

The starting point of collective repentance of a nation is repentance by its individual members. This must include a real feeling of regret, a firm resolve never to repeat the sins, followed by actual change in behavior, and, in the case of any violation of the rights of other human beings, an appropriate compensation or asking for forgiveness from the aggrieved party. This individual repentance, if performed with its true spirit, does guarantee forgiveness from Almighty God in the Hereafter. It does not mean, however, that the individual will escape any collective punishment from God that might befall his nation (Al-Qur'an 8:25), except in the case when he had used all available resources and had tried his utmost to persuade others to give up their sinful practices (Al-Qur'an 7:165).

The state of collective repentance can be achieved only when first of all a considerable number of individuals would repent and mend their ways; then they must unite themselves into a cohesive force and change the general trend of the society by their exhortation and persuasion, then enforcing the good and forbidding the evil, leading to a revolution in thought as well as behavior. And then, in order to change the whole politico-socio-economic setup, a popular resistance movement will be required that would act as a non-political pressure group, forcing the desired transformation through a non-violent revolutionary struggle. At the same time, a strong nucleus of *Iman* or faith has to be created within the educated classes, especially among the intelligentsia, which would act as a center for the revival of faith throughout the whole society, and thus generate intellectual base and popular support for the revolutionary struggle. The establishment of the Islamic System of Social Justice would then represent our collective repentance.

Epilogue

The Messenger of God (Peace be upon him) has prophesied that a time would come when the Muslims, though great in number, would be as weak and ineffective as the scum on the surface of flood waters.

One can hardly doubt that we are living in that age. Our miserable state of existence, as we have seen, is the direct result of our own deeds: Our turning away from the guidance of the Holy Qur'an and the way of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon

extremely discouraging — especially in relation to the growing influence of Washington, which has a particular antipathy towards Islamic Fundamentalism — we are still hopeful that our country and the adjoining areas would form, sometime in the very near future, a genuine Islamic State. As for the question “When shall that be?” the following answers can be quoted from the Holy Qur'an:

They surely take it to be far away, but We see it very near! (70:6,7)

and

Say: “I do not know if what is promised to you is near, or if my Lord will prolong its term.” (72:25)

However, there are two distinct possibilities for our immediate future: Either we will turn towards Allah (SWT) in repentance, in which case the impending punishment shall hopefully be revoked, or we will continue to sink even deeper into sinfulness, in which case — and it is not easy to face these bitter realities — we might suffer a really major disaster, and only then shall we wake up from our slumber. The choice is ours; though, unfortunately, we have so far been opting for the latter.

Aldous Huxley has said that the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach is that men do not learn very much from the lessons of history. The events of the last four thousand years, as narrated very briefly in this book, clearly show how Almighty God punishes His “beloved” people whenever they transgress His commands. In this context, Pakistani Muslims are already feeling the pangs of minor punishments from Allah (SWT), and, unless we repent, a major episode of Divine retribution seems imminent, the signs of which are already in the air. In the words of Jesus Christ, “Already the ax is laid to the roots of the trees; and every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut and thrown on the fire.” (Luke 3:9)

Repentance: The Only Way to Salvation

What needs to be done, therefore, if we are to escape from the impending catastrophe, is that we turn towards Allah (SWT), repent truly, and make a solemn vow to practice Islam in its totality.

New World Order, representing the global designs and interests of United States and Israel. Despite this fact which is apparent to everyone, we are still being so naive that a few known or unknown forces are easily being able misled us into totally meaningless confrontations and violence.

And those who should help stop this madness — our political leaders — are themselves busy fighting for their domination. The dangerously irresponsible and often illogical rhetoric that appears regularly in our national press is ample evidence that they don't care about anything but power. They make lovely promises of prosperity for the common man, but that poor fellow is the last person their list of beneficiaries.

The Impending Doom

Under the prevailing circumstances, therefore, the possibility of an Islamic Revolution in Pakistan in the foreseeable future is almost non-existent. But to give up all hopes would be tantamount to giving in against the forces of disbelief. As a matter of fact, nothing is beyond the power of Almighty God, and it is only on the basis of our reliance on His succor that we are able to keep the hopes of a bright future alive.

