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Editorial Board

Editorial

Some of you may have wondered as to the significance of the minaret in the *Review of Religions* logo. Its significance is explained in the article, 'How to Get Rid of the Bondage of Sin'. The author explains that minaret (or *minar* in Arabic) is the symbolic name given to such a person who, by virtue of his magnanimity, purity and holiness, displays within himself a heavenly light. This light serves as a guide for mankind, just as a lighthouse serves as a beacon for ships ploughing the seas in the pitch of night. The whiteness of the minaret symbolises this person's purity; his steadfastness in the face of trials and tribulations is represented by the firmness with which this tower stands.

The minaret, in short, symbolises the Promised Reformer of this age, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). Its

relevance to the subject matter of the article is well demonstrated by the author himself. He argues that one cannot achieve freedom from the shackles of sin through the mistaken Christian doctrine of atonement through the crucifixion of Christ. This freedom can only be won through a deep belief in, and a perfect knowledge of, God: 'It is not to believe simply that there is a God but to know God and see God'. Put another way, to emancipate oneself from the numberless gods that surround us, we should fear the retribution of the One God and we should love Him above all else. This in Islamic parlance is called *Taqwa* or righteousness.

The next question that arises is how can one gain this perfect knowledge of God, and hence develop love for and fear of Him? The acquisition of any kind of meaningful knowledge requires effort and exertion on the part of the seeker. To reach God, to build up one's knowledge of Him, one must tread the path that

leads to Him. Practical ways of doing this are hinted at in the article 'Islam and the Global Quest for Sustainable Development'. The author makes the powerful argument that many of today's ecological and other problems faced by the world can be attributed to the lack of morality and ethics in our decision making. Global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer, hunger, poverty, to mention a few, are problems created by man. According to a World Bank report there is enough food in the world to feed its population twice over and yet family planning is advocated as a way to alleviate hunger. The problem is not that there is a shortage of food, it is rather the policy of food distribution that results in millions of people in our small world going hungry. By introducing morality and ethics into our global policies we can solve many, if not all, of the man-made problems. As the author of 'Islam and the Global Quest for Sustainable

Development' so eloquently puts it, '...the degradation of our morals and pollution of the ethics of the society we live in are responsible for the degradation and pollution of our environment.' In bringing ethics and morality into our political decisions, not only would we start to clean up the environment but we would also move closer to God, gain more knowledge of Him and begin to unlock the shackles that enslave us to the materialistic idols that so dominate our world.

CORRECTION

We regret that due to an oversight, a photograph of the late Mr. Bashir Ahmad Orchard (July 2002, page 51) is labelled as with the 2nd Khalifa whereas it is with Hadhrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad Sahib. We apologise for this error.

Notes and Comment

A Second Coming

Time and time again, Christians and non-Ahmadi Muslims have predicted that the Second Coming of Jesus^(as) was imminent. But with the passage of time, their anticipations have proved false. Just as amongst the Jews it has begun to be acceptable in some circles to dismiss talk of the second coming of a prophet as a mere concept, there are some Christians who have begun to feel the same. As for the non-Ahmadi Muslims, they once believed that this Messiah would go about the land breaking the Cross and kill the pigs. Instead of trying to interpret these prophecies in the metaphors in which they are expressed, they too have begun to doubt the authenticity of the prophecies about the great world reformer promised to them. However previously they never disputed these prophecies.

For thousands of years the Jews have been yearning for the advent of the Christ but they do not realise that he has come and

gone but not in the way they had expected. They were awaiting a warrior king who would lead the Israelite armies against the despotic rule of the Roman Empire. Their belief about the bodily descent of Elijah before the advent of the Messiah stood as a great hindrance in their ready acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus^(as), himself hinted that John had the attributes of Elijah.

However, Jesus^(as) was no super human being but a mortal and he died a natural death. What was meant by his second coming was that someone having his attributes would be born. God, the Creator, does not need to recycle human beings. Can you imagine a son of God giving up his heavenly throne and descending from heaven after two millenniums? It is an idea that can only keep a blind faith alive. Yet the Christians see no irrationality in this dogma.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), the Holy Founder of the

Ahmadiyya Muslim community claimed that he had been commissioned by God Almighty as the World Reformer and the Messiah promised to the people. He explained that the descent of Jesus^(as) was not to be in his physical person but that a Messiah was to come in his image and spirit. Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) claimed that he was that person. If he was false in his claims, why did God assist him in his plans, help him defeat his opponents and grant him success after success for twenty long years? Concerning the widely believed notion that Jesus^(as) in his second advent will descend physically in his person on the wings of angels Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) predicted in 1903 that:

'Remember very well that no one shall ever come down from heaven. All our opponents who live today shall die and none from them shall ever see Jesus son of Mary coming down from heaven. Then their children that are left after them shall also die and none from among them shall ever see Jesus son of Mary coming down from heaven. And then their third generation shall also die and

they too shall not see the son of Mary coming down. Then God shall cause great consternation in their minds and they shall then say that the period of the dominance of the Cross has also passed away and the way of life has changed completely, yet the son of Mary has not come down. Then in dismay the wise among them shall forsake their belief and three centuries from now shall not have passed when those who await the coming of Jesus son of Mary, whether they be Muslims or Christians, shall relinquish altogether this concept. Then shall prevail only one religion over the whole world and then there shall be only one religious Leader. I came only to sow the seed planted by my hand. It shall now grow and flourish and there is none that can hinder it.

(*Roohani Khazain*, Vol.20: Tadhkiratush Shahadatin p.67)

The wise can see the writing on the wall even now and will not have to wait for another two centuries.

Islam and the Global Quest for Sustainable Development

By Dr. Abd Latif Busari - (Abuja, Nigeria)

This article was written before the World Summit took place

If all goes well, millions of people across the world will watch what is un-arguably the single largest gathering of world leaders during the third edition of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), otherwise referred to as the Earth Summit. They will meet to discuss the burning issues of the global environment and sustainable development. The very first edition of this conference was held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973 and the second one, which attracted greater world attention was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1991. The third summit which was scheduled for Johannesburg, South Africa, between 2-11 September, 2001, could not be held.

A committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations has proposed a new date (26 August - 4 September 2002) for ratification by the General

Assembly. This summit promises to be the biggest ever yet as most of the current world leaders, at least 135 Heads of State and Government of both small and big nations plus thousands of delegates from across the globe, are expected to attend the most crucial last 3 days of the summit.

It is necessary at this point however, to ask first what are the issues that are considered so important and have similar conferences held in the past yielded much by way of solutions to the perceived problems? My personal lay-man's view is that indeed, the issues at stake are weighty indeed. They are issues that affect all of God's creatures and the environment in which they live. But as to whether similar meetings held in the past have achieved much, my answer is, no! The major decisions of the summit held in 1991 in Brazil, referred to as the 'Rio Principles'-

have gone largely unimplemented, ten years after the summit. The decisions include the Pollution-pays Principle, the Precautionary Principle and the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities. Indeed, the status of implementation of the Rio Principle is among the top priority items to be discussed at the opening meeting. Similarly, the Montreal Protocol - an international agreement signed in 1998 in Montreal, Canada - with the major goal of reducing the rate of depletion of the Ozone Layer through a graded reduction in CO₂ emissions mainly from the burning of fossil fuels and the manufacture and use of compounds like CFC (Chloro fluoro-carbon) which have been implicated in causing Ozone depletion, has also not been implemented. The Montreal Protocol calculates that if all necessary actions are taken on the part of concerned countries the Ozone layer could be fully repaired by the middle of the 21st century. However, one cannot, on the basis of past failures, refuse further efforts at solving such persistent problems.

The scope of the issues to be discussed and for which solutions must be proffered at this meeting have been substantially enlarged to take care of virtually all conceivable issues of sustainable development and global harmony. Already meetings have been held by all regional blocks to synthesize and fine-tune the most pressing problems confronting their populations for inclusion in the global agenda.

The Asia-Pacific meeting was held in Phnom Pehn, Cambodia on 26th November 2001, the Africa group met in Nairobi, Kenya on 18 October. The Arab block had their meeting in October in Cairo, Egypt, while Europe's meeting was held in September and the Latin America group had also met in Rio, Brazil. From all these meetings 15 major areas including 5 consensual issues were arrived at.

My main aim in this article is to highlight some of the more important areas that the summit hopes to address and show how Islam, through its teachings, has proffered solutions that will enable mankind to find his way out of the log-jam

The 15 major areas of deliberation at the proposed summit include;

1. Agriculture and Food Security-how to double agricultural production especially in Africa in 5 years and ensure a sustainable agricultural and rural development (SARD);
2. Sustainable Consumption and Production - the need to decouple economic growth from pressures on the environment or natural resource base and increase global energy efficiency;
3. Management of Natural Resources-the need to develop specific initiatives and implement past international commitments on issues of fresh-water, sanitation, coastal zones, mountains, air quality, climate change, forest, biodiversity, land use and desertification, minerals and metals etc.
4. Sustainable Human Settlement - the need for strategies on effective urban planning and management, issues of mega-cities and urban slums.
5. Fresh Water and Sanitation-how to achieve the Millennium Declaration target of global access to water and sanitation services and promotion of integrated water management.
6. Energy - need for promoting global access to energy and initiatives for promoting sharing of renewable and affordable energy.
7. Implementation of the Rio Principles- status report on the implementation of the Polluter-pays principle, Precautionary principle and the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and to map out strategies that will remove all impediments to their effective implementation;
8. Health - the need to strengthen health services as part of poverty reduction and sustainable development strategy;
9. Human Development- involving human education, train-

ing, employment, gender main-streaming, minority rights and youth development.

10. Financing of Sustainable Development - strategies for mobilizing all sources of finance for sustainable development, especially of the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC), cancellation of debt of poorest countries; etc.
11. Poverty Eradication-how to achieve the Millennium Declaration goal of halving global poverty level by 2015 and provide the linkage between environment, poverty, trade and human security.
12. Trade and Market Access-need for greater market access to developing countries' products especially textile and agricultural products, elimination of market distortions such as subsidies, export support measures and other unwholesome trade practices and reduction of environmentally damaging subsidies.
13. Globalisation-the clear need

to make globalisation equitable, inclusive and sustainable. Specific initiatives to be developed in areas of trade, finance, investment, new technologies (including information technology I.T).

14. Transfer of Technology-requires summit to foster the establishment of effective strategies for technology transfer and capacity building in the LDCs.
15. Governance/Institutional Structure for Sustainable Development - summit is expected to discuss ways of improving institutional framework and strategies for effective monitoring of sustainable development at national, regional and international levels, to promote good governance and effective bilateral or multilateral partnership among nations for security.

As can be seen these, topics go far beyond the traditional environmental protection and sustainability issues that characterised the earlier summits. What I intend to do is to

highlight the Islamic perspectives on some of these topics with a view to suggesting alternative solutions to the problems. Although they appear like so many issues, a closer look will reveal that all of them can be fitted into 2 or 3 main themes;

- a. issues pertaining to the sustainable use of the earth's resources without irreversible damaging effects on the environment and its inhabitants;
- b. issues on a humane economic world order that will ensure equitable distribution of the world's resources in a manner that will satisfy the minimum requirement of all peoples;
- c. issues on good governance and leadership that will exercise authority in a manner that will promote and foster the material and moral and ethical upliftment of people at various levels - family, organisational, national, regional etc.

Do we have Islamic concepts, principles and precepts that can be adopted to guide mankind on these topical issues of our time?

In my opinion we do and I will briefly highlight these major concepts before going into the detailed discussion of how their adoption could help mankind.

The first is that according to Islam, human beings, are by divine wisdom, at the center of creation and are the rulers of this world. Indeed, they are the *raison d'être* of Allah's creation and all other things were created to serve the purpose and needs of man. We read from the Qur'an;

Have you not seen that Allah has pressed for you unto service whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and has completed His favour on you, both externally and internally?
(Ch.31:v.21)

And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; all this is from Him. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect.
(Ch.45:v.14)

There are several other similar verses portraying the subjugation of the earth and all it contains to man (eg: Ch.2:v.30, Ch.22: v.66).

