

Contents

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Editorial - What can we learn from earlier prophets and their followers? - Fareed Ahmad	2
Notes and Comment: An Aids Memoire - The destructive effect of this plague in the modern world - Fareed Ahmad - UK	4
Unity v. Trinity - part I A critical review of Trinity from a philosophical and historical perspective. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad ^(as)	6
Ramadan - Part II How fasting during Ramadan can purify man spiritually as well as physically Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad	24
Reformation True spirituality lies in the sincerity in human action and not just in the actions themselves. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad ^(as)	40
The Fazl Mosque - A Mosque for All Time An insight into the significance of this mosque over the last 50 years. Hananah Zaheer - Washington, USA	46
Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya - A Monumental Book A look at some aspects of this monumental work that remains unmatched in its defence of Islam. - Dr. Latif Ahmad Qureshi.	49
Islam and Science A brief review of how some recent theories are proving the truth of the Qur'an. Rafi Ahmad, Ph.D - California, USA.	56

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Editorial

Religion has everything to offer our world today, as it did to those societies to which earlier prophets were sent. Those who accepted them benefited manifold, but why is it that those who proclaim to follow the same prophets today appear to be in such a state of disharmony?

Whilst there is no denying the nobility of prophets or their teachings or even of the early followers of such prophets, what is often overlooked is that the achievements of those religions was nothing but the achievements of the early followers - for they were the shining examples of what their religions taught. What we see in the main today are hollow personas, soulless shadows of those followers that are so far removed that the exemplary characteristics the early followers possessed can hardly be made out. It is as if

religions have become a brand, with people proudly showing off their labels without any care of whom the labels are attached to.

The objective of religious people today should not be that of becoming proud of one's religion, but to make his religion proud of him - it is a struggle of spirituality and humanity. The religious standard has been set by the prophets who founded them, now it is the duty of everyone who chooses to follow to attain that standard so that he can be considered worthy of being referred to as a Jew, Muslim etc. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), did just that and became an exemplary follower of the Holy Prophet^(sa) to such a degree that he himself was blessed with prophethood. The blessings, however, did not end there - for through him the flame of spiritual guidance was re-ignited so that those who cared to follow him would also share in the blessings of his nearness to God. Very few ever

attain such nearness, but just as the moon offers itself as a guide for even the most wayward traveller, the blessings of prophethood is a blessing for all.

The life of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) was a timely reminder that religion and religious advancement was not just the preserve of people of a bygone era, rather it was a permanent challenge to mankind - to strive to succeed in it and then reap the benefits in this life and the hereafter. If mankind truly understood religion and what it stood for then it would realise that the path to making sacrifices for the sake of God lies wide open - a path along which the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous had all journeyed in search of God.

The path is one of unity and as we enter the blessed month of Ramadan, Muslims should seek to revive the spirit of unity within themselves and with people of all faiths. Ramadan

is an opportunity to make progress so that we can witness the real peace that religion has to offer the world today as it has done so in the past. Even if it brings us closer for a while then it is a worthwhile effort, and if we can be closer for a while, then who knows, perhaps it can spur us to be closer for longer.

Fareed Ahmad

In this edition, for the convenience of non-Muslim English readers, (sa) or ^{sa} after the word the Holy Prophet or the name Muhammad, are used. They stand for salallahualaihiwasallam, and abbreviated as 'sa', meaning peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or ^{as} after the name of all other Prophets is an abbreviation (meaning, peace be upon him derived from alaih salato-wassalam) for the respect a Muslim readers utters.

Notes and Comment

An Aids Memoire

Since the first case was reported twenty-one years ago 25 million people have died as a result of Aids, and current UN estimates forecast that in the next 20 years nearly 70 million more will die. The stunning speed at which it has spread is an indisputable reflection of 21st century morality, or rather the lack of it. Dr. Peter Piot, the UNAIDS executive director gave a stark warning at the Barcelona Conference this year saying, 'We haven't reached the peak of the Aids epidemic yet...it's an unprecedented epidemic in human history...From a pure medical problem, Aids has become an issue for economic and social development and even for security.'¹

Who would have believed that a single human impulse could cause such catastrophe? The very instinct that was bestowed upon man for his survival is being used for his own destruction. It is a global phenomenon and no country is safe from it - in Iran a striking poster boldly warned its new arrivals at its airport of the 'plague of the century'. Africa is in crisis and with governments reluctant to act - either for economic or political reasons - multinationals are starting to step

in. Theirs may be an act of charity in setting up clinics, hospitals and launching massive programmes to slow down the spread, but such programmes are also rooted in business sense. If your workforce is dying off then it won't be long before you have no workforce at all.

Startling also is the response of governments - South Africa, until relatively recently, rejected the existence of its Aids crisis and 'solved' the problem by simply ignoring it. It is now bracing itself for the colossal impact this silent killer will have on its nation. After all when one in nine of your citizens are HIV positive and up to 17% of your citizens are doomed to die young who will be tomorrow's teachers, scientists, ministers and leaders? Who will be left to generate wealth and protect your country?

The developing world, already ravaged by war, famine and globalisation is having to deal with another real and ruthless killer amongst its ranks that cannot be caught, captured or killed - it is Armageddon at its most cunning. Countries like Botswana where 40% of the adult population are infected with HIV are being crippled and there is little hope for its people.

Even the medical 'treatments' offered - that at the most only delay the inevitable - are priced out of the poor man's reach. But this is not just a poor man's war. The first world - for all its advancements and prosperity - is suffering with the extent of the damage unfolding as time goes on. People from all walks of life are being hunted down by their past and are being forced to face the plague born out of their immorality and indulgence. Yet despite this it is disconcerting to note that the incoming leader of the Church of England, Dr Rowan Williams, who takes over as the Archbishop of Canterbury at the end of October, has failed to endorse the traditional Christian teaching condemning extramarital relationships and homosexuality!² (This is particularly odd if one considers the Biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah). With the moral reins being loosened it is little wonder that society continues to drift.

The amoral freedom advocated on the silver screens the world over is costing dear - billions upon billions of dollars that could help the destitute in east and west are being poured into research and medication to offer some hope of salvation. Recent UN calculations state that up to \$10 billion per year are needed just to provide some medical treatment to Aids sufferers in the poor nations alone.

Perhaps a cure will be found and perhaps this will become a blemish on man's history but all these lives, all this time, effort and money will be lost and will have been worth nothing if nothing is learned from this sordid chapter.

That all this was predicted 1400 years ago is astounding and deeper reflection moves one to accept it as a powerful sign of an All-knowing Being. A Being Whose mercy encompasses all, Who creates, nurtures and guides. A Being Who guards, cares and cherishes His creatures. A Being that has clearly distinguished right from wrong and out of mercy made clear the consequences of both. Yes, man is free to do as he wills, but attached to this freedom is the gravest responsibility - for his actions impact upon not only himself but also others around him. And if he fails to keep himself in check within the confines of morality then his day of judgement may arrive sooner than he thinks.

Fareed Ahmad

1. UNAIDS Barcelona Report 2002, press conference
2. *Evening Standard*, 2 Oct. 2002

Unity v. Trinity - part 1

A Hundred Years Ago: Reproduced from the *Review of Religions* of February 1902

For those who believe in God and His attributes and in the reward of good and evil hereafter, it is of the first importance to find out the true means of salvation.

If the Divine laws of nature, the human nature itself, the plainest evidence in the teachings of the holy books of God, the opinion of the majority of the believers in His revealed word, and other living and incontrovertible proofs, all tend to show and speak with one voice that there is no salvation except through the blood of Jesus Christ^(as), and no deliverance from eternal punishment but through a belief in the mysterious doctrine of Trinity, injustice and iniquity could go no further than reject these two blessings to fallen humanity. These are sure and infallible tests and can never lead to an erroneous conclusion, and therefore we may trust their combined evidence for

guidance in determining the truth or falsity of the two central dogmas of the Christian faith. We shall briefly consider the evidence of each of these five witnesses and point out the conclusions that follow.

The doctrine of salvation, as preached by the Christian Missionaries, is too well-known to be stated at any length. Salvation, they say, depends upon two things. In the first place, a man should believe in the doctrine of Trinity i.e., he should regard the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost as three separate and co-eternal Gods, yet constituting only one eternal God. Thus he must believe them to be three and one, at one and the same time. The second indispensable requisite for salvation according to the Christians is a belief in the dogma that Jesus Christ^(as) died on the cross, and by means of this accursed death shared with Satan the curse which of old had

always been the lot of the Prince of Darkness and the unclean spirits. We are told that those who believe in the curse upon Jesus^(as), shall be saved the evil consequences of the dangerous curse which sows the seed of unbelief, iniquity and all other evils in the heart of man, turns him to the path of faithlessness, blinds the heart, and is the cause of an ever-widening separation and an ever-increasing enmity between the heart of man and the Divine Master. As to those on whom this curse falls and who partake of it, it is necessary that, as heirs of the author of evil, their hearts should turn away from God, and that they should hate Him, and thus fall into an eternal hell; for curse is the dark taint which brands the face of Satan. But Jesus^(as), so it is said, so loved the world that he himself requested his Father to subject his heart to this perilous curse so fraught with danger and attended with consequences equally dangerous.

This is the summary of the principles on which rests the salvation offered by the Christian Missionaries, and it is

with regret that we have to say that both these dogmas are dead against the laws of nature, repugnant to the nature of man, unsupported by the holy books of God, uncorroborated by any living and conclusive proofs, and rejected by the opinion of the majority of those who have inherited the revealed books.

Take Trinity first and we see that Divine law goes quite against this strange doctrine. Everything in its simplest form has been created by God in a spherical or round shape - a fact which attests to and is consistent with the Unity of God. Look at the earth and the great heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon and stars; are they not all spherical? The elements also show a rotundity in shape. Take a drop of water and it is also spherical. Had the doctrine of Trinity been true, all these things should have been created in a triangular shape. The handiwork of a three-cornered God ought to have been three-sided like its maker. The stars of the heavens and the elements of the earth should all have been triangular so as to serve as an indication to trinity in the

person - or persons, whichever is consistent with Christian theology – of the Creator. It strikes strange that the nature of God should have been triangular, and the creation of His hand should without an exception have followed the law of sphericity. The more we look into the laws of nature, the more are we convinced that the doctrine of Trinity finds no support in nature and is plainly rejected by the Divine law.

Evidence from the first source thus utterly subverting the theory of Trinity, we shall now consider if it is consistent with human nature. A mere glance would show that the idea is as strongly repulsed by human nature as by the natural laws. Christian theologians admit, and Rev. Pfander supplies written testimony in his *Mizan-ul-Haq*, that people who have not been brought to the knowledge of Trinity by missionary efforts, though otherwise endowed with reason and all the human faculties, shall not be called to account for not believing in Trinity. Their salvation shall only depend upon a belief in the Unity of God, unlike those to

whom the doctrine of Trinity has been preached, whom a belief in the Unity shall not avail. Had the doctrine of Trinity any reality, it should have had its evidence in human nature. Then all human beings whom God had granted reason, no matter this doctrine had or had not been ever preached to them, should have been judged according to their belief in the Trinity of God. If there is any trace of this doctrine in the human nature, why is man not culpable for rejecting it? It is evident that the laws revealed to man through the prophets of God, are an image of the principles implanted in the nature of man. It is highly repulsive to the moral feelings of man that he should be compelled to accept that as his faith, of which he does not witness the least trace in his own nature. The plain dictates of human nature are the Unity of God and the absence of any rival or partaker. The three or four-sidedness of God or His alleged composition of three persons, is quite foreign to the nature of man. It is otherwise as to His Oneness strongly impressed upon man's nature. It is for this reason too

that although ignorance and superstition have invented thousands of gods and goddesses to serve particular purposes, yet human nature, never resting satisfied with these self-made deities, has always attested to the existence of the One Supreme God. Even idolators have acknowledged the existence of the Supreme Being with whom their minor deities served as intercessors. How can we account for this except that human nature bearing as it did very strong impressions of the Unity of its Creator, could never rest contented with the plurality of gods, but was compelled from within to acknowledge, above them all, the One True God?

