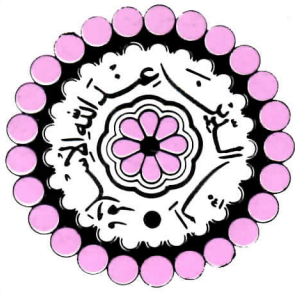


THE REVIEW of RELIGIONS

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THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the expected world reformer and the Promised Messiah whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The Movement is an embodiment of true and real Islam. It seeks to unite mankind with its Creator and to establish peace throughout the world. The present head of the Movement is Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad. The Ahmadiyya Movement has its headquarters at Rabwah, Pakistan, and is actively engaged in missionary work.



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The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

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

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

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EDITORIAL

CHRISTMAS DAY

The vast majority of Christian Churches proclaim that Jesus was born on the 25th December and it is on this date that Christians all over the world celebrate Christmas Day. Although the manner in which this occasion is observed raises many points for discussion, we are focussing attention only on whether or not Jesus was born on the 25th December. We quote the views and findings of some Christian authorities who believe that he was born at another time of the year.

Bishop Barnes writes:

There is, moreover, no authority for the belief that December 25th was the actual birthday of Jesus ... Our Christmas Day seems to have been accepted about A. D. 300. (Rise of Christianity)

Chambers Encyclopaedia states:

There is no authoritative tradition as to the day or month of Christ's birth and some uncertainty exists as to the actual year. St. Celements of Alexandria refers to calculations which placed it in April or May.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica informs us:

Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church, and before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come into the calendar. The exact day and year of Christ's birth have never been satisfactorily settled.

According to the Holy Quran the birth of Jesus took place at a time when fresh dates are found on palm-trees in Judea. After delivering Jesus under a palm-tree an angel spoke to Mary saying:

continued on page 20....

FRIDAY SERMON

(The following is the gist of the Friday sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, on 28th October, 1990)

It is quite a time since I have reminded the Community about financial sacrifices in the way of God. One reason is that financial contributions have increased with such speed that there has really been no need to speak on the subject. Recently Mr Muhammad Ashraf, additional Financial Secretary, sent me a list of those branches in Africa which are in the fore-front in paying contributions. Today I have chosen to speak on the subject again. It should be remembered that Allah is independent of all needs but we are dependant on Him for our needs. There are thousands of ways by which God provides required needs.

The need and value of making contributions in the way of God have been repeated many times in the Holy Quran. By so doing people are cleansed and purified. It is a means by which a devotee grows in righteousness, becomes reformed and discards many unsalutary ways.

I want to explain the philosophy of making financial sacrifices. It is for your benefit otherwise you would be the losers. I have had much experience in this matter and its non observance will cause the individual losses of many types. The Holy Quran links the payment of Zakat with financial sacrifice. According to the Holy Quran the best solution for the economic improvement of a nation is that the people should give contributions in the way of God. Their condition always continues to improve.

Our Community is spreading in some regions of Africa where there is extreme poverty. I have made an appeal for the African Fund. We are endeavouring to establish industry and to increase trade with Africa in addition to some other plans also. Our capital, however, is very limited and qualified personnel in the Community are so few that our effort to render assistance is hardly a drop in the ocean. I informed our missionaries in Africa that if they did not ask the new converts for contributions on account of their poverty then they would be doing a grave injustice

to them. Only God can change the economic situation in Africa. The Holy Quran, in its wisdom, teaches that God blesses abundantly the wealth of those who make financial sacrifices in His cause. During the time of the Holy prophet the Muslims lived in poverty and even he and his wives often suffered hunger despite the fact that they belonged to respectable Meccan families. Only a few of the Muslims possessed wealth. The truly rich were those who accepted and practised the Divine message which the Holy Prophet conveyed to mankind. Even after migrating from Mecca to Medina they remained more or less in the same position. They subsisted with difficulty. Later on, after a few years, God filled their homes with great wealth and you will not find such a remarkable change in history.

It is not in accordance with the teachings of Islam to decorate mosques with gold. Nevertheless the time came when Muslim rulers and governments possessed so much wealth that they did not know what to do with it even after helping the poor, building universities and improving the economy in many ways. The great halls which you still see attached to the mosques in Spain, were decorated with gold and jewels. When the Muslims were thrown out of Spain the gold and gems were robbed. All wealth is in the hands of God who is Self-Sufficient. It is we who are in need.

There were only a few rich people in Arabia during the early days of Islam so the financial sacrifices of the majority were only small offerings. Later God gave the Muslims so much wealth that Baghdad was the richest town in the world. I have mentioned this one example to show that by making sacrifices in the way God there follows prosperity. If religious nations fail to make financial sacrifices in the way of God then they are punished with poverty. If, however, they remain in the fore-front in this matter then God bestows wealth and prosperity upon them. We should clearly understand the efficacy of this secret and put it into practice in order to build national economy. The Holy Quran teaches that we should not do a favour to somebody with the thought of receiving a favour in return. Our sacrifice to God is a humble gift. If He accepts it that will be our good fortune and reward. It is the duty of those who have national responsibilities to encourage and raise the spirit of sacrifice of the nation. Financial sacrifice is a remedy which has been tried and tested in the past especially in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him. He witnessed its results. Some people wonder how the Arabs came in possession of oil. It was through their earlier sacrifices.

It is one of the laws of religion that great wealth comes to those who

sacrifice their wealth in the service of God. I was very pleased to learn that even in the poorest regions of Africa there exists the spirit of making financial sacrifices and responding to appeals. If all the members of our Community contributed according to their ability then I can affirm that the whole destiny of Africa would change. Here lies the solution of all their economic problems. The people should learn to donate in the way of God. This is the remedy for overcoming poverty.

Another remedy for overcoming poverty is faith. As a result of paying Zakat and other contributions one's faith increases and one wins the pleasure of God. God never ignores those who make sacrifices for Him. He never deprives them of their needs. One has to become a beggar either of God or of the world. It is better to become a beggar of God. One should always understand that by becoming a beggar of God one wins the pleasure of God. This is an established reality. There is no doubt about it. Some people complain, due to misunderstanding, that our Community is constantly dwelling on the need of its members to make financial sacrifices and does not pay attention to other necessary requirements. It is not the officials of the Community, but God Himself, in the Holy Quran exhorts the faithful to make financial sacrifices. The officials are only expounding God's exhortations, therefore, no fault lies on them. Giving in the way of God is, in fact, for everyone's own spiritual and material benefit.

The giving of financial contributions develops sincerity and purifies the soul - Taqwa. The person's outlook changes and he attracts the pleasure and blessings of God and even if he has faults and weaknesses his contributions will not go waste. God, out of His Grace, even overlooks his faults. If one loves someone one does not want to be witness to his faults and looks in another direction. Some people receive bad reports about their children but treat them as if unheard. They do not want to hear them. So it is with God Who knows the unseen. We learn from the Holy Quran that He overlooks the faults of His beloved servants. I know that God overlooks the faults of those who make financial sacrifices for His sake. They grow in piety. A devout mother would not feel happy if her children did not spend any money for religion. She does not consider it would be a burden upon them. She wants them to participate in this blessing. I know the parents of some children who hold back their children who have just started earning from making contributions in the way of God on the grounds that they are not properly settled in life. On the other hand there are other parents who are thankful for the blessings they have received as a result of their contributions and do not want to

deprive their children of also drawing blessings from God, so they urge them to contribute. Some children well trained by their parents fully understand the philosophy of giving in the way of God. Some young persons send their first earnings to me to be used in the service of God, while others, who used to take part in Community activities, start slipping away. Their money has become a curse for them.

A boy once wrote to me saying that after he started earning he contributed generously to the Community but his parents told him he should not donate so much. He should save some or help such and such a person. The boy asked me whether it would be a sin if he disregarded the advice of his parents as he knew it was proper to respect and obey them. I was able to settle the matter amicably. The position of Khalifa is that he is the head of a worldwide family with whom people discuss personal matters informally. In connexion with this matter my attention was drawn to another subject in the Holy Quran based on the following verse:

Slay not your children for fear of poverty (6:152)

This verse is generally and correctly interpreted to mean that no one should practice birth control for fear of being unable to maintain one's children or for national economic reasons. The verse generally applies to this subject. I feel that it can also be interpreted to mean that spiritually you would be killing your children with your own hands if you prevented them from giving financial contributions in the way of God. It is essential that members of the Ahmadiyya Community should constantly be reminded and guided in understanding about the beneficial blessings which result from giving to God Who knows the condition of our hearts. We should give with full awareness, humility and genuine feeling. This is the spirit which God loves and which is difficult to express in words. Sometimes one gives something to a person just in order to get rid of him, or to a persistent child just to keep it quiet. In like manner people sometimes give something to a begger. It is better to give with feelings of kindness, sympathy and love. One should always give with sincere and pleasant feelings which melt the heart. If members give with this spirit then the Community will prosper in leaps and bounds and no one will be able to block its progress. May Allah enable us to do so.

THE SATANIC VERSES

(Zubair Ahmad)

INTRODUCTION

Few books in living memory have sparked off such a fiery controversy on the International scene as did Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Making its first appearance in September 1988, it was soon nominated for the Booker and Whitbread literary awards in which it was voted runner-up.

The Muslim world was shocked and enraged at the insulting references in the novel about Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and his companions. Outraged by the sheer indifference displayed by the British Government for not taking any legislative action, a copy of *The Satanic Verses* was set on fire in January 1989 by some Muslims in Bradford to protest to the authorities and to publicly express their disgust and anger at the vulgar nature of the novel. According to the official Iranian news agency, *Muslims have been especially offended by a dream sequence in the book in which the Prophet Abraham is called "bastard" and Bilal, Islam's first Muezzin (prayer caller) an enormous black monster, and prostitutes take the names of Prophet Muhammad's wives, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. The fury of Ayatullah Khomeini of Iran was expressed by his death sentence on Salman Rushdie, which he issued on 14th February, 1989, declaring that ... the author of "Satanic Verses" is against Islam, the Prophet and the Quran, and all involved in its publication, are sentenced to death.*

Muslims all over Britain and elsewhere organised protest marches to demonstrate against the book, and some Muslim groups began to raise slogans to endorse the Iranian call. A police armed guard was arranged for the writer who then went into hiding as the threats were being taken very seriously.

