

True conception of the Ahmadiyya Movement

From the book 'The Ahmadiyya Movement'

by

Maulana Muhammad Ali

*First Head of
the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore,
and world-renowned author of several books on Islam*

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc. U.S.A.

1996

*Originally published in Urdu as
Chapter 4 of the book 'Tahrīk Ahmadiyya'*
December 1931

*Published in English in 'The Ahmadiyya Movement'
(English translation of 'Tahrīk Ahmadiyya')*
1966

First U.S.A. edition (with revisions)
1996

© 1996 by Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore, Inc.
1315 Kingsgate Road, Columbus, Ohio 43221 U.S.A.
All Rights Reserved.

The *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam* (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) was founded at Lahore, Pakistan, in 1914 by the prominent followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. It exists to promote a liberal, tolerant and peaceful picture of Islam, as found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It has published a vast quantity of highly-regarded literature on Islam in various languages, and has branches and members in several countries.

Publisher's Note

True Conception of the Ahmadiyya Movement originally formed a chapter in the Urdu book *Tahrîk Ahmadiyya* by Maulana Muhammad Ali, first published in 1931. The Urdu book was translated into English as *The Ahmadiyya Movement* by Maulana S. Muhammad Tufail, missionary of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, who had also served as Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, England. Besides being a part of *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, this chapter was also published in English separately.

This is the first U.S.A. edition of the booklet, which has been re-typeset and re-formatted. In a few places the translation has been slightly revised, but it remains substantially as in earlier printings.

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore, Inc., U.S.A.
1315 Kingsgate Road
Columbus
Ohio 43221
U.S.A.

Contents

<i>Aḥmadiyyat is not a separate religion</i>	1
<i>It is not even a sect in the general sense of the term</i> .	4
<i>Attitude towards jurisprudential problems</i>	5
<i>A Movement for Islam</i>	6
<i>Death of Jesus Christ</i>	7
<i>Significance of the Claims</i>	8
<i>Visions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad come true</i> . .	10
<i>Aḥmadiyyat is the only interpretation of these visions</i>	13
<i>Aḥmadiyyat is a true interpretation of Islam</i>	14
<i>Distinguishing Features of the Aḥmadiyya Movement</i>	18
<i>The second distinction: Islam is not spread by sword</i>	21
<i>Aḥmadiyyat and the killing of apostates</i>	23
<i>Aḥmadiyyat and Jihād</i>	24
<i>The third distinction: The Qur'ān must be given precedence over everything else</i>	26
<i>Glory of the Qur'ān manifested</i>	30
<i>The fourth distinction: Islam is an intellectual and scientific religion</i>	31
<i>New light about interpreting the Qur'ān</i>	34
<i>The fifth distinction: Revival of Islamic Brotherhood</i> .	35
<i>The sixth distinction: The door of ijtihād is open</i> . . .	37
<i>The seventh distinction: Unity among Muslims</i>	39

The eighth distinction: The significance of paradise and hell properly explained 41

The ninth distinction: Theory of abrogation rejected . 43

The tenth distinction: Faith in the dominance of Islam 44

Appendix 1

Was the doctrine of Jihād abrogated by the Founder? 49

Appendix 2

Did the Founder make slanderous attack on Jesus and his mother? 56

Appendix 3

The use of strong language against the ‘ulamā’ 64

True conception of the Ahmadiyya Movement

Ahmediyyat is not a separate religion

There are many misconceptions prevailing among people about the Ahmadiyya Movement. The greatest of all is that it is a religion quite separate from Islam like Bābism or Bahāism. The basis of this false idea is that Mirza Ghulām Ahmad of Qādiān, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, has laid a claim to prophethood. This allegation has already been refuted in the foregoing pages.¹ But there are some who go to the extent of declaring that Ahmadīs have a different *kalimah* (formula of Faith), a different form of prayer, a different Book besides the Qur'ān and a different *Qiblah*.² All these charges have no foundation at all.

It is apparent that had Ahmediyyat been a separate religion, like the Bābī or Bahāī faith, its activities obviously would not have been confined to the spread of Islam. Whatever work has been done in this age about the propagation of Islam, in Europe, America and other countries of the world, the greater part of it is due to the efforts of the followers of the Ahmadiyya Movement. In this connection the literature produced by Muslims is either the result of the activities of this Movement or has been done under its influence. Had Ahmediyyat been something different from or hostile to Islam, it would not have laid so much emphasis on establishing Muslim missions and spreading

-
1. The reference is to the book of which this booklet formed one chapter.
 2. Place towards which one faces in prayer.

Islamic literature all over the world. Bābism was in existence fifty years before the inception of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. Did it start any Islamic mission or publish any Islamic literature? If Aḥmadīs had a religion different from Islam, they would have directed their full efforts to the advancement of that ‘new’ faith, but as they are entirely engaged in the service of Islam, they cannot, and in fact do not, owe allegiance to any other religion except Islam.

It is, indeed, true that a group from among the followers of Ḥazrat Mirza Ghulam Aḥmad, *i.e.* the followers of the Qādiāni movement, have ascribed a claim of prophethood to him but they are still in an intermediary state. Although on account of their belief in such a prophethood they have declared all the Muslims of the world to be unbelievers (*kāfirs*)³ they have not yet adopted a new formula of faith (*kalimah*) for themselves. And although according to their creed unless a person accepts Mirza Ghulam Aḥmad as a prophet and formally takes an oath of allegiance to that effect, he does not enter the fold of Islam, they have, so far, refused to formulate a new *kalimah* for themselves and adhere only to the Islamic formula of faith:

Lā ilāha ill-Allāh, Muḥammad-ur rasūl-ullāh

“There is no God but Allāh, Muḥammad is Allāh’s Messenger.”

