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Editorial

Freedom of religion is one of the fundamental rights of man. Provided his religious practice does not harm his society, man should be free to profess his belief and practise his religion, without any hindrance. This is because religion is a matter between man and God. World religions have never compelled their followers to either deny this right to anyone or to compel anyone to follow a different belief. This is only to be expected as religion originates from God and its object is to bring man closer to God. So those who follow religion must strive to reflect His attributes. If God were intolerant of different beliefs then would He not have wiped out all but one religion? On the contrary He has left this to the choice of the individual, as God is The Patient and The Forbearing. So, if man were in anyway religious then he would not depart from this principle in the slightest.

For Muslims in particular there should be no doubt concerning the freedom of religion. In Islam

God has made the choice of religion absolutely clear. He states in the Holy Qur'an:

There should be no compulsion in religion.
(Ch.2: v.257)

He also says in relation to Islam that:

And say, It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.'
(Ch.18: v.30)

If one looks at the life of the Holy Prophet^(sa) – the model for mankind – then we can see that he exhibited not just religious tolerance but a determination to defend the rights of people to practise their religion without let or hindrance. In his Charter of Freedom, for example, the Holy Prophet^(sa) assured Christians living under Muslim rule that they would have freedom to practise their faith and Muslims would not only defend them from persecution but also help to repair their churches. The narratives from Muslim Spain are a wonderful testament to how this was practised by the

Muslims of the time and their tolerance was acknowledged by the Christians and Jews who lived with them. If that were not enough, the Holy Prophet^(sa) also clarified the role of intra-religious differences. His teaching that, 'Honest and sincere differences of points of view among my people should be accounted as a blessing.' (As-Sayuti) leaves no room to question the right to freedom of thought. The wisdom behind this is clear - with differing viewpoints one has the opportunity to reassess and reanalyse one's beliefs, to think about the rationale of one's religion and to increase one's knowledge through dialogue, debate and study. This promotes greater understanding and forms the foundation for tolerance and respect in society, so allowing it to progress intellectually as well as spiritually.

Yet it is unfortunate that despite all this instruction one finds the Muslim world divided by religious difference - even to the extent that some are persecuted for their belief in God and His Prophet^(sa).

The lead article in this issue discusses the subject of religious persecution in Pakistan, with particular reference to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community that has suffered persecution for decades. It explores the history of this persecution and shows its incompatibility with religion, international law as well as the wishes of the founder of Pakistan. What is apparent is that as Muslims the persecutors are ignoring both the advice of God and His Prophet^(sa), and as Pakistanis they are ignoring the guidance of the founder of Pakistan. The new country that was to be a place of freedom for all, has become a place of persecution and restriction.

However, the history of religion has been absolutely clear on the fate of those who persecute and the fate of those persecuted on account of their belief in God. One can only hope and pray that the perpetrators of this injustice realise the error of their ways so that they too can become recipients of God's Mercy, rather than God's Wrath.

Notes & Comments

DNA - A Matter of Life and Death?

The words 'Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid' to the average person may mean little. Yet the significance of 'Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid' (DNA) is so great that even as you read these words, it is revolutionising our world in a way that could perhaps be compared to the Industrial Revolution, or even man landing on the moon. DNA research, however, has the potential to go much further as it offers the chance to probe deeper into the mechanics of life systems and see how they work.

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA, for it was back in April 1953 that an article by James Watson and Francis Crick of Cambridge University was published in the magazine *Nature* that revealed the DNA double helix. Unsurprisingly they received a Nobel Prize for their work, together with Maurice Wilkins of Kings College

London who had also carried out essential research on DNA. (Dr Rosalind Franklin, whose work has subsequently been acknowledged as pivotal to the DNA findings, however, did not share the Nobel Prize). Watson and Crick also hypothesised that each strand of the helix could act as a template so allowing it to replicate the second strand - and their theory was subsequently proved right.

As the work progressed over the next few decades scientists gained a better understanding of the composition DNA and more significantly how DNA could be manipulated. As the knowledge of DNA components and their interaction with other molecules increased scientists assembled a 'genetic toolbox'. The next step was for them to map out an entire genome and this was first achieved for the genome of a bacterial virus that comprised 5,400 bases. This inspired them to go for gold and seek to map the ultimate genome - the human genome - this, however, was to

be a much harder task as it consists of nearly 3 billions bases. Nevertheless, technological advances made it possible to do this quicker than expected and in May this year the complete human genome was published (although crucially it did have some gaps). You did not need to be a scientists to realise that this was a momentous day as the 'stuff of life' for humans was laid bare in black and white for all to see and for some to manipulate.

The opportunities presented by DNA and genetic engineering are immense and there has been much talk of the benefits of genetics. Genetics has opened a whole new chapter in the field of medicine with the promise of 'wonder drugs' that would seek to tackle diseases at a genetic level - either by replacing defective genes or by instructing genes to behave in a particular way to produce a desired result. In agriculture genetics is hailed as benefiting the third world through improving crop yields, and in court rooms there are benefits by way of DNA fingerprinting that help to prove the guilt or innocence of suspects. There is no doubt that

these are worthy goals but what of the risks?

On this aspect our past experience with medical 'breakthroughs' provide us with valuable lessons for the future. There is, unfortunately, more than enough evidence to show that man has a tendency to overstate the benefits whilst understating the risks of new medicines. This has effectively allowed scientists to use humans as guinea pigs for their 'research' and for drug companies to make billions in the process. The situation resultant from past discoveries and drugs is so bad that we do not know how many of the medical problems being treated by doctors today are due to nature and how many are due to the side-effects of synthetic medicines prescribed by them to cure other ills. This ignorance is startling - if one looks at the range of anti-anxiety drugs and sleeping pills as an example, it is alarming to note that opium, alcohol, cocaine and even heroin were all once favoured treatments recommended by doctors. More recently the group of medicines known as benzodiazepines (e.g. Valium) has been

a popular treatment, with doctors issuing nearly 60 million prescriptions in the 1980s in Britain alone. Yet all these have substantial side effects that can create a vicious circle of subsequent drug treatment and dependence for the patient.

One critic encapsulated this problem well by saying that, 'The most serious problems have generally arisen not because doctors didn't know enough – but because so many behaved as if they did.' (p.13, *Power and Dependence*, by Charles Medawar). This would also serve as a useful warning for potential genetic treatments; in fact the issue of genetics is far more serious because of its potential impact, not just on people today but in the future as well – because genetic treatment can impact human germ cells that may manifest their effects in subsequent generations.

There are also other problems that result from our incomplete knowledge. As noted above even the current map has 'some gaps' and these gaps could be crucial. Additionally, each human is different and his genetic make up

(consisting of his share of good and defective genes) is different, therefore a treatment based on one person's genome sequence, or even several sequences, may not be suitable for another. This is further complicated by the fact that the same genetic code sequence (that scientists seek to use and manipulate) may or may not prompt a cell to act in a particular way, as this is also dependent upon the context of the sequence, and we do not know how this is determined. Thus the risks of ploughing ahead and formulating treatments in an attempt to meet expectations or simply to experiment are phenomenal.

The debate that surrounds the use of Genetically Modified [GM] crops also highlights the risks well – with GM crops there is serious concern regarding their effect on regional ecosystems as the genetic modifications work their way through the food chain. The problem is that once you initiate the use of GM crops you cannot control the boundaries of the experiment or worse still call things to a halt if things start to go wrong. Genetic research in medicine faces similar issues.

However, the temptation to play dice with God's creation is overwhelming and it is impossible for this knowledge not to be used for personal gain.

It is remarkable that the dangers associated with genetics were highlighted in a Divine book over 1400 years ago. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rehma'ullah) underlined this in his book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth* that the Qur'an warns that Satan would effect a change in the creation of Allah and it goes on to say that '...he who takes Satan as a friend besides Allah has certainly suffered a manifest loss' (Ch.4: v.120). The Qur'anic warning is stark that such work being is driven forward by a satanic impulse and can lead to a 'manifest loss'. Such a warning should instil the utmost caution and in any research in this area.

In reality this desire to experiment is practically irrespensible because the goal is in essence a search for the elixir of life. The desire for immortality either in person or by reputation is a repeating theme in human history – the narratives regarding

the Egyptian Pharaohs are a good case in point – and now man once again believes he has immortality within his grasp. This characteristic of immortality was expressed by Prophet Socrates^(as) who said that, 'Love of fame, and the desire to achieve something that will never die, are extremely powerful emotions. For this fame and glory, even more than for their children, people are ready to run risks, spend their wealth, endure every kind of hardship, and even lay down their lives...their desire for lasting renown and high reputation is the incentive for numerous actions; the stronger the people are, the greater is the incentive. People are in love with immortality.' (The Symposium 202a – 202c)

With such emotions at play and with so much at stake it would be ironic indeed if the discovery that led to the unravelling of the human genome also resulted in the undoing of man.

Fareed Ahmad, UK

Belief in God

Presented below, in translation, is a compilation of excerpts taken from the discourses and speeches of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Urdu text of the excerpts is taken from *Malfoozat*.

Translated by Amatul Hadi Ahmad



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

In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, 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.

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.

Belief in God is of two types. One type of belief is that which is limited to the tongue and it has no influence on actions or deeds. The other type of belief is one that carries with it testimony of deeds. Moreover, until the second type of belief develops [within a person], I cannot say that a person believes in God. I cannot understand the situation where a person claims to have a belief in God yet he commits sins. A large part of the world is made up of people who have

belief of the first type. They declare that they believe in God, but at the same time they are engulfed by the impurities of the world and are steeped in the evil of sin. What, then, is the reason that a belief in God's existence does not lead to [behaviour] that is related to belief? A person desists from taking anything that belongs to another person, even if the person happens to be of the lowliest status, in his presence. How is it that there is opposition to God and how is there such courage shown in disobedience to God's laws while it is asserted that such people have belief [in the existence of God]? I accept that a great number of people of the world assert in their own tongues that they believe in a Supreme Being. Some call him 'Parmaishar', other call Him 'God', and others call him by different names. However, when this professed belief of theirs is tested and examined, it has to be said that it is nothing but a verbal claim that is not attested by any actions or deeds.

It is in the nature of man that he wishes to avoid the harm and to gain from the benefits of whatever he believes in. For example, arsenic is a poison and a person does not dare to taste it as he knows that a small amount of this poison can kill. Why then, having acquired a belief in God, will he not derive the conclusions that pertain to that belief? If belief in God equals even the belief that one has about arsenic then a person's emotions and desires would turn cold and a death would come over them. However, instead we have to accept that the proclamations of belief are only utterances and belief has not acquired the hue of certainty. Hence such a person deceives his own self when he says, 'I believe in God'.

The first duty of a human being therefore is that he should correct the belief he has in God, that he should prove with his deeds and actions that they do not go against the glory of God or the commandments of God. [Malfoozat Vol 4 PP 313-314]

We do not consider God to be limited in any way nor could He be limited. We know this about God that He is on earth as He is in heaven. He has two types of relationships. One is a common relationship which He has with all His creation and the other is a special relationship which He has with particular people who, having purified themselves, progress in His love. At that stage He becomes so close to such persons that it seems as if He is speaking from within them. It is a strange aspect of God that despite being far, He is near and despite being near He is far. He is very close but we cannot say that this closeness is like one body being close to another. He is above everything but we cannot say that there is something below Him. He is more 'visible' than anything else but even so He is most profound. A person is given knowledge of Him to the degree of his own attainment of purity.

By 'emotions' what [the questioner] presumably means is why has God burdened man

with the Law of Shari'ah and why has man been imprisoned within the walls of the forbidden and the permitted? In order that it should be known that God is extremely Holy and because of His sanctity He does not like impurity. Moreover because He is merciful and beneficent, He does not wish human beings to tread a path that leads to their ruin. Hence, these are His 'emotions' on the basis of which the religious system continues, no matter what name you wish to give them.

[*Malfoozat*, Vol. 10 P 426-427]

It is the practice of Allah that there is a kind of symmetry between the physical and the spiritual system]. Just as God nourishes and provides for the development and nourishment of the physical system, the same is the case in the system of spiritual development. The two systems, the physical and the spiritual, develop side by side. This discussion would take a different line if the questioner denies the existence

of God. However, a person who believes in the existence of God should keep the two systems in mind and benefit from their comparison. He Who has created the physical system has also created the spiritual system. Just as He nourishes the physical system with fresh sustenance, so He nourishes the spiritual system with fresh sustenance. Just as the physical state is dependent upon fresh water, so the spiritual state is also dependent upon fresh, heavenly revelation. Just as the physical body dies if it does not receive nourishment, so the soul too dies without spiritual nourishment. If in spiritual matters there were available only past and ancient references, then what would be the conclusion other than that the spiritual system is in a state of demise - what else could it be?

