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Editorial

Ever since his advent, the person and purpose of Jesus^(as), Son of Mary, have been the subjects of much debate and discussion. No other prophet has appeared in the entire history of religion whose birth, death, life, teachings and re-advent, have been subject to greater debate than Jesus^{'(as)}. This is mainly because the significance of these is not confined to Christianity alone. It transcends the world of Christianity to other world religions, Judaism and Islam in particular.

These religions remain at odds with each other about the basic facts of the life and ideology of Jesus^(as). Too many myths and legends have emerged in these religions relating to the mission of Jesus^(as) to distance man from the realities of life and make faith imaginary. A natural concomitant of this is the spread of materialism, immorality and irreligion among contemporary youth initiated, besides other

factors, by a fatal trend towards a total rejection of religion in general and disbelief in God in particular.

Religion, if it is to have its natural and proper place in spiritual life must be based on incontrovertible facts, the search for and assimilation of which is one of the principal aims of this periodical. It is generally for these reasons that over the last century many pages of this journal have been devoted to the person of Jesus^(as) in an attempt to divest him of all false appurtenances of divinity and disentangle the labyrinth of controversy surrounding him.

Much of this edition is again devoted to the person of Jesus^(as). *Muslim Beliefs in Jesus Christ^(as)* is an excellent summary of the Islamic notions relating to Jesus^(as), believed to be a noble prophet and honoured messenger of Allah, holding a unique place among the prophets of Israel. In

this review of relevant scriptures, the author examines the various schools of thought surrounding the person and mission of Jesus^(as). Many conclusions are drawn from this article, the most important, perhaps, being the fulfilment of the prophecies relating to the second advent of Jesus^(as) in person of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian.

Following on from that, in *Jesus Versus Finality*, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru) examines, from the vantage point of rationality, the incompatible belief held by the majority of Muslims today that Jesus^(as), Son of Mary, would return to earth as a prophet among the Muslims in the Latter Days while still maintaining that the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) is the last prophet. This belief has arisen from various misinterpretations of relevant Qur'anic passages and from a misunderstanding of vital traditions of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) on the subject. In this piece, the

author has relied purely on logic and common sense which have neither creed nor colour. Rationality, common alike to all peoples and religions, appeals to the human intellect and provides a basis of agreement on this fundamental issue. Amongst other things, it is what makes this article, an extract from the book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*, one of the best ever written on the subject.

Tommy Kallon – UK

Notes & Comments

Professional Fasting?

In this narcissistic age, it is all about standing out. Being merely talented, it appears, is no good any more. Or at least, this seems to be the philosophy of David Blaine, and perhaps is why he embarked upon a strong dose of self-imposed martyrdom framed in a glass cage. The American illusionist has moved on from the standard legerdemain of card tricks to feats of performance and endurance that have kept him in the front pages of newspapers and television screens. An estimated fourteen million American viewers watched him entomb himself in a block of ice in Times Square for two and a half days. He followed this up by standing on top of a 100-ft pole in a Manhattan park for 35 hours, before jumping down into a pile of cardboard boxes.

For his next trick, Blaine is in London and a total of 44 days incarcerated inside a Plexiglas

box suspended over the River Thames at Tower Bridge, an event filmed by satellite television. He has no food: his only means of sustenance is water delivered by a feeding tube. He is fitted with a catheter and his only baggage is a backpack containing diapers, Wet Wipes and lip balm.

Such feats which appear more and more a macabre dance with mortality than magic is what the daredevil refers to as the 'purity of suffering.' The problem for the magician is that some have responded with a heart-warming refusal to be impressed. No medical team was willing to monitor his progress in the glass case for what he claimed would make valuable scientific research. Unless he gets through a record number of nappies, this would not be one for the record books either as the *Guinness Book of Records* has turned him down on the grounds that it does

not do starvation records. Quite rightly so, otherwise the book will be full of anorexic schoolgirls and cadaverous victims of famines.

But more than anything else, Blaine's organisation was not quite prepared for the level of antipathy their man has provoked. This was not the intended response to ostentatious fasting, an act repeatedly introduced as his toughest endurance feat yet. The crowds were supposed to faint with anxiety, empathise through the long nights, discern some noble purpose for his supposed travail. Instead some come to participate in an exhilarating act of collective ridicule; they watch, eat and cackle.

Worse than that, the magician has come under assault from fish and chips, eggs, golf balls and laser pens from a public expressing their outrage. He failed to appreciate that people would only be impressed if he were doing this for charity; to raise money for famine relief, for

instance. Not when he is to walk away with an estimated £5m from TV and licensing for a dull episode of professional fasting.

So some good does come out of all this. The prospect of Blaine at the mercy of a good humoured, if predominantly satirical crowd, composed of all ages, classes and ethnicities, hints at some residual, collective good sense and moral judgement, which can discriminate between perhaps a huckster and a hero. It bears a strong message of disapproval for a stunt which makes a mockery of the hunger strikes of Aung San Suu Kyi and Mahatma Gandhi, is an insult to Third World charities and the starving of the world.

Fasting has been inculcated in all religious disciplines based on Divine revelation. Says the Holy Qur'an, the final code of conduct revealed to mankind by Allah Almighty:

O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before

you, so that you may become righteous.
(Ch.2: V.184)

As David Blaine emerges from his faux-starvation, millions of Muslims around the world would be looking forward to the start of the holy month of Ramadan with a joyous surge of anticipation that inspires the hearts of the young and the old. During Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar calendar in Islam, fasting – complete abstention from food, drink and conjugal relations from dawn till sunset – is obligatory upon every adult Muslim, subject to certain permissible exemptions. The purpose, as of all forms of Islamic worship, is to draw people closer to Allah. It is a physical, moral and spiritual exercise designed to promote righteousness and guard against evil. Among other things, the Muslim learns, through personal experience, what hunger, poverty, loneliness and discomforts mean to the less fortunate sections of society.

Ramadan is a season of closer

communion with Allah Almighty, providing numerous opportunities to seek His pleasure. As such, the birth of the new moon which signifies the start of the lunar month is greeted with excitement. Felicitations are exchanged all around as mosques begin to be filled with eager worshippers. An extra prayer service is held every evening during which the congregation is privileged to listen to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an from beginning to end. Numerous people read the Holy Qur'an through by themselves. Others hear it interpreted and expounded during discourses held and a reflection over the Divine signs contained therein take up a larger portion of one's time. Most of the night is passed in supplication and in praise, glorification and remembrance of Allah. Greater attention is directed towards philanthropic causes such as caring for the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, the sick, the distressed, the neighbour and the wayfarer. Towards the close of each day, the heart experiences a glow of

gratitude to the Divine that His Grace has enabled one to approach the end of the fast having spent the night and the day striving to conduct oneself in conformity to His will.

Numberless people experience closer communion with their Maker and Creator during this blessed month, the intensity and frequency of which continue to increase as the month progresses. During the last ten days of Ramadan, many people go into retreat, as it were, into a mosque, devoting their entire time not occupied by obligatory and voluntary prayer services, to the study of the Holy Qur'an and the remembrance of Allah. This period of complete devotion is the culmination of the physical, moral and spiritual discipline instituted by Islam. Fasting is the only form of worship in which the only audience is none other than God himself. In other forms of worship, one could allege that someone is praying or giving alms to be seen as amongst the faithful but a fast is only undertaken for God – there is no

show-off. The spiritual recompense of the Islamic fast and its concomitant activities is beyond the fancy of the materialistic illusionist. The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) is reported to have said:

'There are appropriate spiritual rewards for all worship and righteous action; the ultimate reward of a person who observes the fast solely for winning the pleasure of Allah is Allah Himself.'

Tommy Kallon – UK

Postscript – Mr David Blaine emerged 4 stones lighter on 20th October 2003 and in an emotional outburst declared that the experience had taught him an appreciation of all the little things created by God.

Jesus Versus Finality

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



The beliefs that the last prophet, Muhammad^(sa), has already come and gone and the assertion that Jesus^(as) would descend to earth as a prophet after him are so inconsistent that they cannot be owned simultaneously. In fact this cocktail of two unrelated issues was made by some Ulema of the late medieval times. At the time of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an any connection between the two was unthinkable.

For the sake of the unfamiliar non-Muslim reader we need to explain the historical background of this issue lest they should fail to understand what the row is all about. The verse *Khatamun-Nabiyyeen* is one of the most fundamental verses of the Qur'an which is profoundly rich in meaning and contains many possible connotations. But none of its connotations can even remotely be related to the so-called ascent of Jesus Christ^(as). Hence the Mullah's plea that Jesus^(as), was lifted to the fourth heaven because this verse of finality was to be revealed by God is absolutely ridiculous and melodramatic. This so-called bodily ascent of Jesus^(as) has nothing to do with this verse nor with any verse in the Qur'an. The idea of raising Jesus Christ^(as), to heaven had never occurred to God. The entire Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) absolve God of this absurdity by a total absence of any such reference to the ascent of Jesus^(as). For the Mullahs to maintain that God had lifted him to forestall the problem created by this verse is a blatant lie and an unfounded allegation against the Qur'an. Thus it is the Mullah who is creating the problem himself and resolving it in the name of God. To bind this unfounded

conjecture to one of the most fundamental verses of the Qur'an is an act of abomination. The reasons which motivate the medievalist clergy to do this and the deceptive manner in which they attempt to fuse these absolutely unrelated issues is the main subject of discussion here. Having familiarised the reader with the background, now we proceed to tell the tale of the Mullah's desperation. With this in mind we hope that the reader will fully understand that which follows.

Despite the fact that the imagined ascent or descent of Jesus^(as) has nothing to do with the independent declaration of the Holy Prophet's^(sa) finality, the clergy still assert that there is a definite link between the two. Prophet Jesus^(as), son of Mary, they insist, will be personally brought back from the heavens because no new prophet can be raised after Prophet Muhammad^(sa). This ingenious device of bringing an old prophet back to earth instead of raising one from the Ummah to meet the new need may seem highly laudable to the Muslim orthodoxy but their enthusiasm cannot be shared by ordinary humans. No one with an iota of common sense can attribute this cheap act of trickstering to God the Almighty, the All Wise. Only the Mullahs can and this exactly is what they attempt to do. By connecting the return of Jesus^(as) with the finality of the Holy Prophet^(sa), they think that they have rescued God from the consequences of a premature declaration of finality. Thus, the clergy believes that they have saved God from a grave dilemma of contradiction. This has to be the brainchild of a half-wit Mullah to whom it rightly belongs. The promise of finality to any prophet by God, despite His knowledge that it could not be kept, is inconceivable of Him. To make a show of keeping the promise by bringing an old prophet after the demise of the last one is sheer mockery. Thus, judging God by his own standards, the Mullah first attributes a shameful act of contradiction to Him, then comes forward to help Him save His face from it. This blatant attempt is not made without a purpose. To the Mullah it is a great idea having multiple advantages.

