REMOVING IDENTITY...?
THE HIJAB BAN IN SCHOOLS
The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) prophesied that the Promised Messiah (SAW) would be raised near a white minaret, east of Damascus. This prophecy was fulfilled with the advent of the Promised Messiah (SAW) from Qadian, India, a city directly east of Damascus.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (SAW), the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, was born to a noble family in Qadian, India. From an early age he had a keen interest in religion and developed a love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He was also known for his honesty, friendliness and resolve. Over time his knowledge and understanding of religion and its application to society deepened. Being a Muslim, it was his firm belief that all religions were true at their source but with the passage of time had drifted away from their original teachings; he upheld the dignity of religion and demonstrated its relevance to everyone.

His earnest defence of religion was ultimately blessed when he started to receive direct revelation from Allah – a blessing that he continued for the rest of his life.

He also wrote a fascinating treatise in 1899 entitled Jesus in India, a book that uncovered remarkable evidence of Jesus's journey to India. In 1902, the Promised Messiah (SAW) initiated The Review of Religions which has covered a vast array of topics on religion, philosophy and contemporary issues of the day. It is the longest running English magazine in defence of Islam and the values it teaches.

In 1889, under Divine Guidance, Hazrat Ahmad (SAW) founded the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community – a community that has since grown in its stature and strength and has remained active in conveying the message of Islam to the ends of the earth.

Hazrat Ahmad (SAW) had established himself as a respected writer and had written over 80 books. His writings have been translated into more than 60 languages and continue to inspire readers to this day. One of his greatest scholarly works was The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, prepared as a paper and read out at the Conference of Great Religions in 1896.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) stated:

None of you will believe until you love for your brother what you love for yourself.

ISLAM, HADITH, BUKHARI AND MUSLIM

Sacrifice

Never shall you attain to righteousness unless you spend out of that which you love;

ISLAM, THE HOLY QUR’AN, 3:93

The Holy Prophet (SAW) stated:

How can man be of benefit to others unless he makes sacrifice! Indeed, sacrifice is essential to benefit others and to sympathise with them.

ISLAM, THE PROMISED MESSIAH (SAW), TAFSIR HAZRAT MASIH E MAU’UD, VOL 2, 131

Jesus said to him 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, and follow me.'

CHRISTIANITY, THE BIBLE, MATTHEW 19:21

Whatever your circumstances, do the necessary to alleviate the suffering of your father, your mother or your sister, even to your last breath.

BUDDHISM, JATAKAS, VOLUME 1, NO 287

All deeds are right in the sight of the door, but the Lord weighs the heart. To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Lord than sacrifice.

JUDAISM, TANAKH, PROVERBS, 21:2-3

The Master said, 'The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete.'

CONFUCIANISM, ANALECTS 15.9

To Thee as a sacrifice Zarathustra offers the very life and being of his self, He dedicated the first fruits of his loving thoughts to Ahura Mazda; he offers the best of his words and deeds and willing obedience to Divine Law.

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HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD AS, THE PROMISED MESSIAH AND MAHDI
The world is passing through turbulent times. The global economic crisis continues to manifest new and grave dangers at every juncture. The similarities of the current circumstances to the build-up of the Second World War are stark. Events appear to be moving us rapidly towards a Third World War. The consequences of a nuclear war are beyond our imagination.

Read online at: www.alislam.org

Purchase the book here: http://store.alislam.org/
The Promised Messiah as Imam Mahdi

We can never know the true essence of anything, nor derive benefit from it, until we discover a straight path to reach it. The affairs of the world are intricate and complex, whether they relate to the responsibilities associated with kingship and administration, whether they relate to combat or battle and warfare, whether they relate to the subtleties of natural science and astronomy, whether they relate to the method of diagnosis and treatment in the field of medicine, or whether they relate to trade or agriculture. Success in any of these fields is difficult, rather well-nigh impossible to come by until one finds a clear avenue of approaching the subject at hand. When confronted by difficulty, any intelligent person compels himself to ponder night and day, for hours on end, so as to devise a means by which to resolve the problem at hand. All professions and inventions, or any other intricate and complex matter, can only be undertaken once the right approach has been adopted. Thus, in order to achieve success in worldly or religious objectives, the most effective prayer is that of seeking the right path. When one approaches anything from the correct avenue, then with the grace of God, such a person undoubtedly can succeed in attaining their goal. God, in His power and wisdom, has set out a proper way of achieving everything. For example, no ailing person can be efficaciously
treated until an effective approach for the identification and diagnosis of their ailment is followed, and the heart is led to believe that the proposed course of action shows promising signs of success. In fact nothing in the world can be achieved until the correct method is undertaken for that purpose. And so one who strives towards an objective must first discover the correct way of achieving it. Thus, just as one first requires a correct path so as to attain success in worldly matters, so too, since time immemorial, in order to become a friend of God, and to receive His love and grace, a correct path has always been required. Therefore, in the very beginning of Surah Al-Baqarah, the chapter that follows Surah Fatihah, God says: ‘the path to attain blessings is the one which We put forth’.

ENDNOTES


In recent times vested interests have launched a ‘crusade’ against Islam. Islam is labelled as a religion of terror, backwardness and suppression.

Based on Quranic teachings, the author of this book goes about disproving these notions and professes that Islam provides practical solutions to current issues; and argues that:

1. Swords can win territories but not hearts, forces can bend heads but not minds;
2. The role of women is not of concubines in harems nor a society imprisoned in the four walls of their houses;
3. Richer nations provide aid with strings attached and yet the flow of wealth continues to be in the direction of the rich while the poorer sink deeper in the red;
4. Religion does not need to be the predominant legislative authority in the political affairs of the state;
5. Irrespective of the thawing of the cold war, the issue of war and peace does not only hang by the thread of superpower relationship.
6. Without God there can be no peace.

It also contains comprehensive discussion on interest; financial aid; international relations; and the role of Israel, America and the United Kingdom in a new world order.

The message of this book is timeless and chalks a blue print for the future prospects for peace.

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REMOVING IDENTITY...?
THE HIJAB BAN IN SCHOOLS

IS BANNING THE HIJAB IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS ACROSS THE UK THE BEST MOVE TO MAKE IN THIS MODERN SOCIETY?
As members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, we look to guidance from His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Fifth Successor to the Promised Messiah. The Review of Religions has regularly featured the responses of His Holiness on controversial topics such as mass immigration into Europe, the causes of terrorism and radicalisation and the true meanings of jihad. Regular readers will have noted some recurrent features of these responses of His Holiness – whilst they are perfectly balanced, tolerant and progressive, they remain exclusively based on the true teachings of Islam. Solutions offered by His Holiness therefore embody reason and moderation. Indeed, as the Khalifah (Caliph – Successor) of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, His Holiness continues to guide us towards the authentic teachings of Islam in all matters.

And so returning to the case of the primary school hijab controversy, we find the same aforementioned characteristics in the latest guidance issued by His Holiness on this topic, being published here in The Review of Religions. His Holiness has given a very practical, wise and fair response to the subject based on Islamic teachings. His Holiness has explained while Islam does require that young women wear the hijab after adolescence, it does not ask prepubescent girls to don the headscarf. His Holiness said:

‘Islam does not require young girls to wear headscarves. Only when they reach an age of full physical maturity is it required and this is generally in teenage years. Thus there is no Islamic requirement for any primary aged girl to wear a headscarf.’

