

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Being a member of the Jamaat of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi demands from each one amongst an elevated standard of the practice of all the teachings of Islam as taught by this same Mahdi and Promised Messiah, namely Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908). We will never fulfill our obligations as an Ahmadi Muslim unless and until one of the main priorities of our life is the search for an understanding of what the Promised Messiah (as) has truly said and at the same time a constant endeavour to put his teachings into practice. By the Grace of Allah, this is what I am trying to do for our members. I strive to share with them what the Promised Messiah has said with the hope that they will do their best to put these teachings in practice. But for modern men and women, listening is not sufficient. We do not retain much of what we hear. After twenty minutes, we switch off. Our mind starts to wander. But we do retain what we study and try and strive to remember. A striking example of that is when we try to memorize the Holy Quran. After repeating some verses a few times, they stick to memory and one can easily recall them. I think that the daily reading of the Holy Quran, which is a practice amongst Muslims, helps a lot in remembering the true teachings of the Holy Quran. But the question is how far one has made it one's practice to read a portion every day and to remember it and strive to practice it. You will recall that the first word that was revealed to the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) was "*Iqra*" which is translated as "read". The Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) replied "*maa ana be qari*" which may be translated "I do not know how to read". Eventually Hazrat Gibril (as) will tell him to read and he will say "*Iqra bisme rabbekallazi khalaqal insaana min alaq*" meaning "read in the name of thy Lord who has created man from an adhesive clot" plus four other verses. Eventually in history, the transmission of knowledge would develop in leaps and bounds until in our age, where, together with literacy, it is the driving force of progress. When we read the Holy Quran especially, we develop a critical capacity which help us to distinguish right from wrong. The more we read, the better we become. Since the time of the Holy Prophet (saw), many guides have come and many have tried to explain the Holy Quran to other people so that they might have a better understanding of the Book and the means to lead a better life. Hazrat Masih

Maood (as) is one such guide *par excellence* and he has bequeathed us teachings which if we follow will help us to lead a life of virtue, a life of good deeds. Hence the need for everyone who says that they are Ahmadi Muslims to make it their life mission to know these teachings, to live by them and to spread them around.

So, we continue with the book Noah's Ark's extract from where we left off previously. The Promised Messiah said:

“O ye who seek the Lord, open your ears and listen! Take heed that there is nothing like perfect conviction which delivers you from sin; conviction gives you the power to do good; and conviction alone can turn you into a lover of God. Can you turn away from evil without perfect conviction? Can you hold your base impulses in check without the help of a sure light? Without this perfect conviction, can anyone bring about any real change in himself? Can you attain to any state of satisfaction and peace of mind without this perfect certainty? Can you at all win any real prosperity without it? In the wide world, is there any Atonement which can give you the power to avoid sin which man so much stands in need of? Can the fictitious blood of Jesus, son of Mary, deliver you from sin? O ye Christians, refrain from uttering a monstrous falsehood, even such as would fain break this earth to pieces! For deliverance, Jesus himself had to depend on perfect conviction, he believed with conviction, and was delivered. Woe, indeed, on those Christians who deceive the world by saying they have been delivered by the blood of Jesus Christ even when from head to foot they are drowned in evil. They do not even know who is their God. Their life is one of indulgence and ease; with the intoxication of wine in their head they remain unaware of the life with God; and for them there is no share in the fruits of life as lived in purity. Always remember, therefore, that you cannot come out of the darkness without firm conviction, nor can you get the holy spirit. Blessed are they who have this conviction, and blessed are they who have been delivered from uncertainties and doubts, for they alone shall be delivered of sin; and blessed will you be when this great treasure of firm conviction is given to you, since on that day sin for you will come to an end. Sin and conviction cannot exist together. Would you ever knowingly put your hand into a hole which you see is occupied by a poisonous snake? Or would you remain standing where a shower of red hot stones is coming down from some belching volcano? Or which forms the target of a thunderbolt from the skies? Or where a ferocious lion is likely to attack any moment? Or would you live in a place where a dangerous plague is destroying mankind? Then, if you believe in God with the same firmness of conviction as you believe in the danger from a snake, or a thunderbolt, or a lion, or from plague, it is not possible that you should defy

Him by disobedience, to incur punishment thereby, or that you should want to break the bond of sincerity, and loyalty which binds you to Him.