But this is, as I have said, only an intermediary position or a state of indecision. They will either, at last, have to give up the belief in the Promised Messiah’s prophethood or formulate a separate *kalimah* and a separate religion for themselves.⁴ The logical conclusion of their creed — that anybody who does not accept Mirza Ghulam Aḥmad as a prophet is a *kāfir* and outside the pale of Islam⁵ — is that the *kalimah* is not valid any more.

3. Mirza Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *The Truth about the Split* (Qādiān, India, Second Edition, 1938 C.E.), pp. 55, 140, 185 etc.

4. Please see the Translator’s Note on page 47.

5. See next page for note.

Therefore when the acceptance of the existing *kalimah* does not keep a person within the fold of Islam — and even the four hundred million Muslims of the world who declare their faith in it are declared to be *kāfirs* and outside the pale of Islam — then this *kalimah* must necessarily be considered as abrogated, and the messengership and prophethood of a person whose acceptance has become essential for entering the fold of Islam must form a part and parcel of the new *kalimah*. If the belief in the prophethood of Ḥazrat Mirza is not renounced, a time will come when these people shall have to formulate a separate *kalimah* and a separate religion, and their relation with Islam would become like that of Bābīs or Bahāīs who consider Islam a genuine religion of the past, but with regard to the present time they consider their own faith alone as true — Islam and its *kalimah* having been abrogated by them.

The Qādiānis have put themselves on the horns of a dilemma. They are trying to sail in two boats at a time. On the one hand they declare four hundred million Muslims — believers in the *kalimah* — to be *kāfirs* and on the other they include themselves among Muslims, refusing to adopt a new *kalimah* and a new faith. But this condition cannot exist for long. Either the repulsiveness of such a doctrine would at last create an aversion in the minds of the majority of these people and they would refrain from attributing a claim of prophethood to Ḥazrat Mirza or they would accept the ultimate result of their belief, which is that the old *kalimah* shall have to be discarded to give place to a new one. The Aḥmadiyya Movement, at any rate, was neither a new religion in its original form, nor has it, so far, grown to be a new religion among the followers of Ḥazrat Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad.

Note 5 from last page:

“That all those so-called Muslims who have not entered into his *bai'at* formally, wherever they may be, are *kāfirs* and outside the pale of Islam, even though they may not have heard the name of the Promised Messiah. That these beliefs have my full concurrence I readily admit.”

— Mirza Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd in his book *The Truth about the Split*, Qādiān, India, Second Edition, 1938 C.E. pp. 55–56.

It is not even a sect in the general sense of the term

Every religion in the world is divided into sects which generally differ in their fundamentals with one another. For instance, some Christians regard Jesus Christ as God or son of God and others take him to be a human being and with advancement of knowledge this group is increasing in number. This means that believers in Triune God as well as those who believe in one God are all Christians. Similarly, among Hindus there are many who believe in one God and there are others who worship idols and have faith in three hundred and thirty million gods. Some consider the Vedas as the spoken word of God and others take them to be the composition of human beings. Such differences, in fact, should be termed as fundamental sectarian differences.

There are no differences and no sects in Islam in this respect. All the sects of Islam agree on the fundamentals of religion. All believe in one God and in the finality of the Prophethood of Muḥammad. All take the Qur'ān as the last revealed Book of God which has not suffered any change in text. All face towards the same *Qiblah* when praying. But with this uniformity of opinion that all believe in one God, one Messenger, one *Qiblah* and one Book there have been differences on minor points and details of religion. Some Muslim *Imāms* after due consideration have arrived at different conclusions with regard to certain matters of religious life. Various groups of Muslims have followed these *Imāms* according to their own choice, and this has resulted in the formation of different schools of thought in Islam. This is the real fact behind the growth of the so-called sects in Islam. Differences among these sects are not differences in the fundamentals of religion, but in matters of jurisprudence, or details of religious practices. This type of difference of opinion is, in fact, a blessing as the Prophet is reported to have said: *Difference in my ummah is a blessing*, because along with unity this opens a way for freedom of opinion. Liberty in views, and free exercise of judgement (*ijtihād*) is, in fact, a great blessing that helps in the advancement of knowledge and learning, and develops in every person the habit of deep

thinking. The sectarian differences of Muslims are, therefore, of no real importance. But the foundation of Aḥmadiyya Movement has not been laid on any of such sectarian differences. The chief characteristic of this Movement today has been the same as it was before, *viz.* the defence and propagation of Islam. Whatever differences this movement has with other Muslims, these are definitely not connected with matters of jurisprudence or details of religious life but only with matters concerning the defence and propagation of Islam. The history of the Movement bears testimony to the fact that when Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad founded this organization and made a declaration for an oath of allegiance, he did not differ with other Muslims on any religious doctrine. The object of the formation of this organization was only the protection and propagation of Islam. Although he had been devoting his whole time even before that to this noble objective but at this stage under Divine command he set up a permanent basis for the spread of Islam according to the Qur'ānic verse:

*“And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right.”*⁶

Immediately thereafter he started writing *Fath̄ Islam* wherein he divided the work of the spread of Islam into five main branches. At this juncture, it was manifested to him that the belief in the physical ascension and continued existence of Jesus Christ was an obstacle in the way of the progress of Islam. It was on this Divine manifestation that his claim was based and it was because of this that Muslims started opposing him.