That said however, His Holiness does point out that ultimately, wearing the hijab is a personal choice for young girls:

‘If a young primary aged Muslim girl wears a headscarf freely and out of her own desire after seeing her mother or elder relatives wear them then this is something that is a personal matter and nothing wrong with it. If a girl is naturally inspired by her mother then this is something positive. Young children girls and boys, often imitate their parents, which is a natural part of growing up.’

Moreover, His Holiness raises concern over the potential impact of questioning very young school girls, saying:

In this editorial, we feature guidance from His Holiness, the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, on the wearing of the hijab (head covering) in UK primary schools.

What Muslim women wear on their heads has become the subject of fierce controversy over the past several years. While the wearing of the niqab, or face veil, in public places has been banned in several European countries, the hijab, or head covering has now come under scrutiny. In November last year, Ofsted, the UK’s Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills, which oversees educational issues, issued a recommendation to its school inspectors in the UK to question young Muslim primary school girls wearing a hijab or similar headscarf. The Head of Ofsted and chief inspector of schools said:

‘In line with our current practice in terms of assessing whether the school promotes equality for their children, inspectors will talk to girls who wear such garments to ascertain why they do so in the school.’

Some Muslim organisations reacted with anger, claiming that Ofsted were being racist and Muslim girls were being denied a basic religious right. Further, a letter signed by over 1000 teachers, academics and faith leaders stated that it was ‘a kneejerk, discriminatory and institutionally racist response that will violate civil liberties and create a climate of fear and mistrust in schools.’ Many others, however, supported the decision and saw the wearing of the hijab by girls of a young age as a symbol of oppression and even radicalisation.

This year, a top London primary school decided to ban children under eight from wearing the hijab during the school day. After sustained criticism and a petition signed by more than 19,000 people calling for the ban to be lifted, the school reversed its decision, leading to outcry from both sides of the debate. In an ironic twist of events, the Head teacher involved now says that her words were taken out of context by the media who misrepresented her statement about young girls wearing the hijab.

So what is the balance here? Was Ofsted right to question young Muslim girls on their choice of head covering? Or should very young Muslim girls be defended in their choice to wear the hijab?
In terms of questioning schoolgirls why they wear a hijab - it cannot be right to ask very young girls who are aged just 4 or 5 or in early years such questions. This could easily confuse them, cause stress and even lead to mental health issues later in life. Children need to be valued for who they are, regardless of race or religion. When young children’s choices are questioned by adults, it can make them feel as if they have done something wrong.

All members of all religious dominations should be afforded equal respect. Young boys from Sikh communities often wear their turbans to school, and at times young Jewish school boys wear the kippah. To single out young Muslim girls wearing the hijab would therefore be discriminatory. All religious symbols should be treated equally and no one religion should be targeted as this can make its followers feel alienated from the broader society. Indeed, as His Holiness emphasises:

“No school should take any action that could serve to make any Muslim child feel as though there is something wrong with their religion or culture.”

The mission of primary schools is to give our young people the tools, education and information to succeed themselves and the drive to improve society. Singling out others on the basis of creed or culture goes against this principle.

Finally, regarding girls at secondary schools, His Holiness has advised that they should also be treated in a delicate manner by any teachers wanting to ascertain why they wear the hijab:

His Holiness said: ‘As for older Muslim girls, in secondary school, if teachers ask them it should be done extremely sensitively and it should not be done in a way that makes them feel isolated or discriminated against.’

Throughout its history, Britain has welcomed and assimilated people of all cultures and faith backgrounds, and guaranteed them the freedom to practice their religion. It is a tradition that fosters integration and peace in society. To make Muslim girls feel apart from their peers will do the exact opposite and lead a descent into chaos.

About the Author: Syed Amer Safir is the Chief Editor and Manager of The Review of Religions. He can be reached at editor@reviewofreligions.org
Every human being seeks salvation in some form or another. The concept of salvation holds pivotal importance in matters of religion. A faith unable to deliver its followers from sin is worthless, yet the progress and benefit of society depends on this very salvation. So where should one turn to attain it?

In this work, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, explains that since human nature is weak, salvation can only be attained through a mediator who, owing to their perfect relationship with God and deep sympathy for humanity, can serve as a link between God and man. In every era, God has conferred salvation upon humanity through His prophets, but none can match the unparalleled status held by the Prophet of Islam in this respect, who was the paragon of perfection. In the present age, it is this pure and blessed prophet who is the only intercessor that can grant humanity a living relationship with God and free mankind from the shackles of sin.

The author presents an exquisite exposition on the philosophy of divine intercession, sinlessness, forgiveness, human frailty and his advent as the Promised Messiah.
It’s clear that conflict is increasing all over the world, and that the threat of war – or nuclear deployment – looms over the world. And while some people blame Islam for the increasing conflict, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V and worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, points out that true Islam states that Allah provides not just for Muslims, but for those who follow other religions or who follow no religion at all. Moreover, Islam was first in promoting true human rights: declaring all people are equal.

And indeed, if we look at the threat of nuclear war, we see that it is non-Muslim countries – not Muslim ones – who are in control of these weapons and who manufacture the arms that lead to the destruction we see in the world today. In this historic speech delivered in Germany in August 2017, His Holiness outlines the only way to achieve a lasting peace in an increasingly chaotic world.

After reciting Tashahhud, Ta’awwuz and Bismillah, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V said:

‘All distinguished guests, Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu – peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

There is no doubt that we are passing through extremely precarious and turbulent times. If we take even a cursory glance at today’s world, in almost every direction, we are witnessing increasing conflict, hostility and restlessness. Whilst much of the world seems to have reached the definitive conclusion that Islam is to blame for the volatile state of the world, I do not think it is accurate to say that Muslims alone are stoking the flames of disorder that are burning across the world.

Nonetheless, it is a cause of deep sorrow that some so-called Muslims and Muslim groups have persistently eroded the world’s peace and have heightened tensions and fears amongst non-Muslim communities, by spreading hatred and undertaking the most heinous atrocities. Certainly, I personally have no hesitation in accepting the fact that such Muslims have played a very significant role in fuelling disorder and sparking division within society.

A major cause of this has been the fact that extremist Muslim groups or clerics have preyed upon vulnerable Muslims, and rather than guiding and helping these frustrated and misguided people, they have poisoned their minds with extremism and radicalised them.

His Holiness pointed out that the teachings of Islam completely prohibit the use of force for the purpose of conversion.

Whilst much of the world seems to have reached the definitive conclusion that Islam is to blame for the volatile state of the world, I do not think it is accurate to say that Muslims alone are stoking the flames of disorder that are burning across the world.
As such, Allah the Almighty is the God not only of Muslims, but is also the God of Christians, Jews and the people of all faiths and indeed the people who hold no faith and do not even believe in His existence. Thus, Allah is the ultimate Provider and Sustainer for all of mankind and He has showered his grace and mercy upon all people, no matter their caste, creed or colour.

Tragically, some have been brainwashed to such an extent that they have carried out horrific terrorist atrocities, whilst others who may not have conducted attacks, share a similar wicked ideology. In a similar vein, we have long seen that some Muslim governments are mistreating their people and have inflicted untold cruelties and injustices upon them, which has bred division and led to uprisings and bloody civil wars.

