

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

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Exponent
of Islam
and the
Lahore
Ahmadiyya
Movement
for over
eighty
years
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The Light

& Islamic Review

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Presents
Islam as:
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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About ourselves

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

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

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

History:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Passing away of Dr. Asghar Hameed, Head of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement

Brilliant University academician and outstanding scholar of Islam

It is with the deepest sadness that we have to report the death, in Lahore on 14th October 2002, of the Head of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, *Hazrat Ameer* Professor Dr. Asghar Hameed *sahib* — *inná li-lláhi wa inná ilai-hi ráji'ún* ('We belong to Allah, and to Him do we return').

Dr. Asghar Hameed had been Head of the Movement since 1996, following Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan *sahib* in this office.

A life-sketch

Dr. Asghar Hameed was born in Lahore in 1919. He received his primary and secondary education in his ancestral hometown, Amritsar (now in India). He passed his Matriculation examination from the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental (M.A.O.) High School, which was being run by the Anjuman-i-Islamiyya Amritsar. By the time he passed his Matriculation examination in 1933, the school was upgraded to an Intermediate College, so he continued his studies there and passed his Intermediate examination from the same institution.

In 1935 he came to Lahore to pursue higher studies and entered the famous Government College. He graduated with honours in Mathematics in 1937, and obtained his Master's degree in Mathematics from the University of Punjab in 1939. Dr. Asghar Hameed started his career as a lecturer of Mathematics at the Engineering College, Lahore. In due course, he proceeded abroad for further studies and did his Doctorate in Mathematics from the University of Edinburgh, U.K., in 1947. He was appointed Head of the Mathematics Department at the Engineering College Lahore and held this position for many years. In 1961, the Engineering College was elevated to the status of a university. Dr. Asghar Hameed was appointed as the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Planning in the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore. He held this prestigious appointment for several years. He retired as Professor of Mathematics in 1979.



During his service, he was reputed to be a dedicated teacher, a hard-working academician and an able administrator. He enjoyed the respect both of his colleagues and students alike. On his retirement he was awarded a purse and the Keys of the University and paid glowing tributes in the citation presented to him.

He has compiled a family-tree and brief history of his family (The Mantoo Family of Amritsar), which includes some well-known jurists, and political and literary figures.

After his retirement he moved to Darus Salaam, the precincts in suburban Lahore where the head-

quarters of the Jama'at are located, and decided to devote all his time and energy to the cause of the Ahmadiyya Movement. He worked very closely with and under the guidance of the late *Hazrat Ameer* Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan *sahib*. He delivered the Friday sermons on a regular basis. Some of these, including those on 'The Reformative Contributions of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad', were published in the *Paigham Sulh*. He translated the Promised Messiah's book *Kitab al-Bariyya* into English, and while doing so he compiled a glossary of the difficult words and terminology found therein. He taught the meanings of the Holy Quran (*Dars-i-Quran*) at Darus Salaam for a period of six years. During this time he completed his commentary three times. His special interest has been the study of the Urdu and English translations and commentaries of the Holy Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali. While doing so, he prepared lists of printing errors in these translations. He has also done a wonderful job by preparing an abridged edition of that encyclopedic work by Maulana Muhammad Ali *The Religion of Islam*. As he said: "It will prove useful to an average person interested in the study of the basic knowledge of Islam".

He was a man of great moral courage and strength. In the 1974 anti-Ahmadiyya agitation his house was attacked by an unruly mob, who burnt his car and threatened the household. He withstood these tribulations with great courage. He was a straightforward, humble and sincere person, who disliked flattery and hypocrisy. He was a knowledgeable man, dedicated to the cause of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Above all, he had the spiritual qualities to lead a Jama'at committed to the propagation of Islam.

The year before he was elected *Ameer* was a year of sorrows and tribulations for him. During this period, he lost his young and talented son Dr. Asif Hameed, his devoted wife and his brother-in-law. The late Hazrat Ameer's firm faith in Allah and sincere commitment to the Ahmadiyya Movement gave him the strength to bear these bereavements with great fortitude. Despite these blows, his spiritual zeal and devotion for the cause of the Ahmadiyya Movement grew in strength, and he undertook the responsibility of leading the members of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore. May Allah the Merciful grant him a high station in the heavens and shower His blessings upon him — *Ameen*. ■

Some recollections and impressions about the late Dr. Asghar Hameed

Compiled by the Editor

1. First I must add my own tribute. Besides his recognized learning in his professional field of mathematics, Dr. Asghar Hameed was also highly knowledgeable in the books of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and Maulana Muhammad Ali and Lahore Ahmadiyya writings in general, as I came to know personally. He had a phenomenal memory, and in any religious discussion or when asked a question he could point you to a reference in the appropriate book almost instantly. He could reflect over new and difficult issues and come up with possible solutions in the light of Islam. Almost every time that I spoke to him, even when he was very ill, I gained some piece of interesting and useful knowledge from him. He suggested some lines of research to be followed up.

This high degree of knowledge and intelligence was combined with a deep humility and an absolutely unassuming manner. In the early 1990s I was passed the typescript of his English translation of the Promised Messiah's book *Kitab al-Bariyya* for revision and finalization for publication. He had done the translation most meticulously, with great precision and attention to detail. As he expressed the wish to remain anonymous I have paid him the following tribute in my Foreword to the second, the main, part of this publication (entitled *An Account of Exoneration*):

"The translation of this entire book was first prepared by a highly learned and scholarly, senior figure in the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Lahore, Pakistan, who did the work most meticulously with great accuracy. May Allah bless and reward him profusely for his labour!"

When he read these words in a pre-publication copy, three years ago, he said to me: "These words of praise were not necessary".

His reading was broader than his career subject and the religious publications of our Movement, and included, for example, works of English literature. I

myself heard him, on a social occasion, relating in some detail the plots of *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens and *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo.

When he was yet a youngman of 25 years, his name was mentioned by Maulana Muhammad Ali in a Friday *khutba* published in *Paigham Sulh* (issue dated 23 February 1944). Maulana Muhammad Ali had been appealing to young persons of the *Jama'at* to learn foreign languages so that they could translate our literature into them. He then added:

“There is a young friend of ours sitting here. His name is Hameed Asghar and he is a lecturer in a college. He has interest in gaining religious knowledge and he comes to see me sometimes to learn from me. I mentioned to him my idea that after the War [the Second World War] we should spread the Holy Quran and Islamic literature in Russia. This has made him think of learning the Russian language. God has brought about the resources for him and he is now learning this language.”

Although Dr. Asghar Hameed did learn some Russian in those days, but the plan in mind could not be followed up, especially as our *Jama'at* lost its focus on its translations projects shortly afterwards. Amazing are the ways of Almighty God, however, that only a few months after he became *Ameer* of our *Jama'at*, the time also came when our Russian translation and commentary of the Holy Quran, which had been in preparation for the previous seven years, was published by the A.A.I.I.L., U.S.A., and its initial distribution in Russia also coincided with his period of headship. May Allah grant him forgiveness and protection, and admit him among His righteous servants — *Ameen*.

2. Tariq Ahmad writes:

May Allah have mercy on our beloved *Hazrat Ameer*, Dr. Asghar Hameed *sahib* and grant patience to his family and to our *Jama'at* to bear his loss.

