



# THE REVIEW of RELIGIONS

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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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### SUGGESTIONS INVITED

Our readers will be delighted to know that a special Centenary Edition of the *Review of Religions* is proposed to be printed in March 1989, Inshaallah.

To make it worth the august occasion we would very much wish to have your suggestions as to its size, volume, topics of current importance and other relevant points to make it befitting and attractive.

Your literary contributions are also solicited. Proposals should reach us before 30th December 1987.

*Managing Editor.*

## Guide Posts

### PURITY OF HEART

**(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)**

Purity of heart is the core of all revealed religions. The essence of religion is not knowledge but holiness and it is this aspect of faith which has been highlighted in the scriptures and by the founders of all revealed religions since time immemorial. Turning to the Old Testament we read the prayer of David:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.”

(Psalms 51:10).

In the New Testament Jesus is reported to have said:

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

(Matthew 5:8).

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

(Matthew 4:6).

God says in the Holy Quran:

“Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself.”

(87:15).

The purpose of our existence may be stated in very simple words. It is that we should strive to live a pure and holy life; and for a Muslim it means moulding one's life in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Quran and in the like of the noble example of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

In the pursuit of self-purification both devout prayer and earnest effort in the observation of righteous conduct is required. Without the help of God purity of heart cannot be attained solely by one's own efforts. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, The Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam has said:

“No one can achieve true purity and righteousness unless he receives heavenly help.”

One thing is certain. God will surely answer and help a person along the

path of virtue who seeks Divine help through prayer. No doubt the best prayer is to be found in the first chapter of the Holy Quran:

“Thee Alone do we worship and Thee Alone  
do we look to for help.  
Guide us on the Right Path —  
The Path of those on whom Thou hast  
bestowed Thy blessings, those who have  
not incurred Thy displeasure, and those  
who have not gone astray.”

(1:4–7).

Whatever one prays for one should do so in earnest. An English poet wrote that a thing of beauty is a charm for ever which aptly describes the beauty of a pure heart. The practice of self purification needs constant attention. It is only natural that from time to time the spiritual wayfarer may find himself slipping. This is only to be expected. Nothing can be achieved without perseverance. When he is aware of having made progress in his spiritual endeavours it becomes a source of pleasurable satisfaction to him. There is no end to the road of self-purification. New horizons always lie ahead. One should never rest on one's upward climb, nor should one ever become faint-hearted on the assumption that the path is too narrow or the goal too high. In fact it is a very pleasant journey. In this respect Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud Din Mahmud Ahmad has written in his book *Ahmadiyyat or the True Islam*:

“Islam rescues man from despair and tells him that he can, in spite of his errors and mistakes, attain to the purity of mind and conduct which is the highest goal of man. It thus encourages him to make constant effort towards purity and virtue and enables him ultimately to arrive at his goal.”

I would like to relate a short story. While driving through the countryside a man drove into a farmer's yard to ask for a drink of water from his well. He told the farmer “I find your water so clear, cool and refreshing. I have been told that people travel long distances to get it. But is this not the same old well which at one time contained water only for part of the year and, at the same time, it was not good?” ‘Yes’ replied the farmer ‘that is correct. It used to be choked up with sticks, old leaves and other things with the result that nearly all the passages which let in fresh water were blocked, and the water which did trickle in was dirty and stagnant. I cleaned out all the obstructions and opened the passages for the inflow of clean water which you now see and are drinking.’

Likewise in order to keep our hearts clean we have to purge them of spiritual impurities. We have to remove those obstacles which block the inflow of pure heavenly water; and once removed to see that the channels remain open all the time free of impure obstacles. What are these obstacles?

There are so many. I will draw attention to two important ones only — rancour and pride. These attitudes stain the heart as strong tea stains the inside of a tea-pot. Even the holding of them in mind discolours the heart which can only be cleansed through deep love for God and His love for us. This is why the love of God plays such an important part in religion on account of its sanctifying power. There is a prayer in the Holy Quran:

“Leave not in our hearts any rancour  
against those who believe.”

(59:11).

One can have no real peace of mind nor can the love of God radiate from the heart which is polluted with rancour. One must strive through prayer and right thinking to eradicate all feelings and conduct involving jealousy, hate, bitterness, resentment, contempt, revenge, unbrotherliness, ridicule, sarcasm, envy, rudeness and similar poisonous emotions which are obstacles to self-purification which requires that one should constantly be turning to God and spring-cleaning one's heart. A pure heart is the abode of God and, therefore, a state of paradise on earth. This is the description of paradise given in the Quran:

“Verily the righteous will be placed amidst  
gardens and fountains. Enter therein with  
peace and safety. And We shall remove whatever  
of rancour may be in their breasts so  
that they will become as brothers seated on  
thrones facing one another.”

(15:45–48).

Here also is a description of the character of the Promised Messiah who said:

“I have such control over my passions . . . that  
even if a man goes on abusing me in my face  
in the foulest manner for one year, he would  
at last himself feel ashamed and will have  
to admit his failure to move me even a little.”

(Character Sketch of the Promised Messiah).

Maulvi Abdul Karim — a close companion of the Promised Messiah — has written about the forgiveness and forbearance which he showed to all — even his worst opponents; and he has urged all to give up the habit of fault-finding, indulging in antagonistic and adverse criticism, and in expressing displeasure with any person in public. The Promised Messiah declared:

“A true Muslim never harbours malice for anyone.”

“Avoid malice and deal with human beings with love  
and sympathy.”

“Forget all mutual resentment and unpleasantness.”

“You should have no ill-feeling for anyone whosoever.”

“I say that you should forgive and overlook the faults of others.”

These words reveal the pure and stainless condition of the Promised Messiah’s heart. They speak for themselves. They need no further comment. They only need to be acted upon; but they cannot be acted upon without prayer and dedication to self-purification.

Pride is the other obstacle to self-purification. God warns in the Holy Quran:

“Walk not on the earth proudly.”

(17:38).

The Holy Prophet also warned:

“Allah has revealed to me that you should conduct yourselves with humility towards one another, so that no one transgresses against another, nor boasts of any superiority over another.”

The Promised Messiah also condemned pride in no uncertain terms. He said:

“I tell you truly that on the day of Judgement no other vice, other than the association of anything with God, shall rank as high as pride. This is a vice which humiliates a person in both worlds.”

“Pride is the worst impurity of all.”

There is a prayer of the Holy Prophet:

“O God, keep me humble while I am alive and keep me humble when I die, and let my resurrection on the Day of Judgement be with the humble.”

Humility is a mark of righteousness; and righteousness is the fruit of self-purification. That is what really counts in life. God says in the Holy Quran:

“Verily the most honourable person in the sight of Allah is he who is most righteous.”

(17:38).

Jesus said in different words:

“He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

(Luke 14:11).

While we should strive to do everything that is praiseworthy we should do nothing in order to be praised; nor should we look down upon or despise those whose habits and ways of life are contrary to our own ideals. We should pray and feel sympathy for them, and at the same time be fully aware of our own shortcomings. Our thinking and behaviour should reflect humility. Whatever we possess, be it health, education, wealth, property, family connections, beauty, position, spiritual blessings or anything else then we have much for which to show gratefulness but nothing for which to show pride. I like the words of St. Augustine who first brought Christianity to Great Britain. When he was asked what is the first thing in religion he replied “The first is humility, the second is humility and the third is humility.’

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) has likened the practice of self-purification to that of a person walking with extreme care along a narrow path bordered on either side with thorny bushes. A person seeking the love of God and anxious to cultivate purity of heart will watch his speech and conduct with attentive care being ever eager to keep on the Right Path in all matters of behaviour. While knowledge has its value, true religion consists not in knowledge but in holy living. Rancour and pride are two enemies of spiritual progress against which we should ever be on guard. Purity of heart demands that at no time should we think, say or do anything which might be displeasing to God; and with this spiritual goal ever before us it is necessary to seek the help and protection of God at all times.



# **PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM**

**(Mrs Hamdah Farooqi)**

In dealing with this subject I will commence by quoting from the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, who has explained the real meaning of Islam and that of a true and practising Muslim. He has written:

“Islam means losing oneself for the sake of God and surrendering one’s own pleasure for the pleasure of God.”

(Essence of Islam).

“In the idiom of Arabic, Islam means to commit some affair to some one, or to seek peace, or to surrender a claim or a point. The technical meaning of Islam is set out in the verse of the Holy Quran which reads: ‘The truth is that whoever submits himself completely to the will of Allah and acts righteously shall have his reward with his Lord. No fear shall come upon such, nor shall they grieve (2:113). This means that a Muslim is one who commits himself wholly to the cause of God Almighty; that is to say one who devotes himself to God Almighty, to follow His designs and to win His pleasure, and then becomes steadfast in doing good for the sake of God Almighty and devotes all his faculties to that cause.’”

(Ayena Kamalat-e-Islam, pp. 57–58).

“The reality of Islam is to present one’s neck to God like the sacrificial lamb; to give up one’s own designs and to be devoted to the designs of God and His pleasure; to be absorbed in the love of God and to obey Him entirely for the sake of His love; to obtain eyes that see only through Him, and to develop a heart that should be wholly devoted to Him, and to obtain a tongue which would speak only at His command. This is a stage where all search ends; human faculties complete their functions and man’s ego dies completely. Thereupon Divine Mercy confers a new life upon the seeker through His living words and His shining light. He is honoured with the delightful converse of God and a fine light, which is not discoverable by reason and is not recognizable by the eyes, approaches close to his heart as God has said ‘We are closer to him than his jugular vein’ (50:17). In this manner God honours mortal man with

His nearness. Then the time comes when blindness is removed and the eyes are given insight, and man beholds God with his new eyes, and hears His voice and finds himself wrapped in the mantle of His light. Thus the purpose of religion is fulfilled and having held God, man casts aside the dirty garment of his lower life and puts on a garment of light and waits for the sight of God and of heaven not merely as a promise to be fulfilled in the hereafter, but in this very life he achieves the bounties of sight and converse and heaven. As God the Almighty has stated. 'Upon those who confirm; Allah is our Lord; and are then steadfast, angels descend, re-assuring them; fear not, nor grieve; and rejoice in the Garden which you were promised' (41:31). This means that angels descend upon those who affirm that their God is One who possesses all perfect attributes and Who has no associate in His Being or His attributes; and after their affirmation, they are steadfast and no earthquake or calamity and no confrontation of death can shake their faith. God speaks to them and reassures them not to be afraid of calamities or of enemies, and not to be sorrowful over past misfortunes. He reassures them that He is with them and that He has bestowed upon them in this very world the paradise that was promised to them in which they should rejoice. This is a promise which has been fulfilled. There is testimony to the effect that thousands of humble ones in Islam have tasted of the spiritual paradise which is promised in this verse."

(Lahore Lecture, pp. 20–22).

Writing on the excellencies of Islamic principles and teachings, the Promised Messiah has stated:

"A person can be held to be a Muslim when the whole of his being together with all his faculties, physical and spiritual are devoted to God Almighty, and the trusts which are committed to him by God Almighty are rendered back to the True Giver and Bestower. He should demonstrate his being a Muslim not only doctrinally but also in practice. In other words a person claiming to be a Muslim should prove that his hands and feet, heart and mind, reason and understanding, his anger and his compassion, his meekness, his knowledge, all his physical and spiritual faculties, his honour and his property, his comfort and his delight and whatever pertains to him from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, together with his motives, his fears, his passions have all been subordinated to Almighty God as a person's limbs are subordinated to him. It should be proved that his sincerity has reached a stage in which whatever is his, does not belong to him but to God Almighty and that all his limbs and faculties have become so devoted to the service of God as if they had become the limbs of the Divine.

