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EDITORIAL

Fareed Ahmad – Newquay, UK

The presence of evil in the world has often given rise to the question that if God is so Powerful and so Merciful then why does He not rid the world of such misery? Why does He not crush the work of Satan once and for all? Surely that would result in peace and enable mankind to live in harmony.

The difficulty with such a solution is that it overlooks the very purpose of creation itself. The object of the creation of man as set out in the Holy Qur'an is the worship of God the Creator (Ch.51:V.57) and it is this worship that enables man to draw closer to God.

This worship is not merely the offering of the daily salat. Although that is an obligatory element, any effort that seeks to earn the pleasure of Allah merits reward. The Qu'ran sets out very clearly the attributes of God and the actions of man that earn

nearness to Him and these are further supplemented by the life-example of the Holy Prophet^(saw).

For example man must be honest, just and merciful and if he is not then he is giving way to the Satanic forces that constantly seek to pull him away from the path to God. The misery we see in this world is a reflection of man's failure to suppress the satan within him. However, by struggling to overcome negative temptations and striving for positive actions man progresses and gains Allah's pleasure. Such a struggle can only take place when there is a force that needs to be resisted and overcome. Take away the negative force and the struggle and you take away the ability for man to progress and earn his reward.

In this issue of *The Review of Religions* we reprint an interview of The Promised Messiah^(as) by Professor Wragge of England,

then living in the outbacks that took place in 1908 that tackles this very issue. It is fascinating to see that the questions that troubled the intellectuals of that time are not very different from the questions that trouble the mind of modern man. Similarly

the answers that were so eloquently given by the Promised Messiah^(as) remain as true today as they did nearly a century ago – no doubt a living testament to the timeless message of Islam and its guidance as set out in the Holy Qur'an.

References to the Holy Qur'an item count 'Bismillah...' (In the Name of Allah...) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted and should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in *The Review of Religions* will be found one verse less than the number quoted.

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(saw)' or 'saw' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for '*Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*' meaning 'Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or 'as' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'Peace be upon him' derived from '*Alaihis salatu wassalam*' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for '*Radhiallahu Ta'ala anhu*' and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally, 'ru' or (ru) for *Rahemallahu Ta'ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

Professor Wragge

meets

The Promised Messiah^(as) (Part 1)

Professor Wragge was a renowned meteorologist of his time. He lived in Australia, but in 1908 was visiting India as part of his world tour during which he gave lectures on meteorology to very large audiences. In May 1908, he stayed in Lahore for a short period. There he gave a lecture which was well-attended, especially by many highly placed English people. Hadhrat Mufti Mohammad Sadiq^(ra) was also present and he met the professor after the lecture. He briefly explained to Professor Wragge the proofs and arguments put forward by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) in support of his claim to be the Promised Messiah of his time. Upon hearing these the Professor wished to meet Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) straight away. Mufti Sahib^(ra) sought first to arrange a time with Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) who gave his permission; the meeting took place after Zuhr prayers on 12th May 1908 in Lahore, Pakistan. Mufti Mohammad Sadiq^(ra) acted as the interpreter and the conversation was originally recorded in Urdu. The following is a translation of that Urdu transcript which is to be found in Malfoozat, Vol. 10, p.353.

Professor Wragge

I am a man of science and I see that the earth on which we live is very small. In comparison to thousands and millions of other kinds of God's creation, the earth melts into insignificance. Why then has God's blessing been limited to this earth or to any one religion or nation?

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as):

Actually this is not correct, neither is it our belief that God reveals himself through a particular nation or sect. God does not have a special relationship or love for any one particular nation. What is correct is that God is the God of the entire universe and he has created

the means of physical nourishment and development for all creation without any distinction. According to our principle he is 'Rabbil Alameen' i.e. the Nourisher and Sustainer of all the worlds. He has created grains, air, water, light, etc. for all creation. Likewise, in every age and in every nation He has, from time to time, sent reformers for the reformation of people in those nations. As it is stated in the Holy Qu'ran (Surah Fatir, verse 25) Allah the Almighty is God of all the worlds. He has no special relationship with any nation. In fact the different heavenly books which have come from time to time do not contradict each other.

This is because a reformer is needed when the world inclines more towards evil deeds and bad practices, such as lies, theft, quarrels and general immorality, so that people become distanced from purity and virtue, and are overwhelmed by selfish desires and emotions. So much so that they, in their belief, also abandon the worship of one God and

incline towards idol worship. God is the nourisher of man's physical as well as spiritual being. His pride demands that at such times of spiritual darkness he should appoint a person for reform, and the concept of such a reformer does not fall outside the bounds of laws of nature. Just as the actual wheat that grew in the times of Adam and other prophets cannot be a source of nourishment for us, and just as the water which existed in previous times cannot quench our thirst, so we need fresh spiritual food as well as water.

It is the tradition of Allah that just as He nourishes and provides for the development of the physical process, where previous nourishment is not sufficient for the present, so is the case with the system of spiritual development, and the two systems, the physical and the spiritual, go side by side. For the person who denies the existence of God, this discussion would take a different line. But a person who believes in the existence of God should keep the two systems in mind and benefit from their comparison. He who

has created the physical system has also created the spiritual system. Just as He nourishes the physical system with fresh sustenance, so He nourishes the spiritual system with fresh sustenance. Just as the physical state is dependent upon fresh water, so the spiritual state is also dependent upon fresh, heavenly revelation. Just as the physical body dies if it does not receive nourishment, so the soul too dies without spiritual nourishment. If in spiritual matters only past and ancient references are available, then what would be the conclusion other than that the spiritual system is in a state of death. What else could it be?

God Almighty, as is His nature, always wishes to be recognised. For proof of his existence and identification He always provides true, clear and fresh signs and these are not too difficult to understand. It is this system which has always been in existence and which continues. Thousands upon thousands of prophets came and provided such proofs through their own actions and deeds, thus completing the

argument in favour of the existence of God.

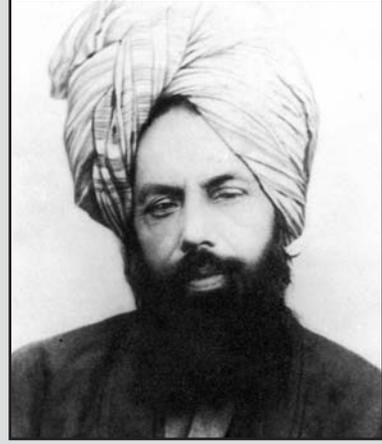
Now, how can a person stating that he is a scientist or a philosopher break this proven continuum of witnessed signs? What is needed in such a case is that, just as the holy people provided a practical example with their lives and validated their claims, so should the negation of it be offered in the same way. Such people, however, would be justified in asking, why they are presented with old stories and fables, why not give a living proof or a living example, and for this I am available.

An astronomer cannot provide a definite proof of the existence of God merely by observing the solar system which may, at the very most, lead to a view that there should be a God. The fact that there is a God and that He most certainly exists has always been proven with the principles put forward by the prophets. If people like myself did not appear in this world there could never be in the world any real and complete proof of God. At the very

most, if someone was of a just disposition and also possessed a virtuous character, then from the well ordered heavenly bodies and from the solar system, etc. he could conclude that there ought to be a God. Other than that, the fact that God exists and He is the Master, the Ruler and the moving force behind all creation, all this is not possible for people to know without the guidance of those who are from God. It is such people who enable others to witness the existence of God and, by providing fresh evidence and signs, it is as if they are able to ‘show’ God to others.

Professor Wragge

It is written that there was one Adam and one Eve. Eve was a weak woman. She ate one apple. Now, the punishment of her having eaten an apple will continue forever. This I do not understand. Also, that this earth with which we are related, is but one among many thousands and millions of other systems which God has created then why would God’s (qudrat) and blessings be limited to this earth?



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths. His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as):

This is not our belief. We don’t propose that there is no system other than our earth and the sky. Rather, our God says that He is ‘Rabbil Alameen’ , that is, He is

the Sustainer of all the universes and that wherever there has been an inhabitation there He has sent His messengers. Lack of knowledge does not make something non-existent. God created such a vast system of provision for this small earth, why would He not have created provision for all other habitations?

As for saying that all human sorrow and hardship were caused by Eve's having eaten an apple, this is not a belief held by Islam. We are taught that:

And no burdened soul can bear the burden of another; and if a heavily laden soul call another to bear its load, naught of it shall be carried by the other, even though he be a kinsman.....

(Surah Fatir Verse 19)

One person's punishment cannot be meted out to another, nor can there be imagined any benefit in this. Eve's having eaten of an apple is not the cause of any sorrow, difficulty or punishment,

the reasons for these things are given in the Qu'ran but are totally different.

Professor Wragge

There are two things I wish to find out – one is, what is sin? A person in one country may consider some act to be a sin while the same act may not be considered sinful in another country. Man progressed from a small insect to a human being and then he learned to discern between truth and falsehood, he distinguishes truth from lies, good from bad, gained knowledge of sin and goodness and after all this there is the difference - what is sin for one person is not sin for another who indulges in it?

The other thing I wish to find out is about Satan. What is Satan? How is it that God being the master and having power over such knowledge, Satan got to have so much sway that God had to come to this world himself to reform the world. What is meant by this?

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam

Ahmad^(as):

I usually speak having in mind people who believe in the existence of God. God's being is a source of eternal happiness and pleasure for man's life. Whoever separates from Him or leaves Him in one way or another, about such a state of a person it is said that he has sinned. Furthermore, keeping in view the nature of man, God has further defined as 'sin' those acts which through their finer implications, prove to be harmful for man himself, even though a person sometimes may not be able to appreciate such harmfulness. For example, theft and harming others by taking away their rights, harms the purity of one's own life. An adulterer's act of adultery and his taking what may belong to someone else, destroys his own piety and engulfs him in various physical and spiritual difficulties. Similarly, those acts which are against the nature of man's purity and piety are also referred to as 'sin', as are all the related acts – whether related closely or distantly – these are also considered as types of sin.

God Almighty is greater than all else, He has the most knowledge, He is the true creator of man and every particle which exists. It is He Who is also the creator of their nature and He is wise. If, with His complete wisdom and complete knowledge, He suggests that something is harmful for you, that indulging in it would not benefit you at all, rather it is totally harmful, then it is not the action of a wholesome person to go against this.

We see that when a doctor advises a patient to abstain from something, the patient acts on that advice without any argument. Why does he act in this way? He does this because he considers the doctor as being in possession of much greater knowledge than himself. Similarly, there are some things which are harmful for man's body or spirit whether man himself understands that or not. There are some things which would be harmful even if God had not given a ruling about them. In medicine also there are some things which are considered 'sins' and lack of medical knowledge is

no excuse for the person who goes against the medical principles. If someone does not believe this they can check with doctors and physicians.

