

*“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 2011

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

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

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

On Christian-Muslim Relations

Comments by Sen. John Kerry
at Yale Divinity School

[U.S. Senator John F. Kerry delivered a major speech in 2008 on interfaith dialogue at Yale Divinity School. Senator Kerry's presentation was part of a conference, with about 150 attendees, prompted by "A Common Word", a declaration issued in 2007 by Muslim theologians and clerics about Christian-Muslims relations. The "A Common Word" initiative is the interfaith co-part to the "Amman Message", which deals with Muslim intra-faith relations (of which the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society is an official endorser). In his presentation, Senator Kerry boldly suggests that the future of humanity depends on a greater understanding between Christians and Muslims. He remarks on how too many Americans, including politicians, know too little about Islam and connects this lack of knowledge to America's decision to go to war against Iraq, a decision still hotly debated and influencing the political stage today. The full text of Senator Kerry's insightful speech is reproduced here.]

I'd like to start by extending my heartfelt thanks to His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, President Levin, Dean Attridge, Miroslav Volf, and Joseph Cumming for having me here, and to all of you who have made the journey to Yale to tackle such a timely, essential, and challenging topic. It's a pleasure to be here.

The American novelist Michael Chabon recently asked, "Is there anybody else who feels that it might be best if we just started the 21st century over again?"

As someone who narrowly lost the Presidency in 2004, I try not to worry about do-overs. But as a person of faith, it's hard to avoid a sense of regret about all the ground we've lost in a few short years in our quest for interfaith tolerance and understanding.

We've barely broken the seal on the 21st century, but already it's been marked not just by burning buildings and occupying armies and riots and roiling images of bloodshed and humiliation, but also by an even more widespread and dangerous worry—by a question you hear whispered and spoken quietly: What if we can't live together? What if the gulfs that separate us are unbridgeable? Maybe we just need higher walls and fewer visas. Maybe coexistence is just too difficult.

While demagogues will play cynically to this pessimism, most leaders believe and talk otherwise.

They believe we can, we must, and—God willing—we will find a way to live together better than we have. That's why you're here. You've placed yourselves among those looking to be on the right side of this debate—now together we must put ourselves on the right side of history.

In a world where today a Catholic, a Protestant, a Russian Orthodox Christian, a Confucian ex-Communist, a Hindu, a Muslim, and many assume a Jewish finger sits on a nuclear button, it's a delusion to think we can retreat to our safe spaces. Not when Christians, Hindus and Muslims number in the billions. Not when Islam is the second-largest faith in Europe and the third-largest in America. Not when people of all faiths are migrating and mingling like never before. Gallup says there are 1.3 billion Muslims worldwide. The Vatican recently announced that there are now more Muslims than Catholics. The reality is that our faiths—and fates—are inextricably intertwined. The poet Auden said it best, "We must love one another or die." It's a delusion to think we have any choice but to find a way to live together.

The question of tolerance isn't new and it's not one Americans come to without our own experience. We've struggled with this since our founding, which has its roots in the search for religious freedom. The quest for religious truth and the challenge of peaceful coexistence are written into the fabric of our country and the history of the world and even into my own family DNA.

John Winthrop, my great-grandfather eight times over—meaning 10 generations ago—was the son of a lawyer born in England. His passionate faith and his disagreements with the Anglican Church inspired him to lead a ship full of religious dissidents across the Atlantic to America to seek freedom to worship. On the deck of the *Arabella*, he famously said: "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us."

It wasn't long before these religious dissidents—many of whom lived in the city of Salem, which takes its name from *salaam* or *shalom*, meaning "peace"—experienced their own religious strife. They accused women of witchcraft and burned them at the stake.

In this "city on a hill," Winthrop clashed with a rogue preacher named Samuel Gorton. When Gorton compared Winthrop to Pontius Pilate and his followers to idol-worshippers and vipers, Winthrop responded by putting him in shackles and having him arrested. When Gorton refused to stop preaching, Winthrop expelled him into the wilderness.

More doctrinal differences, this time over relations between church and state, would soon exile Roger

Williams from Massachusetts. Accused of “wanting to banish god from government,” Williams was threatened with deportation back to England. Instead, he left Boston, leading his flock wandering through forests for the winter until he emerged on a great bay and called it Providence.

Then, a theologian named Thomas Hooker broke with Massachusetts leadership because he believed that all authority, in state or religion, must rest on popular consent. It wasn’t long before he left too, and founded Hartford, Connecticut with his congregation.

Yet another pastor, John Davenport, called for his congregants to burn their rings, cloaks, wigs and other vain personal items in a large bonfire—along with religious books he considered to be wicked. What happened? You guessed it: he left town to found a colony in Connecticut—making him one of the first to forsake Cambridge Massachusetts for greener pastures right here in New Haven. Davenport College at this university is named after him.

Today we are all neighbors with more in common than could possibly separate us.

These early disagreements—all among a group of Christians whose shared disagreements with the Anglican Church had led them to the New World in the first place—remind me of a joke a Jewish friend of mine used to tell:

A Jewish man, miraculously rescued after years stranded alone on a desert island—welcomes some news crews. He shows them a bucket and says, “this is how I got my rainwater.” He shows them his coconut tree, and walks them past a snake patch he learned to avoid. And then they arrive at a clearing, with two shining temples.

The man says, “these are my two synagogues.” And the reporters ask, “if you were here all alone, why did you build two synagogues?” And the man points to one and says, “this one, I go to every week.” And he points to the other one, with a look of disgust. “That one...I would never set foot in!”

So these are not new challenges. Every religion has a version of this joke because we all struggle with the divisiveness of religious differences—even small differences inside the same religion.

This dialogue is critical. And the truth is, no faith arrives with clean hands. In Christianity we’ve had our own struggles, going back to the crusades—and some would say there are still crusades going on today!

America has experienced its share of religious disputes and religious cruelty. And yet, though we’re far from perfect, no place has ever welcomed so many

different faiths to worship so freely.

There are Buddhist temples in the farmlands of Minnesota, Mosques in the cornfields of the Midwest, and Hindu temples in suburban Nashville, Tennessee. Ours is a country not only of white church steeples but of synagogues, of minarets of Muslim mosques, of golden domes and shikara of Sikh temples; of monasteries, Buddhist as well as Catholic. “E Pluribus Unum,” “From Many, One, is our national creed.”

From many faiths, one shared country. That achievement rests on our solution to the age-old question: Who defines the truth in public space? Our experiment has succeeded because we’ve allowed for different notions of truth in public life. Many believe that to do otherwise is to invite permanent war.

My pride in America’s successes is tempered by knowing that we are a long way from mutual understanding with the Muslim world today. One enormous problem in that effort is that we lack a forum to discuss these issues. Even among political leaders it happens far too rarely.

If you don’t engage, you can’t even find answers to the most basic, fundamental questions: Why do you wear the hijab? Why do you go to Mecca? What is jihad? If you ask many Americans or Europeans, they don’t know because they aren’t having the dialogue. We have major politicians who couldn’t tell you the difference between Shi’a and Sunni—so it’s no wonder that we attack a secular dictator in response to radical fundamentalist terrorists.

And shockingly, the vast majority of followers of these great faiths have very little understanding of our common ancestry—or even know that we all worship one god and the same god. And do so with a very similar sense of awe and wonder and total commitment.

As a Catholic American politician, I know enough about Islam to know that I don’t know enough about Islam—and when it comes to Islam, American politicians ought to do a lot more listening and maybe a little less talking.