Having seen the utter failure of the scheme of Trinity so far as Divine laws and the human nature could testify, we shall now turn to the third criterion and see what the prophets taught in plain words on this much contested point. Notwithstanding the alterations and corruptions which the teachings of the prophets have undergone, we still observe a

strong element in them relating to the Unity of God. From the book of Genesis to that of Malachi, all the prophets have in unflinching tones declared the Unity of God, and have laid stress upon it to an extent that establishes the doctrine conclusively and renders it impenetrable to the least doubt. A few instances will suffice by way of illustration: Ex. 34:14 ; Dan. 3:28 ; Is. 40:18, 44:6 and 8, 55:5 and 6 ; Jer. 10:6; Hos. 13:4; Ps. 86:10; Neh. 9:6; I Chs. 17:20. Instances can be multiplied by hundreds in which the books of the Old Testament have taught in clear words the Unity of God. The Gospels, notwithstanding that they have been, most of all, subjected to alterations from human hands, also bear witness to the same teaching in plain words in their plainest sense and no trace of Trinity will be observed in them. If the clear teachings of all those books which inculcate the Unity of God were placed in one scale of a balance and the assumptions of Christianity, due either to a misconstruction of certain allegorical phrases of the New Testament, in the other, the

difference in the weight of evidence will be apparent to the dullest understanding, if it is not dead to all sense of shame and fear of God. Anyone who takes the trouble to cast a glance first at the conclusive and positive evidence relating to the Unity of God preached by the prophets and the holy books, and then at the dubious assertions of the Christians, shall not have the last hesitation in coming to the conclusion that to expect any evidence of Trinity in the Holy Word of God delivered to mankind through the prophets, including Jesus^(as) is as vain a desire as blowing at the sun under the delusion of extinguishing its light. I challenge every hired and unhired defender of Christianity as it exists today in its present form to come forward and show if the same clearness and definiteness, the same emphasis and repetition, mark the teaching of Trinity as that of Unity in the Word of God. I most emphatically assert that the weight of evidence in the case of the latter principle is out of all proportion to the weight of the alleged proof in that of the

former.

If any one can show that the same stress is laid upon Trinity as upon Unity in the revealed word of God, I would be the first to recant my principles and accept the opposite doctrine. But if such strong proof of Trinity cannot be had anywhere, it does then become the Christians to doff their religious prejudice and not to reject the strong and conclusive arguments of Unity. If they are determined to erect the whole building of their creed on the shaky foundation of obscure and vague assertions, what reason have they to blame their Hindu brethren for deifying Rama or Krishna^(as). If gods can be made in this arbitrary fashion, the list of gods, instead of being limited to three, would soon swell to an enormous extent. What a bare-faced injustice that when the words God or Son of God or similar other metaphorical phrases are spoken of the prophets in the Bible, they still remain men and do not for that reason partake of Divinity, but when the same or even inferior words are used of Jesus Christ^(as), or are only deemed to

have been used of him, it being a matter of dispute whether they actually apply to him or to some body else, he is metamorphosed and becomes a God. If we can make gods of men in this arbitrary manner, then although the turning of copper into gold may be impossible, yet the turning of men into gods or the business of making god would be an extremely easy task. But I ask if we can depend upon and find consolation in a God that is the creation of mortal whims and fashioned by mortal hands.

Having shown that the Bible lends no support to the doctrine of Trinity, we now come to the fourth point. Under this heading we shall discuss if the majority of the people of the Book have regarded Trinity as true. It is admitted on all hands that the Jews are the first heirs to the Bible, and among them Moses^(as) was the greatest prophet who gave a standing and perfect law to his people. He not only delivered the law to them but himself acting as the commentator explained it fully and cleared off all doubts as to the meaning of any passage in it.

Now all the books of Moses^(as) without a single exception lay stress upon and assert the oneness of the Lord God in clear, definite and emphatic words, and the Israelites were commanded to learn these teachings by heart, bind them for a sign upon their hands and write upon the posts of their houses and upon their gates. They were also warned that if they strayed from the path (of Unity) set for them and forgot the teachings relating to it, they shall be destroyed from off the face of the earth, severely punished from heaven and as well as earth, smitten with incurable diseases, scourged with scale and itch, and brought to destruction in blindness and madness. The same teachings were further emphasised by giving, along with this warning of curse, a promise of blessings and bounties if they stuck fast to them.

To all these precautions for the safe preservation of this all-important doctrine, is to be added the fact of successive prophets continuing to rise from among the Israelites for fourteen hundred years which

bring us close upon the time of Jesus^(as). They never witnessed an interval during which they were left without a prophet. Moses^(as) himself did not leave them at the time of his death without a guide and guardian, but left Joshua his Minister as his substitute and as a leader of the people. The system of prophets that rose among the Israelites after Moses^(as) and walked in the footsteps of their great predecessor, is without a parallel in the history of the world. An enquirer, who casts aside the trammels of prejudice for a while, will at once be convinced that nothing could be more wonderful than that the Jews could have forgotten the central and most emphatic doctrine of all the books and the great aim of all revelation, which had repeatedly been communicated to them through an unbroken chain of continuously rising prophets which was ever kept fresh in their memories and which had practically been acted upon by their fathers. And wonder of wonders that the radical principle of the Bible teachings, the doctrines of Trinity and Atonement, taught to the Jews

through the prophets should have so passed out of their memories as not to have left the slightest trace behind them.

The teachings relating to each person and attributes of God were not simply related in the Bible as tales but were most deeply impressed upon the minds of the people, so much so, that their children and old women were also cognisant of them. Now if a denial of the Trinity and Atonement was really such a deadly sin and a blasphemy that the denier was for that reason to be condemned to eternal hell, how was it that the teachings of the prophets related to these cardinal doctrines in such an obscure and ambiguous style? If really the case had been as is deemed by the Christians, it was the primary duty of all the prophets to bring the Trinity to the front and enjoin a belief in it in the most unmistakable terms, taking care to avoid all words that could have led to the contrary conclusion of the oneness of God. But to the great bewilderment of the Christian theologians, the case is quite the contrary. All the books from

the first to the last teem with the teachings of Unity, and the whole attention of the people was directed to this one great purpose, and the result was a deep impression upon the whole nation of the Unity of God. Had all the prophets from Moses^(as) downwards inculcated the doctrine of Trinity and declared this to be the chief object of their mission from the Most High, the Israelites could not have been so utterly ignorant of it. If, as is alleged, Trinity and the blood of Jesus^(as) formed the ground work on which rested the salvation of men, why did Moses^(as) and the prophets keep back this matter of life and death and not promulgate it? If they ever propagated such a doctrine it still remains to be solved why their books do not contain the slightest trace of it? How are we to explain the obvious fact that all the Jewish sects are as unconscious of this puzzle of Trinity as the son of a Muslim or the gods of Hindus of their modes of worship and the formulae of idols-worship? The solution of this problem remains as great a mystery as the doctrine of Trinity itself.

From the earliest times to today, the Jewish sects have borne an unbroken testimony in their speeches and writings, and they still proclaim with a loud voice, that they were never taught Trinity and Atonement, nor is there the remotest trace of these strange doctrines in their holy books, and that a god-man had never been promised to them. Even if we admit the stubbornness, the thirst of blood, the iniquities and the transgressions of the Jews, justice compels us not to be so hard upon them as to suppose that they at Expiation which were foundation-stones of their faith, and inserted in it in numerous places the simple doctrine of the Oneness of God which resembled the teaching of the Quran on the point, and that they had all arranged and agreed to take this step. The absurdity of any such supposition appears further from the fact that the various Jewish sects, notwithstanding numerous points of difference, all testify in one voice that the doctrines of Trinity and Atonement had never been preached to them.

To secure further evidence, I wrote to certain learned Jews enquiring of them if the doctrines of the Old Testament relating to the person an attribute of God, resembled the Trinity and Atonement of the Christians or the teachings on the point of the Holy Qur'an. Their evidence was simply asked for as unprejudiced testimony, for they denied the revelation of the Qur'an and the Gospel alike. Their reply was in accordance with what I have shown above, viz., that the Bible taught the Unity of God from the first to the last, and not one jot of it gave any support to the doctrine of Trinity or Atonement. The injunctions of the books of the prophets in this respect, they wrote, resembled those of the Qur'an and were totally opposed to the Trinity and Atonement of the Christians. The books of Moses^(as) and those of the other prophets did not contain the slightest trace of the Christian doctrines, and they were at a loss to know how to reconcile the plain teachings of their holy books with the puzzling innovation of the Christian. It is the duty of

everyone who claims to follow truth to decide for himself this most important question and not to allow it to pass unnoticed. It is known to all that the Jews, who are called the People of God, were chosen as the first scholars in the Divine school under the guidance of righteous prophets who were constantly among them during the 1,400 years that followed Moses^(as). Notwithstanding the continuous revival of the teachings of the books of Moses^(as) by the successive rising of the prophets, and the constant presence of the Word of God spoken through them, which rendered a resort to the principle of analogical deduction unnecessary, nothing is more surprising than that the Jews should have remained so ignorant of the doctrines of Trinity and Atonement, although upon them alone depended their salvation. In vain did the prophets preach and in vain were their lives spent if they did not even communicate to the people the true doctrine of salvation, and thus utterly failed to fulfil the object for which they had been

raised by God. Does not a thinking mind pause here to seek the reason of this deep mystery? Can the Christian doctrine of the attainment of salvation be reconciled by any sane person with the utter absence among the Jews of any sect or school which might for a moment have ever thought of faith in these two mysterious dogmas?

Add to it the circumstance that among the Christians there have been, and there still are, sects that have rejected Trinity. Consider now what remains in the hands of a Christian to boast. Had all the sects of Christianity been unanimous as to this doctrine a Christian might have caught at this last straw to console himself. But as it is, this is a bitter draught for Christians that internal differences as to the supposed corner-stone of salvation have undermined the whole foundation of their faith, and brought them face to face with the convincing argument of the Unity of God. The existence of Christian sects that have rejected Trinity from the oldest times, as the Qur'an has also

testified, proves it beyond doubt that as the doctrine of Trinity is repugnant to the Divine laws and to human nature, and disclaimed - nay repudiated - by the Holy Word of God, it is in like manner rejected by the evidence of an overwhelming majority of those who have inherited the Book of God.

All these witnesses having separately and collectively disproved the doctrine of three Gods, it remains for us to see if there is any peculiarity about Jesus Christ^(as) on which basis his claim to Deity is supported. With a full knowledge of all the facts that are known about Jesus^(as), I assert it positively, before all the world with a conviction as strong as it is possible for a man to have, that there is nothing in Jesus^(as) above an ordinary human being, which may lead us even for a moment to entertain the idea that he was God. Much stress is laid upon his birth, but what are we to say of the first man, the parent of mankind, who had neither father nor mother. We never consider him God. Moreover, we see in our every-

day experience thousands of worms brought into existence without any father. Shall we for that reason take them to be the Almighty Being that created the Universe, or are they to be considered as the sons of the Most High? I consider it as an invaluable favour of the Qur'an upon Jesus^(as) and his mother that it falsified the base charges of 600 years' standing by verifying the birth of Jesus^(as) to have taken place in a manner which washed off the blemish from Mary. As to what the Jews allege with regard to this birth, the subject is so indecent that even a passing allusion could not be made to it. In short, the birth of Jesus^(as) is unattended with any such peculiarity as may entitle him to divinity. On the other hand, learned physicians of the Greek and Indian schools have given instances of such cases, rare though they be, and show the possibility of a child being formed in the mother's womb without the seed of a man.

