



# The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

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لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ

*There is no deity but Allah, Muhammad is His Messenger*

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The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the expected world Reformer and the Promised Messiah. The Movement is an embodiment of true and real Islam. It seeks to unite mankind with its Creator and to establish peace throughout the world. The present Supreme Head of the Movement is Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad. The International Center for the Ahmadiyya Movement is at Rabwah, Pakistan. The Ahmadiyya Movement is actively engaged in the propagation of Islam.



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful*

## THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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## WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam means *peace, surrender*. The significance of the name Islam is the attainment of a life of perfect peace and eternal happiness through complete surrender to the Will of God.

Absolute and uncompromising belief in One God is the central doctrine of Islam. *There is none worthy of worship but the One and Only God (Allah) Who possesses all excellences and Muhammad is His Messenger.* This is the most important doctrine of Islam.

Islam helps us to establish a permanent relationship with God to realize Him during our earthly life as our Helper and Guide in all our affairs.

Islam requires belief in all the prophets and spiritual guides including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius and Zoroaster. Islam represents the completion of the mission of *all* the prophets from the dawn of history. It teaches that *all the prophets of God came with one and the same mission*. Thus Islam establishes peace and unity between all religions. The Holy Quran—the Muslim Scripture—was revealed to the Master Prophet Muhammad 1400 years ago and has been preserved intact without the slightest change. A large number of Muslims know the whole Book by heart. It is an inexhaustible treasure of spiritual truths capable of satisfying the needs of all people in all countries and all stations of life.

The establishment of true democracy and universal brotherhood without any discrimination of caste, creed, color or country is the unique and unrivalled distinction of Islam. Islam has fulfilled and realized the splendid principles of democracy in the actual life and action of human society.

According to Islam, life after death is a continuation of life on earth. Heaven and Hell begin right in this life. Heaven is eternal and everlasting, while hell is temporary. Hell is a hospital for the treatment of the human soul. As a soul is cured, it goes to Heaven. Heaven is the attainment of a life of everlasting progress and complete joy and happiness through union with God and by the development of the fine spiritual qualities and the unlimited capacities which have been implanted in human beings.

A few of the distinctive features of Islam are:

1. Liberation of women by establishing the equality of both sexes, safeguarding their rights and liberties and raising their status.
2. Absolute veto on all intoxicants.
3. Equitable solution of all economic problems.
4. Furnishing mankind with the noblest practical ethics.
5. Promotion of science and education.

Some of the obligatory duties laid down by Islam are:

1. Five daily Prayers.
2. Fasting in the month of Ramadhan.
3. Paying *Zakat* for the relief of poverty.
4. Pilgrimage to Mecca, once in one's lifetime, if circumstances allow.



*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful  
We praise Him and invoke His blessings on His Noble Prophet*

## COMMENTARY ON VERSES OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسُئِلَ  
فِي خُرَابِهَا أُولَئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ ۚ  
لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

*“Wa Mann Azlamo Mimman Mana’a Masajidallahe  
An Yuzkara Feehasmohu Wa Sa’a Fee Kharabeha.  
Oulaaeka Maa Kaana Lahum An Yadkholuha Illa  
Kha’efeen. Lahum Fid-Dunya Khizyun-Wa Lahum Fil  
Aakhirate Azaabun Azeem.”*

*And who is more unjust than he who prohibits the  
name of Allah being glorified in Allah’s temples and  
seeks to ruin them? It was not proper for such men to  
enter therein except in fear. For them is disgrace in this  
world; and theirs shall be a great punishment in the  
next. (2:115)*

This verse constitutes a strong indictment of those who carry their religious differences to such extremes that they do not even refrain from perpetrating outrages against the places of worship belonging to other creeds. They hinder people from worshipping God in their sacred places and even go so far as to destroy their temples. Such acts of violence are denounced here in strong terms and a lesson of tolerance and broad-

is inculcated.

The Qur'an recognizes for all men the free and unrestricted right to use their temples and declares that if anybody wishes to worship God in a place of worship, he should not be prevented from doing so; for a temple or a mosque is a place dedicated to the worship of God and the person who prevents men from worshipping Him in it, in fact, contributes to its ruin and desolation.

This is what Islam teaches about the respect for the places of worship, and yet it has come to be condemned as an intolerant religion. Islam is indeed the first and the only religion to inculcate broad-mindedness and teach respect for the religious susceptibilities of all peoples; and the Holy Prophet was the first person who carried this great and noble principle into actual practice. He allowed the Christians of Najran to hold their service in his own mosque, the celebrated *Masjid-un-Nabi*, when they came to have a religious discussion with him at Medina (*Zurqanî*).

It will be noted that the verse prescribes two punishments for those who prohibit others from glorifying the name of Allah in places of worship. One is disgrace in this world and the other is heavy punishment in the next. The punishment of disgrace is typical of the offense; for a person who first builds a temple or a mosque with the object that the name of God may be remembered in it and then proceeds to prevent people from worshipping Him therein, cannot but bring upon himself humiliation and disgrace in the eyes of the world. The words also contain a prophecy about the disbelievers of Mecca who prevented the Muslims from entering the Ka'ba. The prophecy was fulfilled when Mecca was taken and the infidels met with humiliation and disgrace.

Finally, it may be noted that the verse should not be understood to mean that the Qur'an advocates the unqualified access for all sorts of persons to all places of worship without regard to circumstances. In fact, only those who wish to use them for the specific purpose of God's worship and have no ulterior motive are allowed.





## FROM THE WRITINGS OF HAZRAT AHMAD

### *Our Powerful, Wonderful God*

“God Himself is constant. He is Eternal, Never Changing, Most Perfect in Himself. Changes are produced in human beings. When one changes for the better, God reveals Himself to him with a new manifestation. When one makes progress, God reveals Himself with a higher manifestation. God exhibits miraculous manifestations of His Power and Glory when man undergoes a miraculous change. This is the root of marvels and miracles...

“Our God is a very loyal God and He shows wonderful works for those loyal to Him. The world wishes to swallow them and enemies gnash their teeth against them, but He Who is their friend saves them from every danger and makes them triumph in every field. Blessed is he who firmly holds on to this God.

“We believe in Him. We recognized Him. He alone is the God of the world. He has sent down His revelation to me. He has shown powerful Signs for me. He has sent me as the Promised Messiah for this age. There is no other God except Him, neither in the heavens nor on the earth. Whosoever does not put his faith in Him remains deprived of His blessings and lives in confusion. We have received the revelation from our God which is as bright as the sun. We have seen Him. He alone is the God of the world. There is none other except Him. How Powerful and Ever-Living is the God we found; full of wonderful Powers is the God we witnessed. The truth is that there is nothing impossible for Him, except a thing which runs counter to His own Promise and His own Book.

“When you stand up for prayer, it is incumbent upon you to hold that your God is All-Powerful. Then your prayers will be accepted and you will witness the marvels of His Power, just as we have witnessed. Our witness is based on personal experience, not on hearsay...

“God has mastery over everything. But the Book of God has laid down this rule regarding prayer: He treats a righteous person like a friend out of His infinite mercy. Sometimes he does as the person asks, as He has said: *‘Call me and I will answer you.’* Sometimes He wishes His will to prevail, as He has said: *‘We will try you with a bit of fear and a bit of hunger...’* This is so He might treat a person according to his prayers to increase his certainty in Him and

sometimes He might do His will and increase his rank and out of love for him advance him along the paths of light...

"Our God has countless wonders, but only those witness them who become His with truth and fortitude. He does not reveal His wonders on others who do not believe in His Powers and are not faithful and true to Him. Unfortunate, indeed, is the person who still does not know that he has the Only God who is Master over everything. Our God is our paradise. Our highest enjoyments are in Him. We witnessed Him and found every beauty in Him. This treasure is worth possessing even if one has to sacrifice his life for it. This jewel is worth buying even if one loses everything else for it.

"Ye unlucky ones, run to this fountain and it will quench your thirst. This is the fountain of life, it will save you. What shall I do? How can I convey these glad tidings to the hearts? What kind of a drum should I beat through the streets, announcing to everyone that this is your God, so people will hear me? What medicine should I use so people have their ears opened to listen?

If you become His, then be certain that God is yours. He will keep awake for you and guard you while you are asleep. You may let down your guard, but God will keep an eye on your enemy and will frustrate his plans. As yet you do not know the Powers inherent in your God. If you knew Him, never a day would come when you would worry about worldly things. A person who owns a treasure will not cry on the loss of a single penny as if he is going to perish for this loss. If you knew about this gold mine that God will suffice for all your needs, you would never lose your cool for this world.

"God is a precious treasure, learn His value. He is your helper at every step. You or your material plans are nothing without Him. Do not follow other nations who depend only on material means. ... They put all their faith in material means and did not seek strength from God. They are dead and the heavenly spirit has left them as a dove flies away from its nest. They have a craze for worldly things which has cut away all their internal organs. Beware of this madness.

"I do not prohibit you from using material means within proper limits. I do forbid you to become slaves of material means, like other nations, and ignore God Who provided these means to you. If you had eyes, you will see that God is everything, anything else is worthless. You cannot stretch your hand nor retract it without His consent.

(Extracts from *Kashti-i-Nooh*)



## THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

By  
Mostafa Sabet

*(Mr. Mostafa Sabet, a prominent Ahmadi from Egypt, has been a resident of Canada for several years)*

The subject of the existence of God is of common interest to both the believer and the atheist, though each looks at it from a different perspective. I would attempt to address a couple of arguments generally raised by atheists. One may run as follows: "There is no conclusive evidence that God exists. All that you can claim is that this universe could not have come into existence accidentally but must have had a creator. This is an inference. Inference may be true or false. Thus faith in God is based on probabilities but there is no conclusive evidence that God exists". Another argument may run like this: "I have a scientifically oriented mind. I cannot accept any fact which cannot be proven in the laboratory. If you cannot prove a fact in the laboratory, it does not stand as a fact; it is but a mere illusion. You cannot prove the existence of God in the laboratory, hence it is not a fact. Thus God does not exist". In short the two questions I shall attempt to answer are:

1. Is there a conclusive evidence that God exists?
2. Is God's existence a fact which can be proven as any other scientific fact can be proven in the laboratory?

It is surprising that both atheists and believers of today share the same belief about one of God's attributes which provides the conclusive evidence of His existence. In the world of today, it is generally accepted by both atheists and adherents of various religions that God does not speak any more. The atheist believes that God does not speak because He does not exist in the first place, while on the other hand, those who identify themselves with religion, with few exceptions of course, believe that God does not speak because, if I can put it flatly, He doesn't have anything more to say. But those who claim that God has said all that He wanted to say, and that all what He wanted to say is written in their respective holy books, do not understand the nature of God's words. They generally take the *Shari'a* or the divine Law to be the only type of God's word. Once

the Law is completed and perfected, there is no need in their minds, for God to send down any further word. You may find people like that among the followers of all religions. Christians, for example, generally believe that the Bible contains everything God wanted to tell man, thus nothing more is required, hence God does not speak any more. Similarly, Muslims of today, in general, believe that God does not speak any more because the divine Law has been completed in the Holy Quran and the religion of Islam has been perfected and nothing more is needed or required. If we were to accept this argument, then these people have no conclusive evidence to prove that God does exist today?

