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Editorial

Many people have preconceived ideas about religion which can affect and colour behaviour and understanding. One often hears rather sweeping and general statements, for example, that science is in conflict with religion or that religion is always associated with wars and strife. Further enquiry about the evidence for these statements may reveal a lack of understanding about complex issues. Sometimes those who make such statements have made very little effort to analyse the problems. They are probably aware, at some level, that they do have certain preconceptions which might not be based on sound arguments but, nevertheless, may not readily acknowledge that they should review their position. Rather than re-examining the issues in any detail they continue to carry around those ideas, perhaps due to inertia or perhaps because such ideas may be continually reinforced from the media or from others.

In this issue there is an article entitled 'Islam – A Religion of Peace'. It states: 'For the last one thousand years, the Western world, has nurtured a false image of Islam that has no relationship with reality'. This article addresses some of these misconceptions concerning, for example, jihad, freedom of conscience and religious tolerance. It

shows that the ingredients for peace at both the individual and collective levels are to be found within Islam – 'religion is about winning the hearts and minds of the people rather than enslaving them by force'. Examples are given from the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) and from the principles adopted by the Muslims in Spain. The article states 'The Islamic concept of peace means adjustment and orientation of the individual with and towards, on the one side with his Creator and, on the other side his fellow human beings. This applies to the entire relationship between individual and individual, individual and community, community and community, between nation and nation ..'.

In a world where people's impression and perception of religion may be based on solely the soundbites or the occasional newspaper headline, it is important to recognise the need to explore questions in detail. The existence of such misconceptions about religion emphasise the importance of careful examination of the original teachings and of historical evidence – and some may be surprised at what then emerges.

Mansoor Saqi – UK

Notes & Comments

Headscarves – Oppression or freedom of choice?

In September of this year, a German court ruled that a school in the southern state of Baden Wuerttemberg was wrong under current legislation to exclude a female teacher for insisting on wearing a headscarf to work. The teacher in question is a Muslim. The school had argued that wearing the headscarf violated the state's neutral stance in matters of religion. The teacher argued that the school was violating her freedom of religion.

The debate is not confined to Germany. In Turkey, Muslims are in the majority and the headscarf, is worn by more than half of Turkey's women, Yet it is seen as a symbol of Islamic fundamentalism by the defenders of Turkey's secularist state and is banned in government institutions and schools.

In France, secularity has been enshrined in the constitution since 1905. So one's national identity has precedence over one's religious belief. However in 1989, the then left-wing government declared that the wearing of scarves was not necessarily incompatible with France being a secular state. The decision on whether to allow pupils to wear them or not had been left up to the discretion of head teachers.

The new centre-right government, however, has said that it is prepared to pass a law banning all religious effects from the classroom.

The issue of the wearing of scarves by Muslim women is a controversial one. The way that we dress and the symbols we use to express ourselves can evoke powerful emotions in others. Some German feminists are arguing that the scarf is a symbol of women's oppression. They point to regimes like the Taliban who insisted that women cover from head to toe in the name of Islam. However what these critics forget is that the headscarf is not itself an Islamic device to repress women. Certainly some regimes have used it to segregate and isolate women. However the Qur'anic commandment to women to dress modestly is for the protection of women, and to prevent them from being exploited by men. Women are not objects to be viewed and exploited for their beauty.

Let us also remember that in the name of Islam, the Taliban also committed a number of un-Islamic acts, such as preventing women and girls from getting an education. The scarf may have become an icon of Islamic practice, but as we know icons can be distorted from their original

representations. The Swastika is an excellent example of this. Originally it is an ancient Greek/Roman/ Indian symbol which represents luck, life, love, but its use by the Nazi regime in Germany has meant that few have any positive associations with it.

In most of the major faiths, covering of the head by ladies (and men) is normal practice. Many Christians cover their heads at least when in Church. Take the habit worn by Catholic nuns. It is a veritable icon of modesty, and is not interpreted as repressive, for those who become nuns choose, to wear this attire, as the Muslim women choose to wear the scarf.

Islam also urges both men and women to dress modestly. Modesty is not a commandment directed solely at women.

Surely men who submit themselves to God and women who submit themselves to Him,

..... and men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Him – Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward.

(Ch.33:V.36)

We know from the history of Russia, that religious belief cannot be suppressed. Even during the

Communist era, religious communities were still active in spite of tremendous persecution. Marx was not completely wrong when he said that religion was the opiate of the masses. However it is not an opiate in the sense of being a mindless addiction that prevents one from reflecting on injustice in the world. Religious belief and man's natural inclination towards his Maker have always been present since the beginning of time. It is an attraction that is so powerful that it overrides other affiliations and rather like the addict, the believer who finds His Lord is unable to abandon Him.

And politicians have nothing to fear from those believers who preserve the integrity of their religion at source. All religions at source enjoin men and women to good. Islam in particular, directs believers to fulfil their responsibilities and obligations to society as a whole. The Muslim is a citizen and a believer. Those in government posts and in any positions of authority should be wary of other politicians who seek to corrupt religious belief in order to divide communities and create fear and evil.

Sarah Waseem – UK

Islam and Peace

by Rafiq A Hayat (National Amir UK) – Based on a speech delivered at the Annual Convention [Jalsa Salana] of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK) 2003

‘Islam’ is a religion of peace. The word Islam means peace. How often have we heard these words from speakers and commentators?

Then why is it that in this enlightened era, while people are discovering the richness of other faiths and religious traditions without abandoning their own faith, while many Christians and people of other faiths learn meditation from Buddhists, while Jews and Christians feel no qualms about reading the religion and philosophies of each others’ faith, only Islam seems to have been excluded from this circle of goodwill for the last one thousand years?

For the last one thousand years, the Western world, has nurtured a false image of Islam that has no relationship with reality; and the intensity and continuity of this distortion shows no signs of

abating even in this liberal and tolerant climate of today’s world. There are many reasons for this attitude but this is not the proper moment to go into details.

But the fault does not lie with the West alone: some of the extremist clerics of Islam today have also made their contribution in perpetuating this vision of extremism and intolerance. The ignorant and politically motivated clerics of Islam have distorted the beautiful teachings of Islam and in so doing, they have changed the Holy Word into Holy War.

They do not realise that the world has changed and has moved into 21st century. The Cold War has finished. Perestroika and Glasnost have come and gone and the ground realities in the world have changed beyond recognition. Muslims, like everyone else, have to adopt to the changing envi-

ronment. Misconceived zealots only make a negative contribution to world peace.

In fact the zealots and fanatics of all religions have always placed mankind at large at the mercy of those extremist groups who have no general concern for life other than their own. Fortunately they are only few and in minority, and, in no way represent the true Muslim majority.

In the aftermath of the earth-shaking events of 11th September 2001, many in the West and in the Muslim world are rightly appalled by the fact that the mass-murder perpetrated on that day is being hailed by some Muslims as an act of *Jihad*. Only the most deluded souls could regard such suicide-attacks as *Jihad*.

Despite its evident falsity, the image of Islam conveyed by this distortion of Islamic principles is not easily dislodged from the popular imagination in the West. There is an unhealthy and dangerous convergence of perception between, on the one

hand, those – albeit a tiny minority – in the Muslim world who see the attacks as part of a necessary anti-western *Jihad*, and on the other, those in the West – unfortunately, not such a tiny minority – who likewise see the attacks as the logical expression of an inherently militant religious tradition, one that is irrevocably opposed to the West.

Although of the utmost importance in principle, it appears to matter little in practice to the extremists that Muslim scholars have pointed out that the terror attacks or suicide attacks carry no legitimacy in terms of Islamic law and Islamic morality.

September the 11th, 2001 is still fresh in our mind. This horrendous tragedy perpetrated by a few fanatics for their political gains has suddenly revived all the old prejudices in the West. It is as if all the old clichés and prejudices and definition, have been taken out from the cupboard of antagonism, dusted and presented to the Western public as the image

of Islam as a barbarian, anti-Western and primitive religion. It is as if the wheel of history has turned full circle back to the ages of the Crusades and Holy Wars.

This phenomenon of fanaticism and extremism is relatively new in Islam. It is not the religion but the few self-appointed leaders of religion who have traditionally brought the religions in disrepute. If we read the dismal history of religious hatred, we see that voices of reason have traditionally been drowned by the ignorant prejudice. Torrents of blood have been shed in the name of every religion, deity, ideology, faith, order and political system.

The extremist elements in Islam today have distorted the meaning and significance of *Jihad* within Islamic teachings and all the learned Muslims all over the world must denounce in the strongest possible terms all forms of terrorism that masquerades as *Jihad*.

The Holy Qur'an permits *Jihad* only within narrow confines –

either in self-defence or to bring stability and order in society. The Holy Prophet of Islam (sa) has given us a shining example of the *Jihad* that he considered more important. In his lifetime, the Holy Prophet(sa) had to fight wars but only when they were unavoidable. These were the wars that the Holy Prophet(sa) called 'The lesser Holy Wars' (*al-Jihad-al-Asghar*). But it was the continuous battle against the carnal soul (*Nafs-i-Amara*) – a constant battle against all that attracts man to negation of God and God's Will that The Holy Prophet(sa) called 'The great Holy War' (*Al-Jihad-i-Akbar*).

Islam is not a pacifist religion and it allows the Muslims to fight but only to defend themselves. Fighting is only permitted under very narrow confines. The Holy Qur'an, addressing the Holy Prophet(sa) says:

Fighting is ordained for you, though it is repugnant to you'.

(Ch.2: V.217)

The Holy Qur'an explains:

And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you'.

(Ch.2: V.191)

But immediately in the same verse, Muslims are reminded:

But do not transgress. Surely Allah loves not the transgressors'.

(Ch.2: V.19)

Granting permission to fight, the Holy Qur'an says:

Permission fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged'.

(Ch.22: V.40)

Explaining the true *Jihad*, The Holy Qur'an explains:

And whoso strives, strives only for his own soul.

(Ch.29: V.7)

The verse gives a brief but very apt description of a true warrior – a true striver in the way of Allah.

In other words, the true warrior of Islam smites the neck of his own anger with the sword of forbearance. Only the false warrior strikes at the neck of his enemy with the sword of his unbridled ego. For the first, the spirit of Islam determines *Jihad*; for the second, only bitter anger. While fighting in self-defence is permitted, it is forbidden to use compulsion or force in the matter of religion. It is a unique feature of Islam that the Holy Qur'an pronounces clearly and unambiguously,

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

(Ch.2: V.257)

This is the way of Allah and indeed this has always been the way of Allah. Religion is about

winning the hearts and minds of the people rather than enslaving them by force. The Holy Qur'an contains an unmatched virtue that it explains and clarifies all ambiguities. While saying, *'Fighting the way of Allah those who fight with you'*, the Holy Qur'an clearly states, *'There is no compulsion in the matter of religion'*. This clearly means that while fighting is permitted, it is only in defence and it is only in the way of Allah. Fear of Allah should be foremost in one's mind. At the same time by explaining that *there is no compulsion in the matter of religion*, Allah the Almighty has specifically forbidden the use of force, compulsion or fighting to make people accept Islam. The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) set a shining precedence for all Muslims. When in Madinah, while he had the power as the Head of Muslim Community, he never forced his will on others and never used any compulsion. His attitude with the populace of Makkah was exactly the same. He did not force a single person to become Muslim.