Attitude towards jurisprudential problems

In all the matters of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) the attitude of Aḥmadīs is completely liberal. The details of laws, *viz.* regulations of marriage, divorce, inheritance, prayer, fasting, ablution etc. which have caused great controversy among Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ do not worry them in the least. They enjoy full liberty in these

6. The Qur'ān, 3:104.

matters. It would be quite correct to say that the Aḥmadiyya Movement is rather a synthesis of the different schools of thought in Islam based on *fiqh* and invites them towards unity by tolerating and ignoring their differences. Whatever minor differences Aḥmadiyyat has with other Muslim sects only relate, as already remarked, to the propagation and defence of Islam. Thus, if Aḥmadiyyat is a sect in Islam, it is unlike the sects of other religions, for there are no sects in Islam in that sense. It is again unlike other sects in Islam which are based on differences in *fiqh*, for in that sense it is a synthesis of all these sects. It is a sect in Islam in the sense that for the furtherance of the cause of Islam it has laid emphasis on certain points and has devised effective means to face the hostile forces working against Islam. The task for the internal reformation of Muslims itself falls within the scope of its programme.

A Movement for Islam

Because of its distinctive features from other Islamic groups in certain respects, the Aḥmadiyya group may be called a sect or school of thought in Islam, but it is in fact a great movement within the fold of Islam, the main object of which is to awaken Muslims and consolidate their efforts for the spread of Islam. Its object is not to concentrate on, and retain differences of, minor importance as is done by other schools of thought in Islam. Its ideal is, however, far superior and beyond all sectarianism.

If the only object of this movement is to prove the death of Jesus Christ and establish the truth of the claims of Ḥazrat Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad as the Promised Messiah, Mahdi and *Mujaddid*, it may perhaps be classed as a sect like other sects in Islam. But that is not for which the Aḥmadiyya Movement stands. These are only a means to achieve an end. And what is that end? Spreading and strengthening the cause of Islam in the world and rousing up of Muslims for this sacred task.

Death of Jesus Christ

Belief in the death of Jesus Christ is regarded to be the most important feature of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. There have been Muslim divines like *Imām Bukhārī* and *Imām Mālik* who believed in the death of Jesus Christ. *Imām Bukhārī* in his collection of *Ḥadīth* has reported from Ibn ‘Abbās that the significance of *mutawaffī-ka* is *mumītu-ka* (i.e. *I will cause you to die*).⁷ That is he has not accepted the meaning of *tuwaffa* as the taking of body and soul together as was accepted afterwards by some people. *Imām Mālik*, similarly, believed in the death of Jesus Christ: *wa qāla Mālik-un māta i.e.*, and *Mālik* said he died.⁸

Belief in the death of Jesus Christ by two persons of such great calibre shows that there must be others also from the earlier Muslim divines who entertained a similar belief. The companions of the Holy Prophet seem to be all agreed upon this point. Because at the death of the Holy Prophet, those companions who could not believe the sad news to be true were silenced by Abu Bakr by the recitation of the verse: “*And Muḥammad is no more than a messenger; messengers before him have already passed away.*”⁹ All the companions of the Holy Prophet were thus duly convinced that like *all* other prophets, their Prophet too had left this mundane life. This was the consensus of opinion of the companions of the Prophet over the death of Jesus Christ. Had anyone of them believed that Jesus was alive he should have pointed it out.

In this age too the late Sir Sayyid Aḥmad of Aligarh, *Muftī Muḥammad ‘Abduh* and *Sayyid Rashīd Radā* of Egypt, believed in the death of Jesus Christ. Many other ‘*ulamā’* of India also share this belief but are afraid of declaring it in public, as such a belief is sufficient to stigmatize them as pro-Aḥmadī. People

7. Al-Bukhārī, 65:12.

8. Imām Muḥammad Ṭāhīr of Gujrat, *Majma’ Bihar al-Anwār* (Lucknow, India, Nawal Kishore Press), Vol. I, p. 286, and *Ikmāl al-Ikmāl Sharḥ Muslim*, Vol. I, p. 265.

9. The Qur’ān, 3:144.

have grown suspicious to the extent that anybody who just mentions it, is considered to have secret alliance with the Aḥmadiyya Movement. As the claim of Ḥazrat Mirza is based on the death of Jesus Christ, the Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ and some of the present-day translators of the Holy Qur’ān are much hesitant in accepting this belief as true.

Apparently, the question of the life and death of Jesus Christ is neither one of the fundamentals of Islam nor a part of its *furū’* (lit. branches). Why is it, then, that it has become one of the distinguishing features of this movement? As it has been discussed before, the main object of the Aḥmadiyya Movement is the propagation of Islam, particularly in the West where it has to face the onslaughts of the *Dajjāl* (Antichrist); the belief in the corporal existence of Jesus Christ is the greatest obstacle in the propagation of Islam among Christians. If Jesus Christ is alive in heavens with his body of clay for the last two thousand years and does not partake of food and is above the needs and necessities of this material life without suffering any change in his body, he is certainly not of the human species. If he is actually endowed with these peculiarities, his body is immortal. This is the argument which is put forth by Christians very forcibly. Muslims who believe in the continued existence of Jesus Christ fall an easy prey to them. The natural corollary of their strange belief is that Jesus Christ is far above a human being, rather a co-sharer in Divinity. It is not worthwhile under these conditions to go and preach Islam to Christians. For this reason Ḥazrat Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad laid emphasis on eradicating such a false view about Jesus Christ.

