

Contents

June 2004, Vol.99, No.6

Avoid Those Who Create Disorder: People should identify you as the special servants of Allah

Address to the Annual gathering of the Ahmadiyya Community in Ghana asking participants to deal with others with kindness, tolerance, compassion, justice and humility. By saving the next generation from the ills of the society, become a guarantor for the survival of your future generation and nation. *By Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V.....* 2

The Essence of Islam – III

Devoting one's life to the cause of God Almighty so that he becomes the object of worship, the true goal and the beloved and so that one's life is devoted to the service of His creatures are the true essence of Islam. *y. By Hadrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad^(as)* 15

Treatment of Prisoners of War

The enslavement of conquered people or their being held as prisoners of war requires that they must be treated with justice and granted the rights available to all free persons. Islam set the standards for others to follow: *By Hadrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad^(as)* 28

Peace Symposium

A Dharma Talk on Buddhism: Emphasis on Peace argues that peace and happiness depend on our minds *by Phrakru Sarnu Lom;*
A Jewish View on Peace looking squarely at the absence of war to promote peace. *By Rabbi Danny Rich.* 47

My Journey into the Ahmadiyya Community

A young American recalls her acceptance of Islam. *By Dara Fulton, USA* 54

Noah's Ark – Another Viewpoint

Those who rode in Noah's Ark heeded the Warner sent to them; likewise the plague during the time of the Promised Messiah^(as) swept away 10 million disbelievers. *by Latif Qureshi.....* 58

Letters to the Editor

..... 63

- Basit Ahmad
- Bockarie Tommy Kallon
- Fareed Ahmad
- Fazal Ahmad
- Fauzia Bajwa
- Mansoor Saqi
- Mahmood Hanif
- Mansoor Hyder-Muneeb
- Navida Shahid
- Sarah Waseem
- Saleem Ahmad Malik
- Tanveer Khokhar.

Chief Editor and Manager: Mansoor Ahmed Shah

Management Board:

- Mr Munir-ud-din Shams (Chairman)
- Mr Mansoor Shah (Secretary)
- Mr Naseer Ahmad Qamar
- Mr Mubarak Ahmad Zafar
- Mr Mirza Fakhar Ahmad
- Mr. Abdul Baqi Arshad

Special contributors:

- Amatul-Hadi Ahmad
- Farina Qureshi

Proof-reader:

- Shaukia Mir

Design and layout:

- Tanveer Khokhar

Publisher:

- Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah

Distribution:

- 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

© Islamic Publications, 2004
ISSN No: 0034-6721

Avoid Those Who Create Disorder: People should identify you as the special servants of Allah

Address by Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, to the Annual Gathering of the Ahmadiyya Community in Ghana

*Assalamu alalikum
warahmatullah wabarakatuhu
[Peace and blessings of Allah be
upon you]*

By the grace of Allah, the Jalsa Salana of Jama'at Ahmadiyya Ghana starts today. These Annual Conventions in various countries of the world are held pursuant to the tradition started by the Promised Messiah^(as) for the *tarbiyyat* [or spiritual training and reformation] of the members of the Jama'at.

The purpose of the Promised Messiah^(as) behind this Jalsa, as I said just now, is to reform the members of the Jama'at so that they know what is religion. A living relationship with God should be created in them. By listening to speeches on subjects of reformation, they should begin to improve their spiritual con-



dition and should become '*the servants of the Gracious God*' because Allah has said:

And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.

(Al-Dhariyat Ch. 51: V.57)

The second important purpose of these Jalsas is that by meeting each other to create an environment of brotherhood, and a loving relationship should begin to grow. People from various towns, different families, and

tribes; persons from various schools of thought and different temperament; persons holding diverse opinions on worldly matters; the educated and the uneducated Ahmadis, should gather together, should recognise each other, should participate in each others, moments of happiness and sorrow, and should pray for the growth of the Jama'at and the country. This is because in whichever country you dwell, it has a right on you that you should use your talents and abilities for the progress of the community and the country with absolute loyalty. So, this is such a spiritual gathering in which we find also the opportunity to reform ourselves and create a bond of brotherhood with our brethren. We also get a chance to get to know new friends and build relationships.

There are only two supreme purposes of human life. One is *Haququllah*, the obligation we owe to Allah, and the other is *Haququl 'Ibad*, the fulfilment of our duty towards Allah's servants and His creation. So, as I said earlier, one is the worship of God.

The Promised Messiah^(as) says that the minimum standard should be such that it is free of all personal desires and a true believer should elevate his relationship with Allah to such heights that even if one knows that there is no paradise and no hell, even then one should be so lost in the love of Allah that one should worship Allah and should never cause this worship to slacken. If a person recounts the blessings and benevolence which Allah has endowed through His attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* [or His Grace] then at once one wants to bow down towards Him. When we begin to try and pray like that, we would be able to receive countless favours of Allah the Almighty. May Allah enable us to do that.

The second important purpose of life is *Haququl 'Ibad* or the rights of man to other men. The obligations towards Allah's creation can only be discharged when for Allah's sake we begin to be kind towards God's creatures. True kindness towards Allah's creation can never arise till we have the ability of tolerance; till our hearts are filled with

compassion; till our ideologies manifest justice; and till we deal with everyone in humility. When all these qualities begin to develop in us, we can say that we have truly recognised the teachings of Islam and Ahmadiyyat because this is what Islam requires. It would be a great misfortune if after having found such beautiful teaching of Islam, we fail to act upon it. Then, as Ahmadis, we carry an extra burden of responsibility because true to the prophecies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) we have believed in the Promised Messiah and Mahdi^(as) who presented the beautiful teachings of Islam once again before us.

Now, I wish to present before you, in brief, some examples of these beautiful teachings. The Promised Messiah^(as) says in an advertisement:

‘It befits you that there should be no intention to cause any loss to any religion, any people, or any man in any group but instead you should become sincere advisors to all. It is also necessary that you do

not spend any time with those who are evil, who lead a bad way of life, who create disorder, or who are of a bad character nor should they find a place in your homes because they can be cause of misguidance for you.

These are those matters and conditions that I have been emphasising from the very beginning and it shall be compulsory for every person to act on these admonishments and there should be no element of impurity, ridicule or derision in your meetings; and walk on this earth with piety in your heart and purity of thoughts and conduct and remember every mischief is not worth responding. Therefore, it is important that you should develop a habit of forgiveness and mercy. You should act with patience and forbearance and do not assail anyone unlawfully.’

What a beautiful teaching is this! Do not even think of causing any loss to any person or any nation.



Loss or damage is not only caused by wars, but it can arise in everyday life by making complaints against your colleagues in the office. Damage can be caused to those with whom you do not agree by spreading rumours against them, and there are many other minor ways in which you can cause a loss to others. The Promised Messiah^(as) tells us that we should not even think about this. Truth should always be your guiding light and whenever you give advice to others, always do it honestly so that people say that if you want true advice, go to such and such an Ahmadi because he will never give you false counsel. Then, the Promised Messiah^(as) advises that we should not mix with people who indulge in false rumours because such people can cause

you to move you away from the Ahmadiyya Community and sometime, they may even use you against the country because trouble makers cause nothing but disorder and conflict. It is none of your business to keep company with such people.

Further he said that sometimes one takes action against such troublemakers in frustration, but it is not important to reply to every mischief. According to the commandment of Allah, you should turn your face and walk away from such troublemakers because all these are trivial and useless matters. Submit yourself to Allah and pray to Him to save you from these troublemakers and save the Ahmadiyya Community and save our country from the people who want to cause mischief and dissention. You should preach peace. Whichever society you live in, people should point at you and say that those who are steadfast in their faith and are the special servants of Allah; and who remember the duties of man to Allah, are none other than the Ahmadis, who live in harmony and peace with their

neighbours; and regardless of religion and despite differences of ideologies, can act with justice; and, that it is only Ahmadis who are the source of establishing world peace. In this day and age, when the world is in turmoil, the responsibility is even greater. Everyone is only concerned with his own self and there is no one to look after others.