Hazrat Ameer was one of my teachers during my early college days in Pakistan. He was kind enough to tutor me in Mathematics at his home during two summers. He had retired from his University position by that time. He not only did this free of charge but was generous with his hospitality, making sure that the heat of the summer was

alleviated for this student by at least a glass of cool lemonade every time.

I have nothing but fond memories of this amazing man. Mathematics was not my strong suit (probably never will be) but it was not for any lack of patience and effort on his part. He was one of the most patient teachers that I have ever had the pleasure of learning from. There was never a time when I felt fear in his presence, as one might when studying under someone who has reached a high point in his career. I always had a sense of gratitude and desire to do more for him. Even when he was explaining a complex problem to me for the third time (just for that day) he would at times chuckle a little as if he and I together discovered the mistake in my approach to the problem.

Later on I also got to know him as an Imam, who gave impeccable Friday sermons. I am sure that his abilities as a teacher came into play, but the presentation of his thoughts flowed so well, and towards the end of the sermon the ideas presented felt complete and fulfilling. He delivered these sermons in such an unassuming yet direct manner, as if he was carrying on a personal conversation with the audience.

I had also heard from my elder brother, who was at the UET (University of Engineering and Technology) when Dr. Asghar Hameed *sahib* was the head of a department there, that he was known as a man of integrity and tremendous backbone. It was known among students that once he made up his mind and deemed a course of action to be right, no one could make him waver an inch from it.

By the time he became the *Ameer* I was no longer in Pakistan, but during my visits, I made it a point to spend some time with him. I always found him in a simple white *shilwar kameez* suit and he would receive guests in his living room. He always talked straight and spoke plainly and truthfully. An individual who did not care for anyone once he knew that he was doing the right thing. A very polite man, yet he spoke as he saw things to be; a rare quality among people these days.

May Allah give our beloved *Hazrat Ameer*, Dr. Asghar Hameed *sahib* a place close to Him in the hereafter. May He make him sit with those in whose footsteps he so carefully followed, and faithfully and to the best of his ability discharged his duty as the *Ameer* of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore.

3. Rashid Jahangiri writes:

Dr. Asghar Hameed *sahib* was a very humble person indeed. In December 1998 on the occasion of the annual *Jalsa* of our Ahmadiyya Anjuman in Lahore, it was the first and the last time I had the chance to meet the late Dr. Asghar Hameed *sahib*.

On the first day of the *Jalsa*, we reached Lahore late. The evening session had already started. After the session, I was sitting in the mosque, next to my father, when we saw a man who, on sighting my father, waved his hand and started walking towards us. My father asked him, “You stay there and I will myself come”, but still that person came and before my father could get up from the carpet he reached us and shook our hands and sat opposite to us on the carpet, and started conversation with my father. After he left, my father making a reference to arrogant religious leaders, said: “Did you notice how humble is our *Ameer*?”

Next morning I went for *Fajar* prayer. I was the third person in the mosque. Dr. Asghar Hameed *sahib* was sitting on the carpet. In a few moments other people started coming in. There was no such protocol that others should be in the mosque before the *Ameer* arrives. Even the prayers were not led by him. After the *Fajar* prayer, I introduced myself to him and requested him to pray for me as I was about to take my professional exam in a few weeks. Listening to my request, he tried to make it clear to me that he was not a holy man of God. I understood the point he was making. So I asked him, “you pray for me, I will pray for you”, to which he agreed.

My short interactions with him left a profound impression of his humility on me. I wish I had more time to know him.

4. Yahya Ahmad writes:

Dr. Asghar Hameed continued to live in the same house and buy groceries for his household even after his election as our *Ameer*. The Anjuman voted to grant him a driver and even employed somebody for this job. He refused to make any personal use of the driver, but stated as he had been employed it would now be unfair to discharge him, so the Anjuman could use him for its official work.

He believed deeply in fully following the *Shariat*. He once said: “If you find anything against the *Shariat* then leave it”. He made his *wasiyyat* (will) in his lifetime and gave his property gradually

in the way of God. He advised others to do the same and stated something to the nature of why wait till death to do this good work. He was straight forward and a man of principle. Once he decided something based on principles he was immovable. He was a humble man and would no doubt be surprised about the profound effect he had on others. ■

New Head of Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement: Dr. Abdul Karim Saeed



Following the death of Dr. Asghar Hameed, the new *Ameer* and Head of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman has been elected to be **Dr. Abdul Karim Saeed**.

Dr. Abdul Karim Saeed was born on 28th February 1945 at Dadar in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. His grandfather, Hazrat Maulvi Muhammad Yahya, an early companion of the Promised Messiah, named him Abdul Karim.

Dr. Saeed attended Burn Hall School in Abbottabad and Forman Christian College in Lahore before joining medical school. He graduated as a doctor from King Edward Medical College Lahore in 1968. Dr. Saeed was inclined towards religion from early childhood. He benefited a lot from the discourses on the Holy Quran and Hadith and readings from the books of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that his father, the late *Hazrat Ameer* Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan, conducted almost on a daily basis. He was also very much influenced by lectures and Quran teaching of the late Maulana Abdul Haq

Vidyarthi, Naseer Ahmad Faruqi and Maulana Hafiz Sher Mohammad. As a student in a missionary school he did not hesitate to engage the Christian priests in discussions about the death of Jesus Christ or to explain the truth of the claims of Hazrat Mirza sahib to fellow students and teachers. He has been continuously building on this firm foundation and is today considered one of the most learned members of the Movement.

Dr. Saeed started his medical career in Mayo Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan, and later moved to New Zealand, followed by the U.K. where he obtained Membership of the Royal College of Physicians. He moved back to Pakistan in April 1981 and took up a teaching position in Ayub Medical College, Abbottabad. He was promoted as Professor of Medicine in 1987 and appointed Head of the Department of Medicine in 1991. In 2001, he was selected to become Principal of the College but his appointment was cancelled by the government under pressure from the anti-Ahmadiyya religious lobby. Dr. Saeed also has the distinction of being conferred the Fellowship of the Royal Colleges of Physicians London (1994), and Fellowship of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Pakistan, in 2001. He is also serving as a member/chairman of a large number of professional committees.

He has remained a staunch member of the *Jama'at*, and has shown great patience and commitment to the Movement in times of adversity and persecution by the opponents of the Movement. His love for the Holy Quran is exemplary. Dr. Saeed was elected a member of the General Council of Trustees of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore in 1992 and has retained this honour and served the *Jama'at* in that capacity ever since. He commands great respect for his rectitude and uprightness. He has always made very positive contributions to the affairs of the Movement, and been a regular speaker at the Annual Ahmadiyya Gathering in Lahore for over 20 years.