In a discussion with a Christian friend of mine, he tried to answer this question by emphasizing that the fulfillment of the Biblical prophecies in our time is the conclusive evidence of the existence of God as those prophecies were revealed thousands of years ago. He also made use of the well-known argument that the universe is governed by laws which indicates that the universe must have had a creator. I agreed that the system of the universe proves that it must have had a creator, also the fulfillment of the prophecies proves that their originator must have had insight in the future. Then I asked: "If we were to accept that God was the Creator of the Universe and the Originator of those prophecies, it only proves that God did exist in the time of the creation and at the time those prophecies were revealed, but it does not necessarily prove that the same God still exists today. May be for some reason or another His existence came to an end." The fulfillment of the prophecies proves that the one who originated them had a previous knowledge of these events but does not necessarily prove that he still exists or even that he still has the capacity of insight in the future. The only conclusive evidence that God does exist is when He continues to speak. Without this conclusive evidence, our faith is based on a "May Be". May be God still exists but for some reason He does not speak any more; but the other possibility is equally valid: May be God does not exist any more. In any case, there is no certainty about His existence. There is no certainty of faith.

For this reason, God has raised the Promised Messiah in our age to prove His existence and to grant the believers a certainty of faith. This is the prime objective of every prophet: To reconcile man with his Creator and bring the believers to a certainty of faith through establishing communion with God. Once a true believer establishes a

personal relationship with God, then he receives from God, according to his own faculties and capacities, that which proves to him beyond any shadow of a doubt that God does exist.

Many times in my discussions with non-Ahmadi Muslims, they agree that God will converse with the believers on the Day of Judgment and in *Jannat* (the Garden or Paradise) but not in this life. The Holy Quran emphatically disagrees with this argument. It says:

*"Those who believed and kept to righteousness, for them are the glad tidings in the present life and also in the Hereafter."*  
(10:63-64)

Again, the Holy Quran explains that communion with God is established in this very life and that the believers receive a message from God through His angels, as it says:

*"As for those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah', and then remain steadfast, the angels descend on them saying: 'Fear ye not, nor grieve; and rejoice in the Garden that you were promised. We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter. Therein you will have all what your souls will desire, and therein you will have all that you will ask for. An entertainment from the Most Forgiving, the Ever Merciful'" (41:31-33).*

I would like to draw the attention of those who deny that God speaks to His servants in this life, to the words of the message conveyed by the angels to the believers. There are three imperative verbs: 'Fear ye not, not grieve and rejoice in the Garden that you were promised'. This means that the angels in fact say: 'Now, right now, at this present moment you should have no fear of anything related to the future; and now, right now, at this present moment you should not grieve over anything that may have happened in the past; and now, right now, in this present moment you can rejoice in the Garden that you were promised.' This means that rejoicing in the *Jannat* (translated as the Garden) starts in this very life. It is inconceivable that the true believers who receive this message containing those three imperative verbs will not do as they were told until the Hereafter.

Though the angels say 'Fear ye not' yet they will continue to have fear until the Hereafter; and though the angels say 'nor grieve' yet they will continue to grieve till the Hereafter; and though the angels say 'rejoice in the *Jannat*' yet they will not rejoice in the *Jannat* till the Hereafter. No, the *Jannat* of true believers starts in this very life and continues in glorious manifestation in the Hereafter. That is why

the angels assure the believers saying: "We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter". This friendship starts in this life and continues in the Hereafter.

Accordingly, the angels continue to assure the believers: 'Therein you will have all that your souls will desire and therein you will have all that you will ask for'. The word translated as 'Therein' is an adverb which in Arabic may refer to place as well as to time. In the angels message, the word *Feeha* (Therein) does not only refer to the *Jannat* (The Garden) but also refers to this life and to the Hereafter. In other words, the word *Feeha* (Therein) refers to the *Jannat* of this life and also refers to the *Jannat* of the Hereafter. A true believer receives the assurance that he can have all what his soul desires and all what he asks for right now, in the *Jannat* of this life. What do you think a true believer will ask for more than to have a closer relationship with God? What do you think a true believer's soul will desire except to hear the sweet voice of her Creator?

A true believer stands in front of Allah seeking only one thing—His pleasure; yearning only for one desire—To hear His sweet voice and to see His beautiful countenance. Having achieved that, a true believer does not experience any worldly fear nor suffers any grief. Yes, he may seem to be suffering from all kinds of torments, yet his soul keeps rejoicing when it hears the voice of its Beloved. Look at Bilal! He was tormented on the scorching sand of Arabia, heavy rocks were placed upon his chest and he was mercilessly dragged upon the sharp rocks of the mountains. He could have saved himself from all this apparent suffering if he had denounced God, but how could his tongue have uttered that word when his soul and heart were filled with the sweet voice of his Beloved? Yes, to the eyes of the world he was suffering, but in reality he was rejoicing in a *Jannat*. That is why his tongue was unable to repeat anything but the attribute of his Beloved: 'Ahadun Ahad' meaning: He is One, He is One. In this context, the Promised Messiah was once asked, why the prophets, though they are most dear and near to God, yet He lets them be subjected to untold torments and sufferings?' The Promised Messiah smiled and said, "Were they really suffering?"

The fact is that the true believers live in a *Jannat* not merely believing in the existence of God but experiencing the existence of God. On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud, one of the Muslims went looking for some dates to eat after the initial victory the Muslims had achieved. When he returned to the battle-field he found

that the Muslim army had suffered a defeat. He saw some people weeping and when he asked about the Holy Prophet, he was told that the Holy Prophet was killed, upon which he said, "Why are you sitting here weeping, let us go and join the Holy Prophet where he is. I swear by God that I can feel the scent of *Jannat*". This proves that he had previously experienced the scent of Paradise and that when he felt it at that time he was able to recognize it.

Experiencing the existence of God can never come to an end. Over the past fourteen hundred years there were always people who experienced the existence of God, but it was decreed that in the time of the Promised Messiah myriads of people would experience God's existence. This phenomenon is referred to in the Bible as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Notice that the term 'outpouring' is generally used for heavy rain. The Holy Quran refers to the same phenomenon and likens the word of God to the rain. It says:

*"And He sent down water upon you from heaven that thereby He might purify you, and remove from you the filth of Satan, and that He might strengthen your hearts and make your steps firm therewith" (8:12).*

This heavenly water is the conclusive evidence that God does exist today as He existed before. It is from this fountainhead that the companions of the Holy Prophet drank to their satisfaction. It is this running spring of life which bestowed heavenly life upon them to the degree that they cheerfully laid down their lives for the sake of Allah. The same heavenly water bestowed the same heavenly life upon the companions and followers of the Promised Messiah to the degree that they did not care for the world. When they heard the sweet voice of their Creator and experienced His existence in their lives, they were transformed into different beings. They lived in the world but did not belong to the world. In their eyes, all the delights of this world and all its treasures were not equal in value to a mosquito's wing. They surrendered everything in the way of Allah so He bestowed upon them everything their souls desired. They turned their faces from the world so God unveiled His face for them. The world despised them and conspired against them but God loved them and became their Guardian and Protector. The world turned them out of their homes and countries but God overshadowed them and made them dwell in houses full of light and mercy of which the world can never imagine or conceive.

Look at Hazrat Khalifatul Masih. He is a living example of the



## WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE?

By

Louis J. Hammann

Professor of Religion, Gettysburg College

The question I want to confront in this essay haunts me as a person and drives my curiosity as a scholar. It was first brought into sharp focus by a comment of a friend of mine who is a member of a Christian sect, known as *Jehovah's Witnesses*. The origin of the movement can be dated around the middle of the 1880's. Current membership is over 2,600,000 in two hundred five countries around the world.

Individual members commit themselves to "publishing" the good news of the coming kingdom of God. Often the witnesses are so insistent in their efforts to persuade the uninitiated of the imminence of the "end time" that they provoke irritation, even hostility in persons to whom they offer their literature and their message. As a result, the Witnesses have a bad reputation among many religious people in the United States, in Africa, in Europe, and wherever they "publish," that is, perform their missionary duties.

If I had allowed myself the usual negative response to the Witnesses whom I have personally known, I would not have found my friend's comment at all intelligible. He made a distinction that one might not expect from a Jehovah's Witness, given the reputation of Witnesses among a public only casually informed about the movement.

My friend said, apropos of our discussion of the Witnesses' theological vision, that he made a distinction between one's being Jehovah's witness and a Jehovah's Witness. When I expressed some puzzlement over what he had said, he set out to clarify this observation. If one is a Jehovah's Witness, he thinks of himself as "belonging to a club." Such a claim whether implicit or explicit, does not necessarily refer to the character of one's personal piety. It means at most that a person claims membership in a particular group or movement. It need not involve any commentary on one's religious disposition. Instead the claim is made that one belongs to a sect or denomination, that one is a "card carrying" member of an organization. To be "Jehovah's witness," however, may mean something quite different.



Now, of course, we are on the verge of an issue that not even all Witnesses may be clear about. Certainly any person who is a Jehovah's Witness most likely thinks of himself as Jehovah's witness. Hence, such a distinction may seem obscure or irrelevant to a serious devotee. He is what he believes and believes what he is. A Witness does what a witness does, but does a witness always and only do what a Witness does? The question may seem rhetorical, but in it, with appropriate labels changed, lies a problem for religious people that cannot forever be ignored. Can piety and commitment only be defined in terms set by an institutional structure? Or can persons express a religious disposition in such ways that institutional definitions are set aside? It is the view from inside a tradition that often suggests that an exclusive delineation of beliefs is required to satisfy a superordinate being. From the point of view of a Witness, Jehovah Himself must seem determined to judge an individual's worth on the basis of affiliation. But it is obvious now that even for some Witnesses such strictures are not absolute, even within a traditional structure. Many (most?) religious movements have eventually written in a confessional clause that compromises the exclusivistic reflexes that seem almost natural to certain sects and denominations.

It is certainly true that most of us on the outside of a particular tradition are quite sure that those on the inside insist that our spiritual destiny depends on living and believing within well established limits. More sympathetic attention, however, often proves this notion wrong. The Krishna conscious, for example, will often protest that religious virtue resides as well in those who sincerely believe in Jesus or submit to Allah. Apparently there is a mode of religiosity that is generic and those groups that have made for themselves a place in the "real world" are able to countenance that mode. Their own piety, of course, is one example of such religiosity. Therefore, it is more "important" for persons to please a tolerant God than to justify themselves by adherence to the protocols of a singular tradition. *Sincerity* of commitment seems a more important consideration than creedal or practical orthodoxy.

