

constructive contribution as it tries to learn the secrets of the universe and manipulate its potentials. The leadership which permits and controls all that potential, using it for the benefit of mankind, not to threaten human life with destruction, nor to devote it to satisfy carnal desires, belongs to faith only. It is given to the Muslim community which seeks God's guidance and does not allow itself to be dictated to by anyone of God's servants.

These verses include a warning to the Muslim community against following other people. These are followed later by an explanation of how the Muslim community can create and maintain a proper set-up. The first warning is against following people of earlier revelations, the Christians and Jews, for they will inevitably lead the Muslim community back into disbelief: "Believers! If you pay heed to some of those who have been given revelations, they will cause you to renounce the truth after you have accepted the faith." (Verse 100) In the first place, to follow the people of earlier revelations and to copy their methods and systems indicate an inner defeat and suggest that the Muslim community has abandoned its leadership role. It also suggests the existence of doubts in the minds of the Muslims about the adequacy of the Divine system to organise and elevate human life. These very doubts are the beginnings of creeping disbelief, even though in these earlier stages one may not sense the approaching danger.

The people of earlier revelations, on the other hand, are keen to turn the Muslim community away from its faith, which represents both its line of defence and its driving force. The enemies of Islam are well aware of this, as they have always been. Hence, they spare no effort and resort to all manner of schemes and designs so as to divert the Muslim community from its proper way. When they realise that they cannot win an open war against the faith of Islam, they resort to evil. When they feel they cannot launch a war against it by themselves, they recruit hypocrites who pretend to be Muslims so that they work against Islam from within, advocating different systems and pledging their loyalty to different leaderships.

Were the people of earlier revelations to find some Muslims responsive to their arguments, they would lose no time in channelling that responsiveness to their paramount goal of leading those Muslims, and the Muslim community as a whole, to total disbelief and renunciation of the truth. Hence, the sternness of the Divine warning: "Believers! If you pay heed to some of those who have been given revelations, they will cause you to renounce the truth after you have accepted the faith." (100)

At the time of the Prophet, no prospect was more daunting to any Muslim than to find himself sinking into disbelief after he had accepted the faith. That meant throwing himself back into the fire of hell after he had saved himself and opened his way to heaven. This applies to every true Muslim across generations. Hence, a warning in such terms is sufficient to alert his conscience and keep it wide awake.

hand, if Moses comes back to you tomorrow and you follow him and leave me you will go astray. You are my share of nations and I am your share of Prophets."

A hadith reported by Jabir quotes the Prophet as saying: "Do not ask the people of the earlier revelations about anything, for they will not guide you aright when they have gone astray. You will have one of the two alternatives: either you will accept a falsehood, or you will reject a truth. Had Moses been living among you, the only course lawful to him would be to follow me." The Prophet is also quoted as saying: "Had Moses and Jesus been alive, they would have had to follow me."

This is the position of the people of earlier revelations. The Prophet makes our position abundantly clear when it comes to following their guidance in matters of faith, ideological concepts, law or way of life. However, Islam imposes no restriction whatsoever on its followers when it comes to benefiting by the advances of any group of people in any branch of science. We have only to relate these advances to our own approach to everything in the universe, knowing that God has enabled man to make use of everything on earth so as to achieve a higher and more secure standard of living. We should also be grateful to God for enabling us to make such discoveries and for facilitating our use of the resources and potentials He has placed in the universe. We express our gratitude to Him by worshipping Him alone and by making the right use of our advances.

When it comes to asking the followers of other religions about concepts of faith, the purpose of human life, its method, laws and regulations, its moral values and codes, we find the Prophet's face changing colour at the slightest indication of such. God gives the Muslim community a stern warning against being led by others in any such matter. The ultimate result of that is nothing but the total rejection of faith.

