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VIRTUE AND GUIDANCE

Extracted From

A Research on the Qur'ān and the Prophet

By

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P R E F A C E

"A Research on the Qur'ān and the Prophet" is a religious book written by the learned orator, Fakhruddin Hijāzi. It speaks of some metaphysical realities which have descended from the apogee of God's sophia to the soul of the true Prophet, Muhammad (ص), in the form of a divine revelation and as a true, eternal Book, and have provided the universe with the manifest religion of Islam.

According to the vital programs of Islam, human beings are able to advance towards the spiritual elevation and fly high to the endless direction, to the world of illuminations and finally to the pure eternity.

What a pity that nowadays, the time of fraud and mania, the devious man feels no more a need for the supreme human values and takes the Un-

seen Station for nothing. Alas! that man calls himself cultured and civilized but he lacks the capability and power to distinguish between his good and evil deeds. He is, in fact, devoid of the courage to get back from the midway of absolute animal life.

The present work contains two chapters of the above-mentioned book concerning 'virtue' and 'guidance', which the translator hopes would improve the religious knowledge of dear readers whose only means of acquiring religious information is the English language.

In the end, it would not be irrelevant to mention that the English translations of Qur'ānic verses have been borrowed from Rodwell's "The Koran", to whose soul I owe a deep dept of gratitude.

H.V. Dastjerdi

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful,
the Compassionate

THE STATION OF VIRTUE

ELIF.LAM.MIM. No doubt is there about this Book: It is a guidance to the God-fearing, who believe in the unseen, who observe prayer, and out of what we have bestowed on them, expend for God; and who believe in what hath been sent down to thee, and in what hath been sent before thee, and full faith have they in the life to come: These are guided by their Lord; and with these it shall be well. ¹

With the passing of Ramadhān and the murmur of virtue, we are now confronted with the Nurūz movement and natural spring has taken over the spring of praying. How good it is to gain freshness from both sides and to never remain still and apathetic.

Fasting was a great divine school which taught us the lesson of virtue so as to clean the dust of vice from the heart and to purify the dimness of sin from the soul. It is now better to know what virtue is, who the pious and what the motives and phenomena of righteousness are and what a status the pious have at the pure threshold of God.

Human Supremacy

Islam was originally placed at the opposite side of class privileges, and the reverend Leader of Muslims, the day when he succeeded the trespassing Quraish, stood by the house of Ka'aba where the elevated shrine of unity and the worshipping place of the believers was, saying: *"Allah has created man from dust and no one takes privileges over others except for righteousness."* This clear reality is expressed in the Holy Qur'ān as follows: *"The most worthy of honour in the sight of God is he who feareth Him most..."*² In fact, the Qur'ān says that anyone who fears

God and is afraid of tomorrow's punishment and stains not himself (or herself) with the dirtiness of vice, is dearer than others before God.

This decisive statement and stable logic is a mystery for the prosperity of beings so as not to adorn their hearts with what is other than the love for God, not to seek except the Will of Him (the Glorious, the Great) but, instead, to purify the person and to refine the soul; for such purification and refinement are factors of human advance towards reaching the sublime empyrean of the Lord and towards spiritual success.

On the other hand, due to the reason that virtue is the criterion for virtuous beings, by the acquisition of it, hostilities and coarsenesses will vanish and moral and intellectual evolution which is the principle of primordial nature will be substituted for them.

What is Virtue?

The eloquent logic of Islam in responding this question is: "*Virtue is the best of provisions.*"³ As a matter of fact, virtue is a worthy provision which can save us from being stranded powerless in the far passages of life, constantly invigorate us through the dangerous eternal journey towards the everlasting world and finally lead us to our Lord, powerful and light of wing.

The founder of Stoicism, Znon,⁴ had the idea that the principal aim and the ultimate desire of man in his actions is virtue. In other words, he believed that virtue is a kind of morality which prompts the individual to acquire the good and to refrain from evil.

The leader of the pious, Ali (on whom be God's peace), has more expressively explained this reality. He says:

Piety is the key to goodness, the font of eternal prosperity and ultimately the fact which frees sensualists from subjection to any evil and dirty habit, as well as from destruction and hardness of life. ⁵

In the subtle school of the Stoics, virtue is thought to be dependent on human will. They say: "Our good and evil deeds reside on our will." A strong and powerful will, they believe, should appear within the social institution to keep control of the devil of the soul and to choke its breath in the throat.