Moreover, we also have in our minds a similar phase during the struggle of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) when, after the death of his only apparent support — his uncle Abu Talib — in the 10th year of Prophethood, the chances of an Islamic Revolution in Arabia appeared thin and bleak. It could have been assumed that the leaders of Quraysh would kill the Prophet and thereby terminate the whole movement. Desperate to find a new base, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) went to Ta'if, but was violently rejected and there and forced out of the town. Returning to Makkah, he realized that he would be immediately killed upon entering the city, and was therefore forced to ask for the protection of Mut'im bin Adi. The gentleman — who never embraced Islam — arrived at the outskirts of Makkah, and, together with his six armed sons, escorted Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) to the city, announcing his protection. Even after these utterly hopeless conditions, however, the Islamic movement not only survived, but the greatest revolution of all times was achieved in the Arabian peninsula within the next ten years or so.

Thus, even though the present conditions in Pakistan are

identity that became the basis of the idea of Muslim Nationhood was neither racial or linguistic in origin, nor based upon a common homeland, but it was founded upon our unique ideology, viz., our deep affiliation with Islam.

The most crucial purpose behind the idea and struggle for Pakistan was Islamic renaissance and revival. As the ideologue of Pakistan Allama Muhammad Iqbal explained in his famous presidential address at Allahbad, a Muslim state was meant to be "for Islam an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times."

This means that today we are living in a paradox. Although our country owes its existence to the Islamic ideology, we have so far failed to make any meaningful progress towards the implementation of that ideology. This also means that by refusing to honor our pledge with God the Almighty, we are ourselves responsible for inviting His anger and His retribution. The pathetic state of our affairs is, therefore, nothing but a manifestation of Divine punishment.

At an ideological level, our intelligentsia is almost completely in the favor of liberalism and permissiveness, a point of view based upon the materialistic and atheistic frame of mind which has been imported from the West. Thus, immodesty and licentiousness is being promoted in the name of entertainment and culture as the ideal standards of behavior for our young men and women. Morally, we are probably the worst group of people on the face of the earth. What to speak of Islamic ethics, we are even devoid of basic human values, as lying, cheating, and hypocrisy have become integral parts of our national character.

As for Islam itself, the majority of our uneducated and semi-educated population tend to treat their faith as only a set of dogmas which has nothing to do with a person's value structure. Among the educated classes, most are suffering from various degrees of atheism, skepticism, and agnosticism. A big chunk of our religious community is busy running after wealth and power, and the menace of sectarianism, which is continuously being fueled by them, has added another ominous dimension to the already worsening national chaos.

The only power that stands to benefit from our internal hostilities and schismatic tendencies is, of course, the so-called

Khurasan (i.e., areas which are now included in Afghanistan and Pakistan), and no force would be able to stop them until they are inserted in Aelia (Jerusalem)."

These prophecies mean that there shall be in the future an Islamic State in the areas which today comprise Afghanistan and Pakistan (and perhaps also those which are included in Iran and Central Asia), so that during the final battles in the Middle East, armies from this part of the world will advance to fight against Dajjal under the leadership of Mahdi. A similar prophecy is also found in the Book of Revelation:

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the Great River, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up to prepare a way for the kings from the east (16:12)

The State of our Affairs

We, therefore, tend to believe — on the basis of the above sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and also because the revivalist efforts of the last four hundred years have largely been concentrated in the Indian subcontinent — that the process of the global Islamic Revolution is going to start from our part of the world. Despite these high hopes and optimism, however, we must admit that the conditions are extremely depressing and almost totally hopeless at the moment, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As far as our own homeland is concerned, the history of the last half a century is clear proof of the truth that we have done everything in this country except what we were supposed to do in order to promote and substantiate its Islamic ideological character. We have followed every ideology except the one we should have. We have utterly and completely failed to live up to the claims and promises made during the struggle for independence in the 1940's.

During the years just prior to independence, we used to make solemn promises with Allah (SWT) that Pakistan shall represent a true Islamic State. This meant that we had recognized Islam not just as a system of beliefs and individual morality alone, but also as the only sources and criterion for our social, legal, cultural, economic, and political systems. The sense of a separate

reformer appears among the Muslims to clarify and rejuvenate the original teachings of Islam. What is most significant is the fact that, during the first millennium, all of these reformers appeared almost exclusively in the Arab world. After the destruction of Baghdad in 1258, the academic and intellectual center of Islam started to shift eastwards — towards the Indian subcontinent — until, at the start of the second millennium, this part of the world became the main nucleus of Islamic reforms and revivalist movements. Thus, unusually great personalities have appeared here during the last four centuries, including Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (11th century Hijra), Shah Waliyullah Delhvi (12th century), Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (13th century), and more recently, *Sheikh-ul-Hind* Maulana Mehmood Hassan, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, and Maulana Mawdudi (14th century). Now the question arises: Are all these sincere efforts of the last four hundred years to go in vain? We believe the answer is an emphatic NO!

