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A BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

BY MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI

(Continued from the issue dated 16th June 1962)

Belief in all prophets an essential principle of Islam

Of the many benefits conferred by the Holy Prophet on humanity in general, for which he is called *Rahmat-ul-lil 'alamin* or a mercy for the nations, I would mention only one more. He taught, what no teacher before him had ever taught, not only that a prophet had appeared in every nation, but also that the Muslim must believe in all those prophets just as he believed in the Prophet Muhammad. "There is not a people but a warner has gone among them," says the Holy Quran. And again, it defines true Muslims as those "who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee." In these words, the Prophet laid down the basis of a universal peace. He not only taught how one individual could live at peace with one another, but also how different tribes and families of the human race could live in peace and harmony with each other, and to crown all what nobody in the world had even attempted, how peace could be brought about among the contending religions of the world. He taught, and never before him had the truth found expression through any prophet, that there is not a nation on the face of the earth but has had a Divine Messenger of its own. Profession of faith in all the religious reformers raised among different nations, is in fact the only thing that can bring peace to the different warring factions of humanity that follow this or that prophet, and it was to bring about universal peace that the Holy Prophet Muhammad laid down in clear words that a prophet was raised in every

nation and that a true Muslim must believe in all the prophets.

It may be added here that the Muslim's faith in the prophets of other nations is not limited to those prophets who are mentioned by names in the Holy Quran, for twice does the Holy Book plainly say: "And We sent apostles We have mentioned to thee and apostles We have not mentioned to thee." It was for this reason that when the companions of the Holy Prophet came in contact with the Magi of Persia, they accorded the same treatment to them as they accorded to the Jews and the Christians, which shows that they treated them as the followers of the Book. With the plain words of the Holy Quran "that there is no people but a warner has gone among them" ringing in their ears, how could they do otherwise. And a Muslim is bound to believe that a vast country like India, and a huge nation like the Hindus, could not be without a book or without its prophets.

A misconception

A misconception prevails generally among all non-Muslims. It is that the Holy Prophet Muhammad preached his faith with the sword. It is a myth pure and simple. The basic principle of Islam, a faith in all the prophets of the world, is enough to give the lie to this allegation. The great and liberal mind that preached not only love and respect for the founders of the great religions of the world but much more than that—*faith in them*—could not shrink down to the narrowness of intolerance for those very religions. Tolerance is not in fact the word that can suffi-

ciently indicate the breadth of the attitude of Islam to other religions. It preaches equal love for all, equal respect for all, equal faith in all.

Again, intolerance could not be ascribed to a book which excludes compulsion from the sphere of religion altogether. "There is no compulsion in religion" (2: 56), it lays down in the clearest words. In fact, the Holy Quran is full of statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person's own concern and that he is given the choice to adopt one way or another, that if he accepts truth, it is for his own good, and that if he sticks to error, it is to his own detriment. I give below a few of these quotations:

"We have shown him the way, he may be thankful or unthankful" (76: 3).

"The truth is from your Lord, so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve" (18: 29).

"Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord: whoever will therefore see, it is for the good of his own soul, and whoever will disbelieve, it shall be against himself" (6: 105).

"If you do good, you will do good for your own souls, and if you do evil, it shall be for them" (17: 7).

The Prophet was allowed to fight indeed, but what was the object? Not to compel the unbelievers to accept Islam which was against all the broad principles which he had taught. No, it was to establish religious freedom, to stop all religious persecution, to protect the houses of worship of all religions, mosques among them. Here are a few quotations from the Holy Quran:

"And had there not been God's repelling some people by others, there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which God's name is much remembered" (22: 40).

"And fight with them until there is no persecution and religion is only for God" (2 : 193).

"And fight with them until there is no more persecution and all religions should be for God" (8 : 39).

The condition under which the permission to fight was given to the Muslims have already been described. Every student of Islamic history knows that the Holy Prophet and his companions were subjected to the severest persecutions as Islam began to gain ground at Mecca; over a hundred of them fled to Abyssinia but persecution grew more relentless still. Ultimately the Muslims had to take refuge in Medina but they were not left alone even there and the sword was taken up by the enemy to annihilate Islam and the Muslims altogether. The Quran bears express testimony to this: "Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and God is well able to assist them; those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is God" (22 : 39, 40). Later, the express condition was laid down: "And fight in the way of God with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits" (2 : 190).

Fighting allowed only to vert persecution

The Quran therefore allowed fighting only to save a persecuted community from powerful oppressors and hence the condition was laid down that fighting was to be stopped as soon as persecution ceased: "But if they desist, then God is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight with them until there is no persecution" (2 : 192, 193). If the enemy offered peace, peace was to be accepted, though the enemy's intention may be only to deceive the Muslims: "And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it and trust in God, He is the Hearing, the Knowing. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely God is sufficient for thee" (8 : 61, 62). The Prophet made treaties of peace with his enemies; one such treaty brought about the famous truce of Hudaibiyya, the terms of which were not only disadvantageous but also humiliating to the Muslims. According to the terms of this treaty "if a believer, being converted to Islam, went over to the Muslims, he was to be returned, but if Muslim went over to the unbelievers, he was not to be given back to the Muslims." This term of the treaty cuts at the root of all allegations of the use of force by the Holy Prophet. It also shows the strong conviction of the Holy Prophet that neither would Muslims go back to unbelief, nor would the new converts to Islam be deterred from embracing Islam because the Prophet gave them no shelter. And these expectations proved true, for while not a single Muslim deserted Islam, a large number came over to Islam and being refused shelter at Medina formed a colony of their own in neutral territory.

