

*“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 eighty years**

**October – December 2008**

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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CONTENTS

No. 4

<b><i>Clarion Fund and Pastor Parsley</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>From politics to religion, the threat of Islam to the West remains at the forefront of public discourse</i>	
By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.	
<b><i>Prophet Abraham: A Life of Supreme Dedication, Submission and Sacrifice</i></b> .....	<b>6</b>
<i>Eid-al-Adha Khutba 2008</i>	
By Dr. Jawad Ahmad	
<b><i>Abraham and the Sacrifice of the Animal Within</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad	
<b><i>The Ahmadiyya Movement and Sectarianism</i></b> .....	<b>14</b>
<i>An analysis of a widespread misconception</i>	
By Maulana Muhammad Ali	

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**احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور**

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

P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, 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.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	

#### 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.

## Clarion Fund and Pastor Parsley

**From politics to religion,  
the threat of Islam to the West remains  
at the forefront of public discourse**

**By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.**

After a long and intense presidential election season, the American people elected Barack Obama as their next president. The historic significance of this election was profound. It was a first in terms of an African America being elected to lead the country's highest public office. It was exceptional in terms of the role women played: Hillary Clinton very nearly became the Democratic Presidential candidate and Sarah Palin almost became the country's Vice-President. It was also outstanding in terms of the tremendous active participation by youth and the impact the internet had on raising campaign donations.

In addition to the momentous events of this past presidential election campaign season, there was another unprecedented campaign that took place over the past several months. This campaign was not tied to any particular presidential hopeful, but was quite clearly aimed at affecting the outcome of the election. This campaign comprised sending twenty-eight million free DVDs of a 2006 propaganda film titled *Obsession: Radical Islam's War against the West* to Americans in various swing states via seventy daily newspapers. Conservative estimates place the cost of this campaign at about ten million dollars.

The distributor of the film, the Clarion Fund, is a registered non-profit organization that claims "to educate the public about national security issues". It does this "by funding documentaries and websites dealing with topical issues". The Obsession DVD in particular aims at exposing the threat of "radical Islam" to the West. It includes many clips from television programs throughout the Middle East, from Lebanon to UAE, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in support of its premise.

The objections to the Obsession DVD campaign were numerous. Along with legal arguments that such a campaign violates election laws and breaches the organization's tax exempt status, there was a widespread moral view that the Obsession DVD was sim-

ply a concerted effort to further an agenda to instill hate in the hearts and minds of Americans against a particular group of people (i.e. Muslims). In all fairness, the Obsession DVD does begin with a disclaimer that states: "It is important to remember that most Muslims are peaceful and do not support terror". Moreover, while describing the Obsession DVD on the Clarion Fund's website, it is stated: "A peaceful religion is being hijacked by a dangerous foe, who seeks to destroy the shared values we stand for".

So why all the fuss? If the Obsession DVD targets "radical" Muslims only, why should "moderate" Muslims be offended? Isn't objecting to the campaign *inter alia* aligning one's self with radicals? Not quite. As Hate Hurts America, a non-profit interfaith coalition that was formed to address the rising problem of hatred against American minorities, very aptly explains, the Obsession DVD "cast[s] a wide net of suspicion against Muslims by blurring the line between violent radicalism and mainstream Islam".

But is there any merit to the assertion that Americans will be fooled into believing the violent acts and vile propaganda of some is representative of an entire group of people? Are we to believe that Americans will not be able to make the distinction between "radical Islam" and "true Islam"? The answer to both questions, for the most part, is "Yes". Case in point: the infamous lady at the John McCain rally who stated before the world that she does not trust Barack Obama because he is an "Arab". Although she didn't refer to him as a "Muslim", it was quite apparent she meant the same thing. Because he was an Arab/Muslim, her logic flowed, he could not be trusted, as, presumably, Arabs/Muslims are inherently anti-American and a threat to the West. Clearly, the threat of "radical Islam" is very much understood by at least some Americans as a danger posed by anyone who is Arab or Muslim.

One may suggest this was simply an isolated case. Perhaps this lady was unusually uninformed and impressionable, it may be argued. This supposition fails to carry much weight due to the numerous examples of educated, well-informed persons expressing the same view. Take a look at the nationally recognized Pastor Rod Parsley. Rod Parsley is the pastor of the World Harvest Church, a mega-church in the Columbus, Ohio area that has membership of over twelve thousand. He also leads nine other ministries, which include The Center for Moral Clarity, a

Christian school, a bible college, and hosts a television show that airs across the U.S. and Canada. Due to his far reaching influence, John McCain sought his support in his run for the White House. Whatever one may think about Pastor Parsley, clearly he is not uninformed or lacking intelligence; his accomplishments, rather, reveal he is quite knowledgeable and very bright. Yet, Pastor Parsley, like the lady at the McCain rally, fails to make the distinction between Islam as a religion and radical Muslims who claim to be followers of Islam. In his book *Silent No More*, he includes a chapter titled “Islam: The Deception of Allah” and warns of a war between Islam and Christian civilization. Lest there be any uncertainty as to who exactly he believes this enemy to Christian civilization is, he states emphatically:

There are some, of course, who will say that the violence I cite is the exception and not the rule. I beg to differ. I will counter, respectfully, that what some call “extremists” are instead mainstream believers who are drawing from the well at the very heart of Islam.

Thus, Pastor Parsley, much like the confused lady at the McCain rally stating she did not trust Barack Obama because he was an “Arab”, lumps all Muslims into the category of America’s enemies based on the actions of radicals/extremists. Accordingly, the concern that the Obsession DVD can blur the lines between radical/extremist Muslims and mainstream Muslims is certainly valid: we frequently see persons of all backgrounds attributing the acts of radicals to all Muslims and generalizing the ideologies of extremist to the true teachings of Islam.

In response to Pastor Parsley’s rhetoric, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society issued a press release and publicly invited him to debate the merits of his views. The press release is copied below:

***Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society  
Invites Pastor Rod Parsley to Debate***

COLUMBUS, OH, 5/29/08: As widely reported by various media outlets recently, Columbus, Ohio Pastor Rod Parsley has an extremely unfavorable view of Islam. He believes Islam is an “Anti-Christ” religion, the underlying spirit of the faith being “one of hostility”. He believes Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, “received revelations from demons and not

from the true God”. He also believes America “was founded, in part, with the intention of seeing this false religion destroyed” and that 9/11 “was a generational call to arms”.

In a sincere effort to educate Pastor Rod Parsley, the members of his congregation, other Christian leaders who may hold similar views, and the millions of Americans who are quite unaware of the true nature of Islam, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society invites Pastor Parsley to debate the merits of these views.

“Far from a hostile religion”, Dr. Mohammed Ahmad, President of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, explains, “the word *Islam* is derived from the Arabic word *silm*, meaning *peace*. “Moreover”, he continues, “Islam is titled after the objective to which it aspires: the attainment of peace – within the individual, amongst people, and between man and God – is what Islam prescribes as the very purpose of life”.