Even the Orientalists who are too ready to accuse Islam with unfounded allegations, have not been able to find any such example in the life of the Holy Prophet^(sa). William Muir accepts that there is no instance in the life of Holy Prophet^(sa), either in Madinah or in Makkah where he used his authority to convert people to Islam. The famous instances of sending letters to Heraclius, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, to the rulers of Persia, Bahrain, Oman and Egypt inviting them to become Muslim shows that Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) believed in persuasion rather than compulsion. His message was short and simple:

'In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful: this letter is from Muhammad, the slave of Allah and His Apostle, to Heraclius, the ruler of Byzantine. Peace be upon the followers of guidance. I invite you to surrender to Allah, Embrace Islam and you will be safe. Embrace Islam and

Allah will bestow on you a double reward. But if you reject this invitation, you will be misguiding your people’.

The reactions of all the rulers were different and Allah treated them accordingly.

My prime purpose is to show that ideals of Islam were realised in history by missionary activities. There may be instances of forced conversion scattered in Islamic History, but they are only few.

Amir Mu’awiyah (661-680) issued a charter of freedom of faith in his domain and employed many Christians in his service. Christians held high offices at court. Ibn Abu Usaibi’ah states that the father of St John of Damascus was a Counsellor of Abd al Malik (685-705). There were two brothers in the service of al-Mutassim (833-842) who stood very high in the confidence of the Commander of the Faithful. One named Ibrahim was given care of privy seal and made incharge of the treasury. So great was the Khalifa’s affection

for him that he visited him in his sickness and when he died, the Khalifa ordered his body to be brought to the royal palace and the Christian rites were performed there with great solemnity.

Christians were also allowed to build new churches during the Muslim reign. In the time of Abd al Malik, a wealthy Christian of Edessa, named Athanasius, erected in his native city a fine church dedicated to the Mother of God and a Baptistery. He also built a number of churches in various parts of Egypt. All this was done with the permission of the Muslim rulers and has been recorded by a Christian Historian (Michael the Elder).

Throughout the Islamic history, there has been compassion, tolerance and understanding for non-Muslim subjects during the Muslim rule in various parts of the world. It is in harmony with the same spirit of kindly consideration for his subjects of other faiths that Hadhrat Umar bin al-Khittab had an agreement

drawn up when Jerusalem submitted to him:

‘In the name of Allah the Comassionate, the Merciful! This is the security which Umar, the servant of God, the Commander of the faithful grants to the people of Aelia. He grants to all, whether sick or sound security for their lives, their possession, their churches, their crosses and for all that concerns their religion. Their churches shall not be changed into dwelling places, nor destroyed, neither shall they nor their appurtenances be diminished in any way, nor the crosses of the inhabitant nor aught of their possessions, nor shall any constraint be put on them in the matter of their faith nor shall they be harmed’.
(*Tabari*)

One can go on and on showing the tolerance and peaceful credentials and the practises of Muslim rulers that they never used their sword in anger to force their subjects to Islam.

When Sultan Mahmood of Ghazna at the height of his conquests reached the temple of Somnat in India, he was surrounded by priests who offered him heaps of gold to spare their idols. He refused to accept the money, saying that he did not want to be known in history as a trader of idols. In spite of his total power over his conquered land, he did not raise his sword to convert Indians to Islam. Even during the Mughal Empire, all the emperors showed remarkable tolerance towards their non-Muslim subjects. Not only did they not force their religion on others, they employed non-Muslims in key positions in government. Even Emperor Aurengzeb, who is often wrongly accused of fanaticism, had a Hindu subject as his Commander of the Armies. M.J. Akbar, in his book the *Shade of Swords*, explain this point vividly:

‘If Islam spread in India, it was not because of the sword of Babar or Akbar, but because of the power of the

sufi mentors, mystic-saints like Mansoor al Hallaj and Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti. Mere monarchs could not demand obedience from a sufi; his allegiance was only to God.’

We find similar freedom and tolerance when we look at the spread of Islam in Spain. When Muslims first became victorious in Spain in 711, there was only Catholic Christianity and no one was allowed to profess any other faith by order of the Church. When Muslims established themselves in Spain they gave full liberty to Christians and Jews. T.W. Arnold, in his *Preaching of Islam* states:

‘Of forced conversion or anything like persecution in the early days of Islam, we hear nothing. Indeed it was probably in a great measure their tolerant attitude towards the Christian religion that facilitated their rapid acquisition of the country.’

‘We read also of founding of

many fresh monasteries in addition to the numerous convents both for monks and nuns that flourished undisturbed by the Muhammadan rulers’.

‘The Christian Clergy persecuted the Jews who formed a large minority in Spain. Edict of brutal character were passed against those who refused to be baptised; and they, consequently hailed the invading Arabs as their liberators from such cruel oppression.’

Dozy, Muller, Makkari and other historians have nothing but praise for the Muslim rulers of Spain. Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, grudgingly concedes that ‘*the Jews of Spain hung on to the coat tails of Saracens because they found freedom and liberty for their religion*’.

It is a fact that Jews and Christians rose to high ranks and the Jewish culture, medicine and

art flourished under the Muslim rule. Arnold sums up beautifully:

'In 711 the victorious Arabs introduced Islam in Spain; In 1502 an edict of Ferdinand and Isabella forbade the exercise of the Muhammadan religion throughout the kingdom. During the centuries that that elapsed between these two dates, Muslim Spain had written one of the brightest pages in the history of mediaeval Europe. Those were the triumphs of civilised life, arts and poetry, science and philosophy.....'

We see the same scenario in the Ottoman Empire. From the very beginning till when the empire had expanded from the Middle East to Europe, there was never any compulsion to change the religion of the subjects of the Empire. Persecution of the Christians was strictly forbidden. The first Patriarch after the Turkish conquest, received from the hands of the Sultan himself the seal of his office and his pastoral staff. Wilfred Blunt, the famous

English traveller who visited Turkey in the early part of seventeenth century, tells us:

'There is seldom any compulsion of conscience in matter of religion as long as no criminal offence occurs.'

I would leave the last word to George Finley. In his *History of Greece*, he writes;

'We find that many Greeks of high talent and moral character were so mindful of the superiority of Mohammadans that they voluntarily embraced the faith of Mahomet. The moral superiority of the Ottoman society must be accepted as one of the reasons of numerous conversions in the fifteenth century.'

The same picture emerges from the Muslims in Western Asia, in Christian Africa, from captive Muslims among the Mongols and the spread of Islam in China and Malay Archipelago. Muslims never enforced their religion. It was only by their tolerance and

general conduct in everyday life that they impressed the locals who became Muslims voluntarily. Even those who remained with their own religion enjoyed freedom of faith and realisation of their social careers that were not possible under other environments.

Islam is a comprehensive religion. It realises that with human weakness, ambition and dynamism, there will be occasions when dispute, conflict and even wars will be inevitable. Although Islam forbids initiation of war of aggression but it does become inevitable for Muslims to fight a defensive war, the teachings of Islam lay down strict guidelines. For instance, the freedom and rights of non-combatants must be respected. The old and infirm, the women and children must be protected from any harm. Residential properties must be left intact and crops and fruit orchards must not be damaged; and the list goes on. Even when it comes to the opponents in the battlefield, Islam enjoins that if the enemy

sues for peace, the hostilities must stop and peace accepted.

And if they should incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it and put thy trust in Allah.....And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely Allah is sufficient for thee....

(Ch.8: Vs.62, 63)

For the prisoners of war, Islam lays down strict rules that the rights of prisoners must be respected and no harm should come to them when they have surrendered. As soon as agreement has been reached, the prisoners must be set free to go back to their homes.

One can safely say that more than fourteen hundred years before the compilation of the Geneva Convention, Islam prescribed the rules to make physical conflict restricted to combatants and provide the protection to the innocent.

In the field of human rights too, one has only to read the last sermon of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) to realise that hHuman

rights and the respect for human dignity was established fourteen hundred years ago. At the occasion of his last pilgrimage, he delivered his last sermon sitting on his camel. The Holy Prophet^(sa) after praising God and thanking Him, turned to the people and said:

‘O men, listen well to my words as I do not know whether I shall meet you again on such an occasion in future. Safety of your lives and your property is as inviolate as this holy day and holy month..... Whoever of you is keeping a trust of someone else shall return that trust to the rightful owner. All interest shall henceforth be waived. Your capital is, however yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any injustice..... Every right arising out of murders of pre-Islamic days is henceforth waived..... With God, the months are twelve in numbers. Four of them holy..... O men, to you a right belongs with

respect to your women and to your women a right with respect to you.....Treat your women well and kindly for they are your partners and committed helpers.... O men, ponder well that I am leaving the Book of God and the Sunnah of His prophet. If you follow them, you will never go astray. O men, listen well to my words. Every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim, and Muslims constitute one brotherhood (without distinction of colour or race). Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim if it belongs to another Muslim unless it is given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore do injustice to yourselves.

The rest of the ‘Charter of Human Rights’ is already integral in the teachings in the Holy Qur’an

The contemporary world history only mentions December 10, 1948 as a landmark in the march of human civilisation when the United Nations proclaimed the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us not belittle the credit that is due to the United Nations because it was the first time ever when the nations of the world, for once unanimously agreed to give dignity and assurance to the human race. With 30 articles, this Charter is one of the most comprehensive in assuring the equality to man without any prejudice to colour, creed and race. 1400 years ago, God Almighty, through His Divine Commandments revealed the most comprehensive Charter of Human Rights in the Holy Qur'an through the prophet of Islam.

At the risk of repeating myself, I must explain that the word 'Islam' implies the achievement of peace in this world and in the Hereafter. It is a well-recognised fact that peace in its true meanings does not comprise solely of physical security or absence of war and conflict. Although important and essential, this condition is only a limited aspect of the wider concept of peace. The Islamic

concept of peace means adjustment and orientation of the individual with and towards, on the one side with his Creator and, on the other side, with his fellow beings. This applies to the entire relationship between individual and individual, individual and community, community and community, between nation and nation and, in short between the whole of human race. It comprises all spheres of life – political, moral, intellectual and spiritual. This has always been the primary concern of Islam.

The Holy Qur'an provides us with all-embracing guidance for the establishment of peace. It lays down the basic guidance for the adjustment of human relations to establish peace between man and man.