It seems that the burden of Arab Muslims has largely been shifted on to the shoulders of Muslims belonging to the Indian subcontinent, and, especially after the claims and promises made during the movement for independence, the task of reviving Islam as a living force has now become the paramount responsibility of Pakistani Muslims. In view of the efforts undertaken during the last four centuries, this also appears to be their destiny. Last, but by no means the least, are the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), which allude to the fact that this part of the world is going to be the starting point for the global Islamic domination; these traditions are given below:

Ibn Maja has narrated on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Haris, that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said that during the battles before the Doomsday, "Armies emerging from the East shall advance, and after conquering one country after another, they shall help and strengthen the authority of Mahdi".

According to another tradition narrated by Tirmidhi, on the authority of Abu Huraira, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said that "Black banners shall emerge from

humiliated group of people. The cause of this unfortunate state of affairs, as we have seen, is our own wrongdoing, our own sinful behavior, our own deviations from the straight path. It follows that the only way to escape from the continuing Divine punishment, and to regain our lost glory, is to repent with the true spirit of repentance and to rectify our corrupted ways.

We the Muslims are the custodians of the last message of Allah (SWT), representatives of the God-given system of life (*Deen-ul-Haq*), and intermediaries between Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and the entire humanity. This leaves us no way to avoid our primary duty, which is to establish the perfect way of life, viz., Islam and its system of Social Justice, initially in a specific territory and then throughout the entire globe. According to the Holy Qur'an:

You are the best of community that has been raised up for the (guidance of) humanity. You are therefore supposed to) enjoin the good, forbid the evil, and keep your own faith firm in God. (3:110)

Strive in the way of God with an endeavor worthy of Him. He has chosen you...in order that the Prophet be a witness against you, and you be witnesses against mankind. (22:78)

Thus We have appointed you a middle people (between the Prophet on one hand and the humanity on the other), so that you be witnesses against mankind, and the Messenger be a witness against you. (2:143)

Although this Herculean but sacred duty of delivering the message of Allah (SWT) to the entire mankind is the collective responsibility of the whole Muslim Ummah, God the Almighty does not burden any soul beyond its capacity, and therefore it is primarily the obligation of Arab Muslims, as the Holy Qur'an was revealed in their own language.

However, after the termination of Prophethood, Allah (SWT) has made a special arrangement to renew and revive the Ummah and her mission. Thus, after every three or four generations, i.e., after about every hundred years or so, a pious

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Lessons From History-VIII

Based on the Urdu Columns By: Dr. Israr Ahmad

About Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him)

Although the exact nature of the ascension and reappearance of Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) is incomprehensible to us, and although these events are beyond the realm of normal human experience, they are by no means impossible. The rationalists among us would express serious doubts and lack of conviction about this, but the fact is that our belief in the ascension and reappearance of Jesus Christ is based upon clear verses of the Holy Qur'an and even more explicit traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The prevalence of materialistic thinking, especially under the influence of the now outdated Newtonian Physics, has caused many of our intellectuals to reject the possibility of miracles. But it must be kept in mind that a miracle, by definition, represents a breakdown in the usual physical laws of the universe, and a special creative feat of Almighty God is manifested from out of the ruins of that broken law. All natural laws have been established by Allah (SWT), and He is able to suspend any of them for any period of time. He is omnipotent, able to do all things.

It seems, on the basis of the predictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), that both the Jews and the Arab Muslims will become the targets of Divine retribution in the final battles — but with a marked distinction. The condemned Children of Israel are going to be completely destroyed at the hands of their own prophet, Jesus Christ, just as numerous other nations were removed from the face of the earth because they committed the crime of rejecting their respective Messengers. On the other hand, the Muslims will receive their share of punishment for turning away from the Holy Qur'an, and, afterwards, the survivors will be able to repent and mend their ways, paving the way for the beginning of the second phase of the domination of Islam.

From Dishonor to Exaltation

We had started our discussion with the assertion that the Muslim Ummah of today is a pathetic, miserable, and extremely