It saves the life of Jesus^(as) from an ignoble death upon the cross and frustrates his enemies' attempts to prove him false. Imagine their exasperation at finding Jesus^(as) escape their clutches by vanishing into thin air (if there is any air at all in the fourth heaven where he is assumed to have ascended). But this measure must also have created another small problem for God. When and why he should be brought back to earth must have been the question. After all he could not be left abandoned in his heavenly confine till Doomsday. As far as God is concerned the problem does not exist. As far as the Mullah is concerned the problem is created by him to hide his own contradiction of believing in the finality of the Holy Prophet^(sa), as well as believing in the re-advent of Jesus^(as) as a prophet after him. That is the only reason why he connects the verse of *Khatamun-Nabiyyeen* with the imaginary ascent of Jesus^(as). He does it with a cunning deceitfulness which cannot be detected by the ordinary Muslim masses. The following is the case he builds:

1. Jesus^(as) was lifted to heaven with a purpose and will be brought back finally to earth.
2. The coming of an old prophet after the last one had appeared would not break the seal of his finality.
3. The need for a new prophet in the latter days will be fulfilled without creating any dilemma of contradiction in God's Decree.

There are some who kill two birds with one stone but the orthodoxy seems to know how to kill three with one! In reality, however, by shifting the twist of their own mind to that of God, they commit an unpardonable act of blasphemy.

We believe that by concocting this mindless exercise and spinning such a bizarre tale the most prominent advantage the Mullah gains,

among others, is to escape the possibility of any Divine authority to be ever imposed upon him. Good riddance once and for all from the institution of prophethood and the danger of ever losing his absolute command over the ignorant Muslim masses. The belief that a two thousand year old prophet would come again has the inherent guarantee that no prophet would ever come again. Thus the Mullah's grip on Islam will be perpetuated and he will forever retain his despotic authority over the unsuspecting Muslim masses.

The dead never return from their otherworldly abode. Once departed, none has ever paid a second visit to begin mixing with the living. Never has God brought back any dwellers of the past. Those who literally await the return of Jesus may continue to do so till eternity. He will never come, nor will the Mullah ever quit his demagogic command over the Muslim world. Left forever at the mercy of the Mullah, who knows no mercy, the masses are duped to wait in vain for the return of Jesus^(as) bearing a cup of elixir in his hand. Islam will continue to suffer year after year, century after century under the despotic rule of the Muslim clergy.

Looking yet again at the same question of Jesus^(as) versus finality, the solution proposed by the Mullah is untenable anyway. To borrow an old prophet from the bygone Ummah of Moses^(as) for the completely different requirements of the Muslim Ummah of the latter days can in no way resolve their problems. A borrowed prophet, they fail to understand, will be the one who will violate the sanctity of the Holy Prophet's^(sa) finality and not the one who is born and raised within his Ummah as his spiritual son.

Over and above what has been discussed, it must be noted that in the context of the present discussion mere chronology cannot determine whether a prophet is old or new. If a prophet comes again with exactly the same attributes which he had during his first advent then of course

his visit could be treated as a repeat visit. But, if before his second advent, he has been radically changed in his physical characteristics and aptitudes and his attitude to his enemies has fundamentally changed, he can in no way be described as an old prophet come again. In addition, the spiritual status he holds, the message he delivers, the miracles he works and the authority he exercises over the whole of mankind has no similarity with the Jesus^(as) of the New Testament. It is also worthy of note that the Jesus^(as) whose advent was promised by the Holy Prophet^(sa) has a completely different identity from that of the previous Jesus^(as). The promised Jesus^(as) would not be a prophet of Israel any more. He will no longer be subordinate to the Torah, or to the Gospels he himself taught. Nor will he be confined to the domain of the House of Israel. If, despite all this, the Mullah must insist that the Promised Jesus^(as) is the same Jesus^(as) of Israel then they must admit that before being brought back to earth he would be completely reconditioned and recommissioned in all the essential features of his prophethood. If that is not the advent of a new prophet, what else is? No Mullah would concede that such a Jesus as the one described could ever be assimilated into Islam without compromising the principle of the Holy Prophet^(sa) finality. What remains for them is only to believe that Jesus^(as), would return to earth without any change wrought in him. Once here, he would be budded onto the tree of Islam and re-grow as a reformer fit to be called a universal Muslim prophet. We should be permitted to draw the attention of the Mullah that even then, he will remain foreign to Islam, unable to shed his non-Muslim personality of an Israelite. His case would be like that of a bud from a tree of a different species grafted onto the stem of another. If a lotus can be grafted onto a cherry tree, or a blueberry to a pineapple bush, only then can one visualize a pre-Islamic prophet grafted onto Islam. But to what avail. The grafted stem can never lose its identity. What would grow out of Jesus^(as) even when bonded to Islam, would still be a Jesus^(as) of Israelitic identity.

Jesus^(as), therefore, even if physically transferred to the world of Islam, can never change his true identity. The Qur'an will continue to describe him merely as a prophet to the children of Israel. Any infuriated Muslim divine could stand up to defy his claim on the basis of this Qur'anic injunction alone, if he ever returns. He will be roundly denounced as an impostor. By what authority, he will be questioned, did he abrogate the proclamation of the Qur'an that he was merely a prophet to the House of Israel? As long as the Qur'an defines him as such, his identity will never be changed; he was and will always remain a prophet to the House of Israel.

... رَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

... a Prophet to the children of Israel ...
(Ch.3: V.50)

Ours is an age when the fundamentalists have overexcited the sensibility of the Muslim masses to the issue of blasphemy. Evidently, the life of Jesus^(as) will not be safer in the hands of Muslim fanatics than it was in the hands of the Jewish people. Moreover, he will have to face other multifarious dangers which he did not encounter during his first advent. The world of Islam is split into schisms far more sharply and intolerantly than the world of Judaism was at the time of Jesus Christ^(as).

The threat to his life will be grave no matter where he lands in a Muslim state – if he ever lands! If his landing strip happens to be in Iran, evidently he will be subjected to a gruelling examination regarding his doctrinal position. Does he believe in the twelve Imams or does he reject them? Does he believe in the *Khilafat* of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Uthman or does he not? Does he believe in the unbroken continuity of succession of Hadhrat Ali to the Holy Founder^(sa) of Islam? If he conforms to the Shi'ite beliefs in answer to these

questions, the threat to his life will still not be averted because of the additional problem of the disappearance of the twelfth Imam. It will be demanded of him as to how he dared return to earth alone while their *Holy* twelfth Imam (Al-Mahdi) is still in hiding somewhere in space. Without the personal testimony of that Imam to the truth of Jesus^(as), he will most certainly be stigmatised and penalised for being false.

If he is found guilty of endorsing the right to *Khilafat* of the first three Caliphs, Hadhrat Abu Bakr, Hadhrat Umar and Hadhrat Uthman (may Allah be pleased with them), he will be denounced even more vehemently as an impostor. After this, his being condemned to death would be but a routine procedure of Shi'ite jurisprudence.

However, if he descends in a Sunni territory while holding Shi'ite views, no sooner will he land than be despatched back to heaven. If on the other hand he holds Sunni views, his life will still not be out of danger because each of the Sunni sects dwelling in that country would require him to testify to the truth of their beliefs, or be rejected as a liar. It is hard to conceive Jesus Christ^(as) converting to the *Barelvi* faith or becoming a Wahhabi fundamentalist the moment he touches down in their respective countries. Whichever of the two will he claim as his own? Either way it will be tantamount to bargaining for a death warrant issued by the clergy of the other.

The reason for this condemnation would not just be his belonging to a different sect; the reason for his condemnation to death would be his imposture as a true prophet of God. No true prophet of God can hold wrong religious views they will argue. Each sect, would judge Jesus^(as) by the testimony of their own beliefs; none will judge their beliefs by the testimony of Jesus^(as).

There will also arise the question as to which school of jurisprudence he belongs. Will he belong to the school of Hadhrat Imam Malik or

that of Imam Abu Hanifa or Imam Shafe'i or Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal? Having had no experience of such juristic wrangles, he will find himself helplessly trapped in the middle of this rigmarole. How he would wish that he had never ever returned to earth! Even if he is accepted by the sect whose garb he finally decides to wear, he will be strongly rejected by the remaining seventy-one sects. Over and above this will he not continue to confront the danger of rejection by all on the basis of the Qur'anic verse mentioned above, which declares him to be *merely a prophet to the House of Israel?*

The shout of 'Go back to where you really belong' may be heard from the mouth of any fanatic in the assembled crowd. 'Take off and re-route your flight to the State of Israel,' may well be curtly demanded of him. 'If you are man enough to face a retrial at their hands, go to the Jewish people and prove your true identity.'

What shall God do at this new turn of events one wonders. Will He command the angels to hasten to Jesus^(as) rescue once again, lifting him to the same remote celestial abode? Or will he be abandoned by God to shift for himself at the mercy of the Muslim or the Jewish clergy? Whether he will be re-crucified by Israelite soldiers in the state of Israel or whether he will be hung till death by a Muslim hangman, is a question which only the future will tell – if he ever visits this miserable world of ours again. Far more than his previous advent, he will find the new one to be a mission impossible.

On a more serious note, we beg to remind the reader that when religion is interpreted without rationality, when faith is divorced of reason, all that they give birth to are myths without legitimacy and legends without substance. Mindless trustees of faith succeed only in making a mockery of Divine wisdom.

The great scholars of medieval ages who failed to understand the true

import of such prophecies can genuinely be excused. Theirs was a different age. Their understanding of the world and the cosmos around it was as yet merely conjectural. But the contemporary medievalists who are born and raised in this age of enlightenment have no justification for their gross misreading of Divine prophecies. The soul of holy Jesus^(as), the true servant of God, has undoubtedly returned to Him to occupy the lofty station he is assigned. The Jesus they await is a mere fantasy of their own minds. What does one care therefore, if that phantom figure is crucified or stabbed to death or hung a thousand times! The whole episode of Jesus^(as) bodily ascent and preservation somewhere in space, merely to fulfil the future need for a prophet, is so provocative to the human sense of propriety! Add to this the impunity of their attributing this nonsense to God and wonder what stuff their minds are made of!

Let the world of Islam get rid of this fantasy once and for all and let the clerics who nurture it get lost. The death of their age will usher in the age of the revival of Islam.

Last, but not least, there is yet another strong objection against the suggestion that a prophet of Israel could be somehow trimmed to fit into the robe of a Muslim prophet. How can the orthodox clergy forget that during his absence from earth the Holy Qur'an could not have been revealed to Jesus simultaneously with the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). This angle of observation raises many difficult questions for the clergy to answer. The foremost among them is the issue of his conversion. When and from whom did he learn that the greatest of all the prophets had appeared down below on earth? Did he testify to his truth forthwith becoming a believer? If he did become one – the first ever in space – how did he learn to practise Islam without knowing anything of the Qur'an?

As such, whether the Qur'an was revealed to him directly by God

through the Archangel Gabriel, is the highly crucial question which must be addressed and answered.