I believe we have a duty to understand each other in the name of living peacefully. We have a duty to engage with each other. The Abrahamic faiths—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—have to find new meaning in the old notion of our shared descent. What really is our common inheritance? What does it mean to be brothers? Are we responsible for each other, or are the exhortations of the Koran, the Torah, and the Bible just words?

Ultimately, our sense of kinship has to rest on something more basic than our common ancestry: an acknowledgement of our shared humanity.

The good news I see is that, for all the challenges our differences present, all of the major religions do have a sense of universal values—a moral truth based on the dignity of all human beings.

Gandhi called the world's religions "beautiful flowers from the same garden." Every religion embraces a form of the Golden Rule, and the supreme importance of charity, compassion, and human improvement. When Jesus was asked "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law," he replied: first "you shall love the Lord your God" and second "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

The Talmud says that in Roman times, a nonbeliever approached the famous Rabbi Hillel and challenged him to teach the meaning of the Torah while standing on one leg. Holding up one foot, Hillel replied: "What is hateful to yourself, do not do to another. That is the whole of the Torah... the rest is commentary."

The Prophet Muhammad said "not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself."

Buddhist scriptures teach us to "treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Native American spirituality proclaims that "all things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves."

Anyone who adheres to these basic principles must acknowledge: the moral challenges we all face today are immense, but also shared. Billions of human beings live in poverty. People are struggling to feed their families from Port Au Prince to Dhaka. AIDS orphans are raising their younger siblings in shantytowns in South Africa. A planet is being ravaged and radically altered by the pollution we've created. And people in every corner of the world are living lives of violence and desperation.

We should think of our shared struggle in terms of these unmet challenges. 65% of the Middle East's population is under age 25. There's a 15% unemployment rate, half of which is comprised of youths between ages 15-24—and just to maintain this unacceptable status quo as the population grows, the region needs 80 million new jobs in the next 15 years. Extremism and violent sectarianism often represent a human attempt to capitalize on the failures of governance and civil society. This applies to failed states like Afghanistan, where in the 1990s the Taliban arose to fill a chaotic vacuum, but also to many other places where the state, the society, and the religious order don't do enough to remedy unfairness, lack of education, or social alienation. I don't just mean a place like Sadr City in Baghdad—this is true of Cairo or even

the desolate immigrant suburbs around Paris. People exploit religion to drive a wedge and gain a foothold—and failed states, failed civil societies, and frankly corruption in governance empower them to do so.

The dialogue here must include ways in which we join to express a common moral responsibility to avoid that exploitation and find instead the governance that empowers people and liberates religion.

In talking about our shared challenges, I don't seek to minimize the real differences between our religions. The specificity, the immediacy, the richness of each of our sacred texts, the greatness of our preferred theologians and thinkers—all are cheapened when dialogue tries to turn religion into some sort of undifferentiated feel-good mush. Nor can we hope to remove any influence of faith from our public life. In fact, we shouldn't even try. If we're not shaped by our faith, then we don't have faith.

It's important to remember what faith is. Faith, to the person who has it, is truth. But in the end, faith is a belief beyond the evidence—or as some people say, in the evidence yet to come. Who pronounces the truth? In the end, God does—not us. And each of us has to choose among god's messengers on earth.

What separates our faiths are different beliefs about what is not shown but simply believed. Belief by Christians that Jesus is the Son of God; Belief by Catholics in the Holy Trinity—a notion which Muslims and some even some other Christians believe compromises the oneness of a monotheistic God; Belief by Muslims that Jesus was a great prophet who didn't complete his mission, requiring Mohammed and the teachings of the Koran; Belief by Muslims and Jews that Jesus was an important teacher but that God could never become human. Each religion believes its basic tenets are supported by fact: That Mohammed received the Koran; That crucifixion was observed and recorded; That Moses led the Jews to the promised land. While each rests on basic facts, it still takes a leap of faith to weave these facts together into a religious narrative.

Whatever our differences, among the monotheistic religions, we should be celebrating that we all believe in one God. All religions should be celebrating our agreement to put one thing above all else: worship. And at the same time, we must also welcome the secular among us to join in celebrating our common awe at the majestic fact of the universe we inhabit, however it may have originated.

We don't need to agree on everything to get along—instead, we need to ask ourselves tough questions about coexistence. I see at least two types of conversations to cultivate between the great Abrahamic faiths—and all

faiths. The first I would call traditional interfaith dialogue. The second is a search for how we might live together in some sort of peace and harmony that respects our differences while fashioning a common effort for human dignity. We cannot wait for the theological conversation to finish before we move to pressing political and social questions.

Somehow, we have to find a way to agree that faith may be worth dying for, but it cannot be worth killing for. We have to strive for a global ethic that allows each of our religious faiths to express themselves fully but also allows us to unite around common ethical ground.

My own faith, Roman Catholicism, has advanced a line of thinking that I believe can help structure this second conversation. For many years Catholics have spoken of the common good, not just for Catholics, not just for a single people, not just for this or that nation, but for all the earth's people: an international common good.

Vatican II, a crucial document in recent Catholic history, labels the common good "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment." These conditions include the right to fulfillment of material needs, a guarantee of fundamental freedoms, and the protection of relationships that are essential to participation in the life of society. These rights are bestowed on human beings by God and grounded in the nature and dignity of human persons. They are not created by society. Indeed society has a duty to secure and protect them.

Can our great faith traditions come together and forge a consensus on the conditions of life that will empower people to find their own fulfillment? It seems to me that we cannot move forward as a planet if we do not come to some rough consensus on what these broad rights are. Beyond that we must find ways to secure these goods for everyone on our planet while simultaneously discussing, arguing and sharing our particular understandings of God and God's call for how we are to live our lives.

There are many different ways that communities of faith and governments can contribute to nurturing this second conversation. There are profound gaps in the mutual understanding not only between the major faiths, but also between nations populated by these faiths. Governments possess resources to sponsor educational exchanges, to make it easier for students to study abroad, to create venues for mutual intellectual collaboration and exploration.

We must also recognize that dialogue is not enough. We must also learn to match it with action and treat each

other with respect. Napoleon, for example, arrived in Egypt declaring his love and respect for the Muslim religion, and even hinting that he himself was eager to become a Muslim. Then he pillaged the country. It's not enough to talk a good game—our actions must foster coexistence as well.

I believe our shared ethics must also expand to embrace a duty to engage, to learn from, and to at least try to understand one another. I've been thinking recently that along with the Hajj to Mecca there should be another pilgrimage somewhere else—Jeddah maybe—where people of all faiths could join together and pray—in their own ways—for the enduring health of our planet and its people.

All religions today include their moderate and extreme elements—those who value peaceful coexistence and those who don't. It's up to each of us to work within our faith communities and between them to push people toward expressing their beliefs in a manner compatible with a peaceful world.

Gandhi said: You must be the change you want to see in the world. We all want to see a great deal of change. Somewhere between religious war and religious harmony—the "love" that each of our faiths command—is tolerance, acceptance of others' freedom to believe. I am so impressed and so grateful to "A Common Word" for not merely longing for a better dialogue but for standing up and delivering one.

We have come together to make an honest effort at understanding. When you do so, whatever your faith, I believe you are doing God's work.