God Almighty as is His nature, always wishes to be recognised. For proof of His existence and identification, He always provides true, clear and fresh signs and these are not

too difficult to understand. It is the system that has always been in existence and it is a continuum. Thousands upon thousands of prophets came and provided such proofs through their own actions and deeds, thus completing the argument in favour of the existence of God.

[The question that arises here is] how can a person who is a scientist or a philosopher break this proven continuum of witnessed signs? What is needed in such a case is that, just as the pious and holy persons provide an actual physical example with their lives thus validating their claims, so should the negation of it [i.e. that there is no God] be offered in the same way. Such people, however, would be justified in asking, why they are presented with old stories and fable instead of being given a living proof or a living example and for this I am available.

An astronomer cannot provide a definite proof of existence of God merely by observing the

solar system. At the very most they may point to the fact that there should be a God, but not that there is. The fact that there is a God and that He does most certainly exist, has always been proven with the principles put forward by the Prophets. If people like myself did not appear in this world there could never be in the world any real and complete proof of God. At the very most if someone was of a just disposition and also possessed a virtuous character, then from the well ordered heavenly bodies and from the solar system, he could conclude that there ought to be a God. Other than that the fact that God exists and He is the Master, the Ruler and the moving force behind all creation, all this it is not possible for people to know without the guidance of those who are from God. It is such people who enable others to witness the existence of God and, by providing fresh evidence and signs, it is as if they are able to 'show' God to others. [Malfoozat Vol.10 pp.354-355]

God cannot be seen with physical eyes nor can we feel Him with other senses because if He was of the perceptible realm for which the senses have been created then without doubt He would be visible or we could perceive Him. However, of the senses, none is needed for knowing God. There are special means and other kinds of senses for identifying Him. Wise men, brahmans and philosophers have tried but in vain. They have all committed mistakes and they never achieve the belief that creates a surprising change in a person's life. When such was their own condition, how could they serve as a guide for others? Those who are themselves engulfed by problems and who do not themselves have any satisfaction or peace, how could they be a source of satisfaction for others? The torches that are lit on this path are the Prophets (peace be upon them). Thus, should a person wish to acquire the light of belief, it is his duty to find and tread upon this path. Without this it is not

possible to attain nearness to God, and true spiritual knowledge which safeguards against sin. Furthermore, every person can decide for himself as to which pursuit creates true belief and spiritual knowledge. It is true that when a person treads on the path of truth, he does face trials and tribulations. Fear of the family, of the neighbourhood and of the wider society threatens him. However, should he in reality love the truth and hold it dear, then he will eventually escape from the difficulties - otherwise tribulations will manifest his hypocrisy.

It is necessary for a believer to reach a point of frenzy [in his belief] and not care for any humiliation in the path of truth. However, as long as he is imprisoned by fear of admonishment from his peers, he cannot be a believer, as [beautifully expressed in a Persian verse]:

از عمل ثابت کن آن کسے کہ در ایمان تست
دل چر دادی یوسے را ماہ کنعاں را گزین

*Prove with your deeds
Your declaration of belief
Having given your heart to
Yusaf.
Stay on the road leading to
Canaan.*

In this age, we observe that there are spread in all four corners of the earth all manner of sins, major and minor. A dry faith is not sufficient to remove all these sins. Do we find in existence the fear of God as it should be? No, most certainly not! In reality a human being is gripped by Nafse-Ammara [i.e. the self that incites to evil] as if a baby sparrow was gripped in a lion's paw. Unless there is freedom from Nafse-Ammara, any change would be a most arduous task and escape from sin is very difficult. However, [consider this illustration] - should there be a devastating earthquake and the roofs of people's houses were shaking, sinful thoughts would be far from people's minds as they would be struck with fear. Similarly, the inner condition of a person suffering from a fatal illness cannot be the same as

when he is enjoying a life of comfort.

In order to bring about a change in his condition, a human being is totally dependent upon God's manifestations and powerful signs. It is essential that God creates such means as would strengthen a person's faith and make it fresh and stronger so that his faith does not remain limited to verbal utterances but shows an effect on his practical condition also and in this way a person should become a true Muslim. With regard to this, God Almighty spoke to me through revelation in the following verse in Persian:

چو دور خسروی آغاز کردند
مسلمانان را مسلمان باز کردند

*When the Regal age begins
The so-called Muslims will be
turned into true Muslims once
again.*

This is the word of God. In the present age, if we carefully analyse the situation, we will

note that it is a lip service faith that we commonly observe. Thus, it is the intention of God Almighty that verbal Muslims should be turned into true Muslims.

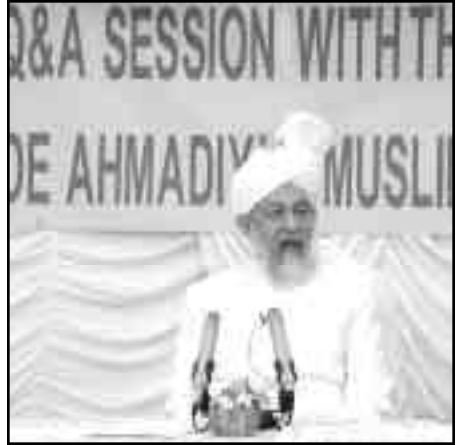
[*Malfoozat*, Vol. 10, pp.314-315]

PLEASE NOTE:

In this journal, for the information of non-Muslim readers, '(sa)' or 'sa' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for 'Salallahu alaihi wassalam' 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 'Alaihi salato wassalam' for the respect a Muslim reader utters. Also ru or (ru) for 'Rahemahullahu Ta'ala' means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him

Contemporary Issues

On 24 February 1990 Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (God's Mercy be upon him) gave an address at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. This address has since been published as a book entitled *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*. After the address the audience was invited to ask any questions they wished. Presented below are some of the questions that were



raised in this session and answers given by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru).

Compiled by Amatul Hadi Ahmad

QUESTIONER

In the speech it was stated that salvation cannot be monopolised. Why then does God say in the Holy Qur'an that 'to God religion is Islam'?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad: This is a very important aspect of what I have already explained to you. Islam, according to the Holy Qur'an, is an epithet or a description that is applicable not only to the religion known as Islam but also to all the religions of the world at their source. 'Islam'

means submission and total submission. According to Islam itself every religion of the world was based on 'Islam'. Furthermore, the faith of Abraham is also referred to as 'Islam'. This is one reason why you feel that there is an apparent contradiction in these two statements.

Another reason is that, according to Islam, salvation depends on the truth of a person more than on what he believes. If he believes in something to be true with all his sincerity and honesty and

there is no contradiction in him regarding his belief and his action then he would not be held responsible for his errors of judgement. This is the fundamental philosophy of Islamic teaching. At the same time, however, the Holy Qur'an declares in other places that Islam is the final religion. For instance in Chapter 5 verse 4 of the Holy Qur'an states:

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My Favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.
(Ch 5: V. 4)

That is, 'We have perfected for mankind a religion that has become universal'. Hence for universal man this religion is needed - man stands in need of this religion. However, if he has not heard of it, at least not convincingly, then if he sticks to his own beliefs in all honesty and sincerity, the message is he should not be afraid of God Who is Just and Kind.

QUESTIONER

You quote the Qur'an as stating that women are equal to men in all regards. But as far as the vast majority of the Muslim world is concerned, women are definitely not credited as such. Obviously, although pure in statement, the teachings of Islam are not interpreted as such by mankind. What are your views on this since this is not an issue that is readily accepted by many Muslim men?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad: This is again a very important issue. What I did say was not that they are equal but that they had equal rights in proportion to the rights of men upon them. This is exactly the statement of the Holy Qur'an. However, at the same time, if you read on in the verse, you will find that the Holy Qur'an declares this, despite the fact that men have an advantage over women in some ways. For instance, and this is mentioned in other places in the Holy Qur'an, that men are created

stronger and more powerful. Furthermore, men have the advantage of not being responsible for reproduction in the sense that they do not have to carry human babies in their bellies for nine months and to look after them. Such differences do exist. Equality, however, is not in totality of constitution. Equality is only in relative terms of rights. Hence, Islam knows no difference between a man's right and a woman's right. However, they would, of course, be related to their constitution as well. God only knows how He has created mankind so wherever you discover any difference in teaching you will always find it without fail, without exception, in that the difference is directly related to the constitutional differences, not otherwise.

Turning to the other part of the question and the statement that the world of Islam is not acting upon Islamic teachings, as I have already explained, this is the case in respect of all religions of the world. Where are the countries in which the

religions of those countries are practiced in all honesty and sincerity and good understanding. Religion is flying on a higher plane which is raving and making noises but it has not been connected up with the 'veins' of human action. A raving engine can only play on one's nerves but cannot help one move along. This, unfortunately, is the situation of religion everywhere in the world.

QUESTIONER

How is personal sin dealt with in Islam? If God is All Merciful and forgiving then why not sin so that God may be even more merciful? Where is the line drawn between those who go to Paradise and those who go to Hell?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad: Sin and forgiveness have a relationship between man and God very similar to the relationship that exists between man and man. In daily experiences you find that your children 'sin' against you and

against the discipline of the house. In what sense is this so? It is so in the sense that you know better than they do. You understand that ultimately their misdeeds are wrong for them and it so happens that sometimes they are forgiven and sometimes they are not forgiven. It so happens that at times it is the 'sin' itself that automatically 'contains' the 'punishment' [through the chain of cause and effect]. For instance, if a child, attracted by the dazzle of fire, mistakenly puts his hand in the fire before the mother can prevent him, his hand would burn.

Hence, this is the nature of 'sin' and punishment which sometimes is directly and immediately related to sin. If one observes the history of permissiveness in some advanced societies of the world one would be amazed to learn that every time a wave of permissiveness captured the imagination of society, it was followed by a wave of 'natural punishment'. Long ago there was gonorrhoea, syphilis, sex-

related herpes, and then there is AIDS.

In short, how can you say that God is not forgiving because He has created a system of cause and effect. So sin must not be understood in a narrower term as if it is only in relation to God. Sin is misbehaviour of all types in any situation. Sometimes it is punished and sometimes it is not immediately and directly punished. It depends on the detection and sometimes it is forgiven because forgiveness promotes reformation and sometimes it is not forgiven because forgiveness promotes crime. More importantly, by forgiving some you would be usurping the rights of others. This is the fundamental philosophy of forgiveness and punishment that has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an which states that to forgive is better provided it causes reformation. In a society where murder has become the order of the day, the removal of capital punishment from the legal system of a country, is a

form of forgiveness that is bound to encourage murder in that society.

I have been studying the data of crime in European countries and you will also share my opinion because I am talking of facts, that the more the governments grew lenient regarding some crimes, the more they flourished. The Holy Qur'an states that only those people will be rewarded by God, who forgive on the condition that their forgiveness promotes reformation and not crime. This is so also in your homes when, suppose, a child is disposed to hurting others, or hurting other children of the same family, would you go on forgiving such a child limitlessly, for all times to come. That is an impossible scenario but suppose it happened. In that case the outcome would be that you were being kind to the 'criminal' and unkind to the other innocent children. You would be responsible for the suffering caused by such a child to its siblings. You should

try to understand the philosophy of sin through your own personal experience and your inner wisdom would declare that is exactly how it should be in relation to God. There is no other philosophy that can govern this relationship.

Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan: An Analysis Under International Law and International Relations – part 1

Published in *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol.16, Spring 2003, pp.217-245
by Amjad Mahmood Khan

I. Introduction

Before September 11, 2001, the United States characterised the Pakistani government as an unstable regime with a tarnished history of corrupt dictators, military coups, and territorial violence along its borders.¹ Following the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, Pakistan became a leading partner in the U.S.-led war on terrorism, thrust into a position to bring “international criminals” to justice and to act as a hero for the “civilized” world.² Indeed, one of the lessons of September 11 is that exigencies often spur credulity. U.S. concerns with Pakistan’s human rights problems lost significance once Pakistan agreed to stand with the United States against terrorism.

