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European Edition

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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.



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The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

A monthly magazine devoted to the dissemination of the teachings of Islam, the discussion of Islamic affairs and religion in general.

The Review of Religions is an organ of the Ahmadiyya Movement which represents the pure and true Islam. It is open to all for discussing problems connected with the religious and spiritual growth of man, but it does not accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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Guide Posts

Glimpses Beyond the Grave

(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

“Treat this day as if thy life had already been spent, and this were an extra day granted thee by special favour of the Almighty. What can be greater folly than to lose it?”

(Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad A-Ghazali).

Belief in the existence of the Hereafter is a cardinal doctrine of Islam. Disbelief in it is tantamount to a denial of Islam (5:70). Nevertheless mere belief is not sufficient to satisfy the yearnings of the zealous Muslim who is anxious to acquire conviction and certainty through the medium of personal experience.

All Muslims claim to believe in the existence of God; but there are few who possess a certainty of conviction. Their belief does not extend beyond an assumption. Similarly no Muslim will deny belief in the life to come; but few possess that assured certainty.

Man does not know the exact nature of the rewards which lie in store for the righteous in heaven because they have been withheld from his knowledge (32:18); but although they cannot be understood in their full measure they can be comprehended to some extent. It is impossible for man to experience the intense heat within the sun; but he can experience something of its glow even on this far away planet. Likewise the balm of paradise can be experienced to a lesser degree even on this side of the grave for God tells us in the Holy Quran that heavenly life begins right here.

The Holy Quran tells us that God is the Lord of all the worlds (1:2). Broadly speaking there are two universes — the material and the spiritual. God is the Creator and Lord of all the innumerable galaxies of stars and planets spinning and revolving in space; and He is also the Creator and Lord of all the spiritual conditions and stages in the realm of the spirit.

The eyes of the soul can see beyond the vision of the physical eyes into the intangible world of the spirit; but still their vision is extremely limited. The

polished lenses of the powerful telescope can penetrate deep into space beyond the vision of the naked eye; but no telescope can capture the immensity of the universe; nor can the soul know of the full glory of paradise before it departs this world; but it can experience a glimmer.

The greatest of all God's Messengers was the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him). He was completely shrouded in the mantle of God's Grace. During his heavenly journey known as the Miraj the thin but opaque veil which screens this world from the next was lifted and some of the unknown secrets of paradise were disclosed to him; but it should be remembered that this was a spiritual experience seen in a dream and therefore does not contradict the Quranic verses which states that the blessings of the next life are hidden from man. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him) was the most righteous of all men and as heavenly life commences in this world for those who are truly righteous the Holy Prophet was not among those who belong only to this world and who think, see and hear only with their physical brains, eyes and ears.

Life is a Dream

The Hereafter is the real and permanent abode because it is everlasting (11:109). It is the life of this world which has no permanency although man is inclined to think it is the real thing. Existence on this planet is no more than a dream for everything concerning it is temporary, evanescent and unstable. These same distinctions characterise a dream.

A dream appears to be real while it lasts. Joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain which are experienced in a dream are as real to the dreamer as they are to him in a state of consciousness. When he awakens he concludes that his nocturnal vision was not real; but the unreal certainty seemed to be real as long as it lasted. Conversely, cannot that which seems to be real be unreal? May not our conscious experiences be as much a dream as our unconscious experiences? When awakening from the dream world visited in sleep we exclaim "Ah — it was just a dream!" Likewise when we awaken in the Hereafter might we not also utter the same words relating to this life?

This thought is well worth our reflective attention: If the unreal (a dream) seems to be real then may it not be possible that that which seems to be real (life) may also be unreal?

This planet on which we live appears to be a solid ball of rock and mineral; but in fact it is no more solid than the finest of gases. All substance is composed of atoms which are so minute that a million times a million of them make a lump too small to see. Not only are all atoms separated from one another by space but every atom itself is mostly space in the same manner as there is more space than matter within our solar system. Every atom is a

miniature solar system which has its own planets (electrons) revolving around its nucleus. A grain of sand may be likened to a galaxy of stars such as the Milky Way which to the naked eye appears as a mass of light whereas in reality it comprises thousands of millions of stars so widely separated from one another that light travelling at 186,000 miles per second takes a hundred thousand years to travel from one end of this galaxy to the other.

The vision of the eye is so restricted that the unreal appears real and the real appears unreal.

Like a dream this world is evanescent and unstable. Everything is constantly changing and disappearing. Iron has been known to disappear completely through the process of rusting. The cells of the body are said to be renewed every so often producing a completely new body.

An object submerged in the ocean is encompassed by water; and a dream is encompassed by a sea of consciousness. The dreamer enters the dream world from the realm of wakefulness; and then he returns from the dream world to the realm of wakefulness. Likewise this life is immersed in the ocean of obscurity. Man comes from the obscure and returns to the obscure although the state he comes from and the state he returns to may be different conditions. In this respect there exists a parallel between the dream of life and the dream of sleep.

Every nocturnal dream comes to an end; so does every form of life on this unstable planet.

Hereafter Everlasting

When it is clearly understood that this life is evanescent like a dream and that the life of permanent abode lies on the other side of the grave then humanity will cease concentrating on riches and worldly honour and take to heart God's counsel:

"O my people, this life of the world is
but a temporary provision; and the
Hereafter is certainly the home of
permanent stay."

(40:40).

Thousands of generations comprising billions of human beings have passed on to the great beyond. Not a single individual now breathing away its existence has long to live; yet man is so engrossed with the embellishments of this life that he scarcely gives thought to the Hereafter; and there are many who give no thought to it at all. Ah! If man would but give attention to the Word of God:

“And the life of this world is only a play
and a sport, but surely the abode of the
Hereafter is better for those who are pious.
Will you not then have sense”?

(6:33).

Know it for certain that the Promised Messiah whose advent has been foretold by the earlier prophets including Jesus and Muhammad (may peace be on them) has appeared in these times in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. Let every God-fearing individual take heed and reflect time and time again on his words of advice:

“Always bear in mind that your death stands
very near. You have no idea when that hour
will come.”

These words of warning ring with truth yet few persons heed them. People do not like to think that their death may be close at hand and they prefer to assume that long years lie ahead of them. But life is always short. Astronomers have been able to ascertain that the universe has been in existence for at least six thousand million years; and shortly they expect to have evidence available to prove that it has existed for a much longer period. The few score years which sometimes run the gamut of a life span amount to no more than a tick of the clock in relation to the age of the universe.

The Hereafter is no illusion or dream because it is a stable and everlasting world. There the soul will develop into a new creation according to its condition when leaving this life; and its development will also be subject to the Mercy of God. The purification of the soul should be man's highest goal in this life; and this special grace is attainable by all who earnestly desire it; but it only comes through complete submission and devotion to Allah. All other paths are closed. The Promised Messiah has emphasised the conditions necessary for spiritual purification:

“Turn wholly and solely to Him, so that you lose
interest in this world. Become entirely His,
living wholly for His will and pleasure, for His
sweet sake, hating everything impure and sinful,
for indeed He is Holy.”

(Our Teaching).

“Let him who would walk on the right path,
completely submit himself with all his faculties
and powers to the will of God and then pray
unceasingly and untiringly for the divine union
and thus realize the reality of divine
existence through divine assistance.”

(Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam).

Only through submission to Islam can the polluted soul become cleansed of its impurities. Every Muslim should ardently desire and strive for self purification. This should be the real objective of living and the most dominant thought in his mind. Nothing else should be of greater concern to him; not even his love for family, wealth and property (9.24). This philosophy is the quintessence of Islam.

God is Merciful

Islam teaches that God exercises His attribute of Mercy both in this life and in the next. On the other hand Christian preachers talk of everlasting hell and punishment. This belief divests God of His mantle of Mercy and reveals the blurred spiritual vision of Christian evangelists. Certainly evil doers and deniers of truth will experience some punishment; but when they have suffered their desserts they will be released from their torments. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of God be upon him) is reported to have said that there will come a time when hell will be empty. All praise to the Beneficent and Merciful God of Islam.

Islam does not teach, however, that all souls in paradise will enjoy the same status. God tells us in His Word — the Holy Quran:

“And for all there are grades of rank according to what they did.”

(46:20).

“Therein (paradise) they will hear no idle talk nor lying. A recompense from thy Lord — a gift in proportion to their works.”

(78:36, 37).

In this respect the Holy Prophet has said:

“There are a hundred grades in paradise prepared by Allah for those who fight in the path of Allah and, in between each, is as great a distance as is between earth and heaven . . .”

(Bukhari).

The Promised Messiah — the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement — has also stressed this encouraging truth:

“Those who accept God here, who lose themselves in divine love and who take their stand on the right path, have in store special honours which would not be attained by other people.”

(The Will).

Islam encourages spiritual initiative; and every true Muslim hankers to be among the elect and looks forward to the special delights of the Hereafter promised to the distinguished servants of God. Anticipation of these fruits is in itself a taste of paradise on earth.

Fruits of Paradise have Roots in this Life

There is a world of difference between wild grapes and the sweet luscious fruit which hangs in bunches from the pruned vine. Likewise there is no comparison between the spiritual joys vouchsafed to man in this life and the sweet nectar of paradise in the Hereafter.

The Holy Quran has compared the blessings of paradise with the good things of this life. The analogy is symbolic but it is the only way of giving man some indication and understanding of the fruits of paradise. The rewards of the Hereafter will be embodiments of a person's conduct in this life; and so it is here where they have their roots. The righteous soul can taste the ecstasy of heaven while it still dwells in its mortal frame on earth; but the full abundance of joy in store for it cannot be known until death opens the gate to the garden of Allah. There the soul will recognise a degree of resemblance between these new joys and those experienced on earth. They will cry out:

“This is what was given us before”

(2:26).

A few illustrations will help in understanding the philosophy of spiritual embodiment.

Creation is the embodiment of thought. Every invention was once no more than an intangible thought in the mind of man; and from this state it came to be embodied into physical reality. Character is also the embodiment of thought. Vulgar thoughts become translated into coarse and indecent habits while noble and graceful habits are the embodiments of pure thoughts. Worry is the result of depressed thoughts while the sunny disposition materialises from cheerful thoughts. Everything is the embodiment of thought. The intangible materialises into the physical. As thought is the seed of achievement on earth so the condition of the soul is the seed of a new spiritual creation in the Hereafter.

To a great extent health is the embodiment of food. Man is not only what he thinks but he is also what he eats. Health flourishes or suffers according to the nature of the food absorbed into the system. However, health and food are not one and the same thing. The former is an embodiment of the latter; and in a more or less similar manner the blessings of the next life are embodiments of the good things of this life. As there is a connexion between health and food which is discernible to the mind of man so there is a connexion between the

blessings of this life and the blessings of the Hereafter which will be cognizant to the soul after death:

“This is what was given us before”

(2:26).

The blessings of paradise have their roots in this world; and a glow of their heavenly lustre may be felt by the righteous man while he is still on this side of the grave for, in truth, he has already forsaken this world through his dedication to God and discovered for himself that heavenly life commences right here.

All Praise is due Allah the Lord of all the worlds.