The whole of the Western world was outraged over Khomeini's edict to a question of *freedom of expression*. *It is a positive outrage to civilised standards...* remarked one Conservative M.P. His outrage was shared by

M.Ps who had sponsored a Commons motion criticising Mr Rushdie's book just the month before.

All diplomatic ties with Iran were severed. Embassy staff of Western nations in Iran were called back, and those of Iran sent home. This religious controversy had now acquired a political overtone. Or did it not indicate a political conspiracy right from the start?

In retrospect, the events that unfolded ever since the publication of *The Satanic Verses* have only served to unleash intolerant attitudes, heighten racial tensions, jeopardise international relations and threaten the very prospects of bringing the whole world together under the banner of peace.

What solution can there be to this dilemma? Does the right of freedom of expression give one the license to injure the feelings and trample upon the rights of fellow citizens? In the name of fiction, is it permissible to cross the bounds of decency? They say that the truth is often stranger than fiction! What is the truth about Islam? Does it indeed advocate the death penalty for blasphemy? Or is Rushdie to be punished for abandoning Islam and betraying the faith? But was Rushdie ever really a Muslim? What provoked a severe reaction from Iran and not from other Islamic nations?

This is an attempt to make a critical analysis of the book, the issues it raised and the events which followed the publication of *The Satanic Verses* a year ago.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION VS LICENSE TO INSULT

The issue of Salman Rushdie's freedom of expression was at the forefront of this controversy. Article 19 of the United Nations' - United Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that, *everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression which Salman Rushdie declared was an issue much larger than my book or indeed my life.* However, a letter of a Muslim, published in a newspaper argued that, *freedom of speech is all very well but it should not extend to deliberate by insulting and slandering of people's beliefs. Perhaps (you) would like to define this borderline whereby criticism becomes insult and freedom of speech undergoes censorship.* So let us now endeavour to analyse the term *freedom of expression* and its implications.

Freedom of expression is indeed a fundamental human right which has been enshrined within the constitution of the United Nations Charter. But so also is the right to protection of the law against attacks on one's honour and reputation (Article 12). It is argued that when the speech becomes abusive and the bounds of decency have been crossed, then the

rights of others are being trampled upon, and this is where *freedom of speech* must undergo censorship (Article 29). This point has been recognised by those who framed the blasphemy laws. Besides, it is not mere criticism or a difference of opinion which is censored, but rather, it is the manner of expression of the criticism. If this is abusive, that constitutes a blasphemy. So once the boundaries of decency have been crossed, it is no longer a question of freedom of expression but one of civilised conduct.

If, for instance, an MP were to abuse the Prime Minister in the British Parliament using vulgar terms such as whore, bitch or bastard, would he be glorified under the banner of freedom of expression and opinion? On the contrary, his outrage would be vociferously condemned as an affront to all civilised standards. He would be forced to retract his words. There are certain norms of decency which no one is permitted to violate regardless of any freedoms or liberties, especially in certain establishments such as that of Parliament. And religion must be included within this category for the sake of peace and order (Article 29).

No one shall be subjected.... to attacks upon his honour and reputation, proclaims the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 12). Everyone has the right to protection of the law against such..... attacks. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject.... to limitations..... determined..... solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others, and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and general welfare..... (Article 29). Why doesn't the Government impose limitation on Salman Rushdie's freedom of expression, and thereby safeguard the right of the Muslims to protection of law from an attack upon their honour? Why so much emphasis on freedom of speech?

Another interesting argument that has been put forward is that the *right of not* being abused must also be safeguarded since there is no reason that the tongue should be any more sacred than the ears or the eyes. Besides, if pornography undergoes censorship to guard the eyes from obscenity, shouldn't blasphemy also be curbed to protect the eyes and ears from filth? The British Government is hypocritical in that it endeavours to protect the rights of its own religion (i.e. blasphemy laws for Anglican Christians) but imposes freedom of speech on others. And why is it that apart from Her Majesty the Queen (Head of the Church of England), anyone else may be insulted at the Speakers Corner in Hyde Park, London? Surely all religions and their founders must be included

within this sacred category, It would be hypocrisy not to!

The fact of the matter is that *The Satanic Verses* has been written in a manner which has crossed all boundaries of decency. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and his companions are depicted in such a manner as would offend the taste of every decent person, whether Muslim or not. Such being the case, it indeed appears reasonable that the blasphemy laws should be extended to protect all religions and ideologies from abuse. This will ensure both the removal of *The Satanic Verses* from circulation, and will also prevent such obnoxious material from being marketed anytime in the future.

FACT OR FICTION?

All the events and characters in this book are entirely fictitious, and are not intended to represent any actual event or real person, either living or dead.

It was strongly argued by Salman Rushdie and others that as his novel was a fictitious one, no one had the right to restrict his imagination. So let us now examine this claim that *The Satanic Verses* is a work of fiction

Indeed, the story concocted by Mr Rushdie is entirely imaginary in that it has no bearing on reality whatsoever. However, whilst the story may be unreal and imaginary, the tale is woven around real and well-known people. Usually, in any work of fiction, there is a disclaimer such as the one quoted above. However, Mr Rushdie makes no such declaration in his novel. A fictitious tale woven around imaginary people is indeed a work of fiction. But if the people are real, and well-known to millions as in this case, regardless of whether the events are imaginary or not, such a novel cannot and should not be described as a work of fiction.

If, for instance, a filthy and indecent fictitious tale is woven around the person of Her Majesty the Queen, would it be lauded as a masterpiece of imagination? Similarly, when an insulting and abusive tale is concocted, hurling filth and attributing indecency to wellknown people who are deeply revered and loved by about a thousand million people all over the globe, how could it, by any stretch of imagination, be seen as a work of fiction? Perhaps this is because the Western readers, in their ignorance of Islamic history and unfamiliarity with the names of the Prophet's companions, fail to see the connotations and interferences implied by the passages. Whatever the case in reality *The Satanic Verses* is neither fact nor fiction.

DEATH SENTENCE FOR BLASPHEMY?

The Rushdie affair brought into question the very teachings of Islam

on blasphemy, apostasy and other related issues. In fact it raises fundamental issues which need to be clarified before we delve into the Rushdie affair any further. The prevalent conception in the Western world about Islam is a narrow-minded, intolerant and barbaric religion which advocates conversion at the point of the sword, and the death penalty for blasphemy. But is this really what Islam is? In fact, this raises the important question as to whether religion should be judged by the actions and notions of its present-day followers, or from the more authentic and reliable sources on which the religion is based?

For instance, would it be right to judge Christianity from the modern day Catholic-Protestant conflict of Northern Ireland, a war that is being waged in the very name of Christianity? or from the *Christian* atrocities of the Middle Ages, such as the Spanish Inquisition where tortures like the *rack*, and an ingeniously horrific device known as the Iron maiden were used to extract the *truth*. Was this the Christianity practiced and professed by Jesus who was himself the object of severe and untold persecution?

So let us now judge Islam from its sound sources, i.e. the holy book of the Muslim (Holy Quran) and the conduct of the Holy Founder of Islam (Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him).

QURANIC TEACHING ON BLASPHEMY

First of all, it needs to be clarified that there is absolutely no Quranic teaching which imposes any sanction whatsoever on freedom of expression or conscience. The Holy Quran gives full rights to all and sundry, irrespective of personal ideology, way of life, or creed.

The Holy Quran (Ch. 2, V. 257) clearly states:

There shall be no compulsion in religion.

Here the word *religion* (*deen* in Arabic) means any creed, religion, faith, ideology or way of life.

Though some people have ascribed their own intolerance and narrow-mindedness to Islam, there is not a shred of evidence from the Holy Quran that Islam propounds the death penalty for blasphemy. On the contrary, restriction on abuse has actually been placed on the Muslims themselves. The Holy Quran teaches Muslims not to insult the idols of idolators (6:109), even though idolatry is regarded as such a grievous sin that *God would never forgive* (4:49). Muslims are not even allowed to abuse the most outrageous thing in the eyes of God!

This lofty teaching of the Holy Quran finds no comparison even in the civilised world of today. Whilst the Holy Quran requires Muslims to respect others, the British Common Law demands that everyone should honour their religion. Yet it is Islam which is always condemned as being backward!

What greater blasphemy could there be than against God Almighty Himself? Yet the Holy Quran prescribes no punishment for such a grievous blasphemy against God, as might *well nigh (cause) the heavens to burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder and the mountains fall down in pieces* (19:91). Another reference to blasphemy is that of the Jews against Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Holy Quran refers to this as a grievous calumny, but once again, no penalty whatsoever is prescribed for the Jews.

The duty of Muslims is to advise the blphemers to desist, and leave their company if they do not take heed (6:69,70). Muslims are further instructed to return to such company once they change the topic. Obviously this injunction would be inappropriate if the punishment was indeed a death penalty! Muslims are told they will not be held accountable for the misdeeds of others (16:70), and that Allah Himself will take whatever punishment He deems appropriate (4:141).

Hence, nowhere in the Holy Quran is even the remotest hint of any punishment for blasphemy which maybe inflicted by human hands either individually, politically or administratively.

THE PROPHET'S VERDICT ON BLASPHEMY

An incident in the life of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, clarifies his own understanding of this issue. If we are intent upon judging Islam by the actions of its followers, why not observe the conduct of him who has been described as the first and foremost of all the believers (6:164). Furthermore when his wife Ayesha was asked to describe his character, she replied: His character was the Holy Quran. Hence in the person of the Holy Prophet we have a living commentary and exposition on the teachings of the Holy Quran.

In fact, a most heinous blasphemy was committed against the Holy Prophet himself when he was ruler of Medina. A hypocrite, Abdullah bin Ubayy, whose cherished desires of becoming Chief of Medina were shattered by the arrival of the Prophet, during the course of a campaign blatantly boasted that, *if we return to Medina, the one most honoured (i.e. himself) will surely drive out therefrom the meanest (i.e. referring to the Prophet).* (63:9).

The faithful companions of the Prophet were outraged, none more so than Abdullah's own son who was a sincere Muslim. With sword drawn, he implored the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. But each and every time he refused, and emphatically declared that absolutely no action whatsoever would be taken against Abdullah for his blatant blasphemy.