My ancestor, John Winthrop, saw his colony in Massachusetts as a "city on a hill"—an example to teach others how to live an ideal life. Today it is up to all of us to build a new kind of city on a hill: one that cannot be walled off, one where those who disagree are not locked in shackles or exiled into the wilderness. We still need to set an example for the world. We have a lesson to teach humanity. Only now, the lesson is this: "We must love one another or die." We must learn how to love our faiths and live them side by side. In the 21st century, that will be our city on the hill. May god bless you all. Thank you. ■

Islam in the World Today:

An introduction to the fundamentals of the faith
and an assessment of extremist propaganda

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[This article is a transcript of a presentation delivered at the Columbus Rotary Club. The Rotary Club is well known for its business and executive membership and its valuable contributions to community service. The Columbus chapter is currently the second largest in the country. The membership requested a Muslim speaker to provide insight into the contemporary Muslim world. Accordingly, the presentation dealt with a short background on the basics of the faith and then focused on two major misconceptions, that of Islam's teachings on war/jihad and its compatibility with democracy as a governing system.]

1. The Essence of the Faith

The word “Islam” is derived from the Arabic word “silm”, meaning “peace”. So, the religion is neither named after its founder nor the place from which it originated, as is the case with other faiths, but rather is titled after the **objective** to which it aspires. The attainment of peace – within the individual, amongst people, and between man and God – is the lofty goal Islam prescribes as the very purpose of life. “Peace”, therefore, is the very essence of the faith.

And it was this simple message that encapsulated the essence of this faith, that inspired its adherents to strive to contribute toward the advancement of civilization. History shows that from every area of **science**, to every aspect of **civil society** (including, politics, commerce, economics, and education), to all spheres of the arts, Muslims, either through invention or by building upon earlier knowledge, provided the world with gifts that set a trajectory for the development of the civilized world. Muslims of the early Islamic empires are commonly recognized as being **preservers of the past** and **providers for the future**.

I would like to read to you a passage from a speech that I believe very eloquently relates the legacy of Islamic contributions to modern civilization. The author of the speech is Carly Fiorina. Ms. Fiorina is the former CEO of the technology giant Hewlett-Packard, she was also a top advisor to Republican presidential candidate John McCain and a candidate for the U.S Senate representing California. While speaking of “management” and “leadership” at a conference during her tenure at Hewlett Packard, Ms. Fiorina stated the following:

There was once a civilization that was the greatest in the world.

It was able to create a continental super-state that stretched from ocean to ocean, and from northern climes to tropics and deserts. Within its dominion lived hundreds of millions of people, of different creeds and ethnic origins.

One of its languages became the universal language of much of the world, the bridge between the peoples of a hundred lands. Its armies were made up of people of many nationalities, and its military protection allowed a degree of peace and prosperity that had never been known. The reach of this civilization's commerce extended from Latin America to , and everywhere in between.

And this civilization was driven more than anything, by invention. Its architects designed buildings that defied gravity. Its mathematicians created the algebra and algorithms that would enable the building of computers, and the creation of encryption. Its doctors examined the human body, and found new cures for disease. Its astronomers looked into the heavens, named the stars, and paved the way for space travel and exploration.

Its writers created thousands of stories. Stories of courage, romance and magic. Its poets wrote of love, when others before them were too steeped in fear to think of such things.

When other nations were afraid of ideas, this civilization thrived on them, and kept them alive. When censors threatened to wipe out knowledge from past civilizations, this civilization kept the knowledge alive, and passed it on to others.

While modern Western civilization shares many of these traits, the civilization I'm talking about was the Islamic world from the year 800 to 1600, which included the Ottoman Empire and the courts of, and, and enlightened rulers like Suleiman the Magnificent.

Although we are often unaware of our indebtedness to this other civilization, its gifts are very much a part of our heritage.

2. Distorted Perception Today

Today, however – far from being viewed as a spiritual faith, founded on the notion of peace, and a primary source of development for civilization – Islam is viewed as a violent and intolerant faith that is inherently incompatible with the civil and democratic ideals accepted by the modern world.

Recent polls (Washington Post) show nearly half

(49%) of Americans have a negative view of Islam.

More than a quarter (26%) admit to having at least some prejudice against Muslims.

We see 2/3 of Americans (66%) opposing the efforts of Muslims to build a community center (which happens to also include a prayer area) two blocks away from Ground Zero because its considered too close.

Obviously, these negative perceptions are based on some reality. Extremists of the Muslim faith have engaged in terrorist attacks in various places and claim that their actions are a “jihad” and are in compliance with what their faith mandates. In the same vein, we hear from extremists that Islamic governance cannot be reconciled with western-style democracies and, as a result, Muslims are required to fight to withstand the imposition of man-made laws that diminish the sovereignty of God on earth.

These two views are **entirely without merit** and those who subscribe to them, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, are **simply wrong**. These two views find no support in the primary sources of Islam; they are simply tools used to further political ambitions. I’d like to address both of these views.

3. War and Jihad

First, Islam does not advocate war; far from it, as already explained, it requires Muslims to do good to others so that peace may be established on earth. In particular, the Arabic word “jihad”, which many people believe to be synonymous with the term “holy war”, simply means “**striving hard**”. It implies an exertion on one’s part to the best of his or her ability for the purpose of improving a condition. And its primary significance is the striving against one’s inner passions, to bring about reform within one’s self and to improve the conditions of others in society. So, a laborer determined to work hard to support his or her family, so that they will not become dependents of the state, is a type of “jihad”.

A father or mother working hard to raise their children properly so that they will exhibit good moral values when they grow up, is a type of “jihad”.

A student working hard to earn a degree for the purpose of contributing to society in a positive way is a type of “jihad”.

In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad once said: “The most excellent jihad is to say a word of *truth* before an unjust ruler”.

There is no doubt, though, that the Quran (the holy scripture of Islam) does contain verses dealing with war. Although “peace” is the goal in Islam, “war” is permis-

sible under certain circumstances as an “exception” and only a **means** to the **end**; war is permissible only for purposes of trying to maintain peace. In fact, the well-known “**Just War**” **Theory**, accepted by all western nations in some form or the other, is strikingly similar to the concept of justified war in Islam. Just as the “Just War” Theory attempts to reconcile the feelings of moral abhorrence towards war with an acknowledgment that war may sometimes be necessary, so too does Islam balance this conflict of interests.

And, the Holy Quran provides clear guidance as to the proper **conditions** under which war may be permissible or justified; it states:

Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. (22:39)

So, the Quran permits Muslims to engage in war only in **self-defense**; that is, when being “oppressed” by others. And what does “oppression” mean? Well, the Quran does not leave this important question unanswered; in the very next verse it explains:

Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is God. And if God did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God’s name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. (22:40)

So, the type of “oppression” that justifies military conflict in Islam is when the rights to life and liberty are appropriated and freedom of religion (for all) is annexed. The Quran permits fighting in order to establish peace and order and halt the unlawful deprivation of rights (in particular, religious freedom).

Clearly, this is a polar opposite to the propaganda of “extremists” who claim the Quran instructs Muslims to fight others in order to compel them to follow Islam or in order to establish a so-called “Islamic State”. There is simply nothing “extreme” about the Islamic position on war; neither does it sanction it without strict conditions, nor does it require a wholesale prohibition under every possible circumstance. Rather, a balanced and practical approach is provided.

4. Democracy

Moving on to the other common misunderstood view – it is believed by many that Islam’s teachings on governance or statehood is incompatible with the values underlying a democratic political system and rather requires the people to be governed by autocratic regimes.

Recent events in the Middle East show convincingly that this is not the understanding of the masses. But

what does the Quran have to say - are the Quranic principles of governance compatible with “democracy”? Well, first the term “democracy” itself needs to be understood. The word democracy has no single definition. It means different things to different people.

For some, it equates to a system of governance wherein a written constitution is supreme. The British and Israelis though would necessarily disagree, for they have no written constitution.