Once again we go to Ali's school to see how this statue of piety expresses this issue in respect to his queer certainty which rests upon knowledge and faith. Ali says:

O creatures of God! I advise you to seek piety, for it is the harness and the control. Thus, seek its security and clutch

to its realities. ⁶

Virtue is the harness through which the pious sustain their bodies and souls from falling into the gulf of vice and destruction. They make themselves strong and straight in the path of justice, faith and chastity. How good it would, therefore, be if the prosperity-seeking creatures of God grasp at such a string (virtue) in order to save themselves from the collapse into the burning valleys of sin, for the fetid cesspool of corruption is the dwelling place of the villain while the strong fortress of immunity, goodness and success is the lasting station of virtue. Ali (A.S.) says:

Know O creatures of God that piety is strongly fortified; it is a respectful heaven while the sinful and vicious life is such an undependable refuge which can neither protect nor safeguard those who take shelter there. ¹

Finally, it is virtue or piety which helps us in avoiding sins and conciliates our hearts with the fear of God. In this regard Ali's saying is the testimony. He says:

*O people! Piety prevents mankind from indulging themselves in sins and vices. It makes them God-fearing...*⁸

It is not proofless, therefore, that the Prophet of Islam prompted people towards the signs of virtue and repeatedly announced in his guiding sermons: "*O people be pious.*"

The Stoics believe that temporary passion is a motion in the soul, opposite to human nature and wisdom. The first condition for righteousness, they assert, is the killing of such an adverse motion in itself. In this regard and on the attainment of the reality of virtue, Epictetus, the philosopher, says: "*Recoil and be patient.*" The Stoics hold as well that 'patience' means having resistance against earthly

pleasures and being brave against lusts. They further explain that 'recoiling' is the lack of attempt on man's part to attain what is concerned with worldly desires. This is also very nicely represented in a sacred tradition which reads as follows:

Take the control of your person in carrying out God's command and prevent it from committing sins.

In doing so, the more the energy one applies, the better the reward he receives, for it is said: "*the best obedience before God is the hardest obedience.*"

It is to be noted, therefore, that we should preserve ourselves from falling victim to animal instincts and passionate desires. This is in itself the mystery of life. This preservation and control has been interpreted as 'fortitude' in the logic of religion. Ali (A.S.) recommends: "*Attempt seriously to obey God and*

attempt to stand against sin." ⁹

Fortitude is the same concept that Epictetus calls 'endurance' and, interestingly, the precept of fasting which is the perfect example of such endurance has been mentioned as "patience" in the Qur'ān where it says: "*Get help from Fast (patience) and prayer.*" ¹⁰

Socrates and Plato, architects of the Ideal State in ancient Greece, considered knowledge to be the sole element of virtue. They believed that human beings should perceive the consequences of good and evil deeds through their knowledge and then follow virtue.

However, this essential yet insufficient condition cannot definitely impel us to piety unless we control ourselves under the commandments of faith. In this respect the Holy Qur'ān says:

God will uplift those of you who believe, and those to whom 'the knowledge' is given, to lofty grades... ¹¹

Emmanuel Kant, the great German philosopher, believes that good will is the only thing that may become the subject of morality. He further adds that man should originally have a longing for goodness and then contemplate it in order to become pious.

It is not, therefore, proofless that Zoroaster, too, regarded 'good thought' as a definite principle in the theory of his religion, and that Jesus Christ (on whom be God's mercy) preached that *'if others taught you not to commit adultery, I say not imagine it even.'*

But as to Islam, it regards 'good will' and the desire of proximity to Allah as a basis for the acceptance of our deeds. It expounds that actions and deeds depend on human will and that man is measured by what he possesses in his will.

Darwin and Lamarck, proponents of the theory of evolution, believed that just like nature

and materiality, virtue and morality as well move towards evolution. Also, Herbert Spencer, the English philosopher, believed that good deeds are those which are beneficial for evolution. He concluded that man will reach a stage in the light of moral evolution that he follows philanthropy instead of egoism. In other words, at that stage, man shall seek his own trouble but others' comfort.

This idea is quite clearly represented by the conduct of our religious leaders but in the form of piety and humanity. The testimony is Ali's altruism, when he and his family remain in hunger while they bestow the barley bread of their fast table on the poor.

The Holy Qur'ān reveals this in the following verse:

They of Medina who had been in possession of their abodes and embraced the faith before them, cherish those who take refuge

with them; and they find not in their breasts any desire for what hath fallen to their share: (they prefer them before themselves, though poverty be their own lot)..And with such as are preserved from their own covetousness shall it be well. ¹²

It is also Ali (A.S.) who devotes his dear soul to the attainment of God's satisfaction in the tumultuous battlefield.