In the light of this directive from God and the guidance of His Messenger, where do we, who claim to be Muslims, stand today? I see us taking Orientalists and their disciples as our teachers when we study the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet. I also see us formulating our concepts of life and existence on the basis of what we learn from these Orientalists, as well as from Greek, Roman, European and American philosophers. We borrow our regulations and laws from these suspect sources. I also find us borrowing our manners, code of conduct, and morality from the stinking immorality into which the modern material civilisation has fallen. Yet we still claim to be Muslims! Such a claim is worse than open disbelief. For when we take such a stance, when our state of affairs is such, we testify to the failure of Islam. Such a testimony is not made even by non-Muslims.

Islam is a method with unique, distinctive characteristics in relation to its ideological philosophy, its laws regulating all spheres of life, and its moral code which governs all political, economic and social relations. It is a method designed to lead humanity as a whole. Hence, it is necessary that a certain community should implement this

Part 4 Surah 3 Al-Imran Verses 100-101

A Warning Against Obeying Non-Muslims

Believers! If you pay heed to some of those who have been given revelations, they will cause you to renounce the truth after you have accepted the faith. (100) But how can you sink into disbelief when God's revelations are being recited to you and His messenger is in your midst? He who holds fast to God has already been guided along a straight path. (101)

Having answered all the arguments advanced by Christians and Jews against the message of Islam, the surah now makes this direct address to the Muslim community, which begins with a stern warning against paying heed to false claims made by followers of other religions, and outlines the essential characteristics of the Muslim community, its methods, beliefs and way of life.

The Muslim community implements a Divine system which makes it unique among all nations of the world. It owes its very existence to this system which, in turn, assigns to it a role which cannot be played by any other community. It has to establish this Divine system in practice so that it appears to all eyes as real and practical. Statements and clauses are thus translated into actions. They define moral standards, generate certain feelings and establish certain relations.

The Muslim community, however, cannot go along its proper way, realise the purpose of its existence and make the theory a reality unless it receives its instruction from God alone. Only through this can the Muslim community assume the leadership of mankind. This precludes them any possibility of following or paying heed to any human being. The choice before the Muslim community is either to follow this course dictated by its faith, or to sink into utter disbelief.

The Qur'an emphasises this fact on several occasions. It tries to mould the feelings, thoughts and morality of the Muslim community on the basis of this principle at every possible opportunity. On this particular occasion, by answering the arguments of the people of earlier revelations and forestalling their schemes against the Muslim community in Madinah, this principle is re-emphasised. The fact that it is stated again here, within the context of a particular set of circumstances, does not detract from its permanent validity. It applies to all generations of the Muslim community because it is the basis of its very existence.

If the Muslim community is brought into existence in order to assume the leadership of mankind, how is it possible for that community to receive instructions from the very ignorance which it aims to eradicate? If the Muslim community is to abandon its role of leadership, what purpose has its existence? Its leadership is to provide correct concepts and beliefs for human life, generating perfect moral standards and a perfect social set-up. In such a healthy situation, the human intellect makes its

The surah, therefore, continues the warning with a reminder to the Muslim community of God's grace. How fearful is that prospect, of finding those who have accepted the faith allowing themselves to be led back into disbelief, when God's revelations continue to be recited to them, and God's Messenger remains in their midst. All the incentives to accept the faith are there, and the call to God continues to be made, and the parting of the ways of belief and disbelief is made absolutely clear: "But how can you sink into disbelief when God's revelations are being recited to you and His messenger is in your midst?" (101)

It is indeed a great calamity that a believer should sink into disbelief in circumstances which are conducive to strengthen his faith. If God's Messenger has completed his term in this life, God's revelations remain with us, and the guidance of His Messenger continues to show us the way. Today, we are addressed by the Qur'an as the first generation of Muslims were addressed by it. The way to follow that guidance is clear and the banner of the truth continues to fly high: "He who holds fast to God has already been guided along a straight path." (101) The only guarantee against slipping into renunciation of the truth is to hold fast to God. He is the eternal Master of all. He never dies.