The sympathetic outsider is faced here with a real dilemma. Should he trust the protestations of tolerance for generic piety? Or should he be suspicious that such tolerance is a thin cover laid over a deep seated hostility shaped by a double edged fear on the part of those on the inside? One's smiling adversary may be afraid that a prospect may be lost if the sect exhibits too exclusivistic a stance. It is easy to offend

the sympathetic outsider if the definition of piety is too narrow. On the other hand, the insider may be moved by a fear that in the clash of cultures in a relativistic universe his own religiosity may not be so easy to defend. The certainty shored up by revelation may falter when the "argument" shifts onto a more mundane level where *cultural* relativism sets the rules of the discussion.

I am sure that interactive situations, where issues of piety and commitment are at stake, are not this simple. Latent in such encounters are the dispositions of individuals that can vary along a spectrum of great extremes. And in fact the delineation of a tradition's practical orthodoxy may not have been made with any great precision over the years. Even more puzzling to the outsider could be the fact that a particular tradition is systematically tolerant of others—even if only within well-established limits. That is, there may be reasons worked into the structure of beliefs that make "tolerance" a principle authorized by the founding revelation itself. One of the clearest examples of this possibility is Islam.

Against the prevailing bias of many Christians, the religion of Islam, insofar as it is scrupulous about Qur'anic injunctions, is committed to tolerance toward non-Muslims. Such tolerance may or may not commit individual Muslims to affectionate appreciation of others, but it is a religious principle based both on practical considerations and on a Qur'anic vision of an original unity of humankind. With regard to this last condition, *sura* 49, verse 14 is an exemplary statement:

*"O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."*<sup>1</sup>

And if that were not clear enough, then *sura* 2, verse 257 leaves no doubt:

*"There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so 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."*

Since "the Qur'an has laid down final commandments and....constitutes the final revealed Law of God,"<sup>2</sup> these and comparable passages are sufficient to establish the principle of religious tolerance from Islam.

In several passages of the Qur'an, one can discern as well a practical basis for the revealed principle. An explanatory note to *sura* 2, verse 257 observes: "Compulsion is incompatible with religion: because...religion depends upon faith and will, and these would be meaningless if induced by force..."<sup>3</sup> The Qur'an itself protests that "*On the Messenger lies only the conveying of the Message. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you hide.*" (5:100) Muhammad, nor his followers, have any sanction from the revealed Message to be coercive in matters of religion. His duty is to present the Message that in its own power appeals to the mind and heart of those willing to submit. Beyond this, no one should go.

In his essay, "*Non-Muslims and the Umma*," S. Barakat Ahmad reviews the history of Islamic tolerance. He discovers that even hypocrites (*munaḥiqun*) and recanters do not have any punishment prescribed for them that Muslims are to inflict. Such persons have only their own conscience and their sense of the divine presence to contend with. Neither individuals nor the community's authorities are advised to abuse or to coerce even the hardest of heart.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, then, tolerance is the Message, even when Muhammad's position in relation to the *umma* was secure enough during his time in Medina to carry out capital punishment if he had been persuaded to do so.<sup>5</sup> An individual's spiritual decision and destiny are shaped by Allah, and cannot be judged or coerced by his fellowman. But tolerance and non-compulsion, however reassuring, may not be a sufficient response for some non-Muslims.

In a complex world where cultural relativism is inescapable, one may still wonder whether the distinction made by my Witness friend may prove tempting for Muslims. Can one be muslim without being a Muslim? Is the *umma* sufficiently large, its definition flexible enough to include those whose submission may not be exhibited according to the conventions of the Islamic tradition? Or is "muslim" only defined by reference to behavioral protocols and verbal protestations? What, after all, does it mean to be muslim? To be muslim, must one be a Muslim? How should a Muslim respond to one who claims to be muslim, even though he may not exhibit all of the conventional gestures that identify a Muslim?

The questions proliferate easily and one does not know where to search for definitive answers that put an end to the questions. Even when we turn to the Qur'an the answer seems not to be decisive:

*"Surely, men who submit themselves to God and women who submit themselves to Him, and believing men and believing women, and obedient men and obedient women and truthful men and truthful women, and men steadfast in their faith and steadfast women, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Him—Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward.(33:36)*

These are virtues that are not the exclusive province of those who formally submit to God according to the precise discipline of a Muslim. The level of generality of this passage makes it catholic in its inclusiveness. But does not a Muslim enjoy an identity that makes him a member of an exclusive group? Islam means the peace that comes from submission to God. Can anyone experience *that* peace if he does not practice the disciplines of piety and belief as prescribed by the tradition? I may insist that I have experienced that peace, though my disciplined behavior may not fulfill the expectations of Muslim friends. But surely a tradition cannot include indiscriminately any and all who offer the subjective assurance that they have experienced "the peace that follows submission." Why not? What, in the final analysis, allows or compels the discrimination that marks off *the Muslim* from one who protests that he is muslim? Is the answer to that question decidable on clear principle or is the answer determined by what I would call "practical default"? That is, if the answer is not decidable unequivocally on the basis of the authority that prevails in the tradition, it may be decided by strictly practical considerations.

For example, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV, currently the Supreme Head of the International Ahmadiyya Jama'at, said, in a speech delivered in Rabwah at the 1983 Jalsa Salana, that those who have not heard of Islam, will be judged according to the standards of their own religion. Clearly Ahmadiyyat is committed to religious tolerance on the basis of principle as well as on the basis of practical (*i.e.*, political and psychological) considerations. Still, the Fourth Khalifa does not erase the distinctions between Islam and a general religiosity. He certainly knows the Qur'anic claim:

*"The Religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will): Nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any*

*deny the Signs of God, God is swift in calling to account.* (3:19, A. Yusif Ali's translation)

He went on to say that those who hear "the Message" will be rewarded with Islam and that the reward for good deeds done *before one accepts Islam*, is Islam itself. There is an implication in such a statement that Islam is tolerant—but not therefore inclined to compromise its integrity as a well-defined historic tradition.

It is most interesting to hear such statements come from Ahmadiyyat, especially in view of the political fact that more than one government of States whose population and culture are traditionally Islamic have declared the movement "non-Muslim." So we see a strange paradox: A revivalist sect of Islam is more tolerant of non-Muslims than certain powerful Muslim states are tolerant of a religious movement within Islam. And it was an Ahmadi Muslim who wrote the essay referred to above, "Non-Muslims and The *Umma*," in which the principles of tolerance and non-compulsion in religion are so thoroughly justified as part of the revealed truth of the Qur'an. The irony is compounded!

What may "outsiders" say, especially those whose personal religious convictions allow them to affirm a piety and faith that corresponds to, even if they do not closely imitate, "the system of beliefs and rituals based on the Qur'an?"<sup>6</sup> When Islam is thought of "as a cultural complex, embracing *specific* political structures and legal social traditions," must the outsider assume a hostility brooding just beneath the surface that renders "non-Muslims" forever suspect?<sup>7</sup> Or may "muslim" refer to one who experiences *Eiman*? Is *Eiman* the name of a religious experience or is it limited in its reference to the experience that makes one a Muslim? *The Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* seems to come down on the side of the latter interpretation. In the article on "Iman" it declares:

Hence in theology al-iman means: 1) the putting of one's trust, the having faith, in Allah and his prophet and his message, and 2) the content of that message.<sup>8</sup>

But surely Allah is the creator God whose power combines with mercy to make justice possible in this world. What religious person would deny the vision of reality that is infused with such a conviction? May, then a person be muslim—without being a *Muslim*? Or are adjective and noun separated by a gulf of practical considerations over which no reliable bridge can ever be built?

Within the orbit of Islam, the answer seems to be yes and no.

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the fourth Khalifa, also said in the address referred to above that anyone may in *this* world have freedom "to belong to any religion." When I heard that, I also sensed the implication that in the *next* world there will be punishment for anyone who rejects Islam (*i.e.*, who does not become *a Muslim?*). Still, Muhammad is the counselor, the advisor; he is not responsible for the human choices made by individuals.

What then are the limits of tolerance? How does the life of a person, defined by choices made in *this* world, relate to the cosmos? When one asks such a question in the context of a discourse that is realistic about the variety of religions that one confronts in contemporary society, he must find it difficult to get an answer that is perfectly clear. Religious traditions, Islam among them, are often caught between principle and practice, between historic and sectarian versions of a tradition, between humanitarian concern and orthodox definitions of "the faith." And when one adds to such orthodox definitions the special strictures of latter-day movements, the question seems to defy a practical answer. For even if commitment to principle remains, there is still the question of loyalty and adherence. Surely there are persons whose practical piety may not qualify them to pledge allegiance to "Islam," even though their religious disposition would qualify them as "muslims." Or must a tradition, such as Islam, circumscribe its tolerance so that the outsider remains forever a stranger?

The question forced on me by this dilemma will not go away. It haunts my response to Islam both in its generic (Sunni?) and in its sectarian forms. It is also a question that may intrude itself into any relationship with a well-defined religious tradition. What *are* the limits of religious tolerance?

It is now clear, however, that this is a question that cuts in two directions. It challenges *institutions* to an intentional effort at self-definition. It may also provoke *an individual* to self-examination in order to determine the character and content of his piety. From the institutional side, that is, from the inside, the question is: Can we count that person as one of us? From the personal side, that is, from the outside, the question is: What must I do to qualify as one of them? If I am "religious," am I eligible for the full range of benefits that come to persons who have been accepted on the basis of institutional standards (definitions)? Do I or do they set such standards? Are the standards strictly subjective or must not a tradition insist

that there are objective standards given, for example, in scripture? Must I feel constrained by intuition or revelation, by personal experience or historical process, by an authority or by self-confidence to declare that I am "religious" and hence, for example, "Christian" or "Muslim"? Or must these two kinds of adjectives remain forever discrete? When the sharp edge of such questions provokes me to decide where I belong or what I am, what counts as answers? My own preference or desire? Or must I submit to institutional prerogatives?

From the side of the tradition, such questions change somewhat. What does being "religious" mean? Does it have the same meaning as "Christian" or "Muslim" or "Buddhist"? Does being "religious," whatever that may mean, affect one's destiny or only his social relationships? Does personal religiosity bear a significant relationship to a superordinate reality or is it only to be defined in psychological terms? To put the question in dramatic language: How does heaven relate to earth? What, for example, is at stake in defining oneself as striving for the *kingdom* of God as an earthly phenomenon or as awaiting the kingdom of *God* as a transcendental opportunity? How can ordinary persons know the configuration of the reality that is hidden from ignorance, obscured by human imperfection, or beyond the influence of merely human anticipation? Or must a particular tradition consider such questions as the mere presumption of human institutions and therefore correctively consign them to the level of personal transaction? And "meanwhile" it may be that something else entirely is going on in the universe that is beyond influencing by pious individuals or by religious institutions.

What, then, permits an institution to be tolerant of those who are not precisely aligned in its orbit? What conditions must be met by such persons who are religious by their own will and decision, even though they may not conform to strict institutional protocols? It may be that such questions cannot be given definitive or general answers. Indeed, to limit the options of both institution and individual to a response of *tolerance*, itself creates apparently irresolvable confusion. Human persons actually exhibit a broad spectrum of responses to the religious behavior of others. And that range of individual responses has its counterpart in institutional responses as well.