The world is not uniform either culturally or socially. It is populated by people of different colours and creed, different tribes and communities and each community has its own social, cultural and religious norms. This diversity that we observe all



around us is part of the Divine Design and Divine Wisdom. The Holy Qur'an says,

And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. In that surely are the Signs for those who possess knowledge.
(Ch.30: V.23)

The diversity is neither a sign of superiority nor an indication of inferiority neither does it confer any privilege nor handicap. Again, the Holy Qur'an emphasises:

O mankind, we have created you from male and female, and We have made you into clans and tribes that you may recognise one another. Verily, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.
(Ch.49: V.14)

The only badge of honour recognised by Islam is the righteousness of a person and his conduct. Everything else is irrelevant.

Part of this diversity is the

variation in man's intellect. This leads, among other things, to different faiths and creeds. This has often been alleged to be a source of conflict. There is not the least reason why that should be so.

It should be emphasised that truth has only one facet but error has many; yet no compulsion is permitted in so vital a matter as the fundamentals of truth. It is part of dignity with which man has been endowed by his Creator, that his conscience should be free. It is unequivocally proclaimed in the Holy Qur'an

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely right has become distinct from wrong.

(Ch.2: V.257)

'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)

The Holy Qur'an goes far in establishing this freedom that it

proclaims that even God Himself, Who indeed possesses the power to do so, would not force anyone in the matter of conscience.

And if thy Lord had enforced His Will, surely, all who are on the earth would have believed together. Wilt thou, then, force men to become believers?'

(Ch.10: V.100)

The tolerance and respect towards other religions is one of the unique features of Islam. Islam bases itself upon the truth that Divine Guidance has been given to man all through the ages. It follows, therefore, that all great faiths had a single Divine origin and must be respected and revered.

Say ye: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between

any of them and to Him we submit ourselves'.
(Ch.2: V.137)

After naming several of the prophets mentioned in the Bible, the Holy Qur'an directs:

These it is whom Allah guided aright, so follow thou their guidance.
(Ch.6: V.91)

Surely We sent down the Torah wherein was guidance and light.
(Ch.5: V.45)

And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel which contained guidance and light fulfilling that which was revealed before it in the Torah.
(Ch.5: v.47)

Islam extended a hand of friendship 1400 ago to the religionists of the world and that has remained a basis of mutual

accord for all times:

Say: O People of the Book! Come to a word equal between us and you – that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him
(Ch.3: V.65)

Islam teaches the believers that the real guarantee of peace and security is through faith in the Merciful and Compassionate Creator. If the winning of Allah's pleasure becomes the dominant motive of all the people of the world, there will be an everlasting peace that will emerge from the inside of man. The essence of religion of Islam is faith in the Divine and that faith is responsible for the adjustment and coordination that brings about peace and harmony.

It is our responsibility and duty in today's world to explain all the beautiful teachings of peace that are given in the Holy Qur'an and Islam. The forces of darkness, ignorance and prejudice have surrounded the citadels of

civilisations. They give a bad name to Islam. It is for us to combat these forces with exposure to the true teachings of Islam and by setting a true example as Muslims.

On the subject of love, peace and brotherhood, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, in a recent Sermon, advised all members of the Jama'at:

‘It is a duty of every Ahmadi today that he should take this message to the whole world that the true teaching of Islam is the one that has been given to us by the Promised Messiah^(as). They should take the message of love, peace and brotherhood; and declare to the whole world that Islam was not spread by the sword but because of the excellence of its teachings. Tell those who are associating Islam with the sword that they are following the wrong course. Explain to them and pray for them because they come in the category of ‘*Inna hum La Yaalamoon*’ – They do not

know. It is the crying need of the time to convince the world that Islam spread during the time of the Holy Prophet^(sa) because of his prayers and supplications; and in this age, God willing, this will happen only by presenting the true teachings of Islam as expounded by the Promised Messiah^(as), the true devotee and servant of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa).

A quotation of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi^(as) of this age seems pertinent at this stage. He declared more than a hundred years ago, in his book *A Message of Peace*:

‘Irrespective of whether we are Hindus or Muslim, and although we have many differences, we believe in God who has created this world and all that is contained in it. We also claim commonality as human beings and we live in one country as neighbours. It is our duty that we should become friends with a clear

conscience and honest intentions. We should sympathise with each other on all matters temporal or religious. My Friends! That faith is no faith that does not teach sympathy for mankind. A human being is not human unless he displays some element of sympathy. Our God has made no distinction in any nation. Whatever faculties were given to the ancient nations have been given to the Arabian, Persian, Chinese, Japanese, European and American nations. The earth serves as a common ground for all and the sun, the moon and the stars perform common service for all mankind. These Divine manifestations teach us that we should, also treat each other equally, with amity and with tolerance. Narrow-mindedness or hard-heartedness has no place in human relations.'

This is not the age of confrontation or of fostering mutual hatred. True and faithful

Muslims have lived for too long under the shadow of the activities of a minority who have distorted beyond recognition the traditional spirit of Islam. That minority has fostered international terrorism and sectarian hatred to gain their political ends. It is time for all the Muslims to stand up and explain the true ideology and peaceful credentials of Islam.

The Holy Prophet's^(sa) message was one of peace and unity, not contempt and war. From this platform, I want to make a plea, a request, an appeal to the whole Muslim world! Let us get together and show to the world the true and beautiful face of Islam - Islam that was taught by our beloved Prophet^(sa). His final message was of unity and mutual love. Hatred did not feature in his teachings. His successors respected the freedom of conscience of all their subjects. We will have to show to the world by our conduct and by our actions the true spirit of tolerance and peace. We will have to put flesh and blood on the bare bones

of theory. It is one thing to quote the Qur'anic verses and the Holy Prophet(sa), quite another to put these in action in every day life. We have rich treasures of Sunnah to draw for this purpose.

What I am trying to emphasise is that it is the sacred duty of every Muslim today to lead the world towards peace and establishment of justice. It can only be done if we work together putting aside the comparatively minor differences. We can have unity without unanimity and we can have diversity without division. Eventually we can have a world community of Muslims without the scourge of communal hatred,

sectarian malice and oppression and the madness of terrorism.

There is power that sets people free from age-old prejudices and that power is love of God Almighty. That is the source of true religion and it brings together all who are truly human. Muslims can show the world what is true peace – peace within and peace in society. Before they can do that they will have to get together and purge the society of those who preach and practise oppression, terrorism and sectarian hatred.

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 in the form of a prayer for a Prophet.

Also ru or (ru) for *Rahmahullahu Ta’ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him

Spiritual Progress

Presented below is a compilation of extracts that have been taken from the discourses and speeches of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, as recorded in the collection entitled *Malfoozat*.

Malfoozat is the title of the ten volumes that contain the collection of discourses, speeches and addresses of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi.

Translated by Amatul Hadi Ahmad



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

In 1891, 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.

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

The path that a beginner should adopt in the realm of spiritual knowledge is that he should, first, acquire familiarity with God's attributes such that it takes him to the level of certainty about God. It is then that he will be informed about God's being and about His perfect attributes and at that point

his soul will speak from within that it has found God and that it is fully satisfied. When there is such faith in God that it reaches the level of certainty and a person feels that he has 'seen' God and has acquired a familiarity with God's attributes, at that stage a person develops a revulsion for sin. The nature that was once attracted to sin, now hates sin and this condition is known as repentance.

The point that after acquiring total faith one's nature comes to hate sin, is something that can be clearly and easily understood. There are in the world some poisonous animals as well as poisons such as strychnine. Why does man fear these? Simply for this reason that experience shows that a certain poison, taken in a certain quantity, proves fatal. Many have been observed to have died after an intake of poison and that is why one is not inclined towards taking poison – one fears it. When this is the case, what then is the reason that all manner of sins are committed, so much so that if there was even a very small coin lying in the street, someone would stoop down to pick it up when a

brief enquiry could establish its owner. I know that there have been cases where for such paltry amounts as 12 annas the lives of innocent children have been taken. You can see from the proceedings of the courts what dark and fearful scenes emerge. Lies are told for the petty things. Bad and evil deeds are flowing like a river in full flow. Why is this? Simply because there is no belief in God. People are afraid of snakes and poisons because they believe them to be fatal and they have faith in such things being dangerous. I see no reason why there should not be a hatred of sin if there were complete faith in God.

There are two things that are important for a human being to safeguard against the bad and to run towards the good. There are two aspects of goodness. One is abandonment of harmful acts and the other is performance of deeds that are of benefit to others. A person cannot achieve perfection merely through giving up bad deeds unless there is also a move towards doing deeds that benefit others. This is an indicator of how much change has, in fact, taken

A PERSON CANNOT ACHIEVE PERFECTION MERELY THROUGH GIVING UP BAD DEEDS UNLESS THERE IS ALSO A MOVE TOWARDS DOING DEEDS THAT BENEFIT OTHERS. THIS IS AN INDICATOR OF HOW MUCH CHANGE HAS, IN FACT, TAKEN PLACE AND THE HIGHER LEVELS [OF GOODNESS] ARE GRANTED ONLY WHEN A PERSON HAS FAITH IN THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AS WELL AS KNOWLEDGE OF THOSE ATTRIBUTES. UNLESS THIS CONDITION IS FULFILLED, ONE CANNOT EVEN PROTECT ONESELF AGAINST BAD DEEDS, LEAVE ALONE BEING BENEFICIAL TO OTHERS

place and the higher levels [of goodness] are granted only when a person has faith in the attributes of God as well as knowledge of those attributes. Unless this condition is fulfilled, one cannot even protect oneself against bad deeds, leave alone being beneficial to others which is a great thing indeed. Is it not the case that people stand in awe of kings and [here in India] people fear, to an extent, the penal system of India and many people do not go against the law. Why then the audacity to go against the law of the One who is Judge Supreme! Is there any reason other than that there is no faith in God - this is the only reason.

In short, the first stage of safeguarding oneself against bad deeds can only be successfully

completed when there is faith in God. The second stage should then be one of searching for the path that was adopted by God's holy people and there is only one such path that has been adopted by all God's holy people who by treading this path benefited from God's beneficence. The way to discover this path is that one should try to ascertain what kind of relationship God had with the holy people.

The first stage of safeguarding against the bad is acquired through the manifestation of *Jalali* attributes, that is, awe-inspiring attributes of God because He is the enemy of those who indulge in base and shameless acts. The second stage is granted through the manifestation of God's *Jamali*

attributes, that is, attributes of beneficence and beauty. The ultimate, however, is that nothing can be achieved unless one is granted strength and power from God in the form of what is known in Islamic terminology as *Ruhul Qudus*, the Holy Spirit. It is a force that is granted by God and with its descent comes inner peace and tranquility, *Sakeena*, and there develops a natural love and attraction for goodness. The person endowed with *Ruhul Qudus* runs to perform good deeds with pleasure and enjoyment whereas others see it as a heavy burden. Just as even a child enjoys eating something delicious, so when a person develops a relationship with God and the Holy Spirit descends upon him from God, performance of good deeds for such a person becomes like drinking a sweet and delicious drink. The beauty that exists within goodness begins to become apparent to him and he runs helplessly towards good deeds and even the thought of bad deeds makes his soul shudder.