For others, it means a governing structure wherein persons are elected strictly by popular vote. This, however, does not hold true in representative democracies like the U.S.

Still others view democracy as a political scheme whereby all people are guaranteed equality. Try reconciling this with the caste system prevalent in the so-called largest democracy in the world, India, or the years of slavery experienced in America’s early history.

In the most simple and basic terms, though, democracy may be defined as a system of governance wherein: **1)** majority opinion is accepted, and **2)** individual/minority rights are protected. Both these criteria find explicit support in the Quran.

Majority Rule

For instance, the essence of “majority rule” is openly declared in the Quran; while speaking of the true believers, it states:

And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and *whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves* ... (42:38)

In this verse we find the foundation for a **government by counsel**, or a **parliamentary government**. Clearly, in Islam, the people are not to be ruled by the whim of one person, but rather are to be consulted, or have their representatives consulted, as to how the affairs of public life are to be conducted. And this principle was put into practice by no other than Prophet Muhammad himself. Authenticated reports show that he not only engaging in consultative processes with regard to administrative matters and state affairs, but also accepted the majority view despite his personal opinion at times being to the contrary. In fact, Prophet Muhammad was expressly commanded in the Quran to “consult them (i.e. the people) in important matters” (3:158).

The Quran also encourages the “majority rule” style government by laying the foundation for a “**participatory system**”:

Surely God commands you (the people) to make over positions of trust (in government and state

affairs) to those worthy of them. (4:58)

So, accordingly to this verse, it is the people, the general public, who possess the authority to make someone their representative. Again, authenticated reports show this principle was practically demonstrated in the early history of Islam by the Muslims “**electing**” the first four *Caliphs* (i.e. heads of state after Muhammad) either by agreement of all parties, by nomination after consultation with leading representatives of the community, or by appointment by an elective council. And the chosen representative was **accountable** to the people, being in a position of “trust”. As Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, in his first public address after being elected, stated:

You have elected me *Caliph* (head of state), but I claim no superiority over you ... Help me if I act rightly and correct me if I take a wrong course ... Obey me so long as I obey the laws and regulations. In case I disobey the laws and regulations, I have no right to obedience from you.

So, the concepts of a “**social contract**” between the people and the government and the “**rule of law**” where leaders are accountable to the people for their actions, values that are hallmarks in democratic systems, are principles that were practiced in the early history of Islam and were derived from the provisions on governance in the Holy Quran.

Individual/Minority Rights

Similarly, the fundamental elements of the minority/individual rights notion are unequivocally upheld in the Quran. The Quran affirms that all people, regardless of race, color or creed are equal:

“All mankind is a single nation” (2:213).

It also features what some believe to be the magna carta of religious tolerance by declaring:

“There is no compulsion in matters of religion” (2:256).

With regard to gender equality, women were granted the right to inheritance, the right to property ownership and every other individual right granted to man. Even the protection against disparate treatment in pay, is advanced:

“For men is the benefit of that they earn. And for women the benefit of what they earn” (4:32).

Keep in mind, this was all in the 6th century. And undisputed history bears testimony to the distinguished civil liberties enjoyed by non-Muslims under early Muslim rule, the protected status of Jews in Spain being an illustrious example.

Conclusion

Now, why is it important to address these issues and point out the fallacies of the extremists' interpretations. Well, it is now becoming widely accepted that "**ideology**" is the center of gravity of Islamic extremist groups. It is recognized that defeating terrorism entails attacking the ideology upon which terrorists' base their causes, rather than simply focusing on a "capture and kill" type philosophy. Moreover, Islam should not be viewed as the **problem**; rather, a correct understanding of Islam can be the **solution** to combatting extremism in the Muslim world. Muslim extremists need to be stripped of the **garb of Islam** they have been wearing to address their political grievances.

And certainly Muslims have the primary responsibility in refuting the ideologies of extremists. And this is what the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society, the organization of which I am the Secretary, has been doing, not since 9/11, but for the past 100 years. We publish literature on Islam that is of such scholarship that all of the largest retailers in the country carry them and many universities use them as text books. But our main focus is on having these works translated into various languages of the world and distributed for free in foreign countries so that the ordinary Muslims may have the opportunity to learn about their religion for themselves in their own language and not rely on, what unfortunately is often the case, some politically motivated imam telling them what their religion is. This work takes us to Russia and Central Asia, all the way to the Philippines, to Nigeria and now even to the middle-east, where we have our literature certified by Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, so that it may be accessible throughout the Arab lands as well.

Certainly a lot more needs to be done. But this is our contribution to help facilitate the establishment of peace in the world, by reclaiming our faith from extremists. ■

The World is in Need of a Moral and Spiritual Revival

Eid-ul-Fitr Sermon, August 2011

By Ebrahim Mohamed
(Cape Town, South Africa)

[This article comprises the Eid-ul-Fitr Khutba (Sermon) delivered by Ebrahim Mohamed, the President of the South Africa branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, in Cape Town this year. In this Khutba, Mr.

Ebrahim Mohamed explains the true significance of the exercise of fasting in Islam and the real manner in which the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr should be celebrated. Because the purpose of fasting in Islam is to foster "God Consciousness" within us and cure our spiritual ailments, as Mr. Ebrahim Mohamed explains, the present conditions in the world today reveal a dire need for such spiritual exercises.]

The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed, guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion. So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you and that you may give thanks. [Holy Quran, 2:185]

The question is often asked; why do Muslims fast in the month of Ramadan and why do they celebrate the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr after fasting is over? The answer is contained in the Holy Quran itself as quoted above.

Fasting in Ramadan is not a ritual to appease an angry God, or to overcome the fear of evil spirits or to mourn some sorrow or loss. It is a disciplinary, moral action that helps the devotee to guard against evil and to seek a connection with Allah Almighty.

Abstaining from food and drink is not enough – abstention from foul manners and bad behaviour is the objective of fasting. A person who is proud, haughty, suspicious, rude, ill-mannered, or who engages in indecencies and vulgarities, and despairs at disappointments and failures, who opposes the doing of good and persists in the engagement of deception and mischief in the land, is one that is not conscious and fearful of Allah. The fast is therefore meant to help us keep our weaknesses in check and develop a God Consciousness in us by awakening the spiritual seeds that are lying dormant in us. If the fast has not done this, then it has failed in its objective.

The Holy Quran as a Guide, Clear Proofs and a Criterion:

In the above verse there are three statements made regarding the Holy Quran:

- It is **guidance** for all men (Huddal Lienaas). It contains teachings that are suitable for all men and countries.
- It contains comprehensive arguments, evidence and **proofs** of that guidance (Wa bay hi naat minnal huda).
- It is a **Criterion** or **Discrimination** (Wal Furqaan) between truth and falsehood.

So if we ponder on the condition of the human race today and ask ourselves, is there a crying need for Divine Guidance that clearly distinguishes between right and wrong? The answer is a definite yes! The soul of man is sick today. In spite of overwhelming scientific and technological advancements, mankind is stifled to death. He is constantly insecure and unhappy. He has made gross materialism his goal instead of spirituality and thus finds himself living in fear of the next economic collapse; the next political or natural disaster that might follow. Greed for wealth and power has brought about a situation in the world where human lives have become meaningless. Killings appear to be the order of the day not the exception. So-called sophisticated nations of the world are driven by a mad race for wealth and power under the guise of “growth” and “advancement”, only to face ruin as their economic empires collapse as a result. High debts, serviced by onerous interest bearing loans are a direct cause of the downfall of world economies. America, Spain, Greece, Italy and France are already facing bankruptcy. An interesting fact is that most of these European territories were once under Muslim rule at one stage in the history of the world.

