

“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

July – September 2009

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

Vol. 86

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Published on the World-Wide Web at: www.muslim.org

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.

ISSN: 1060–4596

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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	Philippines

Achievements:

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

History:

1889: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Universal Consensus on the Amman Message

By Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad

[The Amman Message has become an extremely valuable tool throughout the Muslim world for purposes of uniting Muslims to a common ground. The current state of affairs among Muslims the world over necessitated this timely international declaration. This declaration is consistent with the reformative teachings on unity amongst Muslims proffered by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad one hundred years ago. As such, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society fully supports the Amman Message and is actively engaged in promoting its important message. This article, with some amendments, is the official “Introduction” to the Amman Message by His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, the chief organizer of this international declaration.]

There is no good in much of their secret conferences save (in) whosoever enjoineeth charity and fairness and peace-making among the people, and whoso doeth that, seeking the good pleasure of God, We shall bestow on him a vast reward. And whoso opposeth the messenger after the guidance (of God) hath been manifested unto him, and followeth other than the believer’s way, We appoint for him that unto which he himself hath turned, and expose him unto hell - a hapless journey’s end! Lo! God pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He pardoneth all save that to whom He will. Whoso ascribeth partners unto God hath wandered far astray. (Al-Nisa’, 4:114-116)

Background

Over the course of the two years 2005-2006 CE, 1426-1427 AH, there occurred a series of events of great historical importance to the worldwide Islamic nation (*Ummah*), events without parallel for fourteen centuries, ever since the time of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib—may God honour his countenance. The sum of these events was that by the grace of God and through the efforts of the Hashemite King of Jordan, Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, the *Ummah* agreed by unanimous and universal consensus (*ijma’*) among both the political and acknowledged religious leadership upon three fundamental matters, namely: (1) the definition of who is a Muslim; (2) who has the right to issue *fatwas* in the name of Islam, and (3) who and under what circumstances has the right to call a someone else a *kafir* (an apostate). The agreement on these three issues, which have come to be known as the ‘Three Points of the

Amman Message’, amounts to a unique, historical, complete and mutual inter-recognition by all Muslims of each other as fellow Muslims, through the voices of the leading Muslim authorities of the day from all the major existing schools of thought and denominations. It also represents a unanimous consensus (*ijma’*) of the *Ummah* on who—and within what pre-conditions, qualifications, circumstances and parameters—is qualified to issue a *fatwa* or legal ruling in Islam (and therefore is a *mufti*). It thus constitutes a definitive demarcation of true Islam in all its forms, and an authoritative identification—if not a definition—of orthodoxy in Islam. And in it lies the promise of the unity and consolidation of the entire *Ummah* of the Prophet Muhammad—may peace and blessings be upon him.

Three Points of Amman Message

In order to further clarify and make known the ‘true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam’, and in order, more importantly, to reaffirm the basic unity and fundamental common ground of all Muslims from every school of Islamic jurisprudence (*Mathhab*) and every school of Islamic thought, H.M. King Abdullah II then sent the following three questions to 24 of the most senior, recognized and influential *mujtahids* (senior-most scholars), ‘*ulama*’ (scholars) and *maraji*’ (authorities) from all around the world representing all the branches of Islam, schools of jurisprudence, schools of thought and religious orientations: *Who is a Muslim? Who has the right to undertake issuing fatwas (legal rulings)? Is it permissible to declare someone an apostate (takfir)?*

Based on the *fatwas* provided by these great scholars (who included the *Shaykh Al-Azhar*—Sunni Islam’s traditionally most respected authority; the foremost Shi’i Ayatollahs of Najaf and Iran; the *Zeidi maraji*’ of the Yemen; the *Ibadi* Grand Mufti of Oman, and the Grand Muftis and Supreme Fatwa Councils of the major Islamic countries that have these), H.M. King Abdullah II convened an international Islamic conference of approximately 200 of the world’s leading Islamic scholars (*‘ulama*) from 50 countries in Amman, Jordan on 27th-29th *Jumada I*, 1426 AH / 4th-6th July 2005 CE. In Amman, the scholars agreed by unanimous consensus—and signed their names to—the following statement (whose essential first three points of—on *takfir*, the *Mathhabs* and *fatwas*—became known as the ‘Three Points of the *Amman Message*’):

(1) Whosoever is an adherent to one of the four *Sunni* schools (*Mathahib*) of Islamic jurisprudence (*Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi’i* and *Hanbali*), the two *Shi’i* schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*Ja’fari* and *Zaydi*), the *Ibadi* school of Islamic jurisprudence and the *Thahiri* school of Islamic jurisprudence, is a Muslim. Declaring that person an apos-

tate is impossible and impermissible. Verily his (or her) blood, honour, and property are inviolable. Moreover, in accordance with the Shaykh Al-Azhar's *fatwa*, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare whosoever subscribes to the *Ash`ari* creed or whoever practices real *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) an apostate. Likewise, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare whosoever subscribes to true *Salafi* thought an apostate.

Equally, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare as apostates any group of Muslims who believes in God, Glorified and Exalted be He, and His Messenger (may peace and blessings be upon him) and the pillars of faith, and acknowledges the five pillars of Islam, and does not deny any necessarily self-evident tenet of religion.

(2) There exists more in common between the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence than there is difference between them. The adherents to the eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence are in agreement as regards the basic principles of Islam. All believe in Allah (God), Glorified and Exalted be He, the One and the Unique; that the Noble Qur'an is the Revealed Word of God; and that our master Muhammad, may blessings and peace be upon him, is a Prophet and Messenger unto all mankind. All are in agreement about the five pillars of Islam: the two testaments of faith (*shahadatayn*); the ritual prayer (*salat*); almsgiving (*zakat*); fasting the month of Ramadan (*sawm*), and the *Hajj* to the sacred house of God (in Mecca). All are also in agreement about the foundations of belief: belief in Allah (God), His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and in the Day of Judgment, in Divine Providence in good and in evil. Disagreements between the '*ulama* (scholars) of the eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence are only with respect to the ancillary branches of religion (*furu'*) and not as regards the principles and fundamentals (*usul*) [of the religion of Islam]. Disagreement with respect to the ancillary branches of religion (*furu'*) is a mercy. Long ago it was said that variance in opinion among the '*ulama* (scholars) "is a good affair".

(3) Acknowledgement of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*Mathahib*) within Islam means adhering to a fundamental methodology in the issuance of *fatwas*: no one may issue a *fatwa* without the requisite personal qualifications which each school of Islamic jurisprudence determines [for its own adherents]. No one may issue a *fatwa* without adhering to the methodology of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. No one may

claim to do absolute *Ijtihad* and create a new school of Islamic jurisprudence or to issue unacceptable *fatwas* that take Muslims out of the principles and certainties of the *Shari`ah* and what has been established in respect of its schools of jurisprudence.

Applicability of the Amman Message

The adoption of the *Amman Message* and its Three Points (on *takfir*, the *Mathhabs* and *fatwas*) by the Islamic *Fiqh* Academy and the addition of its important voice and authority to all the leading religious scholars world-wide who had already signed the *Amman Message* and its Three Points, effectively completed a universal *religious* consensus. This consensus was thus reached by recognized *mujtahids* and leading Islamic scholars of every school of jurisprudence and thought, and by every existing international scholarly assembly set up for achieving Islamic consensus. This, combined with the political consensus mentioned earlier, achieved a universal and unanimous consensus of Muslims in our time on the *Amman Message* and its Three Points, by the grace of God and at the hands of H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan.