It appears Pastor Parsley is quite unaware that the Holy Quran provides:

All people, regardless of faith, color or creed, are equal: “mankind is but a single nation” (2:213).

Total and complete religious freedom must be upheld: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:256).

State governments must be democratic: “those whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves” (42:38).

Financial independence of women must be established: “For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women the benefit of what they earn” (4:32).

Justice must be administered in all matters: “Be maintainers of justice even though it be against your own selves or your relatives” (4:135).

A welfare system for the poor and needy must be institutionalized: “Give away wealth out of love for Him (God), to the near of kin and the orphans, and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and set slaves free” (2:177).

War must be limited to cases of self-

defense only: “Permission to fight is given to those on whom war is made” (22:39); “And fight against those who fight against you, and be not aggressive” (2:190).

Are these principles contrary to the values and ideals upon which America was founded? Is there any other religious scripture that so explicitly defines the principles required to establish a peaceful, civil, democratic society?

It appears Pastor Parsley is also unaware that the Holy Quran:

Vindicates Jesus’ status of Messiah: “...whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and in the hereafter ...” (3:44);

Refers to Jesus as a “word” of God: “The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only a messenger of God and His word ...” (4:171);

Explains that Jesus was “strengthened with the Holy Spirit”: “And We gave clear arguments to Jesus son of Mary, and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit” (2:253);

Has an entire chapter titled “Mary” (Chapter 19), after Jesus’ mother, and defends her against charges of being unchaste: “... for their uttering against Mary a grievous calumny” (4:156);

Provides that Jesus’ disciples received revelations from God: “And when I (God) revealed to the disciples ...” (5:111).

Can these beliefs be reasonably construed as inherently “Anti-Christ”? Do these plain confirmations appear to be inspired by “demons”?

“Clearly, Pastor Parsley has relied on biased and inaccurate sources in forming his views about Islam”, explains Attorney Fazeel S. Khan, Secretary of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society. “The erroneous-ness of his views”, he continues, “is plainly manifested by his failure to make the primary distinction between one, Islam as a religion, and two, misguided persons claiming to be followers of Islam”. “He has aligned himself with the Islamic extremists’ interpretations of Islam; such an act only legitimates the extremists’ cause, a result that impedes the global

effort in eradicating extremist ideologies from the world”, he concludes.

Inciting hatred towards members of a particular faith and calling for violent acts directed against them is neither Islamic nor Christ-like. The Holy Quran, rather, mandates resolving religious differences in a more civilized manner; it states: “Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and debate with people in the best possible manner” (16:125). It is in the spirit of engaging in respectful dialogue, as mandated by the Holy Quran, that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society invites Pastor Parsley to a written, public debate on the validity of his views about Islam.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society is headquartered in Columbus, Ohio and is the U.S.A. branch of the international Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. For more information, you may contact Fazeel S. Khan at [aaail@aol.com](mailto:aaail@aol.com) or (614) 873-1030, and visit [www.muslim.org](http://www.muslim.org).

Despite the title of his book being *Silent No More*, Pastor Parsley has chosen to remain completely silent in response to this invitation.

As argued in the Press Release, whenever addressing the issue of Islamic extremism a primary distinction needs to be made between what Islam as a religion prescribes and what some who claim to be followers of Islam practice. This is really the key in fully understanding the issue. It is widely recognized by political scientists that Islamic extremism is generally the product of political grievances, not adherence to religious obligations. Accordingly, if one is to continue to believe that Islam is the source that fuels terrorism carried out by Muslims, the root cause of the problem will be overlooked. In actuality, it is a radical, unsupportable interpretation of Islam that is simply being used by Muslim terrorists as justification for furthering political goals. By stripping extremists of the garb of Islam, they lose the moral ground upon which their existence is based and are also deprived of their most influential recruiting tool. What better way to address the “threat of radical Islam”?

Certainly, Muslims have the primary responsibility in refuting such extremist ideologies. However, the question must be asked, if entities like the Clarion Fund genuinely seek to enhance the country’s national security by reducing the threat of “radical Islam” to

the West, why not attack the ideology upon which radical Muslims based their cause by exposing the untruths of extremist views in contrast to true Islamic principles? The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society has been engaged in this concerted campaign for approximately a century now. It has produced a library of scholarly works that utterly destroy the very extremist views that are causing havoc in the world today. It has translated these works into numerous different languages so that local populations throughout the world may benefit from it. It continues to establish learning centers and missions around the globe so that the material in native languages may be accessible to all. Accordingly, a strategic platform for eliminating the threat of “radical Islam” has already been set. Common sense dictates that all those who claim to want to defend America’s national security from “radical” Muslims would take advantage of this opportunity to further its goal by supporting the mission of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society. Will the Clarion Fund support this cause? Or will it, like Pastor Parsley, become silent when asked to step forward and become accountable for its views? ■

## Prophet Abraham: A Life of Supreme Dedication, Submission and Sacrifice

Eid-al-Adha Khutba 2008

By Dr. Jawad Ahmad

*[This article, slightly modified, was presented by Dr. Jawad Ahmad as the Eid-al-Adha khutba (sermon) at the London Center this year. In this article, Dr. Ahmad reveals the key features, both ritual and spiritual, of the Eid-al-Adha festival. In addition to sacrificing an animal and performing the hajj (pilgrimage), Dr. Ahmad explains, by comprehending the lessons from the life of Abraham one can appreciate the true meaning of “sacrifice”. Moreover, despite Abraham being highly regarded in Christianity and Judaism as well, it is Islam, Dr. Ahmad shows, through its principles and practices, that truly aims at reaffirming the “faith of Abraham”.*

My Lord, grant me a doer of good deeds. So we gave him the good news of a forbearing son. But when the son became of age to work with his father, he said: O my son, I have seen a dream that I should sac-

rifice you, so consider what you see. He said: O my father, do as you are commanded. If Allah please, you will find me patient. So when they both submitted and Abraham had thrown him down upon his forehead, We called out to him, saying, O Abraham, you have indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward the doer of goods. Surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And We granted him among the later generations (salutations). Peace be to Abraham. Thus do We reward the doers of good. (37:100-110).

Eid al-Adha is the second of two important festivals for Muslims, coming after Eid al-Fitr. One unique aspect of the annual Islamic pilgrimage (*Hajj*) or the minor pilgrimage (*Umra*) is that in this high point of worship, no memorable event relating to the life of the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has been included. Rather an animal is offered for sacrifice a tribute to the spirit of sacrifice shown by Prophet Abraham when he was ready to sacrifice his son Ishmael in obedience to the Divine command. The circuits made around the *Ka’bah* are made as a tribute to Abraham and Ishmael for re-building this place of worship. The *sa’i* (running) between the two hillocks of *Safa* and *Marwa* is a tribute to the patience and fortitude shown by Lady Hagar (Hajira), the mother of Ishmael. The throwing of pebbles symbolically at Satan is a tribute to the resistance offered by Prophet Abraham to the attempts of Satan to dissuade him from sacrificing his son, while he was taking him to the place of sacrifice. By enjoining Hajj, Almighty Allah has given ever-lasting recognition to Prophet Abraham’s struggle against polytheism, his profound devotion to worshipping Allah and unqualified submission to the Divine commands.

