

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

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*Exponent of
Islam and
the Lahore
Ahmadiyya
Movement
for over
seventy-five
years*
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The Light

& Islamic Review

March – April 1999

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*Presents
Islam as:*
**PEACEFUL
TOLERANT
RATIONAL
INSPIRING**
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◆ *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A.* ◆
1315 Kingsgate Road, Columbus, Ohio, 43221–1504, 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 world-wide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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Beliefs and aims

The main object 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, good moral example, and the natural beauty of its principles. It neither aspires to gain political power, nor allows the use of force in support of the faith.

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 justly, 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 *Lā ilāha ill-Allāh, Muḥammad-ur rasūl-ullāh* (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 the following countries:

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

The Movement has members and supporters in many other countries as well. In Berlin, it has a large historical mosque constructed in the mid-1920s.

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, such as French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Dutch and Polish.

The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

The Movement's unique contribution to Islamic thought is summed up on the left.

History:

1889: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founded 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: Prof. Dr. Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, elected Head.

Id al-Fitr address

*Khutba at Darus Salaam, London
delivered on 18 January 1999*

by Mr Nasir Ahmad, Former Editor, *The Light*

Today we are celebrating *Id al-Fitr* at the conclusion of the blessed month of Ramadan. I have just recited verses 183, 184 and 186 of the chapter *The Cow* and its translation. These outline historical, physical, social and spiritual aspects of fasting. None of the existing revealed books contains principles and practices of religion, their rationale and necessary details in a manner as has been done in the Holy Book of Islam, i.e. the Holy Quran.

Fasting is a religious institution almost as universal as prayer. Cruden's Bible Concordance says:

“Fasting has in all ages and among all nations been an exercise much in use in times of mourning, sorrow and affliction.”

It is also in vogue among the Hindus. Even Christians were recommended by Jesus to keep the fasts:

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.... That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:16, 18).

These Biblical words remind me of a very significant saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) in which Allah expresses the ultimate objective of fasting more forcefully: *as-siyamu li wa ana ajzi bi-hi*, which means, “Fasting is for Me and I will grant its reward.”

Islam is the only religion in the world in which a believer is required to pray five times a day to Allah at certain intervals. Then he is to observe a month-long spiritual exercise of fasting. Apparently it seems that Muslims have been burdened with much more religious obligations than any other religion in the world. And keeping in view the present-day race for material comforts in life, a believer would need special effort and determination to discharge them. But if Muslims are to prove themselves to be “an exalted nation” as envisaged in *Surah Baqarah*, verse 143, which is:

“And thus We made you an exalted nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people”

and also to be the vicegerents of Allah on earth, then a believer needs to undergo hard training and strict discipline in order to demonstrate high moral and social virtues making him worthy of the high position.

The fact is that Islam came to eradicate all wrong beliefs and practices in vogue in the name of religion. Islam beautifies the lives of individuals by doing good deeds, which should not only make him worthy to be called the best of Allah's creatures, but he should become instrumental in promoting love, affection and welfare in the society. This principle for a successful life has been explained in the Quran as:

“For that which does good to men, it carries in the earth” (13:17).

Indeed good deeds illuminate our inner self, brighten our worldly life and guarantee a beautiful life in the hereafter. This is what the Quran says:

“And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two Gardens” (55:46).

The reward of the righteous is plainly spoken of here as two Gardens, i.e. a garden in this life and a garden in the Hereafter. The garden of this life is the spiritual bliss which the righteous find here in the doing of good.

Hazrat Maulana Nur-ud-Din, world-renowned commentator of the Holy Quran and closest associate of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, explains beautifully the object of religion in these words:

“There is a way followed by prophets and there is a way followed by kings. The prophets do not resort to cruelty, oppression and compulsion to perpetuate a system. But kings resort to compulsion and tyranny. Police can take cognizance of an offence only when it has been committed. But religion prevents even intention of committing a sin. Thus when a person accepts the supremacy of religion over him, then he does not need the supervision of police to lead a righteous life.”

Brothers and Sisters, fasting in the month of Ramadan has been prescribed with the sole purpose of creating this spiritual awareness in a believer, and the Holy Quran has used the word *taqwa* for it, *la'allakum tattaqun*, i.e. so that they may keep their duty. It conveys the meaning ‘one who guards himself

against evil or one who cares for or keeps his duty'. Thus Islam is a religion of action and not of mere faith, as we find in Christianity that mere faith in the death of Jesus on the Cross obliterates one's commissions and omissions and one is not obliged to lead a righteous life to seek Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

The very object of man's creation is that he should follow a system, as Allah says in the Quran:

"And I have not created the jinn and men except that they should serve Me. I desire no sustenance from them, nor do I desire that they feed me" (51:56, 57).

It means that it is through obedience to the laws ordained by Allah that man can attain excellence by fully utilizing his capabilities. For Allah has created man with enormous capabilities for advancement as we find it mentioned elsewhere in the Quran:

"Certainly We created man in the best make" (95:4).

The biggest hurdle in the way to progress is the evil against which the Quran warns man time and again. It has often been termed man's "open enemy" and has also been named *Shaitan* or devil, and that is why man has been commanded by Allah to observe various measures to guard against the evil. The Quran says:

"O men, serve your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard against evil" (2:21).