The Main Problem besetting the Ummah Today

Now in our day the main problem besetting the *Ummah* is disunity and thus weakness. Muslims are weak and unable to protect themselves. They are unable to lift their children out of abject poverty and misery, and unable to save them from danger, ill-health, malnutrition and inadequate education. Muslims are now unfortunately passing through the time about which the Prophet—may peace and blessings be upon him—spoke as follows:

The nations will summon each other upon you as you call guests to eat from a plate of food,' they said 'Will we be few in number on that day O Messenger of God?' He said, 'No, rather you will be many on that day, but you will be [disunited and weak] like the foam on the ocean. And God will remove the fear in the hearts of your enemies and place in your hearts al-wahan.' They said, 'What is al-wahan O Messenger of God?' He said, 'Love of this world and hatred of death. [Abu Dawud, Sunan, Kitab al-Fitan wal-Malahim, Hadith no.4297]

Now our worldly weakness, disunity and inability to even protect ourselves is linked by the Prophet—may peace and blessings be upon him—to spiritual weakness, worldliness and forgetfulness of God and the next world. Indeed, success and strength in the world is predicated upon spiritual strength and sincerity of devotion to God. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

Whoso desireth the reward of the world, (let him know that) with God is the reward of the world and the Hereafter. God is ever Hearer, Seer. (Al-Nisa, 4:134)

Moreover, God says in the Holy Qur'an:

... And to help believers is ever incumbent upon Us. (Al-Rum, 30:47)

We note that God does not say that it is incumbent upon Himself to help *Muslims (Muslimeen)*; rather, He says that it is incumbent upon Himself to help believers (*Mu'mineen*). Thus—and God knows best—God's help (and therefore certain strength and success) is predicated upon the degree of sincerity and strength of our faith. Conversely, continued failure, weakness and disunity in the world is thus a sure sign of our weakness in faith. The main problem besetting is thus surely is weakness and disunity, caused by weakness of faith.

Resolving the Main Problem besetting the Ummah Today

If weakness of faith makes us divided and lacking in defenses, and that is the main problem besetting the *Ummah*, then it follows that strength of faith and unity of the *Ummah* are the solution to its problem. One cannot, however, impose sincerity and strength of faith on the *Ummah*: God said, speaking to the Prophet himself—may peace and blessings be upon him:

Lo! thou (O Muhammad) guidest not whom thou lovest, but God guideth whom He will. And He is Best Aware of those who walk aright. (Al-Qasas, 28:56)

Indeed, God does not aid those who do not make any effort to change themselves:

.... Lo! God changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts. (Al-Ra'ad, 13:11)

However—as the verse above also indicates—it is nevertheless possible for Muslims themselves individually to work to increase, with God's grace, their own sincerity and faith, through *practicing* righteous deeds, virtue and piety. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

Lo! those who believe and do good works, their Lord guideth them by their faith. Rivers will flow beneath them in the Gardens of Delight. (Yunus, 10:9)

Lo! God is with those who keep their duty unto Him and those who are doers of good. (Al-Nahl, 16:128)

Moreover, the very practice of piety and righteous deeds itself brings about solutions from God to all pos-

sible problems:

...And whosoever keepeth his duty to God, God will appoint a way out for him / And will provide for him from (a quarter) whence he hath no expectation. And whosoever putteth his trust in God, He will suffice him. Lo! God bringeth His command to pass. God hath set a measure for all things. (Al-Talaq, 65:2-3)

As for him who giveth and fears [God] / And believeth in goodness / Surely We will ease his way unto the state of ease. (Al-Layl, 92:5-7)

Lo! those who say: Our Lord is God (Allah), and afterward are upright, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not nor grieve, but hear good tidings of the paradise which ye are promised. / We are your protecting friends in the life of the world and in the Hereafter. There ye will have (all) that your souls desire, and there ye will have (all) for which ye pray. (Fusilat, 41: 30-31)

What can be done to facilitate this, to help Muslims help themselves through righteous deeds, piety and virtue, is to acquire and spread true knowledge of Islam and virtue, and to combat religious ignorance and misguidance:

And the believers should not all go forth. Of every troop of them, a party only should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may gain sound knowledge in religion, and that they may warn their folk when they return to them, so that they may beware. (Al-Tawbah, 9:122)

Keep to forgiveness [O Muhammad], and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant. (Al-A'raf, 7:199)

Then, as quoted by the July 2005 International Islamic Conference, direct efforts at uniting the *Ummah*—accompanied by piety and virtue—can and must be made:

The believers are naught else than brothers. Therefore make peace between your brethren and fear God that perhaps ye may obtain mercy. (Al-Hujurat, 49:10).

In summary then, what can be done practically speaking to help resolve the main problem besetting the *Ummah* is to practice virtuous and pious deeds to overcome our spiritual weakness, to work to dispel ignorant discourse and to unite and make peace between Muslims. This is contained in the following sacred verse, quoted at the beginning of this chapter:

There is no good in much of their secret conferences save (in) whosoever enjoineeth charity and

fairness and peace-making among the people; and whoso doeth that, seeking the good pleasure of God, We shall bestow on him a vast reward. (Al-Nisa', 4:114)

The Goal of the Amman Message and its Three Points

The goal of the *Amman Message* and its Three Points is, by the grace of God, to do *precisely* what was mentioned above as the solution to the main problems of the *Ummah*: the *Amman Message* itself aims to dispel ignorance about Islam, and is a call to virtue, piety, mutual acceptance and fairness. The aims of its Three Points (on *takfir*, the *Mathhabs* and *fatwas*) are: (1) to stop the practice of declaring other Muslims as apostates for secondary doctrinal disputes (real or imaginary) thereby criminally depriving them of their rights, making it licit for others to kill them and creating strife (*fitna*) in the *Ummah*. (2) To have all Muslims recognize each other, thereby naturally making the *Ummah* more united and hence stronger. And (3) to stop—or at least expose—incorrect *fatwas* by ignorant and unqualified people which misguide Muslims into all manner of dangerous, destructive and sinful ideas, and consequently modes of behavior and actions.

Moreover, by specifically safeguarding the very methodologies of Islamic Law—the *Mathahib*, which function to coherently resolve ostensible (but not real) conflicting or dialectical indications from the Qur'an and the *hadith* (the root sources of the *Shari'ah*) and extract plausible (if varying) conclusions—the Three Points of the *Amman Message* work to safeguard the whole *Shari'ah* and consequently the whole of Islamic civilization (at least in principle). In other words, recognizing and safeguarding the *Mathahib* means not only safeguarding the Muslims who follow them, but also preserving the internal intellectual cohesion of Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and consequently assuring its practical outcomes in the form of balanced religious rulings. Like sound logic based on sound premises, sound *Mathahib* (the word in Arabic literally means 'points of departure'), based on Revelation (Qur'an) and on inspiration (*hadith*) are bound to lead to sound conclusions. The *Mathahib* are thus like trees that give the fruits of Islamic Law from the sacred base of Revelation and inspiration. God says:

Seest thou not how God coineth a similitude: A goodly word, as a goodly tree, its root set firm, its branches reaching into heaven, / Giving its fruit at every season by permission of its Lord? God coineth the similitudes for mankind in order that they may reflect. / And the similitude of a bad word is as a bad tree, uprooted from upon the earth, possessing no stability. / God confirmeth

those who believe by a firm saying in the life of the world and in the Hereafter, and God sendeth wrong-doers astray. And God doeth what He will. (Ibrahim, 14:24-27)

The Importance of the Amman Message and its Three Points

The importance of the *Amman Message* and its Three Points is: first that, as seen and discussed earlier, it contains—if God wills—an exact, powerful and pragmatic remedy to the ills of the *Ummah* of Islam, rooted in religious principles. Second, that there has already been—by the grace of God—as mentioned at the onset, a historical, unique and religiously authoritative universal Islamic unanimous consensus upon it by both the *Ummah's* highest political and religious leaders. It is thus potentially an extremely important tool to bring about peace, reconciliation, unity and hence development, prosperity and strength in the Islamic world. It is so especially because it also inherently but necessarily contains all that is necessary (from the Muslim side at least) for peace and good relations between the Muslims and non-Muslims.

Conclusion

The historic consensus on the *Amman Message* and its Three Points comes at a time when tensions between the Islamic world and Western world in particular are at their highest level since the Colonial Age over a hundred years ago, and perhaps since the age of the Crusades, almost one thousand years ago. It is our hope, God Willing, that the *Amman Message* and its Three Points will prove an effective tool in helping to prevent this unnecessary larger conflict and thus save the lives of Muslims and non-Muslims everywhere.