The point to remember is simply this that the root of sin is those actions which lead man far away from purity and righteousness. The true love of God and union with Him is the true pleasure and real comfort. Thus moving away from God and being distant from Him is also sin and is the source of pain, sorrow and difficulty. Those things which God dislikes due to His own sanctity, that is sin. There are some matters on which people may not agree but, on the other hand, the greater part of the world is jointly agreed that lying, stealing, adultery and cruelty are such acts that all nations and religions jointly consider them to be sins. But remember that the root of sin is precisely those acts which distance man from God, which are against His sanctity, against His wishes and against man's nature – it is such acts which constitute sin.

Every person senses sin. If someone slaps an innocent person and knows that he had no right to do so, he will, at some later time, when he looks at his action with a cool head, himself feel ashamed and will sense that he has done a bad deed. Conversely, if someone feeds a hungry person, gives a drink of water to a thirsty person, and clothes someone lacking clothes, such a person will have an inner sense of having been good, and having done a blessed deed. A person's heart and conscience and the light of belief remind him whether his various actions were a good act or a sinful act.

With regard to Satan, it should be remembered that in man's nature and composition there have been included two forces and they are both opposed to each other and it is so in order for a person to be tried and tested and, with a successful outcome, to become deserving of God's nearness. Of the two forces, one pulls man towards goodness and the other invites man towards evil. The force that pulls towards goodness

is called ‘malak’ or ‘angel’ and the force which invites towards evil is called ‘Satan’. In other words, you can understand it like this that there are two forces which work on a person: one calls towards good (da’i ilal khair), and the other towards bad (da’i ilash-sharr). Someone may not like the use of the terms ‘angel’ and ‘Satan’, but he would not be able to deny the existence of these two types of forces within man. God never intended any evil. God only does what is good.

You see, if sin did not exist in the world there would be no goodness. Goodness develops from sin. The concept of goodness is formed by the concept of sin. If someone has the opportunity to commit adultery and he possesses the ability to do so but then he abstains from this sin, this action is called goodness. If someone has the opportunity to steal, or to be cruel, and he is capable of doing these acts, but he does not do so and positively abstains from them, then he is doing a good deed. To have the opportunity and capability of sinning and then not

indulging in sin, that is a good and blessed deed.

Professor Wragge

In the world there are two forces at work – the positive and the negative. If we always use the positive force and never use the negative, one day the negative will gather force and could erupt at any time and destroy the world. The same is true of good and evil. If the whole world did only good and never did any bad deeds then similarly evil would gather force and destroy the world.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(AS):

You see, if a person is not capable of shouting, his speaking softly will not be considered a behaviour of high esteem. If a person always remained in one state and was not capable of any change, then goodness could not remain as goodness. It is the existence of the two extremes which creates goodness. If the state was unchangeable and man was not given any other abilities to change his state so that he was

always forced to do good, and he was never given the ability to do evil, then what would there be that we could call 'obedience' or 'goodness'? God has, to an extent, given human beings control – they can change their state. They have the power to do good and have the ability to do evil. However a person will act, he will find his reward accordingly.

You see, if there were no evil behaviour then what kind of behaviour would be called 'good behaviour'. Only when there exist bad characteristics can [one] have good characteristics. A person can think of something bad, and having a picture of it in his mind, he can censure it. Similarly, he refers to some special deeds as 'goodness' and praises these. If there were no pictures in one's mind of anything bad then there would be no such thing as 'noble characteristics'. It is always through evil that we can distinguish goodness. If only one aspect was created then there certainly would not be any reward nor any pleasure (of God).

Sorrow and joy, discomfort and comfort, darkness and light, bitter and sweet, poison and antidote, bad and good and sin and goodness, all come into being by the existence of its opposite. If such opposites were not created, life itself would have been very dull. If only one state was created, that was already in our nature, why then would there be any reward and why any recompense? How could this be a source of gaining God's pleasure when all the deeds were acts of compulsion, a person having no power to do otherwise.

It must be remembered that man has been given control. He has the power to do good or bad, to be kind or cruel, to be benevolent or miserly. It is always by keeping in mind the two aspects of possible behaviour that we can form an opinion about a particular person being good or bad. Indeed, the essential defining element of the term 'deeds' is that a person has the capability of doing the reverse. A person, having the capacity to take revenge but does not do so, has performed an act of

goodness. But a person who does not possess a limb with which to retaliate against some-one who hits him, would not be in a position to say that he has done a good deed by not retaliating:

He, indeed, prospers who purifies it, and he is ruined who corrupts it
(Ch.91:Vs.10-11)

It is clear from this holy verse that the existence of goodness and good qualities has its basis on the two capabilities (of doing good or bad). He who is endowed with only one capability and has never been given the other, would be like an image which cannot be erased.

He who denies the existence of Angels and Satan is in effect denying self-evident truths, and going against that which can be easily sensed or witnessed. We see everyday that people do good deeds and also that in the world around us many evil acts are committed and that the two forces are equally at work. This cannot be denied by any person. Who is

there who does not within himself find some sense and influence of both? Here, no philosophy or logic can rule otherwise since the two forces are present and each is working in its place.

To turn to your question that if people only do good deeds and no bad acts are committed then eventually evil will gather force and destroy the world. About this, all I can say is that I am not concerned with statements of the type 'if this happens then that will happen and if that happens this will happen'. We see this much that human nature has been created and prepared for good actions as well as for bad actions. I do not go beyond this.

POVERTY and HUMAN RIGHTS

The following paper was presented at the Assembly of the World's Religions held in New Jersey U.S.A. in November 1985

By Maulana Ataul Mujeeb Rashed – Imam of the London Mosque

Throughout recorded history, philosophers and thinkers have sought to solve the problem of how to establish a balance between the rights and obligations of man. In the earlier period, loyalty to a community was rewarded by distributing portions from its possessions. Later, the feudal or tribal lords guaranteed security and safety of their followers in return for personal or tribal obedience. The Greeks realised that a contented man was necessary for a happy society. The advent of the Renaissance paved the way for the Age of Man in which human needs and urges for individuality and freedom have been accorded recognition. Since then, as the limits of human knowledge have widened, more and more attention has been paid to the requirements of identifying and safeguarding such rights as are considered

essential for the progress of mankind.

The famous English-American writer of the eighteenth century, Thomas Paine, spelt out the ideas of constitutional enlightenment which provide the framework of human rights as a part of Western political culture and social morality. As a result, many states have incorporated provisions dealing with the social, economic and political rights for their citizens in their constitutions or legal systems. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly of the U.N. in 1948, represents a broad consensus of contemporary civilisation on the subject of human rights.

However, this does not mean that everyone in this world is

guaranteed full freedom or that all the governments are committed to safeguarding human rights without any exception. Far from it. Man continues to be a victim of discrimination, intolerance, and cruelty at the hands of fellow men. Despite the existence of the U.N. Human Rights Commission and similar bodies at regional and national levels, there is no foolproof system under which an individual or a community can seek immediate or effective redress of grievances pertaining to human rights.

There are two main reasons for this unsatisfactory situation. First, the legislative or legal guarantees designed by the Western Society cover but a segment of the total field of human rights. Further, the legal sanctions can be applied only after the violations have taken place and can be substantiated by relevant evidence. The U.N. Human Rights Commission and the many governments which are represented on it, fail to recognise the seriousness of the violations unless there is mass bloodshed or destruction of life and property. Lastly, the question of safeguarding human rights is frequently

considered on political or ideological basis. For example, the Western thinking is concentrated on political rights of man while the focus of attention in the Marxist society is on the economic rights of man.

Again, Western countries are more interested in the human rights violations in the Communist countries but ignore similar violations in the countries allied to the West. The Americans and the Europeans shed so many tears at the fate of Jews in the Eastern bloc but remain silent at the plight of Arabs in Israeli-occupied territories.

Both East and West subscribe to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning freedom of travel but all over the world barriers are raised to restrict travel and movement on grounds of colour and race.

The Soviet Union is in the forefront demanding economic and social rights of farmers and workers in Central America and condemning apartheid in South Africa but it has effectively curbed religious and

cultural freedom of Muslims in Central Asia and is denying the people of Afghanistan the right to follow their own way of life. Thus, serious contradictions exist between the precepts and practices of the contemporary world in respect of safeguarding human rights.

It is my submission that this diabolical situation can be corrected if the world would understand and adopt the provisions regarding Human Rights embodied in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah (Precepts) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw), which are the most authentic and authoritative sources of the Islamic Code of human behaviour.

Poverty and Human Rights

But, before I proceed further to explain the human rights and its principles as laid down in Islam, let me explain briefly the phenomenon of poverty and its impact on human rights.

Allah, the Almighty, our Creator and Maker, has created us all in such a way that no two persons are exactly identical. This change and

variety bestows a unique beauty and individuality upon each individual. The good aspects aside, the other side of the overall situation very often presents a gloomy picture. These differences in creation, such as colour and race, have led to the division of human society into various groups and blocs. The difference in mental and physical capabilities has further resulted in various divisions based on social and economical standards. This division is found at all levels. Individuals are torn apart by the barriers of poverty and richness. Nations are being classified as developed and developing countries on the same basis. And the phenomenon does not end here. Nations and individuals are being subjected to all sorts of discrimination due to their poverty. Individuals are looked down upon by their fellow beings merely because they were not born with a silver spoon in their mouth. Poor nations are hated and deprived of their equal position in the community of nations. The victims of poverty are persistently denied their basic human rights individually and collectively.

The organisers of this World

Assembly have rightly pointed out in their statement that poverty, that condition where human beings lack the basic necessities to sustain life, is a pervasive reality in our world. Islam, being a universal and comprehensive religion, has thoroughly commented on various aspects of this question and has guided us to such methods as may be helpful to safeguard the rights of the poor. Some of these points are mentioned below:

1. Discrimination stems from the feelings of superiority. In order to nip this evil in the bud, Islam has stressed the idea of absolute equality of all human beings in the sight of Allah. Neither membership of a tribe nor citizenship of a state confers any privilege, nor are they sources of honour. The true source of honour in the sight of Allah is a righteous life (Ch.49: V14). In his Farewell Address, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(saw) said:

'You are all brothers and are all equal. None of you can claim any privilege or any superiority over any other. An Arab is not

to be preferred to a non-Arab, nor is a non-Arab to be preferred to an Arab; nor is a white man to be preferred to a coloured one, or a coloured one to a white, except on the basis of righteousness.'
(Hanbal V, p.41).

2. Islam has stressed this point time and again in the Holy Qur'an that the whole universe, with all its potentials, has been created for the benefit of the whole of mankind without any discrimination. They are not intended for, or confined to, any particular section of human society. This teaching rules out the ideas of exclusive ownership or monopoly in regard to natural resources. All that God Almighty, the Creator, has created in this universe is to be used and shared by all.
3. After establishing the above-mentioned principles, in order to assure the equal position of the poor in a society, Islam has particularly stressed the status of such members of society who are generally looked down

upon and maltreated by others due to their poverty or other drawbacks. The orphans, the widows, the servants, the labourers and the poor are granted a respectable and honoured position in Islamic society. Muslims are enjoined to do maximum good to such people and any act of kindness and honour done towards these people is extremely praiseworthy and noble in the sight of Allah. Just to mention two examples, I wish to quote three sayings of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(saw):

In one place he is reported to have said that he who strives for the welfare of a widow will be joined with him in heaven as the two fingers of a hand are joined together.

