

*“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**

**April – June 2017**

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.

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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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**Editor:** Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

**Circulation:** Mrs. Samina Malik.

#### Contact information:

'The Light', P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, U.S.A.

**Phone:** 614 – 873 1030 • **Fax:** 614 – 873 1022

**E-mails:** aaiil@aol.com

**Website:** www.muslim.org

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.

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#### 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.

## Analyzing the Words “Jihad” and “Qital” within the Spiritual Context of the Quranic Text

By Hans Drost

[The author, Mr. Hans Drost, is from the Netherlands. He is an ardent student of Islam for over 40 year, and particularly studies the literary works of Maulana Muhammad Ali. He has also assisted in various projects in which books by Maulana Muhammad Ali were translated from English into Dutch. In this article, Mr. Drost provides a detailed explanation of the term “jihad” as used in the Quran. He does so by distinguishing the term “jihad” from that of “qital” and assessing the historical context of various pertinent verses. He also offers insight as to how the term “jihad” may have come to be associated with aggressive conflict as opposed to a spiritual striving in Muslim-ruled societies in the past.]

### Introduction

The much used and abused word *jihād* is derived from the verb *jāhada*, which appears approximately 65 times in the Qur’ān. The noun *jihād* is used only four times, twice in conjunction with the verb *jāhid*<sup>1</sup> and twice its meaning translates into the phrase *striving in God’s way*<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately, for many centuries, the word *jihād* has been interpreted to mean war (to fight) and more specifically ‘religious war’. There are only two words in the Qur’anic revelations which relate to war or conflict. One is *qitāl* (to fight) derived from the word *qatala* and the other is *harb* (destruction). Around the early 20th century, certain religious scholars interpreted the word *jihād* as ‘striving to do good’. At the same time, bowing to prevailing political interests and pressures, they added ‘to fight in self-defense’ as another (secondary) interpretation.

### Historic perspective

I fully agree with Karen Armstrong who mentioned in one of her ‘TED Talks’ that religion has always been hijacked by politics. Throughout history, almost all recorded conflicts were really political wars in which the rulers created discord along religious lines. To ensure support, the mostly illiterate population was forced to take sides or face possible fatal consequences. The Roman philosopher Seneca remarked: “Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful.”

The Prophet Muhammad spent the first 13 years of his call to monotheism in Mecca, where he and his followers were brutally persecuted by the Quraish tribe. During this time, God had not made any revelations regarding self-defense and to escape the torture and deprivations, they migrated to Medina. Just before their exodus, Muhammad received the first revelation authorizing self-defense. The verse, Quran 22:39, reads as follows:

“Permission to fight in self-defense (*yuqātilūna*) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed.”

While Muhammad and his followers were in Medina, the revelations regarding ‘fighting in self-defense’ continued, see: Quran 2:189–196. Verse 2:195 encapsulates the parameters:

“... and cast not yourselves to perdition with your own hands and do good (to others).”

There are 35 recorded battles that took place around Medina in the last ten years of Prophet Muhammad’s life. A perfect example of the Prophet adhering to the self-defense revelations occurred when he and his followers marched to Tabūk to oppose the rumoured presence of a Roman army. When they did not encounter anyone there they returned to Medina. To be sure, in those days a retreating hostile army usually left a succession of pillaged, sacked and burned villages in its wake. But the historical record shows that Muhammad and his followers went back to Medina without conquering any territory or molesting the hamlets or the populace.

### The noun *jihād* and the verb *jāhada* in the Mecca surahs

The noun *jihād* is mentioned four times in the Qur’anic revelations. That is, twice in the Mecca surahs and twice in the Medina surahs. By studying the word *jihād* within the framework of the Mecca surahs, my conclusions are as follows:

1. Chapter 22, verses 73 – 78:

The parable in verses 73 through 76 challenges polytheism. Verses 77 and 78 encapsulate the heart of the matter, i.e. those who embrace monotheism must follow God’s dictate:

“And strive hard (*jāhidū*) for God with due striving (*jihād*)”.

They shall devote time to daily prayer, pay the poor-rate and follow God’s guidelines for world peace.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Chapter 25, verses 45 – 60:

Verses 45 through 51 contain a lesson related to monotheism beautifully expressed by Maulana Muhammad Ali in his footnote 25:49a:

*“The mercy of Allāh, which appears in the form of rain in physical nature, comes spiritually in the form of revelation. As the pure water from the clouds gives life to a dead land, so does the pure water of revelation from Him raise the spiritually dead to life.”*

In this same paragraph, verse 52 is the only one that begins with the word *fa*. Its significance is underscored by the use of *falā*, marking it as a pivotal revelation. It effectively permits the monotheists to disobey the polytheists, but only in religious matters. This is to be accomplished by:

*“and strive (jāhidhum) against them a mighty striving (jihād kabīr) with it”.*

The last word ‘it’ indicates the Qur’ān (*the Discrimination*), as mentioned in verse 1 of chapter 25. Verse 53 indicates that the *mighty striving* coincides with the choice between monotheism and polytheism, i.e. either *follow the sweet, very sweet river of monotheism or the salty, bitter river of polytheism*.<sup>4</sup> Verses 54 through 60 are a continuation of the lesson in monotheism and illustrate the characteristics of God.

The words *“jāhadū wa sabarū”* in verse 16:110 translate into *“struggle hard and be patient”*. Taken in context, they describe the spiritual, psychological and physical energy needed in order to convert from polytheism to monotheism. Spiritual energy is provided by the Qur’ān. Psychological energy encompasses determination, perseverance and desire while physical energy involves time, money and effort.<sup>5</sup> The Qur’anic revelations also mention that we can find support in *sabr wa salāt (tenacity and prayer)*<sup>6</sup>.

### The noun *qitāl* and the verb *qatala* in the Mecca surahs

Although the noun *qitāl* does not appear in the Mecca surahs, the verb *qatala* is used in the parables and stories involving Moses and Joseph. In these texts, *qatala* translates into *slain* or *slaying*.

As mentioned before, verse 22:39 is the first revelation that allowed self-defense. However, there is one other verse that alludes to self-defense. Verse 73:20 mentions the word *yūqātilūna* which means *to fight in God’s way*. This same verse is part of one of the early Mecca surahs. Because no revelation regarding self-defense had been received prior to 22:39, while

Muhammad and his followers resided in Mecca, this verse appears to be a contradiction.

By studying this apparent discrepancy in more detail<sup>7</sup>, we find that the chapters 67–114 (revealed in Mecca) are not arranged in chronological but in spiritual order under Divine guidance (see 4:82). Also the syntax of verses 73:20 and 74:31 is different from all the other verses which mainly consist of short sentences. A plausible explanation for this apparent discrepancy is that both these verses were revealed in Medina and inserted into the early Mecca surahs for spiritual clarity, literary enrichment and symbolic comprehension.

### The word *jihād* in the Medina surahs

The revelations Muhammad received while residing in Mecca were meant to inspire, motivate and guide an individual’s spiritual conversion from polytheism to monotheism. But, the revelations he received in Medina were meant to lay the foundation of an Islamic state. At that time, the word *jihād* as defined in the Mecca surahs meant to *exert spiritual energy in pursuit of monotheism*, as in 29:6:

*“And whoever strives hard (jāhada), strives (yujāhidu) for himself”.*

In the Mecca and Medina surahs, the meaning of the word *jihād* is the same. But in the Medina surahs, the emphasis is more on economic and social interests as evidenced by the addition of the generally aggrandizing words *in God’s way*. I have gathered five points (spiritual pillars) outlining the steps to spiritual enlightenment, which are as follows:

1. There is but one God.
2. Cleansing the soul through prayer and fasting as well as exerting energy, time and money to aid our fellow man (sacrifice and pilgrimage).
3. Embracing God’s moral code, including compassion, mercy, humility and justice while accepting personal responsibility and accountability.
4. Not to practice idolatry.
5. Working towards world peace and following the Golden Rule, i.e.: “Do unto others as you wish others would do unto you”.

### The word *qitāl* in the Medina surahs

When Muhammad and his followers migrated to Medina, their situation improved considerably. They established treaties with the local tribes in order to defend the city against the warmongering polytheists from Mecca. In all, there were 35 recorded battles around Medina in ten years. As mentioned previously, verse 22:39 allowed combat in self-defense only. The

two words describing the approved actions are the noun *qitāl* used thirteen times in the Medina surahs and the verb *qatala* (and its derivatives) used approximately 122 times.