If the Qur'an was revealed to him while he was still in space, he would certainly have become a partner prophet to Prophet Muhammad^(sa), like Aaron was to Moses^(as), both enjoying an almost similar status. If the Qur'an was not revealed directly to him through the archangel, what would be the nature of his faith before his return to earth? Had he remained a Judeo-Christian while Islam had been declared by God as the last universal religion of mankind? Was he treated as an exceptional case and allowed to remain a non-Muslim after the advent of the Holy Founder^(sa) of Islam? If not, then one cannot escape the logical conclusion that the Qur'an must have been revealed to him somehow.

Will the Mullahs suggest that instead of the archangel, the Holy Prophets^(sa) should himself have delivered the message to him? But the problem is that when the Holy Prophet^(sa) delivered the message of the Qur'an to his companions no intermediary agent was required. Whatever was revealed to him through the archangel, he directly passed it on to his companions. But Jesus^(as), according to the medieval Mullahs, was sitting high above somewhere in the heavens with no possible direct link with the Holy Prophet^(sa). So there are only two options left. Either he should be considered as totally unaware of the revelation of the Qur'an till his eventual return to earth, or the Qur'an should only be revealed to Jesus^(as) as a message from the Holy Prophet^(sa). But how can this message be lifted to him while in space unless the archangel is again involved in this exercise? The scenario which develops is so insulting and so abhorrent that a true believer cannot entertain it even for a moment. Imagine the archangel delivering the Holy Qur'an to the Holy Prophet^(sa) and then begging him to recite it back to him so that he could deliver it to Jesus^(as) as a message from the Holy Prophet^(sa) and not from God.

Returning to the issue of Jesus^(as) conversion to Islam, if the Qur'an was not revealed to Jesus^(as) at all, but he believed in the Holy Prophet^(sa) in a vague nondescript manner, then at best he could be described as a non-practising Muslim with no knowledge of Qur'anic teachings. The common herd of Muslims anywhere on earth could claim a better status in Islam despite their ignorance. How would a Jesus such as this be welcomed back to earth by the great Muslim theologians and clerics of the time? To redress his ignorance will he be rushed to the presence of the Imam Al-Mahdi the instant he lands so that he could be initiated without further loss of time? No sooner than he accepts Islam, will he be offered the chair of judgement over all the conflicting Muslim sects? When and by whom will he be taught Islam fast enough to discharge such grave responsibilities with absolute precision and perfection?

If the clergy insist that he must have been recommissioned as a Muslim prophet, while still in space before his descent to earth, then how could he be treated as an old prophet of the pre-Islamic era?

To conclude, the borrowing of a prophet from a pre-Islamic era requires that either he is recommissioned in space as a new prophet in Islam after the advent of the last Prophet, or he is to be converted after his descent to earth and then recommissioned as a Muslim prophet.

However much this bizarre idea of inherent contradictions may appear devoid of all common sense to the rest of the world, the orthodox clergy is not perturbed in the least. Reason and rationality have no role to play in their understanding of Divine prophecies. They take them literally without ever realising what damage this may do to the cause of Islam. It is this madness which is largely responsible for all the chaos we observe today prevailing in their perceptions, hopes and aspirations.

All said and done, the borrowing of a non-Muslim prophet from a pre-Islamic age does not transpire to be as profitable as it appeared to the clergy. It is a tribute to their relentless obstinacy that they would much rather have a convert prophet from space than a prophet born here on earth, within Islam. They do so because there are many more advantages from this fairy tale visit of Jesus to be gained. He, as a visitor from space, would not be the same ordinary human prophet as he was but would have amassed prodigal superhuman powers unheard of in the history of prophethood before his return to earth.

This mythical image of Jesus is evidently created by their same tendency to over-literalize prophecies. Evidently they do not care what price they have to pay for the folly of rejecting reason and rationality. To Jesus Christ^(as) they assign the task of salvaging whatever remains of the dignity and honour of Islam in the latter days. It will be he, they believe, who will launch a single-handed powerful offensive against the anti-Christ on a global scale. Having roundly defeated and destroyed the anti-Christ – the one-eyed monster, Jesus will hand over the keys of his world dominion to the people of Islam, and will also distribute the immense treasure and riches which he will have amassed. Thus all the spoils of his war against the anti-Christ will he lay at the feet of the Muslim *Ummah*.



The orthodoxy's vision of Jesus' re-advent when he will literally smash all the crosses in the world to smithereens

Having resolved their political and economic problems, he will turn his full attention to such prophecies as relate to religion. He will start by launching his campaign against Christianity. His strategy will be to break every cross in the world, whatever material it is made of. He will visit every cathedral, every monastery, every church, every

temple, every Christian hermitage. He will walk every street of every township and stare at every passer-by in search of any cross. Ladies perhaps will become the prime object of his scrutiny because he will be aware of their despicable habit of having crosses engraved upon their jewellery and ornaments. He will take care of the fact that they also wear crosses hanging around their necks. Thus he will snatch away every bangle, every bracelet, every pendant and earring with the sign of the cross upon it. Woe to the ladies who dare to cross the path of that Jesus, but where can they escape and hide, the poor defenceless wretches? He will enter every house and search every cabinet and jewellery box. Every wall and every corner will be scanned. Crosses must be literally broken and wiped out from the face of earth. Until he has accomplished this task to the full he will not rest in peace. This is the vision of the Muslim orthodoxy of the mission of Jesus Christ if ever he returns to earth, but that is not all.

Having completely disposed of the symbol of Trinity, he would then turn to another task which prophecies assign to him, if they are taken literally. He will lose no time in beginning to kill every non-Muslim inhabiting the world. Either they must convert to Islam or they must die – these will be their only options. He will go about this slaughtering business in a rather unusual way. He will breathe fire like a mythical dragon, while no myth has ever presented such a dragon before, even in the wildest tales of fantasy. His blazing breath will scorch to death innumerable infidels even when they are miles away from him. Those within the reach of his sword, will have their heads stricken off and made to roll. He will identify them unmistakably because on the forehead of each non-believer would appear the imprint in bold: *Al-Kafir*, the nonbeliever. Thus he will leave none alive except the Muslims, and the de-Christianised Christians of course, who will be left without a single cross to worship. Hence the curtain will fall upon this unique carnage by the imaginary Jesus, filling the entire earth with fetid odour, an obnoxious stench of rotting

bodies, some slaughtered, some scorched to death. Hatred will generate more hatred, bloodshed will lead to more bloodshed.

The last gory act of Jesus upon the earth will be to annihilate the species of swine. No quarter will be granted to pigs. All boars and all sows and all their brood will be put to the sword – each one of them. Hand on sword, fire in breath, Jesus will visit every township, every village, every street, every house, every shack and every sty in search of the hiding rascals. He will visit every wilderness, will thrash all the bushes of Africa, and will hunt for them in the rain-forests of South America. China will not be spared for that matter, nor will Japan. The islands of the South Pacific will also be combed where the flesh of pig is considered a highly prized delicacy.



The imaginary Jesus as painted by Christian artists, is shown in the vision of the Muslim orthodoxy as carrying a sword in hand during the carnage of the swine.

Evidently no prophet of God in the entire history of mankind has ever performed such bloody, filthy feats as are attributed to the Jesus Christ envisioned by the Muslim orthodoxy. This is what the clergy in Islam have done to the profound wisdom of the Holy Prophet^(sa). They have failed to penetrate across the bodies of letters to reach the soul and spirit of the prophecy they contained.

The real task assigned to the Promised Christ in this prophecy was to purify the human society from inhuman behaviour and some evil habits which the swine symbolises. There are many animals and birds which steal the fruits of the farmer's labour for the sake of their survival but do not destroy the crops and trees just for the fun of it. The swine stands out among all the animals in this destructive tendency. The swine is also notorious for eating the corpses of its

young ones. No other non-marine animals are known to devour their young ones when they die. A bloodthirsty lion, or even a ferocious wolf, will rather die of hunger, woefully sitting beside the dead bodies of their brood, than to even dream of eating their flesh. Dogs do not eat the corpses of their dead puppies either. Pigs and boars, it should be remembered, are vegetarians, yet by some devilish instinct they relish eating the corpses of their young ones. Evidently therefore, the message implied in this prophecy has to be to wage a Holy War against the perverted habit of humans to be inclined to genocide and to feel free to usurp the rights of the weak. The pig's habit of eating its own piglets could be likened to the child abuse of the modern age. Child abuse may be directed against one's own children or against the children of others, either way it is swinish in character. Recently it has become a subject of common talk in modern society, so needs no further elaboration. No other animal can match humans in this ugliness.

War against evil has always been the occupation of prophets. As such, Jesus Christ^(as) in his second advent would be no oddity among them if his second advent is understood to be metaphorical. But a Jesus such as the one who is idolised by the Muslim clergy – a literal murderer of the swine – is what they need and await to welcome. The moment this apple of their eyes arrives and discharges his task of eliminating the pig species from the animal kingdom, he must needs be applauded. So will he be applauded and befitting homage would be paid to his last glorious days spent on the planet earth.

Glory be to Lord Jesus will be chanted over sea, over land, over hill, over dale. The church bells will not toll for the carnage he will make but the minarets will resound with the shouts of the Muezzin heard far and wide, *Allah-O-Akbar, Allah-O-Akbar, God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest* – and *glory be to our saviour the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Lastly, before Jesus' departure from earth, there is yet another highly important business for him to conduct, but in this he must be assisted by the Mullah. Throughout it has been only Jesus Christ serving the cause of the Mullah. Let the Mullah serve his cause now, for once at least! All that Jesus would demand of the Mullahs after his global exploits would be to help him in the task of getting married. After the ruinous trail of rampage and bloodshed that he would have left behind, marriage would not be an unwelcome change for him.

If the Mullah has any serious regard for the literal fulfilment of prophecies he must find him a highly gifted young Muslim damsel who should not fail to bear him children. Christ is about to be married! Some great Mullah must be found to read his wedding sermon and enquire from the would be father-in-law of Christ if he consents to give the hand of his daughter to that of Jesus. After his consent would come the turn of Jesus, at last, to confirm the proposed marriage. What happy moments, what ecstasy! After a celibacy of two thousand years or more he would stand up and nod his head in affirmation *Yes I do, O loving Mullah, yes I do*. In what better manner could the exploits of Jesus Christ be celebrated than that! From North to South, from East to West, hymns will be sung in his praise and marriage songs will fill the air with their sweet melody. All that is left for him is to hopefully wait for the delivery of his blessed first-born with a holy string of other sons and daughters to follow. Thus by producing children at the ripe old age of two thousand years plus, he will create the greatest of all the miracles he had ever worked. His spirit has always been strong but the flesh too would not lag behind in strength it seems. What a miracle indeed that the passage of time makes him grow even stronger, while old age is left buried far behind in the land of his youthful first advent. Finally, the hour of death will arrive, but what a glorious enviable death it will be! Blessed be the day he was born and blessed be the way he will die.

This is the enchanting tale of Jesus which, if ever realised, the Mullahs will always tell their pupils in every *Madrasah* of Islamic instruction, year after year, generation after generation.