Sayings of Muhammad (Peace be on him)

The Lord doth not regard a prayer in which the heart doth not accompany the body.

The love of the world is the root of all evils.

All actions are judged by the motives prompting them.

Do not speak ill of the dead.

The most excellent Jihad (Striving in the way of God) is that for the conquest of self.

Kill not your hearts with excess of eating and drinking.

Strive always to excel in virtue and truth.

All God's creatures are His family; and he is the most beloved of God who trieth to do most good to God's creatures.

Be persistent in good actions.

Humility and courtesy are acts of piety.

Rise of Islam

(Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad — The Promised Messiah)

The primary object of the Holy Prophet was to reform the Arabs. The Arabs were then in such a degraded state that they could hardly be called men. There was no evil but was to be found in them and there was no form of *shirk* but prevailed among them. Thieving and dacoity formed their business and the murder of a human being was with them like the trampling under foot of an ant. They killed orphans to appropriate their property and buried their daughters alive under the ground. They took pride in adultery and openly spoke of indecent things in their poems, which were immoral in the highest degree. Drinking prevailed to such an extent that no house was free from it, and in gambling they beat every other people. In short of, they were a disgrace even to the beasts and the snakes of the desert.

But when the Holy Prophet rose to regenerate these people and when he devoted his whole attention to the purifying of their hearts and cast his holy influence on them, he worked such a transformation among them in a few days that from their savage state they rose to be men and from the stage of men they advanced to the stage of civilization and thus progressing step by step they became godly men and finally they were so annihilated in the love of God that they bore every pain with the utmost resignation. They were subjected to various kinds of tortures, whips were lashed at them with great cruelty, they were made to lie on burning sand, they were put in fetters, deprived of food and drink for days until they were almost at the doors of death, but they only stepped forward at every affliction. Many had their children slaughtered before their eyes, many were hanged by the neck in the presence of their children, but a contemplation of the steadfastness with which they laid down their lives draws tears from the eyes. What was it which drew them so powerfully towards Islam and worked such a change in them that they threw themselves on the threshold of a man who once walked about in the streets of Mecca, a poor, solitary and helpless man? It was the hand of God that was controlling their hearts; it was the spiritual attraction of the Holy Prophet which raised them from the depths of degradation to the sublime heights above.

The wonder is that before they embraced Islam, most of them were the mortal enemies of the Holy Prophet and were thirsty of his blood. I cannot see there could be a greater miracle than that a poor, helpless and solitary man should have thus purged their hearts from malice and should have so drawn them towards himself that cast away their costly robes and having donned sackcloth presented themselves before him like humble servants.

Some thoughtless men bring the charge of *Jehad* against Islam and assert that all these men were compelled to accept Islam by dint of sword. These men have passed all limits in their injustice and in concealing the truth. Alas, why is it that they intentionally turn their face from the real facts. Our Holy Prophet did not appear in Arabia as a king so that it might be supposed that as he had with him kingly majesty and power, therefore the people flocked to his standard in order to save their lives. It was as a poor, helpless and lonely man that he began to preach the Unity of God and his own Prophethood. What sword had he then, the fear of which caused a man to adopt his religion? If they did not accept his religion of their own free will, the forces of which king were summoned and whose aid was sought to compel them to adopt the religion? O seekers after truth, know it for certain that these charges are fabricated by those who are great enemies of Islam. Consult history. Our Holy Prophet was that orphan boy whose father passed away shortly after his birth and whose mother also died when he was yet a child of a few months old. Then the child, who had with him the protecting hand of God, grew up under the care of God unsupported by man. During the days of his orphanage and helplessness, he even watched the sheep of some persons. He had no guardian except God. He was twenty-five years old, but not even any of his uncles gave his daughter in marriage to him, for apparently he had no means to support his family. He was quite illiterate and knew no trade or profession. When he attained the age of forty, his heart was at once drawn towards God. There was a cave, named *Hira*, at the distance of a few miles from Mecca. He went to that cave alone, hid himself there and worshipped God. He was thus one day secretly occupied in Divine contemplation, when God manifested Himself to him and said: "The world has abandoned the path of God and the earth has become corrupt with sin, so I appoint you as My Apostle that you may warn the people and invite them to God before Divine punishment should overtake them." This message filled him with fear and he humbly said in reply that he was an illiterate person. Then God opened his heart and filled his breast with Divine wisdom and spiritual knowledge and illuminated his heart. His holy spiritual power attracted the lowly and the humble people towards him and they became his devoted servants but the great and the haughty girt up their loins to oppose him until at last they even determined to put him to death. Many of his followers, both male and female, were killed and at last the house of the Holy Prophet himself was besieged. But who can destroy a man whom God wishes to save? God sent His Word to the Holy Prophet informing him of the intentions of his enemies, bidding him to leave the city and promising him

His assistances at every step. The Holy Prophet, accordingly left the city in the company of Abu Bakr and the two hid themselves in a cave, called Thaur, where they stayed for two nights. The enemy pursued them by following their footsteps and tracked to its entrance and proclaimed that they were either in the cave or they had ascended to the heavens. But who can encompass the wonders of the Divine power? God so showed His power that in a single night the spider covered the whole mouth of the cave with its web and a pigeon made its nest at the mouth of the cavern and laid its eggs there. So when the tracker persuaded men to go into the cave, an old man among them cried: "This man is a fool. This web was at the mouth of the cave even before Muhammad was born." Hearing this all dispersed and nobody cared to examine the interior of the cave.

After this, the Holy Prophet escaped to Medina, where most men accepted him. This infuriated the Meccans still more, and they were sorry to lose their victim. Thenceforth all their efforts were concentrated on bringing about the annihilation of the Holy Prophet. The small band of Meccans who had accepted the Holy Prophet had also left their native city to seek protection in other lands and some of them had sought shelter under the king of Abyssinia. The few that remained in Mecca, being too poor to migrate, were bitterly persecuted and their cries of pain are ever referred to in the Quran.

The cruelties that the Meccans perpetrated on the poor Muslims exceeded all limits. They began to murder poor women and tender orphans. Some women were killed so ruthlessly that they were tied by their legs to two camels which were made to run into opposite directions and thus the poor women were torn in two pieces.

When the barbarities of the inhuman infidels reached this limit, God, who at last takes pity on His people sent His word to the Holy Prophet saying that the cries of the oppressed had reached Him, that the faithful were now permitted to take up arms against the oppressors that those who had smitten the innocent with sword should perish by the sword, but that the faithful were not permitted to transgress for God did not like the transgressors.

This is the truth about the Islamic Jihad, but it has been most cruelly misrepresented. God is indeed tolerant, but when the mischief of a people exceeds all limits, God does not leave the oppressors without punishment and Himself brings into existence the means of their destruction. I do not know who told our opponents that Islam was propagated by means of sword. God says in the Quran, "There is no compulsion in the religion of Islam." This being the commandment of God in His Holy Book, who was it who gave orders to exercise compulsion? And what means were there to constrain men to accept the faith? Does compulsion create in the compelled that devotion and steadfastness with which the followers of the Holy Prophet fought against overwhelming odds without receiving any salary? When they numbered two

or three hundreds they fought against thousands, and when they numbered thousands they defeated millions. To protect Islam from the attacks of the enemy, they allowed their heads to be cut off like sheep. They bore testimony to the truth of Islam with their blood. They had so great a passion to spread the Unity of God in the world that they went to the deserts of Africa undergoing severe privations to preach the Unity of God there. Then suffering all sorts of trouble they went to China, not as warriors but as humble preachers, and their preaching was blessed with such good results that millions of men professed the faith. Then they came to India, clad like dervishes in sackcloth, delivered their message to the natives of Arya Varta so that many of them embraced Islam. And on the west they carried their message of the Unity of God to the farthest end of Europe. Say truly, was that the work of men who were driven into Islam at the point of the sword and who though professing to be believers were still infidels at their heart? Nay that was the work of men whose hearts were full of the light of faith and in whose hearts the love of God reigned supreme. What is the teaching of Islam? The chief object of Islam is to establish the Unity and Majesty of God on earth, to extirpate *shirk* (setting up equals to God) and to weld all nations into one people by bringing about a religious union among them. All other religions and all other prophets had their attention confined only to one people and one country. If they taught any morals, their object only was that their own people alone should possess those morals. Jesus, for instance, plainly said that his mission was confined to the house of Israel, and when a woman who was not from the Israelites approached him saying "Have mercy on me, O Lord," he repulsed her saying, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and when she again humbly approached him with the same request, he again rejected her with the answer, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." But our Holy Prophet never said that he was sent only to the Arabs. On the other hand, and Quran says: "I am sent to the whole world." But it should be remembered that Jesus cannot be blamed for having thus coldly repelled the woman for the time then was not yet ripe for a universal guidance and Jesus was accordingly commanded to confine his preaching to the Israelites and to have nothing to do with others. So, as I have said above, the moral precepts of Jesus were only addressed to the Jews. The law of Moses laid emphasis on tooth for tooth and eye for eye, and the object of this teaching was to establish justice among the Jews and to check them from transgression, because they, owing to their having lived in slavery for 400 years, had become hard-hearted and mean, and injustice formed the chief trait of their character. Similarly in the time of Jesus, God's wisdom demanded that the over-strictness with which the Jews had come to punish every offender should be remedied by enjoining upon them leniency and mercy and so Jesus laid great stress on forgiveness. Hence the moral teaching contained in the Gospel was only addressed to the Jews and Jesus had no concern with any other people.

The truth is that the moral teaching of Jesus is not only not based on universal sympathy, for while it sympathises with the offender, it does not sympathise with the offended, but it is also conspicuous by another serious defect. As the law of Moses goes to one extreme by laying too much emphasis on retaliation, the teaching of Jesus goes to the other extreme by enjoining forgiveness and pardon of the offender in all cases. These codes do not aim at the development of all branches of the human tree. The Pentateuch nourishes one branch while the Gospel confines itself to the development of the other branch, both being conspicuous by the absence of moderation in their teachings. As it is not expedient to punish the offender in every case, similarly it is inconsistent with a proper culture of all the human faculties to forgive on all occasions. It is for this reason that the Quran rejects both the extreme teachings and follows the golden mean by saying that the punishment of an evil should be proportionate to the evil done, as the law of Moses teaches, and the teaching of forgiveness as given in the Gospel should be followed only when it is productive of good results and when the offender is likely to profit by forgiveness and to reform himself. Otherwise the law to be followed is that which is given in the Pentateuch.

Quran on Religious Tolerance

"There is no compulsion in religion. The truth has become manifest from error."

(2:256)

"Say: It is the truth from thy Lord for you all. Then whosoever will, let him disbelieve."

(18:29)

"Say: O people, the truth hath come unto you from your Lord. So, whosoever is guided is guided for the good of his soul, and whosoever goeth astray goeth astray only against it (his soul). And I am not a custodian over you."

(10:109)

"Abuse not the idols of the idolators, for if ye do, they will abuse your God in return, as they know not your God."

(6:108)

The “Militant” Islam?

