The Religions of Man* is different

from all these. It is a serious and sincere attempt to present the essence and fundamental truths of seven living religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The author is of the view that every religion, as it is believed and practised by its followers today, contains things good as well as things not so good, or, in the words of Huston Smith, "The full story of religion is not rose-coloured. It is not all insight and inspiration. It is often crude; charity and wisdom are often rare, and the net expressions bizarre when not revolting." He has, however, chosen to leave out the 'bad' in each religion and present only the best. For, he says, "This is a book about values. Probably as much bad music as good has been written in the course of human history, but we do not ask that a course in music appreciation give it equal space. Time being limited, we expect no apology for spending it with the best. I have taken a similar position with regard to religion."

The Religions of Man is a book that takes religion seriously. It is "about religion that exists. . . not as a dull habit but as an acute fever. It is about religion alive. And whenever religion comes to life it displays a startling quality; it takes over. All else, while not silenced, becomes subdued and thrown without contest into a supporting role." Whatever any individual's personal religious beliefs may be, or even if there is some antagonism towards religion, it is difficult for anyone to deny that religions have had the profoundest impact on individuals and societies in all continents. "Who are . . . the greatest benefactors of the living generations of mankind?" asks Toynbee, "I should say: Confucius and Laotze, the Buddha, The Prophets of Israel and Judah, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammad and Socrates."

The Religions of Man is not a work of Comparative Religion. For: "Comparisons among things men held dear always tend to be odious, those among religions most odious of all." Nor is it a text book in the history of religions. Historical facts in *The Religions of Man* have been held to the minimum needed to give the ideas discussed some grounding in space and time. There is, of course, nothing in the book which is contrary to facts historians have discovered, but religion is not primarily a matter of facts in the historical sense; it is a matter of meanings. *The Religions of Man* is an intelligent, clearly written study, which reveals the spirit of each faith. With warmth, brilliance and understanding, Huston Smith discusses the spiritual meaning that the great religions of the world hold for men and women today.

In writing about the different religions, Huston Smith has tried in each case to put himself in place of the believer and described each religion not only from outside, but more so from inside, with imagination and sympathy. The task is by no means an easy one, as the author himself acknowledges. "The book," he confesses, "is inescapably Western in being directed to the mind-set of the contemporary Western reader. This has been due to necessity; this being the writer's own mind-set. It is the only book he could write. But one must recognize it as a limitation and understand that the book would have been different if written by a Zen Buddhist, a Muslim Sufi or a Polish Jew." It must, nevertheless, be admitted that the author has to a great extent succeeded in what he set out to do; in the case of some religions more than in the case of others.

The religions which Huston Smith has discussed most convincingly and with which he has been able to feel completely at one are Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. As for Islam, he has described it as sympathetically as it was possible for him to do, but he has not been able to identify himself with it as completely as with some other religions. There appear to be several reasons for this. One of them is that Huston Smith has depended mostly on non-Muslim scholars for his information about Islam. At the end of each chapter, he has given a list of books which he recommends for further reading on the religion with which that chapter is concerned. The books that he has recommended on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity are all by scholars who believe in those religions. But in the case of Islam, of the six books that he has recommended, only two are by Muslims — Dr. Muhammad Iqbal's *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and Syed Ameer Ali's *The Spirit of Islam*. The other four books are not only by non-Muslims, but two of them (Alfred Guillaume's *Islam* and Kenneth Cragg's *The Call of the Minaret*) are by scholars whose main concern in life was to mould the Muslim mind and thinking in such a manner as to make Christianity acceptable to the Muslims. Can it be that Huston Smith has relied on non-Muslim writers because Muslims have failed to produce books on Islam which come up to the modern standards of scholarship and appeal to the rational mind of the West?

Another reason why the chapter on Islam is somewhat less satisfying than the chapters on other religions is that Islam is a much misunderstood religion. Non-Muslims of the West have deep-rooted prejudices against Islam — that the God of Islam is the

God of power, domineering and ruthless, and not the God of love; that Islam degrades woman and reduces her to a miserable, sub-human status; that Islam preaches holy war against all non-Muslims and strive to convert them by force; that Muslims are fatalists and there is no free will in Islam. A large part of the chapter on Islam is devoted to refuting these charges and, it must be admitted, Huston Smith has done his job of removing these misunderstandings and stating the true Islamic position admirably and convincingly. But with so much space taken up with defence, there is not much left for giving a positive exposition of the doctrines and teachings of Islam.

Huston Smith's real difficulty was with the Qur'an. There is a very wide gap between the Muslim and the Western perceptions of the Holy Book of Islam. Huston Smith states: "No book in the religious heritage of any other culture is as inaccessible to Western appreciation as the Koran."

There is, however, no such reservation in the mind of Huston Smith with regard to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him!) After giving a brief but accurate life sketch of the Holy Prophet, he writes the following about him:

"Pure-hearted and beloved in his circle, he was, it is said, of sweet and gentle disposition. His bereavements having made him sensitive to human suffering in every form, he was always ready to help others, especially the poor and the weak. His sense of honour, duty, and fidelity won him as he grew older the high and enviable titles of 'The True', 'The Upright,' 'The Trustworthy One.' Yet despite his concern for others he remained removed from them in outlook and ways, isolated in the midst of an effete and chaotic society. As he grew from childhood to youth and from youth to manhood the lawless strife of his contemporaries, the repeated outbursts of pointless quarrels among the tribes frequenting the Mecca fairs, and the general immorality and cynicism of the day combined to produce in the prophet-to-be a sustained reaction of horror and disgust. Silently, broodingly, his thoughts turned inward."