Fortunate and lucky are such Ahmadis who live in this part of the world because you have accepted the Imam of this age in accord with the prophecies of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa). You carry the additional responsibility to create an environment of peace in your country and also continue your efforts to spread peace in the world. Some Western powers, who enslaved some parts of Asia and Africa in the past, are wrong to claim that they shall again create peace. They will do what they have done before and that is enslave the nations.

If there is going to be peace in this world, it will come through you and through the beautiful teachings of Islam for which you

have taken up the responsibility to spread it in the world. Prepare yourself for this task. Excel in the field of education. Improve your moral and spiritual conduct. Take this improvement to the heights that Allah expects from us. Resolve to hold high the banner of justice in the world – justice that is free from any personal considerations.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an,

O ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is aware of what you do.

(Ch.5: V.9)

See, what a beautiful teaching. Allah commands you to establish equity. Do this because this is piety. When you dispense justice like this, you will be nearer to righteousness. You will be righteous and you will be the ones who fear Allah. Always beware in case the voice within you removes

the fear of Allah from you and never let it happen that the voice of your self prompts you that as someone is your enemy, it is right to do injustice to him. Allah says, never do that because when you do injustice to your enemies it means that you have no fear of Allah in your heart, because Allah is telling you clearly that never think that little injustice to your enemies will make no difference. Allah says that my teaching to you is to act with justice and I am aware of your every action. Therefore, do not even think otherwise. This is the beautiful teaching which commands you never to do injustice to your enemy even. Instead, at one place, Allah says that even if your enemy has indulged in excess, you should never do the same.

So after this teaching, there can be no question of doing any injustice to your countrymen. One cannot even think of doing injustice to them. An Ahmadi should never think that such and such is from the North and I am from the South, or that his tribe is such and mine is different or that our social mores are different or that our

language and our opinions differ, and therefore we cannot get together. Or that he mistreated our elders, therefore, he cannot be forgiven and that if I get hold of him, I will take my revenge. Allah says that you should never harbour malice or grudge but that you should have courage and patience. And as I have said before, you should never be unjust to your enemy because you have the faculty of compassionate treatment of God's creation. When the standard of justice has been set so high then it can be safely said that you are not devoid of love and that you can establish peace in the world. If you develop your social relationships in this way and determine in a way that spreads peace and justice in the world, then it can be said that you possess fear of Allah and that you act on His commandments. If you act on Allah's commandments, then Allah says I am aware of every thing and I have the knowledge of whatever you do. And I also have a divine Law that if you do not act on the teachings of justice and do not act on My commandments, then I can apprehend you and my hold is

very severe. After justice, it is the commandment of Allah that you purify your hearts and throw all rancour and misunderstandings from your hearts and always remember that that He would forgive personal mistakes. If we have to look at the wider perspective in the interest of the Ahmadiyya Community, or in worldly affairs, the interest of the country, we are enjoined to cooperate in goodness. Therefore, we have to serve while remaining steadfast in truthfulness and in goodness.

This will only happen when after dispensing justice, you develop beneficence and do acts of kindness. When you have developed beneficence, an environment of love and peace will develop and all avenues of progress will open before you and you will develop courage and broadmindedness. So, every Ahmadi must demonstrate this courage and broadmindedness and he should continue to treat all whether known to him or strangers with kindness.

I personally know that the Ghanian people are more broad-minded and courageous than others. I have lived among you for sometime and I know your qualities. Some nations have a characteristic that that they are ready to kill each other over petty matters. But with you, it is very rare that you use any arms in your quarrels. When I was here, I used to tell my friends that if the freedom with which you carry a cutlass in this country, is reflected in other countries, especially in Asian countries where there are religious fanatics, there would be between five and seven murders every day on every street. I am trying to make you understand this because the contact among different countries has become easier and travel has become more frequent, and it is possible that trouble makers from other countries can come and influence your habits. Therefore, no Ahmadi should be impressed by such influences. You should always remember that the duty of an Ahmadi is to remember and worship Allah, to fulfil our obligation to other fellow human beings, serve humanity and create

peace in the world. Our personal enmities or difficulties should not come in our way. Then, you must remember that you should not rest after whatever good deeds you have performed but that you have to continue to excel in your efforts. As Allah the Almighty says:

Everyone has a goal to which he turns his whole attention. Then vie with one another in good work. Wherever you be, Allah will bring you altogether. Surely Allah has the power to do all that He wills.

(Surah Al-Baqarah
Ch.2:V.149)

Therefore, Allah explains that everyone has a goal that he tries to achieve. Because if you have no goal, you have no purpose in life and such people never progress. They are like intoxicated persons who get drunk and lie in one place or if they manage to walk they take a few steps and then fall down. You can often observe such scenes. People get drunk on liquor. Therefore, Allah says that those who want to progress in the world,

have a goal in their sight. And Allah says that those who worship Allah should have one goal and that is to excel in goodness.

What is goodness or righteousness? As I have said before, righteousness is that you follow the commandments of Allah, He has enjoined you to worship. Therefore worship in the true sense and that is say your prayers five times a day. Not only that but try to say your prayers five times a day in congregation. Fasting is enjoined on you, therefore, fast. You have been commanded to spend in the way of Allah, therefore make financial sacrifices. Perform good deeds and stay away from undesirable things. Get into the habit of working hard.

If you can go from here and work on twelve-hour shifts in Europe or America, then why can you not work so hard in your own country? If today, all people begin to work hard, the pace of progress of this country would increase many folds. So, you who are Ahmadi Muslims and to whom the true light of the



Hadrat Mirza Masroor with the country's President at the Ghana Jalsa Salana.

teachings of Islam has reached, work with this philosophy in mind yourself and draw the attention of others to this objective that we must excel in every work. We have to free ourselves intellectually and socially in every way. We have to take our worship to new heights. In worldly affairs we have to get ahead of Europe and America. The people of Europe and Africa are not super human beings that they have progressed. They have worked hard to attain their objectives. They are always pressed into inventing new things.

So, it is your duty that for the betterment of your nation, you should pray to Allah for His assistance and increase your effort.

Utilise fully the faculties with which Allah has endowed you. So, this would be a good deed because the love of one's country requires that every Ahmadi should do whatever he or she can for his or her country. The love of one's country is also an integral part of faith. Therefore, every Ahmadi should work selflessly for his country. He should march forward with this thought in mind. Then see that you shall be blessed with both spiritual and material progress as well, God willing. And just as today, the scientists of America and Europe, experts in political economy, agriculture and specialists in other fields tell us ever new things after their research, if your spirit of resolve remains steadfast, and the fear of Allah remains in your hearts, then you most surely will present ever new inventions before the world and be its guide.

