

Contents

April 2004, Vol.99, No.4

Editorial	Terrorists Strike Spain? <i>by Mansoor Ahmed Shah –UK</i>	2
Alexander Dowie and His Zion	Message from Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV ^(ra) sent to the Ahmadiyya Community in USA before the start of the conference to commemorate the fulfilment of a grand prophecy concerning Alexander Dowie	3
Challenge to Alexander Dowie	John Alexander Dowie founded Zion, 100 miles north of Chicago, declaring himself as Elijah III and wishing to end Islam. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community invited him to a prayer duel – the rest is history. – <i>by Anwer Mahmood Khan – USA</i>	7
Divine Guidance – Part I	Those who turn a deaf ear to the Prophets of God, deprive themselves from guidance and are engulfed by the wrath of God. i – the Promised Messiah and Mahdi	22
True Islamic teachings Compared to Al-Qaeda’s Doctrine	A paper read at the networks of instability seminar in Brussels. Religious terrorists, disowned by their own faith, have mentors who provide them with the political justification in pursuit of their objective of dying as martyrs. The teachings of Islam totally condemn terrorists and suicide bombers. – <i>by M.A. Ashraf – Scotland</i>	31
The Immaculate Conception	‘We breathed into her Our Spirit’ is misconstrued as implicating God in a paternal role: Understanding the physical and spiritual birth of Jesus ^(as) – <i>by Moosa Qureshi, London</i>	53

COVER PHOTO: *Bait-ur-Rahman mosque in Washington, USA*

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- Muhammad Hanif

All correspondence should be forwarded directly to the editor at:

The Review of Religions
The London Mosque
 16 Gressenhall Road
 London, SW18 5QL
 United Kingdom

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Editorial

Terrorists strike in Spain

As we go to print, we hear that the evil of terrorism struck at innocent early morning train commuters in Spain. We should learn from the public solidarity that followed that the people of Spain were filled with utter disgust at the corrupt philosophy of terror and loss of life and property. This act needs to be condemned in the strongest terms, not just in Spain, but by all persons in the world.

If it was indeed some Muslims involved in this reign of terror (there is a paper on the Al Qaeda in this edition of *The Review of Religions*), we call on them to go and reflect on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an or the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) and tell us how they could reconcile their action with these teachings. How would they stand before their Maker when they are called to account for the disorder they created on the earth? If you were Muslims, you have caused great damage to other Muslims and set the clock back on an understanding of Islam.

It has become very clear that governments have not been successful in winning the war on terror. Likewise, if the ordinary people are indiscriminately targeted by missiles fired by a 'democratic' neighbour, it is not going to restore confidence in the philosophy that democracy should replace authoritarian regimes and thus pave the way for peace. Once terrorist trends are allowed to grow

and flourish in societies and countries, the best any government can do is to now and then wipe out the symptoms. We need to have a fresh strategy to discourage and suppress terrorism.

The first thing that we need to do is to restore a system based on justice where all the rights of everyone are protected. The nearer we can come to this ideal, the earlier we would be able to remove discrimination, discord and differences that divide societies. Then governments themselves should not resort to terrorism. We need to develop a strong partnership between the governments and leaders of opinion in every society, including religious leaders, to co-operate with each other in promoting peace and projects that lead to a peaceful society. This requires inter-state dialogue, co-operation on free trade and movement of people and the eradication of poverty and hunger. We should supplement it with an infrastructure of education to broaden the mind. For far too long we have ignored the role of religion in drawing mankind closer to its Creator and reminding us to discharge the trust reposed in each one of us to look after our fellow human beings. As for irreligion, it only breeds suspicion and fosters an irresponsibility towards other human beings. Once there is an atmosphere of knowing who stands next to us, fear should disappear and the terrorist and the criminal readily identified as misfits. Each one of us has to help in this task.

Mansoor Ahmed Shah – UK

Alexander Dowie and His Zion

Zion, Illinois is a small town a few miles north of Chicago's suburbs. At the end of the nineteenth century it was a thriving new town built on the vision of a then great American evangelist, John Alexander Dowie. His success as an evangelist was astounding, far greater than that of Billy Graham of recent times, and within a few years he had built a following numbering about 100,000, with missions all over the world. Presented in this and the next article are detailed accounts of events leading up to a most unusual challenge, extensively reported in the American and British press of the time.

In the year 2000 the Ahmadiyya community held a conference in Zion, Illinois celebrating the success of their community in that town. At this occasion the fourth head of the world-wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the late Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ra) sent a message to the community in the USA. A copy is presented below, followed by an article giving a detailed background to the challenge.

Message to the Ahmadiyya Community in Islam Inc., USA

Assalamo alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuhu

I am pleased that our community in the United States of America is holding a conference near Zion city to commemorate the fulfilment of a grand prophecy made by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, the Promised Messiah, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam of Qadian (1835-1908), peace be upon him. I convey to all those attending this conference my greetings of peace and blessings of God Almighty upon them.

The circumstances which gave rise to this grand prophecy, the numerous articles published in the USA at that time and the manner in which this prophecy was fulfilled will unfold before you through the presentations made at this conference and the material collated by the members of our community in USA.

Very briefly, John Alexander Dowie, born in Edinburgh in 1847, acquired a degree of reputation for healing. In 1888, he came to the United States of America and started publication of the *Leaves of Healing*. He founded the Christian Catholic sect and was a

staunch supporter of the concept of trinity. In 1901, he started building a town he called Zion City and claimed to be Elijah III. Mr Dowie was a bitter enemy of Islam and carried on an offensive, scurrilous and abusive campaign against the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and wanted to destroy Islam.

The keenest distress that oppressed the mind of the Promised Messiah was the baseless accusations against his mentor, the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. While the Muslim contemporaries around him did nothing to confront this self-acclaimed Elijah, the Promised Messiah threw down the gauntlet to Mr Dowie and in a powerful message in 1902 proposed to him a prayer that of the two of them, the one who was false might die before the other.

‘It should be remembered that I am not just an average citizen of this country. I am the Promised Messiah who is being awaited by Mr Dowie. The only difference is that Mr Dowie says that the Promised Messiah will appear

within 25 years and I proclaim that he has appeared already and I am that person....If instead of the destruction of all Muslims Mr Dowie’s purpose can be served by my death alone, he will have established a great sign, in consequence of which millions of people will acknowledge the son of Mary as god and will also believe in Dowie as his apostle.’

[*Review of Religions*, Urdu, Vol.1
No 9 pp 342-8]

This challenge of the Promised Messiah^(as) was given wide publicity in the American press. Mr Dowie’s outburst in the *Leaves of Healing* of December 1903 led to a progressive decline of all his affairs and his miserable death, as prophesied by the Promised Messiah^(as).

To the casual observer, this may appear to be nothing more than a crazy claim by a person in America almost a century ago and perhaps its ending too much of a coincidence but that would be like shutting one’s eyes to the truth and not judging such matters in a rational manner.

The fact of the matter is that all major religions promise the advent of a Divine personage who would usher in a new era of hope for mankind and unite it under one shared belief. This meeting point of all major religions is sadly an utopia because each religion's believers await a different person belonging exclusively to their own religious order and carved out of their wild irrational hopes. The question which emerges is whether a single person is promised or many, simultaneously.

Now if God has no contradiction in Him, He will either send one person with a single message or none at all because otherwise the attitude of different warring factions of various religions, each holding divergent views and aspirations, would be irreconcilable.

For thousands of years, the Jews have been yearning for the advent of the Christ but they do not realise that he has come and gone but not in the way they had expected, nor in the manner they had assigned to his advent. They expected him to be a warrior Messiah and to appear with a crown over his head and

seated on a royal throne. He was to lead the Israelite armies against the despotic rule of the Roman Empire. Two thousand years have passed since their rejection of Jesus, on whom be peace, as Messiah, yet no Messiah of their expectation has come. Their belief about the bodily descent of Elijah before the advent of the Messiah^(as) effectively blocked the passage of the Messiah they awaited. So the Jewish position in reality turns out to be a denial of the advent of the Messiah^(as) altogether.

The case of all others who expect a world reformer is no different from that of the Jews. The actors of course are different but they enact the same scene in different garbs. Imagine, for instance, a Christ paying a second visit to earth in the grand style envisaged by the Christians who still await his literal second coming. A son of God giving up his heavenly throne and descend-ing from heaven after two millenniums is an idea which can only keep a blind faith alive. Yet the Christians see no element of irrationality about it because dogma has blinded them.

This was the case with Mr Dowie who went so far as to make it easier for the second advent of Christ, an almost outrageous wedlock between spirit and matter, to descend on earth by claiming himself to be Elijah III—another shattered dream.

The same anomaly of the Jews and Christians applies to the unreal and supernatural expectations of the followers of all other religions. Rationality should have helped such followers to realise that the literal revisit to earth by any prophet or son of God is illogical. It has never happened in the past nor can it ever take place in the future. Never was the founder of any major religion sighted as descending from on high: he always appeared through the normal course of human birth.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at accepts the claims of all religions who promise the advent of a universal Divine Reformer in the latter days but believes that the promise of the simultaneous advent of so many reformers could only be metaphorical and not corporeal: one reformer wearing

so many garbs. That reformer was, according to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, the Founder, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian in whose favour God Almighty showed many signs, one of which is the fulfilment of the prophecy about the death of Mr Dowie.

I invite you to study this person who wrote more than eighty books and judge for yourself the truth of his claims. Allah bless you and enable you to do that.

Yours truly

Mirza Tahir Ahmad

(Head of the worldwide
Ahmadiyya Muslim community)

Challenge to Alexander Dowie

by Anwer Mahmood Khan – USA

John Alexander Dowie, a Scotsman by birth (born 1847), migrated with his family to Australia in 1860. In 1867 he moved back to Scotland to study theology. In 1872, he returned to Australia and found work at a congregational church in the small city of Newton near Sydney. Later, he became a minister in a Melbourne Church. In 1878, he organised the International Healing Association. During his time in Melbourne he was arrested many times because of his extreme protests against the wickedness that, according to him abounded in that area.

In July 1888 he arrived in the San Francisco area in the United States, where he began his healing activities. Initially he was given a warm welcome, but later people deserted him. He travelled extensively up and down the west coast. In Evanston, Illinois he began his ministerial work in a small wooden hut near the World

Fair facilities. In 1896 he formed his own church, the Christian Catholic Church, with an enrolment of 500 followers. In 1897, he established the Central Zion Tabernacle. In 1895, he was arrested over a hundred times for protesting against alcohol use and for practising medicine without a license.

Slowly he began buying large parcels of land some forty-two miles north of Chicago while keeping the attention of the media on his controversial pursuits in Chicago. On New Year's Eve, he gathered all his followers to an all-night service at the Central Zion Tabernacle. As the clock struck twelve, Dowie drew the large curtain, twenty-five feet high and twenty-five feet wide, that was hiding the blueprint of his soon to be founded new City of Zion. The blue print was laid out on 6,600 acres site in an area along the bank of Lake Michigan. This was the beginning of the City of Zion.

From this point on, he began to progress in leaps and bounds.

Claims of John Alexander Dowie:

Dr. Dowie, initially referred to as General Overseer or simply Doctor Dowie, assumed authority progressively over a period of eight years. The first title, which he declared for himself on January 22, 1896 was ‘authoritative teacher.’ We read: ‘I am not claiming any office; no man has heard me claim any office. I am a teacher and have taken no other place. I have not stood here claiming to be recognised as a prophet. I have not stood here claiming to be recognised as an Apostle. I have stood here as an authoritative teacher.’