(Sheikh Nasir Ahmad)

Ask a schoolboy in the West or even a teacher of religious instruction about his knowledge of Islam, and the answer you will get will be surprisingly simple. The answer is almost always the same, and runs like this:

“Islam, preached by Muhammad, is the religion meant for the Bedouins and for the primitive conditions of the yore. The Prophet went through the teachings of Christians and Jews and was deeply impressed by them. Thereafter he wrote a book called the Quran. Further, Muhammad spread the new religion by the use of sword, and later the Arabs penetrated into several other countries and converted the people to the religion of Islam by force. The teachings of Islam are appropriate for the conditions of the Middle Ages. Generally speaking, the hallmark of Islam are such out-of-date teachings which do not apply to our times. Its main features are intolerance and fatalism, coupled with religious fanaticism. Islam is not a religion fit for our latitudes, at least not for the 20th century. This religion of men despises women and allots them a subordinate position in society.”

Such and similar information on Islam is also supplied by the standard works on Islam written by non-Muslim authors, and this is the sum-total of knowledge of the average person in the West.

The non-Muslim reader is invited to ponder over an important aspect of human life. A shrewd and successful businessman, who is not a religious person, knows by experience that the best way of ensuring the constructive cooperation of his employees is through motivation and conviction. This cannot be achieved by force or mere authority, at least not as a long-term proposition. The clever businessman can sell his goods or services to his clients better only if they can be convinced of their quality in relation to their price. This is so because a wise salesman does not want to sell only once but seeks to build up a wide circle of regular customers.

Now, turning to Islam, it has to be noted that Islam is a religion which claims to have its origin in God, and its purpose is to lead human beings to the

Creator. How is it possible for a religion with such high ideals to conceive the use of force as a method of its propagation? Can mere force engender inclination toward and love for an idea? And does a good idea at all stand in need of force? Doubts are cast on the truth of a religion which permits the use of force for spreading it. Critics of Islam who maintain that Islam is a religion of coercion, put forth a claim which is a contradiction in terms. They are not prepared to attribute to God the wisdom, intelligence and shrewdness which they readily pre-suppose in a non-religious businessman.

Freedom of Religion

Nowhere in Islam and in its Scripture, the Quran, is the slightest indication to be found which should suggest that the use of force or compulsion of any sort is permitted in order to spread it. On the contrary, Islam inculcates peaceful co-existence among the followers of all religions. This teaching of Islam extends even to atheists, sun-worshippers, fire-worshippers and idolaters. Muslims are not permitted to use abusive language for the idols of the idol-worshippers lest it should injure the religious susceptibilities of others (6:109). Some verses of the Quran are quoted to refute the accusation of the use of force in the matter of belief:

"There is no compulsion in religion. Surely, the right way has become distinct from error."

(2:257).

"Say: 'O mankind, the Truth has come to you from your Lord. So whoever follows the guidance, follows it only for the good of his own soul, and whoever errs, errs only against it. And I am not a keeper over you.'"

(10:109).

"And say: 'The Truth is from your Lord, therefore let him, who will, believe, and let him, who will, disbelieve.'"

(18:30).

"And if thy Lord had enforced His will, surely, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wilt thou then force people to become believers?"

(10:100).

These passages of the Quran are crystal-clear and they leave not the slightest doubt. The accusation is wrong, baseless and wholly untenable. It is, more than anything else, the deep-rooted hatred of Islam which has prompted its enemies to fabricate this accusation.

Now we examine another verse of the Holy Quran which knocks the bottom out of this unfounded and unsubstantiated allegation. The verse

refers to a war situation in which the Muslims had been attacked by non-Muslims with the intention of coercing the Muslims to abjure their faith. The Quran says:

“And if any one of the idolaters seeks protection of thee, grant him protection so that he may hear the Word of Allah; then convey him to his place of security. That is because they are a people who have no knowledge.”

(9:6).

The All-Knowing God had, of course, known that at one time Islam would be accused by its opponents of the use of force in matters of faith. This particular verse shows the all-embracing tolerance of Islam and its concern for the upholding of the principle of religious freedom. The situation depicted in this verse deserves our special attention: An enemy soldier fighting against the Muslims decides to desert his own army and to join the ranks of Muslims. In doing so, he leaves the army of an enemy who had persecuted the small, helpless community of Muslims in Mecca for thirteen long years, who was thirsting for their blood and ever keen to make life for the Muslims miserable in every conceivable manner. After the Muslims had left Mecca for Medina, this enemy had indulged in a number of wars of aggression against the Muslims. A renegade from this army could expect from his people nothing less than death-penalty for deserting the army. Even in such a situation the Quran does not say that Muslims should try to force their religion (Islam) on the deserter who was indeed in a situation with little choice. It was clear that the deserter would under no circumstances return to his former army. The Quran lays down as the first duty of the Muslims to grant protection to the enemy soldier. In the second instance, Muslims are told to convey to the fugitive the message of Islam, and thirdly — and this is significant — to make arrangements for him to be brought to a place of his choice where he is sure of his safety.

If Islam were a religion of coercion and compulsion and if it had allowed the use of force, then the Muslims would never have let this golden opportunity of converting an enemy to Islam by use of threat, blackmail or force. It is amazing how the critics overlook this meaning of the verse.

Truth is that in early Islam not a single case is known where a non-Muslim was forced to profess Islam.

Penalty for Apostacy

It may be argued that if the penalty for recanting Islam in a country with Muslim majority is death, then this is also to be construed as indirect compulsion in matters of faith. The answer to this is that as far as the teachings of Islam are concerned, there is no worldly punishment prescribed for anyone

who abjures Islam. An apostate may not fear any penalty in a Muslim country so long as the government adheres to the precepts of Islam and does not lay down its own standards and norms. The misguided view that the penalty for apostasy is death cuts at the very root of the teachings of Islam. Two verses of the Holy Quran may be quoted to show the incompatibility of this view with the spirit of Islam. We read:

"Surely, those who disbelieve after they have believed and then increase in disbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted, and these are they who have gone astray."

(3:91).

If the penalty for recanting Islam were death, how could a person who had abjured Islam, still increase in his disbelief. We read further:

"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 path."

(4:138).

This unequivocal verse does not admit of any other but the one clear-cut interpretation. It speaks of a Muslim who abjures his faith but after some time he again accepts Islam, then yet again renounces it — and so on. Had a worldly penalty been prescribed for such a person, then the sentence of death would have been executed between the period of his renunciation of faith and his supposed second-time profession of Islam. In other words, the re-acceptance of Islam would become impossible.

The tolerance as taught by Islam brought about such a spectacular change in the character and conduct of a people, hitherto ignorant and barbarious, that they came to learn the higher values and respect for human life and sense for human dignity. This teaching placed the inter-human relations on a sound basis which transformed the uncivilised people of the time of the Holy Prophet to highly moral beings with nobler spiritual ambitions.

With this teaching of the Quran in the background and the facts of history as evidence, no sane person can ever doubt that the accusation of compulsion is an invention and an insult to the intelligence of man. It is a fact that Islam, 1400 years ago, was not spread by force. It is a fact that it spread in spite of the force which was used to stem its progress.

During its second upsurge in our time, in which one speaks of the "re-awakening of Islam", it is destined to conquer the hearts of the people in an emphatically peaceful way so that no one will ever dream of attributing the idea of violence to Islam. We witness today that Islam is steadily becoming the topic of the day in all parts of the world. This is a phenomenon of our time and it is not happening as a consequence of a political revolution somewhere in the world. Nor is it due to the discovery of oil in a certain region of the world. It is

rather the result of a quiet evolution which is taking place in the hearts of the people, and with it approaches the time of the fulfilment of a grand prophecy of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace be on him), in which he had foretold that Islam would re-emerge at a time when the need is the greatest and that it would solve the problems of mankind also in our times.

The modern man, otherwise possessing an analytical mind, is the victim of a big error, a fallacy, when judging the merits of Islam, he does not take into consideration a basic fact necessary for the appraisal of the teachings of Islam and the conduct of early Muslims. The result is a grievous wrong done to Islam and early Muslims. The basic fact one ignores is this: When after long years the protracted persecution of the early Muslims ended, they were able to create in a short time a Muslim State in which also non-Muslim citizens lived enjoying all civil rights. During the wars which had been imposed upon the Muslims and in which they took part only when they were attacked by the army of their enemies, the warriors in the enemy camp were simultaneously non-Muslims and enemies of the Muslim State. They fought the Muslim army in their two-fold capacity: From the point of view of religion, they were non-Muslims, and from the political viewpoint they were enemies of State. Any punishment they received for their war crimes was just and fair, acknowledged as such even by the enlightened society of the 20th century. Never were they subjected to any pressure for their non-belief, nor were they ever taken prisoners or had to pay ransom for the reason that they were non-Muslims.

The Geneva Conventions of our time on the treatment of an enemy found guilty of waging a war, and on the treatment of prisoners-of-war could learn a lot from the conduct of Muslims of the 7th century. The concept of the United Nations Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can in its essential elements be traced back to the teachings of Islam.

“Jihad”

Now a glance at the much-disparaged notion of “Jihad”, the so-called “Holy War”. The Arabic word “Jihad” has neither the connotation of “holy” nor that of “war”. The translation of the word “Jihad” with “holy war” is arbitrary, tendentious and absurd. The word simply applies to any activity or job which is accomplished with great effort and which calls for striving hard. Maximum effort applied to a task is “Jihad”. Great sacrifice of one’s time, of one’s wealth, of one’s personal honour for a noble cause is “Jihad”. The proclamation and preaching of truth under circumstances involving great risk to one’s life is “Jihad”. To rise against a tyrant in defence of the victims of oppression is “Jihad”. The struggle against one’s own weaknesses, one’s egoism, against the moral decay of the society, against oppression and wrong, against an enemy who attacks one’s country, against compulsion in matters of

faith and against the persecution of the innocent — all comes under the category of "Jihad".

As far as war is concerned, Islam does not permit a war of aggression for purposes of expansion. To understand the term "purposes of expansion" we must go back to the conditions obtaining at the time of early Islam when such wars of aggression were order of the day. Islam simply put an end to the wars of aggression and permitted only defensive war under certain conditions, after all efforts to keep the peace have failed and the enemy imposes war on the Muslim State. Such defensive war is permitted in order to restore the conditions of peace, but not to disturb the peace. This would be clear if we cast a glance at the wars in which early Muslims were involved involuntarily. We pass in review six incidents to illustrate the point.

No. 1 — The Battle of Badr

The Muslims had been driven out of their home Mecca by force after having been exposed for 13 years to severe persecution and sufferings at the hands of the Meccans. During all this period of persecution, Muslims had not done any harm to anyone. After their migration they had settled down in Medina which lay at a distance of about 380 kilometres from their home-town Mecca. Hardly a year in Mecca, they were faced with an army of at least 1000 well-equipped and experienced soldiers which the Meccans had despatched to Medina in order to rout the Muslims in their new home Medina. To meet this enemy, the refugee Muslims were able to muster merely 313 men with only two horses and a few camels between them. The battle that ensued resulted in a pitiable defeat of the much superior army of Meccans. It is to be noted here, as elsewhere in all the episodes that follow, that the Muslims had not gone from Medina to Mecca to attack the Meccans; on the contrary, it were the Meccans who had chosen to march on Medina to attack the Muslims. This battle is known in the annals of history as the Battle of Badr.