. A man, too, there is who selleth his very self out of desire to please God. ¹³

Who are the Pious?

There is no piety in turning your faces toward the east or the west, but he is pious who believeth in God, and the last day, and the angels, and the scriptures, and the prophets; who for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred, and to orphans,

*and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming; who observeth prayer, and payth the legal alms, and who is of those who are faithful to their engagements when they have engaged in them, and patient under ills and hardships, and in time of trouble; these are they who are just, and these are they who are pious.*¹⁴

The above verse enables us to distinguish between the pious and the impious.

The first privilege of pious beings is the belief in God, i.e., believing in the great Lord, the Absent of absents, whose auspicious presence is manifested everywhere, believing in the Day of Judgement, the Resurrection for all the people to receive their parts (reward or punishment), accepting the prophets as divine messengers and the angels as immortal and spiritual forces, being humble before God (performing prayers) under the light of such belief, helping the creatures of God (giving alms) and finally

devoting the life to the challenge of God's enemies and the propagation of orthodox doctrines of Islam (fighting in the way of God-Jihād).

These are the qualities possessed by the pious. These are the signs of piety which, regarding the Qur'ān's testimony, were incorporated in Ali's life.

Motives of Virtue

What attracts us originally towards virtue is our own attention to God's favors and kindnesses. God who has specified human beings for His bestowal and who has chosen them from amongst all His creatures and favored them with all material and spiritual blessings and needs.

Is it not a pity thus not to feel grateful for His blessings, to curse His generosity and to set ourselves against His commands?

In this respect, Ali (A.S.) advises the people through the following words:

O creatures of God! I advise you to piety and the fear of God who has brought examples for your guidance in the Qur'ān, who has determined your dying time, who has dressed you with human qualities (to have superiority over all other creatures) and who has promoted your subsistence (provided your conveniences).¹⁵

The second motive for virtue is to fear God's wrath and vengeance, and to constantly bear in mind his fear and dread in order not to deviate from the path of piety and in order to preserve our souls against unlawful acts. It is written in the Qur'ān:

But as to him who shall have feared the majesty of his Lord, and shall have refrained his soul from lust, verily, paradise—that shall be his dwelling-place.¹⁶

The third motive is to be aware that this world is like a short passage and our departure from this mortal abode is close at hand. Therefore, we must not yield our heart to its loves. We should, instead, take its position, wealth, and illusive phantoms for nothing in order not to barter faith for the world, not to trespass upon people's rights; and in order to stay always aloof from committing individual and social crimes.

It is better to know the world through Ali's (A.S.) logic:

*The streams of this world are dirty and its springs are turbid (most of the ways and means of enjoyment in this world are vicious and many sources of income are sinful). Its window dressing and its show is beautiful but destructive. It is a quickly-ending deception, a speedily-fading light, a hurrying shade, and a weak and unreliable protection.*¹⁷

Eventually, to be pious, we should have belief in the hard eternal penalty and its painful suffering, and fearing from the torrid sparks of the Fire of Hell; we should not commit sins in order to preserve ourselves and our offsprings from its flames. We should follow piety, for God says:

Save yourselves and your families from the fire whose fuel is men and stones...¹⁸

Abstinence

We must abstain from what is the cause for the fall of the spirit, disease of the soul, sickness of the body and corruption of the community; and we must always keep our body and soul unsullied.

The remedy for a great many psychical diseases is virtue.

The first of these diseases is related to

haughtiness and vanity, i.e., imagining to have supremacy over all men and things and dealing without humility and meakness which are the best of human attributes.

The Holy Qur'ān challenges haughty people and invites them to prostration and genuflexion. It advises them in Luqmān's words, saying:

And distort not thy face at men, nor walk thou loftily on the earth; for God loveth no arrogant vain-glorious one. ¹⁹

The second disease of the soul is avidity. We must not follow the world and its phantoms more than our legitimate needs demand. We should not tread the realities down for the sake of our own self-interest. We should not forget the aim of humanity with the increase on our wealth and property; for the Qur'ān says:

The desires of increasing riches occupyeth you, till you come to the grave. ²⁰

Jealousy is also a dangerous disease which burns the stock of obedience like a fire, breaks down the order of the society and hinders human progress, development and success.

In fact, the said three diseases-haughtiness, avidity, jealousy - stand at the zenith of all psychical inadmissibilities.