Even the sun and the moon and the stars have been constrained into the service of man (Ch.6:Vs.13-17). But having created all these for man Allah created man himself, in the best make (Ch.95:V.5), made him superior to other creatures (Ch.17:V.71) giving man the capacity for unlimited progress (Ch.87:V.3) and then showed him the twin ways of good and evil (Ch.76:V.4, Ch.90:V.11) and gave him the freedom to act as he chooses (Ch.41:V.41). I will later expatiate on how the neglect by mankind, of all these bounties from Allah and his deliberate choice of evil over good has led him to his present woes.

The second major Islamic concept, that is in close tandem with the above is that at the point of creation Allah has made adequate provision for all and there is no reason why any creature should be in want of anything. We read again in the Ch.20:VS.119-120.

It is provided for thee that thou wilt not hunger therein, nor wilt thou be naked, And that thou wilt not thirst therein, nor wilt thou be exposed to the sun.

The above clearly shows that food, water and shelter for man's use have been provided in abundance by Allah. But these provisions come with some conditions; man should use them judiciously and equitably (Ch.25:Vs.64-76, Ch.16:Vs.3-19), should exercise good judgment in their use (Ch.92: Vs.6-12) and he shall only have what he strives for (Ch.53:V.40), but shall be assisted to achieve the object of his desire (Ch.17:Vs.19-21).

The third principle that would guide mankind out of some of the problems enumerated above has to do with the Unity of Allah our Creator and the brotherhood of mankind. The point here is that if human beings truly realise that they all come from the same God, the same source and are therefore brothers to one another, their attitude to each other would be radically different from what is currently on display today. It also follows that when any man is chosen to lead others or finds himself in position of authority over others, he should exercise the authority in trust, as all sovereignty actually belongs to God (Ch.3:V.27). Any leader who does not exercise authority with equity, justice and humility

(Ch.4:V.59,Ch.5:V.9,Ch.38:V.27), loses the right to lead (Ch.47:Vs.23-24).

Before showing how the application of these principles can effectively help mankind resolve his self-created problem, let us quickly review the current status of some of the aforementioned issues to enable us all to see the nature of these problems and some of the solutions so far tried and whether it is not high time man tried some alternative strategies to resolve them.

Food for All

A World Bank Report (Knudsen and Nash, 1990), claims that there is more than enough food to feed the people of the world twice over. This confirms the proclamation by Allah in Ch.20: Vs.119-120, yet over 60% of this world's population go hungry, according to the same report. The same report states that the problem of hunger in the world today is poverty and not insufficient food production. A television documentary prepared by ITV for the EU in 1987 titled the '*Politics of Food*' shows that the European Union countries spend the sum of £150 million

daily to store all the food reserves - grains, milk, butter, fruits - produced in those countries. Recently with the advent of the mad-cow disease farmers in United Kingdom and few other European countries had to slaughter over a million heads of cattle - and those countries still did not go hungry. Yet there are countries in this same world - Somalia, Congo, Angola, Bangladesh, Iraq, and lately Afghanistan, - where due to either ravages of war, drought, flood or famine, whole populations starve to death. The U.S. Federal Government has to pay what it called 'intervention or set-aside levies' to some of its farmers NOT to produce on their farms while the world is at present grappling with how food production in Africa can be made to double its present starvation levels. Millions on the continent have to scavenge refuse dumps in order to eat. The fact therefore is that Allah has in His Mercies made all the necessary provision, but man, by his selfishness and avariciousness and thinking he has all the answers, has caused all the problems.

Water Everywhere, Not A Drop to Drink

A *TIME International* magazine special supplement (Nov. 8, 1999) revealed that chronic water shortage affects one third of the people on earth; yet 80% of the earth's surface is taken up by water. In North China, it is reported that global warming is aggravating an already acute water shortage. Global warming is implicated in the rise of summer temperatures by 0.5 - 0.8°C leading to serious losses of water from rivers while rainfall remains unchanged and its water is not enough to off-set the losses from the rivers.

Common sources of water that people rely on are either guinea worm infested (as in many parts of Africa) or polluted by toxic effluents, industrial wastes or agricultural pesticides. Common clean water to drink - a free gift from the Creator - is now a luxury item to most people on earth!

Human Shelter

Another free gift from our Creator - provision of shelter - is lacking to a third of the world's population. Millions of peasants live in the open, surrounded only by flimsy polythene sheets and

rags in major cities of Asian and African countries. Even the birds of the skies are more decently sheltered. Despite the establishment of the United Nations Commission on Habitat and Settlement (UNCHS), and the setting aside of a day every year as World Habitat Day to refocus world attention to this deplorable global problem, it has remained with us and may in fact be getting worse. A UN study predicts that by the year 2015 there will be 26 extremely huge cities in the world and 22 of them will be in the less developed countries. The megacities will include Bombay (26 million by 2015) Lagos (24 million), Dhaka (19 million) and Karachi (19 million). These are cities already unable to provide decent shelter for 25-45% of their present populations. The report further estimates that by 2030 almost 60% of the world's people will live in urban areas, by which time some megacities will contain some 30 million or more people. We should ask ourselves who will provide housing for all these people?

Natural Resource Endowment

Nowhere is man's penchant for despoilage witnessed more than in his handling of natural

resources such as forests, minerals and metals, fresh-water, air quality, bio-diversity etc. Among the natural resource endowments that mankind has abused, mention should be made of our intellect and the God-given freedom of choice. It is indeed our injudicious use of these last two that led to the over-use, misuse and abuse of the others

Also through some other activities that we engage in such as pollution and over-fishing, we are rapidly destroying the oceans, rivers and lakes and because of over-grazing by our herds and intensive agriculture on fringe lands, the deserts are expanding. In fact, agricultural lands are rapidly shrinking due to erosion and desert encroachment, while we lose perhaps some 30,000 species of animals and plants every year. The result of all this is staggering. Some of the repercussions have direct impact on our lives. In Hongkong air pollution kills about 2000 people prematurely every year. Citizens have resorted to wearing air masks and using bottled oxygen in order to breathe clean air. The Clean Air Initiative for Latin American cities was launched to help reduce the rate

at which thousands of Latin American citizens suffer and die from respiratory diseases caused by air pollution.

Unknown to us, Allah, the Creator, has configured that we would need these natural products to replenish genetic biodiversity in our crops and animals and to produce new medicines. We also would rely on pristine ecosystems to replenish oxygen, control erosion, recycle essential nutrients, regulate water cycles and re-stock critical fisheries. But by our activities we are destroying them all and in the process putting ourselves and our lives on earth in serious jeopardy.

Rio Principles and Tokyo Protocol

Another direct effect of the misuse and abuse of our environment is the phenomenon of climate change. According Dr. Anthony Givens of the London School of Economics in the lecture he delivered in Hong Kong in 1999, just 25 years ago, the concern among scientists was global cooling and how to stem the trend. Today the pendulum has swung to the opposite end and global warming is the major environmental concern. It cannot

fail to be so given the unrelenting emission of heat trapping carbon dioxide and other gases through the burning of fossil fuel by motor vehicles and heating of homes.

Now vast portions of the earth especially in the northern hemisphere periodically experience heat waves up to 50°C. Places like Texas (U.S), Eilat (Israel) and many others have recorded this. And the impact of this is already with us - witness the incessant flooding, forest fires, hurricanes and tornadoes that are regularly making the rounds in international news in different parts of the world. It has been estimated that as a result of the global warming, sea levels will rise by an average 24 cm over the next 50 years.

Poverty and Sustainable Development

All issues pertaining to global finance, the world economic order, based, as it were, on capitalism and globalisation, the debt overhang of the HIPC's and the accompanying poverty in these countries, as a whole, constitute the obverse side of the sustainable development coin. Yet, in the last decade or so, the world has witnessed financial

upheavals in many developing countries leading sometimes to riots and forced or precipitate change in governments. Many economies had gone into recession so much so that today, many are questioning the wisdom in the measures recommended by the Breton Wood Institutions for economic resurgence. One after the other, countries like Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, Malaysia, Russia and lately Argentina have had serious financial crisis almost sometimes threatening political stability in these countries. In 1998 President Clinton had to extend a 20 billion life-line to Mexico. In 1999 Brazil had to devalue its currency (the *Real*) by as much as 40%, its interest rate went as high as 39% and inflation went into double digit, plunging the country into a severe economic recession. Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Philippines all had their own economic crisis one after the other and most of them especially Japan - the third biggest world economy are not out of the woods yet. The situation has almost caught up with Singapore that is reported to have the most secure and stable economy in the region. Even in the U.S., reported to be the

global economic leader, interest rates have to be cut several times in order to stimulate the economy. Meanwhile, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen.

Africa is in a special class of its own as the continent is home to most of the world's most impoverished countries. With the possible exception of some north African Arab countries and South Africa, at the other end of the continent, all the countries are members of the infamous HIPC's. This situation is compounded by innumerable theatres of war that dotted the continent's landscape. It is no wonder that Human Development Index (HDI), in these countries has been the lowest for decades and remains the lowest till date.

At one point or the other the developed countries - belonging to their own prestigious OECD club have tried using IMF and the World Bank as fronts, to force down both macro and micro economic theories which they believe worked wonders for their own economies. Such attempts have largely failed and are increasingly being resisted in many Development statistics and

economic indices in these countries are chilling

At the heart of all the financial mess of course is the capitalist economic world order solely based on the charging of interest. The global economy now is characterised by large-scale cross-border capital flows, inter-dependent markets, market liberalisation and de-regulation, mega-conglomerates mergers and buy-outs oiled by the internet and the information super highway. Globalisation entails 'free competition', allowing so-called market-forces to determine the health of the economy and its direction. It is amazing that inspite of all evidences pointing to the un-workability of their economic theories over the past few decades they still insist that these theories only and nothing else offer the way out. Proof again, of man's arrogance in self actualisation and disdain for the sensibilities of others.

THE ISLAMIC OPTION

Sustaining the Environment

Perhaps it is first necessary to establish the link between Islam, and indeed any religion for that matter, and the environment.

Muslims believe there is a very strong link. For as long as man relegates the moral aspects of his day-to-day dealings to the background, so long would he continue to have intractable problems not only in such issues as the environment but also in every other sphere of his life and living. There is obviously in the world today a crisis of values and ethics. This moral crisis, which might well be viewed as 'moral pollution' underlies the phenomenon of environmental pollution and degradation that we are all witnessing today. The moral crisis came about as a result of our individual and collective relegation of religion to the backburners. In order to understand Allah's subjugation of *'whatever is in the heavens and the earth'* to mankind, one has to first understand the philosophical principles underlying the Islamic concept of creation of nature and its use by man. To put it simply, Allah, according to Islamic teachings, has created man, as the best of creatures and endowed him to the extent that he is personally responsible for the *moral ordering* of the natural world. It is only when man began to fail in this duty, that is, when man divorced ethics and morality

from his pursuit of knowledge and its application that environmental pollution and degradation set in.

Islam teaches that the universe has been created for a specific purpose. The Holy Qur'an Ch21:V.17 says:

And We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is in between the two in play.

Furthermore, the creation of the heavens and the earth has been in accordance with the requirements of wisdom (Ch.15:V.86, Ch.39:V.6). These requirements of wisdom dictate that there be laws governing the running of the whole system, down to its minutest detail. The whole of Allah's creation is in harmony. Allah, (*Subhanahu wata'ala*) repeatedly reminds mankind that in all His creation, one cannot find a flaw, discord, disorder or incongruity, for He is Allah, Al-Hakeem, the Most Wise. In the universe created by Allah, everything is adjusted and there is a superb coordination by the Master Planner (*Khairun Makirun*), Himself. It follows therefore, that any disorder or

maladjustment we may observe must result from our misuse or contravention of the laws governing the universe. The depletion of the Ozone layer due to the overproduction of 'green house gases' is an example. Another is when an individual or a group of men use their knowledge - another of nature's endowment to create situation or objects that cause disharmony among other men. World history has shown that every time an individual or a group misuses any of God's endowment or does anything to show disregard for Allah's natural law, it poses danger to them, one way or the other.