Pakistan’s leaders saw September 11th as an opportunity to gain redemption. Blasted in the past for conducting nuclear testing, suspending its Constitution, and breeding Islamists, Pakistan, post-September 11, was in an excellent position to curry favour with its critics by suffocating terrorist networks. Seizing upon this opportunity, President Pervez Musharraf led a fight against militant Islam. This shift in Pakistan’s priorities resulted in a decrease in attention paid to the plight of religious minorities in Pakistan, once a recognised problem of serious international concern.³ The two issues of human rights and terrorism were treated as unconnected, without the slightest suggestion that addressing the former would be helpful in addressing the latter.

The problem of Pakistan’s treatment of its religious minorities once again merits consideration. Pakistan’s Penal Code carries specific provisions criminalising behaviour considered blasphemous to Islam. Apart from stifling religious freedom for non-Muslims, these provisions

also target a particular group of minority Muslims that the Sunni Muslim majority deems heretical to Islam, namely members of the Ahmadiyya Community, a Muslim group of roughly four million adherents in Pakistan that has always considered itself as belonging to the Muslim *ummah* (or larger 'community of Muslims'). The fundamental difference between Ahmadis and the Sunni Muslim majority concerns the identity of the Promised Messiah^(as), the reformer that the Prophet Muhammad^(sa) foretold would appear after him.⁴ Doctrinal interpretations peculiar to Ahmadis were deemed sufficient to place them outside the pale of Islam by the religious orthodoxy.⁵

For over five decades, Ahmadis have endured senseless persecution. Their mosques have been burned, their graves desecrated, and their very existence criminalized. According to a 2002 United States State Department report, since 1999 316 Ahmadis have been formally charged in criminal cases (including blasphemy) owing to their religion.⁶ Between 1999 and 2001, at least twenty-four Ahmadis were charged with blasphemy; if convicted, they could be sentenced to life imprisonment or death.⁷ The offences charged included wearing an Islamic slogan on a shirt, planning to build an Ahmadi mosque in Lahore, and distributing Ahmadi literature in a public square.⁸

Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims, and yet their persecution is wholly legal, even encouraged, by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and its leadership. As a result, thousands of Ahmadis have fled the country to seek asylum abroad. Recognising the pervasiveness of the problem and the pressing need for action, the United States House of Representatives introduced a bipartisan resolution in February 2002 urging Pakistan to repeal both the anti-blasphemy provisions in its Penal Code as well as the second amendment in its constitution, which declares Ahmadis to be non-Muslims.⁹

This Article undertakes a legal analysis of the problem of persecution towards religious minorities in Pakistan. Surveying the rise of religious persecution towards the Ahmadiyya Community—including its gradual legalisation—this Article makes a positive case for the repeal of the anti-blasphemy provisions in Pakistan's Penal Code. Part II explores

the background and history of the persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan with emphasis on the legal entrenchment of the anti-blasphemy provisions in Pakistan's Penal Code. Special emphasis is placed on Pakistan's state practice with respect to the protection of religious minorities, illustrating the striking slide from its initial high regard for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to its current defiance of emerging international norms with respect to religious liberty. Parts III and IV survey the way in which Pakistan's anti-blasphemy provisions violate both international law and prevailing international norms of religious liberty. Part V puts forth the competing policy paradigms for and against the repeal of the anti-blasphemy provisions. Finally, Part VI concludes with recommendations on how best to synthesize the policy paradigms and present a solution that is viable to both Pakistani and U.S. interests. (Parts III onwards are featured in July 2003).

Two main issues underlie the following analysis: (1) whether Pakistan has violated international covenants and customary law in promulgating the anti-blasphemy provisions in its Penal Code; and (2) whether the international community can intervene on behalf of Ahmadis in Pakistan, given that the majority of Pakistan's people seem to favour the anti-blasphemy provisions currently in place. This Article concludes that both questions can be answered in the affirmative, and that addressing the situation of the Ahmadis through international law can enable the United States and other Western democracies to uproot militant Islam in Pakistan more effectively.

II. Background

A. The Emergence of Pakistan and Its Commitment to Religious Freedom

An often misguided assumption regarding the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is that the country emerged solely out of the Hindu-Muslim divide of the late 1940s; that is, Hindus and Muslims could not live together peacefully, separatist movements emerged, and Pakistan sprung forth as an independent Muslim country. It may be more appropriate to understand the emergence of Pakistan as a product of trans-religious phenomena: political identity, empowerment, and constitutionalism. The leading Indian Muslims of the time, led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, articulated the idea of Pakistan as a

revolutionary political experiment necessary for the subsistence of Muslim citizens. An ardent democrat, Jinnah sought a separate Muslim state, founded on consensual and pluralistic grounds, as a model of welfare, community, and popular sovereignty.¹⁰ He believed in the supremacy of the general will rather than of the religion of Islam *per se*.

Jinnah's involvement in the Muslim League Lahore, particularly the 1940 session, brought the concept of religious tolerance to the forefront of the Muslim secessionist movement. Jinnah and other concerned leaguers never felt that the political arrangement of major Muslim provinces in one single state would solve completely the struggle of Muslims and Hindus in South Asia, but they knew that Muslims in India could only gain independence by forming a sovereign and liberal Muslim state. The state they envisioned was the largest of its kind in the Muslim world at the time.¹¹

It was easy for many Muslims, however, to lose sight of Jinnah's ideals. The monolithic nature of the Indian Congress Party and British Raj, the brutal and devastating riots of 1947, and the increasingly bloody dispute in the Punjab pointed to violence as the most effective means to establish a separate Pakistan.¹² To many, absolute justice meant the establishment of a state protective of Muslims at the expense of Hindu separatists. Islamist language pervaded the provincial corridors of Hindu-Muslim India.

Jinnah did not see the founding of Pakistan as an historical aberration. His vision was based on the primacy of the people; it was a non-sectarian, non-denominational, and purely Islamic ethos.¹³ He felt that in founding Pakistan he could elevate not only the status of South Asian Muslims in the world, but also the status of Islam itself. In spite of the force of Muslim separatists wielding militant Islam as their weapon, Jinnah gained tremendous public support among the Muslim masses. Within the Lahore League, he sought counsel from Muslims who subscribed to his point of view.¹⁴

Three days before Pakistan's official founding, Jinnah, then president of the Constituent Assembly, spoke about the problems his people would face and the kind of cooperation necessary to alleviate them. He declared:

If you change your past and work together in a spirit that every one of you . . . is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges, and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make. We should begin to work in that spirit, and in the course all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community – because even as regard to Muslim you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis, and so on – will vanish. To my mind, this problem of religious differences has been the greatest hindrance in the progress of India. Therefore, we must learn a lesson from this. You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State.¹⁵

Thus, Jinnah pushed for the Muslims of Pakistan to disregard religious distinctions in politics. He reminded his audience, the Constituent Assembly, that Pakistan would assume independent statehood with the goal of creating a progressive Muslim state based on pure Islamic principles. His rhetoric was one of reconciliation, tolerance, and moderation.

The right to religious freedom was not only central to the struggle for the independent state of Pakistan in 1947; it was also an important part of a larger world-wide debate over human rights at that time. Indeed, as Muslims fought for an independent Pakistan, the U.N. General Assembly fought to construct a universal norm for protecting freedom of religion with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), passed in 1948. During a drafting session of the UDHR, representatives from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan quarrelled as to whether freedom of conscience and freedom to change one's religion, as outlined in Articles 18 and 19 of the UDHR, were recognised under Islamic Law (or the *Shari'a*). The Saudi representative expressed his vehement opposition against the inferred right to change one's religion under *Shari'a*, calling the Articles a product of Western thinking. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, the Pakistani representative to the session, Pakistan's first foreign minister, and an Ahmadi, hailed the adoption of the articles as an

‘epoch-making event’ and considered them entirely consistent with Islam’s emphatic denunciation of compulsion in religion.¹⁶ Re-asserting Jinnah’s ideals, Khan said the following to the General Assembly at the occasion of the adoption of Article 18 of the UDHR:

Pakistan is an ardent defender of freedom of thought and belief and of all the freedoms listed in Article 18. For the Pakistani delegation, the problem had a special significance as some of its aspects involved the honour of Islam The Muslim religion unequivocally claims the right to freedom of conscience and has declared itself against any kind of compulsion in matters of faith or religious practices.¹⁷

The colloquy was a window into Pakistan’s deep and open commitment to the UDHR, in particular its provisions for freedom of religion and conscience.

Before partition, Muslims were themselves a religious minority in India and wanted the Constitution of India to include safeguards for their protection. As late as the months preceding partition, the All India Muslim League (AIML) negotiated with the Indian Congressional Party for constitutional protections for the large number of Muslims who would remain in Hindu majority areas in India post partition. In exchange, AIML was prepared to offer similar protections to non-Muslims who would remain in the territory of the new Pakistani state.¹⁸ Continuing Jinnah’s work of championing minority rights, Pakistan’s founding documents reflect that the protection of religious minorities under a separate Muslim state was of prime significance. Pakistan’s original 1956 constitution outlined in clear terms the right of each citizen to profess, practice, and propagate his religion (Article 20), to attend school freely without religious instruction (Article 22), to enjoy places of public entertainment without religious discrimination (Article 26), to qualify for appointment in the service of Pakistan without religious discrimination (Article 27), and to preserve and promote his own language, script, or culture without religious discrimination (Article 28). These provisions had their roots in Articles 1(3) and 55(c) of the U.N. Charter,¹⁹ which emphasise non-discrimination on the basis of religion,

and in Article 18 of the UDHR,²⁰ the language of which tracks Article 20 of Pakistan's constitution.²¹

B. The Fundamentalist Surge and the History of Ahmadi Persecution

The building of a secular and inclusive state in Pakistan proved difficult in the face of rising religious fundamentalism. For Pakistan outwardly to manifest its solidarity with the international community with respect to freedom of religion was easier than for its *ulema* or 'religious leadership,' consisting of the class of orthodox Muslim clerics, to agree with this vision of freedom. Religious fundamentalists recognized that the persecution of Hindus was too obvious a breach of Pakistan's constitutional rights protections to escape censure from the international community. A more subtle form of persecution under law, however, would attract less attention; thus Pakistani fundamentalists used the platform of the excommunication of Ahmadis, members of a 'fake Muslim community,' as a pretext to maintain their hegemony.²² They used Pakistan's constitution as their political weapon of choice.

In March 1949, the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan introduced the so-called Objectives Resolution, which relied heavily on the UDHR, pledging that Pakistan's first constitution would make adequate provision for non-Muslims to enjoy full religious freedom.²³ Soon after the Objectives Resolution was passed into law by Pakistan's General Assembly, the Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islam (Ahrar), a Muslim separatist movement, began to engage in anti-Ahmadi agitation. On May 1, 1949, Ahrar activists made their first public demand that Ahmadis be declared non-Muslims. The Ahrar insisted that Khan be removed from his position in the cabinet, along with all other Ahmadis in public service. They also accused members of the Ahmadiyya Community of conspiring with India (and particularly remnants of the British regime) against Pakistan's Sunni population. The Ahrar opposition movement climaxed during the peak of the Punjab disturbances. The Ahrar, knowing the disturbances would carry to Karachi, pressured Governor-General Khwaja Nazimuddin to remove Khan from office on the pretext that this would protect Karachi from the ensuing violence of the unrest in Punjab. In the midst of this tense situation, Khan delivered a speech before the Anjuman Ahmadiyya at Jahanghir Park, Karachi on May 18, 1952. Immediately after his speech

Khan resigned from the powerful Basic Principles Committee (BPC), a governmental agency that ensured the application of Islamic principles in everyday governmental practice.²⁴

Increasingly, Muslim fundamentalist groups turned away from their position that the very creation of Pakistan was *per se* un-Islamic, and began to pressure government officials to transform the country into an Islamic theocracy. The leader of this new struggle was Maulana Maududi, head of Jama'at-i-Islami (Party of Islam), an Islamic revivalist fundamentalist movement. Maududi sought to unify Pakistani Muslims under the common cause of excommunicating Ahmadis from Pakistan.²⁵ The ruling Muslim League Party opposed both the idea of creating a theocracy in Pakistan and the 'theo-democratic' activities of Jama'at-i-Islami. The government's ensuing crackdown on the Jama'at-i-Islami resulted in violent demonstrations by Maududi's movement against Ahmadis in 1953. The Pakistani government condemned these anti-Ahmadi demonstrations as a threat to public order. Thus, at least until 1953, because it disagreed with the Jama'at-i-Islami on the creation of a theocratic state, and because of the close association of the Jama'at-i-Islami to the anti-Ahmadi movement, the government treated anti-Ahmadi speeches as attacks on its policies.²⁶

By 1954, it became clear that the government was giving ground to the fundamentalists. The Pakistani *ulema* used Ahrar propaganda as a basis to launch a unified campaign against Ahmadis.²⁷ For the next two decades, Ahmadis would face severe attacks on their properties and businesses; the *ulema* treated Ahmadis not only as non-Muslims, but also as threats to Islam. The 'Islamization' of Pakistan's constitution received its first major push in 1962 when the *ulema* and the Advisory Council for Islamic Ideology added a 'repugnancy clause' to the constitution: 'No law shall be repugnant to the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Qur'an and Sunnah [actions of the Holy Prophet], and all existing laws shall be brought into conformity therewith.'²⁸ The shift towards the strict constitutional implementation of the *Shari'a* was partly a result of the 1958 military coup, which indirectly stifled secularist movements within Pakistan.