Equally, the historic consensus on the *Amman Message* and its Three Points provides, God willing, a unique tool and hence an unprecedented historical opportunity to repel internal strife (*fitna*) and infighting amongst Muslims. It comes at a time when tensions, and in some places fighting, between Muslims is at a level not seen for centuries. It is our hope, God Willing, that the *Amman Message* and its Three Points will prove an effective tool in helping to end this cruel sedition, and thus save the lives of Muslims everywhere.

There is no good in ignorantly pursuing minor points of differences between Muslims, once the Islamic essentials of the Unity of God, the Prophet Muhammad, the Holy Qur'an and the five pillars of *Islam* (submission) and six articles of *Iman* (faith) are agreed upon. It is better by far to pursue righteous action: charity, fairness to others and to make peace between people. We note that God did not restrict this here to Muslims; rather He said: *people*. When that is done with sincere intentions, God will bestow a vast reward.

And whoso opposeth the messenger after the guidance (of God) hath been manifested unto him, and followeth other than the believer's way, We appoint for him that unto which he himself hath turned, and expose him unto hell - a hapless journey's end! (Al-Nisa, 4:115)

Equally, there is no good in opposing the way of the believers and their consensus.

Lo! God pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He pardoneth all save that to whom He will. Whoso ascribeth partners unto God hath wandered far astray. (Al-Nisa, 4:116)

For everyone who has wronged themselves and others by pursuing division, controversy and even conflict between Muslims, *if they desist and repent* they will find God Forgiving, *in sha Allah. Allah Kareem.*

We pray that God guide those who go astray: that He repels internal strife (*fitna*), and that He shower His blessings on the *Ummah* of Muhammad—may peace and blessings be upon him. God, may He be Exalted, says:

Lo! this, your nation, is one nation, and I am your Lord, so worship Me. (Al-Anbiya', 21:92)

And lo! This, your nation, is one nation and I am your Lord, so fear Me. (Al-Mu'minun, 23:52)

Addressing the Applicability of the Amman Message

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

Introduction

The Amman Message has become an extremely valuable tool throughout the Muslim world for purposes of uniting Muslims to a common ground. However, despite its clear purpose and undeniable intent, there are some who try to undermine its significance by arguing that it still does not fully protect all Muslims, including members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat, from discrimination by other Muslims. A review of the three points of the Amman Message and corresponding interpretive guidance, and a base level of common sense, reveals such an argument is completely without merit.

First, a distinction needs to be made between the Amman Message (and the intent of its framers) and some ignorant persons/groups who claim to support it (only in theory, but not in practice). Undermining the applicability of the Amman Message due to the hypocritical acts of some of its supporters is no different than judging Islam as a religion based on the conduct of

some of its radical adherents. Both lines of assessment are flawed, basically comparing apples with oranges.

Second, it must be understood that no matter how clear a declaration may be, there will always be those who will attempt to justify their distorted views on technical grounds. The Holy Quran itself has not been spared from such tactics. Do we not see the jihadists manipulate verses of the Quran on war in support of their views? Do we not see some non-Muslim critics do the same in an attempt to cast doubt upon the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet? Accordingly, just as it is understood that it is only fair and just to interpret the Holy Quran in a contextual manner, so too must such an approach be applied to the Amman Message when interpreting its applicability.

The Three Points of the Amman Message

The Amman Message specifically recognizes the validity of the Sunni, Shia, Ibadhi, Ash'arism, Sufi and true Salafi traditions. It goes further to clarify who a "Muslim" is by using the following broad terminology:

Equally, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare as apostates any group of Muslims who believes in God, Glorified and Exalted be He, and His Messenger (may peace and blessings be upon him) and the pillars of faith, and acknowledges the five pillars of Islam, and does not deny any necessarily self-evident tenet of religion.

Based on the foregoing, it forbids the practice of *takfir* (declaring one to be a non-Muslim) between Muslims. In addition, it restricts the issuing of *fatwas* (religious rulings) by Muslims without the requisite qualifications for doing so, and requires such determinations to be based on the strict methodology contained in each school of jurisprudence.

Applicability to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, expressly clarified his beliefs in such detail that no doubt can be left as to whether he was a Muslim. For instance, he declared:

"The gist and essence of our religion is: *There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.*" (*Izala Auham*, p. 137)

"Our Kalima is: *There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.* I believe in Allah, the angels, the apostles, the revealed Books, paradise and hell and the Day of Resurrection. I accept the Holy Quran as the Book of Allah, and Muhammad (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) as the true Prophet. (*Anwar al-Islam*, p. 34)

“We believe, with our body and soul, in the *Kalima Tayyiba: There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah*. We consider the Holy Quran as God’s true and perfect book, and accept it with all sincerity of heart to be the last of the Books, and with all sincerity of heart we believe the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) to be the last of the prophets. We say the same prayers, face towards the same *Qibla*, fast in the month of Ramadaan in the same manner. There is no difference in our *Hajj* and *Zakaat*. (Commentary of *Sura Fatiha*, pp. 297-298)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad also enjoined his followers to uphold this belief system. He instructed the members of his Society as follows:

“I enjoin my followers that they should believe in the holy *Kalima* from the bottom of their hearts, namely, that there is no god except Allah and Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger, until they die, that they believe in all the prophets and all the revealed books whose authenticity is established from the Holy Quran, and that they accept as obligatory fasting, prayer, poor-rate (*zakat*) and pilgrimage and all that has been prescribed as obligatory by the exalted Allah and His Messenger, and that they accept as forbidden all that has been forbidden and thus follow Islam in the true sense.

To sum up, it is obligatory to believe in all those matters on which there was consensus in belief and practice of the pious ones of the olden days of Islam, and which are considered to be Islam by the consensus of *Ahl-i Sunna*. I call the heaven and the earth to witness that this is my faith ...” (Ayyam as-Sulh, p.86-87).

“You, who have taken the pledge on my hand, should understand that you have pledged to give preference to religion over the worldly life. So remember that this pledge of yours is with Allah. As far as possible be firm on this pledge, stick to prayer, fasting, *Hajj*, the poor-rate (*Zakaat*), the commandments of Shari’ah, and avoid every evil and semblance of sin. Our Jama’at should be a pure model for others. Lip professions are meaningless if not accompanied by appropriate deeds.” (*Ruhani Khaza’in* No. 2, vol. v, p. 453)

“Our religion is the same Islam. It is not new. There are the same prayers, the same fasts, the same pilgrimage, and the same *Zakaat*. But there is this difference that these duties had [by now] assumed outward forms only, without any true

spirit in them; we want to infuse in them the spirit of sincerity. We want that these duties be performed in a manner that they produce results which are missing at the moment.” (*Ruhani Khaza’in* No. 2, vol. ix, p. 312)

Using the criteria contained in the Amman Message, we see that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat¹ evidently satisfy the conditions required to be a Muslim by:

- Believing in Allah and Muhammad as His Messenger;
- Believing in the Articles of Faith;
- Believing in the Pillars of Islam.

In addition, as quoted above, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and his followers accept the consensus of the *Ahl-i-Sunnah* tradition, which is specifically recognized by the Amman Message.

A Baseless Argument

Notwithstanding the clear uniformity in beliefs held by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat with the guidelines promulgated by the Amman Message, it is argued that the inclusion of the phrase “and does not deny any necessarily self-evident tenet of religion” in the Amman Message’s definition of a Muslim provides an escape clause by which members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat may still be excluded. As stated in the introductory remarks of this article, the fact that there are people who may make such a mischievous argument in no way should detract from the value of the declaration as a whole. It is clear from the letter and spirit of the Amman Message that it is not to be interpreted in a manner so as to exclude those who objectively fall within its ambit, but rather provide a platform from which basic commonalities may be drawn upon. Who can deny that the aim of the Amman Message is to be inclusive, rather than exclusive? Who can deny that one of its three points prohibits the use of un-authoritative *fatwas* to exclude Muslims from being part of the *ummah*?