On June 2, 1901, he claimed to be Elijah III. He wrote: ‘As the teacher of the Christian Catholic Church in Zion. . . I continued to develop practically these principles in my ministry, and God used me to prepare the church for the declaration of June 2, 1901. I there stood forth before an immense audience in the Chicago Auditorium and declared that God

had sent me as John the Baptist had been sent, in the Spirit and Power of Elijah.’ He further said, ‘The name is not a title, it is a reality. I firmly believe in common with tens of thousands of my followers that I have been sent by God in the “Spirit and Power of Elijah” as the third and last manifestation of that prophet. The first manifestation was in Elijah (which means Jehovah is my God) 28 centuries ago, when the worship of Baal was triumphant in Israel. This was Elijah the Destroyer. The second manifestation was in the person of John the Baptist. (Matthew 13:14). He was Elijah the Preparer. The third manifestation of Elijah is in my person, of whom Christ spoke, after John the Baptist’s death, when he admitted the correctness of rabbinical contention, “Elijah must first come,” saying “Elijah indeed cometh and shall restore all things.” I am Elijah, the Restorer.’ (PP. 53-57)

Finally, he declared his ultimate office to be ‘The First Apostle.’ This declaration was made on September 18, 1904. He said, ‘I stand hereby today as the High

Priest on earth and the First Apostle of the Christian Catholic and Apostolic Church in Zion of that High Priest in Heaven.’ In this capacity, he not only announced his communion with the Divine, but he made several statements, which he claimed had originated from the Almighty God Himself.

The organisation of the Christian Catholic Church was formally instituted on February 22, 1896. Ministers were ordained in Chicago, and churches were started in practically every major city in the USA and missionaries were sent abroad to England, France, Germany, Scandinavia, Australia, China, South Africa, Switzerland, Jamaica, Mexico and other places.

Dowie’s Animosity Towards Islam

Having claimed to be Elijah III and, in his eyes, the greater title of ‘The First Apostle’ Dowie often gave evidence of his hostility towards Islam in his speeches and writings. He hurled foul and abusive remarks against Islam, its founder, and Muslims in general.

He writes in his publication, *Leaves of Healing*:

Zion will have to destroy Mohammedanism.

One of the greatest systems in the Orient is Mohammedanism . . . the Mohammedan is taught to look forward to heaven as one vast brothel and harem, where he can find satisfaction in women that are prepared for him as the creatures of lust. Zion will have to wipe out that shocking blot upon humanity. That accursed flag will have to come down from the high towers of Jerusalem. May God help me to knock at the gate of the Moslem before long! The Moslem will fight. There are hundreds of millions of them. One of the great wars imminent is that between the Cross and the Crescent. But, beloved, there is something stronger than steel. It is the Sword of the Spirit. There is something greater than anger. It is Love. Love subdues the man; it subdues the nation, and will reach the heart... (*Leaves of Healing*, Volume XIII, p.474)

The Terrible Danger to Christianity from Mohammedanism

‘I warn the Christian nations of America and Europe. Islam is not dead. Islam is full of power. Although Islam must go, although Mohammedanism must be destroyed, remember it will not be wiped out by the effete Latin Christianity; the powerless Greek Christianity; the worn-out Christianity of those who nominally acknowledge Christ and live as gluttons and drunkards and harlots and whoremongers and oppressors.’

(Leaves of Healing, Vol. VII, August 25, 1900)

The Unspeakable Turk

‘How can any one who knows exactly what Mohammedanism is, for one single moment imagine that God or man can forever stand that abomination? “Where the Moslem hoof comes no grass grows” is the Eastern proverb. Wherever the accursed teaching of Mahomet has come there has been an end of all real progress.... I pray for the day to come when the

Crescent shall disappear, and when the flags – I would like to see them united there and everywhere of Great Britain and America – shall float over Zion at Jerusalem, as they often do at the city of Zion near Chicago. May God Grant it! It is the time that the Moslem abomination was gone, “bag and baggage” as Mr. Gladstone used to say. Let it slink away back into the deserts of Arabia whence the filthy thing emerged. . . May God destroy it.’

(Leaves of Healing, Volume XII, p.526)

In 1902 Dowie had prophesied that unless all the Muslims of the world accepted Christianity, they would meet with death and destruction.

Hadhrat Ahmad’s^(as) Response

Hadhrat Ahmad^(as), deeply loved the founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). He was much aggrieved by Dowie’s abuse and foul allegations. He first responded with polite admonishment, but this met with no response. Dowie continued in his

abusive assertions. Hadhrat Ahmad^(as), at this stage, issued a leaflet inviting Dowie for a decisive act of *Mubahila* (prayer duel). He writes:

‘Recently, there has appeared in the United States of America, a man, apostle of Jesus, whose name is Dowie. He claims that Jesus, in his capacity as god, has sent him into this world to invite people to the doctrine that there is no god besides Jesus’. . . [He] deifies Jesus and calls himself his apostle and also states that the prophecy mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:15 is fulfilled in his advent and he himself, is the Elijah and the apostle of this age. . .

As regards Muslims, we wish to point out respectfully to Mr Dowie that there is no need for the fulfilment of his purpose to subject millions of Muslims to destruction. There is a very easy way of determining whether Dowie’s god is true or our God. That way is that Dowie need not repeatedly announce his prophecy of the destruction of

all Muslims. He should keep me alone in his mind and should pray that of the two of us, the one who is false may die before the other. Dowie believes in Jesus as god and I consider him a humble creature and a prophet. The matter at issue, is which of us two is in the right. Mr Dowie should publish this prayer which should bear the testimony of at least one thousand persons. When the issue of the paper that contains this announcement reaches me, I too will pray accordingly and shall append to this prayer the testimony of a thousand persons, if God so wills.

I have not been the first to propose such a prayer. It is Mr Dowie who through his announcements, has put himself in this position. Observing this, God who is jealous, has urged me towards this confrontation. It should be remembered that I am not just an average citizen of this country. I am the Promised Messiah, who is being awaited by Mr Dowie.

If Mr Dowie is true in his claim and Jesus is indeed god, this matter can be determined by the death of only one person; there is no need of destroying the Muslims of all countries. But if Mr Dowie does not respond to this notice and offer a prayer according to his boasts and is removed from the world before my death, this would be a Sign for the people of America. The only condition is that the death of either of us should not be caused by human hands but should be brought about by illness or by lightening or snakebite or by an attack of a wild beast. I grant Dowie a period of three months to make up his mind to comply with my request and I pray that God be with those who are true.

The method I propose is that Mr Dowie should come into the arena against me with the permission of his false god. I am an old man of more than sixty-six years of age. I suffer from diabetes, dysentery, migraine and deficiency of blood. I realise, however, that

my life depends not upon the condition of my health but upon the command of my God. If the false god of Mr Dowie possesses any power, he will certainly permit him to come forth against me. If, instead of the destruction of all Muslims, Mr Dowie's purpose can be served by my death alone, he will have established a great sign, in consequence of which millions of people will acknowledge the son of Mary as god and will believe in Dowie as an apostle'

Although Mr. Dowie did not publicly acknowledge this challenge, the world press took special notice and over forty newspapers around the world publicised this 'duel challenge' in their daily, weekly, and monthly publications. (*See Appendix I*)

The Argonaut of San Francisco gave an account of the challenge under the caption, 'English versus Arabic Prayer Contest', and concluded with the remark:

'In brief, the Mirza has written to Dowie: You are the leader of

a community. I too have several followers. The decision as to who is from God can be easily sought. Each of us should pray that whoever is false, God should take him away in the lifetime of the other. The one whose prayer is heard shall be considered from the true God.

This indeed is a most reasonable and just option'.
(1st December 1902)

Alexander Dowie did not reply to Hadhrat Ahmad's^(as) challenge as requested. However, in February 1903, he announced:

'I pray to God that Islam should soon disappear from the world. O' God, accept this prayer of mine. O' God, destroy Islam'.

Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) reiterates his Challenge

On 23rd of August 1903, Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) published another statement addressed to Dowie where he stated:

'It should be borne in mind

that Dr. Dowie has not given any reply to my challenge made in September 1902 nor has he even so much as mentioned it in his paper [i.e. *Leaves of Healing*]. For an answer to my challenge, I will wait for a further period of seven months from this day. If he accepts the challenge within this period and fulfils its conditions as published by me, and makes an announcement to the effect in this paper, the world will soon see the end of this contest. I am about 66 years of age, while Dr. Dowie is about 55 years. Therefore compared to me he is still young. Since the matter is not to be settled by age, I do not care for this great disparity in years. The whole matter rests in the Hands of Him who is the Lord of the heaven and earth, and Judge over all judges and He will decide it in favour of the true claimant. But if Dr. Dowie cannot even now gather courage to appear in the contest against me, let both the continents bear witness that I shall be entitled to claim the same victory as in the case of

his death in my life-time. If he accepts the challenge, the pretensions of Dr. Dowie will be settled though he may try hard as he can to fly away from the death, which awaits him. Yet his flight from such a contest will be nothing less than a type of death and a calamity will most certainly overtake his Zion for he must face the consequences of either acceptance of the challenge or of its refusal.'

Here Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) claimed that if Dowie ran away from this challenge, then he would call upon the people of America and Europe as witness and Dowie's flight from the proposed contest would be deemed to be his defeat and a type of death. Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) concluded this statement with the declaration, as reported in American Newspapers:

'a calamity will most certainly befall his Zion very soon'.

Under pressure from the press and his own followers, Alexander Dowie of Zion was at last forced to respond to Hadhrat Ahmad's^(as)

challenge. In December 1903, Dowie announced:

'In India, there is a Mohammedan Messiah who keeps on writing to me that Jesus Christ lies buried in Kashmir. People ask me why do I not send him the necessary reply? Do you think that I should answer such gnats and flies? If I were to put my foot on them I would crush them to death. The fact is that I merely give them a chance to fly away and survive.'

(Leaves of Healing, December 27, 1903)

Hence, Alexander Dowie had, with this statement, accepted Hadhrat Ahmad's^(as) challenge, if not expressly, at least in an implied manner. When Hadhrat Ahmad's^(as) statement was published Dowie was at the height of his power, in terms of his health, his following and his financial resources. No sooner had Dowie issued this statement his affairs began to decline. His health showed signs of deterioration; his followers began to question his claims and he encountered financial difficulties.



Above: Photo of Alexander Dowie's House.



Right: Photo of Alexander Dowie in his full uniform.

Below: Dowie seated with his wife Jane (right) and Daughter (left) and behind, his son, daughter and father.



Dr. Dowie's High Profile

At the time of the challenge Dowie's ownership extended over 6600 acres of land; the Bank of Zion; the lace factory of Zion; Zion schools; factories and manufacturing plants; railway lines; grocery stores; produce markets; the Central Zion Tabernacle; Zion Publishing House. His followers controlled four publications. The *Leaves of Healing* was printed in four languages and distributed all over the world. His church had branches in Australia, Germany, France and Switzerland. His personal guards numbered over 3000 and he had thousands of employees. His personal Christmas gifts were no less than one million dollars. His net-worth was estimated to be in excess of 20 million dollars, a huge sum in those days.

Evangelising New York in 1903.

Dowie had planned an evangelical trip to New York on October 18, 1903. Arrangements for this event took ten months of planning and \$300,000. Three-thousand of his soldiers travelled from Zion to New York. Eight trains carried thou-

sands of his followers for the meetings planned for Madison Square Garden, which was rented for a month.