Hadrat Musleh Maud states:

'The thing most important to be found in any progressive people is that whenever any thing good comes before them, they should have an

interest in their hearts to acquire that object. In other words, a people blessed with the twin qualities of patience and extreme interest or strong desire can most surely become dominant in the world. These qualities are the keys to progress. Why does a senior doctor, engineer or scientist become famous? It is because the doctor had an interest in his medical skills or the engineer had a burning desire in his engineering feats and that scientist was immersed in devising ways for the political progress of his country.... So these qualities are most essential for progress, firstly, that whenever one is stopped from something bad, he stops and, secondly, he should have a strong desire in his heart to obtain those things that are practical and beneficial.’
(*Tafseer Kabir*, Vol.7: pp.103-104)

Therefore every Ahmadi’s thinking should be in accordance with the principle I have just mentioned to remain completely away completely from everything that

is bad and to have a burning desire for everything that is good. When each one of us is inclined towards thinking in this manner, the people would automatically be drawn towards you. An Ahmadi would have a rank in society. If having accepted the Imam of the age, there is no change within you, then there is no point in being an Ahmadi by name alone. I know that you have many talents and Allah has blessed you with many faculties but we have to apply them to the fullest extent. How can I think about those who have been blessed with the eyes to behold the light as a result of which they have been able to recognise the Imam of the age, that they lack their own faculties? You most certainly have these abilities in you and I can see them. We have to nurture and flourish and make them manifest with sincere effort. May Allah enable you to do that.

The Promised Messiah^(as) states:

‘Progress in good deeds and righteousness. These are the paths to God’s grace and blessings. I know fully what

our Jama'at and we are. Allah's support and His help will accompany us in this same condition, if we tread on the straight path and follow completely and sincerely the Holy Prophet^(sa) and make the Holy Qur'an our way of life and can prove this with our actions and practice and not by words alone. If we adopt this method, then remember most surely that even if the whole world stands united and wants to annihilate you, it can never annihilate you because God is with you.'

(*Malfoozat* Vol.7: p.179)

May Allah enable all of us to act in accordance with this pure teaching. May each one of us be a sincere and true servant of Allah and is able to discharge his obligations to Allah and to Allah's creation. And he does not stop on those good deeds on which he is stationed, but everyday sees him on a fresh dawn of advancement. May you partake in all the blessings in the purpose for which you have come to participate in this Jalsa. May you see special

signs of nearness to Allah in this Jalsa and may you attain His pleasure. May you all be the beneficiaries of the supplications of the Promised Messiah^(as) for those who participate in the Jalsa. May Allah make this Jalsa a success in every way and bless it and when you return home, you return with a new spirit.

Because of the presence of ladies here, I want to say a few words as a matter of guidance for Lajna. Ladies have an important role to play in a society. A woman's fundamental role starts from home where she acts as a wife or a mother perhaps at the moment or may be in the future. The Promised Messiah^(as) has drawn our attention to follow the path of *taqwa* or righteousness. If understanding this, the ladies adopt the fear of God and tread on the path of righteousness, they would be able to bring about a great revolution. A woman is a guardian of her husband's home and, when he is not there, she is responsible for the house as well as for the training of her children. It is our faith that prayer and

submission to Allah is our fundamental weapon to achieve a high standard in anything we do. If Ahmadi ladies can understand this point, they can be sure that they have safeguarded the future generations. To do that, they will firstly have to set their own example. In order to set a good example, it is important that you observe the five daily prayers, and then pay attention that the children also observe their prayers regularly. Once the children are seven years of age, you will have to remind them to observe their prayers; and with love and affection, you will have to persuade your husbands to pray with regularity. You will have to wake all of them up for the morning prayers.

Some men may get offended and ask who are you to wake them up for prayers. But you must do this because it is a commandment from your Allah and His Messenger that if the husband gets up first, he should wake up his wife or if the wife gets up first, she should wake up her husband. Therefore, there is no reason for

men to be offended or for the ladies to be afraid.

As far as I have observed here, the women get busy with their daily routine early in the morning. I am sure that they get up before the men. The women work very hard and diligently and go to the shops early in the morning to buy food and then make the meal to feed their husbands and children. In order to prepare some food, for instance *Banku* or *Kenkey*, she prepares it for many days. In order to prepare *Fufu*, she beats it over and over again to finally pound it to an edible powder. So you must use the same hard work and effort that you used to provide them with edible food, to provide them with their spiritual diet.

This is a great responsibility for you, because if you do not think of it in this way, your children will not grow up as useful citizens for the nation. Hadrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) said that nations cannot reform without the reformation of their youth. Remember, that the reformation of the young can only take place

on the basis of the good deeds of their mothers. You have to improve the spiritual standards of the Jama'at, uproot the social ills from the Jama'at and the country and strengthen yourselves and your country economically. Therefore, bowing down before Allah, and, seeking the assistance of Allah the Almighty, you should pay a great deal of attention towards the education of your future generation.

If you can make yourselves capable of educating your families in such a manner that they become hard-working and they always submit before Allah, then no power on earth can cause you any harm. You have a very high station. Not for nothing has the Messenger of Allah^(sa) said that Paradise lies under the feet of the mother. It is your excellent training that will make the children obedient servants of Allah, possess high moral standards, become extremely hard-working so that the world is transformed into a heaven on earth and such people become heirs to the everlasting paradise.

Therefore, O Ahmadi women, you must realise your high station in life; and by saving the next generations from the ills of the society, give them high moral training and thus become a guarantor for the survival of your future generation and also your nation. Allah the Almighty never allows those who follow the commandments of Allah to go to waste. May Allah enable you to realise your status and may you be the instruments of saving the next generation! Amin.

Finally, I wish to thank also the guests who have taken their precious time to attend this Annual Convention and have provided testimony of their love and brotherly affection. May Allah also reward them with His grace.

The Essence of Islam – Part III

This is the third of a series to be printed over the next few months in *The Review of Religions*. It sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as) Hadrath Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa); and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad, may Allah have mercy on him and may He reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, Allah be pleased with him and quoted from *The Essence of Islam*. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was Hadrath 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.

Islam, the True and Living Faith *(continued...)*

The reality of Islam is to present one's neck to God like the sacrificial lamb; to give up one's own designs and to be devoted to the designs of God and His pleasure; to lose oneself in God and to impose a type of death upon oneself; to be dyed in the personal love of God and to obey Him entirely for the sake of that love; to obtain eyes that see only through Him, and to obtain ears that hear only through Him, and to develop a heart that should be wholly devoted to Him, and to obtain a tongue which would speak only at His command. This is a stage where all search ends; human faculties complete their functions and man's ego dies completely. Thereupon Divine

mercy confers a new life upon the seeker through His living words and His shining light. He is honoured with the delightful converse of God and a fine light, which is not discoverable by reason and is not recognisable by the eyes, approaches close to his heart; as is said by God: We are closer to him than his jugular vein (Ch.50:V.17). In this manner, God honours mortal man with His nearness. Then the time comes when blindness is removed and eyes are given insight and man beholds God with his new eyes and hears His voice and finds himself wrapped in the mantle of His light. Thus, the purpose of religion is fulfilled and having beheld God, man casts aside the dirty garment of his lower life and puts on a garment of light and waits for a sight of God and of heaven, not merely as a promise to be fulfilled in the hereafter, but in this very life he achieves the bounties of sight and converse and heaven. As God has stated: Upon those who affirm, ‘Allah is our Lord,’ and are then steadfast, angels descend reassuring them,

fear not nor grieve and rejoice in the Paradise which you were promised (Ch.41:V.31). This means that angels descend upon those who affirm that their God is One who possesses all perfect attributes and Who has no associate in His Being or His attributes; and after their affirmation, they are steadfast and no earthquake and calamity and no confrontation of death can shake their faith. God speaks to them and reassures them not to be afraid of calamities or of enemies and not to be sorrowful over past misfortunes. He reassures them that He is with them and that He has bestowed upon them in this very world the paradise that was promised to them in which they should rejoice. This is a promise which has now been fulfilled. There is testimony to the effect that thousands of humble ones in Islam have tasted of the spiritual paradise which is promised in this verse. The true followers of Islam have been made heirs by Almighty God to all the previous righteous ones, and bounties that were bestowed upon them have been bestowed upon the Muslims

[*Lecture Lahore*, (Lahore, Rifahi Aam Steam Press, 1904); Now published in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol. 20, pp.14-15].