If we study the Bible and the Qur’an we come across some amazing acts performed by Prophet Abraham. For instance, the Holy Qur’an says:

And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands he fulfilled them. Then Allah said: Surely I will make you, O Abraham, a leader of men.” (2:124).

The Bible provides a somewhat similar narration, but it also contains some prophecies which have been

fulfilled by the advent of Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his followers:

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curse you, and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 17: 2,3)

Please note here the words: “I will bless them, that bless you.” Here the word “them” stands for Muslims and the word “you” stands for Prophet Abraham.

Jews and Christians both regard Prophet Abraham as the Great Patriarch. But the question arises as to who fulfils the prophecies conveyed to Abraham by Allah. Who commemorates the sacrifices made and trials faced by him? Who makes it a fundamental regular practice to invoke salutations and blessings upon him as promised to him by Allah. No doubt the Jews believe Prophet Moses to be the last of the prophets and exalt and glorify him alone and disbelieve other prophets who came after him. Similarly the Christians believe that Prophet Jesus died on the Cross atoning for the sins of believers and regard him as the son of God and establish his glory by raising him to the position of a partner in the Godship of Allah. But it is only the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) who not only believe Prophet Abraham as the “Father of Prophets”, as numerous prophets were raised among the Children of Israel, but also invoke salutations and blessings to exalt and glorify him along with the Holy Prophet Muhammad who came in fulfilment of his intense supplications made to Allah while rebuilding the Ka’bah. That is why at the end of each cycle of an individual or congregational Muslim prayer the following salutations are recited:

O Lord! Exalt Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad as You exalted Abraham and true followers of Abraham. And You are Mighty and highly praised. O Lord! Bless Muhammad and the true followers of Muhammad as You blessed Abraham and the true followers of Abraham. Certainly You are praised and Mighty.

And the Holy Prophet Muhammad has said that any supplication made after reciting the salutations is most likely to receive divine acceptance.

The Holy Qur’an records the supplications of Prophet Abraham in the following words:

And when Abraham said: My Lord, make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols.

Our Lord! I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Your Sacred House, our Lord, that they may keep up prayer; so make the hearts of some people yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful. (14:35, 37).

We must not forget that in order to earn ever-lasting blessings from Allah, Prophet Abraham and his immediate family went through a series of trials in which they remained steadfast and carried out what was commanded to them with utmost submission. We find the details in the Qur’an in the following words:

And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands, he fulfilled them...

And we enjoined Abraham and Ishmael, saying: Purify My house for those who visit it and those who abide in it for devotion and those who bow down and those who prostrate themselves. (2:125)

History tells us that Prophet Abraham under divine command left his native town with his wife Hajrah and their sibling Ishmael, and after trudging through rugged and sandy routes reached the barren city of Makkah. He then left both wife and the child in the deserted vicinity of the *Kab’ah*, the first House of Allah, and returned home.

But that was not the end of trials. A bigger and more difficult trial was yet to come. When the first-born child grew up into a righteous and sturdy young man, Prophet Abraham saw in a dream that he was sacrificing his son. The very next morning he consulted his young son about the command given to him in the dream. The obedient son without any hesitation replied: “My dear father, Do as has been commanded to you”. And Prophet Abraham attempted to carry out what he was commanded to do by Allah, when he was revealed the following memorable words:

O Abraham! Surely you have indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward the doers of good (37:105).

Here again you will find that even Allah has regarded it as a vision and not as a commandment and that is why Allah honours him in the Qur'an with the title of "*Haneef*", that is, the most upright person:

And he was a most submissive and upright person (3:66).

In addition, Allah mentions his appreciation for the followers of Prophet Muhammad (saw) for following and believing in Prophet Abraham's messages in these words:

The nearest of people to Abraham are surely those who follow him and this Prophet [i.e. Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw)] and those who believe. And Allah is the Friend of those who believe. (3:67)

The sacred House of Allah, the Ka'bah, initially created by Prophet Adam and then re-built by Prophet Abraham, forms a focal point in a Muslim's daily prayers as well as during the performance of Hajj. It is but a simple cubic structure, but has a tremendous spiritual heritage and historical background attached to it. That is why it has assumed so much importance and veneration by Muslims. It is a symbol of the Unity of Allah - a living monument reminding people that Allah is All-Powerful and One Who can preserve any thing which stands for its Unity in spite of all human efforts to destroy it. History tells us that from Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad (saw), all prophets put their lives at stake and bore extreme hardships, along with their devout followers, to uphold the Unity of Allah. Even at times Allah singularly guarded the sanctity and safety of the Ka'bah, the first house built for His worship. And this brings to mind the attack of Abraha at the Ka'bah; a Christian Governor of Yemen, with a mighty army and elephants with the intention of destroying it but were miraculously warded off by the pebbles of tiny birds.

About five years ago I went to perform 'Umra along with my family. While sitting in one of the verandas of the Sacred Masjid, I looked at the simple structure of the *Ka'bah* and tried to imagine a thousand of years back, when this place was not so embellished, yet people from distant lands travelling for months came to visit this shrine to pay their respect to this symbol of the Unity of Allah and the memory of its early settlers - Prophet Abraham, his wife Hajara and his son Ishmael.

Over the years, the deserted place is now blooming with millions of pilgrims of all nationalities and colours from all over the world. And the once barren place is now booming with every conceivable item produced anywhere in the world. Just imagine how supreme the sacrifices and the humble supplications were that Allah responded with such tremendous bounties, blessings and affluence. Allah also raised a great Prophet to perpetuate not only the memory of those who rebuilt it and offered such supreme sacrifices, but through that Prophet permanently established the Ka'bah as the greatest and most vibrant centre of spiritual elevation and purification. This simple structure also instils firm faith in the hearts of its devotees that all those who worship Allah and submit to Him with sincere supplications and devotion and serve His creatures will be granted not only a gracious reward but ever-lasting blessings.

At this point I would like to quote a Christian writer, Chris Horrie. In his book, *What is Islam?* (published by Virgin Books, London (England), Mr. Horrie pays tribute to the historic role played by the Ka'bah in establishing the concept of *tauhid* (Oneness of the Divine Being) and in the struggle against polytheism. He writes:

The Ka'bah is a cube-shaped stone building, believed to have been built at the beginning of time by Adam for the exclusive worship of Allah. The fate of the shrine is symbolically linked to Islam's battle against mankind's repeated reversion from true religion of Allah-worship into paganism. (p.38).

Recently I was reading the November 2008 issue of EMEL, published from London. In this issue, the talented and devoted editor, a British Muslim, Mrs. Sarah Joseph, who was awarded OBE by the Queen, has given a fascinating account and inspiring spiritual insight into what she felt while looking at the simple cubic structure of Ka'bah. She writes in her Editorial Note:

As I slowly walked round, I could hear the hushed whispers of a thousand prayers in a hundred different tongues. Each was calling upon their Lord, praising Him and asking Him to respond to the call of their hearts. Beads of sweat ran into tears of worshippers as they brought to God their

troubles and their deepest wishes. I came with my prayers, my searching, my needs; and with the strongest belief that He would hear me and He will answer....