Getting back to the question of the purpose of creating the universe, we read from the Qur'an (Ch.41: Vs.10-13, Ch.79:Vs.28-34) that it is solely to aid man, in diverse ways, to achieve the purpose of his own creation. This is the context in which the verses earlier referred to were revealed. Subjugating to man all that is in the heavens and the earth, far from making man a despoiler, are to help him achieve the purpose of his creation. They are part of Allah's measure of unlimited bounty to man (Ch.16: Vs.13-20). The universe and the

various laws governing it are constantly at work, but this working and their consequence, whether beneficent or otherwise, depend on man's use. The Holy Qur'an reiterates this point in several portions (Ch.14: V.8, Ch.16: Vs.13-17, Ch.56, Vs.69-91 etc). Therefore, having 'pressed into service' all that the universe contains for man's use, to help him achieve the purpose of his own creation, Allah then makes man responsible for the way he uses this facility or wields this authority. That effectively makes man account-able for the way he chooses to conduct his life on earth. In effect, man is the architect of his present woes (Ch.39:Vs.49-52).

Again because man was created 'in the best mould' (Ch.95:V.5), and was given all the required facility (Ch.16: Vs.13-17) and was also given the chance to make his own choice (Ch.41:V.41), man has no excuse whatsoever for not achieving the purpose of his creation and existence and that again makes him accountable. Allah thus promised to raise man up to account for his life (Ch.23:V.80). As the saying goes, 'to whom much is given, much is expected'. So, what is man's

ultimate purpose in life? In other words what will he be held accountable for, on the day of 'Akhira'. It is how far he has been able to receive the impress of God's attributes and become a manifestation of these attributes within the limits of his creation and capacity (Ch.5: V.57, Ch.2:V.22). Allah created man in order to equip himself with the best provision, which is righteousness (Ch.2: V.198) The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) expatiates on this when he said, 'equip yourself with the attributes of God'. When man has been able to do this, and let us quickly remind ourselves that some of the attributes of Allah are that He is a God of order and equilibrium, of harmony and balance, of peace and love, of justice and equity, when man too is able to acquire some of these through a complete submission to the will of Allah and through His worship, then would he be able to live with his fellow man, nay with all God's creatures, a life of harmony and order, devoid of discord or imbalance in an unpolluted and safe world. This is the context in which God has subjugated to man the universe and all it contains. Times without number, Allah exhorts man to

reflect i.e. to think, study and do research so that he may acquire the proper knowledge about all Allah's bounties so he can understand the laws governing them and thereby make beneficent use of them to achieve his own purpose of creation. And while man may justifiably be proud of his array of scientific and technological breakthroughs, all great scientists agree that we do not as yet know even 1/millionth of what there is to know about our universe. Infact our knowledge, staggering as they may appear to us, is still rudimentary, in relative terms. To quote Diane Ackerman; '*There will always be plenty of nature's sweet secrets waiting to be told*' and Elizabeth Gleick - author of *Life in the Abyss* says, 'Some scientists speculate that there may be 10-100 million species living on the ocean floor that are yet to be discovered'. Given this background, there doesn't appear to be so much that men should be so haughty about.

The assurance that the whole of universe is subjugated to man's service and the certainty that everything in the universe is governed by laws, the knowledge of which God has promised to

vouschafe progressively to man (Ch.55:V.34), are in themselves reassuring as well as proof that man can make a success of his life and living on this planet.

The only condition is that man must make conscious choice to make a beneficent use of these bounties for his physical and spiritual growth. If he fails to do this, that is, if he misuses or abuses them, the very bounties may become the instrument of his ruin and destruction (Ch.14:V.8). So we are back to where we started from, that the environmental degradation and global pollution we are witnessing are a reflection and manifestation of our misuse of God's bounties 'of diverse hues'. In other words the degradation of our morals and pollution of the ethics of the society we live in are responsible for the degradation and pollution of our environment.

However, hope is not lost. Islam has provided a way out of this predicament, if we care to follow it. The first thing to do is for man to realise that in acquiring the various scientific and economic knowledge, we have become arrogant. Our disdain for the

world around us is a direct result of that arrogance and it is this same arrogance that is manifested in our conscious effort to lose all moral or religious restraint that may otherwise curb our excesses. Man of course knows what is right from what is wrong. So says the Qur'an. All it takes is to change our moral outlook, get closer to God in order to imbibe some of His attributes and make a conscious effort to make beneficent use of His bounties. If all the world leaders who signed and endorsed the Montreal Protocol, the Kyoto Protocol, the Rio Principles realise that they have a moral obligation to implement these agreements, that they will be held accountable for their choice to either implement or neglect - for the overall benefit of mankind - then the world would begin to witness a real change for the better. The same advice is applicable to leaders of major countries that have so far refused to sign these international treaties. The major pollutants which the Kyoto Protocol sought to reduce include sulphur dioxide which causes acid rain, nitrogen oxide which contribute to urban smog and carbon monoxide and mercury emissions from power

plants. U.S. releases about one quarter of these man-made green-house gases while China emits about 11% of the world's carbon emissions.

Sustaining All-Round Human Development

In general terms the same conditions that led to the pollution and degradation of our environment have led to the incredible lopsidedness in the distribution of global wealth and the inability of vast portions of the earth to have the minimum level of life's comfort, let alone sustain themselves from one day to the next.

In specific terms, it is the inability or unwillingness of a minority section of the world to follow the Islamic injunction of curbing their avariciousness as already shown in the case of U.S. and China on the Kyoto Protocol. the Qur'an Ch.59:V.10 says

And whoso is rid of the covetousness of his own soul - it is these who will be successful.

At the heart of the capitalist economic world order is the issue of interest (*Riba*), which is a

manifestation of the inability to rid oneself of avariciousness. Paradoxically those whose banking laws and profits are based on interest believe they are doing the lender some good. But there is no way that lending whose returns include interest 'involving diverse additions' (Ch.3: V.131), can be benevolent. Anyone who comes out to borrow in the first place must be in some relative form of dire straits, for if he could finance whatever the project or acquisition is without borrowing, he would have done so. What Islam prescribes is that;

If any debtor be in straitened circumstance, then grant him respite till a time of ease. And if you remit it as charity, it shall be better for you, if only you know. (Ch.2: V.281)

This - debt forgiveness - is what scores of leaders of poor countries have been asking for. President Obasanjo of Nigeria has been in the forefront using all available international fora to obtain this from both the London and Paris club of creditor nations. But his pleas have so far fallen on deaf ears. Instead, palliative measure such as debt re-scheduling is preferred. The

Qur'an enjoins us to remit all debts owed us as charity!

This is true benevolence. And there is no merit in those who regard the taking of interest as trade - referring to it as 'the cost of capital'. Allah says He, by divine wisdom, allows trade but forbids interest. (Ch.2: V.276). This clearly shows that there is a world of difference between the two. It cannot be trade because the money over which interest is being charged is itself, a valueless entity - intrinsically assuming the value arbitrarily awarded to it by convention, might or common acclamation.

The rich nations assuage some of their guilt by the so-called 'aid' they dole out to poor countries, but what they get in return in terms of interests on the so-called debt owed by these countries more than makes up for this, ten times over. The Jubilee 2000 project launched in February 1999 (now known as the Jubilee coalition) claims that Africa now owes about 379 U.S dollar per head on the average. But for every one dollar the rich countries of the West gives as aid, nine dollars come back in debt servicing. So where is the

benevolence in the so-called aid being doled out? The developed nations of the West and their leaders have taken the pursuit of materialism and the adornments of this world as the ultimate. The Promised Messiah of this age, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), admonishes Muslims in his book *Our Teachings*, thus:

'I do not forbid you to think of material means within proper limits, what I forbid is that like other nations you become the slaves of material means, altogether forgetting God, who controls material means as well. Only if you have eyes to see you will find there is only God and God alone everything else being worthless..... A person spiritually dead would laugh at this but it would be better for him if he died before he indulged in this laughter'.

The same avariciousness plaguing the rich nations is to be found among the so-called leaders and elites of most of the poor nations of the world. These are countries where individuals at the helm of government are richer than their countries - wealth obtained by robbing the country blind. In

recent times, billions of dollars and pounds stolen by a former military leader in a popular African country were traced to some banks in rich western countries - which was where some of the money came from originally as loans to his country.

In a book titled, *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*, the Head of the world wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, dealt extensively with the issue of Islamic economic system. According to him, in Islam, an attempt is made to create a situation where government and the wealthy in the society understand that it is 'in their own ultimate interest to establish an equitable economic system' where they are constantly on the look out for the rights of the less privileged and endowed. The current capitalist economic order could not create such a situation, which is why we now have so much misery, pain, and disharmony in our socio-economic relations. I wish world leaders attending this summit will read this book and critically review its suggestion to see if it cannot help solve our current financial problems.

Islam lays greater emphasis on 'giving rather than taking or keeping'; therefore, an atmosphere is created where 'the demand for one's rights gives way to regard for the rights of others'. The Holy Prophet^(sa) was reported to have urged Muslims, thus:

Give the labourer more than his dues. Pay him what he has earned before his sweat dries out. Do not put those under you to serve on tasks that you cannot perform yourself. As far as possible, feed your servants with whatever you feed your family. Do not transgress against the meek in any way or you will be held accountable by God. Lest you succumb to false pride, occasionally make your servants sit on the same table with you and serve them.

These exhortations form the philosophical underpinning of the Islamic socio-economic system. Lest some think they are mere platitudes, a cursory look at the Sunnat of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) will prove otherwise, as he ran a society based on these principles and was able to achieve real economic justice.

This could still be achieved in today's contemporary world if we care to follow Islam.

The place to start is to first imbibe - as individual, corporate or national entities - the various religious injunctions that enjoin us to love others as ourselves and only do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This is the essence of true brotherhood and the universal beliefs in the common origin of mankind and the unity of God. With this moral re-orientation we can then set up the pillars of such economic system involving Zakat, prohibition of interest (under whatever guise or form), prohibition of hoarding of wealth, adoption of moral principles in business and commercial dealings etc. Qur'anic verses dealing with these principles and practices include Ch.3:V.135, Ch.2:V.4, Vs.262-265, Ch.51: V.20, Ch.76: Vs.9-10, Ch.74: V.7, Ch.93: V.11 etc. Even in the West certain big business are now adopting the last pillar - using moral principles and ethics in the daily conduct of business. Far from making business ventures unprofitable, as some may think, it is indeed yielding high dividends, aside from removing social disharmony

and economic tension all because it is blessed and in doing so, we are responding to the 'innate laws of the human psyche' while attempting to imbibe the attributes of Allah our Creator - which ultimately is the purpose of our creation.

It is my sincere hope that as the preparation for the Johannesburg meeting gets underway world leaders that do attend would 'equip themselves with the best provisions' (which is righteousness Ch.2: V.198) for this meeting. They should for once break from the past and come out with simple but divinely inspired strategies that would set mankind on the path of peace, progress and sustainable development in an unpolluted environment.

The current crop of world leaders should also search their consciences and see whether they are truly discharging this onerous trust in a just and equitable manner as enjoined by Islam. Why should the developed countries of the West for instance, continue to provide sundry subsidies to their farmers and key industries to enable them compete in the world market and at the same time insist - through the IMF - that debt-ridden poor

countries remove similar subsidies as part of their economic structural adjustment programmes? In the world today, there are different sets of law governing international relations. This is part of the problem. Leaders of so called third-world countries even have more cases to answer before God in the manner their policies and governance have impoverished their citizens. This is another direct result of the neglect of religion.

In conclusion, the leaders of the world should swallow their pride and accept that in the exercise of choice over these global issues, they have erred. Hadhat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Head of the world wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has made us realise that God has instilled in man's nature the faculty of intuition, which warns him of the impending dangers attendant upon his decisions. It is therefore left to our leaders to make the right choice to get mankind out of our present dire circumstances. The Qur'an (Ch.75: Vs.15-16) further asserts that 'man is a witness against himself, even though he may offer excuses'.