After ritual prayer, fasting is the most important measure, which not only helps man to guard against evil and makes him steady in following the path of righteousness, but brings him closer to his Creator. And this close relationship with Allah beautifies his soul. Man's journey from an ordinary soul to the best of Allah's creation — which is also called *nafs al-mutma'inna*, i.e. the 'soul at rest' in the Quran — has been beautifully elaborated in the first five verses of the *surah Al-'Alaq*, which also happen to be the first revelation of Allah to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. These are:

"Read, in the name of thy Lord Who creates — creates man from a clot. Read! And thy Lord is the most Generous and Honourable" (96:1-3).

The word '*alaq*' means a clot of blood, as well as attachment and love. The former significance is the one generally adopted because of the mention of '*alaq*' in the process of creation of man. Dr. Basharat Ahmad

in his wonderful commentary *Anwar-ul-Qur'an* has drawn a beautiful analogy between human sperm getting attachment to the womb of the mother and man's attachment to Divine love. When a human sperm, quite an insignificant thing, finds its way to a female womb in a state of love and close contact between the two, in due course of time it gives birth to a beautiful child; similarly an ordinary man unknown to the world at large, when he is graced with close contact with Divine love, he also in due course of time attains spiritual eminence and becomes Allah's best creation. And this close contact with the Divine love is the objective hinted at in the words *idha sa'alaka 'ibadi 'anni fa-'inni qarib*, i.e. "And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am nigh." This is the concluding verse in the series of verses where fasting has been prescribed.

The month of Ramadan is not only to purify us of all sorts of dross and weaknesses, and to promote good and human welfare, but also to rededicate ourselves to achieve the great ideals set by Islam. And this requires hard struggle and strict spiritual discipline. Here I would like you to consider a very significant verse of the Holy Quran in which Hazrat Abu Bakr, closest associate and first successor to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, has been censured for withholding maintenance to one of his relatives, Mistah, because he had taken a leading role in spreading false reports about his daughter Hazrat Ayesha. It says:

"And let not possessors of grace and abundance among you swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah's way; and pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (24:22).

The incident referred to in this verse took place when the Holy Prophet, accompanied by his wife Ayesha, was returning from the expedition against the Bani Mustaliq in the fifth year of Hijrah. Hazrat Ayesha had gone out to answer a call of nature, but when she returned, she perceived that she had lost her necklace, and went back to search for it. In her absence the attendants, supposing her to be in her *howda*, started, while it was yet dark. When she returned, finding the camel and the men gone, she sat down there and was later brought to Madinah by Safwan, who was following in the rear. Some mischievous persons from among the hypocrites spread false reports, slandering her, and some of the Muslims also associated themselves with the slander. Hazrat

Ayesha's innocence was at last established by the revelation contained in verse 11 of chapter *an-Nur* (*The Light*).

The slander against Hazrat Ayesha was absolutely baseless and even Allah witnessed her innocence through Divine revelation. Hazrat Abu Bakr's indignation against Mistah, his relative, was quite genuine. But Islam wants its followers to do good only for the pleasure of Allah and personal displeasures should not come in the way at all. Good works should continue in spite of it. In this case, not only Hazrat Abu Bakr has been censured for withholding the allowance, but the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his companions have also been enjoined to forgive the wrongdoers. This is the religion which tends to create real peace and harmony in human attitudes and relationships at all levels. This is how a true believer submits completely to the will of Allah. This is the spirit of submission which Islam expects that we should show in each act and every moment of our lives. This is the standard of morality Islam requires from its adherents. And, Brothers and Sisters, fasting is that spiritual discipline through which a believer's soul is enlightened and enlivened.

The month of Ramadan is also the anniversary of the revelation of the Holy Quran. It was on the 25th or 27th of this month that the first five verses of the Quran, now part of *Surah Al-'Alaq* were revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad in that lonely cave of Hira where he was in a state of deep worship of Allah. That night is called *Lailat-ul-Qadr* or the Night of Majesty because it was on that night that the majestic and everlasting Divine guidance in the form of the Quran was granted to humanity. As the Quran says:

“The Night of Majesty is better than a thousand months. The angels and the Divine spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord — for every affair — peace, it is till the rising of the morning.”

This Divine gift, the Holy Quran, which is unique as a literary piece of literature, unique in its spiritual influence, unique in its style, unique in its comprehensive meanings, elegant and superb among the revealed books, has *even suffered at the hands of its own followers*. I will explain it briefly and will also tell you briefly what is the Ahmadiyya contribution in defending the integrity of the Quran.

It is a pity that inauthentic stories, mostly from Biblical sources, had found their way into most of the well-known commentaries of the Quran. These stories relate that Hazrat Ibrahim (Abraham) lied three times;

Hazrat Yusuf (Joseph) had illicit relations with Zulaikha; Hazrat Lut's (Lot's) daughters made him drunk and had sex with him; Hazrat Sulaiman (Solomon) worked magic and the Holy Prophet Muhammad was under the magic spell worked by a Jewish woman which made him forgetful. I am leaving these aside and would like to deal with some more fundamental issues which undermine the authenticity and integrity of the Holy Quran, namely its compilation, the theory of abrogation, and the meanings of the abbreviations given at the beginning of several chapters. You will be surprised to know that some of the leading modern Muslim scholars still entertain the idea that the Holy Quran was collected and compiled in the form of a complete Quran in the time of Hazrat Usman. This view has provided Western scholars with an occasion to raise objections about the authenticity of the Quran. Let us see how far this wrong notion has found its way into the writings of modern Muslim scholars. In his book *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World* Mr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, an Iranian-born scholar presently Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University, USA, and author of over twenty books, under the heading 'The Noble Quran' says:

“Gradually the verses were assembled, sometimes written on the bones of camels, sometimes on papyri but most of all upon the tablets of the hearts and breasts of the companions who heard the utterances from the mouth of the Prophet.... And so, what had been written by the early *kutab* or people who had recorded the Quran, especially Ali and Zayd from the period of the life of the Prophet and the caliphate of Abu Bakr on, was assembled finally at the time of the caliphate of Uthman. The complete text of the Quran was put together and systemized according to the instructions of the Prophet himself resulting in the order of the 114 chapters, which we have today. Copies were then made of the definitive versions and sent to the four corners of the newly established Islamic world” (pp. 9, 10).