After the seven rotations of the Ka'bah, we moved to pray behind the footprints of prophet Ibrahim who had, with his son Ishmail, rebuilt the ancient ruins left by Adam and dedicated then again to the One True God...

My thoughts turned to the connection with history and then our own place in it. As I followed ritually in the footsteps of the prophets, one is forced to ask questions; What am I doing to follow the example of the prophets, to act upon the messages of the prophets, to aspire towards the goals of the prophets...

I sat on the steps looking at the Ka'bah. Its beauty lies within its simplicity and I think the same can be said of the whole of Islam....

We had participated in the rites as ancient as humanity itself, yet it was absolutely current in our experience. The rites were ancient, but their purposes were timeless; as is the call to self-surrender oneself unto God. And so I prayed: "Make our faith a living faith, not something inherited or passively acquired, but lived and felt in the reality of today. As Makkah overflows with history, may our hearts overflow with faith to be experienced in this life and in the life hereafter.

Thus the Ka'bah is a living monument to the monotheistic concept, and the festival of *'Id al-Adha* is a reminder to man to work continuously for the inner and outer purification of his person through spiritual discipline and training so that he should be able to lead a virtuous life. Further, he is to derive strength to empathise with others and serve them. The rituals observed during pilgrimage furnish us with living proof of the fact that hardships undergone and sacrifices made for noble and virtuous ideals and for setting a noble example are always rewarded by God, the High. The greater the sacrifice, the greater and more abiding shall be the recompense.

The sacrifice of an animal during Hajj brings to an end the rituals of the pilgrimage. But do we think that sacrifice of an animal is just symbolic or does it carry a positive message for every Muslim? Abdus Sattar Edhi of Karachi, Pakistan is world-renowned for his humanitarian services. Tehmina Durrani of Pakistan, a woman with a penetrating pen and an observant eye, has compiled an autobiography of this simple but courageous lover of humanity. In the book entitled *A Mirror to the Blind*, she translates Abdus Sattar Edhi's inner feelings of the significance of sacrifice while performing Hajj in the following words:

In keeping with Prophet Abraham's submission to Divine command to slaughter his son Ishmael, on the day after Hajj, Muslims all over the world celebrate Eid, highlighting Allah's mercy towards that supreme sacrifice by replacing Ishmael with a sheep. It is a sacrifice not of a goat, or a cow or a camel but of need, love, desire, habit, greed and a thousand other obstacles in the way of submitting to truth. It represents the death of ego, whereas Muslims merely slaughter an animal. (A. Sattar Edhi Foundation, Mithadar, Karachi, Pakistan, 2001, p.137)

One important lesson we can learn from the shining example of this noble family is how culture and collectiveness as individuals and as members of a family can provide tremendous impetus to achieve high objectives in life. Each member of this righteous family exhibited commendable sense of politeness, mutual respect, unity of purpose and firm conviction in the divine support. For instance, the father addresses his son "*yaa bunayya*", which means "O my dear son", and the son replies "*yaa abate*", meaning "O my dear father". Again when Prophet Abraham was leaving his wife Lady Hagar in that deserted place, she in desperation asked: "Who will look after us in this wilderness"? And the reply was: "I entrust you to the care of Allah". And the wife said: "Then He will never forsake us".

Here one can observe how individual character as well as collective coherence not only fosters strength among family members. but provides immeasurable impetus to achieve great objectives. This is what every family needs, this is what every community needs and this is what the whole Muslim *Umma* needs today. In fact, the great objective of the mam-

moth gathering planned by Allah in that barren and vast stretch of land at Arafat, clad in one dress, reciting one set of praises to the Almighty Allah, is to seek forgiveness for their sins and beseech His mercy to make them submissive and righteous, and above all to foster bonds of brotherhood and commitment to act righteousness and to set an example of righteousness for others.

Let us, brothers and sisters, pray and make a solemn promise today on this auspicious occasion that we will try our best to sacrifice our undue desires, selfish anger, greed, inclinations to exploit others for one's own benefit, and attempts to deny help and happiness to those who deserve it. Let us submit sincerely to the commandments of Allah and the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). And let us also make a solemn commitment to fulfil the objectives of sacrifice symbolised in the festival of Sacrifices. In short, the message of Eid al-Adha is to purify our inner selves, elevate our spiritualism, foster love and respect for others and extend selfless sacrifice to uphold the cause of Islam and foster sympathy for our fellow human beings. Ameen. ■

## Abraham and the Sacrifice of the Animal Within

By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad

*[This article was presented at the symposium on "The Faith of Abraham" held in conjunction with the USA Jamaat's 2007 annual convention. In this article Dr. Ahmad emphasizes that the true sacrifice of Abraham was his unwavering adherence to the Unity of God. This sacrifice, Dr. Ahmad explains, is an internal struggle with one's own base desires. In the lives of Abraham, Lady Hajira and Ishmael, Dr. Ahmad continues, we are provided examples of how this process of true belief in One God through sacrifice may be achieved.]*

We find in the person of Abraham, a unique individual who shares the respect of major world religions. The Old Testament speaks of Abraham, "...and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." (Genesis 24:1). His rise to such eminence was because, "... Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My Laws." (Genesis, 26:5). In John 39, Jesus is quoted as say-

ing... "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Speaking of Abraham, the Holy Quran states:

And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands he fulfilled them He said: Surely I will make thee a leader of men. ...When his Lord said to him, Submit, he said: I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds. (2:124, 131)

Hindu religious tradition also relates the story of Brahma, according to which, no being in the three worlds will worship him. He is also called son of god, and is often depicted with a white beard, reciting one of the four Vedas. One of his hands is shown holding a spoon, which is associated with the pouring of holy *ghee* (oil) into a sacrificial pyre-indicating the fact that Brahma is the lord of sacrifices. Brahma's vehicle is a divine swan. This divine bird is bestowed with the ability to separate milk and water from a mixture of the two. Also, this virtue indicates that one should learn to separate the good from the evil and then accept that which is valuable and discard that which is worthless or evil. From this symbolic language emerges a patriarchal human figure blessed with the revealed word, whose spirit soared to higher elevations like a bird, who could tell right from wrong (correlating with the Arabic word "*hanif*") and who is not worshipped as a god, but is close to God, and is connected with the institution of sacrifice. This is very much a portrait of Abraham.

### Faith of Abraham: belief in Divine Unity

With reference to Prophet Abraham and Prophet Muhammad, the Holy Quran states:

Say: As for me, my Lord has guided me to the right path – a right religion, the faith of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists. Say: My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are surely for Allah, the Lord of the worlds (6:161, 162)

The *faith of Abraham*, based on the belief in the Oneness of God, is also presented in the Holy Quran as a point of consensus between all revealed religions:

Say: O people of the Book, come to an equitable word between us and you, that we shall serve none but God and that we

shall not associate aught with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides God, but if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are those who submit. (Ch.3:64)

Accordingly, Islam invites all humanity to the basic doctrine of Unity of God in its simplest form, what is also referred to as the *faith of Abraham*.