No. 2 — The Battle of Uhah

The Meccans were determined to avenge their humiliating defeat at Badr. A year later, they marched with 3000 armed men towards Medina. On this occasion, the Muslim army was even less-equipped and was also relatively smaller in numbers as compared with the first clash a year earlier. On the Meccan side there were 700 armours and 200 mounted soldiers. Against 3000 Meccan soldiers there were only 700 men on the side of the Muslims with only 100 armours and only two horses. After a partial retreat of the Muslim army at one point, this battle, too, ended in the defeat of the enemy in spite of its obvious superiority. In the course of this battle, the Holy Prophet personally came under attack with increased threat to his safety, but he displayed an almost superhuman courage in the face of the great danger. Here, too, it

should be noted that it was the Meccans who had forced the Muslims to come out of Medina and defend themselves. After the name of the scene of the fight, this battle is known as the Battle of Uhad.

Shortly after this battle, famine broke out in Mecca. The Prophet opened a fund to furnish aid to the enemy in the latter's hour of need with this humanitarian gesture, nota bene, for an enemy who had twice waged war of aggression against him, not to speak of the untold sufferings it had inflicted on him and the Muslims during the 13 years of severe persecutions.

No. 3 — The Battle of the Ditch

In the fifth year of Hijra, the Meccans launched a campaign of hatred and enmity against Muslims throughout Arabia. Several Arab tribes joined an army of the "Confederates" which had collected a force 18,000 to 20,000 strong. This imposing army marched in the direction of Medina and was confident that there could be no escape for the Muslims this time. The entire population of Medina at the time was approximately 3000 souls, all counted, from which a mere 1200 to 1250 strong army could be raised. Muslims had to face an army numerically 15 times stronger than their own number. The unenviable plight of the Muslims was quite obvious. But it so happened that panic broke out among the ranks of the enemy following some unexpected events which they took for bad omen and that led to the sudden and hurried withdrawal of the "Army of the Confederates" without having achieved their object. This episode is known in history as the Battle of the Ditch.

No. 4 — Expedition to Syria

This fourth incident proves conclusively that the Muslims never took to the battlefield on their own initiative but were each time forced into it.

Christian tribes on the Syrian border made preparations for an attack on Medina. They had been incited by Jewish tribes and by pagan Arabs. After waiting for a long time in the vain hope that the army of the enemy would soon withdraw from the border, the Holy Prophet, deeply concerned with the security of Medina, sent out a 3000-strong army to Syria. On the occasion of this expedition the Prophet issued instructions governing the conduct in the event of a war. These instructions do honour to the Geneva Conventions on the conduct of war.

Muslims were required to fight in a brave manner but not lose sight of the humanitarian aspect.

They should not molest any priest or monk or any other person who was occupied with the work of divine service and the maintenance of a house of worship.

Women, children and old or disabled persons were to be spared.

No tree was to be pulled down nor a building demolished. When the Muslim army arrived at the Syrian border, it learned that the Caesar had come in person at the head of 100,000 of his own soldiers along with a similar number of soldiers of the Christian tribes. It is not difficult to imagine the situation of 3000 Muslims facing an army of 200,000 soldiers under the personal command of the Caesar. They certainly faced sure and utter rout.

One General of the tiny Muslim army fell after the other, but finally the brave, small group of Muslims was victorious and the Byzantine army was forced to quit the battlefield by a veritable miracle which happened to the succour of the Muslim army.

Islam has been charged with the false accusation that it was spread by the sword. The fact is that it was able to be spread in spite of the sword of its enemies. History supplies ample proof thereof.

No. 5 — The Fall of Mecca

In the 8th year of Hijra, after his migration to Medina, the Prophet entered once again his beloved and cherished home-town Mecca. He was accompanied by 10,000 of his followers. Yet this mighty army had not come to Mecca to shed blood, to kill and to loot, but to forgive the enemy and to declare that the Prophet was there to forget all their misdeeds and to show mercy to those who had persecuted him and had waged wars against him. This entry in Mecca with such a big force would have been an opportunity par excellence to force upon the vanquished enemy the acceptance of Islam. Yet not a single person was asked to join Islam and no one was threatened with reprisals in the event of default. It is true, though, that a number of Arabs accepted Islam on this occasion, but they did so by their own volition and out of their own conviction.

No. 6 — The Battle of Hunain

Within a month of the renowned Fall of Mecca, Muslims had again to take to the battlefield to face an army comprising 70,000 soldiers, near Hunain. After some confusion in the beginning within the Muslim army, this battle, too, ended in a complete victory for them — which strengthened their faith in Divine help.

This brief sketch of the military engagements during early Islam speaks eloquently and refutes in all parts the allegation so often raised that Muslims used force to spread their faith. May the critics and polemising adversaries of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (on whom be peace), use the right angle while judging the teachings of Islam.

In fairness to the critics and in order to appreciate also their position, it may be useful to quote those passages of the Quran from which the critics draw their wrong conclusions. The Quran says:

“Permission (to take up arms) is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged, and Allah, indeed, has the power to help them. — Those who have been driven out of their houses unjustly, only because they said “Our Lord is Allah”. And if Allah had not repelled some people by means of others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft remembered, would surely have been destroyed. And Allah will, surely, help him who helps Him.”

(22:40, 41).

These verses are very clear in that reasons are enumerated here why Muslims were after all granted the permission to defend themselves. First, because they had been driven out of their homes without any fault of theirs. Secondly, because they were not permitted to believe in God and to worship Him. Thirdly, so that the followers of all religious beliefs — Christians in their churches and monasteries, Jews in their synagogues and Muslims in their mosques — could enjoy the full liberty of conscience and belief and perform their religious services in peace and without let or hindrance.

In fact, the religious world ought to be grateful to Islam and the early Muslims who so boldly and bravely stood for the protection of the inalienable right of man to the freedom of religion.

We read in the Quran further:

“And fight them (the transgressors) wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for persecution is worse than killing . . . but if they fight you, then fight them . . .”

(2:192).

“And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is professed for Allah. But if they desist, then no hostility is allowed except against the wrongdoers.”

(2:194).

Islam on the Conduct of War

The teachings of the Quran are clear-cut and unmistakable. The Quran speaks in sharp terms against every sort of aggression and violence. It pleads for peace and harmony. It goes to the extent of saying that, if in the course of a war the enemy should desire truce, then it becomes imperative for Muslims to stop all fighting, even though there may be a justifiable risk that the desire of peace on the part of the enemy is simply a deceiving manoeuvre and the enemy is seeking only to gain time by using this ploy.

It is a mistake of the critics to regard these passages of the Quran as being applicable in normal times and to hastily infer that Islam wants Muslims to kill the non-Muslims. Through the early wars, as has been stated above, Islam provided the world with a charter on peace and war. By using this charter, a war can be prevented and, if it does break out, its scope can be limited and it can be stopped quickly and its consequences can be mitigated. The precepts of Islam with regard to war may be summarised as follows:

1. Fighting is permitted only against those who start hostilities.
2. Those who are not involved in the war effort, must be spared. The fighting is to be directed only against a regular army.
3. Each war operation must be localised in terms of the area and the duration of the operation.
4. Muslims should have respect for all religious practices of the enemy.
5. Children, women, old persons, ministers of religion and civilians may not be molested. They should not be attacked unless they actually join the fighting.
6. The concept of "total war" does not exist in the vocabulary of Islam. The policy of "scorched earth" is detested.
7. All agreements and pacts must be faithfully kept.
8. Fighting should stop immediately as soon as the enemy expresses the desire for a truce. Those on the defensive should not go over to the offensive.
9. A supranational body like the UNO is to be formed with the object of preventing a war by all means and to watch over the world peace.

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to quote a passage from the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam:

"That is why God Almighty divided the life of our Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, into two phases: one phase of hardships and calamities and sufferings, and the other of victory; so that during the phase of sufferings those high moral qualities might be demonstrated which come into play at such times, and during the phase of victory and authority those high moral qualities might be illustrated which cannot be displayed in the absence of authority. Thus both these types of qualities were perfectly illustrated in the life of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, by his passing through both these phases and conditions. During the period of trials in Mecca, which extended over thirteen years, the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, demonstrated in practice all the high qualities which a perfectly righteous person should exhibit at such a time, such as trust in God, perfect serenity under sufferings, steady and eager carrying out of duties and fearless courage. Observing his steadfastness, many of the disbelievers believed in him and thus testified that it is only

one who has complete trust in God who can display such steadfastness and endurance of suffering.

During the second phase, that is to say the phase of victory, authority and prosperity, he demonstrated such high qualities as forbearance, forgiveness, benevolence and courage, so that a large number of the disbelievers believed in him through witnessing his exercise of those high qualities. He forgave those who had persecuted him, granted security to those who had expelled him from Mecca, bestowed great wealth upon those among them who were in need and, having obtained authority over his bitter enemies, forgave them all."

(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, page 111).

We owe it to our sense of justice, to our love for historical truth and our desire to enhance understanding among peoples that we do not henceforth entertain this fable against Islam that it preaches violence and the use of force and is not an advocate of complete freedom of religion. One who claims the contrary, is to be pitied for his ignorance. Terrible and ghastly things are happening in certain countries of the world — in the name of Islam. None of these horrible happenings has the power to shake our conviction that Islam is the religion of peace which has declared the life and the conscience of every person as something inviolable and sacrosanct. Islam should be judged on the basis of its teachings and not necessarily on the basis of the conduct of some of its followers. Where would we stop if we always judged a religion according to the deeds or misdeeds of its adherents? What figure would the Jewish faith cut if we judged it on the criterion of the present-day Jews? How would Christianity fare if we judged the noble teachings of Jesus Christ in the light of the conduct of the Christian nations of the 20th century?

Apostle of God

If the object of religion be the inculcation of morals, the diminution of evil, the promotion of human happiness, the expansion of the human intellect, if the performance of good works will avail in the great day when mankind shall be summoned to its final reckoning, it is neither irreverent nor unreasonable to admit that Muhammad was indeed an Apostle of God.

(S. P. Scott, History of the Moorish Empire in Europe.)

Advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi

(Abdul-Wahab Adam)

Some years ago, after one of the Arab-Israeli wars, when the combined forces of the Arab nations had suffered a most crushing and humiliating defeat at the hands of the Jews, King Hassan of Morocco made the significant statement that the defeat of the Muslims at the hands of the non-Muslims was attributable to only one factor which was that Muslims had ceased to be good Muslims.

Yes, time was when all the non-Muslim powers together would be filled with awe and tremble at the mere mention of a Muslim power.

Today all the Muslim powers together cannot face a tiny non-Muslim foe!

Time was when all the non-Muslim powers would dare not touch any Muslim power because of the conviction that other Muslim countries would not stand by unconcerned without going to the aid of their Muslim brethren.

Today Muslims are fighting among themselves. Two Muslim nations are locked in a fierce war, each being determined to annihilate the other and destroy whatever the other possesses and holds dear.