A person can be held to be a Muslim when the whole of his being together with all his faculties, physical and spiritual, is devoted to God Almighty, and the trusts that are committed to him by God Almighty are rendered back to the True Giver. He should demonstrate his being a Muslim not only doctrinally but also in practice. In other words, a person claiming to be a Muslim should prove that his hands and feet and heart and mind, his reason and his understanding, his anger and his compassion, his meekness and his knowledge, all his physical and spiritual faculties, and his honour and his property, his comfort and his delight and whatever pertains to him from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, together with his motives, his fears, his passions, have all been subordinated to Almighty God as a person's limbs are subordinated

to him. It should be proved that his sincerity has reached a stage in which whatever is his does not belong to him but to God Almighty, and that all his limbs and faculties have become so devoted to the service of God as if they had become the limbs of the Divine.

Reflection on these verses shows clearly that devoting one's life to the cause of God Almighty, which is the essence of Islam, has two aspects. First, that God Almighty should become the object of worship and the true goal and beloved, and that no one should be associated in His worship, in His love, and in His hope. All the commandments related to His holiness and glory and worship, and all the limits set by Him, and all heavenly decrees should be totally and sincerely accepted. All these commandments and limits and laws and decrees should be accepted in great humility, and all the truths and understandings, which are the means of appreciating His vast powers and of finding out the greatness of His kingdom and

His sovereignty and are a guide for the recognition of His favours and bounties, should be fully ascertained.

The second aspect of devoting one's life to the cause of God Almighty is that one's life should be devoted to the service of His creatures and to sympathy with them and to sharing their burdens and sorrows. One should suffer pain to bring them comfort, and one should experience grief to bring them consolation.

This shows that the reality of Islam is a very superior thing and that no one can truly deserve the title of Muslim till he surrenders the whole of his being to God, together with all his faculties and desires and designs, and till he begins to tread along this path withdrawing altogether from his ego and all its attendant qualities. A person will be truly called a Muslim only when his heedless life undergoes a total revolution and his evil-directing self, together with all its passions, is wiped out altogether and he is invested with a new life which is

characterised by his carrying out all his obligations to Allah and which should comprise nothing except obedience to the Creator and sympathy for His creatures.

Obedience to the Creator means that to make manifest His Honour and Glory and Unity one should be ready to endure every dishonour and humiliation, and one should be eager to undergo a thousand deaths in order to uphold His Unity. One hand should be ready to cut off the other with pleasure in obedience to Him, and the love of the grandeur of His commandments and the thirst for seeking His pleasure should make sin so hateful as if it were a consuming fire, or a fatal poison, or an obliterating lightning, from which one must run away with all one's power. For seeking His pleasure one must surrender all the desires of one's ego; and to establish a relationship with Him one should be ready to endure all kinds of injuries; and to prove such relationship one must cut sunder from all other relationships.

The service of one's fellow-beings means to strive 'for their benefit purely for the sake of God in all their needs, and in all the relationships of mutual dependence which God has established out of true and selfless sympathy for them. Everyone in need of help should be helped out of one's God-given capacity and one must strive for their betterment both in this world and in the hereafter [Ayenae *Kamalat-e-Islam*, (Qadian, Riyadh Hind Press 1893); Now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol.5, pp. 59- 62].

I would now wish to enlarge upon the fruits of Islam. When a true seeker of God establishes himself fully on Islam and everyone of his faculties begins to tread naturally upon the paths of God Almighty without any kind of artificiality, the ultimate result of his effort is that the higher manifestations of Divine guidance, freed from all obstructions, are directed towards him. Diverse types of blessings descend upon him and the

commandments and doctrines which were accepted on faith and as hearsay, are now experienced by him as realities and certainties through dreams, visions and revelation. The mysteries of the faith and the law are revealed to him and he is afforded a view of the Divine kingdom so that he should arrive at the stage of perfect certainty and understanding. A blessing characterises his tongue and his words and all his actions and his movements. He is bestowed extraordinary courage and steadfastness and his understanding is expanded at a high level. The narrowness of human obstructions and meanness and miserliness, and the tendency towards frequent stumblings, and shortsightedness and proneness towards passion and lowness of behaviour, and every darkness of his ego are totally removed from him and he is filled with the light of Divine attributes. Thereupon, he undergoes an entire change and puts on the garment of a new birth. He hears through God Almighty and sees through Him and moves with Him and stops

with Him, and his anger becomes the wrath of God Almighty and his compassion becomes the compassion of God Almighty. When he arrives at that stage, his prayers are heard as a mark of his having been chosen, and not merely as a trial; and he becomes the proof of God on earth and personifies security from God. There is joy in heaven on his account and the highest gift that is bestowed upon him is the word of God which descends upon his heart free from any doubt, like the light of the moon shining through without any mistiness. It carries an effective sense of delight with it and bestows satisfaction, such as a friend receives from a friend. We can only define it by saying that it is a special manifestation of God the Glorious which is conveyed through a favourite angel. Its purpose is to give intimation of acceptance of prayer, or to communicate a new or secret matter, or to make aware of something that is to happen in the future, or to warn of God's pleasure, or lack of it, concerning any matter, or to create certainty

and understanding concerning some matter. It is a Divine voice which manifests itself in the form of converse in order to create understanding and satisfaction. It is not possible to define it any further. It is a voice which proceeds from God and is experienced in delicious words full of blessings, which is not induced by any thinking or reflection or any intrusion of self and is surcharged with a divine manifestation and divine majesty [Ayenae *Kamalat-e-Islam*, (Qadian, Riyadh Hind Press 1893); Now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol.5, pp. 226-233].

I believe in Islam alone as a true religion. I perceive that by believing in Islam fountains of light are coursing through me. Through the love of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, I have arrived at that high stage of converse with the Divine and of acceptance of prayer which can only be achieved by a follower of the true Prophet and by no other. If the Hindus and the Christians and

others were to supplicate their false gods, even unto death, they could not achieve that stage. I hear the words of God which the others believe in only as a theory. I have been shown and have been told and I have been made to understand that Islam alone is the true faith in the world, and it has been disclosed to me that I have received all this through the blessing of following the Khatamul Anbiya (Seal of all the Prophets), peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and that the equal of it cannot be achieved in any other religion. [*Ayena Kamalat-e-Islam*, (Qadian, Riyadh Hind Press 1893); Now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol.5, pp. 275-276].

A thousand thanks are due to Almighty God Who has bestowed upon us a religion which is such a means of attaining to the knowledge of God and to the fear of God as has had no equal in any age. Thousands of blessings be upon the immaculate Prophet through whom we have entered this faith

and thousands of Divine mercies be bestowed upon his companions who irrigated this garden with their blood.

Islam is such a blessed and God-indicating religion that if a person follows it truly and acts upon the teachings and guidance and admonition that are contained in the Holy Word of God Almighty, the Holy Qur'an, he would see God in this very life. For the recognition of God Who is hidden from the sight of the world behind a thousand screens, there is no other means except the teachings of the Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an guides towards God Almighty through reason and heavenly signs in a very easy manner. It comprehends a blessing and a magnetic power which draws a seeker of God every moment towards God and bestows light and comfort and satisfaction. A true believer in the Holy Qur'an does not merely contemplate like the philosophers that there ought to be a Creator of this wonderful universe; he acquires a personal insight and being honoured with

a holy vision he sees with the eye of certainty that that Creator in fact exists. He who is bestowed the light of this Holy Word does not merely guess like those who rely upon reason alone that God is One, without associate, but through hundreds of shining signs which take him by the hand and lead him out of the darkness, observes in fact that God has no associate in His Being or in His attributes. He is able to demonstrate to the world that he believes God to be such a Unity. The majesty of the Unity of God so fills his heart that in comparison with the Divine will, he regards the whole world as no more than a dead insect and indeed as nothing at all (*Braheen Ahmadiyyah*, Part V, pp.16-17).