A more gruesome example is hard to find in the entire history of religion of how Divine prophecies are utilised out of shape, by a mindless materialist clergy. But this is not a prerogative of the Muslim clergy alone. Whenever and wherever the priesthood takes over the command of religious orders they are likely to turn facts into fiction and realities into myths. This is the price man always pays for entrusting his faith to a hierarchy divested of common sense and reason, unable to distinguish between fair and foul. Whatever their business, rationality is not a commodity in which they trade.

The most tragic of all the religious leaders of the world is the case of the Muslim priesthood. The vain hopes they build for the ultimate victory of Islam are based utterly on misconstrued prophecies turned into mirages and illusions. They are no longer fit to lead any religious order, let alone Islam! They are no longer fit to follow any prophet of God, be he old or new.

Their vision of the final victory of Islam, attained entirely by the might of Jesus, absolves them of any role to play in the final struggle for the victory of Islam. In truth, what they need is not a prophet but an enslaved giant. They fail to realise that the type of Jesus for whom they aspire has never appeared in the entire comity of prophets before. No prophet is mentioned in the Qur'an or in any other scripture who would fight single-handedly for the supremacy of his people while they sit idly by. This is what the Jews demanded of Moses^(as) and were denied. If the final victory of any religion can thus be achieved without blood, sweat or toil, where is there room for a prophet of God who invariably calls to the path of sacrifices? Their vision of a prodigal Jesus corresponds to a genie rather than that of a Divine

Reformer. The real issue with them has never been a choice between an old prophet or a new one, it has always been between a genie and a prophet. Their attitude is reminiscent of a tale from the classic work of *A Thousand and One Nights*.

Once upon a time, so it is narrated, a magician in the guise of a vendor roamed the streets of Baghdad shouting at the top of his voice, ‘Old lamps for new! Old lamps for new!’ Many a housewife rushed to the door to have her old lamp swapped for the new ones he offered. A happy bargain indeed, they thought, and so it was. Yet there was one exception. Little did one of the housewives know that when she exchanged her old lamp for a new one offered by the swindler, the old lamp she was giving away had imprisoned in it a genie with almost unlimited powers. She had no idea that the owner of that lamp could also become the master of the genie. Hence, the interest of the swindler was in the prisoner of the lamp, not in the lamp itself. If that genie could be possessed by swapping a million new lamps for one that is old, no greater bargain could be conceived.

In reality the Mullahs are neither interested in a new lamp lit by the light of Muhammad^(sa) nor are they interested in the old lamp of the *Ummah* of Moses^(as). All they are interested in is the prodigal Jesus of their fancy deemed to be trapped therein. No Divine torch of prophethood means anything to them. A prophet is not what they care for and a prophet is not what they require. All that they need is a giant slave who would lead them to all the worldly riches at their bidding.

Political and economic domination of the world is their only ambition for which they are most ill-equipped. All that they are trained for is the letting of Muslim blood at the hands of other Muslims butchered by the knives of others Muslims.

Any bloody revolution brought about by Mullahcracy in any Muslim

country should not mislead, others. In no way can it upset the balance of power in the world. To dream of world domination without scientific and technological advancement, to hope for tilting the existing balance of power without boosting their own economy and revolutionising their industry; to challenge the might of great world powers without the capability of manufacturing highly advanced and sophisticated military hardware is ultimate madness. What little, one may ask, do they have to achieve their goal?

The Mullahs must realise that their blatant distortion of the great prophecies of the Holy Founder^(sa) of Islam will not go unpunished. It will bring them and those whom they lead to nothing but utter ruin. This is the price they must pay for the crime of perverting the wisdom of God. Let them stand on a corner and watch the days and nights slip by. Let them watch the heavenly tracks and strain their ears to listen to the descending footsteps of their mythical saviour from the voids of space. Let them live on and on in hope, and perish again and again in despair, generation after generation after generation. None will ever come to rescue them from the entangled web of their own twisted vision and contradictions between their ideals and practice. Every moment that passes, every second that ticks by, the fear of God is fast vanishing from their daily life. Honesty, justice, selfless sacrifice, mutual brotherly love and respect for other's property have become values of the bygone days – still dearly remembered, but widely shunned. With what yearning they are talked about, with what love and tenderness they are treasured, but only in the storehouses of memories!

Theft, robbery, murder, child abuse, abduction, fornication, adultery, prostitution, fraud, and deceit are only registered by those whom they strike. Others live with them in an unholy alliance. Gang rapes committed in broad daylight by the very custodians of peace; bribery, corruption and brazen-faced violations of law by their lordships, who

are supposed to be the defenders of justice – a society where the wardens of peace lynch and murder peace, a society where disorder is the only order of the day. Yet strangely enough, it is not altogether bereft of its sense of right and wrong. It hates the evil it generates itself, it abhors the horrors it commits. It is sick to death of the pollution it exhales. Everywhere, everyday the evils are decried by the very people who exude them. They are castigated, condemned and censured at such tempo as its resonance can be heard from one end to the other, from the lofty legislative chambers to the lowly shacks of the destitute. Yet how dearly they are embraced at the same time, how firmly clasped, how faithfully adhered to in everyday life at all tiers of society! Their deeds display what their mouths condemn. This is the lie they live or the death they daily die but call it life. Where are the custodians of Muslim values and where are the torch-bearers of decent conduct? Are there any who would lose a single moment of their sweet sleep over these bitter realities? Why should it matter anyway, and what do the Mullahs care! What difference could it make to a society which has been induced to believe that the hour of Divine Decree will finally strike and Jesus^(as), son of Mary, will descend from his heavenly abode to raise Muslims such as these to the lofty chambers of command. It would be they who would carve and shape the destiny of the world. Thus the Mullahs lullaby the Muslim masses to sleep ‘until such time as the Lord of the Christian West will desert their cause and rise in full glory as the Lord of the Muslim East’. Why then, should the Mullah ever bother about the moral destitution of the herds he leads? Why work for their reformation and strive hard needlessly to redeem them from their hopeless state of morbidity? Patience, patience, is the only panacea – just wait for the hour to strike!

Woe to such an hour of destiny if it ever strikes! Damnation is the name for it. For the creatures of Allah to be subjected to the rule of the Mullah is sheer abomination. Jesus Christ! Could he ever permit

himself to stoop so low! Could he ever be a party to such a blatant crime! No –not he! Jesus or no Jesus, no prophet of God would ever debase himself to champion the cause of a depraved people. It is a task fit only for a power-hungry demagogue who would not be reluctant even to become a king of beasts let alone of a beastly people. With or without the help of a Jesus he would not hesitate to step upon the shoulders of prophets to achieve his ambition.

The Mullahs' dreams are madder than those of a mad hatter's but how can they ever be realised? Mad dreams never turn darkness into light, nor do they ever break the dawn of a new day. It is always the dawn of a new day which breaks and shatters such dreams. Let the Mullah sleep forever. Let the empty chambers of his brain be filled with as many illusions as would feed upon his limitless craving for power. Let the people of Islam wake up and wish him to sink into a deep sleep till Doomsday. Let the sleeping Mullah lie and sink into a deeper sleep. And let him leave the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet^(sa) alone to begin to see the light of the day.

Reference:

1. Translation of Ch.3: V.50 by the author.

Friends of Allah

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 Maulvi 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].

Allah states [in the Holy Qur'an] that:

نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَاكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter...
(Ch.41: V.32)

In other words, Allah is stating that he is a friend of the righteous in this world and the next. Implicit in this verse is also the denial of the belief held by some that angels descend only at the time of death and do not descend at any other time in this life. If that were the case, how is it that Allah is a friend in this world and the next.

It is indeed a blessing that those who are the friends of Allah are able to see angels. The next world is one in which we believe through our faith but a righteous person is shown the next world in this very life. Righteous people find Allah in this life – they see Him and He speaks to them. If this is not available to a person then his death and his departure from this world will be a very bad one. A previous saint has stated that, 'He who has never had a true dream will face a frightful end.' The Holy Qur'an holds this to be a sign of a true believer. Take note that he who does not possess this sign, does not possess righteousness. Hence, this should be a prayer from all of us that this condition

is fulfilled in us, that Allah may grant us the blessing of revelation, of true dreams and of visions. This is a special characteristic of a true believer and, hence, it should be present.

There are many other blessings that are granted to the one who is righteous. For instance, in the opening chapter of the Holy Qur'an, *Surah Al Fatiha*, Allah teaches a believer to pray thus:

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ
غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا
الضَّالِّينَ ۝

*Guide us in the right path -
the path of those on whom
Thou hast bestowed Thy
blessings, those who have not
incurred displeasure, and
those who have not gone
astray.*

(Ch.1: V.6-7)

In other words, 'guide us to that path which is straight and which

is the path of those who are the recipients of Your blessing and grace.’ This prayer has been taught so that a human being should acquire high resolve and should understand the intention of the Creator. That intention is that this *Umma*, the followers of the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam, should not spend their life like animals, rather that all veils should be removed [to reveal true knowledge of Allah]. It is the belief of the *Shi’a* sect that attainment of knowledge of Allah came to an end after the twelve Imams. Contrary to this, the prayer [taught in *Surah Al Fatiha*] shows that Allah had intended beforehand that the righteous should attain to the level of prophets and the pious. Another point that is made through this is that the human being has been granted many capabilities that need to be nurtured and developed. A goat’s capabilities cannot develop as it is not a human being. When a person of high resolve hears the stories of prophets and messengers, he does not only wish to have faith in the

blessings granted to that group, he wishes also to gain knowledge of them. He desires to acquire the different levels of knowledge regarding those blessings, beginning with knowledge that is certain [but based on inference], then witnessed certainty to the certainty of experience and absolute truth.

There are three stages of knowledge. Knowledge by way of certainty of inference, knowledge by way of witnessed certainty and the stage of knowledge acquired through the certainty of experience. For example, being certain of the existence of fire having seen smoke rising from a place, is inferred knowledge that is certain. However, to see the fire with one’s own eyes is a witnessed certainty but even higher is the stage of absolute certainty of truth. An example of this would be like putting one’s hand in the fire and from the burning sensation and the movement of the fire ascertaining that the fire is actually there and real. How

unfortunate is the person who does not possess any of the three levels of knowledge [of the spiritual realm].

[*Malfoozat*, Volume 1, pp.18-20]

No matter how many holy people and saints there may have been, they all spent their time striving and perfecting their worship. Baba Fareed Sahib and all the other past holy and saintly people reached their high station due to striving and carrying out special and strenuous spiritual exercises. Moreover, these people followed fully and strictly the practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa). It was only after such strict practice and much effort that their pride, their arrogance and their egoism left them. They became as if they had gone through the eye of the needle – through which all such people have to pass. It is only after much strenuous efforts that such people attain their station. It is such people whose prayers are accepted; otherwise, you see that a physician's medicine has no efficacy unless one exercises abstinence. So is the secret of the acceptance of prayer – prayer has

no efficacy unless a person abstains fully [from all that is disliked by Allah].