A person will truly be called a Muslim only when his whole life

undergoes a total revolution and his evil-directing self, together with all its passions, is wiped out altogether and he is invested with a new life which is characterized by his carrying out all his obligations to Allah and which should comprise nothing except obedience to the Creator and sympathy for His creatures. Obedience to the Creator means to make manifest His Honour and Glory and Unity, and that one should be ready to endure every insult and humiliation, and one should be eager to undergo a thousand deaths in order to uphold His Unity. The love of the grandeur of His commandments and the thirst for seeking His pleasure should make sin so hateful as if it were a consuming fire, or a fatal poison, or an obliterating lightning from which one must run away with all one's power. In order to seek His pleasure one must surrender all the desire of one's ego; and to establish a relationship with Him one should be ready to endure all kinds of injuries.

The service of one's fellow-beings means to strive for their benefit purely for the sake of God in all their needs and in all the relationships of mutual dependence which God has established out of true and selfless sympathy for them. Everyone in need of help should be helped out of one's God-given capacity and one must strive for their betterment both in this world and in the here-after."

(Ayena Kamalat-e-Islam, pp. 59-62).

How beautifully has the Promised Messiah commented upon the underlying philosophy of the teachings of Islam. The basic and most important belief that Islam puts forth is the Unity of God with the declaration that "There is none worthy of worship except Allah, and Muhammad (peace be on him) is His Messenger." This is sufficient for one to be counted as a Muslim.

The second pillar of Islam is the offering of the five daily prayers. Great emphasis has been placed on these prayers (salat) because prayer is the means of reaching God. In the Holy Quran God says:

"Surely, Prayer restrains one from indecency and manifest evil; and remembrance of Allah, indeed, is the greatest virtue."

(29:46).

"Verily Prayer is enjoined on the believers to be performed at fixed hours."

(4:104).

Once the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said to his companions: "Tell me if one of you had a stream running by outside his door and he should take a bath in it five times daily then would any dirt be left on

him.” The companions replied “no dirt would be left on him.” The Holy Prophet then said: “This is the case with the five prayers. Allah wipes out all faults in consequence of them.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) practised every single instruction which he received from God Almighty to such an extent that God told him that he was an Excellent Exemplar! When this Excellent Exemplar for all mankind was asked which actions are most acceptable to God and liked most of all, he replied that they were the observance of prayers at their appointed times, obedience and service to parents and striving in the way of Allah.

The third pillar is fasting. Whereas other religions do not give clear and concise instructions concerning the timings, duration and detailed instructions about fasting, Islam gives very clear and concise directions. God says in the Holy Quran:

“O ye, who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil. The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation — the feeding of a poor man. And whoso does good of his own accord it is better for him. And fasting is good for you if you only knew. The month of Ramadhan is that in which the Quran was revealed as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination between truth and falsehood. Therefore whosoever of you is present at home in this month let him fast therein. But whoso is temporarily sick or is on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days.”

(2:184–186).

The instructions are clear and concise. Even the month has been allocated so that the whole community can set it aside for their spiritual uplift and training in perseverance and self-control.

Let us turn to some of the sayings of the Holy Prophet on the subject of fasting. He is reported to have said:

“Allah, the Lord of Honour and Glory has said that all other deeds of man are for himself but his fasting is purely for Me, and I shall reward him for it. The fast is a shield. When anyone is fasting he should eschew loose talk and noisy exchanges. Should anyone revile him or seek to pick a quarrel with him he should respond ‘I am fasting.’ By Him, in Whose hands is the life of Muhammad, the breath of one who is fasting is purer in the sight of Allah than the fragrance of musk. For the one who fasts there are two joys, one

when he breaks his fast and the other when he meets his Lord. His breath is purer in the estimation of Allah than the fragrance of musk.”

In another tradition the Holy Prophet is reported to have said:

“He who observes the fast of Ramadhan out of sincerity of faith and in the hope of earning merit will have his past sins forgiven him.”

I have so far discussed three of the five pillars of Islam. Belief in the Unity of God and that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was a Messenger of Allah which is the first and foremost article of faith. Then the offering of prescribed prayers followed by fasting for the prescribed number of days during the month of Ramadhan or completing any fasts missed on a corresponding number of days later on in the year. Now I shall move on to the fourth pillar namely Zakat (Charity) the paying of which is obligatory upon a believer. This is a system whereby the poor and needy are to be looked after by the State. Every member of the community is required to pay zakat in accordance with his or her financial position. It is a capital levy prescribed in the Holy Quran:

“Observe Prayer and pay the Zakat.”

(2:111).

“Observe Prayer and pay the Zakat, and hold fast to Allah.”

(22:79).

“Take alms out of their wealth, so that thou mayest cleanse them and purify them thereby.”

(9:103).

It is reported that a man asked the Holy Prophet what he should do to be admitted into paradise. He replied:

“Worship Allah, associating nothing with Him, observe prayer, pay the zakat and strengthen the ties of kinship.”

Again he is reported to have said:

“A person having gold or silver who does not pay the zakat due on it should know that on the day of Judgement his gold and silver will be melted into slabs which will then be heated in the fire of hell and his side, forehead and back will be branded therewith. When the slabs have become cool they will be heated up again and the branding will be continued during a day the extent of which will be equal to fifty thousand years.”

The rewards for doing good are great and manifold while the punishment for not fulfilling this important obligation is very severe because this is the

institution whereby the needy and poor are to be looked after. If the wealthy kept only their own comforts and pleasures in mind then the needs of the poor could not be fulfilled and one section of the community would become richer and richer while the other would become poorer and poorer.

The fifth and last pillar of Islam is pilgrimage to Mecca known as the Hajj. At various places in the Holy Quran God Almighty has very lovingly described the 'House of Allah' and how He blessed it and made it a sacred place. It is known as the Kaba and under instructions from God it was rebuilt by the Prophet Abraham. Nearby there are two hills named Safa and Marwa between which his wife, Hagar, ran to and fro in search of water for her baby after they had been left in the desert by the Prophet Abraham in accordance with God's directions. A Muslim is required to visit these sacred places at least once in a life time on which occasion he dresses in the plainest and simplest of clothing holding nothing in mind and heart except love for the Almighty. The performance of these required obligations at the prescribed times constitute the Pilgrimage which serves as a lesson for the whole of one's life.

Besides the Pillars of Islam there are also five basic articles of faith in which a Muslim must believe. The first and foremost is, of course, belief in the Unity of God without any kind of associate; and in the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) who was a Messenger and servant of Allah. The second is belief in all the prophets that God has sent from time to time for the guidance of mankind. The Holy Quran has mentioned the names of many of them. Then there is the belief that God has been sending guidance from time to time for mankind recorded in various scriptures. This is followed by belief in angels which are spiritual beings that carry out the instructions of God. Last but not least there is faith in the Day of Judgement. Every person will be answerable for his or her deeds whether good or bad. Every single action is recorded and will be accounted.

These teachings basically constitute the structure of the Islamic faith. Every teaching has an underlying philosophy. Islam may be looked upon as a unit divided into two sections — obligations to God and obligations to His creatures. Worship of God and service to His creatures is the story of Islam.

# **THE PROPHECY PLOT (Part Two)**

**(Naeem Osman Memon)**

(For nearly 2000 years evangelical Christianity has furthered the cause of the Church on the basis of several Old Testament prophecies alleged to have been fulfilled with the advent of Jesus the Christ. A thorough examination of these prophecies, with reference to the books of the Hebrew scriptures, not only shocks a reader but also shatters the very premise upon which evangelical Christianity has been based. The candid results of one such critical study of the canonised prophecies is being presented in our present series, The Prophecy Plot.)

## **Promised Ruler from Bethlehem**

**“And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art  
not the least among the princes of Juda, for  
out of thee shall come a Governor that shall  
rule my people Israel.”**

**(Matth. 2:5).**

Micah the Morasthite, a contemporary of Isaiah was an Israelite prophet who prophesied during the reigns of three successive Judaeans kings, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He began his prophetic activity in the later part of the 8th century BCE and he is generally believed to be the author of the prophetic book of the Hebrew scriptures, the Book of Micah.

## **Background to Micah’s Activity**

When the seed of Jacob first came to settle in the land of Canaan, the indigenous population of the country showed some signs of extreme moral and spiritual laxity. Their pagan religions were based upon gross immorality, sexual perversity and idolatry and their land was heavily burdened with an obnoxious collection of “sacred” pagan sanctuaries for heathen gods and goddesses, particularly the heathen god of rain and fecundity, Baal, and also the goddess of female fertility, Asherah.

At the onset of the Israelite settlement in Canaan, the children of Israel found the Canaanite customs and traditions extremely repugnant as the pagan worship conducted at these heathen sanctuaries involved some lewd fertility rites including ceremonial marriages with male and female representatives of the pagan gods and goddesses. However, when the seed of Jacob finally established itself as a nation in the land of Canaan they began to adopt the Canaanite character and what was initially found strange and offensive, became more acceptable to their new standards of moral and spiritual conduct. They assimilated several pagan customs and traditions in their own culture and also adopted the heathen gods and goddesses, Baal and Asherah.<sup>1</sup> By the time Micah began to prophesy in 758 BCE, sexual immorality and idolatry had become an integral part of the corrupted Hebrew way of life.<sup>2</sup>

### **Micah's Prophecy**

Micah the Morasthite, being a man of pious disposition, was extremely saddened by the indulgences of the 'chosen seed' of Israel. His prophetic vision lamented the desolation of the house of Israel in Samaria on account of its abominable sin and transgression. He prophesied that the Lord of Hosts, Yahweh will lay bare the foundations of Samaria and it will become a pile of ruins because His wrath would smash all the graven images of the rebellious people and their precious idols will become a desolate heap of rubble.<sup>3</sup>

The faithful witness of the Lord also mourned the fate of Israel in Judaea, the southern kingdom still in possession of the posterity of David the Bethlehemite. When Micah began his prophetic activity during the reign of king Jotham of Judaea, the land of Judaea already abounded with sanctuaries of Canaanite gods and goddesses. But happily, this abominable offence had not yet profaned the sacredness of the holy city of Jerusalem. However, Micah envisaged that the sin of Samaria would reach the gates of Jerusalem and the pagan gods would eventually violate the sacred precincts of the holy temple, on account of which, he mourned, the seed of Jacob in Judaea too, would stand on the threshold of destruction.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Hope of Israel**

In the midst of all this lamentation and mourning, Micah the Morasthite recorded an oracle in relation to the birth of a saviour of Judaea, a promised ruler 'in Israel' who would come forth from the city of David. The faithful witness of the Lord Jahweh prophesied to the effect:

1. Judges 3:7.

2. 2 Chronicles 27:2 & 2 Kings 15:28.