Surely, there are persons who are hostile to some or all religious traditions. Others will exhibit disdain or even a benign indifference



when they must confront alternative ways of being religious. Beyond indifference one may find the response of tolerance, a response that seems to be minimally positive. In the context of a more discriminating terminology, "tolerance" seems to be less than an "affirmation" of the particularities of some other "alien" religious tradition.

But affirmation is still not participation, and this latter is what institutions must certainly hope for. Tolerance, therefore, is at best a "meanwhile" response, a tentative nod that does not sanction an individual's failure or refusal to conform to the exact protocols of a tradition, nor does it indulge in indifference or disdain of others. "Tolerance's" etymology may help us pin down its meaning on the emotional spectrum that ranges from "hostility" to "participation." The word's root is "to bear," "to lift up." Hence in the complex world beyond the social simplicity of tribalism, the best responses that we can manage may be "to carry" each other. But one "carries" a *burden*. Even the virtue of tolerance, then, implies some effort of mind and heart. Tolerance is more begrudging than graceful. One who may, by his own protestation, be muslim could still be a "burden" for a Muslim. But that Muslim's religious obligation seems to require—or at least allow—him to carry that spiritual weight at least for a while. Such an accommodation, however, still does not suggest a definitive answer to our puzzle. Tolerance, at its best, seems a waiting game, no matter the spiritual sincerity of the other.

What, then, are the limits of religious tolerance? Are there *no* boundaries or are they well marked in principle though obscured in practice? For example, does assigning "final judgment" of one's disposition to a superordinate reality avoid the practical issue of institutional self-definition? Or does such a ploy simply conceal a fundamental disdain for the presumptuous religiosity of another? Is a *Witness* merely being polite or perhaps indifferent to one who presents himself as being Jehovah's witness as a mark of his sincere but generalized piety? In the context of the divine-human drama that engages us all, is it reasonable to insist that generalized piety, however sincere, makes one muslim—but not therefore "a Muslim"?

How, then, are the limits of religious tolerance set? Are they strictly matters of practical (social) definition or are they constitutive of the revelation that has generated a tradition? In many, perhaps all, instances the practical answer to both questions is yes, especially if

one acknowledges that it is reasonable to confront the issue from both inside and outside.

The basis of the complexity of the issue is now evident. There are at least two questions to be asked when we consider the limits of religious tolerance: Are the limits practical and determined by historical circumstances; are the limits integral to the truth claims that are the focal commitments of a particular tradition? But *both* of these questions are susceptible to answers from inside and from outside a tradition, answers given or preferred by individuals looking in from the outside and answers powerfully implicit in the convictional structure that provides the context for those who speak from inside. Furthermore, the limits of religious tolerance as set from inside *and* as experienced from outside are further obscured by the fact that, for some traditions, those limits may be preferred but not necessary, while for others they may be necessary though not preferred. For example, the humanists among us would *prefer* that traditions practice the virtue of religious tolerance. If such a practice, however, compromises the integrity of a tradition, how can any outsider insist that tolerance is a necessary virtue? On the other hand, who in the modern world wants to suffer the accusation of intolerance, even when ideological consistency might seem to make it necessary?

One looking in from the outside may not be able fully to appreciate such ambivalence, whichever arrangement it takes. But we could go on forever weaving this cloth of ambiguity—its warp the many distinctions that we have discovered, its woof the threads of individual psychology and of the actual content of traditional beliefs and practices. We shall, however, stop here and assess the prospects of ever finding or establishing the limits of religious tolerance.

One thing seems certain. It is impossible to generalize about how particular traditions will set the limits of tolerance. It is unlikely that we can discover any universal basis for religious tolerance that will cut across all traditions. Each tradition, it seems, must find, in its own structure, either the practical or ideological grounds for setting the limits of tolerance. In the on-going struggle for the hearts and minds of individuals, traditions must make complex decisions about where they will establish their boundaries and on what basis, practical or ideological. Some will define themselves as exclusive enclaves of the elect, others as catholic communities dedicated to sheltering a very wide range of piety. Some will insist that the judgment on an individual's decision is not determined by traditional protocols;

others will make themselves the arbiters of spiritual fulfillment. In the midst of such uncertainty, how should an individual appraise his own intention and experience? Is there percolating in the universe a generalized piety and a universal virtue that individuals need only imitate if they want to declare their religiosity? Or does the superordinate reality always and only exhibit a particular identity and, therefore, establish limits of justification that require behaviors that foreclose on religious tolerance?

And, again, the questions proliferate. The well where the answers lie seems to have no bottom, the labyrinth no center. What are the limits of religious tolerance? The *answers* depend on many variables and on frequent shifts in point of view. The variables are often substantive, functions of ideological as well as practical considerations. The points of view are functions of historical as well as psychological factors that are certainly not consistent from individual to individual. Institutional needs as well may confuse the perspective from which one judges where the limits of religious tolerance ought to be set.

It is evident to me at last that I have failed, in this essay, to produce any generalized answer to the question, "What are the limits of religious tolerance?" I know that there is in me "something that does not like a wall," so I am relieved by my failure. But I also know that I need boundaries within which I can live out my existence. To some extent, of course, I set my own. But the task is so fraught with metaphysical consequences that I need help. When the help is delivered by religious traditions, I may resent the very help that I cry out for. How and where the limits of religious tolerance are set depends, in part perhaps, on my cry. It depends more, certainly, on theological assumptions that have to do with the nature of the superordinate reality that is at the focal point of a tradition's vision of the universe. It depends also on a tradition's deepest convictions about the nature and status of human existence. If we insist that a tradition must be very precise and aggressive in setting the limits of religious tolerance within which it will operate, we should appreciate the degree of difficulty of such an apparently innocent task.

In the final analysis, we face some odd paradoxes: We desire the boundaries that we would deny. We chaff under the limits that we long for. We resent giving the tolerance that we insist on as a birthright.

There is an old popular song that was sung in the U.S. as far back as the 1950's: "Give me land, lots of land, under starry skies above.



## AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE CRUCIFIXION

By  
Dr. Aziz Ahmad Chaudhri

In 1907, a book titled *The Crucifixion by an Eyewitness* was published by the Indo-American Book Co. of Chicago. It was an English translation of a Latin manuscript found in Alexandria, Egypt, in the 19th century. This manuscript was in the form of a letter written in Latin by an elder of the Essene Brotherhood in Jerusalem to his Essene brethren in Alexandria in reply to their letter inquiring the truth about Jesus about whom they had heard rumors. The letter was written seven years after the crucifixion by a person who claims to have been an eyewitness to the event of crucifixion. He describes it in detail.

About the origins of this Latin manuscript, the translator writes in the preface of this book:

“A member of the Abyssinian Mercantile Company discovered in Alexandria an ancient house, formerly occupied by Grecian friars, in whose library—to oblivion abandoned—was found an old parchment. A French literate, accidentally present, at once commenced deciphering it; but a missionary, in the ardor of fanatical orthodoxy, tried by all means to destroy the antique document. But the efforts of the Jesuit missionary do not seem to have been successful, as a copy of the Latin original was written, of which a copy, through the Freemasons, found its way into Germany.

It has been proved from the archeological discoveries made on the spot, that the house where the parchment was found was owned and occupied by the Order of “*Essenes*.” Further, that the document found was the only remains of literature from the once well-filled library of this scientific and religious Order of Brotherhood.

The French literate, who first conceived the importance and historical worth of the manuscript, tried hard to enrich the French Academy with the original, but, owing to the intrigues of the Jesuit mission in Egypt (bent on destroying a document so detrimental to their doctrine), he was not successful; although it was preserved principally through the interference of influential Abyssinian merchants and Pythagorical Societies, from whom the copy above spoke of, came into the possession of the modern institution of

Freemasons, and a society in Germany now possesses, without doubt, the only copy in existence". (pp. 17-18)

The letter opens with the Essene greeting "Peace be with you dear brethren". In the early part of the letter some of the events of the life of Jesus are described and it is stated that Jesus was a member of the Essene Brotherhood and that he was initiated at a place called Jutha, close to the Castle of Masseda. Details of the initiation ceremonies are given and it is further stated that John the Baptist was also an Essene and was initiated along with Jesus.

About Jesus, the author writes:

"He was sent of God, chosen by the Almighty, beloved of us all, and inspired both in teaching and in the knowledge of nature and its elements". (p. 55).

While describing the events of crucifixion in detail, the author says that the Essene policy was not to interfere in public matters. Nevertheless they tried to save Jesus by their secret efforts. About the nailing of Jesus on the cross, the writer says that contrary to rumors, only the hands of Jesus were pierced through with thick iron nails but not his feet. This seems credible as otherwise Jesus would not have been able to journey on foot on the road to Emmaus, on Sunday evening so soon after being nailed to the cross. Describing the event of the cross, the author of the letter writes as an eyewitness:

"Darkness descended over the earth, and the people returned to Jerusalem. But Jesus's disciples, his friends, and the leaders of our holy Order remained on Golgotha, our Order having nearby a colony for worship and for partaking of our feast of love.

"And Jesus recognized his mother among the weeping women from Galilee, standing close by the silent John (the Evangelist). Jesus called out loudly, in the anguish of his pain, citing the twenty-second Psalm, praying God thereby to deliver him from his sufferings.

"The heat grew steadily more intense, more unendurable, and a fire was forming in the earth and air, such as is essential to the purification of the elements. The Essene brethren, through their knowledge of nature and its elements, knew that an earthquake was coming, as had formerly occurred in the days of our forefathers.

"As the night approached, the earth began a terrible shaking, and the Roman Centurion became so terrified that he prayed to the heathen gods. He believed that Jesus was beloved by the gods. Most of the frightened people hastily departed from the place and returned to Jerusalem; and the Centurion, who was a noble man of

compassionate nature, permitted John to conduct the mother of Jesus close to the cross.

"As he recommended his mother to the care of John, it was growing darker, although the full moon should have been shining in the heavens. From the Dead Sea was observed to rise a thick, reddish fog. The mountain ridges round about Jerusalem shook violently, and the head of Jesus sank down upon his breast.

"When he uttered his last groan of pain and anguish, and passed away, a hissing sound was heard in the air; and they of the Jews that still remained were seized by a great fear, for they believed that the evil spirits who dwell between heaven and earth were proceeding to punish the people. It was that strange and unusual sound in the air that precedes an earthquake.

"Soon the mountain began to shake, the surrounding country and the city commenced to rock, and the thick walls of the temple gave way until the veil in the temple parted and fell from its place. Even the rocks burst asunder, and the hewn sepulchres in the rock were destroyed, as were also many of the corpses kept therein.

"And as the Jews regarded all this as extremely supernatural, so the Roman Centurion believed now in the divinity and innocence of Christ, and comforted his mother."

There was a certain Joseph, from Arimathea. He was rich, and being a member of the council, he was much esteemed by the people. He was a prudent man, and whilst he did not appear to belong to any party, he was secretly a member of our sacred Order and lived in accordance with our laws. His friend Nicodemus was a most learned man, and belonged to the highest degree of our Order. He knew the secrets of the "Terapeuts," and was often together with us.