Nevertheless, let it be crystal clear that no matter what the extremists claim, all terrorist and extremist acts, whether conducted by groups or by radicalised individuals, both in the Western world and in Muslim countries, run entirely contrary to the true teachings of Islam. Without a shadow of doubt, Islam’s teachings are a guarantor for peace and security for all mankind. Its teachings are rooted in compassion, mercy and humanity and it is these true Islamic values that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has endlessly emphasised and endeavoured to spread across the world for more than 125 years.

Hence, let me say again that under no circumstances does Islam permit any form of cruelty, injustice or wrongdoing. From the very outset, Islam’s teachings are those that seek to unite mankind, rather than to drive a wedge between the people of different communities. Indeed, the very first chapter of the Holy Qur’an, which Muslims believe to be the Word of God revealed to the Founder of Islam (peace be upon him), states that Allah the Almighty is the “Lord of all the worlds.” As such, Allah the Almighty is the God not only of Muslims, but is also the God of Christians, Jews and the people of all faiths and indeed the people who hold no faith and do not even believe in His existence. Thus, Allah is the ultimate Provider and Sustainer for all of mankind and He has showered his grace and mercy upon all people, no matter their caste, creed or colour.

The Arabic words used in the Qur’an are, بِلِلَّهِ أَطْلِبُ اللَّهَ مُعَلِّمًا (Rabbil Aalameen), wherein Allah the Almighty has used the word “Aalim”, which has been translated into English as “worlds”. However, no translation can reflect the true scope of the word “Aalim”, which is incredibly vast and far reaching. By using this word, Allah the Almighty has made it clear that He is not just the Provider and Sustainer for people of certain religions or for particular eras, rather He is Creator and Nourisher of the people of all nations, of all beliefs and for all times. These words are filled with unparalleled beauty and great wisdom, wherein they have enshrined the sanctity of the principle of universal equality and made it clear that there is no place in the world for any form of racial or national superiority. These words make it clear that Allah’s blessings and favours are not limited to any particular race or ethnicity, but rather are bestowed indiscriminately.

Whilst these are Islam’s true teachings, it is a cause of regret that racism and bigotry remain prevalent in the world. Indeed, amongst the very people who allege that Islam discriminates against non-Muslims, are individuals who themselves are guilty of what they falsely charge Islam
In words that were as timeless as they were enlightened, he proclaimed that all people were born equal and that a white person was not superior to a black and nor was a black person superior to a white.

In words that were as timeless as they were enlightened, he proclaimed that all people were born equal and that a white person was not superior to a black and nor was a black person superior to a white. Similarly, he said that an Arab could not claim superiority over a non-Arab and nor could a non-Arab claim superiority over an Arab. Brandishing an eternal torch illuminating the path towards universal human rights, the Holy Prophet \textsuperscript{a} pronounced that all human beings were born equal and had the same rights. Certainly, as we now live in a time when Islam is so misunderstood, it is very important to reiterate this enlightened principle that proves that Islam is against all forms of discrimination and prejudice.

It is not only in our physical and mental attributes that Allah has made us equal, but rather we believe that for the sake of our spiritual well-being and development, Allah has also provided the means of salvation and guidance to all peoples of the world. In religious terms, Islam says that prophets have been sent by God Almighty to all nations and Muslims are commanded to respect and honour them all. Thus, we hold the Founders of all religions in great esteem and can never contemplate speaking against any of them. Indeed, true Muslims will refrain from speaking ill about any prophet or saintly figure, even as those who are against Islam choose to mock, curse and vilify the Prophet of Islam \textsuperscript{a}. No doubt, when we hear others unjustly malign our beloved Prophet \textsuperscript{a}, it causes us intense distress and grievously wounds our hearts, yet we will never react by disrespecting the prophets or saintly figures of other religions and beliefs. In the face of hate and adversity, it is our faith which compels us to respond with love and to manifest peace at all times. Indeed, Islam does not just say that Muslims should not speak against other religions or prophets, rather it goes so far as to say, in chapter 6, verse 109 of the Holy Qur’an, that Muslims should not even speak against the idols worshipped by idolaters, because it could provoke them, out of their ignorance, to then curse God Almighty and certainly this would offend and injure the sentiments of Muslims.

Consequently, rather than permit a cycle of perpetual hatred, leading invariably to hostilities and conflict, the Qur’an calls on Muslims to show patience and to take the higher moral ground at all times. Furthermore, chapter 3, verse 65 of the Holy Qur’an lays the foundation for religious tolerance amongst the people of all faiths and beliefs, where it states that religious people, and especially the People of the Book, should join together and unite over their collective belief in the existence of God. Thus, the Qur’an calls on mankind to look for common ground
Thus, the One God Who we worship is not cruel or nor does He demand that all mankind turn to Him; rather, He is that Supreme Being Who has stipulated that everyone is free to believe whatever they desire.

and to set aside any differences that may exist. Here, the Qur’an also states that, whilst it is up to non-Muslims to decide whether they wish to follow this injunction, Muslims are duty-bound, no matter what, to open their hearts and to respect the beliefs of others.

Another allegation often levelled at Islam is that it permits compulsion and aggression in order to force people to accept Islam. Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, in chapter 2, verse 257, the Holy Qur’an has unconditionally declared there should be no compulsion in matters of religion or belief. Whilst Islam claims that the Holy Qur’an is a universal and complete teaching, an inherent feature of it is that religion is a matter of one’s heart and so no form of pressure can ever be used to coerce people into accepting it. Further, chapter 10, verse 100 of the Holy Qur’an, states that whilst Allah the Almighty had the power to compel mankind to accept Islam, He permitted free will and He desired for people to choose their own path independently and free from any form of duress.

Thus, the One God Who we worship is not cruel or nor does He demand that all mankind turn to Him; rather, He is that Supreme Being Who has stipulated that everyone is free to believe whatever they desire. This does not mean that Muslims should not preach their religion, on the contrary, Allah the Almighty has instructed Muslims to convey the message of Islam to others, but such preaching must be done peacefully and with a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. Accordingly, in chapter, 18, verse 30 of the Holy Qur’an, it states that it is the task of Muslims to inform mankind that Islam is a truth from God Almighty and whoso wishes to accept or deny it is free to do so. It is with this spirit that we strive to peacefully propagate the true teachings of Islam and to invite mankind towards the recognition of God Almighty. We seek to win people’s hearts and minds through kindness and compassion.

Further, chapter 10, verse 26 of the Holy Qur’an states that:

“And Allah calls to the abode of peace…”

Whilst reinforcing the point that all people are free to accept or reject the teachings of Islam, this verse also points out that Allah invites mankind towards peace and security. Hence, when Allah calls mankind to the abode of peace, it is imperative that Muslims personally exhibit peace and are the means of security for all humanity.

Thus, I have quoted a number of passages of the Holy Qur’an that entirely refute the notion that Islam, God forbid, is a religion that seizes the rights of non-Muslims or is a means of destroying...
For example, most of the weapons being produced in the world today are made in countries that are predominantly Christian, and such weapons are being used to kill and maim innocent people in different parts of the world and are fuelling brutal conflicts. Does this mean that Christianity is inherently evil and to blame for the world’s horrific arms race? Of course not.

In light of all that I have presented, it is my ardent hope and prayer that, instead of making rash judgements and branding Islam as a religion of violence and cruelty based upon hearsay, people use their intelligence, look at the facts and reflect honestly upon what Islam represents. Only then will they appreciate for themselves that the hateful acts conducted in Islam’s name in recent years have nothing to do with its original teachings. It is quite unfair to blame Islam, or any other religion, for the sins of those who act against the original teachings of their religion. For example, most of the weapons being produced in the world today are made in countries that are predominantly Christian, and such weapons are being used to kill and maim innocent people in different parts of the world and are fuelling brutal conflicts. Does this mean that Christianity is inherently evil and to blame for the world’s horrific arms race? Of course not.