Significance of the Claims

The true conception of the Aḥmadiyya Movement is only this, that it is a great movement for the propagation, spread and defence of Islam in the world, and all the distinguishing features it possesses are a means to achieve this great end. So much so that accepting the claims of the Founder is also not an object in itself but only a means to achieve the object of the spread of

Islam. The greatest thing is that with the acceptance of these claims one feels in oneself a very strong faith which invigorates one to make every sacrifice for the sake of Islam. The logic of this belief may or may not satisfy everybody, but the fact is that those who kept company with the Founder of the Movement or came into spiritual contact with him after his death, felt a real zeal for the propagation of Islam and became fully convinced that Islam was going to overpower the world. It seems something is lacking in us that we do not rise up to the occasion and acquaint the world with the real teachings of Islam, otherwise Islam possesses such a spiritual beauty within it that, whether it is materialism which seems at present to sweep away everything along with it or the net of Christianity which seems to be spreading all over the world today or the dominance of any other force, all of them are going to be subdued by Islam; all heads have to bow down before its invincible principles of peace and spiritual well-being. This faith and this love for the religion of Islam inspires every Aḥmadī to do his best for the cause of Islam.

Without faith and love the will to sacrifice cannot exist. The spiritual contact with the Founder stimulates in Aḥmadīs this faith and love. Thus a change occurs in them as it does in a tree which has been engrafted upon. That is why there is a tremendous difference between the attitude of an Aḥmadī and that of a non-Aḥmadī. The latter is waiting for somebody else to come and help him in the cause of Islam and the former is convinced that this is his work and it is he who is responsible for it and has the power to do it. Differences in the outlook of these two persons are quite obvious. Waiting for Jesus Christ to come down from heaven is an escapist's refuge. Belief in the claims of the Founder enlivens Muslims and they know for once and for all that nobody is coming from above to raise them from the slough of despondency into which they have sunk so deeply; they themselves have to struggle hard for their own deliverance.

Those who enter into fealty with the Founder know full well that the prophecies of the Holy Prophet have come true. It was

propheesied that the days of the glory of Islam would be followed by poverty and misery among Muslims, but Islam would again rise in its full splendor and overpower the world with its spiritual force and the era of the onward march of Islam would start anew. This is the age when the prophecies relating to the dominance of Islam with the advent of the Messiah are going to be fulfilled. It is our duty now to carry the message of Islam to all the corners of the world. The power to conquer the hearts is inherent in Islam. But the Muslims must work and sweat for its success.

The acceptance of the claims of the Founder has thus changed the lethargic attitude of his followers. It has given them a new power of faith which is palpable behind all the activities of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. This is the only object in accepting Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad as the Promised Messiah, Mahdi and *Mujaddid*. This does not mean that Islam was incomplete before and by accepting the Founder our religion has been perfected. Islam was indeed perfected at the time of the revelation of the verse: *This day have I perfected for you your religion*,¹⁰ but the faith in man keeps on waxing or waning, as we have it in *Bukhārī*: “The faith increases and decreases”.¹¹ Acceptance of the Promised Messiah’s claim is a great source of enhancing our faith in Islam. The uphill task of the propagation of Islam cannot be done without this strong faith, particularly when this path is not strewn with outward honours and glories and it does not have the thrills and attractions of an adventurous life like that of a politician.

Visions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad come true

As a matter of fact, if we give just a little thought to the subject, we shall discover that the Aḥmadiyya Movement has opened new avenues for the glory and success of the Holy Prophet’s mission. It has shown to the general Muslims how the prophecies made thirteen hundred years before have now come true.

10. The Qur’ān, 5:3.

11. *Al-Bukhārī*, 2:32.

This in fact has been a source of great help to increase their faith in the Holy Prophet. All the events in the world foretold by the Holy Prophet have happened before our eyes. The ‘*ulamā*’ read those prophecies day in and day out but did not realize their significance.

There was only one person who lifted the veil from these reports and interpreted them in our age. That one person was Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad of Qādiān. For lifting this veil of darkness one needed the light which comes from above. It was, of course, under heavenly guidance that he clarified many wrong notions about these reports. Reports about the Antichrist and the Gog and Magog, discussed elsewhere, which reveal the depth of the Holy Prophet’s spiritual insight, are only a part of these prophecies over which the Founder has thrown light. There are other prophecies as well mentioned in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth which have come true and the Aḥmadiyya Movement has drawn attention towards them to enhance the faith in the Holy Prophet’s visions. For instance, the great World War has been called *al-mulḥamat al-kubra* or *al-mulḥamat al-‘uzmā*,¹² which means the Great War. The first World War (1914-1918 C.E.) is known exactly by that name. It is also reported that the Christians (*al-rūm*) would far exceed the other nations in numbers at that time,¹³ and Muslims would be treated most severely at their hands;¹⁴ *al-rūm* in the reports refers to Christian nations. And that Muslims would become so weak that it would appear that other nations would completely devour them up.¹⁵ Their internal wranglings, their declaring one another infidels (*kāfirs*), the disappearance of the knowledge of the Qur’ān from among them, their worship of the outward ceremony, their following in the footsteps of the Jews and the Christians, their mental and moral debasement, all these are mentioned in the Ḥadīth. The absence of faith and religious knowledge, the scarcity of people

12. *Miṣḥkāt*, Chapter *al-Malāḥam*.

13. *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. IV, p. 230.

14. *Ibid*.