Similarly, he has enjoined his faithful followers to pay the wages of a labourer before the sweat dries upon his body.

With regard to servants, the Prophet^(saw) said: ‘They are your brothers, and you should treat them as such. Provide them with the kind of clothes that you

wear and if you set them a hard task, join them in it to help them complete it’ (*Abu Dard*).

4. Islam has established a very comprehensive economic system in order to secure the widest and most beneficent distribution of wealth through institutions set up by it and through moral exhortations. Wealth must remain in constant circulation among all sections of the community and should not become the monopoly of the rich (Ch.59: V.8). Islam has ensured the achievement of this sublime object by establishing a system of inheritance and a system of regular charity on the one hand and prohibition of interest, gambling and all such ways of accumulating wealth by unlawful means on the other. This economic system laid down by Islam minimises the gap and difference between the poor and the rich and thus, goes a long way in eradicating the imbalance which is the root-cause of economic discrimination and denial of human rights.

Principles of Human Rights

The principles of Human Rights enunciated by Islam differ from the Western concept in two important aspects. First, the Islamic values are comprehensive and universal. Second, they are guaranteed by divine sanction derived from the Word of God. No other judicial or constitutional system can make this claim. Let us briefly examine the fundamentals of Islamic code on human rights.

In the opening verses of Surah Al-Rahman, and at several other sections of the Holy Qur'an, we are told that the aim of Islam is to establish a balance and to bring about an accord in the relationship of man and his Maker, his relationship with the Universe and with his fellow men through beneficent judgement. Islam insists upon the acceptance and comprehension of the unity and coordination of the creation and the unity and equality of man. The Holy Qur'an informs us time and again that the universe is created in an orderly design and that there is a specific purpose behind the creation of man. The most striking character of Islam is its universality and the place that it assigns to man

as the focal point of the universe. A unique position is thus allotted to man in the Divine scheme of the universe. Equipped with all the inherent qualities and capacities, and with Divine guidance available at all stages, and with the whole of the Universe subjected to his service, Man has been placed in the most favourable position for the complete fulfilment of his life.

The second fundamental characteristic of the Islamic code is the place of honour accorded to the freedom of man and the rejection of compulsion or coercion. However, it does not sanction unrestricted or unbridled freedom, as it would be against the very law of nature. Freedom has to be balanced with certain limitations. To ensure freedom for everyone, the freedom of each must be, to a degree, curbed, curtailed or controlled. The freedom that man enjoys is the right to discipline his freedom.

Like most subjects affecting human personality, the subject of human rights has many facets. As an all-pervading and complete religion, Islam provides a comprehensive framework for human conduct in terms of individual, moral, social,

economic and political rights and obligations. The Holy Qur'an has spelt out the rights of man during all phases of life – starting from pre-birth to childhood and through adult life to old age. The Holy Qur'an also lays down broad principles governing man's relations with all those who will possibly come into contact with him throughout his life. These include the rights of children, the rights of parents, the rights of a wife and a husband, the rights of neighbours, the rights of travellers, the rights of the needy, the rights of orphans, the rights of workers and wage earners. The list of the items is so comprehensive that the subject could provide a challenge for any legal or constitutional expert of modern times.

To begin with, Islam stands firmly and uncompromisingly on freedom of conscience. It does not seek to secure even belief in God through compulsion or coercion. Much less does it object to restricting freedom on the ground of one's belief and conviction. Belief is a matter of conscience and conscience cannot be compelled. This truth is proclaimed by the Holy Qur'an in Verse 257 of Surah Al-Baqarah:

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.
(Ch.2: V.257)

Again, in Verse 30 of Surah Al-Kahf, the Holy Qur'an mentions:

And say, 'It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.'

It follows that Islam gives a person the right to profess what he truly believes, and not to profess belief in that which he does not sincerely believe. In the same context, the change of belief, howsoever offensive from the moral or spiritual point of view, does not attract any physical penalty.

There is another fundamental right which the Holy Qur'an recognises and accords to man. This is the exercise of reason, understanding and judgement at every step. At the same time, man is allowed the

freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. This is essential so that knowledge may be fostered and ignorance repelled. The Holy Prophet^(saw) is quoted as saying: *‘The seeking of knowledge is a duty laid upon every Muslim, man and woman’*.

One should not get the impression that Islam speaks about human rights in abstract terms only. The limited time at my disposal has prevented me from discussing the social and economic rights enjoined by the Holy Qur’an. The principles concerning the protection of personal property and possessions, equality before law, equality of opportunity to work, reduction of poverty, balanced distribution of wealth, and sanctity of contracts and agreements are sanctioned by Islam and these also form the true basis of the concept of the Welfare State. Within a few years of the establishment of the first Islamic state, the provision of the basic necessities for everyone was assured. This is the reason why Islam is considered not only a religion but also a system and a civilisation which fulfils man’s spiritual as well as material needs.

Earlier, I had mentioned that the excellent example of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(saw), along with the Holy Qur’an, constitutes the most authentic source of instruction for a code of righteous conduct and for the preservation of the rights of man. The Holy Qur’an describes his functions as the creation and strengthening of faith through drawing attention to Divine Signs, the moral and physical uplift of the people, teaching them the Law and furnishing them with guidance and expounding the philosophy underlying the guidance given by the Holy Qur’an. What do we learn from his life about the preservation of human rights? From innumerable instances, let me mention only two events to illustrate his regard for the rights of the enemies of Islam and his own proclamation on human rights in the most precise terms.

The Holy Prophet^(saw) had appointed Hadhrat Ali^(ra), the Fourth Caliph of Islam, to conduct peace negotiations at Hudaibiyya with the Makkans who were sworn enemies of Islam and had waged war against the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his followers. After protracted negotiations, when the final terms

were being drawn, the Makkans strongly objected to the designation of the Holy Prophet^(saw) as the ‘Messenger of Allah’ and insisted that he should be described only as ‘Muhammad, Son of Abdullah’. When this was brought to the attention of the Holy Prophet^(saw), he said: ‘I am the Messenger of Allah and I am the son of Abdullah. If the Makkans so prefer, I may be described as ‘Muhammad, Son of Abdullah’. Hadhrat Ali^(ra) could not bring himself to bear the responsibility of removing the words ‘the Messenger of Allah’ from the draft and the Holy Prophet^(saw) amended the draft with his own hands.

On the occasion of his last pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet^(saw) addressed his people in Mina on the 11th of Dhul-Hajj, which is the epitome of the entire teachings of Islam. In this historical proclamation, he said: ‘All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever the status in life they may hold, are equal’. He further declared: ‘Your lives and your possessions have been made immune by God to attacks by one another until the Day of Judgment’.

This is the most eloquent and most perceptive universal declaration on the rights of free and equal man. So the entire mankind owes gratitude to the Holy Messenger of Islam^(saw), for drawing attention to the Divine Guidance concerning the status and rights of man as enjoined by the teachings of Islam.

THE MESSIAH HAS COME

Testimony of the Holy Bible

An extract of a speech delivered by Ataul Wahid Lahaye on 7h July, 2001, at the 25th Jalsa Salana of Jama'at Ahmadiyya Canada held at Baitul Islam Complex, Maple (Ontario).

Today, I will be discussing how Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) has fulfilled the prophecies contained in the Holy Bible regarding the Second Advent of Jesus Christ^(as). The majority of verses from the Bible that I am about to analyse are found in the literature of the millennium scholars who lived in the 19th century. Hundreds of these Christian scholars expected the immediate appearance of Christ, and many went so far as to precisely predict when he was to return. For example, Christopher Hoffman undertook to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem for Christ's occupancy in 1826.

Benge fixed the date of Christ's^(as) return at 1836, and from this prediction, others followed in rapid succession. The Irvingites in England and Scotland announced 1835, 1838, 1864 and 1866. Mother Lee and her Shakers abolished

matrimony, as they also believed Christ's return was at hand. Cunningham predicted 1839, Elliot 1866, Brewer and Decker both predicted 1867 and Seis favoured 1870.

William Miller, who predicted 1844, had up to 500,000 followers, many of whom were so convinced of Christ's^(as) return on October 22, 1844 that they refused to plant crops, gave away their money, discharged their employees, settled their accounts and made preparations for the climactic midnight cry, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.'

They dressed in shrouds, and stood on mountaintops in New York State awaiting Christ's descent. That day has gone down in history as the Great Disappointment.

A famous Jewish convert to

Christianity, Joseph Wolfe predicted 1847. Claus Epp, a leader of the Mennonite Brethren in Russia predicted March 8, 1889. The Dukhabors set forth from a Canadian village in 1902, some naked, to meet the Lord. Reverend Coming in his book, *The End*, written in 1879, concluded that all the signs of those days were preparing for the fulfilment of the prophecy for the Second Coming of Christ. He wrote, Christ is at our door. Harriet Livingston, a famous Washingtonian, preached The Second Coming before the House of Representatives in this time period.

The majority of the predictions that convinced these scholars that Christ's return was imminent are found in Matthew's 24th and Luke's 21st chapters. In these chapters, our attention is directed to other books of the Holy Bible that contain relevant prophecies. These prophecies can be divided into four main categories:

- The time of his return, specifically in years,
- The social environment that mankind would find itself experiencing at that time

including very specific events, heavenly signs.

- How the Messiah and his followers were to be treated.
- The general location of the Second Coming.

The Jews are still expecting their Messiah to come. That Messiah is to be escorted by Elijah the Prophet^(as) whom they believe rose physically to heaven in a chariot of fire thousands of years ago. The Jews of 2,000 years ago had the same expectations with evidence of this found in the New Testament. In John 1 verse 21, the Pharisees asked John the Baptist^(as) if he was Elijah and in Matthew 16:14 some people mistook Jesus^(as) for Elijah^(as). Their attitude was, we will certainly entertain your claim as the Messiah, but first produce Elijah^(as).

‘Behold, I will send you Elijah, the Prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.’

(Malachi 4:5)

Many Jews accepted Jesus^(as) as the Messiah, yet no Elijah descended

from heaven. Fortunately for us, Jesus^(as) clears up the entire misconception by explaining in Matthew 17:12-13 when he says:

‘But I say unto you that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist’

Elijah's return had been fulfilled by John the Baptist^(as).

Therefore, if we as Ahmadi Muslims claim that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) has fulfilled the descent of Jesus Christ^(as) as John the Baptist^(as) fulfilled the descent of Elijah^(as), we would not be extraneous to the explanation of such an event, as presented by Jesus^(as) himself. Obviously descent is a metaphorical term used to attach greater importance to the expected occurrence.

This is also supported in Matthew 23:39 where Jesus^(as) states:

‘...Ye shall not see me

henceforth till ye say “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”’

This may mean that someone was to come in the name of Jesus^(as), and not Jesus^(as) himself.

Let us now review the verses pertaining to Christ's^(as) return. In Luke 21:24-27, we read:

‘And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and waves roaring. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things, which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.’

In these verses, Jesus^(as) is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem by the Gentiles, and the

banishment of the Jews from Jerusalem. When that banishment was to end, when the time of the gentiles is fulfilled, he would return.

Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans under Emperor Titus in 70 A.D. after a long siege. In 132 A.D. the Jews, under the leadership of Bar Cochba, rebelled against the Romans. Jerusalem was destroyed and a new city, Aellia Capatilina was constructed on the ruins. Many Jews were scattered and exiled. Under Roman law, Jews were not allowed to enter the city. In 637, the Arabs took control of Jerusalem and similar restriction still applied.

This restriction upon the Jews was lifted when Turkey signed the 'Edict of Tolerance' allowing Jews to freely enter Jerusalem. This document was signed on March 21, 1844. Shortly thereafter, Jews started to migrate back to Jerusalem for the first time since 70 A.D. The time of the Gentiles had come to an end. David ben Gurion comments on this era in the book, *The Jews In Their Land*:

'And every such wave of return was inspired by renewed

Messianic hopes. This process was crowned in the last quarter of the 19th century with heightened immigration and the beginnings of agricultural settlements.'

The millennium scholars found a verse in the Book of Revelation that supported this date. In Chapter 11:2-3, we read:

'...And the holy city (Jerusalem) shall they tread under foot forty and two months....And they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days.'

Christian scholars all agree, that in Bible prophecy, one day stands for one year. This is supported in several verses. For example in Ezekiel 4:6 we read: 'I have appointed thee, each day for a year.'

The Christian scholars came to the conclusion, that since at that time, the Gentiles who controlled Jerusalem were Muslims, that predicted time period of forty-and two months, or 1,260 days when applied as the year 1,260 to the Muslim calendar was 1844 of the Christian calendar.

The Book of Matthew directs us to the Prophet Daniel^(as) in Chapter 24:15. Again the millennium scholars found reference to several more dates. Daniel 12: 11-12 referring to the holy temple in Jerusalem states:

‘And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.’

Using the same method of calculation as was used for the verse in Revelation; the dates of 1,290, 1305, and 1330 of the Muslim calendar correspond to 1873, 1888 and 1912 of the Christian Calendar. More dates are predicted in Daniel 9:1-24:

‘Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the

vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.’

The millennium Christian scholars unanimously interpreted this verse to be the time period from the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem to the coming years. They also took this prophecy to start when Artaxerxes decreed the Temple to be rebuilt in 47 B.C. as mentioned in Ezra Chapter 7. 457 BC plus 490 years brings us to 33 A.D., the general time of Christ’s^(as) crucifixion.

They also found another prophecy in Daniel that they believed applied to the Second Coming of Christ^(as). We find in Daniel 8:13-14:

‘Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake; How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.’

Adding 2300 years to 457 B.C.

brings us to 1843. We can readily understand why the millennium scholars of the 19th century expected the return of Jesus Christ^(as) during their time. The second category of predictions which describe the condition mankind would be in at that time fully support the same time period. We read in Matthew 24:14 :

‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.’

The study of the spread of Christianity conducted by the millennium scholars of the 19th century establishes that this was the time when the message of the kingdom had been conveyed to the entire world. According to the British and American Bible Societies, 421 million copies of the Bible had been distributed in 50 languages in practically every country of the world. In 1842, Mr. Spicer stated in *Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy*, that the gospel had been spread to 95% of the inhabitants of earth.

In 1842, five treaty ports in China

were opened to commerce and missionaries. In that same year, Dr. Livingston opened the door to Bible preaching in the African interior. In 1844, Turkey recognised the right of Muslims to become Christian. In the book, *A Hundred Years Of Missions*, Dr. Leanard writes:

‘For the first time since the apostolic period occurred, an outburst of general missionary zeal and activity occurred.’

He was referring to the 19th century.

Dr A.T. Pearson wrote in *Modern Mission Century*:

‘India, Siam, Burma, China, Japan, Turkey, Africa, Mexico, South America were successively and successfully entered within 5 years, from 1853 to 1858, new facilities were given to entrance and occupation of seven different countries, together embracing half the world population.’

Mr Faber writes in *Eight Dissertations*:

The stupendous endeavours of one gigantic community to convey the Scriptures in every language to every part of the globe may well deserve to be considered as an eminent sign even of these eventful times. Unless I be much mistaken. Such endeavours are preparatory to the final grand diffusion of Christianity, which is the theme of so many inspired prophets and which cannot be so far distant in the present day.’

Another prophecy of this category is found in Matthew 24:6,

‘And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.’

Just before the end, the end defined as the time for the return of Jesus Christ^(as), wars and rumours of wars would prevail. We can readily determine that this prophecy was fulfilled in the 19th century by reviewing the wars fought during that time period. To be brief, I will mention just 10. They were Britain, Prussia, Austria and Russia against

France in 1815. The war of 1818 between America and Britain. The Crimean War 1853, The Civil War in America 1861, Britain against China in 1860, the Sepoy Mutiny in India, 1857, Russia against Turkey, 1870, China against Korea, 1894, the Boxer Rebellion in China, 1900, Great Britain against the Boer Republic 1899 and America against Spain in 1898.

Two more prophecies of this category, the category of special events and social conditions is found in the Book of Daniel, 12:4. It states:

‘But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.’

Regarding the increase of knowledge, economist Robert Gordon suggests that the great inventions of 1860 to 1900 had a more pronounced effect on productivity and living standards and for many more years than our much-acclaimed New Economy of today. In fact, our modern inventions pale when compared to the great inventions leading to the

first new economy. Those inventions, electricity, the internal combustion engine, the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, advances in entertainment and communication, and urban sanitation really did change the world. The post 1913 surge in productivity growth that lasted until the beginning of the 1970's was directly connected to these new inventions. Computers and the Internet do not measure up to the Great Inventions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Again, we conclude that there was a great increase of knowledge in the 19th century.

The second prophecy found in this verse in Daniel speaks of people running to and fro, as a description of restlessness. Again looking for evidence of restlessness during the 19th century we see a long list of riots and revolutions. Again, for brevity, I will mention just 10. Enough to prove that this prophecy also came to light in the 19th century.

Riots raged in 1842 from September to December in southern and eastern England as rioting agricultural workers directed their main efforts against

threshing machines. More rural riots broke out in 1843. During the plug riots of 1842, strikers stopped, instead of wrecking the mills by removing the lead plugs in the steam engines. In Latin America, revolutions against the Spanish and Portuguese occurred in Venezuela, Argentina, Paraguay, and Mexico in the early 1800s under the leadership of Simon Bolivar. From July 27th to July 29th 1830, students and workers raised barricades and made themselves masters of France, leading to the flight of Charles X.

The Slavs were too scattered to form a single nation. A rising in Prague in June of 1848 was ruthlessly crushed by Austria. On March 13, 1881, the Nihilist organisation known as the People's Will, assassinated Tsar Alexander. The bomb blast shook every European throne and reprisal in Russia was severe. The general mood of Europe and the US was more aggressive in the last years of the 19th century, than it had been for several decades before. In November 1887, the lifeguards were called in to London to clear Trafalgar Square of demonstrators. On May 1, 1890, militant workers

demonstrated in both America and Europe, demanding an 8-hour day. In 1894, the army was called in to quell rioting strikers in Illinois. In China, rebellions, murders, massacres and succession crises accompanied the rise of power of Empress Tzu Hsi in 1898.

R.A. Wallace in his book, *The Wonderful Century*, 1898, summarised the mood of the time.

‘There was, therefore, no 19th century resting place. The French Revolution, combined with the Industrial Revolution (both unfinished), affected both ways of thinking and feeling. The repercussions are still echoed today.’

The next category deals with heavenly signs, or special astronomical activities. Research into this topic show that the amount of unique astronomical activities increased several times during the 19th century.

Again we turn to Matthew’s 24th chapter, verse 29.

‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall

the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heavens and the power of the heavens shall be shaken.’

The Christian Millennium scholars of the 19th century interpreted this verse to mean eclipses of the sun and the moon, meteor showers, comets, etc.

Henry James Foreman states in his book, *The Story of Prophecy*,

‘It was the 19th century, yet the shooting stars of 1833, and the perihelia, or rings around the sun 1843 were objects of the most awesome speculation and discussion. And the tail of the great comet of 1843 measured 108 million miles in length... whole families were engaged in making shrouds against that fateful day.’

In 1811, a comet appeared with a head 1,125,000 miles in diameter, larger than the sun. The tail was 100 million miles in length.

Bielids Comet was first discovered in 1772, but was not found to be periodical until 1826. In 1832 the

comet passed very close to the earth. In 1845, the comet was observed to break in two, and in 1852, at the time of its expected return, it was found that the two parts of the comet were both very faint and separated by over one million miles. It did not return in 1866.

On November 27 of 1885, a spectacular meteor shower originating from Von Nostrands Comet was observed. 39,546 meteors were observed in four hours and eight minutes. Since 1899, very few showers from this comet have been observed.

Records of Leonids Comet are found as far back as 585 A.D. In 1799, 1833 and 1866-67 this comet caused the most spectacular shower of modern times.

The great comet of 1843, which has not been named, was a periodical comet with an orbit of 400 years. It had the longest tail of any comet, 200 million miles long, making it a sight of grandeur. Donati's comet lit the sky in 1858.

Yet another comet appeared in 1861. At one time the comet was

brighter than any star in the sky, except Venus, and a peculiar glow suffused the entire sky. It could easily be seen in broad daylight.

Another great comet, one of the brightest of modern times, passed within a third of a million miles of the sun in 1882.

The head of Holmes comet had a diameter in excess of a million miles. It is one of the largest on record and appeared in 1892, 1899 and 1906. Since then it has not been seen.

On June 30, 1908, the greatest meteor fall in modern history took place in Siberia. Scientists still study this phenomenon because of its great destructive power. Lunar and Solar eclipses also occurred in 1894 and 1895.

To the people witnessing these events, it would surely have looked as if the stars were falling from heaven, and we can readily conclude that this prophecy was fulfilled during the 19th century.

Let us now turn to the fourth category of millennium prophecies, those that describe how the

Messiah and his followers were to be treated.

‘Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.

And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.’

(Matthew 24:9,30)

‘For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends, and some of you shall be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair on your head perish.’

(Luke 21: 15-18)

These verses paint a rather grim picture of how those who were to accept the Messiah, those who would pledge their loyalty to the one who would represent Jesus

Christ^(as) in his Second Coming, were to be treated. Hatred, persecution and even death awaited them. They would be betrayed by their own family members and entire nations would conspire to oppose them.

The Messiah, from the verses in Luke, would possess profound wisdom, such that no one on earth could argue against him, and even though afflicted with severe persecution, he would be protected by God Almighty as indicated by ‘there shall not an hair on your head shall perish’.

His appearance should be of a cloudy nature, and his message would run counter to all contemporary thought and expectations, causing the nations of the earth to mourn. This type of appearance is supported in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians 5:2.

‘For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.’

The fifth category of prophecies indicating the general location of the Second Coming is found in Matthew 24:27:

‘For as lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.’