It is a mistake to suppose that the conditions related above were abrogated at any time. The condition to fight "with those who fight with you" remained in force to the last. The last expedition led by the Holy Prophet

was the famous Tabuk expedition, and, as already stated, though the Prophet had marched a very long distance to Tabuk at the head of an army of thirty thousand, yet when he found that the enemy did not fulfil the condition laid down above, he returned, and did not allow his troops to attack the enemy territory. There is not a single instance of an expedition being sent to convert a people by force; nay, there is not a single case in which the Prophet ever asked a man to believe on the pain of death. The waging of war on unbelievers to compel them to accept Islam is a myth pure and simple. It was the enemy that waged war on the Muslims to turn them away from their religion as the Holy Quran so clearly asserts; "And they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can" (2 : 217).

It is sometimes asserted that the Quran forbids relations of friendship with the followers of other religions. How could a book which allows a man to have as his wife a woman following another religion (5 : 5), say in the same breath no friendly relation can be had with the followers of other religions? The loving relation of husband and wife is the friendliest of all relations, and when this is expressly permitted, there is not the least reason to suppose that other friendly relations are forbidden. The fact is that wherever there is a prohibition against making friends with other peoples, it relates only to the people who were at war with the Muslims, and this is plainly stated in the Quran:

"God does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of your religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; for God loves the doers of justice. God only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of your religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up others in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust" (60 : 8, 9).

Killing of apostate not sanctioned by Quran

Another widely prevailing misconception may also be noted here. It is generally thought that the Quran provides a death sentence for those who desert the religion of Islam. Anyone who takes the trouble to read the Quran will see that there is not the least ground for such a supposition. The Quran speaks repeatedly of people going back to unbelief after believing, but never once does it say that they should be killed or punished. I give here a few quotations:

"And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever, these it is whose deeds shall go for nothing in this world and the hereafter" (2 : 217).

"O you who believe! should one of you turn back from his religion, then God will bring a people whom He shall love and they too shall love Him" (5 : 54).

"Those who disbelieve after their believing then increase disbelief,

their repentance shall not be accepted, and these are they that go astray" (3 : 89).

On the other hand, the Quran speaks of a plan of the Jews to adopt Islam first and then desert it, thus creating the impression that Islam was not a religion worth having (3 : 71). Such a scheme could never have entered their heads while living at Medina where the government was Muslim, if apostasy according to the Quranic law were punishable with death. The misconception seems to have arisen from the fact that people who after becoming apostates joined the enemy were treated as enemies, or where an apostate took the life of a Muslim he was put to death, not of course for changing his religion but for committing murder.

The man who brought about the most thorough transformation of a nation within twenty years, who alone and unaided, swept off vice and immorality from a whole country where the most strenuous efforts of powerful missionary had hopelessly failed, who by his personal example purified the lives of vast numbers of humanity,—could such a man himself be in the grip of sin? An impure man could not consistently preach virtue; how could he take others by the hand, and free them from bondage of sin, and inspire his very soldiers and generals with sentiments of virtue? Could a man who himself groped in the dark lead others to light? And yet an attempt is made in many quarters even to-day to depict Muhammad who had done all this as a profligate, simply because he resorted to polygamy. Whatever may be the views on polygamy of a world itself sunk deep in immoral practices, there is not the least doubt that plurality of wives is met with in the lives of the great religious personages who by a consensus of opinion led lives of transcendent purity. Abraham who is held in reverence by more than half the world up to this day had more wives than one. Similar was the case with Jacob, Moses and David among the Israelites, and with some of the famous and revered sages of Hindus. The example of Jesus is quite out of question, as according to the Gospels he did not marry, and if this example were followed, the world would come to an end before long. Yet it is true that these great sages were not led away by sensual desires to a polygamous life. Purity in all respects is the outstanding characteristic of their lives, and this fact alone is sufficient to condemn the attempt to defame them on the basis of their resorting to polygamy. What was their object in doing so, it is difficult to say at the present day, as their histories are generally enveloped in darkness, but as the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad can be read in the full light of history, we will take his case in detail.

Four Periods

The life of the Prophet may be divided into four periods so far as his domestic life is concerned. Up to twenty-five he led a celibate life; from twenty-five to fifty-four years, he lived in a married state with one wife; from fifty-four to sixty he contracted several marriages; and last from sixty till his death,

(Continued on page 5)

The LIGHT

Sunday

July 1, 1962.

NO COERCION IN RELIGION

HAVING been down-hearted and dismayed by the Christian proselytising campaign which, it is no gain-saying the fact, has now been moving in Pakistan with an accelerated speed, the Adara Ziaul Islam, an organization dedicated to the propagation of Islam, has made an appeal through a pamphlet circulated among the members of the National Parliament, Provincial Assemblies and the President of Pakistan and other high authorities, to pass a legislation under which conversion of Muslims to other religions should be made punishable with death. That such an un-Islamic demand should have come from an organization which professes to have dedicated itself to the propagation of Islam, is monstrous indeed. If the non-Muslim world, too, by way of retaliation, were to pass such a legislation prescribing death-penalty for change of religion, will the Adara Ziaul Islam close up its shutters and beat a retreat; or will it continue to preach to the winds, for who will dare to come forward to accept Islam, and have his neck broken forthwith? If the Adara Ziaul Islam wants for itself the unrestricted freedom to preach and propagate Islam, and make conversions from the followers of other faiths, it must, in all fairness, concede the same right to other religions.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets (Jesus).