15. *Tirmidhī*, *Ibn Mājah*.

interested in the spiritual matters have also been repeatedly described therein. The irreligiousness about which the whole material world is proud today has also been foretold by the Holy Prophet thirteen hundred years before. As compared with this, the abundance of the material wealth was also recorded in the reports. Similarly the Qur'ān also mentions many prophecies relating to this age. The giving up of camels, for instance, for more comfortable and swifter modes of conveyance:

*“And when the camels are abandoned.”*¹⁶

And it is found in the Ḥadīth also:

*“The camels shall certainly be neglected so that they shall not be used for going swiftly (from place to place).”*¹⁷

Barbarous nations will be civilized:

*“And when the wild nations are assembled.”*¹⁸

And all the nations of the world will come into close contact with one another:

*“And when men are united.”*¹⁹

Magazines, newspapers, pamphlets etc. will be published in abundance:

*“And when the books are spread.”*²⁰

These and many other prophecies like these are found more or less about every age, but most of them can particularly be applied to our own times. The detailed description of the age we live in, which distinguishes itself from all the previous ages, has

16. The Qur'ān, 81:4.

17. Imām Muḥammad Ṭāhir of Gujrāt, *Majma' Bihār al-Anwār* (Lucknow, India, Nawal Kishor Press) Vol. III, p. 165; *Mishkāt*, Ch. Descent of Messiah.

18. The Qur'ān, 81:5.

19. *Ibid.*, 81:7.

20. *Ibid.*, 81:10.

been made with such a clarity in these reports that it simply baffles the human intellect. This engenders new faith in the Holy Prophet's visions. By directing attention towards all these aspects, the Aḥmadiyya Movement has, in fact, opened up a new path for proving the truth of Islam and of Islamic traditions.

Aḥmadiyyat is the only interpretation of these visions

The Holy Prophet was not only shown, thirteen hundred years ago, what was going to happen to Islam but also what catastrophe the world was going to face. He mentioned all these events in his prophecies. Similarly the appearance of the Promised Messiah and the coming into existence of the Aḥmadiyya Movement is also a link in the chain of these events. As all other things indicate the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet, a similar purpose is served by the existence of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in this age. All the events mentioned above were intimately connected with the appearance of the Promised Messiah. The coming of the Messiah before the fulfillment of these signs was not possible. If such signs have been fulfilled, then the Messiah should also come, as these happenings are intertwined with his appearance. But if only a few signs have come true and for the fulfillment of the rest we have to wait, then we could also wait for the coming of the Messiah. But if all such events have taken place, then why should the coming of Messiah, the centre piece of the whole evidence, be delayed indefinitely?

The prevalence of Islam over other religions according to Hadīth is connected with his advent. If Gog and Magog have dominated the globe we inhabit and they have captured all the wealth and power of the world, if the Antichrist is leading humanity astray, and if Muslims have entirely lost touch with the Qur'ān and are lamentably involved in wranglings and are slinging mud at one another over minor differences, if their '*ulamā*', devoid of all understanding of truth and reality, are engaged in only the externals of worship, and the real faith, as

the tradition goes, has been raised up to the Pleiades, if all this has happened and Islam has been completely surrounded with all sorts of misfortunes, then can it be the response of God Almighty and All-wise that Islam should suffer on all sides but His promise of its deliverance should remain unfulfilled in this dire hour of need? This is, however, not possible. If a little thought is given to this point it will be easily seen that the manifestation of the Promised Messiah is more evident than all these matters. Because it was he who directed our attention to these happenings in the world, to show that all these events go to fulfil the prophecies and visions of the Holy Prophet. Every sign was before us but we could not see into it; we read about it in the books of *ḥadīth* day and night but could not understand it. There was a veil of darkness over our eyes as well as over the eyes of those who were worldly-wise otherwise, or the '*ulamā*' or the so-called spiritual leaders. It was Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad who tore asunder this veil of ignorance and there appeared from beneath it, shining proofs for the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet. Had Ḥazrat Mirza not appeared, all these things would have remained hidden from the world. In spite of the fact that there are hundreds of events by which the dreams and visions of the Holy Prophet have been fulfilled, but the sole and single interpretation of all of them is Aḥmadiyyat.

Aḥmadiyyat is a true interpretation of Islam

Aḥmadiyyat is not only an interpretation of the prophecies and visions of the Holy Prophet but it is also a true interpretation of Islam. It is neither a separate religion nor a separate sect. But as has been explained before, it is a great movement for the propagation of Islam. But as the propagation of Islam required that Islam should be presented in its true form and all the stains and blots from it should be removed to make it a source of attraction to the people, so Almighty Allāh Who had given the insight to the *Mujaddid* of this age so that he was able to see the fulfillment of the visions of the Holy Prophet in the world events also favoured him with the spiritual insight to identify all the erroneous beliefs which stood in the way of the progress of

Islam. Ahmadiyyat is thus a representation of Islam in the simple and pure form which attracted the world before and is doing so even now. In other words, Ahmadiyyat is a true interpretation of the teachings of Islam and the Qur'ān. And the feature which distinguishes it from the other sects of Islam is only this that it removes the errors which had found place in Islamic teachings and it manifests the inherent beauties of Islam which had been forgotten by Muslims so that Islam may attract the world once again.

Islam is a **living religion** which presents a God Who is a living reality, Who spoke to His righteous servants before, and Who speaks with His righteous servants even now and will continue to do so forever. Like His attributes of hearing and seeing, His attribute of communication with human beings has never been suspended. Although prophethood has come to an end, God's communication with His servants has not been stopped. But Muslims generally thought that God spoke before, but after the Holy Prophet, the doors of revelation were closed forever. Special stress has been laid by the Ahmadiyya Movement on this point of God speaking with man. A religion which cannot make its followers attain the stage of communication with God, is a dead religion. And as has been promised in the Qur'ān and the Hadīth, God will always continue to speak with the righteous servants of this *ummah*.