The God of a true religion should be so much in accord with reason and the light of nature that His existence should be a matter of proof for people who possess reason but who have no heavenly book in which they believe. He should be such as does not savour of coercion or artificiality. Such perfection is characteristic

of the God Who is presented by the Holy Qur'an. The God of Islam is the same true God who is seen through the mirror of the law of nature and is visible in the book of nature. Islam has not presented a new God but has presented the same God Who is presented by the light of man's heart and by man's conscience and by heavens and earth.

Another quality of a true religion is that it should not be a dead creed. The blessings and greatnesses which were cultivated in it in the beginning should persist in it till the end of the world, for the promotion of the welfare of mankind, so that ever fresh signs should confirm its past signs and should not permit the light of its truth to become an old tale. I have been writing over a long period that the Prophethood which was claimed by our lord and master Muhammad, the chosen one, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and the heavenly proofs in the form of signs which he had set forth, still continue in Islam and are bestowed upon his followers so

that they should arrive at the state of complete understanding and should witness the living God directly. The signs which are attributed to Jesus^(as) are mere stories, and are nowhere to be seen, and therefore this religion which teaches the worship of the dead is itself dead like its god. A verity cannot be confined to old tales. Every people has a store of tales setting forth alleged miracles and wonders. It is a characteristic only of Islam that it does not present merely the defective and imperfect comfort of tales and stories, but satisfies the seekers with living signs. A seeker after truth should not be satisfied with senseless worship of the dead and should not be put off with sorry tales. We have come into the market of the world to purchase the best. We should not waste our faith by exchanging it with false things. A living faith is that through which we can find the living God. The living God is He Who can inspire us directly, or could at least bring us in contact with one who is directly inspired. I convey this good news to the whole

world that the God of Islam is such a living God. Those with whom no one can now speak are dead and are not God. No one can see their signs today. He whose God is dead would be put to shame in every field and would be humiliated and would not be helped in any way. My purpose in making this announcement is that a religion which is true does not change. As it was in the beginning, so it would be at the end. A true religion would never become a dry tale. Islam is a true religion and I call everyone, Christians, Aryas, Jews, Brahmos, to show them the truth of Islam. Is there anyone of them who seeks the living God? We do not worship the dead. Our God is living. He helps us through His inspiration and revelation and through heavenly signs. If there is a single Christian who is truly a seeker after truth, let him make a comparison between our living God and his dead god. For such a trial a period of forty days would suffice. (*Tableegh-e-Risalat*, Vol. VI, pp. 13-15).

The Islam whose qualities we have set out is not something for proof of which we have to refer only to the past and to have to point only to the ruins of tombs. Islam is not a dead faith so that it may be said that all its blessings have been left behind and that there is nothing ahead. The principal quality of Islam is that its blessings always accompany it and that it does not speak only of the past but presents present blessings. The world is always in need of blessings and heavenly signs. It is not as if it needed them in the past and does not need them now. A weak and helpless human being who is born blind is in need that he should know something of the heavenly kingdom and that he should see some signs of the existence and power of God in Whom he believes. The signs of a past age cannot suffice for a subsequent age, for hearing is not the same as seeing and by the passage of time past events become like stories. Every century starts a new world. Therefore, the God of Islam, who is the true God, manifests new

signs for each new world. At the beginning of each century, especially at the beginning of a century which has strayed far away from faith and integrity and is enveloped in many darknesses, He raises a substitute Prophet in the mirror of whose nature is exhibited the form of a Prophet. Such a one demonstrates to the world the excellences of the Prophet whose follower he is and convicts all opponents through the truth and the display of reality and the frustration of falsehood [*Ayena-e Kamalat-e-Islam*, (Qadian, Riyadh Hind Press 1893); Now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol.5, pp. 245-247].

The sign of a true religion is that through its teaching such righteous ones should continue to arise who should arrive at the stage of a Muhaddath to whom God Almighty should speak face to face. The foremost sign of the truth of Islam is that all through it produces such righteous ones with whom God Almighty talks as is said in the Holy Qur'an: Angels descend upon them

reassuring them, fear not, nor grieve (Ch.41:V.31). This is the test of a true, living and acceptable religion. We know that this light is to be found only in Islam and that the Christian faith is without such light [*Hujjatul Islam*, (Amritsar, Riyadh Hind Press); Now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol.6, p.3].

We can furnish conclusive proof to every seeker after truth that from the time of our lord and master the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, up to today, in every century there have appeared men of God through whom God Almighty has guided other people by the display of heavenly signs. Of these were Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani, Abul Hasan Kharqani, Abu Yazid Bistami, Junaid Baghdadi, Mohyuddin Ibn Arabi, Dhunnoon Misri, Mueenuddin Chishti Ajmeri, Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, Fareeduddin Pakpattani, Nizamuddin Dehlavi, Shah Waliullah Dehlavi, and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, may Allah be pleased with them. Their number

exceeded thousands and so many extraordinary happenings concerning them are set out in the books of the learned ones that even a very bigoted opponent has to admit that these people manifested extraordinary signs and miracles. I tell you truly that through my research, so far as it is possible for one to discover about the past, I have come to the conclusion that the number of heavenly signs in support of Islam and as a testimony of the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, which have been manifested through the aulia of this Ummat, is not to be equalled in the history of other religions. Islam is the only religion which has progressed through heavenly signs and its numberless lights and blessings have ever demonstrated the existence of God Almighty as if He was visible close at hand. Be sure that on the score of its heavenly signs Islam has not been put to shame in any age. In this age of yours you could if you wished be the witnesses of signs in support of Islam. Say truly whether you

have not witnessed signs in support of Islam in your own age. Is there any other religion in the world which can produce such testimony? This is a matter which has broken the back of Christian missionaries. The signs of the truth of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, whom they reject, are visible in this age like pouring rain. For seekers the gates of heavenly signs are as open today as they were in any previous age, and for those who are hungry after truth the banquet of bounties is as much available today as it was before. A living faith is as much available today as it was before. A living faith has always the hand of the living God at its back and such a faith is Islam [*Kitabul Bariyyah*, (Qadian, Ziaul Islam Press 1898); Now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol. 13, pp. 91-92].

If anyone should have a question that there are hundreds of false religions which have flourished through thousands of years, though they must have originated

in some imposture, the answer is as follows. According to us, imposture means that a person should himself fashion deliberately a few sentences, or should invent a book claiming that it has been revealed to him by God Almighty whereas nothing of the kind has been revealed to him. We can affirm on the basis of full research that such imposture has never been able to flourish in any age. The Book of God bears clear testimony that those who were guilty of imposture against God Almighty were soon destroyed. We have already stated that the same testimony is borne by the Torah, the Gospel, and the Holy Qur'an. The false religions that we observe in the world today like that of the Hindus and the Parsees, do not represent the dispensations of false Prophets. The truth is that their followers through their own mistakes have fallen into accepting their current doctrines. You cannot point to any book which claims clearly that it is a Divine book while in truth it might be an imposture and a whole people might have

held it in honour throughout. It is, however, possible that a Divine book might have been misinterpreted. A political government seizes jealously a person who falsely claims to be a government official. Then, why

would God, Who is jealous of His glory and His kingdom, not seize a false claimant [*Anjam Atham*, (Qadian, Ziaul Islam Press); Now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* (London, 1984), Vol. 11, p. 63-64, footnote].