Some people have made up some false stories and tales about some holy people. These, too, become a huge stumbling block in the path of ordinary people and become the cause of stumbling for a great many people. One such story has been made up about Hadhrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani that whoever came before him was turned into a saint by his attention. Remember that no one has ever attained to a special and high station without bringing about a death over himself or without fully following the tradition and practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa). However, this much is certainly true that without there being a capability, nothing can be achieved. The capacities of some people and their nature is made such by Allah that pride, arrogance, conceit and other similar ills are easily extricated and it is as if these had never existed. Just as a seed becomes like dust when it is buried in the

earth and then Allah's power makes it grow, so these people first lose everything in the path of Allah and then Allah brings them back to life, makes them develop and spread and their acceptance by other people is made easy. Hence, the person who steadfastly bears the difficulties and tribulations that from time to time confront him by way of a test from Allah, and bears all this without laying down any conditions or limits and leaves his matter to Allah, then Allah, through His blessing, shows him all that makes his faith stronger and his heart wholesome. However, when people are stubborn and wish to make Allah move according to their wishes, such people remain deprived. After this, what care can Allah have for such people? Allah is indifferent. There are tens of million of His servants. If a person does not accept, that is up to him but such a person then joins those who are destined for hell. In showing signs, Allah does not take any notice of people's wishes and plans. Manifestation of signs also

depends upon the capabilities [of people]. If a grain that has been chewed is sown within the earth, it will not grow or develop. Similarly, the unfortunate people cannot become the heirs of Allah's blessings and signs.

[*Malfoozat*, Volume 10, pp.208-209]

Allah is not pleased with mere words. You should become so true that your sincerity and your anguish reaches up to the heavens. Allah protects and blesses the person He considers to have a heart that is truthful and full of love. He looks at hearts and peeks into them. He does not care for empty words. He enters the heart that has been cleansed thoroughly and purified of all impurities. He enters such a heart and makes His home there. On the other hand, the heart in which there remain impurities is declared to be an accursed one.

Remember that faith without good deeds is an incomplete faith. How is it possible for true faith not to be accompanied by good deeds? Make your faith and

belief total. People do not strengthen their faith and yet they complain that they are not receiving the promised blessings and rewards. Allah has, of course, promised:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ
مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ
حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

And he who fears Allah – He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he expects not.
(Ch.65: V.3-4)

That is, he who is righteous and is so in the sight of Allah, is safeguarded by Allah against all hardship and Allah grants him provisions from sources that are unimaginable. This promise of Allah is true and it is our belief that Allah is Most Gracious and Most Merciful and He fulfils His promises. He who becomes Allah's is saved by Allah from humiliation and is fully taken care of by Allah. However, those

who declare themselves to be righteous and yet complain that they have not received the accompanying rewards, leave us wondering as to which of their two claims to believe. [*Malfoozat* Volume 5, pp.243-244]

Allah Almighty makes men pass through different trials so that He may see whether the believer gives precedence to his faith over the material world. There are many who profess a belief in Allah but when they find such belief interfering with their material advantages, forsake the cause of Allah or when they have any fear of harm from the rulers, they forsake the path of Allah. Such people are in fact without faith and they do not know that in reality it is Allah Almighty who is the Judge over all judges. Doubtless, the path of Allah is a difficult path and unless a person [undergoes such extreme striving in the path of Allah] that is akin to tearing off one's own skin, he cannot find acceptance before Allah. Do we not dislike a servant who is disloyal? Is it not true that a servant who is not

ALLAH ALMIGHTY MAKES MEN PASS THROUGH DIFFERENT TRIALS SO THAT HE MAY SEE WHETHER THE BELIEVER GIVES PRECEDENCE TO HIS FAITH OVER THE MATERIAL WORLD. THERE ARE MANY WHO PROFESS A BELIEF IN ALLAH BUT WHEN THEY FIND SUCH BELIEF INTERFERING WITH THEIR MATERIAL ADVANTAGES, FORSAKE THE CAUSE OF ALLAH OR WHEN THEY HAVE ANY FEAR OF HARM FROM THE RULERS, THEY FORSAKE THE PATH OF ALLAH.

faithful to his master and is not constant in his duty is not looked upon with honour anywhere? Thus it is also in the presence of Allah. The person who forsakes his Divine Master for the sake of limited material gain is the most disloyal and faithless person.

Taking the *Bai'at* (Oath of Initiation) is to give oneself up to Allah. It means that the person entering into *Bai'at* sells his life to Allah. It is wrong to think that one who walks in the path of Allah ultimately suffers loss. He who serves Allah faithfully cannot suffer any loss. Loss is his who is false, who breaks the covenant he has made with Allah for the sake of this world. Let him who is guilty of such disloyalty remember that no ruler

or king would be able to deliver him when the hand of Allah is upon him. He has to eventually meet the Judge of all judges. It is, therefore, necessary for every true believer to have faith in Allah Who is the King of all the heavens and the earth and should turn to Allah with true repentance. This is certainly a most difficult thing to achieve – it is only possible when Allah makes the heart move in that direction. Hence, it requires much prayer.

The person who treads in the path of Allah with true sincerity is granted extraordinary power and capability. The heart of the believer has within it a power of attraction such that other people are drawn to him. I cannot

understand why people should not be drawn to you if there is within you sufficient attraction of love in the path of Allah and a magnetic power generated within you. [*Malfoozat*, Volume 7, pp.29-30]

Some people consider that merely by visiting some holy person and without any effort or inner purification, they will be able to join the fold of the Truthful. This is just wishful thinking. You should study the Holy Qur'an to see that you cannot win the pleasure of Allah unless you too endure hardship and tribulation as did the prophets of Allah. Some of their ordeals and suffering were so extreme that, [in the words of the Holy Qur'an]:

حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ
أَمْنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصُرُ اللَّهَ
أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَدْ بَدَأَ

Until the Messenger and those who believed along with him said: 'When will come the help of

Allah?' Yea, surely the help of Allah is nigh.
(Ch.2: V.215)

It has always been the case that the servants of Allah have been put through many an ordeal and hardship before they were accepted by Allah.

The Sufis have written about two paths that lead to success in this struggle. One is the path of *Salook*. This is the path of people who, by using their own intelligence and wisdom, adopt the path of Allah and His Prophet(sa). [Allah, addressing the Holy Prophet(sa) states in the Holy Qur'an]:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ
فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ

Say, 'If you love Allah, follow me: then will Allah love you...'
(Ch.3: V.32)

That is, if you wish to become the loved ones of Allah then you should follow the path of the

Holy Prophet^(sa). He is the perfect guide and he is the Prophet who underwent such extreme hardship and suffering that the like of it has never been seen anywhere in the world. His quest was such that it did not let him rest even for a day. The followers [of this Prophet] will only be those who truly and sincerely follow his every word and every deed. The true follower is he who follows in every way. The person who has scant regard [for Divine injunctions] and a harsh attitude [towards other people] is not liked by Allah. Such a person will, instead, come under the wrath of Allah.

The injunction to follow the Holy Prophet^(sa), places an obligation on the seeker to first study the whole history of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and then to follow in his footsteps. This is what is meant by *Salook*, [that is, 'Initiation']. There are in this path numerous ordeals and hardships. It is only after showing steadfastness in the face of numerous hardships that a person becomes a *Salik*, that is a 'Devotee'.

The status of the people on the path of *Jazb* is greater than those on the path of *Salook*. [The term *Jazb* implies absorption of the love of Allah]. Those who strive on the path of *Jazb* are not left at the stage of *Salook*. Allah deliberately puts them through ordeals and tribulations in order to draw them closer to Himself through the eternal power of absorption, that is, *Jaazba-e-Azli*. All the Prophets of Allah were *Majzoob*, that is, they were drawn to Allah and were absorbed in Allah.

When the human soul is faced with painful ordeals and tribulations, the experience and the consequent humility makes it radiant. Just as iron or glass while possessing the capacity to shine, shine only after they have undergone a lengthy process of burnishing and then they shine so brightly that in them is reflected the face of the person looking in. Striving in the path of Allah also works as a process of burnishing. The burnishing of the heart should be to such a degree that

the ‘face’ is reflected in the resulting ‘mirror’ [of the ‘heart’]. What is meant by ‘reflection of the face’? The meaning of this is to become the fulfilment of the saying, ‘Create within you morals in accordance with the character of Allah’. The heart of the *Salik*, that is, the Devotee, is a ‘mirror’ that is burnished so much through undergoing experiences of great suffering and tribulation that the reflection of the moral qualities of the Holy Prophet(sa) are fixed upon it. This occurs at a time when, having undergone numerous spiritual exercises and inner purification, there remains no resentment or impurity within. It is only then that this status is attained. Every

Muslim believer needs this kind of cleansing to some extent. No believer will find salvation whilst being without the ‘mirror’ of the heart. [*Malfoozat* , Volume 1, pp. 27-28].

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

The Muslim Belief in Jesus Christ^(as)

by Dr. Kaleem Malik, MD - Speech from Jalsa Salana USA 2003

On the subject of the Muslim beliefs in Jesus Christ^(as) there exists large volumes of literature encompassing many diverse traditions, customs and cultures. Like the followers of other religions, Muslims also have a wide range of opinion and interpretation, especially with respect to the beliefs in our beloved Jesus Christ^(as).

At the outset, the very premise and source of the true Muslim beliefs about Jesus Christ^(as) should be established. So without getting into a debate over the sources of these beliefs, we will resort only to the very root basis of all of our Muslim beliefs. In other words, we will resort only to the Holy Qur'an as the source of these beliefs. Only secondarily, will we also examine the sayings or the traditions of the Holy Founder of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa^(sa), the Ahadith, which elaborate the beliefs in Jesus^(as), based on the Holy Qur'an.

The Holy Qur'an is believed to be that book which is the direct revelation of Allah to His Prophet, Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa^(sa), which was recorded in the Prophet's life and safeguarded without the slightest interpolation or change, to this very day. The Holy Qur'an mentions several prophets, Adam^(as), Abraham^(as), Jonah^(as), Moses^(as), Jesus^(as), as well as others. With regards to the prophets of Allah, the Holy Qur'an makes the emphatic declaration that believers 'make no distinction between any of His Messengers', meaning that they are all from Allah and all are to be revered and accepted. Despite mentioning so many prophets, the Holy Qur'an appears to make a special recognition of our beloved Jesus^(as).

It is important to point out that the Holy Qur'an describes a more comprehensive and detailed account of our beloved Jesus^(as), than for any other prophet

mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. The reason for this is that perhaps there is no other individual in the history of religions whose figure generates such controversy and such diverse opinion. The Jews, Christians, Muslims and others, all hold widely different views with regards to his birth, his purpose and mission, the crucifixion and the manner of his death. The obvious diversity in these interpretations and the many myths surrounding him necessitated the need for Allah Almighty Himself to respond, and address these conflicting concerns about our beloved Jesus Christ^(as).

To begin with, his very name is introduced in the Holy Qur'an as:

His name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, honoured in this world and in the next.

(Ch.3: V.46)

The distinction of his name not only honours him with the title of Messiah, the Anointed one, but also uniquely recognises a fatherless birth, as 'Son of Mary'.