Rather than hiding behind excuses, mankind should trace its steps back to its Creator, before more calamity comes its way. Allah has promised (Ch.26: V.209) that He never punishes any people until such people have repeatedly rejected His warnings. Mankind should take all these floods, typhoons, tornadoes as warnings which if heeded may spare him from Allah's wrath.

Anyone who still thinks these tragedies and tribulations of our time are mere coincidences should go and read the article by the United Nation's Secretary General - Mr. Kofi Anan in the International Herald Tribune of September 10, 1999. He had tried to alert the world about the extraordinary increase in the number and magnitude of so-called natural disasters. According to him, there were three times as many great natural disasters in the 1990's as there were in 1960's, while the total cost of these disasters were nine times as much in the same period. He stated that the number, intensity and cost of natural disasters in 1998 alone exceeded those of all such disasters in the whole of 1980's. The point in all these is that

something strange is happening to our world - and it is not mere imaginings of superstitions for religious people. They are happening all around us and are well documented. All the examples I have enumerated above were not concocted. Everybody reads them, in the news. The earlier mankind sees them for what they truly represent - evidence of our past sinful ways - and change our ways, the better for us.

We have Allah's assurance in the Qur'an Ch.39: V.54, thus;

Say 'Oh My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls! despair not of the mercy of Allah, surely Allah forgives all sins. Verily He is Most Forgiving, Merciful.'

May Allah grant us a clear understanding of His injunctions and the humility to make us accept the limitation of our knowledge and may He also grant us the grace that would enable us to pattern our lives in a manner that would foster harmony among all sojourners on earth. Amin.

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The Purpose of Religious Differences

Presented below, in translation, are two conversations of the Promised Messiah^(as) with non-Muslims. The Urdu text of both conversations is contained in *Malfoozat*, Vol.5, pp .151-154 and pp.141-146 respectively. (Translated by Amatul Hadi Ahmad)



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as)

In 1891, Hadhrat Mirza Ahmad claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

On 1st March 1903 a gentleman by the name of Kashi Ram Ved came from Lahore to pay his respects to the Promised Messiah^(as). Some other people were also present after Zuhr prayers when (in the course of conversation) the Promised Messiah^(as) addressed Mr Kashi Ram Ved and said:

Religious difference is a fine thing. God in His wisdom has intended it to be there. It sharpens the human intellect. In the world even if there is agreement on some matter, it is still difficult to get to the finer details and many other minor matters continue to raise their heads.

Making speeches in large gatherings for the purpose of exchanging ideas is also a good thing but in our country, up to now, such civilised people have been very few in number who would sit and listen to the views of their opponent in silence.

THE DIFFICULTY THESE DAYS IS THAT NOT ONLY IS THERE THE RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE, BUT WHAT HAS COMPOUNDED THE PROBLEM IS THE FACT THAT IT IS NO LONGER THE CONCERN OF THE PEOPLE TO CONCENTRATE UPON THE BASIS OF THE TRUTH BUT ANIMOSITY AND ILL FEELING AGAINST EACH OTHER HAS DEVELOPED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT TO REFER TO THE OPPONENT'S RELIGION WITH RESPECT OR HONOUR IS CONSIDERED A SIN.

I myself wished and it was my intention that we should make available a place in Qadian where people of different religions could gather and freely express the truth and qualities of their religion. I know that if there were debates and discussions for the expression of truth it would be a very good thing but experience has proved that they contain elements of mischief and disorderliness and therefore such discussions have not been pursued. It is possible that there may be a handful of people who would listen to their opponent's views with patience and kindness but the majority is made up of ordinary people who are not able to listen to even one word against their own religion no matter how gentle it is. But if a person of a different religion is to speak then it is very possible that there may be some things which are said

which go against another religion and as a result of this people's emotions are aroused. In such a gathering there can be peace only when the speaker and the listeners can sit together just as when a father sees something bad in his son and he advises the son who listens with patience and kindness. The attraction of such love proves beneficial. To hope for any benefit to ensue from a state of anger and viciousness is an idle thought.

The difficulty these days is that not only is there the religious difference, but what has compounded the problem is the fact that it is no longer the concern of the people to concentrate upon the basis of the truth but animosity and ill feeling against each other has developed to such an extent that to refer to the opponent's religion with respect

or honour is considered a sin. I see that people speak with much disrespect and rudeness. Earlier on relations between Hindus and Muslims were so good that they lived as one community. Now there is such division that the earlier positive feelings which existed between them no longer exist. Enmity and prejudice have taken hold of them instead. So, when there is no element of attachment or attraction left and all that is looked for (in debates) is winning or losing, how can there be an expression of truth? For the expression of truth it is important that a person does not possess any inner prejudice and there should be no enmity or ill feeling.

I also believe there is another error in which people have fallen. Before attacking a religion they do not consider whether (that which they are using for an) attack is in fact to be found in that book or not. They leave the actual book to one side and pick up on some person's personal opinion and attribute it to that religion.

In a number of things we are against the Arya religion and we do not consider them to be right.

But I do not attribute the (aspects criticised) to the Vedas. I do not know what is in them. But, we do attribute them to Pundit Dayanand and he has accepted this. We ourselves speak against such beliefs and have publicised that this is the belief of the Arya Samaj. Similarly, if the Aryas have an objection to make, they should make it either against the Holy Qur'an or against a belief which I have stated and published as my belief. It is not appropriate that something which we do not believe is pronounced to be our belief.

As numerous sects (of different religions) have come into being, therefore, any objections against a belief should be levelled only against the sect which has accepted that belief. Hence, at the time of discussion the relevant book should be mentioned. It can be seen from the various versions and commentaries (available) how much difference there is.

If this principle is kept in mind the audience can benefit. How can a person who has neither read nor understood a book, have the right to raise objections

against it? In matters of religion it is necessary that the debate should be about the commonly accepted original principles though it is not necessary that one should have read all the books for which more than a whole lifetime would be needed.

Debate should be undertaken according to the principles of debate. Those who are experienced in the art of debate have written that it is totally useless to become involved in minor subsidiary matters the example of which is like an army which is headed by principles as its officers. When there is a decisive outcome amongst the officers, a similar outcome amongst the soldiers follows. For example, when a commanding officer is killed, the soldiers surrender. I don't say anything until God Almighty permits me to do so. If I wished to participate in (verbal) debate I would not have published this book (*Naseeme-Dawat*). Usually, in gatherings (for religious discussion) truth is kept hidden and people work with prejudice and stubbornness. I have, therefore, made a promise with God that I would abandon this practice.¹

I have written this book (*Naseeme-Dawat*) with a view to the rules of debate and in it I have stated my argument in accordance with the principles I have presented. I do not respond to those who throw abuse at me because God Almighty has taken from me the capacity to respond with abuse. Besides, which of these people is one to respond to? (There are so many)!

(When the Aarya gentlemen left, some others came and in answer to questions, the Promised Messiah^(as) gave the following brief answer):

Adhering to the truth despite the difference of opinion, this you can see in the book *Naseeme-Dawat*. God has taken away from me the capacity to utter abuse neither am I able to make answer to each and every one (who has given abuse). Millions of people are uttering abuse, which one of them am I to answer? I take issue with the Aarya Samaj and not with the Vedas because I am not familiar with the Vedas.

On the evening of 28th February 1903, some Aarya gentlemen came to pay their respects to the Promised

*Messiah^(as) who asked them if they too had come to attend this meeting. They replied that they had only come as they had heard that the Promised Messiah^(as) would also speak at that meeting. Otherwise, they said, they had no wish to come here. The Promised Messiah^(as) replied:*²

We know that in reality there are some decent people in every nation, people whose aim is not to unnecessarily abuse other people and view them with prejudice or to speak disrespectfully of their honoured leaders. But whatever I do, I do it only with the permission of and at the indication and command of God Almighty. He has not permitted me to indulge in this type of (abusive) verbal debate. Hence many years ago I published this promise in my book *Anjaame-Atham* and I have made a promise with God that I would not join the gatherings for such verbal debates. You are aware that in such gatherings many different types of people attend. Some are totally ignorant and attend merely for the purpose of joining the crowd. Others come so that they can throw abuse at the

respected figures of the opponent group and they gain a sense of satisfaction from this. There are yet others who are of an extremely harsh nature. To go to gatherings made up of such people and to enter into religious debate then becomes a very delicate matter. Because you know that when two people stand opposite each other with the sole purpose of proving that the other's religion is completely wrong and has no share in truth or spirituality, and is in fact dead and has no connection with God, until such time as they prove this of the other person's religion, they find it difficult to show the beauty of their own religion. The errors of the other religion have to be pointed out. If the faults which exist in it are not mentioned then there can be no expression of truth. But some people get over-excited by this and they cannot bear to listen and their emotion erupts into violence and they are ready to fight.

Hence, to go to such gatherings is against good sense because for religious analysis it is essential that people come to a religious gathering with a cool heart and with a nature which is fair and just. It is better if they don't

have any inclination towards quarrelsomeness or violence. Then, in such an atmosphere one person can describe the qualities of his religion and speak as much as he can and then someone from the other group can stand up and in a similar civilised, gentle manner can describe the qualities of his religion. This can be repeated many times but, unfortunately, in our country up to now such patient and gentle (religious) analysts do not exist. Such a time has not yet come. But, yes, it is hoped that God will soon bring such a time. I even intended that we should prepare a building here in which people from various religions could speak freely (about their religion). In truth if a matter is not heard with a cool heart and a fair mind and with an inclination towards tolerance then it is extremely difficult to get to its true reality. Take a small case in the courts, for instance, where the judge listens with a cool head to the evidence and excuses from both sides and, after much thought and careful analysis, he makes a decision. Sometimes this takes many years. When such is the case with worldly matters, how can matters of religion be resolved in two or four, or ten or

twelve minutes. It is easy for the enquirer to put the question but the difficulties faced by the person responding are not easy to imagine. If a person puts the question that tells me about the solar system and the stars and the earth and (also states that) answer me in the time that I have taken to put the question - give me the answer within that time otherwise you are a liar. Now, the predicament of the person who has to give the answer is quite evident. What can he do? Until he writes a book made up of many chapters, the answer will not be complete! In short, these are the types of difficulties I face. These are the reasons which prevent me from attending such gatherings.

If, however, the questioner takes the stance that this is my question and I will listen quietly until you have completed the answer, then the person replying would enjoy giving the answer. In truth that which is spoken for God and the heart which does so for the sake of attaining God's pleasure and is full of righteousness, such a person would never do this (i.e. indulge in the use of bad language).

But these days tongues are like

I HAVE REPEATEDLY EXPLAINED TO MY COMMUNITY THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE HASTY IN OBJECTING TO OTHERS. EVERY ANCIENT RELIGION WAS, IN FACT, FROM GOD BUT THE LONG PASSAGE OF TIME HAS CAUSED ERRORS TO DEVELOP. THESE SHOULD BE REMOVED GENTLY AND SOFTLY. DON'T PRESENT ANYONE WITH THE STONE-LIKE GIFT OF AN OBJECTION.

knives and objections are raised one after the other (for no real purpose). When it is done (i.e. questions are asked) for the sake of God then the style is different and the language used is different. That which comes from the heart reaches the heart! I can smell the scent of the question which comes from a sincere seeker of truth. Even harshness when it comes from a seeker of truth has a certain element of enjoyment. It is his right that he persists until he finds satisfaction (in the answer given) and until all the evidence is provided he can certainly continue in his questions. I don't mind this at all. On the contrary, such a person is worthy of respect. Words which are for God have no comparison with deceiving utterances of the baser self.

I have repeatedly explained to my community that they should not be hasty in objecting to others. Every ancient religion was, in

fact, from God but the long passage of time has caused errors to develop. These should be removed gently and softly. Don't present anyone with the stone-like gift of an objection. We see that if today we buy some material and have it made up into a garment, after a short time it becomes old and undergoes change so much so that it becomes something very different (from its original shape).