However, this incident does not end here. Many years later, when Abdullah eventually died, the Holy Prophet himself stood up to conduct his burial proceedings. The Prophet was well known to be full of compassion, and kindness, yet this action of his surprised even some of his most faithful companions. Hazrat Umar, went and stood right in front of the Prophet and reminded him that the Holy Quran declared about hypocrites: *Ask thou pardon for them or ask thou not, it is the same to them. Even if thou were to ask pardon for them seventy times, Allah will never forgive them.* (9:80)

Hazrat Umar relates the following incident:

When the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, went and stood by the dead body of Abdullah bin Ubayy and was about to pray, I asked him: *Are you going to pray over God's enemy?* The Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, smiled and said, *Get behind me Umar I have been given a choice and I have chosen. It was said to me: Ask pardon for them, or ask it not.....* If I knew that by asking pardon more than seventy times, he would be forgiven, I would do so. Then he prayed over him and walked with his dead body and stayed at his grave until he was buried. (Kitab Sirat Rasul Allah by Abdul malik Don Hisham op.cit., 927)

This is the real Islam as taught in the Holy Quran and put into beautiful practice by him (may the peace and blessings of God be on the Prophet) whose noble example Muslims are bidden to follow (3:32; 33:22). What a lofty teaching and what an inspiring exemplar!

TREACHERY BY AN APOSTATE?

Clifford Langley, Religious Affairs Editor of *The Times*, tries to explain *Why Islam is now inflamed*. He writes: *In the eyes of fellow Muslims, apostasy from his faith is the most serious crime a Muslim can commit. The second most serious crime is to insult the prophet Muhammad. Put them together and they constitute the sort of challenge which will drive fanatical Muslims to the extreme..... Under Muslim law an apostate should be put to death; it is a matter of honour that any slight on the honour of Muhammad must be avenged..... There is nothing so surprising therefore in the international Muslim protest over Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses.....* (The Times,

15th February 1989).

I have already proven conclusively that so far as the Holy Quran is concerned, there is no text, no verse, not a single word that prescribes any worldly, political or administrative punishment for blasphemy. As with blasphemy, so also for apostasy. Nor is there any action of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) which even remotely advocates any penalty for either blasphemy or apostasy. Here again, some intolerant and ignorant Muslims have, most unfortunately, attributed their own bigotry to Islam, which the Religious Affairs Editor of *The Times* has taken for granted.

Nor was Salman Rushdie ever a *Muslim*, in the real sense of the word, to have departed from the faith of Islam in the first place. Salman Rushdie did not have the remotest connection with religion and he admits that himself. He did not even have a Muslim upbringing, as Philip Howard, Literary Editor of *The Times* comments: His father was Anis Rushdie, a wealthy businessman who died in 1987. The son was brought up in an Anglophile, Anglo-centric way.' (*The Times*, 15th February 1989). Being brought up and bred as an atheist, how could he ever have been a Muslim' or a follower of any other religion for that matter? It was in fact his lack of faith which emboldened him to write such a scandalous book despite being warned of the possible dire consequence of such a work.

The only way Rushdie can be described as a Muslim is in the sense used by Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, when he remarked that *every child is born a Muslim*. He meant that Islam is a religion which is based upon, and ingrained within, the nature of man. And so far as man is concerned, the notion of compulsion is inconsistent with his very nature. In fact such a notion is utterly abhorrent to Islam. The early history of Islam shows that Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and his band of followers were themselves the victims of severe and untold persecution arising from *apostasy*, having discarded their former creed and way of life. It was for the safeguarding of their freedom of conscience and belief that Muslims were allowed to take up the sword against that of an enemy intent upon wiping out Islam by force. This is the true Jihad (The Holy War) which these Muslims laid down their lives for. It is most ironic indeed that these very Muslims are seen in the West as going about converting people at the point of the sword. Even more ironic is that this new murder call is being justified in the very name of him upon whose head was a reward of 100 camels!

Islam is the only religion whose scripture guarantees freedom of con-

science and belief in express and emphatic terms:

There is (to be) no compulsion in (matters of) faith. Verily right has been made distinct from wrong. (2:257)

This freedom is so repeatedly affirmed in the Holy Quran, with such a wealth of illustration and exposition, that it does not leave the slightest room for doubt on the matter. For instance: Proclaim O Prophet: This is the truth from your Lord; then let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve (18:30). *Whoever follows the guidance truly does so for his own benefit; and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. Thou art not appointed a guardian over them. (39:42)*

The following verse clarifies the Islamic position on apostasy:

Those who believe, then disbelieve (i.e. become apostate), then believe (again), then disbelieve (i.e. become apostate again) and thereafter go on increasing in disbelief. Allah will never forgive them nor guide them to any way of deliverance. (4:138).

Clearly, one is free to re-enter the religion of Islam having once become apostate. How could this be if the penalty for apostasy was death?

RELIGION AND POLITICS

Religion and politics appear to have a mysterious relationship. Religion is often accused of creating disorder, and is alleged to promote more bloodshed than prevent it. The history of religion begins with the story of Abel, who was murdered by his own brother for some personal gain. Perhaps what Cain did to Abel is just what politics does to religion. It is corrupt human beings who exploit religion to further their ulterior motives. It is unscrupulous politicians who play havoc with religion. It seems as though we are still living under the curse of Cain!

Politicians speak highly of civilisation profess devotion to principles, and the promotion of human values. They cherish their own image as the champions and guardians of civilisation yet their loyalty to these values remains so long as there is no conflict with their personal interest. The moment this happens, the entire super-structure of values crumbles to the ground.

The Ethiopian famine of a few years back illustrates this point. The whole world was moved at the shocking intensity of this disaster. But when the UN forewarned the West of the impending doom years before the famine struck, no one stirred a finger, nor a hair was raised.

And the Russian politicians were also waiting. Why? Because the leftist

Marxist philosophy is of course more easily accepted at the height of poverty and starvation! When ultimately Russia did make a move, it was time for the west to mobilise its own propaganda. How could communism be hailed as the champion of civilisation and be allowed to win the hearts of a whole nation? So this is the real face of politics and politicians. In their bid to beautify their own image, it is religion which is made to appear hideous. It is politicians in the garb of religious divines, who convert Friday sermons into political broadcast; it is they who turn white minarets into columns of darkness, and from here propound a hellish philosophy to those who come in search of paradise.

It was the politicians of Rome who put helpless Christians before hungry lions. The crowds roared with laughter at the crunching sound of bones, which the wild beasts devoured to satisfy their hunger. It is the insatiable desire of politicians for power which has taken hostage the religion of Islam.

It is said, *Truth is often stranger than fiction*. The Western world has indeed been made stranger to the real Islam, thanks to its exploitation by unscrupulous politicians, the foolish actions and notions of some ignorant followers and a hideous depiction by hostile critics. The real Islam is the most beautiful religion. Islam literally means *peace* and the surrender of ones will to that of a Merciful God, Allah by name. *Islam preaches harmony, and promises global peace and tranquillity through the establishment of a permanent spiritual relationship with One God. Islam requires belief in all the prophets including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Confucious, Zoroaster, and many others. Muslims are expected to utter the respectful benediction Peace be upon him after mentioning the name of every prophet. Thus, by inculcating respect for other religions, Islam endeavours to establish peace and understanding between all people. This is the real Islam as taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), whom Muslims honour as the greatest of all the prophets.*

A POLITICAL CONSPIRACY?

It can be confidently stated after a careful study of *The Satanic Verses*, that there are religious forces behind this work. An even more startling claim, perhaps, is that some political conspirators appear to be working hand-in-hand with the religious forces. Let us examine both these allegations in the light of the contents of *The Satanic Verses*.

The roots of this book can be traced to the time when orientalist, in their devotion to Christianity and intolerance towards Islam, exploited every spurious narration in order to attack Islam. To this goal, unreliable

narrations were quoted as hard facts, so that a totally unacceptable picture of Islam may be presented to the Western reader. Such narrations were of very doubtful origin, collected centuries after the advent of Islam, and are not consistent with the teachings of the Holy Quran, nor have they been given any credence by any scholar of Islam. The narrators have themselves been proven to be liars and hypocrites. Now, once again, this time under a different garb, the same doubtful sources and narrations have been rehashed into *The Satanic Verses*.

One thing is certain that this book is not the work of an individual effort, as Salman Rushdie did not have any remote connection with religion (as discussed earlier). It is therefore surprising that he should have come up with the same material used by earlier enemies of Islam in their attacks on Islam, nor can this be a coincidence. The book is in effect a collection of all the filth collected over the centuries, particularly those which fit the Western temperament today. Sexual overtones, which are very popular nowadays, have been freely employed in this book to create a very obscene work appealing to base desires. It appears he was instructed to write a book that would destroy all good thoughts about Islam, and to suppress the new emergence of Islam. Rushdie's lack of faith, purity of heart and decency, and the lure of riches from promises of wealth, emboldened him to this task, despite being forewarned of the possible dire consequences of such a work.

One example of the vulgar contents of the book is the filthy misrepresentation of the wives of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, as prostitutes. He creates an imaginary house of prostitutes within the Holy Kaaba at Mecca, the names of the prostitutes being those of the wives of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Hence a parallel is created between the real and the imaginary, simply because there are absolutely no traditions, even those of a spurious nature, which would misrepresent the wives of the Holy Prophet (sas) in such a fashion. Clearly, this information could only have been provided by some well-informed group of conspirators who had an axe to grind with Islam.

It is also apparent that *The Satanic Verses* was intended to provoke a severe reaction especially from Iran. Of all the Companions of the Holy Prophet (sas), his only Iranian disciple (Salman Farsi) is particularly singled out for a vicious attack on his character. This appears to be an indication of some political vengeance hidden behind this facade of art and literature. Was this because Ayatullah Khomeini of Iran had ada-

mantly refused to succumb to Western pressures?

Khomeini saw Western nations as being two-faced in their dealings with Muslim nations by selling them, in most cases, second rate weapons in exchange for a major share of the oil wealth of the Arab nations. These weapons may be used against other Muslims nations but not against non-Muslim countries, while at the same time bad publicity was given to the Muslim states. Furthermore, the Muslim states had practically become economic and political slaves of the Western world. Khomeini tried to reverse this trend for which he is despised, yet credit must be given to him in that, unlike other Muslim leaders, he never bowed down before that which he considered to be false. He cannot, however, be condoned for his crude actions, having done an injustice to himself, his own people and to the image of Islam.