Pakistan's reformation of its constitution under the strictures of the

Shari'a has resulted in a steady deterioration of the rights protections found therein.²⁹ Nowhere was this more evident than in the 1974 amendment to the constitution. After a bloody civil war and the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, the National Assembly approved a new constitution in 1973, portions of which embodied the legal and political machinery of the *Shari'a* as espoused by the orthodox religious clergy. The *ulema* indoctrinated Pakistan's masses, arguing that there was an inherent danger in affording too much political autonomy to religious minorities whose very existence undermined Islamic ideology.³⁰ In 1974, a new wave of anti-Ahmadi disturbances spread across Pakistan. Having made significant gains in their 20-year political struggle for an Islamic theocracy, members of the *ulema* saw the disturbances as their opportunity to pressure Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims. Under Bhutto's leadership, Pakistan's parliament introduced Articles 260(3)(a) and (b), which defined the term 'Muslim' in the Pakistani context and listed groups that were, legally speaking, non-Muslim.³¹ The goal of this constitutional amendment was to bring some of Pakistan's remaining progressive constitutional provisions under the purview of the *Shari'a*. Put into effect on September 6, 1974, the amendment explicitly deprived Ahmadis of their identity as Muslims.³²

In early 1978, General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, now safely installed as president after a coup overthrowing Bhutto, pushed through parliament a series of laws that created a separate electorate system for non-Muslims, including Ahmadis.³³ In 1980, under President Zia-ul-Haq's leadership, the Federal Shariat Court was created and given jurisdiction to examine any existing law to ensure it was not repugnant to Islam.³⁴

In 1984, Pakistan's constitution was amended yet again. Seeking to solidify the place of the *Shari'a* within the legal order, President Zia-ul-Haq issued a presidential order to parliament asking that the constitution be amended in such a way that the original Objectives Resolution of 1949 would take on a new substantive force. Thus, the key provision of that Resolution, which stated that 'Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in

the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah,³⁵ became embedded in the text of the constitution. A further amendment proposed, but never passed, later that same year would have strengthened this provision by adding the following: 'The injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah shall be the supreme law and source of guidance for legislation to be administered through laws enacted by the parliament and provincial assemblies, and for policy making by the government.'³⁶ The essential purpose and effect of the two amendments was to establish the supremacy of the *Shari'a* over the constitution itself. That is to say, questions of constitutional interpretation could only be answered in line with the *Shari'a*.

As a result of these amendments, the Federal Shariat Court, with wide discretionary power accorded it, became the state's legal instrument to legitimise subsequent criminal ordinances passed by parliament. These ordinances included five that explicitly targeted religious minorities: a law against blasphemy; a law punishing the defiling of the Qur'an; a prohibition against insulting the wives, family, or companions of the Prophet of Islam^(sa); and two laws specifically restricting the activities of Ahmadis.³⁷ On April 26, 1984, Zia-ul-Haq issued these last two laws as part of Martial Law Ordinance XX, which amended Pakistan's Penal Code and Press Publication Ordinance Sections 298-B and 298-C. Ordinance XX undercut the activities of religious minorities generally, but struck Ahmadis in particular. For fear of being charged with 'indirectly or directly posing as a Muslim,' Ahmadis could no longer profess their faith, either verbally or in writing. Pakistani police destroyed Ahmadi translations of the Qur'an and banned Ahmadi publications, the use of any Islamic terminology on Ahmadi wedding invitations, the offering of Ahmadi funeral prayers, and the displaying of the *Kalima* (the principal creed of a Muslim) on Ahmadi gravestones. In addition, Ordinance XX prohibited Ahmadis from declaring their faith publicly, propagating their faith, building mosques, or making the call for Muslim prayers. In short, virtually any public act of worship or devotion by an Ahmadi could be treated as a criminal offence.³⁸

In *Mujibur Rahman v. Government of Pakistan*, the Federal Shariat Court was asked to exercise its jurisdiction under Article 203D of the

constitution to rule whether or not Ordinance XX was contrary to the injunctions of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. The court upheld the validity of Ordinance XX and ruled that parliament had acted within its authority to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims. Ordinance XX, the court maintained, merely prohibited Ahmadis from 'calling themselves what they [were] not,' namely Muslims.³⁹

With the passage of the Criminal Law Act of 1986, parliament advanced Ordinance XX's severe restrictions. The 'Blasphemy Law,' as the Act came to be referred to, amended Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code by raising the penalty against blasphemy from fine or imprisonment to death.⁴⁰ Because the Ahmadi belief in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) was considered blasphemous insofar as it 'defiled the name of Prophet Muhammad,'⁴¹ Zia-ul-Haq and the Pakistani government institutionalised the persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan with Section 295-C. The mere existence of practising Ahmadi Muslims could be considered blasphemous and punishable by death.

On July 3, 1993, the Supreme Court of Pakistan dismissed eight appeals brought by Ahmadis who were arrested under Ordinance XX and Section 295-C. The collective complaint in the case, *Zaheerudin v. State*,⁴² was that the 1984 Ordinance violated the constitutional rights of religious minorities. The court dismissed the complaint on two main grounds. First, the court held that Ahmadi religious practice, however peaceful, angered and offended the Sunni majority in Pakistan; to maintain law and order, Pakistan would, therefore, need to control Ahmadi religious practice. Second, Ahmadis, as non-Muslims, could not use Islamic epithets in public without violating company and trademark laws. Pakistan, the court reasoned, had the right to protect the sanctity of religious terms under these laws and the right to prevent their usage by non-Muslims. The court also pointed to the sacredness of religious terms under the *Shari'a*. By directly comparing the Ahmadis to the controversial author Salman Rushdie as a way of underscoring the risk to public safety, this decision ironically endorsed violence against the Ahmadiyya Community.⁴³ The ruling further entrenched the anti-Ahmadi ordinances by giving the government power to freely punish Ahmadi religious practice as apostasy.⁴⁴

In the wake of the *Zaheerudin* decision, the number of religious minorities arrested and charged with blasphemy increased dramatically.⁴⁵ Provincial-level ordinances restricting the democratic activity of Ahmadis proliferated. In 1999, for example, the Punjab Provincial Assembly, with the backing of the Federal Shariat Court, unilaterally decided to change the name of the Ahmadi-founded and 98% Ahmadi-populated village of *Rabwah* (an Arabic word meaning 'higher ground' used reverentially in the Qur'an) to *Chenab Nagar* (an Urdu phrase used pejoratively in Pakistan meaning 'Chenab river village') and infiltrated its housing projects with non-Ahmadi settlements in an effort to transform permanently the composition of the village itself.⁴⁶

Since October 1999, the emergence of President Musharraf has brought about substantial changes in Pakistan's internal political structure, but little in its legal structure. Although President Musharraf combated the corruption of past leaders, particularly that of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, increased the number of seats in parliament for minority candidates,⁴⁷ called for the holding of general elections free from past campaign finance corruption,⁴⁸ and facilitated an immediate and active partnership with the United States in the war against terrorism, he failed to take action against the legal persecution of religious minorities. In fact, Musharraf and other government officials refuse even to discuss repeal of the anti-blasphemy provisions; the perceived tenets of the *Shari'a* render the matter moot.⁴⁹ With the recent parliamentary gains by fundamentalist groups in Pakistan, the prospect of reform appears even more unlikely.

(to be continued)

REFERENCES

- 1 See, e.g., H.D.S. Greenway, *Court India, But Don't Ignore Pakistan*, *The Boston Globe*, Sept. 10, 2001, at A15. Greenway writes: 'Pakistan was, and is, in the U.S. doghouse for not restoring democracy, which ended in a military coup in 1999.'
- 2 See, e.g., Mansoor Ijaz, *Given Cover, Pakistan Can Prove Helpful*, *L.A. Times*,

Sept. 19, 2001, at B11. Ijaz writes: 'Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president, rightly has chosen to stand on the side of civilisation in what will soon become a global campaign against zealotry.'

- 3 See, e.g., Editorial, *Pakistan's Cruel Blasphemy Law*, N.Y. Times, Aug. 30, 2001, at A20. That a leading American newspaper's scrutiny of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan came but eleven days prior to September 11 illustrates the dramatic de-emphasis of Pakistan's problems after September 11.
- 4 See M. Nadeem Ahmad Siddiq, *Enforced Apostasy: Zaheerudin v. State and the Official Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan*, 14 Law and Ineq. 275, 279 (1995). Siddiq notes that, fundamentally, Ahmadis fall within the pale of Islam. They are followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, who claimed to be the same Messiah foretold by Prophet Muhammad^(sa) and awaited eagerly by all Muslims. The Ahmadiyya Community meant to revive the 'true spirit' and message of the Islam Muhammad^(sa) effectuated, relieving it from all misconstrued or superstitious teachings that tainted Islam for fourteen centuries. The orthodox Muslims claim that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) had proclaimed himself as a prophet, thereby rejecting a fundamental tenet of Islam: *Khatm-e-Nabuwwat* (a belief in the 'finality of Prophet Muhammad'^(sa)). Ahmadis respond that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) came to illumine Islam in its pristine beauty and to reform its tainted image, as predicted by Prophet Muhammad^(sa); for Ahmad^(as) and his followers, the Arabic *Khatm-e-Nabuwwat* does not refer to the finality of prophethood in a literal sense, that is, to prophethood's chronological cessation, but rather to its culmination and exemplification in Prophet Muhammad^(sa).
- 5 See Leonard Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan*, 261 (1961).
- 6 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan*, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/14026.htm> (Oct. 7, 2002).
- 7 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan*, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/sa/8237.htm> (Mar. 4, 2002); Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan*:

http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/irf_pakistan.html (Sept. 5, 2000).

- 8 The persecution of Ahmadis is part of the widespread mistreatment of religious minorities in Pakistan under anti-blasphemy laws. Christians, for example, are also subject to severe religious persecution. A telling case concerns Ayub Masih, a Christian jailed for making favourable comments about Salman Rushdie, the author of the controversial *Satanic Verses*. A Pakistani court sentenced him to death on April 27, 1998, a year after he survived an attempt on his life during trial. The case was on appeal to the Lahore High Court when Masih's chief defender, Roman Catholic Bishop John Joseph, committed suicide outside the courtroom to protest Masih's death sentence. His act sent shockwaves through the minority Christian community across Pakistan, which protested violently against the Blasphemy Law immediately thereafter. See Dexter Filkins, *Pakistan's Blasphemy Law Under Heightened Scrutiny*, L.A. Times, May 9, 1998, at A1.
- 9 H.R. Res. 348, 107th Cong. (2002).
- 10 Iftikhar H. Malik, *Islam, Nationalism And The West: Issues Of Identity In Pakistan*, 110 (1999).
- 11 *Id.* at 111.
- 12 See Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, 239 - 40 (1985).
- 13 *Id.* at 216.
- 14 He found one such person in Muhammad Zafrulla Khan: an Ahmadi, a prominent member of the Governor-General's Legislative Council, a justice of the Supreme Court of India, and a staunch proponent of reconciling political founding with fundamental Qur'anic teachings on governance and liberty. Khan was later knighted by the Queen of England.
- 15 Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Address at the Karachi Club (Aug. 11, 1947), available at: http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/constituent_address_11_aug1947.html.
- 16 See Tayyab Mahmud, *Freedom of Religion and Religious Minorities in Pakistan: A Study of Judicial Practice*, 19 Fordham Int'l L.J. 4086 (1995); see also Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* 168 (2001).
- 17 Quoted in David Little et al., *Human Rights and the Conflict of Cultures: Western and Islamic Perspectives on Religious Liberty* 37 (1988).
- 18 See Mahmud, *supra* note 16, at 52 - 53. One might even argue that the

protection of religious minorities was itself the catalyst for partition.