3. Micah 1:5-8.

4. Micah 1:9.



**“Thou Bethlehem Ephrath, though thou be little among the thousand of Judaea, yet out of thee shall come forth to me, that is to be ruler in Israel.”<sup>5</sup>**

Micah also foretold that the Lord God of Israel would continue to abandon the seed of Jacob until after ‘the woman which travaileth had brought forth the saviour’ but after the birth of the promised child, the Lord Yahweh will wrought wonders in the land of Israel through the promised ruler. His prophecy suggested:

- (i) That after the birth of the subject of his oracle the remnant of his brethren shall be returned unto the children of Israel.
- (ii) The promised ruler will then shepherd his people in the strength of the Lord and the majesty of His name.
- (iii) He will bring peace to his people and when the Assyrians breach through the defences of his land and tread within its borders, Judaea will be delivered from the menace of its enemy and the land of Nimrod will be laid to waste.
- (iv) The hand of the Promised Ruler shall be upon all his adversaries and all his enemies will be cut off.
- (v) In his day, witchcraft shall no more prosper in the land of Judaea and it will be rid of all its soothsayers.
- (vi) The graven images and pagan idols will be cut off from amongst his people and they shall no more worship the work of their hands.
- (vii) The offensive and grotesque groves of Asherah shall be ‘plucked out of the midst of them’ and all the heathen sanctuaries will be destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Ruler from Bethlehem**

Some 700 years after Micah the Morasthite first recorded this oracle, the author of the first synoptic gospel of the Christian scriptures quoted the 8th century BCE Israelite prophet and maintained that the prophecy referred to the advent of Jesus the Christ, alleged to have been born in the city of Bethlehem Ephrath in Judaea in the year 4 BCE.<sup>7</sup>

The legend of the son of Mary’s nativity in the humble surroundings of a manger in Bethlehem of Judaea is an essential ingredient of the Christian creed. Yet, except for the ‘suspect’ evidence of the Christian evangelists, there appears to be no other conclusive proof in history which indicates that Jesus was positively born in the city of Bethlehem in Judaea.

5. Micah 5:2.

6. Micah 5:3–15.

7. Matthew 2:5.

The gospel of Luke maintains that the parents of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, were both residents of the city of Nazareth in Galilee. It was here that the angel Gabriel first appeared unto the virgin and informed her of the conception and birth of her son, Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Mary and her espoused husband are then alleged to have travelled south to Bethlehem of Judaea to register for a certain census ordered by the Roman Emperor. 'And so it was, that while they were there, Mary's days were accomplished and she brought forth her first born son.'<sup>9</sup>

Luke's convenient placing of Mary in the city of Bethlehem Ephrath of Judaea at the time of her son's birth may sound very convincing except for some very pertinent questions raised as a result of his assertions and also the discrepancies between his evidence and the facts of history as recorded by other reputable historians of his era.

The land of Palestine, at the time of Jesus's birth in the closing years of the first century BCE, was being ruled by a confederate king who enjoyed certain unique privileges conferred upon his predecessors by the Emperors and Senate of Rome.<sup>10</sup> Herod the Great, the then Emperor of the Hebrew nation, had been granted independent jurisdiction in the internal administration of his kingdom<sup>11</sup> and historical evidences indicate that his imperial masters usually "restrained from meddling" in the affairs of his kingdom.<sup>12</sup> Hence, the possibility of the Roman Caesar demanding a census in the territory of an independent prince was not only unlikely but highly improbable.

The author of Luke's gospel also suggests that the alleged census was being demanded by the Roman Emperor for the purposes of taxation but authentic historical records maintain that the Hebrew nation was exempt from any direct taxation by the Roman government and its confederate kings were not obliged to pay any tribute to their imperial masters. Under an earlier decree by Julius Caesar, subsequently confirmed by the Roman Senate, whatever levy was paid by the Jewish nation, was to be retained by the ethnarch.<sup>13</sup>

It is also an established fact of history that Herod the Great, being a confederate king, did not come under the patronage of the procurator of Syria. He was directly responsible to Caesar and received all 'directives on foreign policy' from the Imperial Senate at Rome.<sup>14</sup> An internal census being conducted in the vassal kingdom of an independent prince by a Roman governor would not have only undermined the authority of a friend and ally of Rome but would have been seen as a breach of trust on the part of the Roman

8. Luke 1:26-31.

9. Luke 2:1-9.

10. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XIV/Ch VIII/Sc 5.

Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XIV/Ch X/Sc 2/22.

11. Martin Noth: The History of Israel.

12. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XVIII/Ch IX/Sc 4.

13. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XIV/Ch X/Sc 1/6.

14. Martin Noth: The History of Israel.

Empire. Such an action could have caused resentment in the land of Palestine and also apprehension within the other vassal states of the Roman Empire.

Secondly, if any such census as claimed by Luke was demanded by the Roman Emperor, then one would expect it to be conducted in a Roman fashion, which according to evidences of history required registration at the place of domicile and not ancestral origin. The Roman presence in the Hebrew territory was already resented by the indigeous population of the land. A census which required a mass displacement of nearly 4 million Jews of Palestine<sup>15</sup> would not have only caused untold hardship and turmoil to the Jewish people but would have also flared feeling of acute resentment against the imperial masters. The Roman dynasty however, had not transversed the known world out of sheer stupidity. They had conquered and subjected many an ancient civilization as a result of their ingenuity and hence it would be inconceivable to imagine that they could be so vain as to give futile cause for rebellion to an already rebellious nation.

There is ample evidence in history to suggest that the Romans were extremely conscious of the emotional susceptibilities of the people they dominated. They were, in fact, exceptionally benevolent towards the Hebrew people in particular. According to Josephus's evidence, the Jewish nation managed to acquire some unique rights and privileges.<sup>16</sup> At one stage, when the Hebrew people complained of harassment by another vassal state, the Roman Senate issued a decree to the effect that 'since the Romans, following the conduct of their ancestors, were ambitious to settle their confederates and friends in happiness and firm peace, they designed that no injury should be done to the Jews who were the confederates of the Romans.'<sup>17</sup>

Common sense also demands that Luke's testimony in relation to the conduct of this census be considered in light of rational explanations and expectations. If as Luke alleges, the census was being demanded for the purposes of taxation,<sup>18</sup> then one would think that a registration at the place of domicile would be more appropriate. A tax is a financial contribution imposed by a government to raise revenue, levied on the income or property of a person.<sup>19</sup> One would imagine that in this event, it would be more appropriate to conduct a registration in the city of domicile rather than of ancestral origin as the former could see the verification process of an individual's declaration of income and assets.

15. Weech, W. N.: History of the World.

Luke alleges that Caesar ordered a census throughout the Roman Empire. (Luke 2:2, 3) This would have meant a mass movement within the entire Roman world.

16. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XIV/Ch X/Sc 3/22.

17. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XIV/Ch X/Sc 22.

18. Luke 2:3.

19. Collins English Dictionary.

### Actual Census Held Ten Years Later

The author of the gospel of Luke appears to have overlooked these considerations in his 'pious zeal' to place the mother of Jesus in the city of Bethlehem Ephrath at the time of her first born's birth. But this however, is not the full extent of Luke's miscalculations. His ingenuity in placing the virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem of Judaea at the time of her son's birth in 4 BCE does not stand the strains of historical scrutiny.

Luke alleges that the census demanded by Caesar was conducted under the supervision of the Roman Governor of Syria, Sulpicius Quirinius alias Cyrenius<sup>20</sup> but historical records maintain that at the time of Jesus's birth, when Herod the Great was the king of the Hebrew nation, the Roman province of Syria was under the jurisdiction of the Roman procurator Quintilius Varus.<sup>21</sup> Varus succeeded Saturninus as the governor of Syria in 6 BCE<sup>22</sup> and he continued to serve as the supreme agent of the Caesar in Syria throughout the reign of Herod the Great. Quintilius Varus was still in Syria when Herod the Great's son Archealus went to Rome to assert his right to the kingdom of his father and plead his case in Caesar's court. He came to Jerusalem from Syria to quell a rebellion against Archealus when Herod's son was still in Rome. Not much later, when the Judaeans nationalists besieged the Roman garrison in Jerusalem, Varus marched unto Jerusalem with two Roman legions stationed in Syria.<sup>23</sup> According to Josephus, the Roman province of Syria was still under the governorship of Varus when the Jewish nation accused Archealus in the court of Caesar and Herod the Great's kingdom was divided amongst his three sons Archealus, Phillip and Antipas.<sup>24</sup> This, according to other historical records, happened two years after Jesus's birth when Joseph and Mary are said to have been returning from their self imposed exile in Egypt.<sup>25</sup>

Sulpicius Quirinius, alias Cyrenius did not take over as the Governor of Syria till after Herod's kingdom was divided amongst his three sons in the year 2 BCE when Jesus was already 2 years of age. At the time when Jesus was born in 4 BCE, Cyrenius was the pro consul of Africa and hence could not have conducted a census in the Hebrew kingdom of Herod the Great. It is hence not surprising that Luke's alleged census of 4 BCE is not mentioned by any of the reputable historians of his age, including Nicholas of Damascus, a first century historian who not only sat in Herod the Great's court<sup>26</sup> but also wrote more than a hundred books of history and also Flavious Josephus, who is acknowledged to be a diligent historian and a man of impeccable integrity.<sup>27</sup>

20. Luke 2:3.

21. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XVII/Ch V/Sc 2.

22. Martin Noth: The History of Israel.

23. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XVII/Ch X/Sc 1 & 9/10.

24. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XVII/Ch XI/Sc 4.

25. Illustrated National Family Bible: Chronological Index.

26. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XVII/Ch V/Sc 4.

27. Joseph Scaliger: De Emendatione Temporum.

Apparently, the Roman Governor of Syria, Cyrenius did conduct a census in Judaea but only after Archealus's kingdom had been deprived of its independence and it had been constituted a part of the greater Roman province of Syria in the year 6 CE.<sup>28</sup> Jesus, the son of Mary was nearly 10 years of age when this census was undertaken by the Romans and as this census was demanded in Archealus's former kingdom only, Jesus's parents would not have been required to travel south to Bethlehem, they being subjects of Archealus's brother Herod Antipas's kingdom of Galilee.

### **Descendant of David the Bethlehemite**

Micah's specific mention of Bethlehem Ephrath in his oracle suggests that the subject of his prophecy would be born in the Judaeian city of Bethlehem. But as this small highland town some five miles south of Jerusalem is affectionately identified with the great Israelite king, David son of Jesse, it has often been alleged that Micah's prophecy not only foretold the birth of the Promised Ruler in the Judaeian city of Bethlehem but also indicated that he would be born in the lineage of David the Bethlehemite.<sup>29</sup> It is hence not surprising that Christian evangelists not only claim that Jesus was allegedly born in Bethlehem of Judaea but also maintain that he was a direct descendant of the great Israelite king.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus's ancestry as a descendant of David is yet another essential dogma crucial to the whole premise upon which the Christian faith has been built and developed. Ironically, despite every effort by the ecclesiastical agencies, the question of his ancestry as a descendant of the Israelite king has never been satisfactorily established and the contradictory evidences of the canonical scriptures leave much to be desired.

Jesus, according to the evidence of most Christian evangelists, was born without the agency of a father.<sup>31</sup> Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary was positively not his natural father.<sup>32</sup> Since the Jews did not account descent on the mother's side,<sup>33</sup> and Jesus did not have a physical father, being born fatherless, his descent from the lineage of David the Bethlehemite could not be established under any criteria.

However, if certain concessions were made in this particular case and Jesus's descent through his foster father Joseph was investigated, the suspect evidence of the two evangelists, Matthew and Luke, would still fail to establish the authenticity of their claim that he was a direct descendant of the Bethlehemite.

28. Josephus: Antiquities: Bk XVIII/Ch XIII/Sc 5 & Bk XVIII/Bk I/Sc 1.

29. John 7:42.

30. Matthew 2:1 & 1:1.

31. Matthew 1:18.

32. Luke 3:23.

33. Fredric Farrar: The Life of Christ.

Luke's genealogy of Jesus claims that his foster father was a son of Heli while Matthew maintains that Joseph was the son of a certain Jacob son of Matthan.<sup>34</sup> Hence, while the parentage of Jacob or Heli's son Joseph remains a mystery, the feasibility of tracing the son of Mary's ancestry through his foster father not only remains remote but practically impossible as Joseph's mystery father could have been a descendant of any of the other tribes of Israel.