On 3rd November 2002, Dr. A.K. Saeed was unanimously elected as *Ameer* and President of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore. Being at the pinnacle of his career, he has accepted this responsibility at a tremendous sacrifice. We request all readers to pray for his success in uplifting the Movement, and that may Allah give him the strength, wisdom and spiritual prowess to lead us to successfully spread the message of Islam to the corners of the world — *Ameen*. ■

Age of Aisha (*ra*) at time of her marriage

by Zahid Aziz, Editor *The Light*

Qualities of Aisha and her role in Islam

In any discussion on the age of Aisha (*ra*: may Allah be pleased with her) at the time of her marriage with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him), it is of the greatest relevance to note the pivotal role she played as a teacher, exponent and interpreter of the religion of Islam. Aisha was an exceptionally intelligent and astute woman, a young prodigy, and this was the main reason why she was got married to the Holy Prophet, as is clearly proved by events after the Holy Prophet's life. She entered his household, shortly after his emigration to Madina, just at the time when the teachings of Islam in all fields of life for the Muslim community were starting to be revealed to the Holy Prophet and demonstrated by him by his example and practice. An intellectually gifted person was required who would have daily contact with the Holy Prophet at the closest and most personal level, so as to absorb the teachings that he was giving on all aspects of life by his words and actions. Such a person would need to possess the following qualities:

- an excellent, precise memory to retain a vast amount of detail accurately,
- the understanding to grasp the significance and the principles of the teachings,
- powers of reasoning, criticism and deduction to resolve problems on the basis of those teachings,
- the skills to convey knowledge to a wide range of audience,
- and, finally, have the prospect of living for a considerable period of time after the death of the Holy Prophet in order to spread his message to distant generations.

That Aisha possessed all these qualities and carried out this mission is an absolutely positive and undeniable, historical fact. After the Holy Prophet's death, she acted as a teacher and interpreter of Islam, providing guidance to even the greatest of the male

Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. They made a special point of going to her to gain knowledge and seek her opinion. A vast number of sayings and actions of the Holy Prophet are reported from her in books of Hadith. She not only quoted his sayings and reported her observations of events, but interpreted them to provide solutions to questions. Whenever necessary, she corrected the views of the greatest of the Companions of the Holy Prophet. She made rulings and judgments on which Islamic law is based.

The following are two examples of what the Holy Prophet's male Companions said about her:

“Abu Musa said: Whenever there was any hadith that was difficult [to understand] for us, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, and we asked Aisha we always found that she had knowledge about that hadith.”

“Musa ibn Talha said: I never saw anyone more eloquent than Aisha.”

— Tirmidhi, *Abwab-ul-Manaqib*, i.e. Chapters on Excellences, under ‘Virtues of Aisha’.

In the famous compilation of the lives of saints in Islam, *Tadhkirat-ul-Auliya*, the author Farid-ud-Din Attar, who lived eight centuries ago, introduces the life of the early female saint Rabia of Basra as follows:

“If anyone says, ‘Why have you included Rabia in the rank of men?’, my answer is that the Prophet himself said, ‘God does not regard your outward forms’. ... Moreover, if it is proper to derive two-thirds of our religion from Aisha, surely it is permissible to take religious instruction from a handmaid of Aisha.”

— *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, abridged English translation of *Tadhkirat-ul-Auliya*, by A.J. Arberry, p. 40.

It is thus recognised, from the earliest times in Islam, that some two-thirds of Islamic *Sharia* is based on reports and interpretations that have come from Aisha.

In view of these exceptional qualities of Aisha and the towering role played by her in the transmission of the teachings of Islam, it is simply preposterous and outrageous to suggest that she was the victim of some form of child and marital abuse. We ask in particular the Christian and Jewish critics

of Islam, who are reviling the Holy Prophet Muhammad on the basis of his marriage with Aisha, whether they can point out any example of a woman *in their religions* who played a role like that of Aisha in learning the religion from its founder and becoming the teacher and instructor of all his followers, including men, after his death.

Age of Aisha at time of marriage with Holy Prophet Muhammad

It is believed on the authority of some Hadith reports that the marriage ceremony (known as *nikah*, amounting to betrothal) of Aisha with the Holy Prophet Muhammad took place when she was six years of age, and that she joined the Holy Prophet as his wife three years later at the age of nine. We quote below from two such reports in Bukhari.

“It is reported from Aisha that she said: The Prophet entered into marriage with me when I was a girl of six ... and at the time [of joining his household] I was a girl of nine years of age.”

“Khadija died three years before the Prophet departed to Medina. He stayed [alone] for two years or so. He married Aisha when she was a girl of six years of age, and he consummated that marriage when she was nine years old.”

— *Bukhari*, Book of Qualities of the *Ansar*, chapter: ‘The Holy Prophet's marriage with Aisha, and his coming to Madina and the consummation of marriage with her’.

As to the authenticity of these reports, it may be noted that the compilers of the books of Hadith did not apply the same stringent tests when accepting reports relating to historical matters as they did before accepting reports relating to the practical teachings and laws of Islam. The reason is that the former type of report was regarded as merely of academic interest while the latter type of report had a direct bearing on the practical duties of a Muslim and on what was allowed to them and what was prohibited. Thus the occurrence of reports such as the above about the marriage of Aisha in books of Hadith, even in Bukhari, is not necessarily a proof of their credibility.

Determination of the true age of Aisha

It appears that Maulana Muhammad Ali was the first Islamic scholar directly to challenge the notion that

Aisha was aged six and nine, respectively, at the time of her *nikah* and consummation of marriage. This he did in, at least, the following writings: his English booklet *Prophet of Islam*, his larger English book *Muhammad, the Prophet*, and in the footnotes in his voluminous Urdu translation and commentary of Sahih Bukhari entitled *Fadl-ul-Bari*, these three writings being published in the 1920s and 1930s. In the booklet *Prophet of Islam*, which was later incorporated in 1948 as the first chapter of his book *Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad*, he writes in a lengthy footnote as follows:

“A great misconception prevails as to the age at which Aisha was taken in marriage by the Prophet. Ibn Sa‘d has stated in the *Tabaqat* that when Abu Bakr [father of Aisha] was approached on behalf of the Holy Prophet, he replied that the girl had already been betrothed to Jubair, and that he would have to settle the matter first with him. This shows that Aisha 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 Aisha. This shows that Aisha must have been about ten years at the time of her betrothal to the Prophet, and not six years as she is generally supposed to be. This is further borne out by the fact that Aisha herself is reported to have stated that when the chapter [of the Holy Quran] entitled *The Moon*, the fifty-fourth chapter, was revealed, she was a girl playing about and remembered certain verses then revealed. Now the fifty-fourth chapter was undoubtedly revealed before the sixth year of the Call. All these considerations point to but one conclusion, viz., that Aisha 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 one report in the *Tabaqat* that Aisha was nine years of age at the time of *nikah*. Again it is a fact admitted on all hands that the *nikah* of Aisha took place in the tenth year of the Call in the month of Shawwal, while there is also preponderance of evidence as to the consummation of her marriage taking place in the second year of Hijra in the same month, which shows that full five years had elapsed between the *nikah* and the consummation. Hence there is not the least doubt that Aisha was **at least** nine or ten years of age at the time of betrothal, and fourteen or fifteen years at the time of marriage.” (Bolding is mine.)

— *Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad*, 1992 U.S.A. edition, p. 30, note 40.

To facilitate understanding dates of these events, please note that it was in the tenth year of the Call, i.e. the tenth year after the Holy Prophet Muhammad received his calling from God to his mission of prophethood, that his wife Khadija passed away, and the approach was made to Abu Bakr for the hand of his daughter Aisha. The *hijra* or emigration of the Holy Prophet to Madina took place three years later, and Aisha came to the household of the Holy Prophet in the second year after *hijra*. So if Aisha was born in the year of the Call, she would be ten years old at the time of the *nikah* and fifteen years old at the time of the consummation of the marriage.