Moving on, I mentioned at the outset that I do not believe it is only Muslims who are contributing to the disorder prevalent in the world, and so permit me to elaborate upon this a little further. We are all well aware of the horrifying consequences of the two World Wars that took place during the 20th Century, where millions and millions of people were killed and the lives of countless others were destroyed. Those World Wars proved to be a dark stain in the world’s history, and yet it is a source of deep regret that the world has not learnt from its past mistakes and instead mankind is again sinking ever deeper into a terrifying abyss.

Rather than striving for peace through dialogue, understanding and mutual respect, world powers have sought peace through intimidation and fear, by developing weapons with the potential for...
On the one hand, the Western world calls on Muslim nations to stop all forms of terrorism and to adopt peace, but on the other hand, there are elements amongst them who fear that peace in the Muslim world will diminish their own power and dominance.

destroying the world many times over. In spite of being witness to the unprecedented torment and utter devastation caused by America’s use of nuclear weapons against Japan during World War Two, a number of countries, including America, have continued to develop ever more powerful atomic weapons without pause for thought to the chilling consequences.

Of the nine countries that have acquired nuclear weapons, only one – Pakistan – is a Muslim nation. Hence it cannot be said that the Muslim world is the centre of these deadly weapons that constitute the greatest threat to the well-being of mankind. Furthermore, and as I said earlier, the vast majority of weapons present in Muslim countries have been produced in the non-Muslim world. Naturally, the question arises as to why, on the one hand, non-Muslims nations are calling for peace in the Muslim world, but on the other hand, are fuelling the very wars and conflicts that they condemn? Whilst occasionally there have been positive measures or policies taken by certain governments or institutions, that have had the potential for good, sadly such policies have been drowned out. Instead, the defining characteristic of the world’s efforts to ensure peace over the past seventy or more years, has been intimidation and scare tactics, whereby nations have sought peace through the development of ever more deadly weapons.

No matter what is claimed, the truth is that such measures cannot bring about long-lasting peace and there is every chance that one day someone will press the button unleashing carnage and misery like the world has never seen before. Thus, rather than peace-building through the so-called “deterrent model”, we, Ahmadi Muslims, believe that there is only one path leading towards lasting peace – and that is the path of God Almighty.

The time has come for mankind to recognise its Creator and to accept that God Almighty is indeed the Lord of all the Worlds, Who sustains us, provides for us and is our ultimate Creator. In return for His endless favours upon us, is it not His right that we turn to Him, bow down before Him and seek His nearness? As long as the world continues to prioritise material wealth and power, we will not see true peace in the world. Certainly, it is this overriding desire to usurp the rights of others for personal gain that has fuelled the conflicts that have spread across the world.

Very recently, a renowned elderly American politician stated that it would not be in the interests of the United States for the terrorist group Daesh to be entirely eliminated from Syria; rather, it would be beneficial to the West if some lingering presence of this evil group remained. This is the type of logic that a wise and peaceful person can never comprehend or countenance. On the one hand, the Western world calls on Muslim nations to stop all forms of terrorism and to adopt peace, but on the other hand, there are elements amongst them who fear that peace in the Muslim world will diminish their own power and dominance. This is hypocritical and such twisted ideologies can only serve to destabilise the world.
Once conditions have improved and people are able to live peacefully, then the war must be brought to an immediate halt. Furthermore, the verse states that during wars, only the aggressors should be targeted or taken prisoner, and innocent people must be safeguarded and that there is no room for collateral damage, as we tragically see in the wars fought today. Wherever Islam has sanctioned any type of force, it is done in order to stop the hand of the oppressor and never as a means of conquest or aggression. The very notion of provoking others and inciting disorder is something that Islam takes extremely seriously and that is why the Holy Qur’an says that such incitement, which seeks to create and ferment hatred between peoples and nations, was an even greater crime than murder.

The truth is that Islam's teachings are those that seek to bridge the differences that exist between people and to unite society under an umbrella of peace, love and harmony. Indeed, the Holy Prophet Muhammad—taught that a true Muslim is he from whose mouth and hands all other people are safe. Hence, to unnecessarily cause others any pain or grief, no matter of what scale, is a sin and opposed to Islam.

Further, as I have already alluded to, Western countries and arms producers have a vested business interest in maintaining a degree of conflict in Muslim countries. Such one-eyed policies and selfish motivations are entirely regretful and can only prove a means of destroying the peace of the world. In stark contrast, Islam's teachings are those that seek to establish peace at every level of society and our religion has made it clear that the key to peace is true justice. Fairness and equity are the cornerstones to peace, to the extent that Islam has said that a person or nation must be ready to testify against themselves in order to uphold the truth and for justice to prevail. Thus, true peace cannot be established, be it in a person's home, in a town or city, in a nation or at an international level, until there is justice.

Moving on, in answer to those who ask why wars were fought in early Islam, let me briefly explain. In chapter 22, verses 40 and 41 of the Holy Qur'an, Allah the Almighty gave permission to the early Muslims to fight a defensive war for the first time. However, these verses make it clear that permission was not granted so that Islam could dominate or conquer territory, rather Allah gave permission in order to quell disorder and cruelty and in order to forever enshrine the principle of universal freedom of belief. Thus, in verse 41, even before Muslims have been told to defend mosques, they have been instructed to protect churches, temples, synagogues and the places of worship of all religions. Furthermore, chapter 2, verse 194 of the Holy Qur'an makes it clear that even where a defensive war is permitted, it must remain proportionate and its purpose is always to bring an end to cruelty, persecution and oppression.

Once conditions have improved and people are able to live peacefully, then the war must be brought to an immediate halt. Furthermore, the verse states that during wars, only the aggressors should be targeted or taken prisoner, and innocent people must be safeguarded and that there is no room for collateral damage, as we tragically see in the wars fought today. Wherever Islam has sanctioned any type of force, it is done in order to stop the hand of the oppressor and never as a means of conquest or aggression. The very notion of provoking others and inciting disorder is something that Islam takes extremely seriously and that is why the Holy Qur’an says that such incitement, which seeks to create and ferment hatred between peoples and nations, was an even greater crime than murder.

The truth is that Islam's teachings are those that seek to bridge the differences that exist between people and to unite society under an umbrella of peace, love and harmony. Indeed, the Holy Prophet Muhammad—taught that a true Muslim is he from whose mouth and hands all other people are safe. Hence, to unnecessarily cause others any pain or grief, no matter of what scale, is a sin and opposed to Islam.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Islam's teachings are entirely peaceful and are a means of security for all people, from all walks of life.

There is no need to fear true Islam and so I hope you will agree with me that those who brand Islam as a violent or intolerant religion are themselves guilty of a great injustice.

With these words, I thank you all for taking the time to attend our Jalsa Salana and to listen to what I have said.

May Allah bless you all. Thank you very much.