This however is only a small part of the discrepancies between the evidences of Matthew and Luke. The author of the Gospel of Matthew alleges that Joseph, son of Jacob, was the 26th descendant of David through his elder son Solomon while the author of Luke maintains that he was the 41st descendant of the Israelite king, through his other son Nathan.<sup>35</sup>

To reconcile this apparent contradiction in the evidences of the two early evangelists, Christian apologists have often argued that while Matthew traced the genealogy of Jesus through his foster father Joseph, Luke is believed to have traced his genealogy through his mother Mary. What these apologists fail to explain however, is as to how Luke could have been so careless with his evidence in stating that Heli was the father of Joseph<sup>36</sup> and not of Mary. The difficulty in explaining this significant error is further aggravated by the fact that Luke appears to have been very concerned with minute detail. He for instance, ensures that Jesus's sonship of Joseph is not misunderstood and makes it crystal clear that 'he was supposed to be the son of Joseph.'<sup>37</sup>

There are also some other discrepancies which need to be considered and taken into account when examining the two genealogies of Jesus. While Matthew and Luke trace the descent of Jesus through two separate sons of David the Bethlehemite, Solomon and Nathan, their separate accounts somehow fuse together into a common ancestral Shealtiel. Matthew alleges that Shealtiel was the son of Jeconiah, a descendant of David through his son Solomon whereas Luke claims that he was the son of Neri, a descendant of David through his younger son Nathan.<sup>38</sup> Matthew and Luke then proceed to trace Jesus's descent through the common grandson of Jeconiah and Neri, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, who according to Biblical chroniclers was the son of Shealtiel's younger brother Pedaiah.<sup>39</sup> The confusion continues still further when Matthew claims that Jesus's foster father was born in the lineage of Zerubbabel's son Abuid and Luke alleges that Joseph was a descendant of Zerubbabel's son Rhesa.<sup>40</sup> What the two Christian evangelists fail to

34. Luke 3:23 & Matthew 1:16.

35. Matthew 1:6, 7 & Luke 3:31.

36. Matthew 1:6/16 & Luke 3:23, 31.

37. Luke 3:23.

38. Matthew 1:12 & Luke 3:27.

39. 1 Chronicles 3:19.

40. Matthew 1:13 & Luke 3:27.

appreciate however is that according to the Book of Chronicles, none of Zerubbabel's eight children were named Abuid or Rhesa:

**“Zerubbabel was the father of two sons  
Meshullam and Hananiah and one daughter  
Shelomith. He had five other sons Hashubah,  
Ohel, Benechiah, Hasadiah and Jushab Hased.”<sup>41</sup>**

### **The Gospel Truth**

Jesus, it appears from scriptural evidences, was neither born in the Judaeen city of Bethlehem nor was he a descendant of king David of Bethlehem. According to the 4th synoptic gospel of the Christian scriptures, Jesus is said to have stirred quite a commotion with his learned discourse while he was visiting Jerusalem to attend the feast of the tabernacles.<sup>42</sup> The cause of this discord, it appears from John's evidence, was the question of Jesus's status as the anticipated Messiah of the Hebrew people.<sup>43</sup> While some believed that he was the Christ, others had their reservations on account of their preconceived notion:

**“Hath not the scriptures said that Christ  
cometh of the seed of David and out of the  
town of Bethlehem where David was.”<sup>44</sup>**

Had Jesus “come of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was”, the Jewish nation would not have had any cause to dispute amongst themselves. Their refusal to recognise the son of Mary as the Messiah of the Hebrew people did not stem from any personal prejudice against Jesus but as a result of a positive knowledge that he did not fit within the constraints of the scriptural prophecy which foretold the advent of the Messiah from amongst the descendants of David and from out of the city of Bethlehem in Judaea.

John's scenario of the events at Jerusalem suggests that the son of Mary was not a stranger to these people who argued amongst themselves. This is evident from the fact that they not only wondered “how knoweth this man letters having never learnt”<sup>45</sup> but they also knew “this man whence he is”,<sup>46</sup> implying that they knew from what place or of what origin he was.<sup>a</sup> Hence, they refused

41. 1 Chronicles 3:19, 20.

42. John 7:10–53.

43. John 7:26 & 41.

44. John 7:42.

45. John 7:15.

46. John 7:27.

a. ‘whence’: lit: ‘from what place, cause or origin’

COLLINS ENGLISH DICTIONARY

to acknowledge him as the Messiah because he was a Galilean<sup>47</sup> and because he did not come out of the seed of David the Bethlehemite.<sup>48</sup>

This view is further substantiated by Nicodemus's silence before the Pharisees when challenged to the effect:

**“Search and look, for out of Galilee  
ariseth no prophet.”<sup>49</sup>**

Nicodemus was a disciple of Jesus and one would have thought that he could have easily corrected the Pharisees by informing them that Jesus was not a Galilean but a Bethlehemite and this could have been verified from the “census records” alleged to have been prepared by the Roman Governor at the time of Jesus's birth in the year 4 BCE.

A similar question is raised by the alleged conversation between Phillip and his friend Nathaneal, who according to the gospel of John responded to Phillip's invitation to meet the anticipated Messiah with a contemptuous remark, “Can any good come out of Nazareth.”<sup>50</sup>

### **A Levite from Bethlehem of Zebulon**

A conscientious study of Christology, based upon the evidences of the synoptic gospels leads one to the conclusion that the overenthusiasm of the early evangelists and their well meant zeal to honour and establish Jesus as the long awaited Messiah of the Hebrew people has not only resulted in an invention of some fanciful legends but has also suppressed and hidden some very essential and true facts of the life and ministry of historical Jesus.

Happily however, the mystery surrounding the ancestry of Mary and hence her son Jesus is satisfactorily solved when some obscure<sup>b</sup> references found in the canonical gospels are examined in the light of Hebrew laws and customs.

According to the author of Luke, Elizabeth, the mother of John was not only a wife of a Levite but was herself a descendant of the priestly family of Aaron.<sup>51</sup> Traditionally, the Hebrew people were required to marry their daughters within their own family<sup>52</sup> and although the law was basically designed to preserve the Divine appointments of inheritances, it appears that this practice of restricted marriages was religiously adhered to even by the Levites.<sup>53</sup> It is hence not incorrect to infer that Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharia, was a Levite through her paternal as well as maternal families and since she

47. John 7:41.

48. John 7:42.

49. John 7:52.

50. John 1:16.

b. 'hidden or concealed'.

51. Luke 1:5.

52. Numbers 36:1–12.

53. 1 Chronicles 23:22.



was the cousin of Jesus's mother,<sup>54</sup> Mary too was a Levite as was her husband Joseph, being married to a Levite woman in accordance with the laws of Moses.

Jesus's Levitical affiliations are also indicated by the reported manner of his dress. The author of John's gospel reports that Jesus wore a 'seamless dress woven from top throughout'<sup>55</sup> and this unique design of Jesus's dress fits within the description of the Levitical dress designed for the Hebrew priests.<sup>56</sup>

Mary and Joseph's ancestors however, although Levites by descent, were not of the priestly order.<sup>c</sup> Joseph, the foster father of Jesus was a carpenter<sup>57</sup> by trade and since the Hebrew people brought their children up in the trade of their ancestors, Joseph may have belonged to the Merari division of Levites<sup>d</sup> and since Mary was married to him under the restrictive covenant of marriages, she too was of the stock of Levi's youngest son. This may also account for her son Jesus's initial training in the traditional trade of his ancestors.<sup>58</sup>

The settlement of Mary and Joseph's ancestors in the remote region of Galilee could be explained by the conduct of the Hebrew settlement after the division of Canaan.

Historical records maintain that at the time of this eventful division, Canaan was distributed amongst the twelve non Levite tribes of Israel. The descendants of Jacob's third son Levi, being entrusted with the service of the tabernacle, were not numbered amongst the inheritors of the land and hence did not receive a specific territory. But, as the other twelve tribes were required to give the Levites "one tenth of their own inheritances" the posterity of Levi, as a result of this Divine legacy, received a total of 48 cities and surrounding pasture lands, scattered all over the Hebrew domain.<sup>59</sup> The Aaronite Levites, being guardians of the Divine law and teachers of the Hebrew people were hence evenly distributed amongst the twelve tribes and with this distribution went the secondary tribes of Levi, required to assist the Aaronites in the maintenance of the sacred sanctuaries and its pasture lands.

The descendants of Merari, historical records maintain, inherited four

54. Luke 1:36.

55. John 19:23.

56. Exodus 28:31, 32.

c. Elizabeth's husband Zacharias was not an Aaronite by descent. Since only 4 of the original 24 divisions of the Aaronite priests returned from exile in Babylon, the Jews pooled their resources and created another 20 priestly divisions from the non Aaronite Levites. Zacharias belonged to the division which carried Abijah's name and was not necessarily a descendant of the priestly order. REFER AID TO BIBLE UNDERSTANDING PAGE 1341. WATCH TOWER PUBLICATION.

57. Matthew 13:55.

d. The descendants of Levi's youngest son Merari. They were entrusted with such duties in the service of the tabernacle as required carpentry skills. Numbers 3:36, 37.

58. Mark 6:3.

59. Numbers 18:20 & 35:1-7.

cities from the Zebulunites.<sup>60</sup> Mary and Joseph's ancestors may have hence settled in the northern territory of Zebulun at the time of this distribution.<sup>c</sup> There is, however, no evidence to suggest that they settled in what is alleged to be a 'rather insignificant small village of Nazareth situated in the low mountains north of the valley of Jazreel' as such a village does not appear to exist in the historical records of Palestine.<sup>f</sup> They may have been the residents of Bethlehem of Zebulun, a suburban village attached to one of the four cities inherited by the Merari Levites.

Jesus's descent from the humble stock of Merari Levites may also account for the extreme poverty suffered by his parents.<sup>61</sup> With the consolidation of the Hebrew people in the land of Canaan, the holy tabernacle was finally replaced by permanent temples and hence the traditional skill of many a Levite family, including those of the Merarites, were made redundant during the reign of the Israelite king David.<sup>62</sup> This unfortunate termination of the obligatory Merarite services and the supply and demand situation, was bound to force the skills of many a Merarite into obscurity and Jesus's ancestors may have been among the unfortunate victims of David's action.

### **Jesus and the Promised Ruler of Micah's Oracle**

The question of Jesus's birth and descent however, is not the only evidence of this regrettable misappropriation of Micah's prophecy by the author of Matthew's gospel.

Jesus, the son of Mary, did not accomplish any of the feats expected to be accomplished by the subject of Micah's prophecy. On the contrary, his advent produced a complete contrast to the expectations of the oracle. The subject of Micah's prophecy for instance, was expected to unite the seed of Jacob<sup>63</sup> but Jesus was constantly involved in a controversy which caused a further breach within the ranks of the already divided Hebrew people.<sup>64</sup>

The Promised Ruler of Micah's prophecy was also expected to "shepherd his people in the strength of the Lord and the majesty of His name."<sup>65</sup> Jesus spent most of his three years ministry in a state of constant fear<sup>66</sup> and could not muster a strength of more than twelve disciples of which one Judas deserted him and the other, Peter denied him three times. His disciples and

60. Joshua 21:34.

e. The territory of Zebulun later became a part of Galilee.

f. Chapter Five: He shall be called a Nazarene.

61. Luke 2:24 & Leviticus 12:18.

62. 1 Chronicles 23:26.

63. Micah 5:3.

64. The controversies which Jesus provoked during his short ministry of three years may be too numerous to cite. The following few from the Gospel of Matthew are but a token. MATTHEW 9:11, -34, 12:2, -14, -34, 15:2, 21:45. The division amongst the seed of Jacob is also evident from JOHN 7:12, 52 & 8:37-59.