Islam is a **natural religion** which appeals to the nature of man, human nature being spontaneously attracted towards it. Unfortunately some of the Muslim leaders fell under the impression that Islam could be propagated with physical force also. Such thoughts were given free expression in reports about the advent of Mahdī. The objections raised by non-Muslims with regard to the spread of Islam with sword were thus strengthened by Muslims themselves. This caused great hatred among non-Muslims against Islam which subsequently obstructed the way of the propagation of Islam. It was Ahmadiyyat which clarified the whole issue by emphasizing the point that there was

“no compulsion in religion”.²¹ Islam had been drawing people under its fold because of its beautiful teachings. It is the natural religion of mankind, a simple religion, devoid of all ethical and ritualistic intricacies. Even an illiterate person can understand its teachings. But *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) made the whole affair very complex. Simple beliefs and teachings of Islam gave place to hair-splitting logical discussions that did no good, except paralyse the practical life of Muslims. The Aḥmadiyya Movement regained the lost original simplicity of Islam by placing the Qur’ān, which is the real source of the teachings of Islam, above everything else. The Ḥadīth, wherein the Holy Prophet has explained and interpreted the teachings of the Qur’ān, comes next. *Fiqh* which is not the original source of the details of our life should not be given preference over the Qur’ān or Ḥadīth.

Islam is a **rational religion**. The Qur’ān repeatedly enjoins its readers to apply their intellect, reason and understanding in matters of faith. But the ‘*ulamā*’ in their narrow-mindedness reached the stage that anybody who tried to understand religious matters on an intellectual level was dubbed by them as a heretic. Aḥmadiyyat again threw light on this aspect and proved the authenticity of the principles of the faith on a rational basis and showed that reason and faith did not stand apart. They both supplemented each other. Reason proved the necessity and veracity of religion which gave light and guidance to reason. But some ‘*ulamā*’ of today regarded science and scientific knowledge against religion and forbade Muslims to have any secular education. The Aḥmadiyya Movement helped in removing such misunderstandings from Muslim minds and made it clear that the material progress of the world would also, in the long run, lead mankind to higher spiritual progress beneficial to the cause of humanity. The denial of spiritual values was only due to lack of real knowledge of faith. With the progress of knowledge Islam would also progress, for it was a rational religion, a religion that encouraged a scientific outlook on life.

21. The Qur’ān, 2:256.

Islam is truly a **liberal and tolerant religion**. It regards the entire human race as one nation and declares that like physical and natural laws, there is only one spiritual law for the whole of humanity and that every nation had its spiritual leaders who called people to righteousness. But this prominent feature of Islam had been completely ignored. It was Ahmadiyyat which threw light on this point as well and laid emphasis on the fact that the prophets were sent to every nation and thus revived the liberal and universal outlook of Islam.

Islam is a **progressive religion**. Although the principles of Faith have been laid down in the Qur'ān and their explanations have been given in Ḥadīth to some extent according to the needs, but as Islam is universal in its concept and man is faced with a host of new problems with the advancement of civilization, the doors of *ijtihād* (exercise of judgement) in Islam have not been closed. That is, according to the needs of every age and every country, people have the right to work out their own laws best suited to their own requirements under the guidance of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Islam is no doubt a **religion of unity and fraternity**. According to the clear injunctions of the Qur'ān nobody has any right to excommunicate a brother Muslim from Islam who declares his faith in the unity of God and Prophethood of Muḥammad. But in this age different sects among Muslims thought that salvation was their exclusive privilege and each declared the other to be heretics and the inmates of hell. Ahmadiyyat revived the principle again that all those who profess the *Kalimah* were Muslims and nobody could dub a person *kāfir* who declared that “*There is no god but Allāh, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh*”.

Before Islam, religion was considered to be a combination of outward rituals and ceremonies, a source of getting future reward or escaping from future punishment. Islam gave a new turn to the conception of religion and associated it with day to day activities of man, and made it a source of development of human faculties. Muslims again had forgotten this great fact

about the teachings of Islam to which Ahmadiyyat drew their attention. The Ahmadiyya Movement has also thrown light on many other problems concerning Islam. Below I discuss in detail these distinguishing features of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

Distinguishing Features of the Ahmadiyya Movement

For the common people the question of Jesus Christ's death is perhaps the only distinguishing feature of the Ahmadiyya Movement. This, however, is not correct. There is no doubt in it that this Movement has done a lot to clarify this point as it was an obstacle in the way of the propagation of Islam, and the claim of the Founder as the Promised Messiah is also based on this. If Jesus Christ is alive, his claim cannot be correct and if he is dead then certainly there is no other Messiah except Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadiyan in this *ummah*, but the greatest distinguishing feature of Ahmadiyyat is that it has revived the almost dead concept of God's communication with men.