Clearly, the burden to show that members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat, or any other person/group claiming to be Muslim, “denies a necessarily self-evident tenet of religion” is on those making such an argument. Moreover, in addition to showing such a denial exists, the Amman Message requires those making such an argument prove that according to the methodology of established jurisprudence, such a denial is grounds for placing one outside the pale of Islam. This is an important point that should not be overlooked. The Amman Message provides an internal protective measure by mandating that *fatwas* of *kufir* can only be made on the

basis of the methodology of established jurisprudence. It thereby ensures that those who support the Amman Message in theory but who may want to limit its applicability in practice are placed with the burden of substantiating their contentions on the basis of objective, established criteria contained in Islamic law. Thus, personal and subjective opinions as to what is required to be a Muslim – in addition to the belief in the *kalima*, the five pillars of Islam and the six articles of faith – are given no credence under the Amman Message; it is only objective support from established Islamic jurisprudence that is considered as worthy of consideration.

Additional Interpretative Guidance

In addition to the express language contained in the Amman Message, clarification from those instrumental in framing it prove that the declaration cannot be used as a device to continue to discriminate against those who clearly fall within its scope. For instance, His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, who prepared the Introduction to the Amman Message, explains:

“There is no good in ignorantly pursuing minor points of differences between Muslims once the Islamic essentials of the Unity of God, the Prophet Muhammad, the Holy Qur’an, the five pillars of *Islam* (submission) and six articles of *Iman* (faith) are agreed upon.”

Thus, the essentials are belief in the Unity of God, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Holy Quran, the five pillars of Islam and the six articles of faith. Focusing on a “minor point of difference” – and using such to exclude those agreeing on the foregoing under the guise of a “necessarily self-evident tenet of religion” – is, as expressed by Prince Ghazi, a worthless and “ignorant” pursuit.

Furthermore, Shaykh Al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawai, author of the Preface to the Amman Message, explains in a reply to a question about “Who is a Muslim”:

“The true believer, sincere Muslim, and sensible man, is one who avoids entertaining ill suspicions of others, restrains his tongue from ascribing kufr to a man who professed the Kalima and does not deny any of the fundamentals of religion such as prayers, Zakat (obligatory charity), fasting the month of Ramadan and pilgrimage to the house for those who can afford the journey.”

For those who go beyond these limits, such as those attempting to exclude Muslims on the basis of some perceived “denial of a necessarily self-evident tenet of religion”, Shaykh Tantawi further explains:

Pronouncing *takfir* upon a Muslim is one of the gravest sins ... Only people who lost their minds, whose vision are blurred, and who are dominated by ignorance and conceit can declare others as *kafir* or *fasiq* without careful consideration. Let those who unjustifiably think badly of others beware of such abominable behavior. Let them remember the saying of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH): “The believer is not given to cursing, slandering or obscene and foul speech.”

Again, neglecting agreement on the fundamentals in exchange for finding distinctions on extraneous matters is, as expressed by Shaykh Tantawi, an “abominable” act based on “ignorance”.

The Ultimate Proof

The theoretical arguments concerning the applicability of the Amman Message to the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat are quite apparent. However, determinative, leaving no room for doubt, is the fact that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat’s endorsement of the Amman Message has been officially recognized by the authorities administering the Amman Message and is included among the Islamic entities affiliated with this declaration. What more proof could be needed? The following endorsement letter² is published on the official website of the Amman Message [at <http://ammanmessage.com/newEndorse.pdf>]:

* * *

March 31, 2009

The Hashemite Royal Court

His Royal Highness, Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad

RE: Official Endorsement of the Amman Message

Your Royal Highness, Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad,

Assalamu aleikum! I pray this letter finds you in the best of health and *iman* by the Grace of Almighty Allah.

It is with great pleasure that I submit this letter for your kind consideration. I am the Vice-President of the U.S. based Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society (originally known as “Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, Lahore”). The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society is an Islamic organization that publishes literature on Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad as well as comparative religious studies. These literary works have received worldwide acclaim for their authenticity as well as scholarship. Most of these works have been certified by Al-Azhar University. In fact, His Highness, the Grand Imam, Sheikh Muhammad Tantawi has written the Preface for the Arabic translation of one of our primary texts, “The Religion of Islam” by Maulana Muhammad

Ali. In addition to publishing the original texts, we devote much of our time to having these works translated into various languages and distributed for free to people around the world. The objective is to provide people with access to authentic Islamic material so that they may study Islam for themselves in their own language and be able to fully comprehend their *deen* to the best of their abilities.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society fully recognizes the importance of unity among Muslims. The prevalent *fatwas* of *kufr* that are repeatedly declared over minor differences of opinion do nothing but cause damage to the progress of Islam. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society firmly believes that anyone who recites the *kalima tayyaba*, “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”, must be accepted as a Muslim; as to whether he or she believes or practices correctly is a matter only between them and Almighty Allah (swt). We believe that Muslims must unite on this common ground and only then will it “prevail over all religions” (Holy Quran 9:33).

As for our beliefs, we unequivocally affirm:

“Allah - there is no god but He. His are the most beautiful names.” (20:8);

“Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten, and none is like Him.” (Ch. 112).

Accordingly, we believe that that there is one, and only one, God Who is the Creator and Controller of the entire universe. He is unique in every respect, and there is nothing which bears any likeness to Him. He is the Knower of all things, and has full power over the whole of creation. He does not stand in need of anything at all, while everything is totally dependent on Him. He possesses all the perfect qualities, and man should worship Him, and Him alone.

We also unequivocally affirm:

“Say: O Mankind, surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all” (7:158);

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets” (33:40).

“Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar” (33:21).

Accordingly, we believe that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah for all mankind, that he was the last of the prophets (after whom no prophet may appear), and that it is by following his blessed example that one may attain closeness to Almighty Allah.

Because the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society works throughout the world to spread the true, peaceful teachings of Islam, it sees first hand the great need of unity amongst Muslims. It is with this understanding that we are so pleased with the efforts of all who contributed to the creation of the Amman Message. We fully support the Amman Message and would like to officially endorse it and became an official signatory to it. We would further like to assist in spreading the Amman Message to Muslim communities around the world. We firmly believe that the Amman Message is an instrument that can help Muslims the world over to put the following Quranic injunction into practice:

“And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited. And remember Allah’s favour to you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes clear to you His messages that you may be guided.” (3:103)

May Almighty Allah continue to Bless you and Reward you for your efforts in this regard and Grant you many more opportunities to serve the cause of His *deen*. Ameen!

Wasalaam,
Samina Malik, Vice-President, Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society

* * *

The fact that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society has been officially accepted as an endorser and listed among other Islamic entities shuts the door to any contention that the intent of the Amman Message was to exclude groups like the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat. Moreover, this practical illustration of the inclusion of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat within the scope of those contemplated by the Amman Message does away with any suggestion that the declaration’s supporters can still technically oppose such groups based on extraneous, subjective and unqualified criteria.