The nature of these matters, however, is such that they cannot

be adequately expressed in words because they are matters of the heart. The true significance of these matters can only be known through feeling them when one is granted fresh signs of light. One should not, however, begin to feel proud and should not consider experiences of deep emotion that at times one may have, to be the ultimate spiritual state. Such experiences are of a temporary nature. Sometimes it does happen that a person reading a novel cries at the painful circumstances described there. The reader of the novel clearly knows that it is an imaginary story and not a true one. Hence, if crying or feeling a sense of deep emotion were to be the basis of true happiness and enjoyment, nowhere would there be people more advanced in spiritual enjoyment than in Europe because thousands of novels are published there and millions of people shed tears while reading them.

The truth is that it is part of the nature of man that he laughs at something humorous and cries in situations that lead him to tears and, at times, he also derives a

certain pleasure from this. This pleasure, however, cannot be the basis of any spiritual discernment. For instance, a man falls in love with a woman and in his emotional state, makes up verses and recites them which make him both happy and sad and he weeps. There is in human beings this capacity whether it is used appropriately or inappropriately. A person should not be satisfied at just being in possession of this capacity. God has endowed [mankind] with this capacity so that the true seekers may not be deprived and, when used appropriately, it should act as a prelude to the next stage of spiritual development and should become like a faculty.

In short, matters such as crying or the abandonment of certain other material things or relationships are of a temporary nature. One should not become inactive through reliance upon them. Matters upon which a true knowledge of God can be based are such that if a person is tried in the path of God again and again and is thrown into the river of difficulties and tribulations, even then he should not be perturbed and should keep

moving forward. After this, he is made aware of the knowledge he has of God and it is this that is a true pleasure and a true bounty. At such a time there is a deeply felt emotion but this emotion is not temporary, rather it is filled with joy and pleasure and the soul flows towards God like a spring of pure water. In other words, before reaching the true ocean, one sees a mirage that also appears like an ocean. The person who is deceived by illusion and does not move forward, loses hope and is left without any achievement or success. On the other hand, the person who does not give up and keeps moving forward, is the one who attains the desired aim. (*Malfoozat* Vol. 2 pp.237-241)

Worship of the God that we believe in does not require strenuous mystical exercises nor does it pose any need for images and idols. In our religion, the attainment of [closeness to] God and the witnessing of His manifestations does not necessitate undergoing extreme physical exercises. On the contrary, those who love God truly, are able to find Him very quickly through an

easy path and this we have seen for ourselves through practise. If a human being takes one step towards God, He takes two towards that person. If a person walks speedily towards God, God runs towards him and enlightens his heart.

In my view the idol makers did not understand the wisdom of the secret of God remaining as the Unseen and the Hidden. It is precisely these attributes of God that open the way of desiring and seeking Him and as a result lead to the path of all knowledge and search. All the knowledge that has been acquired by man was at some time 'hidden' from and unseen by man. It was man's effort and search that shone through and made him attain the desired jewel [of knowledge] that was sought. A true lover is just like that. The absence of his beloved makes no difference to his love. On the contrary, the apparent separation creates a sort of anguish and pain that further enhances the feelings of love. How can a person who searches for God, idol in hand, rightly claim to have true and sincere love [of God] when

without the idol his attention cannot be fully focused towards that Being of pure and complete beauty.

A human being should examine the state of his own love [of God]. If it is the case that like the love-sick lover he sees the face of his beloved at every moment, no matter what he is involved in, and his full attention is focused on the beloved then he should know that he is truly in love with God and that God's love and light exist within him. However, if it is the case that the various activities of life and external bonds and obstructions distract his attention [from the countenance of God] even for one moment, then I say truly that such a person is not a true lover of God and that is why the light and brilliance that is accorded to the true lovers [of God] is not granted to such a person. This is the very point at which most people have stumbled and have gone on to deny the very existence of God. Ignorant as they are, they did not examine their own love and without taking stock of it they began to have wrong notions about God. Hence, in my

view God's remaining invisible and hidden is for the purpose of man's progress in the path of sincerity and in the attainment of true guidance. It further serves the purpose of cleansing and sharpening man's spiritual capacities in order that God's light may be manifested in him. [*Malfoozat* Vol. 1, pp.318-319]

In my view a person cannot gain any benefit until he becomes inclined towards a pure change in himself through his efforts. To quell the rebellious spirit within oneself is a great achievement in a person's struggle on this path. It is through the rule of this rebellious spirit, *Nafse Ammara*, that a person is deprived from fulfilling his obligations to God and from doing his duty to fellow man. There are, in fact, only two parts in the *Shari'a* [Islamic Law]: One is the duty to God and the other is the duty to fellow human beings.

What is the obligation to God? It is just this that God should be worshipped and that none other than Him should be considered worthy of worship. It is, moreover, the obligation to occupy one self

with remembrance of God and to act in accordance with His teachings and to abstain from that which He has forbidden and to guard oneself at all times against that which He has made illegal. Obligation to one's fellow human beings is briefly that one should not oppress others or be cruel to others. One should not usurp the rights of others and should abstain from bearing false witness.

The above two propositions are so comprehensive that all types of sins, crimes and evil deeds and the principles of all types of goodness are encompassed by them. By the same token, however, the extent of difficulty of achieving them is also great. It is easy for someone to say that he can safeguard himself against sin through his own strength. Man, however, can never separate himself from his nature. The nature of man is not like a part of his clothing that, should it become filthy he can cut it off and remove it. The nature of man is an integral part of the soul from its birth. Human nature has been created so that it fears and abstains only from such things that it considers to be the cause of harm

to it or to be the cause of its destruction. No one would have seen a person taking strychnine knowing it to be poison nor can one have seen someone holding a snake knowing it to be deadly and a real danger to his life. Would anyone enter a village without good reason knowing that it was in the grip of a plague that was taking a heavy toll of lives? What is the reason for these safeguards? Just this that these things are considered to be extremely dangerous to one's life.

It is therefore, the case that man can find salvation from sins and other ills only when he is aware of the certainty of their harmful effects, more so than he is aware of the harmful effects of snakes and thieves and such like. Moreover, a person can only achieve this if the Majesty and the Greatness and the Omnipotence of God Almighty are kept before him. Man is capable of abandoning his greed, his wishes and even his heart's desires. For example, a diabetic, having been advised by his doctor to give up sweet things, abandons them for the sake of saving his life. The

same is true [in the spiritual realm] of greed and selfish desires. If it is the case that the greatness of God and His awe has taken hold of a person's heart, disobedience to God would seem like consuming fire and he would feel it to be worse than death.

The more a person gains knowledge of God's power and control over all things and the more he becomes certain that disobedience of God will lead to a severe punishment, the more he will abstain from disobeying God and from breaking His laws. You should note that some people 'die' even before they meet their death. What kind of people are those who are referred to as 'the virtuous', 'the devotees' and the *Aqtab*, that is, those who shine like a pole-star acting as a spiritual pivot for others to follow. What is it that these people come to acquire that is so extraordinary? It is the certainty [of knowledge about God] that they come to possess. Certain and definite knowledge necessarily and by nature forces a human being towards a certain direction. In relation to God, vague suspicion cannot be enough.

Doubt cannot be of benefit. Efficacy has only been placed in certainty. The certain knowledge of God's attributes has an effect greater than that of a terrifying lightening. It is such an effect that makes the virtuous and holy people bow their heads before God and throw themselves down before Him. Remember, then, that the greater the certainty, the greater will be abstention from sins.

At first glance it may appear that there are many who make such claims but their example is like that of a pimple that shines because it is full of puss and areas surrounding it also seem to glisten as a result. It is, however, full only of obnoxious matter that is nothing but puss and filth. Alongside claims of piety, there should be signs of abstention from sins. Light, sunshine and heat are signs that the sun is out. Could anyone consider the claim of a person who says at night that the sun is out when there are no signs of the sun, as being worthy of acceptance? No, certainly not. Similar is the situation of those who say that they believe when the signs of true belief are not with them – signs such as total dislike of

sins and signs of God's favour and blessings are absent from them. What is required is that a person should abstain completely from all that is against the pleasure of God and should consider the disobedience to God and sins generally to be worse than eating fire. Moreover, one should not be influenced by the material splendour or might of anyone in opposition to God. Even more than that, one should not be in the least concerned about anyone's ability to benefit or harm besides the will of God. In this regards all others should be treated as worthy of no more attention than a dead insect. One should become such that one's tranquility and every move is brought under the will of God, losing oneself in God completely.

The achievement of all these matters is beyond the strength of man. It is not within the power of a person to attain all these blessings and to safeguard against all the impurities. It has, therefore, been the way of God that for this purpose, He commissions and sends a human being [as Messenger] to the world and manifests His extraordinary powers

at the hands of the Messenger. [The distinguishing signs of such a person are that] God accepts his prayers and informs him of this and bestows upon him a flow of revelation, conversation and other forms of communication. Moreover, there are manifested at his hands such great and extraordinary signs that the worldly people are humbled through witnessing them. At the same time, the manifestation at his hand of brilliant and mighty signs in his support, fills the hearts of [good] people with greater knowledge of God and with the pleasure of certainty to such an extent that it is as if they have 'seen' God. It is through witnessing such mighty signs of God's greatness and power that the hearts of men are purified from the thought of everything besides God and it is thus that they are able to suppress and burn away their selfish desires that are the birthplace of sin. Their hearts then come to be occupied by the awe of God's greatness, of His majesty and omnipotence. In short, it is through such means that God [through His Messenger] prepares a party of men whose hearts are purified.

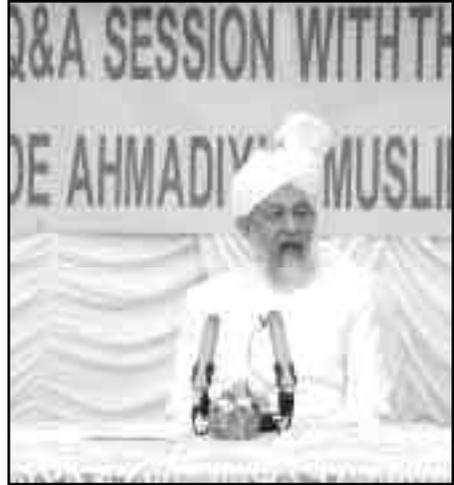
The condition that dissolves sins develops only when God manifests His awe-inspiring attributes of Greatness and Omnipotence. Such manifestations grip the world and strike utter terror in the hearts of people like that of a terrifying lightening storm that strikes fear in the people. So it is during the time of a Messenger of God that the manifestation of the awe-inspiring attributes of God's greatness brings about a pure change in the world.

[*Malfoozat* Vol. 10, pp.319-322]

Faith and Belief

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the Fourth Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, (God's Mercy be upon his soul), offered to people of all nationalities, faiths and beliefs the opportunity of raising questions and issues that were of interest to them. Presented below are answers to some questions that were raised in two sessions held in London.