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, ‘(sa)’ or ‘sa’ after the words, ‘Holy Prophet’, or the name ‘Muhammad’, are used. They stand for ‘*Salallahu alaihi wassalam*’ meaning ‘Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him’. Likewise, the letters ‘(as)’ or ‘as’ after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning ‘Peace be upon him’ derived from ‘*Alaih salato wassalam*’ for the respect a Muslim reader utters.

The abbreviation ‘ra’ or (ra) stands for ‘*Radhiallahtala*’ and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Also ‘ru’ or (ru) for *Rahemallahu Ta’ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

Treatment of Prisoners

This is an article by Hadrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad entitled 'Islam and Slavery' published in *The Review of Religions*, May 1995. It has been reproduced owing to the significance of this subject following the disclosure of prisoner abuse in the recent war and indeed the high handed treatment by some in authority in other prisons, penitentiary centres and police cells.

Slavery has been defined as the system in which a human being is held to be the legal property of another and is bound to absolute obedience and submission. A slave is thus a human chattel who may be retained or sold or otherwise dealt with as his master pleases. The system had its origin in war. In the beginning of human society, whenever there was a war between two tribes or nations, the combatants of the vanquished army – and very often, even the noncombatant male members of the vanquished nation – were put to the sword, while the children and women were taken into slavery and made to do all sorts of work for their masters.

Gradually, however, as civil life and industries developed and there was a greater demand in the world for servants and labourers,

it was felt that the best and easiest way of securing labour was to enslave the conquered people. Conquering nations then began to enslave rather than slay their prisoners of war, who were forced to do manual work both for the conquering nation and its individuals. Over time, the system became so widespread, that in some countries, the slaves even outnumbered the free inhabitants, and slavery became an integral part of civil life¹. These slaves were looked upon as the sole property of their masters, who could treat them in any way they liked, exact from them any work they pleased, inflict on them any punishment they desired, and sell them to others whenever they chose to do so.

Eventually the system became so extended that even the children

of the slaves were treated as the property of their masters, and thus a permanent system of slavery was established. When people found this system to be so lucrative, they no longer confined themselves to the enslavement of only the prisoners of war, but devised other cruel ways of enslaving free men. For instance, they made unprovoked raids on weaker tribes, and reduced their men and women to a condition of bondage. In certain countries even civil debtors became liable to be converted into slaves.

At the advent of Islam, nearly 1400 years ago, the practice prevailed more or less in all countries. Hundreds of thousands of slaves were leading lives of extreme misery and pain in Rome, Greece, Egypt, Persia and other countries. Their lot was hardly better than that of dumb driven cattle. In Arabia, too, there were thousands of slaves in those days, and they formed an essential part of the wealth of the rich. Perhaps nowhere in the world were they more despised

than in Arabia. They were treated with the utmost cruelty and heartlessness.

When the Holy Founder of Islam^(sa) began his preaching roughly in 611 A.D., his teachings included the injunction that slaves should be treated with leniency and kindness, and his earliest revelations declared the emancipation of slaves as an act of great virtue. In one of its earliest *Surahs*, the Qur'an refers to this subject in the following words:

'Have We not created for man two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and have We not shown him the two ascending paths of nobility? But he did not follow the path of 'Aqabah. And what should make thee know what the 'Aqabah is? It is the setting free of a slave, or the feeding in a day of hunger an orphan who is near of kin or a poor man lying in the dust.'

(Ch.90: Vs.9-17)

The simplicity and excellence of the teachings of Islam, combined with this special injunction about slaves, made a deep impression upon the slaves of Arabia who began to look upon the Holy Prophet's^(sa) call as the call of a deliverer. It was for this reason that notwithstanding the atrocities that were inflicted upon them by their infidel masters on account of their acceptance of Islam, the new religion spread very rapidly among the slave population. The proportion of slaves was indeed extraordinarily large among the early converts.

It appears from history that even in the very beginning of Islam, slaves were not treated with contempt in Muslim society. As time advanced and further Divine commandments were revealed concerning the slaves, their position became stronger and their condition better, till at last there ceased to be any distinction between the slaves and their masters except that the former were administratively subordinate to the latter. Along with this, the movement for the

emancipation of slaves also gained in force day by day, and the Muslims, under the influence of the teachings of the Qur'an, and stimulated by the example of the Prophet^(sa), vied with one another in taking an active part in this movement. Muslim history teems with instances of slaves set free by their Muslim masters.

But the question is whether the work of the Holy Prophet^(sa) with regard to slaves was confined only to the improvement of their position and gradual emancipation, or whether he took effective steps to put an end to the cruel inhuman ways of reducing free men to slavery. It is true that even if it be supposed that his work did not go beyond the limit stated above, he can not fail to be regarded as one of the great benefactors of humanity for having rendered conspicuous service in the amelioration of the condition of slaves, and inaugurating a movement for their emancipation. But his real work went very much farther, for, he not only ameliorated the condition of the slaves, but took

effective measures to abolish slavery altogether. His teachings about slaves thus fall under two heads:

1. Teachings for the betterment of the condition of the existing slaves and measures for their gradual emancipation.
2. Steps for the permanent abolition of slavery.

We propose to deal in these pages with the teachings of the Holy Prophet^(sa) under each of these two heads.

The prisoners of war

If there is any teaching of Islam which may be represented as sanctioning slavery, it is its teachings with regard to the prisoners of war. But, as it will presently appear, war prisoners were not actually treated in Islam as slaves. In this connection, it should be mentioned at the very outset that, as borne out by history, it was in the prisoners of war that the institution of slavery had its origin. Subsequently,

however, other ways were invented, owing to which slavery, which was originally an inevitable outcome of the early conditions of the world, assumed a heinous aspect, and instead of serving as a means for preventing tyranny for which it was originally meant, it became a dreadful instrument of oppression.

Originally the institution of slavery consisted of one nation who made an unprovoked attack upon another, and tried to blot them out from the face of the earth or reduce them to subjection by unjustly depriving them of their liberty; the latter, in case of their triumph over the aggressive party, took their men as captives and detained them as prisoners of war. This course was necessary, for, if it had not been adopted, international wars would never have come to an end, nor would the aggressors ever have desisted from committing excesses upon public peace, and tyranny and oppression would have become rampant. Religious communities

in particular needed this kind of protection since they were always bitterly persecuted by the disbelievers amongst them who wanted to exterminate them by sword. This form of slavery was, therefore, found more or less in all the nations of the earth.

The system was in vogue even among the Israelites who were the descendants from the chosen Prophets of God and who, as a nation, had been brought up under the care and guidance of a long chain of Divine Messengers. They practised it in compliance with an injunction of their own law (Deut. 20:13-14) and it continued to be practised even among the early Christians who were in fact an offshoot of the Israelite people³. It also continued in the Christian countries of the west right up to the eighteenth or even the nineteenth century.

Similarly, slavery was practised by the ancient Aryan people as well⁴. In fact the *Sudras* and the other untouchables who are still to be found in India in millions

are a sad remnant of the system of slavery that was in vogue in ancient India.

In short, in the early days of the world slavery was found more or less in all countries and was a necessary consequence of the state of things then prevailing and was primarily meant as a check to tyranny and oppression. It was, as stated, more urgently and more truly needed by religious communities, who were subjected to atrocities more than any other people, and to extirpate those religions, men rose up in arms against them.