Note #1

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat is specifically mentioned (as opposed to the broader term “Ahmadiyya Jamaat” or “Ahmadiyya Movement”, which would include the Qadian Jamaat as well) because it is only the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat that strictly adheres to the beliefs quoted above. Contrary to the beliefs of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Qadian Jamaat contends that prophets may appear after the Holy Prophet Muhammad and formal acceptance of such new prophets is required to remain Muslim. The second khalifa of the Qadian Jamaat, M. Mahmud Ahmad,

upon whose insistence of these views created the split in the Jamaat, wrote in his book *The Truth about the Split* (Rabwah, 1965, first published in 1924):

“the belief that all those so-called Muslims who have not entered into his [Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s] bai`at (i.e. pledge) formally, wherever they may be, are Kafirs and outside the pale of Islam, even though they may not have heard the name of the Promised Messiah. That these beliefs have my full concurrence, I readily admit.” [p.55-56]

“... as we believed the Promised Messiah to be one of the prophets of God, we could not possibly regard his deniers as Muslims.” [p.137-138]

“not only are those deemed to be Kafirs who openly style the Promised Messiah as Kafir, and those who although they do not style him thus, decline still to accept his claim, but even those who, in their hearts, believe the Promised Messiah to be true, and do not even deny him with their tongues, but hesitate to enter into his Bai`at, have here been adjudged to be Kafirs.” [p.139-140]

The practical consequences to such beliefs were explained by Maulana Muhammad Ali, the first Head of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat, in *Tahrir Ahmadiyyat*:

“The Qadian Jamaat is trying to sail in two boats at the same time. On the one hand, they declare the 400 million Kalima-professing people to be kafir, and do not accept that a person becomes a Muslim by professing the words: ‘There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’, but rather they regard such a one as a kafir. On the other hand, they include themselves among the Muslims, refusing to make a separate religion or Kalima for themselves. But this situation cannot last long. Either the repugnant nature of this doctrine will ultimately create an aversion in most of them and they will cease to ascribe the claim of prophethood to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Or, the necessary consequence of this doctrine will follow, namely, that the Kalima ‘There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’ will be declared abrogated, and they will accept a new Kalima in its place.”

This is certainly not to suggest that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat considers members of the Qadian Jamaat to be non-Muslims. The intention is to simply provide Maulana Muhammad Ali’s apt description of the dilemma faced by the Qadian Jamaat today at the junction of attempts, like the Amman Message, to unite Muslims on the basis of established common grounds.

Note #2

It has also been alleged that the drafters of the Endorsement Letter purposefully neglected to expressly mention Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the content of the letter, so as to appease the Jordanian authorities. Such criticism fails to recognize the following obvious points.

First, the suggestion that the Jordanian authorities, or any of the Muslim scholars in the world today, require an explanation that the Ahmadiyya group (whether from Qadian or Lahore) are followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is naïve at best. This is a fact that is understood by anyone having a minimum level of exposure to Islamic traditions of the past century. Moreover, the Endorsement Letter was personally presented to members of the Jordanian authorities after multiple discussions that took place in Amman, Jordan about the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat and the split in the Ahmadiyya Movement.

Second, the purpose of the Endorsement Letter was to explain the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat’s view on “Who is a Muslim”. Accordingly, the view that anyone who recites the *Kalima* is a Muslim was presented, and a more detailed description of what we believe the two parts of the formula contained in the *Kalima* entail was then offered. Unlike the Qadian Jamaat, as explained in Note #1, we do not believe that belief in Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is essential to be a Muslim and, thus, there was no logical reason for including the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in this topic.

Third, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad created the Ahmadiyya Movement for the purpose of having a group of Muslims within the Muslim nation that directed its efforts solely for the propagation of Islam. Accordingly, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Jamaat introduces itself in line with this objective – that is, an Islamic society that engages in various activities around the world for purposes of establishing the true teachings of Islam. Again, unlike the Qadian Jamaat, we do not consider ourselves as a separate sect, with the goal of brining as many people into our fold as possible. Consistent with Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s desire and clear instructions, we simply work for the propagation of the true, peaceful teachings of Islam and, as a result, introduce ourselves accordingly.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's Criticism of Secular Philosophy and his Vindication of Divine Revelation

By: Prof. Henry Francis B. Espiritu

[This article is written by Prof. Henry Francis B. Espiritu of the Philippines. Prof. Espiritu is Assistant Professor VII in Philosophy at the University of the Philippines-Cebu College. He obtained his Master of Arts (M.A.) in Philosophy from the University of Philippines-Diliman and his Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Political Science (Cum Laude) from the University of the Philippines-Cebu. He is a Ph.D. in Philosophy candidate at the Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City. Prof. Espiritu is a member of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society in Philippines and is actively engaged in promoting the true, peaceful, rational and inspiring teachings of Islam, as espoused by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, throughout the country. This article is an illustration of the deep insight and logic Prof. Espiritu brings to this important work.]

“My dear ones, the sterile logic of this world is a ‘Satan’. And the ephemeral philosophy of this world is like *Iblis*. It greatly covers the light of faith and gives rise to bravado and takes one close to atheism. So you should guard yourself against this and develop a humble and meek heart and become such that you obey the commandment without dispute and dissent, just as a child obeys his mother... I have attained this perfection by following the Holy *Qur-an* and the Holy Prophet and if the ultimate objective of religion is to develop a personal relationship with God, I have by following the *Qur-an* and the Holy Prophet, achieved this objective. There is no other religion in the world that can transport a man to these heights. Islam is the only living and true faith, a faith by following which, one attains to God-realisation.”—Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad¹

The Failure of Secular Philosophy to Satisfy and Quench the Famished Hearts of Spiritual Seekers

Theistic philosophers of varied creedal convictions have composed numerous dissertations disproving atheism and agnosticism by means of sound philosophical analyses and logical proofs. However, owing to the overly cerebral and analytically complicated way in which their treatises were written, they failed miserably in touching the discerning hearts of spiritually thirsty

souls who are seeking for innate certainty in their pilgrimage of faith. Indeed, there is a grave spiritual peril in employing philosophy as the basis of refuting atheism and agnosticism. A philosophical argument used to prove God's existence can be logically controverted and counter-arguments can be likewise deployed to deny the existence of the Supreme Being. Therefore, using philosophy to prove or disprove the existence of a Supreme Being is not only desperately tentative and spiritually counterproductive, but also outrightly barren.

A Punjabi Sufi saint of medieval India, Hazrat Fariduddin Ganj-i-shakar (circa, A.D., 1173-1266) complained regarding the uncertainty of philosophical reasoning (as a way of ascertaining the Absolute Truth) in his pathetic prayer to God. He cried deep within his spirit:

Oh my soul, philosophy is weariness to the heart—arguments fly here and there and like arrows, counter-arguments fly in different directions piercing my head heavy with scholarly suppositions. I searched the Beloved at the gate of philosophy, I seek my Friend in the winding paths of logic... but alas, the arrows of pros-and-cons have killed me. Oh my Beloved, I seek refuge in You from the confusions and scruples of my restless mind. Grant me grace to reach Thy vision. It is Thy Face alone that suffices my parched and barren heart.²

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's Utter Distrust of Human Philosophy's Claim to Know the Absolute Truth

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (circa, A.D., 1836-1908)—another Punjabi mystic and theologian considered by his followers as a great *mujaddid* (renewer) of Islam—echoed Hazrat Baba Farid's complaint regarding the uncertainty of a faith that is solely based on human philosophy. Philosophy cannot be an indubitable basis of our faith in God because it is based on the suppositions of the human mind.³ The human mind alone, if unaided by God's mercy (*rahmat*) and self-revelation (*ilham*), cannot fathom the great mysteries of life, the universe, and existence. Philosophy, despite its claim to certainty and universality, is nothing but a bewildering array of contradicting views and theories that often change according to times and climes.⁴ Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad insists that the only way by which humankind can arrive at the absolute conviction of God's existence is by reflecting on the self-revelation of God in the Holy Book (*Al Qur-an*) as explained and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. The reflective reading of God's self-revelation as found in the *Holy Qur-an* and the reverential devotion accorded to the *Sunnah* (Holy Tradition) of the Prophet of Islam, are for

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad the potent arsenals in refuting the menace of atheism and agnosticism in the heart of humanity.⁵

Philosophy (even if such a philosophy is “theistic”)—as an incomplete vehicle in ascertaining the existence of God—can only bring the person to a logical and mental assent of the possibility of Divine existence. By deductive as well as inductive reasoning, one is compelled to assent verbally and mentally that indeed God exists. Theistic philosophy often uses naturalistic arguments in proving the reality of God’s existence—but this contemplative reflection of nature is not enough. One will accept in a cerebral manner the fact of God’s existence but despite this mental assent, one’s heart will still be void of absolute certainty (*haqq-wa-yaqeen*) of God’s reality. The heart can never be serene and tranquil until it reaches certainty of faith (*tahqiq-ul-iman*). Certainty of one’s faith in God can be only attained by taking hold of the truth of Revelation as found in the *Holy Qur-an*, since the Holy Book is God’s self-revelation of His Person to His creatures. Believing in the truths as found in the self-revelation of God to humankind is the only way for humans to achieve spiritual firmness and calmness of the heart (*sukun-e-dil*).

