

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

The Light

AND

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement
for over ninety years

October – December 2015

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel
misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to
facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

Vol. 92

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

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

The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. **The Islamic Review** was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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The main objective of the A.A.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the **hearts and minds** of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words **La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah** (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that **no** prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, **Mujaddids** will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

About ourselves

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has branches in many countries including:

U.S.A.	Australia
U.K.	Canada
Holland	Fiji
Indonesia	Germany
Suriname	India
Trinidad	South Africa
Guyana	Philippines

Achievements:

The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

History:

1889: **Hazrat** Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

1901: Movement given name **Ahmadiyya** after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name **Ahmad**.

1905: Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

1908: Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

1914: Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

1951: Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

1981–1996: Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

1996–2002: Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

2002: Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

Combatting Violent Extremism

The Work of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[This article is a transcript of a talk delivered by the Editor at the First Community Church in Columbus, Ohio in December 2015. Both clergy and members of this church have been friends of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society for many years, and members of LAIS have spoken at the church on numerous occasions. At this particular event, the Editor took the opportunity to speak about how attacking the ideologies upon which Muslim extremists based their cause is central to successfully combatting their violent extremist acts. In addition, the purpose and objective of the Ahmadiyya Movement was also relayed, with emphasis supplied on the teachings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that poignantly address the extremist ideologies that we see causing havoc in the world today. Finally, the practical work performed by LAIS in pursuit of the objective of reclaiming the religion of Islam from extremists was discussed.]

Good morning, everyone. It is always a pleasure to be with you. I was thinking about what I could talk about today. There is certainly no shortage of controversies concerning Muslims and the religion of Islam that could be discussed. I decided to keep it short so that we have more time for questions and answers. I would like to share with you some thoughts on what is now quite commonly understood as a *critical component* to addressing the problem of violent extremism among some Muslims. And that is attacking the *ideology* that Muslim extremists promote and upon which Muslim terrorists base their criminal actions.

This is something that I have been speaking about for some time now; I actually made the case for this in my Torch Club presentation many years ago. See, this “war on terror” we are engaged in is not something that can be won on the battlefield. Rather, it requires the eradication of the theological notions that call for violence against others as a sacred duty and promotes an “us vs. them” worldview. This extremist ideology needs to be delegitimized. For example, the Klu Klux Klan claims to be a Christian organization. But no person who seriously wants to learn about Christianity and live a Christian life goes to the KKK to learn about the faith. And this is what needs to be done with groups like ISIS – they need to be relegated to the status comparable to fringe groups like the KKK that are dismissed and mocked by the mainstream.

And this task can only be achieved by Muslims. Now, even though every Muslim organization in the U.S. consistently condemns terrorism in all its forms, no doubt, condemnation isn’t enough. Muslims cannot simply say “these terrorists don’t represent all Muslims” or “Islam is a religion of peace”. Rather, they need to systematically address the theological arguments groups like ISIS make in support of their cause. And I’d like to share with you some information about what the Islamic organization I belong to, of which I am the Secretary, is doing in this effort.

This organization, the Ahmadiyya Movement, was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who lived in a small village named Qadian in the Indian subcontinent, in 1889 (about 127 years ago). Now, there is a prophecy made by Prophet Muhammad that at the beginning of every century, there would be a person who would arise among his followers who would be a “*mujaddid*” (or “spiritual reformer”). And Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be the *mujaddid* (or reformer) of this past century. Now, the role of a *mujaddid* is simply to revive the faith – that is, to provide guidance in terms of interpretation and understanding of religion and serve as a model for how to achieve spiritual development in the contemporary era. And this is what Mirza Ghulam Ahmad focused his mission on – explaining deep spiritual insights about the Islamic faith and rebutting the extremist ideologies that were being promoted by some.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad emphasized the Islamic principles of religious tolerance and the beauty in diversity and pluralism; for example, he wrote:

Friends, ponder for God’s sake, and say whether such beliefs are acceptable to reason, whether there is anything in human conscience which responds to them. I cannot see how a rational being can believe, on the one hand, that God is the Lord of the whole universe, and yet say, on the other, that He has withdrawn His fostership and care from the greater part of the world, and that His love and mercy is confined to one people and one country.

He goes on to write:

Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India, have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light ... All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use

the produce of the earth ... These liberal ways of God teach us that we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy (for anyone).

And he specifically called out the extremist religious personalities who were preaching a distorted and perverted interpretation of the concept of “*jihad*”. And relatedly, he called attention to the true character of the Prophet Muhammad as a mercy and blessing to mankind, not a proponent of warfare, as many have tried to portray him as. For example, he wrote the following, which seems to be quite prophetic of the condition of some Muslims we see today:

The ignorant religious leaders have greatly deceived the masses and declared acts of brutality, cruelty and inhumanity to be the key to attaining paradise.

Is it a virtuous deed that there is a man going about in the market place, we have no connection with him so much so that we don't know his name and he doesn't know ours, but despite this he is shot at with the intention to kill him? Is this religious behavior?

Contrast this with those pious early Muslims whom God instructed in Makkah not to respond with violence even if they were cut to pieces. Alas, today the religious leaders have forgotten all those events, and think that to fire a gun at an innocent man constitutes Islam.

The ignorant ones have merely heard the word “jihad” and are using it as a pretext and cover for satisfying their own selfish ends, or purely out of fanaticism and lunacy are perpetrating bloodshed.

He named the Movement “Ahmadiyya” after the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s other name “Ahmad”, which signifies one who is patient and shows perseverance in times of trials (and reflects the period of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s life in Mecca in which he and the early Muslims suffered severe persecution and bore it all patiently). And members of this Movement pledge to revive this example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s character and promote the spiritual basis of the Islamic faith to others. As Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained:

Those who join my army, I order them to give up these ideas [of a jihad of war], and to purify their hearts, develop and nurture their feelings of mercy towards all humankind and be helpers of those in distress and suffering. They should spread peace on earth, as this is how their religion will spread.

Today we hear calls for a Gandhi or a Martin Luther King or a Nelson Mandela of the Muslim world – yet many are unaware that this non-violent movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was established over a century ago.

And there is a lot of work being done today to carry on this legacy and bring about change in parts of the world where Muslims may be susceptible to extremist propaganda. We have produced a library of literature that rebuts the beliefs promoted by extremists. This literature is carried by all the major bookstores in the US, and many universities use them as text books. But what we also do is have these books translated into different languages and placed into the hands of native populations around the world, so that people have an opportunity to learn about their religion for themselves and not rely on some politically-motivated cleric telling them what their religion is about.

We have also collaborated with Al Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt (regarded as the premier Islamic educational institution in the world) to have these works translated into Arabic. We have received certifications for these publications from Al Azhar, which provides the necessary stamp of approval to give legitimacy to the interpretations and rebuttals contained in our literature. And finally, we partnered with like-minded Muslim leaders and organizations in the Arab world to help disseminate these publications to the masses. Tens of thousands of copies of our literature have been distributed, for free, in Egypt alone. And we are currently working with other governments to have our literature provided to all of the clerics who are officially licensed as religious teachers. Seventy thousand copies of our Russian translation and commentary of the Holy Quran has been distributed in Central Asian countries. Just this past September we held a seminar in Istanbul for this purpose, and I will be attending another conference in Cairo next month to help further these efforts.

I’m trying my best to get all of the work that requires international travel done before the next election, perchance a certain celebrity becomes president and I may not be allowed back into the country ... [laughter]. But in all seriousness, all of this work to counter these extremist ideologies and combat the very foundation of the terrorists’ propaganda is being done by American Muslims, many of whom are from right here in central Ohio.

I will end here. I thank you for your attention, and I would love to take some questions. ■

The New War on Terror

Enlightening Views from President Obama and
King Abdullah II

Compiled by the Editor

[As is becoming more widely understood today, any successful 'war on terror' necessarily requires an initiative that addresses the ideologies upon which violent extremists base their cause and attacks the false narrative of an inherent clash of civilizations between the West and Islam advanced by them. This 'war' cannot be won on a battlefield alone. Produced here are two articles by world leaders – one from the West, and the other a Muslim from the East – who, in their own ways but in complementary styles, adopt strategies that further this enlightened approach. President Obama in his L.A. Times Op-Ed explains how success in this campaign is dependent on winning the hearts and minds of those who may be susceptible to extremist propaganda, and how Muslim voices countering these extremist views must be supported. King Abdullah II in his address before the European Parliament correspondingly calls for unity and cooperation in this global effort against extremist groups, who are enemies of all peace-loving communities including the vast majority of Muslims.]