The *New York Times* published an article under the headline: 'Invasion of New York by Dowie's army'. The *Chicago Tribune* expressed an expectation of 100,000 converts. A crowd of 30,000 people packed Madison Square Garden to hear Dr. Dowie. But the expected success did not materialise. Rather it was here, in New York that Dr. Dowie's influence and power began to decline, just two months after Hadhrat Ahmad's^(as) definitive challenge addressed to him.

All the New York publications covered this event and the *New York Times* ran the following headlines: 'Hostile Audience Howls at Dowie'; 'Elijah Overawed by Angry Multitude'; 'Throngs turn from Enraged Elijah III'; 'New York – The Waterloo of the Elijah'; 'Massive Gathering deserts Elijah'; 'Elijah III's Hosts in Tents of Ungodly Many Complaints Made'; 'Dowie and his Host Mass in the Garden';

‘Dowie leaves the City and may not Return’

Dowie’s Downfall

Certain revelations regarding Dowie’s mishandling of financial affairs began to emerge in the press. From here his popularity took a sudden and steep decline. Two years later in October and December 1905 he suffered a series of severe strokes leading to paralysis of his lower body and he was taken to Mexico and Jamaica in search of a cure which was never found. The feet that Dowie of Zion had proudly stated could trample the Muhammedan Messiah, like a gnat or fly, could not now even support his own body.

Dowie’s followers discovered that he indulged in heavy drinking, while preaching against it and also the misappropriation of the organisation’s funds as a result of which he was deposed from his position. He was accused of having embezzled \$2,529,766 from Zion City of which \$35,000 was found to have been given as gifts to pretty women of Zion. His wife and son also deserted him and were not present with him at his

death. He spent the rest of his life in physical misery and mental anguish. On the 7th of March, 1907, Alexander Dowie died, abandoned and disgraced.

‘He built a creed;
He was excommunicated.
He built a city;
He was expelled from it.
He amassed a fortune of millions;
He was reduced to virtual poverty.
He elevated Volivia to a great power;
Volivia¹ ruined him.
He drew about him thousands who worshipped him;
He died deserted by all save a handful of the faithful.’
(*Chicago Evening News*, 9 March 1907)

At the time of Alexander Dowie’s death, *The Sunday Herald* of Boston, that had followed progress of the controversy between Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) and Alexander Dowie, observed:

‘Dowie died a miserable death with Zion city torn and frayed by internal dissensions’.



Above: Photo of Dowie’s catholic church which is now renamed Christ Community Church.

Above inserts Dowie’s Zion community’s old and new logos..

Left: Dowie grave.

The Truth Seeker, which had also followed the argument, stated (on Sunday, June 15,1907):

‘The Qadian man predicted that if Dowie accepted the challenge, he shall leave the world before his eyes with great sorrow and torment. If Dowie declined, the Mirza

said, the end would only be deferred; death awaited him just the same, and calamity will soon overtake Zion. This was a grand prophecy: Zion would fall and Dowie would die before Ahmad. It appeared to be a risky step for the promised Messiah to defy the restored Elijah to an endurance

test for the challenger was 15 years the older man of the two and probabilities in the land of plagues and famines were against the survivor, but he won out’.

Another American journal, *The Dunnville Gazette*, Friday, June 7, 1907, which reported Alexander Dowie’s miserable death in strict accordance with Hadhrat Ahmad’s^(as) prophecy observed:

‘Ahmad and his adherents may be pardoned for taking some credit for the accuracy with which the prophecy was fulfilled a few months ago’.

Little of the original Zion City of Dowie remains. Dowie had built a great hall seating 8000 worshippers for special services. In 1937 this building together with the radio station were ravaged by fire. In early 1954 Zion was hit once more when an entire city block of the down-town district was destroyed by fire. Today a few of the buildings of the original Zion still remain – Dowie’s house, a small chapel across the street, a now renovated hotel and the

dilapidated buildings of his lace factory. Today a small town with suburbs of 35,000 population has been built up and is still named Zion. Almost one hundred years after the great controversy, there are very few, if any followers of Dowie remaining in the world. However, the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) number in tens of millions and are spread out all over the globe. There is even a small yet dynamic community of his followers residing in and around Zion, Illinois. In fact this community makes a contribution towards the maintenance of Dowie’s house as a museum and it would come as no surprise if the majority of visitors to Dowie’s house today are followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

In the year 2000, the followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) held a convention in Zion City to commemorate the fulfilment of his prophecy regarding Dowie and his Zion. It is his followers who are active today in Zion, conveying the message of Islam through his teachings.

References

1. Wilbur Glenn Volivia, appointed by Dowie to be his successor, led the rebellion leading to the overthrow of Dowie.

APPENDIX I

Some captions in Newspapers on Hadhrat Ahmad's^(as) Prayer Contest

- 1 *The Argonaut*, San Francisco, Dec. 1, 1902 'An Anglo-Arabic Praying Match'.
- 2 *New York Times*, March 29, 1903 Editorial: 'The Rival Prophets'.
- 3 *Baltimore America*, June 25, 1903 'Dowie versus Ghulam'.
- 4 *Boston Daily Advertiser*, June 25, 1903 Dr. Dowie, Elijah, has received a Challenge to a Prayer Duel by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, Punjab, India.
- 5 *Democrat and Chronicle*, June 25, 1903 'Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, threatens to pray Prophet Elijah Dowie to Death. All right, such long range assassination as that is permissible. Sail right in, Mirza.
- 6 *The Inter Ocean*, Chicago, June 27, 1903 Editorial: 'Ghulam Ahmad's Challenge'.
- 7 *Burlington Daily Free Press*, Burlington, Vermont, June 27, 1903 'A Praying Duel Proposition'.
- 8 *The Inter Ocean*, Chicago, June 28,

1903, 'Will Dowie Fight this Duel? Who is a liar?'

- 9 *The Sunday Times-Union*, Jacksonville, June 28, 1903 (Small News item) One Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who dwells in Northern Hindustan, Challenges Alexander Dowie to praying match, and threatens to pray him to death....
- 10 *Worcester Sunday Spy*, June 28, 1903 (Established 1770, by Isaiah Thomas, Worcester, Massachusetts) 'Alexander Dowie has a rival in India'.
- 11 *The New York Times*, October 17, 1903, 'Dowie and his Host Mass in the Garden'.
- 12 *The New York Times*, October 18, 1903, 'Elijah III's – Hosts in Tents of Ungodly' Many Complaints Made.
- 13 *The New York Times*, October 19, 1903 – Throngs Turn From Enraged 'Elijah-III' – Half Of Vast Audience Leaves Garden Despite Guards – Prophet Denounces City.
- 14 *The New York Times*, October 20, 1903, 'Hostile Audience Howls at Dowie'.
- 15 *The New York Times*, October 21, 1903, 'Came Nation Halts Abuse from Elijah'.
- 16 *The New York Times*, October 22, 1903 – 'Elijah Overawed by Angry Multitude – Convert for Dowie – Trust Funds Disappear – Audience was Hostile – Strange Revelations.

- 17 *The New York Times*, October 24, 1903 'Dowie Leaves City – and May Not Return' (16 pages with Review of Books & Art).
- 18 *The New York Times*, October 25, 1903 (26 page magazine Supplement and Financial Section) Advertisement: 'Dowie - His Creed and his Personality' – Letter to the Editor: 'The Ways of Dowie' by Mark Marion, N.Y., Oct. 20, 1903 - Dowie Repeating Himself .
- 19 *The Commercial Advertiser*, NY, October 26, 1903, 'Dowie Challenged' Indian Messiah Dares him to Prove his Claims.
- 20 *The Times*, London, November 9, 1903 – 'The Dowie Mission' – 'Dr. Dowie's Crusade'.
- 21 *The Literary Digest*, Vol. XXVI, Number 25, 'Rival Messiah in a Proposed Prayer Duel'.
- 22 *New York Daily Tribune*, April 3, 1906 'Dowie Down and Out' – New Leader for Zion.
- 23 *New York Daily Tribune*, April 5, 1906, 'Receiver for Zion' – Act to forestall Dowie's Threatened Flight Against Ouster.
- 24 *The Outlook - The Week*, April 14, 1906. 'Zion in a Ferment'.
- 25 *The Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 1907 – Founder of Dowieite Cult and of Zion City – Who Died Yesterday – Dowie, Dying, Says He'll Live Again – I'll Return to Earth in 1,000 years – almost his Last Words – Dowie an extraordinary Man – In Robes of First Apostle.
- 26 *The New York Times*, March 10, 1907 – 'Dowie Dies in the City he Founded' – Neither wife nor son, whom he had repulsed, was at his bedside.
- 27 *The Times*, London, March 11, 1907 'Dr. Dowie'.
- 28 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 12, 1907 - 'Dowie faithful Hold Last Rites' – Ten Score followers of 'First Apostle' – Refuse to Participate in other Services – Not to Attend Funeral – Gladstone Continues with Arrangements for Final Ceremonies on Thursday.
- 29 *The Dunnville Gazette*, June 7, 1907 'A Messiah in India'.
- 30 *The Truth Seeker*, New York, NY, June 15, 1907, 'The War of the Prophets'.
- 31 *The Sunday Herald*, Boston, June 23, 1907, 'Great is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad The Messiah' Foretold Pathetic End of Dowie, and now He Predicts Plague, Floods and Earthquakes.

Divine Guidance – Part I

On 27th December 1901, after Asr prayers, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as) of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi addressed the large gathering of people who had come from different parts of the country. Presented below is the first part of the translation of the speech that was delivered on this day. The original text of this Urdu speech has been taken from *Malfoozat*, Volume 3, pp.142-149.



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 and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

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

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

Translated by Amatul-Hadi Ahmad

You should all listen [to what I have to say] with full attention and careful consideration because this matter is a matter of faith and in this matter carelessness, laziness or lack of attentiveness leads to many ill consequences. Those who are careless in matters of faith and do not pay attention when someone

addresses them, no matter how good or beneficial that address may be derive no benefit. It is such people about whom it is said that they possess ears but they do not hear, they have hearts but they do not understand. Hence, remember that whatever is stated should be listened to with full attention and consideration because he who does not listen carefully can reap no benefit even from a close association with a good and beneficial person no matter how long he spends in his company.

At the time when God Almighty appoints Prophets as Messengers for the world, there exist two types of people. One type is that which pays attention to what the Prophets state and gives careful consideration to their words. This is the group that benefits and attains true righteousness and the fruits of its blessings. The other group of people are those who not only ignore what is being said but they laugh and mock at the Prophets and plot and plan to harm them.

At the time when our Holy Prophet^(sa) was appointed [as Messenger] at that time too, in accordance with this rule, there were two groups. One group was that which listened to the message of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and listened to it with full attention. Consequently, they were affected by those words to such an extent that they became passionate admirers of the Holy Prophet^(sa) ready to sacrifice their parents, their children and other loved ones. In short, all that was loved by them in this world became secondary to the love they felt for the Holy Prophet^(sa). Previously they had been spending their days in comfort, enjoying the company of their friends and relatives. All that had to be given up, however, when they forged a relationship with the holy person. All the relationships had to be torn asunder but they did not find it difficult to do so, they felt only pleasure and happiness. It needs to be considered carefully as to what it was that the Holy Prophet^(sa) possessed that led to people being so enamoured with him

that they were ready to give up their lives. They were ready to sever all links be they of worldly gains or of political or national links. They were not only ready to do all this, they actually showed by giving up their lives to what extent they held their relationship of love and sincerity with the Holy Prophet^(sa). On the face of it, the Holy Prophet^(sa) had no material wealth that could be a source of attraction for others. The Holy Prophet^(sa) was himself brought up as an orphan, what could he give to others.