Fourteen hundred years ago the Holy Quran condemned and forbade interest on money. Generating incomes by means of trade to sustain its economies, as taught in Al Quran, some countries, it is observed, somehow managed to weather adverse economic conditions. The Chinese to a large extent has followed this principle and therefore has survived and are flourishing under these woeful circumstances. If European nations, especially those where Muslims once ruled, had taken advantage of the guidance of Al Quran instead of supporting usurious financial systems masterminded by some Jewish clans, they might have avoided the disastrous situation they find themselves in. It is no secret that Arab investments in the UK, Greece etc have helped save these nations from complete economic ruin. This turn of events, in the history of the human race is prophetic, a Divine promise made to the Holy Prophet Muhammad more than a thousand years ago, and should have skeptics in the efficacy of the revelation with which the Holy Prophet of Islam was blessed, think again.

The world needs a moral and spiritual revival

When we turn to institutionalized religion, we find it, too, has seemingly lost its power to improve the moral and spiritual condition of man. However, mayhem occurs on a daily basis, not because of religion but despite of religion and its lofty teachings of love, harmony and peace. Bribery and corruption amongst religious leaders and politicians are largely to blame for the

moral decay we are witnessing on a daily basis. Mosques, Churches and even hospitals come under attack and are destroyed and hardly a meaningful word of protest from these so called leaders. Instead, pulpits and podiums are used to propagate division, hatred and violence and NOT peace. The Power of Love has been replaced by the Love for Power. In the political arena, we have witnessed countries’ governance overthrown at a click of a button through rebellion and rioting instead of consultation and elections, while the rest of the world looks on like vultures waiting for the best opportunity to seize a piece of the proverbial “pie”

All is not lost. All is not doom and gloom. We need to seek salvation in the teachings of the Holy Quran. This was the clarion call of the great Imam and Mujjadid of the 14th Century Hijra, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, 100 years ago, but unfortunately ignored by most. Allow me to share just a few of the noble teachings contained in the Holy Quran, most relevant today:

- That the noblest in the sight of Allah, is the most righteous of them
- That all men are equal before the law. There is no distinction between prince and beggar
- That all human life should be respected and none should be killed without justice.
- That everyone should have freedom of belief and there should be no compulsion in religion
- That everyone should have the right to defend his honour
- That all places of worship should be protected.
- That no one should even abuse the idols which are called upon besides Allah. Islam is against all forms idolatry but forbids passing derogatory remarks against idols lest in their ignorance idolaters might rebuke Allah.
- That the right testimony should be given, though it be against one’s own self, or ones parents or near relatives – whether rich or poor, for Allah has a better right over all of them
- That justice should be done irrespective of the faith, family or nationality of the person
- That everyone should enjoin good and forbid evil That all founders, messengers of all religions should be respected.

These are the teachings of the Holy Quran that form the basis of all forms of human rights and would be of great benefit to universal peace efforts if embedded in the constitutions of the nations of the world. Allow me

to appeal to all of us to reflect on it, inculcate it in our lives and teach it to our families, our friends and whomsoever we come in touch with. Try to use it to create a renewed and fresh culture, a new mind set driven by an unflinching faith in Almighty Allah in order to bring about love, peace and harmony in the world. If we do this persistently without fail now and in the future, we would do justice to the fast in the month of Ramadan in which the revelation of the much sought after Divine Guidance started.

May Allah's unflinching love and mercy always surround us! May Allah be near us in this hour of need! May He, day by day and always, give us true joy in this life, and every blessing, peace and happiness in the life to come! Ameen! ■

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True conception of the Ahmadiyyah Movement

An introduction to some distinguishing features
of this Islamic organization

By Maulana Muhammad Ali

Introduction

[This article contains material from the booklet True Conception of the Ahmadiyya Movement published by Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, (Lahore) USA. The booklet originally formed a chapter in the book Tahrik Ahmadiyya (The Ahmadiyya Movement) by Maulana Muhammad Ali, first published in 1931. This article highlights some of the distinctive features of the Ahmadiyya group and clarifies some of the popular misconceptions about it. The entire booklet is available at www.muslim.org/bookspdf/trueconcc/conts.htm.]

Many are the misconception prevailing among people about the Ahmadiyyah Movement. The greatest of all is that it is a religion quite separate from Islam, like Bābism or Bahāism. The basis of this false idea is that Mirza Ghulām Ahmad of Qādiān, Founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement, has laid a claim to prophethood. This allegation has already been refuted in the foregoing pages. But there are some who go to the extent of declaring that Ahmadis have a different *kalimah* (formula of Faith), a different form of prayer, a different Book besides the Qur'ān and a different

Qiblah.¹ All these charges have no foundation at all.

Had Ahmadiyyat been a separate religion, like Bābi or Bahāi faith, its activities obviously should not have been confined to the spread of Islam. Whatever work has been done in this age about the propagation of Islam, in Europe, America and other countries of the world, the greater part of it is due to the efforts of the followers of the Ahmadiyyah Movement. In this connection, the literature produced by Muslims is either the result of the activities of this Movement or has been done under its influence. Had Ahmadiyyat been something different from or hostile to Islam, it should not have laid so much emphasis on establishing Muslim missions and spreading the Islamic literature all over the world. Bābism was in existence fifty years before the inception of the Ahmadiyyah Movement. Had it started any Islamic mission or published any Islamic literature? If Ahmadis had a religion different from Islam, they must have directed their full efforts to the advancement of that 'new' faith, but as they are entirely engaged in the service of Islam, they cannot, and in fact do not, owe allegiance to any other religion except Islam.

It is, indeed true that a group from among the followers of Ahmad, *i.e.* the followers of the Qādiān section, have ascribed a claim of prophethood to him, but they are still in an intermediary state. Although, on account of their belief in such a prophethood, they have declared all the Muslims of the world to be unbelievers (*kāfirs*),² they have not yet adopted a new formula of faith (*kalimah*) for themselves. And, although according to their creed unless a person accepts Mirza Ghulām Ahmad as a prophet and formally takes on oath of allegiance to the effect, he does not enter the fold of Islam, so far they have refused to formulate a new *kalimah* for themselves and adhere only to the Islamic formula of faith:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is Allah's Messenger.

But this is, as I have said, only an intermediary position, or a state of indecision. They would either, at last, give up the belief in the Founder's prophethood or formulate a separate *kalimah* and a separate religion for themselves.³ The logical conclusion of their creed — that anybody who does not accept Mirza Ghulām Ahmad as a prophet is a *kāfir* and outside the pale of Islam⁴ — is that the *kalimah* is not valid any more. When the acceptance of the existing *kalimah* does not keep a person within the fold of Islam — and even the four hundred million Muslims of the world who declare their faith in it are declared to be *kāfirs* and outside the pale of Islam

— this *kalimah* must necessarily be considered as abrogated, and the messengership and prophethood of a person whose acceptance has become essential for entering the fold of Islam must form a part and parcel of the new *kalimah*. If the belief in the prophethood of Aḥmad is not renounced, a time will come when these people shall have to formulate a separate *kalimah* and a separate religion, and their relation with Islam would become like that of Bābīs or Bahāīs, who regard Islam a genuine religion of the past, but, with regard to the present time, they consider their own faith alone as true, Islam and its *kalimah* having been abrogated by them. The Qādiān people have put themselves on the horns of a dilemma. They are trying to sail in two boats at a time. On the one hand they declare four hundred million Muslims — believers in the *kalimah* — to be *kāfirs* and on the other they include themselves among Muslims, refusing to adopt a new *kalimah* and a new faith. But this condition cannot exist for long. Either the repulsiveness of such a doctrine would at last create an aversion in the minds of the majority of these people and they would refrain from attributing a claim of prophethood to the Founder or would accept the ultimate result of their belief, which is that the old *kalimah* shall have to be discarded to give place to a new one. Aḥmadiyyah Movement, at any rate, was neither a new religion in its original form, nor has it, so far, grown to be a new religion among the followers of Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad.