Likewise, ancient religion too contains the root of truth within it. God is with truth and the true religion contains within it living signs. A tree is recognised by its fruit. Even within governments which are a kind of a shadow of that Being which is the most hidden, even there we see how the truthful are respected by them and are dear to them. The officers and workers whom the Government itself has appointed, say, as a Governor of some place, how they work with courage and

do not like anonymity. But the fraudulent Deputy-Commissioner or a Police Inspector, etc. who cheat people by becoming such officers themselves, could they come before the Government? When the Government finds out it will humiliate them and they would go hand-cuffed to prison or have some other punishment meted out to them. The same is true of religious truthfulness. He who is truthful in the sight of God, possesses God's signs and has the mark of courage and truthfulness.

In reality, he who fears God faces tremendous difficulties. A person becomes pure only when he abandons his own wishes and purpose and becomes totally engrossed in his efforts to attain the pleasure of God. Selfishness, pride and haughtiness are thrown out from his inner self. His eye should look only in the direction in which God commands. His ear should pay attention only to what God says. His lips should open only for the statement of truth and wisdom, and otherwise should remain closed until God commands. His eating, dressing, sleeping, drinking, being with his wife, should all be done because God has so commanded. He shouldn't eat because he is

hungry but because God says so. In short, until he shows that he has 'died' before his death he does not reach the level of the righteous. But when he causes a 'death' over himself, God would never let him die a second death.

These days it is seen that when lips are opened, talk is of nothing but mockery, poking fun at others and saying hurtful things about others. Whatever is contained in a vessel, pours out. Their talk bears witness to what is within them. I can recognise a good-hearted person from afar. A person who comes with a good character and a wholesome heart is just the kind of person I wish to see. Even abuse from such a person doesn't seem to bother. But it is unfortunate that such people with pure hearts are very few indeed.

[Here an Arya person spoke to say that there are only two ignorant nations. If you don't mind my saying so, one is that of the Sikhs and the other is that of our Muslim brothers].

The Promised Messiah^(as) replied:

For a man of understanding no abuse is greater than being called

'ignorant'. To call someone ignorant to his face is considered a very harsh abuse. But you should consider the fact that none of our people here present have responded (to your abuse). Do you, even now, doubt the gentle and civilised manner of our people? There are many who come and give abuse to my face but none of my people dare to respond (angrily) to such a person.

Day and night I give them the teaching of patience. I teach them to be gentle and forbearing. This is not the nation to which your principle (of ignorance) will apply. But we are not responsible for other common people (who are not under our influence). We would believe you if in an Arya gathering someone were to say to them that you are an ignorant people and then they, in turn, were to show patience instead of responding with something a thousand times worse!

You have not seen Muslims, neither have you seen their character. If there were to be a comparison between them and the Aryas, it would be like that of a wolf and a lamb. I don't take responsibility for those who are

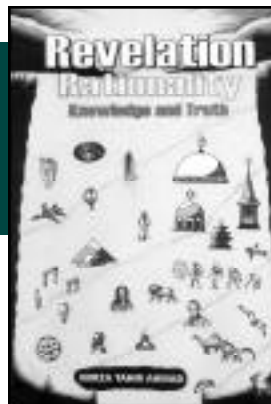
not under my influence but to listen to abuse and other language meant to incite and remain patiently silent is the work of real men. It remains to be seen if some (others) can also show it. Gentleness is difficult (to achieve and practice). Anyone can be harsh!

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1. Additional script from 'Al-Badr' newspaper of the time
2. On 28th February 1903 the Aryas, a sect of the Hindu religion, held a large meeting in which Islam was spoken of very abusively and insults were hurled at the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The 'Blind Watchmaker' Who is also Deaf and Dumb - part III

This is an extract taken from the book Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth, written by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad.



Visualising how this highly sophisticated electrical device was constructed in the sea, without purpose, without design and without a knowledge of how electricity works, one is only left with the scenario that one day in the remote past, an ordinary fish might have been surprised with the bizarre chance appearance of some portholes in its belly. All we can do is to sympathise at its exasperation while waiting for this most complicated electronic generative system to evolve into a meaningful device. Some internal disturbance indeed for the fish because as yet it could not have understood any useful purpose for this rigmarole. How long it could have taken in terms of Darwinian time, Dawkins understands better. Then, somewhere else in the body, the voltmeter began to appear with connecting wires to the tiny brain of the fish, and some fantastic physical changes were followed by a new arrangement of each muscle with special alignment and phenomenal qualities. The unknown maker, whoever it was, had thus created a masterpiece of an electric generator. Was it the know-nothing formless mindless principle of natural selection? Was it the brain of the fish which was not even aware of its own functional abilities? Was it the almighty gene which without possessing a conscious brain occupied the command centre to perfectly operate a system

which had to be operated by a highly competent scientist?

Dawkins also avoids many other key issues. He provides no clear logical solution for the question as to why two such electric fish species, the South American and African weakly electric fish, are quite unrelated to each other and how both could be developing independently in different geographical locations, with a similar functional design.

He further elaborates this separated yet convergent evolution in the following words,

'Electric fish have, at least twice independently, hit upon this ingenious method of navigation...'²⁰

and again,

'Fascinatingly, the South American electric fish have hit upon almost exactly the same solution as the African ones...'²¹

How these fish unanimously 'hit upon the same idea' is a most intriguing question. Moreover, how could they have hit upon an idea so complicated and problematic which they could not even contemplate, let alone resolve. This would also imply that different animals all over the world are hitting upon ideas to simultaneously develop bit by bit. The polar bear has hit upon the idea of being white in the Arctic whereas the polar bear in Canada hit upon the idea of being brown - all independently! This positively indicates purpose and design. The fact is that fish do not hit upon ideas nor does any other animal for that matter. Though Dawkins himself has provided all the necessary data for proof of a Great Conscious Designer, he fails to make the correct analysis of his hard labour. It is because of his greatly flawed

theory that he has resorted to giving up and claiming that:

'The physical principle that they exploit - electric fields in water - is even more alien to our consciousness than that of bats and dolphins.'²²

On this point of wonderment, which he is emphasising, we have made preceding observations previously in this chapter. The purpose of the preceding passage is to prove that Dawkins is definitely wrong in his previous assertions that the living do not present any purpose. All the paths of evolution which he describes, though having no relationship with each other, arrive at the same point of culmination independently. What made them converge to that point while pursuing a completely different and alien journey which had no destination? If different people begin their journey, without purpose and without aim, in directions which they do not choose, how can they meet exactly at the same spot which invariably suits them individually and collectively? Let Dawkins think this over calmly. Let him reconsider his theory of purposelessness in view of the testimony of his own scholarly writings.

His lack of design theory is also strongly rebutted by the coordinated development of animals and plants. There are thousands of such examples some of which we have already discussed in our book. Here we quote just one such example with reference to Darwin himself. Darwin has discussed the coexistence of many species of animal and vegetative life evolving together complementarily. Worms, insects and birds, on the one hand, go on evolving exactly in accordance with the evolution of plants. The nature and shape of the flowers and fruits on the other hand, remain exactly harmonised with animals which evolve separately. We can quote hundreds of such examples where it is impossible to suggest a blind mutual

cooperation of the two entirely governed by natural selection.

Here we refer to the discovery of Madagascan orchid, *Angracecum*. The biologists refer to an episode in relation to this plant which had a star-shaped snow-white flower from which descended a foot long curved tubular structure into the ovarian chamber. Only a half-inch of this chamber was filled with nectar. When it was enquired from Darwin how this plant could have been pollinated, he suggested that there must exist a counterpart of this plant in the form of a moth which should have a corresponding foot long curved proboscis which could reach the nectar along this path. This is exactly what was discovered later on. It paid a tribute to Darwin's genius but not to his principle of natural selection. By the mere operation of natural selection, both the plant and the moth could not have evolved separately, yet together, in perfect harmony.

The question arose as to how this flower could have survived without its reproductive system being operative. If there was a bit by bit evolutionary process involved, why did it begin to evolve into an impossible situation? Why grow an exceptionally long curved tube and hide its nectar beneath it? Why obstruct any bird or insect from reaching the nectar at the bottom for the sake of pollination so that its reproductive organs could be activated? Two separate, yet simultaneous courses of evolution, one occurring in the plant and the other in the animal, are impossible to explain away by the mere factor of chance.

Can Professor Dawkins suggest some solution applicable to the problem quoted above? How did that flower evolve bit by bit simultaneously with the hawk-moth possessing that extraordinary proboscis? Do moths ever have such a long curved proboscis? How many varieties of moths must have been created and destroyed before natural selection could begin its work upon

them. Both must have started their beginnings from a most trivial state. They had to remain constantly aware of what was happening on the other side so that they could precisely correspond to each other's shape and design perfectly. They both must have been interlocked into a single entity as though their separate identities as an animal and a vegetable had ceased to exist.

Having done that, Dawkins is required to throw light on the forces which throughout governed this separate, yet powerful development. What hand of blind selection could have achieved it? At each of millions of little steps they must have separately taken, the number of steps which must have gone wrong would be enormous, in accordance with the mathematics of chance. The blind hand of natural selection had a prodigal task of choosing and rejecting from among them. Yet the ultimate choice of natural selection went absolutely wrong. A flower was created which was almost impossible to be pollinated - a moth evolved which could only survive on the ultimate completion of that particular flower.

Here at least Dawkins must admit that natural selection worked against itself in creating enormous difficulties for the survival of species. The evolution of the two depended entirely on the coordinated moves of the species we have mentioned above. This by itself is impossible without a conscious and an extremely knowledgeable mind to govern it - a mind which natural selection does not possess. Neither of the two parallel evolutions should have survived to reach their culmination if there were no controller guiding their separate steps to remain exactly complimentary to each other. There are many other factors in the grand scheme of things as created by God which are beyond the dominion of natural selection. If those specifically designed factors were not brought into play, and evolution of the living

were left entirely at the mercy of natural selection, life would have completely lost its bearing.

The list of the many specific measures taken by God during the evolution of life, which had nothing to do with natural selection, is too long to be reproduced here. One of them, for instance, relates to the extinction of dinosaurs and the profound objective this served in the scheme of creation. Why a massive meteorite should have brought about the end of the age of the dinosaurs precisely at the time when this end was needed? If pre-designed by God, as we believe, one purpose it could and did serve was to give other forms of life a chance to develop their evolutionary potentials to the maximum limits, undeterred by dinosaurs. The second highly essential purpose it served, but was understood much later in time, was to bury dinosaurs deep down by the sea shore to gradually convert them to oil, which man of that age would have so direly needed. Such is the work of an All-Knowing Creator. None can attribute this perfect exercise to mere chance. It is impossible for it to have happened accidentally, while now we can clearly read a perfect well-coordinated design in this entire exercise, serving at least two essential purposes in the scheme of things. How on earth could this be the work of natural selection!

How we wish Dawkins had applied his all-pervasive theory to the real mysteries of nature which he so competently describes instead of the phantom games his mind creates. Incidentally, we draw his attention to figure 5 on page 61 of his book, which he has presented to justify his theory of *accumulating small change*. Each figure shown there, starting with the one resembling a swallowtail, could have at random created any other figure shown in this group of seventeen. This is a deliberate attempt to mislead the innocent computer which is only attuned to his master's voice. What concept of genes was fed into that will ever

remain a mystery because the behaviour of genes is unpredictable and they do not work in a two-dimensional world of lines and figures. The world of genes is far more complex than the land of biomorphs where evidently the figures at every generation are doctored by a brain which genes do not possess. Again the figures are concocted by a brain which operated the computer, while it can never claim to know all the intricacies of the world of genes. The childlike figures which his computer has drawn could as well have been sketched by a toddler on a piece of paper, lacking meaning and reality as much as the figures produced by his computer do. Could figures such as these ever be the creation of genes? Genes do not possess minds but the complex work they produce cannot be created by a mindless thing. They work as though they possess the most advanced mind and are capable of implementing their intricate decisions. No comparison whatsoever can be drawn between these computer figures and real living things. But let us suppose for a while that this model is really representative. If so, any figure among the seventeen could give birth to any other figure by cellular development or random mutations of genes.