Neither does the fact that Jesus^(as) called himself the Son of God serve as any evidence of his actually being the Almighty God, for the Old Testament

teems with such expressions as the Son of God, and not only the sons but also the daughters of God have been mentioned therein. One verse goes even so far as to say that we are all gods, and of Israel the Lord says, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born.' Ex. 4:22. Now all that is stated is that the expression Son of God has been used of Jesus Christ^(as), but as we have shown above, the same expression and even stronger ones have been used of numerous other persons in the Bible. What is the test to decide and who shall decide that in the one case the expression has been used metaphorically and in the other literally and actually? Is there any reason to suppose that the words are to receive a particular interpretation in the case of Jesus^(as)? The truth is that unable to realise the true sense of the expression, the Christian theologians of today have committed a blunder in interpreting it. Those who understand theological terms, know full well that expressions of honour and endearment, similar to the one under discussion, are constantly used in the Word of God of such of his

chosen people as are His beloved ones. It is these metaphorical expressions which, when they fall into the hands of ignorant persons, are turned to the use of deifying those to whom they refer, an idea quite foreign to the original use. In the Gospels even Adam^(as) is referred to as the Son of God. Are we then to take him actually so? Before we proceed to consider the claims of Jesus^(as), it must be settled whether Adam^(as) was actually the Son of God, for he, too, like Jesus^(as) is honoured with the title.

If the use of such metaphorical expressions is sufficient to turn a man into a God, a Muslim may as well declare his own Holy Prophet^(sa) as God on the strength of the Holy Qur'an. Speaking of the Holy Prophet^(sa) the Holy book says 'the hand (of the Prophet) which is upon your hands is the hand of God.' Thus in this verse (The Holy Qur'an, Ch.48:V.11), the Almighty God terms the hands of the Holy Prophet^(sa) as His own Divine hand. Another verse runs this:

'Say (O prophet!) O my servants! Who have transgressed your souls, do not despair of the grace of God, for God forgives all the sins.' In this verse (Ch.39:V.54) all the people have been called as the servants of the Holy Prophet^(sa) being elsewhere called the servants of God, and furthermore the verse gives him the right of pardoning the sins of men. If the actual Divinity of man can be inferred from any circumstances, what stronger evidence than this is required to establish the Divinity of our Holy Prophet^(sa). And that is not all. Verses to the same effect abound in the Holy Qur'an to such an extent that one may, if one chooses to take allegorical language literally, deduce from them the most definite conclusion as to the Divinity of our Holy Prophet^(sa), and the fact stands in bold contrast to the doubtful evidence to the sonship of Jesus^(as), furnished by the Gospels, notwithstanding all the pretensions of the Christian Missionaries to the contrary.

So far as to the evidence from the Scriptures of the two religions, but when we proceed

a little further and look at actual facts, we meet with a total absence in Jesus Christ^(as) of that power and pre-dominance which is the necessary requisite of Divinity, whereas in the person of our own Holy Prophet^(sa) we find its manifestation as clear as daylight. When the Holy Prophet^(sa) declared his mission, the most violent opposition raged against him. As his mission was universal and contained an invitation to all the nations of the earth to Islam, similarly was the opposition not confined to any particular sect or community, but gradually extended its circle, as the sphere of his preaching became wider. People of all denominations and religious sects were determined to cut up Islam, root and branch, and none spared the least effort to injure him. Monarchs also sent their men to have the Prophet arrested and put to death, but were hopelessly baffled in their evil designs. Consider then what saved Muhammad^(sa) from all these formidable forces and what protected him in this wide-spread fire of enmity? The secret of it lies in the strong and

deep connection of his soul with the Infinite, such a connection as no man has ever before or since attained. The Prophet^(sa) was jealous for the honour of the Lord his God and the Lord was, in return, jealous for the honour of His Prophet^(sa).

Comparisons are odious but we cannot refrain from briefly referring to one between the Companions of our Holy Prophet^(sa) and the Apostles of Jesus^(as). One of the latter, Judas Iscariot, betrayed his Master for a paltry sum of thirty half-crowns. This shows to what extent the chosen ones had faith in the righteousness of their teacher. In fine contrast with the despicable behaviour of Judas, shines out the noble conduct of the Companions of our Prophet^(sa) who forsook brothers, sisters, parents, sons, lands, properties and all, for the sake of their beloved master, because they saw in him a visible and glorious manifestation of the Most High God. Their fidelity to their master is unparalleled in the history of the world. Who can fathom the bottomless depth of faith which undulated in their hearts? It was

the face of God they saw clearly reflected in the face of their Prophet^(sa). But the conduct of the Apostles in relation to their Master is quite inexplicable, and we are unable to say what opinion they entertained of him. Peter, who had charge of the keys of heaven, cursed Jesus^(as) and was not satisfied until he thrice repeated his imprecations.

Take another circumstance. Not a few designs of the Holy Prophet's^(sa) were, over and over again, formed by his internal and external foes, but they were all helplessly frustrated, notwithstanding his utter helplessness against his powerful enemies. On the other hand, whoever rose with the evil design brought ruin upon his own head. For instance, Khosru Parviz, the ill-fated monarch of Persia, became thirsty of the Prophet's^(sa) blood and accordingly sent his own men to arrest him. But hardly a night had passed before he himself became a morsel of death, notwithstanding that there is no evidence that our Holy Prophet^(sa) even prayed for his destruction. It is reported that

when the soldiers of the emperor brought to the Holy Prophet^(sa) the news of his contemplated arrest under the orders of the monarch, he replied that it was no business of his but that the whole matter lay in the hands of God Who alone would give the response. Next morning he revealed to the soldiers the news of the assassination of their monarch under the supreme and unavoidable command of the Lord of the heavens and earth. Here indeed we see a manifestation of the Deity for no sooner did Khosru Parviz conceive the idea of the Prophet's arrest than the angel of Death, in obedience to the absolute decree of heaven, was upon him in Persia and cut short his life. What a contrast again when we cast a glance at the circumstances of Jesus'^(as) arrest as narrated in the Gospels! We are obliged, with the utmost regret, to confess that a whole night's prayers of Christ proved quite barren. He passed the night in a state of restlessness with eyes heavy and full of tears, but as soon as the morn appeared, one police constable of the Roman Government with

IT SHOULD BE CLEARLY NOTED THAT THE FEAR AND TIMIDITY DISPLAYED BY THE DISCIPLES ON THE ARREST OF JESUS^(AS), WAS WITHOUT ANY FOUNDATION. THE JEWS HAD NOT EVEN THE POWER AND MEANS TO CAUSE ANY MATERIAL PHYSICAL INJURY, NOT EVEN SO MUCH AS A SLAP ON THE FACE, TO THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS^(AS). FOR, IN THE FIRST PLACE, JESUS^(AS) HIMSELF WAS A JEW AND THE PEOPLE WERE ALL HIS KINSMEN.

whom was a multitude of the people (the Jews) came and having arrested him put him into custody before 10am. Is this the all-powerful God whose end was so sad and pitiable? How can we put faith in a man having a deep connection with God so long as we do not see him distinctly accompanied with the Grace of God in this very world?

From the evidence recorded of him what is Jesus^(as) but a man who fell upon his face before God and prayed to Him earnestly that the fatal cup may pass away, but his prayers were not answered, or so the Christians admit. But our Lord and Master the Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was the chosen one of God, upon whom Divine assistance was showered even

without his praying for it. Hence it was that when the companions of the Prophet^(sa) witnessed Divine assistance and favour distinctly showered upon him, they forsook everything for his sake, shed their blood in his cause and allowed themselves to be butchered like sheep and goats and died in faith and fidelity to him. Had the worship of man been allowed in the Divine faith, they would have gladly rejected the gods that were the creation of man's imagination, and worshipped their master, the Lord's elect as the great God. The reverence in which they held him and the obedience which they showed to his commandments, were neither shown towards Moses^(as) nor had Jesus^(as) the good fortune to witness them in his devoted disciples. If anyone

should care to compare the fickleness and unbelief of the disciples of Jesus^(as) with the steadfastness and faith of the companions of Muhammad^(sa) he should read the disgraceful acts related of Judas, or if not satisfied with his conduct, he may see the testimony of Peter, the chief of the twelve who shall sit on thrones to judge Israel.

It should be clearly noted that the fear and timidity displayed by the disciples on the arrest of Jesus^(as), was without any foundation. The Jews had not even the power and means to cause any material physical injury, not even so much as a slap on the face, to the followers of Jesus^(as). For, in the first place, Jesus^(as) himself was a Jew and the people were all his kinsmen. Moreover, owing to the dispersion and consequent loss of the majority of their tribes, they had been considerably reduced in number, and led humble lives under a foreign government. Notwithstanding all this weakness and adversity of the persecutors themselves, the disciples were so weak of faith that they were ever ready

to forsake their master on being offered the slightest rebuke. Is this the effect of the preaching of one who appears with the powers of the Deity? In short it is in the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) only that the glory of the great and living God is manifested, and we cannot imagine the Deity or a manifestation of the Deity being laid hands on by the most abject persons and at last disappearing from the stage of life without any success or any Divine assistance coming to him.

From what has been said it is clear that the divinity of Jesus^(as) falls to the ground under all the important tests stated above. We shall now consider the subject from another point of view, *viz.*, his morals. Here again we are sadly disappointed by the absence of any sound argument in his favour. Speaking candidly and uprightly, not a single excellent moral in Jesus's^(as) character can be proved to any satisfaction. Morals may broadly be divided into two large classes. Firstly those that may be displayed in affluence and under easy circumstances. Secondly, the

time for the display of the highest moral qualities arrives when a man, after years of suffering and persecution experienced in a state of helplessness and humility, is completely triumphant and gains absolute power over his enemies. In the case of Jesus^(as) both kinds are sadly wanting. Had he had plenty of resources and handsome fortune, and in that condition spent freely and given liberally, we would have been entitled to speak of him as a charitable and generous man who assisted widows, supported orphans, relieved the needy, clothed the naked, comforted travelers, took in strangers, fed the starving and gave timely help to the famine-stricken. But we have no proof in hand of any of these commendable deeds. Similarly, had he after the years of sorrow and suffering during which he bore persecutions at the hands of the Jews, triumphed and gained complete victory over them and freely forgiven his bitterest enemies, he would have done a noble and exemplary deed worthy of emulation. We would have then had reason to say that he was of a mild and

forgiving nature, as it is only at the time of absolute triumph over enemies that forgiveness can be shown. **We, no doubt, love and revere Jesus Christ^(as) and consider him as a great prophet in the Mosaic line,** but if we are asked to furnish evidence of his forgiveness and indulgence towards his enemies, we must confess our lack in this respect. There is no historical or recorded evidence of great and excellent moral qualities ever displayed by him. Our good opinion of him as a great and good prophet cannot be questioned here as it is based on our belief and not on any such demonstrable facts and historical research as may satisfy other minds.

If, on the other hand, we cast a glance at the life of the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Arabia, we meet with an overwhelming proof of the presence in his sacred person of both sorts of morals in the highest degree. The evidence of the unbelievers, the opponents of Islam, who praised the unparalleled generosity and charitableness of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is sufficient to convince every man of common

intelligence, and numerous acts of kindness and traits of hospitality are recorded in hundreds of books. When the Holy Prophet^(sa) made his triumphant entry into Mecca, after twenty long years of suffering, and his bitterest enemies, who, on account of their cruelties and bloodshed, had rendered themselves liable to a wholesale and indiscriminate murder of young and old, of male and female, were completely reduced to subjugation and lay at his mercy alone, he freely forgave them and granted an amnesty to the whole population of Mecca, and said 'I pardon you as Joseph pardoned his brethren and grant freedom to you all.' By the laws of war then prevalent they were all his slaves. This generous treatment unparalleled in the annals of wars, was a sign to the Meccans, and their hearts leaped to accept the truth they had before rejected. Heavenly power attracted them all towards it and before sunset almost all of them embraced Islam. It is manifest from this that excellent moral qualities are a manifestation of the attributes of God, are not to be

sought for in Jesus^(as), but that they were manifested in the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam. He is not only generous and charitable but also meek, open-hearted and forgiving. The field of battle bears evidence to his courage and manliness, freely giving alms to his charity and bountifulness, and forgiving the enemy after obtaining triumph over him to his clement and merciful nature.