Compiled by Amatul Hadi Ahmad



QUESTIONER

My question is about acquiring faith. I think that people come to believe in God through faith rather than through scientific proof and I wondered how Islam helped people to acquire that faith?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(rw):

I think the scientific proof is there but, unfortunately, most people are prejudiced in favour of atheism. This is because believing in something that you cannot see, you cannot touch, cannot feel in any way is very

difficult. As people become more educated, the more they think that mysteries, of course, they are, but to believe in a mystery over and above other mysteries is more difficult. This is what they say. This is what they claim but it is inaccurate. The mystery of creation is a mystery that you must either understand or reject. The evidence, however, is so powerful that you cannot reject it. One's mind is incapable of understanding it, yet the principle of evidence is given precedence over the principle of faith. As far as human faith is concerned, it could not have

visualised these mysteries to have happened ‘naturally’. There are objections against this belief that are repeated all over the human scientific experience – yet they have to believe what they see. This is the only principle that can help people to realise the existence of God scientifically because if you remove God, no existence is possible – which is the problem. If one considers the issue from different scientific angles, one will reach the same point. According to the science of Entropy, everything must disappear altogether from existence, may be in many trillions of years, but whatever energy exchange takes place, it loses a part of that energy in a form which is irretrievable. It, therefore, dissipates into space, into thin air. Every time the process of recreation of a universe takes place, in the form of a big bang or whatever you may believe, the universe which comes into being is slightly less than the universe that had died before it. This principle has to be understood in minute detail. The result would be that, call it

trillion into trillion years, ultimately, the whole universe must come to an end – there should be nothing left.

Visualise now eternity – had the existence of the universe become impossible eternally before, you and I should not have been sitting here! This is the greater objection that the scientists should face – and many scientists do face it and say that they are driven to believe in the existence of God because of this – there is no way out.

The question then arises, ‘does God also lose his energy or does he not?’ This question was addressed by Aristotle, and Aristotle, who lived many thousands of years ago, was wiser than the scientists of today. He calculated philosophically and logically that because existence of anything is not possible without a first cause, that because the existence of created things is not possible because they lose energy – in action we lose energy – hence, the first cause would be conceived in a manner such that

it does not lose energy. That is exactly the Qur'anic vision of creation with the 'word', a concept that is also found in the Bible. The word is not action – the word is vision or wish for something. God is not created so He must have some attributes that are not created. Created attributes are not the attributes of the Creator. There is a divide between the two. If that is not true then the Creator must also have been created. Hence, logically if we begin with the concept of a Creator, he must be different from whatever he created. Our arguments are based on our experience of the creation. The nature of the Creator we do not know. Hence, according to the Qur'an the nature of the Creator is such that He visualises a thing and it begins to be and finally comes into being in its complete form – the energy is balanced in such a manner that nothing is lost. For instance, if you bring together matter and anti-matter, the result is zero. This, therefore, is a vision of God to create something out of nothing. Without losing His

energy at all, He realises a thing in two separate areas out of non-existence and both are created in their own zone while no extra energy is required for their creation through their coming together. Similar rational arguments can be given in favour of God as believed in religion. There are, however, many areas of further discussion and objections against this view. I do not have time to repeat everything that I have already stated on this subject on previous occasions but I would refer you to my book, [*Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*] in which this and related issues have been discussed at length. I think the rational community of the world will agree that this is the dilemma we are facing. We must believe in God or not believe in our own existence – that is the issue. This is the only dilemma. If we deny the existence of God, we must also deny our own existence and that we cannot! Both are linked inseparably.

QUESTIONER

There is a great difficulty in trying to understand people's claims to have had experiences of God and faith. How should such claims be postulated and understood?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru):

The role of religion, at present, is almost at an end as far as mass convictions are concerned because that time is lost. These days, the religious leaders seem to have turned to the last line of defence and they talk of religious experiences that are based around the individual and do not have to be shared by others. Even if they do not believe in those experiences, at least the person who goes through that experience will be influenced by that and will modify his or her life accordingly. Hence these days there is so much talk of spiritual experiences.

I believe this is a very dangerous area that will not hold water for long. This is because experiences can be quoted from one side and

countered from another. However, when experiences are only in relation to personal behaviour and remain as such, not much harm is done but it so happens that personal experience are related and attached to dogmas and beliefs. People begin to justify dogma through supposed experiences of some individuals. When the situation develops to this stage, it enters a dangerous area simply because dogmas from, for example, Buddhism, Confucianism and Muslim Sufism and so on, all suddenly erupt to contradict each other. Consequently, all the benefit [of the individual experience] may be lost. I believe that, provided the individual religious experience is not used as evidence in support of the dogmatic truth of the people who go through this religious experience, it is all right. It can even be good for the person having the experience. However, such experiences can be of two types.

It can be a rational experience or it can be an irrational experience.

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Rational experience is only that which is repeatable, like science. Under the same circumstances it should be capable of repeating itself and demonstrate its truth everywhere in the world, provided one adopts an appropriate attitude. So far this has not been the case with the great majority of the 'experiences' that are used to gain mass support. The fraudulent people very quickly take over this area and they take over on a mass scale, as has been witnessed in Africa, Syria and Egypt, for example, as spiritual healers. There are so many spiritual healers in the name of Islam, those who apparently work miracles exploiting the ignorance of the people. So much confusion is, in fact, born out of

this that it cannot be adopted as a safe instrument for rehabilitating faith sufficiently for it to guide one's actions.

QUESTIONER

My question is why I should be a Muslim, a follower of Prophet Muhammad, and how can I become one?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(rw): If you become a believer in God, that is the first step towards religion and when you become a believer in God the best approach to this issue should be to ask, which is the religion that can help you get closer to God quicker than other religions, with greater certainty and with less danger? As such, when you look

upon religions in comparison with Islam, Islam's distinctive features will rise above upon the horizon where they could not be confused with features of other religions. For instance, when you believe in God, you also believe in the universality of God. It is impossible for you to believe that God sent His Messengers only to one particular people, at one particular time and forgot all His other creation everywhere else in the world. If it is such a God, it is better not to believe in Him. God can only be believed in if He is universal. Therefore, one should find elements of universality in religion. In whichever religion you find universality depicted and maintained, that is the best religion.

For instance, when one becomes a Christian, it is not essential for one to believe in Buddha^(as), to believe in Krishna^(as), to believe in Zoroasthra^(as) or in any other Prophet of God. Belief in Christ alone is considered to be sufficient. One cannot even believe in the truth of the Prophet Muhammad^(sa) because if one did,

one would not remain Christian. In Islam, it is exactly the opposite. A belief in Islam requires a person to believe in Buddha^(as), to believe in Krishna^(as), to believe in Jesus^(as), to believe in Moses^(as), to believe in all the Prophets of God who appeared all across the world. What, then, is to be considered a better teaching? Islam, obviously! It is a universal religion. It relates to the concept of God having created all human beings. If you were to compare Islamic teachings with teachings of other religions, you will be led to Islam by the force of argument, by the force of rationality. There will be no other choice left for you. That is one way of reaching Islam. The second is by praying to God. If you want to reach God, why not ask Him which is the best path? If you turn to Him with all sincerity, with a resolution that if He leads you to a faith, whatever that may be, you will follow it, God will, then, take care of you. This is the surest and the easiest path to God.

QUESTIONER

If Islam has an objective to unite people why is it that the believers are so disunited today and what has the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association done towards uniting people?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru):

It is correct that those who believe in Islam today are disunited. Those who believe in Christianity today are also disunited. Those who believe in other religions are also disunited. The fact is that truth does not disunite – it unites. If one were to apply the same standard to the Ahmadiyya Community, one would find that Ahmadis whether they are in Kosovo or in Mauritius, in Europe or in America, wherever they are they are all united. This is the strength of the Ahmadiyya Community. This is why we claim that our objective is to unite people. We have demonstrated our unity. The Ahmadiyya Community is a united body even though it is spread all over the world. Some non-Ahmadi scholars have also

noted this fact and they say it is amazing that Ahmadis are the only religious people who are united not only in their beliefs but also around a central authority of the Caliphate that moulds their character alike. For instance, Immigration Officers who see and interview Ahmadis arriving in the UK from all over the world for the Annual Convention, remark that they are amazed at the fact that all Ahmadis share a certain similarity of conduct and general demeanour. It is the unity of Ahmadis that is proof of the truth of Ahmadiyyat.

Islam and the Creation of Peace-Loving Men and Women

Based on a speech presented by Ataul Mujeeb Rashed, Imam London Mosque, in Toledo, Spain March 1988

Importance of the subject

Since the creation of mankind, it has been the cherished desire of all to establish, enjoy and share the fruits of peace and tranquillity. But, we have to admit this bitter reality that it has always remained a desire never accomplished in totality. Mankind is yearning for peace today more than ever before. How is it that having passed through the shattering and devastating experience of two world wars and in the shadow of a nuclear holocaust, despite all the efforts that have so far been put forth to the contrary, man continues to be far far away from the realisation of his dream about universal peace.

In order to bring about real peace in our society, or for that matter in the world we live in, it is most essential to go about it through the components our society is

composed of i.e. men and women. Human beings have this inborn quality to love for peace and tranquillity but the experience shows that the same peace-loving men and women are occasionally seen destroying the very concept of peace. Where does the fault lie? What is the remedy? How can this problem be solved? These and several other questions of similar nature find their answer in the subject under discussion today.

Islam, the religion of peace provides the full answer. Firstly, through its most elaborate and comprehensive teachings, it provides the doctrinal basis for the establishment of peace. Secondly, the noble example of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad^(sa) further illumines this path of peace, studded with historical land marks, serving as

a model to be followed. Thirdly, the emphasis on living up to the teachings of Islam and the noble example of the Holy Prophet^(sa) goes a long way in the creation of peace-loving men and women to ensure the ultimate translation of all ideals of peace into reality.

Islam: Religion of Peace and Submission

This subject has a direct and deep relevance to Islam which literally means peace and submission. Both these meanings, describing two main aspects of its teachings, are closely related to each other. Therefore, explaining the basic teachings of Islam, we can say that Islam stands for establishment of real peace in all directions and at all levels through total obedience and submission to the will and commands of God Almighty. It can also be said that peace is the ultimate object of Islam and submission to His commandments is the key to it.

According to Islam, God Almighty is the fountain head of guidance which is made manifest

to the people in various ages according to their particular needs and requirements. This manifest guidance is called religion and the torch-bearers of this guidance are described as the messengers of God. As all the religions have emanated from the source of God, the Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, it is but natural that all religions, taken in their pure form, at their sources, always stood for peace. They all had this common theme.

But in spite of all that, no religion other than Islam was given a name which literally means peace. This happened for the first time, in the history of religion, only in the case of Islam and it certainly constitutes a unique distinction of this great religion. Moreover, this name was given by God Almighty Himself, yet another distinction of Islam. Both these facts very clearly indicate the Divine plan of things. God Almighty reserved this special name to be bestowed upon that religion which presents the best and the most elaborate and comprehensive teachings about

peace in a way never witnessed before in the history of religion.