I say that, undoubtedly the Holy Prophet^(sa) had no material wealth nor did he possess any other means of worldly temptation or inducement but he possessed the very things that are in reality the most effective and attractive and it was this that attracted the world towards him. These were truth and magnetism and it is these two things that Prophets bring with them. The existence of both these qualities are essential as a person cannot gain from just the one nor can he benefit others by possessing only

one of these qualities. Truth without attraction cannot lead to great gain. Similarly, what benefit can there be if there is magnetism but no truth. There are many people in this world that speak for the truth but it is observed that such truth does not prove to be beneficial or effective. Why is this so? It is because such truth is only on their lips – their heart is not acquainted and they do not possess the attraction that develops after the heart's acceptance. Hence, the person who speaks half-heartedly about truth, has a similar effect.

True magnetism, real attraction and actual effectiveness develop only when the truth that a person describes, is not only accepted by him but by practising it he acquires its shining results and effects and he has these within himself. Should a person himself not hold a true belief in the matters that he describes, and does not show the effect of the true faith through his practice he can never be an effective or beneficial being. Such words

emanate from foul smelling lips and become even more foul smelling by the time they reach the ears of others. Moreover, such cruel and heartless people manage to slaughter truth in yet another way. As there are no signs of true blessings and fruits [of truth] with such people, consequently, those listening to them consider what they say to be no more than mere imaginary talk and consequently take a careless attitude towards it and are deprived.

In short, it is worth remembering that the person who calls towards reformation and betterment of the world cannot be of benefit unless he has with him truth and magnetism. However, those who do not pay attention to his words [find] that they also do not benefit from the words of those who do possess truth and magnetism.

Just as it is part of God's law of nature that day follows night and night follows day and that there is no change in this law, so there occur in the world ages that are of a similar nature. At times there

is a spiritual 'night' and at times the 'sun' rises to bring a new 'day'. Hence, the last thousand years resemble a spiritual dark night and it has been referred to as Faij-e-A'awaj by the Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam [meaning a period of crookedness]. For God it is 'one day' as is stated in the [Holy Qur'an]:

وَأَنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ
رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ
مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ

Verily, a day with thy Lord is as a thousand years of your reckoning.

(Ch.22: V.48)

In this period of thousand years there was a very dangerous veil of darkness spread over the world in which there were used all manner of deceitful schemes and prevarication to drag the greatness of our Holy Prophet^(sa) into an unholy mire. The people themselves who were called Muslims were engulfed in all manner of Shirk, [that is,

indulging in practices that denied the Unity of God] and had begun to follow customs that were un-Islamic. About this group of people the Holy Prophet^(sa) has stated: *Laisoo minni wa lastu minhum*, that is, ‘They are not from me and I am not from them’. In short, as God has stated, this was a night of thousand years that has passed. God has now desired that the world should be given a portion from the light and it should be given to him who is capable of receiving it. It is a capacity that is not possessed by everyone. Hence, God has appointed me in this century in order that I may revive Islam.

We observe that Prophet Moses^(as) was not able to succeed, in the full meaning of the word, because he was not able to turn many of his people into sincere [followers]. A small period of absence lead to rebellion of the people despite the fact that Prophet Aaron^(as) was present amongst them and the people turned to the worship of a calf. All the way through, the people

[of Israel] persisted in doubts and suspicions. Never were the people as a whole able to show heartfelt sincerity despite witnessing numerous signs. Similarly, Prophet Jesus^(as) also remained without complete success, so much so that even the disciples, as is stated in the Bible, showed signs of insincerity and some having turned away cursed him. The Scribes and the Pharisees who sat on the seat of Moses^(as) were not able to take a share of the divine light and accept the words of truth that Jesus^(as) had brought and did not listen to him with care. Although it can be said that Jesus^(as) faced many difficulties that were like prophecies for the signs and indications of the Messiah. However, had they given these matters careful thought and consideration and had they been truly guided, they would have benefited and with strength they would have come out of their difficulties. Reflection upon these matters naturally gives rise to the question as to why it is so? A brief answer to this is that a person is destroyed through his

own strategy. Those who do not pay heed and consider the existence [of God's Messenger] to be of no benefit and do not pay attention to his blessed words, the necessary consequence of this is that they remain deprived. As I stated at the beginning, one should listen attentively and with care. Those who do not listen with care are the people who have ears but who do not hear. Similarly, I would now say that these are the people whose hearts are locked and upon whose eyes and ears there are covers. That is why they mock and laugh at the words of the Messengers of God and those appointed by God. Consequently, not having benefited [from the Messenger of God], they become deprived and are engulfed by the wrath of God.

It is those who heed the words of the Messenger of God with careful attention, patience and steadfastness, who are able to benefit from them. Eventually the glitter of truth itself brightens their hearts and their eyes are opened and their ears develop a new capacity to hear. Moreover,

the heart ponders and creates a state of practice [of righteous actions] that lead to the attainment of solace and tranquillity.

In the world we see that when a person loses the opportunity of doing good and acting righteously, he later becomes saddened at the thought of having lost such an opportunity and feels the pain of such a loss. Similarly, those who live through the time of Prophets and then lose this opportunity [to recognise them and to reform] are engulfed by the wrath of God. It is regrettable that the people of the world are unaware of all this. Had it been possible for the people of this world to obtain information about the dead and if the dead could return to this world to recount their stories then everyone would live the life of angels and sin in the world would be as if a 'death' had come over it. However, God has not wished it to be so and there is a veil of mystery over this matter in order that there should be a reward for goodness and the

reward should not be wasted. For instance, if questions were to be published before an examination, the answers could not be used to test the ability [of people taking the exam]. Similarly, the method God Almighty has adopted for accountability has been safeguarded against extremes.

Had it been the case that God had lifted all the veils and no matter remained secret or hidden and the dead could come and tell us about heaven and hell, would there remain any atheists or idol worshippers? For instance, even if only a few dead people belonging to this place could describe the reality [of life after death] to their grand children and other loved ones, could any one then remain in a state of disobedience – most certainly not! However, God Almighty has not wished so. Should a person declare that he believes in the sun, that it exists and gives light, what type of reward could be attached to such a belief – none whatsoever. Similarly, in order to establish the value and importance of faith and for the reward

of righteousness, God Almighty has wished that there should be some hidden aspects. The wise person achieves greater integrity and completeness [through the hidden aspects of faith] and the foolish remain deprived. Moreover, there is no aspect of faith that does not have a reality or a philosophy. There is contained an extraordinary philosophy in keeping some matters hidden. As I have just stated, if there were to be total manifestation such that nothing remained hidden, facts of the next world and the pleasure of God, all were known, then nothing would then be goodness nor would there be any appreciation of it. There is no reward upon a belief in things that are known and witnessed. A person who professes belief in a mosque or a tree or in the sun is not entitled to any reward. But he who finds out about something that is hidden and believes in that, such a one is doubtless worthy of praise and is entitled to receive much praise. What [kind of a reward can there be] when there is a total manifestation?

Similarly, should someone claim to have seen the crescent of the moon on the twenty-ninth, his eye-sight would certainly be worthy of praise but if someone says that he has seen the full moon on the fourteenth and invites others to see it when it has become full and its light is fully visible to all, such a person would be considered no more than a joker indulging in a time-wasting exercise. In short, ability manifests itself through wisdom.

God has hidden some things and manifested others. If God had manifested everything, reward of belief would have been forgone and if He had hidden everything then all religions would have remained in darkness and nothing would have been the cause of satisfaction. Moreover, today no religion could have asserted upon another that it is at fault nor could there have been established any principle of accountability because this difficulty is beyond human capability. However, God Almighty has stated [in the Holy Qur'an]:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا
إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

*Allah burdens not any soul
beyond its capacity.*

(Ch 2 V 287)

In short, it is a blessing of God that there is only a small test [of belief and faith], one that does not constitute very great difficulty. Despite the fact that the other world is such that whoever goes there does not return, God has maintained a system of illumination and blessing through which we can discover [the nature of some mysteries] in this world and the hidden matters become matters of reality.

Philosophers of today have tried to undertake much research into the matter of whether the dead can return to this world. In America, one person was killed to see whether any sense remained after death. The person on whom the experiment was carried out was told to indicate to them with a sign but after he was

dead he was unable to do anything. This is so because it is a hidden secret of God and no one can attain to its mystery. When man has gone beyond the limits, he sets about trying to find out the mystery [of hidden secrets]. The western world by research into numerous worldly matters, reaches out in every science and philosophy beyond reasonable limits and seeks to leave behind the human limits and go beyond. This however is to no avail. In short, in matters that are related to aspects of faith, God has neither hidden so much that one has to reach the limits of trouble and pain and still be unable to fathom these, nor have they been made so manifest that faith would not remain as faith and there would not be any gain set upon it.

Despite all these things, however, today is a day of rejoicing for Islam that no one in the world can compete with it. It holds with it the powerful miracle of its clear guidance and truths [that can be seen] in practice together with living

signs and living blessings that no one has the power to challenge.

The claim that in this age Islam is distinguished in the world by its pure teaching and its living results is not an empty claim. God has through His Servant proved this truth and by extending to all religions and faiths an invitation to the truth, has informed that in reality Islam is the one religion that is a living religion and any one who has the slightest doubt should come to me and witness these qualities and blessings for himself but the condition is that he should come as a true seeker and not as a hasty objector.

To be continued

True Islamic Teachings Compared to Al-Qaeda's Doctrine

A paper submitted at the European Union's Seminar in Brussels.

By M A Ashraf – St. Andrews University, Scotland

There is a growing realisation that the War on Terrorism needs to be fought in the mind, at least as much as it is being fought on the ground. The importance of the ideological dimension in the current terrorist threat is being recognised; even Donald Rumsfeld has accepted that defeating terrorism requires not just military victories but a 'war of ideas'¹. This war of ideas needs, an understanding of the terrorists' worldview and ideology before effective countermeasures can be determined.

I intend first to set the context in which we must try to understand Al Qaeda's doctrine. We need to understand and agree on the relationship between religion and politics; we need to know how extremism enters religion and how extremists adopt terrorism. We need to understand terrorism as a phenomenon both historically and contemporarily. These steps, especially the last one, will

enable us to develop a better understanding of the generic characteristics of religious terrorists and it will help us determine where Al-Qaeda fits into this model and where it sits apart. We are then ready to examine Al-Qaeda's doctrine. Specifically, we can begin to see how the organisation uses religious scripture to justify its worldview, its strategy and how it uses religion to inspire support and action. The process allows us to identify contradiction and conflicts in its theological justification as well as determining when theological beliefs shape ideology and when ideology (particularly political objectives) shape theological beliefs. Only after this stage are we in a position to consider effective means of countering the ideology, both in the Muslim world and in the West.

The Context – Religion and Violence

There is one school of thought that assumes religion is the cause of violence and another suggests that religion opposes it but that people hijack religion for political purposes. To explore this question in a way that would be persuasive and 'accessible' from a Western perspective, the actions of the Dutch Reform Church in South Africa have been analysed. The Church went from a position of arguing against segregation of Black and White communities in the 17th Century to supporting Apartheid in an increasingly aggressive manner in the last century. This change of position was brought about due to a change of political outlook in its congregations and Ministers resulting from economic threats posed by the Blacks and by immigrants as well as a strategic threat posed by the British occupation. A summary of the analysis based on Susan Ritner's work is attached at Annex A. The point of most interest is the way in which the Church formulated scriptural arguments to support its

position. From this we can conclude that:

- a) Doctrines of extremism develop progressively in response to perceived political threats.
- b) Religious scriptural justification is offered for the extremists' policies to motivate its members and to counter criticisms from the moderate parts of the religion.