To be continued.

This article is a translation of an anonymous article reproduced from the second issue of the *Review of Religions* but a specific writing of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as)

Ramadan - Part II

By Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad - Translated by Khalilur Rahman Mullick and Hamida Farooqui. Transcribed by Fauzia Bajwa

Shortly, Muslims will embark on a month of fasting, abstaining from food and drink during daylight hours for a period of thirty days. The holy month of Ramadan has great significance in the Muslim calendar. What follows is a synopsis of a series of Friday sermons, originally delivered in Urdu by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, discussing the philosophy and importance of fasting.

The Editorial Board takes full responsibility for any errors that may have occurred in the process of translation and transcription.

Financial Sacrifices During Ramadan

O ye who believe! Surely many of the priests and monks devour the wealth of men by false means and turn men away from the way of Allah. And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah - give to them tidings of a painful punishment. On the day when it shall be made hot in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded therewith and it shall be said to them: 'This is what you treasured

up for yourselves; so now take what you used to treasure up.'

(Ch.9: vs.34-35)

These verses refer to people who have religious knowledge and who renounce the world for the sake of God; they seclude themselves from society ostensibly to worship Allah e.g. mullahs and Pirs. Many of them devour other people's properties unlawfully. A distinguishing feature of such persons is that they prevent others from advancing in the way of Allah by placing obstacles in the path to Allah. Also mentioned in the above verses are those who have such

a deep love of wealth, that its acquisition, lawful or unlawful, becomes their goal in life and they waste their lives in collecting gold and silver. The distinguishing feature of this group of people is that they are unable to spend in the way of Allah. Both these groups are linked to those who deny the truth. The Holy Qur'an says of such people: Give them the tidings of a severe punishment, when their foreheads will be branded by red hot irons and their backs and sides will be stained and they will be told 'This is what you gathered for yourself. Today you should enjoy this staining and see what you have collected for yourself.' This punishment applies to both of the above groups. The Jama'at Ahmadiyya is totally different to these two classes of people; members of the Jama'at do not earn unlawfully and they do not place obstacles in the path of Allah. Rather, they call people to the path of Allah and spend their wealth to call people to the path of Allah. A part of this verse sometimes

applies to the weak members of the Jama'at Ahmadiyya, and is the negative result of their eagerness to increase their wealth. When they make financial sacrifices, many a time they do not do so in accordance with their capacity, while poor people generally spend beyond their means to win the pleasure of Allah. The Holy Qur'an has given us a way of recognising whether or not we spend according to our capabilities. People who offer financial sacrifices, despite the fact that this may cause them some hardship or may make a dent in their wealth - according to the Holy Qur'an, these are the ones who are spending according to their capacity. Therefore every Ahmadi should test himself in this way - does he make financial sacrifices for the sake of Allah even when he cannot afford to and even when his love of wealth is beckoning him in other directions? If so, then he enjoys the protection of Allah and has nothing to fear.

This subject matter has a special link with Ramadan and also with one's entry into paradise. In another place in the Holy Qur'an Allah says: 'Those who reject Our Signs and turn away from them with disdain, the gates of heaven will not be opened to them nor will they enter Heaven until a camel goes through the eye of a needle. And thus do We requite the offenders' (Ch.7: v.41). Jesus^(as) has mentioned this subject in a different way. He said to his disciples: 'Truly I tell you: a rich man will find it hard to enter the kingdom of heaven. I repeat, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God'. Here, instead of using the word arrogant, (as in the above quoted verse of the Holy Qur'an) the word wealthy has been used. The disciples were astonished when they heard this and exclaimed: 'Then who can be saved? Jesus^(as) looked at them and said: 'For men this is not possible, but everything is possible for God.' (Matthew Chapter 19, Verses

23-26). These examples given in the Qur'an and the Bible are similar - both are the Word of God. When religion reached perfection and the Seal of Prophets, i.e. Muhammad^(sa), was raised in the world, then the same parable was again put before us, but in a different way. The common factor in these two examples is that arrogance, which is a despicable trait, is in fact the sum total of a person who has no link with reality. Man's ego results in self-delusion, which leads him to believe that he is greater than in fact he is. This is similar to the case of an insect which could pass through the eye of a needle but deludes itself into thinking that it is the size of a camel. What Jesus Christ^(as) is trying to point out is that a wealthy person bloats himself in size. His love of wealth is such that he wastes all his life in collecting riches. As long as he increases his financial stature and adds to his material possessions he feels satisfied; if a stop were to be put to his acquisitions, he would be in a

state of misery. For him, paradise lies in monetary gain. Jesus Christ^(as) has said that such a person will not be able to enter paradise. The same subject is discussed in the Qur'anic verses mentioned above. Why are people who collect wealth prevented from entering paradise? The reason is that entry to paradise is through the paths of truthfulness and reality, and one who has made his position a false position cannot enter the narrow path of reality. The verses of the Holy Qur'an which deal with this subject contain a higher point of wisdom. Jesus^(as) said that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, it is not possible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle and hence this parable will make every rich person lose hope, as it leaves no path of salvation for him. But the parable which the Holy Qur'an mentions with reference to arrogance, says 'till the camel has passed through the eye of

the needle.' In other words, there is a possibility of it passing through and one should search out the means of doing so. The path for achieving salvation is that of humility, of understanding one's situation. Once one discards arrogance and develops humility, one considers oneself to be no better than a worm for whom it is easy to pass through any narrow opening. As the Promised Messiah^(as) said, 'I am no more than a worm of the earth and despised by the worldly people.' If man were to give up arrogance, he would certainly pass through the eye of the needle. The words of the Holy Qur'an are deep in rhetoric and eloquence and they illuminate points of wisdom for us. During the month of Ramadan, if the rich, truly desire to enter paradise, then the message of Ramadan is that Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) should be obeyed. They should make greater financial sacrifices and humble themselves and limit their desires. If one cannot rid

RAMADAN BRINGS A MESSAGE FOR EVERYONE. ON A PHYSICAL LEVEL, RAMADAN PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE FAT FROM THE BODY, AND THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE ACCUSTOMED TO EATING RICH FOOD SHOULD USE THIS TIME TO SHED THEIR EXCESS FAT. ON A SPIRITUAL LEVEL, RAMADAN ENABLES US TO REMOVE OUR SPIRITUAL ERRORS.

oneself of greed, then one cannot practise humility or lighten one's burdens.

So in this respect Ramadan brings a message for everyone. On a physical level, Ramadan provides the opportunity to reduce fat from the body, and those people who are accustomed to eating rich food should use this time to shed their excess fat. On a spiritual level, Ramadan enables us to remove our spiritual errors. It is reported by Abu Huraira^(ra) that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said: to purify everything there is a charity and the charity of the body is fasting. Fasting is also the

charity of soul, of course, but here he has specially mentioned the charity of the physical body. In another saying the Holy Prophet^(sa) said: if you want to be healthy you should fast.

Fasting melts the unnecessary fats and leaves the body in a lighter state. Then it goes on to say: the fast of Ramadan removes the impiety of the heart. How does it remove impieties? From the medical point of view, cholesterol is reduced. When arteries are blocked the flow of blood is restricted and as a result one feels a burning pain. Some call it heart burn, some call it angina. Many of the diseases suffered by man are caused by his laziness. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) says if you pass through the furnace of Ramadan your unnecessary fat will be burnt and you will find some health and spiritual

comfort. He said that there is a charity to purify everything and what is meant here is that Ramadan is a charity for the inner and the physical self. Also, the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) calls us to increasing our financial sacrifices, which is the remedy for our spiritual ills. Man removes his accumulated physical and spiritual ills during Ramadan. Some people try to maintain the benefits during the year, some, unfortunately, return to their old ways.

The Jama'at should try to benefit fully from Ramadan by spending in the way of Allah using various methods. Basically one's intention must be correct and healthy and whatever one spends should be purely for Allah. For example, people who loathe spending money on their wives and children, could during Ramadhan try to gain Allah's pleasure by being generous towards their families. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) has said that even if you were to

feed your wife a morsel of food with the sole intention of winning the pleasure of Allah, then that will be regarded as virtue. Start by practising virtue in your own homes. Having sorted out your domestic problems, you should take a look at your surroundings, your neighbours and other people suffering in the world. You should spend in charity and zakat for them and try to alleviate their suffering. You should give the zakat of your body and your heart and soul and all your self. And after giving this zakat, as is included in the meaning of zakat, man's burdens are shed and his strength increases. By the end of Ramadan, Muslims have shed their burdens and increased their physical and spiritual strength, with the result that their speed increases and they can then progress at an increased pace. Hadhrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas^(ra) is reported to have said that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was the most generous person and that his generosity would gather even more strength

during Ramadan During the times when the angel Gabriel visited him to repeat the Holy Qur'an with him, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) would spend in charity with more force than the strongest winds.

The Importance of Prayer

The Promised Messiah^(as), while discussing the spirit of Ramadan, said that Ramadan is heat of the sun. During Ramadan one controls one's physical desires, and at the same time shows an eagerness to advance towards Allah; this spiritual and physical burning together make Ramadan. Ramadh means heat, and Ramadan means two heats. The Promised Messiah^(as) says that it is necessary for both heats to mix together to become Ramadan. One should give both physical and spiritual zakat and then Ramadan will be created in the true sense of the word. Some people think that the two heats refer to the hot climate of Arabia combined with the heat of the fast but the Promised

Messiah^(as) discounts this theory. He states that spiritual Ramadan means eagerness for spiritual blessings. It signifies the kind of burning that melts even hard hearted people.

The Promised Messiah^(as) mentions that the excellence of Ramadan is indicated by the fact that the Holy Qur'an was revealed in this month. The sufis say that it is a good month for illuminating the heart. Salat purifies a person and Ramadan enhances his visionary powers. What is the illumination of the heart? A person with an enlightened heart has many visionary experiences, such as true dreams or revelation. But the Promised Messiah^(as) has said that one cannot develop illumination of the heart without purifying oneself through salat. How does salat purify? It purifies by distancing carnal passions and physical desires from a person. Without rectifying errors and discarding sins, the heart cannot be illuminated and reform cannot be achieved without

salat. During Ramadan special attention should be paid to salat. Prayers should be offered in such a way that man witnesses his sins falling away from him and his soul unburdened. By reflecting on the words of salat and by reconciling one's conduct with these words, a great transformation can be brought about in one's conduct. For example, Surah Fatiha contains the prayer 'Guide us in the right path; the path of those on whom You have showered Your blessings, not the path of those who incurred Your wrath.' Now such a great prayer has certain demands. Who were the people that were showered with blessings? Do I have any of their attributes? Who were the groups who incurred the displeasure of Allah? Do I have anything in common with them? Such reflection and self-analysis will result in an increased self-awareness. Initially only one or two shortcomings will come to mind. This is because one is engulfed in darkness; when

one enters an illumined room from the darkness one only sees a little at first. To start with only major sins will come to light; these should be included in one's prayers and pious intentions will help in the acceptance of prayers. As a result, the removal of those weaknesses becomes easier. There will of course be some struggle but with the blessings of Allah and with the help of Allah those sins will be discarded. Then, as the light increases and darkness is shed, one becomes aware of other evil habits. Again, the process of prayer and purification needs to be repeated. The Holy Qur'an mentions again and again, that the Prophet^(sa) and his teachings bring his followers out of darkness into light and this can only be done through sincere prayers. Once a person is purified, illumination of the heart is bound to come. Truth and falsehood cannot co-exist in a person and light will only come when darkness is removed.

I'tikaf

Some people choose to spend the last ten days of Ramadan residing in the mosque, devoting their time to the remembrance of Allah. This taking up residence in the mosque for the remembrance of Allah is termed I'tikaf. I'tikaf is actually for the last ten days, but as it is not always possible to determine whether Ramadan will last for twenty-nine or thirty days, as a precautionary measure, the Holy Prophet^(sa) would start the I'tikaf a day early. When I'tikaf started and how it started and up to what period the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) kept on observing I'tikaf are some issues that will be discussed now.