Making Sure One's Way Is Right

The Prophet used to adopt a very strict attitude with his Companions in matters of faith and with regard to their way of life. At the same time, he allowed them to use their discretion in practical matters which rely on experience and knowledge. Examples of these include military strategy, agriculture and all purely scientific matters which belong to a domain that has no bearing on faith, social system or the relationships which regulate man's life. The way of life adopted by an individual or a certain society has nothing to do with pure or applied science.

The religion of Islam, which has been revealed to conduct human life according to a certain Divine method, makes its directive clear to man to seek knowledge and to benefit by every material discovery or scientific advance, provided that this is made within the context of implementing Islam's own method of life.

Imam Ahmad relates, on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Thabit, that 'Umar came to the Prophet one day and said: "Messenger of God! I have asked a Jewish friend of mine from the tribe of Quraizah to write me the basic teachings of the Torah. Shall I read them to you? The Prophet's face changed colour when 'Umar said that." 'Abdullah ibn Thabit turned to 'Umar and said: "Do you not see the expression on God's messenger's face?" 'Umar said immediately: "I believe in God as my only Lord, accept Islam as my faith and Muhammad as God's messenger." The Prophet's face regained its normal colour and he said: "By Him who holds my soul in His

as to progress and development. We, who believe in this method, know perfectly well what we call for. We see the misery of mankind and we see as well, over the horizon, the real possibility for mankind's salvation. We are also aware that unless the leadership of mankind is given over to this method, then man will sink into even further deprivation.

The first step to salvation is that this method should remain pure. Its advocates must not listen to any directive given to them by the ignorance which has spread all around them. This ensures the purity of the system until God wills it to reassume the leadership of mankind. God is too kind to man to let him fall prey to his enemies who advocate ignorant ways. This is the lesson God delivered to the first Muslim community in His revelation and which the Prophet was keen to drive home to his followers by his sound teaching.

method in order to assume the leadership of mankind. As we stated earlier, it is contrary to the very nature of leadership that this community should receive directives from any source other than its own method of life.

It is for the good of mankind that this method was revealed by God. It is also for the good of mankind that the advocates of Islam call for the implementation of this method, now and in the future. Indeed, the urgency for its implementation today is that much greater, considering the terrible suffering of mankind under all other systems. There is simply no saviour except this Divine method which must retain all its distinctive characteristics in order for it to play its proper role and save mankind anew.

Man has made great advances in utilising the resources and potentials of the universe. His achievements in medicine and industry are miraculous when compared with his past. Fresh discoveries and triumphs still await us. But what is the effect of all this on human life? Has it given man happiness, security and peace? The answer is in the negative. What humanity has found instead is misery, worry, fear, neurological and psychiatric disease, in addition to widespread perversion and crime. Moreover, it has made no progress whatsoever in the formulation of a sound concept dealing with the purpose of human existence. When this is compared with the Islamic concept, this civilisation appears to shrink into insignificance. It seems no more than a curse which belittles man's own concept of himself and his position in the universe. It degrades him and limits his aspirations. The result is a heart consumed by a void and a soul writhing under the burden of confusion.

The simple reason is that humanity cannot find God because miserable circumstances have caused its course to deviate away from Him. Had scientific research followed the Divine method, it would have made every achievement accomplished by man a step drawing humanity nearer to God. Instead, it causes humanity to move further away from Him. Man is, therefore, deprived of the light which would have revealed for him the true purpose of his existence and which would have enabled him to work for that purpose equipped with the scientific progress God has enabled him to achieve. Furthermore, man is deprived of the method which would have established harmony between him and the universe. He is also deprived of the system which would have established a perfect equilibrium between individual and community, man's potentials and resources, rights and duties, as well as the interests and concerns of this world and the life to come.

Certain groups of people even strive to deprive man of God's method and guidance. It is they who describe man's aspiration to implement this method as "reaction". They dismiss it as a mere nostalgia for the historical past. Whether this be the result of their ignorance or their ill-will, they actually deprive humanity of the right to aspire to the only method which can lead to perfect peace and happiness, as well