Islamic teachings on peace and war

Islam forbids aggression, but it urges to fight if failure to fight jeopardises peace and promotes war. If failure to fight means the extirpation of free belief and of the search of truth, it is our duty to fight. This is the teaching on which peace can ultimately be built, and this is the teaching on which the Prophet of Islam^(sa) based his own policies and his practice. The Holy Prophet^(sa) suffered continuously and consistently at Makkah but did not fight the aggression of which he was an innocent victim. When he migrated to Madinah, the enemy was out to extirpate Islam; it was, therefore, necessary to fight the enemy in defence of truth and freedom of belief and in order to establish and ensure peace for one and all.

Before proceeding any further, it will be appropriate to study the passages in the Holy Qur'an which bear on the subject of war.

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged -and Allah indeed has power to help them- Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said. 'Our Lord is Allah'— And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful. Mighty. (Ch.22:Vs.40-41)

And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not transgressors. And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for persecution is worse than killing. And fight them not in, and near, the Sacred Mosque until they fight you

therein. But if they fight you, then fight them: such is the requital for the disbelievers. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.

(Ch.2:Vs.191-194).

Say to those who disbelieve, if they desist, that which is past will be forgiven them; and if they return thereto, then verily, the example of the former peoples has already gone before them. And fight them until there is no persecution and religion is wholly for Allah. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Watchful of what they do. And if they turn their backs, then know that Allah is your Protector.

(Ch.8:Vs.40-41)

And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also

towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, all-Knowing. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely Allah is sufficient for thee. He it is Who has strengthened thee with His help and with the believers.

(Ch.8:Vs.62-63)

Excepting those of the idolaters with whom you have entered into a treaty and who have not fallen short of fulfilling their obligations to you nor aided anyone against you. So fulfill to these the treaty you have made with them till their term. Surely, Allah loves those who are righteous.

(Ch.9:V.4)

And if anyone of the idolaters ask protection of thee, grant him protection, so that he may hear the word of Allah: then convey him to his place of security. That is because they are a people who have no knowledge.

(Ch.9:V.6)

It does not behove a Prophet that he should have captives until he engages in a regular fighting in the land. You desire the goods of the world, while Allah desires for you the Hereafter. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.

(Ch.8:V.68)

Then afterwards either release them as a favour or by taking ransom - until the war lays down its burdens.

(Ch.47:V.5)

And those of your slaves who desire a deed of liberation to be contracted, write it down for them if you see in them any good potential and give them out of that wealth which truly belongs to Allah which He has bestowed upon you.

(Ch.24:V.34)

Conclusions

Categorically, we may say, these verses teach the following rules:

(i) War is to be resorted to only for the sake of God and not for the sake of any selfish motives,

not for aggrandisement or for the advancement of any other interests.

(ii) We can go to war only against one who attacks us first.

(iii) We can fight only those who fight against us. We cannot fight against those who take no part in warfare.

(iv) Even after the enemy has initiated the attack, it is our duty to keep warfare within limits. To extend the war, either territorially or in respect of weapons used, is wrong.

(v) We are to fight only a regular army charged by the enemy to fight on his side. We are not to fight others on the enemy side.

(vi) In warfare, immunity is to be afforded to all religious rites and observances. If the enemy spares the places where religious ceremonies are held, then Muslims also must desist from fighting in such places.

(vii) If the enemy uses a place of worship as a base for attack, then Muslims may return the attack. No blame will attach to them if they do so. No fighting is allowed even in the neighbourhood of religious places. To attack religious places and to destroy them or to do any kind of harm to them is absolutely forbidden.

(viii) The fact that the enemy started the attack from a religious place is not to be used as an excuse for attacking that place.

(ix) Fighting is to continue only so long as interference with religion and religious freedom lasts. When religion becomes free and interference with it is no longer permitted then there is to be no war, even if it is the enemy who starts it.

(x) If the enemy desists, it is the duty of Muslims to desist also, and forgive the past. Muslims are to fight, while religious persecution lasts, and so long as religion is not free and interference in religious matters

is not abandoned. When the aggressor desists, Muslims are to desist also. They are not to continue the war because the enemy believes in a false religion.

(xi) Muslims have no right to meddle with another people's religion even if that religion seems to them to be false. If after an offer of peace the enemy continues to make war, then Muslims may be sure of victory even though their numbers are small.

(xii) If in the course of a battle the disbelievers at any time incline towards peace, Muslims are to accept the offer at once and to make peace. Muslims are to do so even at the risk of being deceived. They are to put their trust in God. Cheating will not avail against Muslims, who rely on the help of God. An offer of peace is to be accepted.

(xiii) Pagans, who enter into a pact with Muslims, keep the pact and do not help the enemy against Muslims, are to have

reciprocal treatment from Muslims. Piety requires that Muslims should fulfill their part of a pact in the letter as well as the spirit.

(xiv) If any of those at war with Muslims seek refuge with Muslims in order to study Islam and ponder over its Message, they are to have refuge with Muslims for such time as may be reasonably necessary for such a purpose.

(xv) It is not permitted to make prisoners of the enemy save as a result of regular war involving much bloodshed. The system of making prisoners of enemy tribes without war and bloodshed practised until - and even after the advent of Islam, is here made unlawful. Prisoners can be taken only from the combatants and after a battle.

(xvi) Regarding the Prisoners of War the best thing, according to Islam, is to let off prisoners without asking for ransom. As this is not always possible, release by ransom is also

provided for.

(xvii) Those who do not deserve to be released without ransom but who have no one to pay ransom for them if they still ask for their freedom - can obtain it by signing an undertaking that, if allowed to work and earn, they will pay their ransom.

The Holy Prophet's^(sa) directions about war

Islamic teachings however, do not consist only of precepts laid down in the Holy Qur'an. It also include the precepts and example of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa). What he did or what he taught in concrete situations is also an essential part of the Islamic teachings. We append here some sayings of the Prophet on the subject of war and peace.

1. Muslims are forbidden altogether to mutilate the dead.
2. Muslims are forbidden to resort to cheating.

3. Children are not to be killed, nor women.
4. Priests and religious functionaries and religious leaders are not to be interfered with.
5. The old men or women and children are not to be killed.
6. When Muslims enter enemy territory. they should not strike terror into the general population. They should permit no ill-treatment of common folk.
7. A Muslim army should not camp in a place where it causes inconvenience to the general public. When it marches it should take care not to block the road nor cause discomfort to other wayfarers.
8. No disfigurement of face is to be permitted.
9. The least possible losses should be inflicted upon the enemy.
10. When prisoners of war are put under guard. those closely related should be placed together.
11. Prisoners should live in comfort. Muslims should care more for the comfort of their prisoners than for themselves.
12. Emissaries and delegates from other countries should be held in great respect. Any mistakes or discourtesies they commit should be ignored.
13. If a Muslim commits the sin of ill treating a prisoner of war. atonement is to be made by releasing the prisoner without ransom.
14. When a Muslim takes charge of a prisoner of war, the latter is to be fed and clothed in the same way as the Muslim himself.
15. Public buildings and fruit-bearing trees and food crops are not to be damaged.

16. The possibility of peace should always be kept in view

From the sayings of the Holy Prophet^(sa) it is evident that Islam has instituted steps which have the effect of preventing or stopping a war or reducing its evil. The principles which Islam teaches are not pious precepts only; they have their practical illustration in the example of the Prophet^(sa) and the early Khalifas of Islam. As all the world knows, the Holy Prophet^(sa) not only taught these principles, he practised them and insisted on their observance.

Turning to our own time, I do wish to say that several proposals for peace have been forwarded and many ideal plans have been presented but no practical and realistic example has been offered to show the world how to prevent war, minimise its sufferings or stop it altogether.

To preach a method of stopping wars, but never to be able to afford a practical illustration of that method indicates that the

method is impracticable. It would, therefore, seem that human experience and human wisdom point to only one method of preventing or stopping war; and that method was taught and practised by the Prophet of Islam.

One more point should be added here. The above-mentioned teachings were given by the Prophet about the conduct and behaviour of the Muslims in a battle field. Generally it is said and believed that there is no rule to be followed when you are in a state of war. Question of mercy and good treatment does not arise. No one thinks of doing any act of charity and grace to any one. But here we see a man advising his followers to take every possible step to be kind and considerate even to the enemies. Here is a man who preaches and urges peace and morality even in the battle field. He is the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad^(sa) who was rightly described by God as the embodiment of mercy for the whole of mankind.

The Holy Prophet's^(sa) farewell address

A landmark was set by the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) when he spoke to his followers on the occasion of his last pilgrimage and outlined the fundamental teachings of Islam. Apart from so many other things, he touched upon the equality of human beings and their equal rights and obligations. Needless to say that this very point shatters the concept of racial superiority, discrimination, hatred and enmity – the various causes which have plagued our society today. In this background, the address of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is a monumental declaration of human rights, proclaimed over 1400 year ago, establishing the real basis of universal peace. I wish to quote the relevant portion. The Holy Prophet^(sa) declared:

'O men. what I say to you. you must hear and remember. All Muslims are as brethren to one another. All of you are equal. All men, whatever nation or tribe they may hold,

are equal. Even as the fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to one another. No one has any right. any superiority to claim over another. You are as brothers.

"Even as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy., so has God made the lives, property and honour of every man sacred. To take any man's life or his property. or attack his honour, is as unjust and wrong as to violate the sacredness of this day, this month. and this territory. What I command you today is not meant only for today. It is meant for all time. You are expected to remember it and to act upon it until you leave this world and go to the next to meet your Maker.'

In conclusion. he said:

'What I have said to you, you should communicate to the ends of the earth. May be those who have not heard me

may benefit by it more than those who have heard'.

The Holy Prophet's^(sa) address is an epitome of the entire teachings and the spirit of Islam. It shows how deep was the Holy Prophet's^(sa) concern for the welfare of man and the peace of the world. Inequality between man and man always oppressed the Holy Prophet^(sa). The conditions which made for this inequality were conditions which made for antagonism and war between nation and nation and country and country. Unless the spirit of inequality was killed and conditions which induced one people to usurp the rights of another and to attack their lives and their possessions – unless these conditions which become rampant at times of moral decay were removed, the peace and progress of the world could not be assured. The Holy Prophet^(sa) taught that human life and human possessions had the same sacredness which belonged to sacred days, sacred months and sacred places. No man ever showed such concern and such

care for the peace between nations as did the Prophet of Islam. No man ever did as much as the Holy Prophet^(sa) to promote equality among mankind. No man pined as much as him for the good of man.

This address of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is an outstanding example of the beautiful way in which he used to teach his followers how to become peace-loving people. He helped and guided them by pointing out the pit-falls and high-lighting the ways of achieving the object. This process continued throughout his life.