L.A. Times Op-Ed [February 17, 2016] – President Obama: Our fight against violent extremism

The United States has made significant gains against terrorism. We've decimated the core al Qaeda leadership, strengthened homeland security and worked to prevent another large-scale attack like 9/11.

At the same time, the threat has evolved. The al Qaeda affiliate in Yemen actively plots against us. Since 9/11, terrorists have murdered U.S. citizens overseas, including in the attacks in Benghazi, Libya. Here in the United States, Americans have been killed at Ft. Hood and during the Boston Marathon.

In Syria and Iraq, the terrorist group we call ISIL has slaughtered innocent civilians and murdered hostages, including Americans, and has spread its barbarism to Libya with the murder of Egyptian Christians. In recent months, we've seen deadly attacks in Ottawa, Sydney, Paris and Copenhagen.

Elsewhere, the Pakistan Taliban massacred more than 100 schoolchildren and their teachers. From Somalia, al-Shabaab has launched attacks across East Africa. In Nigeria and neighboring countries, Boko Haram kills and kidnaps men, women and children.

In the face of this challenge, we must stand united internationally and here at home. We know that military

force alone cannot solve this problem. Nor can we simply take out terrorists who kill innocent civilians. We also have to confront the violent extremists — the propagandists, recruiters and enablers — who may not directly engage in terrorist acts themselves, but who radicalize, recruit and incite others to do so.

This week, we'll take an important step forward as governments, civil society groups and community leaders from more than 60 nations gather in Washington for a global summit on countering violent extremism. Our focus will be on empowering local communities.

Groups like al Qaeda and ISIL promote a twisted interpretation of religion that is rejected by the overwhelming majority of the world's Muslims. The world must continue to lift up the voices of Muslim clerics and scholars who teach the true peaceful nature of Islam. We can echo the testimonies of former extremists who know how terrorists betray Islam. We can help Muslim entrepreneurs and youths work with the private sector to develop social media tools to counter extremist narratives on the Internet.

We know from experience that the best way to protect people, especially young people, from falling into the grip of violent extremists is the support of their family, friends, teachers and faith leaders. At this week's summit, community leaders from Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Boston will highlight innovative partnerships in their cities that are helping empower communities to protect their loved ones from extremist ideologies.

More broadly, groups like al Qaeda and ISIL exploit the anger that festers when people feel that injustice and corruption leave them with no chance of improving their lives. The world has to offer today's youth something better.

Governments that deny human rights play into the hands of extremists who claim that violence is the only way to achieve change. Efforts to counter violent extremism will only succeed if citizens can address legitimate grievances through the democratic process and express themselves through strong civil societies. Those efforts must be matched by economic, educational and entrepreneurial development so people have hope for a life of dignity.

Finally — with al Qaeda and ISIL peddling the lie that the United States is at war with Islam — all of us have a role to play by upholding the pluralistic values that define us as Americans. This week, we'll be joined by people of many faiths, including Muslim Americans who make extraordinary contributions to our country every day. It's a reminder that America is successful because we welcome people of all faiths and backgrounds.

That pluralism has at times been threatened by hateful ideologies and individuals from various religions. We've seen tragic killings at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in 2012 and at a Jewish community center in Kansas last year.

We do not yet know why three young people, who were Muslim Americans, were brutally killed in Chapel Hill, N.C. But we know that many Muslim Americans across our country are worried and afraid. Americans of all faiths and backgrounds must continue to stand united with a community in mourning and insist that no one should ever be targeted because of who they are, what they look like, or how they worship.

Our campaign to prevent people around the world from being radicalized to violence is ultimately a battle for hearts and minds. With this week's summit, we'll show once more that — unlike terrorists who only offer misery and death — it is our free societies and diverse communities that offer the true path to opportunity, justice and dignity.



Remarks by King Abdullah II [March 10, 2015] – Before the European Parliament

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,

Mr President, Distinguished Members:

Thank you. Jordan treasures its long ties of friendship with this great institution. I appreciate your invitation to speak today.

Permettez-moi aussi de remercier les citoyens de Strasbourg pour leur hospitalité chaleureuse. Cette ville représente toujours un symbole du passage de la guerre à la paix, un symbole de la réconciliation et de l'unité de l'Europe.

My friends: People thrive where there is mutual respect. Civilization is built on it. Futures are better for it.

But co-existence must be made, and made again, in every generation. The common good is defended only by vigilance and action. This means more than security measures. Humanity must arm itself with ideas, with justice and with economic and social inclusion.

Today, these challenges have special importance. Our world faces an assault by terrorists with ruthless ambition. The motive is not faith, it is power; power pursued by ripping countries and communities apart in sectarian conflicts, and inflicting suffering across the world.

The savage murder by *Daesh* of Jordan's hero pilot outraged all Jordanians, and horrified the world. Jordan's response has been swift, serious and determined. And our fight will continue. We and other Arab

and Muslim states defend not only our people but our faith. This is a fight that has to be carried out by Muslim nations first and foremost. A fight within Islam.

At the same time, the danger of extremism must be seen for what it is: global. The threat is not only in Syria and Iraq. It has struck Libya, Yemen, Sinai, Mali, Nigeria, the Horn of Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australia. Europe has suffered despicable attacks and shown unbeatable courage. Your friends are with you. In January, Rania and I joined millions of people in France, who marched, united, against violence and intimidation.

My friends, There are those living in Europe today who remember the ravages that struck the continent in the late 1930s and the World War that followed because of an aggressive, expansionist ideology based on hate and disregard for the very essence of humanity. Europe's war became the World's War. Today, we are fighting a similar war. A war against an expansionist ideology that feeds on hate; that is committing murder in the name of God and religion to justify evil actions that no religion tolerates — a war against terrorists who disrespect Islam's values and humanity's values.

Our victory now depends on our unity. Europe's role is vital. Only by cooperation can our regions shut down the sources of terrorist support and defeat their purposes.

It is also essential that our regions renew the source of our great strength: the mutual respect that binds and sustains us. Young people, especially, must be inspired by values that reject violence, create peace and build inclusive society. Let me suggest three areas of importance.

The first is meaningful interfaith outreach, engaging people where they live. A dialogue of respect is the rock-bed of all societies. Attacking and excluding others, insulting other peoples and their faith and convictions — this is no way forward. The future lies in unity and respect, not division and stereotypes.

Europe is an important partner in this effort — especially in helping to stop the global rise of Islamophobia. This poison is based on false ideas and plays into the hands of these extremists.

This is why it is important to clarify what it really means to be a Muslim. I and countless other Muslims, have been taught from our earliest years that our religion demanded respect and caring for others. The Prophet Mohammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself."

This is what it means to be a Muslim.

Among the very names of God, we hear: the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. All my life, every day, I have heard and used the greeting, *Assalamu*

aleikum — a wish for the other to be blessed with peace.

This is what it means to be a Muslim.

More than a thousand years before the Geneva Conventions, Muslim soldiers were ordered not to kill a child, a woman or an old person, not to destroy a tree, not to harm a priest, not to destroy a church.

These are the same values of Islam we were taught in school as children: not to destroy or desecrate a place where God is worshipped, not a mosque, not a church, not a synagogue.

This is what it means to be a Muslim. These are the values I teach my children and they will hand on to theirs.

My friends, I am outraged and grieved by the recent attacks in some countries against Christian and minority communities. This is an offense against humanity as well as Islam. Arab Christians are an integral part of our region's past, present and future.

Jordan is a Muslim country, with a deeply-rooted Christian community. Together, the Jordanian people make up an in-divisible society, friends and partners in building our country.

The world's Muslims have a critical role in global understanding. Our faith, like yours, commands mercy, peace and tolerance. It upholds, as yours does, the equal human dignity of every person — men and women, neighbours and strangers. Those outlaws of Islam who deny these truths are vastly outnumbered by the ocean of believers — 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide. In fact, these terrorists have made the world's Muslims their greatest target. We will not allow them to hijack our faith.

My friends, The second area key to global harmony is an international system that gives all people the respect they want and deserve. Again and again, I hear the question: why doesn't the world defend Palestinian rights?

Time after time, the peace process has stalled. Let me say what the situation looks like in reality: more Israeli settlement building, less respect for the occupied Palestinians.