Time was when Muslims were the torch-bearers of learning and enlightenment, when non-Muslims would flock to Islamic centres of learning and research to seek knowledge. Today, throughout the world, "Muslim" and "ignorance" are considered as two words of the same meaning, just as "Muslim" and "backwardness" are also considered as two words of the same meaning.

Time was when a Muslim, for fear of Allah, would adhere scrupulously to the commandments of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah and refrain from approaching anything that was forbidden by Allah and His Prophet.

Today a Muslim would not only hesitate but even pride himself on gambling away millions of dollars in the course of one night at a casino at Monte Carlo, completely ignoring the Quranic injunctions prohibiting gambling.

I am reminded of an incident. I was stunned when in the course of

discussion with an Arab Muslim friend when he emphatically asserted that there was nothing in the Holy Quran which forbade intoxicants. I quoted the Quranic verse:

“O ye who believe! wine and the game of hazard and idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan’s handiwork. So shun *each one of them* that you may prosper.”

(5:91).

He simply smiled and said the verse does not say it is “haram”. Just imagine! For anyone with the fear of God in his heart and the least regard for the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace), even a casual mention in the Holy Quran that intoxicants are undesirable would have been enough to dissuade him from indulging in them.

Here, it is clearly stated that it is “an abomination,” and the “work of Satan”. The command then goes forth from Allah Himself: “Shun it”. Yet the conclusion that is drawn from all this is that it is not intended that we should not indulge in it. What is intended is that you should go ahead and drink it!

No wonder in a recent magazine called NURADDEEN, there is an eye-witness account of what goes on in the heart of Islam which includes the fact that intoxicants are brewed and indulged in with impunity by the privileged among the so-called custodians of Islam.

Sectarianism has assumed such horrible proportions that Muslims would argue hotly on minor points of differences and disagree so violently that they would draw swords and spill blood and pride themselves in letting the blood of fellow Muslims flow.

Belief in God has become only a lip service because Muslims would see nothing wrong in going to the graves of saints to prostrate and to ask them to bestow riches or children upon them.

Permit me to narrate to you an incident that occurred in Pakistan. I was on a visit to Rawalpindi. With me was the then Ambassador of Ghana in Pakistan who was a Christian.

All of a sudden traffic came to a standstill. Then we saw people carrying on their heads pots of fire, chanting slogans and waving red flags. In Pakistan, I had been in Rabwah most of the time. I had never seen such a weird and bizarre thing in my life nor could I associate what I was seeing with any religion, let alone Islam.

Upon the enquiry of the Ambassador, somebody told us that the actors in that bizarre drama were Muslims who were returning from the graves of their dead saints where they had gone to prostrate and to seek various types of favours.

On hearing this the Ambassador said: "Why then do you Muslims dare preach against idol-worship, because from what I have seen today, I can say without any fear of contradiction, that Muslims indulge in the sort of idolatry that would shame even pagans."

I can go on and on to cite instances of the social, moral and spiritual degradation of Muslims in the latter days. Suffice it to say, this was a most trying period in the history of Islam. The greatest challenge, the greatest tribulation that Islam had ever faced. This was the time that instead of Muslims converting non-Muslims to Islam, Muslims were being converted in great numbers and with incredible rapidity to Christianity.

These erstwhile Muslims after abandoning Islam would become such virulent enemies of Islam that they would be foremost in attacking Islam and they would attack it with such vehemence as would defy description.

Would Allah watch these terrible times, these tribulations, this deluge to engulf and swallow up Islam without any move to remedy the situation? Never!

The fact is, in the whole long history of the world, the greatest single event was the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad Mustapha (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah). The next most significant event in the history of the world is the advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (on whom be peace).

The Holy Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) is reported to have said:

"Even if only one day would have been left for the world to come to an end, Allah would lengthen that day and would not let that day end until He causes the Promised Messiah and Mahdi to appear."

(Abu Daud Vol. 2: Kitabul Mahdi).

In other words, the appearance of the Mahdi is so important for the fulfilment of the object of the creation of the world that he will, definitely, without doubt, be made to appear before the world comes to an end.

The Hadith goes further to tell us the moral condition of the world at the time of his appearance. It says that he will come at a time when the world would have been filled with corruption, transgression, iniquity and injustice and it is only with his coming that these evils will be removed and in their place, virtue, equity and justice would be established. The wording of the Hadith is as follows:

"He (the Messiah and Mahdi) will fill the world with justice and virtue in place of the injustice and iniquity that would have engulfed the world."

I marvel at the temerity of those Muslims who witness with their own eyes

the crass ignorance, the utter faithlessness, the terrible corruption, the iniquity, the transgression, the disunity, the internal bickering and in-fighting among Muslims with the resultant social, moral and spiritual decadence of Muslims and yet believe that there is absolutely no need for the Mahdi, the Guided One, who is also referred to as the Promised Messiah, to come to reform them.

It must be stated with all the emphasis at our command that if Allah would allow this horrible condition of Muslims to persist without taking any remedial steps to arrest the situation, if Allah would permit Muslims to divide into 73 sects without any move to unite them, if Allah would allow such unprecedented moral degeneration of Muslims without raising a Reformer to reform them, then, there can be no justification in describing Muslims as:

“the best community that has been raised for mankind.”

(Quran Ch. 3:111).

In that case, Islam may be likened to, in the words of the Mahdi (on whom be peace), a beautiful garden that has been abandoned by its owner so that, for lack of care, it withers away and its charming and sweet smelling flowers fall off.

It could also be likened to a building which though complete in every respect, has developed cracks through the passage of time. Yet its owner does not see to its maintenance and allows it to deteriorate further until it completely falls apart.

Or it could be likened to a situation when each and everyone in a household is afflicted with a deadly disease. Yet it be insisted that there is absolutely no need for a doctor to administer medicine to those who have been so afflicted with the deadly disease.

It should be clear to all those who have read the Holy Quran and the Hadith that all the signs which were meant to herald the appearance of the Mahdi have been fulfilled.

There are those who say that the Traditions which deal with the advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (on whom be peace) are weak and unreliable. This is a later development otherwise the truth is, the appearance of the Mahdi in the latter days was so stressed by the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) that it had become a cardinal part of the faith of every Muslim.

The glad tidings of the appearance of the Mahdi and the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had been transmitted from generation to generation. The appearance of the Mahdi was linked up with the ascendance of Islam and the spiritual position that the Mahdi was to occupy in the world of religion was described as so lofty that great saints spent their entire lives praying fervently

that the Mahdi be made to appear during their time so that they could derive blessings from attaching themselves to him.

The question of the unreliability of the traditions pertaining to the appearance of the Mahdi does not even arise. Besides, it is worth considering that when all the signs which are mentioned in the Traditions about the advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi have been fulfilled as clearly as daylight, then that, in itself, constitutes a proof of the authenticity of the Traditions.

Another thing in this connection which is worthy of note are the prophecies about the advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi which are not confined to the Traditions only. The Holy Quran also prophesies his advent.

One of the signs mentioned in the Hadith to herald the appearance of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi is that a time would come when the camel which used to be the most reliable and efficient means of transport in Arabia would be abandoned and when that time comes, we should know that the time of the appearance of the Mahdi is at hand. (Majma' Bihar, Vol. III p. 165, Mishkaat Bab Nuzul Issa Ibn Maryam).

This same sign has been mentioned in the Holy Quran: when the she-camels, ten months pregnant, are abandoned. (81:5).

It will be seen, therefore, that the Holy Quran and the Traditions agree on the appearance of the Promised Messiah. The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, has written a book, SHAHADATUL QURAN, in which he has quoted the Holy Quran extensively to prove that it is replete with prophecies about the advent of the Mahdi. So it will be seen that if we reject the Traditions which prophesy the appearance of the Mahdi, we will have to reject the Holy Quran as well!

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) is reported to have said:

“What will be your condition when the Son of Mary, will descend among you and he will be your Imam from among you.”

(Sahih Bukhari, Bab Nuzul Issa Ibn Maryam).

From this Tradition, it has been wrongly inferred that Jesus has been kept alive for nearly 2000 years in the skies and that he will come again in the latter days for the reformation of mankind, including Muslims.

Without going into polemics — because space will not permit such polemics in the course of this brief article — I must draw the attention of those Muslim brethren who hold such opinions that nothing can be more derogatory to the honour of the Holy Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) than this belief.

Is it suggested that while the Holy Prophet, the best of creation, the one individual who is the cause of the creation of the entire universe, has tasted of death like all other prophets, but Jesus, son of Mary, has been kept alive in the heavens for as long as 1900 years?

We read in the Holy Quran:

“We granted not everlasting life
to any human being before thee.
If then thou shouldst die, shall they
live here for ever.”

(21:35).

When we say it is believed that Jesus, son of Mary, has been kept alive in heaven for 1900 years in order to be brought back to the earth to reform the Muslims, is it also believed that the adherents of Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) will become so depraved that not one of them will be considered worthy of being raised for the reformation of the Muslims and that “a Prophet for the Jews” will have to be kept alive for 1900 years for this purpose?

Finally, I ask those Muslims who hold such opinions to consider the verse:

“And He will teach him the book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel. And will make him a Messenger to the Children of Israel”.

(3:49-50).

Should he come again as a Messenger for the whole of mankind, are those Muslims going to alter this verse from the Holy Quran and insert:

“A Messenger to the whole world?”

When one ponders over the Hadith which foretells the second coming of Jesus, one finds that the solution of this matter is contained in the very Hadith itself. The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be on him and the blessings of Allah) was so perfect in his diction that nobody dares suggest other meanings to what he said.

The literal translation of the Hadith is what will be your condition when Jesus, son of Mary, will appear from among you and will be your Imam from among you?

The phrase “from among you” occurring twice in the same Hadith clearly shows that the Mahdi was to appear from among the Muslims themselves and not from among another community of people.

It also means that the Mahdi was to be from among the living on earth and would not be an earlier prophet descending from the sky.

When Jesus was asked about Elijah who, according to prophecy, was to

descend from heaven before him, his answer was that Elijah had already come in the spirit of John the Baptist. (Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 8:11-13; Luke 1:17).

This clearly shows that whenever a prophecy referring to the descent of any prophet means that somebody else will come in his spirit and power.

I do not intend to discuss here in length, the question of the possibility of a prophet coming after the Holy Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah) because it was the Holy Prophet himself who called the promised Mahdi to come "Issa" (Jesus) which makes it clear that the expected Mahdi was to be a Prophet.

Besides, there is a Hadith in Muslim in which the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) has himself referred to the Mahdi as a Prophet as many as four times:

"The Prophet of Allah, Issa, and his Companions will be besieged . . . then Issa, Prophet of Allah, and his Companions will turn to Allah . . . then Issa, Prophet of Allah and his Companions will invade the camps of the enemy . . . and again, Issa the Prophet of Allah, and his Companions will turn to Allah".

(Muslim, Bab Zikrul Dajjal).

There is yet another Hadith:

"There is no Prophet between me and him. He will definitely appear. So when he does appear, you should recognize him."

(Abu Daud Kitabul Malahim).

In effect, what the Hadith means is that there will be no other Prophet after Muhammad (peace be on him) except the Promised Mahdi.