Later research

Research subsequent to the time of Maulana Muhammad Ali has shown that she was older than this. The following information has been brought to light.

1. The famous classical historian of Islam, Ibn Jarir Tabari, wrote in his ‘History’:

“In the time before Islam, Abu Bakr married two women. The first was Fatila daughter of Abdul Uzza, from whom Abdullah and Asma were born. Then he married Umm Ruman, from whom Abdur Rahman and Aisha were born. These four were born before Islam.”

— *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 4, p. 50.

Being born before Islam means being born *before* the Call.

2. The compiler of the famous Hadith collection *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Imam Wali-ud-Din Muhammad ibn Abdullah Al-Khatib, who died 700 years ago, has also written brief biographical notes on the narrators of Hadith reports. He writes under *Asma*, the older daughter of Abu Bakr:

“She was the sister of Aisha *Siddiqah*, wife of the Holy Prophet, and was ten years older than her. ... In 73 A.H. ... Asma died at the age of one hundred years.”

— *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Edition with Urdu translation published in Lahore, 1986, vol. 3, p. 300–301.

This would make Asma 28 years of age in 1 A.H., the year of the *Hijra*, thus making Aisha 18 years old in 1 A.H. So Aisha would be 19 years old at the time of the consummation of her marriage, and 14 or

15 years old at the time of her *nikah*. It would place her year of birth at four or five years *before* the Call.

3. The same statement is made by the famous classical commentator of the Holy Quran, Ibn Kathir, in his book *Al-bidayya wal-nihaya*:

“Asma died in 73 A.H. at the age of one hundred years. She was ten years older than her sister Aisha.”

— Vol. 8, p. 346.

4. The birth of Aisha being a little before the Call is also consistent with the opening words of a statement by her which is recorded four times in Bukhari. Those words are as follows:

“Ever since I can remember (or understand things) my parents were following the religion of Islam.”

— Those four places in Sahih Bukhari are the following: *Kitab-us-Salat*, ch. ‘A mosque which is in the way but does not inconvenience people’; *Kitab-ul-Kafalat*, ch. ‘Abu Bakr under the protection of a non-Muslim in the time of the Holy Prophet and his pact with him’; *Kitab Manaqib-ul-Ansar*, ch. ‘Emigration of the Holy Prophet and his Companions to Madina’; and *Kitab-ul-Adab*, ch. ‘Should a person visit everyday, or morning and evening’.

This is tantamount to saying that she was born sometime *before* her parents accepted Islam but she can only remember them practising Islam. No doubt she and her parents knew well whether she was born before or after they accepted Islam, as their acceptance of Islam was such a landmark event in their life which took place just after the Holy Prophet received his mission from God. If she had been born *after* they accepted Islam it would make no sense for her to say that she always remembered them as following Islam. Only if she was born *before* they accepted Islam, would it make sense for her to say that she can only remember them being Muslims, as she was too young to remember things before their conversion. This is consistent with her being born before the Call, and being perhaps four or five years old at the time of the Call, which was also almost the time when her parents accepted Islam.

Two further evidences cited by Maulana Muhammad Ali

In the footnotes of his Urdu translation and commentary of Sahih Bukhari, entitled *Fadl-ul-Bari*, Maulana Muhammad Ali had pointed out reports of two events which show that Aisha could *not* have

been born later than the year of the Call. These are as follows.

1. The above mentioned statement by Aisha in Bukhari, about her earliest memory of her parents being that they were followers of Islam, begins with the following words in its version in Bukhari’s *Kitab-ul-Kafalat*. We quote this from the English translation of Bukhari by M. Muhsin Khan:

“Since I reached the age when I could remember things, I have seen my parents worshipping according to the right faith of Islam. Not a single day passed but Allah’s Apostle visited us both in the morning and in the evening. When the Muslims were persecuted, Abu Bakr set out for Ethiopia as an emigrant.”

— Muhsin Khan’s English translation of Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 37, Number 494.

Commenting on this report, Maulana Muhammad Ali writes:

“This report sheds some light on the question of the age of Aisha. ... The mention of the persecution of Muslims along with the emigration to Ethiopia clearly shows that this refers to the fifth or the sixth year of the Call. ... At that time Aisha was of an age to discern things, and so her birth could not have been later than the first year of the Call.”

— *Fadl-ul-Bari*, vol. 1, p. 501, footnote 1.

Again, this would make her *more than* fourteen at the time of the consummation of her marriage.

2. There is a report in Sahih Bukhari as follows:

“On the day (of the battle) of Uhud when (some) people retreated and left the Prophet, I saw Aisha daughter of Abu Bakr and Umm Sulaim, with their robes tucked up so that the bangles around their ankles were visible hurrying with their water skins (in another narration it is said, ‘carrying the water skins on their backs’). Then they would pour the water in the mouths of the people, and return to fill the water skins again and came back again to pour water in the mouths of the people.”

— Sahih Bukhari, *Kitab-ul-Jihad wal-Siyar*, Chapter: ‘Women in war and their fighting alongside men’.

Maulana Muhammad Ali writes in a footnote under this report:

“It should also be noted that Aisha joined the Holy Prophet’s household only one year before the battle of Uhud. According to the common view she would be only ten years of age at this time, which is certainly not a suitable age for the work she did on this occasion. This also shows that she was not so young at this time.”

— *Fadl-ul-Bari*, vol. 1, p. 651.

If, as shown in the previous section above, Aisha was *nineteen* at the time of the consummation of her marriage, then she would be twenty years old at the time of the battle of Uhud. It may be added that on the earlier occasion of the battle of Badr when some Muslim youths tried, out of eagerness, to go along with the Muslim army to the field of battle, the Holy Prophet Muhammad sent them back on account of their young age (allowing only one such youngster, Umair ibn Abi Waqqas, to accompany his older brother the famous Companion Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas). It seems, therefore, highly unlikely that if Aisha was ten years old the Holy Prophet would have allowed her to accompany the army to the field of battle.

We conclude from all the evidence cited above that Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was *nineteen* years old when she joined the Holy Prophet as his wife in the year 2 A.H., the *nikah* or betrothal having taken place five years previously.

The Bible on marriage of young girls with older men

As it is Christian evangelists and other believers in the Bible who have been bitterly reviling the Holy Prophet Muhammad on account of his marriage with Aisha, we put to them the practices of the great patriarchs and prophets that are recorded in the Bible itself in this connection. The main accusations regarding the marriage of Aisha are that she was too young in age while the Holy Prophet was a much older man, being fifty years of age, and that consent to marriage was either not obtained from her or she was not capable of giving it.

Abraham

In the book of Genesis in the Bible it is recorded about Abraham:

“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, ‘The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.’ Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. ... So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was **eighty-six years old** when Hagar bore him Ishmael.” (Genesis, chapter 16, verses 1–4, and 15–16, New International Version. Bolding is mine.)