When Khomeini announced the death sentence on Salman Rushdie, so strong and vociferous was the West's reaction that all of Europe and the USA united in calling back their embassy staff, and sent the Iranian embassy staff back to their own country. The basis for this severe action was apparently the *outrage of all civilised standards*. However, when similar death threats were made against the Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community with the promise of a reward of £40,000, and published within British newspapers, the reply, in writing, from the Home Secretary, when this was pointed out to him, was that he wasn't sure whether any crime had been committed! So the extreme reaction to Khomeini's edict was not a matter of adherence to any civilised principles. Clearly, the difference in attitude is political.

CONCLUSION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly proclaims that *everyone has the right to protection of the law against..... attacks upon his honour.....* (Article 12). Furthermore, *in the interest of public order, no one should be allowed to trample upon the rights of others,* (Article 29). However, not even in the interests of peace and order was any legislative action taken by the government, and the feelings and sentiments of Muslims, were in effect, being dismissed as though they didn't exist at all.

The Western world does not appear to appreciate the degree of reverence of Muslims for their Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Perhaps the answer partly lies in Kipling's saying: *East is East, and West is West; and never the twain shall meet*. This might also explain why extreme medieval connotations were attached by the press to the book-burning affair in Bradford. In the Middle Ages, this would

imply a condemnation of either *intellectualism* or *heresy*. But book-burning is a common-place event in the streets of certain Asian countries and is a mere protest against the book and no more.

However, no hue and cry was raised by the media when certain Members of Parliament set fire to some papers just a few weeks before the Bradford incident. The same double-standards seem to apply to any event related to the Muslim world. Atrocities perpetrated by so-called Muslim groups are dubbed as *Islamic terrorism* (a contradiction in terms!). Yet the Protestant-Catholic conflict of Northern Ireland is not termed *Christian-beastliness*. Nor is the savagery of Hitler condemned as *Christian-barbarism*. The entire history of the Middle Ages can be smeared red with the blood of Christian terror. Nuclear weapons are *stock-piled* mainly by the *Christian* nations. Yet whenever a Muslim state endeavours to acquire such weapons, it is dubbed as an *Islamic bomb*. The explosion of the Rushdie affair into an International crisis owes much to this narrow-mindedness towards Islam.

The rather foolish propaganda by some Muslims made *The Satanic Verses* a best seller, just like Peter Wright's novel *Spy-Catcher* before it.

Ironically, these demonstrations were meant to prevent people from reading a blasphemous novel. The result was just the opposite as passages from the book were quoted in newspapers and magazines, and read out in the news on radio and television. Translations of the novel into various foreign languages, so as to meet the demands of the non-English speaking world, is already well under way.

However, the protests of ordinary Muslims were indeed genuine and spontaneous as their feelings had been seriously hurt. Their deep-rooted sense of reverence for Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is a love much more profound than even their affection for their own parents. And that child is yet to be born who wouldn't defend an attack on his or her parents' honour! In an increasingly smaller world, one must have regard for all people, yet at the moment the West seems to be saying that we *don't* care about your feelings at all. This can hardly be the basis for trust and friendship.

However when one looks at this affair, one thing is certain. It has unleashed racist and intolerant attitudes somewhat akin to those prevalent in Nazi Germany. Some tabloids have used this row as an excuse to call for the deportation of Muslims, and the Independent declared that there was no place for *intolerant* Muslims in a tolerant Britain! The

minds of the west have been agitated over a very delicate and sensitive issue, which has a real potential to acquire the ugliness of Nazi Germany. We can only hope and pray that no such controversy arises in the future which would rekindle these fiery emotions from within the hearts of those still inflamed over the affair.

The blasphemy laws should be extended to protect all religions and ideologies. This will ensure both the withdrawal of *The Satanic Verses* from circulation, and will go some way to prevent such obnoxious material from being marketed anytime in the future. At least we can then hope to live in peace for some time to come.

Finally, from the Ahmadiyya Muslim point of view, the most distressing aspect of this affair was the further damage it has done to the image of Islam. Political grudge there may well have been against Khomeini, but this should not have been taken out on Islam. Khomeini's edict was indeed a most outrageous one. However, religion should always be judged from the sources upon which it is based, and not from the pronouncements of fanatics or politicians. Furthermore, there should be one common yardstick for judging all religions and ideologies. The Islam taught by the Holy Quran and practiced and professed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is the a most beautiful and attractive religion. I have already proven conclusively that so far as the Holy Quran is concerned, there is no text, no verse, not a single word which prescribes any worldly, political or administrative punishment for either blasphemy or apostasy. And the noble conduct of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, reiterates this in a most exemplary matter. It is this very Islam which will captivate the hearts of the entire world and the *Sunrise of truth will dawn from the West* as foretold by Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, fourteen hundred years ago.

....continued from page 2

And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree; it will drop upon thee fresh ripe dates. (19:26)

The Bible mentions that shepherds were watching their sheep at the time of Jesus' birth which would have been most unlikely in December when the climate in Judea is extremely cold.

HOLY PROPHET OF ISLAM AS A FATHER

(Dr. Qazi Muhammad Barakatullah)

Muhammad literally means much praised. Even before he made claim to prophethood, his own people knew him to be Truthful and Trustworthy (Hisham).

The Holy Prophet of Islam was the father of three sons and four daughters. Two sons Qasim and Abdullah, named in the family Tayab and Tahir were born from Hazrat Khadija. Another son, Ibrahim, later on, was born from Hazrat Maria, his coptic wife.

The first born was Qasim after whom, according to the Arab custom, the Holy Prophet himself was called Abul Qasim, that is father of Qasim. Qasim died at the age of two before the advent of Islam.

Next to Qasim was his eldest daughter named Zainab. Next to her were daughters Ruqayya, Umme Kalsoom, and the youngest of all daughters was Fatima. The youngest offspring of the Holy Prophet and Hazrat Khadija was Abdullah, who passed away as an infant before the coming of Islam.

Hazrat Khadija had two children from her previous husbands, from one a son, and from the other a daughter, and both were called *Hind*. Apparently, the children remained with the respective families of their fathers, and came to visit her from time to time, to receive affection and gifts. The son, Hind Ibn Abi Hala seems to have been much attached to the Prophet, his stepfather as later, in Islam, he enthusiastically wrote about the Holy Prophet in touching terms: *.. his mouth was like a box of rubies full of pearls, his face was more beautiful than the moon when it is full ..* This reflects unmistakable intimacy, and an extraordinary love and respect.

According to Arab custom, when Zaid bin Harith was offered for sale, the Holy Prophet asked Hazrat Khadija to buy him. So Zaid bin Harith was bought but set free. The Holy Prophet and Hazrat Khadija then

adopted him as their son and afterwards he was known as Zaid bin Muhammad. He lived under the Holy Prophet's protection and became a notably faithful as well as a companion.

Hazrat Zainab, the eldest daughter, was married to Abul-As bin Rabi bin Abd Shams. Hazrat Ruqayya and Hazrat Umme Kulsoom were married to Utbah and Utaibah, sons of the Holy Prophet's uncle Abu Lahab. As time passed and He proclaimed himself to be the Prophet of Islam, Abu Lahab prevailed upon his sons to divorce his daughters Ruqayya and Umme Kulsoom who were later married to Hazrat Usman bin Affan one after the other. Both of them died in the Holy Prophet's lifetime. Hazrat Fatima, the youngest, was married to Hazrat Ali and she was the only child that survived the Holy Prophet. She was stricken with grief by her father's death with the result that she died within six months of that event.

Almighty Allah blessed the Holy Prophet of Islam and Hazrat Maria, his coptic wife, with a son who was named Ibrahim. It was an ecstatic occasion for the Holy Prophet. It was natural that he expressed his affection for the new born. The baby's mother, Hazrat Maria, also brought delight for the Holy Prophet. He also generously rewarded the midwife Salma, wife of Abu Rafi. He celebrated the birth with great happiness for he had a strong attachment for him since he had lost his two earlier sons, Al Qasim and Abdullah who were given the family name Tayab and Tahir, at a tender age. His daughters, after they grew to maturity, married and bore children, but only Fatimah survived from all his progeny. Naturally the death of all these sons and daughters who passed away one after the other and were buried by the Holy Prophet's own hands left him with a severe sense of bereavement. It was, therefore, natural that a father who was so bereaved felt exceedingly joyful and happy at the birth of Ibrahim.

Alas, the pleasure that Ibrahim brought to the Holy Prophet did not last long. Soon, the child fell seriously ill. He was moved to a date orchard near Mashabat Umm-i-Ibrahim, where his mother and Sirin, his mother's sister, looked after him. When his condition worsened and it became apparent that he would not live long, the Holy Prophet was informed and called. He was so shocked at the news that he felt his knees could no more carry him, and asked Abdur Rahman ibn Awf to give his hand to lean upon. The Holy Prophet proceeded immediately to the orchard and arrived in time to bid farewell to an infant dying in his mother's lap.

His heart was torn apart by the new tragedy, and his face mirrored his inner pain. Choking with sorrow, he said to his son, *O Ibrahim, against the judgment of God, we cannot avail of a thing, and then fell silent. Tears flowed from his eyes. The child lapsed gradually, and his mother and aunt cried loudly and incessantly, but the Holy Prophet never asked them to stop. As Ibrahim approached to die, the Holy Prophet with tears in his eyes talked once more to the child: O Ibrahim, were the truth not certain that the last of us will join the first, we would have mourned you even more than we do now.* A moment later he said: *The eyes send their tears and the heart is saddened, but we do not say anything except that which pleases our Allah. Indeed, O Ibrahim, we are bereaved by your departure from us.*

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, tried to sublimate his sadness and lighten his sorrow. Looking towards Hazrat Maria and Sirin (Hazrat Maria's sister), he said to them in appeasement that Ibrahim would have his own nurse in Paradise. Umm-i- Burdah, or according to another version, Al Fazl ibn Abbas, washed the body of the child in preparation for the burial. He was carried on a little bed by the Prophet and a number of Muslims to the cemetery of Abu Bakr, where, after a prayer recited by the Prophet, he was laid to rest. The Holy Prophet ordered the grave to be covered in. He filled it with sand, sprinkled on some water, and erected a tombstone. He then said: *Tombstones do neither good nor ill, but they help appease the living. Anything that man does, God wishes him well.* It is recorded that Holy Prophet said, *Had Ibrahim lived he would have been a true prophet.* (Kanzul Ammal)

The death of Ibrahim coincided with the eclipse of the sun, a phenomenon that the Muslims saw as a miracle. They went about saying that the sun eclipsed in sadness over the death of Ibrahim. The Prophet heard them and said: *The sun and the moon are signs of God. They are eclipsed neither for the death or birth of any man. On beholding an eclipse, therefore, remember God and turn to Him in prayer.*

AN EXCELLENT PRAYER

(Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – The Promised Messiah)

The most excellent prayer which instructs us concerning the time and occasion of supplication and depicts before us the picture of spiritual zeal is the one that God, the Beneficent, has taught us in the opening chapter of the Holy Quran. It is as follows:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ - اَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

All worthiness of praise belongs to Allah alone Who is the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds (1:2).