However, there are disparities concerning the use and interpretation of the word *qatala*. For instance, it is often found in stories relating to murder and mayhem while describing violent historic events. For ease of study, I have compiled a short list identifying the twelve locations in the Qur’ān where the verb *qatala* and the noun *qitāl* are used to describe self-defense:

1. Chapter 2, paragraph 24, verses 189–196 and paragraph 27, verses 217–221.
2. Chapter 4, paragraph 12, verses 88–91.
3. Chapter 9, paragraphs 1, 2 and 4.

In chapter 9, Maulana Muhammad Ali presents historical events in his introduction, see also his respective footnotes 1a through 29a.

When the Medina verses regarding self-defense are taken out of context, a much different interpretation of the word *qitāl* emerges. It gets even more confusing when the media and the politicians substitute the word *jihād* for *qitāl*.

There are three verses in particular (2:191, 2:217 and 9:29) in which the word *qitāl* is often taken out of context, adding to the notion that the Qur’ān condones or even encourages violence. Chapter Q Al-Baqarah 2, paragraph 24 contains the verses 189–196 which inform Muhammad and his followers, who had just migrated to Medina, that a new era had arrived (‘the new moon’). They were told that they must ‘enter houses through the front door’, i.e. stay on the right path and keep one’s duty to God. Verse 190 continues:

*“And fight in self-defense in the way of Allāh against those who fight against you but be not aggressive. Surely Allāh loves not the aggressors.”*

In this verse, the words ‘*those who fight against you*’ indicate the polytheists from Mecca who pursued Muhammad and his followers to Medina with the intent to annihilate the monotheists.

The Meccans are mentioned six times in verse 191 (‘*them*’ and ‘*they*’). Studying this verse in its entirety gives a full account of the situation at the time. However, because the first part of verse 191 is often taken out of context and inevitably promoted as an autonomous article of faith and then consequently applied to contemporary circumstances, this verse takes on much different and even dangerous connotations. The same is true of verse 2:217, in which the first three sentences are also often misconstrued. Like all words or

texts taken out of context, their meaning is decisively altered.

To reiterate, the word *qitāl* means *to fight in self-defense* and by examining verse 2:217 in context, we find that the design of this paragraph is embodied in the last sentence of verse 2:221:

*“... and Allāh invites to the Garden and to forgiveness by His will and He makes clear His messages to men that they may be mindful.”*

Verse 9:29 is another one often taken out of context. It is imperative to read/study the whole of chapter 9 in order to understand its fundamental concept, specifically verses 25–29 and 30–37. These verses were revealed to Muhammad in the ninth year of his stay in Medina at which time the Islamic state had grown considerably. In fact, they authorized the Muslims to defend themselves against the monotheistic Christian-Romans as well as the Zoroastrian-Persians, who had begun to take economic and political notice of the growing Islamic influence and were contemplating an attack on the Arabian Peninsula. Prior to verse 9:29, fighting in self-defense was allowed only against the polytheists of Mecca.

There are several other verses taken out of context which are often condensed into intractable attention-grabbing oneliners thereby depicting the Qur’ān with an aggressive image. It is important to study these verses in their entirety in order to correctly understand the subject matter. But, since these verses are often regarded as monotonous, tiresome and punctilious by the media and politicians, they have been deemed superfluous in content and not worth the time to study.

Over the course of many generations, the next three topics have often purposely been ignored by religious leaders and the ruling class. Beginning in the eighth century, the rulers pressed the clergy into finding ecclesiastical justification for the expansion of their territories. At that time, the religious leaders decided to use the word *jihād* in order to ‘legitimize’ the rulers’ militaristic warfare. The Qur’ān describes the consequence of circumventing moral, ethical and legal accountability in 30:12/14: “*And the day when the Hour comes, ...*”, signifying the Day of Judgment.

## 1. Spirituality

The word spirituality has often been confused with the word spiritualism which, among other things, can mean: clairvoyance, telepathy, extrasensory-perception, parapsychology and occultism. Of course, the meaning of the word spirituality does not even come close to any of those definitions. Depending on the subject matter, the definition of this word includes: dedication, commitment, piety, worship, devoutness, holiness, sincerity and love.

It is our spirituality that sets us apart from other living beings. But since it encourages compassion, sympathy and charity, it has led to a ‘negative selection’ of the religious and educated elite in countries governed by absolute monarchies, dictatorships as well as religious intolerance. In order to silence any dissent, educators, scientists and (impartial) religious leaders were persecuted, jailed and/or executed.

But spirituality has not (yet) been eradicated. Since the 1960’s, there have been philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, physicists and artists who, either singly or collectively under the umbrella of UNESCO, have worked to resurrect, stimulate and promote spirituality by introducing a new term called ‘*transdisciplinarity*’. This term includes concepts such as: vision, impact, freedom, dimension and understanding. It also emphasizes the idea that spirituality should not be replaced but complemented by science and technology.

I venture to add a few other definitions to the word spirituality, namely brother/sisterhood, morality, decency and tranquillity.

## 2. Complacency of the clergy

In my studies, I have found that over the last 450 years much of the meaning of the original Qur’anic revelations has been changed, skewed and misinterpreted in order for certain Islamic states to obtain, maintain and expand dominance. In the 16th century, secular and religious control were consolidated by two Eastern superpowers, the Mughal and Ottoman Empires (with all the disastrous consequences thereof). Keep in mind the system of *taqlid* which resulted in curtailing and eventually banning open and free discussion of religious topics, themes and texts (called *ijtihad*). Only state approved interpretations of the Qur’anic revelations were allowed and any disobedience was punishable by imprisonment or even execution. As a result, these skewed interpretations became mainstream and a theological straightjacket for the general population. With this in mind, the clergy proceeded to restructure certain spiritual texts using passive and unemotional language in order to mould the population into mere followers of their phlegmatic dogmas. They also introduced the five pillars of Islam<sup>8</sup> as goals, but they were only meant to pursue a goal and not to achieve the goal.

Other important items found in the Qur’anic text are the 99 names by which God is identified. A few of these depict His characteristics, while others are derived from narratives and stories in the revelations. Also in this case, the clergy has restructured the original colorful and animated descriptions into mundane and banal platitudes.

## 3. Accountability

A key factor mentioned in the Qur’ān is the importance of personal responsibility<sup>9</sup>. In itself, this is a logical, fair and civilized expectation, but it can be an often difficult if not impossible mandate to follow.

a) Take for instance the trained soldiers of Mecca who, like the Roman legions were paid mercenaries and had no allegiance to any country or any social or economic interests. They had to perform as a cohesive unit and any individual objection was met with swift and deadly consequences. Even soldiers suffering from what was called shell-shock in World War I, now described as post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD, would be court-martialled and executed. If an entire unit refused to fight, every tenth soldier was killed and this practice continues even today in certain areas of the world. Individual opposition, emotional instability and conscientious objections were and still can be fatal afflictions.

b) The troops involved in the 35 battles around Medina under Muhammad, were not part of a standing army. They were a ragtag collection of civilians, merchants, farmers and craftsmen. Guided by the Qur’anic revelations they fought under two conditions<sup>10</sup>. First, any combat had to be in self-defense. Second, each participant had to agree to voluntarily take part in the fight and would be held accountable for any unauthorized actions. The excuse that they merely followed orders, as in subsequent war time trials (a generally unsuccessful defense strategy), was not acceptable.

The difficulty of personal accountability under a central authority also pertains to the economic sector. In the face of illegal or immoral activities, any charges of wrongdoing brought forth by an impartial individual often results in forced resignation and/or be victimized by the trials and tribulations of a whistle-blower.

## Political ‘shorthand’

Islām spread from Arabia to West Africa and India within one century of Muhammad’s death. There were several reasons for the rapid proliferation of Islām. First, Jesus who preached to the Jewish tribes living in areas now known as Morocco and India, introduced Muhammad as the last prophet in his *Injīl* (joyous message). Later, Islām spread to Asia and the rest of Africa through the words and songs of travelling storytellers and balladeers (*qawwālī*). That Islām is a strictly monotheistic religion also seems to have played a major role.

In the middle of the eighth century serious conflicts existed between the various Muslim rulers regarding territory and political power. One of the powerstruggles resulted in the replacement of the Umayyad dynasty with the Abbasid dynasty, who moved their central government from Damascus to Baghdad. In 756, the

Umayyad's last ruler Abd ar-Rahmān I fled to Córdoba, Spain.