"Now it so happened that after the earthquake, and many of the people had gone away, Joseph and Nicodemus arrived at the cross. They were informed of the death of the crucified, in the garden of our Brethren, not far from Calvary.

"Although they loudly lamented his fate, it nevertheless appeared strange to them that Jesus, having hung less than seven hours, should already be dead. They could not believe it, and hastily went up to the place. There they found John alone, he having determined to see what became of the beloved body.

"Joseph and Nicodemus examined the body of Jesus, and Nicodemus, greatly moved, drew Joseph aside and said to him: "As sure as is my knowledge of life and nature, so sure it is possible to save him."

"But Joseph did not understand him, and he admonished us that we should not tell John of what we had heard. Indeed, it was a secret to save our Brother from death. Nicodemus shouted: "We



must immediately have the body with its bones unbroken, because he may still be saved", then, realizing his want of caution, he continued in a whisper, "saved from being infamously buried."

"He persuaded Joseph to disregard his own interest, that he might save their Friend by going immediately to Pilatus, and prevailing upon him to permit them to take Jesus' body from the cross that very night and put it in the sepulcher, hewn in the rock close by, and which belonged to Joseph.

"I, understanding what he meant, remained with John to watch the cross and prevent the soldiers from breaking the bones of Jesus".

"The Jewish council had already demanded of Pilate an order to the soldiers to break the bones of the crucified, that they might be buried."

"Soon after Joseph and Nicodemus had departed, each one on a sacred mission, a messenger arrived bringing the order to the Centurion to take down the corpses and bury them. I myself was greatly agitated by this information, for I knew that if he were not handled with great care he could not be saved, and still less if his bones were to be broken."

"As the messenger arrived I hastened to him, thinking and hoping that Joseph already might have seen Pilate, a thing of which there in reality was no possibility."

"Does Pilate send you?" I asked of him. And he answered, "I come not from Pilate, but from his Secretary, who acts for the governor in such important matters".

"The Centurion, observing my anxiety, looked at me, and in the manner of a friend I said to him: "You have seen that this man that is crucified is an uncommon man. Do not maltreat him, for a rich man among the people is now with Pilate, to offer him money for the corpse, that he may give it a decent burial."

"My dear Brethren, I must inform you that Pilate often did sell the bodies of the crucified to their friends, that they might bury them."

"And the Centurion was friendly to me, inasmuch as he had conceived from the events that Jesus was an innocent man. And therefore, when the two thieves were beaten by the soldiers with heavy clubs and their bones broken the Centurion went past the cross of Jesus, saying to the soldiers: "Do not break his bones, for he is dead.

"To be sure of it, one of the soldiers stuck his spear into the body in such manner that it passed over the hip and into the side. The body showed no convulsions, and this was taken by the Centurion as a sure sign that he actually was dead; and he hurriedly went away to make his report.

"But from the insignificant wound flowed blood and water, at which John wondered, and my own hope revived. For even John knew, from knowledge of our Brotherhood, that from a wound in a dead body flows nothing but a few drops of thickened blood; but now there flowed both water and blood.

"Joseph and Nicodemus returned in great haste. Joseph through his dignity had moved Pilate, and Pilate, having received information as to the death of the crucified, gave the body to Joseph, and without taking any pay therefor.

For Pilate had a great reverence for Joseph, and secretly repented of the execution. When Nicodemus saw the wound, flowing with water and blood, his eyes were animated with new hope, and he spoke encouragingly, foreseeing what was to happen.

"He drew Joseph aside to where I stood, some distance from John, and spoke in a low, hurried tone: "Dear friends, be of good cheer, and let us to work. Jesus is not dead. He seems so only because his strength is gone.

"While Joseph was with Pilate I hurried over to our colony and fetched the herbs that are useful in such cases. But I admonish you that you tell not John that we hope to reanimate the body of Jesus, lest he could not conceal his great joy. And dangerous indeed would it be if the people should come to know it, for our enemies would then put us all to death with him.

"After they hurried to the cross, and, according to the prescriptions of the medical art, they slowly untied his bonds, drew the spikes out from his hands, and with great care laid him on the ground.

"Thereupon, Nicodemus spread strong spices and healing salves on long pieces of "byssus" which he had brought, and whose use was known only in our Order.

"These he wound about Jesus' body, pretending that he did so to keep the body from decaying until after the feast, when he would then embalm it.

"These spices and salves had great healing powers, and were used by our Essene Brethren who knew the rules of medical science for the restoration to consciousness of those in a state of death-like fainting. And even as Joseph and Nicodemus were bending over his face and their tears fell upon him, they blew into him their own breath, and warmed his temples.

"Still Joseph was doubtful of his recovery to life, but Nicodemus encouraged him to increase their efforts. Nicodemus spread balsam in both the nail pierced hands, but he believed that it was not best to close up the wound in Jesus' side, because he considered the flow of blood and water therefrom helpful to respiration and beneficial in the renewing of life.

"The body was then laid in the sepulchre made in the rocks, which belonged to Joseph. They then smoked the grotto with aloe and other strengthening herbs, and while the body lay upon the bed of moss, still stiff and inanimate, they placed a large stone in front of the entrance, that the vapors might better fill the grotto.

But Caiaphas, although it was the Sabbath day, had sent out his secret spies. He was anxious to know who were the secret friends of Jesus. His suspicions had fallen upon Pilate because of his having given Joseph of Arimathea the body without any pay, he being rich, a Rabbi and member of the high council, who never had appeared to take any interest in the case of Jesus previously, but who now had given his own place of burial for the crucified."

"Fear of this caused him great anxiety, and for this reason he hoped to discover some secret means of accusing Joseph and having him thrown into prison. He betrayed this fact himself by sending late in the night a number of his armed servants to an obscure valley close by the grotto in which lay the body of Jesus. Some distance from them was stationed a detachment of the temple guard, to assist the servants of the high-priest, if necessary.

"But the rumor has told you that these guards were Roman soldiers, which was not the case. The high-priest even distrusted Pilate.

"Meanwhile, Nicodemus had hastened with me to our brethren, and the oldest and wisest came to confer as to the best means of restoring Jesus to life. And the brethren agreed immediately to send a guard to the grove. Joseph and Nicodemus hurried to the city, there to fulfil their further mission.

"After midnight and towards morning, the earth again commenced to shake, and the air became very oppressive. The rocks shook and cracked. Red flames burst forth from the crevices, illuminating the red mists of morning.

"This was, indeed, a dreadful night. Beasts, horrified by the earthquake, ran howling and crying in every direction. Through the narrow opening the little lamp in the grotto threw trembling shadows into the horrible night, and the servants of the high-priest were full of fear, listening to the hissing in the air and the roaring and rumbling in the earth.

"One of our brethren went to the grave, in obedience to the order of the Brotherhood, dressed in the white robe of the fourth degree. He went by way of a secret path which ran through the mountain to the grave, and which was known only to the order.

"When the timid servants of the high-priest saw the white-robed Brother on the mountain slowly approaching, and partially obscured by the morning mist, they were seized with a great fear, and they thought that an angel was descending from the mountain.

"When this Brother arrived at the grave which he was to guard, he rested on the stone which he had pulled from the entrance according to his orders; whereupon the soldiers fled and spread the report that an angel had driven them away.

"Thirty hours had now passed since the assumed death of Jesus. And when the Brother, having heard a slight noise within the grotto, went in to observe what had happened, he smelled a strange odor in the air, such as often occurs when the earth is about to vomit forth fire.

"And the youth observed with inexpressible joy that the lips of the body moved, and that it breathed. He at once hastened to Jesus to assist him, and heard slight sounds rising from his breast. The face assumed a living appearance, and the eyes opened and in astonishment gazed at the novice of our Order.

"This occurred just as I was leaving with the brethren of the first degree, from the council, with Joseph, who had come to consult how to bring help.

"Nicodemus, who was an experienced physician, said, on the way, that the peculiar condition of the atmosphere caused by the revolution of the elements was beneficial to Jesus, and that he never had believed that Jesus was really dead. And he further said that the blood and water which flowed from the wound was a sure sign that life was not extinct.

"Conversing thus, we arrived at the grotto, Joseph and Nicodemus going before. We were, in all, twenty-four brethren of the first degree.

"Entering, we perceived the white-robed novice kneeling upon the moss strewn floor of the grotto, supporting the head of the revived Jesus on his breast.

"And as Jesus recognized his Essene friends, his eyes sparkled with joy; his cheeks were tinted with a faint red, and he sat up, asking: "Where am I?"

"Then Joseph embraced him, folded him in his arms, told him how it had all come to pass, and how he was saved from actual death by a profound fainting fit, which the soldiers on Calvary thought was death.

"And Jesus wondered, and felt on himself; and, praising God, he wept on the breast of Joseph. Then Nicodemus urged his friends to take some refreshments, and he ate some dates and some bread dipped in honey. And Nicodemus gave wine to drink, after which Jesus was greatly refreshed, so that he raised himself up.

"Then it was that he became conscious of the wounds in his hands and in his side. But the balsam which Nicodemus had spread upon them had a soothing effect, and they had already commenced to heal.

"After the "byssus" wrappings had been taken off and the muckender was removed from his head, Joseph spoke and said: 'This is not a place in which to remain longer, for here the enemies might easily discover our secret, and betray us.'

"But Jesus was not yet strong enough to walk far, wherefore he was conducted to the house belonging to our Order, that is close by Calvary, in the garden, which also belongs to our brethren.

"Another young Brother of our Order was dispatched at once to assist the novice who had been watching by the grave of Jesus, to annihilate every trace of the byssus wrappings and the medicines and drugs used.

"When Jesus arrived at the house of our brethren he was faint and weak. His wounds had begun to cause him pain. He was much moved, in that he considered it all as a miracle.

"God has let me rise," he said, "that he may prove in me that which I have taught, and I will show my disciples that I do live." (pp. 62-82)

According to the author, it was one of the Essene members who was present in sepulchre who said to the women when they came to visit the site: "Jesus is risen. Do not look for him here. Say to his disciples that they will find him in Galilee." (p. 83)

As Jesus was anxious to see his disciples and prove that he was still alive, members of the Essene sect advised him to live in seclusion for the sake of his safety and thus remain "dead to the world".

Then one of the elders of the Brotherhood said:

"Thou art not safe in this country, for they will search after thee. Do not, therefore, go any more among the people to teach, for what thou hast taught will live among thy friends forever, and thy disciples will publish it to the world. Remain, I pray thee, dead to the world. The Brotherhood has brought thee back to life through its secrets, therefore live henceforth for our holy Order to which thou art bound. Live in the seclusion of wisdom and virtue, unknown to the world. (p. 91)

"And the brethren warned Jesus of his danger, that he might avoid his enemies and thus fulfil his mission. For they had been secretly informed that Caiaphas intended quietly to arrest and assassinate Jesus, in that he believed him to be a deceiver." (p. 118)

After this, the author of the letter relates various journeys and appearances of Jesus in post crucifixion period. In contrast to the accounts of gospels which describe his appearances as sudden, mysterious, without adequate details and proper sequence, the descriptions by the author are logical and detailed. It is stated that

while traveling, he was helped by members of the Essene sect with whom he stayed in various towns and the countryside. On the urging of his Essene friends, Jesus consented to go into solitude and return to the solitary countryside near the Dead Sea where an Essene community lived.