Since the creation of the world, I'tikaf has been inextricably linked to the worship of Allah. The concept of I'tikaf can be found in the first house that was constructed for the worship of Allah the Almighty, i.e. the Ka'aba. All religions of the world entertain some form of I'tikaf, but under Islam, the

concept was matured and strengthened. Usually I'tikaf means to sever one's worldly ties and to dedicate one's time for the remembrance of Allah. In some religions, this takes on an extreme form. For example, Christian monks and Hindu hermits exile themselves from the world on a permanent basis. The Holy Qur'an does not advocate the practice of secluding oneself for an entire life-span. Monasticism, as found in Christianity, was not taught by Allah - it is an interpolation of later generations - and thus a teaching full of wisdom was taken to a point where it could not be adhered to by every person. The Holy Qur'an is a universal teaching which is strongly connected to the Ka'aba - the first place constructed for the worship of the One God. It must therefore be assumed that the Holy Qur'an's teachings are in accordance with the way that I'tikaf was originally observed. In this regard, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) presented an unparalleled conduct

which explained the real aim of virtue. The entire life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was an example of how to establish personal links with God. Cutting ties with the world is escapism, an escape from trials and tribulations. The conduct of the Holy Prophet^(sa) was such that he led a full and active life and yet remained aloof from worldly attractions, never letting himself to be overpowered by them. This is the real Jihad - a person remains absorbed in Jihad on all fronts - trials are presented, but the person remains steadfast on the righteous path and does not let himself to be waylaid. This is actually the way to create a bond with Allah Almighty, as established by the conduct of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). The Siraat-al-Mustaqeem, the straight path, is the middle path which Allah has recommended for people; they should fulfil all their responsibilities and they should remain steadfast while still maintaining their bond with Allah. The real concept of

I'tikaf is to withdraw from the world for a short period leaving all worldly trials behind. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) did not call I'tikaf a high standard of piety, rather he called it a sacrifice.

In the early days of Islam, the Holy Prophet^(sa) started the I'tikaf in the middle of Ramadan and continued until the twenty-first night of Ramadan. This practice remained in force for some time and gradually his companions took to joining him. As a matter of fact, some wives of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) also put up their camps in the mosque. On one occasion, Hadhrat Ayesha^(ra) put up her camp in the mosque with the permission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). When the other wives came to know of this, they too were desirous to partake of this piety and they took up residence in the mosque. Permission for this had not been taken from the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa), only from Hadhrat Ayesha^(ra). When

the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) arrived, he was surprised to see all the tents and was told that they were the tents of his wives. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) exclaimed: 'Is this their concept of piety?' He expressed displeasure, that true virtue comes from one's inner urge, it does not come from copying others. He was so displeased that in that Ramadan he did not reside in the mosque for I'tikaf, and made up for this loss in the following month, the month of Shawal. This was the glorious conduct of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa)! He did not ask his wives to remove their tents as he had declared that ladies were permitted to reside in the mosque and Hadhrat Ayesha^(ra) had already been granted permission. So there was no reason for denying the other wives that permission. But he felt that in this instance they were trying to outdo each other. So his final verdict in the matter was to remove himself. He did not admonish his wives but made his views felt in such a way that the

right of those ladies were not trespassed upon and he was the only one who endured any suffering. He did not undertake I'tikaf.

How did this I'tikaf then turn to the last ten days of Ramadan? Once the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said that he observed night of Lailatul Qadr, the night of destiny, on the twenty-first of Ramadan when I'tikaf had concluded. From then on, he decided to reside in the mosque for the last ten days of Ramadan. That year, two I'tikafs were observed - one was of the middle ten days and then the last ten days. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) then remained steadfast in his practice of residing in the mosque for the last ten days of Ramadan.

While observing I'tikaf, one is not allowed to undertake any unnecessary tasks, both inside the mosque or outside it. One is only allowed to leave the mosque if absolutely necessary, and beautification and

adornment of the self is not permitted. Hadhrat Safia^(ra) reports that on one occasion when the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was residing in the mosque for I'tikaf, she visited him to discuss some important matters and this was not against the spirit of I'tikaf. When she was about to leave, Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) escorted her to the door. There is a special glory which is displayed in that conduct. At that time the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) had temporarily made the mosque his home. So, to show his respect to his guest, he went with her as far as possible, and then bade her farewell. At that time two Ansaris were passing by in the street and saw this. They offered the Prophet^(sa) salutations of salaam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) asked them to stop and told them that he had been accompanied by Safia. The two companions were hurt and said 'O Prophet of Allah, did you think we are going to entertain any bad thoughts about you? Why did you give us

this explanation?' The Holy Prophet^(sa) replied 'Satan is circulating like the blood flows in human beings and I was afraid that for some reason he may make you stumble. So that was why I gave you the explanation.' This was the I'tikaf of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). He used to worship in the concentrated form. His concentration on prayers was great in Ramadan anyway and in the last days the concentration increased even more. This continued until the last year of his life. In that year he stayed in the mosque for I'tikaf for twenty days. He probably had some fore-knowledge of his impending death but did not publicise it to spare his companions from grief.

Hadith

As regards the conduct of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) in Ramadan, there are various reports which will now be discussed. Hadhrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas^(ra) relates in Sahih Bukhari that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was the most

generous of people and in the month of Ramadan his generosity increased. When Gabriel presented himself to repeat the Holy Qur'an, in those days the Prophet's generosity turned into gale force. Hadhrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas^(ra) reports that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said that for every person at the time of breaking the fast, there is a time of prayer which is never rejected. So at the time of breaking the fast people should refrain from idle pursuits. This is an occasion when Allah accepts the prayer and that time should not be lost. This special time of prayer is a point of wisdom - for the whole day and for the sake of Allah the Almighty, one has observed restrictions and has forsaken lawful things; then he starts to consume those lawful things in the name of Allah. So Allah the Almighty shows His appreciation of the sacrifices made for Him by accepting the prayers of the supplicant. At that time one should make such prayers which would be helpful for the hereafter. But it is not

something that is automatically granted to every person who fasts. Only those who observe the fast in a manner pleasing to Allah are referred to in this Hadith. In Kitab-ul-Tauheed, Abu Huraira^(ra) reports that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said that Allah says: 'The fast is for me and I am the reward of the fast.' Closeness to Allah is achieved through fasting. Allah says: 'My servants have given up their lawful needs for my sake and the fast is a protection against sin and there are two pleasures that are granted the servant. One pleasure is granted in this world when he breaks the fast; every day at the end of the day, he feels a sense of satisfaction. The other pleasure will be granted in the Hereafter when that person will meet his Lord, and the Lord will be pleased with that servant.'

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) also said the odour of the mouth of the person who is fasting is more dearer to Allah than the beautiful fragrance of

musk. In other forms of worship one does not abstain from lawful activities; they have been allowed by Allah Himself and nobody is going to renounce them. But during the fast some otherwise lawful pursuits are disallowed. Allah does not need food or drink and in everyday life a person is dependent on food and drink. As a result of his sacrifice, the servant is drawn close to Allah, which is why Allah says I myself become the reward of that person because he tried to come closer to me. The Arabic word Abd means slave, one who has nothing of his own. Allah, in the Holy Qur'an has used the word Abd, because human beings are slaves to Allah. They have nothing of themselves, then Allah grants them temporary possessions and then it is demanded that of their own free will they give up their possessions and offer them to Allah. This is true worship as taught to the human being - that he came to this world empty-handed, he was granted possessions, he formed bonds

with things. Then by his own free will, he has to attain a kind of death and give up those possessions; not all of them but some of them; if not for long periods then maybe for short periods. In the concept of Aboodiat (derived from Abd), man is forced to submit to the will of Allah but Abadat is when out of one's own free will, bonds are formed with Allah and ties are severed from the world. Allah is made the central point of the desires of the heart. Whether this is mental or physical or spiritual, it is a migration towards Allah. The fast becomes helpful in this migration. It is the supportive action in offering oneself to Allah in such a way that one comes close to death. Ramadan means undertaking such hardships that sometimes take one to the verge of death and as a result Allah says: 'I am the reward.' The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) during the month of Ramadan considered leaving the trials of the world to be a sacrifice. He said when a person breaks his

links with the world and lives in the mosque, all the good deeds he used to do outside the mosque are still written into his account by Allah, as if he is still performing those good deeds. The I'tikaf is to become attached to Allah.

In Sahih Bukhari and Muslim, it is related that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said that in paradise there is a door called Rayyan, i.e., it is the door of fulfillment. On the Day of Judgement, only people who observed the fast will be permitted to enter paradise via that door; those who did not fast will not be allowed through it. It will be announced: 'Who are the people who observed the fast?' and they will be called one by one and ushered through the door, which will be closed after them. This hadith creates a picture of paradise which can be understood in relation to the five senses. A person with the sense of sight experiences the world in a manner which cannot be shared by one who is visually

impaired. Figuratively speaking, there are five doors through which human beings interact with their surroundings. If one of these doors is closed to a person then that world ceases to exist for him; he has no link with that particular sense and his experiences are restricted. A visually impaired person cannot enjoy the pleasures of sight. People who were unable to fast will also enter paradise, they will enter because of other virtues. But what is meant here is that a special sense will be granted to those who willingly sacrifice their rights for the sake of Allah. This special sense will enable them to enjoy the blessings of paradise in a unique way. This is the door mentioned in the Hadith. In Sahih Bukhari, Hadhrat Anas bin Maalik relates that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said: 'O Muslims take your breakfast before dawn because that is blessed.' Some people try to attain higher virtue by giving up breakfast, believing that the greater the

hunger the greater the virtue. Whenever such people mentioned this to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa), he would admonish them. One can only please Allah in the way He has prescribed. He has instructed us to take breakfast before dawn; to forego that instruction is not piety. Taking the pre-dawn breakfast is an essential part of the fast.

In *Tirmidhi*, it is reported that Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said: 'Your Lord has stated: For each good deed the reward is from double to seven hundred times, but fasting is for Me and I will Myself reward the person who fasts. The fast is a protection against fire.' In the Holy Qur'an mention is made of the seed which sprouts, then seven cobs of corn grow out of it, each cob holding hundreds of kernels. This is the concept of how good deeds grow and flourish. The concept is not of counting things in these kinds of proportions; the Holy Qur'an uses such illustrations to help people understand and to encourage

them to perform good deeds. Even if they undertake a small amount of good they will be given ample recompense. The rewards are actually unlimited and this concept of limitlessness has been taken from the Holy Qur'an because the final edge of infinity is Allah. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) has said that the reward can be increased by more than seven hundred times until Allah Himself becomes the reward!

Reformation

Presented below, in translation, is an address delivered on 26 December 1903 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (may the peace be upon him). The Urdu text of the speech is taken from *Malfoozat*, Volume 6, pp.235-239. *Malfoozat* is the title of the ten volumes that contain the collection of discourses, speeches and addresses of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi.

(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.

[Translator's Note: All references to the verses of the Holy Qur'an are given in Arabic as they occur in the text. The English translation, presented in italics, is taken from the translation of the Holy Qur'an by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali Sahib^(ra). Where the Promised Messiah^(as) has himself stated a certain interpretation of the Arabic verse, this is incorporated in the main body of the text].

The reason why I consider it important to address you today is that the time of death is unpredictable and no one can say with certainty that his life will be so long and that so many days of it remain. Hence, it is a matter of deep concern to me that those who are still unfamiliar with the reasons as to what God's purpose is for establishing this Community, such people should become

familiar with the reasons and should know what it is that is expected of our Community. It is also a mistake to consider that a customary declaration of *Bai'at*, [i.e. initiation into the Community] is by itself a sufficient means of salvation. [It is to remove such misconceptions] that I have felt the need to put before you the true purpose [of the establishment of a new Community] and what it is that God really wants [from those who join this Community].