Firstly, it is evident that as Abraham (who then had the name Abram) was 86 years old, Hagar must have been some fifty years younger than him, and probably even younger, to bear a child. Secondly, the Bible speaks of Sarai *giving* her maidservant Hagar to Abraham. So Hagar’s consent was not obtained but rather she was commanded by Sarai to go and become Abraham’s wife.

David

The first book of Kings in the Bible begins as follows:

“When King David was old and well advanced in years, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him. So his servants said to him, ‘Let us look for a **young virgin** to attend the king and take care of him. **She can lie beside him** so that our lord the king may keep warm.’ Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful girl and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The girl was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no intimate relations with her.” (1 Kings, chapter 1, verses 1–4, New International Version. Bolding is mine.)

So there seems nothing wrong, according to the Bible, in procuring a *young virgin*, again apparently without her consent, whose duties include lying with the elderly king in bed. The intention was certainly for sexual enjoyment, otherwise there was no necessity of looking for a young, beautiful virgin. A much older woman, perhaps a widow, could have performed all these duties, including lying with the king to keep him warm.

Mary and Joseph

The most famous marriage in Christianity is no doubt that of Mary, Jesus' mother, with Joseph. While the following details are not in the canonical Gospels in the Bible, it appears from other early Christian writings (known as apocryphal writings) that Mary was *twelve years old* when the temple elders decided to find a husband for her. They selected the husband by drawing lots, and Joseph whom they chose was an elderly man, being according to some accounts *ninety years old*. The husband was selected and Mary was handed over to him, and she played no part in his selection.

These accounts are summed up in the Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913 edition, as follows:

“It will not be without interest to recall here, unreliable though they are, the lengthy stories concerning St. Joseph's marriage contained in the apocryphal writings. When forty years of age, Joseph married a woman called Melcha or Escha by some, Salome by others; they lived forty-nine years together and had six children ... A year after his wife's death, as the priests announced through Judea that they wished to find in the tribe of Juda a respectable man to espouse **Mary, then twelve to fourteen years of age, Joseph, who was at the time ninety years old**, went up to Jerusalem among the candidates; a miracle manifested the choice God had made of Joseph ...”

— In article *St. Joseph*, under letter *J*. See the webpage: www.newadvent.org/cathen/08504a.htm

Although these apocryphal accounts are not now accepted by many Christians, and the Catholic Encyclopedia says that they “are void of authority”, yet it also speaks of their influence as follows:

“they nevertheless acquired in the course of ages some popularity; in them some

ecclesiastical writers sought the answer to the well-known difficulty arising from the mention in the Gospel of the Lord's brothers; from them also popular credulity has, contrary to all probability, as well as to the tradition witnessed by old works of art, retained the belief that St. Joseph was an old man at the time of marriage with the Mother of God.”

However, these accounts are accepted by the Eastern churches. The website of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy has an article on this subject entitled *An Elderly Joseph* which agrees with the presentation in the apocryphal writings “of Joseph as an elderly man, a widower with adult children”. It concludes:

“The Christian East's picture of Joseph as a courageous, faithful, God-centred elderly widower rings true.”

(See the following webpage:

www.unicorne.org/orthodoxy/articles/articles_a/joseph.htm)

While the Western Christian churches may not accept these accounts as authentic, the Eastern churches in Europe do accept that Mary was 12 years old and Joseph a widower 90 years old when they married. Moreover, there is nothing in the Gospels of the New Testament to contradict these accounts, and the Gospel stories are not at all inconsistent with these ages for Mary and Joseph.

Appendix

We quote below from the *Infancy Gospel of James*, one of the apocryphal works referred to above, from chapter 8, verse 2, to chapter 9, verse 11:

“When she [Mary] turned twelve, a group of priests took counsel together, saying, ‘Look, Mary has been in the temple of the Lord twelve years. What should we do about her now, so that she does not defile the sanctuary of the Lord our God?’ And they said to the high priest, ‘You have stood at the altar of the Lord. Go in and pray about her. And if the Lord God reveals anything to you, we will do it.’ And the priest went in taking the vestment with twelve bells into the holy of holies and prayed about her. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood before him, saying, ‘Zachariah, Zachariah, depart from here and gather the widowers of the people and let each one carry a staff. And the one whom the Lord God points out with a sign, she will be his wife.’ So the heralds went out to the whole surrounding area of Judea and the trumpet of the Lord rang out and all the men rushed in.

Throwing down his axe, Joseph went out to meet them. And after they had gathered together with their rods, they went to the high priest. After receiving

everyone's rod, the high priest went into the temple and prayed. When he was finished with the prayer, he took the rods and went out and gave them to each man, but there was no sign among them. Finally, Joseph took his rod. Suddenly, a dove came out of the rod and stood on Joseph's head. And the high priest said, 'Joseph! Joseph! You have been chosen by lot to take the virgin into your own keeping.' And Joseph replied, saying, 'I have sons and am old, while she is young. I will not be ridiculed among the children of Israel.' And the high priest said, 'Joseph, fear the Lord your God and remember what God did to Dathan and Abiron and Kore, how the earth split open and swallowed them because of their rebellion. Now fear God, Joseph, so that these things do not happen in your house.' Fearing God, Joseph took her into his own possession."

(From the English Translation by Shelly Matthews. See: www.earlychristianwritings.com/infancyjames.html) ■

The analogy of the "Garden"

*Speech at the A.A.I.I.L. U.S.
Convention, August 2002*

by **Fazeel Sahukhan**

Analogies appear to be a principal form of communication in religious literature. It seems that analogies, taking on the form of allegorical statements or parables, are a means to achieve the goal of understanding spiritual concepts. This can be said because we find all religious personalities utilizing this form of communication in their respective missions. In Islam, the description of "heaven" as revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad is a perfect example. Rather than spending too much time, today, speaking about the spiritual condition of heaven, which is readily available for all to study from our literature, I would like to focus more on the specific issue of the analogy in the Quran of heaven being a "Garden". The "nature" of heaven will be reviewed merely as an introduction to this main topic that I would like to discuss.

Heaven as a spiritual condition

In reference to heaven, the Holy Prophet was once asked: "if paradise were as extensive as the heavens

and the earth" as is stated in the Quran, "where should hell be"? The questioner was obviously under the impression that heaven and hell are two physical locations, and that if one were to consume everything and extend to infinity, as is indicated by the phrase "as extensive as the heavens and the earth" (the Quran, 57:21), how is it possible then that the other can even exist? The Holy Prophet simply replied: "Glory be to Allah, where is the night when the day comes"? The clear message being, just as one experiences night and day as two conditions, rather than two places, so too does one experience heaven and hell.

The Quran also indicates that these two conditions of heaven and hell are, in fact, two opposites on a spiritual evolutionary chart: he who purifies his soul, evolves along this spiritual path to experiencing more and more of the blessings that the condition of heaven contains, and he who corrupts his soul, stunts his spiritual growth and experiences the conditions that hell has to offer. Chapter 91:9–10 of the Holy Quran, in regards to the conditioning of the soul, states:

"He is indeed successful who causes it to grow, and he indeed fails who buries it."

From this verse it is clear that the qualities needed in order to evolve spiritually are provided equally to all — that is, all have the potential to reach the higher stages of spiritual progress — and those who foster their soul with what is good and abstain from what is bad or harmful, progress to higher stages in this spiritual journey.