These conflicts, warfare and skirmishes between the various Muslim rulers clearly demonstrated that Muhammad's teachings regarding self-defense alone were not sufficient. It is interesting to note that despite claims of linear descent from the prophet Muhammad, the old rituals, beliefs, jealousies and powerstruggles continued to plague the lives of the desert Arabs.

The rapid spread of Islām from the Arabian Peninsula to Morocco and India could also be seen as an effective deterrent against a possible attack by the Roman and Persian empires, since this would then involve a much larger, stronger and predominantly muslim dominated area. Whether territorial expansion is deemed an act of self-defense or one of aggression depends on the people involved. But clearly, the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula<sup>11</sup> in 711 by Tāriq ibn Ziyād was an act of aggression, since the Iberian rulers, called the Visigoths, were no threat to the North African muslims. They had a small standing army, were not involved in any external conflicts and were therefore perceived as an easy target. Not only did the muslims occupy the Peninsula, they also invaded the present day territory of France. When they reached the city of Narbonne, they lost the battle against William of Gellone and retreated to Spain. In 1492 the Spaniards re-conquered the last remnants of the al-Andalus muslim ruled territory.

The role religion plays in politics has long been entrenched in the framework of Muslim governments. In fact, the Qur'ān and its revelations were regarded as a guiding force in all political decisions. Therefore, in order for Tāriq ibn Ziyād to convince the Islamic State to assemble and mobilize an army to invade the Iberian Peninsula governed by the peaceful Visigoths, he needed a viable religious excuse. This is where the words 'political shorthand' and 'word cohesion' come in handy. The Muslim rulers decided to call the invasion of the Peninsula a necessary act in defense of their territory. And, in order to absolve all participants of individual accountability, they chose the word *jihād* to further this 'cohesion'. It was taken out of its qur'anic context and assigned a completely different meaning. In face of the inherently illegal and immoral aggression, the word *qitāl* was not deemed acceptable. The populace was taught that the word *jihād* stood for the justifiable occupation of a Non-Muslim nation for territorial gain. This was called 'the initiative-jihād' and classified as a 'pre-emptive strike'. Later, in time of the crusades, the word *jihād* was used to describe a war in the name of religion, i.e. a holy war.

Nowadays, the word *jihād* has taken on the destructive consequences of a 'runaway train'. It is unstoppable

in its multi-layered misused and abused interpretation. Acts of aggression, invasions, uprooting the populace, killing non-muslims as well as non-conforming muslims all fall under the heedless umbrella of the word *jihād*. Paradoxically, it is said that if a person is killed while engaged in these illegal and immoral acts, he has earned a place in paradise. The media calls these people *jihadists*, a word not found in the Qur'ān.

We all know that language is the most powerful tool man possesses. Therefore, by calling the extremists *jihadists* lends them a measure of admiration, respect and even something akin to holy. Since the press is the most influential medium in existence today, they can be a major player in righting a wrong by calling people who commit these acts by their appropriate names, i.e. assassins, bombers, extremists, fanatics, insurgents, saboteurs or terrorists to name a few.

### Conclusions

1. Qur'anic revelations disallow aggression except in cases of (legitimate) self-defense.
2. The true meaning of the word *jihād* is *striving to obtain five spiritual pillars*.

The word *qitāl* authorizes fighting in self-defense, but only until the threat has been eliminated.

3. The words 'in self-defense' should be part of all translations of the verb *qatala* and its derivatives in the twelve previously mentioned Medina verses and specifically 2:190–193, 2:216–217 and 9:29.
4. To take the bite out of the sensationalized word *jihadist*, the politician and the press must use the correct language in dealing with extremists. We all must stand up for human rights, protect the weak and work toward freedom of personal choice and freedom of religion.

The Qur'ān teaches that only by living in peace with tolerance, brotherhood and love can we honour each other and God. ■

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**Endnotes**

1. See (the Mecca verses) *Q Al-Hajj* 22:78 and *Q Al-Furqān* 25:52.
2. See (the Medina verses) *Q Al-Barā'at* 9:24 and *Q Al-Mumtahanah* 60:1.
3. See also footnotes 22:78a and 2:143b by Maulana Muhammad Ali.
4. See also footnote 25:53a by Maulana Muhammad Ali.
5. The word *sabr* means exertion, to spend time, money and energy in order to achieve a goal. However, nowadays, it has come to mean inactivity or acquiescing.
6. See verse 3:200 and accompanying footnote 200a by Maulana Muhammad Ali.
7. See verses 17:106 and 25:32.
8. These five pillars are: declaration of faith, prayer, zakāt, fasting and hajj.
9. See verse 17:13–15.
10. The citizens of Medina did not necessarily have to take part in the fighting, they could also choose to support the cause by offering supplies or money.
11. Brief historic background: The last king of the Visigoths (Roderick) was killed by his nobleman Julian in the river-port of Santa Maria, south of Seville. In order to defeat Roderick's army, Julian enlisted the aid of Tāriq ibn Ziyād, the governor of Tangiers. They assembled a force of 7,000 Arabs and Berbers. Overwhelmed, the civil war divided Visigoths fled North or converted to Islam. In contrast to Muhammad's teachings, the Muslim army continued their incursion into the rest of Spain and occupied it for the next 700 years.
12. My translation of the three Latin phrases used in this article is as follows:
 

*Inter arma silent leges et religio: In war, law and religion are suspended.*

*Fortia pectora opponere adversis rebus: Brave hearts oppose injustice.*

*Fas est et ab hoste docere: The vanquished are allowed to teach the victorious (likened to the ancient Arabic proverb: 'Take what is pure and leave what is impure').*

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## Spiritual Striving of a Believer

By Lubna Ahmad

[This article is a transcript of a presentation delivered by Mrs. Lubna Ahmad at the Lahore Ahmadiyya center in Cape Town South Africa in September 2016, a day before the conference on "The True Significance of Islamic Caliphate" held collaboratively by the US and South Africa branches. In this article, Mrs. Ahmad provides an excellent comprehensive outline of the spiritual journey of a true believer. She discusses, among other topics, the source of spirituality (God Himself) and the need for recognition of the divine attributes within, the various stages of spiritual development, the perseverance required in this striving, and the practical works essential for advancement in this undertaking.]

### Chapter 55, *Ar-Rahman* (The Beneficent)

*The Beneficent*

*Taught the Quran.*

*He created man,*

*Taught him expression* (Holy Quran 55:1-4)

The Beneficence of Almighty Allah extends to both the material and spiritual worlds. Allah, provided means for the physical survival of man, without his asking. Similarly, the Divine gift of the Holy Quran was given for his spiritual development. The chapter under discussion reminds a believer to partake of the Beneficence of his Creator, by putting His attributes into practice for the benefit of His creation.

The Holy Quran, an all-comprehensive spiritual guide states, "In it are all right books" (98:2,3). It upholds the truths from all previous Scriptures. "The revelation of the Book, is from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise", as stated in chapter 45:2. With regard to the creation of man, Allah states in the Holy Quran, "Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit" (32:9). Human beings are given the *Ruh* (Spirit), which is the inherent seed of goodness from their Creator, in addition to 'freed will', or the ability to make choices in how to lead their lives. This makes man superior to the instinctive behavior given to the rest of creation. Gifts of spiritual knowledge through revelation and expression have been conferred upon man. The essential elements for the physical sustenance are there and so is the light of spiritual sustenance.

Islam is a religion which appeals to the rational and scientific mind. The Holy Quran invites the reader to contemplate on the very essence of physical creation in the universe. The harmony and the universality of the physical laws testify to the truth of the existence of

Allah, the One and Only God, Who exists necessarily by Himself and possesses all the attributes of perfection. According to the Holy Quran:

*He has created the heavens and the earth with truth; He makes the night cover the day and makes the day overtake the night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient (39:5)*

Chapter 55 continues to state in verses 5 thru 9:

*The sun and the moon follow a reckoning,  
And the herbs and the trees adore (Him).  
And the heaven, He raised it high, and He set up  
the measure,  
That you may not exceed the measure,  
And keep up the balance with equity, nor fall short  
in the measure.*

From the movement of the heavenly bodies, to the growth of the smallest herbs on land, all follow the universal law of measure or *mizan*. The physical balance in nature corroborates with the spiritual balance given to man. The Holy Quran draws our attention to the coherence and limitations of the physical phenomenon in the creation around us. God consciousness is created through fairness, justice, and giving of the due to those who deserve it.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad has compared a believer to the date palm. It is interesting to note that each and every part of a date palm is useful. A palm tree provides food, clothing, materials for housing, rope etc. The dates are a good source of fiber, minerals and vitamins. The leaves provide shade and are used for roof rafters, fences, floors, furniture and crates. The fibrous part is turned into rope, and the wider base of the palm leaf is used as a broom. The date trunk is used in making houses and also burned as fuel. Similarly, all God-given faculties of a true believer bear different fruits and fragrances. All are needed for the preservation of the *Ruh* (spirit) and its growth into the *nafs* (personality of the individual).