The truth is, the verse in which the Holy Prophet is referred to as Khatum-un-Nabiyeen (Seal of Prophets), was revealed some five years before his son, Ibrahim, died. Yet on the death of Hazrat Ibrahim, the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace, is reported to have said:

"If Ibrahim had lived, he would certainly have been a true Prophet."

(Ibn-e-Maja, Kitabul Janaiz).

If no Prophet could come after him, he would not have said that if Ibrahim had lived he would certainly have been a Prophet.

Some of our friends have said that Allah caused him to die because He did not want him to become a Prophet.

Nothing can be more ridiculous and more derogatory to God than such an opinion, for if this is to be accepted, it will mean that God had forgotten His Own revelation that there was to be no Prophet after the Holy Prophet and so it was after Hazrat Ibrahim had been born that He remembered His promise and, therefore, caused him to die.

Is any Muslim prepared to accept such a course of thinking? No. Never!

What is important to note in this connection is that just as Jesus (on whom be peace) came without a new law but to serve the law of Moses (on whom be peace) so also was the Mahdi not to bring any new law but to serve the law of the Holy Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah).

And this is exactly the claim of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) He says:

“Whatever my spiritual attainment, I have attained it through the blessing of the master Prophet Muhammad Mustapha (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah).”

(Durri Samin Urdu).

And this also is the view expressed by eminent Companions of the Holy Prophet of Islam, on whom be peace, including Hazrat Ayesha, may Allah be pleased with her and distinguished Muslim divines and saints after them.

These include Hazrat Muhiuddin Ibn' Arabi, Hazrat Imam Abdul Wahhab Shi'irani, Hazrat Imam Muhammad Tahir and Hazrat Mulla Ali Qari.

In deference to the space, I shall quote only Hazrat Ayesha, may Allah be pleased with her, and Hazrat Muhiuddin Ibn Arabi.

Hazrat Ayesha is reported to have said:

“Say, by all means that he is Khatamun Nabiyyeen i.e. Seal of the Prophets, but do not say there will be no Prophet after him”.

(Durri Manthur, Vol. 5; Takmila Majma-al-Bihar, p. 85).

Hazrat Sheikh Akbar Muhiuddin Ibn Arabi is also reported to have said:

“The prophethood that has ceased after the Messenger of Allah, on whom be peace, is the prophethood with a new law. And this is the meaning of his saying: ‘Messenger-ship and Prophethood have ceased; so there will be no Messenger after me.’ All that this saying means is, there will be no Prophet after me who will abrogate my law so that any Prophet who will appear will be bound by my law.”

(Futuhate-Makkiyya, p. 100).

Having cleared some of the misconceptions regarding the advent of the Mahdi, I now intend to mention a few signs which were to herald the appearance of the Mahdi and adduce facts from them to prove that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (on whom be peace) is indeed the Promised Messiah.

It must be said from the outset that nobody who reads the Traditions will fail to be impressed with the spiritual vision of the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be on him and the blessings of Allah) because the prophecies are so clear and convincing that it would appear as if at the time of making the

prophecies, the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) was seeing exactly what was to happen 1400 years hence.

For instance there is the Hadith:

“The Promised Messiah will appear beside a white minaret to the east of Damascus.”

(Kanzul Ummal, Vol. 7, p. 202).

There are those who would want it to appear that the Promised Messiah was to descend on a white minaret in Damascus. But the Hadith does not say so. What the Hadith says in plain words is: “besides a white minaret to the east of Damascus”. Now brethren, take a world map and study the location of Qadian. It is exactly to the east of Damascus!

And it is to this that this Hadith also refers:

“The Mahdi will appear in a town the name of which will be Qada’a.”
(Jawahirul Asraar, p. 55).

So that the Holy Prophet did not only tell us the location of the Mahdi’s appearance, he even went to the extent of telling us the name of the town from where he was to appear!

The Holy Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings of Allah, also gave us the description of the appearance of the Mahdi:

“I saw in a vision that I was making the circuits round the Ka’aba. I suddenly saw a man of wheat colour and his hair was straight and long.”
(Bukhari, Vol. II, Kitab Bad-el-Khalaq).

Now this is a perfect photograph of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

The colour of his skin was wheat colour exactly as indicated in the prophecy and his hair too was straight and long.

After having described the location, the appearance of the colour of his skin and the texture of his hair, the Holy Prophet of Islam, on whom be peace, proceeded further to give us a sign the like of which has not occurred since the creation of the heavens and the earth, as proof of the appearance of any Prophet:

“For our Mahdi there shall be two signs which have never happened for any one else since the creation of the heavens and the earth: At his advent there shall occur an eclipse of the moon in the first of its appointed nights and an eclipse of the sun on the middle one of its appointed dates and both will occur in the month of Ramazan.”

(Darqutni, p. 188).

The same prophecy is to be found in the Holy Quran:

“And the moon is eclipsed and the sun and the moon are brought together.”

(75:9-10).

Both the Holy Quran and the Hadith are one in proclaiming that for the Promised Messiah, God will manifest two spectacular signs the like of which has not been manifested in favour of any other claimant to prophethood. And it is that within one month, and the month will be Ramadhan, there will be both an eclipse of the moon and then the eclipse of the sun!

It must be remembered that there have been eclipses from time to time ever since the creation of the heavens and the earth; but never had this sign been shown as evidence of the truth of any Prophet, and the beauty of the sign is further enhanced when it is specifically predicted that it will be the month of Ramadhan. Yes, within one month, in the month of Ramadhan, there was going to be manifested, first, an eclipse of the moon and then an eclipse of the sun.

Eclipses of the moon occur on 13th, 14th or 15th of a given month. The Hadith specifically mentioned that it will be on the first of the three days, that is the 13th of the month.

Eclipses of the sun occur on 27th, 28th and 29th of a given month. The Hadith specifically mentioned the second day which is the 28th of the month. Most miraculously, this phenomenon that had not been witnessed ever since the creation of the heavens and the earth as a proof of the truth of any prophet, was manifested by the Almighty in support of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

In 1311 Hijri which corresponds with 1894 A.D., this spectacular sign was manifested, first in India and then in the United States of America. This was such a clear sign in support of the Mahdi that the Mullahs were convinced that people will not fail to recognise it.

In their envy, they started saying that people will now be misled.

Such were the powerful and clear signs manifested in support of the Mahdi (on whom be peace).

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was, and still remains, the only claimant to the eminent spiritual position of the Mahdi.

The condition of the times was pointing to the need of a Reformer. So he came. Truly he said:

“The time was quite ripe for the appearance of the Messiah. Even if I had not come somebody else would have come.”

(Durri Sameen).

There are also the prophecies which throw light on what Allah had intended

to be accomplished at the hands of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. This is important because if it is proved that he did whatever Allah intended that it be accomplished at the hands of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, then that would constitute a proof that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi.

The Hadith clearly mentions two such tasks. One of the tasks to be accomplished was the breaking of the Cross while the other was the killing of the swine. (Bukhari, Bab Nuzul Issa Ibn Maryam).

It is erroneously believed that what was meant by the "breaking of the cross" was that the Mahdi would go from place to place breaking all the wooden, silver and golden crosses wherever he would find them. It is common knowledge that earrings and necklaces in the shape of a cross are generally worn by women, especially Christians, throughout the world. In other words, the Mahdi would literally have to search through the necks and ears of women in all countries of the world to find out if they wore earrings and necklaces of copper, silver and gold in the shape of the cross. He would then instantly seize them and break them into pieces!

What a strange job for a Prophet! The idea of a Prophet who unjustly destroys peoples' property without compensation is bad enough but the idea of a Prophet who goes through the streets and around peoples' homes examining the necks and ears of strange women in his search for ornaments in the shape of a cross is even more revolting!

These ridiculous interpretations of such important prophecies of the Holy Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace) is one of the most tragic happenings in the history of Islam.

The breaking of the cross meant that the Promised Messiah and Mahdi would disprove with incontrovertible arguments the false doctrines of Christianity which revolve round the crucifixion of Jesus (on whom be peace) i.e. that Jesus was the Son of God who was sent to the world to die on the cross to atone for the sins of mankind.

It was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (on whom be peace) who proved beyond any shadow of doubt that there is not even an iota of truth in the fictions of the divinity of Jesus (on whom be peace) his accursed death on the cross, his bodily ascension to the skies, and his atonement for the sins of mankind.

Nor can the Mahdi's "killing of the swine" be taken literally. All that is meant by his "killing the swine" is that he would expose the shameless and immoral practices and concepts that would have become widespread among the Christian nations during the time of his appearance.

This task was also accomplished at the hands of Hazrat Mahdi (on whom be peace).

Another task of the Promised Mahdi, as mentioned by the Holy Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace), was to bring back faith which would have ascended to the Pleiades at the time of his advent.

Placing his hand at the shoulder of Salman the Persian, the Holy Prophet, (on whom be peace) is reported to have said:

“If faith would have ascended to Pleiades it would be brought back by a man from these.”

(Bukhari, Kitabut Tafseer Bab Tafseer Sura Jum’a).

Today when belief in God is openly ridiculed so that it has become fashionable for academics to opine that “God is dead”, mankind stands in need not only of cogent and incontrovertible arguments but also powerful signs to establish the truth of the existence of God. From this conviction alone can firm faith flow and flourish.

This task too was accomplished by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, who claimed to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi.

In the world of disbelief, he succeeded in establishing a religious Community the members of which have such implicit faith in the Almighty that each one of them would be prepared to sacrifice his or her all, including his or her life, for winning the pleasure of Allah.

In today’s world of materialism, prominent and well-placed Ahmadi Muslims are literally being slaughtered in Pakistan for nothing other than their faith in Allah and they remain firm in their avowed faith.

What other evidence is required to establish the claims of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement?

The Holy Quran affirms the fate that awaits a false claimant to prophethood:

“And if he had forged and attributed any
saying to Us,
We would surely have seized him by the
right hand,
And then surely We would have severed his
life-artery.
And not one of you could have held Us
off from him.”

(Holy Quran Ch. 69:45-48).

I close with an extract from the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi:

“Hearken, all ye people. This is a prophecy of Him Who had created

heavens and earth. He will spread this Community of His in all countries and will make it supreme over all, through reason and arguments. The days are coming, indeed they are near, when this will be the only religion which will be held in honour. God will bestow extraordinary blessings on this religion and Movement. He will frustrate everyone who seeks to destroy it. This supremacy will last till the Judgement Day.

Remember, that no one will descend from the heavens. All our opponents who are alive today will die and no one will see Jesus son of Mary descending from the heavens. Then their next generation will pass away and none of them will see this spectacle. Then the generation next after that will also pass away without seeing the son of Mary descending from the heavens. Then God will make them anxious that the time of the supremacy of the Cross had passed away and the world had undergone great changes, yet the son of Mary had not descended from the heavens. Then the wise people will suddenly discard this belief. The third century after today will not yet have come to a close when those who hold this belief, whether Muslims or Christians, will lose all hope and will give up this belief in disgust. There will then be only one religion that will prevail in the world and only one leader. I have come only to sow the seed, which has been sown by my hand. Now it will sprout and grow and flourish and no one can arrest its growth."