On Jesus' bidding farewell to his disciples on Mount Olive, the letter says:

"And Jesus led them to the place most dear to him, near the summit of Mount Olive, where can be seen almost the whole of the land of Palestine; for Jesus longed once more to look upon the country where he had lived and worked.

"To the east was seen Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the Arabian Mountains; and to the west shone the fires from the Temple Rock; but on the other side of the mountain was Bethania.

"And the chosen disciples believed that Jesus would lead them to Bethania. But the elders of the Brotherhood had silently come together on the other side of the mountain, ready to travel, waiting with Jesus, as had been agreed upon.

"And he exhorted his disciples to be of good cheer, and firm in their faith. As he spoke, his voice grew more and more melancholy, and his mind was absorbed in solemn transport.

"He prayed for the friends he was about to leave, and lifting his arms he blessed them. And the mist rose around the mountain, tinted by the descending sun.

"Then the elders of the Essene Brotherhood sent word to Jesus that they were waiting, and that it was then already late.

"As the disciples knelt down, their faces bent toward the ground, Jesus rose and hastily went away through the gathering mist. When the disciples rose, there stood before them two of our brethren in the white garb of the Brotherhood, and they instructed them not to wait for Jesus, as he was gone, whereupon they hastened away down the mountain.

"But in the city there arose a rumor that Jesus was taken up in a cloud, and had gone to heaven. This was invented by the people who had not been present when Jesus departed. The disciples did not contradict this rumor, inasmuch as it served to strengthen their doctrine, and influenced the people who wanted a miracle in order to believe in him." (pp. 123-125)

At the end of the letter, it says about Jesus' life in seclusion:

"But Joseph and Nicodemus had three times been with him in his place of concealment. And on their return they informed us of him. But his body was not vigorous enough to overcome the sufferings he had endured for want of rest.

But Joseph and Nicodemus had been with him the last full time when the sixth full moon was waning, and they came to our Brotherhood as we were preparing to partake of the feast of love, and revealed the secret to the elder of the Order.

And their hearts were sorely grieved, for the chosen one was taken up into the heavenly dwellings of the Father.

"The Eternal Spirit had gently burst the clay, and tranquil as his life was his death.

"And he was buried by the physician close by the Dead Sea, as bids the regulations of our Brotherhood.

"But Nicodemus enjoined silence concerning the death of his friend, to all who did not belong to the highest degree." (p. 127-128)

The author of the letter was not present and was not a witness to the supposed death and burial of Jesus close to the Dead Sea. Obviously he wrote about this part from hearsay. When Jesus had returned to the wilderness near the Dead Sea in company of the Essene community there, his friends wanted to keep it a secret as is obvious from their advice to Jesus to remain "dead to the world". Probably it was this desire to keep silent about the life of Jesus, after he bade farewell to his disciples on Mount Olive, which resulted in rumors about his death on the Dead Sea shore. It is probable and rational that Jesus wanted to keep secrecy about his period of stay in Palestine after the crucifixion as he was preparing to travel to the East in search of the lost Isralite tribes. We do not think that Jesus died on the Dead Sea shore as there is evidence of his migration to Kashmir in Northern India.

Nevertheless, this letter by a leader of the Essene Brotherhood in Jerusalem, who claims to be an eyewitness to crucifixion, is most interesting and significant. It gives a logical explanation of events which are shrouded in mystery in the Gospels. It confirms our thesis that Jesus did not die on the cross but was only mistaken as such and that he recovered due to the efforts of his secret disciples and friends. It gives details of efforts by the Essene Brotherhood to save Jesus from death at the hands of his enemies and their help in the post crucifixion period. It provides an explanation as to where Jesus lived in between his appearances to his disciples and about which the Gospels tell us nothing at all. The letter clarifies the mystery of men clothed in white robes which were seen in seplucher and also at Jesus' departure at Mount Olive as related by the Gospels. It

(continued on page 38)



## CIVILIZATION IN MUSLIM SPAIN

By

Dr. Qazi Muhammad Barkatullah

The Muslims led the world for five centuries from 700 to 1200 A.D. in power, law and order, system of government, cultivation of manners, standards of living, cultural and social life, religious tolerance, literature, science, medicine, art, philosophy and scholarship, etc. Rarely has a society produced in an equal period in history innumerable illustrious men in various areas such as government, medicine, education, literature, history, geography, philosophy, mathematics, chemistry, and astronomy. The reader will thus marvel at the Muslim civilization for the impact it had on the rest of the world. An orientalist observed:

“Never was Andalusia so mildly, justly, and wisely governed as by her Arab conquerors” (Lan-Poole, *S. Story of the Moors in Spain*, p. 43).

Al-Maqqari gives a hundred examples of the justice, liberality, and refinement of the rulers of Spain. Their management of public affairs was the most competent in the Western world of that period. Laws were rational and administered by a well organized judiciary. For the most part, the subjects of the land, were governed by their own laws and officials. Towns were well policed; markets, weights and measures were well supervised. A regular census recorded population and property. Taxation was reasonable. The revenues of the Muslim Caliphate had reached higher than the United governmental revenues of Latin Christian world. This became possible not due to high taxes, but for well governed and progressive agriculture, industry and trade. (Chapman, *C.E. History of Spain*, N.Y. 1930).

The Muslim people, as a whole, were literate, kings, calligraphers, and merchants like physicians might be philosophers. It has been remarked that the Muslims were better gentlemen than their Christian peers. The Muslims kept their word more frequently and showed more mercy to the defeated than the practice which was prevalent in the rest of the Christian world. “The only thing the Christians excelled the Muslims, during these centuries, was their low morality in areas of everyday life. (Will Durant *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 4, p. 394).

The Arab conquest proved to be a boon for the native peasants. The Arab leaders in their turn accumulated large tracts and for the most part left the actual work of agriculture to the conquered. However, they supervised the whole process and under their direction the agricultural science developed in Spain far in advance of Christian Europe. The Oxen used in plowing were largely replaced by ass, mule and horse. (Clapham and Power, *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, Camb. Univ. Press Vol. 1, 1944).

The influence of Muslims upon Christian world was varied and immense. Christian Europe received Muslim influence in such things as food, drinks, medicine, armors, heraldry, artistic taste, industrial and commercial articles and techniques. Muslim Spain taught to Christian Europe the culture of rice, buckwheat, sugar cane, pomegranates, cotton, spinach, asparagus, silk, banana, cherries, oranges, lemons, quinces, grapefruit, peaches, dates, figs, strawberries, ginger myrrhete. Muslim Spain at that time enjoyed the reputation of being the 'garden spot of the world' and almost a 'paradise' of fruits and flowers. Some of the original names of the articles, and commodities, brought from Muslim Spain to the Christian world still retain the original words, e.g., orange, lemon, sugar, syrup, sherbet, julep, elixir, jar, azure, arabesque, mattress, sofa, muslin, satin, bazaar, caravan, check, tariff, traffic, magazine, risk, cable, admiral, etc. The game of chess came to Europe via the Moors and picked up some Persian terms on its way. For example, check-mate is from *Shah Mat* meaning "the King is dead". Muslim science developed mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, medicine, and transmitted it to Europe. Some of the Arabic terms still lie embedded in European speech, for example, algebra, zero, cifer, azimuth, alembic, zenith, almanac. And Muslim medicine led the world for about a half a millenium. The ribbed vault was known to Muslims before it made its way to Europe. The rejuvenation of the ceramic art in Italy and France has been attributed to the visits of Italian potters to Muslim Spain. The technique, of workmanship of metal and glass, book binding, were learned from Muslim artisans. Almost everywhere in Europe, weavers looked to Muslims for models and designs. There were bridges, aqueducts, fountains, reservoirs, public baths, fortresses, and turreted walls, built by Muslim engineers. The Alcazar (Al-Qasr) at Seville and the Alhambra at Grenada were fortresses and palaces combined. Muslim garden was a sort of paradise-park with springs, brooks, fountains, tiled pool, rare flowers, shade, fruit and nut trees. And usually a pavilion for

enjoying the open air without the glare of the sun. Rose festivals were celebrated with sumptuous display.

The Muslims in Spain enjoyed an abundance of metals such as gold, silver, tin, copper, iron, lead, alum, sulphur, mercury, coral, pearl, rubies. Metallurgy was well developed. Murcia was famous for its iron and brass work; Toledo for its swords; Cordova for shields. Handicraft industry also flourished. Cordova made 'Cordovan leather' for Europe. There were eager buyers everywhere in the world for carpets, cushions, silk curtains, shawls, divans manufactured by Muslims in Spain. Al-Maqqari reports that in the 9th century spectacles, complex chronometers and flying machines were invented in Cordova. The Muslim products of Spain were carried to Africa and Asia in a merchant fleet consisting of over a thousand ships, and vessels from a hundred ports crowded at the harbors of Spain.

The Muslim government maintained regular postal service. The official coinage of gold dinars, silver dirhams and copper 'fals' were more stable in comparison to the currency of the contemporary Latin world. The Muslims in Spain had extensive estates. The merchants had acquired a lot of land. Wealthy people had made their villas away from the cities to enjoy and relax. The Caliphs had devoted a quarter of their land income for the relief of the poor.

The Caliphs in Spain were men of letters and of liberal views. Freedom of worship was accorded to all non-Muslim faiths. The Christians and Jews lived peacefully under the Muslims. They acquired wealth and education and sometimes rose to high place in the government. The Muslims, Jews and Christians mixed with each other freely. Sometimes Muslim males married women of Jewish or Christian faith. Sometimes the same building was used for a church or a mosque. Now and then, Christians and Muslims joined together to celebrate each other's holidays together. It is recorded that the Christians frequently expressed their preference of Muslim rather than Christian rule. (Lane-Poole, *Moors*, p. 47). However a Christian clergyman complained about the behavior of Christians under the Muslims:

"My fellow Christians delight in the poems and romances of the Arabs. They study the works of Mohammadan theologians and philosophers, not to refute them, but to acquire a correct and elegant arabic style. Alas! the young Christians who are most conspicuous for their talent have no knowledge of any literature or language save the Arabic. They read and study with avidity Arabic

books. They amass whole libraries of them. They everywhere sing the praises of Arabic lore' (Dozy, *Spanish Islam*, 1913, p. 268).

Muslim cities of Spain were well known throughout the world of that time. Cordova alone had 200,077 houses, 60,300 palaces, 600 mosques, and 700 public baths. (Al-Maqqari, vol. III, p. 2). Visitors from other parts of the world marvelled at the wealth of people, and generally speaking, the prosperity of the nation. Every family could afford comfortable means of transportation. The streets were well paved, had raised sidewalks, and were lighted at night. One could travel ten miles straight under the well lighted street lamps and uninterrupted series of buildings without any kind of fear. (Will Durant, op. cit. p. 302). Over the Guadaquivir the Muslim engineers had constructed a great stone bridge of seventeen arches, each fifty spans in width. The construction of an aqueduct brought to Cordova an abundance of fresh water to be consumed in homes, gardens, fountains and baths.