- 19 See U.N. Charter art. 1, para. 3; U.N. Charter art. 55, para. c.
- 20 See *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* art. 18, G.A. Res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc.A/811 (1948), *reprinted in* Supplement of Basic Documents to International Law and World Order 377 (Burns H. Weston et al. eds., 3d ed. 1997) [hereinafter Document Supplement].
- 21 See Pak. Const., art. 20. 'Subject to law, public order and morality: - (a) every citizen shall have the right to profess, practise and propagate his religion; and (b) every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.'
- 22 '[The Ahrar's] enmity of the Ahmadis extended over almost a quarter of a century, and . . . it can be said with absolute certainty that now the Ahrar brought the anti-Ahmadiyya controversy out of their old armoury purely as a political weapon. . . . [I]f [the Ahrar] could arouse public feeling and the masses against the Ahmadis, nobody would dare oppose them and . . . the more the opposition to this activity of theirs, the more popular they would become.' Lahore High Court, Report of the Court of Inquiry Constituted Under Punjab Act II of 1954 to Enquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953 257 (1954). For an ethnographic discussion of the effects of labelling on Ahmadis in Pakistan, see Antonio R. Gualtieri, *Conscience and Coercion: Ahmadi Muslims and Orthodoxy in Pakistan* (1989).
- 23 See Javaid Rehman, *The Weaknesses in the International Protection of Minority Rights* 143 (2000).
- 24 See Binder, *supra* note 5, at 262.
- 25 See Siddiq, *supra* note 4, at 284.
- 26 See *id.* at 285. The cause of the 1953 disturbances against Ahmadis was put to judicial inquiry. Justice Muhammad Muneer and Justice M.R. Kiyani of the Lahore High Court issued a 387-page document, known later as the Muneer Inquiry Report, that rebuked the politically-motivated goals of Muslim fundamentalist groups apparent in the anti-Ahmadi disturbances. The Report undermined persecution movements against Ahmadis in 1953. See Mahmud, *supra* note 16, at 66 - 68; see also Lahore High Court, *supra* note 22.
- 27 See Siddiq, *supra* note 4, at 285 - 86.
- 28 Pak. Const., pt. IX, art. 227.

- 29 See Mahmud, *supra* note 16, at 45.
- 30 See David F. Forte, *Apostasy and Blasphemy in Pakistan*, 10 Conn. J. Int'l L. 27, 35 - 36 (1994). "The political power of religious radicals comes from their ability to mobilise the passions of the lower middle classes in the cities by conjoining the ideology of nationalism with the xenophobia and legalistic positivism of militant Islam." *Id.* at 35.
- 31 See Pak. Const. pt. XII, ch. 5, arts. 260(3)(a), 260(3)(b). 'Muslim means a person who believes in the unity and oneness of Almighty Allah, in the absolute and unqualified Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the last of the prophets, and does not believe, or recognise as a prophet or religious reformer, any person who claimed or claims to be a prophet, in any sense of the word or any description whatsoever, after Muhammad (peace be upon him).' Subsection (b) reads: "'Non Muslim" means a person who is not a Muslim and includes a person belonging to the Christians, Hindus, Sikh, Buddhist or Parsi community, a person of the Qadiani Group or Lahori Group (who call themselves "Ahmadis" or by any other name) or a Bahai, and a person belonging to any of the Scheduled Castes.'
- 32 In addition to the constraints the amendment placed on Ahmadis, it also called for the nationalisation of Christian schools, so that the influence of private Christian groups was radically reduced.
- 33 Approximately 92% of Pakistan's 140 million people are Muslim. The remaining 8% constitute roughly four million Christians, four million Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and Bahais, and four million Ahmadis. Election reform legislation in 1978 provided for separate electorates for non-Muslims in the National and Provincial Assemblies. Only ten of the 211 seats in parliament are reserved for minority candidates. Members of minority religions may only vote for candidates in their local districts from a list of minority candidates. As a result, 95% of the nation may vote for candidates based on their geographic locality, while the remaining 5% must vote for roughly 5% of parliamentary seats regardless of their geographic locality. The division of the electorates has serious implications. Perhaps most obvious is that majority Muslim candidates have no incentive to appeal to religious minorities. The influence of religious minorities being negligible, majority Muslim candidates have no political obligation to push for the civil liberties of religious minorities in parliament. For a long time, the Pakistani National Assembly based its representation for religious minorities on 1981 census figures. The census figure of Ahmadis presented in the National Assembly, for example, was

104,244, only 2.6% of the actual Ahmadi population in Pakistan. Moreover, non-Muslims have no representation whatever in the senate and federal cabinet. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, supra* note 7. Political persecution of Ahmadis emanates from their political disenfranchisement. In order to cast their votes for minority candidates, non-Muslims must register on the 'non-Muslim' electoral rolls. Ahmadis, however, base their entire ideological foundation on Islam and profess to be true Muslims. According to Ahmadis, under the current electorate set-up, any representation as minorities would be a tacit admission on their part that they are, therefore, non-Muslims. To register as non-Muslims demeans their faith and compromises their ethical standards. Ahmadis cannot register as Muslims without facing severe legal consequences, including fines and imprisonment. The result is a glaring infringement on freedom of conscience, as protected by the UDHR and international human rights law. Ahmadis are psychologically paralysed when filling out electoral ballots to the extent that they rarely vote in Pakistan's elections. *See, e.g.,* Barbara Crosette, *Pakistan's Minorities Face Voting Restrictions*, N.Y. Times, Oct. 23, 1990, at A5; David Lamb, *Non-Muslims in Pakistan Seek a Political Voice*, L.A. Times, Jan. 13, 2002, at A9. On February 27, 2002, President Musharraf issued Chief Executive's Order No. 7 of 2002 (Conduct of General Elections Order), which called for the elimination of the separate electoral system. Non-Muslim minorities and Ahmadis hailed the Order as a step towards true democracy in Pakistan. On June 17, 2002, however, Musharraf passed a series of amendments to the original Order, which stated explicitly that the "[s]tatus of Ahmadis [was]. . . to remain unchanged" (Section 7-B). The striking result is a joint electoral roll with the names of eligible voters (Muslims and non-Muslims alike), but with no Ahmadis.

- 34 *See* Forte, *supra* note 30, at 37. By 1986, the Federal Shariat Court had invalidated fifty-five federal laws and 212 provincial laws as being contrary to Islam.
- 35 *See* Pak. Const., art. 2(A) (made part of constitution by Presidential Order No. 14 (1985)).
- 36 *See* Pak. Const. amend. IX, Bill section 2 of 1985 (an unadopted proposal to amend Pak. Const. of 1973).
- 37 *See* Pak. Penal Code §§ 298B, 298C (collectively referred to as Ordinance XX). According to § 298B:

(1) Any person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves 'Ahmadis' or any other name) who by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation

- a. refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a Caliph or companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*), as 'Ameer-ul-Mumineen,' 'Khalifat-ul-Mumineen,' 'Khilafat-ul-Muslimeen' 'Sahaabi' or 'Razi Allah Anaho';
- b. refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*Peace be upon him*), as 'Ummul-Mumineen';
- c. refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a member of the family (Ahle-bait) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*), as Ahle-bait; or
- d. refers to, or names, or calls, his place of worship as Masjid; shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, and shall also be liable to fine.

(2) Any person of the Qadiani group or Lahori group (who call themselves as 'Ahmadis' or by any other name) who by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, refers to the mode or form of call to prayers followed by his faith as 'Azan' or recites Azan as used by Muslims, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, and shall also be liable to fine.

According to S 298C:

Any person of the Qadiani group or Lahori group (who call themselves 'Ahmadis' or by any other name), who, directly or indirectly, poses himself as a Muslim, or calls or refers to, his faith as Islam, or preaches or propagates his faith, or invites others to accept his faith, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.

38 See Siddiq, *supra* note 4, at 288 - 89.

39 See *Mujibur Rehman v Gov't of Pakistan*, 1985 S.D. Vol. II (Fed. Shariat Court) 382, 473 (Pak.).

- 40 See Pak. Penal Code § 295C (part of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1986, which amended the punishments enumerated in §§ 298B and 298C to include death). 'Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall be also liable to fine.'
- 41 See *id.*
- 42 *Zaheerudin v. State*, 26 S.C.M.R. 1718 (S.Ct. 1993) (Pak.). *Zaheerudin v. State* was a 4 - 1 ruling led by Justice Abdul Qadeer Chaudhry, holding that Ordinance XX was in accord with statutes and judicial opinions in England and the United States that protect religious freedom; the majority erroneously cited legal precedent from both jurisdictions as false support. For an extended treatment of the case and its misapplication of American judicial precedent, see Siddiq, *supra* note 4.
- 43 Note that Ahmadis believe in retaliation only as a matter of necessary self-defence. The spiritual leader of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Community at the time of the passage of the 1974 amendment, Mirza Nasir Ahmad, voiced no official opposition against it, nor did he encourage his members to rebel against the laws. Likewise, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the spiritual leader of the Ahmadiyya Community at the time of the passage of Ordinance XX and the Blasphemy Law, encouraged tolerance against oppressive Muslims. The explicit purpose behind the anti-Ahmadi ordinances, that is, to quell the Ahmadi threat, appears irrational when placed in the context of Ahmadi non-retaliatory conduct.
- 44 See Siddiq, *supra* note 4, at 286.
- 45 Seventeen blasphemy cases, resulting in one conviction, were registered against Ahmadis in the first nine months of 1994. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *Annual Report On Human Rights Abuses: Pakistan*,
http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/drl_reports.html
(Feb. 1995).
- 46 See Rehman, *supra* note 23, at 153.
- 47 In January 2002, Musharraf added new seats in the National Assembly, reserved sixty seats for women, and ended a system in which non-Muslims had to run separately for a limited number of reserved seats. See Mohamad Bazzi, *Musharraf Pledges October Elections*, *Newsday* (New

York), Jan. 25, 2002, at A34 (Musharraf added 350 new seats and set aside 60 parliamentary seats for women); Erik Eckholm, *Leader Plans Open Election for Pakistan in October*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 25, 2002, at A6 (Musharraf ended non-Muslim discrimination in electoral practices).

48 See Erik Eckholm, *supra* note 47, at A6.

49 This is especially compelling given that Pakistan's constitution had been suspended for re-examination immediately after the October 1999 military coup. See Celia W. Dugger & Raja Zulfikar, *Pakistan Military Completes Seizure of All Authority*, N.Y. Times, Oct. 15, 1999, at A1.

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Islam is the only Living Religion

By Maulana Abdur-Raheem Dard

Reprinted from *The Review of Religions*, London, May, 1925.

On those who render perfect obedience to God and His Apostle - on whom be peace and blessings - God will confer one of four dignities according to their deserts. Those who attain the highest stage of perfection will be made Prophets, those next to them will be made Siddiqs, i.e., favourites of God; those coming after them will be made Shaheeds, i.e., those from whose eyes the veil has been removed but who have not yet attained the dignity of special friends; and those that are next below them will be made Salih, i.e., they will be righteous men who are trying to improve themselves but who have not yet been admitted to the inner presence of God. These are the best companions whose company benefits others. These different stages of development can be attained only through the Grace of God, and God well knows His servants. (Holy Qur'an, Ch.4: vs. 69, 70.)

For an exhaustive and full discussion of this subject it seems necessary to understand and explain the meaning and object of religion, to know what really constitutes its life, to define and examine the various religious systems of the world, and then to apply the test of livingness to all of them with a view to finding out which is the really Living Religion. But keeping in view the limits of time and space I should like to adopt another method which, I believe, will not only shorten the process but simplify it at the same time. This pertains to the practical effect of religion on the lives of its followers as distinct from the internal scrutiny of its principles and teachings. 'A tree is known by its fruits,' says Jesus Christ⁽⁶⁶⁾, and this is no less true when applied to religions. Instead of involving ourselves in the dry, vague, and abstract intricacies of logical, historical, and metaphysical discussions of the various problems of Eschatology,

Ethology, Ethnology, Sociology, and Anthropology we deal directly with concrete and patent facts which require no more than common sense to be understood; just as in practical life we need not know the terms of Biology and Botany to know a tree, so to judge a religion we need not necessarily know the technicalities of Materialism, Polytheism, Anthropomorphism, Agnosticism, and Pantheism, etc.