The Holy Quran repeatedly shows the importance of both the physical and spiritual creation and establishes a contrast between the two. It reminds man of the transitory nature of his worldly existence, and what will stay behind is the footprints of his deeds. Man is constantly reminded to form a connection with Almighty Allah, by following His Guidance and taking responsibility of his actions. He is asked to observe that even the heavens and the earth testify to the Glory and Power of Allah.

*And Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Possessor of power over all things. (3:189)*

*In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for men of understanding. (3:190)*

*Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? (55:13)*

This last verse is oft repeated in Chapter 55, as a constant reminder to the seeker of Truth that multiple examples found in the heavens and the earth testify to the innumerable blessings by the Lord, (*Rabb*), Nourisher unto perfection. He, Who not only creates, but nourishes from the lowest to the highest state of physical and spiritual perfection. Allah, the Lord of the worlds, not only Creates but Evolves, Guides and Sustains His creation.

*He is Allah; the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the Heavens and the earth declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, the Wise." (59:24)*

### Realization of the Divine within and two-fold duty

The spiritual journey of a believer begins with the realization of the Divine attributes within himself or herself. God consciousness leads to the need to reach out to the Source of Goodness. It must be known that both men and women have been given equal opportunity to develop spiritually, and they will be rewarded accordingly.

*And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer — these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with a whit unjustly. (4:124)*

The awareness that he or she is created for a much higher purpose than the rest of the creation alone is sufficient to make the believer strive towards getting closer to the Creator. Man has been given the knowledge of the attributes of Allah, and the potential to develop and practice those attributes of Beneficence and Mercy for the benefit of humanity.

The journey of the spiritual wayfarer continues by complete submission to the Will of Allah. He understands his two-fold duty as a human being; service to God and service to humanity. Such a person has conviction, faith and trust in God. He knows that his very first step is to stay humble before Allah, the One and Only God. He knows that he has to be vigilant of the internal enemy or uncontrollable animal spirit (*nafs-e-ammara*) motivated by his low desires. He also has to work against the external enemy or *shaitan* (devil), which may try to interfere with his righteous course of action. The Holy Prophet Muhammad said, "Create the moral characteristics of Allah, within yourself." The Holy Quran also refers to the same, "We take Allah's color and who is better than Allah in coloring and we are His worship-

pers” (2:138). A believer tries to create Allah’s color in himself, by reflecting His attributes. Allah gives good news in the Holy Quran. Man is informed that Holy Prophet Muhammad was not Divine, but “was a mortal like you” (18:110). The simplicity of his example makes it easy for us to follow. Historical examples from Holy Prophet’s life are a source of inspiration for the believer. Recognition of Allah, the Most High, and safeguarding the rights of individuals, are the two most essential components of Islam.

### Stages in Spiritual development

Awareness of the presence of the Divine within leads a believer to the stage of self-evaluation and prioritization of goals. To get closer to Allah, the heart must be cleared of all roots of evil. Accordingly, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Reformer (*Mujaddid*) of the age and Promised Messiah, has presented six stages of spiritual development. Each stage is more difficult than the previous, yet at any time the previous stage works in harmony with the next, and faith becomes deeply embedded in the nature of the believer. He constantly strives to:

1. Give up arrogance and develop humility.
2. Give up unproductive activities and involve in spiritually motivating deeds.
3. Avoid wastefulness and spend in the way of Allah.
4. Do away with lustful behavior and wear the clothing of modesty (*libas-e-taqwa*).
5. Avoid misuse of God-given faculties and sacrifice in the way of Allah (state of self-annihilation).
6. The last stage is a gift from God, effortless on the part of the believer. He walks with humility and submission towards Allah, Who runs towards him. Allah becomes a Living Reality for him. He receives the gift of a new *Ruh-ul-quddus*, (inspiration), and experiences profound contentment in prayer. Doors of wisdom and knowledge are widened for him as he earns the Love of God. His trust and love in God become stronger against all odds.

### Oath of allegiance: There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

The formula of faith is an oath of allegiance that is taken to enter into the fold of Islam. A sincere believer understands the need of fulfillment of this oath in terms of action and not just verbal expression. It is a testimony to the Truth of the Unity of God, and proclaiming Holy Prophet Muhammad as His last Messenger. Belief in Allah, the One and Only God, means disassociating anything or anybody that undermines the Unity of God in the heart of the believer. The oath also entails follow-

ing the role model of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, whose practical example was the Holy Quran. Commitment and perseverance is essential to undertake any important task in one’s life, from both worldly and spiritual aspects. The Holy Quran states:

*And those who are faithful to their trusts and their covenant,*

*And those who are upright in their testimonies (70:32-33).*

A believer knows that Divine guidance is an essential component for both worldly and spiritual pursuits. He puts religion above the world. He does not stray from the real purpose of his life and strives to get closer to God by following the direction of the Holy Quran to the best of his ability. He knows that obeying the Holy Prophet in actuality means obeying Allah. The Hand of Allah is above the hand of the believer, as he takes this oath of allegiance with confidence and he has nothing to lose.

*Those who swear allegiance to thee do but swear allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is above their hands. So whoever breaks (his faith), he breaks it only to his soul’s injury. And whoever fulfils his covenant with Allah, He will grant him a mighty reward. (48:10)*

### Trust in Allah, and outcome of supplications

A believer is one who has complete trust in Allah, in all his affairs. Such a believer seeks the help and guidance of Allah. He is mindful of his supplications, his efforts and puts his trust and faith in Allah, the Most High. He accepts graciously whatever outcome, good or bad comes his way to be in his best interest. He knows that Allah is his Protector, Best of Judges and the Knower of the Unseen.

*Knowest thou not that Allah’s is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allah you have not any friend or helper? (2:107)*

*And gives him sustenance from whence he imagines not. And whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him. (65:3)*

### Trials and tribulations for spiritual development

A pious person too is not exempted from the difficulties of trials and tribulations. A believer knows this and accepts any challenge that he encounters. He realizes that difficulties in life are a test of his spiritual endurance and praying with sincerity and conviction will bring him closer to his Creator. His understanding of patience entails remaining steadfast in difficult times, accepting what Allah has commanded and abstaining from what He has forbidden.

Wealth and children are two precious entities that can sometimes bring misery and difficulty in a person's life. A believer may also undergo hardship through the same, but he picks up courage, endurance and determination. He spends his resources not just on his children, but also on other people and the propagation of Islam. Hazrat Abu Bakr, the First Caliph, spent all his wealth in the cause of Islam. Justice prevents the believer to side with his children when they are in the wrong. Prayer to Allah for guidance and observance of patience are the two tools exercised by a believer. He never complains and is always thankful to Allah for the blessings that have been given to him.

*Your wealth and your children are only a trial, and Allah — with Him is a great reward. (64:15)*

*O you who believe, seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient. (2:153)*

*And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and this is hard except for the humble ones (2:45)*

#### **Remembrance of Allah: Guarding against evil (Taqwa)**

*Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force). And Allah knows what you do. (29:45)*

A true believer knows that “remembrance of Allah is the greatest force”, the most powerful and effective restraint upon wrong doing. Such a believer upkeeps the five obligatory prayers, by not only reciting the prescribed Quranic verses, but he pays attention to the meaning of the prayer. He makes sure he is mindful of the words he recites by putting the guidance into practice. He praises the perfect attributes of Allah, and seeks His Guidance so that he too can emulate those Divine qualities within. God consciousness during prayer and otherwise motivates the believer to shun evil and do good (*taqwa*). The striving of a believer is earning the Love and closeness of his Creator. He moves towards Allah, the Source of Goodness, by freeing his heart of all mini-gods and anything that goes against the Will of God. He knows that it is through goodness that he can have communion with Allah.

*Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee! Save us from the chastisement of the Fire. (3:191)*

*Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and keeps his duty — then Allah surely loves the dutiful. (3:76)*

The Holy Quran is not just a Book of Guidance or a narration of sacred history, it is a Book that speaks about the glory, greatness, goodness, love, purity, power and knowledge of the Supreme Being, Allah. Maulana Muhammad Ali very eloquently explains, “It is living belief in the Divine power, knowledge and goodness that restrains man from walking in the ways of His displeasure.” The Holy Quran states:

*Allah — there is no god but He, the Ever-Living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist being — His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth (2:255)*

#### **Fulfillment of obligation: Serve Allah and His creation with justice**

A believer not only fulfills his obligation to Allah, but to Allah's creation as well. He practices kindness, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, justice, honesty, and all forms of goodness to everyone around him. He sees all human beings as members of one united brotherhood. Race, gender, socio-economic and cultural barriers are removed and goodness pours out in every direction.

*And whoever does good works and he is a believer, he has no fear of injustice, nor of the withholding of his due. (20:112)*

*And as to those who believe and do good deeds, He will pay them fully their rewards. And Allah loves not the unjust. (3:57)*

*Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and keeps his duty — then Allah surely loves the dutiful. (3:76)*

#### **Doing of good to others through charitable works**

Wealth, faculties and everything that we possess is given to us by Almighty Allah. A believer tries to remember this always. He knows that whatever he owns is a trust from Allah. He must show gratitude to his Creator by spending it according to the guidelines given in the Holy Quran. He “gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free and keeps up prayer and pays the poor-rate” (2:177). Accordingly, Hazrat Umar, when appointed as the second Caliph, would walk the streets of Madinah, making sure no one went to bed hungry.

Proper use of the God-given faculties is also to be honored by a believer. He follows the Quranic injunctions:

*Surely Allah enjoins justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion. He admonishes you that you may be mindful. (16:90)*

*Those who spend in ease as well as in adversity*

*and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others). (3:134)*

*And turn not thy face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly. Surely Allah loves not any self-conceited boaster. (31:18)*

Likewise, as a conqueror, the Holy Prophet enters the city of Makkah, extending his forgiveness to his enemies and kind treatment to women, children and elderly at large. On another incident, finding an orphan child standing alone on Eid Day (Muslim religious festival), the Holy Prophet gives assurance of “being his father for the day”, places him on his shoulder and walks towards the playground.

### **Internal and external unity needed for world peace**

The selfless spirit of the believer motivates him to establish peace around him. He knows that the mission of world peace is colossal and to accomplish it requires a lot of planning. He undertakes the responsibility to achieve this goal, with the help of others and most of all the faith in Allah serves to be his driving force. He ignores matters that are not detrimental to the fundamental principles of his faith and takes necessary measures to overcome the internal and external challenges of peace making. He focuses on issues that can promote unity amongst the Muslims, and peace-making with followers of other faiths and traditions. Aiming to unite Muslims on a common platform and discouraging them from trivial matters of divide, are his concerns. The Holy Quran is a Covenant or “Rope of Allah” (*Hub-li-Allah*) which alone can serve the purpose of eliminating internal strife.

*And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited. (3:103)*

Muslims are also warned to not follow the steps of those who deviated from the teachings of the Book, as is revealed in the history of nations.

*And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear arguments had come to them. And for them is a grievous chastisement. (3:104)*

The first step is for Muslims to unite on the fundamental principles of the Holy Quran and clarify any misunderstandings about the Quran that interfere with peace-making. Once this realization develops and acted upon, they would then be able to live in harmony with followers of other religions. Presenting the broad principles of Islam to the interfaith audience is the second step of peace-making. Uniting all world religions under the banner of Unity of God and Divine Revelation is the goal of a believer. A Muslim believes in One Supreme God and prophets of all nations, proving the common-

ality between Islam and other faiths will help establish world peace.

*And argue not with the People of the Book except by what is best, save such of them as act unjustly. But say: We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit (29:46).*

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement continues to follow Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who undertook the mission of spreading Islam with the pen. Holy Quran translations into other languages and pertinent literary works have been published and distributed as the sole mission of this organization.

*And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful. (3:104)*

*And those who are steadfast seeking the pleasure of their Lord, and keep up prayer and spend of that which We have given them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good; for such is the (happy) issue of the abode (13:22)*

*You should believe in Allah and His Messenger, and strive hard in Allah’s way with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you, did you but know! (61:11)*

The spiritual wayfarer’s will synchronizes with the Will of God. His relationship to Allah is like a child in the lap of its mother, who finds comfort, love and protection from all kinds of danger. Divine support extends over him against evil intentions of the opponents of Truth, like the opening rays of the rising sun that dispel darkness.

May Almighty Allah help each one of us to continue with our spiritual striving. Without Allah’s Mercy nothing is possible. ■

## “Takfir” (Excommunication) in Contemporary Practice

### Part 3 – Chapter 2

By Dean Sahu Khan, Esq.

[Mr. Dean Sahu Khan authored a book titled “Is Takfir (Excommunication) Permissible in Islam?” based on his thesis for a Masters in Arts degree in Islamic Studies from Charles Sturt University in Australia (for which he received “High Distinction”). That book is being published as a series of articles with the above-captioned title for *The Light and Islamic Review*. Mr. Sahu Khan is by profession a Senior Prosecutor with the Office of Director of Public Relations in Canberra. He is also the Chair of the Canberra Interfaith Forum and past, long-term President of the Australian branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. In this series of articles, Mr. Sahu Khan assesses the concept of takfir (excommunication) from an Islamic theological perspective, then discusses the implications of this practice within a legal framework, and finally critically analyzes the motivations for this practice. Produced here is Part 3 of the series, which comprises Chapter 2, a discussion on “takfir” within the Islamic legal framework and its place within the primary sources of the Islam (the Quran and Hadith).]

#### Chapter 2: Discussion on takfir within the Islamic legal framework and its place within the primary sources of Islam (Qur’an and Hadith)

From the previous chapter, it is apparent that the dividing line between a believer and a disbeliever is the confession of the unity of God and the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). By this confession, a person becomes a Muslim and remains so until such time as they renounce the same. That is the position “in spite of any opinion the person may hold on any religious question, or any evil which he may commit” (Ali, 1950, p. 95).

The term *takfir* is derived from the Arabic root word *kufir* that literally means pronouncement of unbelief against someone and can be translated, in the context of this paper, as excommunicating a person from the religion of Islam. The term has to be distinguished from other relevant terms such as apostasy, heresy and religious infidelity. It is necessary to explain the terms apostasy, heresy and religious infidelity because there appears to be either confusion or deliberate misinterpretations of the terms by radical groups like ISIS to justify their atrocities. Apostasy is abandonment or renunciation of a religion by a person (“Apostasy”, 1982, p. 40).

Heresy is any opinion contrary to the orthodox doctrine of a religion (“Heresy”, 1982, p. 467). Heresy is therefore distinct from apostasy, which is an explicit renunciation or abandonment of one’s religion, principles or cause. Heresy is usually used to refer to violations of important religious teachings, but is used also for views strongly opposed to any generally accepted ideas or orthodox opinions. Religious infidelity is the condition of lacking religious beliefs (“Religious infidelity”, 1982, p. 877), or of doubting or rejecting the central tenets of a particular religion (Religious infidelity, n.d.). The terms are not synonymous with each other or with *takfir*.

This study highlights that people brand their targets as apostates when they intend to call them *kafirs*. This error, intentional or otherwise, has significant consequences as those who accuse people of apostasy believe they can kill them (apostates) with impunity, whereas they cannot kill people upon whom they make *takfir* only.

Apostasy, on the other hand, is explicit renunciation of Islam by a person (Tristram, n.d.), e.g. an apostate is “...whoever of you turns back from his religion...” (Qur’an, Al-Baqarah, 2:217) and “...and should anyone of you turn back from his religion...” (Qur’an, Al-Maidah, 5:54). In *takfir* a person is the recipient of someone else’s decision and in apostasy the individual is the decision maker. A Muslim becomes an apostate “by denying that which made him a believer” (H. Yusuf, 2007, p. 66).