If such computations as Dawkins has done could be found in nature, a swallowtail could give birth to a 'man in hat', or an extremely surprised 'man in hat' could give birth to a scorpion. A frog could be born out of a spitfire giving birth to a fox which could lay a litter of beautiful lamps, out of which emerge jumping spiders or bats rapidly fluttering away to their caves of darkness. This is how his computer game works in a single plane of straight or twisted lines. Why not start an analytical study of a real man wearing a hat and show us how natural selection could have built such a person, with or without the hat? Why pull a bat out of the hat of his computer images? Why not turn to the bats whom he has so aptly described and begin to show how they could have evolved bit by bit. There he should have paused and

demonstrated how natural selection could have created even the wing of the bat.

Incidentally, talking of wings, we are amazed to read his suggestion that amphibians could have turned into flying birds bit by bit just by flapping their arms. If anyone knows, he should have known that wings cannot be created by the flapping or twisting of arms. Such flapping or twisting could go on for billions of years yet would fail to create a wing.

The anatomy of a flying bird is far more complex. If moving arms up and down could create the internal and anatomical changes which could carve the breast bone of a bird, only then perhaps could we entertain this absurd suggestion. But the entire frame of the light hollow bones which a bird possesses are a prerequisite for the possibility of flight. Again feathers are not born with the up and down physical exercise of arms. They may go on till eternity but not the ghost of a feather would grow out of their movements. We have yet to see a physical trainer with his arms covered with tiny feather-like growth which could bit by bit turn into feathers. A naturalist could object to this suggestion by reminding us that the lifetime of a physical instructor is too short to produce such anatomical changes. He should remember that the class of mammals have been in existence for around three hundred million years. All mammals move their limbs, all try to scale as much height as they can by jumping, but feathers they never grow! Is that a prerogative of amphibians alone? But feathers or no feathers, the amphibians could never have built their internal mechanism into that of even the most rudimentary of birds. We know Darwin has suggested this but his suggestions can never alter the realities of life. Amphibians or no amphibians, Dawkins must project his mind five hundred million years into the past when the entire earth was buzzing with flying insects. How did they develop their wings bit by bit with all the

cellular and anatomical features which go into the making of a flying insect?

Turning once again to the computer images of Dawkins, which seem to be so popular with him, he has taken only twenty-nine steps, while for a realistic vision of what happens within the genes and how they work, enormously large number of computations were required. Moreover genes according to his admission have no mind and no computer to work upon - while he has a mind and a computer and the know-how to manipulate the computer to his own advantage. Not only this, he also admits that he selected some specific figures out of every generation of computer images to be re-fed into the computer for creating the next generation. He has also disregarded the important factor that no human can visualize when genes should mutate or should not mutate. No scientist's brain, no matter how clever he might be, can project itself into the cellular universe. Thus any computer model proposed by the most knowledgeable scientist based on his estimation of when and how the genes should spurt into activity, interplaying with a myriad of other internal factors, is fiction not reality.

References

- 1 DAWKINS, R. (1986) *The Blind Watchmaker*. Penguin Books Ltd, England pg98-99.
2. DAWKINS, R. (1986) *ibid* p.99.
3. DAWKINS, R. (1986) *ibid* p.97.

How to Get Rid of the Bondage of Sin - II

We feel greatly privileged in reproducing this article, a translation of an excerpt from the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, who started the *Review of Religions*. This article drew worldwide acclaim from several writers who praised its contents. It was first published in the *Review of Religions*, 1902, Vol.1, No.1. The first part of article this was re-published in the June 2002 edition

If it might be objected that swords were resorted to by early Islam and hence the legality of *Jihad*, we say the objection is based upon ignorance of early Islamic circumstances. Islam never allowed the use of the sword for spreading the faith. On the other hand, it strictly prohibits compulsion in matters of faith. It has the plain injunction 'There shall be no compulsion in religion.' Why was the sword taken in hand then? The circumstances under which this measure had been resorted to have nothing to do with the spread of religion; they are connected with the preservation of life. Briefly, they are as follows:

The savage inhabitants of the deserts of Arabia, who could hardly distinguish right from wrong, conceived a hatred towards Islam in its earliest day

and became its bitter enemies. The reason of this hatred may be easily conceived.

When the unity of God and the Islamic truths were preached openly to idolatrous Arabs and convincing arguments against idol worship were impressed upon their minds and they were told, how degrading it was for the noblest of God's creatures to bow in submission to stones, they found themselves unable to meet the adherents of the new faith upon argumentative ground. This exposure led to a motion in favour of Islam among the more reasonable of them. The ties of relationship were cut asunder, the son parted from his parents and brother from brother. This exasperated them the more and they saw plainly that, if their fathers' false religion was to be saved, excessive measures must be taken to stop the ingress into

the new religion. The new converts to Islam were therefore violently persecuted and no efforts were spared to block the way to the new faith. Those acquainted with early Muslim history know full well what barbarous and cruel treatment was meted out to the early converts, and how many were murdered in cold blood. But these harsh measures did not prevent people from the acceptance of truth, for even a superficial glance is enough to convince a man of the reasonableness and purity of Islam as against idolatry. At length when the implacable foes of Islam saw that severe persecution availed but little and that their ancient, religion was threatened to be swept away in the current of Muslim reason, they planned the death of the Prophet himself. But their designs were frustrated. Almighty God saved His messenger and took him to Medina. The unbelievers, however, could not rest in their homes so long as they heard that the religion they had persecuted was gaining ground in another place. They pursued the Muslims to their new abode, and nothing but, their extirpation could satisfy them. What could Islam do under these circumstances but

defend itself? For what fault, were Muslims to be mercilessly butchered and not allowed to protect their lives? Why should not the inveterate persecutors have been brought to retribution and just punishment? The Muslim battles were therefore not undertaken for gaining converts but to protect innocent Muslim lives. Can an unbiased judgment accept the conclusion that Islam was unable to prove its reasonableness as against savage Arabs? Can an unprejudiced mind believe that men who had sunk down so low as to worship images and lifeless things and who indulged in every manner of vice, could vanquish the noble religion of Islam on intellectual grounds, and that failure in proof led it to resort to the sword for increasing the number of its followers? Those who have advanced such objections against Islam have been guilty of grave injustice, inasmuch as they have concealed the true state of facts.

It is, however, true that the Muslim *Maulvis* and the Christian missionaries are equally to blame for this unjust charge against Islam. The ignorant *Maulvis* while pretending to support Islam have by their repeated inculcations,

grafted the false doctrine of Jihad upon the minds of the unenlightened public who were misled by the *fatwas* of the *maulvis* on the one side and the objections of the Christian Missionaries, whom they took for learned men, on the other. The doctrine of Jihad being thus supported by the evidence of two opposing witnesses, its validity could not be questioned by the masses. Had the Missionaries taken a different course and with true honesty declared that the *fatwas* of the *Maulvis* were based on ignorance of the early Islamic history, and that the circumstances which then rendered an appeal to arms necessary for Muslims, did not exist any more, the idea of Jihad would long since have been eradicated from the face of the earth. But they never looked to the consequences and a misdirected zeal for their own religion cast a veil over their judgments in grasping the truth.

It must also be stated here that permission for self-defence and murdering the enemies of Islam was not given to the Muslims until the Arabs had, on account of their excessive oppressions and outrages and innocent bloodshed,

rendered themselves culpable and liable to be punished with death. But a clemency was even then shown to such of them as embraced Islam. The unity of religion established a relation of brotherhood and all past wrongs were forgotten. It is here that some opponents of Islam have stumbled and from this they draw the conclusion that the new religion was forced upon the unbelievers. In fact, the case is just the reverse of what the objectors have thought. There is no compulsion here; it was a favour to those who had rendered themselves liable to death. It is apparently absurd to take this conditional mitigation of just punishment for compulsion. They deserved to be murdered, not because they did not believe in the mission of the Prophet, but because they had murdered many an innocent soul. The extreme penalty of the law was upon them, but the mercy of the Gracious God gave them another chance of averting this merited capital punishment. He knew that during the long years of opposition the Islamic truths had been brought home to them and they well understood the futility of idol-worship. His mercy offered them an opportunity, even after

the sentence was justly pronounced against them, for imploring His pardon and the forgiveness of their sins. This clearly shows that it was not the object of Islam to put any unbeliever merely as such to death, but that it was willing to forgive even when the criminal was found deserving of death.

Islam had to grapple with other difficulties. Religious prejudice was so strong at the time that if a member of any tribe adopted the faith of Islam, he was either put to death or threatened with it, and persecution was so severe that life seemed a burden to him. Islam had therefore to face the difficulty of establishing freedom of religious exercise and for this noble object it had to undertake wars.

The early wars of Islam fall under either of the above headings and it never took the sword for its own propagation or for any other purpose. Attempts were made to blot out its very existence and therefore it had to struggle for its life. It did not take up arms of its own accord but was compelled to do so. It had to defend itself and repel the dangerous foe. Later on, when its true principles were

forgotten, the doctrine was read in a different light and ignorance looked with pride upon a hateful course of life. But the fault can in no way be attributed to Islam. The source from which it flows is pure and undefiled. That this doctrine has been identified with Islamic teachings by shallow-brained zealots who do not care for the life of man even so much as man should care for the life of a sparrow, cannot be questioned. But the innocent blood that has been spilt in the past does not satisfy them. They have yet a bloody *Mahdi* in store for the world and would like to exhibit the ugliest picture of Islam before all nations, that all people may know that Islam has always had to resort for its propagation to compulsion and the sword, and that it has not a particle of truth in it to gain its conquest over hearts. It seems as if the holders of these views are not satisfied with the humiliation and decadence which Islam has already suffered, but must bring it still lower and subject it to yet more disgrace. These men are, a reproach to Islam. But God now wills that Islam should not be branded with reproaches and remain under a cloud any more. It is already so distressing to find

that its opponents who have not taken the trouble to investigate matters for themselves, have it impressed upon their minds that Islam has from its very beginning been employing the sword to add it to its numbers.

It is high time that all these base charges should be cleared from the face of Islam. If the Maulvis unite to root up the evil from the midst of the Muslims they shall have done a lasting good to, and conferred a blessing upon, their co-religionists. Such an exposition of the doctrines of Islam will further reveal the excellence and the beauties of that religion to the general public, and the aversion which its opponents have conceived on account of misconceptions shall be turned into admiration. The clouds of dust having been cleared, shall then be able to get their light from that source of light. It is evident that no one can approach a bloody murderer. Everyone fears him, women and children tremble at his sight, and he looks like a mad man. An opponent of an alien religion cannot even pass a night with him lest he should choose to be a *Ghazi* [a victorious warrior] at the cost of his life. Such events occur daily among

the ignorant frontier people, and a single bloody deed is deemed sufficient to entitle the murderer to paradise and its manifold blessings. It is a shame for the Muslims that alien races cannot safely live as their neighbours. They cannot trust them for a single moment and hardly expect any good in times of need. They do not deem themselves safe among them and shrink at the hidden belief of *Ghazism*. [roughly translated as the code of stalwart frontline soldiers].

An instance of this occurred lately here at Qadian. On the 20th November last, a European came here. Just at that time a number of my followers had assembled together and the conversation was upon a religious subject. The traveler stood apart from the assembly and was addressed in polite words. It appeared that he had been to Arabia and other Muslim countries, and that he came here with the object of taking my and my followers' photographs. As a guest, he was asked to stay for a few days, but he appeared apprehensive. He stated that he had seen many Muslims who had committed atrocious deeds of murder against Christians. He mentioned several

specific instances in which such cruelty had been shown. It was then explain to him that this, the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam, abhorred such doctrines and hated their adherents. It had set before itself the noble object of uprooting this evil. Upon this he felt satisfied and stayed here for one night.

There was a lesson in this story for the *pro-Jihad Maulvis*. The growth of such horrible doctrines among the Muslims has done lasting injury to the cause of Islam and created an abhorrence for it in the hearts of other nations. They have no confidence in their sympathy so long as the dangerous doctrine of *Jihad* finds favour with them. They cannot form a favourable opinion except of such of them as do not lead strictly religious lives and are not very scrupulous about their religious beliefs. For all these misunderstandings none but the Muslims themselves are responsible. The blame of depriving a whole world of the recognition of Islamic truths lies at the doors of the *Maulvis* who taught doctrines repulsive to the nature of man. How could the religion be from God, whose teachings needed the flash of this

sword to get an entrance into the human heart? Such considerations were enough to keep back people from the acceptance of truth. The true religion is that which on account of its inherent property and power and its convincing arguments is more powerful than their keenest sword, not that which depends upon steel for its existence.