Although in the Gospels he was referred to as Son of man, the Holy Qur'an gives him the distinct title of Messiah, son of Mary. Since he is introduced in the Holy Qur'an as the Son of Mary, it is only fair to begin this subject of the Muslim beliefs in Jesus^(as), by first briefly mentioning the Muslim beliefs of Mary, his mother. The Holy Qur'an has indeed depicted her as a most pious, righteous and chaste woman.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

O Mary, Allah has chosen thee and purified thee, and chosen thee above the women of all peoples.

(Ch.3: V.43)

This is the bold declaration of the Holy Qur'an, which not only exonerated a pious woman of the unfair charges and allegations against her, but the Holy Qur'an also granted her such an exalted status for mankind to always emulate. It is the Holy Qur'an that mentions her hardship, her piety, her chastity and her status. In fact,

there is an entire chapter in the Holy Qur'an entitled Maryam. To truly realise the weight of this position, it should be pointed out that Islam stands uniquely alone as the only other religion to accept the virgin birth. Islam is the only outside religion, which bears witness to this phenomenon and reveres Mary as an example for mankind.

Coming back to Jesus^(as), the Holy Qur'an draws our attention to his purpose and status:

And will make him a Messenger to the children of Israel.

(Ch.3: V.50)

Also, Jesus^(as) is reported to have said in the Holy Qur'an:

And I come fulfilling that which is before me, namely, the Torah.

(Ch.3: V.51)

This is consistent with the Gospel record of Mathew 15:25, 'I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. And also

Mathew 5:17, 'think not that I have come to abolish the law, but to fulfil the law'.

It is our belief that Jesus Christ^(as) was commissioned for this honourable task to revitalise the true spirit of the Torah and remove misunderstandings about the Law. It was the Law of Moses^(as) that after 1300 years suffered deterioration and fell into spiritual darkness. It was in response to the need of that critical hour, that Almighty Allah fulfilled His promise and granted the Israelites a Messiah to resuscitate their religion and purify them.

From the depths of spiritual ruins, emerged a son of a virgin mother, signifying that none was worthy to father such a reformer. From the depths of spiritual ruin emerged the Messiah from Allah, to gather his people, to reveal the majesty of Allah through many heavenly signs and miracles. The Holy Qur'an (Ch.3: V.50) highlights some of the miracles of Jesus^(as), including healing the blind and the leprous giving life to

the dead, and creating birds, which will soar high in the skies.

The ability to create birds is a metaphor meaning that ordinary people who accepted his teachings were spiritually transformed into birds soaring high into the spiritual horizons and above all worldly concerns. The healing powers are also understood in the spiritual sense. He restored sight to the spiritually blind, and gave life to the spiritually dead.

Jesus^(as) specifically referred to the Pharisees of his day as being blind because of their maladies and hypocritical nature. Indeed all reformers of Allah are spiritual physicians, because they always appear to a people who, at the time, are in need and as the Holy Qur'an states, such people are deaf, dumb, and blind (Ch.2: V.77).

The most controversial subject with regards to the Muslim beliefs in Jesus is the subject of the crucifixion. History bears ample testimony that whenever a Prophet

appears before his people, it is his own people who fiercely reject him. The case of Jesus^(as) is not an exception. We wholly and completely recognise that every human effort was made by the Jews who rejected him, to put an end to this message, to cause him every humiliation, to condemn him, to call him a liar, a false prophet, an illegitimate son, a rejected one of Allah, in short, they desired passionately to prove our beloved Jesus^(as), to be an accursed one of Allah. The Jews of the time regarded Jesus^(as) as a false prophet and to justify their accusations, they tried to enforce their law that according to Deuteronomy 21:23, 'he that is hanged is accursed of God.' Therefore if Jesus^(as) died on the cross, the Jews would have succeeded in their design and the scriptures would prove them to be truthful, and our beloved Jesus^(as) to be a liar and an accursed one of Allah.

According to the Holy Qur'an, and as supported by historical, biblical and scientific evidence, the Muslim belief is that the Jews were unsuccessful in their attempt

to crucify and kill Jesus^(as). The fundamental Qur'anic argument, which boldly comes in defence of Jesus^(as), is the Qur'anic declaration that Jesus is a true messenger and beloved of Allah.

In response to the slandering and maligning accusation of the Jews, who wished to prove that Jesus was an accursed one of Allah, we submit that our beloved did not fit the description of an accursed of Allah. One would be said to be an accursed of Allah when his heart has become estranged from Allah... has become so darkened that there remains no ray of divine love, divine knowledge, or divine light. An accursed of Allah would mean that the bond of loyalty and trust with Allah is broken and there develops contempt and hostility. But we confess wholeheartedly, that such a description has no place for the chosen ones of Allah. Our beloved Jesus^{'(as)} heart was never estranged from Allah and never did he demonstrate any behaviour or action that would lead one to say that he was, God forbid, an accursed of Allah.

On the contrary, the Holy Qur'an declares that Jesus^(as) was a noble and honoured Messenger of Allah. Even Paul wrote in 1st Corinthians 12:3, 'that no man speaking by the spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed'.

It must be appreciated how serious these allegations are. These were the corrupted views of the followers of the very law, which Jesus^(as) came to fulfil. Paul concedes to these allegations and like the Jews, accepts that Jesus was accursed and writes in Galatians 3:13, 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written that cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree'.

In response to the piles of accumulating allegations against Jesus^(as), Allah the Almighty consistently comes running to the aid of his beloved and true Prophet. Whereas the Jews planned to kill Jesus^(as), Allah planned to save him.

The Holy Qur'an says:

And they (the enemies of Jesus) planned, and Allah also planned, and Allah is the Best of planners.

(Ch.3: V.55)

Allah had already comforted Jesus^(as) and promised him that not only would He save him from their evil design, but would also establish his truthfulness. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

O Jesus I will cause thee to die a natural death and will exalt thee to Myself, and will clear thee from the charges of those who disbelieve, and will place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve, until the Day of Resurrection; then to me shall be your return...

(Ch.3: V.56)

This was the comforting promise of Allah, that He will take the responsibility to save Jesus^(as), and then remove the slanderous allegations against him, and then exalt his status, and then even extend this promise to his true followers, by also exalting their status.

So, the question to ask is what then was this plan of Allah? How did Allah save Jesus^(as) and establish his truthfulness. The next verse addresses the very crucifixion.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an,

And for their (the Jews) saying, 'We did kill the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah;' whereas they slew him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified; and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it; they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture; and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty..

(Ch.4: V.158)

The events of the Passion of the Crucifixion have long been accepted as a mystery. But, what we have here is the unveiling of that Divine promise made to Jesus^(as) by Allah Himself.

The Holy Qur'an vindicates Jesus^(as) and states that the Jews were not successful in their attempts to kill him. But rather to them, he only appeared and looked as if he was dead. In reality he was very much alive.

It may be worth, at this point, summarising and recapping the various different beliefs with regards to this event so that we may appreciate the true and correct beliefs of Muslims. Up to now, we know of four camps or prevailing schools of thought.

The Jews believe that he was accused and a false prophet and so to prove it they believe that they successfully killed him by crucifying him on the cross.

Our mainstream Christian brethren believe as the Jews that Jesus^(as) suffered the death of the crucifixion. But in doing so he atoned for the sins of mankind. They believe that after 2 to 3 hours on the cross he died, and on the third day he rose resurrected from the dead and lived a short while in secrecy amongst his

disciples, and then bodily ascended to the heavens. He is also believed to bodily return in the same manner in the latter days and offer a final salvation to mankind. Whoso does not accept him, according to some, he will proceed to cast them in eternal hell.

Today's mainstream Muslims believe that Jesus^(as) was never even put on the cross. Rather, at that critical hour of danger to his life, today's Muslims believe that Allah created a Jesus^(as) look-alike impostor and crucified him instead. Jesus^(as) meantime was bodily lifted to some unknown station in the sky. They too also believe that in the Latter Days, he will bodily descend from the sky, this time return as a Muslim and offer Islam to mankind. Whoso does not accept, he will slaughter.

It should be emphatically pointed out that neither did the Holy Founder of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad^(sa), share this view, nor did his companions share this current view of our contemporary Muslims today. In fact, the Holy

Qur'an rejects this view in its totality. This distorted view evolved centuries after the demise of the Holy Prophet(sa). This view has much in common with the second camp due to the great Christian and Hellenistic influences and mixing of ideologies and cultures, which followed the crusades.

Finally, the fourth camp is offered, for mankind to judge for itself. This was the belief of the Holy Founder of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa(sa), and in accordance with the Qur'anic teaching, that Jesus Christ(as) not only survived the ordeal of the crucifixion but went on to fulfil two major prophecies. The first prophecy is that he declares:

'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.'

(John 10:16)

He was referring to the lost tribes of Israel who as we know had

migrated towards the east and were not in Judea at the time, but scattered. The second prophecy, in his own words solves the mystery of the crucifixion. Jesus(as) gave the most powerful sign of Jonah(as), that, just as Jonah(as) for three days was in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of Man be in the belly of the earth (Matthew 12:39).

It is the Muslim belief that prophets fulfil their stated mission as a testimony and proof of their truthfulness as being chosen by Allah. It is only the light of the Holy Qur'an that enables one to fully realise that Jesus(as) actually fulfilled these promises. The Qur'an does not deny the fact that Jesus(as) was on the cross. The Qur'an only denies him dying on the cross. The Qur'an declares that the Jews and the enemies of Jesus(as) were not successful in their design to kill him and make him accursed. This was the strongly held belief of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa), that Jesus(as) died a natural and noble death after having lived to an old age.

On this controversial subject of the crucifixion, there are volumes of books spanning various disciplines of science, medicine, history, including the biblical sources, all of which today support the claim that the Holy Qur'an made 1400 years ago, that our beloved Jesus^(as) survived the ordeal of the cross and fulfilled his stated mission.

From the medical and historical perspective, in a brief nutshell, the probability of survival from hanging on the cross for only 2-3 hours is indisputably clear. The usual custom of hanging for days in this slow and torturous death was not applicable to Jesus^(as). Clearly Allah's plan was different as evident from the Bible itself, which describes some amazing events. It was Allah's plan to create every possibility for Jesus^(as) to survive and not undergo the usual custom. The scene that is described is one of chaos, earthquakes, eclipses, curtain of the temple torn, the graves of many saints opened and so on. This was the hand of Allah,

which removed Jesus^(as) from the cross within 2-3 hours, understandably in a state, which seemingly may have resembled death. In fact, so doubtful was his death that the only real expert of the time on the art of crucifixion, the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate marvels and doubts that Jesus^(as) is dead. He is handed over not to his enemies but his friends, who care for him, bring him ointments, the best healing agents of the time and care after him. This is why Jesus^(as) chose the example of Jonah. Jonah survived the seemingly impossible odds, revived and emerged out alive from the fish. It was the same scenario of seemingly impossible odds which Jesus^(as) had to overcome, to survive in like manner, to revive and emerge from the belly of the earth, in exact likeness to Jonah^(as). After having been revived and resuscitated, he continues his mission as evident from the accounts of the Bible and of history. He eats, rests, seeks shelter, disguises himself, and meets with his disciples in secret, in the same physical body.