Freedom of conscience, it should be clearly understood, is the corner-stone of all Islamic teaching. The Holy Quran, when the world was seething with religious prejudice and persecution, made a proclamation: *La ikraha fiddin*: "No Coercion in the matter of religion." It depends entirely on one's own free will to pick up and adopt this religion or that. *The right way*, the Holy Quran argued (2 : 256), is clearly distinct from

error; and it is, therefore, left to every individual to make a free choice of his own. A man from the tribe of Bani Salam bin 'Auf, who had embraced Islam, once came to the Prophet, and said: O Apostle of God, I have two sons who are yet Christians. Can I not, as their father, make them renounce Christianity and accept Islam instead which I believe to be the true faith? The Prophet recited this verse, *La ikraha fiddin* which constituted the Islam's *magna charta* of religious freedom, and warned him in the clearest terms that there was no compulsion nor any coercion in the matter of religion.

To keep Muslims within the fold of Islam by the threat of capital punishment, as the Adara Ziaul Islam would like to do, is obviously repugnant to the basic principle enunciated by the Holy Quran, viz, *No coercion in the matter of religion*. The Jews, it may be recalled, were also the avowed enemies of Islam. They hatched up, for the overthrow of Islam, a subtle plot while living under the Muslim rule in Medina. In the morning they avowed belief in the truth of Islam, but in the evening they denied it in order to perturb the minds of those who had accepted Islam. We read in the Holy Quran:

And a party of the people of the Book say: Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe, in the first part of the day, and disbelieve in the latter part of it, perhaps they may turn back. (3 : 71)

The Jews accepted Islam, although hypocritically, in the morning, and apostatized in the evening in order to create the impression that Islam was a false religion. And all this was done under the Muslim rule in Medina, but the apostates were not put to death for the evident reason that apostasy was not punishable with death. *Bukhari* (61 : 25) has on its record another instance of a Christian who became a Muslim, and used to write the Holy Quran for the Prophet; he then apostatized and went over to Christianity again, and said, Muhammad knew not anything except what I wrote for him. This happened at Medina when the Muslim state had been well established. The apostate who spoke ill of the Prophet calling him an

impostor, was not even molested, much less to put him to death.

It may be remarked in passing that there is only one case, sometimes cited in proof of the death penalty for apostasy, in which the apostates had been punished. But it was not for their apostasy, but for their murdering the Keeper of the State camels and driving away the animals that they were put to death. A party of the tribe of 'Ukul who had accepted Islam, came to stay at Medina; but the climate of the town suited them not. The Prophet sent them to a place outside Medina where the State milch camels were kept, so that they might live in the open air and also drink of the milk. But they killed the Keeper of the camels, and drove away the animals. When the matter was brought to the Prophet's knowledge, a party was sent in pursuit of them, and they were put to death.

When the war of extermination was going on between the Muslims and the unbelievers, it often happened that a man who apostatized, went over to the enemy and fought against the Muslims. He had, therefore, to be treated as an enemy, not because he had changed his religion but because he had changed sides. And if the apostate went over to any such tribe which was not at war with the Muslims, he was not touched. Of such apostates the Holy Quran said:

Except those who join a people between whom and you there is an alliance, or who come to you, their hearts shrinking from fighting you or fighting their own people. And if Allah had pleased, He would have given them power over you so that they should have fought you; therefore if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not given you a way against them (4 : 90).

It can easily be seen that even the waverers were not to be killed, or fought against if they refrained from fighting, although they may have gone over to disbelief after accepting Islam.

Hefferning, a scholar of great learning, has rightly written in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* that in the *Kur'an* the apostate is threatened with punishment in the next world only. A few verses:

(1) Whoso disbelieves in Allah after his belief—not he who is compelled while his heart is content with faith, but he who opens his breast for

disbelief—on them is the wrath of Allah, and for them is a grievous chastisement. (16 : 106)

(2) And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever—these it is whose works go for nothing in this world and the Hereafter. And they are the companions of the fire ; therein they will abide (2 : 217)

(3) How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing and after they had borne witness that the Messenger was true. Their reward is that on them is the curse of Allah. Except those who repent after that and amend (3 : 85, 88, 89).

Rather than probe into the root cause of this alarming flow of Muslims from the House of Islam into the fold of the Christian church, and apply unto it the proper remedy, the Adara Ziaul Islam as well as some other like-minded religious institutions have been crying to the Government of Pakistan to come to their aid with the un-Islamic legislation of inflicting death penalty on such apostates. The chief weapon which the Christian missionary is employing against Islam with deadly effect, is of the Muslim Ulama's own making. The Christian missionary claims that Jesus, unlike all other prophets of the world, stood in a special relationship to God, viz, he was the Son and partner of the Most High God ; hence superhuman and *sans pareil*. The Ulama unfortunately endorse this position by investing Jesus with unearthly and supernatural attributes. If he was born, unlike the rest of human race, without the agency of a human father ; if he was lifted, unlike every other human being, to the high heavens with this physical body, and has been alive there for two thousand years, *sans* food, *sans* age and *sans* death ; if he is to come back to this earth in person towards the end of the world to save mankind ; what else is Divinity ; and the Christian missionary is perfectly justified in claiming superiority for his religion. If Jesus is alive in the heavens, he is certainly superior to all the dead men put together. There lies the weakest point in the defences of Islam against Christianity. You will have either to accept that Jesus is dead and not alive in the heavens, or that he was the Son of God and not a mere human prophet.

The Holy Quran tells us
(61 : 6) :

And when Jesus, son of Mary, said : O children of Israel, surely I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me.