These themes are repeated in other religions. In the case of Al Qaeda, we see a clear trend in its doctrine's historical development from the writings of Ibn Tamiyya who responded to the 13th Century Mongol onslaughts against Muslims, to Maududi, founder of Jama'at Islami, who developed the ideas of *jihad* against colonialism, through experience of the British rule in India. We also see the trend of Syed Qutb, who advocated rebellion against corrupt secular Arab regimes, and Abdul Azam whose writings on achieving a new world order were an inspiration to Osama bin Ladin.

Despite the fact that the overwhelming message common to all religions is of peace, compassion and brotherly love, many believe that religion is responsible for great misery, suffering, violence and terror. We ought, therefore, to persuade both Western and Islamic peoples that religions in themselves do not pose a threat through violence but it is political manipulation of religions, which in fact does. In the words of Mark Juergensmeyer, what is needed '... is an appreciation of the power religious imagination still holds in public life, and the recognition that many will find in it a cure for violence instead of a cause.'²

Islam and Politics

There is a belief that Islam is incompatible with Liberal Democracy and it is intrinsically political, having not experienced the separation of religion and state as the West did during the Enlightenment. These views are, at best, sweeping generalisations and fail to understand the detail and the dynamic nature of the religion. In particular they do not

fully account for the delayed and disrupted influence of modernity on Islamic nations in comparison with the West.

This topic is both broad and deep and needs careful analysis. Some brief thoughts are included in Annex B. Suffice to say, Islam as a religion can be apolitical and it can be compatible with Liberal Democracy. To what extent it is either of these things depends as much on the West's political attitude towards Muslims as it does on the interpretations of the religion within Islamic countries.

From Extremism to Terrorism

So what makes extremists turn to terrorism in the name of God? The prevailing view amongst academics is that a mixture of religion and 'day to day practical political considerations' motivates religious terrorists³. The relationship between these motivations is seldom considered and needs to be more closely explored. Most commentators make the implicit assumption that of these two motivations, the religious one is the strongest. My

hypothesis is that the fundamental motivation is solely political, and religion merely offers the moral justification to employ the force, often in a reprehensible manner, necessary to achieve political objectives.

Walter Reich in his book, *Origins of Terrorism*⁴, explains the necessity of moral justification and of obscuring personal agency. He identifies the premise that human beings have a self-sanction mechanism that stops them from committing inhumane acts. Overcoming such scruples can be done by '...reconstructing conduct as serving moral purposes, by obscuring personal agency in detrimental activities, by disregarding or misrepresenting the injurious consequences of one's actions, or by blaming and dehumanising the victims.' What this means in essence, is that people need moral justification before they indulge in horrific actions. The need for this justification and the strength of the case put forward is strongest in societies with the strongest ethical codes. These

tend to be religious and in the case of Islam, where politics needs most moral justification, the scriptural arguments are the most elaborate.

The development of a justification leads to the development of a particular worldview where political threats are presented as religious ones. For example, in 1991 the initial motivation of Al-Qaeda was to try to convince the Saudi government that Arabs, instead of Western troops, should expel Iraq from Kuwait. Yet their rhetoric emphasised, amongst other things, the presence of unveiled female troops in the land of the 'two sacred places' as a major threat against which Muslims should rise. Similarly, Al-Qaeda despises many aspects of globalisation and considers secular liberal democratic institutions a threat to Islam. They use this threat to justify their political objectives of establishing a caliphate (in this context, a religious leadership similar to the Papacy) in Saudi Arabia, which would replace the existing Arab monarchies and provide unifi-

cation of all true believers (most of the Sunni Muslim world, at least).

This construction of a worldview where Muslims are under threat from every quarter leads to a sense of 'serious crisis'. Magnus Ranstorp describes this crisis as 'multifaceted, at once in the social, political, economic, cultural, psychological and spiritual sphere.' Fighting against this, the terrorists 'perceive their actions as defensive and reactive in character'.⁵

Clerics play a crucial part in shaping this worldview. Their 'language and phraseology shapes the followers' reality, reinforcing the loyalty and social obligation of the members to the group and reminding them of the sacrifices already made, as well as the direction of the struggle.'⁶ The role of the Imam and his Friday Sermon in stirring up popular unrest is commonly reported but this phenomenon is not limited to Islam. According to Sprinzak: 'There has been no act by the Jewish underground which

did not have a rabbinical backing.'⁷ It is this process of converting political goals into religious imagery and language by the clerics that causes confusion over the source of motivation. What started out as a political objective is transformed in the mind of the terrorist foot soldier into a religious duty.

Trends in Religious Terrorism

Religious terrorism has ancient roots. David C Rapoport compared the activities and beliefs of 3 ancient terror groups—the Thugs, the Assassins and the Zealots–Sicarii⁸. Many pertinent trends emerge. For example, the Zealot-Sicarii used theological argument to interpret the political situation of the Jews under the contemporary superpower, the Romans. It alleged that prominent Jews were being culturally absorbed by heathen Romans and were complicit in 'the desecration of God's name'. Although it mostly killed Romans and Greeks, it also killed Jews. Indeed, one of its first victims was a Jewish priest. The Group indulged in both clandestine

assassinations as well as military combat with the Roman army. Its rhetoric and strategy has remarkable similarities to those of Al Qaeda today.

Despite these roots, religious terrorism is a relatively new trend in the contemporary field of political violence. Bruce Hoffman identified that in 1968 there were no groups who could be described as religious terrorists to well over quarter of terrorist groups having a religious motivation by 1994⁹. This proportion has subsequently risen further and, with the advent of Al Qaeda, the global effect of religious terrorism seems to have eclipsed other types of terrorism. What, then, are the characteristics of this phenomenon?

Characteristics of Religious Terrorists

Baruch Goldstein, a member of the Jewish fundamentalist group, the Kach movement, shot 90 rounds into a crowded mosque in Hebron on 25 February 1994. He killed 29 and wounded 150 worshippers before being over-

powered and killed. Although the Prime Minister and others expressed disgust at Goldstein's actions, many militant and Orthodox Jews saw him as a martyr. One of his mentors, a Rabbi, spoke of Goldstein in fond terms saying that he was a man 'who could no longer take the humiliation and the disgrace. Everything he did was in honour of Israel and for the glory of God.'¹⁰

This incident, when taken in conjunction with other examples, tells us a great deal about the characteristics of 'religious' terrorism. Some of these characteristics are not exclusive to this particular form of terrorism but they take on a greater significance in a religious context. The characteristics could be described as:

1. Such groups seem more inclined to target civilians and do so without discrimination of sex or age.
2. The location and date of their attacks tend to be chosen with

symbolic overtones. The Mosque symbolised the difference in the identity of the Israeli Jews and the majority of Palestinians who are Muslims. Even the town of Hebron had significance; it was the site of a massacre of 69 Jews in 1929. The date of the attack was the 2nd Friday of the Muslim Holy month of Ramadan.

3. Religious terrorists are disowned by the majority of their own faith but enjoy a great deal of respect, support and affection by a significant number of people within their own faith, even those who do not belong to their particular movement or organisation.
4. Their actions are an inspiration to others, particularly if they die and are allocated the status of a martyr.
5. They invariably have a mentor who gives them spiritual indoctrination to reinforce the political grievances they feel as well as to provide a justification for their action. This

goes beyond making their act seem right or just, to it being seen as a necessary divine duty that would earn the pleasure of God.

6. The theological justification is often related to an ancient religious ruling provided for a different context.
7. They see themselves as the down trodden who are standing up for the oppressed of their faith against humiliation and injustices committed against their people by others of a different faith or their own people who are under the influence or pay of their enemies.
8. Most significantly, their religious and political objectives are complexly intertwined. Whilst religion provides a long-term vision and an essential motivation for committing acts of terror, their actions are invariably triggered by a political crisis and political objectives are often their immediate goals.

Yigal Amir a young Jewish student who assassinated the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 further demonstrated these points. Amir, like Goldstein, saw Rabin as a traitor to the cause of Israel. He was influenced by militant Rabbis who provided him with a justification based on a religious ruling first advocated in the 12th century by a Spanish Jewish scholar, which states that a witness to the act of an individual trying to kill another is allowed to kill the potential assassin. In this case, Rabin's political actions were seen by Amir and his supporters as attempting to kill Israelis and the state of Israel. Therefore, his murder was a necessary religious duty.

Characteristics of Al-Qaeda and Associated Terror Movements

Al-Qaeda was hardly known in the mid 1990's when Magnus Ranstorp analysed features of religious terrorism from which the above characteristics were extracted but it fits the profile like a glove. It originated out of the

'crisis' of the first Gulf War when Osama bin Ladin offered to repel Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait. He felt eminently qualified for the task having beaten the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan. The Saudi regime rejected his offer and his fears that the invader would use the invasions as an excuse to dominate the region were confirmed during the following decade when a large part of the 300,000 strong Western force deployed during the war, remained in the Gulf. Bin Ladin and friends had averted the crisis first faced by Islam in the 1980's from the USSR but they now saw Islam face a more menacing threat, this time from a united Western world.

Bin Ladin employed powerful rhetoric to articulate the political and social injustices committed against Muslims by Western powers. He combined this with *fatwas* (religious edicts) to declare rebellion against the status quo a religious obligation. This complex mixing of generally acknowledged disadvantages in

Muslim politics and society with plausible sounding theological arguments are amongst the most powerful factors behind Al Qaeda's success.

Although many see bin Ladin as a religious mentor, he shares this role to some degree with his number two, Dr Ayman al-Zawahari. They both, in turn, draw on the ideology of the late Abdullah Azzam, Bin Laden's intellectual mentor. The scriptural justification for their use of force traces its precedence to the writings of Sayyid Qutb, Abul Al'a Maududi, and Ibn Tamiyya, as already mentioned. The religious credibility amongst the followers of Al Qaeda's doctrine is crucial to their worldview and motivation. Without it, Al Qaeda's influence will be greatly reduced. As Joseph Conrad put it, 'Every extremist is at least sincere'.¹¹

The majority of Muslims have rejected Al Qaeda and its associated groups as un-Islamic. As such the situation is in keeping with the pattern of other religious

terrorists but the critical difference is that the moderate majority seems powerless to offer a credible alternative argument. Why this is so is a question that needs deep analysis as part of the war on terror. In the meantime, support for such terrorists is on the increase.

Al Qaeda's operational methodology and targeting also fits neatly into the generic model of a religious terrorists' *modus operandi*. Their targeting of the two African embassies and the World Trade Centre were highly symbolic of their enemy, the US Government and its values. They displayed a callous disregard for the lives of innocents whilst glorifying as martyrs, their comrades whose suicidal actions led to the attack. The precision and audacity of the attacks have earned Al Qaeda considerable respect in parts of the Muslim world. This no doubt will inspire more recruits.

Al Qaeda's characteristics are not restricted to the generic list. A couple are peculiar to Islamic

terrorist groups. Islamic governments initially support militants for political purposes but it is a feature of these groups that they invariably bite the hand that feeds them. For example, Anwar Sadat initially supported the Muslim Brotherhood as a political expediency. He ended up being assassinated by the extremists. Similarly, Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haqq accommodated Muslim militants when they presided over Pakistan¹². Bhutto was hung and Zia was blown up in his aircraft. Al Qaeda was initially supported by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. It is seriously threatening the Saudi regime as well as worrying others in the region.