Thus, in verse 41, even before Muslims have been told to defend mosques, they have been instructed to protect churches, temples, synagogues and the places of worship of all religions.
I shall now proceed to describe the three states of man. But before I do so, it is necessary for me to voice a reminder that, as indicated in the Holy Word of God Almighty, the natural state of man, the fountainhead of which is the self that incites to evil, is not something divorced from his moral state. The Holy Word of God has classified man’s natural faculties and desires and urges as natural conditions. These, when they are consciously regulated and controlled and are brought into action on their proper occasions and places, become moral qualities. In the same way, moral conditions are not entirely distinct from spiritual conditions. When moral conditions develop absolute devotion to God and complete purification of self and, cutting asunder from the world, turn wholly to God and to perfect love and complete devotion and full serenity and satisfaction and complete accord with the Divine will, they become spiritual conditions.

So long as his natural conditions are not converted into moral conditions, man deserves no praise, inasmuch as they are to be found in other animates and even in solids also. In the same way the mere acquisition of moral qualities does not bestow spiritual life upon a person. A person who denies the existence of God can yet exhibit good moral qualities, such as to be humble of heart, to seek peace, to discard evil and not to resist
the evil-monger. These are all natural conditions which may be possessed even by an unworthy one who is utterly unacquainted with the fountainhead of salvation and enjoys no part of it. Many animals have a gentle disposition, and can be trained to become wholly peaceful and not to react savagely to chastisement, and yet we cannot call them human, let alone humans of high status. In the same way, a person who is entirely misguided and even suffers from some vices, can exhibit these qualities.¹

ENDNOTES

ALLAHU AKBAR: A CALL TO PRAYER, NOT TERROR
In some recent terrorist attacks, witnesses reported hearing the words ‘Allahu Akbar’—which literally means Allah is the greatest.

Whether such terrorists actually believed they were doing it for God or witnesses’ testimony was unreliable, as it often can be, all makes for a moot point because Allahu Akbar in any case isn’t a dangerous phrase, and its declaration is something which has been resounding across the world for centuries.

The mayor of Venice, Luigi Brugnaro, said after the Barcelona attack in August 2017, that anyone shouting Allahu Akbar in the city’s St Mark’s Square would be shot, which may lead people unacquainted with the term to believe it’s some sort of Muslim terrorist slogan—it’s not.

Muslims recite Allahu Akbar at least 170 times a day during their formal prayer services so when Mr. Brugnaro said anyone shouting Allahu Akbar in Venice would be shot, he probably didn’t realise the significance of the oft-repeated phrase. Allahu Akbar means ‘Allah is the Greatest’ and Allah is described in the Holy Qur’an as the ‘Lord of all the Worlds’—not just the God of Muslims, but the Lord of all creation and the One who cares for them all. This is why Arabic-speaking Coptic Christians also recite this phrase to express their joy and gratitude or to praise God for something good that has happened. One can find similar phrases to Allahu Akbar in Psalms which also glorify God in this vein.

It is also a reminder for Muslims that God is Almighty so they must always rely on Him and can trust their Lord to fulfil their needs. It further draws one’s attention towards prayer because unless one maintains that God is great, he won’t feel the need to pray, especially with the conviction, hope and humility which are prerequisites for the acceptance of prayer.

If terrorists actually had any inkling of the meaning of Allahu Akbar, they would never commit their heinous crimes. A truly religious person believing in the omnipotence of God relies on Him to solve all problems and a believer is eternally at peace and contented, barring him from ever having any negative emotion or hatred by which terrorists attack innocents. Attackers commit atrocities because their minds are at unrest which proves that their uttering of Allahu Akbar is merely artificial, for a true believer in Allahu Akbar is always composed, having entrusted all affairs to the great God.
Traditionally in Islam, the adhan, or call to prayer, is pronounced from the minaret with the resounding words of Allahu Akbar.

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The Islamic call to prayer – the adhan – begins with Allahu Akbar and shows that while God is the greatest, He desires His creation to also rise above base instincts and follow the path laid out to Him so he can attain a level of eminence and honour but since Allah is the greatest, true honour can only be achieved through His path alone, as the Qur’an says: ‘all honour belongs to Allah’. The words of the adhan are recited in the ear of every newborn child, not to prepare them for war but to inculcate a love of their true Creator and ready them for a life in search of higher values, devotion to God and service to humanity. The repetition of the phrase signifies that while at first, its recitation is merely a result of mental reasoning, eventually a believer, by acting upon the requirements of faith, practically begins to see and experience the signs of Allah's overarching omnipotence and control over all affairs thus causing the believer to proclaim Allahu Akbar from within with greater frequency and intensity.

Allah being the greatest above all laws, leaders, kings, managers and authority, only His protection can guarantee safety and success. Muslim students who may have just sat their mock exams and receive favourable results might shout Allahu Akbar or Alhamdulillah which means ‘all praise belongs to Allah’ – again, an expression of gratitude. Students expressing their joy by praising God are clearly not a threat. Similarly, a woman was trapped in a collapsed building in Bangladesh in 2015 where 1000 people were killed. After 17 days in the rubble, onlookers shouted Allahu Akbar as she was rescued in a miraculous story of survival against the odds. This is the appropriate use of the phrase which signifies that God’s grace saved the 18-year-old.

When terrorists do use the phrase as some sort of battle cry, they have been led to believe they are doing it for God. But so-called Muslim clerics today have hijacked religious ideas to further their own interests and thus use religious slogans, verses and phrases to promote political, military or revenge-based motives like ‘punishing’ the West for all the wars in Muslim lands which is why we find impressionable youth in the West who are disenfranchised and frustrated, becoming victims to the perverse messages of corrupt clerics. Having been brainwashed and possessing no true knowledge of their faith they think they’re genuinely performing a praiseworthy act, for God. However, using the holy name of God to
commit injustices continues and is not exclusive to Muslims.

The Chief Executive Director of The Council on American-Islamic Relations of Florida summed the entire issue up perfectly:

‘That is the biggest act of heresy: to shout God’s glorious name when committing the worst crime against God.’

And His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad said in a recent Friday sermon that such people proclaim the name of God but exhibit no signs of the fear of God.

God is and always has been the highest authority and epitome of good, and religious values still play a significant part in the lives of most people. And so it’s little surprise when those who wish to justify their misdeeds, do so in the name of God. And while no such justification exists in scripture, claiming to commit an atrocity in the name of good makes it justifiable in the eyes of wrongdoers. And this is a phenomena the Qur’an points out when it says ‘Thus have the doings of the disbelievers been made to seem fair to them.’

For example, the young politician in her prime, Jo Cox, who had built bridges with communities was killed by someone who shouted ‘Britain First, this is for Britain’. In his eyes perhaps it was for Britain or maybe he was using a nationalistic slogan to justify his hate-filled and racist attitudes.

Attacks by right-wing radicals or white supremacists are no different to those who shout Allahu Akbar when committing foul deeds. They are full of hate and rancour. Whether such attackers cite political, racial or religious slogans makes no difference. We should not pay attention to anything they say for actions speak louder than words. And all across Europe and the world, Muslims take part and contribute to society in wonderful ways and it is they who carry the true spirit of Allahu Akbar.

ENDNOTES

3. The Holy Qur’an, 4:140.
From 1896 to 1914 the plague ravaged British India, and more particularly, the province of Punjab. During these perilous times, as towns and cities were devoured, the British government undertook efforts to save the people from this pandemic through inoculation. It was in this backdrop that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian penned Noah’s Ark in 1902. In it the author elaborates the essence of his teachings and states that those who sincerely follow its tenets would be saved miraculously from the onslaughts of this epidemic, even without inoculation. This was a prophecy vouchsafed to him by God. History testifies to the magnificent fulfilment of this prophecy.