Before I quote what Maulana Muhammad Ali wrote in this regard, I would like to read out to you some remarks made by the publishers about the book from which I have just quoted. It runs like this:

“The book is written by one of Islam's greatest contemporary scholars. It was written specifically for Muslims, and in particular young Muslims — urging them to become

familiar with their religion and to gain an understanding of the modern world from the Islamic point of view in order to respond positively to its challenges.”

And now I quote some of Maulana Muhammad Ali's observations and conclusions based on the Quran and authentic Hadith. He established that the Holy Quran was preserved both in writing and in memory under the direction of the Holy Prophet in his own lifetime. He says:

“Among those whom the Holy Prophet used to summon to write down portions of the Quran immediately after their revelation are mentioned names of Zaid ibn Thabit, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali etc.... At Madinah, Zaid ibn Thabit was chiefly called upon to do this work ... The Holy Prophet took the greatest care to have a writer and writing material with him under all conditions, and even when he had to fly for his life to Madinah, he still had writing material with him” (Bukhari 63:45).

So Seyyed Nasr's view that “most of all [it] was on the tablets of the hearts” is not correct and is against the facts of history. At Makkah in the earliest days, there were Abu Bakr, Ali, Khadija, wife of the Prophet, and others who wrote down the portions revealed. The Prophet took the greatest care to have a writer and writing material with him under all circumstances.

Now I come to the theory of abrogation. It means that a verse is considered to be abrogated or cancelled by another when the two cannot be reconciled with each other. This theory of abrogation has even been dragged to the extent that there are verses that do not exist now in the Quran but are in force, such as stoning to death of an adulterer. This wrong notion has led some to believe that the punishment of flogging in the Quran is meant for unmarried people and stoning to death is for the married ones. Anyhow, according to later commentators the figure of abrogated verses has been as high as five hundred. In this connection, Imam Jalaluddin Sayuti, one of the well-known classical commentators, brings the number of verses which he thinks to be abrogated down to twenty-one. Then the later writer and *Mujaddid* of the twelfth century *Hijrah*, the famous Shah Wali Ullah of Delhi, commenting on this in his *Fauz al-Kabir*, says that the abrogation cannot be proved in the case of sixteen out of Sayuti's twenty-

one verses, but in the case of the remaining five he is of the opinion that the verdict of abrogation is final.

Maulana Muhammad Ali, under the inspiration of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement and the scholarly guidance of Hazrat Maulana Nur-ud-Din, declared that the principle on which the theory of abrogation is based is unacceptable, being contrary to the clear teachings of the Quran. The Quran destroys this foundation when it declares that no part of it is at variance with another, when it says:

“Will they not then meditate on the Quran?
And if it were from any other than Allah, they
would have found in it many a discrepancy”
(4:82).

The Maulana has established that even those five verses believed to stand abrogated by Shah Wali Ullah are perfectly correct in their sequence and context and thus the theory of abrogation falls to the ground on all considerations.

The third point with regard to the integrity of the Quran, which Ahmadi commentators have elucidated, is the abbreviations or *muqatti'at* as they are called in Arabic, such as *alif lam mim*, etc. These combinations of letters or single letters occur at the beginning of 29 chapters of the Quran. Almost all the Muslim and non-Muslim translators have left them untranslated. Their view is that the meanings of these abbreviations are only known to Allah or the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and they carry no significance as far as the subject matter of their respective chapters is concerned. Several verses of the Quran show that everything mentioned in the Quran is “made easy”, is “without any crookedness”, is “clear” and is “in plain Arabic language”. Arabs used similar letters in their poetry. Abbreviations are known to all languages. They are frequently used in English these days. Thus to consider abbreviations given in the Quran as meaningless is something very much against the integrity of the Quran as a Divine revelation. Maulana Muhammad Ali was the first Muslim translator who, as early as 1917, not only gave a translation of these abbreviations but also explained their significance and connection with their respective chapters. And that is why a monthly called the *Islamic Digest* in its issue of March 1996, published from Karachi, Pakistan, praised Maulana Muhammad Ali's contribution in this regard in these words:

“Maulvi Sahib's style is that he gives a summary of the subject at the beginning of each chapter. Then he explains how it relates to other chapters and verses. In depicting the

relationship of one chapter with another, he puts emphasis on three points: firstly, the mutual relationship of the verses; secondly, the mutual relationship of the sections; and thirdly, the mutual relationship of the chapters.”

On a previous occasion I told you that the author of a book called *Quran aur Insan*, published by Ferozsons, a well-known publisher of Lahore, Pakistan in 1995, commended Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Urdu translation in these words:

“Translation of the Holy Quran by the late Maulana Muhammad Ali ... is to a large extent, literal and not an interpretation. For this reason, it expresses the Divine will in a far better way in the Urdu language” (p. 41).

Please remember that when Muhammad Asad’s translation was first published by Rabitah Alam Islamia, Makkah, its copies were later burnt as it was mostly in accord with the Ahmadiyya views.