This failure sends a dangerous message. It erodes trust in international law and community. It threatens a pillar of world peace: that conflict must be solved by political means — not by force, not by violence. And it has given the extremists a powerful rallying cry. They exploit the injustices and the lingering conflict, to build legitimacy and recruit foreign fighters across Europe and the world.

It is time to think about the future, and how this ongoing conflict will breed further hate, violence and

terror across the world. How can we fight the ideological battle, if we do not chart the way forward towards Palestinian-Israeli peace?

Our countries, united, must provide the momentum and chart the way forward towards a final, comprehensive settlement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, A third critical effort is creating deeper hope. Radicalization thrives on economic insecurity and exclusion. To create stakeholders in a peaceful world, people need opportunities to fulfil their potential and build good lives. Helping them is a powerful message of respect.

The European Parliament has recognized the importance of creating social and economic opportunities in naming 2015 the Year of Development.

For Jordan, development is a priority. And despite all the regional challenges, we have pressed forward to meet urgent needs, to grow jobs, to improve the quality of life through continued reforms and partnerships such as yours. Jordan values our strong partnership with the European Union and its member states and we are committed, with your support, to work together towards more advanced levels of partnership.

Jordan also takes seriously our moral obligations to others. Despite scarce resources, the people of Jordan have opened their arms to refugees fleeing regional violence. Jordan has taken in thousands of Iraqi Christians over the past year. This is in addition to giving shelter to 1.4 million Syrian refugees, which is 20 per cent of the population, over the past few years. This is more than the equivalent of France hosting the entire population of Belgium. My small country is now the world's third-largest refugee host and I thank all of you who are helping us to uphold this global responsibility.

My friends, your support sends a message, not only to my people, but all those who seek to move forward in peace and moderation: Europe is with you.

Our regions, our people, can find no better partners and neighbors than each other. History, geography and future bind us. Let no one separate us. Together, we can create pillars of mutual respect that will support the common good for generations to come.

Thank you. ■

An Analysis of the Doctrine of Original Sin

By Prof. Andrew Oldenquist

[This article – by Andrew Oldenquist, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Philosophy at the Ohio State University – provides a critical assessment of the doctrine of ‘original sin’. Prof. Oldenquist analyzes the underlying notions as well as the broader implications of the doctrine, both in terms of theology and morality. Much of the argument presented concerning the doctrine is consistent with the Islamic perspective on the topic, thereby providing a unique opportunity for better understanding and appreciation of differing views. Prof. Oldenquist is also a member of the OSU Faculty Club Theology Seminar, a brain-trust of scholars interested in matters of theology, of which the Editor has been invited on several occasions to provide an Islamic perspective on issues being discussed.]

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

ROMANS 5:12

Since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin.

That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers’ wombs and are unable to have true fear of God and true faith in God. This inborn sickness and hereditary sin is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all those who are not born again through baptism and the holy spirit.

MARTIN LUTHER

Abstract

The bible says God made Adam’s nature sinful for an act of disobedience; Christian theologians have said we inherit Adam’s sin as part of human nature and thereby we are all sinful. Original sin is a doctrine of which most people in the world are oblivious and which, today, many Christians ignore; but Roman Catholics and Protestants for whom original sin means something should reject it and their religious institutions should formally abolish it. The doctrine is both conceptually incoherent and morally indefensible, first because it depends on moral miracles. A moral miracle, such as God making humankind sinful by decree, is incoherent because it purports to change human nature from sinless to sinful without it changing in any non-moral way, thereby violating the supervenience of moral judgments. Second, original sin requires the incoherent idea of sin as punishment (as distinct from punishment for sin). Finally, individual persons are not morally responsible for the nature they inherit. If the doctrine is widely doubted today, that

is all the more reason why its incoherence should be demonstrated and its motivation explained. It is a doctrine whose purpose is entirely evangelistic.

What Is Original sin?

There is a shocking dissonance between the teaching of Jesus to forgive one’s enemies and the theologians’ doctrine that we all deserve permanent death or hell because our nature is sinful and not because of anything we personally did: God imposed sin on human nature and its soteriological solution is divine forgiveness through Christ, enabling one to become a Christian, escape permanent death and achieve heaven. The doctrine implies one can possess original sin without the possibility of sinning, for example, infants who die soon after birth and severely handicapped persons. We can imagine two persons in the Adam and Eve story, Eve before the disobedience, sinless, and Adam and Eve’s first child, sinful, and coherently suppose there was no thought or desire one had and the other did not. Saint Augustine and later theologians tell us that only those who ask for and receive Christ’s forgiveness of their sin, thereby becoming Christians, escape damnation; everyone else will spend eternity in hell or, at least, dead.

Although Saint Augustine has been credited with inventing the doctrine, it is in the Bible and Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, suggested it a century before Augustine. Augustine sought a way to insure that sin infected everyone, and while he did not identify original sin with sexual desire, he believed concupiscence was its primary manifestation; he loathed lust as though it were original sin itself. The main reason he and other early and medieval theologians propounded original sin was that they did not think everyone believed they were sinful enough by their own doing to require Christ’s forgiveness and thereby become Christians. The idea was evangelistically brilliant. Contemporary theologians who accept original sin must believe that if they discover that a particular infant lacks the DNA that programs for sexual desire, nevertheless that infant does not lack original sin, which the Catholic Encyclopedia says is “a privation of justice that each child contracts at its conception.” But what can it mean for someone to “contract” something at conception?

Physical miracles violate natural laws but are coherent objects of faith: God, whose will created natural laws and the Red Sea, suspended those laws and parted it for Moses; but moral miracles, as when God is said to will humanity sinful, are incoherent objects of faith. But why cannot faith trump morality as it can gravity and inform the faithful that God has willed human nature sinful? It cannot because it is conceptually impossible that the morality of an action (or of a person’s nature) change without it first changing non-morally. This is what Richard Hare called the supervenience of moral

judgments. Rightness and wrongness (and goodness and badness) supervene on nonmoral properties, meaning we cannot coherently give different evaluations of two persons or two actions if we cannot tell them apart non-evaluatively: “What’s wrong with it?” is always an appropriate question. One might suppose Adam’s disobedience was the non-moral change in human nature - the “other difference” - needed for the intelligibility of God making human nature sinful. However, Adam’s act of disobedience depended on his preexisting nature and it could not, by itself, change his nature (or human nature). Indeed, how could a single action of Adam or anyone change his or her own nature? God, not Adam, changed Adam’s nature and human nature to sinful. One interpretation is that Adam and Eve originally lacked sexuality and that when God became angry and decreed them sinful, He gave them sexuality to manifest their sin and perpetuate our sinful species (with the help of their necessarily incestuous children). Of course, if God gave Adam and Eve sexual desire only because they disobeyed Him, had they not disobeyed God they would have been the last humans as well as the first humans.

Sin as Punishment

Although divine (and earthly) punishment intelligibly can be for bad or sinful acts, making us sinful *as punishment* strangely reverses the natural order of sin and punishment. For what would God punish you with sin? For a sinless action? A good God could not do that. For a sinful action? That is either superfluous or it would make you doubly sinful. The incoherence of punishing with sin is like the incoherence of punishing with criminality and punishing with guilt: sin, criminality and guilt are states of character for which one might be punished, not punishments. Perhaps “punishing with sin” means there was no such thing as sin when they disobeyed, upon which God became angry, invented sin and punishment and made Adam and Eve and all future humans sinful. But if there was nothing wrong with disobedience when Adam and Eve disobeyed, why would God get angry at them?

How did actual persons come to make moral judgments and attribute sin? Our early social ancestors got angry at what we now call theft and for the reasons we do now: they worked and took risks for their food and shelter, thereby acquiring a sense of possession for what they worked for. Therefore, others seizing what they worked for deserved their anger and vengeance (and this occurred before there was language and words like “deserve.”) It is in these kinds of situations that morality began and over the millennia as language evolved, they invented special words - “bad” and “wrong” (in High Cro-Magnon) - for the objects of their anger when certain conditions held. This may help explain sin in the sense of bad behavior, but it does not explain original

sin, which (a) is our deserving blame and punishment for *someone else’s* behavior, and (b) is punishment that *makes* us sinful instead of punishment for *being* sinful. Thus God punishes you once by making you sinful and punishes you again (by sending you to hell or withholding heaven) because you are sinful; and neither of these two punishments is for something you did.