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ -

He provides for us out of His mercy before any action proceeds from us, and after we have acted He rewards our action out of His mercy (1:3).

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

He alone is the Master of the Day of Judgement and has not committed that day to anyone else. (1:4).

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ -

O Thou Who dost comprehend all these attributes, we worship Thee alone and seek Thy help in all our affairs (1:5). The use of the plural pronoun in this context indicates that all our faculties are occupied in His worship and are prostrate at His threshold. Every person by virtue of his inner faculties is a multiple entity and the prostration of all his faculties before God is the condition that is called Islam.

Guide us along Thy straight path and establish us firmly on it (1:6); the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties and favours, and not of those who have incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray and did not reach Thee (1:7). Amen.

These verses tell us that divine bounties and favours are bestowed only

upon those who offer up their lives as a sacrifice in the cause of God, and devoting themselves wholly to it and being occupied entirely with His pleasure continue to supplicate so that they might be bestowed all the spiritual bounties that a human being can receive by way of nearness to God, meeting Him and hearing His words. With this supplication they worship God through all their faculties, eschew sin and remain prostrate at His threshold. They safeguard themselves against all vice and shun the ways of God's wrath. As they seek God with high resolve and perfect sincerity, they find Him and are given to drink their fill of their understanding of God. The true and perfect grace that conveys a person to the spiritual world depends upon steadfastness, by which is meant that degree of sincerity and faithfulness which cannot be shaken by any trial. It means a strong relationship with the Divine which a sword cannot cut asunder and fire cannot consume, nor can any other calamity damage it. The death of dear ones or separation from them should not interfere with it, nor should fear of dishonour affect it, nor should a painful death move the heart away from it in the least degree. Thus this door is very narrow and this path is very hard.

Alas how difficult it is !

This is indicated by Almighty God in the following verse:

Tell them: If your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ
وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا
وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا
أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي
سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ
لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ - (توبه: ۲۴)

wives, and your kinsfolk, and the wealth that you have acquired, and the trade the dullness of which you apprehend, and the dwellings that you fancy, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah declares His judgment. Allah guides not

the disobedient people (9:24).

This verse clearly shows that those people who put aside the will of God and give preference to their relatives and their properties whom they love better, are evil-doers in the estimation of God and that they would surely be ruined because they preferred something else to God. This is the third stage in which that person becomes godly, who welcomes thousands of calamities for the sake of God, and leans towards Him with such sincerity and devotion as if he has no one related to him except God, and all others have died. The truth is that till we submit ourselves to death we cannot behold the Living God. The day our physical life undergoes death is the day of the manifestation of God. We are blind till we become blind to the sight of all besides God. We are dead till we become like a corpse in the hand of God. It is only when we face God completely that we acquire the steadfastness that overcomes all passions of self, and the steadfastness brings about the death of the life that is devoted to selfish purposes. This is described in the verse:

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ - (البقرة: ١١٣)

This means that God requires that we should offer ourselves to be sacrificed in His cause (2:113). We shall achieve steadfastness when all our faculties and powers are devoted to His cause and our life and our death are all for His sake, as He has said:

قُلْ إِنِّي صَلَاتِي وَمَخْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ - (الانعام: ١٦٣)

Proclaim, O Prophet: My prayer and my sacrifices and my living and my dying are all for the sake of Allah (6:163).

When a person's love of God reaches a stage at which his living and his dying is not for his own sake but is entirely for God, then God, Who has always loved those who love Him, bestows His love upon him and by the meeting of these two loves a light is generated inside the person which the world cannot recognize or understand. Thousands of the righteous and the elect had to lay down their lives because the world did not recognize them. They were accounted selfish and deceitful as the world could not see their bright countenances, as is said:

يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ (الاعراف: ١٩٩)

They look at thee, but they do not see thee (97:199).

In short from the day when that light is generated in a person he ceases to be earthly and becomes heavenly. He Who is the Master of all beings speaks inside him and manifests the light of His Godhead and makes his heart, which is saturated with His love, His throne. As soon as such a one becomes a new person through His bright transformation, God becomes a new God for him and manifests new ways for him. It is not that God becomes another God, or that those ways are different from His ways, and yet they are distinct from His normal ways, of which worldly philosophy is not aware. He becomes one of those who are referred to in the verse:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (البقرة: ٢٠٨)

Of the people there are those of high degree who dedicate themselves wholly to seeking the pleasure of Allah in return for their lives. These are the people towards whom Allah is Most Compassionate (2:208). Thus he who arrives at the stage of spiritual life becomes wholly devoted to the cause of Allah.

In this verse God Almighty sets forth that only such a one is delivered from all suffering who sells his life in the cause of Allah in return for His pleasure and proves his devotion by laying down his life. He considers that he has been brought into being for obedience to his Creator and for service of his fellow beings. He performs all the virtues which are related to every one of his faculties with such eagerness and sincerity as if he beholds his True Beloved in the mirror of his obedience. His will is identified with the will of God and all his delight is centered in his obedience to God. Righteous conduct proceeds from him not as labour but as delight and pleasure. This is the paradise that is bestowed upon a spiritual person in this very life. The paradise that will be bestowed in the hereafter would be a reflection of this paradise which will, through Divine power, be manifested physically.

(Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam).

80 YEARS AGO

(The following article appeared in the Review of Religions dated December, 1910)

THE RELIGION OF THE PARSEES.

The Parsees are followers of Zoroaster and believe in the Avesta as their sacred book. Zoroastrianism was the state religion when the Muslims entered Persia as conquerors, but it was swept before the rising tide of Islam. Notwithstanding the full religious liberty granted to the people by their Muslim rulers, the Zoroastrians as well as the followers of other religions, embraced the new faith with amazing eagerness. Speaking of the toleration of the Muslims, the Christian author of *The Preachings of Islam* says:

The Zoroastrian priests had acquired an enormous influence in the state... They took advantage of their position to persecute all those religious bodies -(and they were many)- that dissented from them. Besides the numerous adherents of older forms of the Persian religion, there were Christians, Jews, Sabaeans and numerous sects in which the speculations of Gnostics, Manichaeans and Buddhists found expression... The followers of all these varied forms of faith could breathe again under a rule that granted them religious freedom and exemption from military service on payment of a light tribute.

Speaking of the rapid spread of Islam in Persia, the same writer says:

That this widespread conversion was not due to force or violence is evidenced by the toleration extended to those who still clung to their ancient faith. Even to the present day, there are some small communities of fire worshippers to be found in certain districts of Persia, and though these have in later years often had to suffer persecution, their ancestors in the early centuries of the Hijra enjoyed a remarkable degree of toleration; their fire-temples were respected, and we even read of a Muhammadan General (in the reign of Al-Mu'tasim, 833-842 A. D.) who ordered an Imam and a Mu'azzin to be flogged because they had destroyed a fire-temple in Sughd and built a mosque in its place. In the tenth century, three centuries after the conquest of the country, fire-temples were to be

found in Iraq, Kirman, Sijistan, Khurasan, Jibal, Azarbijan, and Arran, i.e., in almost every province of Persia. In Fars itself there were few cities in which fire-temples and Magians were not to be found. Ash Shahrastani also (writing as late as the twelfth century), makes mention of a fire-temple at Isfiniva, in the neighbourhood of Baghdad itself.

In the face of such facts, it is surely impossible to attribute the decay of Zoroastrianism to violent conversions made by the Muslim conquerors. The number of Persians who embraced Islam in the early days of the Arab rule was probably very large from the various reasons given above, but the late survival of their ancient faith and the occasional record of conversion in the course of successive centuries, render it probable that the acceptance of Islam was both peaceful and voluntary... Scanty as these notices of conversions are, yet the very fact that such can be found up to three centuries and half after the Muslim conquest is clear testimony to the toleration the Persians enjoyed, and argues that their conversion to Islam was peaceful, and to some extent at least, gradual."

The followers of Zoroaster do not, at the present day, number more than 82000 persons. In Persia, they are to be found at Kirman, Yazd and Tehran, but the greater number is found in Bombay, and in some of the cities of Gujrat. The Indian Parsees are the descendants of the ancient Persians, who emigrated to India about the year 710 and were welcomed by the Hindu Raja of Baroda. They wear a peculiar hat shaped like a horse's hoof, which was originally assumed as a token of submission to the rulers of their adopted country. The first act a devout Parsee does after getting out of bed is his morning prayer. Then he rubs on his face and other parts of his body a little nirang or cow urine as a protection against the influence of Devas or evil spirits. They believe in two spirits, Ahura Mazda, or good, and Deva or evil, which are ever striving for supremacy, but they believe that 3000 years after Zoroaster, a prophet will be born from the seed of Zoroaster who *will destroy evil, purify the world, and make Mazdaism supreme.*" It is strange that all the great prophets of the world have independently of one another, foretold of the appearance of a great prophet in the latter ages and all describe him as coming to destroy evil, to spread peace in the world and to make the true religion supreme. Besides, all the religions represent him as coming in *the latter days," the last ages," the end of age," the end of time.*" The Zoroastrians, the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Christians and the Muslims all have been expecting the advent of this messenger. Again, it also appears that this promised messenger was to appear in the East. "*Who raised the righteous man in the East?*" asks Isaiah (41:2). Jesus also in his

characteristic way points to the East as the place of his advent (Matt. 24:27,28). The Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, pointed with his finger to the East. It is curious that the Holy Prophet describes the promised messenger to be of Persian descent. Ahmad, in whom the prophecy has been fulfilled, was actually of Persian extraction. The Hindu looks to India itself as the place of the appearance of the illustrious avatar at the end of Kaljug or iron age. A study of these prophecies shows that they all refer to one and the same personage. That prophet has already appeared and he is no other than Ahmad of Qadian. He came with all the signs and established his claim with numerous and mighty prophecies. He came like lightening and has passed away like lightning. The seed he has sown has already sprouted forth into a tender plant; it is making a steady progress, and is destined in due time to spread over the whole world. The propaganda started by him is like the new moon which will wax into full moon in due time. Then evil will be completely destroyed and purity will reign in the earth.