The Commander of the Faithful, Ali (A.S.) says:

Keep away from three characteristics which are the basis of all faults:

1) vanity; for Satan was haughty, not bowing down to Adam.

2) avidity; for Adam was avaricious, eating from the forbidden tree.

3) jealousy; for Cain was envious, killing his brother, and the jealous person is reckoned amongst the deniers (of God) because he is not content with the divine will and destination. ²¹

All the component parts of the human body are also bound to abstain from vice and unjust actions in order not to obliterate the soul or the faith, make the body sick and corrupt the community.

The first limb is the tongue which establishes a relation between our outer and inner beings, and which must avoid committing sins, telling lies, bearing tale and developing corruption.

The tongue is like unto a snapping dragon which plays with the human body. An Arabic couplet reads:

*Control thy tongue O man! Lest it should
bite thee, the dragon.*

The belly is a greedy stock with numerous expectations. It persuades us to perform illegitimate deeds. It takes away pleasantness of the soul and annoys the body. The Commander of

the Faithful says:

And refrain from gluttony, for it is the root of hard-heartedness ; it causes prayer to be tedious for you and it corrupts the body. ²²

But what sort of disgrace, passion shall inflict on man's purity and how it shall petrify the soul and demolish the faith, is beyond human imagination. Perhaps, the following tradition may shed light on the importance of the dangers caused by such human organs and feelings:

The one who saves himself from the evils of the tongue, the belly and the passion, is immune against all wickednesses. ²³

Foes of Virtue

The foes of virtue are merely two but considerably steadfast and dangerous elements. The

first one is the Fallen Satan who is rejected from the threshold of the Lord; and who lies in ambush to induce men to commit sins. God regards him as the manifest enemy of His creatures, saying: *"But follow not the steps of Satan; for he is your avowed enemy."* ²⁴

The second element is the refractory soul and the mean animal desires which are the greatest enemies and which make effort to haul us towards animal realm and to smash the pearl of mankind so vigorously that there would remain no dwelling and refuge save for the fire of Hell. Ali (A.S.) believes: *"the most dangerous of your foes is your self that lives within you."* ²⁵

Phenomena of Virtue

As a conclusion, it is better to look at the consequences of virtue and see what forms the fruit of this self-control, i.e., the battle against vice and Satan.

Getting help from the Qur'ān, we may summarize the consequences of virtue into two sublime phenomena — namely; guidance and salvation.

This guidance has been considered by the holders of knowledge to be the second guidance; the first one being the natural guide and the religious instinct.

In the light of the luminous rays of piety, the second guidance comes into being, through which man ascends to the center of God's attention, nearness and intuition, where he will not worship, like the Leader of the pious — the Commander of the Faithful — the God that he does not see. Ali (A.S.) says: "*How shall I worship the God whom I see not?*"²⁶

On the attainment of such guidance through piety the Qur'ān says:

O ye who believe! If ye fear God, He will make good your deliverance, and will put

*away your sins from you, and will forgive
you.* ²⁷

A beautiful couplet of a popular lyric by
Sa'adi reads:

*Man will reach a spot where all he sees
is God,
Lo! How elevated is the status of mankind.*

Salvation, too, is to be free from all inad-
missibilities. It is the approach to the emi-
nent status of success (success in functions be-
fore the Lord) which all the people are enthu-
siastic to gain. "These are guided by their Lord,
and with these it shall be well." ²⁸ Yes. This
is the reward for the pious.

We ask God — the Benignant, the Compassion-
ate — to place us among the pious and, accord-
ing to His Mercy, favour us with success in
gaining proximity to submission (in prayer), and
in abstinence from vice, to preserve us against

Satan's intrigues and the temptations of the
evil soul and to make us benefit from the bliss
of guidance and salvation.

THE PRIVILEGE OF GUIDANCE

And whom God shall please to guide, that man's breast will He open to Islam; but whom He shall please to mislead, strait and narrow will He make his breast, as though he were mounting up into the very Heavens. ²⁹

Nowadays that we need the privilege of guidance the most, it would be better to discuss the value of this divine magnificent blessing and its great endless worth in such a way that hearts would be more brightened by its light, the dimness and darkness would fly away from the territory of souls and the light of the heavenly guidance would shed its eternal shine everywhere.