(Tazkaratush Shadatain, pp. 64-65).

Fruits of Righteousness

If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in each nation there will be peace in the world.
(Chinese proverb)

Taqwa

(Afzalur Rahman)

Once the Holy Prophet Muhammad defined *taqwa* in these words: "A man, who is passing through a thick forest of thorny bushes, tries to protect himself from the thorns all around him. He endeavours to keep off the thorny bushes from him. Sometimes, he moves to this side and sometimes to the other to guard himself from the probable injury that he might otherwise suffer from the thorns. This action and carefulness on the part of this man in the thorny forest to protect himself from the thorny bushes and trees is *taqwa*. This is how a *muttaqi* should lead his life in this world, which is full of the thorns of evil and corruption. Prayer is prescribed to develop protection, a kind of immunization, in the form of *taqwa* in a believer to guard him from the onslaught of evil from within and without. And the best of men in the eyes of God is the one who has His *taqwa* in his heart: "O Mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the eyes of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you" (49:13).

This is addressed to all mankind and not only to the Muslim brotherhood, though it is understood that in a perfect world the two would be synonymous. As it is, mankind is descended from one pair of parents. Their tribes, races and nations are convenient labels by which we may know certain differing characteristics. Before God they are all one, and he gets most honour who is most righteous. The Quran here points to the great error that has always been responsible for corruption and inequity in society in all ages, i.e., prejudice based on difference of race, colour, language or nationality. This discrimination is not based on any rational or moral principle but on the accident of birth. In the above verse of the Holy Quran, three important principles are explained.

First, that you all are born of one pair of parents, one man and one woman, and all the races and nations that are found in the different parts of the world are, in reality, offspring of the same original pair. There is, therefore, no logical, rational or moral basis for gradation between you. You have One God Who created you from one pair of parents and from the same substance.

Second, that in spite of one origin, your distribution in tribes and nations is natural. Obviously, all mankind cannot be, in a narrow sense, one family or one nation. With increase in population, it was inevitable, that many families should come into existence and, from those families, tribes and nations. Likewise, with movement of people to different regions and parts of the world, differences in their language, colour, features and culture were bound to occur. This would also create vast geographical divisions and distances separating different habitations. But this natural difference and division between various nations does not warrant gradation between man and man or between one nation and another, that one nation should feel superiority over another one, or that people of one colour should regard people of another colour as inferior to them, or that people should differentiate in matters of human rights between different nations, etc. The reason God has created mankind in tribes and nations is because this is the natural way for their mutual introduction, acquaintance and cooperation. In this way, people of one family, one tribe and one nation can work together and form one culture and cooperate with one another in social matters. It was but sheer ignorance that what was only a means of recognition and acquaintance with one another was made a means of pride or hatred among people.

Third, that if there is any basis of distinction or superiority between man and man then it is by moral excellence, virtue or piety. All men are equal as far as birth is concerned because their Creator is One, the substance and method of their creation is one and the same and their ancestry goes up to one pair of parents. Besides, the birth of any man in one nation, family or country is merely accidental, and his own will, choice or effort has no part in it. Therefore, there is no rational or logical reason for giving preference to one over the other. The real thing which can make one excel the other is this: that he fears God more than others, avoids evil and treads the way of goodness and piety. Such a man, whatever nation, tribe or country he belongs to is an asset to any society for his personal excellence. And the one showing opposite characteristics is a man of low grade, whether black, white, brown, from the East or from the West.

The Holy Prophet explained the same principle in his address on the occasion of the victory at Makkah: "Thanks to our Lord Who has removed from you the evil of ignorance and its pride. O People; all mankind is divided only into two parts. The one righteous and *muttaqi*, who is honoured in the eyes of God, and the other wicked, shameless and damned, who is despised and contemptible in the eyes of God. Otherwise all men are offspring of Adam and God Created Adam from dust." On the occasion of his Last Pilgrimage, the Prophet said. "O People; Beware, you all have One God. No Arab has preference over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, nor a white over a black, nor a black over a white except from *taqwa* (piety). The most honoured among you in the eyes of God is the one who is most pious.

There are many traditions of the Holy Prophet which stress this point, what that really gives distinction to a person is his *taqwa*. The Holy Prophet said, "you are all descendants of Adam and he was created from dust. O People, leave boasting of ancestry, otherwise they will be more despised than an ordinary insect in the eyes of God." On another occasion, the Prophet said, "On the Day of Judgement, God will not ask you of your ancestry. The most honoured among you in the eyes of God is the one who is most pious." And he also said, "God does not see your faces and your wealth, what He sees is your hearts and your deeds." In short in Islam, there is no distinction of colour, creed, or nationality; all men are equal in the eyes of God. They are all one before Him and only those are honoured who are most righteous and pious (*muttaqi*). Even other forms of *ibadah*, such as pilgrimage and fasting, help in the growth of *taqwa* in individuals: "O ye who believe; fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may learn *taqwa*" (2:183). And with regard to pilgrimage, it is said: "And whatever good you do, (be sure) Allah knows. And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is *taqwa*" (2:197).

— Cultivate Optimism —

Always look on the bright side. Learn to smile. When you speak to people—smile. It is a wonderful thing when you meet some one and they just instinctively smile and say, "I am very glad to know you." There is power in a smile. Smile and you are immediately happy. Cultivate optimism, and always look on the bright side.

(Henry Knight Miller)

Seal of the Prophets

(Dr. A. R. Bhutta)

We know that the term 'Khatamun-nabiyyin' which literally translated means 'Seal of the prophets', is grammatically 'Murakabe-Ezafi' (*compound phrase*). The 'Khatam' (*Seal*) is 'Muzaf' and 'Nabiyyin' (*prophets*) is its 'Muzaf Eleh' (*combining word*). It is also a matter of common knowledge that when two words join together to make a phrase, they do not necessarily give their literal meaning. For example, 'Ibn' means 'son' and 'Sbeel' means way; but when these words join to make 'Ibn-Sabeel' it does not mean 'Son of the way', it only means a traveller. So the real sense of a phrase is determined by grammar, its usage in language and the context in which it is used. Let us now try to find out the real meaning of the term 'Khatamun-nabiyyin'.

It is an established and unchangeable rule of Arabic grammar and language that when the word 'Khatam' is used in the praise of a person and its combining word (*Muzaf-Eleh*) is a 'group of talented people', it never means that the person called 'Khatam' is the last or final to appear in respect of time. It always means that in the opinion of the user, the person concerned is the perfect and supreme in that 'group of talented people' and that he has achieved the last and final grade in that particular excellence. The Islamic literature is full of such instances and not a single example can be cited against this rule. To quote some:

Khatamu-Shu'ra (*Khatam of poets*) never means last and final poet, but a perfect and top-most poet.

Khatamul-Mufassarin (*khatam of commentators*) does not mean a last born but a supreme commentator.

Similarly the word 'Khatam' has been used with many other 'groups of talented people' like, 'Muhaqqaqueen' (*investigators*), 'Muhadaseen' (*reporters*), Hukkam (*officers*), Mualameen (*teachers*) and Auliyya (*friends of God*). In none of these terms the word 'Khatam' means the last born or the last one to appear in the world. It only means that, in the opinion of the user, the person called 'Khatam' is the best and the most perfect of all in that particular talent which belongs to the group.

It may, however, be noted that when 'Khatam' is not used in praise of a person and its combining word (*Muzaf-Elah*) is not a group of talented people, then it does mean the last or at the end in respect of time; because in that case it is used not to praise the person for any excellence or talent but as a mere statement of fact. For example, 'Khatamul-Aulad' (*Khatam of sons*) will mean last-born because to be born is not a talent and the term is used not to praise the boy but merely to point out the fact that he is the youngest son. Similarly, the term 'Khatamul-Muhajireen' will mean last one to migrate because to migrate is not a talent nor is the term used to praise the last migrator. The neglect of this point is the most common mistake which even the learned among the muslims make or pretend to make.

Keeping the above mentioned rules of the Arabic language in mind, it will be clear to every truth seeking person that the term 'Khatamun-Nabiyyin' as used in the praise of the Holy prophet, can only mean that he is the best, perfect and the supreme Prophet who has attained the last, final and the highest rank in prophethood. No prophet superior or greater than him can appear after him but the appearance of a Prophet, subordinate to him cannot be contrary to this title. This is what the Holy prophet as well as the scholars of Islam understood by this term.

The Holy prophet is reported to have said of Hazrat Ali: "O, Ali you are 'Khatamul-Auliya' just as I am 'Khatamul-Anbiyya'". (Tafseer-Safi p. 111).

Evidently this saying could not mean that Hazrat Ali was the last wali. It can only mean that he was the best wali just as the Holy prophet was the best nabi.

Hazrat Ayesha, the wife of the Holy Prophet is reported to have said of the Holy Prophet: "Say that he is 'Khatamul-Anbiyya' (*Seal of the prophets*) but do not say that there is no prophet after him". (Durre-Mansoor Vol. 5, p. 104 and Takmila Majmaal Bihar Vol. 4, p. 85).

Now if 'Khatam' meant 'Last' then why not say so? Some confused and insolent scholars have recently condemned this saying of Hazrat Ayesha as 'worthless'. But one wonders what do they say about all the saints and scholars of Islam who tolerated such a 'worthless' statement in the Islamic literature for more than a thousand years and who even commented and explained this statement. For example, Imam Mohammad Tahir (*died 986 H*) comments:

"This (*statement*) is in view of the advent of Isa, and this is not contrary to the Hadith 'No prophet after me'; because by it he (*the Holy prophet*) meant that there would be no prophet who would abrogate his law". (Takmila Majmaal Bihar p. 88).

Hazrat Mohyuddin Ibne Arabi (*died 638 H*) writes: "The prophethood that ended with the Holy Prophet is the one with the law and not the very institution of it . . . And by his saying 'No prophet after me' he meant that no

prophet can come who would be against his law; rather any prophet that appears after him, would be under his law”.

And further it is explained: “. . . so prophethood will continue till the day of Judgment but the Law has come to an end; and to bring Law is only a part of prophethood . . . Isa will descend without a Law but he would be a Prophet without any doubt”. (Fatuhate-Makia Vol. 2, pp. 3, 100).

Allama Abdul Wahab She'rani (*died 972 H*) writes: “Know it that prophethood has not ended absolutely; only the Law-bearing prophethood has been lifted . . .” “There have been prophets in the world in the past and there will be in future too, but they will be subordinate to the Law of the Holy Prophet. Most people, however, do not know this”. (Alyawakit-wal-Jawahar Vol. 2, pp. 28, 90).

Imam Fakharuddin Razi (*died 606 H*) explains: “It is essential for ‘Khatam’ to be supreme. Look! just as the Holy prophet has been declared supreme on account of being ‘Khatam’ of the prophets, so is the man declared supreme on account of being ‘Khatam’ of all the physical creatures”. (Tafseer-e-Kabir Vol. 6, p. 31).

Before we consider the context of the term ‘Khatamun-Nabiyyin’ let us have a look at the literal meaning of the word ‘Khatam’.