The Religions of Man is a clear and objective description of the origins, tenets and modern values of world's great religions. The reader emerges after reading it with a new appreciation not only of his own religion but also of religion not his own. The question that is bound to arise in the minds of many readers is what is the relation of these various religions to one another. Huston Smith takes up this

question in the last chapter and provides three possible answers.

The first possible answer is that among all these religions, only one is completely true. The others are either wholly untrue or partially true, having truth and falsehood, good and bad, mixed in them in different proportions. This is the view taken officially by Christianity.

The second answer is the exact opposite of the first. There are many well-informed and deeply religious men who believe that in all important respects the great religions, as they have come down to us and exist at present, are the same and equally true. The differences, they maintain, are of secondary or peripheral nature. This is the view of the relation between religions of theosophists and Bahais.

The third answer is that the various religions are not exactly the same (though unity is in certain respects both striking and impressive,) but they are all equally true. They are different paths to the same goal. Those who hold this view do not believe in verbal revelation. They say that what God inspires is an idea in the mind of the prophet. The different prophets gave their own verbal and concrete expressions to the idea, in keeping with the different cultures, traditions and the special conditions of their respective places and times. Hence the doctrinal formulations and practices of the different religions are different but the spirit is the same in all. This is the view of Hinduism and also, it seems, of the author of *The Religions of Man*.

There is a fourth answer also, which Huston Smith has not mentioned, and that is the Islamic answer. Islam believes that all the great religions of the world were *originally* the same, all were God-inspired. But as they exist at present, they are different (not only in their secondary characteristics, but also in their essential tenets), because they have not come down to us in their pristine purity.

The Islamic view is that God, Who is the loving Creator, Sustainer and Guide of all mankind, has raised His prophets or messengers in all lands and nations. We read in the Quran: "There is not a people but a warner has gone among them" (35:24), "And every nation had a messenger" (10:47), "And We sent no messenger but with the language of his own people, so that he might explain the message to them clearly" (14:4).

As the prophets, who appeared in different

countries and at different times, were inspired by the same God — the one and only God — the religion which they taught was the same in all essential respects. God says in the Qur'an:

“Lo! this your religion is one religion and I am your Lord, so keep your duty unto Me. But they (mankind) have broken their religion among them into sects, each sect rejoicing in its tenets” (23:52-53).

“He has ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion, and be not divided therein” (42:13).

But with the passage of time the scriptures were altered, the prophets were deified, and their religions were misinterpreted and corrupted by the incorporation into them of alien dogmas and practices.

This becomes very clear when we study the history of Christianity. It is now widely recognised that Jesus was not the founder of a new religion called “Christianity”. The religion of Jesus was not different from the religion of the earlier prophets of Israel: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets: I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them” (Matthew 5:17).

Traditional Christianity, as it is believed by the various Christian Churches and denominations, is the creation of St. Paul, and may well be designated “Paulinism.” This is what a distinguished modern scholar, Thomas Sheehan, has written in this connection in his book *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity*:

“Today, at the dawn of her third millennium, the Christian church is undergoing a theological crisis in what she thinks and believes about Jesus of Nazareth.

“This crisis grows out of the fact now freely admitted by both Protestant and Catholic theologians and exegetes: that as far as can be discerned from the available historical data, Jesus of Nazareth did not think that he was divine, did not assert any of the messianic claims that the New Testament attributes to him, and went to his death without intending to found a new religion called ‘Christianity’. That is, the theological crisis has to do with the *prima facie* discrepancy between what Jesus of Nazareth apparently thought he was (a special but very human prophet) and what mainline Christian believers now take him to be (the divine Son of God, co-substantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit).”

Christians believe in the Trinity, but Jesus believed in the plain unity and oneness of God: “The first commandment is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Mark 12:29). “You shall worship the Lord your God and HIM ONLY shall you serve” (Matthew 4:10).

Christians believe that Jesus is “God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God,” the incarnation of the divine son of God, the Second Person in the divine Trinity. But Jesus denied any claim to divinity and claimed to be only “a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God” (John 8:40) — that is, a man chosen by God from among men, to whom He revealed the true Gospel and whom He appointed as His messenger or prophet to the Children of Israel:-

“This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent” (John 17:3).

Christians believe that Jesus (God the Son) came down from heaven to willingly and deliberately lay down his life as a vicarious or atoning sacrifice for the sins of men, and that only those who accept him as the divine Lord and Saviour will attain salvation or Eternal Life. But Jesus declared that the way to Eternal Life was through faith in the unity of God and His prophets, obedience to His commandments and good deeds, especially service and kindness to fellow human beings. Jesus said:

“Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

The three most distinctive tenets of Christianity, according to Huston Smith, are the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. Thus, it is clear that Jesus taught, not Christianity, but Islam. The same is true of the Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Moses and other prophets. What happened to the religion of Jesus happened to the religions of these other prophets also. Hence the differences that we find today between one religion and another.

Huston Smith brings his remarkable book to a close with an exhortation to develop a true understanding of all the religions of man: “For understanding, at least in realms as inherently noble as the great faiths of mankind, brings respect, and respect prepares the way for a higher power, love — the only power that can quench the flames of fear, suspicion, and prejudice, and provide the means by which the peoples of this great earth can become one to one another.”

M. A. Samad