The term 'hudā' (to guide) which is mentioned 236 times in the Qur'ān, carries various meanings of which the following 17 are worth mentioning:

Religion, faith, oneness of God, tradition, Heavenly Books, the prophets, to lead, to reason, to find out, to recognize, to read, to command, to inspire, to retain, to repent, to bring into proper way and to wish to abstain from evil deeds. ³⁰

The brightest amongst these meanings is the term 'to lead' — in a broader sense: "Guidance indicates something that kindly leads man to the desired." ³¹

This guidance that has been interpreted as leading and directing, has degrees and divisions to which attention should essentially be paid.

The author of *Al-Munār* speaks of it in brevity. However, we will explain it in detail.

Instinctive Guidance

This is called the guidance of the natural conscience and inborn inspiration through which the human infant sucks the mother's breast and cries for help at the time of hunger and pain.

It is wonderfully visible among animal species. It actually conducts their social and individual life.

The Holy Qur'ān refers to this clear reality, saying: *He said, "our Lord is He who hath given to everything its form and then guideth it aright."*³² *"He has inspired it concerning how to live and how to feed itself."*³³

This inborn inspiration stimulates the bee to build the most mysterious dwellings and to produce the most delicious, digestible foods for the pleasure as well as the treatment of human beings.

In the case of the bee, the testimony is the following verse of the Qur'ān:

*And thy Lord hath taught the Bee, saying:
"provide thee houses in the mountains,
and in the trees, and in the hives which
men do build thee:*

*Feed, moreover, on every kind of fruit,
and walk the beaten paths of thy Lord."
From its belly cometh forth a fluid of
varying hues, which yieldeth medicine to
man. Verily, this is a sign for those who
consider.* ³⁴

The day when this verse descended from the heavens of revelation, no one was exactly aware of the mysteries of the bee's hive. But later on, such entomologists as Cornelius, Huber, Swammerdam and finally Moris Meterling studied, observed and investigated and then after many years of experimentation and travel, they came to the conclusion that the 'Honey Town' (bee hive) is a large, amazing center in which one

of the greatest, vital endeavours occurs.

There are 120 000 steadfast, standardized hexagonal houses built by the architect bees in the 'honey town'. At the center of these houses, the royal palace which is the seat of the queen bee who produces two millions infants a year, gloriously and with a particular magnificence makes its appearance. Around the palace stand splendid buildings, the residence of princesses, in which live 100 000 virgin bees. Thereupon are thousands of special houses for the care of infant bees. Stocks, barracks and wide streets have been built in every direction. Air-conditioning is also seen here and there in the hive.

An armed city and a civilized territory as such has been set up through the manual work of some apparently unwise bees. Here, all bees including the queen, princesses, guards, sentinels, workers, wet nurses, street-cleaners, engineers, operators and finally nurses make attempts in all aspects of life under the command of

their instincts and according to Meterling; under the command of the hive's spirit-to produce honey, to continue life and to train the new generation. They never stop their endeavors.

Another example of the instinctive guidance may well be seen in Eels which migrate from all parts of the world to a certain spot in the south of Bermuda Islands without compass, guide or geographical maps. Despite the hardships of storms and whirlpools, they tolerate this long, quite crooked distance, lay their eggs in the depths of the ocean and die there. Strangely enough, Eel infants, after growing up, swim the same long distance without back-ground and awareness, return to the parent's settlement and then once again travel to the same spot to lay their eggs.

Butterflies, too, telepathically communicate with each other through their feelers which are like unto reporting antennae.

There are still other animals which use their labyrinths as radars for finding directions.

Now, it would be better to visit the very surprising nests of ants and let them smile at the pompous army of Solomon with their instinctive power of inspiration which enables them to establish dependent, federal governments.

The Holy Qur'ān explains the queer tale of ants as follows:

Till they reached the valley of ants, Said an ant, "O ye ants, enter your dwellings, lest Solomon and his army crush you and know it not." 35

What is then in the dwellings of ants which they so feign disdain of? This question should be answered by men like Reaumur, Villier and Huber who have, for many years, studied the house and the life of this apparently insignificant insect. They say that the town of ants (ant-hill) consists of 20, 30 or 40 stair apart-

ments with domes, halls, galleries, cellars, streets, crypts and stadiums for running and wrestling games. The royal palace of the queen, they say, is also quite gorgeously seen in the town. Such a large, amazing town includes farmers, cattle-tenders, soldiers, hunters, workers, weavers, guards, architects, bricklayers, surgeons, sentinels, millers, agents, lieutenants, fire ants, bridge-constructors and finally captured ants, slaves, housekeepers and the most astonishing of all, predator ants-namely: Dorylina Vagitina. ³⁶

These animals are all inspired by God. They struggle day and night for survival. Ali (A.S.) says:

Look at the ant and see how it, with a small body and with its delicacy of figure which can not be seen by eyes and thought of by mind, moves on the earth, hurries toward its part, transfers the grains into its hole and places them

ready-stocked in summer for its winter, ³⁷

It is, in fact, the instinctive guidance that leads man and all living creatures to continue their lives, and it is this guidance which its rules are immutable forever. But this alone may not suffice for solving the complexities of life. Therefore, we should go after another guidance.