I wish to leave you with a key aspect of the Muslim belief in Jesus^(as). Today, Jesus^(as) again stands in the centre of a key debate. Almost universally, mankind awaits a Reformer. As already mentioned, many believe that Jesus^(as) himself will physically and bodily return from the heavens and offer salvation. After all, Jesus^(as) himself did lay great emphasis on his returning in the Latter Days. But how will he come?

Jesus^(as) himself gives the answer. He settles the method or manner of his second coming once and for all. This was the very question, which was put to him by the Jews who awaited the second coming of Elijah^(as) to physically descend from the heavens and serve as the spiritual harbinger for the Messiah. How clearly did Jesus^(as) dispel their false beliefs and practices. He passed the verdict for all of time to come, that no man would descend from the sky, neither recycled from the past or from the present or even from the future. By identifying John the Baptist as the spiritual Second

coming of Elijah^(as), Jesus has solved the issue in a most profound manner, for all of time.

There is no doubting his prophecy of the Second Coming. Mathew 24 is full of this very prophecy, which cannot be ignored. The time is described as one of unrest, and turmoil. Nations will rise against nations, wars, famines, earthquakes, man will turn away from faith and the world will be filled with wickedness and darkness. 'For as lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man... Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away.' (Matthew 24:27)

The Holy Founder of Islam^(sa) has used even more detail to describe the Latter Days as being filled with irreligion, materialism and godless pursuits. He referred to the coming of the Promised Messiah, as one who would find the world filled with sin and faith having vanished and ascended to the stars. At one time he said that even if faith disappears and

ascends to the stars, this Promised Messiah will reach into the stars and bring it back and re-establish faith in the hearts of men.

Today we are witnessing the fulfilment of those great prophecies of the Bible, the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith and other holy Scriptures. The Latter Days have arrived with powerful fulfilment of those prophecies. The verdict of our beloved Jesus^(as) is clear. It is our belief that the Promised Messiah^(as) has appeared as predicted. Syedna Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) has appeared in the likeness and spirit of Jesus^(as), just as Jesus^(as) described John the Baptist^(as) to have come in the likeness of Elijah^(as).

The worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community recognises the fulfilment of Allah's promises. We celebrate the righteousness of Mary and her Immaculate Conception. We celebrate the fulfilment of Allah's promise to save Jesus^(as) from the clutches of his enemies and establish his truthfulness. We celebrate the fulfilment of his

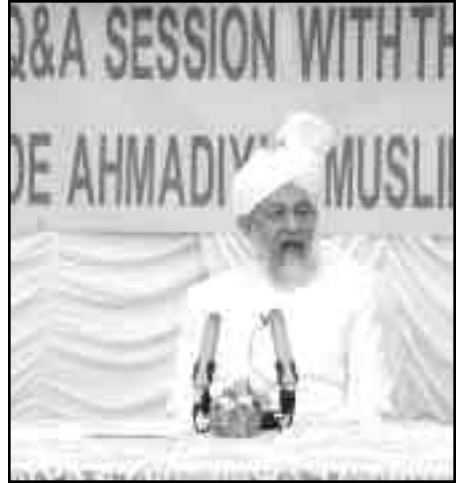
prophecy as a Sign of Allah, to not only survive like Jonah^(as) but also to gather the Lost Sheep as he predicted. We celebrate the great service he has provided about giving the glad tidings of the coming of Prophet Muhammad^(sa) as recorded in various places of the Gospels. And today we credit Jesus^(as) for settling once and for all, the way to recognise the Promised Messiah.

Amidst the sea of controversy, of mystery and false notions, the Holy Qur'an had emerged to remove the injustices and restore, with justice, the correct beliefs in the heart of man. Beliefs which would appeal to the heart and beliefs which would appeal to the intellect.

Belief and Guidance

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

I am from Malaysia and we believe that by the time Imam Mahdi comes to this world, Islam will be the strongest religion in the world. What is confusing is that if we say that this religion is the strongest religion then why is it that for the past three years when Bosnia was suffering attack from the Christian community, no Islamic country came forward to help? Why is America involved instead?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru): You have asked two questions in one. The second question I advise you to address to Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait, to Jordan, to Syria and to such other countries you are blaming for the absolute lack of interest in Muslim affairs. I am not answerable for what they do. I am answerable only on behalf of the Ahmadiyya community with our belief that the Imam Mahdi has come.

As far as your hearsay reports about Imam Mahdi suddenly transforming the world of Islam

into the most powerful people on earth is concerned, I disagree with that view as false on the count of contrary historical evidence. No man who was ever raised by God as a prophet or a messenger or a reformer brought about such a miracle in the world – not even the Holy Prophet^(sa). Fourteen hundred years have passed and still you yourself are quoting the example of the Bosnians being Muslims completely helpless and laid at the mercy of their non-Muslim enemy. Here, it is not the Christians who have perpetrated any crime against them – that is also wrong. Those who have perpetrated the most horrid crime against the Muslims are people without any religion – they are practically atheist and morally destitute. Why blame Christianity unnecessarily for crimes committed by non-Christians!

Coming back to the question of Imam Mahdi, I remind you of the basic fundamental principle that God has been enunciated repeatedly in the Holy Qur'an

[*But thou wilt never find any change in the way of Allah* (Ch.35: V.44)] and that is God's ways in relation to mankind, in relation to religion, have become part of human history and of religious history and you will never see any change in the conduct of God in relation to the attitude of the people on earth and [the Holy Qur'an] repeatedly challenges man to find one single instance where God changed His way and His attitude to the problem. Whenever He raised a prophet, He chose a person who, whilst belonging to the stronger sections of society, was individually weak and was never supported by any powerful group. Every prophet came independently as a single person yet he gained a following through a very strong and persistent struggle and endeavour that he continued regardless of the pressure of the enemy against him. The miracle which is the *Sunna* of God, that is the way of God, in this case which was common to all prophets was that despite the fact that they were neither supported by any

powerful social group, economic group, religious group or political group, yet they invariably emerged victorious. They achieved success through a slow process of change that began with moral change and that change itself was not brought about by a spell cast by the prophet. That change was brought about by human sacrifices. Each person who answered the call of the prophet accepted a miserable life for the sake of truth. He was put into the mill of torture and persecution and the society that had previously honoured him, now treated him as a low person and in this there is no inconsistency in the ways of God, if you find out about those ways through human history. From the time of Adam^(as) up to the time of the Holy Prophet^(sa) this is the story of the prophets repeated over and over again, exactly like this. Ultimately, if people did not reform and rejected the prophet altogether, then the people were wiped out, not the prophets. What happened to the people of Noah^(as)? What happened to the

people of Lot^(as)? Religious history, as preserved in the Holy Qur'an, is most reliable and unchangeable. How can you fit your concept of Imam Mahdi in that history? Where can you fit it if you believe that somebody is Divinely appointed and with his supernatural powers he destroys the rest of the world and makes those who share his views and his religion conquerors of the whole world? Why should that be so if those people are themselves corrupt – if they are at least as corrupt as other people are? What justice would there be in God bringing about a revolution in favour of such a people as you find in many Muslim states? If you really study the current history of Muslim states you will find that most of the people living there have become dishonest and corrupt, indulging in all the ill practices that are to be found in the rest of the world. Name a crime that is found elsewhere in the world but is not found in a Muslim state. Why, therefore, one fine morning should the Imam Mahdi appear and say, 'All

right, do whatever you please – religion does not appear for the purpose of revolutionising morals and conduct – religion only comes to establish the supremacy of one people and that is all. Hence, I have come and you shall emerge as victorious. I will hand over the keys of the world to you and disappear back to nothingness’. Can you agree with such a scheme of things? It is impossible!

QUESTIONER

How did the idea of the physical ascent of Jesus^(as) enter the Muslim ideology?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru): The idea of physical ascent of Jesus^(as) infiltrated the Muslim world very gradually. It was about three hundred years after the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam that it penetrated Muslim thinking. As to why it infiltrated Muslim thinking is a very important question that needs to be carefully addressed.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam had

prophesied that, some time in the future, Jesus Christ^(as) would ‘descend’ although he did not mention from where he would descend. He never stated that this ‘descent’ would be from *As-Samaa*, that is from the heavens, but he did state that Jesus^(as) would ‘descend’. The Holy Qur’an states regarding the Holy Prophet^(sa) himself that he ‘descended’. The Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam is the only Prophet who has been referred in the Holy Qur’an as having ‘descended’. The Holy Prophet^(sa) was, therefore, fully supported by Qur’anic usage of the term to refer to the future ‘descent’ of Jesus Christ^(as). Hence, his statement to the effect that there would be no Prophet between him and the time of ‘descent’ of Jesus Christ^(as). It was because the word ‘Jesus’ was a personal name indicating the historical Jesus^(as) who had lived many centuries ago that gradually the Muslim scholars came to believe that if Jesus Christ^(as) is mentioned by name, it had to be the one who appeared [in Nazareth] among the followers

of Moses^(as), that it had to be the person of Jesus Christ^(as). Consequently, this idea became so entrenched in their beliefs that gradually it became part of their doctrine. Moreover, in order to justify the notion of the ‘descent’ of Jesus Christ^(as), they also began to claim that Jesus Christ^(as) must also have ascended physically [up to heaven], their argument being that he could not descend unless he had ascended in the first instance. They accepted his ascension up to heaven but in the process completely overlooked the fact that nowhere in the Holy Qur’an has it been mentioned that Jesus Christ^(as) was raised bodily to heaven. The only reference that can be found in the Holy Qur’an that is similar to this is the following verse that states:

On the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself.
(Ch.4: V.159)

That is to say, God did the *Rafa’a* of Jesus Christ^(as) to Himself. We, the Ahmadis, point out that the misinterpretation of this verse

does not in any way help the cause of the Muslim scholars who believe in the physical ascent of Jesus^(as) because the question then arises as to where was God when He raised Jesus^(as) to Himself? Was not God present where Jesus^(as) was physically? Does God not occupy the entire universe? Was God not present above Jesus^(as), below Jesus^(as), to the right of him and to the left of him? It is a fact that no body can move physically to God as God is not a physical body and bodies can only move in the direction of bodies. This is an inviolable law – it is as good today as it ever was. You can try the experiment yourself – that which is a body cannot move towards a spirit. A body can only move in the direction of a body. Hence, the interpretation given to the above verse by Muslim scholars, that God lifted Jesus^(as) physically to Himself, would indicate that God was not present where Jesus^(as) was prior to his ascent, that God was somewhere in the heavens, in mid-universe. This would have to be the result of their argument because if God had

ACCORDING TO THE HOLY QUR'AN, THE WORD 'NUZOOOL' OR 'DESCENT' DOES NOT INDICATE A PHYSICAL DESCENT AND THE WORD *RAFA'A* DOES NOT INDICATE PHYSICAL ASCENT. THESE ARE, IN FACT, ARABIC WORDS AND AS SUCH THEIR USAGE SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ARABIC LEXICON

lifted Jesus^(as) to Himself, God should have continued lifting him to the boundaries of the heavens. However, according to the Muslim clerics, Jesus^(as) was left somewhere in the middle of the heavens as if God occupies only that space! They do not understand because they are prejudiced. They want to prove a point in which they already have an entrenched belief.