Making a sinless action, a sinless person or a sinless human nature sinful by decree is a moral miracle and therefore incoherent. God cannot change the morality of human nature as unmediatedly as He changed the position of Red Sea water; this is not a limitation of God’s power but simply an implication of the standard usage of the English expressions “sinful” and “morally wrong.” Physical miracles and moral miracles are only superficially similar. In the Red Sea case something happens, the water slides back allowing Moses and his people to cross. In the case of God decreeing our nature sinful, nothing happens. The incoherence of moral miracles is one of the three grounds of the incoherence of the idea of original sin, the others being the dependence of our knowledge of God’s morality on human morality and the incoherence of sin as punishment.

In 529 A.D. the Western Church confirmed original sin. In the 11th century St. Anselm (unsurprisingly) challenged Augustine’s characterization of original sin as concupiscence, saying instead that it is the privation of the righteousness that humans ought to possess. Martin Luther and John Calvin declared concupiscence the primary manifestation of our sinful nature, Luther saying that human nature is fallen and depraved. Yet, if we attend to what “depraved” means, namely being prone to serious vices without caring or regret, most people are not depraved and Luther is incorrect. The demonization of sexual desire made original sin concrete; it is the worst slander in human history. The teaching of Jesus to forgive one’s enemies and the theologians’ ferocious attacks on human sexuality seem to come from different religions on different worlds. These attacks were unfair and cruel if only because sexual love and a family were the only source of happiness as readily available to the poor as to the rich. Since for just this reason people might be less likely to see religion as their only escape from a world of misery, Augustine and Luther poisoned sex with sin. Carnal love was felt to be Christianity’s most dangerous competition, original sin its counter-weapon. The Russian communists had encountered a similar problem. Before the revolution, many believed in free love, but after they took power in 1917 they became relatively puritanical. Sexual love was thought to be a competitor that could make people feel less dissatisfied with their lot and thereby diminish their felt need and enthusiasm for the revolution and the Soviet Communist Party.

God's Morality and Human Morality

If Moses had come down from the mountain with commandments to do whatever you want, lie and steal, the Hebrews would have thrown out the tablets and we would not have known this role of Moses. They would have told him God is good and does not command immoral things like that. It is incorrect to think God permits theft unless we ourselves believe theft is permissible; but we do not. So too, we cannot believe God made our nature sinful unless we already believe our nature is sinful, which is why the early and medieval theologians were so intent on demonstrating our sinfulness. God may know that some particular action we think right is wrong because He is omniscient and knows distant bad consequences, but this can only mean that if we knew them too, that is the judgment we would make.

Millions of Christians have been made to believe they deserve permanent death or hell; they also believe that had they robbed a bank they would at most deserve a term in prison. How can this be? What ought we to think of threatened divine punishments which not only are for nothing we personally have done but which also are more severe than earthly punishments for rape or murder? Any judge who tried to sentence a thief to lifelong torment—eternal torment being outside his or her jurisdiction—would be disbarred. What we think we deserve in the earthly domain for a given kind of offense must be the same in the afterlife: If the offense has not changed, the correct punishment cannot change; otherwise we do not know what *deserving* divine punishment means. Nevertheless, if one's aim is how best to motivate people when the likelihood of a punishment can be doubted, then making the more distant and less certain punishment far more severe than earthly punishments is a step toward equalizing their ability to motivate us. One might suppose that God, being omniscient, has knowledge we lack about our sinfulness. But we must see that there is a limit to this. What evidence do the theologians have that God knows we are sinful instead of virtuous, that we are deserving of hell instead of heaven? Our own opinion of how good or bad we are should be our best guess at what God knows about us. The only motive that tilts the theologians toward everyone's sin instead of virtue is evangelistic: we all are given a strong motive to become Christians, be forgiven our sin and go to heaven; we (at best) will remain dead if we do not become Christians.

Another objection to this doctrine is that we are not responsible for our nature. Deserving hell or exclusion from heaven because of one's nature is like being a Jew in Nazi Germany. The Nazis sent Jews to death camps - eternal torment being outside their jurisdiction - because of what they were and not because of anything they did. *Their original sin was being Jewish*. Neither can we intelligibly believe God knows we deserve eter-

nal torment for sexual desire or greed, because *we ourselves* do not believe we deserve lifelong torment even for murder. My point isn't that nothing we can imagine warrants hell - perhaps some Nazis deserved hell - but that *we ourselves* must believe something morally warrants hell (or heaven) before we can coherently believe God knows it does. Supposing that God knows morally relevant facts about us we don't know merely invites us to hypothesize what God might know and then we decide both their likelihood and their moral importance.

Consider again why Christians - modern as well as ancient - can accept on faith a miraculous suspension of physical laws in the parting of the sea or the resurrection of Jesus, but would not accept on faith a miraculous suspension of moral laws such as the wrongness of theft or murder. But is not original sin the ultimate moral miracle? And millions of people accept it. If making murder morally right would be a miracle no one would dare attribute to God, how can they believe God miraculously made everyone sinful and deserving of hell? It would not get a second thought were it not for the evangelistic purpose that influential theologians saw it served. Supervenience aside, one might think *any* moral miracle is easier to believe than a physical miracle because nothing needs to happen. But as we have seen, there is more to it than that: we must ourselves be able to accept the morality of the supposed moral miracle, else we will not believe it is from God.

Thousands of years ago important physical events were attributed to spirits and gods, beings who might be appeased and induced to change their minds about the drought or the erupting volcano. These were the only explanations of the natural world our early social ancestors had because there was no science: their question was "Who did it and why?" Their paradigm of physical explanation was human and supernatural agency. Their moral world, however, was more fixed - more solid as it were - than their physical world because while social cohesion required a consistent morality and reliable expectations of others' behavior, natural phenomena such as health, weather and earthquakes were in the less reliable hands of spirits, gods and wizards. Religion developed long before people began attributing moral edicts to gods or to God because the function of religion until relatively recently was explanation and intervention, not announcing morality or sin. But religion's explanatory function ceased with the coming of science.

Original Sin, Theology and Lust

Physical miracles such as God parting the sea for Moses are inconsistent with science but conceptually coherent: we can picture them happening. But moral miracles such as God decreeing human nature sinful are incoherent, first because announcing we are sinful is not a reason why we are sinful. Second, because supervenience

tells us that God cannot change our nature from sinless to sinful without it first changing in some relevant non-moral way. Third, because our opinion of what God knows we morally deserve cannot be different from what we think we deserve, which varies from person to person and for most people today is less than eternal punishment. Finally, because our nature is not sinful: we have fears and tempting desires, but we also have kindness, loyalties and a sense of what is right. I am not arguing it is impossible to believe what is incoherent since millions of people do, but that if someone comes to think their belief in original sin is subject to the criticisms I have given, he or she should feel an obligation to banish it. But how could millions of people ever have accepted original sin, the ultimate moral miracle? I can explain the evangelistic purpose behind propounding it, but I cannot explain how people can believe it, especially today in an age of science.

Carnal love was believed to be Christianity's most dangerous competition, and Christian theologians believed original sin to be their counter-weapon. The Russian communists had encountered a similar problem. Before the revolution, many communists believed in free love, but after they took power in 1917 they became relatively puritanical. Sexual love was thought to be a competitor that could make people feel less dissatisfied with their lot and thereby diminish their felt need and enthusiasm for the revolution and the Soviet Communist Party.

The Case Against Original Sin

The word "sin" is not like the word "water", which we can fully understand without further specification, but is like "language" and "color", expansions of which name particular languages and colors. There no more can be sin in the absence of all particular sins than can there be color in the absence of all particular colors. But sin theologians would reject this: they would be drawn to the analogy with water because they needed sin that could reside in the souls of saints and infants without any particular kind of sin being there. They needed sin itself. If they are correct, literally billions of people do not know they are sinful and require salvation because they are Hindus, Buddhists, Christian Scientists, or communists. But however it arises, original sin is a belief individual Christians should abandon and a doctrine their churches should abolish. We do not deserve what this doctrine says we deserve. It has made millions of people loathe themselves and believe they deserve hell or exclusion from heaven, whether or not they committed serious sins. When Christians consult their judgment regarding how much punishment they deserve, fewer today than in the past would conclude they deserve permanent death or hell. Whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, contemporary Christians should see that the doctrine is

without evidence, without religious merit, is conceptually incoherent, and a tool of evangelism. Without this doctrine Christianity is a nobler religion; its other major components such as the moral teaching of Jesus, the divinity of Christ and an afterlife are not dependent on the doctrine. ■

Notes:

1. New Testament accounts of original sin are in Romans 5: 12-21, First Corinthians 15: 2, and Psalm 51.
2. Supervenience is explained in Richard Hare's *The Language of Morals*, Oxford University Press, 1952.