Sensory Guidance

Sensory guidance is that which comes from the senses and is complementary to the primary guidance (instinctive guidance). In fact, instinctive guidance requires sensory guidance-if there is no perception and no sensation, instinctive guidance will stop. This is why the bee will not be able to see flowers from beyond violet rays, if its numerous eyes, each having 7000 surfaces and millions of coney bars, are taken out.

For the same reason, if the bee's antennae which consist of 12 000 spurs and 5000 sockets are cut off, it would not be able to smell the odour of flowers from a distance of about one kilometer.

The same is the case with ants. The removing of any part of their feelers will cause them to lose one of their senses.

Had the sheep-dog, too, not had the sense of smell, it would not have found the passage-way of the sheep to reach it at the pasture.

The Guidance of Wisdom

Save for instinctive and sensory guidances which are common to men and lower animals, there is an over-refined, precious phenomenon named 'wisdom', which the human being alone is privileged with; while other living creatures have no path to the frontage of its advantages.

Wisdom is the very esteemed blessing which is the masterpiece of creation and the hallmark of nature, and God likes it more than other elements of creation, swearing: "*By my Majesty and splendour that I have brought nothing forth dearer to me than thy creation.*" ³⁸

It is obvious that the guidance of wisdom removes the errors of sensory guidance through knowledge and whispers to us:

The galaxies and the clouds that you observe as a white dust on the lap of the heavens, include millions of stars which lie at a distance of millions of light-years and which are a million times larger than our earth. ³⁹

The very globe of the sun which is one of the close bodies to the earth, is 150 million kilometers far from us and while it seems like a small fire-ball, it is 1 300 000 times larger than the earth.

In fact, wisdom and sophia lead us towards reality, knowledge and morality. They motivate the human temperament to step in the direction of perfection. Therefore, the beings who have benefited from the phenomenon of wisdom are those who have been guided by God and God has given them tidings of salvation.

Hazrat Moūsa-ibn-Djafar ⁴⁰ says:

God gives the wise, sagacious people good tidings in His Book, saying: "cheer them with good tidings those my servants who hearken to my word and follow its excellence. These are they whom God guideth, and these are men of insight." ⁴¹

According to the seventh Imam (A.S.), wisdom is God's guide and it has a mission from Him to direct us. Imam (A.S.) says: *Verily, God has two kinds of guides; visible guides — the prophets — and hidden guides, wisdom." ⁴²*

Religious Guidance

Guidance by wisdom also frequently ceases to lead us sufficiently in the direction of the truth — it finally reaches the dead-end of amazement and denial and encounters obscure problems and gloomy, hazardous obstacles. Here is the place where, according to the true mystic, Molavi, to reach the destination, the woody feet of rationalists have no power and strength.

Here, we should fix our eyes upon the heavens of revelation and ask God, the Compassionate, to show us the path of safety and prosperity and to raise the messengers of His threshold to guide the people; for the loquacious thinkers and philosophers lack the deep ability of receiving and transferring the facts. They are disabled to guide and train the people further at this stage.

Furthermore, the various fussy philosophies have never met all our spiritual demands as the

famous European scientist, Dr. Alexis Carel, argues:

Philosophy has not responded to peoples' inquiries except with trifle answers. Neither Plato nor Socrates have succeeded in relieving the anxiety of mankind concerning the mystery of life.

The world of Socrates, Saint Thomas d'Aquinas and Dante which seemed logical and perfect, has passed over, We do not know to what extent the title 'wise man' can be proper for 'real man'.⁴³

Here is the place where heavenly guidance is necessary for the human society; and where the exigency of the fair Lord's justice requires the appointment of prophets and the descent of divine guiding books.