65. Micah 5:4.

66. Matthew 12:16, 16:20, John 7:7-10.

those favourably disposed towards him did not have the courage to “speak of him openly for the fear of the Jews.”<sup>67</sup>

Micah the Morasthite also prophesied that the hand of the Promised Ruler would be lifted up upon all his adversaries and his enemies shall be cut off.<sup>68</sup> Ironically, Jesus not only failed to gain any superiority over his adversaries, but his enemies eventually prevailed against him.<sup>69</sup> They arrested him, molested him, dragged him to court and accused him as a common criminal. The Roman Governor scourged him, his soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and put it upon his head. They also smote him with their hands and humiliated him in public. He was mocked and then driven to Golgotha and then finally subjected to the accursed cross.<sup>70</sup>

Micah’s oracle also indicated that the saviour of Israel will eventually rid the Hebrew people of all its graven images and grotesque idols.<sup>71</sup> It is ironic that while the deniers of Jesus continue to obey the Divine commandment “Thou shalt not make unto thee, any graven images or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth,”<sup>72</sup> the followers of Jesus Christ have institutionalised the worship of graven images and pay reverence to the works of their own hands. While the subject of Micah’s prophecy was expected to destroy idolatry amongst the Israelites,<sup>73</sup> the gentile followers of the Israelite prophet not only adorn their altars with the graven images of Jesus and his mother Mary but also tolerate pagan idols in some countries of the world.<sup>74</sup>

A specific mention of the Assyrian kingdom in Micah’s oracle indicates that this prophecy was expected to be fulfilled long before the birth of Jesus. According to the Biblical Chronicles, the Assyrian dynasty ceased to exist as a powerful nation some 608 years before the birth of Jesus when the Chaldeans and the Medes desolated Ninevah in 612 BCE.

### **The Actual Subject of Micah’s Oracle:**

Biblical records maintain that immediately after the death of Jehoiada, the 9th century high priest who cleansed the land of Judaea of all its abominable idols,<sup>76</sup> Jehoash, the king of Judaea began to encourage idolatry in his kingdom once again. The Judaeans stopped worshipping in the temples

67. John 7:13, 42, –50, 18: 25–27.

68. Micah 5:9.

69. John 18:12.

70. John 18:12, 18:22, 18:29, 18:30 & John Chapter 19.

71. Micah 5:13.

72. Exodus 20:4.

73. Micah 5:13.

74. Awake 22.9.83.

75. Micah 5:5.

76. 2 Kings 11:18.

of their ancestors and began to worship the idols and images of the Canaanite goddess Asherah.<sup>77</sup> After the death of Jehoash, his son Amaziah succeeded his father as the king of Judaea. He undertook an expedition against the Edomites and on his return, he is believed to have brought back the pagan idols of the Edomites and installed them in the Judaeian country.<sup>78</sup> The Judaeans continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at these places of pagan worship during the reign of Uzziah son of Amaziah.<sup>79</sup> This deplorable state of affairs continued during the reign of Jotham son of Uzziah.<sup>80</sup>

For nearly 87 years after the reintroduction of idolatry in the land of Judaea, none of the successive Israelite kings ever aspired to abolish the abominable practice but, on the contrary, they appeared to encourage the sin and also became a party to it themselves. Micah the Morasthite, the faithful witness of the Lord began to prophesy during the reign of Jotham.<sup>81</sup> Although this grave offence had not yet desecrated the sacred precincts of the holy temple, Micah's prophetic vision foresaw the sin on the doorsteps of Jerusalem.<sup>82</sup> His vision was eventually translated into reality within his own lifetime when Ahaz, the son of Jotham defiled the sacredness of the temple in Jerusalem by setting up a heathen altar next to the holy altar of Jehovah.<sup>83</sup>

Ahaz, the detestable king of Judaea was finally succeeded by his son Hezekiah. When Hezekiah came to the throne in 726 BCE, he found his people thoroughly engrossed in idolatry and he immediately exerted himself to put a check to this abominable practice and destroy it from its very roots.

One of Hezekiah's first actions after assuming power in Judaea was to reopen the gates of the holy temple in Jerusalem. He arranged to have the temple cleaned and repaired and also arranged the Levites to conduct the essential services at the temple.<sup>84</sup> Within two months of his succession, he invited the seed of Jacob from as far as Manassah to Ephraim and from Dan to Beersheba, to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover according to the Law.<sup>85</sup> He "gathered the remnant of his brethren"<sup>86</sup> during the second month of his reign when for seven days, "a great number of people from all over the Hebrew lands gathered in Jerusalem and celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread."<sup>87</sup>

77. 2 Chronicles 24:15.

78. 2 Kings 25:14.

79. 2 Kings 15:4.

80. 2 Chronicles 27:2.

81. Micah 1:1.

82. Micah 1:9.

83. 2 Kings 16:10-18.

84. 2 Chronicles 29:3-36.

85. 2 Chronicles 30:1-6.

86. Micah 5:3.

87. 2 Chronicles 30:13-21.

Immediately after the festival ended, all the Israelites who were present:

**“went out to the cities of Judaea and brake the images in pieces and cut down the groves and threw down the high places out of all Judaea and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all.”<sup>88</sup>**

Biblical records maintain that this bold action was undertaken by the Israelites under the patronage of the Israelite king Hezekiah:

**“he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places and brake the images, and cut down the images of the goddess Asherah.”<sup>89</sup>**

Hence, Hezekiah, a descendant of the Israelite king David, fulfilled Micah the Morasthite’s prophecy which indicated:

**“Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thine hand. And I will pluck up thy Asherim out of the midst of thee, so will I destroy thy cities.”<sup>90</sup>**

The Promised Ruler of Micah’s oracle, Hezekiah, also “shepherded his people in the strength of the Lord and in the majesty of His name.”<sup>91</sup> When the Assyrian king Sennacherib treaded through the borders of his land and threatened the holy city of Jerusalem, Hezekiah refused to be intimidated and prepared his people to meet the challenge of the Assyrian might. He cut off the supply of water outside Jerusalem hence preventing the Assyrians from having any fresh water when they approached the holy city. He strengthened the city’s defences and massed a huge amount of arsenal. He also induced confidence in his mobilised army by advising them to:

**“Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria nor for the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him.**

88. 2 Chronicles 31:1.

89. 2 Kings 18:3.

90. Micah 5:13–15.

91. Micah 5:4.

**With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord God to help us, and to fight our battles.’’<sup>92</sup>**

Hezekiah eventually brought peace to his people as prophesied by the Morasthite.<sup>93</sup> His fervent prayers in the temple of Yahweh<sup>94</sup> were finally heard. An angel of the Lord went to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. The Assyrian king Sennacherib was forced to retreat to Ninevah and he was eventually assassinated by his own sons.<sup>95</sup>

Hezekiah’s adversaries were hence cut off and Judaea was delivered of its enemies as prophesied by Micah the Morasthite.<sup>96</sup> The Promised Ruler from Bethlehem, a descendant of the great Israelite king David accomplished the faithful witness’s prophecy to the letter.

**“He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him, was none like him, nor any that were before him.”<sup>97</sup>**

### **Blessings Through Perseverance**

Those who shall persevere unto the last, though distress descends upon them which shall shake them very badly, storm after storm of troubles blow on them one after another, until people begin to laugh at them with scorn and the world treats them with contempt, in the end they shall triumph and the doors of blessings shall be opened upon them.

(Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad)

92. 2 Chronicles 32:1–8.

93. Micah 5:5.

94. 2 Kings 19:14–19.

95. 2 Kings 19:35–37.

96. Micah 5:9 & 6.

97. 2 Kings 18:5.

## **IRAN AWAITS IMAM MAHDI**

(TEHRAN TIMES of April 16, 1987 published a speech by President Khamenei under the caption: ISLAMIC IRAN PAVING WAY FOR APPEARANCE OF IMAM MAHDI. Among other things the President said “deprived nations should comprehend that their uprising and struggle will accelerate the appearance of Imam Mahdi, who is the Saviour of Mankind.” Continuing the speech he said “If the deprived are deprived of such a hope (appearance of Mahdi) they will become despondent and as a result their will to struggle will gradually diminish.” And he added “The Iranian nation is more deserving than any other nation to shoulder the heavy burden of laying the ground for the appearance of Imam Mahdi”. Since we, Ahmadis claim that the long awaited Mahdi has already appeared in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Persian origin, we feel spiritually and morally bound to make a sincere effort to convey the truth to the most revered President Khamenei in particular and to our Iranian brethren in general with the hope that a serious thought will be given to our statement. — Editor)

From time immemorial the history of Iran is full of awe inspiring feats of fortitude and chivalry. There was a time when this nation clashed with the mighty Roman Empire in Europe. Never-dying impressions of Iranian culture and civilisation are still existing in Asia. It has merited many distinctive qualities from the Islamic point of view. For example Shahr Bano, the blessed wife of Sayyed-us-Shohada Hazrat Imam Husain and the prominent companion Hazrat Salman Al-Pharisi, whom the holy Prophet honoured as being a member of his own household, also belonged to the spiritually rich land of Iran. This has also been proved in the books of commentary and traditions that on the occasion of the revelation of the Ayat ‘WA AKHAREENA MINHUM’ of Surah Al-JUMOA, the holy Prophet put his hand on the shoulder of Hazrat Salman Al-Pharisi and said that if the fundamentals of faith have been forsaken to the extent that they have left the earth and have risen to heaven, then the people of his nation will bring them back and re-establish them on earth.

The holy Prophet also explained the same aim and object of the advent of Imam Mahdi. He said: “A time is destined to come upon my Ummah (followers) when Islam will remain only in name and the Quran will remain

only in print. At that juncture God will command the Mahdi to appear and will cause Islam to dominate and revive through him'. It proves that Hazrat Imam Mahdi and his successors are those chivalrous Persian personalities who will bring back the lost Iman (faith) from Surrayya and re-establish it on the earth. And it is a marvellous Divine device that out of all the Muslim countries the credit and honour of cherishing the idea and image of the Mahdi in their bosoms for so many centuries goes to Iranians. In addition to that in the past few years the Iranian Government has published so much precious literature on the subject and in such large quantities the parallel of which is difficult to find.

Very recently the President of the Republic of Iran and its Spiritual leader Hujjat-ul-Islam Sayyed Ali Khamenei gave a statement under the caption:

“ISLAMIC IRAN PAVING THE WAY FOR APPEARANCE OF IMAM MAHDI.”

Speaking at a mosque in the Holy City of Qom the President said:

“Deprived nations should comprehend that their uprising and struggle will accelerate the appearance of Imam Mahdi who is the Saviour of Mankind.”

“If the deprived are deprived of such a hope (appearance of Imam Mahdi), they will become despondent and as a result their will to struggle will gradually diminish.”

“The Iranian nation is more deserving than any other nation to shoulder the heavy burden of laying the ground for the appearance of Imam Mahdi.’

(Tehran Times, April 16, 1987).

No doubt every syllable of this forceful statement depicts a deep devotion which is extremely welcome to us. But inspite of the love and reverence that we cherish for the president of The Republic of Iran and for the renowned and eminent scholar of the Imamiyya sect, we regret to say that we do not agree with the strange and innovative ideology that the appearance of Imam Mahdi is linked with the political struggle and progress of the deprived nations. We have three submissions in this connection which we intend to explain with great respect and pathos.

First, the authentic commentators on the Holy Quran and the sacred sayings of the eminent Ahl-Bait decisively define that the status of the Imam Mahdi is that of a great spiritual leader, a Divine Reformer and a Messenger of God and that the Ayat: “He it is who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all



religions.” (61:10) will be applicable on him. God himself will appoint him a Prophet, like others, and will guide him Himself through His revelation. Moreover he will announce that he is the Boruz (reflection) of all the prophets.