The millennium scholars interpreted this verse literally, expecting Christ's return to be accompanied by a huge flash of lightning that would travel across the globe. However, the verse could very well indicate that since Jesus^(as) was in Jerusalem when he made this prophecy, the Second Coming would appear east of Jerusalem, and the light or teachings of the Promised One would first be accepted in the east and would eventually extend to the west.

This interpretation finds support in Ezekiel 43:2 where he describes in a vision the glory of God came from the way of the east, and in Revelation 7:2 that mentions another angel ascending from the east having the seal of the living God.

We also read in Matthew 24th chapter, verse 5:

‘For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many.’

This verse also indicates that the Second Coming would not be of an earth shattering event because if false Messiahs were to be accepted, they would somehow have to announce their arrival by descending from the sky surrounded by lighting bolts and angels. During the 19th century there were several men claiming to be either the Messiah or a Prophet. They were the Mahdi of Sudan; Alexander Dowie of Zion, Ohio, who claimed to be Elijah the third; Joseph Smith of the Mormons who claimed to be a prophet; Ali Muhammad Bab who claimed to be the Mahdi when he performed Hajj in 1844; Bahauallah of Iran who claimed to be the manifestation of God; Piggot of England who claimed to be the Messiah; and Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^(as) who claimed he represented the second coming of Christ for the Christians and Imam Mahdi for the Muslims.

To find the true Messiah, we need to apply the prophecies from categories 4 and 5, those that describe the Messiah's characteristics and how he and his followers would be received, to the claimants who came from areas

east of Jerusalem during the 19th century. They were Mirza Ali Muhammad (Ali Muhammad Bab of Shiraz), Bahauallah (Mirza Hussain Ali Nur) of Tehran and Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^(as), India.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) was born in Qadian, India in the year 1835 and departed from this world in 1908. Heavenly signs mark both the years of his birth and death. Haley's Comet made its most dramatic appearance of modern times in 1835, and a great meteor impact occurred in Siberia in 1908.

Qadian, India is directly east of Jerusalem. He authored over 80 books on religious and comparative religious studies and claimed to be the Mahdi and Messiah whose advent had been predicted in the Holy Bible and other holy books.

When commenting on just one of his books titled *Baraheen-e-Ahmadiyya*, one of his most bitter opponents admitted, and he says: 'He challenged the representatives of other religions to prove the truth of their religions with the same or

less number of arguments as had been presented by him in support of the Holy Qur'an in his monumental work.' (*Qadianism, A Critical Study*, p.27)

Towards the end of 1890, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) announced that God had informed him that Jesus^(as) was dead and was not going to return and that he was in fact representing the Second Advent of Jesus^(as). This announcement brought a storm of protest and threats from Christians and Muslims alike, who both were and are still expecting Jesus^(as) to descend from the sky. He told the entire world that their beliefs were wrong, their knowledge hollow and their actions unworthy because their spiritual faculties had become debilitated by drifting away from God.

Today, the followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^(as), India are counted in tens of millions and have established centres for the spread of the true Islam in over 150 countries. We propagate our faith by means of clear and logical arguments, based on wisdom and proof. However, the Messiah and his followers were,

and still are persecuted in many countries.

In 1984, General Ziaul Haq of Pakistan brought Ordinance XX into law, making it a criminal offence for the followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) to practise or propagate their religion. On the Pakistani passport applications, the applicant must sign a statement denouncing Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) as an impostor before a passport is issued.

The Saudi Arabian Government does not allow the followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) from Pakistan to perform Hajj.

A report by the Lawyers Committee for human rights states that the Ahmadiyya Sect, as a group, is subject to systematic and extensive discrimination.

Over the course of the last 111 years, Ahmadis have been murdered in cold blood, only because they believe that the Messiah has come.

In closing, only one of the claimants who came from east of

Jerusalem was alive to witness and announce that these eclipses were a unique sign by God specifically for him and that was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^(as).

HADHRAT MUHAMMAD^(saw) as ‘Abd Shakur’ (graceful servant of Allah)

Speech delivered by Maulana Naseem Mahdi, (Ameer Jama’at Ahmadiyya Canada) on the occasion of Jalsa Salana Canada 2004

Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! you also should invoke blessings on him and salute him with the salutation of peace.
(Ch.33: V.57)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw) – the ‘Abd Shakur’ – embodied the quality of gratitude to the highest degree and practiced it for his entire life. The following is a description of the state of contemporary society with regards to gratitude; the Islamic teachings on the concept of gratitude, some examples from the life of Holy Prophet^(saw) on how he infused every element of this teaching into his life and the benefits of following his beautiful model in gratitude.

Ingratitude in Contemporary Society

Sadly, ingratitude has become an integral part of society. The Holy

Qur’an draws our attention to this phenomenon.

And We have established you in the earth and provided for you therein the means of subsistence. How little thanks you give!
(Ch.7: V.11)

Ingratitude is so ingrained in the lives of people that they cannot perceive their ungratefulness and hence do not admit it. Amazingly, this situation occurs at times when we have more to be thankful for, than any other previous civilisation. Human life has been extended by decades. The quality of life has been improved to a degree that was incomprehensible merely a hundred years ago. Similarly, the wealth of individuals and nations has reached enormous proportions, which reminds a person of stories of uncountable treasures.

Individualism and Excessive Individual Freedom: Cause of Ingratitude

Regretfully many people have got into the cult of ingratitude under the guise of individualism and individual freedom. Not so long ago I attended the graduation ceremony of one of my children in grade one. My experience was similar to the other ceremonies I had attended for Grade 5, Grade 8 and countless other achievements. One common thing I noticed at each of these events was how much individual success was being noted and appreciated at each of these events. It was as if the whole world revolved around these young people and that their current status was achieved without regard of a divine being. This so called individualism is not limited to school going children; Adults face the same mindset in their work place.

Negative Perception of God

Generally, people assume that each success is achieved because of their own efforts and anything bad must be attributed to some freak accident of nature. For example, we do not hear much about

Quebec's successful skiing season; we do not hear about plentiful harvest of the prairies; we do not hear people thanking for the benefits of the forestry of British Columbia; but on the onset of each calamity, be it a snowstorm in Quebec, a drought in the prairies or wild fires in British Columbia, it is termed as an Act of God, as if God is only out there to smite people.

Gratitude in Islam

In this wilderness of ingratitude, Islamic teachings are like a source of light or fresh morning breeze.

In Islam, gratitude is a spiritual and moral state of mind. It is spiritual in the sense of acknowledging the believers' obligation to the Creator and moral in the sense of mandating rightful conduct in relation to God and to those appointed by God.

Ingratitude is simply the opposite of gratitude. It is characterised by the denial of what is rightfully owed to God. The Holy Qur'an states that ingratitude is a form of rebellious unbelief or kufr. It ruins, and distorts the very basis of all moral relationships, whether those

with God or those within the human community.

A dominant feature of the concept of gratitude – '*shukr*' in the Holy Qur'an – is its use to describe the spiritual bond between the believer and God. The term '*shukr*' is derived from the root '*shin-kaf-ra*'. Words derived from this root occur at more than seventy places in the Holy Qur'an. In Arabic lexicons, the term '*shakara*' has the root meaning of 'being filled over', of that of an 'expression'. '*Al-Mishkar*' is a milk-producing animal that is productive despite lack of fodder. 'Shakra' is also the grass that grows despite very little water. Inherent in this meaning is the ability to become content with small provisions. This also refers to the ability to be productive despite meagre resources.

Types of Shukr

According to the very well known dictionary Tajul'Urus, *shukr* is of three types:

1. *Shukr bi al-Qalb*: Its literal meaning is gratitude in the heart. It relates to the understanding at the

provisions given to us and their knowledge in one's heart and mind.

2. *Shukr bi al-Lisan*: Its literal meaning is gratitude with the tongue. It refers to verbal praise for the one who has done us some favour.

3. *Shukr bi al-Jawarih*: This term is applied for appropriate and suitable use of the provisions provided to a person.

Basis for Gratitude

The root of gratitude lies in the act of creation to which every human being owes his existence. The sustenance of life through Allah's bounties and blessings is further grounds for gratitude.

The Holy Qur'an states:

And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing, and gave you ears and eyes and hearts, that you might be grateful.

(Ch.16: V.79)

The Holy Prophet^(saw) as Abd Shakur

The person who exemplified this gratitude in his life was the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw). Therefore if we are ever to truly learn about *shukr*, then we must turn our eyes towards the life of the Holy Prophet^(saw) as *Abd Shakur*.

Qualities of Abd Shakur

Abd Shakur is in reality a composite of two qualities. In it, the Holy Prophet^(saw) can be seen as the true '*abd*' or servant of God and he can be witnessed as the true human embodiment of '*shakur*' the one who shows gratitude. These two qualities are completely intertwined. Their relationship is such that one cannot be truly called an *abd* or a servant of God without showing gratitude and that a *shakir* or a *shakur* – a person who does *shukr* – cannot attain his status, unless he is a true servant of God, i.e., and *abd* of Allah.

Examples of the Holy Prophet's^(saw) Appreciation

We witness that the Holy Prophet Muhammad's^(saw) entire life revolved around the remembrance and gratitude of Allah. He started

his day with *hamd* or praise of Allah. During the day, before starting any activity, he would remember and thank Allah, and He would end that activity by again showing gratitude to Allah. Despite the fact that his entire day was spent being grateful to Allah, he continued to pray:

‘Oh my Lord, Make me one of those who remember You and of those who show ingratitude towards Allah.’ (*Abu Daud, Kitab-us-Salat, The book of prayer*)

Even after his obligatory prayers, he would not forget the remembrance of Allah and continued in the following words.

‘Oh, My Allah grant me the ability to pray that is full of your remembrance, gratitude and beauty.’
(*Abu Daud, Kitab-us-Salat, the book of prayer*)

The Holy Prophet^(saw) did not pass a single occasion on which a person could show gratitude without setting an example for us. For example whenever it rained

after a long dry season, the Holy Prophet(saw) was full of gratitude to Allah. He would uncover his head and take the early shower upon his blessed head and would say:

‘This is a fresh blessing from my Lord.’

(*Masnad-e-Ahmad, Volume 3, page 267 published in Beirut*)

The Holy Qur’an mentions a prophecy of Jesus(as) that indicates that a prophet by the name of ‘Ahmad’ would come after him. One meaning of Ahmad is a person who has shown incomparable gratitude towards Allah. This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet(saw) who taught us Surah Al-Fatiha, which is the most beautiful *hamd* or praise possible.

One attribute of Allah is that He is *Shakur*, The Appreciator. Thus *shukr* is the ability to appreciate. The Holy Prophet(saw) is the perfect manifestation of human equivalent of this attribute. He appreciated every kindness or good deed of other fellow beings. He reminded us that a person who is not appreciative of others cannot be

grateful to Allah. He has admonished us to be mindful of other people’s favours.