Now listen to the review, and also the interesting remarks of the author of the recent commentary about the review:

“Muhammad Asad has very ably explained the message of the Quran in English. He has removed all doubts and wrong notions, which disturbed Western minds in the understanding of the Quran. His effort is also commendable because *he has freed us completely in this respect from depending on the translation of the Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore.*” (Our italics)

Now the remarks of the author about the review are:

“Here the reviewer, in spite of his hatred for Maulana Muhammad Ali, has confessed that before the publication of Muhammad Asad’s translation, the importance of the Maulana’s translation was quite evident, and that they could not dispense with this translation.”

Brothers and Sisters, the person who reviewed Asad’s translation is a well-known Ahl-i Hadith speaker and scholar, Maulana Hanif Nadvi. The review was written in a preface to the third volume of Maulana Abul A’la Maududi’s Urdu translation and commentary of the Quran called *Tafhimul Quran* and the remarks about the review are made by an Ahl-i Quran scholar. In short, they all admit the Maulana’s English translation as an indispensable work. Undoubtedly the Maulana has defended and explained

the Quran in a manner such that its integrity and glory has been thoroughly established.

This firm faith and deep commitment to uphold the dignity and integrity of the Quran was inspired by the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad into the hearts of his followers. They not only defended the Quran against all sorts of criticism of the opponents but even wrong notions of its own adherents. The Holy Founder also urged them to put their heart and soul to spread the Quran to the four corners of the world. The publication of its translation in Russian is the latest Lahore Ahmadiyya landmark in this field. A delegation of the U.S.A. *Jamaat* recently visited important Islamic centres in the former U.S.S.R., and has subsequently made arrangements for the free distribution of three thousand copies of this Russian translation of the Quran.

The following couplet of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement expresses his deep love and devotion for the Quran:

The elegance and beauty of the Quran is the life-light of every Muslim

Qamar (the moon in the sky) may be the moon for others but truly our moon is the Quran

My heart yearns always to kiss, O Lord, Your revealed Book

And to go round the Quran as if it were my Ka’bah.

I am sure you will find these ideas expressed today a bit different from what are usually said from Muslim pulpits. But believe me, it was some of these, and much more valuable ideas expressed, which attracted *The Times* of London and BBC Television to cover ‘Id festivals at the Shah Jahan Mosque at Woking. The Mosque is still very much there. It has even been beautifully renovated now, but it has lost its international stature. Why? Because its sermons miss that rational, universal and liberal approach which is the hallmark of Islam. And nobody can deny the fact that ‘Id congregations at Woking attracted people from all over the UK and from all walks of life. If Islam is to bring light to the West, as is prophesied by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, then it has to be the way the Ahmadiyya Movement presents it. Today we are small in number, enclaved within the four walls of Wembley House, but a time will come when Ahmadiyya views will receive wide acceptance.

Brothers and Sisters, all this requires strong faith, deep commitment and concerted effort. On 27th December, ITV showed a programme about the humble origin of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) at Bethlehem where this uncrowned king of the Christian world was born. Its title was 'Back to Bethlehem'. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, vigorously expounded that all that the Church has ascribed to Jesus has no Biblical and historical support. There is another on-going TV programme on Channel 5, 'From Jesus to Christ.' These are clear signs that a serious thinking is going on in the Christian world to find out the original Jesus, and that will be the Jesus of the Quran. The Holy Founder also raised a slogan, "Back to the Quran", an aspect of which I have just now explained to you briefly. The Ahmadiyya drive about Islam was made towards the end of the last century. It is now steadily being recognised by enlightened Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Being an Ahmadi I have a firm belief that a time is destined to come when researchers from the West would go down to Qadian, that remote village in Punjab, to see for themselves the place from where that clarion call for spreading the light of Islam to the West had its humble beginning.

Lessons in the Quran – 13

*Translation of Mr. N.A. Faruqui's book
Mu'arif-ul-Qur'an*

Translated by Dr. Mohammad Ahmad, Ohio

Al-Baqarah (The Cow)

"Who believe in the Unseen **and keep up prayer** and spend out of what We have given them." — The Holy Quran, 2:3.

Prayer as a means of guarding against evil

In my last two lessons I have discussed the important reasons underlying the Divine intent to keep Himself in the Unseen. As a result of being in the Unseen, people tend to forget Allah, and are in need of a reminder. Prayer serves as such a reminder. Thus the Holy Quran states:

"And keep up prayer for My remembrance."
(20:14)

It is not just enough to *recite* the prayer. In fact, a believer is enjoined to *keep up* prayer. In the previous chapters I have discussed the injunctions pertaining to this. In brief, prayer should be recited with understanding of its meaning, and with the realization that one is standing in front of Allah. It should be considered a great privilege to be given the opportunity to stand before the Best of Judges five times a day. The words of the prayer create the most excellent concept of the Divine Being and His attributes (provided prayer is kept up, and not just said in a hurry). Prayer also strengthens the belief in our hearts that Allah, the Possessor of all perfect attributes, is with us all the time; He sees us, and we can pray to Him wherever we are. He is able to hear our prayers, and is aware of our inner secrets. This is why during prayer we stand with our hands folded, bow down and prostrate; and some of the prayer is recited loudly while the rest is said in silence. When faith firmly becomes established in all of these concepts, the truth of the Quranic statement:

"Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil" (29:45)

is fully manifested. This means that no dirt or evil collects in a person's heart, or remains behind as a part of his actions. He reaches the state of *taqwa* or guarding against evil, which is a great achievement.