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

Every religion in the world is divided into sects which, generally, differ in their fundamentals with one another. For instance, some Christians regard Jesus Christ as God or son of God, and others take him to be a human being, and with advancement of knowledge this group is increasing in number. This means that believers in Triune God, as well as those who believe in one God, are all Christians. Similarly, among Hindus there are many who believe in one God, and there are others who worship idols and have faith in three hundred and thirty million gods. Some consider the Vedas as the spoken word of God and others take them to be the composition of human beings. Such differences, in fact, should be termed as fundamental sectarian differences. There are no differences and no sects in Islam in this respect. All the sects in Islam agree on the fundamentals of religion. All believe in one God, in the finality of the Prophethood of Muḥammad. All take the Qur’ān as the last revealed Book of God which has not suffered any change in text. All face towards the same *Qiblah* when praying. But with this uniformity of opinion that all believe in one God, one Messenger, one *Qiblah* and one Book there have been differences on minor points and

details of religion. Some Muslim *Imāms*, after due consideration, have arrived at different conclusions with regard to certain matters of religious life. Various groups of Muslims followed these *Imām* according to their own choice, and this has resulted in the formation of different schools of thought in Islam. This is the real fact behind the growth of the so-called sects in Islam. Differences among these sects are not differences in the fundamentals of religion, but in matters of jurisprudence, or details of religious practices. And this type of difference of opinion is, in fact, a blessing as The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: *Difference in my ummah is a blessing*, because along with unity this opens a way for freedom of opinion. Liberty in views, and free exercise of judgement (*ijtihād*) is, in fact, a great blessing that helps in the advancement of knowledge and learning, and develops in every person the habit of deep thinking. The sectarian differences of Muslims are, therefore, of no real importance. But the foundation of Aḥmadiyyah Movement has not been laid on any such sectarian differences. The chief characteristic of this Movement today has been the same as it was before, *viz.* the defence and propagation of Islam. Whatever differences this movement has with other Muslims, these are definitely not connected with matters of jurisprudence or details of religious life but only with matters concerning the defence and propagation of Islam. The history of the Movement bears testimony to the fact that when Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad founded this organisation and made a declaration for an oath of allegiance, he did not differ with other Muslims on any religious doctrine.

The object of the formation of this organisation was only the protection and propagation of Islam. Although he had been devoting his whole time, even before that, to this noble object, at this stage, under Divine command, he set up a permanent basis for the spread of Islam according to the Qur’ānic verse:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

*i.e. and from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right.*⁵

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

Attitude towards jurisprudential problems

In all the matters of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) the attitude of Aḥmadis is completely liberal. The detail of laws, viz. regulations of marriage, divorce, inheritance, prayer, fasting, ablution etc. which have caused great controversy among Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ do not worry them in the least. They enjoy full liberty in these matters. It would be quite correct to say that the Aḥmadiyyah Movement is rather a synthesis of the different schools of thought in Islam based on *fiqh* and invites them towards unity, by tolerating and ignoring their differences. Whatever minor differences Aḥmadiyyah has with other Muslim sects only relate, as already remarked, to the propagation and defence of Islam. Thus, if Aḥmadiyyah is a sect in Islam, it is unlike the sects of other religions, for there are no sects in Islam in that sense. It is again unlike other sects in Islam which are based on differences in *fiqh*, for in that sense it is a synthesis of all these sects. It is a sect in Islam in the sense that, for the furtherance of the cause of Islam, it has laid emphasis on certain points and has devised effective means to face the hostile forces working against Islam. The task for the internal reformation of Muslims itself falls within the scope of its programme.

A Movement for Islam

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

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

Death of Jesus Christ

Belief in the death of Jesus Christ is regarded to be the most important feature of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement. There have been Muslim divines, like *Imām Bukhārī* and *Imam Mālik*, who believed in the death of Jesus Christ. *Imam Bukhārī*, in his collection of *Ḥadīth*, has reported from Ibn ‘Abbās that the significance of

mutawaffi-ka is mumītu-ka (i.e. *I will cause you to die*)⁶. That is, he has not accepted the meaning of *tuwaffa* as the taking of body and soul together, as were accepted afterwards by some people. *Imām Mālik*, similarly, believed in the death of Jesus Christ: *wa qāla Mālik-un māta i.e.*, and *Mālik* said he died⁷.

Belief in the death of Jesus Christ by two persons of such great caliber shows that there must be others, also from the earlier Muslim divines, who entertained a similar belief. The companions of the Holy Prophet seem to be all agreed upon this point. At the death of the Holy Prophet, those companions who could not believe the sad news to be true were silenced by Abū Bakr by the recitation of the verse: *And Muḥammad is no more than an apostle; the apostles before him have already passed away*⁸. All the companions of the Holy Prophet were thus duly convinced that like *all* other prophets, their Prophet too had left this mundane life. This was the consensus of opinion of the companions of the Prophet over the death of Jesus Christ. Had anybody believed that Jesus was alive he must have pointed it out.

In this age too the late *Sir Sayyid Aḥmad* of Aligarh, *Muftī Muḥammad ‘Abduh* and *Sayyid Raḥīd Raḍā* of Egypt, believed in the death of Jesus Christ⁹. Many other ‘*ulamā*’ of India also share this belief but are afraid of declaring it in public, as such a belief is sufficient to stigmatise them as pro-Aḥmadi. People have grown suspicious to the extent that anybody who just mentions it, is considered to have secret alliance with the Aḥmadiyyah Movement. As the claim of the Founder is based on the death of Jesus Christ, the Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ and some of the present-day translators of the Holy Qur’ān are much hesitant in accepting this belief as true.

Apparently, the question of the life and death of Jesus Christ is neither one of the fundamentals of Islam nor a part of its *furū’* (*lit.* branches). Why is it, then, that it has become one of the distinguishing features of this movement? As it has been discussed before, the main object of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement is the propagation of Islam, particularly in the West, where it has to face the onslaughts of the *Dajjāl* (Antichrist); the belief in the corporal existence of Jesus Christ is the greatest obstacle in the propagation of Islam among Christian peoples. If Jesus Christ is alive in heavens with his body of clay for the last two thousand years, does not partake of food and is above the needs and necessities of this material life without suffering any change in his body, he is certainly not of human species. If he is actually endowed with these peculiarities, his body is immortal. This is the argument which is put forth by Christians very forcibly. Muslims who believe in the continued existence of Jesus Christ fall an easy prey to them. The

natural corollary of their strange belief is that Jesus Christ is far above a human being, rather a co-sharer in Divinity. It is not worthwhile, under these conditions, to go and preach Islam to Christians. For this reason the Founder of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement laid emphasis on eradicating such a false view about Jesus Christ.