The term *takfir* is mentioned in the Qur’an a number of times in different contexts with different meanings, for example in Al Hadid (57:20) the word *kuffar* (plural of *kafir*) is used to mean farmer, not to signify a person without *iman*. The meaning is derived from the literal meaning of the word *kaffar*, that is, one who covers or conceals a thing. A farmer is called a *kafir* because they conceal the seed under earth. A disbeliever is called a *kafir* because they cover or conceal the benefit or favour conferred on them by Allah. Another example is in Al Nur (Qur’an, 24:55) where the term *kafara* is used to mean disbeliever in the sense of being ungrateful, as they do not appreciate or thank Allah for the benefits He bestows. Even if the term is understood as disbelief, it would mean disobedience (*fisq*) to divine commandments and not a rejection of *iman*, ie *kufir*: (Ali, 2002, footnote 57:20b; footnote 24:55a).

Interestingly, the Qur’an does not appear to state upon whom *takfir*, in the sense of excommunicating someone from the religion of Islam, can be made but it expressly says on whom *takfir* cannot be made. Allah commands “O you who believe...say not to anyone who offers you salutation, Thou art not a believer...”

(Qur'an, Al Nisa, 4:94). This clear injunction prohibits the making of *takfir* on any Muslim, even if they do not carry out any other daily religious obligations, so long as they have uttered the Muslim salutation. It is worth noting the difference between *takfir* and apostasy. The Qur'an explains who are apostates, e.g. people who become unbelievers after being a believer (Al Imran, 3:86-90), those who believe then disbelieve (Al-Nisa, 4:137) and those who disbelieve in Allah after their belief (Al-Nahl, 16:106). In each case, it is the deliberate decision of the individual, and not that of another person to leave Islam and become a disbeliever. These verses of the Qur'an cannot therefore be interpreted as authorising the making of *takfir*. By the very nature of the definition of *takfir*, the person upon whom it is made has to be a Muslim so, if they cease to be a Muslim on their own volition, there is no need to make *takfir* on them. There is however a need to explain and differentiate the words *zindiq* (never was a believer), *ridda* and *irtidad* (apostate), and *takfir* (one upon whom the pronouncement of disbeliever is made). These explanations appear to be the view in the majority of Sunni juristic literature (Ahmad, 2007. p. 51). It is therefore an error to equate *takfir* with apostasy. It is widely accepted by Muslims generally that the punishment for apostasy is death. That view, however, is not unanimously supported or agreed upon by *ulemas*.

All the reliable ahadith, the second main source of the religion of Islam, illustrate the stringent restraints and explicit prohibitions on making *takfir*. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) prohibited calling another Muslim a *kafir* (making *takfir*). Abu Zarr reported that, if a person makes *takfir* on someone and that person is not *kafir*, i.e. upon whom *takfir* should not have been made, the maker becomes a *kafir* and Prophet Muhammad further admonished his *ummah* that it was prohibited to make *takfir* on people who pray (Aziz, 1987, p. 82). In addition, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated that, in the Islamic legal framework, "Three things are the basis of faith. [One is] to withhold from one who says 'There is no god but Allah' – do not call him *kafir* for any sin, nor expel him from Islam for any misconduct" (Aziz, 1987, p. 82). To illustrate how much he deprecated making *takfir*, the Prophet (pbuh) equated the makers of *takfir* to murderers (Aziz, 1987, p. 82). The teachings contained in these ahadith are, therefore, meant to restrain Muslims from dubbing each other as *kafir*.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) explicitly said that, "What is between a person and committing *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) and *kufr* (disbelief) is abandoning the prayer" (Meehan, 2008). This is not to be interpreted as suggesting that those who do not pray are *kafirs*. The Prophet was coming up with the injunction that *takfir* should not be made on a person who prays.

Those who emphasise that action is part of faith rely on such ahadith to make *takfir* on those who do not carry out religious rituals. Imam al-Tahawi prohibited making *takfir* on those who pray or commit any sin, but he qualified his beliefs, "as long as he does not deem it [sin] lawful..." (H. Yusuf, 2007, p. 64). Classical jurists, the likes of Abu Hanifa, Murjia and al-Maturidi as mentioned in chapter one, prohibit making *takfir* on sinners unless they deem sin as lawful.

The doctrine and prohibitions on making *takfir* are so clearly and forcefully taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah that there should not be any need to seek opinions of *ulema* (Muslim scholars) or theologians. However, Muslim scholars have reminded the *ummah* of the prohibitions in making *takfir* within the Islamic legal framework. The famous eighteenth century saint of Delhi, Khawaja Mir Dard (d.1785), reiterated that *takfir* cannot be made on people who pray, even if they follow any falsehood or practise *bida* (religious innovation) because they accept and believe in the oneness of God and accept the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (Islamopedia Online, 2010).

All the imams, Hanafis, Maliki, Shafi'is and Hanbalis, have made it clear that, if there is any ground for not issuing *takfir*, the ruling should not be made, even if that reason is weak (Islamopedia Online, 2010). "Trustworthy Imams of the Hanafis, Shafi'is, Hanbalis, and the Asharis, is that none of the people of the Qibla can be called *kafir*" (Ali, 1950, p. 97), thereby reinforcing all ahadith that prohibits making *takfir* on those who pray. Imam Shafi'i (d.820), one of the four great founders of Islamic jurisprudence, also added that "one cannot make *takfir* on a person who erroneously interprets verse of the Qur'an differently from its obvious meaning" (Ismail, n.d.).

It is repeatedly reminded that "no one from the people of qibla should be rendered unbelievers" (A. Yusuf, 2007, p. 150). On the other hand, it is also stated that "One who says the Qur'an is created...or curses the Shaykhyn [Abu Bakr and Umar] is an unbeliever" (A. Yusuf, 2007, p. 150). Abu Hanifa confirms that both rulings are accepted by the majority of Muslims. It is not suggested that people who say the Qur'an is created or those that curse the Shaykhyn are not 'people of the qibla'. Abu Hanifa acknowledges that "reconciling between the two [types of] statements is difficult" (A. Yusuf, 2007, p. 150). The two statements may be difficult to reconcile, but the issue is not about reconciliation, rather it is whether *takfir* can be lawfully pronounced on either or both. Ali Qari in Sharh Fiqh Akbar highlighted, if there are 99 reasons for considering someone as *kafir* and only one reason against, then that one reason should refrain one from making *takfir* (Aziz, 1987, p. 84).

Contemporary jurist Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri<sup>1</sup> also claims terrorist acts expel a Muslim from Islam. Qadri announced categorically that suicide bombings and attacks against civilian targets are not only condemned by Islam, but render the perpetrators totally out of Islam. He argues that terrorists commit acts of self and mass murder with the firm conviction that their actions are not only lawful, but they will be rewarded by God and they are heaven-bound. Qadri convincingly advances scriptural evidence to demonstrate the perpetrators of suicide bombings are destined for hell, not heaven as they claim. The terrorists, Qadri asserts, erroneously hold those beliefs despite the clear commands of Allah, e.g. Al Ma'idah (5:32) states "...whoever kills a person, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he had killed all men...". The Qur'an repeats the prohibition, "...and kill not your people...aggressively and unjustly..." (Al-Nisa, 4:30-3). Abu Hurayra reported Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said the "one who commits suicide is threatened with a severe torment in the Hereafter" (Qadri, 2011, pp. 80-81). It is therefore abundantly clear that committing suicide and all terrorist attacks are un-Islamic and grave sins (Qadri, 2011, pp. 80-81). Qadri justifies his *fatwa* that terrorists and suicide bombers are disbelievers because they deem their atrocities as lawful. To counter any argument against his *fatwa* in light of the prohibitions against making *takfir* on those who recite the *shahada*, Qadri argues the Qur'an and ahadith specifically forbid suicide and terrorists acts, and the terrorists deem such atrocities are not only Islamic but there is a great reward for carrying them out, all of which makes them disbelievers. This line of thinking explains Fethula Gulen's slogan "No terrorist can be a Muslim, and no true Muslim can be a terrorist" (Gulen Institute, 2001). Both Imam al-Tahawi and Qadri's views are accepted generally by the *ummah*, but they should be read with the caveat that the views held by so-called terrorists are not based on erroneous interpretation of the Qur'an, but they deem their unlawful acts lawful knowing they are unlawful.