Spiritual sustenance

Now I would like to mention another great objective of prayer, knowledge of which has only been given to us by the Holy Quran. No other revealed scripture or religion mentions this. The human soul also requires sustenance for its well-being, progress and existence, just as food is essential for the life, health and development of the human body. This spiritual nourishment is provided by the institution of prayer. Our physical bodies, which are maintained by the daily intake of food and water, will eventually die and perish into the earth. The human soul is the part that remains behind forever, and on it is based our life hereafter. This is the reason why so much stress has been laid on prayer in the Holy Quran and Hadith, and it is a major edict of Islam. The human spirit which receives this nourishment stays healthy, develops, and remains alive. This is the greatest blessing for mankind. The Holy Quran explains this vital truth in these verses:

"And strain not thine eyes toward that with which We have provided different classes of them, (of) the splendour of this world's life, that We may thereby try them. And the

sustenance of thy Lord is better and more abiding. And enjoin prayer on thy people, and steadily adhere to it. We ask not of thee a sustenance. We provide for thee. And the (good) end is for guarding against evil.” (20:131, 132)

It is a distinctive characteristic of the literary eloquence of the Holy Quran that in very few and simple words it sheds light on some very important and complex issues. The essential facts which have been described in these two verses can be summarized as follows.

1. Allah has created different classes of persons. This is mentioned in another place in the Holy Quran:

“See how We have made some of them to excel others.” (17:21)

This Divine wisdom makes it possible for the activities of daily life to be conducted in a satisfactory manner.

2. Each class of persons has been given variable amounts of material possessions. Abundance of wealth, however, leads to a greater degree of trial. This occurs because the attraction of material wealth is such that man makes it the purpose of his life, despite the fact that the world is a temporary abode. The sorrow of leaving one’s prized possessions, and the realization in the Hereafter of the immense loss sustained by not having exerted oneself for the greatest blessing, the love of Allah, is in itself akin to the torment of hell. In addition, a person will have to account for all that he was given in this world. If he considered his worldly possessions a trust of God and spent out of them according to Divine injunctions, he would be secure. His punishment, otherwise, would be that of a dishonest person who betrays a trust given to him.

3. A believer should not greedily long for the fineries of this world. Worldly sustenance is temporary, and one is held accountable for its appropriate disposal. For the believer, however, the everlasting reward is the spiritual sustenance which is bestowed without the need for accountability, and is of a far superior quality.

4. This spiritual sustenance is acquired through prayer. The Holy Quran is a wonderful book of knowledge and profound wisdom. While mentioning the procurement of this sustenance through prayer, the believer is first enjoined to ask his family to do so, and also provide a strong personal example of steadfastness in the keeping up of prayer. This is

because even in case of physical sustenance, man gives preference to his wife and children. A large portion of his earnings is spent for food and clothing and other necessities for his family. The man of the house, who is usually the breadwinner, spends very little on himself. Thus man is told that just as he worries for the physical maintenance of his family, he should be even more concerned for their spiritual well-being. In order to accomplish this he is advised not only to enjoin them to keep up prayer, but also to keep up prayer in person so as to set an example. Without a personal example it would be difficult to get their compliance.

5. Allah provides us with physical sustenance, and does not ask us for it. In a similar manner, when He enjoins prayer, it is not for His own benefit. It is purely for the good of mankind, and provides him with spiritual sustenance, which is essential, much superior, and everlasting.

6. The final comment is that *taqwa* (keeping one’s duty, guarding against evil) leads to a better end. Keep your duty also in regard to the physical sustenance you are given, for you will be held accountable for it. Utilize the spiritual sustenance provided for you in the form of prayer to strengthen and keep your spirit healthy, so that it can control your animal desires. If the animal within you is left unbridled it will weaken your defenses (*taqwa*) against evil, resulting in loss and torment of hell. As I have already mentioned, if prayer is kept up and not merely recited, it leads to living faith in God, which of course gives rise to the quality of guarding against evil.

Spiritual ascension

I will end this discussion by mentioning one other important aspect of prayer. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Prayer is the ascension (*Mi’raj*) of the believer.” Now the event of *Mi’raj* (ascension) is well known to the Muslims. The Holy Prophet in a state of vision (*kashf*) ascended to the spiritual heavens. He progressed in spiritual status beyond the level of all other prophets. At a certain point in this spiritual journey, the Angel Gabriel who escorted him on this journey also parted his company, stating that from there on he would not be able to withstand the manifestation of the Divine presence. He advised the Holy Prophet to go on further by himself. As the Holy Prophet proceeded ahead, he came into the presence of Allah. He sat down respectfully with his legs folded in front of Allah and said: “All services rendered by words, and bodily actions, and sacrifice of wealth, are

due to Allah.” To this Allah replied: “Peace be on thee, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings.” To this the Holy Prophet answered: “Peace be upon us and on the righteous servants of Allah.” What other conversation took place during this spiritual encounter is not recorded. The extraordinary precious treasure or reward, however, that he brought back with him was the permission for his followers to pray five times a day. The lessons that we learn from these events of the *Mi'raj* are:

1. If we follow completely the footsteps of the Holy Prophet, we can ascend to those highest levels in the life after death, where we have to go eventually.

2. By completely following the path of the Holy Prophet, one can progress further than the reach of the angels. The Quran also tells us that if a man truly becomes the vicegerent of Allah, angels are committed to bow before him.