As revealed from the above-quoted verse, the following are examples of associations with God which detract from a firm belief in the Unity of God:

1. Worshipping others than God and addressing prayers to them.
2. Ascribing Divine attributes to others.
3. Taking others as Lords besides God by rendering perfect obedience to them which is due to God alone.

A fourth form of association with God is mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Quran, "Hast thou seen him who takes his low desires for his god?....."(Ch25: 43). Here, blind submission to one's own desires is described as a form of association with God.

In order to uphold the principle of Divine unity, one has to *sacrifice* all else. For example we have love for different things in this world, in variable amount or degree, and for the love of one we are willing to sacrifice the other. Thus we love wealth but we are willing to sacrifice it for our health and well being. Those who love their honor and country maybe ready to sacrifice their life for it. Perfection of love in the Supreme Being thus requires the sacrifice of our material yearnings. The object of such degree of sacrifice also entails that it should be One and Only. Simply stated love of God in its perfect manifestation requires sacrifice of all our other loves and desires. This sacrifice does not require giving up one's desires, but rather controlling them.

### The history of "sacrifice":

Study of various nations shows us that human sacrifice in some form or other was either a part of their ritual practice, or a principle of faith. Burning was often the mode of sacrifice to celestial deities. In ancient Greece the generic term for sacrifice (*thysia*) was derived from a root meaning to burn or to smoke. For the Babylonians, also, fire was essential to sacri-

fice, and all oblations were conveyed to the gods by the fire god Girru-Nusku, whose presence as intermediary between the gods and men was indispensable. In the Vedic cult the god of fire, Agni, received the offerings of men and brought them in the presence of the gods. We find the ritual of the burnt offering in the Judaic tradition and sacrifice of the son in Christianity.

The Holy Quran tells us that the people of Abraham worshipped the sun, stars and various other deities. When faced with Abraham's arguments for the Unity of God and his actions to prove the helplessness of their deities, which they found insulting, the people of Abraham decided to sacrifice him as an appeasement to their gods. The Holy Quran states:

They said: Build for him a building, then cast him into the flaming fire. And they designed a plan against him, but we brought them low. And he said: Surely I flee to my Lord - He will guide me. My lord, grant me a doer of good deeds. So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. But when he became of age to work with him, he said: O my son, I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee: so consider what thou seest. He said: O my father, do as thou art commanded: If God please, thou wilt find me patient. So when they both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead. And We called out to him saying, Abraham. Thou hast indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. (Ch.37: 97-107)

In order to understand the meaning of Abrahamic sacrifice, we must ask ourselves the following questions. What was the purpose of Abraham's sacrifice? Why did God put him, his wife and son through this? What did he sacrifice? How did he evolve spiritually from this trial? What was its importance for generations to come? What was the role of Ishmael and Lady Hager? How does it apply to us today? To answer these questions we must understand the first attribute of God mentioned in the Holy Quran.

God is *Rabbilalameen*. This implies that He is the Only, Creator, Sustainer, Nurturer and Evolver of all Creation from its lowest to its highest stage of devel-

opment. In case of man, this involves both our physical and spiritual development and is universal for all of mankind. Thus, God by His very nature wants to evolve us both physically and spiritually.

### The meaning of “sacrifice”:

In terms of our physical evolution, domestication of animals and use of their flesh and milk is and was a corner stone of our physical development. Similarly, *control* and *sacrifice* of our animal desires is the cornerstone of our spiritual development. Man has the same basic instincts as all other animals. He strives for power, food and survival of his species. These desires are essential for his physical development, but when allowed to run out of control, they are the very means of his destruction. They provide the motive force or energy for our physical progress, but when allowed to run rampant they consume our spirit.

What differentiates man from lower animals is the Divine spirit, which is referred to in the Holy Quran in the following words:

So when I made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit... (Ch.15: 29).

And certainly We create man of an extract of clay Then We make him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place, Then We make the life-germ a clot, then We make the clot a lump of flesh, then We make (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothe the bones with flesh, then We cause it to grow into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators! (Ch.23:12-14)

Islam likens the development of the human soul to the development of the child in the mother’s womb. When in utero, the child is affected by what the mother eats, drinks, or what drug or medicine she takes. When the human child is born he has the impress of Divine Goodness and is innocent. God refers to this impress of His goodness upon the human child as His spirit (or *Ruh*). As the child grows his conscious actions affect the spirit which becomes his Soul (or *Nafs*) and either evolves or remains stunted. When his physical existence ends, it is the soul which embarks on the Journey into the Hereafter.

The animal consciousness of man is referred to in the Holy Quran as *Ammarah*, (The Commanding) because of its overwhelming nature. *Ammarah* is the

nascent condition of the soul, in the garb of bestial passions, when natural impulses predominate. Awareness of the Oneness of God, its Creator and His attributes is essential for the evolutionary journey of the human soul, and this is accomplished by complete submission to Divine guidance. Thus does human consciousness evolve into cosmic consciousness. Man is taught control of these desires through Divine guidance which makes the human brain different from animals (i.e. ability to differentiate right from wrong). By controlling these animal desires, using them in accordance with Divine guidance spiritual evolution takes place. The Holy Quran refers to two further stages of development of the human soul: *Lawwama* (The Self Accusing Spirit) and *Mutmainna* (The Soul at Rest). Islam teaches that man is not the slave of evil. He can show the best of virtues, and he will strive. We cannot put our burden on others, as we have to evolve something out of ourselves. If an operation on a surgeon’s body, or taking some medicine himself, cannot cure his patient, then others action cannot raise us to our goal. Like other entities in Nature, we need some systematic course suitable to each stage of progress; some disciplinary measures to create in us a disposition to pursue it. Islam brings us both. Love of God means, love and awareness of His attributes and putting them into practice in our daily lives.

Nurturing of the human consciousness and its evolution towards the Divine, requires *control* or *sacrifice* of the basic animal desires through trials and tribulations. The human soul evolves from the lower to the highest stage, and gets closer to God. Trials and tribulations are for the purpose of exposing the hidden condition of mans soul, both its weaknesses and its strengths. For example, if a person in adversity, lies, bribes, steals, or breaks his promise to get out of it, then this situation has made apparent to him character flaws, and he is provided an opportunity to make amends. On the other hand those who face adversity with patience their character evolves, and their hidden potential is manifested. A tree which sheds all its leaves and faces the harsh winter bears flowers and fruit in springtime. The Holy Quran refers to the beneficial effect of adversity on human spiritual evolution in the following words:

And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient. (Ch.2:155)

All Prophets, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and Muhammad (the last of this chain of honored servants and exemplars to mankind), had to face adversity, to evolve spiritually. Adversity evolved patience in them, which is a Divine attribute. They were humble in their submission to God and in their dealings with fellow men. Thus, humility is another virtue which is nurtured by adversity. They all taught belief in and service of One God. They submitted to and served God by serving His Creation. Those who follow the righteous servants of God, evolve similarly.