Divine Revelation as found in the Qur-an and the Exemplary Life of the Prophet: Veritable Foundations of Ascertaining Spiritual Truths

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s spiritual magnum opus, *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya* (Ahmadiyya Proofs) is a veritable reflective commentary of God’s Words that combines his spiritual, mystical, and experiential insights of Divine enlightenment in the course of his prayerful reading and introspective meditations of the *Holy Qur-an*.⁶ Furthermore, *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya* and the other spiritual writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad utilize the pure Word of Allah in the *Qur-an* and the righteous precedents set by Prophet Muhammad in the *Sunnah* to elucidate, exemplify, and instantiate in practical terms the Divine truths found in the *Holy Qur-an*. According to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Holy Book, the perfect exemplary conduct of the Prophet, and the private revelations of certainty (*ilham*) vouchsafed by Allah to His beloved saints (*awliya*) and reformers (*mujaddid*) are indeed indispensable testimonies in proving the existence of God.⁷

God’s revelation of His Divine Names and Attributes are gifts of grace (*ni’mat*) and mercy (*rahmat*). Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was aware that apprehending the divine truths in the *Holy Qur-an* can only happen when God bestows enabling grace to the person reading and contemplating its message. The holy prophets, saints (*awliya*), and regenerators of faith (*mujaddid*) encountered the Supreme Lord in a very intimate way. Their

very own virtuous lives are perfect models and proofs of the Reality of God. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claims that his divine office as the renewer (*mujaddid*) of Islam for the fourteenth century of the Islamic era (Hegira) is God’s bestowal of mercy on the Islamic *Ummah* (community). He understood that his commission as a *mujaddid* is for the revitalization of the Islamic faith, which was attacked by atheism, agnosticism, colonial missionary-peddlers, positivistic empiricism, and atheistic materialism.⁸

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as Mujaddid (Regenerator) of Islam and His Office of Upholding and Defending Divine Revelation

The devout believer can show to the world the reality of God and the truth of His presence in the universe, because he himself has experienced God in his very own inner life. Whereas a secular philosopher—no matter how theistic he is in his philosophical commitment, and no matter how well he proves God’s existence in his characteristic cold, calculative and logical rationalism—can never produce the spiritual fervor, ecstatic joy, and divine zeal of the Prophets and saints. Through revelation (*wahy* or *ilham*); prophets, saints, and regenerators of the faith perceive in their souls the absolute truth and certainty of monotheism (*tawheed*), as revealed in the pure light of the *Holy Qur-an*. Thus, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a *mujaddid* saint is bold in his confidence in the truth of Divine Revelation. Furthermore, he firmly exhorts the faithful to put their trust in the *Holy Qur-an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet as indubitable bases of true faith. He says:

My dear child, the sterile logic of this world is a ‘Satan’. And the ephemeral philosophy of this world is like *Iblis*. It greatly covers the light of faith and gives rise to bravado and takes one close to atheism... [G]uard yourself against this and develop a humble and meek heart and become such that you obey the commandment without dispute and dissent, just as a child obeys his mother... I have attained this perfection by following the *Holy Qur-an* and the Holy Prophet and if the ultimate objective of religion is to develop a personal relationship with God, I have by following the *Qur-an* and the Holy Prophet, achieved this objective. There is no other religion in the world that can transport a man to these heights. Islam is the only living and true faith, a faith by following which, one attains to God-realisation.⁹

During the British Raj in India, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, through his writings, exerted his utmost to revitalize the faith of Indian Muslims when anti-Islamic forces from all sides vehemently attacked the foundational tenets of Islam. By giving rational, mystical, allegori-

cal, as well as spiritual proofs on the truth of Islam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad guided the Muslims of India in that difficult and torturous period of their history. During the British colonization of India, irreligious forces inimical to Islam strived to remove the inborn love for Islam and for the Prophet Muhammad in the heart of the Indian Muslims by conducting slanderous propaganda aimed against Islam and by imposing laws that endeavored to efface the beautiful Islamic heritage that was rooted in the Indian subcontinent for many centuries. Atheistic ideologies, sectarian divisions among Indian Muslims, as well as materialistic and positivistic empiricist philosophies aided the anti-Islamic forces of British colonialism in denigrating Islamic faith and traditions. Against this historical backdrop, the defense and renewal of Islam were the reasons that impelled Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to declare his *mujadiddiyat* (divine role of reformation) and to criticize all man-made philosophies that denigrate the pristine revelation of Islam.¹⁰ Human knowledge devoid of guidance from the All Intelligent God will cause the weakening of faith, degradation of morals, laxity in worship, and loss of a compassionate heart characterizing a proper human being. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—seeing the extreme poverty of human philosophy in explaining the purpose of life—warned the Muslims not to trust in the directions of those human philosophers whose minds are not sanctified in the truths of faith. To quote from Dr. Basharat Ahmad in his assessment of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s scathing critique of mundane philosophy:

A philosopher is like a blind man, groping in the dark, trying to discover some argument. It is quite possible that he may or may not find correct arguments by this blind search and he may or may not draw the correct conclusions from these. That is why God, the Most High, has differentiated between a prophet and a philosopher in the *Qur-an*: ‘Can a seeing man and a blind man be alike? (35:19)’... Thus the difference between a philosopher and a prophet is the same as the difference between a blind man and a man with his sight... Hence, all those perfect followers [i.e. saints] of the Holy Prophet who had tasted of the spiritual experience based their invitation to men on this personal experience of God...¹¹

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s Scathing Criticisms of Secular Philosophies as Poor Approximations of the Absolute Truth

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad understood that secular philosophy (devoid of Divine Revelation) is nothing but a poor approximation of Reality. The philosophers—with faltering reasoning and error-prone suppositions—can only best theorize and speculate about Reality. On

the other hand, the prophets and the saints (being the inheritors of the wisdom of the prophets) fully know of Reality since the Almighty God, as the Absolute Truth graciously deigned to impart these truths to the hearts of the prophets and saints by His divine favor (*ni’mat*). Prophets and saints can impart the truth to the seeking hearts because they themselves have seen and tasted the Reality of God in their lives. Thus, the saints’ invitation for us to partake of the spiritual life is directly based on their very own personal encounter with the Reality of God in their experiences of daily living. This personal encounter with God the Absolute Truth, as mediated through Divine Revelation, is poetically expressed by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in this manner:

It is the light of the *Qur-an* that turned out to be the most resplendent of all lights: Pure is He from Whom gushed forth this flood of light. The entire world have I combed and all shops have I hunted: Of pure wine of Divine knowledge, have I found this one phial... I live by the word of God that comes to me. His message is to me as the food of my soul...¹²

Western philosophy’s claim to knowledge and certainty failed to convince Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. During the British colonization of India, when modern Western philosophy is outrightly encouraged, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad firmly held to, and tenaciously defended the truths of Islam. His faith had never been affected by the constant and consistent bombardments of worldly philosophers against the Islamic faith. Whenever there is a clash between modernist philosophies and Islam, he would never become powerless in the face of such mundane philosophies. His writings courageously protected the creed of Islam by using sound philosophical truths and Qur-anic expositions to establish Islam and pin down the mistakes of Western philosophy.¹³ Reading the many treatises he authored, one is constantly amazed at how Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—although he was not formally schooled in Western sciences and philosophies—could with elegance of speech, with profound philosophical reasoning responded effectively, and dismissed forcefully the assaults raised by Western philosophy against Islam. Reading the *Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya*, one can notice that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was deeply convinced that his mystical writings were God’s bestowment on him as *ilham* (personal revelation) for the regeneration of the Islamic faith.¹⁴ He had undergone the purgative and transformative experiences (*riyazat wa mujahadat*)—these experiences of spiritual purification culminated in what Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad calls the “experiences and encounters of spiritual visions” (*ru’yah* and *ilham*) which gave him the overwhelming conviction of God’s Reality.¹⁵ This was the reason why he never

became apprehensive whenever he was confronted with the assaults of Western philosophy against the integrity of the Blessed *Qur-an*. Through allegorical examples, metaphorical instantiations, deductive proofs, inductive reasoning, and most of all; mystical intuitions, personal revelations, and spiritual visions, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad demonstrated that he could use philosophy “at its own game” and defeat it by utilizing philosophy’s own arsenals, and thus upheld the crystal-clear truths of Islamic belief in Divine Revelation.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s View of the Proper Place of Philosophy vis-à-vis Divine Revelation: “Philosophy as Servant of the Qur-an and not its Master”