Practical guidance of the Holy Prophet^(sa)

Islam is a practical religion and its founder, the Holy Prophet^(sa) was a practical man. Throughout his life, he made it a point to practically guide his followers into various ways of translating the teachings of Islam into real practice. In order to make his followers peace-loving men and women he provided a living example of such qualities which

go a long way in shaping the human character. By way of illustration, I wish to present the following examples.

1. Self Control

In the East, one way of showing respect for a person whom one is addressing is not to address him by his personal name. The Muslims used to address the Holy Prophet^(sa) as ‘O Messenger of Allah’, and non-Muslims used to address him as ‘Abu’l Qasim’ (ie., Qasim’s father: Qasim being the name of one of his sons). On one occasion a Jew came to him in Madinah and started a discussion with him. In the course of the discussion he repeatedly addressed him as ‘O Muhammad, O Muhammad’. The Holy Prophet^(sa) paid no attention to his form of address and went on patiently expounding the matter under discussion to him. His Companions, however, were getting irritated at the discourteous form of address adopted by the Jew till one of them, not being able to restrain himself any longer, admonished

the Jew not to address the Holy Prophet^(sa) by his personal name but to address him as ‘Abu’l Qasim’. The Jew said that he would address him only by the name which his parents had given him. The Holy Prophet^(sa) smiled and said to his Companions: ‘he is right. I was named Muhammad at the time of my birth and there is no reason to be upset at his addressing me by that name.’

2. Justice and Fair Dealing

The Arabs were greatly given to favouritism and applied different standards to different persons. Even among the so-called civilised nations of today one observes a reluctance to bring prominent persons or persons occupying high positions or offices to account for their doings, though the law is enforced rigorously against the common citizen. The Holy Prophet^(sa) was however, unique in enforcing uniform standards of justice and fair dealing. On one occasion a case came before him in which a young woman named Fatimah, belonging to a highly

respectable family was found to have committed theft. This caused great consternation as, if the normal penalty were imposed upon the young woman, a leading family would be humiliated and disgraced. Many were anxious to intercede with the Holy Prophet(sa) on behalf of the offender but were afraid to do so. Eventually Usama was prevailed upon to undertake the mission. Usama went to the Holy Prophet(sa) but the moment the latter perceived the trend of his submission he was much upset and said: ‘You had better desist. Nations have come to a bad end for showing favours to highly placed persons while pressing hard on the common people. Islam does not permit this and I will certainly not do it. Verily, if my own daughter, Fatima, were to commit an offence like that I would not hesitate to impose the appropriate penalty’”.

3. Respect for the feelings of others:

People are generally careful not to hurt the feelings of their friends and relations but the Holy

Prophet(sa) was very particular in this respect even regarding people who were opposed to him. On one occasion a Jew came to him and complained that Abu Bakr(as) had hurt his feelings by saying that God had exalted Muhammad(sa) above Moses(as). The Holy Prophet(sa) summoned Abu Bakr(as) and asked him what had transpired. Abu Bakr(sa) explained that the Jew had started by saying that he swore by Moses(as) whom God, he said, had exalted above the whole of mankind, and that he (Abu Bakr(as)) had thereupon retorted by swearing by Muhammad(sa), whom God exalted above Moses(as). The Holy Prophet(sa) said: ‘You should not have said this as the feelings of other people should be respected. Nobody should exalt me above Moses’. This did not mean that the Holy Prophet(sa) did not in fact occupy a higher position than Moses(as) but that an affirmation like this addressed to a Jew was likely to hurt his feelings and should have been avoided.

4. Regard for the poor

A poor Muslim woman used to clean the Holy Prophet's^(sa) Mosque in Madinah. The Holy Prophet^(sa) did not see her in the Mosque for some days and made inquiries concerning her. He was told that she had died. He said: 'Why was I not informed when she died? I would have wished to join her funeral prayers.' And added, 'perhaps you did not consider her worthy of consideration as she was poor. This was not right. Direct me to her grave.' He then proceeded to her grave and prayed for her.

5. Tolerance in religious matters

A deputation from a Christian tribe of Najran visited him in Madinah to exchange views on religious matters. It included several Church dignitaries. The conversation was held in the Mosque and extended over several hours. At one stage the leader of the deputation asked permission to depart from the Mosque and to hold their religious service at some convenient spot. The Holy

Prophet^(sa) said that there was no need for them to go out of the Mosque, which was itself a place consecrated to the worship of God, and they could hold their services in it.

6. Fulfilling of covenants

On one occasion an envoy came to him on a special mission and after he had remained in his company for some days, he was convinced of the truth of Islam and suggested that he might declare his adherence to it. The Holy Prophet^(sa) told him that this would not be proper as he was there in a representative capacity and it was incumbent upon him to return to the headquarters of his Government without acquiring a fresh allegiance. If, after he had returned home, he still felt convinced of the truth of Islam, he could return as a free individual and declare his acceptance of it.

These are only a few examples, just like a few drops out of a vast ocean, but how beautifully do they illustrate the nobility of the Holy Prophet's^(sa) character. Such was his logical and convincing

way of teaching and inculcating the values of peace among his followers through his personal example. The six principles highlighted above are of fundamental nature. If these principles are strictly adhered to and followed by the people in general, fundamental causes of hatred and enmity will be up-rooted.

The actual outcome and the result of this wise way of reformation and moulding the human character can be witnessed in the life time of the Holy Prophet(saw). The great revolution which took place in Arabia over 1400 years ago is undoubtedly unparalleled in human history. A nation known for its short temper and indulgence in tribal war-fare was reformed into a people dedicated to the cause of peace. He turned the fighters – who loved to destroy peace – into ambassadors of peace, spreading and preaching the message of peace throughout the world. He found the whole world in darkness and by his appearance that darkness was converted into light. Such perfect reform was particular to him that

he taught a people who were at the level of animals the ways of humanity; in other words, he converted wild beasts into men, and then turned them into educated men and then made them men of God. This miraculous change has been described in a beautiful couplet by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian. Addressing the Holy Prophet(saw), he says ‘You found them (the Arabs) in a hopeless moral state. Lower than the filthiest thing in the world. And then you transformed them into a glittering piece of gold.’

Finally I wish to submit that Islam provides the theoretical as well as the practical answer to the question of creation of peace-loving men and women. It is the need of the time that the true teachings of Islam, contained in the Holy Qur’an and practically demonstrated by the Holy Prophet(saw), should be followed in letter and spirit, with a sincere and pious intention for the establishment of world peace.

Attempts to Philosophically Justify the Finality of Non-Law-Bearing Prophethood

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



Two major attempts have been made by Muslim theologians and thinkers to logically justify the cessation of even non-law-bearing prophets. The first relates to the issue of the need for a new teacher. The advent of a perfect teacher and a perfect book, it is argued, obviates the need of any other teacher to follow. Of course, if it can be proved that the presence of a perfect book and the appearance of a perfect teacher are sufficient guarantees against any future moral or spiritual decline, then there is no reason why, after this, another prophet should ever be raised again. Regrettably however, this proposition can neither be proved correct theoretically nor historically.

This contention is insupportable because the bringing of a book of law is not the only function performed by prophets. Prophethood is a thing of many splendours. After the death of a law-bearing prophet, the mere preservation of his book and his traditions cannot offer a sufficient substitute for prophethood itself. The case in point becomes amply clear when we examine the conduct of Muslims after the demise of the Holy Prophet^(sa). The progressive deterioration of Muslim society should be sufficient to prove this point. The difference between their moral status during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and that of Muslims today defies comparison. The Book however remains the same perfect, unaltered, un-interpolated Book that it was fourteen hundred years ago.

The second justification in support of the Doctrine of Absolute Finality relates to the idea of the intellectual maturity of man. The chief proponent of this view is no less a person than *Allamah Iqbal claimed by some to be the greatest Muslim thinker of modern times. This doctrine of maturity is based on the assumption that the Holy Qur'an was revealed at a time when man had finally reached the ultimate stage of his mental and intellectual maturity. As such, he

stood in no further need of day-to-day guidance by any Divine personage as did his ancestors of earlier ages. A beautiful philosophy but how hollow and empty of substance it turns out to be under closer scrutiny. The very premise that man has matured enough to be able to draw his own conclusions and chart his own course of conduct from the principle teachings of a perfect religion is challengeable on many counts.

It should not be forgotten that at every stage of man's progress, he always considered himself to be at the summit of intellectual maturity. At every point in history, the generation which occupied it also considered itself to be at the pinnacle of human progress. Looking back from their vantage point, all previous generations must have appeared less mature and less advanced by comparison. Yet at no stage in the past has man behaved wisely enough to guide himself. Heads such as that of the Pharaoh's were always raised in defiance of Divine guidance. All such rebels rejected the prophets of their time with the same inflated ideas of their own importance. All repeated the same claim over and over again that they had matured to take care of their own affairs. Nonetheless, history proves each of them to be wrong. It is so naive therefore, to consider the contemporary age as the only one in which man has finally become self-sufficient in every aspect of his moral and spiritual requirements.

As far as the concept of maturity is concerned, it is also falsified by the realities of history. After the passing away of prophets the division and multiplication of religious sects, based on doctrinal differences and varying interpretations, is a universal trend that has not spared the followers of any religion including Islam. Hence, it is not simply his intellectual maturity which helps man to draw right conclusions from the scriptures, he must also be Divinely guided.

If 'maturity of man' is taken to mean that he becomes independent in drawing his conclusions from the study of scriptures, then there must ensue a perfect unity of agreement on all the fundamental aspects of religious teachings. Alas, what we observe in real life fails miserably to support this view. Muslims, the proud recipients of the last perfect Book, are no less divided among themselves in the matter of interpretation than are the peoples of all other religions. To what avail, therefore, is the so-called maturity of man? The history of religion proves that people once split into sects and schisms have never been reunified by human effort alone. The same inevitably applies to the Muslims today. Without

the agency of a Divine Reformer, they cannot be assembled again under the single flag of Unity. But they have outrightly rejected this Divine measure, the only avenue of hope left open to them.

The existence of about seventy-two doctrinal divisions among them, despite a well-preserved book and a well-documented record of traditions, throws a dismal light on the Iqbalian philosophy of the maturity of man.

Their differences are not merely marginal. They are fundamental and deep-rooted, further multiplying and proliferating as time goes by. Add to this the moral destitution prevailing in the Muslim world and the tragedy of their lifeless existence becomes all the more pathetic. Commit their survival to the maturity of their intellect and perform ablution for their funeral rites, 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust and earth to earth - Amen!'

What misery! Why can modern intellectuals not understand that the purification of a religious society is a task which the mere existence of a Perfect Book cannot perform? Were it so, the followers of Islam must have retained an exemplary state of ideological unity. This unfortunately is farthest from the truth.