It can simply be summarized then, that heaven is, in fact, the stage of attaining spiritual life. It is not a place, but rather a condition one may experience by doing what is good for one's soul.

Heaven as a Garden

Having understood what heaven is, it is now possible to explore the issue of why the Quran repeatedly refers to this condition as a "Garden". What is it about the word "Garden" which illustrates a complex and philosophical concept as intriguing and as important as the state of heaven?

Most noticeably, a garden, which is the opposite of barren land, can be seen as representing "growth" and "life"; two descriptions of heaven, as already mentioned. So referring to heaven as a Garden, can be based upon the clear similarity of both signifying

“life” as opposed to death, and “growth” as opposed to stagnation. It is, therefore, a perfect analogy using a material representation of a spiritual condition consisting of these two qualities.

The Soul as a Seed

Moreover, as heaven is the evolved stage of the “soul”, so too can one say that a garden is the developed state of the “seed”. Just as the soul has the potential for progressing to this higher stage, so too does the seed possess the potential for developing into a higher form. Although this highly developed form of the seed may appear to be a “new” creation, it is actually a continuation of the original life form that has merely evolved. Hence, the analogy of the Garden does not merely represent the goal for which we aspire (i.e. heaven), but it also helps us understand the initial form of life (i.e. the soul) from which heaven may possibly result. To illustrate this point further, I will read out the definition of the word “garden” from Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary. It reads:

A plot of ground where herbs, fruits, flowers or vegetables are *cultivated*; A rich well *cultivated* region.

Therefore, a necessity or pre-condition to producing a garden, is cultivation. The definition of the word “cultivation” from the same source reads:

To foster the growth of; To improve by labor, care or study.

Keeping in line with the present analogy, one learns that if cultivation is needed in order to produce the garden, so too must “fostering the growth of” the soul be required to attain heaven. Thus, the soul in this world must be fostered through “labor, care or study” just as the seed must be cultivated in the soil.

The illustration of the Garden as a manual for attaining Heaven

The analogy of the Garden appears to further reveal *how* one is to cultivate one’s soul. This analogy goes far beyond merely showing a superficial similarity to what it is being compared to; if reflected upon, it is clear that a much deeper lesson is to be learned from it. This deeper significance takes the form of a manual of how to achieve this desired end.

For vegetation to grow, it is commonly understood that three things are necessary: 1) rain, or another source of water, 2) sunlight and 3) the

proper environment. Generally speaking, a garden must be the product of a combination of these three ingredients. The analogy of heaven as a garden is reinforced by the fact that for a soul to reach a heavenly state, the same three things are needed. Water, sunlight and the proper environment are mere physical representations of the three spiritual essentials needed for advancing to spiritual life.

Water as Revelation

Just as the seed is, so too is the soul in need of water, which the Quran metaphorically refers to as signifying “revelation”. Throughout the Quran, we read that the effect of rain upon the earth is likened to the effect of the revelation of the Quran upon the soul. For example, in 22:5–6, we read:

“And thou seest the earth barren, but when We send down thereon water, it stirs and swells and brings forth a beautiful (growth) of every kind. That is because Allah, He is the Truth, and He gives life to the dead, and He is Possessor of power over all things ...”

The illustration is of course that just as rain gives life to barren lands, so too does the Quran give spiritual life to the dead or stagnant souls. Thus, just as the seed of the garden must have exposure to rain, so too must the soul of heaven be exposed to the revelation pouring down to earth in the form of the Quran.

Sunlight as the Prophet Muhammad

After water, a seed will need sunlight. This process is called *photosynthesis*, which simply means ‘putting together with light’. It is the process by which plants use the energy from sunlight to produce sugar, which is converted into ATP, being the “fuel” used by all living things. Accordingly, so too is the soul in need of the shining light of the Prophet Muhammad in order to put into practice the “life” presented in the Quran. In 33:45–46, in reference to Prophet Muhammad, we read:

“O Prophet, surely We have sent thee as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner, and as an inviter to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving sun.”

Thus, just as the seed will need sunlight during its evolution, so too is the soul in need of the example of the Holy Prophet in order to develop the spiritual

life given through the Quran. As the Quran emphasizes in 5:15:

“Indeed there has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book.”

These two ingredients, the Light being the Holy Prophet and the Book being the Quran, are consistently presented in the Quran while explaining how to attain the Garden. They have also been reiterated by the Holy Prophet himself. In his final sermon, he summarized what is necessary for spiritual success by stating:

“I leave behind me two things, the Quran and my example (the *Sunna*), and if you follow these you will never go astray.”

Proper Environment as Appropriate Circumstances/Conditions

However, just as the seed consuming water and being exposed to sunlight will still not develop if placed in an inappropriate environment, where the proper nutrients are not accessible, or where the climate is unsuitable, the soul, as well, can only flourish if fostered under proper conditions. This is probably the most overlooked aspect to spiritual growth. Can one sincerely say they are developing their attribute of forgiveness, if they forgive when they have nothing to lose? Forgiving another for taking a worthless item is very different, from say, forgiving another for taking a loved one's life. Forgiving another out of a genuine belief that it is the moral thing to do, is very different from forgiving out of fear of further injury. It is only when one is in a position to choose, when one is tried, when there is a struggle within, an inner conflict, that one is able to develop these innate attributes. The attribute of patience, for example, by its very definition, cannot be developed without exposure to stress or some form of pain. For one to study the Quran and the Sunnah and yet seclude him or herself from the stressful and morally challenging situations that life has to offer, is a dismissal of the practical aspect of developing the spiritual life within and, in effect, the creation of an environment of spiritual stagnation or moral death. It is therefore essential for one's innate attributes to be tested and tried under the proper conditions in order for it to be developed, much like the seed must be planted and cultivated in the proper environment in order for it to grow.

God's attributes of Mercy

The analogy of the garden also illustrates God's attributes of Mercy, that is *Rahman* and *Rahim*. The opening verses of the Quran reveal the importance of these attributes. It states in the *Fatihah*: “All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. The Beneficent (*Rahman*), the Merciful (*Rahim*)”. Only second to introducing Allah as the Lord of the Worlds, is Allah described as being Beneficent and Merciful. These two attributes reflect two types of mercy. *Rahman* represents the great expansiveness of Allah's Mercy and *Rahim* signifies its constant repetition. In the illustration of the garden, we see that Allah is so Merciful that He provides all that is needed in order for a garden to be produced without any doing on the part of anyone. The sun, water, soil, nutrients, etc., are all available just waiting to be utilized. So too, on the spiritual side, we see that Allah has provided all that is necessary for man to create his state of heaven; that is, the Quran in an everlasting form, free from any type of adulteration, the example of the Holy Prophet which has been recorded in such detail that his life is literally as an open book for all to study, and the tests and trials of life which force all to choose appropriate courses of action. In the illustration of the garden, we see that when one makes use of these raw materials, that is the sun and water, and cultivates, Allah rewards this work by, ultimately, producing a garden. Accordingly, one can be assured that if one is to instill the teachings of the Quran into their life, follow the practice of the Holy Prophet, and persevere the trials and tribulations of choosing appropriate conduct under particular circumstances, he or she too will be rewarded by being blessed with what heaven has to offer. The illustration of the garden reveals Allah's attributes of Mercy in practice; from first providing the ingredients to all, to then rewarding those who make an effort to utilize them.