Another non-conventional aspect of Al Qaeda is that it is not a monolithic organisation. Many of the attacks attributed to it have been carried out by separate organisations that share Al Qaeda's worldview and doctrine. As such Al Qaeda is described as less of an organisation and more of an idea. The types of individuals involved in this loose federation of terror groups also

defies conventional assumptions. Their leadership characteristics have been described as:

*The leaders, from the affluent and privileged segment of society, are highly educated and relatively Westernised. They are not the under-privileged, impoverished and embittered isolates who usually constitute the pool that breeds terrorists and radicals. These Islamist terrorist leaders are different from the typical European middle-class revolutionaries and terrorists ... because the Islamists have become popular leaders of the underprivileged masses, while European terrorists remained isolated from a generally hostile population.*¹³

Un-picking Al Qaeda's Doctrine

Although many commentators have pointed out contradictions between Al Qaeda's ideology and Islamic teachings, they have invariably made piecemeal assessments. The objective of my

research is to consider all of the relevant statements in order to draw out themes, to show the development of the theological arguments in response to political threats and in support of the Group's strategy. And the role these play in motivation and propaganda. By way of example, I will give just a sample of some the points emerging from the analysis.

‘In our religion there is a special place in the hereafter for those who participate in Jihad. One day in Afghanistan was like 1,000 days of praying in an ordinary mosque’¹⁴. This is the religious significance of the Afghan experience for Osama bin Ladin. It reinforces the comment he made in 1993 to Robert Fisk when he said, ‘What I lived in two years there, I could not have lived in a hundred years elsewhere’¹⁵. He is in effect quoting a *Hadith* out of context¹⁶.

These apparently ordinary statements reveal a flaw in Osama bin Ladin's understanding of Islam. Whilst a Jihad aimed at

restoring the freedom of conscience is an obligation in Islam, it does not eclipse the greater Jihad of the struggle between man and his ego. The *Hadith* records the Prophet after returning from a battle as saying to his followers ‘we must now return to the greater Jihad against one's ego’¹⁷. This is achieved through worship, the primary means of which is through the five daily congregational prayers – something that the Prophet never allowed to slip even during intense combat.

Osama bin Ladin's comments betray a distinct weakness in religious knowledge and reveal his subordination of spiritual enlightenment (the primary purpose of religion) to political prowess.

The Strategic Context

Analysis of statements made clearly shows the development of Al Qaeda's strategic objectives in response to external political threats. The Afghan war's strategic objective was merely to remove the Communist govern-

ment. This needed only the declaration of a Jihad. The establishment of *shar'ia* was no more than an aspiration in a few Mujahideens' minds. The first Gulf War and the subsequent US "occupation" were crises that demanded a change to the system of government in Islamic states. This required the establishment of an alternative system and *shar'ia* was considered the solution.

Bin Ladin's belief that ultimate political vision, direction and power should rest with religious rather than secular leaders is articulated on several occasions. In 1996 he said, 'Our trusted leaders, the 'Ulama', have given us a *fatwa* that we must drive out the Americans.¹⁸ As far as he is concerned, secular regimes are working towards the interest of Western governments whilst suppressing their own people.

'When the American troops entered Saudi Arabia,....there was a strong protest from the 'Ulama' religious authorities and from students of the Shari'a law all over the

*country.....This big mistake by the Saudi regime of inciting the American troops revealed their deception. They had given their support to nations that were fighting against Muslims. They helped the Yemen Communists against the Southern Yemeni Muslims and helping Yasir Arafats' regime fight Hamas who opposed the peace process in the Middle East. After it insulted and jailed the Ulama 18 months ago, the Saudi regime lost its legitimacy.'*¹⁹

He goes on to declare that political truths stem from the pulpit, 'Now the people understand the speeches of the 'Ulama' in the mosques—that our country has become an American colony.'²⁰

The shift from conflict centred ideology to crisis centred ideology led to a change in strategic goal from reactive defence of the status quo to active pursuit of a caliphate. The reasoning is that *Shar'ia* law requires an Islamic state, which requires jihad to establish and

protect the state, a caliph must head a true Islamic state but a caliph has authority over 'all' Muslims. The inevitable consequence is an Islamic confederation of states or an empire. Therefore, the intrinsically linked concepts of jihad, *shar'ia*, Islamic state and caliphate will drive Al Qaeda's grand strategy now and for the future.

Jihad

The intoxication of victory over the Soviet Superpower comes out clearly in many Al Qaeda statements. Less often stated is the subsequent anticlimax and disappointment felt by bin Ladin at the disunity and infighting amongst the Mujahideen. It is evident that the political unity and military success of a Jihad hold a tremendous attraction for Bin Ladin, an attraction which translates in his mind to spiritual fulfilment. All of this blinds him and his followers to the Qur'anic limitations of Jihad to a struggle restricted to the establishment of freedom of conscience. Indeed, they have concocted elaborate arguments to expand the very

narrow rules of engagement which forbid attacking non-combatants, property etc. Similarly, they have overcome the prohibitions to justify the use of suicide bombers and weapons of mass destruction.

This realist political approach to theology applies to Al Qaeda's international relations policy. On the one hand it misquotes the Qur'an to forbid any cooperation and friendship with the 'Jews and the Crusaders' on the other it makes a pragmatic allowance for cooperation with the atheistic Socialist²¹. Denying the existence and unity of God is considered the worst sin in Islam and so the logic of Al Qaeda's ruling betrays a naked political manifesto rather than religious purity.

Many of Al Qaeda's affiliated groups support Huntington's thesis of the *Clash of Civilisations*. It very much fits their political worldview and it helps justify their violent response. The war on terror, with its emphasis on overt military action and its resultant deaths of

thousands of civilians (greater in number than that killed by terrorists), is a useful propaganda tool. The future conduct of the war will determine if the threat of terrorism will be diminished or become what Tariq Ali calls the 'clash of fundamentalisms'²².

Countering the Ideology

Understanding Al Qaeda's ideology and how it contradicts Islamic teachings will serve a useful purpose in fighting terrorism but it must be understood in the context of the political and social causes of terrorism. What is needed is a fuller understanding of the options available to counter terrorism and an appreciation of the limitations of each option, both in the West and in the Islamic world.

Europe has begun to debate many options to address the threat. These include language tests for immigrants, licensing of clergy and controls on the establishment of religious education. These are all relevant issues but they are more tactical than strategic in

nature. The primary step in a solution is to agree, both at a public and policy level, the relationship between religion and politics and the need to safeguard religion from political exploitation. Particular attention needs to be given to ensuring the support of the Islamic 'Diaspora' whilst limiting the political freedom of manoeuvre of clerics. A specific challenge will be to positively influence the 'Cyber Umma'.

The solution, however, primarily rests with the Islamic world. The greatest challenge it faces is empowering the 'muted' moderate majority. They lack unity due to sectarian divisions. The past association of senior moderate Ulama with the 'failed' Islamic regimes has damaged their credibility. This lack of unity and credibility has led to a vacuum of religious authority amongst Muslims. There is a growing sense amongst Muslims that the situation will only be rectified by the advent of a promised reformer or Messiah. However, every time a reformer has come, the clergy have turned

against him, declared him a heretic and banned his followers. Of the most effective measures that the West can take to speed up reform would be to put pressure on Islamic countries to un-ban peaceful organisations currently proscribed for religious reasons and to encourage tolerant religious debate.

Conclusion

There is no silver bullet for use against Al Qaeda. Indeed, each bullet used against them has the potential to strengthen them. Their strength is their religious doctrine and it is this that needs to be targeted in order to weaken their commitment and to isolate them from their supporters. An essential prerequisite is a clear understanding of and agreement on the relationship between politics and religion, the characteristics of terrorism and the political causes that fuel it. We need to dissect Al Qaeda's doctrine in order to criticise it. We need also to help create an atmosphere in the West and in the Islamic world where criticism can be openly and constructively

debated. This will help provide the conditions for much needed reform.

ANNEX A -

Religion in Politics – The Dutch Reform Church Experience

A case study that reveals a great deal about religion in politics is that of the role of the Dutch Reform Church (DRC) and Apartheid. Susan Ritner describes the DRC role in '.... the more and more precise refinement of an ideology of apartheid, and to exercising pressure on successive governments to accept this ideology as the basis of race policy.'²³ In the 17th Century, when the church came into existence in South Africa, it did not practise racial discrimination. Discrimination only existed 'between Christian and heathen, baptised and unbaptized.' Later, in the 18th Century, the introduction of West African and Malay slave labour to meet the needs of white settlers and the settlers' increasing dispersal amongst the Bantu tribes of the interior led to a feeling of cultural isolation. This reinforced in their minds the link between 'whiteness, Christianity, civilisation as against colour, heathenism, inferiority.'²⁴

These social prejudices resulted in demands by congregations to seg-

regate whites and coloureds. The Church initially blocked these on the grounds that they were a violation of Christian principles. In 1857, however, the DRC succumbed to social pressure. Interestingly, it justified the segregation on social grounds, as being of benefit to both communities and confirmed that it had not compromised its ideological belief in the equality of mankind.

The separation of congregations naturally led in 1881 to the separation of churches, with the establishment of a Mission Church for the coloured population. The threat from increasing intervention of the British in South Africa and the fear of Anglicisation developed political nationalism in the Afrikaner population. It also made for a closer bond between the Afrikaner and the DRC. The subsequent Boer war further changed the way the Afrikaner saw themselves, from a cultural group to a political entity. The DRC established itself at the forefront of the preservation of Afrikaner identity – its language, culture and religion.

Nationalism was a buffer against British domination. Gradually the DRC and the National Party fused as the two pillars of Africkaerdom.²⁵ These two organs of 'state' worked collectively to protect the interests of

the poor whites by negotiating property and land rights over blacks. The post depression social crisis of the thirties presented the Afrikaners with a "choice between two stark alternatives: integration, leading first to cultural and eventually to 'biological' assimilation; or total separation of racial groups at every point of contact to ensure absolute Afrikaner group identity and racial purity."²⁶ The Church made the second choice. As a Minister put it, 'only carrying out the policy of apartheid in the light of God's Word and with God's blessing would provide deliverance from the dark danger of colour-mixing and bastardisation'.²⁷

Authority of 'God's Word' was necessary for the confidence of the 'theocratically-inclined lay Afrikaner' as well as necessary to defend against criticisms of the English Protestant Church that the DRC contradicted Christian teachings. To fulfil both requirements, the DRC constructed elaborate Scriptural arguments. It is not necessary to expand the religious arguments here but briefly, the Scriptural references supported three principles: unity in diversity ('pluriformity'); it is God's command that separate peoples keep their separateness intact; Christian unity is spiritual rather than racial. These arguments were developed pro-

gressively over decades and became stricter with each revision. Importantly, the process of scriptural justification converted what was a desire for segregation, motivated by Afrikaner self-preservation, into an ideology that made it a religious *duty* on the Afrikaner to resist racial integration. The political manifestation of that duty became more extreme with time as did the religious justification and the Afrikaners' commitment to the ideology.

An important limitation in the application of the DRC case study to other extremist organisations is that the DRC did not overtly justify extreme violence and killing. But just as Clausewitz said, war is politics by other means, it could also be inferred that killing and persecution is merely the application of law and order by extremist states. The point is that, having provided religious justification for apartheid and having a "partnership" with the Government who enacted laws to enforce it, the Church had no need to explicitly advocate violence against blacks. It did, however, support the use of violence by the Government in enforcing the law; some of it resulted in the killing of women and children. It was also noticeably passive in its reaction to terrorist acts by other Afrikaner groups and individuals.

The DRC's ideological manipulation of Christian teachings gives us themes that are repeated in the case of other religious extremists. These themes can be summed up as follows:

- a Doctrines of extremism develop progressively in response to perceived political threats.
- b Religious scriptural justification is offered for the sect's policies to motivate its members and to counter criticisms from the moderate parts of the religion.