According to the Holy Qur'an, the word '*Nuzool*' or 'descent' does not indicate a physical descent and the word *Rafa'a* does not indicate physical ascent. These are, in fact, Arabic words and as such their usage should be understood in accordance with the Arabic lexicon. The word *Rafa'a*, or ascent in the direction of God, when used in the Holy

Qur'an, does not imply a physical ascent towards God. Neither has it been used by the Holy Prophet^(sa) in his statements regarding this subject with the implication of physical ascent. The greatest *Rafa'a* was the ascent of the Holy Prophet^(sa) himself. However, it was not a physical ascent but a spiritual one.

These are all aspects that need to be considered further in greater detail but unfortunately the shortage of time in today's venue does not permit this. However, I hope the questioner will understand this issue from our point of view that these ideas infiltrated Muslim thought not in the first few centuries of Islam but later on. The process of infiltration was further aided by

the Muslims who had converted from Christianity. We also believe that there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the hypocrites, that is those people who became Muslims but in fact wanted to destroy Islamic values from within. This combination of factors took the Muslim scholars onto a path that could never reach a resolution. Unfortunately, this is what we find even today.

The fact is that Jesus Christ^(as) never ascended physically to heaven, hence, he would never return by descending physically. To whose advantage – to the advantage of the clerics who rule the world of Islam as despots and demagogues. Unless Jesus^(as) returns, their authority cannot be snatched away from them and because such a Jesus would never descend so they will continue to enjoy their despotic rule of the world of Islam as they are doing today. Although these issues are peripheral to this question, they need to be pointed out. Consider for yourself the fact that the ascent of Jesus^(as) has

no meaning. Prior to Jesus^(as), God did not adopt the method of physical ascent to maintain the spiritual community. It has never been the case prior to Jesus^(as) that a person was raised, ascending bodily and then descending according to the wishes of the people of the time. How can such an event occur now when it has never occurred before?

However, [to explain this issue more fully] we can quote the example of Elijah^(as). The earlier Scriptures state that Elijah^(as) would one day descend bodily. The Scriptures are very clear about this. Elijah^(as) is assumed to have ascended bodily to heaven and it is clearly prophesied that Elijah^(as) would descend on the same fiery chariot upon which he ascended. All the Christians would support this prophecy and that it is clearly stated in the Scriptures. However, when Jesus^(as) claimed to be from God, the people around him asked about Elijah^(as). How could they believe in the so-called Christ until Elijah^(as) returned? It was absolutely right. Elijah^(as) must

‘descend’ before the advent of Christ and they, quite rightly, asked where he was. In response Jesus^(as) pointed to John^(as) the Baptist. He told the people that John^(as) the Baptist was the awaited ‘Elijah’ whether they wished to believe this or not. Hence, the issue has been resolved once and for all. If Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) Sahib of Qadian is right in his claim that he is the spiritual manifestation of Jesus^(as), then Jesus^(as) is right [in his interpretation of earlier scriptures regarding Elijah^(as)]. If, on the contrary, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) Sahib of Qadian is wrong, then Jesus^(as) is wrong. They are both responding to the same situation. I don’t know why Muslim clerics seem unable to understand this. How can they reject Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) Sahib and accept Jesus Christ^(as) who had issued the verdict that people regarding whom there is a truthful prophecy about their ‘descent’ back to this world at some later period, would appear again but never in the form of a physical

descent. The claim of such a prophecy is fulfilled in the form of another person who is born among the people of that time. The name of the parents of such a person are different from the names of the parents of the person whose manifestation he represents – even his own name is different from the earlier person, yet such a person fulfils the prophecy. It is true that the prophecy of the Holy Prophet^(sa) regarding the future Messiah stated that it was ‘Jesus son of Mary’ who would ‘descend’ and this is no different from the earlier prophecy regarding the ‘descent’ of Elijah^(as). Hence, it is this similarity between the two prophecies and their claims that prove that the Ahmadiyya interpretation is correct.

The Purpose of Religion and Prophets

The following address was made to special guests at the Annual Gathering in Mannheim, Germany in August 2003 by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V. After reciting Shahada and the opening chapter of the Holy Qur'an, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V recited Ch.42: V.14 of the Holy Qur'an.

Firstly, I wish to thank everyone who has spared time to take part in this Jalsa (Annual Gathering). However, I regret that because of my other commitments in this Jalsa, I may not be able to spend much time with you.

In the few minutes that I have, I wish to present to you in the words of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^(as), his thoughts about what religion requires from us and the purpose that prophets serve.

But before that let me provide you with a translation of the verse of the Holy Qur'an I recited earlier:

He has prescribed for you the religion which He enjoined on

Noah, and which We have now revealed to thee, and which we enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying, 'Remain steadfast in obedience, and be not divided therein. Hard upon the idolaters is that to which thou callest them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He pleases, and guides to Himself him who turns to Him.

(Ch.42: V.14)

The Purpose of Religion

The Promised Messiah^(as) has said:

'Purpose of religion is that man should purify one's self of all evil so that one's soul is always in prostration at the threshold of Allah. A person

should be imbued with firm belief, love, discernment and understanding, sincerity and loyalty. A special reformation should take place in him so that he attains paradise in this very world.’

(Lecture Sialkot, Roohani Khazain Vol. 20 pp. 233-234)

The Promised Messiah^(as) says:

‘It should be obvious that by adopting a faith, the true objective is that one should have such firm belief in the God Who is the Fountain of salvation that it is as if he beholds God with his own eyes. The evil spirit of sin wishes to destroy man. Man can never protect himself from the lethal poison of sin till he has total faith in a Perfect and Living God and till he knows that there is a God Who punishes the guilty but rewards the rightly guided with everlasting happiness. It has generally been observed in our daily life that if a person is convinced of the destructive nature of some-

thing, he would never go anywhere near that thing. For example, no one deliberately takes poison. No one stands in front of a wild lion. No one willingly sticks one’s hand in a snake’s pit. Then why does a person knowingly commit sins. It is only because he lacks the conviction he has in other things. So the foremost obligation of man is that he should have a firm belief in God. He should adopt that religion through which firm belief can be acquired so much so that he fears God and he saves himself from sin. But how can such faith be acquired? Can it be achieved through myths or fables? Certainly not. Can it be obtained by dint of logic or some conjecture? Never. So it should be abundantly clear that there is only one way of acquiring belief and it is that through communication with God, a person should bear witness to His extraordinary miracles and by repeated observation, he should believe in the Omnipotence

and Power of God or else he should remain in the company of a person who has already reached that stage of belief.

(Naseem Dawat, Roohani Khazain Vol.19: pp. 447-448)

The Purpose of Prophets

Prophets are sent to draw man closer to God and to reform man. In this connection, the Promised Messiah^(as) says:

‘The purpose common to the advent of all the prophets, on whom be peace, is to establish true and real love of God and to create a respect for human rights and an affection for mankind and amongst brethren. Until that is achieved, everything is just a ritual.’

Explaining this further, the Promised Messiah^(as) says:

‘Indeed, there is no success until man keeps his affairs with God honest and transparent and until he fulfils the two duties. There are two

types of duties, *Haquq Allah*, the obligation of man to his Creator and *Haquq Al’abad*, the duty man owes to the rest of Creation.’

‘The duty of man to man can also be divided into two categories. One, is towards those who have become your brothers in faith, whether he is a brother, father or a son. They all develop a special bond of brotherhood of common faith. The second is to carry a true sympathy towards all human beings.’

‘As far as the duty of man to God is concerned, the most important duty is to worship and pray to Him and that prayer should not be tainted with any personal want. In fact, even if there were to be no heaven or hell, God should be worshipped irrespective and there should be no difference in the personal love that the created should have for its Creator.’

(Malfoozat; vol. 2, pp. 67-68: published in Rabwah)

The Promised Messiah^(as) further says:

‘After a lot of thinking and reflection and following repeated revelation from God, it has become obvious to me that although there are many sects in this country and religious differences have inundated the land, there is only one main cause for these differences. The fact is that spiritual powers and compassion and the love of God has diminished in many people. That Divine light, which helps to distinguish between Truth and Falsehood, has begun to fade from many hearts and the world is moving towards atheism... The proof of this is that the conduct is not what it ought to be. Deeds do not match the words. I do not wish to criticise anyone who is secretly righteous. But what is generally observed is that the purpose for which religion has been made compulsory is largely redundant. Most of the people do

not try to inculcate the true piety of the heart, the true love of God, and a sincere sympathy towards the creation. They do not possess those pure virtues and values that are the heart of any religion like forbearance, mercy, justice, and humility. It is regrettable that while conflicts and wars in the name of religion are on the increase in the world, spirituality is on the decline.’
(Lecture Lahore, Roohani Khazain: vol. 20, pp.147-148)

Therefore it is important for a believer of each religion to reflect that if his relationship with a Living God and his spirituality has diminished or ceased altogether and there is an endless pursuit of materialism, the believer should find out what are the causes of this state of affairs. Is there something amiss in the teachings of the prophets, which evidently cannot be the case. Is there any error in understanding the religious Scriptures? Perhaps there is something written in them but

without proper thought and careful study, we accept someone else's interpretation. May be, what different religions, different scriptures and different prophets taught have been altered with the passage of time and these interpolations have become the cause for the lack of spirituality and religious differences. Therefore, I request you to think about these matters seriously, because until you know and understand the basic teachings of your own religion, the very teachings that were given by the prophets in their own time, you will find it difficult to understand Islam.

The Muslim religious scripture, the Holy Qur'an, was revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa). There is a declaration from God in this Scripture that:

Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its guardian.

(Ch.15: V.10)

This claim is as truly established

today as it was 1400 years ago and not an iota has been changed in this Book.

If you study it yourself you will come to the conclusion that its teaching is the Word of God. Even the western orientalist concede this fact. Professor Noldeke, the great German Christian orientalist, acknowledged as the master in this art, writes:

‘Today's Qur'an is the same as it was at the time of the companions.’

He adds:

‘Efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Qur'an have failed’

(Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Sir William Muir writes:

‘To compare (as the Muslims are fond of doing) their pure text with the various readings of our Scriptures, is to compare things between the

history and essential points of which there is no analogy.’

(Introduction to the Life of Mahomet: Volume 1; Chapter 1 under footnote 27)

If you notice any shortcomings in Muslims, it is because their practical conduct has moved away from the true teachings. There is no shortcoming in the teachings of the Holy Qur’an. It still exists as magnificent as it was before. The Founder of Ahmadiyya Community has claimed to restore these teachings to their pristine purity and this Community is striving hard to continue with this sacred Mission.

In the end, I apologise once again for the shortage of time at my disposal. Naturally, many questions will arise in your mind about what I have said. Therefore, you can contact the Community’s Centre that brought you here for any information you require. God Willing, your query will be entertained diligently.

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