Such are the evils that call for a reformer. Casting a glance at the internal state of Islam, we meet with sad disappointment. It is a ghastly picture. The sun has undergone an eclipse, the greater part being already darkened. The social relations of the Muslims are deplorable. Traditions have been fabricated that act like poison upon their moral conditions and break the Divine laws. The most sacred rights which Divine law has given to man are those relating to life, property and honour. We are commanded not to kill man, not to commit an outrage upon his honour, and not to seize his property dishonestly. But some Muslims have broken all of these commandments. They take away the life of an innocent person and never shudder at the inhumane deed. Empty headed *Maulvis* have circulated *fatwas* to the effect

that it is lawful to seduce or seize the women of unbelievers or heretics and to steal or misappropriate their properties.

How dangerous is the condition of the religion that is full of so many evils, and whose pretended religious leaders, instead of acting in obedience to the dictates of conscience, follow their sensual desires and palm off their own erroneous views as holy doctrines taught by God and His prophets. These are wolves in lambs' clothing and deceive the people. They act like poison and say they are an antidote. They are an enemy to society and an enemy to Islam. Their hearts are void of grace and sympathy but they conceal themselves. They put on the mask of preachers but have in view the indulgence of their own carnal desires. They come into mosques behave like saints, but their character is black with diabolical beads. These infamous characters are not limited to any particular country or town or sect, but may be found in every Muslim country. They pretend to be the religious leaders of the people and expositors of the doctrines of their religion. They call themselves *Maulvis* and assume

saintly airs so that they may pass for godly men. Their deeds, however, reveal their true character. They do not like that true righteousness and true sympathy be spread in the world, for they consider that a loss to themselves.

In short, the way Islam is blocked with numerous difficulties. The souls are dead and do not respond to the call of virtue. The golden mean which Islam taught as the guiding rule of life has been given up, and Muslims have gone to extremes. There are those among them that prostrate themselves before tombs and make circuits around them. They regard the departed souls of their spiritual guides as having full control from God over the affairs of humanity. Every religious order has a tomb in connection with it, which is worshipped by the disciples at the instance of the head. If one asks for a supernatural sign, a thousand miracles of the dead saint are related, but as to proof there is none. With them tomb worship is of the essence of Islam, and all others who claim to follow that religion are in error.

In contrast with this is the sect that has gone to the opposite

extreme. A wholesale denial of spiritual facts has fallen to their lot. Saints and prophets are rejected in the same breath. Miracles are denied, and turned into ridicule. The revelation of God is attributed to an excess of imagination, and the presence of a peculiar creative power in the inspired one. Predictions are described as the result of human foresight, and any prophecy which is not the result of mere insight of human judgment into the surrounding circumstances, and which could be termed a direct communication from a higher source, is an impossibility with them. In short, they declare the Revelation of God to be all talk, miracles all moonshine and prophecies all stuff and nonsense. The graves of the dead are heaps of dust with which the souls have no connection. The resurrection or rising of the dead on the Day of Judgment is a fable of the days of ignorance and to think of a life hereafter is madness. World wisdom is that true wisdom. Man must be bent wholly upon the things of this world, and his only concern should be the requirement of the best means of being foremost in the race of life. He must emulate men who are day and night involved in the

affairs of the world and its base machinations.

Such are the excess and laxity of Muslims with respect to the doctrines of Revelation and Resurrection. But their social and moral relations are all subject to the same rule. There is immoderation in their words and deeds, in marriage and divorce, in charity and parsimony, in wrath and mercy, in revenge and forgiveness; in short, in every one of their affairs. Ignorance and error have everywhere the upper hand among them. This is the deplorable condition of the people that appeared in the world with the distinction and pre-eminence of being the teachers of the unity of God and the golden mean. From this may be judged the state of other people.

We shall now take the case of Christianity which grew up in a land endowed by nature with superior intellect and rare brain powers and accordingly the expectations were greater in its case. But we are sorry to say that in the matter of religion and the unity of God their state is the worst. Their faith is a reproach to their philosophy and science. When we consider their prudence

and skill in the management of worldly affairs and their genius for inventions on the one hand, and their weak side in grasping religious truths and delusion in taking a weak man as the Lord of the worlds, on the other, we are at a loss to account for this irreconcilable inconsistency. We have an unequalled intelligence in the one case and a similar want in the other.

Between the erroneous paths chosen by the Christians and Muslims, a line of distinction can easily be drawn. Among the latter, the infringement is largely on the side of the rights of man, while among the former it is on that of the duties we owe to our Creator. The doctrine of *Jihad* has hardened the hearts of the Muslims to such an extent that they can hardly feel true love and sympathy for their kind. The unenlightened among them are ever ready to cut the throat of an innocent person, or commit an outrage upon him on the slightest excitement or for personal motives, and with their beastly conduct degrade humanity. The Christians have committed the most horrible outrage upon the rights of the Divine Being. They have set-up with Him a weak man

as God. The pity is that they have not even attained the object for which they had deified a creature. We cannot see the good that has resulted to them from it. If a faith in the blood of Jesus has the power of cleansing man from sin, why has it not benefited Europe? Why has atonement proved to be no remedy for the besetting sins of Europe which one feels even ashamed to mention? There it has not only felt to uproot the great vices but has worked their worst development. Does Europe exhibit a higher level of morality or less evil than the Eastern countries? If not, why has it never occurred to the supporters of this doctrine to revise the recipe and seek another remedy? Every physician has to resort to this measure and when he sees that the health of his patient does not improve by one remedy, he has to apply another. If then we care so much for a few days comfort, why is not attention paid to this important question upon which depends the eternal welfare of man?

Nineteen hundred years have elapsed since the blood of Jesus was first introduced into the world as a patent sin-healing remedy, but instead of doing any good it has proved harmful to

society and intensified the evil which it affected to mitigate. Are we still to believe that faith in the blood of Jesus delivers man from the bondage of sin, or should we expect that it shall do in the future what it has been unable to do in such a long past and that the time is coming when Christian nations shall pre-eminently stand above others in shunning lust and iniquity? An unprejudiced European or a traveller who has been to the great European cities the great centres of its civilisation such as Paris, shall not hesitate to testify to the truth of our statements. Nay, some parts of Europe have reached the lowest stage of degeneracy and do not look with any horror upon vice, nor pay any heed to its injurious consequences. Taking more than one wife is illegal there, but looking with lust upon a woman is no delinquency. Is there any verse in the Gospels that legalises the disgraceful conduct of the millions of women in France and elsewhere who do not marry all their lives long, or is it only too true that the blood of Jesus has proved a bane to society?

The truth is that there is no natural relation between the

death of one man and the redemption of another. As to the dead one's deity we can conceive of blessings from a Living God and not from a dead one. The whole world is enlightened by the rising of the sun, not by its setting. Nineteen hundred years' experience of the failure of the remedy, in effecting the desired object undermines the foundation of a Son of God upon which the whole superstructure is built. The death of God is no doubt an ill-devised idea, but supposing that the Almighty Being could not see His way out of the difficulty of human redemption but by the strange course He adopted, it would have been some satisfaction if the desired object had thus been attained. But the object has never been accomplished and the world has been plunged into deeper depths of sin. This unmeaning and unreasonable act of the Deity therefore turns out to be an absolute failure. That God should have been born from the womb of a woman to suffer punishment, disgrace and death is, in the first place, opposed to the established Divine laws, for it has neither any precedent which should satisfy the hearts of men that God has been in the habit of being thus

born into the world, and that such a thing occurred several times before, nor is the claim supported by any such extraordinary signs which can convince reasonable minds that they display a greater power than was manifested in the miracles wrought by the other prophets. Nor is the defect of this absolute lack of evidence made up by the attendance of the pretended consequences for which the dangerous dogma was introduced into the world.

The two great vices in which grow all carnal passions are drinking and prostitution, and it is in Christian nations that we find their worst development. The majority of the inhabitants of Europe are involved in these two vices, and there is no exaggeration in the assertion that in drunkenness Europe beats all the vastly populated countries of Asia, and a single large city of Europe has a larger number of public-houses than the total number of shops of all sorts in an Asiatic town [Readers are reminded that the author is describing a situation in 1902. Ed] Experience has, moreover, established it beyond doubt that drunkenness is the root of all evils and that the intoxicated man is

likely to commit the most horrible crimes on the slightest provocation. Other evils are inseparable from it. Piety and drunkenness like light and darkness respectively, can never exist together in the same place. The man who is not aware of its evil consequences is not far-sighted. Another difficulty about it is that the giving up of the habit of drunkenness is attended with serious difficulties.

The question naturally arises now, whether there is any true remedy for freedom from the bondage of sin if atonement is not. I do not only assert it forcibly but offer it as my own experience and as a well-tried remedy that there exists, and has existed from the creation of man down to this day, one and only one sure method of being released from the slavery of sin and the disobedience of God. Nothing can be proof against sin except a perfect knowledge of God attained through sure and conclusive arguments and brilliant signs of His existence. It is not to believe simply that there is a God but to know God and see God. It is through such a knowledge of God that man sees clearly that, the wrath of God is a devouring fire, and that a

manifestation of the beauties of God sets the soul at rest and makes it evident that true bliss and eternal felicity consist in a constant and reverent adoration of God. Every screen that hides the face of God from man is then raised and the Divine glory and beauty are revealed to him in their full lustre. This is the only way in which sensual passions can be restrained, and it is only such a knowledge of God that works a true transformation in man.

Some men would think that they also believe in God, love God and fear God, yet they are not granted the purity of soul. Others perhaps, might object that all the world, with the exception of a very few, is not a disbeliever in God and yet sin and evil rage in the world. But the fact is, that there is wide difference between a belief in God and a knowledge of God. I do not mean to say that one who merely believes in God is granted the power to overcome sin, but that such power is granted to the man who has a perfect knowledge of God, and who has tasted both the fear and love of God. The believer in God simply admits that a God exists but one who has a perfect knowledge of Him actually sees

what the other simply does not reject on grounds of probability. If it be said that Satan has a clear knowledge of God and still he is disobedient to the Divine being, the reply is that such a view is not correct. Satan has not the perfect knowledge which is granted to the righteous ones of God.

It is in the nature of man that when perfect knowledge renders him certain of something, he is necessarily impressed with it. He avoids every dreadful path of destruction when he has once seen it. It is therefore impossible that a true knowledge of God and disobedience to His Commandments should dwell in the same heart, for if the one is darkness the other is light and must dispel it. We ordinarily see that anything which experience has shown to be beneficial and conducive to any good is anxiously desired by everybody, while that which it has proved to be harmful is hated and even viewed with horror. For instance, the man who has strychnia in his hand but is not aware of its fatal property, may take it in any quantity under the impression of its being some innocuous drug, but the person who knows it to be a poison, cannot take it in any such quantity

as is sure to kill him. Similarly, it is a solid and evident truth that when man knows for certain that there is a God who punishes every transgression, and that punishment is sure to follow every act of disobedience, he keeps at a respectful distance from all sorts of wrong doing such as bloodshed, theft, prostitution, oppression, injustice, breach of trust, setting up others with God, telling a lie, giving false evidence, vanity, hypocrisy, speculation, cheating, abusing, fraud, faithlessness, remissness, lasciviousness, ungratefulness towards God, not fearing God, selfishness, having no sympathy for man, not praying to God with a fearful heart, indulging in luxury and worldly delights, forgetfulness of God, keeping aloof from prayer and humbleness of heart, adulterating articles of sale or defrauding customers, giving short measure or weight, selling at a higher than the market price, not serving the parents, harshness to wives, disobedience of husbands, looking to lust after strange men and women, not caring for the orphans, thinking little of the old and the weak and the sick, disregarding the rights of neighbours and injuring them, insulting a fellow man to show one's vanity, cheering at others in

offensive language, describing some bodily defect to affront another person, calling one bad names, charging one falsely, pretending to receive revelation from God, falsely claiming an apostleship, message or prophecy from Him, denying the existence of God, and, revolting against a good ruler or mischievously creating a dissention in the country.