ANNEX B - Islam in Politics

Islamic Government

The most common point made about Islam and politics is that unlike the West, where there was a separation of politics and religion (Christianity) during the Enlightenment, Islam and politics seem inseparable. The extremists believe, (as do a growing number of 'non-extremist Muslims') that a true Muslim cannot subscribe to any system of government other than by Islamic law – the *sharia*, that this requires an Islamic state and that to establish and protect the state may require fighting (*Jihad*). On the other hand, some Muslims have argued that Islam is compatible with democracy, in that the concept of consensus

(*Ijma*) in public affairs is ingrained in the Qur'an, as is the concept of a debating assembly (the *Shura*)²⁸. They are, however, losing the argument to the increasing influence of the extremists. The fact is that Islam does not prescribe any particular form of government. Rather it merely provides guidance and prescriptions on the values the government should conform to and seek to establish. Nowhere in the Qur'an or *Hadith* is the concept of monarchy or other totalitarian rule expressly forbidden. However, both scriptures indicate a clear preference for consultative and representative administrations.

So what is the role of Islam in such governments? Islam provides, the ethical and moral basis for the government. It places a burden of responsibility on the rulers to provide for their subjects' material and spiritual needs. Above all, it charges them with ruling with absolute justice.²⁹ Why then have Muslim countries failed to provide models of successful governments and more particularly, why have they failed to embrace democracy? To address these issues, we need to briefly consider how Western Liberal Democracies achieved pre-eminence.

Democracy

Democracy as a concept has been in existence for over 2000 years but it only began to take a political form in the contemporary world during the 18th Century. This happened as a result of dramatic social changes, which included the development of the printing press, literacy, industrialisation, urbanisation etc. These changes enabled the exchange of information and ideas among the majority and so permitted the decentralisation of power from a monarch to a parliament.

A simultaneous influence on the development of democracy, particularly its form, was the growing revulsion of Europeans to the sectarian violence that plagued the Middle Ages. The institutionalisation of religious authority in the Christian Church and the growing rivalry between Catholics and Protestants created political structures that repeatedly came into bloody conflict. This conflict existed at every level. In the villages, sectarian lynching, burning and looting were common. In the government, the sovereign, the church and the parliament or nobility were often locked in violent intrigue. And, at the national level, wars were fought along sectarian lines. As a consequence many Christians, led by the Puritans, began to set out the

foundation for secular democratic rule in the New World. Others, like Oliver Cromwell, attempted to do the same in England. They did not fully separate the church and state but they did establish the principles of secularism and parliamentary rule. These developments allowed democracy to take root in the USA and the UK albeit with limited emancipation of the population.

In the meantime, the rest of Europe clung on to monarchy or flirted with nationalism and communism. Democracy only became widespread in Europe following a battle of ideologies largely fought during the two horrific world wars and the quietly bloody Cold War.

The point is that Western Liberal Democracy is a relatively new construct, one of several political ideas to emerge from the process of modernity. It became pre-eminent not just because of the strength of its arguments but because of its success in the bloodiest internal³⁰ and external conflict the world has seen. Whilst these cataclysmic events were taking place in the West, the Muslim world was experiencing military defeats and colonial occupation.

Muslim countries were slow to experience modernity and many are

still undergoing the process. Whilst sectarian violence occurs in Muslim populations, its frequency and ferocity rarely come close to the experience in Christendom. Under these conditions democracy and secularism have little on which to take root. It is in this light that the postcolonial political experiments and conflicts of Muslim countries need to be seen.

Post Colonial Challenge

With the exception of Turkey, Islamic countries have known independence for little more than half a century. In terms of literacy, urbanisation and other modernising influences, they are in a position that is little better than Europe was in at the turn of the 20th Century.

Post independence, we saw Islamic states demonstrating behaviours that are remarkably similar to that of European nations a hundred years ago. We saw the establishment of a number of monarchies (mostly installed or protected by the British); we saw experimentation with Nationalism; as in the case of Nasser's Egypt; we saw seduction of some countries, such as Libya, by revolutionary Socialism and we saw attempts at secular democracy as demonstrated by Mosaddeq in Iran and by Qaid-i-Azam in Pakistan.

These events suggest that the social and political evolutionary mechanisms in the Islamic world were similar, if not identical, to those in post industrialised Europe. The results, however, were different.

Failure to Adopt Liberal Democracy

The failure of Islamic states to adopt Liberal Democracy was caused, in part, by complex external influences. The 'chemical reaction' of the various conflicts that led to the domination of democracy in the crucible that was Europe, was a pure one. Apart from the USA, with its democratic ideals, there was no external political or ideological contamination. Public institutions and social structures needed little modification when a country went from one form of government to another. Those countries that lost the battle of ideas were nursed back on their feet through generous financial and other assistance by democratic nations, for example, the Marshal Plan in Germany.

The Islamic world on the other hand, evolved its political structures under very different conditions. There was often an unseemly haste with which colonial powers handed over power. Public institutions were immature and there was little leadership experienced

in managing them. There was the corrosive influence of the Cold War, which forced alliances with either of the super-powers. That, in turn, resulted in local rivalries and tensions.

Apart from monarchy, all political ideas were imported from the West. Whilst these ideas were not in themselves un-Islamic, the leadership always introduced them with Western social and cultural practices that did not translate well in a Muslim society. The imposition of alien cultural values (sometimes forced), continuing subservience to Western powers and the universal failure of secular Islamic governments to achieve social and political security gave rise to the belief that impoverishment and humiliation resulted from association with the West. Real success and respect could, therefore, only be achieved through non-Western means – through Islam. In the meantime, Maududi had developed a politically radical form of Islam to fight colonialism in India. This Islam was waiting in the wings as a tempting alternative and formed the ideological basis of Islamic extremism in many parts of the Muslim world.

From Extremism to Terrorism

Given the relatively small number of early extremists and the lack of resources at their disposal, asymmetric warfare was the only option

available to exert political will. Terrorism provided the most cost-effective means of making an impact on the national and international stage. At first, extremism was limited to a few small terrorist movements revolting either against colonial oppression, as in Algeria, or against dictatorial secular regimes, as in Egypt. Later, following the end of the Cold War and the subsequent USA involvement in Iraq, they took on a more global and popular hue.

It is important to note that for most organisations the transition from extremism to terrorism was a gradual one. Many extremists were imprisoned and tortured, sometimes for merely expressing critical views³¹. The brutality of the justice they received made them consider a more violent voice for their views³². The time for contemplation of ideology and strategy as well as the scope for camaraderie between like-minded individuals that imprisonment of political prisoners in Arab countries provided is a little considered factor in the rise of terrorism from the region.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr Ashraf is a wing commander in the Royal Air Force and was undertaking a year of full-time study leading to a MPhil in International Relations. The topic for his research degree was Al-Qaeda's doctrine and Islamic Teachings. In 1999, he obtained an MA in Defence Studies at Kings College, part of which was a dissertation on the rise of Islamic Militancy. This article is an edited version from a speech delivered by Mr Ashraf at the EU Commission's DGRELEX Seminar, on *Networks of Instability* in Brussels on 3 December 2003

The Immaculate Conception

By Moosa Qureshi LLB (Hons) MCSE – London (adapted)

And remember her who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our Spirit (Ruh) and We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples.

Verily this is your people – one people; and I am your Lord, so worship Me.

[Surat al Anbiya 21:92-3]

These verses of the Qur'an describe events and concepts that have mystified humanity for two millenia. The miraculous physical genesis of Jesus^(as) and his spiritual significance for humanity are widely recognised and yet **poorly** appreciated by Christians and Muslims alike. Unfortunately, the incident of Jesus^(as)'s birth took place in an era when superstition and scientific ignorance prevailed, and the contemporary interpretation of this miraculous phenomenon has coloured our own understanding from that time.

The Qur'an is the Holy Word of Allah and free from every defect and imperfection. It thereby holds the key that can unlock the truth regarding the birth of Jesus^(as). Disturbingly, perhaps through the influence of the many Christians who joined the fold of Islam in times of antiquity, the orthodox Muslim interpretation of the miraculous conception of Jesus^(as) is also enshrouded in mystery and ignorance. The Muslims do believe that Allah is One and has no physical child, and yet the verse 'We breathed into her of Our Spirit' (Ch.21:V.92) is often taken to refer to the conception of Jesus^(as)(1), thereby covertly implicating Allah in a paternal role. As we shall explain, such an interpretation is erroneous. Moreover, deep study and contemplation of the Qur'an does indeed give us understanding of the true physical and spiritual significance of the birth of Jesus^(as).

Allah's Word and His Spirit

Firstly, it is important to recognise that verse Ch.21:V.92 does not speak of Allah giving Jesus^(as) to Mary^(ra). His conferral of Jesus^(as) is instead mentioned in two verses [Ch.3:V.46] and (Ch.4:V.172), both of which use the expression 'Word' (Kalimah), and not the expression 'Spirit' (Ruh):

When the angels said, 'O Mary, Allah gives thee glad tidings of a son through a Word from Him; his name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honoured in this world and in the next, and of those who are granted nearness to God.'

(Ch.3:V.46)

O People of the Book! Exceed not the limits in your religion and say not of Allah anything but the truth. Verily, the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of Allah, and a fulfilment of His word which He sent down to Mary, and a mercy from Him.

(Ch.4: V.172)

In the Qur'an, there is no reference to any involvement of the Spirit of Allah in the conception of Jesus^(as). And the Word of Allah pertains to the glad tidings given to Mary^(ra), rather than any imagined physical infusion of Allah's Word into her ovum.

Surat al Anbiya in context

Secondly, (Ch.21:V.92) should be considered in context. Every verse of the Qur'an fits into a logical pattern established by Allah. If we read carefully, we find that (Ch.21:V.92) follows a succession of verses where Allah recounts instances of Prophets behaving in a fashion pleasing to Him, and Allah rewarding them with His favour. This is important when interpreting verse (Ch.21:V.92), as we shall later consider.

Suffice it to observe at this point in our discussion, that if we read the whole of Surat al-Anbiya, we realise that a recurrent theme expounded therein is that Allah is above everything He creates, that all Prophets are created human beings, and that Allah and humanity are physically very distinct entities:

*And their hearts are forgetful.
And they – the wrongdoers –
confer together in secret and
say, ‘Is this man aught but a
mortal like yourselves? Will
you then yield to his sorcery
with your eyes open?’*
(Ch.21:V.4)

*And We sent none as
Messengers before thee but
men to whom We sent
revelations. So ask the people
of the reminder, if you know
not; Nor did We give them
bodies that ate not food,
neither were they to live
forever.* (Ch.21:Vs.8-9)

*And We sent no Messenger
before thee but We revealed to
him: ‘There is no god but I; so
worship Me alone.’ And they
say, ‘The Gracious God has
taken to Himself a son.’ Holy
is He. Nay, those whom they
so designate are only His
honoured servants.*
(Ch.21:Vs.26-7)

*And whosoever of them should
say, ‘I am a god beside Him,’
him shall We requite with Hell.*

*Thus do We requite the
wrongdoers.* (Ch.21:V.30)

*We granted not everlasting life
to any mortal before thee. If
thou shouldst die, shall they
live here forever?*
(Ch.21:V.35)

*Herein, surely, is a message
for a people who worship
God. And We have not sent
thee but as a mercy for all
peoples. Say, ‘Surely it has
been revealed to me that your
god is but One God. Will you
then submit?’*
(Ch.21:Vs.107-9)

Much of the Surah is directed against the Christian belief that Jesus^(as) was the consequence of a metaphysical union of Allah and Mary^(ra). The Surah repeatedly emphasises that Allah and humanity are comprehensively and utterly separate, in their essential natures. It follows that Allah does not give physical life to human beings by breathing His physical ‘Ruh’ into them. Such an interpretation of (Ch.21:V.92) would **contend** uniquely against

the general purport of Surat al-Anbiya.