Further, Qadri treated al-Qaeda and other contemporary terrorists as an old evil with a new name. He compared them with the Khawarij who, with their extreme beliefs, violent acts and terrorism, constantly labelled other Muslims as disbelievers. Qadri gave a *fatwa* in which he said the Khawarij and al-Qaeda share the same character traits and their respective theological and political outlooks are almost identical. Qadri listed classical sources to illustrate that the vast majority of Muslim scholars, past and present, consider the Khawarij, the founders of terrorism, to be totally unIslamic. He concluded that the terrorists of the present times are the Khawarij of our time (Qadri, 2011, p. 392).

Islamic law should not be understood "as an adaptable system of regulations derived through deductive reasoning" (Wolff, 2012, p. 454), as that could amount to human beings making decisions in the name of Allah, a dangerous scenario potentially amounting to a denial of divine supremacy. God is infallible; human beings are not. To make *takfir*, despite the Islamic legal framework prohibiting making them, is tantamount to not only pre-empting Allah's judgment, but acting against His commands.

Muslim jurists have examined the act of *takfir* in detail and there appears to be a consensus that *takfir* should not be made. There are some differences in opinions, but most jurists see *takfir* as a sin and a dangerous act done towards fellow believers. It appears the hermeneutics of each group leads them to very casually and sweepingly make *takfir* on the basis that those upon whom *takfir* is made do not agree with their theological ideologies. ■

#### Endnote

1. A Pakistani politician and Islamic scholar of Sufism, a professor of international constitutional law at the University of the Punjab, the founding chairman of Minhaj-ul-Quran International and has written many books on Islam, hadith and spiritualism (Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, n.d.).

## What Jesus Can Teach Today's Muslims

By Mustafa Akyol  
(and comment by the Editor)

[This article, an insightful take on the role and significance of Jesus for Muslims today, is being reproduced from a New York Times Op-Ed on February 13, 2017. The author, Mustafa Akyol, published several books, most recently "The Islamic Jesus: How the King of the Jews Became a Prophet of the Muslims." Following his opinion is a comment by the Editor that was given in response to an inquiry about the points raised in Mr. Akyol's contribution.]

What is the trouble with Islam? Why are there so many angry Muslims in the world who loathe the West? Why do self-declared Islamic states impose harsh laws that oppress minorities, women and "apostates"? Why are there terrorists who kill in the name of Allah?

Many in the West have been asking these kinds of questions for decades. Answers have varied from claiming that there is no problem within Islam today, which is too defensive, to asserting that Islam itself is a huge problem for the world, which is unfair and prejudiced. Luckily, more informed observers offered more objec-

tive answers: The Islamic civilization, once the world's most enlightened, has lately been going through an acute crisis with severe consequences.

One of the prominent minds of the past century, the British historian Arnold Toynbee, also pondered the crisis of Islam, in a largely forgotten 1948 essay, "Islam, the West, and the Future." The Islamic world has been in a crisis since the 19th century, Toynbee wrote, because it was outperformed, defeated and even besieged by Western powers. Islam, a religion that has always been proud of its earthly success, was now "facing the West with her back to the wall," causing stress, anger and turmoil among Muslims.

Toynbee, with the insight of a great historian, not only analyzed the crisis of Islam but also compared it with an older crisis of an older religion: the plight of the Jews in the face of Roman domination in the first century B.C. The Jews, too, were a monotheistic people with a high opinion of themselves, but they were defeated, conquered and culturally challenged by a foreign empire. This ordeal, Toynbee explained, bred two extreme reactions: One was "Herodianism," which meant collaborating with Rome and imitating its ways. The other was "Zealotism," which meant militancy against Rome and a strict adherence to Jewish law.

Modern-day Muslims, too, Toynbee argued, are haunted by the endless struggles between their own Herodians who imitate the West and their own Zealots who embody "archaism evoked by foreign pressure." He pointed to modern Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as an "arch-Herodian" and the "Central Arabian Wahhabis" as arch-Zealots. He predicted that the Zealots would ultimately be defeated because they lack the sophistication to use modern technology. Had he lived today — and seen, for example, how effectively the Islamic State uses the internet — he might revisit that optimism.

Over the decades, a few Muslim intellectuals have taken note of Toynbee's analogy and argued that Muslims should find a third way, something between Herodianism and Zealotism. It's a reasonable argument, but it neglects a lot of history.

These would-be Muslim reformers, like Toynbee, ignore that the first-century Jewish world wasn't limited to the Herodian-Zealot dichotomy. There were other Jewish parties with intellectual, mystical or conservative leanings. There was also a peculiar rabbi from Nazareth: Jesus.

Jesus claimed to be the very savior — the Messiah — that his people awaited. But unlike other Messiah claimants of his time, he did not unleash an armed rebellion against Rome. He did not bow down to Rome, either.

He put his attention to something else: reviving the faith and reforming the religion of his people. In particular, he called on his fellow Jews to focus on their religion's moral principles, rather than obsessing with the minute details of religious law. He criticized the legalist Pharisees, for example, for "tithing mint and rue and every herb," but neglecting "justice and the love of God."

Christians, of course, know this story well. Yet Muslims need to take notice, too. Because they are going through a crisis very similar to the one Jesus addressed: While being pressed by a foreign civilization, they are also troubled by their own fanatics who see the light only in imposing a rigid law, *Shariah*, and fighting for theocratic rule. Muslims need a creative third way, which will be true to their faith but also free from the burdens of the past tradition and the current political context.

Would it be a totally new idea for Muslims to learn from Jesus? To some extent, yes. While Muslims respect and love Jesus — and his immaculate mother, Mary — because the Quran wholeheartedly praises them, most have never thought about the historical mission of Jesus, the essence of his teaching and how it may relate to their own reality.

A notable exception was Muhammad Abduh, one of the pioneers of Islamic modernism in the late 19th century. Abduh, a pious Egyptian scholar, thought that the Muslim world had lost the tolerance and openness of early Islam and had been suffocated by a dogmatic, rigid tradition. When he read the New Testament, he was impressed. As a Muslim, he did not agree with the Christian theology about Jesus, but he still was moved by Jesus's teachings, which were relevant to a problem Abduh observed in the Muslim world. It was the problem of "being frozen on the literal meaning of the law," he wrote, and thus failing to "understanding the purpose of the law."

Some other Muslim scholars noted the same problems as Abduh. But no Muslim religious leader has yet stressed the crucial gap between divine purposes and dry legalism as powerfully as Jesus did. Jesus showed that sacrificing the spirit of religion to literalism leads to horrors, like the stoning of innocent women by bigoted men — as it still happens in some Muslim countries today. He also taught that obsession with outward expressions of piety can nurture a culture of hypocrisy — as is the case in some Muslim communities today. Jesus even defined humanism as a higher value than legalism, famously declaring, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Can we Muslims also reason, "The *Shariah* is made for man, not man for the *Shariah*"? Or, like Jesus, can we also suggest that the Kingdom of God — also called

“the Caliphate” — will be established not within any earthly polity, but within our hearts and minds? If Jesus is “a prophet of Islam,” as we Muslims often proudly say, then we should think on these questions. Because Jesus addressed the very problems that haunt us today and established a prophetic wisdom perfectly fit for our times. ■

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### Comment by Editor:

The points raised are valid and, to be honest, necessary. There is a hadith in which the Prophet Muhammad states that in the latter days Muslims will go to their religious leaders to seek assistance in times of great consternation and will find them as apes and swine. This statement is not only reflective of the depraved moral condition in which many people find their religious leaders today (i.e. devoid of the spiritual foundations of the faith, and focused on ritualistic conduct only), but it is also prophetic of the type of reform attempts made by Muslims in these times (similar to what is discussed in the article). Being an “ape” signifies merely following (or “aping”) others, and being a “swine” signifies being a slave to one’s lower desires (or uncontrollable passions). The alternative (or third) method is based on reform of one’s self (i.e. focusing on the kingdom of God within). Focus on the reform of the individual, is what leads to the reform of a community and eventually the reform of humanity. This is the basis of all faith traditions and the very purpose for religion. And this is actually what is meant by the Quran acknowledging Jesus as the “Messiah” of the Israelite nation – i.e. that he would revive the spirit of the faith.

Interestingly, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam is founded on this very principle. The founder of the Movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, claimed to be the “mujaddid” (reformer) of the age and taught this very same principle (that it is a time for self-reformation and introspection, and that this is the “jihad” of the time, not jihad of defensive battles). And this is what he meant by him stating he came in the “spirit of Jesus” — not that he was actually Jesus (PEACE BE UPON HIM) but that the mission of reform was the same. He explained, “If I had not come in the spirit of Jesus, someone else would have because the time is ripe for the Messiah”.