Lest we misinterpret Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be an inveterate enemy of philosophy, let it be understood that what he was against is the philosophy or philosophies that aim to destroy religious principles—secular philosophies that are utilized by anti-Muslims to attack the Islamic faith (e.g., empiricism, positivism, materialism, agnosticism, atheistic philosophies, etc.). Likewise, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad asserts that philosophies tending to support the logical concept of a Divine Being (i.e., theistic philosophies, naturalized theologies, theistic existentialism, etc.), if devoid of the sure guidance of Divine Revelation, such philosophies still cannot be infallible guides in arriving at the reality (*haqiqat*) or certainty (*yaqeenan*) of God’s existence. The above-mentioned points must be remembered when one seeks to properly understand Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s cutting criticisms of human philosophies. If one seriously looks at his spiritual writings, one will clearly notice that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad employed logical reasoning and rational proofs in elucidating and explaining the Islamic faith. Furthermore, he utilized philosophical analogies and instantiating metaphors as examples, in the same way that he deployed deductive and inductive reasoning in expounding the truths of Islam. For him, the real purpose of philosophy is in giving logical support and analytic proofs of Divine Revelation. Philosophy finds its nobility in being a servant to the truths of the *Holy Qur-an* in the same way that science is likewise a means to explain theological principles.¹⁶

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has no sympathy with the movements of modernist and ultra-rationalist Indian Muslim thinkers, e.g., Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Syed Amir Ali, and Prof. S. Khuda Bakhsh. For him, these Western influenced Muslim philosophers and modernist *ulama* made the *Qur-an* subservient to mundane philosophies and materialistic sciences. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad felt that these modernists and “neo-Mutazilites” have no qualm in forcing the Qur-anic Revelation to “tow in line”

with modern science. In contrast with these ultra-rationalist *ulama*, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad contends that secular philosophies and sciences are not the “masters” of the Qur-anic truths; instead, they should serve the cause of Divine Revelation.¹⁷ It is likewise interesting to note that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s view regarding the superiority of Divine Revelation over and above science and philosophy perfectly echoes the stance made by another *mujaddid* (regenerator of Islam), the medieval Muslim theologian Hazrat Imam al-Ghazali (circa, 1058-1111 A.D.) in his celebrated book, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. In this book, Hazrat Imam al-Ghazali likewise asserts that without the guiding revelation of God as found in the *Holy Qur-an*, the enterprise of human philosophy will simply self-destruct; since philosophy due to its varied and conflicting theories will only lead the seeking soul to mental confusions, self-doubts, and spiritual turbulence. It is the indubitable guidance of Divine Revelation alone that can deliver humankind from spiritual uncertainties and self-deception coming from his own misguided and untamed self (*nafs-e-ammarah*).¹⁸

By Defending the Primacy of Divine Revelation over Human Philosophy, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Had Done a Great Service to all Monotheistic Faiths

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s critique of philosophy in his defense for the truths of Islamic revelation is geared towards confirming the prophetic foundation of Islam as an authentic revealed religion. He repeatedly points-out in his writings that the fundamental basis of Islam is the *Holy Qur-an* and all other areas of knowledge are subordinate to and in the service of the Qur-anic revelation. It is God Himself Who guarantees the truth of the *Qur-an* since it is God Who revealed the *Qur-an* to the world. Therefore faith (*iman*) in the One God and confidence placed in the Divine revelation (the *Holy Qur-an*) as given by God to the Prophet Muhammad constitute the foundational grounds of the Islamic faith. By defending the truths of the *Qur-an* against the onslaughts of secular philosophies, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad performed a great service to all revealed religions in that he has totally upheld the primacy of Divine revelation (i.e., belief in the infallibility of prophethood and in the truth of the revealed scriptures) which is the very basis of all monotheistic faiths; whether Judaism, Christianity, or Islam.¹⁹ By putting philosophy and the sciences as servants of Revelation, he sets forth his deep conviction that true science and philosophy do not contradict Divine Revelation rather support, exemplify, validate, and confirm it.

Hazrat Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi advised the philosophers of his day and age: “*Ai-keh khwandee hikmat-i*

Yunanian...hikmati imaniyan ra ham be-khwan.” The meaning of this Persian couplet is; “Oh thou that hast read the wisdom of the Greeks...do also read the wisdom of the believers”.²⁰ In the same way, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad counseled the agnostics who are steeped in various mundane philosophies to take guidance from the divine and sure truths of the *Qur-an*. The spiritual writings and reasoned proofs for Islam given by this valiant Punjabi saint as he defended the Qur-anic truths, made the impartial and sincere spiritual seekers to encounter the reality of God’s Existence in their lives, thus transforming the gloomy and hopeless condition of their being to that of a radiant and optimistic life overflowing with joy. These spiritual boons of faith (*ni’mat-e-iman*) and certitude (*ni’mat-e-yaqeen*) that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s proofs of Divine Revelation gave to the believers, are gifts that mundane philosophers cannot provide to the restless souls of bewildered humanity.

Epilogue: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s Life and Message Exemplified Authentic Service to the Cause of the Qur-an and Islam

In closing, permit me to say these words of advice (*naseehat*): we ought to be grateful to Almighty Allah for the blessed life of the *mujaddid* saint, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. His saintly life epitomized authentic loyalty to the cause of Islam despite persecutions, vilifications, various hardships, all types of sufferings, and adversities coming from the enemies of Islam. Likewise, we need to be thankful to God for Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s divine office of *mujaddidiyyat* (Islamic reformation). All the bulk of his spiritual treatises made available to us abundant and clear proofs of the Reality of God and the truth of Divine Revelation—thereby chasing away the gloom of agnosticism and uncertainty in our hearts. I hope that owing to the guidance of the Qur-anic revelation and the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in defense of Islam, we will be granted the serene assurance and the absolute affirmation (*yaqeen-e mutlaq*) of the veracity of our Islamic faith and of the living Reality of God in our lives.

Now that we are already armed with the necessary spiritual assurance of our faith, thanks to the efforts expended by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in defending the truths of the *Qur-an* from the attacks of secularists, modernists, and agnostic philosophers, we will hopefully turn out to be assiduous and sincere worshippers of Allah, the Almighty. *Insha-Allah*, with the assurance and tranquility in our spirit wrought by reading the *Holy Qur-an* as elucidated by the life and works of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib, we will become fruitful individuals and responsible members of the Islamic *Ummah* (community). Being assured and convinced of the certainty of God’s existence through the proofs pro-

vided to us by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib in his spiritual treatises, our lives will abundantly overflow in all goodness (*aamal-i-saleehat*) in Allah’s service, reformation of our lives (*islah-un-nafs*), and for the propagation of the truth of Islam (*isha’at Islami*) to others who are in need of such valuable guidance. Ameen!