This is also an established fact that all the righteous researchers of the Shi'ite sect throughout the 13 centuries unanimously confess that the above mentioned Ayat was revealed for Imam Qáim. In the book *Fraid-ul-Matin* vol 2 chapter 18 a tradition of the Holy Prophet has been mentioned which says that when the earth will become full of corruption and crisis God will cause The Mahdi of the Ummah to appear. Allama Jafar bin Mohammad al-'Askari has also narrated this Hadith on page 303 in the second volume of his book *Al Mahdiyy-ul-Moud-ul Muntazar*. This book was published in 1397 H/1977 AD from Beirut. On pages 272, 296 of the first volume of this book the following narration has also been stated with reference to Asááf-ur-Raghibeen and Mashâriq-ul-Anwâr.

“The Angel of revelation will reveal Shariat (Canonical Law) to Hazrat Mahdi and he will deliver his judgments according to it i.e. the Angel will reveal the Mohammadan Law on him and he will judge according to it just as there is a tradition of the Holy Prophet in connection with the Ahwal of the Mahdi that he will follow my foot steps and will commit no mistakes.’

Hazrat Allama Bāqir Majlisi has narrated a very detailed hadith in Vol 13 on page 209 of *Bihār-ul-Anwār*. The essence of the Hadith is that our Mahdi will proclaim that whosoever wishes to see Adam, Shaith, Nuh, Ibrahim, Ismaiel, Musa, Isa and Mohammad Mustapha should see me because I am Adam, Shaith, Nuh, Ibrahim, Ismaiel, Musa, Isa and Mohammad Mustapha (peace be on them).

It will be extremely unfair to base the advent and appearance of such an elevated Apostle and such an eminent Imam on the struggle and material progress of the deprived nations. This ideology will annihilate the actual image of the Mahdi that has been described in the authentic literature of Shi'ite Sages for many centuries.

Secondly the mission of Imam Mahdi will be purely religious and spiritual. He will establish the superiority of Islam through solid and strong arguments. Righteous people who receive revelations and godly people will take Baiát (initiation) on his hands. Not a single drop of blood will be shed for his Caliphate. He will conquer the cities of idolatry and castles of misguidance. All these attributes are recorded in the ancient books of Imamiyya Schools and traditionists. A few excerpts out of them are quoted here.

- (a) The commentator of *Jami-ul-Bian* under the Ayat *Liyuzhirahu Alladin-E-Kullehi* writes:

“The Mahdi will cause the dominance of Islam through strong irrefutable arguments.”

(b) The Holy Prophet said:

“Not even a handful of blood will be shed in the founding of the Mahdi’s Khilafat.”

This tradition has been taken from an authentic Shi’ite book Nasikhut-Tawarikh Vol 1 page 86.

(c) Another Hadith says:

“When there will be abundance of crisis and nations will assault and aggress against each other, God will cause The Mahdi to appear at that time who will conquer the castles of misguidance and will win the sealed hearts.”

(Yanabi-ul Mawadda w/r Al Mahdiyy-ul-Muntazar Vol 1, page 310. Published at Beirut.)

(d) Hazrat Ibn-e-Arabi says:

“The righteous and lovers of God will initiate at the hands of The Mahdi due to Divine evidences and revelations.”

(e) Hazrat Ali ibn-e-Abi Talib prophesied:

“There are many other kinds of treasures with God besides gold and silver and they are those bold believers on whom God bestows the blessing of pure and genuine knowledge and such are the people who are going to be the helpers of the Mahdi in latter days!” (Kifayatul Matalib Fee manaquibi Ali Bin Abi Talib pp. 491–2 by Imam Mohammad Bin Yousuf).

All these prophetic statements show that Hazrat Imam Mahdi will be sent to cause a spiritual revolution. His weapons will be scholarly and his sect will be formed of righteous and Godly people.

If we admit that the appearance of Imam Mahdi depends upon the political success of the deprived nations then we have to admit as well that the vanguard of the Ansars of The Mahdi will be those deprived or backward nations that are already engaged in the struggle for freedom and are making use of material weapons and resources to get their rights. But the stark reality is that in the whole heritage of Hadith and traditions of the Ummah there is nothing like this.

Thirdly, the Holy Quran says:

(a) “Alas for my creatures! Whenever a Messenger comes to them they deride him and make fun of him.”

(Yasin).

According to Divine custom the opposition of the Promised Mahdi is inevitable. We find in writings:

“A barrier will be constructed between the community of The Promised Mahdi and Kaba.” (Tafsir Sáfi by Allama Hazrat Al-Faiz

Al-Kashani commentary of Jum'ush-Shamsu Wal-Qamaru Ch. Al-Qiyamah

- (b) Hazrat Imam Mahdi will be labelled as an apostate and most of the people will say: "We do not recognize you because you are not from among the progeny of Hazrat Fatima just as the idolators opposed the Holy Prophet". (Biharul Anwar Vol. 13, pp. 14, 192).
- (c) A renowned scholar of the sub-continent Sayyed Mohammed Sibtain As-Sarsawi writes on page 507 of his book:

"Only those people can testify and recognize the Mahdi and supersede in his fellowship and obedience who are believers in the true sense of the word. And those who are expecting him will not come forward to accept and obey him until they wait for his appearance restlessly. If it is not so they, on the other hand, will resort to opposition and enmity. They will make attempts to torture him and persecute his followers. The Ullema will issue fatwas for his murder and rulers of some Republics will send troops to murder him. All such people will be Muslims."

In the face of all these prophetic statements when Hazrat Imam Mahdi will have to face opposition in the campaign of the victory of Islam even at the hands of his own people (i.e. the Muslims) how can the political and material struggle on the part of the deprived nations be of any avail to his appearance and to the accomplishment of his mission?

After these three submissions we now divert our attention to the most fundamental and basic aspect in connection with the advent of The Promised Mahdi, and it is that most of the heavenly and earthly signs foretold in the Shi'ite literature have already been fulfilled. We will enumerate them one by one:

1. Prior to the appearance of the Mahdi a meteor will rise. (Bihar-ul-Anwar Vol. 13, p. 171). This meteor appeared in 1881.
2. Hazrat Imam Baqir foretold that there will be solar and lunar eclipses in the month of Ramadhan as a sign for the appearance of the Mahdi. (Darqutni Vol. 1, p. 188). This celestial sign did happen in 1896/1311 A.H.
3. The Holy Prophet said that the Mahdi will be due for appearance when Islam and the Quran will remain only in name. The Shiate researcher Allama Ali At-Tairi says in this connection:  
"The traditions and signs of Islam and the pillars of religion and belief will totally become extinct and the situation prevailing at that time will present the picture that nothing is left of the Holy Quran except its words'.
4. The Persian translation of Allama Baqir Majlisi's book Bihar-ul-

Anwar has been done by Ali Dawani and has been published by the famous Department of Dar-ul-Kutub Islamiyyah. On page 986 of this book the epidemic has been mentioned which ravaged this earth in the beginning of the 20th century, causing unparalleled loss of life and striking awe and fear in the minds of the people of that time with an extra-ordinary death toll. The translator has confessed in many places in the footnotes that many signs of the appearance of the Mahdi have already taken place. For example, according to the prophecy, musical instruments are being used in Mecca and Medina (Footnotes 106). Mosques have become the centres of din and noise due to their being used as polling stations (Footnotes 1046). The epidemic of sudden death has spread far and wide and has become quite common (Footnotes 1053). The prophecy of a bloody wind storm mutilating the limbs and faces and raining of the stone storm has been fulfilled by the bombardment on Hiroshima (Footnotes 1047).

5. The most significant sign of the advent of the Mahdi is the crisis of the Dajjal. Commenting on this Allama Mohammad As-Sadr says on page 532-537 of his book Tarikh-ul-Al-Kubra that by Dajjal means the European civilisation, the destructive devastations of which have engulfed the whole world. This book was published in Al-Imam Amir-ul Momeneen Ali's Press at Isphahan.

After the occurrence of all these magnificent signs only two doors are left open for the Ahl-e Bait of the Holy Prophet and his true servants. Either they admit that all these signs have taken place but they are still waiting for the Mahdi for whose proof these signs were meant or they should be filled with the certainty that after the occurrence of all these signs then he has certainly appeared.

Ahmadis believe that the prophecy which is the shining proof of the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet and his Household has been fulfilled in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He proclaimed in the beginning of the 14th century Hijra that according to a Divine revelation he had been chosen by God as the Promised Mahdi. He was of Persian origin and Haji Berlas was his ancestor who was the uncle of the renowned Mughal Conqueror, Emperor Taimur. The founder of Ahmadiyya Movement spent the whole of his life in the struggle to make Islam dominate over all false religions by strong arguments and he achieved a magnificent victory in this field which has borne witness on his superb literary services. Numerous criteria of the truthfulness of the Apostles of God have been mentioned in the Holy Quran. For example:

Sacred and innocent life before the claim.

(Yunas).

Opposition and ridicule after the claim.

(Yasin).

Blessing of long life after the claim.

(Al-Haqua).

The Holy Prophet lived for 23 years after his claim of Prophethood which would not be the lot of a false claimant.

On the test of all these criteria The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement can surely be regarded as true from God by the test of these criteria. In one Hadith the Holy Prophet says: "Whatever coincides with the Book of God hold it fast and act on it." (Tahzibul Ahkam Vol. II, pp. 193, Kitabul-Nikah).

Not even the greatest researcher of Islam can claim that every word of all the traditions and Ahadith about the advent of the Mahdi are as preserved, secure and intact as every word of the Holy Quran. In this situation, in the first instance, turn to the Book of God to know about their actual meanings and then we should look for the evidence of their fulfilment.

When we cast a glance upon Shi'ite traditions relating to the appearance of the Promised Mahdi we observe the seal of God's confirmation on many of them and those are the very traditions which have come true with magnificence and resplendence in favour of the holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

A few of them are:

- (1) The Mahdi will have a double name. One will be Ghulam and the other Ahmad and still another Mahmud and he will also be called Isa (Jesus) Masih. (Biharul Anwar vol. 13, pp. 7-8).

Similarly he will be known as Massih-uz-zaman. (Al-Najmul-Saqib p. 478).

- (2) The Mahdi will hold the flag of Muhammad and the Government of Ahmad.
- (3) The Promised Mahdi will break the Cross i.e. he will refute and annihilate the creed of crucifixion by arguments against it. (Biharul Anwar Vol. 3, p. 198).

The holy Founder of Ahmadiyyat carried out the campaign against Cross and Christianity with such unprecedented zeal and enthusiasm that his contemporary scholars and people of renown confessed it loudly and publicly.

- (4) The Promised Mahdi will have a book in which the names of his 313 helpers will be written.

This has also come true. (Biharul Anwar Vol. 3, pp. 180-1).

- (5) The Mahdi will remain alive for 19 years after his claim to be the Mahdi. (Biharal (Biharal-Anwar Vol. 13, pp. 1089).

The Holy Founder founded the Jamaat in 1889 and died in 1908.

- (6) Mahdi Moud will be succeeded by 12 Khulafa. (Ibid pp. 1238) Alhamdo Lillah there is institution of Khilafat in Jamaat Ahmadiyya.
- (7) The name of one of the offsprings of the Mahdi will be "Tahir". It should be known that the present Imam of Jamaat Ahmadiyya is Hazrat Sahibzada Mirza Tahir Ahmad Khalifatut-ul-Masih IV who is currently residing in England and is extremely busy, day and night, in various activities of spreading Islam exactly according to the Divine prophecies for it is written that the Mahdi is a sun that will rise from the West and will purify the planet.