‘Khatam’ means ‘The seal’ which is defined as ‘an instrument which leaves its impression on other things’. The main purpose of creating this impression by using a seal, is to attest, to verify or to issue something on the authority of the bearer of seal. Speaking literally, therefore, ‘The seal’ of the prophets would mean a Prophet who attests and verifies the prophethood of other prophets and whose complete and perfect obedience can leave an ‘impression of prophethood’ on his perfect and chosen followers.

It must be noted that the sense of ‘closing’ or ‘finishing’ something, which is commonly linked with the word ‘seal’, is not its real meaning or purpose. In fact, the seal is put on an envelope or lock not to close but to attest the closure. The closure is always done by putting gum or lock, while seal is applied to attest that the closure has been done by the owner of the seal. If the seal is not clear or is tempered with, the closure of the object may be rejected because the purpose of attestation is not served in that case. So the real and the primary purpose of the seal remains ‘to attest or to issue’ something by creating its impression on other objects. Maulana Mohammad Quasim Nanotvi, the founder of the ‘Dewband’ school of thought in Islam, has explained the word ‘Khatam’ as follows: “Just as the Khatam (*Seal*) leaves its impression on the objects, so does the self luminous personality affect his noble followers . . .” “The prophethood of the Holy Prophet is intrinsic in his blessed personality while that of the other prophets is through his effect. Others are prophets through his grace but he is prophet through nobody’s

grace; and that is how the prophethood ends with him. He is, therefore, Prophet of God as well as the prophet of the prophets". (Tehzir-an-nas pp. 3, 4 and 10).

Maulana Shabeer Ahmad Usmani, 'Sheikh-ul-Islam', Pakistan while commenting on the title 'Khatam-nabiyyin' writes in his translation of the Holy Quran: ". . . So we can say that he (*the Holy Prophet*) is the 'Seal of the prophets' with regards to rank as well as time; and those who got prophethood, got it only through the impress of his Seal".

Let us now study the title 'Khatamun-nabiyyin' with its context because it is only in the light of the context that the real and exact sense of a word can be ascertained. God says in the Holy Quran: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men; But he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of Prophets, and Allah knows everything". (33:30).

The use of the word 'But' in the verse is particularly noteworthy. 'But' is a conjunction, used to join two sentences and it serves to remove any doubt or objection that may possibly arise from the first sentence. Now if the term 'Seal of the prophets' is interpreted to mean 'the last prophet', as is generally understood, then the information given by God in the verse can be briefed as follows:

- (i) Muhammad is not the father of any man but he is last of all the Prophets. Or that
- (ii) Muhammad is at the end of his lineage. But he is at the end of the line of prophets. Or that
- (iii) Mohammad has no son after him but he has no prophet after him.

Read the above sentences again and see that the use of the word 'But' is absolutely wrong because both parts of each sentence have something negative in them. The use of the word 'But' demands that if there is anything negative in the first statement, the other statement should contain something positive or vice versa. It makes it necessary that if a fact is denied in the first statement, this denial should be compensated by acknowledging some similar fact in the other statement.

Let us now suppose that the 'seal of the prophets' means supreme head, the top-most and the 'Issuer' of the prophets and read the same sentences again:

- (i) Muhammad is not the father of any man but he is the father (*head*) of the prophets. Or that
- (ii) Muhammad is at the end of his lineage but he is at the top of line of prophets. Or that
- (iii) Muhammad has no sons as issues after him but he has prophets as spiritual issues after him.

The use of 'But' in the above mentioned sentences is absolutely correct

because the objection that arises by denying one fact in the first part of the sentence is removed by acknowledging some similar or even better fact in the other part of the sentence. (*It must be remembered that a prophet is the 'father' of his followers because the wives of the prophets are declared as 'mothers of the followers' in the Holy Quran, 33:7*).

With these facts in mind, read the verse 33:30 once again and see that when God said 'Muhammad is not the father of any man'. God denied the 'physical fatherhood' of the Holy Prophet, but He compensated this loss with a big 'But' and added that he is the father of a nation as 'Messenger of Allah' and even father of the prophets as 'Seal of the prophets'. The 'Seal' mentioned in this verse could never mean 'the last or the end'. It can only mean the seal that issues something because it is the physical issues of the Holy Prophet that are denied in the first part of the verse; and the second part, therefore, must necessarily acknowledge the existence of 'Spiritual issues'. So what God really wants to tell mankind is that, although Mohammad is not the physical father of any man but he is the 'spiritual father' of a nation, and above all he is the 'father of prophets', thus having even prophets as his spiritual sons.

It should be noted that every prophet is the 'father' of his followers and the words 'messenger of Allah' in the verse, made the Holy Prophet only the 'father' of his followers in common with other prophets. It is the next title of the 'seal of the prophets' that exalted him above all other prophets as 'father' of the prophets. Maulana Mohammad Quasim Nanotavi again explains: "The common people think that the Holy prophet is Khatam in the sense that he is the last of all the prophets. But it will be clear to the men of understanding that to be first or last in respect of time is not creditable in itself. In this sense, therefore, to praise him by saying 'but he is the messenger of Allah and Seal of the prophets' cannot be correct . . . The real sense of this verse is that the Holy prophet does not possess the fatherhood in respect of any man; but the spiritual fatherhood in respect of his 'followers' as well as 'prophets' does belong to him". (Tehzir-an-nas pp. 2 and 10).

Supportive Evidence

The fact that the Holy Prophet (*sal-lal-lahu alaihi wa salam*), serves as a source of all kinds of spiritual blessings including prophethood, is supported strongly by the verse 4:70 which reads:

"And whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger, shall be among those on whom Allah has bestowed His blessings — the Prophets, the Truthfuls, the Martyrs and the Righteous. And an excellent company are they".

It is clear from this verse that the above mentioned four spiritual ranks are now attainable through the obedience of the Holy Prophet. The significance of this verse becomes even more clear when we compare it with the verse 57:20 which reads:

“And those who believe in Allah and His Messengers, they are the Truthfuls and the Martyrs in the presence of their Lord”.

By reading the two verses together, it can be easily inferred that, whereas the followers of all ‘the Messengers’ in general could reach up to the ranks of the Martyrs and the Truthfuls (*Siddiqueen*) and no higher, the followers of the Holy Prophet (*this Messenger*) can go even higher and be blessed with the prophethood if and when necessary.

— Belief of Ahmadis —

We are Muslims. We believe in God, Who is One, and in the Kalima. We believe that the Quran is the Book of Allah and Muhammad, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), is His Prophet and Khatamal Ambia. We believe in the existence of angels, in the day of Judgement, and in the existence of Heaven and Hell. We say our daily prayers, keep fast during Ramzan and turn towards Qibla. We consider it our duty to refrain from whatever Allah and His Prophet forbid us to do and to do whatever they commanded us to do. We have no authority to add or detract anything from the Islami Shariat. We accept as part of Islam all that has come to us from the Holy Prophet, whether or not we understand its *raison d’etre*. By the Grace of God, we are Momin, Muslim and Muhawahhid.

(Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.)

Polygamy in the West

(Khalid Ahmad)

Western critics consider polygamy to be an evil and a curse which runs counter to the highest form of civilization. Unfortunately the West has always blamed Islam which they feel is responsible for introducing and promoting this institution. The truth is that polygamy dates back as far as the dawn of human history and has ever remained part and parcel of every society including that found in Western countries. Islam inherited this social problem at a time when it was practised in its worst form. Islam regulated it for the benefit of mankind and society. It should be kept in mind that Islam does not enjoin polygamy but only allows it under certain circumstances and conditions.

History bears witness to the fact that the Islamic society founded by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was initially a monogamous one. However, with the increase in numbers and strength of the Muslim community its enemies made futile attempts to annihilate it by waging war. Many Muslims lost their lives in defence of their faith thereby leaving many widows and orphans with no near relatives to look after them. The Holy Prophet was inspired by God to remedy the situation. He received the following revelation:

“And if you fear you will not be just in dealing with the orphans, then marry of other women as may be agreeable to you, two, or three or four; and if you fear you may not be able to do justice then marry only one or what your right hands possess.”

(Quran 4:4).

This verse was revealed after the battle of Uhud when seventy out of seven hundred Muslims had died in battle leaving behind widows and orphans. According to this verse, the object of allowing polygamous marriages in Islam is primarily to offer Muslims the opportunity to care for the needs of the orphans. Psychologically a man will be more responsible towards orphans when he is allowed to marry the mother of the latter so that by way of affection

towards her he becomes closely intimated with their problems. Again it was revealed to the Holy Prophet:

“And arrange marriage for the widows from among you.”

(24:33).

In the light of these verses the Quran emphatically states that preference should be given to widows over other categories of women when further marriages arise as their social circumstances are considered to be more serious than others. The Prophet himself set an example worthy of emulation by marrying mostly elderly and aging widows. The Quran, as well as the life of the Holy Prophet, destroy the wrong notion that polygamy serves only for the purpose of satisfying sexual gratification. It is rather a sacrifice which is demanded of the faithful for their moral and spiritual upliftment. There are also other situations to give cause for polygamous marriages such as an ailing wife or her inability to procreate children.

It is generally believed that Western society is monogamous. It is true that monogamy has been enforced by an act of Parliament but it needs to be seen to what extent it is being observed. There is, in fact, nothing like the practice of true monogamy in the West when we consider the miserable plight of the numerous mistresses who are deprived of womanhood and respect. One orientalist has stated that irresponsible polygamy is practised in the West which Islam does not permit.

A close look at Western society shows that its moral and spiritual condition is comparable to that of Arabian society at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam. In fact this state of moral degeneracy has spread almost to the four corners of the world. The root cause is the imbalance between the two sexes caused by a depletion of males during the two world wars. This view is supported by statistics published in the Western press. Some persons have expressed their view that polygamy is the only solution for the increased problem of prostitution. Dr. Le Bon, a French sexologist, has written:

“A return to polygamy, the natural relationship between the sexes, would remedy many evils: prostitution, venereal diseases, abortion, the misery of illegitimate children, the misfortune of millions of unwanted women, resulting from the disproportion between the sexes, adultery and even jealousy.”

As a matter of fact the West has nothing to lose by adopting the Islamic concept of limited polygamy as it has already done in the case of divorce. The West has advanced in the direction towards its own emancipation by granting divorce. At the same time it has not fully realised and appreciated the Islamic teachings on divorce which has in a nutshell been beautifully described by the Prophet of Islam:

“Of all lawful things, the most hateful in the sight of Allah is divorce.”

While divorce is allowed it is not encouraged unless circumstances fully warrant it.

By discarding old dogmatic beliefs Western minds are, on the basis of rational thinking, moving gradually towards the principles of Islam.

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

Messenger for all Mankind

“Say, ‘O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth’.”

(Quran 7:159).

“I am sent for the whole world while previous Prophets were sent only to particular tribes.”

(Holy Prophet).

The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

The Review of Religions is the oldest magazine of its kind published in the English language in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent. Its first issue was published in 1902 and it has been continuously published since.

It bears the distinction that it was initiated under the direction of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah himself.

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A study of this magazine is indispensable for the appreciation of the doctrines of the Ahmadiyya Movement and the teachings of its holy Founder.



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