Significance of the Claims

The true conception of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement is only this, that it is a great movement for the propagation, spread and defence of Islam in the world, and all the distinguishing features it possesses are a means to achieve this great end. So much so that accepting the claims of the Founder is also not an object in itself but only a means to achieve the object of the spread of Islam. The greatest thing is that with the acceptance of these claims, one feels in oneself a very strong faith which invigorates one to make every sacrifice for the sake of Islam. The logic of this belief may or may not satisfy anybody, but the fact is that those who kept company with the Founder of the Movement, or came into spiritual contact with him after his death, felt a real zeal for the propagation of Islam and became fully convinced that Islam was going to overpower the world. It seems something is lacking in us that we do not rise up to the occasion and acquaint the world with the real teachings of Islam, otherwise Islam possesses such a spiritual beauty within it that, whether it is materialism which seems at present to sweep away everything along with it or the net of Christianity which seems to be spreading all over the world today or the dominance of any other force, all of them are going to be subdued by Islam, all heads have to bow down before its invincible principles of peace and spiritual well-being. This faith and this love for the religion of Islam inspire every Aḥmadi to do his best for the cause of Islam. Without faith and love, the will to sacrifice cannot exist. The spiritual contact with the Founder stimulates in Aḥmadis this faith and love. Thus a change occurs in them as it does in a tree which has been engrafted upon. That is why there is a tremendous difference between the attitude of an Aḥmadi and that of a non-Aḥmadi. The latter is waiting for somebody else to come and help him in the cause of Islam, and the former is convinced that this is his work that it is he who is responsible for it and has the power to do it. Difference in the outlook of these two persons is quite obvious. Waiting for Jesus Christ to come down from heaven is an escapist's refuge. Belief in the claims of the Founder stirs up Muslims and they know once for all that nobody else is coming from above to raise them from the slough of despondency to which they have deeply sunk. They have themselves to struggle hard for their own deliverance.

Those who enter into fealty with the Founder know it full well that the prophecies of the Holy Prophet have come true. It was foretold that the days of the glory of Islam will be followed by poverty and misery among Muslims but again, Islam will rise in its full splendour, and overpower the world with its spiritual force and the era of the onward march of Islam would start anew. This is the age when prophecies relating to the dominance of Islam with the advent of Messiah are going to be fulfilled. It is our duty now to carry the message of Islam to all the corners of the world. The power to conquer the hearts is inherent in Islam. But the Muslims must work and sweat for its success.

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

Aḥmadiyyat is a true interpretation of Islam

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

Islam is a **living religion** which presents God Who is a living reality, Who spoke to His righteous servants before, and Who speaks with His righteous servants even now, and will continue to do so forever. Like His attributes of hearing and seeing, His attributes of communication with human beings has never been suspended. Although prophethood has come to an end, God's communication with His servants has not been stopped. But Muslims generally thought that God spoke before, but after the Holy Prophet, the doors of revelation were

closed forever. Special stress has been laid by the Aḥmadiyyah Movement on this point of God speaking with man. That religion is dead, by following which man cannot attain the stage of communication with God. And as has been promised in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, God will always continue to speak with the righteous servants of this *ummah*.

Islam is a **natural religion** and appeals to the nature of man, the human nature being spontaneously attracted towards it. Unfortunately some of the Muslim leaders fell under the impression that Islam could be propagated with physical force also. Such thoughts were given free expression about the advent of Maḥdī, and the objections raised by non-Muslims with regard to the spread of Islam with sword were thus strengthened by Muslims themselves. This caused great hatred among non-Muslims against Islam, which subsequently obstructed the way of the propagation of Islam. It was Aḥmadiyyat which clarified the whole issue by emphasising the point that there was *no compulsion in religion*¹². Islam has been drawing people under its fold because of its beautiful teachings. It is the natural religion of mankind, a simple religion, devoid of all ethical and ritualistic intricacies. Even an illiterate person can understand its teachings. But *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) made the whole affair very complex. Simple beliefs and teachings of Islam gave place to hair-splitting logical discussion that did no good, except paralyse the practical life of Muslims. The Aḥmadiyyah Movement regained the lost original simplicity of Islam by placing above everything else the Qur'ān which was the real source of the teachings of Islam. The Ḥadīth comes next wherein the Holy prophet has explained and interpreted the teachings of the Qur'ān. *Fiqh* which is not the original source of the details of our life should not be given preference over the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth.

Islam is a **rational religion**. The Qur'ān very often enjoins its readers to apply their intellect, reason and understanding in matters of faith. But the '*ulamā*', in their narrow-mindedness, reached the stage that anybody who tried to understand religious matters on an intellectual level was dubbed as heretic. Aḥmadiyyat again threw light on this aspect, proved the authenticity of the principles of faith on rational basis and showed that reason and faith did not stand apart. They both supplemented each other. Reason proved the necessity and veracity of religion and gave light and guidance to reason. But some '*ulamā*' of today regarded science and scientific knowledge against religion and forbade Muslims to have any secular education. The Aḥmadiyyah Movement helped in removing such misunderstandings from Muslim minds, and made it clear that the material progress of the world would also, in the

long run, lead mankind to higher spiritual progress beneficial to the cause of humanity. The denial of spiritual values was only due to lack of real knowledge of faith. With the progress of knowledge Islam would also progress, for it was a rational religion, a religion that encouraged scientific outlook on life.

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

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

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

Before Islam, religion was considered to be a combination of outward rituals and ceremonies, a source of getting future reward or escaping from future punishment. Islam gave a new turn to the conception of religion, associated it with day to day activities of man, and made it a source of development of human faculties. Muslims again had forgotten this great fact about the teachings of Islam to which Aḥmadiyyat drew their attention. The Aḥmadiyyah Movement has also thrown light on many other problems concerning Islam.

Distinguishing Features of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement

The foremost task to which the founder devoted his

attention, after his claim of being a *mujaddid*, was to demonstrate this truth once more to the world that God still spoke to His righteous servants. This was, in fact, the main theme of his first book, the *Barāhīn Aḥmadiyyah*; and even afterwards, he has not laid so much emphasis on Jesus Christ's death as on this subject. The basis of his claim, in fact, was the point that communion of God with man continues and will remain so forever. His real claim was that of *mujaddidiyyat*, and a *mujaddid* (renovator) is a *muḥaddath* whom God appoints to uphold the cause of religion. And *muḥaddath* is a person who is not a prophet, but God communicates with him frequently. Thus the basis of the Founder's claim is that, in spite of the finality of Prophethood, God speaks with the righteous persons in this *ummah*. His claim of being the Promised Messiah is a part and parcel of his claim to *mujaddidiyyat*; it is just one aspect of his claim of being a *mujaddid*. This aspect, no doubt, is based on the conception of the death of Jesus Christ but the basis of his real claim, that is of his being the *renovator*, is the phenomenon of Divine communication. If we go through the matter a little carefully, we find that for the revival of faith in religion, the first point is to prove the authenticity of Divine communication with man as this has been most vehemently denied in this age. The conception of a mechanical God in the form of the cause of causes is even admitted by a materialist, but the real foundation of religion was, and is, on the fact of God's communication with man. All nations of the world consider some book or the other to be the word of God, which shows that the basis of almost all religions is the phenomenon of Divine revelation. But there is no religion except Islam that advocates that even now God communicates with man as He used to do before. One of the attributes of God expressly mentioned in the teaching of Islam is that God speaks with man and God's attributes are never suspended. But this concept was so much weakened even among Muslims that for all practical purposes they had neglected this phenomenon. Wahābism was a strong movement in Islam which appeared before the advent of Aḥmadiyyah Movement, but its followers, called Ahl Ḥadīth (people of the Ḥadīth) also believed that God's communication with men was meant for times gone by, although in authentic ḥadīth it was clearly mentioned that there would be persons in this nation who would not be prophets and yet God would communicate with them. Under the influence of modern education, Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān of Aligarh went rather far in this respect and entirely rejected the conception of God's revelation to human beings. He thought that revelation only emanated from man's own heart. This was in fact the ultimate result of that attitude which Muslims had gradually adopted towards religion. If this fundamental fact of revelation was thrown overboard, nothing was left of religion. As has been dis-

cussed before, the whole structure of religion stands on this foundation. If it is said that God used to speak before and has ceased to do so now, then His speaking only becomes a narrative of the past. Such an attitude creates serious doubt as to the very institution of religion. If God spoke before, He speaks now. If He does not do so now, we have no proof that He ever did so before. If speaking is a Divine attribute, it could not be limited to one particular age. The first and the greatest task of Aḥmadiyyat was to clarify this point that God the Most High communicates with His righteous servants. Accordingly the Founder of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement established this point from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth that Divine communication had not come to an end.