It is written in the Qur'ān: "He it is who hath sent His apostle with guidance and the religion of truth,..."⁴⁴

Due to this very reason, God has sent the beloved Prophet of Islam (PBUH) to guide the people and, according to the following clear verse, He has introduced the Holy Qur'ān for the guidance of human beings: "*Verily, this Qur'ān guideth to what is most upright; and it announceth to believers.*" ⁴⁵

Heavenly guidance which has been interpreted as 'directing to goodness' is incumbent on the prophets — "*Verily, you direct them through the straight path.*" ⁴⁶

Even here problems may arise as hoards of proud, ungrateful people override their limits on this animal pasture (the earth) — the arena of struggle for survival; and since they pay no attention to the divine calls of those who guide them in the way of God, they sink themselves into the obscurity of ignorance, corruption and wickedness.

Contrariwise, there are some people who step

onto the path of spiritual advancement and submit to the command of God.

Here it is that a specified guidance which is solely possessed by the divine nature, interferes and directs those who show talent in perceiving spiritual success towards the proximity of the glorious threshold of the Lord; while it leaves others in their very deviation and adversity.

This unique divine guidance which is called 'the assistance and the success', is possessed solely by God. It is exclusively bestowed upon His pious, entitled beings, while others are deprived of its privileges as God says: "*Thou truly canst not guide whom thou desirest; but God guideth whom He will;...*" ⁴⁷

Imam aṣ-Ṣādeq (A.S.) clarifies this idea in the following words:

Verily, I swear by God that if the dwellers of the heavens and the earth assemble to

guide one whom He desires to mislead, they may not do that, and if they gather together to mislead the one whom God wills to guide, they can not do so. ⁴⁸

The said guidance is also called 'qalbbieh' (that which is inspired to hearts) through which the Almighty God calls the pure hearts of the believers towards Himself and ties them with His unknown place and favor. God tells His Prophet (PBUH) that this guidance is only His, saying: *"Their guidance is not thine affair, O Muhammad; but God guideth whom he pleaseth."* ⁴⁹

Accordingly, guidance is divided into three following types: guidance by sending the prophets and the heavenly books; guidance through the heart and guidance by the divine revelation.

Here, the question may arise that why God does not treat all human beings equally—why He favors some people with the bliss of guidance, while He leaves others in anxiety and deviation.

It might further be said that there must be 'determinism and free will' on God's part regarding the issue of guidance, i.e., He misleads some people and leads some others on the basis of His Will and people have no will of themselves to determine their lot.

The answer is that being guided or led astray depend on the people's inclusiveness (ability to include themselves in God's guidance) and capability (in attracting God's attention). Therefore, anyone who makes efforts and shows his talent, will approach God's favor (guidance); otherwise, he will be deprived of it.

The Misled

Who are those whom God doesn't lead? First of all, God does not guide the atheist "*thus God leadeth the unbelievers astray*"⁵⁰; for they themselves do not desire to find a way to the servitude of God to ask His threshold for the bliss of guidance—since they do refrain from the

truth of Divinity and draw a curtain of blasphemy over the door of their hearts, they are deprived from the divine guidance.

The second group of the misled are the oppressor: "*And God guideth not the wicked.*"⁵¹, who infringe upon God's rights and the boundary of the people's rights, who overstep the realm of nature and health and, thus, fill the Lord with wrath.

The third group are the evil-doers—"but none will He mislead except the wicked"⁵², who are sunk in the fetid depth of vices, who disgrace themselves by committing sins and so blacken the mirror of their soul with the rust of vice that they become unable to receive the reflection of the rays of the divine guidance.

Therefore, it is they themselves who are sinful; who extinguish the light of nature in their very being and, as such, dispossess themselves from the capability of being guided. They may,

however, be definitely bestowed with the fruit of guidance by God, if they turn their faces towards Him and give away blasphemy, tyranny and vice.

The people are, thus, destined for being directed who keep away from vice and error and who step on the path of goodness and prosperity.

Incidentally, in English literature, guidance has come to mean, '*going on a way that prevents us from unforgiveable sins*'—finding salvation.

French scholars, too, regard it as, '*going on the virtuous, prosperous direction*'—*cherche la voi du salut*.

The clergy (priests) also take guidance as salvation, i.e., fleeing from evil.