This form of enslavement (which was further softened and purified by Islam so much so that it was practically reduced to mere temporary imprisonment) involved no injustice, for those who desired to destroy the religion of others by sword, who were blood-thirsty tyrants, who sowed the seed of anarchy, murder and plunder in the country by resorting to methods subversive of public peace, forfeited all rights to freedom, just as a thief

or a thug or a dacoit forfeits his right to remain outside a prison. The Holy Prophet^(sa) and his companions had to encounter such outrage more than any other people.

The idolaters of Arabia subjected the Muslims to the most tyrannical persecution. They drew out their swords against the Muslims with the avowed intention of exterminating their religion by force. They sought and conspired to dye their unholy hands with the sacred blood of the Muslims' master. They detained innocent and free Muslims with them as prisoners. They captured defenceless and innocent Muslims by the vilest treachery, made them their slaves, and murdered some of them in the most savage manner. They conspired to enslave their women and made war upon them with that object in view. They mutilated the bodies of Muslim martyrs, and having cut off their noses and ears, strung them together and garlanded themselves therewith. They made brutal attacks on their sick and

suffering women causing in certain cases a miscarriage. They killed the chaste wives of the Muslims by piercing them with spears in the most horrible and shameless manner (*Zurqani*, Vol. I, p.266).

If, under circumstances like these, the tyrants who committed such savageries had been deprived of their liberty and reduced to a state of bondage, that would have been by no means unjust. But such was the kindness of the Holy Prophet^(sa) that even the perpetrators of these heinous crimes were pardoned by him, and those of them who were taken captives in the war had only a temporary restraint put on their liberty. Even during that temporary detention, the Holy Prophet^(sa) gave such directions for their comfort and convenience that under their influence, his Companions took off their own shirts, and gave them to the prisoners to wear (*Bukhari*) – the very prisoners who had been thirsty for their blood. They ate dry dates while giving cooked food to the

prisoners (*Tabari & Ibn Hisham*). They walked on foot giving their camels to the prisoners to ride on (*Qur'an, Ch. 8:V.68*). Do we find a parallel to this in the history of any nation or any country?

The gist of Islamic teachings with regard to the prisoners of war is contained in three verses of the Qur'an, two of which deal particularly with the prisoners of war, while the third enunciates a general principle also applicable to war prisoners.

The first verse runs as follows:

'It does not behove a prophet that prisoners of war should be captured for him, until there has actually been fought between him and the enemy a pitched battle. You have in view the advantages that are near at hand (i.e., you hasten to take captives so that with the help of the ransom money you may become prepared to meet the enemy), but Allah desires for you the Hereafter (and as this course is not

commendable with a view to the end, and is calculated to lead to evil results morally, God orders you to refrain from it); and if you are afraid of the numbers and power of the enemy, then remember that Allah is Powerful over all and He is also Wise.' (Ch.8:V.68)

This verse teaches that the Muslims should not, out of consideration for their own weakness or the power of the enemy or out of a desire to strengthen their financial position by means of ransom money, be careless or unduly hasty in the matter of taking captives so that they may take prisoners of the enemy wherever they may find them weak, or that they may take captives at the battlefield before the armies actually engage in battle. The Muslims are permitted to take prisoners only when they have met the enemy in a pitched battle. This teaching of Islam, which rests on a far sounder foundation than any other International Code of War, reduces the extent and number of

the prisoners of war to the narrowest possible range, which clearly indicates that Islam is loath to taking prisoners of war except in the most unavoidable circumstances. The second verse of the Qur'an says:

When you meet the disbelievers in battle, fight steadfastly and slay the aggressors: and when the battle has been well fought take captives from among the enemy. After that you should either set them at liberty without taking any ransom (if circumstances are favourable and you hope matters will mend thereby) or you should release them for a reasonable ransom, or (if it be unavoidable) you may retain them as prisoners until the war is over and you are relieved of its burdens.
(Ch.47:V.5)

This verse forms, as it were, the foundation-stone of the Islamic teachings with regard to the prisoners of war. It describes the three different courses which

may be followed under different circumstances in dealing with war prisoners. These courses are:

Firstly, to release the prisoners without taking any ransom money.

Secondly, to release them for a reasonable ransom. The practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa) shows that there can be three forms of ransom: (a) Payment of ransom in cash either immediately or under the system of *Mukatabat* already described, the alternatives being at the option of the prisoner, (b) Exchange with Muslim prisoners, (c) Exacting of some suitable service from the prisoners; for instance, if the prisoners know some art or profession, it might be stipulated with them that if they taught that art or profession to a certain number of Muslims, they might be set at liberty in return for that service.

Thirdly, to prolong the period of imprisonment till the termination of the war. By the termination of war is meant its complete termination when not only

military operations practically cease, but also the burdens which the war might have laid on the nation and for which the enemy is held responsible are removed. This last alternative has been proposed as a provision for cases when on the one hand it is not advisable to release the prisoners without ransom, and on the other they or their friends and relatives do not come forward, for some reason or other, to pay ransom. In such cases, the prisoners may be detained till the termination of war, so that their release may not add to the troubles of the Muslims. It is this form of imprisonment that has sometimes been termed 'slavery' and which has been permitted by Islam, but even a cursory study of the true situation will show, that, truly speaking it is not slavery at all. It is merely a form of imprisonment which is further restricted and qualified by a fundamental law enunciated in the verse given below. The third verse of the Qur'an runs as follows:

'If you think it necessary to

punish the oppressors or take some strong measure against him by way of retribution, then take care that the action you take against him does not exceed the evil that has been done to you, and that you resort not to any measure which the enemy has not been the first to resort to. If, however, it be possible for you to exercise patience, then have patience, for patience is better.'

(Ch.16:V.127)

Under this principle, the alternative course with regard to prisoners i.e., that which pertains to the prolongation of imprisonment, may take different forms. For instance, if the enemy exacts some service from Muslim prisoners, the Muslims can also exact suitable service from the prisoners taken from the enemy but this service shall be subject to the general conditions governing the exacting of service from slaves. Thus the prisoners of war shall not be called upon to perform a work which is more

than they can bear, nor shall they be required to do a work which their captors are not themselves willing to do. Similarly, if instead of keeping Muslim prisoners in state prisons, the belligerent nation distributes them among its individuals, the Muslims shall also have a right to place their prisoners in the custody of individuals, and so on. But whatever form is adopted, it is essential that it should not be at variance with any basic injunction of Islam. For instance, the term of imprisonment must in all cases terminate with the termination of war. Similarly, no prisoner shall be put to death merely because he is a member of the enemy force nor shall any prisoner be called upon to perform a work which exceeds his capacity and power, nor shall his convenience and comfort be neglected, and so on.

Such are the teachings which Islam gives with regard to the prisoners of war. Now, let the reader judge for himself whether there is any trace of slavery in these teachings. Call the prisoners

of war slaves if you please; but are they slaves in fact? Do not modern governments take prisoners of war? Do not modern governments exact work from them? Do not modern governments lengthen the period of their imprisonment, in case the war is prolonged? If all this is done by every nation and if the international law of all ages has sanctioned that practice, why blame Islam and its Holy Founder^(sa) for it? Nay, far from being blamed, Islam deserves the unique credit for conferring a lasting boon on humanity by emphasising the element of leniency and kindness in the code of war and has thus paved the way for international peace and amity.

The distribution of war prisoners among the soldiers

We now come to the question relating to the placing of war prisoners in the custody of individuals. It is true that in the beginning the prisoners were distributed among the Muslim soldiers, and in fact, it is this circumstance alone which has been taken to give this practice

the colour of slavery. But when we carefully consider the circumstances under which the above course was adopted, we find that there is absolutely nothing objectionable about it nor can the word 'slavery' be applied to it in the sense in which it is generally understood.