3. The spiritual status achieved by the Holy Prophet is the ultimate stage of *Fana-fi-Allah* (losing oneself completely in Allah). At this stage every word, action, and possession is spent in the way of Allah, and under His direction. This is apparent from the words of the Holy Prophet: “All prayers and worship rendered through words, bodily actions and sacrifice of wealth are due to Allah.”

4. As a result of this complete obedience and service with humility, Allah rewarded the Holy Prophet with peace, mercy and everlasting blessings in this world and the Hereafter. He immediately conveyed these to his followers and all the righteous servants of Allah, because he knew that whenever Allah says something it is fulfilled. This is clearly indicated by his words: “Peace be upon us and on the righteous servants of Allah.” In these words we see a remarkable display of the feelings of selflessness, love and caring for humanity that the heart of this pure and saintly person was endowed with.

5. Going directly into the Divine presence is a historically unique occurrence. What did the Holy Prophet request from Allah? He asked Allah to bless his followers with the same honor and blessing that he was blessed with in obtaining nearness to God. The permission to pray five times a day was granted for this very purpose. How unfortunate is the being who keeps himself deprived of this blessing, and does not keep up prayer; or merely recites it as a custom without acquiring its full benefit.

6. The Holy Prophet has called prayer the Ascension (*Mi'raj*) of the believer. This tells us that prayer is the means to get close to Allah and recognize

Him. The conversation which took place between Allah and him is recited in the obligatory prayer service after the two prostrations. From this it is quite apparent that prostration is the posture of closest proximity to the Divine Being. Prolong your prostration and understand what is being recited, i.e. “My Lord is free of all faults, and He is the most High.” In reciting these words we are imploring Allah, Who has created the means for our spiritual evolution: just as He is free of all faults, may He nurture our spiritual progress so that we can obtain freedom from all our shortcomings; just as He is the most High, due to His goodness and perfect attributes, may He create good qualities in us. If this prayer is rendered sincerely, in it lie all the blessings of this life and the life hereafter. Besides the prayers of the Hadith and the Holy Quran, if you have to make any other request before Allah, you can pray in your own language. Say prayers with the shedding of tears, for prostration is the time when one is closest to God. When a child wraps his arms around his mother and cries, maternal feelings of love and mercy are aroused. Crying of the suppliant in prostration evokes an outpouring of Divine mercy, for who is more Merciful and Bounteous than Allah?

The Death of Jesus – 6

by Maulana Hafiz Sher Mohammad

Views of modern Muslim religious scholars

VI. Scholars of Arabia

1. In his Quranic commentary, Allama Abdul Rahman Sa'di writes:

“God honoured Jesus by causing his disciples to spread in the world, in his life-time and after his death (*mamat*).”

(*Tafsir al-Manan*, published in Makka)

2. In *The Message of the Quran*, published by the Muslim World League of Makka in 1964, the author, Muhammad Asad, translates the verse 3:55 of the Quran in the following English words:

“Lo! God said: O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and exalt thee unto Me.”

Verse 5:117 is rendered as:

“And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt amongst them; but since Thou hast caused me to die, Thou alone hast been their keeper. For Thou art witness unto everything”.

In the footnote to verse 4:157 the translator elucidates:

“Thus the Quran categorically denies the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. There exist, among Muslims, many fanciful legends telling us that at the last moment God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him (according to some accounts, that person was Judas), who was subsequently crucified in his place. However, none of these legends finds the slightest support in the Quran or in authentic Traditions, and the stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators of the Quran must be summarily rejected.”

The next footnote contains the statement:

“Nowhere in the Quran is there any warrant for the popular belief of many Muslims that God has ‘taken up’ Jesus bodily into heaven.”

VII. Egyptian Scholars

1. The famous Egyptian reformist personality Mufti Muhammad Abduh believed that Jesus had died:
 - i. “In the *Tafsir al-Manar*, the teacher and Imam (Muhammad Abduh), after taking the apparent meaning of the verse, has stated that *tawaffa* bears its obvious significance, i.e., causing to die. The raising (*raf*‘) comes after that, and it is spiritual elevation.”
(*Qasas al-Anbiya* by Abdul Wahab al-Najar, p. 428)
 - ii. “*Tawaffa* here means causing to die, as in the obvious and comprehensible significance.”
(*Al-Manar*)
2. Allama Rashid Raza, the famous disciple of Mufti Muhammad Abduh, writes:

“Hence Jesus’ escape to India and his death in that country is not against reason and sense.”
(*Quranic Commentary* by Al-Sayyid Rashid Raza, part vi, pp. 42, 43)
3. Mahmud Shaltut, former Mufti of Egypt and ex-Rector of al-Azhar University, Cairo, writes:

- i. “There is no authority in the Quran or the Sunna which can satisfy the heart upon the belief that Jesus was taken up to heaven with his body and that he is still alive there and that he shall descend therefrom to earth in the last days.”

(*Al-Fatawa*, published by Al-Idara al-‘Ama lil-Saqafat al-Islamiyya bil-Azhar, pp. 52-58)

- ii. “The Quranic verses in this connection indicate that God had promised Jesus that He would cause him to die at the appointed time, and elevate him to Himself, and protect him from the disbelievers. This promise has been fulfilled. His enemies could not kill him or crucify him; instead, God caused him to die at the end of his appointed term and elevated him to Himself.”