Billions of blessings and peace be upon Khatam-ul-Anbiya, Muhammad Mustapha (peace be on him) and on the Ahl-e Bait and on the other leaders of the Ummah whose prophecies God fulfilled and proved that Islam, like other religions, is not a religion of fictions but on the other hand it is a living religion revealed by the Everlasting and Ever living God.

In the end we want to state that the Holy Founder of Ahmadiyya Movement received a revelation in January 1906:

"An upheaval occurred in the palace of the ruler of Iran."

And just according to the prophecy the Iranian nation dethroned Raza Shah Pahlavi, the Emperor of Iran under the able leadership of their beloved Allama Khamenei and set surprising and startling examples of exciting zeal for martyrdom and faith. We fully believe that this fearless, bold and sacrificing nation will, after gathering under the flag of the Mahdi will cause a spiritual revolution and will offer many more sacrifices than in the past.

The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement said:

"Truth will have ultimate victory and Islam will see the same day of glory and light as it has seen in the earlier days and the sun will again shine with full force as it shone in the days of yore, but not yet. Heaven will, inevitably prevent it from rising unless we do not consume the last drop of our blood in hard work and diligence and unless we do not sacrifice all our comforts for its appearance and unless we are not prepared to accept the most ignominious humiliations for the sake of Islam. The renaissance of Islam demands a ransom from us and what is that? It is death in its service."

(Fathi-Islam p. 16).

He says further:

"There will be a renewed Earth and a renewed Heaven. The days are

approaching when the Sun of Truth will rise from the West and Europe will recognise the real God.”

“All the communities are nigh to annihilation except that of Islam. All the strategies will fail except the Divine strategy of Islam. It will neither break nor fail unless frustrates completely all the evil designs of Gog and Magog, the time is also approaching when the pure Unity of God felt in the heart of hearts of the inhabitants of deserts and the illiterates, will spread in the countries. That day no self made redemption nor artificially culled God will remain, and a single waive of God’s Mighty hand will frustrate all the designs and devices of Kufr (disbelief), but not with any sword or with any gun. On the other hand it will be wrought by imparting light in willing and well prepared souls and by illuminating the righteous hearts. It is only at such time that the sayings I am saying will be understood! (Brahini Ahmadiyya vol. IV, pp. 502–3).

### **Suggestions Invited**

**Our readers will be delighted to know that a special Centenary Edition of The Review of Religions is proposed to be printed in March 1989, Inshaallah.**

**To make it worth the august occasion we would very much wish to have your suggestions as to its size, volume, topics of current importance and other relevant points to make it befitting and attractive.**

**Your literary contributions are also solicited. Proposals should reach us before 30th December 1987.**

**(Managing Editor)**

# ISLAM AND RUSSIA

(4)

**(Dr. Qazi Muhammad Barkatullah)**

## PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy has become a pastime for some people but it is a comprehensive word. The word philosophy comes from the Greek root, phileo-sophia; where philo means love and sophia means wisdom. Philosophy thus means love of wisdom. It also means convictions, beliefs, attitudes. It is study of causes of things through the use of reasoning. There are two methods of reasoning: Inductive or to generalise and deductive or to synthesise. A systematic way of reasoning is called Logic. Philosophy is to “Think, Think, Think”. A philosopher is a thinker. Plato classified a philosopher as a ruler of a land who has the wisdom to rule the society and has advance knowledge. Philosophy, thus, is pursuit of wisdom and permeates an individual’s entire life. The late Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II said:

“Wisdom (so called) is blind unless illumined by revelation.”

The Holy Quran says:

“Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. And He is the Incomprehensible the All Aware.”

(6:104).

Comment:

“This verse means that human reason alone, unaided by Divine reason, is incapable of comprehending God. He cannot be seen with physical eyes but reveals Himself to man through His prophets or through the working of His attributes. He is also perceived by spiritual eyes.”

(English Commentary, Rabwah, F. N. 887).

## PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAM

Islam is not a philosophy but a complete religion perfect in all respects for all mankind and for all the time to come. The Creator of the universe, heavens, earth and everything in between, is Allah who is One. Allah is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. Allah, in fact, is the Light of the



heavens and earth. All mankind are created by Allah and true religion with Allah is Islam. And all mankind are created on the nature of Islam:

“And follow the nature made by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind.”

(30:31).

Comment:

God is One and humanity is One. This is the Fitrat Allah or Dinal Fitrah — the religion which is rooted in the nature of man and to which he conforms and instinctively reacts. It is in this religion that a child is born but his environment, the ideas and beliefs of parents and the training he receives from them subsequently make him a Jew, a Magian or a Christian.”

(Bukhari).

(F. Note No. 2284; ENG Commentary).

In 1896, a religious Conference was held on December 26–29, in Lahore now in Pakistan. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, penned a treatise entitled *Islami Usool Ki Philosophy* in urdu — The Philosophy or the Teaching of Islam — for the conference. The composition was read before a mammoth gathering by Hazrat Maulvi Abdul Karim Sialkoti. It was very well received by the public and press. The treatise has since been published many times in several languages. It deals with five basic questions and the answers are supported by the Holy Quran and examples set by the Holy Prophet of Islam. These questions are:

1. The Physical, Moral and Spiritual states of man.
2. The state of man after life on this earth.
3. The object of man's life and the means of its attainment.
4. The effect of human actions in this life and the next.
5. The sources of Divine knowledge.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, stated that valid religious teachings should be able to guide its followers to a living vision of God. Failure to do this would reveal the failure of the teaching. Now and again, over periods of time, there should be evidence of mankind's contact with God. This is what makes the Religious quest worthwhile and meaningful. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad tells us that he has attained and established contact with Almighty Allah by following and practising the principles and teachings of Islam:

“I would be guilty of an injustice were I to conceal the fact that I have been raised to this spiritual eminence. Almighty God has favored me with His certain Word and has chosen me that I may give sight to the blind, lead seekers after truth to the object of their search, and give to the

acceptors of truth the glad tidings of the pure fountain which is talked of by many but is discovered by few.

(The Teachings of Islam, Rabwah, 1966, p. 163).

Hazrat Ahmad again says:

It is among Muslims that individuals have always been raised to this spiritual eminence. Islam is in fact the only religion in which God draws His servant to Him and speaks to him and through him He makes His habitation within his heart and draws him up to Heaven.

(Ibid., p. 162).

Islam presents a living way of life and offers means which establishes contact between an individual and God:

“And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: ‘I am near.’ I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me that they may follow the right way.”

(2:187).

#### THE SOUL

The Arabic word “Nafs” means self or person. Hazrat Ali is reported to have said “Mun Arafa Nafsahu faqud arafa Rabbahu:” That is, He who understood his Nafs, understood his God. Also, there is Hadees (Tradition): ‘He who knows himself, knows God his Lord thereby.’ Commencing with the Holy Quran, however, Nafs also means the soul.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, says that the soul is not something which comes from outside. It is latent in the seed of man as fire is latent in the flint. The hidden soul appears in the body that it is being developed in the womb of the mother.

Allah knows best what the soul is:

“Say, the Soul has been created by the command of my Lord.”

(17:86).

The Holy Quran signifies that after the completion of the physical development of the embryo in the womb, it develops a soul. Elsewhere in the Holy Quran mention is made of the creation of the soul:

“Verily, We created man from an extract of clay; Then We placed him as a drop of sperm in safe depository; Then we fashioned the sperm into a clot; then we fashioned the clot into a shapeless lump; then We fashioned bones out of this shapeless lump; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed it into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the best of creators.”

(23:13–15).

Comment:

“The words Then We developed it into another creation, show that the soul is not imported into the human body from outside but grows in the body as it develops in the womb. At first it has no separate existence from the body but the process through which the body passes during its development in the womb distils from the body a delicate essence which is called the soul. As soon as the relationship between the soul and the body becomes completely adjusted the heart begins to function. The soul then has a distinct existence of its own apart from the body which henceforth serves it as a shell.

(English Commentary; F. N. 1985; pp. 736–737).

As such, the soul is a light which brings life and sparkles the whole body. The soul springs up from the body which is being prepared in the womb of the mother. There is a mysterious relation between body and soul and the solution of that mystery appears to be beyond human comprehension.

### THREE STAGES

Hazrat Ahmad, has elaborated in his book *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, three conditions or states which a person passes through in search of inner peace with Almighty God:

#### PHYSICAL STATE

This is a rudimentary stage in one's life. The soul is prone to evil. A person is unable to control his passions and emotions. He wants and has a desire for all worldly things and is inclined toward evil. This state of man is called *Nafs-e-Ammarah*. It turns man away from the path that leads to perfection.

The first state is very dangerous for the spiritual progress of mankind. In this condition, passions run wild and a person seeks to satisfy the desires of the flesh. The Holy Quran says:

“Surely the soul is prone to join evil.”

(12:54).

#### MORAL STATE

In this stage, a person frees himself from the control of animal passions and is guided by reason and knowledge. He puts a check on worldly desires and governs them instead of being governed by them. In the terminology of the Holy Quran, this is called *Nafs-e-lawwama* or the self-accusing spirit (conscience) (75:3). At this stage a person gains the upper hand. Something from inside persuades a person not to do bad things. At this stage a person's awakened conscience upbraids him for doing bad deeds and restrains his passions and appetites (English Commentary, F.N. 3177). It is the animus

that reproaches a person when he adopts evil ways. It is a self-accusing and reprimanding state of human beings.

#### SPIRITUAL STATE

The third spiritual state is called Nafs-e-Mutmainna. In this condition a person has attained contentment within and the world around him. The soul has now found rest in God. This is the stage in which the soul is purified from all its alloys and is so much fortified with spiritual strength that it clings to God and cannot live without Him.

The Holy Quran says:

O, Thou soul at Peace!  
Return to thy Lord, Thou  
well-pleased with Him  
and He well-pleased  
with thee. So enter thou among My  
chosen servants.  
And enter thou My Garden

(89:28–31).

Comment:

“This is the highest stage of spiritual development when man is well-pleased with his Lord and his Lord is well-pleased with him. At this stage which is called the heavenly stage, he becomes immune to all moral weaknesses and frailties and is braced with a peculiar strength. He is united with God and cannot exist without Him. It is in this life and not after death that this great spiritual transformation takes place in him and it is in this world and not elsewhere that access to paradise is granted to him.”

(English Commentary, F.N. No. 3342).

Thus there are three stages that a person passes through to attain high moral qualities and character. In the first stage a man is raised from a savage stage getting familiarised with the rules relating to ordinary daily actions and modes of social life. Next to improve upon the degree of morality a person's actions and conducts are regulated to turn them into high moral qualities. And the final stage is of contentment where a person is completely engrossed in the love of God. A well known Persian Poet has said:

“Repentance in the prime of youth is the mode of  
the prophets.”

## BODY AND SOUL

It is pertinent to remark that the physical state of human beings is closely associated with the moral and spiritual state. There is natural relationship between body and soul. All physical acts such as eating, drinking, sleeping etc. necessarily produce a corresponding inner effect. The external purity of the body signifies internal purity and moral quality. Weeping saddens the heart and laughing makes it cheerful. Prostration of the body as in Islamic prescribed prayers induces humility and inclines the soul towards adoration of God. The movement of the soul depends upon the movement of the body. If the body is drawn in any direction the soul goes that way too. Thus the outward state of man needs to be reformed and regulated so as to have corresponding moral qualities in human life. Peaceful outward human conduct and actions such as, peaceful family life and social behaviour will create inner moral qualities. It is therefore clear that the inner self effects outward conduct. Outward human actions and reactions stem from inner moral qualities.