Mercy and Compassion

Foundations for Genuine Islamic Education

By Prof. Henry Francis B. Espiritu

[Professor Espiritu is Associate Professor-VI of Philosophy and Asian Studies at the University of the Philippines (UP), Cebu City. He was the former Academic Coordinator of the Political Science Program at UP Cebu (from 2011-2014) and is presently the Coordinator of the Office of Gender and Development. His research interests include Islamic studies, Islamic feminist discourses, Islamic philosophy, Sufism and Public theology, and he is a fervent student of the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In this article Prof. Espiritu addresses the concept of teaching from an Islamic perspective. In particular, he emphasizes the necessity of instilling the qualities of mercy and compassion in one's teaching method. In doing so, he provides examples from the life of Prophet Muhammad, the teachings of saintly Muslim figures throughout Islamic history, and the lessons of Almighty Allah (the Source of all knowledge) as is illustrated in verses of the Holy Quran.]

The opening verse of *Surah Rahman* proclaims: "The Beneficent taught the Qur'an, He created man, taught him expression" (*Surah Rahman: ayah 1-4*. [Maulana Muhammad Ali Translation; henceforth MMAT]). In reading these short verses from the Holy Qur'an, we can observe that there is a great relationship between "mercy" and teaching. In these verses, the Holy Qur'an directly connects teaching the Holy Book of Guidance to humankind, with Allah Almighty's essential divine attribute, the Most Merciful (*Ar-Rahman*). Allah Almighty's Noble Name "*Ar-Rahman*" (The Most Merciful) shows us the compassionate nature of our Creator Who continually treats all His creatures with clemency, tenderness, care, love, concern and benevolence and Who at all times and in all places continually manifests compassion to all His creatures and to the whole ongoing universe.

Almighty Allah unconditionally declares in His Holy Book that His mercy encompasses all things.” (*Surah A’raaf: ayah* 156; MMAT.). When Allah Almighty declares that His mercy encompasses all things, this means that His mercy covers all of His creation and of the whole cosmos. His Mercy is unlimited and continuously descends upon His Creation to renew and refresh it moment by moment and day by day. When Allah says that His mercy is for all His creatures, then His promise of continual mercy is true because one of Almighty Allah’s divine attributes is *Al-Haqq* or the Truthful One.

In the first four verses of *Surah Rahman*, the loftiest bounty of Allah in His Holy Name of “*Ar-Rahman*” is His endowing us with the truthful teaching of the Holy Qur’an, because it is through its pages that man is taught, guided, instructed and directed to righteousness, and ultimately man gains eternal bliss by attending to and following the prescriptions found within its sacred pages. Therefore, teachers and mentors who are occupied in the service of teaching the Holy Qur’an or of any Islamic teachings which are all derived from the Holy Qur’an should take special care that, in teaching the holy book, they themselves must manifest the qualities of mercy, clemency and compassion upon their students. The qualities of mercy, love and kindness must be duly manifested in the teaching of spiritual knowledge coming from the Holy Qur’an which is itself a Book of Mercy. Mercy, kindness, beneficence, care and concern are the proper methodologies in teaching the Holy Qur’an so that pure love of Allah Almighty will ultimately be cultivated and will eventually develop within the hearts of the students.

The *hadith-e-sharif* (holy sayings of the Prophet) categorically narrates that Allah Almighty has inscribed above His Mighty Throne (*Arsh-al-Azeem*) these words: “My Mercy overcomes My anger.” (*Sahih Imam Bukhari, Al Hadith ul-Qudsi.*). The Holy Prophet of Islam, our beloved Nabi Muhammad Mustafa (peace be upon him), declares: “The merciful ones will be given mercy by the All-Merciful. Be merciful to those who are on this earth, and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you.” (*Sahih Imam Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Rahmah*, chapter 7: section 13). Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib, a great Muslim saint of the Punjab and the reviver of Islam in the 14th century of the Muslim Era, has these enlightening and insightful reflections regarding divine mercy (*rahmah*) and compassion (*rahiimah*) as essential attributes of our Almighty Allah:

Another attribute is that Allah provides, out of His bountiful mercy, and not in return for anything done by His creatures, all the means of happiness for all living beings before their creation. We are the manifestation of this attribute in the creation of the sun, the moon, the stars and numerous other

things for the benefit of men before they or their deeds ever existed. This gift is due to His attribute of mercy, and it is when this attribute is at work that He is called ‘the Beneficent’ (*Ar-Rahman*). With respect to another attribute, He is called ‘the Merciful’ (*Ar-Rahim*) in that He gives a good reward for the good deeds of His creatures and does not waste anyone’s effort.” (See: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Teachings of Islam*. Columbus, Ohio: *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam* Lahore-USA, 1998; p.108.).

The Holy Qur’an connects our hearts to Allah’s mercy the moment we read its sacred verses. We start our recitation with the Holy *Basmalah*. In the Holy *Basmalah*, which is the beginning invocation in all our Islamic supplications, Allah Almighty specifically chose His qualities of Mercy and Compassion as the Divine Names by which we constantly invoke His Divine Presence: *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim*. Through the *dhikr* (remembrance) of the Holy *Basmalah*, the Muslim is taught that Mercy and Compassion are inseparable attributes of Allah Almighty and that Mercy and Compassion are His eternal essences. Through constant recitation (*dhikr*) of the Holy *Basmalah*, be it in reading the Holy Qur’an or during the commencing of any duties we have in our worldly existence, our tongue and heart immediately connects to the everlasting attributes of Allahu Ta’ala as the Most Merciful (*Ar-Rahman*) and the Most Compassionate (*Ar-Rahim*). If Allah Ta’ala perpetually relates with His Creation through Mercy, Compassion and Love (*Wadud*), then a true Muslim must likewise be merciful, compassionate and loving in his relationship with all of Allah’s creatures.

Yet, it is indeed very sad to hear news of teachers, even teachers (*ustadh*) of religion and *shaykhs* (mentors) of Islamic spirituality who are cruel and unkind in their dealings with their students. Those teachers of religion who cannot control their anger and abuse student physically and verbally must reflect that ruthlessness, harshness, cruelty and being physically or verbally unkind are sure ways to break-off one’s relationship with one’s students and can cause Allah’s displeasure on such merciless teachers. Hazrat Maulana Baqi Billah Naqshbandi, the teacher of Hazrat Imam Rabbani Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi Naqshbandi even considered it *haraam* (forbidden) to hit children and physically hurt them when teaching them Qur-anic *tajweed* (proper pronunciation). According to Hazrat Baqi Billah, cruelty inflicted by teachers on the students whether by physical blows or by verbal abuse earns Allah Ta’ala’s anger in this world and invites severe punishment in the Hereafter (See *Malfoozat-e-Awliyaullah-i-Naqshbandiyyah-e-Hind* [Table Talks of Naqshbandi Saints of India], Volume 2; pp. 328-330.). May our Almighty Allah protect us from His just punishment!

Furthermore, another great *waliullah* (saint of God), Hazrat Maulana Nuri Muhammad Badayuni Naqshbandi, reminded teachers that parents hand over their children to the teacher's care so that their children can gain knowledge in both secular and spiritual matters. Parents entrust their children to a teacher for the teacher to educate the student with kindness and love. It is therefore breaking the trust (*amanat*) that the parents gave to the teacher if he inflicts cruelty on his students in the guise of strictness and harsh discipline. Breaking of trust or *amanat*, according to Hazrat Muhammad Badayuni is a grievous sin in the sight of Allah which exposes the sinner to Allah's punishment and rectificatory justice in the Hereafter (See *Malfoozat-e-Awliyauallah-i-Naqshbandiyyah-e-Hind* [Table Talks of the Naqshbandi Saints of India], Volume 2; pp. 411-412.). Therefore teachers, specifically teachers of Islam, must be very careful not to infringe on the *amanat* given by parents to them: namely the proper education of their children by teaching their students with genuine concern, mercy and compassion.