(*Ibid.*)

4. Al-Ustaz Mustafa al-Maraghi:

- i. Commentating on the verse, *Ya ‘Isa inni mutawaffi-ka*, he notes:

“In this verse is the glad tiding of his (Jesus’) deliverance from their (the Jewish) plot and his life reaching its appointed term. They would not be able to harm him as they intended by their evil plan. *Tawaffa* means the ordinary death, and *raf*‘ (elevating) is for the spirit after death. The meaning is ‘I will cause you to die (*mumitu-ka*), and after death (*maut*) I will establish you in an exalted position in My presence’, as God has said of the prophet Idris: ‘He elevated him to a high state’.”

(*Tafsir al-Maraghi*, part iii, p. 165)

- ii. In explanation of verse 3:143 of the Quran, he writes:

“It means that Muhammad is but mortal. There have been messengers before him, so they died, and some, like Zacharia and Yahya, were killed. It was not ordained for anyone of them to live forever. So if he (Holy Prophet Muhammad) dies, as had Moses, Jesus, and other prophets died”

(*Ibid.*, part iv, p. 87)

5. Allama Muhammad Farid Wajadi notes the views of some research scholars as:

“Others have said that God caused Jesus to die as he causes people in general to die. Then his spirit was raised to God, as is shown by

the words: *Inni mutawaffi-ka wa rafi'u-ka ilayya.*”

(*Da'irat-ul-Mu'arif*, Islamic Encyclopedia, vol. vi, p. 784)

6. The famous Lebanese scholar Ahmad Al-'Ajuz writes:

“Jesus certainly died on earth according to God's words *inni mutawaffi-ka* which mean ‘I will cause you to die’ (*mumitu-ka*). Death (*maut*) is something that is bound to happen, as God said through Jesus' tongue: ‘Peace be upon me the day I was born and the day I die.’”

(Signed: Ahmad al- 'Ajuz)

7. Al-Ustaz Abdul Karim al-Sharif writes:

“As the Quran has mentioned, God caused the Messiah to die physically, and raised him to Himself and purified him, just as He causes us to die, raises us to Himself, and purifies us.”

(*Al-Nafkhat al-Ula min al-Ta'wil*)

8. Al-Ustaz Abdul Wahab al-Najjar comments on the Quranic verse *Kuntu 'alai-him shahid-an ma dumtu fi-him* (5:117), as follows:

“Jesus watched over his followers and gave them good exhortations till his death (*wafat*). After that, God was the Watcher over them.”

(*Qasas al-Anbiya*, 4th edition, 1956)

9. In his article *Hal al-Quran Mu'jiza* (‘Is the Quran a miracle?’), Dr Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi writes:

“It is a well known teaching of Islam that God is everywhere, and that He is the light of the heaven and the earth. So the words ‘He raised him (Jesus) to Himself’ do not have the physical meaning that He lifted him up to heaven, as is the Christian belief. ... *Raf'* here means to rescue and to honour, as opposed to a degraded death on the cross in the manner in which criminals are executed. Other interpretations that some Muslim commentators have adopted are more akin to poetry than to sound logic, and the reliability of these commentators' scholarship is rather limited.”

(*Al-Mawahib Azar*, Argentina, March 1955)

10. Egypt's famous literary figure, Al-Ustaz 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqad, writes:

“In this connection there is a historical report which cannot be ignored because it deserves

great attention. This report relates to the tomb to be found in the Khanyar area of the capital of Kashmir, and known as the grave of the Prophet or the grave of Jesus. It is recorded in the book *Tarikh al-'Azma*, written about 200 years ago, that the grave is that of a Prophet called Yuz Asaf. The people of Kashmir report from their ancestors that this prophet came to that land two thousand years ago.”

(*Hayat al-Masih fil-Tarikh wa Kushuf al-'Asr al-Hadith*, p. 213)

11. In a poem in praise of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Allama Ibn Rashid al-Baghdadi writes:

Mahauna bi-ka al-adyan lau 'asha rusulu-na la-ja'a-ka 'Isa tabi'-an wa Kalim

“Through you all other religions were superseded; had previous prophets been still alive, Jesus and Moses would have been your followers.”

(*Diwan Ma'dan al-Azafat*, published in Beirut, p. 28)

VIII. Iranian Scholars

1. Iran's famous religious scholar Zain al-'Abidin, whose Quranic commentary was published with the support of the Iranian Government, translates in it the verse *Ya 'Isa inni mutawaffi-ka* as meaning that Jesus' soul, and not his body, was raised to God's presence (vol. i, p. 268).
2. In a poetic verse, Mirza Abul Hasan Qa-ani Sherazi says:

“Jesus has gone up to the skies, but has left his earthly body here.”

Internet correspondence

by the Editor

1. Question from a Baha'i

A Baha'i lady from a University in Canada sent some questions by e-mail to our Website, the main one being as follows:

“Regarding Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claims to be Mahdi and Messiah, you have shown some prophecies that he fulfills in his claim. What

are your views on the fact that the twin Prophets of the Baha'i Faith, the Bab and Baha'ullah (who claimed to be the Mahdi and Messiah as well, actually), also fulfil many prophecies of the major world's religions, including Native American spirituality?"