Historians describe the Muslim mansions having luxury, beauty, majestic portals, marble columns, mosaic floors, gilded ceilings with refined artistic decorations. The palaces of the royal family lined for miles the banks of stately streams. The royal palace Al-Zahra was lavishly designed and equipped; 1200 marble columns sustained it, its hall of audience had walls and ceiling of gold and marble, eight doors inlaid with ivory, ebony, precious stones, and basin of quick silver whose undulated surface reflected the dancing rays of sun. Al-Zahra became residential center for the aristocrats, famous for the grace and polish of manners, refinement of tastes and the breadth of its intellectual interests. Later on, on the opposite end of Cordova, another palace. Al-Zahra was constructed which attracted at time intellectuals, poets, lords and courtesans. Both of these renowned palaces were reduced to ashes at the time of Christian revolt.

The Foundation of the renowned Cordova Mosque was laid down by Abdur-Rehman I, in 788. The mosque also was known as Blue Mosque which was turned into a Cathedral when the Christians came to power. Abdur Rehman I personally supervised the operation of the construction of the mosque. He had hoped that he would lead the congregation in grateful prayer in that new and majestic mosque. But two years afterwards he departed from the world. And his successor Al Hisham continued the construction work started by his father. Afterwards, each Caliph in turn, for about two centuries, added a part till in Al Mansur's time it covered an area of 742 by 472

feet. The exterior showed a beautiful wall made of stone and brick, with numerous towers, and a massive minaret that surpassed all the minarets of the time in size and beauty, so much so that it came to be regarded among the 'wonders of the world.' (Al-Maqqari, Vol. 3, p. 21).

The Cordova Mosque had nineteen portals, surmounted by horseshoe arches beautifully carved with floral and geometric decoration in stone, and it led to the 'Court of Ablutions'. In this rectangle, which was paved with colored tiles, stood four fountains, each made of a block of solid marble so large that seventy oxen had been used to haul it to the site.

The actual part of mosque consisted of 1290 columns, dividing the interior into eleven naves and twenty-one aisles. From the column capitals sprang a variety of arches—semicircular, pointed, horseshoe form—and most of them with voussoirs or wedge stones, alternately white or red. The columns of jasper, porphyry, alabaster, and marble were stretched over a vast and spacious area. The ceiling was carved into cartouches bearing elegantly verses from the Holy Quran and other inscriptions. From the ceiling were hanging 200 beautiful chandeliers holding 700 cups of scented oil, fed from a reservoir of oil in inverted bells also suspended from the ceiling. Floors and walls were adorned with mosaics, some of enameled glass backed in rich colors, containing also, silver and gold. These still sparkle like jewels in the walls of the mosque which now is a Cathedral. One section of the Mosque was designated as a sanctuary. It was paved with silver and enameled tiles, guarded with ornate doors and adorned with mosaics, roofed with three domes and marked off with a wooden screen of exquisite design. Within this sanctuary were built the *mihrab* and *mimbar* upon which there were liberal artistic designs. The *mihrab* itself was an heptagonal recess walled with gold, skillfully ornamented with enameled mosaic, marble tracery bearing gold inscriptions on a ground of crimson and blue, crowned by a tier of slender columns and trefoil lovely arches.

The *mimbar* was regarded the finest of its kind. It consisted of 37,000 little panels of ivory and precious woods—ebony, citron, aloe, red and yellow sandal—all joined together by gold and silver nails and inlaid with beautiful gems. On this *mimbar*, in a jeweled box covered with gold, threaded crimson silk, was placed a copy of the Holy Quran written by Hazrat Usman (May God be pleased with him) stained with his dying blood. Al-Maqqari thought of the

majestic blue Cordova Mosque as "unequaled in size, beauty of design, tasteful arrangement of its ornaments, boldness of execution and by universal consent the most beautiful mosque in its world".

Civilization in Muslim Spain flourished to the extent of attracting people from different parts of the world visiting for different purposes. Historians picture the Muslim cities as beehives of poets, scholars, jurists, physicians and scientists. But the Muslim Grenada fell into the hands of enemies, then: 'there was no tyranny on earth like the tyranny of the priest'. And the destruction of Cordova was termed as the 'Christians most unkindliest act on earth'.



## An Eyewitness Account of the Crucifixion

(continued from page 32)

confirms the theory that Jesus had belonged to the Essene Brotherhood during his early manhood. It provides evidence that after Jesus' farewell to his disciples, he lived in seclusion with the Dead Sea Essene community about whom the Dead Sea scrolls have shed light. And this fact lends support to the theory that it was probably Jesus who has been referred to as the "Teacher of Righteousness" in Dead Sea scrolls.

The translator of this Latin manuscript or the letter comments about it:

"But of particular importance is the minute record of the sufferings of Jesus, and the way in which he conducted himself on the cross. The Gospel records that Jesus really died on the cross, and thereby it stamps his recovery as a miracle, which the intelligent man considers a myth, and from which he extracts the allegorical meaning. But in this letter we are informed of events in their simple representation that contains so much that is probable, and with the circumstances corresponding, that it actually will be a necessity to believe on it." (p. 140)



*Current Topics:***ISLAMIZATION OF SUDAN**

By Dr. Syed Barakat Ahmad

The Sudan is partly Muslim, partly Christian and partly animist. The majority is Muslim. President Ga'afar al-Numeiri has now followed President Zia-ul Haq and bought off the fundamentalist mullah to strengthen his losing grip. The non-Muslim south has started a guerilla war to assert its political rights and express its deep anger on the usurpation of its oil and water resources and the imposition of Islamic law. Alcohol has been banned for non-Muslims and the punishments under Islamic law also apply to them. At least eight persons have lost their right hands for theft. A Christian priest was punished for keeping alcohol.

**INSURGENT RAIDS**

The insurgents have shot down government helicopters and attacked police posts. They have killed western technicians and foreign workers. The American-run, Chevron Oil Company of the Sudan has suspended its operations in the south. A similar raid at the French-run Jonglei canal project forced the company to stop its work to recover swampland on the Upper Nile and to provide more water for the Sudan and Egypt. Both projects are vital to the Sudan's bankrupt economy, which has an external debt of \$8 billion. The insurgents are led by a non-Muslim, John Garang, who has a doctorate in Economics from Iowa State University. One-third of the Sudan's 22 million people live in the south. They resent the northern (Muslim) domination, but were persuaded to try the autonomy which President Numeiri had granted them. The imposition of Muslim law, however, made this autonomy meaningless.

The Sudan is the latest Muslim country to start Islamization. Saudi Arabia (the judicial murder of Princess Mona and her husband) Iran (Jihad against the "non-Muslim" Iraq) Pakistan (Draconian laws against the Ahmadies) have already adopted the so-called "Islamic" law to bolster their unrepresentative governments. President Numeiri, who has been in power for 15 years, has survived numerous coup attempts. Now he has reached a point where he should follow President Zia-ul Haq and enlist the help of the mullah.

Prof. Balraj Madhok's program for a new Hindu party which he intends to launch and his attitude towards Muslims of India must be seen in the context of the so-called "Islamization" of the Muslim

seen in the context of the so-called "Islamization" of the Muslim states. Prof. Madhok told newsmen in Madras that the new Hindu party would strive for a common civil code for all Indians, work for a Central law to ban cow slaughter and seek a total ban on conversions to Christianity and Islam and demand the abrogation of Article 30 of the Constitution which gives special privileges to minorities.

If Sudan with one-third of its Christian and animist population can ban alcohol, is it unreasonable to expect that the Hindus should also demand a ban on cow slaughter?

In fact Prof. Madhok's effort to seek a total ban on conversions seems to be at par, if not more humane, than the so-called "Islamic" law of apostasy. In a very learned booklet *Murtadd Ki Saza Islami Qanun main* (Lahore C. 1950) (Punishment of Apostasy in Islam) Maulana Abul Ala Maududi has tried to prove that the punishment of an apostate in Islam is death, and Muslims cannot be given an option to choose their religion. Prof. Madhok's argument against conversion is that it amounts to a change of nationality and therefore he wants to prohibit it but he does not go as far as to prescribe death as its punishment. The founder of the Jamaat-i-Islami, the late Maulana Maududi, had already foreseen the logic of Prof. Madhok's argument. He wrote in the same book: "In future whenever an Islamic state is established and the law of punishing apostasy by death is enforced and thus all born Muslims are kept by force within the pale of Islam then there is definitely the danger that a large number of hypocrites will be included in the body politics of Islam. They will always pose a danger of treason." So to solve this problem of treason the Maulana who was a great scholar and statesman suggested a one-year notice to be served on all Muslims who wish to be declared as non-Muslims. In this manner "those who cannot be saved will be reluctantly separated from the society for ever." But the initiator of Nizam-i-Mustafa in Pakistan, President Zia-ul Haq, as a practical soldier dispensed with the one-year notice and purified the Muslim society of Pakistan by expelling about five million Ahmadi "hypocrites" from the pale of Islam.

### IMPOSED LAW

Imposition of Muslim law on non-Muslim is definitely against the teaching of the Qur'an. There is not a single verse in the Qur'an and there is no saying of the Prophet either which sanctions the imposition of Muslim law on non-Muslim citizens in a state which is ruled by Muslims. Even the term *zimmi* (*ahl aldhimma*), for the non-Muslim citizens of a Muslim state has not been used either by the Qur'an or the Prophet. As D.R. Hill has observed: "The evidence points strongly towards the conclusion that the expression (*zimma*)



with its connotation of second-class status for non-Muslims, was not in general use at the time of early conquests."

The document signed by the Prophet and the Jews of Medina known as the *Sahifa*, and described as "the Constitution of Medina" by Hamidullah, grants the following rights to the non-Muslims signing that constitution:

1. The security of God is equal to all groups.
2. Non-Muslim members of the *umma* have equal political and cultural rights with the Muslims. There will be complete freedom of religion and all groups will be autonomous.
3. Non-Muslims and Muslims will take up arms against the enemies of the *umma* and will share the cost of war. Muslims and non-Muslims are sincere friends with honorable dealings and no treachery. (Ibn Hisham's *Biography of the Prophet* pp. 341-344 Wustenfeld Edition).

The *Sahifa* is a clear indication of the lines on which the Prophet was building the *umma*. It was a multi-religious community.

### EMPIRE BUILDERS

Unfortunately soon after the death of Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam, the Muslim state passed into the hands of empire builders whose main aim was conquest; propagation of Islam was only incidental. In fact some of the Muslim rulers discouraged the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. The Muslim jurists under these Muslim empire builders developed an elaborate code of law to govern their non-Muslim subjects. This code did not derive directly from the Qur'an or *hadith* (practice of the Prophet) and even violated the Qur'anic intentions and its explicit wording.