Jesus gave the good news of the advent of a prophet who would come *after him*, i.e. after his death, and that his name would be Ahmad. After five centuries a man appeared on the world stage, claiming that he was the Prophet foretold by Jesus ; and his name, too, was Ahmad. It should be remembered that the Holy Prophet of Arabia was known by two names, Muhammad and Ahmad. Now, if he was the true Prophet, foretold by Jesus, and not an impostor, then it shall have to be accepted that Jesus had died previously ; for, the Promised Prophet was to appear *after him*. And if Jesus' death has not yet taken place ; and he is still alive, what about the claim of the Holy Prophet ; for the Promised Prophet Ahmad will come after the death of Jesus ?

Jesus, as a matter of fact, is dead, and not alive. And this hard fact has now been accepted by the highest religious authority of the world of Islam, the Rector of Al-Azhar (Egypt). He has issued an official *fatwa*, declaring,

There is nothing in the Holy Quran nor in the sacred traditions of the Prophet which authorises the correctness of the belief to the contentment of the heart that Jesus was taken up to the heaven with his body, and is alive there even now, and would descend therefrom in the later days. The Quranic verses about Jesus show that God had promised to cause him to die a natural death, then to exalt him and save him from the mischief of the disbelievers, and this promise had certainly been fulfilled. His enemies could neither kill him nor crucify him, but God completed the span of his life and then caused him to die.
(Sd) MAHMOOD SHALTUT.

If the Adara Ziaul Islam and other religious institutions of the same mind, instead of raising a hue and cry over the Christian missionary propaganda against Islam and appealing to the Government to pass an un-Islamic legislation prescribing death-penalty for those who renounce Islam and go over to Christianity, should make this declaration with a bold moral courage that **Jesus is dead** and not alive in the heavens, it will, of a surety, take the wind out

of the Christian missionary's sails and render him utterly powerless.

“ Let there be from among you a party who should invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong ”
(The Al-Qur'an)

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THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

(Continued from page 2)

he did not contract any new marriage. The most important period to determine whether the Prophet was a slave to his passions is the period of celibacy. If he had not been a complete master of his passions, he could not have led an exceptionally chaste and pure life, which won him the title of Al-Amin, to the age of twenty-five in a hot country like Arabia where development must necessarily take place early and passions are generally stronger. His worst enemies could not point to a single blot on his character when challenged later (10 : 16). Even according to a hostile writer like Sir William Muir, already quoted, all authorities agree "in ascribing to the youth of Mahomet a modesty of deportment and purity of manners rare among the people of Mecca." Now, youth is the time when passions run riot, and the man who is able to control his passions in youth, and that in celibacy, cannot, possibly, be conceived as falling a prey to lust in his old age. Thus the first period of his life, his celibacy up to twenty-five years of age, is a conclusive proof that he could never fall a prey to his passions. It should be noted in this connection that in Arab society at the time there was no moral sanction against an immoral life, so that it may be said that he was kept back from an evil course by the moral force of society. No; profligacy was the order of the day; and it was among a people who prided on loose sexual relations that the Holy Prophet Muhammad led a life of transcendent purity, and therefore all the more credit is due to his purity of character.

Second period

Take now the next period, the period of a monogamous married life. When twenty-five years of age, he married a widow, Khadijah, fifteen years his senior, and led a life of utmost devotion with her till she died when he was fifty years of age. Now polygamy was the rule in Arabia at the time; and the wife had no cause of complaint, nor did she ever grumble if the husband brought in a second or a third wife. Marriage with Khadijah had enriched him, though polygamy in Arabia was not limited to the rich; the poor as well resorted to it. The wife being a help-mate in the real sense of the word, because she helped the husband in earning livelihood, as the woman generally does in the labouring classes, the poor had nothing to lose by resorting to polygamy. The Prophet belonged to the noblest family of the Quraish and if he had chosen to marry another wife, it would have been quite easy for him. But he led a monogamous life of the utmost devotion to his wife during all this while. When Khadijah died, he married a very elderly lady named Saudah, whose only recommendation for the honour was that she was the widow of a faithful companion of his who had to flee to Abyssinia from the persecutions of the Quraish. The main part of his life, from twenty-five to fifty-four, was thus an example for his followers that monogamy was the rule in married life.

The third period

Now comes the third period. Of all his wives Ayesha was the only one whom he married as a virgin. Her father Abu Bakr, the closest friend of the Holy Prophet, had offered her to him when he suffered the great bereavement of losing both his wife Khadijah and his uncle Abu Talib. The girl was one possessing exceptional qualities and both Abu Bakr and the Prophet saw in her the great woman of the future who was best suited to perform the duties of the wife of a teacher who was to be a perfect exemplar for mankind. So the Holy Prophet accepted her: but she had not yet apparently reached the age of puberty, and her marriage was consummated towards the close of the second year of the Flight.* In the second year of the Flight began the series of battles with the Quraish and the other Arab tribes, which appreciably reduced the number of males, the breadwinners of the family. These battles continued up to the eighth year of the Flight, and it was during this time that the Holy Prophet contracted all the marriages which appear objectionable to the modern mind, but neither friend nor foe looked upon with disapprobation at the time. And how could they do so, for they saw that it was an act of compassion, and was not due to any indulgence of the passions. Even a Christian writer admits when he says: "It would be remembered, however, that most of Muhammad's marriages may be explained, at least, as much by his pity for the forlorn condi-

tion of the persons concerned, as by other motives. They were not remarkable either for their beauty or their wealth, but quite the reverse." And what other motives could there be? Let us look at facts straight in the face. The Prophet had now a young and beautiful wife in Ayesha in his house. None of the other wives whom he married later compared with her either in youth or beauty. Surely then it was not attraction for beauty that led to these marriages. And we have already seen that from his youth till his old age the Prophet remained a complete master of his passions. The man who could live to celibacy up to twenty-five years, and still have the reputation of a spotless character, who up to fifty-four lived with a single wife, and this notwithstanding the fact that polygamy was more the rule than the exception at the time and that polygamous connection was not in the least objectionable—such a man could not be said to have changed all of a sudden after fifty-five when old age does generally soothe the passions even of those who cannot control their passions in youth. No other motive than compassion for the ladies who were given this honour can be attached to these marriages. If there had been any less honourable motive, his choice would have fallen on others than widows, and under the Arab custom a man in his position could have plenty of youth-led virgins.