The book Noah’s Ark shines as a beacon of hope not only for the people of the past, but also now and shall continue to grant salvation to the world in all ages. It is a book that stands as one of the most influential works of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, and continues to transform lives even today.
March 8th

International Women's Day: Delineating Mainstream Feminism

By Ayesha Mahmood Malik
LLM (Harvard)
Each year on March 8th, International Women’s Day is marked throughout the world, highlighting women’s struggle for equality. At the heart of these commemorations is the question of how this equality may be achieved. However, we must ask whether this struggle for a simplistic view of equality has been misplaced. Feminist discourse has seldom focused on seriously questioning whether the equality model is the best ideal whereby women’s rights may be assessed.

What then does the equality model really say? Within the differing categories of feminist jurisprudence, the radical feminists call for a sweeping form of equality, arguing for complete parity regardless of the context. Yet, it raises the question as to whether we need such a totalitarian notion of equality to achieve egalitarianism between men and women. When the equality model is actually challenged, we find that it ignores the all-important reality that men and women are fundamentally different and these differences must be celebrated and explored as strengths. Cultural feminists, an opposing group of thought to the radical feminist school, focus more on the innate ‘female nature’, and point to this as an invaluable and enriching manner of placing women’s issues into context. Cultural feminism would thus take the experience of childbirth, for example, as a singularly female experience which no man can naturally emulate. On the contrary, an equality-based approach may question men’s inability to conceive and partake in this miracle. A rigid sense of equality may thus at times be unhelpful and even irrational.

Thus, the essence of the argument that cultural feminism expounds is that men and women are different; that such differences reflect their unique physical and emotional vantage points; and that these differences are not synonymous to inequality. The argument is pragmatic and one that mirrors the Islamic philosophy towards the sexes – the Qur’an having prescribed different roles to men and women based on their differing strengths but assessed each role to be equally important in its own right.

The fundamental problem, then, with the equality model is that it ironically prescribes that the male standard is the superior standard and that women must measure up to it if they are to be considered equal. Feminists who blindly argue for absolute equality forget that amid all the clamour and noise they are paradoxically succumbing to a status quo defined by men. Women should be afforded the dignity to take pride in their own abilities and strengths instead of constantly comparing these to men’s skills and competencies.

While the world focuses on bringing about strict equality between men and women, this ignores women’s unique abilities, including the ability to give birth.
AFTER RECENT EVENTS ACROSS THE WORLD ARE WE NOW READY TO LOOK DEEPER INTO THE BOUNDARIES OF SEGREGATION?
Hitchens makes a valid point. Marriage was designed as an institution to safeguard family and society. The rights of married couples have been enshrined in law, although that is increasingly under attack with couples choosing to cohabit instead. Now, with the introduction of gay marriage in many countries, the boundaries are becoming ever more blurred. But does Hitchens really believe that women were not subject to abuse even under ‘the old code’? Why then are we seeing a rise in cases of the reporting of historic sexual abuse not only by celebrities and those in positions of political power?

Mayim Bialik, a US actress, made some interesting observations for which she was lambasted in the media. Commenting on her experiences as a child actor in Hollywood she says, ‘I still make choices every day as a 41-year-old actress that I think of as self-protecting and wise. I have decided that my sexual self is best reserved for private situations with those I am most intimate with. I dress modestly. I don’t act flirtatiously with men as a policy. In a perfect world, women should

Studies suggest that 32% of women say they have been verbally harassed on London’s transport network...
As a society, we need to ask ourselves how we intend to safeguard the rights of women to lead normal lives and move freely in society and the rights of men to be able to do likewise without fear of censure or complaint. No woman or man should ever be subject to abuse of any form. Men and women therefore need to respect each other and themselves. But how do we do this without clear boundaries around what is acceptable and unacceptable social conduct?

The issue of safeguarding women is not limited to clandestine affairs. Women face daily provocation from men. Studies suggest that 32% of women say they have been verbally harassed on London’s transport network, with 19% being the victims of direct physical abuse, according to a joint poll between Thompson Reuters and YouGov. In France more than 220,000 women were sexually harassed on public transport between 2014 to 2015, which the national crime statistics agency described as a ‘conservative estimate’.

Cities have tried to tackle these problems in various ways. Women-only train carriages have been introduced in Rio de Janeiro, Moscow, Cairo and Japan. It would seem then that for women to feel respected and safe requires more than just the physical separation of men from women. It requires a model of morality which clarifies the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for both men and women.
So has Islam got anything better to offer? Firstly, let us be clear. True Islamic segregation is not the cultural practice of shrouding women and girls from head to toe, making it difficult for them to even see as they walk. It is not preventing women from seeking education and employment in case they must mix with men. It is not the prevention of women from running their own affairs.

The concept of Islamic segregation is based on a model of chastity incumbent on both men and women, that guides both to maintain boundaries of modesty and respect between one another. In some instances, these are physical boundaries, e.g. separate prayer areas, or meeting spaces. In all cases it is about the maintenance of modesty and decency in interactions between men and women.

Writing in *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, The Promised Messiah® reminds us that moral qualities are needed to rid ourselves of evil. Ihsan, or chastity, then is the active avoidance of situations that may lead to immorality – which is a responsibility for both men and women. In this verse of the Holy Qur’an, men are directed not to look at women so openly as to be sexually excited by them. This includes safeguarding their senses so that they are not tempted by women. Women in turn are instructed likewise and to dress in a manner that offers them further protection – to wear a head covering and clothes that do not draw attention to their form.

The Holy Qur’an also instructs ‘Approach not adultery’. So here too is an instruction that one must also actively avoid situations that might lead to this road. So, men and women who are unrelated to each other are cautioned not to allow themselves to be in situations that could allow either party to be subject to allegations of inappropriate conduct at a later juncture.

The Promised Messiah® further writes:

*The Book of God does not aim at keeping women in seclusion like prisoners. This is the concept of those who are not acquainted with the correct pattern of Islamic ways. The purpose of these regulations is to restrain men and women from letting their eyes to rove freely and from displaying their good looks and beauties, for therein lies the good of men and women.*

As the Promised Messiah® explains, these measures are not about limiting the movement of women in society – Muslim women work in many spheres of life – but it is about putting in place boundaries and safeguards that protect both sexes from allegations which can and do destroy reputations. These boundaries are not just physical but also spiritual – and to win the pleasure of Allah, Muslim men and women ensure that they not trespass the limits of acceptable social interaction. This way both genders are freed up to lead normal lives without fear of being put in physical danger and without fear of being accused of unacceptable conduct.

In a crude swipe at Islam, Hitchens also ironically raises the need for such safeguards:

*Wise men at Westminster will in future go about with chaperones, record and film all conversations with the opposite sex, require women to sign consent forms before meeting them, and certificates of good conduct afterwards. Nothing else will keep them safe from claims that they momentarily applied a fleeting hand’ to someone’s knee.*

Or there is always the other solution,
Ahmadi Muslim women dressed in burqas, hijabs, and niqabs work both alongside men and apart from men, successfully running hospitals and schools, and organising events throughout the year.