How do we know that fire burns or that water quenches our thirst? Is it by any anthropological excavations or subtle philosophical discussions that we know the practical effects of things so essential for us in this world? The child learns all these things by simple observation and experiment. He feels the necessity of water, observes other people drinking it, himself makes an experiment, and gets at the secret of the thing. He does not, rather he cannot afford to, analyse the component parts of water and then think of using it. Where in the nature of things experiment is not possible he decides by observation and

inference.

And so can every man possessing common sense get at the truth of religion. He should only know the object of religion, the purpose which it should serve, and then he can easily decide as to what religion is really a Living Religion. The one which fulfils its object is surely a true, a real, and a Living Religion; and the other not.

A little consideration will show that God is the essence of all religion. Cicero said, 'Men were called religious from "relegere", because they reconsidered, carefully and, as it were, went over again in thought all that appertained to the worship of the gods.' Lactantius regarded religion as 'the idea of an obligation by which man is bound to an invisible God.' Or to avoid the word 'God' we may define religion, in the words of C. G. D'Alviella, as 'The conception man forms of his relations with the supernatural and mysterious powers on which he believes to depend.' Or, as Mill puts it, 'The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions

and desires towards an ideal object, recognised as of the highest excellence and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire.' Or we may say, with H. W. Garrod, that 'Religion seeks an object to which the whole self of a man can go out in an ardour of joyous devotion.' According to Islam, which, I think, is the best definition, Religion seeks to strengthen man's relation with God and to perfect his dealing with His creatures. We see through all these descriptions that God in one way or another forms the very essence of religion. It is the recognition of God, in a word, as an object of worship, love, and obedience that makes a religion. Delete God from it and you omit the whole thing.

Now, what is the object of worship and love? Every one of us has friends and relations to love and superiors to obey, and we know practically what the words 'love' and 'obey' signify. 'What is love? Ask him who loves,' said Shelley. And it is quite true. We know what we do for a person we love. We seek to

please him, serve him, see him, and talk to him; and as they say 'love begets love' we are not satisfied unless we are convinced of the fact that the person we love also loves us in return, which we can know by his practical behaviour towards us and verbal assurances given to us in his own words.

Exactly similar is our case with God. The principal object of a religion, apart from its teachings on morality, society, life after death, and God, etc., is to lead men practically to God so as to satisfy their deep yearning for union with Him. Now to call a religion living we must see if the God it presents is living or not. If a religion presents a God Who is not living it must be called a dead religion. I may, by the way, point out here that the words 'living religion' are sometimes used to denote that the followers of that religion are living; just as a living language is one which is spoken by a people so a living religion sometimes means a religion which is professed by some living people. But when I use the words I do not mean that its followers are living, I mean

the religion itself.

How then can we know whether the God presented by a religion is living or not? The answer to this question is very simple. If a religion takes us to God, and we practically realise that the object of loving Him is fulfilled, we shall undoubtedly be convinced of the fact. When, after our efforts in accordance with that religion, to please God, serve Him, and talk to Him we find that we are loved in return by Him, and we have the honour of talking to Him, we shall be perfectly justified to call that religion a Living Religion, and that God a Living God.

So far the adherents of all religions will, most probably, agree with me in saying that religion, in order to be living, must present a Living God. All the advocates of the various religions honestly hold that the God which each one presents is a Living One. If a fact were proved by simply making an assertion, then every individual religion is a living religion to the exclusion of all others. If a log of wood were to pass off as a living tree yielding fruit, and if a dead body

were to pass off as a living human being, then the assertions of all the advocates might of course be taken for granted. But even the most foolish of human beings would not commit this mistake. He knows by his every-day experience that a living tree blossoms and yields fruit, and that a living person moves and speaks. He knows the signs of life and can therefore very easily distinguish the living from the dead. So can a man of ordinary common sense distinguish a Living God from a dead one.

The adherents of all religions believe and admit that God spoke and helped the people in the past. And to show that it is a fact I give here some quotations and brief references from the sacred books of the world:-

God spoke to Adam (Gen. 2:16), Noah (Gen.6:13), Abraham (Gen.12:1), Hagar (Gen.16: 8), Isaac (Gen.26:2), Jacob (Gen.28:13), Moses (Exo.3:4), Aaron (Exo.4:27), Joshua (Josh.1:1), Children of Israel (Jud.1:2), Gideon (Jud.7:2), Samuel (Sam.1, 3:4), David

(Sam.1, 23:11), Elijah (Kings 2, 1:4), Solomon (Chro.2, 1:11), Zechariah (Chro.2, 24:20), Huldah (Chro.2, 34:23), Job (Job 38:1), Ahaz (Isaiah, 7:10), Isaiah (Isaiah, 38:4), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4), Ezekiel (Ezk. 18:1), Hosea (Hos. 1:2), Daniel (Dan. 9:22), Joel (Joel 1), Amos (Amos 1:3), Obadiah (Obd. 1:1), Jonah (Jonah, 1:1), Malachi (1:1), Zechariah (1:3), Haggai (1:3), Zephaniah (1:1), Habakkuk (2:2), Christ (St. Mark, 1:11).

About Confucius^(as) it is said, 'Twice or thrice he did vaguely intimate that he had a mission from heaven and that until it was accomplished he was safe against all attempts to injure him Of Buddha^(as) we read that the 'Archangel Brahma came and ministered to him' (*Encyclopaedia Britt.*).

The origin of Vedas is also ascribed to Divine Revelation. About Zoroaster^(as) we read in the *Encyclopaedia* that 'He experienced within himself the inward call to seek the amelioration of mankind and their deliverance from ruin, and regarded this inner impulse,

intensified as it was by long, contemplative solitude and by visions, as being the call addressed to him by God Himself. Like Muhammad^(as) after him, he often speaks of his conversations with God and the archangels (*Encyclopaedia Britt.*). About the Holy Qur'an God Himself says:

'And this Book, We have revealed it as a blessing; then follow it and fear to do wrong, that ye may have mercy.' (VI, 156.).

The Sikhs claim that the Almighty addressed Guru Nanak as follows:-

'All have missed the right path, thou direct them to the right path.'

'Go thou into the world and make all repeat the One name, Establish a true religion and remove untruth.' (*History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion*, by Khazan Singh, E.A.C. Page 349.)

Now having seen that the followers of all religions believe that God spoke to His chosen

ones in the past, it becomes quite evident that He can and does speak with men, and that the words of Cicero: 'Think not that any such thing can happen as we often see in plays, that some god, coming down from heaven, should join the assemblies of men, hold intercourse on the earth, and converse with mortals' are not quite true. We cannot imagine that so many personages living in different countries, different times, and under different circumstances who laid claim to revelation and made it good by practically overcoming all those who opposed and persecuted them were a host of absolutely false and wicked impostors. Nothing short of madness and stupidity could conceive them as such.

At the same time we see that God spoke to them in this very world so that no one can object to its possibility now. To say that our union with God will take place in the next world is of no use to us. 'We cannot afford to trust our spiritual welfare to the life to come. No man is permitted to visit this world twice, and if he can find nothing

in this life, and in the life to come he discovers that he has all along been in error, where lies the remedy? Even supposing that there is no God and no future life, he shall have wasted this life in running after a delusion.

We are told to do this or that, but what we want to know is what will God do in return for our deeds? Our acts and conduct are like knocking at a door, but the question is, will it be opened to us?

If the door is not to be opened to us and our knocking is to be in vain, what has our religion taught us? An incongruous noise which we could have made without the guidance of a religion. All that it has done for us is that it has created in our hearts a longing which it cannot satisfy.

A true religion, therefore, must teach us something whereby we can cause the door to open before we leave this world, so that, before our retreat is finally cut off, we may be assured that we are following the right path.

Now let us see which of the religions of the world fulfils this object. We cannot, of course, make or recommend here an individual experiment for this purpose, because any effort made in this direction will take a very long time.

Therefore it is wise to depend on observation and evidence. We find that none of the followers of Moses^(as), Jesus^(as), Buddha^(as), Zoroaster^(as), Confucius^(as), Guru Nanak, Rama Chandra, or Krishna^(as) has, after their respective times, ever laid any claim to Divine Revelation or union with God. To have actually attained to union with God is quite a different thing; we do not know a single instance in which even a claim has ever been made to that. Jesus^(as) says: 'And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.'¹ (Mark xvi., 17:18). Do we meet anywhere with such believers in Jesus^(as) now? Has any

one ever laid claim to these things? Why, if not, we ask? Is it that the words of Jesus^(as) are wrong and untrue? Have they lost their meaning? Are the Christian teachings so difficult to act upon that during a period of 2,000 years none of the creatures of God has been able to attain to such high position? What use is a religion upon which mankind has acted for so long a time, and yet has failed to bring forth the promised fruit?

God spoke to people so often after Moses^(as) that there hardly passed a period of 50 years without someone being selected for that honour. Why is it, we ask the Jews, that there have now passed more than 2,000 years and the whole race of Israelites has failed to produce a single worthy son of theirs who could talk to God? He used to speak to their children of yore. Why has He forsaken them now?

Why is it, we ask the Buddhists, that the words of Buddha^(as) are not realised now? Where are those ascetics about whom he says that they 'can leave this world and reach even the

heavens of Brahma himself'? Where is he who, according to Buddhism, 'can acquire the power of hearing the sounds of the unseen world as distinctly as those of the phenomenal world more distinctly, in point of fact'? Where are those whom Buddha^(s) promised 'divine vision'? He died in 470 B.C., and since that time none has ever reached these heights of spiritual progress. Has humanity become degraded and degenerated so much? We do not think if it were a fact our scientific men could make the deaf hear and the dumb speak?

We challenge the advocates of all the religions of the world combined together to point to a single person who has during the last 500 or 1,000 years ever laid claim to Divine Revelation. We are sure there is none; at least we do not know of any. Has God ceased to exist then? Has He lost His attributes? Has He no power of speaking? The attributes of God are ever existing and He is not subject to diminution or decline. Then why has He been silent during all these centuries? If He has ceased to speak, how are we to assure ourselves that

He has not ceased to hear, and that His other attributes are unimpaired? Would not His silence justify the conclusion that He can no longer see, and that He has lost the attribute of knowledge, and that He has lost the power to watch over and protect us, and that the universe is now going on of itself? If His other attributes are acting just as they used to do, why has He ceased to speak?

We cannot accept a God Who is deaf, dumb, or blind. Human nature revolts against such an idea, it has always revolted and it will continue to revolt against it. Such a God is no better than a lifeless image; nay, He is worse than that, because He has no form even. He is a mere nonentity. Can we owe allegiance to a mere non-existence? Can we love, obey, and worship a defective and imbecile deity?

No, certainly not. Our God is Almighty, Omniscient and free from every kind of shortcoming and defect. He is All-good, All beauty, All-love, All-mercy, and All-excellence. He does not leave

the world to grope after Him. Whenever He sees that His creatures have gone astray, He raises someone from among themselves to guide them to the right path with His words of power. He provides everything we require for our physical life, therefore, He cannot be expected to be so unwise and cruel as to leave the best portion of our existence - the soul - quite unfurnished with the necessary spiritual food and guidance.

Just imagine what an infinite universe has been created for the satisfaction of our physical needs. There is a sky with innumerable stars and planets, including among them a sun and a moon which give us light and warmth-so essential for our well-being. Think of the vast expanse of the atmosphere around us, full of pure and fresh air to make us breathe and infinite space to allow us to build, rise and fly wherever we please. Take the earth itself, look to the series of rivers, mines and mountains so wonderfully distributed over its surface. Just see the different strata suited for the production

of various vegetable growths. Think of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, what a wonderful and exquisite scale of creation we notice in the universe, how beautifully, efficiently and mysteriously it works to a common end! The whole of this gigantic and magnificent system of organisation is simply meant for providing man the crown of creation the necessities and luxuries of his physical life. But what use is our body without a mind? Is it not a mere machine without the power and force to make it work for an end? What has God provided for our soul's spiritual guidance? Can we see with our eyes without the light of the sun? Can we breathe with our lungs without the air outside? Can we eat with our mouths without there being anything to eat?