What is the Spirit of Allah?

As noted, (Ch.21:v92) speaks of Allah breathing His Ruh into Mary^(ra), and not of bestowing His Word on her. There are three other verses in the Qur'an where Allah speaks of breathing His Spirit into a human being, and we should examine these three verses when interpreting (Ch.21:V.92).

Two of these three verses (Ch.15:V.30) and (Ch.38:V.73) appear to refer exclusively to Adam^(as):

And remember when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to create man of dry wringing clay, of black mud wrought into shape: So when I have fashioned him in perfection and have breathed into him of My Spirit (Ruh), fall ye down in submission to him.' So the angels submitted, all of them together. (Ch.15:Vs.29-31)

Call to mind when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am about

to create man from clay; and so when I have fashioned him in perfection, and have breathed into him of My Spirit (Ruh), fall ye down in submission to him.'
(Ch.38:Vs.72-3)

However, further study of the Qur'an demonstrates conclusively that the Muslims misconstrue this verse by interpreting it physically and not spiritually:

And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth,' they said, 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood? – and we glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' He answered, 'I know what you know not.' And He taught Adam all the names, then He put the objects of these names before the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if you are right.' They said, 'Holy art Thou! No knowledge have we except what Thou hast taught us; surely Thou art All-Knowing, the Wise.' He

said, 'O Adam, tell them their names,' and when he had told them their names, He said, 'Did I not say to you, I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you hide?' And when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they all submitted. But Iblis did not. He refused and deemed himself too big; and he was of the disbelievers. (Ch.2:Vs.31-35)

The Qur'an (Ch.15:v.30, Ch.38: V.73) tells us that Allah instructed the angels to submit to Adam^(as) **after** breathing His **Spirit** into the **fully developed** man. The Qur'an (Ch.2:Vs.31-5) also attests that Allah commanded the angels to submit to Adam^(as) after Adam^(as) was already alive, and indeed after Allah had taught knowledge to Adam^(as). Accordingly, when Allah states that He breathed His **Spirit** into man in (Ch.15:v.30) and (Ch.38:V.73), He is not speaking of giving physical life to man, but rather He is speaking of giving spiritual life to man, i.e. when He guides a human being to a great

spiritual status or gives him knowledge of the unseen. Innate logic should advise us that angels would not bow to man simply because man is physically alive, otherwise why not bow to any animal that is physically alive? In fact man is physically inferior to many animals in many respects. Man's superiority to animals relates to man's spirituality. Nevertheless, if we wish not to rely on innate logic, then the Qur'an also makes clear that the **Spirit** of Allah does not give physical life to human beings.

The third verse (Ch.32:V.10) which mentions Allah's Ruh, also clearly explains that this Ruh is not involved in the physical process of conception:

Who has made perfect everything He has created. And He began the creation of man from clay; Then He made his progeny from an extract of an insignificant fluid; Then He endowed him with perfect faculties and breathed into him of His Spirit. And He has given you ears, and eyes, and

hearts. But little thanks do you give!
(Ch.32:Vs.8-10)

Allah tells us that He breathed His Spirit into the first man after creating that man's progeny. Alternatively, if we interpret (Ch.32:V.10) as Allah breathing His Ruh into that man's progeny, it is known that the foetus is physically alive in the mother's womb before its physical faculties are perfected. Indeed, fundamentally important structures such as the nervous system and liver are not perfected until after birth⁽²⁾. Therefore this verse cannot be held to refer to a biological process of perfection and subsequent life-giving, for biologically life-giving precedes perfection. As we have established above, when Allah speaks of breathing His Spirit into a person, He is telling us that He gives spiritual life to that person, and not physical life.

How Allah breathed His Spirit into Mary

And remember her who guarded her chastity, so We

breathed into her of Our Spirit (Ruh) and We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples.
(Ch.21:v.92)

The commonality of the Muslims believe that this verse implies that because Mary^(as) guarded her chastity, therefore Allah miraculously breathed His Ruh into her and gave her a son without the agency of a father. They speculate thus because Allah speaks of breathing His Ruh into Adam^(as) and they erroneously conclude this signifies Allah gave physical life to Adam^(as) without the agency of a father or mother. Such an interpretation is not supported by the Qur'an, and it is not supported by moral logic. Many women guard their chastity, but this is not a reason for Allah to bestow miraculous sons on them. Furthermore, as earlier explained, Allah sent His **Word** to Mary^(ra), and not His **Spirit**, in the matter of the conception of Jesus^(as).

We observed previously that this verse (Ch.21:V.92) occurs after a series of verses describing how Prophets behaved in a morally

good way, and then how Allah favoured them. Abraham^(as) was saved from the fire (Ch.21:Vs.69-70), Lot^(as) was rescued from the abominations of his fellow citizens (Ch.21:V.75), and Noah^(as) was delivered from the flood (Ch.21:V.77). Solomon^(as) and David^(as) were granted great blessings by Allah (Ch.21:Vs.79-83). Allah also removed distress from Job^(as) (21:85) and Dhu'l-Nun^(as) (Ch.21:V.88). Furthermore, Allah favoured Zachariah^(as) with a son by his formerly sterile wife (Ch.21:V.91). Then Allah states that He breathed His **Spirit** into Mary^(as) and made herself and her son a Sign (Ch.21:V.92), before promising that any believer who does good works will be rewarded by Allah:

So whoever does good works and is a believer, his endeavour will not be rejected and We shall surely record it.
(Ch.21:V.95)

The significance of (Ch.21:V.92) is simply that Mary^(ra) guarded her chastity, so Allah breathed spiritual life into her in the same

way that He breathes His Ruh into any human being who is good (see (Ch.32:Vs.8-10) above). She and her son were 'a Sign for *all* peoples' because of their spiritual goodness at a time of moral stagnation of the Jewish nation, and this interpretation is in harmony with the pattern and essential message of Surat al-Anbiya.

The mystery of the conception of Jesus

We alluded earlier to a Qur'anic explanation of the miracle of Jesus^(as)'s birth. Interestingly, the hypothesised solution to this mystery is found not in any verse that refers directly to Jesus^(as) himself.

Before presenting the clue found in the Qur'an to the phenomenon of virgin birth, we should affirm that Mary^(ra) was indeed untouched by man prior to the conception of Jesus^(as):

She said, 'My Lord, how shall I have a son, when no man has touched me?' He said, 'Such is the way of Allah. He creates

what He pleases. When He decrees a thing, He says to it, "Be" and it is.'
(Ch.3:V.48)

She said, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me, neither have I been unchaste?' The angel said, 'Thus it shall be.' But says thy Lord, 'It is easy for Me; and We shall do so that We may make him a Sign unto men, and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing decreed.'
(Ch.19:Vs.21-22)

It is evident that Mary^(ra) herself lacked understanding of how she conceived Jesus^(as), and Allah did not clarify this phenomenon to her except to state that it was His decree.

Nevertheless, the Qur'an does intimate the explanation to the miracle of Jesus^(as)'s conception in another enigmatic verse, hitherto perplexing to Muslim scholars:

Remember when a woman of Imran said, 'My Lord, I have vowed to Thee what is in my

womb to be dedicated to Thy service. So do Thou accept it of me. Verily, Thou alone art All-Hearing, All-Knowing'. But when she was delivered of it, she said, 'My Lord, I am delivered of a female,' – and Allah knew best what she delivered and the male was not like the female – 'and I have named her Mary, and I commit her and her off-spring to Thy protection from Satan the rejected'.
(Ch.3:Vs.36-37)

Puzzlingly, Allah does not confirm that the woman of Imran did indeed give birth to a female when she was delivered of Mary^(ra). How should we interpret the enigmatic words – and the male was not like the female?

The phenomenon of virgin birth remains the object of scientific research in modern times, and there are two biological mechanisms that form the focus of ongoing studies.

Firstly, parthenogenesis is a biological process common in

insects and fish, whereby an ovum is developed into a new biological organism without the agency of a spermatozoon. Spontaneous parthenogenesis has been documented in human oocytes but was found to be extremely rare⁽³⁾, and human parthenogenesis induced thus far has progressed only to the blastocyst stage of cell division⁽⁴⁾. Biological progress is incomplete because the human egg cell misses a fully functional centrosome when activated by parthenogenesis, and essential genetic information is inaccessible to the parthenote due to maternal imprinting⁽⁵⁾. Moreover, even theoretically, mammalian parthenogenesis yields exclusively a female offspring with XX chromosomes, and therefore cannot account for the generation of Jesus^(as)⁽⁶⁾.

Secondly, and more convincingly, the mechanism of true hermaphroditism may explain the virgin birth of Jesus^(as). This is a congenital condition where external genitalia and internal sex organs have both male and female

characteristics. Both ovarian and testicular reproductive tissue is found in a true hermaphrodite, a quality that is still poorly understood. In 1990, a true hermaphrodite rabbit was found to conceive when kept in isolation in laboratory conditions⁽⁷⁾. The tenability of autoreproduction in human hermaphrodites has also been affirmed:

‘If it is indeed true that in some (human) hermaphrodites auto-reproduction could be possible with medical intervention, another question may be asked: “Is it possible that such auto-reproduction could, with the greatest rarity, occur without such an intervention?” Indications exist in the mythology of various cultures which mention hermaphroditic reproduction, and there are references to virgin birth in the historical documents of several different societies.’⁽⁸⁾

The Qur’an may indeed refer to such a biological condition of a true hermaphrodite when we read, ‘Allah knew best of what she was delivered and the male was not

like the female' (Ch.3:V.37). It is characteristic of the propriety and tactful beauty of the Qur'anic diction, that Allah should thus describe the hypothesised hermaphrodite quality in Mary^(ra). The contrast with other religious scriptures is remarkable. It is also truly miraculous that such a complex biological phenomenon, incompletely understood even today, may be alluded to at a time and place of such profound scientific ignorance as 7th century Arabia.

Conclusion

We have made a sequential and logical journey from a verse of the Qur'an that many Muslims erroneously read as a reference to the miraculous conception of Jesus^(as), to a verse of the Qur'an that is overlooked as an alternative explanation of this hugely important historical event. Along the way, important ideas such as the breathing of Allah's Spirit into humans, the importance of placing each verse of the Qur'an in its correct pattern and context, the essential message of Surat al-Anbiya, and the purity of

style and diction in the Qur'an, have been touched. Perhaps the most important lesson we can draw from this journey is the concept of miracles in Islam:

'Miracles are not seen in Islam as unnatural occurrences, but as natural phenomena that are concealed from human knowledge at that period of time. Otherwise, there would be many questions raised against the wisdom of God. If God created the laws of nature Himself, He should have made some provisions whereby without breaking them, He could bring about desired solutions to a problem.

Not all laws are known to man...

Miracles are so, only in relation to man's knowledge in a specific period of time. When a special exercise of God's power is displayed, apparently a law is broken. But it is not so; it is a hidden law that was already there and came into operation through God's command.'⁽⁹⁾

As we advance in our understanding of the universe and the laws that govern its operation, we

grow ever more appreciative of the wonder of Allah's creation and of the glory of the Qur'an. May Allah open our eyes and guide us always along the path of truth and wisdom.

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