A pluralistic community like the *umma*, which the Prophet sought to build presupposes religious liberty. Toleration is not enough; liberty to practice and preach a dissenting religion to retain its cultural and ethnic identity and to follow and administer its personal law must be based on the idea of rights and guaranteed by the dominant group. In the *umma* it was not a concession but a right established by the Qur'an. The Qur'an lays down the ground rule for the administration of the *umma*:

"For each of you we have prepared, according to the capacity of each, a clear spiritual law and a manifest way. And if Allah had enforced His Will, He would have made you all one people, but He wishes to try you by that which He has given you. Vie then, with one another in good works, To Allah shall you all return: then will He inform you that wherein you differed." (Qur'an 5:48).

These verses being the last of the revelations, are a clear indication

that (a) the *umma* remained a multi-religious community till the end of the Prophet's life; (b) the different constituents of the *umma* were to be ruled according to their own laws; and (c) there was a clear line of distinction between the rights of non-Muslims and Muslims which were inviolable and the dominant group (Muslims) had no privileged position to interfere with them.

### FREEDOM OF FAITH

The Qur'an and *Hadith* provide no punishment for apostasy. There are ten direct references to recantation in the Qur'an and none of them prescribes any punishment for it. In fact some Jews of Medina had made a practice of believing in Islam and then repudiating it. In one reference to this practice the Qur'an says:

*"Those who believe then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve, and then increase in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them nor will He guide them to the way."* (4.137)

An apostate cannot enjoy the luxury of believing and disbelieving if the punishment of apostasy is death. A dead man has no further opportunity to "again believe and then disbelieve".

Religious liberty, freedom of thought and expression are not exclusively modern concepts. Every prophet, religious leader and reformer needs them; his own mission depends on them. It is the established church and the institutionalized religion which does its best to stifle the freedom of conscience. *Al-Kafirun*, the 109th chapter of the Qur'an is the most forthright statement of Islamic concept of freedom of religion. Each verse in this chapter, which contains only six verses and thirty words, emphasizes in clear and definite terms the difference between Islam and non-Muslims. In effect it says that "as there is absolutely no meeting ground between your way of life and mine (the Prophet's) and we are in complete disagreement not only with regard to the basic concepts of religion but also with regard to its details and other aspects, there can possibly be no compromise between us. Hence *"For you your religion and for me my religion."* (109.6)

What Maulana Maududi and Ayatullah Khomeini have preached and what President Numeiri and General Zia-ul Haq practice is not real Islam but a caricature calculated to defame and ridicule Islam. Numeiri and Madhok are two sides of the same coin. One deliberately distorts Islam, the other takes advantage of that distortion.

*(The Hindustan Times, June 29, 1984.)*



## BOOK REVIEW

### *An English Translation of the Meaning of the Quran*

Publisher: Dar Al-Choura, Beirut, Lebanon

Introducing this new addition to the already existing several English translations of the Holy Quran, its publishers profess that:

"It is the end product of extensive efforts by a panel of scholars associated with the American University of Beirut and various other institutes of religious and scientific research. Also that after a checking of its entire text, it has been approved by the Supreme Muslim Sunni and Shii Councils in the Republic of Lebanon."

The main objective before the compilers, the preface goes on to say, has been to render the meanings of the Quran "as accurately as possible into modern English, so as to meet the pressing and long felt need of such a translation among non-Arabic speaking Muslims and non-Muslims."

In the very beginning, the reader meets with two inaccuracies. Hazrat Uthman, the third guided Khalifa, is shown in the preface as the fourth Khalifa, and in the introductory note a slur has been cast on Hazrat Khadijah, the holy spouse of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him). Alluding to their marriage, the note goes on to say:

His marriage, thanks to Khadijah's broadmindedness and understanding, proved a happy one. Though during the first fifteen years of their marriage, he would retire for days to a cave called Hira on a hill near Makkah, for meditation and spiritual devotion, she never complained and always welcomed him back home." (p.xv).

This passage, between the lines, suggests that Hazrat Khadijah did not approve of her husband's occasional retreats to the cave of Hira and that it was out of her broadmindedness and understanding that she desisted from making it a cause of complaint. Similarly, it was to save their conjugal happiness that she always welcomed him back home.

The editors have sadly misconstrued this episode. The fact is that Hazrat Khadijah took very keen interest in the Holy Prophet's meditational retirements. It was she who lovingly prepared and furnished him with all sorts of provisions required by him for his subsistence in the cave. It is a historic fact that whenever any doubts assailed him as to whether he would be able to carry out his mission, it was she who encouraged him and assured him. Had she not deemed it a matter of honor for her also, and had she not gloried in his meditations she would not have taken him to her uncle Waraqa bin Naufal for fortifying his confidence. (*Bukhari*).

So far as the translation of the Quran is concerned, we regret to say that this new version is not free from mistakes. We limit our remarks only to the verses discussed below. Let us take the verse

لَهُ كَافِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَكَافِي الْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيْمُ

It has been translated as "He is what the heavens and the earth contain." (42:1-5, p.356). Here, due to incorrect translation, the Almighty Allah has been equated with His creation and denied a separate identity. The Holy Quran completely rejects such pantheistic conceptions. Unless it is a misprint, it is a glaring mistake.

Again the verse

اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيسٰى اِنِّىْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ اِلٰى

has been translated as follows: "He said: Isa, I am about to cause your term on earth to end and lift you up to me." (3:56, p.39).

In this verse the imperative verb *Mutawaffika* is the key word on which hinges its correct interpretation. It also determines the true nature of Isa's *Rafa* which occurs after his *twaffi*.

According to Arabic usage, when God causes this action on a human being and there is no indication that *Twaffi* is to take place during sleep, then it invariably means to cause to die. There is no exception to this rule. *Twaffahullaho* would mean, 'Allah caused him to die.' (*Muhit*.)

Similarly in the case of *Rafa*, when God is the subject and a human being the object, it has no other meaning than that of granting spiritual ascension, for God, not being material or confined to any place, physical ascension to Him is inconceivable and impossible. This verb has also been used in the Quran regarding the prophet Idris, where God says, *Rafa'naaho* (We exalted him spiritually, 19:57). Incidentally it may be pointed out that physical ascension has never been attributed to Idris on the strength of this word. Even the present translation does not ascribe it to him and interprets the verse as: "Whom We honored and exalted". (p.222).

So, as regards Jesus, the verse would signify that God caused him to die and then elevated him spiritually. The stress on his exaltation after death is to reject the false claim by the Jews that he died an accursed death on the cross.

But in the translation under review, *Mutawaffika* and *Rafi'oka* have been rendered as 'I am about to cause your term on earth to end and lift you up to Me'. (p.39). How God ended Isa's term on this earth has been left unexplained.

This translation seems to subscribe to the common belief that Isa

did not die a natural death on the earth; he was lifted alive by God to Himself and is still living in the heavens. Nothing can be more repugnant to the spirit of the Quran.

Great Imams like Imam Bukhari and Ibn-e-Abbas have translated *Mutawaffika* as *Mumeetoka*, i.e., 'I will cause thee to die'. (Bukhari). Similarly the renowned Arab philologist, Zamakhshari, says: "*Mutawaffika* means, I will protect thee from being killed by the people and will grant thee full lease of life ordained for thee and will cause thee to die a natural death, not being killed." (*Kashshaf*).

Present-day theologians like Muhammad Abduh Rashid Rida and Sheikh Mahmud Shaltut have also emphatically confirmed the death of Jesus. (Tafsir Al-Manar, Vol. III, pp.316-319: Weekly Al-Risala of Cair, May 11, 1942, Vol. 10, No. 462, p.515).

It is very unfortunate that, despite the verdict of such eminent authorities, this verse has been misinterpreted to suit the Christian version of the event.

*Suratul Lahab* affords another instance of translation deviating from the text. About Abu Lahab and his wife, it proclaims, "*Soon shall he burn in a flaming fire; and his wife too, who carries the fuel. Round her neck will be a halter of coir.*" (111:2-5).

The Lebanese translation has rendered these verses as, "*He shall be burnt in a flaming fire, and his wife, laden with faggots, shall have a rope of fibre round her neck.*" (p.465).

The verbs in the original text denoting the condition of Abu Lahab and his wife are in active form. In the Lebanese translation they have been changed to passive form. This unwarranted rendering has lessened the intensity of their mischief and plight, which the original verse wants to underscore.

Moreover, due to the faulty structure of the sentence, the idea of the burning of the wife has been obscured. It seems from the translation that she will escape with only having a rope of fibre round her neck.

Then the verse (2:106) مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا

has also been given a delusive complexion. The word *ayah* has been translated as a *verse*, indicating that some verses of the Holy Quran have been abrogated by some others. (p.11).

This "abrogation theory" presupposes the presence of contradictions and discrepancies in the Holy Quran, which however, the Quran rejects unequivocally. It says:

*"Will they not then meditate upon the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy. (4:82).*

Moreover, abrogation would prove that the knowledge of Allah is imperfect, for in this case it will have to be assumed that at first He issues an ordinance, then as a result of an after-thought, He rescinds it and replaces it with another, more profound than the earlier. This concept has no basis in the Quran nor is there any authentic Tradition of the Holy Prophet to support it.

This theory took shape due to a misinterpretation of the word *Ayah*. It primarily means a sign, a message, a command, *etc.* As every verse of the Holy Quran carried this significance, the word came to be applied to them also secondarily. But there is no justification for translating the word *Ayah* in its secondary sense when its primary meanings fit well in the context.

The context of the verse in question relates to the Jewish and Christian claim that the Bible cannot be superseded by any other revelation. The verse in this setting refers to the earlier divine messages and not to any part of the Quran itself, as would appear from the Lebanese translation.

Again, verse 35 of *Suratun Noor*, commonly known as *Ayati Istikhlaf*, promising the establishment of Khilafat, *i.e.*, spiritual and temporal leadership among Muslims, has also been grossly misconstrued. The likeness of Muslims, affirmed in this verse with the followers of the earlier prophets in respect of *Istikhlaf* or succession emphasizes the point that as spiritual and temporal leadership was established among them, so will it be conferred on the followers of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be on him.)

The root *Khalafa*, from which stems the word *La Yastakhlefanna* occurring in this verse, means to succeed someone (*Mufridat*). Hence *Khalifah* would mean, a successor, a vicegerent, a deputy or an heir. The Lebanese translation has interpreted it as '*Masters*' (p.259). The word *master* signifies, "ruler, chief, director, head, manager, proprietor, controller, employer, superintendent, *etc.*, (Webster), but it does not mean a successor or a spiritual leader.

By interpreting *Khalifah* as master, the Lebanese translation has denied the grant of spiritual leadership to Muslims. The idea that spiritual succession to the Holy Prophet has ended and only temporal succession continues is neither corroborated by the Holy Quran, nor by any Tradition of the Holy Prophet, nor is there any lexical support for it. It is a glaring and deplorable deviation from the text.

Noor-ud-Din Munir

## THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the expected world Reformer and the Promised Messiah. The Movement is an embodiment of true and real Islam. It seeks to unite mankind with its Creator and to establish peace throughout the world. The present Head of the Movement is Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad. The Ahmadiyya Movement has its Headquarters at Rabwah, Pakistan, and is actively engaged in missionary work at the following centers:

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