Intermediary Stage of *Barzakh*

Another similarity between the physical and spiritual representations in this analogy is that both evidence the inevitable intermediary stage known as *barzakh*. *Barzakh* literally means “inactivity” and it refers to the transitory state one is in after death and before proceeding to the life hereafter. In fact, in the spiritual evolution of the soul, between each level of spiritual progress, one experiences a period of *barzakh*. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, in his book *The Ideal Prophet*, explains this phenomenon. He writes:

“The end of each greater stage is characterized by a sudden cessation of progress popularly called death — the decomposition of the ingredients which the progressive entity then absorbed in order to pursue its course of progress, in every stage. This cessation of progress continues for periods of different duration in different cases. This period we Muslims call *barzakh*.”

This sequence can also be witnessed in the evolution of a garden. After growing to full fruition, a garden too will experience a sort of death at an appointed season. A period of inactivity takes place; growth and life become stunted. A lush garden will surely become barren land subsequent to its full development. Nevertheless, after a period of cessation, at the appointed term, or season, we see the signs of the continuation of the previous period’s development. Although it may appear to be a new growth, commencing from a different form of life (i.e. a new seed), it is in fact the resumption of the original growth of the season of past, simply after a period of interruption. Hence, we learn from the illustration of the garden that when one progresses to new stages of heavenly life, although it may appear as if a new creation is developing, it is simply the original, evolved entity starting on a new course in this infinite journey.

“Harith”, the Cultivator

Relevant to this discussion is a prophecy by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It is recorded in the *Musnad* of Abu Dawud that Ali reported the Holy Prophet said, in reference to a reformer of the latter days: one person will be raised from the region of *Warai-un-Nahr* and will be called “Harith”, meaning “farmer” or “cultivator”. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, applied the fulfillment of this prophecy to himself, as his ancestry could be traced to the area which the Harith was to be from (i.e. Turkestan), and his family worked in the agricultural field. However, due to his services for the spiritual upliftment of humanity, clarifying the true meanings of God’s words, exposing the falsity of erroneous, interpolated beliefs, and resolving the differences which tore the followers of God in their respective faiths in uncountable directions, it is not difficult to comprehend the deeper significance of this reference

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Attacks on Islam

A Friday Khutba in Columbus, Ohio

by Muhammad Sadiq (Barry White)

“And they say: None shall enter the Garden except he who is a Jew, or the Christians. These are their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. Nay, whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve. And the Jews say, The Christians follow nothing (good), and the Christians say, The Jews follow nothing (good), while they recite the (same) Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like what they say. So Allah will judge between them on the day of Resurrection in that wherein they differ.” — The Holy Quran, 2:111–113

Many Westerners are attacking Islam today. The Rev. Jerry Vines told an annual conference of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest American Protestant denomination, that many problems America was facing were due to “Religious Pluralism”. He went on to say: “They would have us believe that Islam is just as good as Christianity”. And then added: “Christianity was founded by the virgin-born son of God, Jesus Christ. Islam was founded by Muhammad”. And then he criticizes the Prophet’s married life, and calls him “demon-possessed”.

At this point I would have to say that the Holy Prophet’s married life was exemplary, and to describe him as “demon-possessed” is ludicrous and demonstrates Reverend Vines’ ignorance. I would like to ask the Reverend Vines, How was it possible for a “demon-possessed” man to transform within a short 23 years, 7th century Arabia from a nation addicted to wine, women and song, to a nation devoted to prayer, morality and abstinence from alcohol? Can demonic forces produce such a large-scale reformation? Does not Reverend Vines believe what his master Jesus proclaimed? Did he not say that you will know the good tree by the fruits that it bears, that a good tree bears good fruits, and a bad

one bears bad fruits? How did this demonically possessed Arabian produce such beautiful and abundant fruits in the morally parched deserts of Arabia? If Reverend Vines heeds the judgment of Jesus in this matter, he has to praise rather than insult the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

The President of the Southern Baptist Convention called Reverend Vines' words "an accurate statement", thereby endorsing his views, and putting the whole denomination behind him.

Charles Colson, former Watergate conspirator, is now the Chairman of the Prison Fellowship Ministries. This too is a highly responsible position that should be held with integrity and justice. Recently, Mr. Colson told Fox news T.V. that unlike Christianity, Islam is not a religion of love. He charged that, instead, Islam is "dedicated toward hatred, violence and resentment".

Now if you judge Islam by the actions of some Muslims, you could come to that conclusion. But if you judge Christianity by the actions of many of its followers, just in the last few hundred years, you have to judge Christianity also as hateful, violent and resentful. In America our Christian ancestors slaughtered and dispossessed the American Indians. Then they brought Africans to America as slaves, entailing much misery and death upon these people. Then there were two world wars between the Christians, and the slaughter of six million Jews by the German Christians, and even today our streets are often mean streets, and we are at risk of being mugged, molested or even murdered, and in our homes spouse and child abuse is a big problem. It would, however, be unfair to judge the Christian religion by the actions of those who do not follow the beliefs of Christianity, or who have bizarre or atypical interpretations of Christianity. In the same way, it is unfair and invalid to judge Islam by the hateful and resentful actions of some Muslims who do not represent Islam as taught by the Quran and authentic Hadith.

Insults and distortions are not the only challenge thrust upon Islam today. There is also a vigorous missionary attempt on the part of the evangelical movement to convert Muslims to Christianity, and their methods are often ethically questionable. The magazine *Mother Jones* (May–June 2002, page 43) reports that the organization, 'Frontiers', is the largest Christian grouping in the world that focuses exclusively on proselytizing to Muslims. With 800

missionaries in 50 countries, Frontiers' reach extends from the South Pacific to North Africa, with every major Islamic region in between.

The director of this organization, Rick Love, teaches the missionary students to hide their identity, while secretly working to convert Muslims. He himself went back to school, so he qualified as an English teacher and had an excuse to be in Indonesia. His real purpose was to propagate Christianity to the Muslims there. But as he admitted: "I could look someone in the eye and say, I am an English teacher, I have a degree, and I am here to teach".

Other evangelists have run businesses overseas, and thus were able to employ and propagate to Muslims. Others have been aid workers. Two notable aid workers were Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer, who were imprisoned by the Taliban for spreading Christianity. After their release President Bush praised them by saying "they had a calling to serve the poorest of the poor". However, the magazine *Mother Jones* comments: "But Curry and Mercer were doing more than relief work. Once home, they admitted to violating Afghan law by showing a part of Jesus film, and giving a Christian story book to a Muslim family".

Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, criticizes evangelic propagation methods. "The issue is disproportional power relationship. They use their resources to coerce people to do what they want to do." He tells of a Christian Group that offered to send veterinarians to extremely poor Fulani cattle herders in West Africa. The group insisted, however, that they accept a missionary or no veterinarians would be sent. Mr. Hooper comments: "When people are in desperate circumstances, they'll do things they otherwise wouldn't do".