### Abraham's "sacrifice"

The Holy Quran relates the following about the sacrifices made by Abraham and his family:

So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. But, when he became of age to work with him, he said, O my son I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee; So consider what thou seest O my father, do as thou art commanded: If Allah please, thou wilt find me patient."

"So when they both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead and, We called out to him saying, 'O Abraham thou hast indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do we reward the doers of good'. (Ch. 37:101-105)

Abraham, by his belief and actions, provided an example for his people and all of us to follow. He realized that the belief and practice of the principle of Unity of the Divine being was essential for physical and moral evolution of man. He stood upright to uphold this principle. For this he rejected the deities of his community, in particular worship of heavenly bodies, a common and pervasive form of worship. He willingly became the object of wrath of his community, thus rejecting all lords besides the One God. He sacrificed all his basic animal desires to uphold this principle. This was manifested by him leaving his community, moving into the wilderness, and leaving his infant son and wife over there.

His wife according to Hadith asked him, "Is it by God's commandment that thou art doing this?" Abraham's reply was, "yes." Then said Hagar: "God will not leave us to perish". Here a mother is sacrificing her basic animal instinct of motherhood, in sub-

mission to God's command. She like Abraham is also manifesting a supreme example of trust in God. God provides for their physical sustenance by the discovery of the spring of *Zam Zam* right under the heels of the infant, which then became a resting place for caravans and to this day sustains the city of Makkah. He provided spiritual sustenance for the desert of Arabia and the whole world by raising from the progeny of Ishmael the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

When the son, Ishmael, reaches maturity, and is able to help and assist his father, Abraham sees in a vision that he is sacrificing him. The father who is a prophet does not impose the interpretation of his vision upon his son, but instead asks his opinion. This tells us that freedom of expression is essential for our spiritual development. The son, who is not a prophet at this time but a teenager, replies, "O my father, do as thou art commanded: If Allah please, thou wilt find me patient." This is another excellent example of sacrifice of the basic human instinct of survival at an age where animal desires are at their peak performance. They both then perform the universal gesture of animal submission and humility by prostrating on the ground, thus physically demonstrating that their animal passions are in control and in full submission to the command of their Lord. God thus guided them and through them the whole of humanity, towards the true purpose of sacrifice and away from the erroneous and prevalent practice of human sacrifice.

### Islamic practice of sacrifice:

The practice of sacrificing a healthy, young animal during the annual pilgrimage made by Muslims from all over the world celebrates the Abrahamic Sacrifice. The Holy Quran summarizes this spirit of sacrifice in the following words:

And for every nation We appointed acts of devotion that they might mention the name of God on what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds. So your God is One God, therefore to Him should you submit, And give good news to the humble... Not their flesh, nor their blood, reaches God, but to Him is acceptable observance of duty on your part. Thus has He made them subservient to you, that you may magnify God for guiding you aright. And give good news to those who do good to others. (Ch. 22:34,37 )

The purpose of *sacrifice* therefore is to uphold the principle of *Unity of God* in our daily lives. It is to constantly remind ourselves that He is Almighty, Possessor of all perfect attributes; to practice His attributes by doing good to others, by being humble and guarding against our animal passions. The sacrifice of the animal reminds us not only that by possessing control over it God has provided for our physical growth and development, but more importantly, it also serves as a reminder for the need to control our animal desires in a manner that it can be used to nurture our spirit. The animal desires of man have gone rampant in our age and the fire ignited by this is consuming all of humanity. It has stunted our spiritual growth and limited our vision only to material growth. We as human beings are the creation of One God who is our Creator, Sustainer, Nurturer and Evolver. The Example of Abraham serves as a common means of realizing this Providence and we owe it to ourselves to follow his path.

I close with the following verses from the Holy Quran, the Bible and the Vedas:

“Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.” (Holy Quran)

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy)

“Creator of the Universe, may we receive thy supreme sin-destroying light, May Thou guide our intellect in the right direction.” (Vedas) ■

## The Ahmadiyya Movement and Sectarianism

### An analysis of a widespread misconception

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

*[This article is taken from the Introduction of the book “Second Coming of Jesus” by Maulana Muhammad Ali. This article addresses a great misconception concerning the Ahmadiyya Movement. It is commonly alleged that the Ahmadiyya Movement is another “sect” in Islam that caused disunity amongst Muslims. As is explained by Maulana Muhammad Ali in this article, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founded the movement for the very purpose of uniting Muslims*

*to a common cause. And that cause was to defend Islam from the onslaught of arguments made against it by missionaries of other faiths and to present the truth of Islam to the nations of the West that had a completely distorted image of it. His titles of Messiah and Mehdi, as also explained by Maulana Muhammad Ali, were not intended to fashion dissension, but rather simply to correct misunderstood beliefs that impeded the progress of this cause.]*

### Assessing Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s Mission

There are many people who oppose Mirza Ghulam Ahmad without understanding, or even thinking about, the true nature of his mission. Time is never taken to ponder whether he was beneficial or not to the cause of Islam and Muslims in general. Keep in mind that the question of good and bad is a question of actual facts and not one of religious beliefs and opinions. Thus the point at issue should only be whether Hazrat Mirza was beneficial or harmful to the cause of Islam and the Muslim world.

In what ways has he been harmful? The greatest charge attributed to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is that he has damaged the solidarity of Islam by creating a new sect. This charge is even repeated by intelligent Muslims, though they never take the trouble to look into the facts. The question must be asked, “Did unity among Muslims exist before him”? The fact is that Muslims were fighting one another over the most minor of points, thus sundering and disrupting the unity of Islam. The condition in India was such that cases of quarrels over the saying of *Ameen* in a loud or low voice were brought before the High Court. Pronouncing one another as *Kafir* (unbeliever) was the common pastime of the Muslim *ulama*. Where was the unity of Islam which was damaged by Hazrat Mirza?

Perhaps one can lay the charge that with Hazrat Mirza’s appearance, the differences among Muslims were further augmented. If he had, in fact, drawn the attention of his followers to the trivial matters over which Muslims were already fighting, then this new sect or new Movement could undoubtedly be blamed for expanding the dissension among Muslims. But this was certainly not the case and in spite of this a storm of opposition was raised against his claims and pronouncements of heresy were issued against him. Accordingly, much of his time was occupied clarify-

ing his positions. Still, he turned the greater part of the activities of his followers towards defending and propagating the message of Islam in India and abroad. He produced valuable literature about Christianity and the Ariya Samaj, which was extensively used by even his opponents for the defense of Islam against the powerful onslaughts of these two groups.