The assertion that we know that there is a God and that sin will be punished and yet commit sins, and hence the insufficiency of the method pointed out, is nothing but a delusion. It is impossible that man should venture to commit sin after he is fully convinced that no sooner he shall transgress the commandments of the Almighty than the fire of punishment shall consume him like lightning in the twinkling of an eye. The principle upon which stress has been laid here is one that defies refutation. It is incontestable that whenever an act is sure to be followed by certain punishment, there is no tendency in man to attempt that act. No one ever thrusts his hand into burning fire, or throws himself down the top of a mountain, or jumps into a well, or

stands against a train in motion, or thrusts his hand into the mouth of a lion, or holds out his leg before a mad dog or stands beneath falling lightning or remains in a house when the roof is coming down over his head, or stands upon the ground that is sinking. Is there a stout-hearted man who upon seeing a poisonous snake upon his bed does not at once make a jump to the floor? Or does the rashest man, when his house is on fire, not leave everything to be devoured by flames to escape with his own life? If all this is true and man naturally flees from danger, why does he not keep clear of sin and fly from the coming wrath? There is no satisfactory answer to this question, except that in the two cases there is difference as to the certainty of the consequences.

Most people have really no sure knowledge as to the effect of their transgressions. They are no doubt conscious that sin is harmful, but they never dread it like the lion or the snake. Beneath this outward belief is the lurking idea that there is no positive proof as to the retribution. Even the existence of God is not beyond all question. There is also an uncertainty

regarding the immortality of the soul, or, if it be supposed immortal, who call tell of its fate hereafter, or that transgression of God's commandments shall be really punished? That such ideas are latent in the minds is beyond a shadow of doubt, though they may be there undetected or even unsuspected. But as to occasions of palpable danger instances of which have been given above, there is dead certainty that destruction shall be the immediate consequence, and therefore none can approach the danger, or if any one is brought face to face with it by accident, he shall fly from it.

To sum up, most men have not that certainty in religious matters which they have in the material world. In the one case it is a certitude, in the other a mere idea, a conjecture so to say in this they feel and see, in that it is an idle tale. Fog cannot dispel the darkness of sin, there must be clear light. I say it plainly and truly that the true salvation of mankind has no relation to the crucifixion of Jesus, and even if a thousand Messiahs be crucified that object can never be attained. Only a perfect knowledge or a perfect love of God can

deliver man from the bondage of sin. As to the death of Jesus upon the cross, it is not a true statement in the first place and has, moreover, no connection with the assuaging of sin. It is an obscure assertion with no foundation and no results. Evidence does not support it, nor does experience bear it out. The suicide of a Messiah has no conceivable relation to the remission of another man's sins.

The true nature of redemption is that man should be freed from the hell of sin in this very world. The promise of a salvation hereafter, while this one is to be passed in the fire of sin, is nothing but a fallacy. Idle tales cannot relieve a man of the heavy burden he is so desirous to shake off, nor have these childish stories which are devoid of all pure truth and quite strangers to the purpose, done any good to or saved their upholders, Search the whole country, from North to South and from East to West, and you shall not find a single man who has, through these tales, attained to that righteousness of heart which reveals the shining face of God. It is this righteousness which not only makes a man abhor sin but gives

him a true prospect of a paradise hereafter by granting him in the enjoyment of truths a heavenly bliss in this life. The soul of man melts and humbles itself down before the majesty of God without any restraint. A light descends from heaven and dispels the gloom of carnal desires.

As darkness pervades a room in broad day light if its doors are shut, light enters it if a man takes the trouble to open the doors; similar is the case with the spirit of man. He must exert himself to his utmost before he reaps any real advantage. To admit light into a room, a man must get up from his place and open the windows. Unless he does that he cannot partake of the bounties of the laws of nature. A thirsty man cannot quench his thirst with a mere idea of water, but stumbling and falling he must reach the fountain of sweet water and stoop down to drink of it. Then shall his scorching thirst be satisfied.

The water of life, which can cool and refresh your souls from the inflammation of sin is *perfect* assurance. Upon this earth and under the heavens there is no other remedy for getting cleansed from sin. No cross can deliver you

from this evil, no blood can set you free from the trammels of passion. Do not trust in these, for they have nothing to do with deliverance. Reflect upon realities and ponder over truths. Try as you do in the material world, and then you will see that there is no light but that which proceeds from true assurance that can take you out of sensual darkness, and no pure and sweet water but that which flows from perfect knowledge and an actual revelation of the face of God that can cleanse the impurities of the soul and cool and refresh the burning of the heart. If one propounds a different theory, or another acts upon a different principle, the one is ignorant and the other deceived. It is not light they can give you but further darkness of doubt, and not the cool and sweet water they promise you but more of burning and inflammation. No blood can purify you but the pure blood which the nourishment of assurance generates, and no cross can deliver you but the cross that you have to suffer in walking upon the right road.

Is it not true that unless there is light you cannot see and unless you tread on the right road you

cannot reach the goal. Think of that which is far, from that which is near, and judge the spiritual from the material world. The laws which prevail in the one hold good in the other for both come from the same source. Is there a man who can see without the help of his eyes, or hear without the aid of his ears, or speak but by means of his tongue. Why not seek for similar laws in matters spiritual? Can one stand with one's eyes open on the side of a bottomless pit? Or is not one alarmed when a voice comes into his ears warning him of the approach of thieves? Or again, is there a person who can, notwithstanding healthiness of the muscles of taste, palatably devour bitter and poisonous drugs which produce stomach disorder, and vomiting, swelling of the body or other fatal diseases which ultimately destroy the whole system? If man has to depend on so many things for his guidance in the physical world, is it not true that in the spiritual world he stands in need of a light that should show him the evil of the paths of wickedness, a voice that should warn him of the places frequented by thieves and dacoits, and a taste that should distinguish bitter from sweet and

poison from antidote. These are the things which man needs to be saved. Salvation cannot be got except through light and a blind man who trusts in the blood of someone for being saved from sin trusts but to a broken reed.

Any one who only hankers after a salvation in the next world is certainly on the wrong scent. True salvation is that which begins in this life. It is a light which descends upon the heart and shows the abyss of destruction. Walk therefore in the path of truth and wisdom and then you will find God. Animate and warm your hearts that you may be able to make a motion towards truth. Unfortunate is the heart which is cold, miserable the spirit which is depressed, and dead the conscience which has no light in it. Be not worse than the bucket which goes empty into the well but comes up full. Be not like the sieve which discharges its fluid contents as soon as it receives them. Let all your exertions be to one end only, that your health be restored and that the fever should leave you, whose poisoning has impaired your senses and taken away light from the eyes, hearing from the ears, taste from the tongue, and strength from all the

limbs. Cut off the low connections of this world that you may be able to unite with the higher one. Control your heart from moving in one path, that thus constrained it may take the other. Throw off the filthy worm of this earth that the shining jewel of heaven be granted to you. Look at the beginning when God breathed His spirit into Adam. Let your deeds be such as to make you deserving' of the same boon, that you may be made lord over all things as your father was made before you.

The greater part of the day has passed, the eve is approaching and the sun is going to set. Let your eyes see now or else they will never see. Before you commence that eternal journey send before you delicious and sweet things to eat, not stones and bricks, for those will never satisfy your hunger or quench your thirst. Send forth also clothes for your dress and not thorns and rubbish. The God, who before the birth of the child provides milk for it in the breast of its mother, has *sent one* for you in your time and in your country that he may give you suck like a loving mother. From him you shall suck the milk of assurance and faith, a milk whiter than the sun

and of all drinks the most cheering and, inspiriting. If you are born alive and not dead, run to the breast that can give you fresh milk. Throw off the stinking and noxious milk from your cups, for it affords no nourishment and you cannot see its putridity. It has become a poison and its entrance into your blood is sure to corrupt the internal system. All that glitters is not gold, and therefore take not every whiteness for an excellence. There are things in the world which are black in appearance but are of more solid worth than many a thing polished white. Black hair signify the vigour of the prime of man-hood, while grey ones indicate the weakness and decrepitude of declining years. The whiteness of hypocrisy and sham virtue ought therefore to be condemned. Far better is the plain and frank sinner who does not conceal his faults under a mask. He is nearer the Mercy of God than the other.

Do not put your confidence in doubtful and dubious things which, are not accompanied by true light and not supported on true philosophy, for these are the paths of danger and destruction. Weigh well the desires of your own heart what they are, and pry

into your own minds how they can be satisfied, as to the manner in which man can free himself from evil. What are the dictates of your conscience as to the best remedy for this all-absorbing evil. Can any reasonable mind be satisfied that the blood of Jesus makes sin horrific to our view. Experience supplies evidence to the contrary and it appears it has emboldened men in the commission of sin, for the man who trusts in the blood of Jesus, knows that the penalty of his sin has been paid. He only to whom a knowledge of the poisonous nature of sin is given, can keep clear of the evil, for he knows the danger he exposes himself to in doing evil.

One has been sent from God who alone can give you the knowledge, on acquiring which your hearts shall see God and the poison of evil. Then, will you fly from sin as a man flees from a lion. It should therefore be the first object of every well-wisher of humanity to spread his doctrines and signs in the world so that those who in vain seek deliverance in the crucifixion of Jesus, may see the real source of true salvation. The muddy waters which contain twenty times as

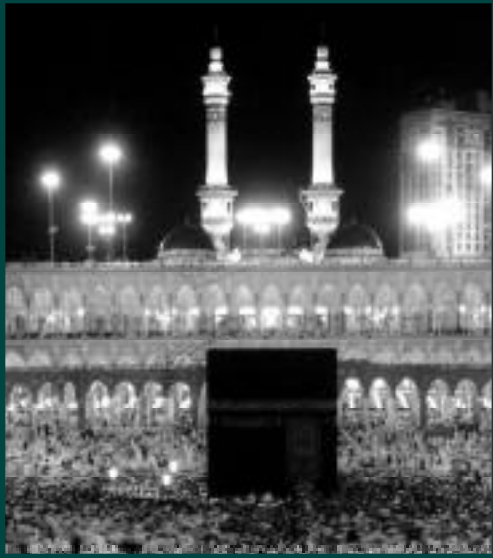
much filth as pure water do not contain the purifying element. The water that descends from heaven in its time can alone cleanse the heart of all dirt. The stream which overflows with pure rain water can alone supply clear and undefiled water, but the stream which does not flow but has stagnant water in it, is far from being crystalline and pure. It is all muddy and dirty and is a receptacle of impure extraneous matter. The heart to which a perfect knowledge of God and assurance had been given is like the overflowing stream which fertilises surrounding lands and whose clear cold water gives satisfaction to and refrigerates the burning heart. It is not only pure itself but purifies everything that is washed in it. It gives true wisdom and sagacity which remove rust from the heart and excite dislike for sins. But the muddy stagnant water of a dry stream, being itself dirty, cannot purify others or do any good to the world.

It is high time now for everyone to be ready and search the water of assurance, for it shall be given to all earnest seekers. Filled with assurance you must flow like a mighty stream that carries off the

rubbish of doubt in its current and the heart pure and free from every sin. This is the water which shall blot out all imprints of sin and thus prepare the heart, by restoring its natural purity, for receiving Divine impressions. Remember that the letters of sensuality can never be erased from the tablet of your heart unless you wash them off with the water of assurance. Strive and the means shall be given to you, seek and it shall be provided, humble your hearts and you shall be able to understand these things, for hardness of heart at bars the road to realities. Do you think that there is any other way for the impression upon your hearts of the greatness of the Living God, or for the revelation of His Glory, or the manifestation of His Power? Do you consider it possible that your hearts shall be filled with the light of assurance and conceive true hatred towards sin by walking in a different path? That cannot and shall not be; there is but one God, one path and one law.

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