In the Holy Qur'an, Almighty Allah gave our Beloved Prophet the exalted epithet "*Rahmatan-lil-Alamin*" which means "Sent as Mercy to the Worlds" (See, *Surah Al-Anbiyah: ayah* 107.). Furthermore, the Holy Prophet is likewise described by Almighty Allah in this manner: "And surely thou (Oh Prophet) hast sublime morals (*Surah Al-Qalam: ayah* 4; MMAT.). The Holy Prophet as spiritual educator is the perfect model of gentleness and mercy, yet he is also a firm and decisive teacher of the entire humankind. One of the duties of our Blessed Prophet, who is Mercy to the Worlds, is in the aspect of spiritual education: this is primarily teaching the precious words of Allah Almighty as found in the Holy Qur'an. Almighty Allah Himself declares regarding the teaching function of our Holy Prophet: "He it is Who raised among the illiterates a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His messages and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom—although they were before certainly in manifest error." (*Surah Al-Jumu'ah: ayah* 2; MMAT).

In another Qur'anic text, Allah Almighty describes our Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in this manner: "Thus it is by Allah's mercy that thou art gentle to them. And hadst thou been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around thee." (*Surah Ahl-Imraan: ayah* 159; MMAT). Allahu Ta'ala says that if our Holy Prophet had been harsh, rough and unkind to his Companions (may Allah be pleased be with them all), they would have abandoned him. However our Beloved Prophet Muhammad had never acted roughly against his Holy Companions. He treated all of them lovingly and compassionately. In turn, it is because of the Holy Prophet's just and merciful dealings with his Holy Companions that made them

genuinely committed and fiercely loyal to the Holy Prophet on account of his God-given virtues of mercy, compassion and love to all creatures: humans, animals and plants alike. In the above verses from the Holy Qur'an, our Almighty Allah has pointed to us the blessed personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as the real role model of a true educator whose attribute is mercy and love coupled with firmness towards the truth. By tempering firmness of religion with mercy and kindness, all the *Sahabah-e-Kiraam's* (may Allah be pleased with them all) love for the Holy Prophet likewise increased day by day; and since they genuinely love the Holy Prophet, they cheerfully obeyed his commands with love, devotion and utmost consistency.

If one reflectively reads the *hadiths* (prophetic narrations) and *seerah* (sacred biography) of the Holy Prophet, who is the model of an authentic Islamic educator, there are so many different ways, that we are being taught that mercy is the topmost criteria of being a genuine educator—more so for those persons who are teaching spiritual or religious subjects. When we study the sacred biography of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), we can observe his balanced and just approach to spiritual teaching. No matter what types and classes of people the Holy Prophet encountered in his spiritual teaching and in his preaching, he would respond to everyone with kindness coupled with firm discipline and loving concern to them. It is reported by Hazrat Imam Bukhari, that during the week of our Holy Prophet's fatal illness before he finally left for his heavenly abode, he addressed his Blessed Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) in his mosque at *Madinah Munawwarah* (Medina, the Illumined City). He told them: "If I have ever hit any of you on his back, let him come and avenge himself by hitting me on my back. If I ever cursed anyone, then let him come and let me ask forgiveness from you. Through this, I have released myself from my debts on the right of such a person, and I will then be able to meet my Allah with no debts accrued upon me from anyone." (See *Imam al-Bukhari, Book of Meeting Allah*, chapter 64, section 8).

The great scholar of Hanafi Sunni jurisprudence and well-loved Sufi spiritual master in the Indian Subcontinent, Hazrat Shah Waliullah Dehlawi Naqshbandi, said that harshness in both conduct or in words are detrimental in the spiritual lives of both the teacher engaged in religious education who is entrusted with the duty of conveying the message of Allah Ta'ala to his students as well as to his students who received the teacher's spiritual teachings. Being harsh, severe, rough or even cruel will certainly erase any educative endeavours on the part of the teacher and turns one's effort of spiritual education into failure since the student will have the tendency to harden his heart to the spiritual instructions of his mentor if the training is done in

unkindness and unconcern. (*Shah Waliullah Dehlawi ka Naseehat* [Shah Waliullah's Spiritual Advice]; pp. 77-79.). This important point should be sufficient source of reflection and a solemn warning for any teacher to understand that he would lose his students' love, or they would become distant from him if his approach in teaching is severe, rough, cruel and harsh. In the final analysis, harshness would be detrimental to the teacher himself because his knowledge will then not benefit others since his students will be repelled away from him, then he will not be able to convey the knowledge he knows to his students. Where there is love and concern on the part of the *ustadh* (spiritual teacher) to his *mureed* (students), one's knowledge can benefit the latter. Where there is dislike, grudge, resentment and hatred of students to their teacher, the teacher's knowledge does not reach the students nor will the students be able to benefit from it. It is therefore extremely imperative for the teacher to cultivate the virtues of mercy, kindness, patience and love for his students so that he will be able to teach them effectively.

Teachers, specifically religious teachers (*ustadh*) and mentors in Sufi spirituality (*mashaykh*), are referred to in the *hadith* as *wasiyy-ul-anbiyaa* (heirs of the prophets). Therefore teachers must contemplate very well if they have manifested the exemplary lives of the prophets as to how they relate with their students. Islamic teachers of religion and spirituality who tend to be harsh and rough on their students to the point of being cruel to them must fear Allah and the severe chastisements in the Hereafter for failing to follow the merciful and compassionate ways of the prophets in teaching their fellow human beings. If Muslim teachers who are spiritual heirs of the Holy Prophet really follow him as their exemplar in their lives as spiritual educators, then they must refrain from being harsh, unmerciful, cruel and inconsiderate to their students.

Sayyidina Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) had narrated what Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said about the respective effects of kindness and harshness in one's spiritual life. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Gentleness beautifies while harshness disfigures. Truly, Allah is gentle and loves gentleness, and Allah gives to gentleness that which He does not give to harshness and he who is deprived of gentleness is deprived of all the good from Allah." (See *Sharh-ul-Sunnan Tirmidhi*, pp. 269.). We cannot deny that there is a need for teachers to discipline and correct their students. There is likewise a need to establish regulative principles with respect to students' rapport, behaviour and deportment. There are really times when a teacher has to be firm and institute disciplinary sanctions against unruly students. However, an Islamic teacher must reflect many times over before inflicting disciplinary measures on his students. He or she should

exercise prudence and caution in his dealing with his or her students and must not punish students on the spot without proper reflection. In fact, when angry against a student, the best recourse for the teacher is to remain silent for a moment. When anger has subsided, then the teacher's sincere talk with the student concerned is beneficial; otherwise an unjust reprimand, or a cruel punishment, or unkind words will only bring harm to the spiritual well-being of the student.

In line with the *Sunnah* (Sacred Traditions) of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), an Islamic teacher ought to be gentle in his temperament, yet firm and decisive in his stand with respect to the divine laws (*ash-shari'ah*) of Allahu Ta'ala. A Muslim teacher should be genial, accommodating, approachable and kind to his students so that they may feel comfortable to ask him questions concerning the faith and that they will be enabled to establish beautiful relationship with him. However, a genuine Muslim teacher should not compromise with what is contained in the real teachings (*al-aqeedah*) of the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet. There will not be any leniency on the part of the teacher when it comes to enforcing the ethical commands of Allahu Ta'ala. There will not be compromise with respect to wrongdoings committed by the student and there will not be any acceptance of wrong teachings that is against the true creed of Islam. But let it be properly noted that a real Muslim teacher ought to seriously reflect if his anger is due to his lower *nafs* (ego) or due to a sincere desire (*ikhlas*) for the student's spiritual development. Sometimes, it is due to the lower *nafs* that teachers discipline their students. If the disciplining of students is due to our lower self and prideful ego, then the results of this kind of disciplining are cruelty, injustice and oppression. If this be the case, then we will not receive any reward from Almighty Allah from our teaching because Allah Almighty extremely hates oppression (*zulmat*) against our fellow humans.

May our Beloved Allahu Ta'ala, Who in His mercy and compassion has sent to humanity various prophets for our spiritual instruction, have mercy and grace upon us and grant us spiritual understanding to realize what constitutes His divine principle of educating students with gentleness and teaching them through mercifulness. May our Beloved Allah bless all our teachers with the noble character and model conduct of His Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and may it be that through the perfect example of His Beloved Messenger, we will receive Allah's *hidayah* (guidance) and *taufeeq* (resolution) to follow our Holy Prophet's virtuous footsteps of mercy, compassion and love in our dealings with our fellow human beings and with all of Allah's creatures. Ameen, a thousand times Ameen! ■

Diversity – A Blessing, not a Curse

By Ebrahim Mohamed

[Ebrahim Mohamed – the President of the South Africa branch of the international Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement – is a prolific writer whose articles on current events have been published in newspapers due to their timeliness and thought-provoking insights. In this article, Mr. Mohamed in a concise yet very informative manner provides perspective to the issue of “diversity” from an Islamic perspective. Despite the practices of some in the Muslim world, as he relays, the authoritative sources of Islam describe diversity among people as a blessing to humanity. It is on the basis of mutual respect and appreciation of our differences, he further argues, that peace and harmony may be established and mankind may progress.]