I have said that a change for the worse could not come over a man who had undoubtedly spotless life until he reached fifty-five. If the beauty of women could not excite his passions in youth and lead him away from the path of rectitude, how could it lead him away in old age? And what were the circumstances in which he lived at Medina during these years? It was not a life of ease and luxury that he was leading at the time; it was a life of hardness, because it was at this very time that he had to carry on a life and struggle with the enemies of Islam. Huge armies came to crush him and the small band of Muslims at Medina. Thus the whole of Arabia was aflame against him. He was not secure for a minute. Battles had to be fought in quick succession. Expeditions had to be arranged and sent. "Prophet of God! we are tired of being in arms day and night" would his companions say to him and he had to console them by telling them that time would come when a traveller would be able to go from one end of the country to the other without having any arms. The Jews and the Christians were his enemies along with the idolaters. His best friends were falling sometimes in battles and sometimes by treachery. It is possible for a man to lead a life of ease and under such circumstances even if a man had the mind to lead a life of self-indulgence, which the Prophet according to all available evidence had not, this was not the opportune time for it. Under such circumstances of warfare, with enemies within Medina and enemies all around it, with the number of the Muslims being insignificantly small in comparison with the enemy, with news of assaults by overwhelming numbers on all four sides, even a profligate's life would be

*A great misconception prevails as to the age at which Ayesha was taken in marriage by the Holy Prophet. Ibn-i-Sa'd has stated in the *Tabaqat* that when Abu Bakr was approached on behalf of the Holy Prophet, he replied that the girl had already been betrothed to Zubair, and that he will have to settle the matter first with him. This shows that Ayesha must have been approaching majority at the time. Again, the Isaba, speaking of the Prophet's daughter Fatima, says that she was born five years before the Call and was about five years older than Ayesha. This shows that Ayesha must have been about ten years at the time of her betrothal to the Holy Prophet, and not six years as she is generally supposed to be. This result is borne out by the fact that Ayesha herself is reported to have stated that when the Chapter of the Moon (54th chapter) was revealed she was a girl playing about and remembered certain verses then revealed. Now the 54th chapter could not have been revealed later than the 6th year of the Call. All these considerations point to but one conclusion, viz, that Ayesha could not have been less than ten years of age at the time of her *nikah* which was virtually only a betrothal. And there is at least one report in *Tabaqat* that Ayesha was nine years of age at the time of the *nikah*. Again, it is a fact admitted on all hands that the *nikah* of Ayesha took place in the tenth year of the Call in the month of Shawwal, while there is also the preponderance of evidence as to the consummation of her marriage taking place in the 2nd year of the Hijra in the same month, which shows that full five years had elapsed between the *nikah* and the consummation. The popular report which speaks of her being six or seven years of age at *nikah* and nine years at consummation is therefore historically incorrect, because it supposes the period between the *nikah* and consummation to be only two or at the most three years. Hence, there is not the least doubt that Ayesha was at least nine or ten years of age at the time of betrothal and fourteen or fifteen years at the time of marriage.

changed, to say nothing of a man of avowed purity of character, which no temptation could shake, turning into a profligate.

If the Prophet's days during this period were passed so strenuously, how did he pass the nights? He had a number of lawful wives but did he spend away his nights in enjoyment with them? There is the clearest evidence on record in the Holy Quran (73:14, 20) as well as the traditions that he passed half the night, and sometimes even more than that, in praying to God and in reciting the Holy Quran while standing in prayer. He would stand so long that his feet would get swollen. Could such a man be said to be taking wives for self-indulgence when the minutest details of his life as available to us show conclusively that it was a strenuous life farthest away from indulgence of every kind?

Exemplar Austerity

Let us now take another point. Was any change really witnessed in the later phase of his life when he became the ruler of a state? "In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Medina, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heracleus, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them the accidents are changed, the essence seems to me to be the same in all" (Bosworth Smith). From the cradle to the grave, the Prophet passed through a diversity of circumstances—a diversity which can hardly be met with in the life of a single man. Orphanhood is the extremes of helplessness, while kingship is the height of power. From an orphan he climbed to the summit of royal glory but that did not create the slightest change in his way of living. He lived on exactly the same kind of humble food, wore the same simple dress, and in all particulars led the same life as he led in the state of orphanhood. It is hard to give up the kingly throne and lead the life of a hermit, but it is far harder that one should wield the royal sceptre yet at the same time lead a hermit's life, that one should ever have the most alluring attractions before one's eyes yet should never for one moment be captivated by them. When the Prophet actually became the ruler of a state, the furniture of his house was composed of a matting of palm leaves for his bed and an earthen jug for water. Some nights he would go without food. For days no fire would be lit in house to prepare food, the whole family living on mere dates. There was no lack of means to live a life of ease and comfort. The public treasury was at his disposal. The well-to-do among his followers, who did not shrink from sacrificing their lives for his sake, would have been only too glad to provide him with every comfort of life, should he choose to avail himself of it. But worldly things carried little weight in his estimation. No mundane craving could ever prevail over him, neither in times of indigence nor of plenty. Just as he spurned at wealth, power and beauty, which the Quraish offered him

when he was yet in a state of utmost helplessness, so did he remain indifferent to them when God granted him all these things out of His Grace.