The Guided

Those people will enjoy divine particular gui-

dance, who are righteous and who keep their distance with the soil of vice. These are whom God directs to the proximity of His attention and places the Qur'ān among them as a guide, saying: "ELIF. LAM. MIM. No doubt is there about this Book: It is a guidance to the God-fearing,..."⁵³

There are, therefore, two types of guidance, one of which leads the pious to the elevated status of piety; while to the other they will reach after obtaining such position. The second one is referred to as '*attainment of the destination.*'

There is another group who benefit from God's particular guidance. They are those who strive in the way of God and, to attain this, give away their property, life and family. They pass the ranks of guidance in the light of purity. The Holy Qur'ān says:

And whoso maketh efforts for us, in our ways will we guide them: for God is assur-

*edly with those who do righteous deeds.*⁵⁴

The steps of getting close to God are thus numerous and everybody should so climb the rungs of this sacred ladder (guidance), in accordance with his ability, as to reach a point where remains no more distance than one step away from the privacy of God's favor. There, is the place of the Praised-Muhammad (PBUH); *"then came he nearer and approached, and was at the distance of two bows, or even closer."*⁵⁵

It is for all these that God's fair creatures always ask Him for the favor of guidance when worshipping and repeat this celestial call from the heart: *"Guide thou us on the straight path"*⁵⁶, i.e., direct us to the way which ends in your affection and Paradise. They also recite: *"O God! make constant on us the guidance through which you directed us to Islam (submission)."*⁵⁷

The Prophet (PBUH) used to say: *"O God! I ask you to bestow upon me guidance, piety, chastity*

and self-sufficiency." 58

On the whole, God's particular guidance does not include all people; therefore, since man is in jeopardy of committing errors and going astray, he constantly implores God to lead him towards goodness, saying: "*O God! lead us to the way accompanied by your hidden aids and protect us from aberration and sin.*" 59 If this prayer ascends cordially to the heavens of the Lord's Mercy, He will accept it and He will answer it.

END

FOOTNOTES

1. Sura II: Baqara—"The Cow", verses 2-5.
2. Sura CXII: Hujurat—"The Apartments", verse 13.
3. Nahjul Balaghah of Ali (A.S.)
4. Znon (425-490 A.H.)
5. Nahjul Balaghah
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Ibid
10. Sura II: Baqara—"The Cow", verse 45.
11. Sura LVIII: Mujadilah—"She who Pleaded",
verse 11.
12. Sura CII: Hashr—"The Emigration", verse 9.
13. Sura II: Baqara—"The Cow", verse 202.
14. Ibid, 173.
15. Nahjul Balaghah
16. Sura XXXV: Naze'at—"Those who Drag Forth",
verse 42.
17. Nahjul Balaghah
18. Sura CIX: Tahrim—"Forbidding", verse 6.
19. Sura LXXXII: Luqman—"Luqman", verse 18.
20. Sura XV: Takathur—"Desire", verses 1-2.
21. Jame-ul-Akhbar
22. Nahjul Balaghah
23. Asrar-ul-Hikam
24. Sura II: Baqara—"The Cow", verse 169.
25. Nahjul Balaghah
26. Ibid
27. Sura XCV: Anfāl—"The Spoils", verse 29.
28. Sura II : Baqara—"The Cow", verse 5.
29. Sura LXXXIX: An'am—"Cattle", verse 125.
30. Vujuh-i-Qur'an

31. Tafsir Al-Munār.
32. Sura XX: Tā. Hā — "Tā. Hā", verse 50.
33. Vuġuh-i-Qur'ān .
34. Sura LXXIII: Naĥl — "The Bee", verses 71-72.
35. Ibid, 18.
36. Named thus by Meterling.
37. Naĥjul Balāghah
38. The book—Creator of the World.
39. Uṣūl-i-Kāfi, narrated from Imam al-Bāqer (A.S.)
40. Sura XXXIX: Zumar — "The Troops", verse 20.
41. The seventh Imam of Shias.
42. Uṣūl-i-Kāfi
43. Original not traceable ; thus, translated from Persian.
44. Sura LXI: Ṣaff — "Battle Array", verse 9.
45. Sura XVII: Asrā — "The Night Journey", verse 9.
46. Sura XLII: Shūrā — "Council", verse 52.
47. Sura XXVIII: Qiṣaṣ — "The Story", verse 56.
48. Uṣūl-i-Kāfi
49. Sura II: Baqara — "The Cow", verse 274.
50. Sura XXIII: Mu'min — "The Believer", verse 73.
51. Sura LXI: Ṣaff — "Battle Array", verse 8.
52. Sura II: Baqara — "The Cow", verse 25.
53. Ibid , 2.
54. Sura XXIX: Ankabūt — "The Spider", verse 69.
55. Sura LIII: Naġm — "The Star", verse 10.
56. Sura I: Fātiĥa — "The Opening of the Book" ,
verse 6.
57. Ma'āni, narrated from Ali (A.S.)
58. Kashf-ul-Asrār
59. Al-Munār