The foremost task to which the Founder devoted his attention after his claim of being a *mujaddid* was to demonstrate this truth once more to the world that God still spoke to His righteous servants. This was, in fact, the main theme of his first book, the *Barahin Ahmadiyya*; and even after this he has not laid so much emphasis on Jesus Christ's death as on this subject. The basis of his claim, in fact, was the point that communion of God with man has been continued and will remain so forever. His real claim was that of *mujaddidiyyah* and a *mujaddid* (renovator) is a *muḥaddath* whom God appoints to uphold the cause of religion. And *muḥaddath* is a person who is not a prophet but God communicates with him frequently. Thus the basis of the Founder's claim is that, in spite of the finality of Prophethood, God speaks with the righteous persons in this *ummah*. The claim of his being the Promised Messiah is a part and parcel of his claim to *mujaddidiyyah*; it is just one aspect of his claim of being a *mujaddid*. This aspect, no doubt, is based on the conception of the death of Jesus Christ but the basis of his real claim, that is of his being the *renovator*, is the phenomenon of

Divine communication. If we go through the matter a little carefully we find that for the revival of faith in religion the first point is to prove the authenticity of Divine communication with man as this is what has been most vehemently denied in this age. The conception of a mechanical God in the form of the cause of causes is even admitted by a materialist but the real foundation of religion was, and is, on the fact of God's communication with man. One book or another is considered to be the word of God by various nations of the world which shows that the basis of almost all religions is the phenomenon of Divine revelation. But there is no religion except Islam that advocates that even now God communicates with man as He used to do before. It has been expressly mentioned in the teachings of Islam that God's speaking with man is one of His attributes and God's attributes are never suspended. But this concept was so much weakened even among Muslims that for all practical purposes they had neglected this phenomenon. Wahābism was a strong movement in Islam which appeared before the advent of Aḥmadiyya Movement, but its followers, called *Ahl Ḥadīth* (followers of Ḥadīth) also believed that God's communication with men was meant for times gone by, although in authentic ḥadīth it was clearly mentioned that there would be persons in this nation who would not be prophets and yet God would communicate with them. Under the influence of modern education, Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān of Aligarh went rather far in this respect and entirely rejected the conception of God's revelation to human beings. He thought that revelation only emanated from man's own heart. This was in fact the ultimate result of that attitude which Muslims had gradually adopted towards religion. If this fundamental fact of revelation was thrown overboard, nothing was left of religion.

As has been discussed before, the whole structure of religion stands on this foundation. If it is said that God used to speak before and has ceased to do so now, then His speaking only becomes a narrative of the past. Such an attitude creates serious doubts as to the very institution of religion. If God spoke

before, He speaks now. If He does not do so then we have no proof that He ever did so before. If speaking is a Divine attribute it could not be limited to one particular age. The first and greatest task of Aḥmadiyyat was to clarify this point that God the Most High communicates with His righteous servants. Accordingly the Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement established this point from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth that Divine communication had not come to an end. The Qur'ān clearly mentions that besides prophets, the gift of God's revelation was also given to the pious and righteous servants of the previous nations, for instance, to the mother of Moses: "*And We revealed to Moses' mother*",²² says the Qur'ān, and to the disciples of Jesus Christ: "*When I revealed to the disciples*".²³ At both these places the word *wahy* has been used. Again, about the righteous persons of the *ummah* of Muḥammad it has been mentioned:

*"Those who say, our Lord is Allāh, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved."*²⁴

At another place we find:

*"They shall have good news in this world's life."*²⁵

Again, in an authentic ḥadīth it has been mentioned:

*"There has remained nothing of prophethood except mubashshirāt (good news)."*²⁶

In another report we find:

"Among those that lived before you of the Israelites, there were men who were spoken to by God, though they

22. The Qur'ān, 28:7.

23. *Ibid.*, 5:111.

24. *Ibid.*, 41:30.

25. *Ibid.*, 10:64.

26. *Al-Bukhārī*, 92:5.

were not prophets, and if there is one among my followers, it is 'Umar.'"²⁷

All the saints (*auliyā'*) of the *ummah* have agreed to this point — even Mujaddid Alf Thānī of Sirhind who has been very near to our times has particularly laid stress on it — that God communicates also with *muḥaddathīn* as He did with the prophets of yore.

The testimony of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and the saints of this nation could only be an evidence for Muslims but as atheism and materialism were rampant in this age, it became essential that all nations should be provided with a conclusive proof of this living reality. The *mujaddid* of this age was, therefore, appointed to show that God actually spoke with man, and this favour could be obtained even today by righteous Muslims. So he challenged the followers of other religions to give any proof of such a Divine favour by following their respective religions. He put his own self as an example to make such favour of God known to the world. In the *Barāhīn Aḥmadiyya* he has mentioned many prophecies which had come true and had also made a very forceful assertion that it was only in Islam that Divine communication was continued and therefore Islam was the only living religion in the world. All the other religions failed to help their followers to achieve this high stage of communication with God. It was in this way that he put forward his own person as a living example for the truth and supremacy of Islam. The same fact lay concealed under his prophecies, that is to say, that they were advanced in support of the truth of Islam. They were indeed a sign for him but they were also signs for the truth of Islam.

The second distinction: Islam is not spread by sword

Islam, as pointed out, is a natural religion of man:

*"The nature made by Allāh in which He has made man."*²⁸

27. *Al-Bukhārī*, 62:6.

28. The Qur'ān, 30:30.

By natural religion is meant that its principles are such as have been reposed in man's nature which is voluntarily attracted towards them. So much so that according to a report by the Prophet every child is born in Islam whether it is born in the house of a Jew, a Christian or a polytheist. Obviously, there need not be any compulsion in accepting what is harmonious with man's nature. The next principle, therefore, laid down by Islam is that "*there is no compulsion in religion*".²⁹

If we search the records of history of the time of the Holy Prophet we find that no historian has made reference even to a single incident where a person was forced to accept Islam by the Prophet or where a war was waged by him against a nation for the purpose of spreading Islam among them. But in spite of all this, European writers have drawn such a picture of Islam and its founder as if people were converted to Islam at the point of sword. The main object of such a propaganda was only to create hatred among the Europeans against Islam. The Western domination in the world has also helped to spread this false view far and wide among all the nations of the world. In India the Arya Samājists lent a hand to the Christian missionaries in propagating such calumnies against Islam.