Everyone should remember that a formal declaration of initiation or merely believing me to be the Imam is certainly not sufficient for achieving salvation because God Almighty looks at the heart - He does not look at verbal utterances.

Salvation requires all that God has repeatedly stated [in the Holy Qur'an] and that is, firstly, that one should truly believe God to be One without any partners and then to believe the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) to be a true Prophet of God. One should also believe the Holy Qur'an to be a divine book and one that will not be replaced as

the Book of religious Law until the end of time. In other words, after the Holy Qur'an there is no need for another book or religious law. Remember this well that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) is *Khaatam-ul-Anbiya*, [i.e. the Seal of Prophets], meaning that after our Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) there will be no new religious law nor a new Book nor any different commandments. There will be only this Book [the Holy Qur'an] and its commandments.

The term 'Prophet' or 'Messenger' that is found in my books in relation to myself [as the appointee of God] are not intended to imply that any new religious law, *Sharia*, or new commandments are being taught. The intention is only to convey the principle that when at the time of need God appoints a person [for a specific purpose], such a person is granted the elevated station where he hears God's words and is given knowledge of unseen and future events. It is due to this that the term *Nabi* or 'Prophet' is applied to such a person and such an appointed

one of God is given this title [by God]. It does not mean that he brings a new religious law, *Sharia* or, God forbid, that he negates the *Sharia* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). On the contrary, whatever he attains, he attains through a sincere and total obedience of the Holy Prophet^(sa) [and complete adherence to the practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa)], without which such a station cannot be attained.

In an age when a multitude of sins are committed and the people of the world do not understand the true nature of faith - all that remains [of faith] is just the outer shell or bones without any inner kernel or true essence. The force of faith becomes very weak while the domination of satanic forces increases greatly. Moreover, there does not remain any interest or enjoyment in faith. At such times the perpetual rule of God manifests itself, namely, that God appoints a true and sincere servant of His, a servant who is completely immersed in the true obedience of God. Such a person is appointed and ennobled with the rare

distinction of communication with God. In this age and at this time God has appointed me as the [Messenger of the time to rekindle in mankind the true love of God] because it is a time when the love of God had become totally cold.

Even though it may be generally observed that people believe in [the declaration] *La ilaha illallah*, i.e. there is no God but Allah, and they verbally attest to the truth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) - they perform *Salat* and keep fasts but spirituality is lacking. On the other hand, the prevalence of acts and practises that go against the principles of righteousness bear witness to the fact that performance of the stipulated worship is customary and there is not to be found even a hint of true spirituality. Otherwise, what is the reason that their acts of worship are not accompanied by the blessing [in the form] of righteous deeds and by the light [of faith].

Remember this well, unless deeds are done with a true and sincere intention and are

accompanied by true spirituality, they can be of no benefit and will be of no avail. Deeds can only be referred to as righteous when there is no corruption in them of any kind. The opposite of rectitude is disorder. The pious person is he who is completely free from all forms of disorder and dissension. *Salat* that is in a state of disorder and is tainted with ulterior motives, is certainly not for God - it does not 'reach' up above the ground by as much as even a hand because such people are devoid of sincerity and spirituality.

There are many people who raise the objection, questioning the need for [the formation] of this Community when according to them they, too, offer *Salat* and keep fasts. In this way they deceive others and there is no doubt that some people who are unfamiliar with [our teachings and with our Community] may well be deceived and join the others in saying that we, too, offer our *Salat* and keep fasts and recite the various prayers, why then has this division been created? Remember that such talk is the result of ignorance

and lack of recognition of God. [The creation of division] is not my doing - if there is division, it is God Who has created this division because it is God Who has established this Community. The reason for this is that the spiritual state has become so weakened that it has reached the point where the force of faith has completely disappeared. However, God wishes to give new life to true faith and this He has done through the new Community. Given these circumstances the objections of the people who question the formation of this Community are absurd and without any basis.

In short, remember this well that such doubts and suspicions should not enter one's heart and if one were to consider this matter fully, such thoughts should not even arise. It is when careful consideration is not given to these matters that doubts and suspicions arise and some people who look only at the surface, make the objection that there are other people who are also Muslims. Such doubts and suspicions can very quickly lead a person to his destruction.

I have seen letters that have been written by people who apparently belong to our Community but say that they are asked by others as to what need there is for a new Community when they too offer *Salat*, declare the same *Kalima*, and keep fasts? Such people further write in their letters that those who question them appear to be good people, doing good works. Despite the fact that the writers of such letters belong to our Community, upon hearing objections and doubts, they write that they do not know the answer [to such objections]. I feel regret and pity for such people that they have failed to understand our true purpose and intention. They only see that other people customarily adhere to the practice of Islam and in this vein they deem to fulfil their duty to God but their practises lack the spirit of truth. Hence, such objections work like the suspicions created by acts of magic and [those influenced] do not care to think that our intention is to create a true faith that saves a person from the death of a sinful life. Such motives are not to be found in

those who follow only the customs and traditions. Their sight is set only upon the apparent - it is not upon the reality. What they have is only the outer skin not the inner kernel.

Remember and understand this point that at the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) had the Jews abandoned the Torah? Had they abandoned practising the Torah? Certainly not! The Jews even now believe in the Torah and their practice is according to this Book. Their sacrifices and other customs are still carried on today as they were at that time. They continue to face towards *Bait-ul-Muqadis* while performing their prayers. At the time of the Holy Prophet^(sa) there were also present great Jewish scholars and Jewish priests, so what need was there for the Holy Prophet^(sa) and for the new Book of God [namely, the Holy Qur'an]? There also existed at that time the Christian people. Among them, too, was a sect that believed in the Unity of God. What then was the reason for the appointment by God of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa)

and for the Book of God? This is a question that should be carefully considered by our opponents and by those who raise such objections [against the formation of our Community]. This is a very subtle issue but those who ponder and consider matters carefully will be able to see that it is not such a difficult matter.

Remember that God looks only upon the soul and upon spirituality. God does not look at the apparent actions - He looks only at the reality and the inner state as to whether the actions are tainted by an element of selfishness and personal desires or whether there is sincerity and true obedience to God. The apparent form of deeds, however, may deceive a person. He may be led to think highly of a person who is seen with a rosary in hand or if he observes a person to be offering voluntary prayers at night or mid-morning. Similarly, when he sees someone to be performing noble acts of virtue, he may believe him to be a saintly person but God does not like the show of 'outer layer' [of deeds]. God is never pleased

with [acts that are only] an outer shell, an outer covering - God is not pleased until there is loyalty and true sincerity.

A person who is without loyalty [to God] is like a dog - [just like a dog falls upon dead flesh], a disloyal person falls upon the rotten world. Such people may sometimes appear to be good but they will be found to hide their ill-deeds and disgraceful practices. What use is the *Salat* that is full of ostentation - what possible benefit can there be in such *Salat*?

(To be continued)

The Fazl Mosque - A Mosque for All Time

The role of a mosque is more than simply being a place of worship. It is an integral part of the community that it serves. Over time it is looked back as a pillar of society and a centre of religious and social assurance. This article presents a personal snapshot of the Fazl Mosque in Washington, USA and touches on different aspects of its history.

By Hananah Zaheer, Washington USA

Cast in the shadows of the evening, it stands between the Turkish and Russian consulates, an embassy of sorts itself. The sidewalk in front of it is shaded and cool, and as I enter the black iron gate of the enormous townhouse, my eyes fall on the sign in front which boldly proclaims its identity. Washington Fazl Mosque. The words are etched on a metal plaque which, like the building, has grown duller with age. The workmen's ladders and the scaffolding hide most of the front of the brick and stone building, and I cannot help thinking that it must have been a beautiful structure in its early days.

And yet, even in its current state, the building inspires a certain awe, a certain respect. It is almost as if there is a tangible layer of peace around it, and standing in front of it, one is aware that history was made around this

building. I walk towards the front door as the wind makes its way across the driveway, sweeping along dry leaves, and I feel the timeless energy of the building. Perhaps it is only because it is part of my past, or perhaps it is because the mosque is like a living entity, witness to its share of history and drama, like an old man whose wisdom is apparent in his lines, in the cracks and folds.

The inside of the townhouse is just as peaceful as the outside, although perhaps a bit more mysterious. The air feels a little damp, and even as I strain to listen for any sounds from the upper levels of the townhouse where the resident missionary's family lives, my ears are met by nothing but silence. In the room to the right of the entrance waits Ahmed Haleem, a man who has been a member of the mosque since 1954, four years after Fazl mosque was established as the

first mosque in the nation's capital.

Sitting on the sofa in his khakis, white t-shirt, and a super bowl xxxii hat, Haleem presents a friendly figure. He takes off his hat as I approach, and greets me with a traditional 'peace be upon you.' He has been a silent figure in the local history of the mosque, a devoted member, now the president of the DC chapter, a man of quiet dignity.

He speaks of his first contact with Islam, and recalls with a smile a woman he worked with who would take her lunch hour to say her prayers. 'I would wait by the bus stop to see if Saeeda was on the bus. If she was, I would get on. If she wasn't, I would just walk.' The woman, Saeeda, eventually became his doorway into the community of Ahmadi Muslims, a minority sect within Islam, considered non-Muslims by most other Muslim factions. Haleem recalls the segregation of society in general at the time.

'Schools, hospitals, union stations...' His tone is amused. 'You get on the same train. You just get on through different doors.'

Coincidentally enough, the make-up of the local Ahmadiyya Muslim community, and the mosque, shifted just as the political and social situations were shifting in the country. The mosque started in 1950 as a small one, with a membership of only seventy-five people. Even though 'a majority [of the mosque members] were Caucasians,' the mosque served as a place for unity in a country where segregation was rampant.

'Even the Sunnis and Shia's could come and offer prayers and celebrate Eid here.'

It was this mosque that enticed him towards the religion, however. After attending a Nation of Islam meeting, and a brief talk with Elijah Mohammad, Haleem decided he was not interested in militancy. After being introduced to the mosque by Saeeda, Haleem was struck by the peaceful atmosphere at Fazl mosque, where he saw people living together in harmony, advocating 'Love for all, hatred for none,' the slogan that still serves as a motto for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

Over the next ten years the make-up of the mosque membe-

ship shifted and became predominantly African American. Today, the majority of members are Pakistanis, although the African American and Caucasian members still continue to attend. Haleem names missionaries that attended to the mosque over time. He is just stating facts, but I am stuck by the realisation that he, like this building, has been here through all the changes. I ask him what impressed him most about this mosque. I am expecting him to talk of the space it affords for prayers and big functions, the sense of peacefulness it brings, but I am surprised by his answer. 'I was most impressed with the fact that personalities that came to the mosque were such that you talk with them like you talk to anyone else.'

The Community is based on principles of equality and brotherhood, and Haleem was surprised by how accessible the leaders of the movement were. Even personalities like Dr. Abdus-Salam, Nobel Prize winner for physics, and Sir Chaudhry Zafarullah Khan, president of the UN General Assembly and the International Court of Justice, would come to offer their prayers

and stay for hours to answer people's questions on politics, physics, and anything else that came up.

Over the years, the mosque has served as not only a place to offer prayers, but also as temporary residence for several young members of the community, for others, it presented itself as a safe haven.

'Sister Rashida moved here after she got divorced...she lived on the third floor for twenty years.'

Even though the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has now outgrown Fazl mosque, moving to a bigger, more modern structure in Silver Spring, a number of members still continue to visit Fazl mosque. The building, being nearly ninety years old, same age as Ahmed Haleem, has borne its share of rough weather. But in the face of all that has gone on around it, it stands still as a mark of faith. As I take my leave of Ahmed Haleem and walk out the door and into the darkened road, I take with me the image of the symbol of peace and tranquillity, and the man who holds that image within his heart.

Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya - A Monumental Book

By Dr. Latif Ahmad Qureshi

Saturday 23rd March 1889 was the fateful day when Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad the Promised Messiah^(as) accepted the hands of a few faithful servants in allegiance to the Ten Conditions of Bai'at (initiation) and founded the community which he called 'The Muslim Ahmadiyya Jama'at'. This was a revolutionary yet a very modest beginning to a new chapter in the history of Islam.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) was already a well-known figure in the religious circles of the then British India. It was a time when British Raj in India was well established. The events of 1857 were already a part of the history. The Muslim government in India was totally crushed. All factions in the society were scrambling for more and more gains. Hindus, who formed the majority of the population,

had realised a need to rationalise their religious beliefs. These were the times of thinkers like Swami Dyanand who while making an effort to rationalise Vedic teachings for the people of India founded an organisation called 'Arya Samaj'. Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan, a Muslim thinker, was of the opinion that the uplift of Muslim masses was only possible through Western education and founded the Mohammadan Anglo Oriental College Aligarh for such education. The British rulers and elite among them like Dr. Hunter and others, who were Christians by faith, had a deep mistrust of the Indian Muslims because of their beliefs in 'Jihad' or the Holy War. The Christians firmly believed that the salvation of the Indian people was in their conversion to the Christian faith. Such a change could, in their view, not only bring religious gains to them but also bring a lasting

stability to the British rule in India. A large number of Christian missionaries, doctors and teachers had, therefore, come to India from Britain, Ireland, America and other Christian nations to preach and propagate Christianity in India. Churches were built in remote villages. Dispensaries were established under Christian Missions in rural areas and schools were established in every important town of India. In the Province of Punjab, the districts of Lahore, Sialkot, Amritsar and Gurdaspur were special centres of Christian preaching activities. Large areas of lands were earmarked for missions. The Bible was translated and published into local languages and widely circulated. The priests and Christian mission-aries went out among the masses and ideologically attacked all other faiths including Islam. It appeared that their victory was very near. Every year the figures of new converts were published and showed thousands of native Indians accepting Christianity as their

faith. However despite all this religious activity there was one very commendable aspect of British rule and that was that there was a stable government, which sought to uphold justice. The rule of law prevailed. Every one was free to propagate one's religious point of view in a fair and peaceful manner. There was no interference by the government in the religious practises of the masses.

The Challenge:

Such were the days when Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) brought out the first volume of his monumental book *Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya* in the year 1880. This book was the result of tremendous research and thinking. It contains the evidence to show the truth of the Qur'an as a revealed Divine book and that of the prophethood of Hadhrat Muhammad^(sa).

In the early part of the book there is a challenge and the offer of a huge prize money of Rs.10,000 by the author for any

person who could counter this evidence put forward by him. Every claim and its supporting evidence are deduced from references from the Qur'an. The religious groups who do not believe in the truth of Qur'an such as the Jews, Christians, Hindus and others who also have their own religious books are invited to put forth similar arguments and evidence based on their own religious scriptures. Those people who do not believe in any religion such as some philosophers and scientists were invited to do the same based on logic and reasoning. Three more volumes came out one after the other till there were four volumes of the book. A logical answer could not only prove the truth of an opponent but could also make him rich. Yet one hundred and twenty two years have gone by and no one has come forward to write a reply and claim the prize.

The Evidence:

The evidence put forward was basically that Qur'an is the Word of God. Hence it is

unique in its depth and meaning. This book contains commentary on the Surah Fatiha - the opening chapter of Qur'an and many other verses of the Qur'an to prove this point. Another important point the author makes is that it is not possible to recognise God simply by using observations, intelligence and logic. Divine revelations are vital in the education and teaching of the human mind. God reveals Himself to His chosen people at all critical times. This has always happened in the past and continues to happen even to this day. God possesses the ability to communicate with His creations just as He has many other attributes such as listening to and accepting prayers; having perfect knowledge; creating without the necessity of any material and so on. People can also talk, hear, see and make things but the work of God and that of man have clear distinctions and are not comparable. Here he quotes the example of simple insects like flies and mosquitoes and stresses the

point that a man cannot even imagine to create the likes of the leg of an insect with all its intricacies.

The same difference is observable between the Qur'an, which is the Word of God, and any other words written by a human being. He describes the prophecies contained in the Qur'an and makes the point that this book was revealed to an unlettered person who could neither read nor write. He was born and lived his entire life between a barbarian, uncivilised and mostly illiterate people in a far away desert. He had no contacts with the civilised people of the time who lived in the outside world and were either Jews, Christians or philosophers and thinkers of the time. Yet that author accurately described the past history, the future occurrences and gave a superb moral and spiritual teaching for mankind. It was a teaching which practically transformed his followers and his nation from being animal into human

beings. Then from being ordinary human beings into being civilised human beings and finally from being civilised human beings into God fearing human beings. This amazing transformation occurred within the short span of just a few years. The time from the start to finish was about 23 years. He profusely quotes from the text of the Qur'an to make his point. He describes the need of the Qur'an and mentions ten amazing characteristics of the Qur'an. Such a commentary of the Qur'an was never seen or heard except during the times of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa).

Revelation in Our times

The author then goes on to quote his own revelations and they are recorded in a fascinating sequence. In these personal revelations Allah addresses him by different names such as Muhammad, Ahmad, Noah, Abraham, Maryam, Isa, Sulaiman and Dawood etc. implying that he would carry the grace of all these previous prophets in

these modern times. This is especially astonishing, as he had not yet claimed to be appointed the messenger of this age. He had not even initiated the Jama'at nor started accepting the Bai'at of people. These verses tell that: he will start such a Jama'at; there will be violent opposition to him so much so that two persons will be sacrificed only for the crime of believing in him as a true messenger of God during his life time - a referral to the two Afghan Martyrs, an event that took place almost twenty years later. His ultimate victory and that of his followers is clearly foretold. He explains very clearly and without any reservations that all these Graces of God are bestowed upon him because of his total and complete submission to the commands of his master the Holy Prophet Hadhrat Muhammad^(sas). He actually is the real person and those who follow him are only his images. He explains by quoting the example of a mirror in which a man sees his image although it is no different from his own

self. He says that revelation is the ultimate proof of the existence of God. There is no proof greater than this proof. In these revelations God tells His chosen servants about events, which are to follow, and great prophecies are made about forthcoming days. They are made at a time when the Prophet is alone and without any friends. He is unknown and unimportant. These prophecies tell about the success of the prophet of God and failure of his opponents. Eventually everything foretold is proved to be true.

The Reception

Some of the Muslims were jubilant. Here was the final light in their totally dark and desperate world. Here the sword of reason appeared to have slain all the dragons of godlessness, multiple deities, trinity, worship of human beings, submission to base objects and the power of ill conceived and incomplete sciences. One of them wrote the famous verse "All the eyes of us ailing patients are on

you. May God make you the Messiah.” This blessed person ‘Sufi Ahmad Jan’ had passed away by the time of the initiation or Bai’at took place. Yet to remember him the first initiation was carried out in his house. Muhammad Hussain Batalvi an Ahle Hadith scholar wrote a long review praising the book in his journal. The review is worth reading. Another scholar Nawab Siddiq Hassan Khan who had done a lot of research about the coming and timing of the Promised Messiah^(as), was very pleased and promised to help in publishing the book. But when he read the searing and fatal attack launched in the book on Trinity and other modern Christian doctrines he became very frightened and withdrew his support. Keep in mind that the British were the rulers of the land and Christianity was their faith, which they wanted to be propagated amongst the Indian masses.

The majority of the Muslims however did not bother at all. They were not concerned

whether Islam lived or died. They neither wanted to spend any money nor risk their honour and other worldly possessions for this cause.

The Final Volume:

The final volume of the book ‘Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya’ was complete for publication in 1905 and was printed in 1908. This contained the final evidence for our present modern times about the truth of Islam, the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad^(sa). In this final 5th volume the Promised Messiah^(as) quotes extensively from his previous volumes, published more than twenty years earlier, and tells about the fulfilment of all the prophecies contained in them. This is in fact a conclusive and irrefutable proof of the truth of Islam, the Qur’an, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) and finally the truth of the Promised Messiah^(as).

The Promised Messiah^(as) wrote more than 80 books in between these volumes of *Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya* but as we read

them one by one we seem to see the same theme being elaborated in many of his books. The theme of peaceful living between various religious groups, the importance of revelation, the mutual respect for religious leaders, explanation of Qur'anic verses particularly Surah Fatiha is present in many books.

There is a famous vision of the Promised Messiah^(as), he experienced during his young days. In this vision he presented a book written by himself to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). When he took this book in his hands it transformed into a fruit. One portion of this fruit was given to a dead person and it revived him back to life. A large portion of the fruit remained in the possession of the Promised Messiah^(as). The logic and reasoning in support of Islam contained in this book has already revived the faith. It is now strong enough to reason out any philosophy or scientific advancement that the world may experience in our times.

There is however, much more that remains in the works of the Promised Messiah^(as), including the awesome *Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya*, for future generations also. For it is not just a book from the past but it is also a book for the future.

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About the Author

Dr. Latif Ahmad Qureshi has written several medical articles and participated in television programme sin the past

Islam and Science

This essay is based on a speech delivered by the author for West Coast Jalsa, Chino, California, U.S.A. on December 29, 2001.

By Rafi Ahmad, Ph.D. - California, USA

In the modern age, religion is often presented as purely a matter of faith. It is said that science and religion fall into complementary, if not conflicting, domains. It is then argued that a clear demarcation between the secular and the spiritual is necessary. In order to separate the domains of religion and science, it must be recognised that science is reason organised for understanding the material universe. It is claimed that religion, on the other hand, is prudent abdication of reason with regard to those questions that are outside the reach of science.

Science involves observation, analysis, hypothesis, and empirical validation. The last - that is, the experimental verification - forms the

essence of science. The boundaries of science, the chain of deductive and causal relationship, due to the very nature of this enterprise, must be allowed to extend as far back and wide, as it can. But the experimental validation must remain the sole arbiter and judge of which theories are accepted as immutable laws of Nature and which theories are relegated to the heap of mere speculations.

Islam rejects the belief that science and religion belong to opposite domains. We hold that reason must be the primary means of evaluating the validity of Islamic beliefs. We believe that a Supreme Creator exists and that the Creator communicates with man through divine revelation. How can these two fundamental assertions be

reconciled? We propose that Islam is a reasonable application of revelation and rationality with regard to those questions that are outside the reach of science.

There are three aspects of the relationship between Islam and science. First, our premise is that the descriptions of cosmology, embryology, and the origin and evolution of various forms of life given in the Qur'an conform to modern scientific findings and thus point to the Divine origin of the Holy Qur'an. The second premise is that Islam and science are not only compatible but that Islam encourages scientific enquiry. The third aspect is the scientific contributions of Islamic societies.

The Qur'an and the Universe
Hadhrat Khalifatul-Masih IV, in his book, *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*, observes that:

'The knowledge gained through revelation is quite

different from that of the knowledge gained through secular scientific investigation. The divine scriptures are not text books of science, hence any reference therein to scientific subjects could not be merely incidental. The main purpose is to establish the unity of source.'

(p. 285)

That is, the Qur'an assures us that there can be no contradiction between the scriptural universe – the word of God – and the material universe – the work of God.

The Qur'an makes highly accurate observations about the creation of the universe. It says.

Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were a closed-up mass, then We clove them asunder? ... Will they not then believe?

(Ch.21: v.31)

The Qur'an continues:

And We have built the heaven with might and We continue to expand it indeed.

(Ch51: v.48)

The reference in these two verses is to the origin of the universe as envisioned by the Big Bang theory and to the expansion of the universe from a black hole, a dark 'closed-up mass' in the apt Qur'anic phrase.

The expansion of the universe, discovered by Edwin Hubble in the 1920s, is a cornerstone of modern cosmology, and is best envisaged as the continual stretching of space itself. Stephen Hawking, who is one of the most eminent theoretical physicists of our time, writes in his recent book *The Universe in a Nutshell*:

'The discovery of the expansion of the universe was one of the great intellectual revolutions of the twentieth century. It

came as a total surprise, and it completely changed the discussion of the origin of the universe. If the galaxies are moving apart, they must have been very close together in the past ... (this) implied that the universe and time itself must have had a beginning in a tremendous explosion.'