Another contemporary movement among the Muslims that came into existence around the same time was that of the Ahl-i-Quran (People of the Quran). However, this group spent all its energy getting involved in the minor internal problems in which Muslims were already deeply engrossed. If it is said that the Ahl-i-Quran movement increased the existing dissension among Muslims, it would be nearer to the truth. But the movement particularly made the target of attacks by the *ulama* was a movement that, in fact, became the source of strengthening the cause of Islam. Instead of entangling itself in internal disputes, it stood in defense of Islam against its external foes. To say that this Movement has enlarged the gulf of dissensions among Muslims is to close ones eyes to relevant facts. The day all Muslim sects unite against the foes of Islam and spend their time and energy in the defense and propagation of Islam, as Ahmadis have done, dissension in Islam will disappear. Hazrat Mirza revived the principle that if there are ninety-nine signs of disbeliefs (*kufir*) in a person and only one indication of Islam, that person should still be considered a Muslim. This principle lays down a solid foundation for the unity of Islam. If this principle is accepted by Muslims, it will have far-reaching effects on them and will give back to them their lost power and glory.

Some people, by neglecting the distinction between *sectarianism* and *difference of opinion*, regard all differences of opinion as an attempt at creating disharmony and discord in Islam. Indeed, the Quran states:

*As for those who split up their religion and became sects. Thou hast no concern with them (6:160)*

The meaning of splitting up the unity of religion and becoming divided into sects is obvious; some people, nonetheless, misinterpret this verse. It does not and could not mean that Muslims should not differ with one another in any respect. It was however

not surprising to find differences of opinion in a nation that was spread all over the world. The Holy Prophet had declared difference of opinion to be a mercy for his *ummah*, which shows that in difference is also hidden the secret of the progress of the *ummah*. Difference only comes into existence by the expression of an opinion which in turn helps to clarify and improve the intellectual and mental faculties of the person. Islam advocates unity, but unity in the principles of religion. In other matters in Islam, there is wide scope for differences. Becoming divided into sects and having differences of opinion are not one and the same thing. Sectarianism is a curse but difference of opinion is a blessing. The companions of the Holy Prophet themselves differed on certain questions although the Quran was revealed in their presence, the words of the Holy Prophet reached their ears, and they were direct recipients of spiritual blessing from him.

#### What is Sectarianism?

The Kharijites were the first who were responsible for the creation of sects in Islam.<sup>1</sup> There have been reports in which it has been clearly mentioned about them that they shattered the solidarity of Muslims, not because they differed with the companions of the Holy Prophet on some matters, for difference existed among the companions also, but because it was they who started *takfir* (pronouncement of unbelief/heresy) among Muslims. At that time, Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Muawiyah were engaged in a battle. The Kharjites sided with Ali but they demanded that Ali should declare Muawiyah and his collaborators *Kafirs* (unbelievers/heretics) and outside the pale of Islam.

Hazrat Ali refused to do so and stated emphatically:

They are also our brothers who have revolted against us: we do not declare them unbelievers or transgressors (*fasiqs*).

If some thought is given to the verses of the Quran on this point, it would be clear that Muslims have been forbidden from two things: from becoming divided into sects, and from splitting up the religion. Both of these are the result of *takfir*. Any group that declares the professors in the *kalima* (declaration of faith) as *kafir* (even if that group is greater in number and perceives itself the greatest group among Muslims) has created divisions in the ranks of Islam and has destroyed the basis on which Muslims could

unite. When the essence of religion is confined to a few problems in which one group differs with the other, and the principles of faith are completely neglected, this is how the religion is split. The result is that all one's energy is wasted on matters of peripheral importance. The parties are so engaged in such trivial differences that nobody cares whether the foundation of faith itself is being destroyed. The basis of sectarianism is, therefore, the pronouncement of unbelief (*takfir*) against Muslims. The sad aspect of the story is that when people start condemning one another over minor differences, the strength of the nation becomes weak. Power which ought to have been used for the progress of Islam is wasted away in trying to decry one another.

When the Quran laid the great foundation of Islamic brotherhood and stated *Innamal mu minuma ikhwatum* [Verily the believers are brethren (49:10)], it did not overlook the possibility of the rise of honest differences among Muslims. At that same place it was pointed out that if two parties of the believers quarrel, peace should be made between them (49:9). Now, both the contending parties have been considered believers here. This is the lesson which Muslims have forgotten today. The tolerance which Muslims were expected to show towards the followers of other religions should have been observed to a greater extent among themselves. They ought to have learnt to respect the ideas of others and to tolerate differences of opinion among themselves. But their present condition is such that the moment a person differs from them on any point he is immediately declared to be an unbeliever and a heretic. To abuse and cause harm to him in all possible ways is regarded as a deed of great virtue. The main problem is not that there are Muslims who differ in their opinions, which is rather one of the essential requisites for the progress of Islam, but that Muslims cannot tolerate honest difference of opinion. The companions of the Holy Prophet, though, showed great broadmindedness regarding the diversity of views among themselves.

If, however, a people differ with others on some matters and they prefer a different view, this cannot be called sectarianism. When on account of this difference, one Muslim brother is declared an unbeliever and is subjected to persecution, which is mistakenly thought to be a meritorious deed and a source of great reward (*thawab*), it is then that the evils of sectarianism take root in a society. A person is not guilty

of sectarianism when, having complete faith in the *Kalimah* and the Quran as the Word of God, he considers some of the ideas or customs and habits of Muslims as being against the Quran and Hadith. If this is sectarianism, then the scope for the reformation of Muslims will be closed. The day when Muslims are delivered from the curse of *takfir*, the day when they cease making plans for destroying one another, their differences will indeed be a blessing in disguise.

### The importance of little things

Perhaps it can be said that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement is himself responsible for disputes on many matters of minor importance. It should be noted though that he has only drawn attention to problems which in their existing forms were detrimental to the cause of Islam on the one hand, and were becoming a source of strength to the enemies of Islam on the other. For instance, he has indeed laid emphasis on the issue of the death of Jesus Christ, the main reason being that Muslims, though they denied the godhead of Jesus Christ, had inadvertently made him an associate in some of the attributes of God. In the struggle between Islam and Christianity, the Christian missionaries used the unfounded beliefs of the Muslims on this matter as a weapon against Islam. They led many Muslims astray by arguing that according to Muslims, Jesus Christ was alive in his temporal body, without eating and drinking, in the fourth heaven, and that his body had not undergone any change, as if it were completely different from the bodies of all other prophets. They would often compare the prophet Muhammad with Jesus Christ by saying that one lay in the ground and the other was alive in heaven and that God made a general rule for the prophets that He did not give them bodies not eating food, not did they abide (21:8) but that Jesus was an exception to this rule and therefore he was a superior being to other messengers. It was also argued that he shared the divine attribute of being now as he ever was, because for the last two thousand years no change had taken place in his body. It was to eradicate this false belief from the minds of Muslims that the Founder had to devote his attention to this problem.

Similarly, the preposterous thought that the awaited *Mahdi* would spread Islam at the point of the sword was another weapon extensively used against Muslims. Such belief only supported the allegations that Islam was spread by the sword. By his claims of

being the *Messiah* and the *Mehdi* promised in the Traditions, Hazrat Mirza completely removed from the way of Islam two serious obstacles and by so doing opened new vistas for the propagation of Islam. He did not engage himself in the disputes in which the Muslim *ulema* at that time were completely engrossed. On the other hand, he guided his followers towards the liberal view that, in spite of these differences, Muslims could still become a united body. This was the secret of his success. He delivered Muslims from a meaningless occupation and directed their attention to a work of real value.