Some missionaries try to get converts by taking on the behavior of the foreign culture. They call this, 'contextualization'. The magazine *Mother Jones* (page 48) explains this concept. "The idea is to get away from the old fashioned practice of importing American style Christianity, complete with wooden pews and western hymns. Instead, missionaries today are more likely to take Muslim names, dress in veils and other local clothing, prostrate during prayer, and even fast during Ramadan". Some Christian groups forbid their missionaries to reveal

that they are Christians, others even say they are Sufis or dervishes.

In the last ten years, the number of missionaries trying to convert Muslims has jumped from several hundred to over 3000 today. The Southern Baptist Convention of which Reverend Vines, whom I have mentioned earlier, is a member, sends many. Like Reverend Vines, many have a hostile attitude towards Islam, and believe that Muslims will go to eternal hell if they do not accept Christianity. They believe that Islam, and other religions for that matter, are inspired by Satan, and that they should be destroyed, that only Christianity has any truth to it. Some believe that Muslims should be converted before Jesus comes back.

The verses from the Quran I quoted earlier throw light on what I have talked about today. They say that it is the vain desires of the Christians and the Jews that only they will enter paradise. They are challenged to bring proof of this if they are truthful. As Maulana Muhammad Ali in his commentary points out: "Both the Jews and the Christians degraded religion to a belief in a set of doctrines, and leading a life of righteousness was not considered as of the essence of religion". The reason for this is that it's much easier to just believe in a set of doctrines and go through some rituals, then to do the hard work of doing good to all humanity. It's much harder to dig into your pocket to help a person, charity or cause, and to be patient and helpful to others. This even applies to Islam. *Surah Al-Maa'un* (Ch. 107) attacks those who pray without helping the orphans and the needy, for instance.

Allah requires us to be "the doers of good to others". To believe in Jesus, Moses, or Muhammad, and not help your fellow men, is to make religion a hollow thing. And whoever does good to others, "he has his reward from his Lord". The verse does not say just Muslims will get their rewards for good deeds, so it applies to other religious groups as well.

The verses criticize the Jews and the Christians because they told each other they didn't follow anything good, even though they read the same book. The verse has Allah telling them they have no knowledge when they adopt such attitudes. Now in these days the evangelical Christians say the Muslims follow nothing good, and they distort the teachings of Islam to suit their purposes. As such they have no knowledge, or to be blunt, they are ignorant.

Commenting on this verse, Maulana Muhammad Ali writes: "The Quran accepts that there is partial truth in all religions. The declaration of this cosmopolitan principle by Islam as regarding a substratum of truth underlying all religions is the more wonderful when it is borne in mind that Islam took its birth in a country which had no connection with the outside world, and the principle was proclaimed by a man who had not read the scriptures of any religion". ■

... The Analogy of the "Garden":

Continued from Page 16, Column 1:

to a person who would be a "cultivator". Hazrat Mirza sahib fulfills this prophecy in its physical and material sense as well as in its spiritual connotation. He was a spiritual cultivator, studying the Quran, learning its deep underlying truths, and analyzing the life of the Prophet in such detail so that he was able to correct many of the falsely based views that were commonly spreading among the un-informed and which were acting as a barrier to spiritual growth. He was a modern day example of how one is to foster one's innate attributes into moral qualities and attain the high spiritual stage of becoming a "friend" of God, regularly communicating with Him. Through his writings and teachings, and example, others were given the opportunity to understand the Quran and the life of the Prophet in all its beauty and glory and, hence, begin to cultivate their own souls. Accordingly, the understanding of the higher stages of spiritual life and the illustration of the garden, helps reveal the significances of the prophecies relating to this latter-day reformer as well.

Conclusion

To conclude, we see from this simple analogy the numerous and varied types of knowledge one may gain from it. The analogy of the garden informs us of the nature of heaven, the capacity of the soul, the essentials needed for spiritual conditioning, the attributes of God in relation to His creation, the inevitable cycle of periods in progressive spirituality, and the underlying significances to the fulfillment of prophecies related to the awaited reformer, to mention a few. The analogy in essence reveals the truthfulness of the Quran and verifies its Divine origin. May Almighty Allah guide us so that we may learn from this analogy, cultivating our own

souls, and, if we have not already started, begin to prepare for ourselves our own personal gardens — *Ameen.* ■

The Quran of Islam

by Nikki Dawson

(Nikki Dawson, a native of California, USA, is a student at Alliant International University, San Diego. The following article is from the preface of a class project she did for one of her classes. Born and raised in the Christian faith, the article gives an interesting perspective of the Quran from the point of view of a non-Muslim.)

As I read the Quran and research its content, I find it very difficult to hold on to my own Biblical belief system. I have always known that the words/semantics of the Holy Bible, throughout the ages, have been translated and changed through the context of each language. The major languages were Gaelic, Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, and English.

I also find it easy to believe that scribes and scholars of old, *possibly* changed the words/meanings of certain scriptures in accordance with their cultural ways and thinking. We are told by some of today's scholars and critics that these men were divinely inspired by God at the time of revision and/or interpretation. Also, some of the texts were written many years after the actual words were said and/or incidences occurred. Word to mouth from generation unto generation can change meanings.

This Book, the Quran, has some kind of power that draws me into its content. It has one author, in one language, and the words were transcribed at the time of revelation. This is one of the reasons why the Quran is to be trusted as the direct word of God, unlike the Holy Bible and the Torah.

The Arabic writings along side the English words are very beautiful to behold. When I heard the words of the five prayers recited in Arabic, I found myself strangely attracted to the message even though I did not understand the content. I also found this to be very dangerous. The first verse recited in Arabic is almost poetic in its sound and touches the very depth of my senses.

Almost every piece of information that I read is the same, or very similar to the Biblical text. I have

been reading and using the Holy Bible as a guideline for over fifty years. It is the basic meaning to both of the texts that I find so fascinating.

The Quran has opened up a new thought process for me. I have had to fight my ways of thinking. I have questioned my very essence. I have had to discover in myself if I held any prejudice about this sacred text.

Have I read it with an open mind? Have I allowed its words, Arabic sounds, and power, to take over and create doubt about my own viewpoints?

What is the Truth? Can I accept this as the word of God given to the Last Prophet, according to its writings? It is definitely a powerful language with a very powerful message.

I believe in the angel Gabriel. I believe in the teachings of Moses. I believe in living a Just and Holy Life. I believe in striving for the highest good possible of/to humankind in the natural and supernatural. I believe that God is the giver of gifts to the few and that all are predestined to fulfill His purpose.

I find it easy to open up to the teachings of how to live in justice and compassion and love. I use some of the laws of the Quran in my daily life. I find it is in so many ways parallel to the Holy Bible and the Torah. It is also fulfilling my desire to find guidance, revelation, knowledge, hope, spiritual recognition, and a universal need to have an explanation for the beginning and the ending of human existence.

It explains what God (Allah) is, His character and His expectations of humankind. The literature also details what is to come. It is timeless in its message. It uses historical evidence as a basis for some of its messages.

The question put before me is to analyze and discuss the main message. How do I interpret the words according to my past experiences and cultural attitudes? I have taken bits and pieces from the teachings and sacred writings of most of the other main religions of the world (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity). I am who I am because of this training.

I have been using the messages in this sacred text, the Quran, for years. Its main theme is almost the same as all the other sacred texts that I have incorporated into my lifestyle. ■

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