Not only did he himself live the simplest life of a labourer, but he did not even allow wealth to have any attraction for his wives. Shortly after their immigration into Medina, the condition of the Muslims had changed and they carried on a prosperous trade. The later conquests went further to add to the comforts of life which the Muslims enjoyed. Quite a human desire crept into the hearts of the Prophet's wives that, like other Muslim families, they too should avail themselves of their share of comforts. Accordingly they approached the Prophet in a body to prevail upon him to allow them their legitimate share of worldly comforts. Thereupon came the Divine injunction "O Prophet! say to thy wives, 'If you desire this world's life and its ornament, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing. And if you desire God and His Apostle and the latter abode, then surely God has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward'" (33:28, 29). Thus they were offered two alternatives. They must have either worldly finery or remain in the Prophet's household. Should they decide to have the former, they would have plenty of what they wanted, but would forthwith forfeit the honour of being the Prophet's wives. Can this be the reply of a sensual man? Such a man would have done everything to satisfy the whims of the objects of his affection. Nay, he would himself have desired that his wives should wear the most beautiful dress and live in comfort. No doubt the Prophet cherished great love and regard for his wives. "The best of you," he is reported to have said, "is the one who treats his wife best." This illustrates his attitude towards womanhood. He had immense regard for the rights of women and was the champion of their cause. But when his wives came to him with what was apparently quite a legitimate demand to have more of finery and ornaments, they were coldly told that if they would have these things, they were not fit to live in the Prophet's household. Does any one who is the slave of his passions disregard the wishes of his wives in such a matter? This shows beyond a shadow of doubt how free the Prophet's heart was of base and sensual thought. He is prepared to divorce all his wives rather than yield to what he regards as unworthy of his wives—an inclination towards worldly things. It shows conclusively that the object of his marriages was anything but self-indulgence.

Historical circumstance

Let us consider once more the historical facts which led the Holy Prophet to take a number of wives within the short space of five years from the third year of Hijra to the 7th, while before that he passed nearly thirty years of his life in a monogamous state. This period coincides exactly with the period during which incessant war was carried on between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. The circle of Muslim brotherhood was at the time very narrow. The perpetual state of war created disparity between the male and the female

elements of society. Husbands having fallen on the field of battle, their widows had to be provided for. But bread and butter is not the only provision needed in each case, as supposed by certain short-sighted statesmen. Sex inclination is implanted in human nature, and the statesman who neglects the sex requirements leads society to moral corruption, ending ultimately in the ruin of the whole nation. A reformer with whom morals are all in all could not content himself with making provision merely for the maintenance of the widows. The Prophet was anxious for their chastity to a far greater extent than their physical needs. It became therefore necessary to allow polygamy. This is the reason that he himself took so many women for his wives during the period when war was raging. Nearly all of his wives were widows. Where self-indulgence is the motive, the choice does not fall on widows. And there was no dearth of virgins. It would have been an enviable privilege for any Muslim to be father-in-law of the Prophet. But the object was a far noble one—the protection of the widows of his friends. In polygamy alone lay the safety of the Muslim society situated as it then was.

Political circumstance

Again, certain political reasons also led to some of the marriages. This was the case in the marriage with Juwairiyah, a lady belonging to the Bani Mustalaq, and such was also the case in the marriage with Safiyyah, the widow of a Jewish chieftain. The Prophet wanted to conciliate both tribes though in the latter case the Jews again proved troublesome in the reign of 'Umar.

Marriage with Zaina

The case of the marriage with Zainab may, however, be specially noted here as calumny has been at work in this case. Zainab was the Prophet's first cousin, being the daughter of his aunt. When she reached the age of majority, she was offered in marriage to the Prophet by her brother. But the Holy Prophet wedded her to Zaid, a slave whom he had himself freed and who was deeply attached to him. The couplet could not, however, pull together and after a time Zaid wanted to divorce her. The Prophet dissuaded him as plainly stated in the Holy Quran (33:36, 37). But ultimately a divorce was found necessary. The divorced woman is generally looked down in popular estimation, and this was a case in which a freed slave divorced a lady of high birth by taking such a woman as his wife, the Prophet wanted to remove the false notion that divorce degraded women. Thus by this act, to which he was morally bound because the lady had been at first offered in marriage to him, he elevated the whole class of divorced women who would otherwise suffer life-long humiliation in society. If he had any desire of self-gratification or if he had any passion for the lady, he would not have refused her when she was offered to him as a virgin. Refusal of her hand in the first instance, and taking her in marriage when being divorced she was lowered in general estimation, shows conclusively that his motive in this marriage was anything but self-gratification.

(To be Continued)



"LIFE AFTER DEATH"

Sir,

The late Maulana Mohammad Ali's Dissertation on "Life after death" which was published in your Weekly by instalment will be a most interesting reading to both Muslims and non-Muslims, written as it is by so profound a scholar and student of the Quran; for not only it is of a common interest to humanity and which no philosopher has or could ignore and which goes under the terms of the Immortality of soul among them, but a vital article of faith for Muslims.

None the less, the Maulana has omitted quoting the verses of the Quran directly supporting this belief; he has forgotten to quote for instance two verses of the Quran in Chapter 11, 154 and Chapter 111, 104 where it is said that those who die in the way of God are not dead but living and receiving sustenance from their Lord, and happily waiting for those who have not yet joined them. It may be argued that it is the special case for those who die in the way of the Lord, which later Muslims called them with the same terms as was current among Christians, the *Shaheed* or Martyr.