On the other hand the conception of the coming of a Mahdī among Muslims also strengthened such misunderstandings. Shi'ah, Sunnī, Ahl Ḥadīth and other sects of Muslims came to believe about the advent of such a Mahdī who was going to propagate Islam by means of the sword. The result was that from Muslim's side no attempt was made to remove the misunderstanding which had resulted in hatred against Islam thus creating formidable obstacles in the way of its progress. The Ahmadiyya Movement used all its resources to clear Islam of such a charge. The removal of this fundamental mistake has rather become a distinctive feature in all its literature. So much so that the Founder's claim of being the Mahdī was to root out this false notion about Islam from the minds of Muslims and

29. *Ibid.*, 2:256.

non-Muslims alike. This, in other words, means that Islam does not stand in need of any sword whatsoever for its propagation. Islam rejects the idea of the advent of a Mahdī who would wield sword for the spread of Islam. What was not lawful for and practiced by the Holy Prophet — that is the spread of religion by force — how could it be permissible for anybody else?

Aḥmadiyyat and the killing of apostates

Islam believes neither in forced conversion nor keeping anybody within Islam at the point of sword. A general misconception prevails among Muslims that those who renounce Islam should be immediately put to death. This means that in a Muslim state if a Muslim goes over to another religion he can do so only at the risk of his life which implies that a sword is hung over the head of every Muslim to keep him in the fold of Islam. Aḥmadiyyat made it clear that it is neither lawful to convert a person to Islam by force nor to keep him Muslim under the threat of sword. The firm principle of the Qurʾān:

“There is no compulsion in religion”,³⁰

applies under both the conditions with equal force. That is to say, if a person wants to come over to Islam from unbelief or wants to go over to unbelief from Islam, in either case, no force and threat can be used against him. The mistake committed by our Jurists was that when someone after recanting Islam murdered a Muslim and he was sentenced to death by the Holy Prophet for his crime they did not care to differentiate that this punishment was given to him for the murder and not for apostasy. Similarly anybody who deserted Islam and joined the hostile forces during the time of war was liable to be punished with death. The chief reason for such an action against him might not have been apostasy but his treachery and going over to the enemy’s camp. Instances of mere apostasy or changing of one’s religion have been referred to in the Qurʾān but the

30. The Qurʾān, 2:256.

punishment of death was never recommended for them. On the contrary, it was also not always necessary to wage war against such persons. For instance in chapter *The Woman*³¹ certain apostates have been mentioned who did not fight against Muslims, and Muslims were also enjoined not to fight against them. In another chapter, *The Family of Amran*, the plans of the Jews of Medinah have been exposed who wanted to dishearten Muslims by accepting Islam in the morning and denouncing it in the evening.³² If apostates were put to death the carrying out of such a plan was impossible. At another place it is mentioned that if anybody renounced Islam the religion of God would not be weakened. If a person turned back from his religion, Allāh would bring a party to Islam instead.³³ The Qur'ānic commandments and the historical records make this point clear that mere apostasy was not punishable with death. In this age it is Aḥmadiyyat which has clarified this issue and has thus removed the stain from the beautiful face of Islam that it could only maintain and spread itself at the point of sword or that it had no spiritual force to keep itself alive.

Aḥmadiyyat and Jihād

Emphasis by the Aḥmadiyya Movement on the point that sword has nothing to do with the propagation of Islam has led many people to believe that Aḥmadiyyat has abrogated the Islamic doctrine of *jihād*. This charge is absolutely baseless. Every Aḥmadī believes in each jot and tittle of the Qur'ān. When the doctrine of *jihād* forms a part of the Qur'ān, and every Aḥmadī believes that none of its commands can ever be abrogated, it follows that the doctrine of *jihād* is as valid for them as for other Muslims. *Jihād* was supposed to mean the spreading of Islam with sword and with this conception of course Aḥmadiyyat did not agree. It made it clear that the significance of *jihād* was to exert oneself for a cause and sword was not

31. The Qur'ān, 4:89,90.

32. *Ibid.*, 3:72.

33. *Ibid.*, 5:54.

necessary for such an exertion. Carrying the message of the Qur'ān to the world was also declared to be *jihād* by the Qur'ān.

*“And strive against them a mighty striving with it (the Qur'ān).”*³⁴

This chapter of the Qur'ān is admittedly Makkan in origin when fighting was not permitted to Muslims and still preaching of the Qur'ān had been called the greatest *jihād*. Indeed *jihād* with sword was only meant for the defence of Islam or for the defence of the Muslim nation, the chief condition of which was that the enemy should first attack Muslims by sword. It was then that it became obligatory on Muslims to defend themselves with sword. But contrary to this the killing of non-Muslims without any rhyme or reason was considered to be the real *jihād* by the ignorant people. This was absolutely against the teachings of Islam. Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad of Qādiān has thrown light on this point and has explained that there is a *jihād* which man can always carry on for Islam and that is exerting oneself spiritually in the way of God and doing one's best to preach the message of Islam to others, and there is a *jihād* with sword which can be resorted to under particular conditions for the defence of the nation or of Islam. For instance, the initiative of attack is taken by the other nation, and this condition is mentioned in both the places in the Qur'ān where permission to fight has been given to Muslims:

1. *“Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made because they are oppressed”,*³⁵

and

2. *“Fight in the way of Allāh against those who fight against you.”*³⁶

34. The Qur'ān, 25:52.

35. *Ibid.*, 22:39.

36. *Ibid.*, 2:190.