One example on true appreciation is related to the Holy Prophet’s(saw) visit to Ta’if. Upon the Holy Prophet’s(saw) return, the non-Muslim Mut’im bin’ Adi extended his protection to the Holy Prophet(saw), so that he could enter Makkah again. Although Mut’im died soon thereafter, the Holy Prophet(saw) did not forget the good deed. When the prisoners of battle of Badr were presented to the Holy Prophet(saw), he said,

‘If Mut’im had been alive, and he had asked to free these prisoners, I would have done so without asking for any ransom’¹

Similarly, during the battle of Badr, an uncle of the Holy Prophet(saw), Hadhrat Abbas(ra) was one of the prisoners. The Holy Prophet(saw) had ordered that all the prisoners should be given clothes. However, Hadhrat Abbas(ra) was quite tall, and no person’s garment would fit him. Abdullah bin ‘Ubayy, a hypocrite, brought his shirt from

home and gave it to Hadhrat Abbas(saw). Even this deed was not forgotten by the Holy Prophet(saw), so much so that upon the death of this leader of the hypocrites, the Holy Prophet(saw) gave his blessed garment for his burial.

Another incident shows how the Holy Prophet(saw) was appreciative of others. Hadhrat Fatima bint Asad(ra) was the mother of Hadhrat Ali(ra) and a cousin of the Holy Prophet(saw). When she passed away in Madinah the Holy Prophet(saw) gave his blessed garment for her shroud and personally lowered her corpse into her grave to ensure that the burial was performed correctly. His eyes were full of tears at that time. Hadhrat Umar(ra) asked the reason for that special attention. The Holy Prophet(saw) indicated that after the death of his mother, Hadhrat Fatima(ra) was like a mother to him. She had showed such loving treatment that he could not truly show his gratitude.

He continued: 'Whenever I sat with my cousins to eat, she would provide for me even more than what was given to her own sons.

Even then, she would save some food for me separately.'

Examples of Holy Prophet's(saw) Contentment

Shukr has another meaning of contentment. The early life of Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa(saw) was full of struggles. However, when he migrated to Madinah and Islam spread to all corners of Arabia, life became affluent for many. Despite that change in fortunes, the Holy Prophet(saw) led a simple and content life, always looking to provide for people worse off than him.

Hadhrat Abu Huraira(ra) narrated that the Holy Prophet(saw) said,

'If any of you would like to see the great blessings of Allah on him, then let him look at those who are less fortunate than him, not those who appear better off than him.'²

Hadhrat Aisha(ra) relates that it never happened that food was cooked in the household of the Holy Prophet(saw) for three consecutive days. Surely if the Holy Prophet(saw) had wanted, he

could have filled his house with the best of provisions; but his way of showing gratitude was to remain content and not show any greed.

Once Hadhrat Umar^(ra) visited the Holy Prophet^(saw) and noticed that he was resting upon a mat. When the Holy Prophet^(saw) got up, the marks of this rough mat were evident on his skin. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) was much disturbed by this sight and enquired if a better arrangement could be made for the Holy Prophet^(saw). The Holy Prophet^(saw) responded by saying that there was no need for such luxuries as he was leading his life in this world just like a traveller who had stopped under a tree for rest before continuing his journey. Some may think that there is no connection of contentment with thankfulness, but, in reality, true gratitude cannot be shown without being content. Greed is the enemy of contentment and thankfulness.

The conquest of Makkah is the epitome of true gratitude. The Holy Prophet^(saw) entered Makkah victoriously with ten thousand followers. However, due to his

gratitude to Allah and humility, he entered the city in a prostrating position looking down – while sitting on the back of a camel. It was a magnificent bloodless victory, which had been prophesied in the earlier scriptures. A worldly leader would have started a grand feast to celebrate this monumental victory. That ruler would have butchered hundreds of animals for this feast. However, the attitude of the Holy Prophet^(saw) provides true guidance to us. After completing some urgent tasks, the Holy Prophet^(saw) visited Umm Hani's^(ra) abode and asked her if there was anything to eat. She responded that there was nothing in the house except some dried breadcrumbs. The Holy Prophet^(saw) asked her to dip those breadcrumbs in water to make them soft and edible. He then enquired from her if there was anything to eat with those breadcrumbs. She responded that there was nothing in the house except a few drops of vinegar. The Holy Prophet^(saw) asked her to bring that vinegar and started to eat. With each bite, he thanked Allah; he praised Allah and said how good those breadcrumbs were with those few drops of vinegar.

Such was the feast of the Holy Prophet(saw) on the great victory of Makkah.³

It is reported that the Holy Prophet(saw) often stayed up all night standing until his feet became swollen. When he was asked why he was subjecting himself to such hardship, when Allah had already forgiven all his past and future human lapses. He would reply, 'Should I not be a grateful servant?'⁴

Hisham bin Urwa said that the Holy Prophet(saw) used to pray, 'Oh Allah! Help me to remember You, to give thanks to You and to worship You well.'⁵

The Holy Prophet(saw) once said: 'Allah is pleased with his slave, who, when he eats something, thanks Allah for it and when he drinks something, thanks Allah for it.'⁶

Shu'bah(ra) narrated that once he came to the Messenger of Allah(saw) looking untidy and scruffy. The Holy Prophet(saw) asked him whether he had any possessions. Shu'bah(ra) replied

that Allah had given him camels, horses, slaves and sheep. The Holy Prophet(saw) said, 'If Allah has given you all of that, then let Him see His blessings on you.'

Al-Nu'man bin Bashir(ra) narrated that the Holy Prophet(saw) said, 'Speaking of Allah's blessing is gratitude and ignoring it is ingratitude. The one who does not give thanks for a small blessing will not give thanks for a great blessing, and the one who does not give thanks to people will not give thanks to Allah.'⁷

Examples of the Holy Prophet's(saw) Remembrance of Allah

The Holy Prophet(saw) was very particular about prayers in congregation. Even during illness, he would go to the mosque to lead the prayers himself. Once, due to severity of illness, he was not able to proceed to the mosque and instructed Hadhrat Abu Bakr(ra) to lead the prayers. As he felt a bit better, he asked to be supported to the mosque. He was still so feeble that he had to rest his weight on the shoulders of two men. According to Hadhrat Aishah(ra),

his feet trailed around the ground. Is this not the example of a true servant of Allah whose every breath was filled with the remembrance of Allah?⁸

It is fascinating to note that every moment of the life of the Holy Prophet(saw) was filled with the remembrance of Allah. Even while going to sleep, he would offer the prayer:

‘O Allah! Let me die with Thy name on my lips, and with Thy name on my lips let me rise.’ Upon waking up he would say, ‘All praise is due to Allah Who has brought me to life after death and one day we shall all be gathered unto Him.’⁹

Darud Sharif – Our Gratitude to the Holy Prophet(saw)

The Holy Prophet(saw) was the best amongst the grateful servants of Allah. Allah the Almighty has bestowed us with all kinds of bounties because of the Holy Prophet’s gratitude toward Him. If we show our gratitude to the Holy Prophet(saw) by offering Darud Sharif, Allah the Almighty will multiply these favours on us.

Fruits of Following the Beautiful Example of the Holy Prophet(saw) as Abd Shakur

In the Holy Qur’an, Allah the Almighty says:

And remember also the time when your Lord declared: If you are grateful, I will, surely, bestow more favours on you; but if you are ungrateful, then know that My punishment is severe indeed.’ (Ch.14: V.8)

The Holy Prophet(saw) offered his gratefulness toward Allah the Almighty throughout his life. The bounties that Allah bestowed upon the Holy Prophet(saw) as a result of his gratitude to Allah are mentioned in the Holy Qur’an in the following words:

Surely, we have given thee an abundance of good.
(Ch.108: V.2)

These favours that belong to this world as well as the hereafter will also be extended to his true followers.

Allah the Almighty says in the Holy Qur’an:

O ye who believe! fear Allah and seek the way of approach unto Him and strive in His way that you may prosper.

(Ch.5: V.36)

The Holy Prophet^(saw) has shown us the beautiful face of Allah; he has given us the beautiful teaching in the shape of the Holy Qur'an; he has given us the beautiful Sharia of Islam, the most beautiful religion on earth. So, following in his footsteps and showing our gratitude to him, we should also become grateful servants of Allah the Almighty.

In this time and age, the Promised Messiah^(as) – the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been given the torch of Islam. The light will shine through him. He is the second coming of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw). He claims that whatever he has got is due to his love for the Holy Prophet^(saw). He says:

‘Once I realised that I should spend more time in invoking blessings and saying *darud* on the name of Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa^(saw), I

realised that the roads leading to Allah are very tiny and some times you have to find them with struggle. Then I realised that this is possible only through the medium of the Holy Prophet^(saw), because Allah says, ‘*seek the way of approach Unto Him.*’ The way of approach to Allah is true obedience of Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa^(saw). Then I saw a vision that two angels come to my house with containers of light. One comes from the outside and one comes from the inside. They are sprinkling light in my house while saying, ‘*This light is given to you because you have been sending darud on the Holy Prophet.*’¹⁰

If we show our gratitude to the Holy Prophet^(saw), then since he possesses the attribute of Shakur to its full human capacity, his appreciation for us will work in our favour in wonderful ways as is evident from the following Ahadith:

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah^(ra) relates that the Holy

Prophet(saw) said, 'He who calls blessings on me, Allah sends down blessings on him ten times.' (*Sahih Muslim*) The Holy Prophet(saw) was not in need of blessings, from us; but he has shown us the way to receive the blessing of Allah.

Hadhrat Abu Talha Ansari(ra) relates that one morning the Holy Prophet(saw) was extraordinarily cheerful. His face was shining with joy. The companions enquired from the Holy Prophet(saw) the reason of such extreme happiness. The Holy Prophet(saw) replied that Hadhrat Gabriel(as) came to him and told him that he who sends or invokes darud or salam on him from his ummah, Allah will write down ten good deeds in his record. Moreover, ten bad deeds will be taken away from his record and the spiritual station of that person will be raised ten times.¹¹

On the Day of Judgement everybody will be in a state of loss and fear. However, the Holy Prophet(saw) said:

'The closest to me on the Day of Judgement will be those who called down blessings on me the most.'

(*Jamia Tirmidi*)

Similarly, in another hadith, the Holy Prophet(saw) said:

'The best of your days is Friday. Therefore, invoke blessings on me frequently on that day, for your invocation is conveyed to me.'¹²

Thus a spiritual arrangement has been made by Allah the Almighty such that our *darud* is reported to the soul of the Holy Prophet(saw).

Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq(ra) relates that the Holy Prophet(saw) said:

'He who sends *darud* on me, I will intercede on his behalf on the Day of Judgement.'¹³

Hadhrat Fadhaalah bin' Ubaid relates that the Holy Prophet(saw) heard someone supplicate in his prayer without glorification of Allah and without invoking blessings upon the Holy Prophet(saw). The Holy Prophet(saw)

observed that he was in a hurry. Then he called him and said to him or to someone beside him that when one is to supplicate, the prayer should begin with the praise of his Lord and His glorification followed by the invoking of blessings on the Holy Prophet(saw). Then one can supplicate as he may wish. Hence the Holy Prophet(saw) has taught us the art of prayer. Our prayers are enriched when they start with the praise and glorification of Allah and with darud and salam on the Holy Prophet(saw).¹⁴

Hadhrat Ubayy bin Ka'b once told the Holy Prophet(saw) that when he supplicated, he would spend one fourth of his time in *darud*. He enquired whether he should increase the amount of time spent in *darud*. The Holy Prophet(saw) replied that if he were to offer more *darud*, it would be better for him. Upon hearing this advice, he suggested that he reserved half of his time of supplication for *darud*. The Holy Prophet(saw) again said that if he were to offer even more *darud*, it would be better for him. Then he suggested that he spent two thirds of his supplication time

in *darud*. Again the Holy Prophet(saw) said that if he were to offer even more *darud*, it would be better for him. Now he said that he would only offer *darud sharif* during his entire supplication. Upon this, the Holy Prophet(saw) said Allah would fulfil all of his desires.¹⁵

Hadhrat Anas(ra) relates that the Holy Prophet(saw) said:

'The one who says darud one thousand times a day, he will not die until he is shown his abode in paradise.'¹⁶

Conclusion

How often do we come across people who complain about small and insignificant things? How often do we see people not content with provisions given to them by Allah? How often do we realise that what Allah has provided for us is truly a blessing? The attitude of appreciation, contentment and gratitude must develop within our daily lives. Without this change in our behaviour, we cannot truly follow in the footsteps of our beloved master Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa(saw).

What a perfect example of shukr has been set by the Holy Prophet(saw) for us. He was an Abd Shakur. He is Shakur because he appreciated. When we send darud, it is appreciated by Allah on his behalf and a spiritual relationship is developed with him which will grow so strong by the Day of Judgement that he will intercede on our behalf. Therefore, we must strive to develop a spiritual relationship with the Holy Prophet(saw)

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PUNISHMENT FOR APOSTASY – Part 7

This is the seventh extract from the 'Murder in the Name of Allah' by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, dealing with Jama'at Islami's founder, Maulana Maududi's misinterpretation of the Islamic concept of Jihad.

In earlier chapters we have given numerous references from the Holy Qur'an and the history of Islam to expose the fallacy that Islam prescribes any corporal punishment for those who renounce Islam as their faith. We examined at length the most common arguments presented by the advocates of death for apostasy, namely the report of Ikramah and the incident of *zakat* in Hadhrat Abu Bakr's time. Some other arguments are examined in this chapter.

It is difficult to assess whether the concept of coercion in Islam had its birth on Islamic soil or was the child of the orientalist's imagination and was later on transferred to the lap of Islam. Having examined this in the light of Islamic history, I honestly believe that the idea first took root in the Islamic world itself and that it is wrong of us to blame the

orientalists for having initiated it. They picked it up from the Muslims: before the orientalists were even born, the idea seems to have been present in medieval Islamic thought. It originated in the late Umayyad dynasty. Throughout the Abbaside period, the idea continued to flourish and was further strengthened because the Abbaside sovereigns wanted to use force not only against the enemies of Islam but also against their own people. A licence for this was not infrequently sought from Muslim scholars under their influence. The concept has therefore arisen from the conduct and policies of the post-Khilafat-i-Rashida¹ Muslim governments of Baghdad.

Looking on from the outside, Western scholars believed that this was an Islamic teaching, but the fact was that it was not Islamic at all. It was the basis of the

behaviour of some Muslim governments. We should remember that the idea had its birth in an age when all over the world the use of force for the spread of influence and ideology was a common feature and no exception was taken to this.

It is clear that the allegation that Islam advocates the use of force for the spread of its ideology does not originate from a study of the sources of Islamic teachings but from a study of the conduct of some Muslim states. Now that a new era has dawned in which all the Islamic literature and traditions are available to us and the Holy Qur'an has been translated into so many languages – when Western scholars have direct access to the sources of Islamic teachings – their persistence in making the allegation is unjustified. They should go to the sources and study the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, the traditions and the conduct of the Holy Prophet, Muhammad^(saw), himself.

This work is an attempt to examine the whole issue, not in the light of how Muslims of a

certain era behaved, but in the light of the fundamental teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the exposition of those teachings by the words of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and by his conduct.

The tendency to judge teachings by the conduct of their followers has often misled people about the original teachings. It is universally observed that after a while all religions lose their influence on the conduct of their adherents. For illustrations of this, study the behaviour of the Buddhists of today or of earlier eras, study the behaviour of the Hindu governments, and so on and so forth; it often has no relationship whatsoever with the original teachings. In particular, politics must not be confused with religion; political behaviour of a nation should not be treated as a mirror reflecting the teachings of the religion which its people are supposed to follow.

It is against this background that we examine the arguments presented by the advocates of death as a punishment for apostasy.

Definition of an apostate

The Holy Qur'an states:

They will not stop fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can. The works of those from among you who turn back from their faith and die in a state of disbelief shall be vain in this world and the next. These are the inmates of the fire, therein shall they abide.

(Ch2: V.218)

This means that whoever, out of fear of the sword (or pain of punishment), decides to abjure Islam has a fundamental right to do so but no one else has the right to declare him to be an apostate. The right to declare himself to be an apostate lies only with him. Nowhere in the Holy Qur'an has this right been granted to others. That is to say, one is free to renounce one's own religion but has no right to impose renunciation of religion on others. According to Islamic teachings, an apostate, therefore, cannot be manufactured by religious scholars or the clergy or any non-tolerant individual or government.

The Holy Qur'an also states:

Surely, those who have turned away after guidance has been made manifest to them have been deceived by Satan who has beguiled them with false hopes.

(Ch.47: V.26)

The Holy Qur'an says:

O ye who believe, whoso from among you turns back from his religion let him remember that in place of such a person, Allah will soon bring a people whom He will love and who will love Him, who will be kind and considerate towards the believers and firm and unyielding towards the disbelievers. They will strive hard in the cause of Allah and will not at all take to heart the reproaches of fault finders. That is Allah's grace; He bestows it upon whosoever He pleases. Allah is the Lord of vast bounty, All-Knowing.

(Ch.5: V.55)

Whoso disbelieves in Allah after he has believed,

excepting the case of one who is forced to make a declaration of disbelief while his heart rests securely in faith, but one who opens his mind wide to disbelief; on him is Allah's wrath and he shall have a grievous punishment.

(Ch.16: V.107)

Those who believe, then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve and thereafter go on increasing in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them, nor guide them to any way of deliverance.

(Ch.4: V.138)

Muhammad is but a Messenger; of a surety, all Messengers before him have passed away. If then, he dies or be slain, will you turn back on your heels? He who turns back on his heels shall not harm Allah a whit. Allah will certainly reward the grateful.

(Ch.3: V.145)

No corporal punishment can be understood to have been mentioned by any stretch of imagination in the foregoing

passages from the Holy Qur'an.

Surah Al-Taubah

In a desperate search for at least one verse in the Holy Qur'an which might lend support for death as a punishment for apostasy, recourse has been made to verses 12 and 13 of Chapter 9 (Surah Al-Taubah). We quote below verses 3-14 of that chapter. These speak for themselves and defy all attempts on the part of anyone who would have them understood differently:

3. This is a public proclamation on the part of Allah and His Messenger on the day of the Great Pilgrimage, that Allah is free of all obligation to the idolaters, and so is His Messenger. So now, having witnessed this Sign, if you will repent and make peace, it will be better for you; but if you turn away, then know that you cannot frustrate Allah's design. Warn the disbelievers of a painful chastisement.

4. Excepting those of them with whom you have a pact and who have not defaulted in any respect, nor supported anyone against you.

Carry out the obligations you have assumed towards them till the end of their terms. Surely, Allah loves those who are mindful of their obligations.

5. When the period of four months during which hostilities are suspended expires, without the idolaters having settled the terms of peace with you, resume fighting with them and kill them wherever you find them and make them prisoners and beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. Then if they repent and observe prayers and pay the zakat, leave them alone. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

6. If anyone of the idolaters seeks asylum with thee, grant him asylum so that he may hear the Word of Allah; then convey him to a place of security for him, for they are a people who lack knowledge.

7. How could there be a guarantee for the idolaters on the part of Allah and His Messenger, except in favour of those with whom you entered into an express treaty at the Sacred Mosque? So long as they carry out their obligations

thereunder, you must carry out your obligations. Surely, Allah loves those who are mindful of their obligations.

8. How can there be a guarantee for the others who, if they were to prevail against you, would have no regard for any tie of kinship or pact in respect of you? They seek to please you with words, while their hearts repudiate them; most of them are perfidious.

9. They have bartered the Signs of Allah for small gains and hindered people from His way. Evil indeed is that which they have done.

10. They show no regard for any tie of kinship or any pact in respect of a believer. It is they who are the transgressors.

11. If they repent and observe prayer and pay the zakat, then they are your brethren in faith. We expound our commandments for a people who know.

12. But if they break faith after pledging it and ridicule your religion, then fight these leaders of disbelief that they may desist, for

they have no regard for their pledged word.

13. *Will you not fight a people who have violated their oaths, who plotted to turn out the Messenger from his home, and who were the first to start hostilities against you? Do you fear them? It is Allah Who is Most Worthy that you should fear Him, if you are believers.*

14. *Fight them: Allah will punish them at your hands, and will humiliate them, and will help you to overcome them, and will relieve the minds of the believers of fear and distress.*

Those who deduce from verses 12 and 13 that the punishment for apostasy is death offer no explanation of the contradiction this creates with numerous other verses. These verses relate to the period after the migration from Makkah to Madinah (see verse 3) when the Quraish of Makkah had embarked upon hostilities to wipe out Islam by force.

The advocates of capital punishment for apostasy should

remember that these verses refer to idolaters who have broken their pledges and ridicule religion; there is no mention of people renouncing their faith. They have broken their pledge after their firm commitment to it. Those who have become hostile to your religion are the first to initiate hostilities against you. The permission for you to fight them is restricted to their leaders whose covenants are worthless and false. The permission is given in order to stop them from entering into hostile acts against you.

This is the true meaning of these verses which have been misconstrued by the advocates of capital punishment. There is not even the remotest reference to people who renounce their faith being forced to become Muslims. The same people are discussed in another part of the Holy Qur'an:

It may be that Allah will bring about amity between you and those with whom you are at enmity. Allah has the power; Allah is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful. Allah does not forbid you to be kind and act

equitably towards those who have not fought you because of your religion, and who have not driven you forth from your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are equitable. Allah only forbids you that you make friends with those who have fought against you because of your religion and have driven you out of your homes and have aided others in driving you out. Whoso makes friends with them, those are the transgressors.

(Ch.60: Vs.8-10)

Temporary disbelief

Another verse of the Holy Qur'an states:

A section of the people of the Book urge some from among themselves: why not affirm, in the early part of the day, belief in that which has been revealed unto the believers and repudiate it in the latter part of the day, perchance they may turn away from their faith.

(Ch.3: V.73)

The people of the Book mentioned in this verse are the Jews of

Madinah. Theirs was a Jewish tactic to create doubt among the Muslims in the hope that some of them might thereby be beguiled into repudiating Islam. How could it be possible for the Jews to have enacted this plan if death was a penalty for apostasy? Had anyone been executed for committing this crime, that would have been a deterrent for others who would not follow in their footsteps.