Here is a link to an issue of *The Light and Islamic Review* which includes one of my articles on this topic titled “The Great Revival Initiative”: [muslim.org/light/light14-3.pdf](http://muslim.org/light/light14-3.pdf). And, you may find this article (also in *The Light and Islamic Review*) interesting as well, titled “The Caliphate and the Quran” (at [muslim.org/light/Light2016-3.pdf](http://muslim.org/light/Light2016-3.pdf)). In the latter article I argue:

“The true significance of Islamic Caliphate lies in “spiritual affinity” to the Prophet Muhammad, not simple political governance over a Muslim community. It has less to do with geographical territory on earth, and more to do with garnering tranquility in hearts. A Caliph is to be less concerned with controlling societies and more concerned with cultivating souls. The true significance of a Caliphate is not dependent on an Islamic State, but rather on an Islamic state of being.”

## Clothing of Virtue and Piety

By Barry White (Muhammad Sadiq)

[This article is a transcript of a Jummah Khutba (sermon) delivered by the late Barry White, affectionately known as Brother Sadiq, who passed away in December 2016. This Khutba is from June 14, 2002 and discusses certain verses from the Quran about clothing. Br. Sadiq explains how these verses highlight the practical uses and benefits of clothing and also allude to the underlying spiritual significance of virtue and piety being the best form of things with which one can clothe themselves.]

*O children of Adam, We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty; and clothing that guards against evil — that is the best. This is of the messages of Allah that they may be mindful.*

*O children of Adam, let not the devil seduce you, as he expelled your parents from the garden, pulling off from them their clothing that he might show them their shame. He surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you see them not. Surely We have made the devils to be the friends of those who believe not.*

*And when they commit an indecency they say: We found our fathers doing this, and Allah has enjoined it on us. Say: Surely Allah enjoins not indecency. Do you say of Allah what you know not?*

*Say: My Lord enjoins justice. And set upright your faces at every time of prayer and call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience. As He brought you into being, so shall you return. — Chapter 7 (Al- A'Raf: The Elevated Places), verses 26-29*

### Practicality of Clothing

Allah tells us that He provided for us clothing to cover our shame (physical nakedness), and for beauty to make us look decorative. There are a number of reasons for man and woman to cover their nakedness.

One important reason is the maintaining of modesty so as to minimize the physical attraction between the sexes.

This makes for a healthier, family centered society. Unfortunately, the West has, for the last century or so, been disregarding clothing and making it so that it covers but does not hide the body. Those countries that are influenced by the West have followed suit. The result has been increased sexual promiscuity in these societies and a serious breakdown in the family. America, at this time, has more families with single parents than the traditional two parent families.

Allah gave us clothing to cover our nakedness. For most of the time throughout the centuries, people have covered themselves whether they were ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Middle Easterners, Indians, Chinese, or Japanese. Europeans and Americans covered themselves, too, until the 1900's. All of these cultures would be shocked to see what comprises clothing on the beaches and even in houses of worship today. Clothing covers our physical nakedness, thus removing from us temptations. Clothing helps us to be moral, a protector of our morality, and is a great blessing from God.

Another reason our nakedness needs to be covered is because of the climate. In the far North, heavy clothing is needed to protect man from the Arctic cold. In the hot deserts, robes and headwear protect man from the unmerciful sun and heat. In temperate climates, one is protected by different types of clothing for different seasons.

Animals have natural clothing such as fur or feathers. Man has to put on clothing for the different climates, but this is actually a great blessing because man can live or go almost anywhere by putting on suitable clothing; furs in the north, robes in the desert, a wet suit in the sea, etc. Put a bear in the desert and he dies because his fur is not practical for that heat. A Mexican Chihuahua dog dies in the Arctic because it does not have enough fur for the cold. The fact is, we need clothing, as animals do, but our clothing gives us the flexibility to go anywhere, even into space.

Another blessing that clothing brings is that it helps us to identify one another. The Private in the military knows the Sergeant by the uniform he wears, primarily the stripes. A soldier knows a sailor by the uniform he or she is wearing. Diplomats and high officials, like Sultans and ambassadors, are identified by clothing. The bus driver and the policeman are quickly identified by their clothing, their uniforms. When you are driving and encounter a uniformed policeman signaling you to stop, you do, because the uniform identifies him as a policeman. As elegant dress, clothing is good for special occasions such as marriages, class graduations, special celebrations like Eid, etc.

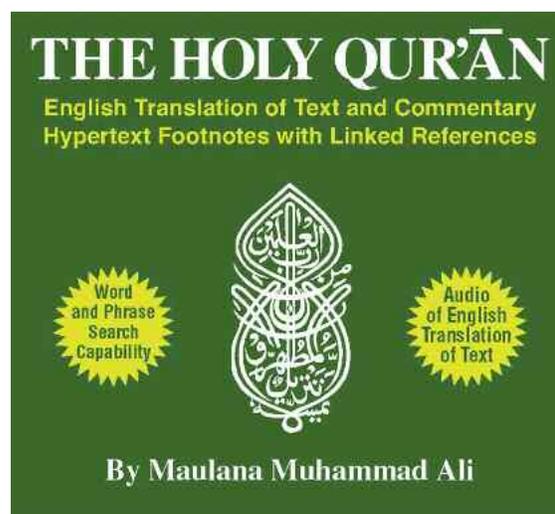
### The Clothing of Virtue

The best clothing, the clothing that will protect your soul and make it beautiful is the clothing that guards against evil, the clothing of virtue. Physical clothing protects and

beautifies the body, and virtue or righteousness protects and beautifies the soul. We should not stop at clothing our body but should move on to clothing our soul.

Allah tells us that we should not allow the devil to pull off our clothing of righteousness as he did with our parents in the garden. The result was their claiming God had enjoined these evils on them. Religious intolerance, subjugation of the American Indian, slavery, segregation, all were claimed to be divinely sanctioned. The Bible used to defend these evil practices and make evil look good. Shakespeare's words were indeed true: "The Devil can cite the scriptures for his own purposes."

Allah tells us He does not enjoin indecency as they claim. No, we are told to say: "My Lord enjoins Justice." Justice – what is good and right – is what Allah enjoins. And then the verse tells us to pray and call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience. This is the only way we can serve justice – by keeping close to Allah and being obedient to Him. Allah is just and knows what is just and what is not. May Allah give us the clothing of righteousness and help us to make justice a reality on this planet.



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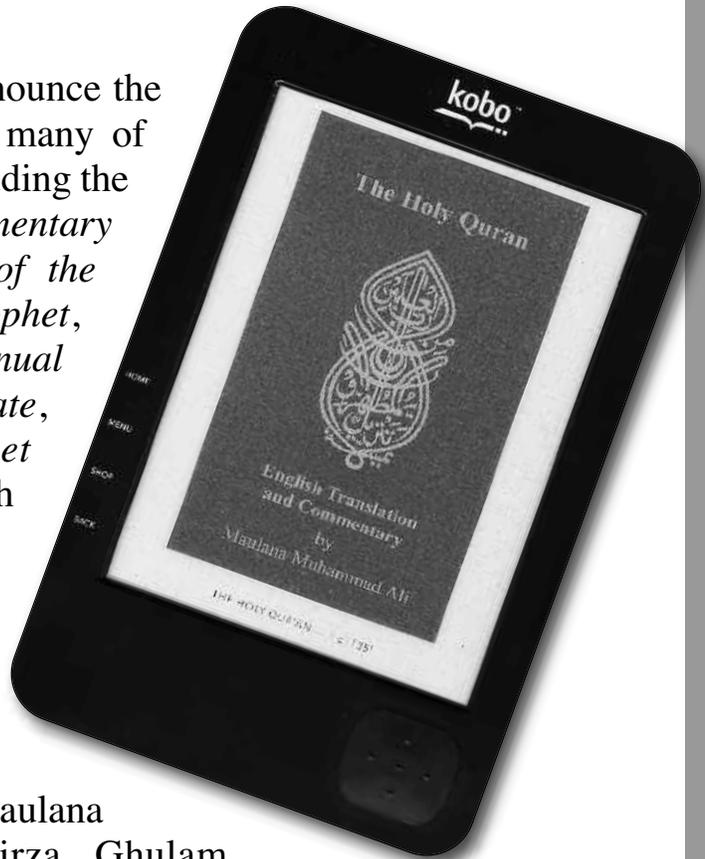
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