To my mind, however, it is not special but general and Soora Momin (verses 6-25) makes the point clear where there is a mention that every man has two lives and two deaths. This was also believed by the composers of the New Testament. One death and one life is in this world, and second life and death in Barzakh or Elysium field before the first trumpet is blown on the judgment and Resurrection day.

Many persons had had the experience of it, apart from the medium of spiritualists. I can give some instances of my own and I wish you should open a column in your paper for the correspondents giving you their own personal experience. Here are the few of my own authenticated account. But before telling this I must introduce my father and my younger brother who were extremely pious Muslims, both dead now. Not only pious but most truthful and their dreams almost amounted to a prophetic vision.

1. In 1948, my wife was lying on death bed and the doctor wanted to send her back from the hospital being incurable. I was naturally very much distressed and was sitting disconsolate in my room, when my father came in and told me that doctor is wrong, she will be cured and come back in a month's time quite healthy and happy as he has seen her in his dream and you know I never dream falsely. I was so much heartened by it that I went away to my duty soon after. On September 6, 1948 I received wire from home that my father had died. On

October 6, exactly one month after, my wife died. Then we understood his dream which was meant for another life.

2. One day, some months after my retirement, my uncle, that is the younger brother of my late father came to me and said that he has dreamed his brother last night and he delivered a message to me to give his brother financial aid for the marriage of his daughter. I smiled and said to him, cannot I give you the money without this kind of subterfuge and here is the cheque. He went away, rather ashamed but happy. Some months later, a friend of my late father came to see me, he had a book under his arm. He said, your father has sent you this book of his library asking him to go and give it to me with his blessing. When I opened the book, it was the *Kimiya-e-Saadat* of Alghazzali; then I understood the dream of my poor uncle.

Bangalore
India

Yours truly
S. M. Ahmad

* * * * *

SOME QUERIES

Sir,

I shall be grateful for light being thrown on the following points:

- (i) What books of the Bible are implied by Injil and Tourat as used in the Quran?
- (ii) Is the English Bible correct translation of the original Injil and Tourat?
- (iii) Can the translation of a revealed book be considered a revelation from God?
- (iv) The Bible (Old Testament in particular) looks like the traditional history or folk lore of the Jews. Can such literature with many obscene details be given the status of Divine Revelation?
- (v) A Muslim scholar well versed in comparative religions opines that the Quranic stories are mere revised accounts of the Biblical stories: Is the assertion sustainable?
- (vi) What are the exact implications of Wahi, Nabi and Rasul? Is inspiration the same as revelation?
- (vii) Did Hazrat Muhammad (POH) claim the Quran as having been preserved in the Tablet of the Throne Divine?
- (viii) Is there any reference to the said Tablet in the Jewish Scriptures?
- (ix) What is the authority for the Islamic tradition of 124000 Prophets having preceded the advent of Hazrat Muhammad (POH)?
- (x) How many of the above Prophets have been named in the Quranic text?

As the LIGHT has been throwing light on many points of Islamic Theology for years, I have considered it desirable to

seek light from you on the above points for the benefit of myself and others.

Yours faithfully,
Aziz Ahmad

REPLY

Q. 1 & 2.

By Injil is meant the Book which was revealed to Jesus. The four Books which are taken for Injil by the Christians, none of them are pristine revelations of Jesus but are the publications of four respective authors Mathew, Marks, Luke and John.

By Tourat is meant the group of books which were revealed to Moses, numbering five namely to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

But the present day Bible is not to be found in its pristine form but an interpolated one—be it Injil or Tourat.

Q. 3. No.

Q. 4. In its perverted form it is not. Please refer to the book by Professor Dummelow (of Cambridge University) "Commentary on Holy Bible".

Q. 5. The assertion is baseless.

Q. 6. Divine revelation to man is stated to be of three kinds. "And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by *inspiring or from behind a veil or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases*" (The Holy Quran 42:51). The first of these which is called *Wahy* is used here in its original significance of a *hasty suggestion or infusing into the heart*, as distinguished from a revelation in words. It is a form of God's speaking to man.

From this verse of the Holy Quran it is also clear that inspiration is not the same as revelation. They are two different modes of divine communion.

The Arabic word for prophet is *Nabi* which is derived from *Naba*, meaning an announcement of great utility imparting knowledge of a thing. A *nabi* is also called a *Rasul*, which means an *apostle* or messenger, literally, *one sent*. The two words are used interchangeably in the Holy Quran, while occasionally both names are combined. The reason is that the prophet has two capacities viz, he receives information from God and he imparts the message to mankind. He is called a *nabi* in his first, and a *rasul* in his second capacity but there is one difference. The word *rasul* has a wider significance being applicable to every messenger in a literal sense; and the angels are called Divine messengers, *Rusul* (plural of *rasul*) (Holy Quran 35:1), because they are also bearers of Divine messages to carry out the Divine will.

Q. 7. The term is actually "guarded tablet" and not "Tablet of the Throne Divine" vide chapter 85 verses 21 and

(Continued on page 8)

IMMORTALITY PROVED?

BY K. B. WAKELAM

The advancement of scientific knowledge is moving forward at a great pace. It is therefore likely that the ultimate laws of the physical world may soon be known. This is a situation pregnant with all manner of possibilities for the occultist who will be able to go to the scientist armed with the evidence of strange phenomena and ask for these to be explained in terms of such ultimate laws. If there is no such explanation at the physical level, then the existence of paranormal events will be established beyond doubt.