Answer:

The claims of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be Messiah and Mahdi were of an entirely different nature from the Babi/Baha'i claims. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad said that the Holy Prophet Muhammad had brought the final, everlasting religion, law and scripture. So any truthful claimant sent by God could *only* appear within the Islamic religion. And the work of any such claimant could *only* be the defence and propagation of Islam (Islam as taught in the Quran and by the Prophet Muhammad). Therefore Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is a Messiah and Mahdi *within Islam* carrying forward the mission of the Prophet Muhammad, and being entirely subject to the authority of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad like any other Muslim.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim to be the Messiah is based on the prophecies within Islam speaking of the return to this world of Jesus, who is then expected to fight the 'Antichrist' and lead Muslims to victory over him. He is supposed to have ascended to heaven and would return from there to earth. God opened the mind of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to the fact that, according to the Quran, Jesus died like all other mortals die (though not on the cross); moreover, no person can go up to heaven in bodily form, live there and return; and furthermore, the return of Jesus violates the Islamic belief that no prophet can come after the Prophet Muhammad. Pointing to a religious principle that the second advent of a person never means his personal return, but the coming of one resembling him, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad interpreted this prophecy of the return of Jesus as meaning the coming of someone like him, and he applied it to himself on the grounds of the similarity of his circumstances with those of Jesus (e.g., Muslims of his time were beset with similar evils to those characteristic of the Jews at the time of Jesus, as can be read in the Gospels; their worldly and political condition was also like that of the Jews of Jesus' time).

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained in detail who the 'Antichrist' was that he was to fight (i.e., the materialism of modern Western civilization), in what manner he was to fight this Antichrist (i.e., purely spiritually and intellectually), etc. A key sign of the

coming Messiah was that he would "break the cross". Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad interpreted it as refuting the false doctrines of Christianity, i.e. atonement, Divine sonship of Jesus, etc. Therefore Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's mission became to fight both the materialistic side and the religious side of Western civilization with arguments.

For Muslims, his claim to be the Messiah means that he will lead them to victory over their opponents, especially the Christian world (victory here means victory in argument and proof). And for Christians, his claim to be Messiah (or the second coming of Jesus) has the significance that he, as a come-again Jesus, is correcting their wrong beliefs about Jesus, and teaching them that Jesus was a mortal prophet of God who lived and died (though not on the cross) like other mortal prophets, and was not the son of God or a part of Godhead. These were, of course, the teachings of Islam which Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is putting forward to Christians.

Though this reply is getting lengthy, I must make the following important points:

1. One of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's basic aims was to teach the world the Islamic doctrine of the absolute oneness of God, which strongly rejects the concept that any human being can ever be a manifestation of God. As I understand it, the Baha'i teachings are that there have been various manifestations of God on earth (Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Baha'ullah). Therefore Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was teaching the opposite of the main Baha'i belief.

2. As noted above, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad proclaimed that the Islamic scripture, teachings and law are valid forever, and will never be abrogated or replaced. Again this is exactly the opposite of the Baha'i belief that the era of Islam has come to an end.

3. The Prophet Muhammad taught that prophets before him had been sent by God to all nations, and he required his followers (Muslims) to believe in all of them. Moreover, he taught, as stated in the Quran, that these prophets had prophesied to their nations of the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad and had instructed their followers to believe in that Promised Prophet when he came. So the Prophet Muhammad became the converging point of the previous prophets and religions. He addressed the whole of humanity, while the previous prophets addressed only their individual nations. To preach the oneness of humanity and to seek to unite religions on fundamentals in the seventh century, as the Prophet Muhammad did, at a time when no one even knew what the whole world

consisted of, is a clear proof of the Prophet Muhammad getting revelation and knowledge from God. But for someone in the nineteenth century, like Baha'ullah, to repeat similar ideas cannot be called new revelation coming from God (particularly when he originally arose from within the religion of Islam).

2. Sarcastic e-mail from a Qadiani

In February, a Qadiani e-mailed our Website, beginning his message as follows:

“I was wondering: how many of Lahore Anjuman’s are there? A hundred or less, I believe.”

I replied to this point as follows. The tone of my reply is due to the totally sarcastic nature of his e-mail:

“If you are saying that the number of our members is a hundred or less, this is absolutely incorrect. Whoever told you this is making a blatantly false statement. But at least it is better than the usual Qadiani mis-statement about us, which is that we do not exist at all!

“We have thousands of members in each of Suriname and Indonesia alone! I have attended meetings of our Movement where the members belonging to just one country were several hundred.

“If more numbers means that your Jamaat is right, then what about the fact that other Muslims (who reject the Promised Messiah) are far more in number than you? Do you ever put this question to Sunnis: How many of you there are? Against Sunnis you argue that you are right because you are a minority compared to them (the one true sect of Islam out of 73 sects), and against Lahore Ahmadis you argue that you are right because you have more numbers compared to them!”

In his response, he failed at all to address my question above. Regarding numbers I went on to make the following point:

“If you want to talk about numbers, then please look at the Yahoo page:

Society_and_Culture/Religion_and_Spirituality/Faiths_and_Practices/Islam/Movements/Ahmadiyya/

“There are 5 Qadiani sites listed there, and 1 of ours. Ours is the only one which works. None of the Qadiani Websites on that page is

working! So the Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman is in the majority on that page. We are 1, and you are **zero, nil, nothing, non-existent!** Is it true that your *khalifa* has banned all of you from having any websites? We have tried e-mailing the address on your websites, asking why you have gone off the Web, but we got no reply back, *as if the Qadiani Jamaat has ceased to exist, and has no members who can answer e-mail.*”

His reply to this point was as follows:

“Why the sites were shut down, I know not much, although you only have one or two pages on the net you are in no manner a majority in the real world compared to our Jamaat.”

I replied:

“Only one or two pages? Have you been through our site and seen how extensive it is? As to the real world position, surely that position is reflected everywhere else, such as on the Internet. Aren’t you concerned that people are finding your links non-operational, and one of them says: Closed due to the order of Khalifat-ul-Masih?”

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