Diversity of colour and language of the human race according to the teachings of Islam is a blessing and not a curse. The Holy Quran states:

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Surely there are signs in this for the learned – 30:22

The diversity of the human race is thus of such great importance in the sight of God that it is referred as one of the **‘signs of Allah’**

Therefore, in Islam, when someone abuses the rights of others along racial lines with preferred treatment given to members of society with certain skin colours and languages, such people are abusing the laws of Almighty God, the Architect of the universe and the human race. It has been shown that the consequences of such abusive actions often turn out to be more painful to the perpetrators than the victims. We have seen it with the fall of ‘apartheid’ and other similar racially oppressive systems in the world.

Racial prejudices, based on skin colour and languages, have plagued humanity since the beginning of time. Concepts of ‘chosen people’, prevalent ‘caste systems’, racial segregation within places of worship, etc. have not helped much to alleviate the racial problems of the world. Even so called progressive secularism much bandied around by neo-liberals and so-called freethinkers, as the answer to society’s problems, have failed miserably. Instead, the ‘master race’ concept of European colonialists which emerged and spread since the 17th century has put large sections of humanity in bondage and in a state of racial oppression for centuries.

In South Africa, after more than twenty years of transformation from legislated racial oppression in the form of ‘apartheid’ to a free and open non-racial society, hardcore racism is still very much entrenched in our social circles. In America, even after the appointment of the first black president, more black people have been incarcerated and killed by white policemen. Can anyone be blamed for perceiving this appointment along non-racial lines to be nothing but window dressing and a smoke screen for the racial hatred that still pervades large sections of that society? Nay, these so called ‘masters of the first world’ has given us nothing but racial discord, division and oppression – nothing but modern day enslavement by the ‘haves’ of the ‘have nots’ on a global scale.

In Islam, we come across principles of the brotherhood of mankind laid down on the broadest practical basis. Mankind in general is told that its members are all, as it were, members of one family, and their divisions into nations, tribes and families should not lead to estrangement from, but to a better knowledge of each other. Superiority of one over another in this vast brotherhood does not depend on nationality, wealth, or rank, but on the careful observance of duty to a Higher Force, or moral greatness. The Holy Quran confirms this:

O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families **that you may know each other**. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware. – 49:13

The Holy Prophet echoed these sublime teachings of the Holy Quran in a practical way. He is reported to have said: “Hashimite or no Hashimite (referring to the high ranking Quraish tribe from which he hailed), if you do not walk in the way of Allah then you are not of me.”

Bilal, the black Ethiopian, was a well-loved companion of the Holy Prophet and had the honour of giving the first call of prayer on the Prophet’s victorious entry into Mecca after several years in exile. When his followers were persecuted in Mecca, the Holy Prophet ordered them to seek asylum in Abyssinia ruled by a black King. He ordered his followers to be obedient citizens even if the head of state was black. A whole chapter in the Holy Quran is dedicated to the Ethiopian prophet Luqman and his words of wisdom are etched into the Holy Scripture and recited and taught by millions of Muslims on a daily basis all across the world.

All the tenets of Islam are aimed at furthering absolute equality. The formal prayer brings together worshippers of all rank and file in society five times a day, standing shoulder to shoulder next to each other, black and white, pauper and rich, king and subjects all together in worship and obedience of the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. On

a global level, the annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) brings together nations of different colours and tongues, clad in the same white simple cloth with one focus on their minds, the unity of God and the unity of mankind. All racial and gender prejudices are discarded, in fact prohibited, giving rise to an awe inspiring spectacle of racial equality and harmony unmatched in any society in the entire world.

Some Muslim nations unfortunately do not uphold and practice these teachings of Islam and practice social inequality instead. Class distinctions, based on lineage, are rife amongst the Saudi Arabs and Indians. This is, not due to, but despite the sublime teachings of equality we find in Islam. They have adopted these practices as an extension of their own backward national and cultural customs and practices and failed to incorporate the reform brought about by Islam.

Diversity, we are told in the Holy Quran, is part of the broad design of creation. Its very existence stimulates research and pursuit of knowledge. We are told it is a sign for the **'learned'**, and that our division into tribes and families is so that we may **'gain knowledge'** of and from each other. Imagine if we all looked, spoke and thought alike. How boring and unappetising life on earth would have been. Intellectually, we would have stifled and no sooner have become extinct.

It is, however, a travesty of justice and most unfortunate that most Western societies have been fed false historical information that gives the impression that Europe is the forerunner of civilisation to the exclusion of all other races. Studies, however, point to Africa as the origin of human life and civilisation. Now the truth of this assertion might be debated, but we know for a fact that African, Egyptian, Arabian, Indian, Mayan, Native American, and Aboriginal cultures - long before Europe came on the scene - had made enormous contributions to human civilization. There was a time in our history, it is said, when some of these civilisations, such as India for example, had already built palaces of marble and stone and feasted on delicately spiced foods and their women wore fine silk clothes, when Europeans were still roaming around in caves clad in buckskin and eating raw meat. The native tribes of North America, too, had far superior moral codes and standards of living that were more in harmony with nature and the environment than that of the European ravagers and plunderers of their land. It is therefore regrettable that non-European contributions to civilisation are often suppressed, for obvious reasons, by Western historians.

The Holy Quran thus encourages us to research and study the contributions made by these diverse nations of the world to society and to honour and respect them. We are clearly told:

In their histories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding – 12:111

It teaches that our knowledge becomes enriched through diversity not just on a social level but on several other levels as well. For example differences are divinely ordained and ought to be respected:

For everyone of you We appointed a law and a way. And if Allah had pleased He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you. So vie one another in virtuous deeds. – (5:48)

In the same way God sent messengers and warners to every nation on this earth: And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them. – 35:24

This is why we find some form of moral codes of conduct even among the most remote tribes on this earth from which we can draw lessons and therefore should not look down upon them with contempt. The humane spirit of *Ubuntu*¹ is exemplary and no doubt vital in this age not only in this country but worldwide where there is so much social strife.

In all societies there must be rules of conduct. It is no use that we say we are not racists but then we do not treat people with respect regardless of race, colour or creed. The Holy Quran provides basic guidelines and rules of etiquette for harmonious social co-existence of all the different people on mother earth. This is especially important for us living in a plural society as we do in South Africa.

In the very verse preceding the verse which informs us about our origin from a common source, a male and a female, and division into families and tribes, we are told:

O you who believe, let not **people** laugh at people, perchance they may be better than they; nor let women (laugh) at women, perchance they may be better than they. **Neither find fault with your own people, nor call one another by derogatory names.** Evil is a bad name after faith; and whoso turns not, these it is that are the iniquitous. – (49:11)

O you who believe, avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is sin; and spy not nor let some of you back bite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You abhor it! And keep your duty to Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful. – (49:12)

This is the guidance the Holy Quran provides in order for us to live in harmony with all other fellow

human-beings. It has highlighted the very basic social evils that tear communities apart and which breed hatred and calls on us to avoid it at all costs. Even calling people by derogatory names as we have witnessed in this country recently can lead to such uncalled for social division at a time when nation building is paramount and of utmost importance to all. We also need to have trust in each other and should not be overly or unnecessarily suspicious of each other. Most hateful in the sight of God is back biting one another, and in order to show how detestable and abhorrent a deed it is it is compared to eating the flesh of a dead brother.

May Almighty God bless us all and may we live in harmony and peace based on mutual respect for each other. ■

Footnote:

1. From the native Xhosa, which means you only become human once you have developed cordial relationships with the rest of humankind.

A Tribute to Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

(translated by Dr. Mohammed Ahmad)

[This article comprises a portion of a Jumma Khutba (Friday Sermon) delivered by Maulana Muhammad Ali on September 17, 1948, days after the death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. At this time of grief for all Pakistanis, Maulana Muhammad Ali provided a memorable tribute to Muhammad Ali Jinnah, relayed the importance of the work he accomplished, and identified the grand task of how to proceed successfully in this cause. Maulana Muhammad Ali also took the opportunity to remind members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement of their special responsibility to spread the correct teachings of Islam to the world, the very purpose of the organization's existence and a task that is to supersede all other world pursuits.]