Segregation is grossly misunderstood when it is conceived as an imposition of restriction on female members of the Muslim society from fully participating in all spheres of human activities. This is not true. The Islamic concept of segregation is only to be understood in the context of measures to protect the sanctity of female chastity and the honour of women in society so that the dangers of violating these objectives are minimised. Free mixing of both sexes and clandestine affairs between men and women are strongly discouraged.7

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad⁸, the fifth successor to the Promised Messiah⁹, has on numerous occasions eloquently elucidated the teachings of morality and the teachings of Islam regarding segregation:

Those who level objections against Islam are accepting the fact that in some situations separation of gender is wise. In some places the option of making separate organisations for men and women has been discussed. This worldly society is also sensing the need of separating men and women. Those who level allegations against us regarding the segregation of genders are now accepting the fact that in some situations separation is a must.⁸

Perhaps it is now high time to examine, rather than mock, Islam’s solution for peace in society.

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5. The Holy Qur’an, 24:31-32.
A Glimpse into the Life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad

Disapproval of Penance

The Holy Prophet, however, strongly disapproved of formality in the matter of worship and condemned the imposition of any penance upon oneself as a form of worship. He taught that true worship consists in the beneficent use of the faculties with which God has endowed man. God having bestowed eyes upon man to see with, it would not be worship but impertinence to keep them shut or to have them removed. It is not the proper use of the faculty of sight which can be regarded as sinful, it is the improper use of the faculty that would be a sin. It would be ingratitude on the part of a man to have himself deprived of the faculty of hearing, though it would be sinful of him to use that faculty for the purpose of listening to slander and backbiting. Abstention from food (except on occasions when it is prescribed or is otherwise desirable) may amount to suicide and thus constitute an unforgivable sin, though it would also be sinful on the part of a man to devote himself entirely to food and drink or to indulge in the eating or drinking of prohibited or undesirable articles. This is a golden principle which was taught and emphasised by the Holy Prophet of Islam and which had not been inculcated by any previous prophet.

The correct use of natural faculties constitutes high moral qualities; the frustration or stultification of those qualities is folly. It is their improper use that is evil or sinful. Their proper use is true virtue. This is the essence of the moral teachings inculcated by the Holy Prophet of Islam. And this, in brief, was also a picture of his own life and actions. Aisha relates: ‘Whenever the Holy Prophet had a choice of two courses of action he always chose the easier of the two, provided it was free from all suspicion of error or sin. Where a course of action was open to such suspicion, the Holy Prophet of all men gave it the widest berth’ (Muslim, Kitabul Fada’il). This is indeed the highest and the most admirable course open to man. Many men voluntarily court pain and privations, not for the purpose of winning God’s pleasure, for God’s pleasure is not to be won by inflicting purposeless pain and privations upon oneself, but with the object of deceiving mankind. Such people possess little inherent virtue and wish to cover up their faults and to acquire merit in the eyes of others by assuming false virtues. The object of the Holy Prophet of Islam, however, was to attain to real virtue and to win the pleasure of God. He was, therefore, completely free from pretence and make-believe. That the world should regard him as bad or should appraise him as good was a matter of complete indifference to him. All that mattered to him was how he found himself and how God would judge him. If in addition to the testimony of his conscience and the approval of God he also won the true testimony of mankind he was grateful, but if men looked upon him with jaundiced eyes he was sorry for them and attached no value to their opinion.

ENDNOTES

The Proof of the Truthfulness of the Promised Messiah's Claim
true might and vitality. According to this prophecy, it was necessary that God Almighty should have raised a person at the turn of this fourteenth century who should have striven to reform the ills that have become current. Accordingly, I have been sent at the proper time. Previously, hundreds of saints have borne witness, on the basis of revelation, that the Reformer of the fourteenth century would be none other than the Promised Messiah. Authentic Ahadith also confirm repeatedly that the Messiah would appear after the thirteenth century. Then, does not my claim at this point in time clearly conform with the time and the circumstances? Is it possible that the prophecy of the Holy Prophetsa should turn out to be false? I have made it clear that if the Promised Messiah were not to appear at the turn of the fourteenth century, many of the prophecies of the Holy Prophetas would go unfulfilled and many saints, who were recipients of revelation, would turn out to be wrong.

When the divines are asked, who

Proof of Truthfulness

Here, a seeker after truth can validly raise a question, namely, what evidence is there to support the claim of my being the Promised Messiah – for every claim requires some evidence, especially in these times when cunning, deceit and dishonesty have become widespread and false claims are being actively promoted. In answer to this question, it would be enough for me to state that the following matters are sufficient as signs and evidence for a seeker after truth:

First of all, there is the prophecy made by the Holy Prophetsa which has consistently been interpreted to mean that, at the turn of each century, God Almighty shall raise a person to revive the faith by removing the weaknesses that might have crept in and would restore it to its

HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMADas, THE PROMISED MESSIAH & IMAM MAHDI
The third sign of the truth of my claim is that, as I have set out in the *Nishan-e-Asmani* [a book written by the Promised Messiah], some men of God, who passed away many years before me, had given the news of my coming, specifying clearly my name and place of residence and my age.

The fourth sign of the truth of my claim is that I have dispatched approximately twelve thousand letters and announcements to the representatives of other faiths, inviting them to a contest in the blessings of faith. There is perhaps not a single well-known clergyman in Europe, America and India who has not been addressed by registered letter. They were all so over-awed by the truth that not one of them came forward. The criticism levelled against this invitation by the *maulvis* [religious clerics] is in truth based on falsehood and filth. I have been given the glad tiding that if any opponent of Islam comes forward to challenge me, I shall prevail over him and he will be humiliated...

The fifth sign in support of my truth is that I have been informed that I shall ever remain triumph over all Muslims in the matter of vision and revelation. So let those of them who claim to be recipients of revelation come forward to compete with me. If they triumph over me in respect of Divine support and Heavenly grace and signs, I would submit to being slaughtered however they wish.


I see that those who wish to be the followers of nature and the law of nature have been offered a good opportunity by God Almighty of accepting my claim, inasmuch as they are not confronted by the difficulties in which our other opponents are involved. They know well that Jesus as has died and at the same time they have to confess that the prophecy contained in the *Ahadith* about the appearance of the Promised Messiah is among the long-established verities that cannot be denied by any reasonable person. Thus they are left with no other option but to accept that the Promised Messiah will be one of the Muslims. They are, however, entitled to inquire as to why they should believe in me as the Promised Messiah, and on what grounds do I base this claim? The answer is that all the indications mentioned in the Holy Qur’an and the *Abadith* with regard to the Promised Messiah have been combined in me and in my age and in my country; as, for instance, the age and the country and the town in which the Promised Messiah was to appear and the circumstances which called specially for his advent, and the earthly and heavenly occurrences which had been specified as indications of his advent, and the knowledge and learning that were to be his characteristic, have all been combined in me. In addition to these, and to provide further satisfaction, I have been strengthened by Heavenly support.

[As I was invested with authority for the Christians, I was, therefore, named the son of Mary. Heaven is showing signs and the earth proclaims that this is the time. These two witnesses stand firm in my support.]