The advocates of the death penalty urge that this verse merely refers to a Jewish philosophy which was never put into practice by them. Even if it was merely a philosophy, this verse is conclusive proof of there being no punishment in this world for apostasy because the Jews could never have conceived the idea had there been such a punishment. Moreover, it is wrong to say that the idea was a hypothetical case; the books of tradition mention that it was put into practice by twelve Jewish divines of Khaibar and Urainah.²

All commentaries agree that this chapter of the Holy Qur'an was revealed between the victory of

Makkah and the demise of the Holy Prophet^(saw). This conclusively proves that the Jews put it into practice after Islam became firmly established in Arabia. How could the Jews ever think of such a suicidal and insane strategy if death was prescribed as a punishment for apostasy? How could they encourage Muslims to follow their faith by affirming it during the day and repudiating it at the end of the day if they knew that the Muslims would be executed for changing their faith?

Traditions

The advocates of capital punishment for apostasy misconstrue out of all proportion the traditions narrated about the Holy Prophet^(saw). Traditions lend no support to their thesis. On the contrary, there are many traditions which clearly show that there is no punishment for apostasy in this life.

However, for the sake of completeness, we set out those traditions which are most often cited by advocates of capital punishment for apostasy.

a) Abu Qalabah reports on the

authority of Anas that the Holy Prophet^(saw) told the people of Akal or Uraynah to go and stay among his she-camels outside Madinah. These people killed the keeper of the camels and ran away with the herd. Although it is true that these people had become apostates, their punishment was not a result of their apostasy but of their murder of the keeper of the she-camels.

b) Whereas Ibn Khatal, who was without doubt one of the four executed on the fall of Makkah, was an apostate, he had also committed the crime of murdering his travelling companion. His execution was, therefore, obviously ordered as a result of his having been convicted as a murderer.

c) Another incident is that of Maqees b. Sababah who killed an Ansar in revenge for Hisham, his brother, who was accidentally killed during the campaign of Zeeqard. Thereafter, Maqees became an apostate. He was executed on account of the murder of the Ansar.

In each one of the above incidents,

the executed person had committed murder. The three people had also happened to renounce their faith, but how can anyone shut his eyes to the murders and attribute their executions to their acts of apostasy?

d) The advocates of capital punishment for apostasy rely heavily on a tradition which mentions the execution of a woman for apostasy. This tradition is most unreliable, to say the least. The truth of the matter is that the Holy Prophet^(saw) never ordered the execution of a woman on account of her apostasy. The well-known treatise of jurisprudence, *Hedayah*, sets out the following:

‘The Holy Prophet^(saw) forbade the killing of women for apostasy, because the principle of punitive regulations is that in such cases the penalty should be left for the hereafter, as a penalty imposed in this life would contravene the purpose of apostasy, being a trial calling to account what pertains to God alone. This

can be departed from only when the object in view is to restrain the person concerned from continuing hostilities (during times of war). As women, by their very nature, are not capable of fighting, a woman apostate cannot be punished in any case.’

Strangely enough, scholars like Maududi, who might be supposed to be fully aware of serious flaws in the reliability of these traditions, still adhere to weak traditions which have been rejected by most eminent Muslim scholars.

e)The incident of Abdullah Bin Sad has already been quoted in part 6. Had there been any Qur’anic penalty for apostasy, the Holy Prophet’s^(saw) words to the effect that no one is above the law would be a clear reminder of his strict observance of God’s laws. If death was the punishment for apostasy, how could the Holy Prophet^(saw) disobey the commandments of God?

Companions

We have observed that neither the

Holy Qur'an nor any reliable traditions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) lend any support to those who advocate capital punishment for apostasy. But those advocates have some other tricks up their sleeves. It is necessary to examine their remaining arguments at greater length. Those arguments are based on the opinions of the Companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw), and not directly on his own personal judgement. Let it be known at the outset that observations or opinions of Companions^(ra) can only be a commentary; they have no right to be treated with as much respect as an injunction of the Holy Qur'an. At best they can only be regarded as an opinion.

a) The incident of the widespread apostasy in relation to the payment of zakat has been discussed [in part 6, see *The Review of Religions*, May 2006]. The Abs and the Zubyan were the tribes which initiated hostilities by attacking Madinah. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) fought them before the return of Osama from his expedition. The apostates were the aggressors. They not only refused

to pay zakat, but also took up the sword against the Muslims. Thus they rebelled against the Islamic state, slaughtered the Muslims amongst them by burning some alive and mutilated those they had killed³. Those who advocate execution for apostasy on the authority of this incident are either ignorant of the facts or deliberately seek to mislead people by playing down the killing of innocent Muslims by the rebels.

b) The advocates then pose the question that if there was no punishment for apostasy, why was Musailmah the imposter not left alone? The truth is that Musailmah aspired to political power. He had accompanied Abu Hanifa and offered to the Holy Prophet^(saw) his submission subject to his being nominated as his successor. The Holy Prophet^(saw) told Musailmah that he would not yield him even a twig of a date palm tree. Musailmah returned and claimed that half of Arabia belonged to him. He sent a letter to the Holy Prophet^(saw) in which he claimed: 'I have been appointed your partner in authority.' The Holy Prophet^(saw) responded by quoting to him verse

129 of chapter 7 of the Holy Qur'an.⁴ After Musailmah's claim of prophethood, he captured Habeeb b. Zaid, a Companion of the Holy Prophet(saw), dismembered him limb from limb, and then burned his remains. The advocates of capital punishment ignore this gruesome murder and claim that apostasy was the only crime attributable to Musailmah. Had he not committed murder, would he have been killed for the crime of apostasy alone? Was he not brought to justice for the murder and for the mayhem and disorder which he created in the land? There is not the slightest shred of evidence that having heard of Musailmah's rejection of his prophethood, the Holy Prophet(saw) condemned Musailmah to death or exhorted any of his Companions to kill him. Having failed to find evidence of any specific condemnation by the Holy Prophet(saw), Maulana Maududi had to seek recourse in a wish which the Holy Prophet(saw) is said to have expressed during his dying moments, that Musailmah should be done away with. Had there been such a wish, it is impossible for us to believe that the Holy

Prophet's(saw) first successor, Hadhrat Abu Bakr(ra), would have ignored it and not sent an expedition in compliance with the wish of the Holy Prophet(saw). Why did Hadhrat Abu Bakr(ra) wait until the time when Musailmah himself took the offensive and openly rebelled against the Muslims? We find that Musailmah mustered a force of 40,000 warriors of Banu Hanifa alone when he fought Khalid b. Walid. Musailmah initiated hostilities and moved against Madinah. It was only then that Hadhrat Abu Bakr(ra) gave orders to march against him on account of his rebellion and his gruesome murder of Habeeb bin Zaid.⁵

c) Another incident cited is that of Tulaiha, another pretender to prophethood. Again, he was not just a pretender but had murdered Ukasha b. Mohsin and Thabit b. Aqram Ansari. Before Khalid b. Walid commenced battle with him, he sent an emissary to Tulaiha to agree peace terms and avoid bloodshed. The advocates of capital punishment overlook the fact that if there had been capital punishment for apostasy, there

was no point in sending an emissary offering forgiveness to Tulaiha.⁶

d) A similar case is that of Aswad Anasi who raised the standard of rebellion with his apostasy. He killed the Muslim governor of Yemen, Shahr b. Bazan, forcibly married his widow and made himself ruler of Yemen. When the Holy Prophet^(saw) learned of his rebellion, he sent a letter to Muadh b. Jabal and the Muslims to oppose Aswad Anasi, who was subsequently killed in a skirmish with the Muslims. (News of his death arrived one day after the demise of the Holy Prophet^(saw))⁷

e) Similarly, Laqbeet b. Malik Azdi became an apostate and claimed to be a prophet. He expelled Jafar and Abad who had been appointed as functionaries in Oman.⁸ He, like all these claimants to prophethood, had no concern with religion. He had his own political axe to grind. His search for political domination was through open rebellion against the Islamic state he lived in, so the question of apostasy is irrelevant here. Let us suppose for a moment

that all these people had not recanted their faith but had merely rebelled against the Muslim state. The state would have had to take the step of quelling the rebellion; for the crime of creating disorder in the land, the Holy Qur'an prescribes capital punishment. That punishment is not for apostasy.

f) The advocates of capital punishment for apostasy cite also the case of Umm Qarfah, a woman who became an apostate during the time of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra). She had thirty sons whom she constantly exhorted to fight the Muslims. She paid the price for her treason and for her complicity in murder, not on account of her apostasy.⁹

g) The case of Hadhrat Ali^(ra) fighting the Khawarij is often cited. The Khawarij created disorder in the land, killed Muslim men and women, the governor appointed by Hadhrat Ali^(ra), his female slave, and also Ali's emissary.¹⁰ (This incident has been discussed on p.70.)

h) Reference needs to be made to

the appointments of Muadh b. Jabal and Abu Musa Ashari, each as governor of a part of Yemen. As they were about to leave, the Holy Prophet^(saw) instructed them: ‘Make things easy for people and do not put them into difficulty. Talk to them cheerfully and not in a manner that might repel them’. One day Muadh came to meet Abu Musa Ashari and noticed a person sitting there who had been secured with a rope. When Muadh enquired about this he was told that that person was a Jew who had become a Muslim and then became an apostate. The narrator adds that for the past two to three months the Muslims had reasoned with him in order to persuade him to become a Muslim but to no avail. Muadh declared that he would not dismount until the person had been executed and observed that this was the judgement of God and His Messenger. This last remark indicates no more than his personal opinion of what he understood to be the Will of God and His prophet. Such opinions carry no weight in law unless they are completely substantiated by references which verify the claim.

(This principle is elaborated subsequently in this chapter.)

References

1. The term used for the first four caliphs (successors) after the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw), namely Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), Umar^(ra), Uthman^(ra), and Ali^(ra). (Their rule lasted from AD632 to 661).
2. *Commentary: Bahral Muheet*, vol. II, 493.
3. Tabari, vol.IV, 1873; Ibn Khaldun, vol. II, 65; Khamees, vol.II, 237 etc
4. Tabari, vol. IV, 1849.
5. Khamees, vol. II, 641.
6. Ibn Hijr Al-Asqalani, *Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz-is-Suhaba* (Beirut: Darul Kitab Al-Arabi), vol.2, 448; Al Imam-Allama Ibn ul-Athir, *Usudul Ghaba fi Ma'rifat-is-Sahaba* (Beirut: Dar Ahyaultarath Al-Arabi), vol.4,3.
7. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Jazri, *Alkamil*

- fil Tarikh* (Beirut: Darul Kutb Al-Almiya), vol.2, 201-5.
8. Tabari, vol.IV, 1977.
9. Masboot, vol.x, 110.
10. Fath Al-Bari, vol.XII, 267;
Imam Razi, *Tafsir Kabir*,
vol.III, 614; Sheikh Ibn Taimiyyah, *Minhajus Sunnah*, vol.II, 61-2; *Tarikh-al Kamil*, vol.III, 148.
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