To return to the religion of the Parsees. According to them the life of man is divided into two parts, — the life on earth and the life beyond the grave. The latter life is the result of the deeds done in the former. All thoughts, words, and deeds of man are recorded in the book as separate items and the evil deeds are entered as debts. The evil deeds can be counterbalanced by good deeds. No one can enter paradise but he must pass over a bridge which lies on the way to heaven. If his good deeds out balance his evil deeds, he passes forthwith into heaven. If evil deeds outweigh good deeds, the torments of hell are his portion for ever. If the good and the evil are equally balanced, the soul passes into an intermediate state and his fate remains undecided until the last day of Judgment. These teachings of Zoroaster are almost identical with those of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them. The Holy Quran says:

And just balances will We set up for the day of resurrection, so that no soul be wronged in aught; and if a work be but the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We would bring it forth to be weighed: and our reckoning will suffice." (21,48). Again, And the weighing on that day shall be with justice; and they whose balances shall be heavy, these are they who shall be happy; and they whose balances shall be light, these are they who have lost their soul. (7.7). And again, Then as to him whose balances are heavy-his shall be a life that shall please him well, and as to him whose balances are light, his dwelling place shall be hell." (101:5,6).

With regard to the evil deeds being annulled by the good actions, the Holy Quran says: "*And observe prayer at each morning, at the close of the day, and at the approach of night, - verily good deeds drive away evil deeds, - This is a warning for those who reflect*". (11,116). The Holy Quran goes a step further, According to it, good deeds not only annul evil deeds, they sometimes even turn them into good deeds. Thus it says, *Save those who have repented and believed and done righteous works as to them, God will change their evil things into good things, for God is Gracious, Merciful.*"(25:70). This is not the only teaching of Zoroaster which is analogous to that of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of God be upon him. He taught many things which were also taught by the Holy Prophet, but the limits of this article do not permit me to refer to them all. This remarkable similarity between the teachings of these two prophets bears out the truth of the Quranic statement that there is not a people but a warner hath been sent to it, and that the Holy Prophet is not a prophet of new doctrines. This analogy is also a convincing proof of the fact that the teachings of both these prophets emanated from one common source and that source was no other than the Divine Being Himself. This analogy is not restricted to the teachings of the Iranian and the Arabian Prophets; it is common to all the prophets of the world; but the similarity between the doctrines of these two prophets is particularly striking. This similarity is not confined to general principles, but also extends to the minutest details. For instance, they not only taught that there is a heaven and a hell beyond the grave, but even the descriptions which they gave of these places of bliss and torment correspond to the minutest details. One of these details is the teaching of the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, with regard to the Sirat which corresponds to Zoroaster's description of the bridge which lies on the way to heaven. This close similarity between the doctrine of the two prophets fills us with admiration for the Iranian Prophet. He truly must have been a great prophet, for there are very few prophets whose doctrines and whose personal experiences bear so marked a resemblance to those of the last and the greatest of the Prophets, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, as those of Zoroaster do. The companions of the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, also paid him the honour due to a prophet and they placed his followers on a par with those of Moses and Jesus, according to them the same treatment which they accorded to the followers of other prophets.

The more ignorant of the Parsees worship the elements, fire, water, and earth and the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars, as gods,

but the more intelligent among them reverence them merely as the holy gifts of God. They stoutly deny that they are fire-worshippers. The original emigrants from Persia brought the embers of the sacred fire from Central Asia, and the sacred fires that are now burning in the Parsee temples at Bombay are said to have been kindled about 3000 years ago.

The Parsee custom of exposing their dead to be devoured by birds and beasts seems to have originated in their reverence for the elements. They hold the body, from which the soul has departed, as impure and unclean; hence they will not allow the sacred elements of fire, water, and earth to be defiled by contact with a dead body. Fire must not burn it, the earth must not take it in its bosom, and waters must not drown it. Hence the practice of exposing the dead bodies to be feasted on by the winged creatures of the air, or the dogs of the streets. This practice has now been partly shorn of its hideousness by the erection of dakhmas or Towers of Silence the last resting place for the departed Parsee. Mr. Frederick J. Haskin gives the following description of these towers in a Californian paper:-

The Towers of Silence in Bombay are the most interesting things to be seen in that interesting city. They stand at the top of Malabar Hill, the highest point of ground on Bombay Island. There are five circular towers of from 200 to 300 feet in circumference and about thirty feet in height. Permission to visit the tower compound is easily obtained, but no one is allowed to go nearer than the flower garden which surrounds the House of Prayer at the gate. Even the mourners in a funeral train may not approach nearer than this.

Men set apart for the purpose, despised by their co-religionists as unclean, take the body from the House of Prayer, where the mourners stand with their clothes linked together in token of united grief. They bear the body on a litter up the inclined plane which leads to an iron door, a little more than half way up the side of the tower. Only these bearded carriers of the dead are permitted to enter the towers. If any other person should see one of the bodies or skeletons inside he would be cursed with eternal perdition and his descendants would share his woe.

Inside the tower is wholly occupied by a circular gridiron, sloping toward a central well and having three concentric rows of niches for bodes. The inside circle is for children, the next for women and the outer circle for men. The body carriers place their burden in one of the niches, remove the shroud and leave the body quite naked.

Then the waiting vultures swoop down from the sides of the tower and from every neighbouring tree. In less than an hour nothing is left but cleanly picked skeleton. That is permitted to remain for several days, when the body carriers again enter and throw the bones into the great well at the center, where they are left to await the slow operation of the transformation of dust to dust.

The tower is roofless, of course, and for that reason receives the rain. The rain water is polluted by contact with the corpses and decaying bones, and being one of the sacred elements it must be purified. The towers are drained into the central well and from thence conduits run out in four directions. Under the tower walls the water is filtered through several feet of charcoal and again, at the end of the drain, through a filter of sand and gravel. Thus purified, the water is permitted to return again into the earth and the sea. Of the five Towers of Silence at Bombay one is reserved for the private use of the great Jeejebhoy family, who built it, and another for the use of the bodies of those who have committed suicide or who have died unnatural deaths.

Western opinion concerning this method of disposing of corpses is divided, some persons advocating it because of its undoubted sanitary perfection, but most foreign visitors look upon it with repugnance. Even the burning of the dead on open pyres, as is done by the Hindus, seems less revolting.

The white towers themselves suggest nothing half so gruesome as the serried grave rows of a western cemetery; the house of prayer is a simple platform open at the sides and roofed over; the garden is beautiful with the flowers of the tropic and the temperate zones, and there is nothing in the appearance of the place to suggest anything unusual.

But there is always the whirl of wings above, a sound which banishes forgetfulness and insists upon constant consciousness of the purpose of this dread place. Hundreds of hideous vultures sit around the rims of the towers, forming a living border of black to the pure white of the structures. The trees are alive with the great, ugly birds, and as far as the eye can see they are circling, circling, circling.

When the familiar cortege is seen winding up the long road that leads to the top of the hill the vultures circle closer and closer, so that when the procession has arrived within the compound the whole tribe of greedy scavengers is present. The moment the body carriers deposit the corpse within and remove the shroud there is a mighty rush of wings and the swift work of destruction is begun.

Strange and gruesome as it may seem, it is even more pronounced when one drives about the streets of the city and sees here and there a marble

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WAY OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

(Ahmad Oliyiwola Jegede)

In the study of this highly intellectual and thought provoking subject one has to learn carefully the stages of man's development as explained in the Holy Quran. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Al Mahdi, and the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community in Islam, has described the physical, moral and spiritual conditions of man in his inspiring book *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*.

Nafse Ammarah.

These words mean that the human mind is ready to incite man to do evil as stated in the Holy Quran:

And I do not hold my own self to be free from weakness surely the soul is prone to rejoin evil save that whereon my Lord has mercy. (12:54)

In connotation this is man's natural state in as much as he is not guided by reason and understanding but just follows his natural inclinations in drinking, sleeping, quarrelling etc. almost like an animal. Elsewhere we read in the Holy Quran:

Those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat even as the cattle. (47:13)

It is when man is in this animalistic stage that he tends to be a disbeliever. However, when man is guided by reason, instinct, understanding and has some control over himself. he is able to regulate his behaviour. This state ceases to be his natural condition. He has now reached the next moral state of Nafse Lawwama.

Nafse Lawwama

Nafse Lawwama means the self-accusing and is referred to in the following verse:

Nay I swear by the self-accusing soul. (75:3)

At this stage man reproves himself for his vices and sins yet is not fully practising virtue. He still stumbles despite his aspirations and efforts to avoid sin and misdemeanour; but at the same time he feels remorse for his misconduct.

In this moral stage he aspires to attain higher moral qualities.

Nafse Mutmainnah.

Nafse Mutmainnah means the soul being in a state of rest. We read in the Holy Quran:

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. (89:21 31)

Similar assurance is found elsewhere:

These are they in whose hearts Allah has inscribed true faith and whom He has strengthened with inspiration from Himself. And He will admit them into gardens through which streams flow. Therein will they abide; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. (58:23)

This is the apex of human development and in this spiritual state man is completely liberated from all moral weaknesses and he is wholly engulfed in relationship with Allah without Whose support he cannot live. A full understanding of this stage is gained from the following passage in the Holy Quran:

And by the soul and its perfection, And He (Allah) revealed to it the ways of evil and the ways of righteousness. He, indeed, prospers who purifies it, and he is ruined who corrupts it. (91:8-11)

Deep reflection upon these verses enables one to infer without reservation or hesitation that God has implanted in man's nature a sense or realization of what is good or bad and that he can achieve spiritual perfection by eschewing what is bad and wrong and adopting what is right and good.