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah. After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

“Who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return.” (2:156)

Allah has guided Muslims in all times of difficulty. The death of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a time of unprecedented grief

for them. Hazrat Abu Bakr consoled them with these words of the Holy Quran:

“And Muhammad is but a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him. If then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?” (3:144).

These words contain a reference to certain incidents related to the battle of *Uhud*. Rumor was rife that the Holy Prophet had been martyred in the battlefield. The strength of belief of his followers is reflected in the following words from one of his companions: “If Muhammad has been killed, his Lord has not been killed, so keep on fighting for the cause he fought for.” With these words on his tongue he plunged fearlessly with sword in hand, into the enemy ranks.

When the Holy Prophet actually passed away and some people thought he was still alive, Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq went into his apartment. Having confirmed the Holy Prophet’s death, he returned to the mosque and addressed the congregation in these words; “Listen to what I say. If any of you worshipped Muhammad, then he has passed away. If you worshipped Allah, then He is Ever-living and death does not overtake Him. Hazrat Abu Bakr had more love for the Holy Prophet than anyone else. He, however, clearly conveyed the message that even such a great man, who was the king of both the religious and worldly realm, was not God. His death should not be cause for the Muslims to slow down in doing what he had entrusted them with.

Muslims after the death of the Holy Prophet had such firm faith in his message that they stood up to suppress the tide of rebellion that rose in the Arabian lands. They also defended against and defeated the combined assault of the two major powers of the time, the Romans and the Persians simultaneously from two different directions across their borders. As a result of their firm resolve they sapped the strength of both, and the Roman and Persian empires were forever vanquished. Moreover within a period of a hundred years as a result of the firm commitment to their faith, they were able to carry the message of Islam from China in the East to Spain in the West.

In the present age we do not see anybody who was the equal of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Within a short span of seven years he overcame the worst and most dangerous enemies and successfully built a sovereign Muslim state. His will and determination had the strength and stability of a mountain. The Congress said India cannot be divided and such division will take place over our dead bodies. Gandhiji, who was also a great personality of this age, said India is indivisible. The British who were in power had the same opinion. A substantial number from amongst the Muslims

were also supporters of this view. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah disagreed with all of them and said this division was inevitable and so it happened. All the powers submitted before his firm resolve. His body was thin and frail, but the source of such great achievements is the heart and not the body. His heart was so committed and resolve so firm that all the opposing forces had to give in to it.

Remember, even after the death of such an eminent personality, if the Muslims remain steadfast it will not be a loss for the cause of Islam but rather a means of progress. It is quite obvious that Muhammad Ali Jinnah had firm belief in God. As a result of it, all his opposition fell like a house of straw. Muhammad Ali Jinnah moved fearlessly without any bodyguards amongst the very same Hindu extremists who killed their great benefactor Gandhi simply due to his statement that Muslims be permitted to remain in India. God has called Muhammad Ali Jinnah back to reward him for his noble work. He, however, called him back only after all the opponents had fully exerted themselves against him, before and after the creation of Pakistan. There are very few human beings who have met such great success in their lives. Regarding them, the Holy Quran states:

“That is Allah’s grace; He grants it to whom He pleases. And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.” (62:4).

Quaid-i-Azam did his work and has gone before God. Today he is respected much more not only by his friends but even his opponents admit this was a man of iron determination. This resolve was a result of his firm belief in God. In this moment of grief, Muslims should once more recall the words of Hazrat Abu Bakr:

“If you worshipped Allah, then He is Ever-living and death does not overtake Him.”

If the hearts of Muslims have this kind of belief in God, their efforts can make Pakistan an ideal Islamic Republic. Today the world of Islam is looking for a model of governance. Such a model can only be provided by people who have the strength of belief in their hearts. Remember, however, those whose footsteps falter in the face of desire for acquisition of wealth or personal pleasure do not have faith in God. Faith, when it enters a heart, makes it firm like a mountain. The person with this kind of belief no longer remains a slave to his desires but his desires do his bidding. It does not require an epic struggle to reach this level, only a commitment from the heart needs to be made. In a matter of a few minutes the person who makes such a commitment reaches a high level of spirituality. If, however, by choice he remains stuck in the muddy waters of low morality, God also does not pull him out of it. I am making this appeal in particular to the leaders of this nation.

A friend has written to me asking, why we [members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat] are not witnessing God’s favors? It is because we who call ourselves “Ahmadis” have not lived up to the ten conditions of the pledge we made at the hands of a pure soul, the pledge of keeping our religion above the world! This is the truth. Our condition is such that we give a few pennies in Allah’s way and think that we have put Him under an obligation. We were called to rise to a level of commitment whereby the sacrifice of everything should mean nothing to us. There is no doubt in this that the *Imam* of this age, your spiritual mentor, called you to something that was above all the worldly pursuits. It was to propagate the Word of God in the world. Anybody who seeks a position of honor, or thinks himself above others, or has the notion that his services for religion are incomparable, is incapable of proclaiming God’s message to the world.

Even more difficult to comprehend is our lack of understanding that propagating the name of God in the world is the very purpose of existence of our organization. Some are worried about how their organization can gain ownership of industry or business. Others are concerned about ways and means to acquire political power. Still others think that honor lies in building schools and colleges. We have strayed far from the humble disposition needed to propagate the name of God in the world. You have lost your foothold upon the mountain of strength that it was placed upon. Very few of us remain concerned about propagating the true message of Islam in the world and illuminating the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Allah, through His Grace, has opened up ways for us but our eyes keep turning in a direction He has prohibited:

“And strain not thine eyes toward that with which We have provided different classes of them, (of) the splendor of this world’s life.” (20:131)

Spreading the truth is like planting a seed. Keep on sowing seeds and working hard. Bringing them to fruition is the work of God. This is the most difficult task in the world. In order to accomplish this we need an even greater faith in God than what we need for our worldly undertakings.

Here in Quetta we said *ghaibana Janaza* (funeral prayers in absentia) for Quaid-i-Azam on Sunday after our Quran lesson. I hope that this was done by all our member organizations and additional prayers for elevation of his spiritual status were also said. If this has not been done by all of our organizations whether they are in Pakistan or India, it should be done. Along with beseeching Allah to grant special spiritual grace to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, we should also request Him to inculcate such firm belief in His Being in the hearts of Muslims that it helps them overcome all their difficulties. ■

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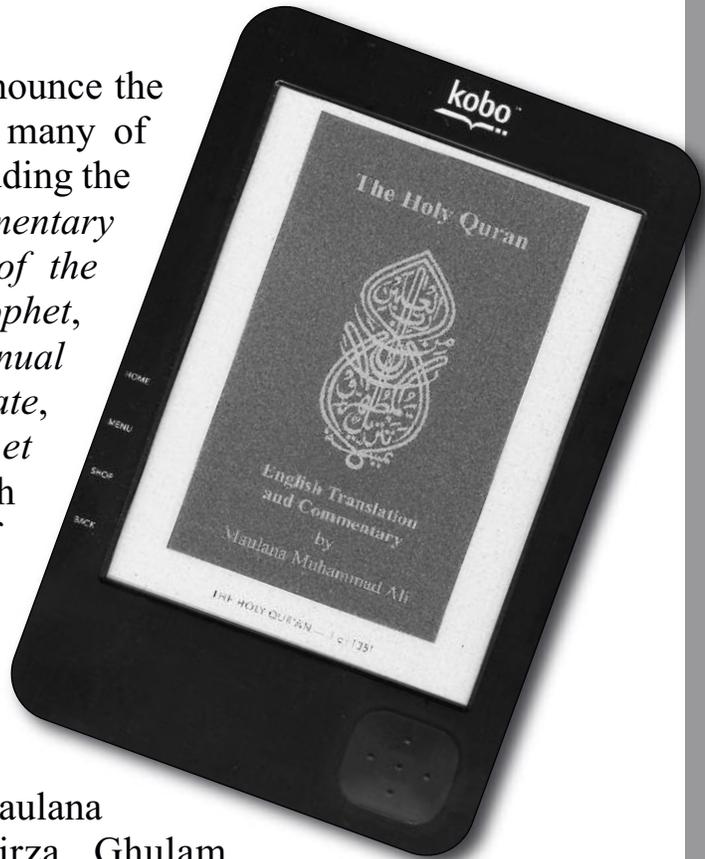
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