Hazrat Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, points out that the kind of food a person eats also has an effect on character as well as the body. For example, eating no meat at all will cause some deficiencies while an excess of meat is likely to destroy the qualities of humility and weakness. Muslims are forbidden to eat Khinzeer (the flesh of the pig) for similar reasons. The very name of the animal contains an allusion to the reason for the prohibition of its flesh. The name is a combination of Khinz and ar, the first part means "very foul" and the second "I see". That is, the word literally means "I see it very foul". This animal lives on filth and is most shameless of all creatures. Taken as food, therefore, its foul flesh will have an injurious effect upon the body as well as the soul.

## OBJECTIVE OF LIFE

A person is not born just to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow he will have to leave the world. Many people set before themselves different material objectives generally limited to the gratification of low desires and the pleasures of the world. However, according to Hazrat Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, Almighty God has declared a much higher objective as the purpose of man's existence. The Holy Quran says:

"And I have not created the jinn and the men but that they may worship Me." (51:57).

This verse states that a person should fulfil obligations to God, and as such, to mankind as well. The real object of man's existence is, therefore, a true knowledge and worship of God and total reliance on His Will. Whatever is said or done should be said or done for His sake only. Man is a creature and his

Creator has brought him into existence. The Creator has bestowed upon him higher faculties than upon animals. The Holy Quran says:

“Surely, We have created man in the best make;  
Then, if he does evil deeds, we degrade him as the  
lowest of the low.”

(95:5–6).

Comment:

“Man is born with a pure and unsullied nature, with a natural tendency to do good, but he has also been given a large measure of freedom of will and action to mould himself as he chooses. He has been endowed with great natural powers and creative qualities to make unlimited moral progress and to rise spiritually so high as to become the mirror in which Divine attributes are reflected. But if he misuses God-given powers and attributes, he sinks lower than even beasts and becomes Devil incarnate. Briefly, he is blessed with great potentialities for doing good and evil.”

(English Commentary, F.N. 3384).

Thus a man may or may not understand but the truth is that the grand aim of a person's life consists in knowing and worshipping God and living for His sake. The external and internal endowments of human nature give us clearly to understand that the highest object of their creation is the love and worship of God. True happiness, which is generally admitted to be the goal of life, is not attainable through the diverse pursuits which men follow but only through God. Not all the joys of this world can afford relief from the gnawing grief which attends a man's last moments upon this earth. The richest millionaire, the highest official, the most successful merchant, the greatest king, or the wisest philosopher does not possess peace of mind and departs from this world a prey to poignant regret. The perfection of man therefore consists in the excellence of his spirituality, in his union with God. The true object of his life in this world is that the window of his soul should be opened toward God. (Teachings of Islam, pp. 132–133).

#### MARXISM

Marxism is the system of views and teachings of Karl Marx.

A large number of the people of the world, willingly or unwillingly, have been drawn into the orbit of Communism. Communism, therefore, must be studied, whether or not the philosophy is acceptable.

The history of Communism begins with the Work of Karl Marx (b. May 5, 1818 — d. 1883). His father was a lawyer who like this ancestors, was a Jew but became converted to Protestant Christianity in 1824. The family was well to do and cultured. Marx studied philosophy and earned a doctorate degree.

During his college years, Karl Marx was influenced by the German philosopher Hegel. But Hegel's dialectical idealism refers to his philosophy, which one way or other, is connected with God. One wonders how Marx's theory evolved from Hegelism to Communism. With Hegel, the entire universe, is a unified whole, operating on the principles of rationality under God but Marx rejected the idea of God and the world as one. He evolved his own theory known as dialectical materialism a sort of, reversal of Hegel's dialectical idealism.

According to Marx, everything is material and that human beings create social life strictly in response to economic needs. Therefore all aspects of society are considered to reflect economic structure, and classes in society are determined by their relationship to their means of production. According to Marx, growth, change and development take place through a naturally occurring "struggle of opposites", a process that individuals cannot influence. This is official philosophy of Communism and is also known as atheism.

Marx and a German socialist leader Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) became close friends. Together they developed the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Marx went from Germany to Paris and studied the French Revolution. He was expelled from the city, spending some years in Brussels, came to London and spent the rest of his life here. Marx's wife was from a well-to-do family. She died and also his young son. He spent his last days in poverty. Marx died at the age of 65 survived by a daughter in failing health.

Marx explained that class struggle or class conflict was the major force behind movements in history. At this point he borrowed Hegel's idea of the dialectic course of history that the events take place through action and reaction with history as a result of conflict. This was the thesis, antithesis and synthesis of Hegelian thought translated to material domain. That historical changes are motivated by material causes, a theory that may be termed as dialectical materialism.

Marx said that the dialectic process involving change accepts no fixed realities, no truth by revelation and no exclusion from the dialectic movement. The real world is the material one, which has no place for religion or morals. Everything is in a constant process of change, developing new qualitative arrangements of social and economic order. History will culminate with the fall of capitalism and rise of communism when a classless society would emerge. Then there would no longer be any forces of change and no further epochs of human history would emerge.

Marxism regards material existence as the true reality, and rules out God. Marx regards mind to be the product of the natural order developed from lower animal forms. The material order is characterised by certain elements that have to do with production. These include the skill of the workers plus the

tools and the raw material. Properly related these elements result in products which man needs to sustain his existence.

The movement from slavery to Communism is motivated by economic factors. At every state preceding eventual Communism, the working man is exploited. The capitalist sells the products for more than the cost and retains the surplus value for himself.

Since the capitalist is in conflict with the working class, Marx called him “bourgeois”, while the labourer was the “proletariat.” There would be an upheaval, according to Marx, which would result in the control of the means of production by the labouring class. Revolutionary groups only serve to hasten the coming of the eventual social order of Communism.

As an overview of the Marxism it is obvious that the Communist view is atheistic and Darwinian. It advocates violent means to bring about economic and classless social order. Marx advocates to establish a tranquil society where all men are equal and free. But to achieve that purpose promotes a revolution consisting of the use of whatever force is necessary to achieve that purpose. However, it is unlikely that a society given training in violent techniques will all of a sudden become peaceful and adopt harmonious attitudes and practices. The Communists say that Church and State are separated under the law; but officially advocating and propagating atheism is in itself violation of human rights. Actually, in a Communist society, a working person is simply reduced to a tool to serve his masters, leaders and the State. As such, it is evident that the Marxist philosophy is simply unrealistic, full of inconsistencies and contradictions.

#### COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

The Manifesto was first published as the platform of the Communist League, a workingmen’s association, a secret society. At a Congress of the League, held in London in November 1847, Marx and Engels were commissioned to prepare for publication a complete theoretical and practical party programme. It was drawn up in German in January 1848. The first English translation appeared in London in 1850. It says, in part:

- (a) Socialism — is a middle-class movement, Communism a working-class movement. (p. 6)
- (b) The immediate aim of the Communists is the formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat. (p. 22)
- (c) The first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class. (p. 30)
- (d) The proletariat organised as the ruling class will increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. (p. 30)



The Manifesto describes some of the objectives of the Communists as:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instrument of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands and the improvement of soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal obligation of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of child factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc.
11. Abolition of family. (p. 26).  
Communists desire to introduce an openly legalised community of women. (p. 28)
12. In place of the old bourgeois society we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. (p. 31)
13. The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. (p. 44)

(*The Communist Manifesto*, International Publishers, New York, 1986).

### Islam — Perfect Religion

Islam is the perfect religion, complete in all aspects for all mankind for all the time to come. The Communists simply talk about a segment of this world, eating, drinking and leaving the world. On the other hand Islam is very comprehensive and presents a conspicuous way of life for this world as well as the world to come. Unfortunately, at this time the Communists are under strenuous restraint and not exposed to the propagational activities of Islam. However, it is a matter of time. Allah says:

“And follow the nature made by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind.”

(30:31).

Comment:

God is One and humanity is one. This is Fitrat Allah or Din al Fitrah — the religion which is rooted in the nature of man and to which he conforms and instinctively reacts. It is in this religion that a child is born, but his environment, the ideas and beliefs of his parents and the training he receives from them, subsequently make him a Jew, a Magian or a Christian (Bukhari).” (English Commentary, F.N. 2284.)

The following verse was revealed to Holy Prophet of Islam only eighty-two days before his demise:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favours upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.”

(5:4).

Comment:

“The doctrines and commandments affecting the physical, moral, and spiritual development of man have been embodied in the Quran in their most perfect form. And nothing which was needed by man has been left out. There are commandments relating to the physical side of man or his external self and the commandments relating to the spiritual side or his inner self. The perfection and completion of God’s religion and favour have been mentioned side by side with law relating to edibles in order to point out that the use of lawful and good food forms one of the very important bases of good morals which in turn provide a pedestal for spiritual progress. (English Commentary F.N. 721)

## What is Islam?

Islam literally means *Peace, surrender of one's Will*; and to be in amity and concord. The significance of the name Islam is the attainment of a life of perfect peace and eternal happiness through complete surrender to the Will of God. The Quran — the Holy Book of the Muslims — interprets it to be the religion whose teachings are in consonance with human nature. Islam, as the Quran has stated (5:4), is the completion of the religion inaugurated by God in the beginning of the world, on His sending the Quran through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him). As a child is taught his alphabet, so God taught the religion to the world gradually and little by little, by sending His prophets at different times and to different peoples.

When the world reached that stage of understanding when it was ready for the final lesson, He sent the last and complete Book through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him). This Book not only corrects the errors which had found their way into various religions, but preaches the truths which have not been preached before, on account of special circumstances of the society or the early stage of its development. At the same time it gathers together in itself the truths which were contained in any Divine revelation granted to any people for the guidance of men (The Quran 98:4). Lastly, it meets all the spiritual and moral requirements of an ever advancing humanity.

This is Islam which is wrongly called Muhammadanism.

According to Islam, the object of man's life is its complete unfoldment. Islam does not support the idea that man is born in sin. It teaches that everyone has within him the seed of perfect development and it rests solely with a person himself to make or mar his fortune. *We created man in the best make* says the Holy Quran (95:5).

The cardinal doctrine of Islam is the Unity of Godhead. *There is none worthy of worship but the one and only God, and Muhammad is His Prophet.* He is free from all defects, Holy and Transcendent. He is All Good, All Mercy and All Power. He has no partner. He neither begets nor is He begotten, because these are the traits of frail and weak humanity. Furthermore, Islam helps us to establish a permanent relationship with God and to realise Him during our earthly life as our Helper in all our affairs and undertakings. This unity of God is the first and foremost pillar of Islam and every other belief hangs upon it.

Islam requires belief in all the prophets, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Confucious and Zoroaster. We regard them all (and many more not mentioned here) as heavenly teachers born to reform and regenerate man and lead him to God. Adherents of some other religions may consider it an act of piety to use disrespectful words and heap abuse on the prophets of other religions, but if a Muslim were to show the slightest disrespect towards the founder of any faith, he does so at the cost of his own faith. He has to utter the respectful benediction *Alaihis-Salam* (peace be on him) after mentioning the name of every prophet. Thus Islam establishes peace between all religions.

## 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.

During more than eighty-five years the message of Islam has been conveyed through this magazine to hundreds of readers and many fortunate persons have recognised the truth of Islam and accepted it through studying it.

The articles published in it deal not only with the doctrines and teachings of Islam but also set forth a comparative appreciation of the teachings of other faiths.

One of its outstanding features is the refutations of the criticism of Islamic teachings by orientalists and non-muslim scholars.

It also presents solutions in the light of Islamic teachings of the problems with which the Islamic world is from time to time confronted.

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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