(p. 76)

A controversy raged for fifty years over whether the universe was expanding. And when it became inescapably clear that it is expanding, another controversy started over whether this expansion means that the universe had a beginning – that is, the Big Bang. The support for the notion of a Creator in the Big Bang theory arises not only from the fact that the theory provides a moment when creation could have occurred but also because at the beginning of the universe we encounter the unexplainable. Laws of physics break down at that point. In physics, that point is called a singularity.

The foregoing Qur'anic verse mentions disbelievers. The reference might very well be to the agnostic and atheistic scientists of today. The idea of origin of the universe with a singularity did not sit well with many distinguished astronomers. Herman Bondi, Fred Hoyle, and others came up with a steady state theory, an attempt to explain the expansion of the universe in a way that would not require the universe to have had a beginning – and by implication a Creator. But this theory was readily discarded, as it did not correspond to the observational data. A few years later, James Hartle and Stephen Hawking proposed a model, where the universe has no boundary either in space or in time – so that this allegedly self-contained and self-creating universe could just be. In his popular book, *A Brief History of Time*, Hawking then asked: *What place, then, for a creator? (p.141)*

There are two main objections to Hartle-Hawking theory.

First, we must grant this theory quite a body of pre-existing laws of physics in order to get away with the trick of avoiding boundary conditions. Second, given our present state of knowledge, this remains an extremely speculative model with little chance of observational verification.

Thus the Qur'an can still rightfully ask:

Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were closed-up mass, then We opened them out? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?
(Ch.21: v.31)

The cycle of creation and destruction of the universe might mislead one to believe that the universe is eternal. The theory of entropy - the tendency in the universe towards irreversible disorder - can be used to dispel this misconception. There is also a constant dissipation of

matter and energy, which indicates that the universe will finally perish. The Qur'an also declares its ultimate annihilation. It says:

All that is on it (earth) will pass away. And there will remain only the Person of thy Lord, Master of Glory and Honour.

(Ch.55: v.27-28)

The Qur'an throws light on many aspects of the origin of life on earth. The Qur'an observes that living things were created from water [21:31], which is a well-established scientific fact.

The Qur'an refers to the fact of human evolution in the following verse:

What is the matter with you that you do not ascribe dignity to Allah? And certainly He has created you in stages.

(Ch.71: vs 14-15)

It is important to make a distinction between the fact of

evolution and a theory of evolution. The fact of evolution means that there is evidence that life has progressed in nature from lower to higher forms over time. A theory of evolution, on the other hand, attempts to provide a mechanism for that process. The Darwinian theory of natural selection hypothesises the evolution of life as a purely physical process fully explainable in terms of small random variations and selection of the fittest. It is a quasi-scientific theory full of critical flaws; and it does not lend itself well to either deductive analysis or empirical verification, the hallmarks of true science. The underpinning of the Darwinian theory is that the role played by a supernatural agency in the evolution of life can be completely eliminated.

The Qur'an recognises the fact of evolution but rejects the Darwinian theory of natural selection. Many Qur'anic verses speak of the evolution of man on earth in planned

and progressive stages, where accidents play no major role in the survival of the species or individual. Hadhrat Khalifatul-Masih IV writes 'at every step of creation, choices that had to be made were made not by the blind hand of natural selection but by the will of God.' [*Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth, p. 103*]

Fourteen hundred years ago, when the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), human understanding of the cosmos was extremely rudimentary. Nonetheless, as we have seen, there are extraordinary scientific facts revealed in the Holy Qur'an.

Islam and Scientific Enquiry

The Qur'an invites reflection upon the universe, the stars and the planets, the light and the rain, the life in its myriad variety – and the extraordinary conditions that govern them. It recommends pondering over the prime cause of creation and the evident wisdom and power of

its Creator. The Qur'anic verses inviting reflection on nature outnumber those that are related to religious observation. Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said that the quest of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim, man and woman. He enjoined his followers to seek knowledge even if they have to travel to far away places. His constant prayer was for the knowledge of the ultimate reality of things.

The Qur'an invites the believers to scientific enquiry on the premise that they are guided by this knowledge to their Divine Creator. It declares:

And in your creation and in that of all creatures, which He scatters in the earth, are Signs for a people who possess firm faith.

(Ch.45: v.5)

Verily in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and in the alternation of the night

and of the day, there are signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allah standing, sitting and reclining, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, 'O Our Lord, You have not created this universe in vain'. (Ch.3: vs. 191-192)

The spiritual longing, the remembrance of God, and reflection upon the God's creation heightens the sense of wonder for the believer and reinforces his faith that the universe was created with a purpose.

The Holy Qur'an says:

And We have not created the heavens and the earth, and that which lies between the two, but with truth; (Ch.15: v.86)

And then it makes a unique proclamation. It says:

Who has created seven

heavens in harmony. No incongruity canst thou see in the creation of the Gracious God. Then look again; Seest thou any flaw? Aye, look again and yet again, your sight will only return to you frustrated and fatigued. (Ch.67; vs.4-5)

These verses have profound significance as we are challenged to study the universe, explore it, and appreciate its perfection and precision.

The universe and its physical laws are indeed without any flaw. The structure of the physical laws are delicately balanced and finely tuned. Many of the basic features of the universe are determined in essence by the values that are assigned to the fundamental constants of the universe. The features of the universe would be drastically different, if the constants assume even moderately altered values. Paul Davies in his book *The Accidental Universe* writes:

'... why, from the infinite range of possible values that nature could have selected for the fundamental constants, and from the infinite variety of initial conditions that could have characterised the primeval universe, the actual values and conditions conspire to produce the particular range of very special features we observe. For clearly, the universe is a very special place: exceedingly uniform on a large scale, yet not so precisely uniform that galaxies could not form; extremely low entropy per proton hence cool enough for chemistry to happen; almost zero cosmic repulsion and an expansion rate tuned to the energy content to unbelievable accuracy, ... and many more apparent accidents of fortune'.

(p. 111)

But we observe no accident, only design – perfect and precise!

The Holy Qur'an further says:

And He has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth; all this is from Him. In that surely, are Signs for a people who reflect.

(Ch.45: v.14)

It would be impossible to conceive a more powerful gesture of encouragement for the limitless exploration of the universe. It is implicit that everything man would discover could be of service to him.

Muslim Contribution to Science

Under the influence of the Qur'an, the attention of its followers was turned towards the study of nature and its laws. Three centuries after the Hijra, one of the most dynamic scientific movements in history began and rapidly gained momentum in the lands of Islam. It continued unabated for several centuries, and Muslims remained the torch-bearers of science and

civilisation. It produced the greatest physicists, astronomers, mathematicians, chemists, clinicians, zoologists, and geologists of their time. Most eminent among them are Al-Jabir, Ibn-Hayyan, Al-Jahiz, Al-Damiri, Ibn-Musa Al Khwarizmi, Abu Kamil, Razi, Masudi, Al-Beruni, Ibn-Sena, Omar Khyyam, Al-Kindi, Ibn-Rushed, Yahya Ibn-Mansur, Ibn-Al-Haitham, Al-Farisi, Abul Wafa, Al-Beruni, Sharafu-Din at-Tusi, Al-Farghani, Al-Battani, and Ulugh Beg. These scientists produced seminal work in medicine, decimal number system, algebra, mathematical algorithms, hydrostatics, propagation and diffusion of light, measurement of celestial movements, the length of the solar year, and the radius of the earth - to name a few among their numerous achievements. The word alge-bra is derived from the title of a book by the Muslim mathematician, Al Khwarizmi; and the word algorithm is derived from his very name.

This scientific spirit of Islam produced a school of rationalist philosophers known as the Mut'azilites, who emphasised that the real message of revelation could not be understood without the use of reasoning. It is reported that the doctrine of Mut'azilite became the distinguishing mark of the intellectuals. And phenomenal progress in the secular sciences occurred under the Mut'azilites rulers.

Commenting on the scientific achievements of Muslims, a well-known historian, Robert Briffault writes in his book, *Europa: The Days of Ignorance*:

'What we call science arose as a result of new methods of experiment, observation and measurement, which were introduced in Europe by the Arabs ... This modern science is the most momentous contribution of the Islamic civilization'.
(p. 232)

This historical verdict is echoed by George Sartan, the great historian of science, in his monumental book, *Introduction to the History of Science*:

‘The main, as well the least obvious, achievement of the Middle Age was the creation of the experimental spirit, and this is primarily due to Muslims.’
(p. 675)

The prestigious scientific journal *Nature* says:

‘At its peak about one thousand years ago, the Muslim world made a remarkable contribution to science, notably, mathematics and medicine. ... A spirit of freedom allowed Jews, Christians and Muslims to work side by side. Today all this is but a memory.’
(Francis Ghiles, *Nature*, March 24, 1983)

Alas, that is true. By the end of the 12th century, an intellectual decline has set in the Muslim world – and it continues to this day. There were external causes, but religious extremism and moral decadence seem to have played a central role in the demise of Islamic science. Add to this, the isolation of scientific enterprise and a rigid orthodoxy with a lack of tolerance for innovation.

Prof. Hoodbhoy, a well-known Pakistani physicist, writes:

‘The decline of science in Islamic culture was contemporaneous with the ascendancy of an ossified religiosity, making it harder and harder for secular pursuits to exist. ... But certainly, as the chorus of intolerance and blind fanaticism reached its crescendo, the secular sciences retreated further and further. Finally, when the Golden Age of Islamic intellect ended in the fourteenth century, the

towering edifice of Islamic science had been reduced to rubble.’

[*Islam and Science*, p.95-96]

It is an unfortunate fact that today science is the weakest in the Muslim countries. Dr. Mehdi Golshani, an Iranian professor of physics, says that less than one percent of the scientific papers published in the internationally recognized journals originates from the Islamic countries. Prof. Hoodbhoy remarks that ‘although Muslims are one-fifth of the world’s population, they are barely noticeable in the world of scientific research.’ (*Islam and Science*, p.50)

After centuries of darkness and intellectual decline in the Muslim world, we see a ray of hope, a silver lining in the cloud. One follower of the Promised Messiah^(as), Dr. Abdus Salam, discovered the fundamental theory uniting the two basic forces of nature - the electromagnetic and

weak nuclear forces. This discovery is considered one of the most profound contributions to the twentieth century science. Besides his pre-eminent work in the area of particle physics, Dr. Salam dedicated his life to the cause of scientific advancement in the third world in general and in the Muslim world in particular.

Regarding the future of science in Islam, Dr. Salam remarked that “so long as the Qur’anic and the prophetic tradition of religious liberty and tolerance prevails, science in Islam will flourish, for the two are closely linked, so far as our faith is concerned.” [*Renaissance of Sciences in Islamic Countries*, p.179].

In that spirit, we hope and pray that our young men and women pursue science for the establishment of the truth of the Holy Qur’an, for the refutation of quasi-scientific theories, and for the enrichment of life.

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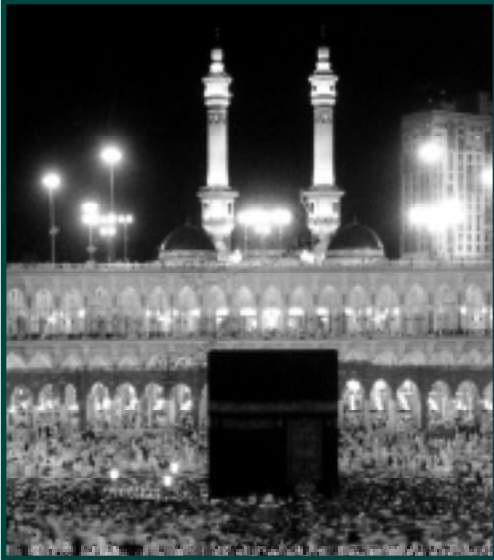
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