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

Footnotes

1. Sacred House of God at Makkah towards which Muslims turn their face while offering the prayers.
2. Mirza Bashīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *The Truth about the Split* (Qādiān, India, Second Edition, 1938 C.E.) pp 55, 140, 185, etc.
3. These words are rather prophetic in their nature which found partial fulfilment in 1954 C.E. when a written statement by the delegate of the Qādiān section was submitted to the Court of Inquiry that: "A Muslim is a person who belongs to the *ummah* of the Holy Prophet and professes belief in *kalimah ṭayyibah*," (*Report of the Court of Inquiry into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953*, p. 218.) At another place in this report it has been mentioned that:

"On the question whether the Aḥmadis (i.e. the follow-

ers of the Qādiān section — T.) consider the other Musalmān to be *kāfirs* in the sense of their being outside the pale of Islam, the position taken before us is that such persons are not *kāfirs* and that the word *kufir*, when used in the literature of the Aḥmadīs in respect of such persons, is used in the sense of a minor heresy and that it was never intended to convey that such persons were outside the pale of Islam” (p. 199).

The above are the remarks by the Judges. The actual answers given at the Court were as follows:

“Q. Do you include Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad Ṣāhib among the *māmūrs* (appointed ones of God — T.) whose acknowledgement is necessary to be called a Muslim?

“A. I have already answered this question. No one who does not believe in Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad Ṣāhib can be taken as out of the pale of Islam.” (Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry, 84th sitting, dated 14th January 1954 C.E.)

“Q. Please look at page 22 of *Dhikr-i-Ilāhī*, which contains the following passage:

“میرا تو یہ عقیدہ ہے کہ دنیا میں دو گروہ ہیں۔ ایک مومن دوسرے کافر۔
ایسی جو حضرت مسیح موعود پر ایمان لائے والے ہیں وہ مومن ہیں اور جو ایمان
نہیں لائے، خواہ ان کے ایمان نہ لائے کی کوئی وجہ ہو، وہ کافر ہیں۔“

(i.e., *My belief is this that there are two groups in the world, viz. one mu'min (believer) and the other kāfir. Thus those who declare faith in the Promised Messiah (i.e. Mirza Ghulām, Aḥmad — T.) are mu'mins and those who have not believed in him — there may be any reason for their non-belief — are kāfirs — T.) Is not the word kāfir used here in contradiction to the word mu'min?*

“A. In this context the word *Mu'min* means one who believes and the word *kāfir* means one who does not believe in Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad Ṣāhib.

“To Court: “Is belief in Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad Ṣāhib, therefore, a part of *imān*?

“A. No. The word *mu'min* here has been used merely to convey the sense of belief in Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad Ṣāhib, not of belief in the fundamentals of Islam.” (*Ibid.* 85th sitting, 15th January 1954 C.E.)

Mirza Baṣhīr al-Dīn Mahmūd Aḥmad, Head of the Aḥmadiyyah community at Rabwah, admitted that belief in the Founder of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement was not a part of faith (*juzw-i imān*), but forty years before he had openly declared:

“مسیح موعود کا ماننا جزو ایمان ہے۔ اس کسی کا دل گمراہ ہے کہ ان کا
عقائد کفر کے کہے کہ حضرت مسیح موعود کا ماننا جزو ایمان نہیں ہے؟“
(انتظیل - لادیاں، ۲۰ مئی ۱۹۱۴ء)

“Belief in the Promised Messiah is a part of faith (*juzw-e imān*). Thus who can have the heart to say by standing in opposition to him is not a part of faith?” (*Al-Faḍl*, Qādiān, 20th May 1914 C.E.)

4. “That all those so-called Muslims who have not entered into his *bai'at* formally, wherever they may be, are *kāfirs* and outside the pale of Islam, even though they may not have heard the name of the Promised Messiah. “That these beliefs have my full concurrence I readily admit.” (Mirza Baṣhīr al-Dīn Mahmūd, *The Truth about the Split — Qādiān, India*, Second Edition, 1938 C.E. pp. 55-56).

The contradiction in the above statement is obvious.

5. The Qur'ān, 3: 103.
6. Al-Bukhārī, 65: 12.
7. Imām Muḥammad Ṭāhir of Gujrat, *Majma' Bihār al-Anwār* (Lucknow India, Nawal Kishore Press), Vol. I, p. 286 and *Ikmāl al-Ikmāl Sharḥ Muslim*, Vol. I, p. 265.
8. The Qur'ān, 3: 143.
9. See Annexe, Chapter 2 “Ulama of Egypt on the death of Jesus Christ” and passages from *the Message of the Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Asad, available at www.muslim.org/books/pdf/trueconc/conts.htm.
10. The Qur'ān, 5: 3.
11. Al-Bukhārī, 2: 32.
12. The Qur'ān, 2: 256.

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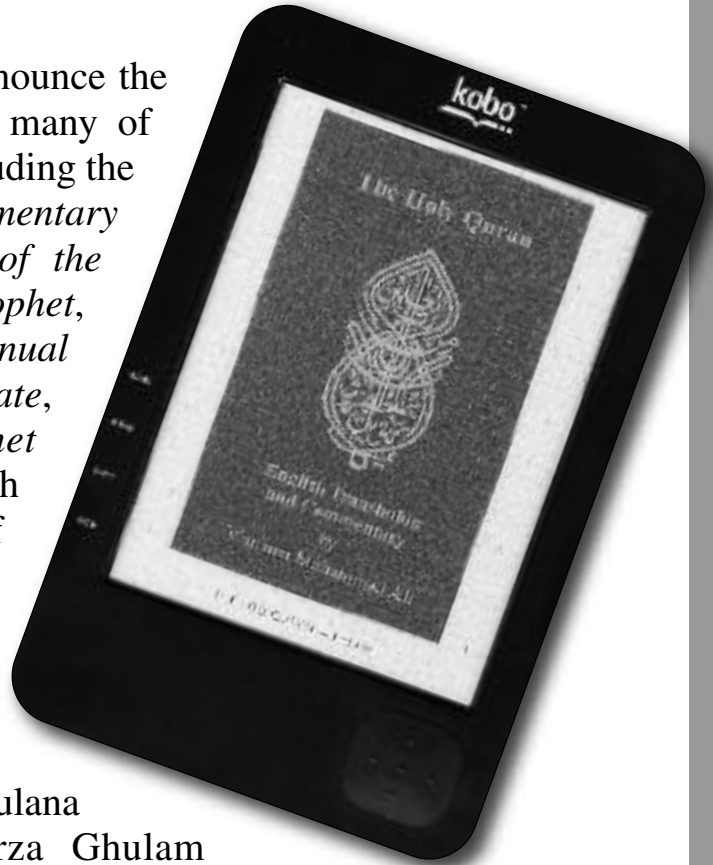
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