Just in the same manner we stand in need of heavenly guidance and Divine revelation to make proper use of our reason and intellect. As our eyes are imperfect without the light of the sun, so our intellect,

however, good and healthy it might be, is imperfect without the light of Divine revelation. Every idea that comes into the mind of man is, however, not to be looked upon as revelation, it may be called inspiration to a certain extent, if it is right and good, but it is not revelation which signifies the word of God Himself. If there really exists a God, He must out of His infinite mercy guide and help us in a befitting manner. If He does not provide us with any spiritual guidance He is guilty of the grossest injustice towards us.

Our soul is undoubtedly more precious than our body. Our body perishes when we die, but our soul survives. It is disconnected from the body and transferred to some other sphere where it pursues its endless course of progress and spiritual advancement. We live after our death and it is our life after death which is the real life. This world is transient and the life we lead here is very short-lived, it is only like an empty dream compared with the life to come. So it would be attributing the greatest of injustice and cruelty

to suppose that God does not provide for our souls the necessary spiritual guidance, as He has so bountifully done for our physical bodies. We cannot conceive that the perfect God can ever be so unjust or cruel as to leave His creatures in distress and affliction.

Moreover, we cannot be certain of His existence unless we know that He speaks. Being infinite, He has no body and therefore we cannot see Him physically. So if He does not speak to us and help us in a manner to make Himself known, we cannot be convinced of His existence. Reason at its best can simply tell us that there should be some God, but 'should be' is not 'IS'.

It is our conviction with regard to His existence, as it is with all other things, that can keep us from the various kinds of sins and temptations. If we are sure that there is a snake in a hole, we will not put our hand into it; if we know that there is fire, we will not jump into it; in the same manner, if man knows and is perfectly sure that there exists a God who will call him to

account for everything he does or says, he will never dare to commit any sin. But if he does not know or if he is not perfectly convinced of it, he will surely not care for anything. The other thing which keeps a man from sin is love. If we love what is good, we will hate what is evil. We know that God is All-beauty; beauty inspires love, and love cannot be satisfied without union with Him, and there is no other way of union with God except conversation. His word is sweet. It is all love. A true lover cannot live without talking to his beloved. It is his life. So is the case of a person who loves God. It would not only be gross injustice but tyranny to think that God does not or cannot speak to console His devoted servants and lovers. It is unthinkable.

I give you the glad tidings that Islam claims to teach THAT whereby the door of revelation and communion with God may be opened, nay, it claims that through it the door has already been opened to many who have in this very life entered it and seen the Face and Majesty of

God, and that if you so desire, it can, God willing, do the same for you.

The messenger of the latter days, the prophet Ahmad^(as), claims that he has enjoyed communion with the True and Living God by acting upon the teachings of Islam.

He has held converse with the Almighty and he has made this claim good by making prophecies which have been and are being fulfilled, by working miracles which were witnessed not only by those who believed in him, but also by those who opposed him, by curing the sick in the most wonderful manner. There is every kind of evidence available to prove all this. You can see documentary evidence, you can talk and inquire from living witnesses of all that has been said, you can know the prophecies which still await fulfilment. Nay, you can still see his son and second successor, who claims that God speaks to him, and that he has heard the living word of God with his own ears [This article was published in 1925: Ed]. Can the followers of

any other religion point to such a person in the near past like the Promised Messiah^(swt)? Can they name any one still living with whom we may be able to talk and converse on this point? I am sure there is none. Why then do we find such people in the world of Islam? Is God angry with others? Jesus says: 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.'

Islam or the Holy Qur'an is a living tree, because it has brought forth good fruit. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The Holy Qur'an is purely the Word of God the Almighty, and I invite the Western people to read it and accept it.

Seekers after truth and searchers for guidance, bless your stars

that the Book revealed by God for the good of mankind is presented before you. O yearners for spiritual life, here is presented to you the chalice brimful of that life-giving Elixir which, thirteen centuries back, restored the dead to life, that you may be able to slake your thirst and enjoy the true life. A fool, indeed, is he who is far away from God and yet considers himself in the land of the living; and ignorant, really, is one who, though steeped in spiritual darkness, thinks himself to be in the light. In truth, he alone is living who lives a heavenly life, and none is more lifeless than one who lacks life of the spirit. The dead entombed in graves are decidedly not so defunct as those buried in their living corporeal framework. The sepulchre of earth is certainly not so hideous as the tomb of flesh, because, while the hard earth of the former is immune from the inroads of the devil, the flowing fluid of the latter is subject to the continual inrushes of the Evil One. He, of course, is in the light whose heart is illumined by the heavenly light, because the external light cannot

avail, unless there is light within. One whose inside is dark will continue to remain in darkness, even in the broad daylight. There are many who take pity on the blind, but more pitiable are those whose minds lack spiritual sight. There are many who take compassion on the deaf, but none takes compassion on those whose minds are closed against truth. Those are really deserving of pity who have minds, but do not understand; who have eyes, but do not see; and who have ears, but do not hear. Such people are little better than irrational animals, because they are unconscious of the life of the spirit which is the real source of all life. Life of the spirit is the kind of life which knows no death. Out of sympathy for such men, I offer this treasure of guidance with the utmost regard and affection, hoping that unbiased minds will surely pay their very best attention to it, and sincerely ponder over the same. No book on the surface of the earth enjoys the peculiar privilege of everlasting life, except the Holy Qur'an of Islam. All others have fallen a prey to death and decay; but this book is

ever yielding rich fruit which is the token of life. Even today, men who follow it, feel the same thrill of life as did those who acted upon it at the time of its revelation. Know ye, lovers of life, that there is no living book under the vault of heaven, except the Holy Qur'an; there is no living faith under the sun, except the sacred Islam; and there is surely no living prophet in the world, but the Holy Prophet^(s) of Arabia or one who gets His spirit and becomes completely like-minded with Him.

Future of Revelation

*This is an extract taken from the book **Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth**, written by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru)*



Animals live from day to day with whatever life offers them. They do not seem to look back to their past nor to a dreamy future ahead of them. Man is an exception in the animal kingdom. Seldom is he content with his present. Either he lives lost in the memories of the past or he sustains himself with the hope that there are better days to come. Such hopes generally pertain to his economic, political or religious future. It is to his religious hopes that we now turn our gaze.

All major religions promise the advent of a Divine personage who would usher in a new era of hope for mankind and unite them under one Divine flag. This is the promised land which one day they all aspire to reach, govern and command. This is utopia, the meeting point of the hopes of all religions and this too, alas, becomes the parting of their ways. Only the dreams are shared but not their realisation. They are unanimous in their belief that one Divine personage will certainly come as the saviour of the human race, but when it comes to his identity they could not disagree more with each other. Will he be Lord Krishna^(as) or Jesus Christ^(as)? Will he be Zoroaster^(as) or Buddha^(as), or Confucius^(as) or Lao-tzu^(as) for that matter? Each is expecting a different person, under a different name and title; each is expecting him to belong exclusively to their own religious order. It is here that the gates one finds left open for the advent of the saviour begin to be shut again. They are seen shut from the vantage point of those who consider all other religions to be false except their own. The only gate they see open is their own; while their gate, as seen by others, is also shut. All who had joined in the chorus, singing the songs of the advent of a universal Redeemer, begin to sing their separate songs when it comes to his identity. Either he must

somehow materialise out of their dreams, or they will accept none other. Alas, the latter is the only fate which they have carved for themselves. Why should God care for their pleasure if they care not for His? Let them create their saviour themselves out of the nothingness of their wild irrational hopes.

It is so intriguing to watch this wrangle on a global scale. After the dust of claims and counterclaims settles down, the only agreement the proponents of different religions reach is to continue to disagree even more vehemently. The Reformer they will accept has to be of their own faith and brand, or none other. Their talk is idle, their hopes are vain, their saviours dwell only in their dreams.

Can the Redeemer, whenever he comes, fulfil the hopes of all religions or will he meet those of only one? To whom will he actually belong, whose aspirations will he fulfil while all will be chanting by the fountain of hope: *make them mine, make them mine, make them mine!* The question which finally emerges is whether a single person is promised or many, simultaneously. God has no contradiction in Him, hence He will either send one person with a single message, or none at all. What would happen to different warring factions of various religions at such a time, each holding views divergent from the other? It is to this inherent contradiction in their attitudes that we shall now turn our attention.

The way they all envision the realisation of their hopes is an impossible task. Take for example the case of the Jewish people, who have long been yearning for the advent of the Christ. For thousands of years they have been striking their heads against the Wailing Wall and still do so, beseeching the Christ to come. Never do they realise that he has come and gone but not in the way they had expected, nor in the manner and style they had assigned to his advent. Thus the gate they thought they had kept open lay practically shut and locked. How tantalising it must be that the guest one so dearly awaits does not come though one sees no hurdle obstructing his path. In reality, all those who await the coming of any Divine guest are themselves responsible for placing impassable obstructions in his way. But somehow they remain unaware of what they do. If they could only realise that their expectations are impossible

to be fulfilled they could at least rest in the sort of peace which follows despondency. The barriers help to relinquish hope and extinguish the flame of expectancy but only if they are recognized. If some people are oblivious to their existence, it is they who are to be blamed for their frustration. The Jewish people, for example, who await the advent of the Christ have not understood this hard, simple reality despite their wisdom. For them there is nothing but to weep and wail beside a wall of stones, beseeching the advent of a Messiah who can never come. For them, none will ever come.

But they are not alone in this inconsistency of being stupid and wise all at once. The case of all other religions who expect an ultimate Redeemer is no different from theirs. The actors are different of course, the acts are played in different garb, yet the drama remains the same. A Christ should have come to the aid of the Jewish people and did come but it was not the same Christ they were awaiting, so they failed to recognise him. They expected him to appear with a crown over his head seated on a royal throne. He would be a warrior Messiah, they believed, who would successfully lead the armies of the Israelites against the despotic rule of the Roman Empire. Two thousand years have passed since their rejection of Jesus' as Messiah, yet no Messiah of their expectation has come. History has changed the political geography of the world and the prophecy of the coming of the Christ has lost all relevance. There is no Judea or Palestine under the yoke of a Roman Empire from which the Jewish people are to be liberated. In fact, that Roman Empire which once ruled half of the world has completely disappeared from the map of the world. We still hear of *deliverance*, but it is a deliverance from the Jews, not of the Jews.

Although there was nothing wrong in their belief that Christ would be born like any other human child to a human mother, yet they attached some supernatural preconditions to his birth which could not have been realised. Their belief about the bodily descent of Elijah before the advent of the Messiah, is just the case in point which effectively blocked the passage of the Messiah they awaited. So the Jewish position, vis-à-vis the advent of a Messiah, in reality turns out to be a denial of his advent altogether.

Turning our gaze from the Jews to the Christians, we find a situation not too dissimilar to the one described above. Imagine a Christ paying a second visit to earth in the grand style envisaged by the Christians who still await his literal second coming. A son of God descending in glory from heaven in a human form is an idea fit only for fiction, yet it serves to keep hope, or shall we say blind faith, alive. Looking at it from the rational vantage point of the non-Christian, the absurdity becomes even more glaring. No non-Christian, be he religious or otherwise, can share this belief because it speaks of an outrageous wedlock between spirit and matter. Yet the Christians see no element of irrationality about it because dogma has blinded them.

The same anomaly of the Jews and the Christians applies to the unreal and supernatural expectations of the followers of all other religions. Even a speck of irrationality in the beliefs of others offends their sense of right and wrong, while they are totally blind to the presence of the same in their own, however preposterous it may be. They could not have failed to detect the squint of their own eyes, if only they had looked at themselves through the eyes of others. Rationality would have helped each of them to realise that the literal revisit to earth by any prophet or so-called god is illogical. Never has it taken place at any time, anywhere in the entire history of the world, nor can it ever take place in the future. Never was the founder of any religion sighted to have descended from on high; he always appeared through the normal course of human birth. Invariably, he launched a movement that had to strive hard for its survival against all odds. This is reality; any belief that does not conform to this must be relegated to the realms of fantasy. All such promises for the revival of religion must be rejected which offend rationality and have never before been employed by God in religious history.