All that can be said here in defence of the late Dr 'Allamah Sir Muhammad Iqbal is that the idea of blocking the passage of Heavenly light with this balderdash did not originate from him. His mistake was to copy, rather blindly one must say, the great German philosopher Nietzsche. It was Nietzsche who had first employed the idea of the maturity of human mind in the modern age against any need of guidance from God. In fact, Nietzsche coaxed man to come to age and utilize his own faculties of five senses. Overman, or superman, is Nietzsche's term for a man who reaches a stage of maturity where his senses are developed to the full. Such a man needs no God to guide him - a God which according to him is no more than a conjecture. Such conjectures were born out of an imperfect faculty of reasoning during an age when man had not yet matured enough to become his own master. Now that man had attained maturity, he concluded in his book *Thus spoke Zarathustra** – the symbolic oracle of the wisdom of Nietzsche that there was no more need for holding onto conjectures.

‘Once one said God when one looked upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say: overman (superman).

‘God is a conjecture; but I desire that your conjectures should not reach beyond your creative Will.’¹

‘Could you *think* a god? But this is what the will to truth should mean to you: that everything be changed into what is thinkable for man, visible for man, feelable by man. You should think through your own senses to their consequences.’²

‘God is a conjecture; but who could drain all the agony of this conjecture without dying?’²

The long and short of *Thus spoke Zarathustra* is a rebellion of Nietzsche against a conjectural god which in fact is the Christian idea of God, and to understand Zarathustra clearly as to why he rebelled against God, one must read the chapter *Retired*.³ But for our purpose it should be sufficient to note that the oracle of Nietzsche’s wisdom sets man free from being guided from on high. The maturity of his faculties is sufficient to guide him.



This exactly is the Iqbalian philosophy against the need of a prophet after man has matured to the maximum of his faculties. Instead of employing this borrowed philosophy for a categorical rejection of the need for God, ‘Allamah Iqbal neatly trimmed the maturity concept to suit his own purpose within the framework of Islam. He conceded that though man stands in need of a Perfect Master and a Perfect Book, once this objective is accomplished he requires no more to be badgered with any further interference from on high. But that is not all there is to it. The doctrine of maturity, as amended by Iqbal, does not merely do away with the need of prophethood, it does away altogether with the need for any communication from God even in the form of non-prophetic revelations. This has to be the only logical conclusion drawn from his doctrine of maturity. The maturity concept requires total independence of man from further Divine guidance in any form. He has become capable of taking all-important decisions for himself in the light of the guidance already vouchsafed to him. Man, Iqbal argued, is no longer a child to be walked with his little finger held in a prophet's

hand. Has he not matured to full adulthood, to shift for himself? A sound healthy logic it seems, but just one glance at the spiritual decadence and utter moral destitution of man today is sufficient to dispel this argument as entirely fallacious and conjectural.

Enough of Iqbal and his postulations. Let us now turn to Maudoodi, another renowned scholar of the mainstream Sunni Muslims. He pleads that the absolute cessation of prophethood after Prophet Muhammad^(sa) has been a singular blessing of God upon mankind. It is a boon, especially for the Muslims, because it spares them the risk of rejecting a Divine messenger of God ever again. They are shielded from ever being accursed by God, as others before them were cursed, for committing the crime of rejecting the prophets of their time. Such a view deserves to be treated more by way of a joke rather than a legitimate argument.

Maudoodi's philosophy, if accepted, would imply that the very institution of prophethood is a curse indeed otherwise its cessation could not have been claimed to be a blessing. This appears to be more in line with the thinking of St. Paul, who branded the law of the Torah as a curse and believed Jesus to be the redeemer because he did away with that law. If there were no law to be broken, argued St. Paul, there would be no sin to be committed.

The aery Maudoodi philosophy however, does not seem to originate from St. Paul alone. It also resurrects the image of Bahauallah. What the Messiah had done by rejecting the law of the Torah, according to St. Paul, Bahauallah claimed to have done to the Qur'anic law. Thus he pronounced himself to be the liberator of mankind from the bondage of the Qur'an. Nonetheless he did not imitate St. Paul entirely because St. Paul had never claimed a role of God personified for himself. He assigned this role of godhead entirely to Jesus. Jesus to him, was in fact a liberator who had undone the blunder committed by 'God the Father' against mankind. The very promulgation of Divine law was tantamount to the creation of sin. Hence, by cancelling the Divine law, what Jesus actually achieved was to have destroyed the very soil from which sin sprouted. By the



same act of redeeming mankind he appears to have simultaneously redeemed 'God the Father' from the folly of creating sin.

Bahdullah applied this philosophy only partially and argued that the Qur'anic law being too heavy and cumbersome had lost its relevance to the people of the modern age. So by liberating mankind from this exacting 'burden' he feigned to set them free, but not entirely so. He betook for himself the role of a new 'Law-maker', after cancelling the previous Law. But in the final analysis Bahdullah succeeded only in making a mockery of God and himself. The shariah that Bahaulah dictated to replace the law of the Quran was no more and no less than a blatant affront to common sense, reason and rationality.

Between these two modern day disciples of St. Paul, i.e. Bahaulah and Maudoodi, nothing seems to have been left of the religion of Islam. As for the Qur'anic law, Bahaulah claimed to have done away with it in the name of emancipation. As for the institution of prophethood, Maudoodi ventured to abolish it by virtue of the same Pauline philosophy. Both failed to achieve their objectives in the sight of God. Both were applauded as great heroes in the sight of men who were already spiritually diseased.

But Maudoodi did not follow St. Paul entirely. He did not go as far as to suggest that the Qur'anic law should be annulled by God, lest the people should incur His wrath by failing to abide by it. He only applied the Pauline principle to the institution of prophethood. Even if non-law-bearing prophets are raised after the Holy Founder^(sa) of Islam, they are likely to be rejected by the majority of Muslims as prophets have been rejected before them. Thus according to Maudoodi's logic, the threat of the curse would keep hanging over their heads like the sword of Damocles. In Maudoodi's estimation by altogether doing away with the institution of prophethood after the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa), God has bestowed untold blessings upon mankind, particularly upon the Muslims.

If the institution of prophethood is finally brought to a close, lest people should be cursed, it is tantamount to pronouncing prophethood itself to be a curse. Thus, the neo-Pauline philosophy of Maudoodi would require God to do away with the curse of prophethood altogether. What deliverance! What redemption! Good riddance is the other name for it!

But it should be clearly understood that this logic is applicable as much to the past as it is to the future. Why was Jesus^(as) sent by God before the Holy Prophet^(sa)? Does not the Holy Qur'an categorically denounce the Jewish people as accursed for the crime of denying him? And what happened to earlier peoples? Did they not defy the Divine messengers sent to them and mock and ridicule them? A sad reflection on human arrogance indeed! Thus declares the Holy Qur'an:

يَحْزَنُ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ
يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

*Woe to mankind. Never does a prophet come to them, but they scorn him and ridicule him!*⁴
(Ch.36; V.31)

It is amazing why God did not think of bringing this curse to an end earlier in time. What happened to the Jewish people throughout the long history of their encounters with the prophets? Were they not cursed at the tongue of David^(as)? What happened to the people of the Book between the time of Moses^(as) and Jesus Christ^(as)?

Was this universal human trend of treating all messengers of God inhumanly not sufficient to make God realise that prophethood was more of a curse than a blessing? Why was Noah^(as) sent and why Abraham^(as) and why Lot^(as)? Did their rejection not cause the wrath of Allah to befall upon their people? But for some insignificant few, were they not obliterated from the face of the earth? Still, the idea that struck Maudoodi did not strike God. Was it because it was Maudoodi's mind which had fabricated this myth of a god? Such infirmity of judgement behoves only a brainchild of his. God kept sending prophet after prophet but arrogant man continued to reject them, one after the other. The curse they thus earned cannot be blamed on the office of prophethood, they themselves are to blame.

Again, if this argument is accepted as valid at any particular point in time, it must also be accepted as valid at all times since the advent of Adam^(as). The fear of rejection of Adam^(as) by his people, who would thus incur upon themselves

the wrath of God, should have been enough justification for God never to have sent Adam^(as) at all. If the fear that people should reject a lesser prophet from among the followers of Hadhrat Muhammad^(sa) is a legitimate reason for the cessation of prophethood altogether, then the same fear should have stood in the way of the advent of the Holy Founder^(sa) of Islam even more powerfully. Is he not the best among all the prophets? Of course he is – as the entire world of Islam testifies. Being supreme among them, for him to be rejected was to earn the worst curse of God ever inflicted. Alas Maudoodi seems to have completely forgotten that not only was the Holy Prophet^(sa) rejected by most of the world's population of his time, but also his truth is still denied by three-fourths of mankind today. At best, it is just one-fourth of the human population which can be described as believers in the Holy Prophet^(sa). But can they really be defined as Muslims? Is their faith in the Holy Founder^(sa) of Islam genuine enough to include them among those who really believe? Maudoodi thinks otherwise. Out of the one billion population of the Muslims, nine hundred and ninety-nine in every one thousand are already condemned by him to be virtually non-Muslims:

یہ انبوہ عظیم جس کو مسلمان قوم کہا جاتا ہے اس کا حال یہ ہے کہ اس کے
 ۹۹۹ فی ہزار افراد اسلام کا علم رکھتے ہیں نہ حق اور باطل کی تمیز سے آشنا ہیں، نہ
 ان کا اخلاقی نقطہ نظر اور ذہنی رویہ اسلام کے مطابق تبدیل ہو رہے۔ باپ سے بیٹے
 اور بیٹے سے پوتے کو بس مسلمان کا نام ملتا چلا آ رہا ہے اس لئے یہ مسلمان ہیں۔^۳

‘This huge hotch potch body of the so-called Muslims is such as nine hundred and ninety nine out of every one thousand have no knowledge of Islam whatsoever. They are incapable of distinguishing right from wrong. Nor have their moral and mental attitudes been in the least Islamicised. From father to son, from son to grandson, they have only inherited a Muslim name and no more.’

From Maudoodi's account of the scheme of things, God had better not send any Divine book or messenger lest His poor creatures should be cursed forever.

Yet Maudoodi believes in the justification of God sending all His prophets since the time of Adam^(as) to the time of the best among them. If their rejection

brought a curse from God on those who rejected them, what exceptional harm would it do if one more like them is added to the list. But the paradox in Maudoodi becomes more of an eyesore when he is discovered to believe in the re-advent of Jesus Christ^(as) as a prophet of God.

If instead of the old Jesus^(as), a new non-law-bearing prophet was to be raised from among the people of Islam, how could he in any way alter this eternal grand plan of cursedness? Why should only his advent be objectionable while all those before him since the time of Adam^(as) served the same Divine decree of a perpetual curse?

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- * Zoroaster, a great prophet of Persia, is understood by many Zoroastrians to be a dualist. many others insist he was a monotheist. His name is spelt and pronounced differently. we have adopted Zoroaster, the English version, with which most people are familiar. Nietzsche, however, refers to him as 'Zarathustra'. In this context we have used his term with his spelling but the person is the same.

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