Many impediments strew the path of the man striving to develop a moral and spiritual life. The Holy Quran sheds light on this fact:

And, We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of

wealth and lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who when a misfortune overtakes them say surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return. It is these upon whom descend blessings from their Lord and also mercy and it is these who are rightly guided. (2:156 158)

In these verses God explains unequivocally that He is the Master and Controller of everything including our own selves. He tests the faith of believers with hardships for which they should have no complaint. They should not allow misfortunes to depress them but rather help spur them forward on the path of God. Again the Holy Quran states:

Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before thee, but when he sought to attain his object, Satan put obstacles in the way of what he sought after. But Allah removes the obstacles that are placed by Satan. Then Allah firmly establishes His Signs. And Allah is All Knowing, Wise. (22:53)

This verse specifically refers to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and the prophets who came before him. It should be understood that the followers of a prophet would also suffer because they are also trying to maintain a close relationship with God. The verse means that satanic persons seek to retard the progress of a God-fearing person with all kinds of obstructions. They want to halt their spiritual endeavour but fail to understand that they are unable to frustrate God's Divine plans as He removes all impediments and causes Truth to prevail.

I will now mention some of the qualities of God-fearing people seeking the pleasure and nearness of God.

Trust In God.

The greatest virtue which enables a man to know God is to possess a firm belief and trust in Him. The Holy Quran has emphasised this cardinal principle:

And why should not we put our trust in Allah when He has showed us our appropriate ways? And we will, surely, bear with patience all the harm you do us. So in Allah let those who trust put their trust. (14:13)

Sincerity

Sincerity in the worship of God is essential. The Holy Quran states:

Surely it is We Who have revealed the Book to thee comprising the

whole truth, so worship Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience. Remember, it is to Allah alone that sincere obedience is due. (39:3,4)

We must not falter in extending sincerity to our fellow beings.

Humility.

The Holy Quran teaches that humility is a mark of a true servant of God and a necessity for acquiring nearness to God:

And the true servants of the Gracious God are those walking on the earth humbly and when the ignorant address them, they avoid them gracefully by saying peace! (25:64)

Those who dispute concerning the signs of Allah without any authority having come to them from Allah. Grievously hateful is this in the sight of Allah and in the sight of those who believe. Thus does Allah set a seal upon the heart of every arrogant, haughty person. (40:36)

And turn not thy cheek away from men in scorn nor walk in the earth haughtily, surely Allah loves not any arrogant boaster. (31:19)

Gratitude.

This is another quality which a person must possess to win the favour of God. This virtue is taught in the opening chapter of the Holy Quran:

All praise belongs to Allah alone, Lord of all the worlds. (1:2)

In one of many other verses we read:

And of His mercy, He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein and that you may seek of His bounty, and that you may be grateful. (28:74)

Promises

And those who fulfil their promise when they have made one. (2:178)

Spirit of Sacrifice.

Spending in the cause of Allah is also a moral quality which draws a man nearer to Him. The Holy Quran says:

You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend out of that which you love; and whatever you spend, Allah surely knows it well. (3:93)

Suppression of anger.

A devout servant of God should be able to suppress his anger under provocation. On this matter the Holy Quran states:

Those who spend in prosperity and adversity and those who suppress anger and pardon men, and Allah loves those who do good. (3: 135)

Frugality

Those who do not make proper use of Divine gifts are guilty of ingratitude, and those who squander away their wealth shirk their responsibilities by its improper use. God says in the Holy Quran:

And give to the kinsman his due, and to the poor and the wayfarer, and squander not thy wealth extravagantly. Verily the squanderers are brothers of satan and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord. (17:27,28)

Good works

The doing of good is the practice of a servant of God. In this connection the Holy Quran states:

You are the best people, raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin good and forbid evil and believe in Allah.(3:111)

Justice

Under no circumstances should justice be flouted. The Holy Quran directs:

And when you speak, observe justice, even if the person concerned be a relative, and fulfil the covenant of Allah. (6:153)

If we are able to maintain these qualities as well as many others which I have not mentioned then certainly we would be competent and qualified to invite people to the way of God. The Holy Quran affirms:

And who is better in speech than he who invites men to Allah and does righteous deeds and says, I am surely, of those who submit.

May Allah bless us with His nearness. Amen.

SAHIBZADA MIRZA MUNAWWAR AHMAD

(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam mourns the death of one of its illustrious sons, Dr Munawwar Ahmad, who passed away in Rabwah, Pakistan on the 19th September, 1990, at the age of seventy-two. He was the grandson of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. He was also the third son of Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, second successor of the Promised messiah, and his spouse Umme Nasir.

Dr Munawwar Ahmad was born in Qadian, India, on the 1st of February, 1918. In 1940 he married Mahmooda Begum, daughter of Nawab Muhammad Ali. He studied medicine at the King Edward Medical College, Lahore and had the distinction of being the first doctor in the family of the Promised Messiah. After graduation he was medical demonstrator at Glansay Medical College, Amritsar, and from 1945-1947 he worked at the Nur Hospital, Qadian. Later, after the partition of the Indian sub-continent, he played a large part in building the Fazl-e-Omer Hospital in Rabwah, Pakistan, and was its chief medical officer from 1955-1983. Now the post is held by his son, Dr. Mubashar Ahmad.

Dr Munawwar Ahmad was particularly concerned for the medical care of the poor and he organised a system for providing them with free treatment and medicine at the hospital. He always prayed for his patients and considered that trusting in medicine alone was tantamount to the setting up of an equal with God. He was the personal physician to both the second and third successors of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad and Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad respectively. In 1955 He accompanied Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad to Europe where he went for treatment following a dastardly attack on his life when he received a deep and dangerous stab wound in the neck.

As I have mentioned he was a very prayerful person and was regular

in attending congregational prayers in the mosque. He did not allow climatic and weather conditions to prevent him from going to the mosque. He would offer long prayers with full and earnest attention. He was also very loyal, respectful and obedient to the Khalifa of the time.

In addition to his medical duties which required much of his time and attention, he was also engaged in other activities of the Community. He was the Vice-President of the Central Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Association which attended to the spiritual and all round training of the male members of the Community between the ages of fifteen and forty. He held this office from 1950-1956. Later he became the Vice-President of the Central Ansarullah Association which attends to similar needs for male members over the age of forty. He also served on various other committees.

I first had the pleasure of meeting him in one of the narrow thoroughfares of Qadian during one of my early visits to that holy place either in 1945 or 1946. At that time I was unaware who he was nor do I remember what words may have passed between us. What I do remember, however, was the bright and smiling countenance with which he greeted me and which was always a permanent feature in his appearance. The last time I met him was at his home in Rabwah, Pakistan, when my wife and I paid him a surprise visit during our short ten day stay there in 1989. He welcomed us in a most gracious, cheerful and amiable manner. He was suffering from several ailments which he nobly concealed under cover of his pleasant and happy demeanour.

Dr Munawwar Ahmad has progeny of four sons and one daughter, Amatul Hayee, who is married to Dr Hamidullah Khan of Batley, Yorkshire, U.K. In addition he has been blessed with fourteen grand children. May God bless and elevate his soul in paradise. Amin.

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statue of some Parsee benefactor whose body was eaten by those very vultures, when he sees at the bank or market or in the club a wealthy and educated man; a knight of England, perhaps, who knows that his body will eventually be food for those same waiting birds.

Western poets have gloomily dwelt on the horrors of the grave and the ravages of the worm, but time and custom have softened those dread pictures. the living do not see the grave worm at his work, but the vulture swoops down upon his prey in the open light. Whatever one may think of the towers of silence and its company of black-feathered, sharp-beaked vultures, a visit to the place is something never to be forgotten."

AHMADI MARTYRS

(S. M. Shahab Ahmad)

The Holy Quran is very explicit that since the time of Adam prophets, on whom be peace, and their early followers have always passed through every kind of trial and hardship. I cannot over emphasize this historical fact, which is clearly mentioned in the Quran which states:

We will surely try you with somewhat of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits; then give glad tidings to the steadfast, who, when a misfortune overtakes them do not lose heart, but say: Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return. It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided. (1:156-158)

The tests by means of which God intended to prove the faithful are: Fear, Hunger, Loss of wealth and property, loss of lives, and loss of fruits. In the early era of Muslim history the disbelievers inflicted all these kinds of hardships upon the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace, and his companions. They remained steadfast, however, and said:

Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return".

About these fortunate people God decrees:

It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided. (1:158)

In the renaissance of Islam, the same history is being repeated. The enemies of Ahmadiyyat - the True Islam - are following in the footsteps of the disbelievers of Arabia by inflicting the same kind of hardships upon Ahmadis. From their own behaviour, they have affiliated with the disbelievers and have aligned us with believers. Ahmadis are steadfast in facing all these hardships only for the sake of God. Consequently, according to the verse 1:158, we are rightly guided and blessed by God. God will decree as He has done in the time of other Prophets. The incidents in Pakistan are hard from a worldly point of view, but, spiritually, they strengthen the faith of every Ahmadi.

In this short article, I will mention only Hazrat Maulvi Abdur Rahman,

strangled to death by the order of Amir Abdur Rahman in mid 1901 and Hazrat Sahibzada Syed Abdul Latif, stoned to death by the order of Amir Habibullah on July 14, 1903. While mentioning these great martyrs, I will mention the terrible end of their cruel persecutors.

Hazrat Maulvi Abdur Rahman

He was son of late Zahiruddeen, one of the most trusted pupils of Sahibzada Syed Abdul Latif, and the first Ahmadi martyr in Afghanistan. Under the direction of Sahibzada Abdul Latif, he came to Qadian two or three times and enjoyed the holy company of the Promised Messiah, on whom be peace, for several months each time. As a result, his faith rose to the station of martyrs. When he returned to Kabul the last time, he was arrested on the charge of embracing Ahmadiyyat and also for his belief that Jihad or holy war against the British contradicts the teachings of the Holy Quran. He was strangled to death on the order of Amir Abdur Rahman, who himself was installed to the throne of Afghanistan by the British.