To illustrate: The indication given in the text of the Holy Qur’an proves that he Holy Prophet as appeared in the likeness
It is set out in an authentic Hadith that he who fails to recognize the Imam of his age will die the death of ignorance… This direction of the Holy Prophet entails that every seeker after truth should continue to seek the true Imam…

of Moses, and that the chain of Khilafat [or Caliphate] after the Holy Prophet would be very similar to the chain of Khilafat established after Moses. Just as Prophet Moses was promised that in the latter days – i.e., when the Prophethood of Bani Isra’il [the Tribes of Israel] would reach its limit and Bani Isa’ir would be divided into many sects, each contradicting the other, so much so that some would declare others to be infidels – God Almighty would raise a successor, i.e., Prophet Jesus, to support the faith of Moses; he would gather the scattered sheep of Israel, and bring sheep and wolves together at one place, and he would be an Arbiter for all the sects of Bani Isra’il, and he would iron out their differences and remove all rancour and ill-will; likewise, a similar promise was made by the Holy Qur’an in the verse:

وَأَخْرَيْنَ مِمَّنْ لَا يَلْبَحُوْا يَتَمُّ

[And others from among them who have not yet joined them - 62:4]

Many details of this are set out in the Abadith. For instance, it is mentioned that Muslims would become divided into as many sects as the Jews; they would contradict each other and brand each other as infidels; and [that they] would increase in hatred and enmity towards each other, till the time when the Promised Messiah would appear as an arbiter. He would remove all rancour and hostility. During his time, the wolf and the sheep will be brought together. All historians are aware that, at the time of the advent of Jesus, the Israelite sects were ridden with dissension and labelled each other as heretics and infidels. I have also appeared at a time when inner dissension has multiplied and each sect has started calling others kafir [disbeliever]. At such a time of dissension, the Muslims were in need of an arbiter. God has, therefore, sent me as one.

—Kitab-ul-Bariyyah, Rubani Khaza’in, vol. 13, pp. 254-257, footnote

My status is not that of an ordinary maulvi, but my status is that of Prophets. Accept me as one who has come from heaven, and all the altercations and dissensions which have divided the Muslims will at once be resolved. Whatever meanings are attributed to the Holy Qur’an by him – who has come as an arbiter and as a commissioned one of God – will be its true meaning and whichever Hadith he affirms as true will be a true Hadith.

—Malfuzat, vol. 2, pp. 140-141

It is set out in an authentic Hadith that he who fails to recognize the Imam of his age will die the death of ignorance… This direction of the Holy Prophet entails that every seeker after truth should continue to seek the true Imam… The question arises: Who can be called the Imam of the age, and what are his characteristics, and in what respect is he to be preferred to other recipients of revelation and dreams and visions? The answer is that the Imam of the age is the person whose spiritual training is undertaken by God Almighty Himself Who invests his nature with such guiding light as enables him to overcome all philosophers and logicians of the world in every kind of debate. He refutes the subtest criticism of every description so well by his God-given power, that one is compelled to admit that he has come into the world equipped with all the resources needed for its reform and thus he was not to face humiliation before any opponent. He is the spiritual Commander-in-Chief of the Muslim forces and God Almighty designs once again to make the faith victorious at his hand. All those who seek shelter under his banner are also equipped with the highest capacities. He is bestowed all that is needed for reform and is endowed with all knowledge that is required for repelling objections and setting forth Islamic excellences.

It must be borne in mind that the expression ‘Imam of the age’ comprises the titles of Prophet, Messenger, Muhaddath and Mujaddid [Reformer]. Those who are not Divinely appointed for the reform and guidance of mankind and are not invested with the requisite excellences cannot be described as Imams of the age even if they are saints or Abdal [Literally, ‘Those who have brought about a holy change’, a term used by the Sufis for the higher grade of saints].

The question remains as to who is the Imam of this age who must, under Divine command, be obeyed by Muslims in general, the pious, the seers and the recipients of revelation. I have no hesitation in affirming that, by the grace of God, I am this Imam of the age. God Almighty has combined all the signs and conditions of the Imam in my person and has raised me at the turn of the century.

—Darurat-ul-Imam, Rubani Khaza’in, vol. 13, p. 495

As I have come from God Almighty with truth and righteousness, you will find the signs of my truthfulness all around you. The time is not far – indeed it is very near – when you will observe angels descending from heaven in large numbers on the hearts of the people of Asia, Europe and America. You have learnt from the Holy Qur’an that, with the advent of the vicegerent of God, the descent of angels is incumbent so that they should turn people’s hearts towards the truth. So wait for this sign. If angels do not descend and you do not perceive the clear effect of their descent in the world and you do not find the hearts inclined in an extraordinary manner to move towards the truth, then you may reasonably conclude that no one has descended from heaven. But if all this happens, then do not persist in denial, lest you be judged by God Almighty as a disobedient people.

—Fathe-Islam, Rubani Khaza’in, vol. 3, pp. 13–14, footnote

In recent times vested interests have launched a ‘crusade’ against Islam. Islam is labelled as a religion of terror, backwardness and suppression.

Based on Quranic teachings, the author of this book goes about disproving these notions and professes that Islam provides practical solutions to current issues; and argues that:

1. Swords can win territories but not hearts, forces can bend heads but not minds;
2. The role of women is not of concubines in harems nor a society imprisoned in the four wall of their houses;
3. Richer nations provide aid with strings attached and yet the flow of wealth continues to be in the direction of the rich while the poorer sink deeper in the red;
4. Religion does not need to be the predominant legislative authority in the political affairs of the state;
5. Irrespective of the thawing of the cold war, the issue of war and peace does not only hang by the thread of superpower relationship.
6. Without God there can be no peace.

It also contains comprehensive discussion on interest; financial aid; international relations; and the role of Israel, America and the United Kingdom in a new world order.

The message of this book is timeless and chalks a blue print for the future prospects for peace.
NOTE ABOUT REFERENCES
Verse references to the Holy Qur'an count 'Bismillah… ' (In the Name of Allah…) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted. Should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in The Review of Religions will be found a verse earlier, i.e. at one verse less than the number quoted in this journal.

For the ease of non-Muslim readers, ‘sa’ or ‘(saw)’ after the words, ‘Holy Prophet’, or the name ‘Muhammad’, are used normally in small letters. 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 ‘Raziallahu 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, ‘rah’ or ‘(rah)’ for Rahemahullahu Ta’ala means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

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

CALENDAR OF RELIGIOUS EVENTS & FESTIVALS

MARCH 2018

Thursday 1st March 2018
Faith: Judaism
Event: Purim

The story of Purim relates to the biblical book of Esther, a Jewish woman who was married to Ahasuerus, the king of Persia. According to the account mentioned in the Bible, she is said to have prevented Haman – a Persian Nobleman – from the killing of innocent Jews in Persia. During this festival Jews render thanks by the giving of alms and reciting the story of Esther.

Friday 2nd March 2018
Faith: Hinduism
Event: Holi

Also known as the 'Festival of Colours', Holi is a Hindu festival celebrated in the spring. It begins on the day after the full moon in the Hindu month of Phalguna - which usually falls between the end of February and the middle of March according to the Gregorian calendar. This festival involves applying or throwing coloured water or powder on friends and family. The ritual is to celebrate the tussel between Krishna and Radha.

Sunday 25th March 2018
Faith: Christianity
Event: Palm Sunday

According to all four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John), Palm Sunday is celebrated to mark Jesus’s arrival into Jerusalem. The Gospels mention that when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem crowds of people laid down their cloaks and branches of palm trees. In memory of this event Christians attend church services where the faithful are given palm leaves or a substitute thereof in places where palm leaves are unavailable.

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The magazine is devoted to promoting intellectual and lively debate that is based on respect for all prophets and religions. Islam repeatedly stresses the need to seek knowledge and The Review of Religions provides a unique platform for people to acquire, and share knowledge.

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