### The advantages of his claims

A little consideration will show that the points on which the Ahmadiyya Movement has been considered harmful have, in fact, been the source of great benefit to Muslims. The objection to Hazrat Mirza's claims of being the *Promised Messiah* and the *Mehdi*, is a result of a lack of serious reflection. The two so-called beliefs, one in the temporal life of Jesus Christ and the other in a warrior *Mahdi*, were extremely damaging to Islam. Their extirpation was not possible in any other way except that God, by giving a person the names of *Messiah* and *Mahdi*, should demonstrate to the world that Islam was neither in need of an Israelite prophet from heaven, nor of the sword of the so called warrior *mahdi*. Islam was going to dominate the world by its sublime principles and by its inherent spiritual powers. This was the great task for which the *Mujaddid* of the fourteenth century was raised, so that it might clear the way for the progress of Islam in the world. The claims of the Founder over which Muslims are stumbling due to lack of serious reflection are, in reality, the source of real benefit to Muslims on the one hand and the source of protecting Islam against the attacks of its enemies on the other. God alone knows when the eyes of our people will open and they will respond to the call of the person who suffered every kind of persecution but could not bear to see that the cause of Islam should suffer. He was considered the only champion of Islam prior to his claims and had earned great respect in the hearts of Muslims, something for which a worldly-minded person would have had a great yearning. However, for the ultimate good of Islam and Muslims, he turned his back on this worldly honor and esteem. He did not care that he should be respected. The only passion he had was that Islam should be respected – that Islam and Muhammad, the

Messenger of Allah, should become dear to the world. In the love of the Messenger of God he did not care if anyone called him a *Kafir*, as he wrote in a poem:

After the love of God I am intoxicated in  
the love of Muhammad

If this is unbelief, by God, I am the greatest  
of unbelievers

### The beneficial aspects of the Ahmadiyya Movement

As compared to the alleged detrimental aspect of the Ahmadiyya Movement, let us now consider what benefits Muslims and Islam received at the hands of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Had he not appeared, all the Islamic literature produced by his followers would not have come into existence. Neither would there have been translations of the Quran nor other Islamic literature in English and German and other languages.<sup>2</sup> The lost teachings and the true principles of Islam would not have been revived and there would not have been any Islamic missions in England, Germany and America. Europeans would not have become Muslims, nor would the voice of Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest) be raised in places where unbelief once reigned. The yeoman service which Ahmadis have rendered in defending and strengthening Islam in India and abroad cannot be ignored by any fair minded historian of Islam. Let every Muslim think for himself whether or not the Ahmadiyya Movement has been beneficial to the cause of Islam.

As to our opponents, I will ask them a few questions. Why are they provoked at the name of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the Ahmadiyya Movement, and why are they not disturbed at the attacks of Christian missionaries and Arya Samajists against Islam? Why do they not take note of the hostile forces working against Islam, and why are they bent on annihilating a Movement that exists only for the service of Islam? How painful it is that a thing which is of real value is considered to be worthless, a Movement which stands for Islam is considered to be a thorn in the side of Islam, and Ahmadis who have pledged themselves to live and die for Islam are being hated by their fellow Muslims! This is indeed very sad, but remember well that the Holy Quran states:

*As for that which does good to men, it tar-*

*ries in the earth* (13:17)

Anything which works for the good of men in never destroyed. Ahmadiyyat stands for the good of mankind, and therefore, it cannot be destroyed. Hence, do not fight against the laws of God. Do not close your eyes to plain facts. Remove the feelings of rancor and hatred from your hearts about this Movement. Try to understand things and learn to love the causes for which this Movement stands. Your hatred now is not hatred against Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, because he is dead, it is hatred against the service of Islam. If you love this Movement, this will prove your love only for Islam and nothing else.

### **The revival of the defense and propagation of Islam**

Indeed it was Ahmadiyyat that revived the work of the defense and propagation of Islam in the world. It was Ahmadiyyat that carried the torch of Islam to Europe in this age. It was Ahmadiyyat that defended Islam against the attacks of Christian and Arya Samajist preachers. Preaching and propagating Islam is the secret of the life and success of the Muslim community. And the one community that drew the attention of Muslims to this cause was linked with the *Mujaddid* (Renovater) of this century. If the Ahmadiyya Movement had done nothing else except arouse the passion for this protection and propagation of Islam in the hearts of Muslims, this in and of itself was a great achievement on the part of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, to whom Muslims ought to have paid him homage. They should have joined hands with him in this noble work. If the followers of this small organization, currently quite insignificant when compared with the vast number of Muslims in the world, could achieve what they have with their limited means what a great revolution might have been created had Muslims unanimously supported them in their activities. Thousands in India, Europe and other parts of the world would have seen the light of the Quran. Now, consider for a moment on whose shoulders lies the sin of their not seeing the light of Islam. Of course, on the shoulders of those who look with their own eyes at the work which serves the interests of Islam and Muslims, but refuse to lend a hand of co-operation. Alas, the plant of Islam is becoming dry before our eyes and there is none to water it. Perhaps it sometimes brings tears to our eyes but we lack the resolution to join those who are trying to nourish it

with their own blood.

“O Allah, have mercy on the nation of Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be on him)” ■

### **Notes:**

1. Kharijites literally means “those who went out”. They were members of the earliest of the religious sects of Islam, arising during the time of Hazrat Ali, the fourth *Khalifah*. They were known for their fanaticism, extremist proclamations and terrorist actions. They branded everyone who disagreed with their point of view an infidel and outside the pale of Islam.
2. The Ahmadiyya Movement was a pioneer in establishing Islamic missions in the West. It also was the first in translating the Holy Quran into various western languages and publishing a host of Islamic literature for western readers.

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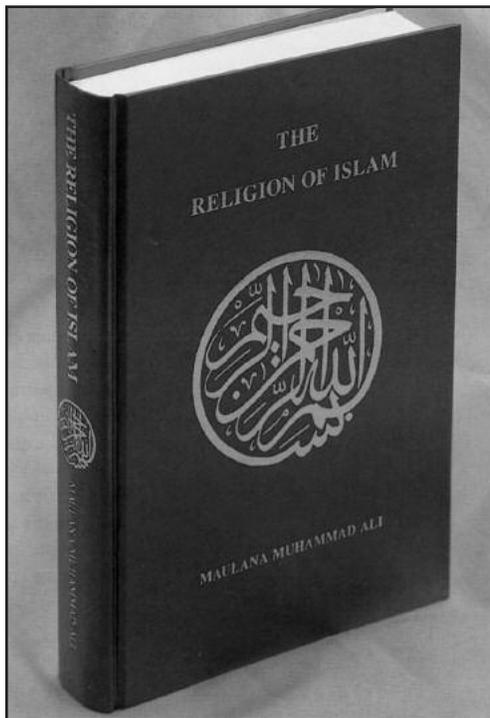
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