O ye people who have been called to righteousness and truth, rest fully assured that Divine attraction will take its birth in you, and you will be washed clean of the ugly blot of sin, only when your hearts become brimful of firm conviction. Perhaps you will say that you have this conviction, but you should take care to remember that this feeling is not more than a delusion on your part. That firm conviction is most certainly not yet yours, for you do not display the characteristics which necessarily must go with it always, you have not yet given up your sinful ways; you have not yet taken the first step which you ought to have taken the moment this firm conviction became yours, you do not yet fear sin as you should. You can very well think out the question in your own mind. A man never puts his hand into a hole which he knows to be occupied by a poisonous snake; nor does he ever knowingly partake of a food he has reason to believe has been poisoned. Nor will he thoughtlessly walk into a thicket of trees which harbours a lion. Then how can your hand and feet, your eyes and ears, dare to sin when you have the same degree of certainty in regard to the punishment and reward from God on your conduct in life? How in the name of reason can you throw yourself into a fire which you know will burn you to ashes? And always remember that the defensive ramparts built by firm conviction against sin are veritably as high as the heavens, so that Satan cannot scale them to get you, after you have once properly built them up. Everyone who is purified is purified through firmness of conviction. It is conviction which gives you the strength to bear hardships, even to the extent of persuading a king to abdicate his royal throne and take to the life of a mendicant. Conviction dissolves all difficulties. Conviction enables a man to see God. All ideas of any atoning sacrifice are false, for every kind of purity comes only from firm conviction. The only thing which delivers a man from sin, and advances him in sincerity and steadfastness, far ahead of the angels themselves, is conviction and conviction alone. All religions which fail to create this firmness of conviction are false. All religions which fail to show God by means beyond any shadow of doubt are false; and all those religions are false which contain nothing more than a handful of tales and fables about what happened in the past.

God exists even now, as He did in the days past; His powers too remain the same as they were in the past; and He is still as capable of showing signs as He was before. Then why should you be satisfied with stories and fables alone? The religion is dead and destroyed which contains nothing more than stories of miracles shown in the past; and the people are a dead people on whom God does not descend in grace and mercy, whom the Divine hand itself has not come down to purify. As a man is drawn towards the joys of this

world when he sees its attractions with his own eyes; similarly, is man drawn towards God when he comes to know with perfect certainty that the spiritual joys are even sweeter. The appeal of Divine beauty takes such a hold on his mind that everything else appears to him of no more value than mere trash. Man is freed from sin only when he comes to know of the power of God, and of Divine retribution, on the basis of a firm conviction. Ignorance is the root of every fearlessness, and no one will be found devoid of the fear of God even to the least extent who partakes of Divine knowledge. When a householder knows that a dangerous flood is advancing on his house or that it has been surrounded by a fire on all sides, he will at once flee from it. Then how can you dare to leave your ways of life unaltered after your belief in the existence of God, in Divine retribution and reward, has hardened into a firm unshakable conviction? Therefore, open your eyes and carefully study the Law of God operating in the universe. Do not be like rats which only go digging and descending into the earth: be like a dove capable of flying into the heavens, which feels happy only when it is flying in the pure air of the loftier regions. After taking the *bai'at* of repentance at my hand, take care that you do not remain unaltered in your former sinful ways. Do not be like a snake that remains as much of a snake after it has shed its skin as ever it was before, remember death, which approaches you every moment, though you remain unaware. Do your best to purify yourself, for a man can attain nearness to what is purity par excellence only when himself he becomes pure, as far as possible.” (P23-26)

Such instructions should make all of us pause and reflect on how far we are doing our best to tread this path or if we have we taken another path. Each one amongst us must account for his beliefs and deeds alone. May Allah facilitate this task for each one amongst us. May we all live in such a way that when the time of death arrives we have no regrets and are eager to meet our Lord, *incha* Allah.