Sahibzada Abdur Rahman was strangled in the middle of 1901. What happened to the cruel Amir within a few months? I quote Frank A. Martin:

*Eventually, in the spring of 1901, Amir Abdur Rahman suddenly had a stroke, and it was thought that it was all over with him; but he rallied, and lingered on until some six months later, when, on October 1, he died, and it was said that his feet were dead a few days before, and the stench from them was such that no one could stop long in the same room with him.*¹

I was told that there was a plot to get the Amir's body on the way to the tomb, which he had built outside Kabul at Kila Asham Khan some years before, and cut it into pieces that dogs might eat it. (This is looked upon as the greatest evil that can befall the body of a Mussulman.)..... However, news of all this having reached the authorities, the late Amir's body was buried instead in the east wing of Boistan Serai Palace, which is just outside the Arak.²

The tomb was three times set on fire by some persons unknown who wished to disgrace it, and that caused it to be commonly said that the heat of the Amir's soul was the cause of the fires.³

Hazrat Sahibzada Syed Abdul Latif (1840-14 July 1903)

He was born in 1840 in his ancestral village Syedgah in the area of Khost, Afghanistan. He was a Syed, belonged to the family of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh, and his father's name was Syed Muhammad Sharif. He was a great scholar of the Holy Quran, Hadith and a leading poet in Pashtu

and Persian. He was a member of the Durand Commission (1893) from Afghanistan side. This Commission demarcated the boundary line between India and Afghanistan. He was priest of the Coronation Ceremony of Amir Habibullah (1901), eldest son of Amir Abdur Rahman. Because of his extraordinary scholarship and piety, he commanded great respect in every circle of Afghanistan. He embraced Ahmadiyyat in late 1902 or early 1903, and enjoyed the company of the Promised Messiah, on whom be peace, for several months. The Promised Messiah has praised him in very high words:

I declare this on the oath of Allah, Who is Master of my life, that I found him to be incomparably sincere and honest in his adherence to me and in accepting my claim. His love and affection could be likened to a clear crystal phial of the most fragrant perfume. Indeed, I found him to be most sincere in his love for me. His heart, like his radiant face, was very pure. The most enviable quality that the deceased sage possessed was that he always gave preference to matters of faith over all worldly affairs. He was, without the least doubt, from among those true and righteous persons who, through fear of God, piety and obedience to Him, endeavour to reach the highest point of rectitude; those who, for acquiring God's pleasure, would voluntarily and gladly sacrifice their lives, their reputation, their glory and their possessions as if all these were mere chaff as compared to seeking the pleasure of Allah. His zeal and enthusiasm for the faith was so highly advanced that it would not be an exaggeration if it was likened to a lofty mountain and even this resemblance would fall short of reality.⁴

Let us see how this great saint was treated by the criminals in Afghanistan; Amir Habibullah being the king was the chief criminal in this case. Frank A Martin, after referring to the peaceful and enlightened teachings of the Promised Messiah, and Sahibzada Abdul Latif's visit to Qadian, writes:

So the Amir, when he heard of all this, sent word to the mullah to return, and the mullah did so, preaching the new religion as he came, and as soon as he was well within the boundaries of the country, he was made prisoner and brought to Kabul. Here he was examined by the Amir, but the Amir could find in the mullah's clever replies nothing against the true religion which would make him infidel, and therefore worthy of death, for a Mussulman, according to the Koran, who becomes an apostate, must be stoned to death. He was then sent for examination to Sardar Nasrullah Khan, who was regarded as more than a mullah in knowledge of his religion, but the prince could not convict the man out of his mouth, and so a jury of twelve of the most learned mullahs was

convened, and even their examination of the accused could elicit nothing on which the man might be killed, and they reported this to the Amir. But the Amir said the man must be convicted, and so he was again sent to the mullahs, who were told that they must sign a paper, saying the man was an apostate and worthy of death. Again the majority of the mullahs affirmed that he was innocent of anything against their religion, but two of the mullahs, who were friends of Sardar Nasrullah Khan, and had been persuaded by him, gave their verdict of death, and on the finding of these two mullahs the man was condemned by the Amir and stoned to death. Before being led away from the Amir's presence to be killed, the mullah prophesied that a great calamity would overtake the country, and that both the Amir and Sirdar would suffer. About nine o'clock at night on the day that the mullah was killed, a great storm of wind suddenly arose and raged with violence for half an hour, and then stopped as suddenly as it came. Such a wind at night was altogether unusual, so the people said that it was the passing of the soul of the mullah. Then cholera came, although according to former outbreaks, another visitation was not due for another four years, and this was also regarded as part of the fulfilment of the mullah's prophecy, and hence the great fear of the Amir and the prince, who thought they saw in all this their own death, and it accounts also for the prince losing control of himself when his favourite wife died. The two mullahs who gave the verdict for his death lived in constant fear. One of them got cholera and almost died of it.⁵

Daily the roads leading to the burial grounds streamed with people carrying their dead, and many, I knew, who came to tell me of a mutual acquaintance whom they had taken for burial that day, were themselves carried to the same place the next day, or a day later. The cholera spread among all classes, and penetrated even to the harems of princes, Sirdar Nasrullah Khan's favourite wife dying of it, and among others the Amir's favourite slave boy was carried off. Several of the highest officials also got the disease, and died of it.⁶

Frank A. Martin does not name the two mullahs who gave their verdict of death for Sahibzada Abdul Latif. However, according to Hazrat Amir-ul-Momneen Khalifatul Messiah IV, these two culprits were Dr Abdul Ghani of India, perhaps leader of the Jury and Qazi Abdur Razzaq, the chief Qazi of Afghanistan. The latter threw the first stone on Sahibzada Sahib.

What happened to them? During the regime of Amir Habibullah, whose favourite Dr Ghani was, for some mistakes was sentenced to eleven years rigorous imprisonment. Many times, he was brought to Darbar

from prison and severely whipped. While in prison, his wife died in Lundikotal, one of his sons was murdered in Peshawar, and the other son was compelled to be a rickshaw puller. After serving the term, he was expelled from the country. No one knows what happened to him afterwards.⁷

God's wrath continues To quote Adamec:

On January 1, he (Habibullah) left Kabul for his winter quarters in Jalalabad, leaving his third son Amanullah in charge of the capital, and , on the night of February 19-20, Habibullah was assassinated in Kalla Gush in the Laghman district.⁸

There was struggle for power between Nasrullah and Amanullah in which the latter succeeded.

On February 27, Nasrullah, Inayatullah, and members of the Mu-sahiban family were arrested by the troops of Jalalabad; the following day Nasrullah abdicated and joined Inayatullah in offering bait (allegiance) to Amanullah.⁹

Nasrullah's trick did not work.

Amanullah held durbar at the Qanuni Bagh at Kabul on Sunday, April 13, 1919, and presided at the trial of the suspected assassins. Nasrullah was sentenced to prison for life, and Inayatullah (eldest son of Habibullah) was condemned to live in retirement.¹⁰

According to other historians, Nasrullah was brought before his nephew in chains. And according to Huzur, his tomb was stoned.¹¹

This was the end of the enemies of Ahmadiyyat who prosecuted Sahibzada Abdul Latif. What was the way God treated his pious servant? Mian Ahmad Noor, a favourite and trusted disciple of Abdul Latif, states:

The body of the Maulvi Sahib was left under the heap of stones for forty days on the spot where he was stoned. Then during the dead of night I, together with some of my friends, went and quietly took out the sacred body from under the stones and brought it secretly to the town. Although there was a great risk of our being caught by the retainers of the Amir, owing to cholera raging in the town, everyone was preoccupied with his own woes and worries. We, therefore, observed the burial rites calmly and took the body to the graveyard and buried it reverently. The amazing fact is that when we took out the body from under the stones, it sent forth a perfume like musk and everyone was greatly astonished.¹²

Compare the difference in the way, God treated Amir Abdur Rahman

and Sahibzada Abdul Latif. The stench from the body of the Amir was such that no one could stay long in the same room with him; whereas, the body of the late Sahibzada sent forth a perfume like musk upto forty days after his death.

A PROPHECY FULFILLED

In the martyrdom of Sahibzada Abdur Rahman and Sahibzada Abdul Latif the prophecy, revealed to the Promised Messiah in 1880 that two shegoats would be slaughtered, was fulfilled.¹³

The meaning of this prophecy became fully clear to the Promised Messiah after its fulfilment. He explains:

The two services shegoats offer to human beings, a species higher than themselves, are that they provide milk and meat for them. Similarly, the two saints, especially Shahzada Abdul Latif, offered milk to the Afghans by conveying the true teachings of Islam to them; and they offered meat by sacrificing their lives.¹⁴

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the present Head of the Ahmadiyya Community has said that sacrifices of these two great persons must have greater positive effect for their own country men. Unfortunately, because of so many great sins of the Afghans, these sacrifices have brought a negative effect on them, which started in 1901 and is still continuing. He is not pleased with this situation and has asked the Ahmadis to supplicate to God for the positive effects of the sacrifices of these two martyrs which will lead to the Afghans embracing Ahmadiyyat in legions. Amen.¹⁵

1. Frank A. Martin (1907) Under the Absolute Amir Harper & Bros; London & New York, p.126.
2. Ibid, p.129-130.
3. Ibid, p.135.
4. The Promised Messiah (1903) Tadhkiratush Shahadatain, The London Mosque (1984 English Edition) p.6.
5. Same as 1-3 p.203-04.
6. Ibid, p.200.
7. Hazrat Amir-ul-Momneen Khalifatul Messiah IV; Eid-ul-Azha Sermon, delivered in Sydney, Australia, on 14th July 1989, in Urdu.
8. Ludwig W. Adamec (1967) Afghanistan, 1900-23.
9. Ibid, p.108-09.
10. Ibid, p.109.
11. Same as No. 7.
12. Same as No. 4, p.77.
13. Roohani Khazain, Vol.1, Brahini-i-Ahmadiyya, The London Mosque (1984 edition), p.610, Hashia Dar-Hashia, in Urdu.
14. Roohani Khazain Vol.20, Tadhkiratush Shahadatain, Publisher and Edition as No.13, p.72-73, in Urdu.
15. Same as No.7 and 11.

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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 be upon 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 be upon 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 Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger. 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 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 other faith, he does so at the cost of his own faith. He has to utter the respectful benediction *Alaihis-Salam*, peace be upon 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 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-six years the message of Islam has been conveyed through this magazine to millions of readers and many fortunate persons have recognized the truth of Islam and accepted it through its study.

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 refutation of the criticism of Islamic teachings by orientalist 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.