The case of the Muslims seems to offer a rather strange exception to this general rule. Yet, on closer examination, one can discern practically no difference in their position and that of the others, except in the sequence. The Muslims begin by claiming that Prophet Muhammad^(sa) is the last of all the prophets and his finality is absolute. The term *Khatme-Nabuwwat*, the finality of prophethood, is unanimously understood by all the mainstream Muslims to mean this. Despite this, they too await the

descent of Jesus Christ^(as), an old prophet of God. Will his advent not violate the finality of Prophet Muhammad^(sa)? This is the most crucial question they must answer. In response to this evident contradiction, they propose that though a new prophet cannot be created, an old prophet can be brought back to fulfil new needs. By this strategy, they seem to have succeeded in keeping the door of prophethood (*Nabuwwat*) shut and sealed, while manoeuvring to furtively admit Jesus^(as) through the back door. The contemporary Muslims, whether they are Sunnites or Shi'ites, seem to share the same interpretation of finality (*Khatme-Nabuwwat*). All have faith in the readvent of Jesus^(as) as a prophet of God, whilst believing simultaneously in the absolute finality of Prophet Muhammad^(sa).

The problem of inherent contradiction in their belief becomes even more pronounced when it comes to the prophesied advent of Al-Imam Al-Mahdi. As an Imam he is to be directly commissioned by God, and as such it should be incumbent upon every Muslim to believe in him. This aspect of his office will be further elaborated later on. It is briefly mentioned here only to emphasise that the office of Al-Imam Al-Mahdi, despite not possessing the title, holds the prerequisites of a prophet all the same. Having said that we must return now to the likelihood of the re-advent of Jesus Christ^(as) and the form in which this may take place. The Ahmadiyya belief differs from the mainstream Muslims only in form and not in the act of his re-advent. The question is whether the form will be literal or metaphorical. Will he be the same person, or will another person be born reminiscent of the old one? Will he appear as a Christian prophet turned Muslim, or a Muslim prophet turned into the metaphorical image of Jesus Christ^(as)? What will be his relationship to all other religions? These are the intriguing questions which must be fully addressed.

The stance of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at is singularly rational. In principle it accepts the claims of all religions who promise the advent of a universal Divine Reformer in the latter days. When the Hindus talk of the re-advent of Krishna^(as), their claim has as much right to be accepted as that of the Christians when they speak of the second coming of Jesus Christ^(as). Likewise the expectations of Zoroastrians concerning

Zoroaster^(as), if they too look forward to his re-advent, or the hopes of the Buddhists or Confucianists that a Buddha^(as) or a Confucius^(as) would reappear as the Promised Saviour should also be treated with equal respect. But the recognition of the truth of all such diverse and seemingly contradictory claims can only read sense if they are taken metaphorically and not literally. The only rational inference that can be drawn is that the Promised Reformer has to be a single person, embodying the advent of all. Otherwise, the literal fulfilment of all such prophecies is impossible because of the supernatural element intertwined with all of them. This is what the Founder^(as) of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at put across to the people of the world with incontrovertible logic. The promise of the simultaneous advent of so many reformers could only be metaphorical and not corporeal. It was exactly in this sense that he claimed to have fulfilled the advent of Jesus^(as) and the Mahdi as one person and also the advents of all others like Buddha^(as), Krishna^(as) and other promised reformers awaited anywhere on earth.

Leaving for a while the reaction this claim created among others, we begin with the account of the turmoil it created within the orthodoxy in Islam. They were not concerned with the re-advent of Buddha^(as) or Krishna^(as) or others in whom they did not believe but they were deeply concerned with Jesus^(as), the prophet to the House of Israel. For anyone to claim to be the reborn image of Jesus^(as) was far too much for them to digest. For the Jesus^(as) of their dreams to be declared physically dead was an enormity -absolute. For his likeness to be born among them was nauseatingly repulsive to the Muslims.

It should be remembered that prior to his above mentioned claim, the fame of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) had spread far and wide in British India because of his book *Brahin-e-Ahmadiyyah*. Paying tribute to the author of this book, Maulawi Muhammad Hussain Batalvi, a renowned Muslim scholar of the Ahle-Hadith sect, has introduced the author of this book to be the best defender of Islam, since the demise of Prophet Muhammad^(as)¹. However in the midst of this popularity, when he suddenly pronounced Jesus^(as), the prophet of Israel, to be dead instead of being alive in heaven, the position changed dramatically. The same scholars who had praised him with hyperbolic tributes changed their

attitude diametrically. What was he as compared to their Lord Jesus Christ^(as), the would-be Saviour of the world? Overnight his fame plummeted to earth from the celestial heights it had occupied. The image of Jesus^(as) had to be tossed back to heaven aloft; he who claimed to have come in his likeness should have been killed instead. The commotion stirred by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian was such as the like of which had never been seen before in the religious history of India. Against him, a pandemonium of abuse and vilification broke loose. The rising star of Muslim India, the most sought for leader of Islam, became the most hunted person, no longer deemed fit even to be called an ordinary Muslim. But it completely failed to cower him. Nothing could deter him from carrying forward the Divine task bestowed upon him.

The Christians did not lag far behind either in their hostile reaction. They left no stone unturned to destroy him and demolish his mission. Even fake charges of murder were pressed against him in the British Indian courts of law. But he remained completely unruffled, not in the least bit intimidated.

As though that was not enough, he further pronounced himself a manifestation of Krishna^(as), the great Indian prophet who was idolised and worshipped as god incarnate. He personally antagonised the Arya Samaj, the most active and redoubtable sect of the Hindus, by launching a counteroffensive against their ferocious attacks on Islam and the Holy Prophets^(sa). He also invited their leaders to a spiritual duel with devastating effect upon those who accepted it. In short, he claimed that all the prophecies relating to the Reformers of the latter days were applicable to only one person. Different names and titles mentioned in different scriptures were of no significance. All that was significant was that the Reformer, whoever he may be, must be commissioned by God as the universal Reformer of the latter days. To those who were prisoners of prejudice, he and his claims meant nothing and it was largely by them that he was rejected with unyielding antagonism. He was rejected like all the servants of God before him and was most certainly supported by God as He has always supported His servants.

It is amazing how people keep forgetting that all prophets of God are treated alike by Him. They too show no difference in their complete submission to Him. Likewise, the universal Promised Reformer will belong exclusively to Him and not to the various religious denominations who expect him to support their distorted beliefs. He will represent God, not those who no longer represent Him. He will only belong to all His servants but not to the self-styled masters of His servants.

The Unity of God and the institution of prophethood from among humans are the two fundamentals which belong to every religion. Names and titles differ but they matter not. What matters is for the claimant to be from God. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) never claimed that he had become different persons with different names and titles moulded into one. But most clergy feigned to misunderstand him in this regard and incited the ignorant masses to jeer and mock him telling them that he claimed to be all the promised prophets kneaded into one person. The masses were rudely shocked. How could a Krishna, a Jesus, a Mahdi and a Buddha all become a single person? 'The claimant has to be mad,' some shouted in scorn. The treatment meted out to him is reminiscent of the same treatment meted out to the Holy Founder^(sa) of Islam when he claimed the uncompromising Unity of God. The idolatrous priesthood wilfully distorted his message and made the people believe that he had forged all their gods into a single one whom he styled as Allah.

أَجْعَلُ الْأَلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ

*'What! Has he made all the gods into one God? This is indeed an astounding thing.'*²

It should not be difficult for an unbiased investigator to see the wisdom of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) during all his disputations with his opponents. His position was always that of a rational person. Were it not so he could easily be proved wrong in most of his beliefs and contentions by the same instrument of rationality.

If he were wrong each religion would be visited by a separate reformer holding a different name, title and ideology. This would open a Pandora's box of claims and counterclaims which once opened could never be shut again. Each claimant would proclaim himself to be the only true manifestation of the Promised Reformer. Each would invite all of mankind to himself as the only hope of their salvation. Each would declare all rivals to be mere hoaxes and impostors. The utter madness of this scenario is self-evident. No man with any element of sanity can believe in a God who would split humans into hundreds of conflicting schisms and factions in His own name, with His own authority.

What manner of God would it be who would make Jesus^(as) descend among the Christians, issuing a call for the conquest of the entire world in the name of the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Having done that, He would hasten to incarnate *Himself* in the form of Lord Krishna upon Indian soil, assuring the Indian people that *He* is neither one, nor two, nor three, *He* is a multitudinous god whose persons and manifestations are hard to count. *He* is to be worshipped as trees, as snakes, as scorpions, as elephants and as the deafening thunderstorms. *He* is to be worshipped as a moon gliding in the stillness of the night. It is *He* who is also the sun and a countless number of stars in the heavens. On the earth *He* can clearly be recognised as the cows, the monkeys, the bears, the hyenas, the tigers, the horses, the donkeys, and limitless forms of other animals dwelling in the sea, on land and in the air. *He* is also to be worshipped as ghosts and other ghostly forms of human fantasy. 'Run towards me', *He* would claim, 'and worship us'.

Before *His* voice is drowned in the tumult of chantings: 'O Lord Krishna, hare-Ram, hare-Ram, we worship you one and all', another voice would be heard gradually rising in crescendo as the voice of the Buddha. It would loudly reject the existence of all such godly figures as Lord Krishna had claimed. He would scorn at the very idea of the existence of God: 'I am Buddha', he would shout at the top of his voice. 'I am no God, neither is there any God besides me. I am only the consummation of human wisdom. That is all you need to know on earth. Let us deny all gods together and celebrate our deliverance from the shackles of this human myth. I have come again to deliver you from God as I always did

after every millennium, and there is none other besides me who can guide you as I can'.

Before he sinks into an all-pervasive silence and retreats into his inner void of eternal nothingness, another voice would rise loud and clear from the neighbouring country of Iran. It would be that of Ahura Mazda, the god of light, speaking through the mouth of Zoroaster. 'The voice you just heard', he would pronounce, 'O children of Bharat and Tibet and China, must have been the voice of Ahraman - the god of darkness, the only god besides me. It had to be he, because there is none other except he and I. Listen carefully O children of Adam: God is neither one nor three, nor four or five. It is a folly to believe in any number of multiple gods. We are neither one nor many, we are just two and the rest is fiction. There is me - the god of goodness, and he - the god of evil, whose voice you just heard impersonating Buddha. He is the god of darkness, while I am that of light. He always denies me, he always rejects me. He always dissuades my servants from worshipping me. He informs mankind that there is none worthy of worship other than man himself. He occupies the seat of each man's ego and in the name of that ego runs away with all the homage paid to it. Still god he is, I must admit, dark as the darkest night he may be. So bear with him, yet beware of him and worship only me'.

In the midst of the tumult created by the warring religious factions mentioned above, the world of Islam will also be stirred to action with the advent of the Mahdi. He will come brandishing his sword, if he is really as bloody as many of the mainstream clergy believe. He will issue the call for a Holy War fighting all the non-Islamic governments of the world.

In this paroxysm of religious madness, religion itself would become the ultimate target. Sanity would take flight from this arena of imbecility, beseeching God to rescue religion from the hands of its rescuers. Without urgent remedial measures by Him, the Hindu, the Christian, the Buddhist, the Zoroastrian, the Jew and the Muslim will all suffer alike.

No man with common sense would hold a brief for such senseless and irrational understanding of God's designs, Rationality and common sense must be granted their due role in the interpretation of religious prophecies and parables. The golden age of the ultimate unification of man could only be consummated if a single Reformer appeared in the name of God, in a single religion of His choice. This, the only rational solution of the problems confronting the religious world of the latter days, has been firmly rejected by the very people who needed it for their survival. They continue to cling, instead, to their empty vision of a golden age which is nothing but a mirage.

The above scenario is a genuine attempt to explain the self-contradictory position of each religion regarding the role it will play in the ultimate redemption of mankind. They open the doors of hope and shut them themselves. The case of the Muslims is only opposite in sequence. They begin to shut the doors by pronouncing the absolute finality of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and no sooner have they done so than they begin to open them again. In reality, however, their stance remains unchanged. Hence the drama played on the Muslim stage is essentially no different from the one played on the stages of other world religions. Despite declaring the total uncompromising finality of the Holy Prophet^(sa) they cling no less eagerly to the figure of Prophet Jesus^(as). They claim that he will certainly come after the Holy Prophet^(sa) yet the manner they assign to his coming makes his coming impossible. Thus, for all practical purposes their position remains unaltered.

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