Footnotes:

- 1 See *Izalah-i Auham*, quoted by Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *The Great Muslim Reformer of the Present Age: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (Hayward, California: Lahore Ahmadiyya Publications, 2001), pp. 41-42.
- 2 Amir Munir Suhrawardi, *Baba Farid ka Munajat [Baba Farid’s Supplications]* (Pakpattan, Pakistan: Khanqah Kitabkhanah, n.d.), p. 38.
- 3 Cf. Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.
- 4 See at length, Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *op. cit.*, specifically the sections, “Emergence of Dialecticians” and “The Appearance of the Mujaddid of the Times”; pp. 16-23.
- 5 See, Naseer A. Faruqi, *Ahmadiyyat in the Service of Islam* (Newark, California: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore, 1983) pp.82-85. Cf. also Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *op.cit.*, specifically Chapter II, “The Basis of the Holy Imam’s Dialectics [*Ilm Al-Kalam*]”; pp. 25-49.
- 6 See, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *A Brief Sketch of My Life [Kitab-al-Bariyya]* (Columbus, Ohio: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore, 1996), Chapters 4 & 5 “Spiritual Experiences” and “Divine Appointment and Claims”; pp. 16-32.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 See at length, Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement*. (Newark, California: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore, 1984), pp. 8-23.
- 9 Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in *Izalah-i Auham*, quoted by Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-42.
- 10 Cf. Maulana Muhammad Ali, *True Conception of the Ahmadiyya Movement* (Columbus, Ohio: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore, 1996), pp. 1-17, 49-55.
- 11 Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *op .cit.*, p. 32.
- 12 Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam of Fiji, *Quest After God: Glimpses of the Life of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (Suva, Fiji: Fiji Ahmadiyya Publications, n.d.), pp. 22, 41.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
- 14 Cf. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *A Brief Sketch of My Life, op. cit.*, pp. 16-24.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp.18-20. Also, see at length Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Testimony of the Holy Qur’an [Shahadat Al-Qur’an]* (Newark, CA: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Ishaat Islam, 1989) for the complete narrative of Hazrat Ahmad’s conviction of the truth of the *Qur’an* and his role as a *mujaddid* of Islam.
- 16 Cf. Maulana Muhammad Ali. *True Conception of the Ahmadiyya Movement. op. cit.*, pp. 14-18.
- 17 Cf. Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, op.cit.*, pp 93-94.
- 18 See Oliver Leamann, *A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 24-26.
- 19 See Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- 20 In Dr. Basharat Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p.1.

Losing My Religion for Equality

By President Jimmy Carter

[This article, by Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States of America and Noble Prize winner, is a moving expression of a personal conflict between common/established religious practice and one's moral and ethical conscience. "Equality" is certainly an ideal to which all faiths aspire but, as articulated in this article, has historically fallen short of the standard set in religious scriptures. The issue of "women's rights", in particular, has been a black mark on the record of all faiths, women routinely being subjugated to the position of an inferior counterpart to man throughout the world. Mr. Carter's courage in addressing this important matter is inspiring and a testament to his faith in "accountability" before God, a doctrine that all faith traditions should uphold with greatest reverence.]

Women and girls have been discriminated against for too long in a twisted interpretation of the word of God. I have been a practicing Christian all my life and a deacon and Bible teacher for many years. My faith is a source of strength and comfort to me, as religious beliefs are to hundreds of millions of people around the world. So my decision to sever my ties with the Southern Baptist Convention, after six decades, was painful and difficult. It was, however, an unavoidable decision when the convention's leaders, quoting a few carefully selected Bible verses and claiming that Eve was created second to Adam and was responsible for original sin, ordained that women must be "subservient" to their husbands and prohibited from serving as deacons, pastors or chaplains in the military service.

This view that women are somehow inferior to men is not restricted to one religion or belief. Women are prevented from playing a full and equal role in many faiths. Nor, tragically, does its influence stop at the walls of the church, mosque, synagogue or temple. This discrimination, unjustifiably attributed to a Higher Authority, has provided a reason or excuse for the deprivation of women's equal rights across the world for centuries.

At its most repugnant, the belief that women must be subjugated to the wishes of men excuses slavery, violence, forced prostitution, genital mutilation and national laws that omit rape as a crime. But it also costs many millions of girls and women control over their own bodies and lives, and continues to deny them fair access to education, health, employment and influence within their own communities.

The impact of these religious beliefs touches every aspect of our lives. They help explain why in many countries boys are educated before girls; why girls are told when and whom they must marry; and why many face enormous and unacceptable risks in pregnancy and childbirth because their basic health needs are not met.

In some Islamic nations, women are restricted in their movements, punished for permitting the exposure of an arm or ankle, deprived of education, prohibited from driving a car or competing with men for a job. If a woman is raped, she is often most severely punished as the guilty party in the crime.

The same discriminatory thinking lies behind the continuing gender gap in pay and why there are still so few women in office in the West. The root of this prejudice lies deep in our histories, but its impact is felt every day. It is not women and girls alone who suffer. It damages all of us. The evidence shows that investing in women and girls delivers major benefits for society. An educated woman has healthier children. She is more likely to send them to school. She earns more and invests what she earns in her family.

It is simply self-defeating for any community to discriminate against half its population. We need to challenge these self-serving and outdated attitudes and practices - as we are seeing in Iran where women are at the forefront of the battle for democracy and freedom.

I understand, however, why many political leaders can be reluctant about stepping into this minefield. Religion, and tradition, are powerful and sensitive areas to challenge. But my fellow Elders and I, who come from many faiths and backgrounds, no longer need to worry about winning votes or avoiding controversy - and we are deeply committed to challenging injustice wherever we see it.

The Elders are an independent group of eminent global leaders, brought together by former South African president Nelson Mandela, who offer their influence and experience to support peace building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity. We have decided to draw particular attention to the responsibility of religious and traditional leaders in ensuring equality and human rights and have recently published a statement that declares: "The justification of discrimination against women and girls on grounds of religion or tradition, as if it were prescribed by a Higher Authority, is unacceptable."

We are calling on all leaders to challenge and change the harmful teachings and practices, no matter how ingrained, which justify discrimination against women. We ask, in particular, that leaders of all religions have

the courage to acknowledge and emphasize the positive messages of dignity and equality that all the world's major faiths share.

The carefully selected verses found in the Holy Scriptures to justify the superiority of men owe more to time and place - and the determination of male leaders to hold onto their influence - than eternal truths. Similar biblical excerpts could be found to support the approval of slavery and the timid acquiescence to oppressive rulers.

I am also familiar with vivid descriptions in the same Scriptures in which women are revered as pre-eminent leaders. During the years of the early Christian church women served as deacons, priests, bishops, apostles, teachers and prophets. It wasn't until the fourth century

that dominant Christian leaders, all men, twisted and distorted Holy Scriptures to perpetuate their ascendant positions within the religious hierarchy.

The truth is that male religious leaders have had - and still have - an option to interpret holy teachings either to exalt or subjugate women. They have, for their own selfish ends, overwhelmingly chosen the latter. Their continuing choice provides the foundation or justification for much of the pervasive persecution and abuse of women throughout the world. This is in clear violation not just of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, Moses and the prophets, Muhammad, and founders of other great religions - all of whom have called for proper and equitable treatment of all the children of God. It is time we had the courage to challenge these views.

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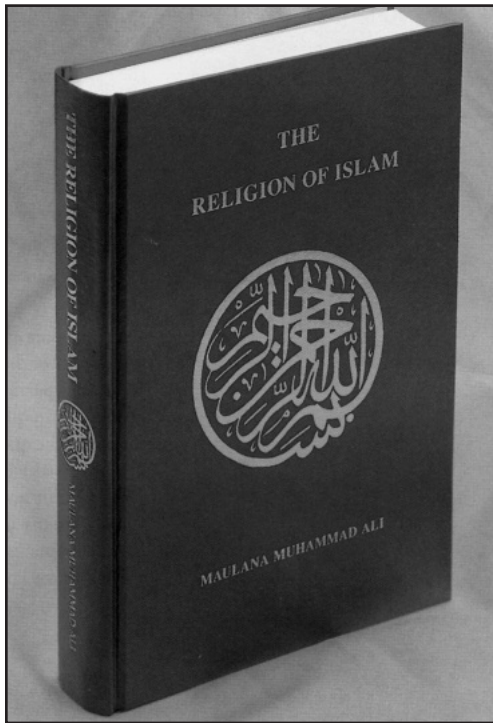
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