Perhaps even now it is possible to demonstrate the fact of immortality. To do this it would only be necessary to show that the mind had a wider appreciation of time than the physical brain which is its servant. It follows that, if the mind can know "now" what events are to take place in the future, then it can have an existence independent of the brain; for the mind would still be "there" in the future if that brain crumbled to dust "now".

Access to a Future State

The power of prophecy, implying more than an assessment of probabilities, requires conscious, or unconscious, access to a future state of the space-time continuum—a power beyond the reach of any physical instrument. The existence of such a mental capability would prove that mind was eternally implanted in the structure of space-time.

The study of communication and control mechanisms in living beings and machines, which is called cybernetics, has already reached the stage where many features of the physical brain can be imitated. A machine can be made to acquire a conditioned reflex in the best Pavlovian tradition, a digital computer can perform a series of operations under the control of a memory store and an analogue computer evaluates statistics and formulae supplied to it.

But in every case these thinking machines must have instructions passed to them on punched cards or magnetised tape. No physiologist has yet uncovered a mechanism in the human brain which serves the purpose of supplying instructions in the same way. All the information coming into the brain does so via the senses, which in turn are dependent on occurrences in the physical world.

Deprived of all Sensation

Many experiments have been carried out by psychologists recently, in which people have been deprived of all sensation for several hours; left floating in water tanks in complete darkness. In such circumstances the brain soon becomes completely disorientated, showing it has no inherent spatial sense. The subject also loses all count of time, proving that there can be no cranial clock mechanism. To test the immortality of mind, therefore, suppose one decides "now" to take a particular action at some future date, an action which can be dissociated en-

tirely from any conscious memory or impulse, one which is completely "out of character," entirely novel in shape and conception. There would be nothing in the past record of brain sensation to account for this act existing solely as a premeditation within the mind of the person who conceived it.

Impossible to Measure Passage of Time

If that person was then shut off from sensation in the manner already described he would not know when the moment had arrived to put his idea into effect. It would be impossible for him to measure the passage of time.

It is therefore clear that the stimulus to the brain which is required to set the post-dated act in motion must come from the evidence of the senses; the seeing of calendars and clocks, the alternation of night and day. At the moment when the mind premeditated this act, it must have had the ability to reach forward in time and implant some signal in the future, so that when the predetermined moment arrives the physical brain sees some special significance in the sense data and this stimulates a novel response.

It is well known how primitive man looks for signs and portents in his everyday life, judging the possible success or failure of his undertakings on whether such signs are favourable or unfavourable. It is true also that purely mechanical people do exist in modern society, with no real free will, and incapable of conceiving an original thought, being completely ruled by convention and sub-conscious impulses. Such people must always have a sign or a miracle to jerk them out of the lethargy of their mechanical lives.

Awake From Living Death

Nevertheless, by a great effort, an intensive study of oneself and one's inner motives, it is possible to awake from the living death of this mechanicalness. Original ideas can then be put into future states of the space-time continuum, which lend significance to the stream of sensation reaching the brain. Each hour can be a portent which we have willed; one can know for certain that his mind reaches out beyond the present and continues his purpose whether or not the material frame perishes.

—Courtesy, *The Voice*.

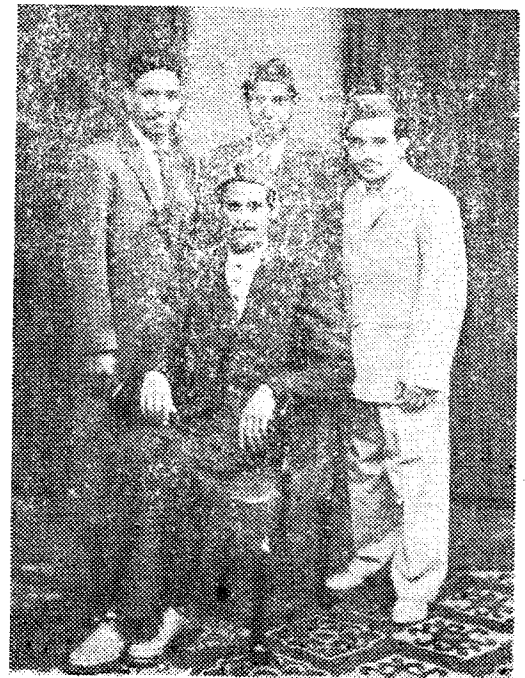
to thee and of them are those we have not mentioned thee" (40:78) "There is not a people but a warner has gone among them". (35:25) The total number of prophets named in the Holy Quran is eighteen.

The authority for this tradition is *Kanzul Ummal fi Sunan-il Aqwal wal-Afal*; Vol. vi; *Kirab-ul-Fazael min Qism-ul-Aqwal*; Page 121; *Hadith* No. 1893.

Q.10. The Holy Quran has named only Eighteen of the prophets.

INTRODUCING

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Sitting : Mr. Dawood Sydow is the Founder of Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam, Capetown, South Africa, and is the Editor of the local organ Mediator.

Standing : The co-workers of Mr. Dawood Sydow are (left to right) :

Mr. Abdur Rahman Ashtiker, Mr. Mohammad Hussain, and Mr. Abdul Aziz Ashtiker.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 7)

22 of the Holy Quran implying that the Holy Quran will be guarded against corruption and its opponents.

Q. 8. There is such reference to the said Tablet in the book given to Moses.

Q. 9 The Holy Quran has not given any fixed number of the prophets sent. Says the Holy Quran: "We sent messengers before thee of them are those we have mentioned to thee and of them are those we have not mentioned

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