We must first of all bear in mind that the practice in question did not form an essential part of the Islamic teachings. As a matter of fact it finds no mention in the special instructions which have been given in the Qur'an with regard to the prisoners of war (Ch.8:V.67; Ch.47:V.4). It was only a retributive measure which was taken recourse to as an answer to the extremely aggressive conduct of the enemy who made slaves of Muslim prisoners and distributed them among the individuals. It was therefore, only to bring the enemy to his senses, that the Muslims also resorted to the method of placing the prisoners of war in the custody of individuals; but Islam never permitted their enslavement in

the way in which the Muslim prisoners were enslaved by the infidels. Moreover, Islam laid it down as a condition that all the war prisoners must necessarily be set at liberty as soon as the war was over.

Another reason why the prisoners of war were placed in the custody of individuals was that in those days there were no state prisons, and the prisoners were necessarily distributed among, and placed in the charge of, the individual members of the victorious nation. This practice naturally remained in vogue among the Muslims as well.

From the above it is clear that in reality this practice was not slavery but merely an arrangement for the protection and maintenance of the prisoners of war – a system which was gradually changed, and was finally replaced by that of State prisons.

It must also be remembered that so far as an Islamic government was concerned, this system by no

THANKS TO THE EMPHATIC INJUNCTIONS OF THE HOLY PROPHET^(SA) AND THE WATCHFUL SUPERVISION OF THE MUSLIM STATE, THE PRISONERS OF WAR LIVED, NOT AS SERVANTS OR LABOURERS, BUT AS MEMBERS OF THE FAMILIES TO WHICH THEY WERE ATTACHED AND WERE PRACTICALLY TREATED LIKE GUESTS. FOR INSTANCE, IT IS ON RECORD THAT THE PRISONERS TAKEN AT BADR, WHO WERE AMONGST THE WORST ENEMIES OF ISLAM, WERE TREATED WITH SUCH KINDNESS THAT THEY COULD NOT BUT PAY THE MUSLIMS WARM TRIBUTES OF PRAISE, AND SOME OF THEM WERE SO DEEPLY TOUCHED BY THE KIND TREATMENT THAT THEY WILLINGLY JOINED THE FOLD OF ISLAM.

means caused any unavoidable hardship on the prisoners. On the contrary it was in many ways even more convenient and comfortable than the system of the present-day State prisons. Thanks to the emphatic injunctions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and the watchful supervision of the Muslim State, the prisoners of war lived, not as servants or labourers, but as members of the families to which they were attached and were practically treated like guests. For instance, it is on record that the prisoners taken at Badr, who were amongst the worst enemies of Islam, were

treated with such kindness that they could not but pay the Muslims warm tributes of praise, and some of them were so deeply touched by the kind treatment that they willingly joined the fold of Islam⁶. In short, even this so-called ‘slavery’ which Islam permitted offered such a spectacle of kindness and benevolent treatment, that even the blessings of the so-called liberty and freedom of the present day fade into insignificance when compared with it.

Yet, as the system practised was merely a retributive step, it must

be regarded only as a special measure meant to meet the conditions then existing. In the present times, therefore, when those conditions have ceased to exist, and the old system has been replaced by that of State prisons, the permission for the retributive measure no longer holds good. The law of Islam does not permit that the prisoners of war should, even under the altered conditions of the present age, be distributed among Muslim individuals, thus bringing into existence a state of things analogous to slavery. In connection with this, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, who claimed to be a messenger of God raised for the regeneration of mankind and who was the greatest authority on Islam in these days, says:

It is a matter for gratification that in the present times non-Muslim nations have abandoned the aggressive practice of making slaves of Muslim captives, therefore, now the Muslims are also not allowed to enslave their

prisoners, for, the Holy Qur'an says that the punishment inflicted on the enemy should be proportionate to the wrong the enemy has been the first to inflict on the Muslims. Hence, now when the conditions have changed and the people hostile to the Muslims no longer go to the extent of making slaves of Muslim men and women in times of war, but treat them as state prisoners, it would be unlawful for the Muslims to make slaves of the prisoners of war taken from a belligerent army.

(Chashma-iMa'refat, pp.244-45)

To sum up, there are two fundamental teachings of Islam concerning the prisoners of war: *Firstly*, that so far as possible, there should be no haste in taking captives, and prisoners should be taken only as a last resort when a battle has been actually fought. *Secondly*, that after the prisoners have been taken, they should be dealt with in one of three ways,

as the circumstances demand. They should either be set at liberty as an act of favour without taking any ransom – and that is the most commendable course – or they should be released in return for a reasonable ransom, or, if necessary, the period of their imprisonment may be extended to the end of war. This is the only teaching that has been expressly laid down in Islam with regard to the prisoners of war. Islam, however, gives a general rule to the effect that if political considerations demand the taking of a strong retaliatory measure against the enemy, it should be subject to the condition, *firstly*, that no such action should be taken against the enemy which the enemy was not the first to take against the Muslims, and *secondly*, that the action taken should not be in contravention of any explicit teaching of Islam. It was under this rule that the prisoners of war were distributed among the Muslim individuals, but now as non-Muslim nations do not make slaves of their captives but treat

them as State prisoners, it would be unlawful for the Muslims as well to distribute their prisoners among individuals.

Can prisoners of war be put to death?

We have already pointed out that Islam does not allow putting the prisoners of war to death, but as some Muslim *ulema* have dissented from this view and as some of the Christian writers have made this point an object of attack against Islam, it appears desirable to discuss it here at some length.

First of all, we must remember that verse 5 of Chapter 47 of the Qur'an clearly shows that it is not lawful for a Muslim to put the prisoners of war to death, and obviously no one has the right to devise a new law in opposition to the injunctions of the Qur'an. But in order to satisfy the reader, we wish to make it plain that the meaning which we have ascribed to the verse in question is not an innovation. It is the interpretation which the companions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) put on it and they

acted accordingly. This view is borne out by the following incident:

Hassan says, 'A captive was brought before Hajjaj, who said to Abdullah, son of Caliph Umar^(ra) who happened to be there, 'Get up and cut off the head of this prisoner.' Abdullah answered, 'We have not been commanded to do so; for God says that when prisoners are taken in war they are to be released either as an act of favour or for ransom. There is no injunction to put them to death.' (*Kitab Al-Khiraj*, by Qadi Abu Yusuf, p.121)

Similarly, Ata bin Abi Ribah is reported to have said: 'The prisoners of war cannot be put to death; the commandment concerning them is that they should be released either as an act of grace or in return for reasonable ransom.' (*Fath Al-Baree*, Vol. VI, p.106).

The plain verse of the Qur'an referred to above coupled with the clear explanations quoted above leaves no doubt as to the

fact that Islam does not allow the slaying of the prisoners of war, and certainly those who ascribe this teaching to Islam are grievously mistaken.

If it be asked why some of the Muslim theologians have declared the slaying of the prisoners of war to be lawful when Islam does not allow it, the answer is that this has been due to a misunderstanding. There are certain instances in history when the Holy Prophet^(sa) ordered certain prisoners of war to be put to death. But those who have inferred the justifiability of slaying prisoners of war from these instances have ignored the fact that the prisoners who were slain, were slain not because they were prisoners of war but because they had been guilty of certain crimes punishable with death. It is evident that if a prisoner is guilty of an offence which calls for capital punishment, the fact of his being a prisoner cannot exempt him from that punishment. If a free man can be punished with death for the offence punishable with

death, why cannot a prisoner be so punished?

As may be seen from an inquiry into each individual case, every prisoner who was put to death by the order of the Holy Prophet^(sa) was put to death not because he was a member of a hostile army, or a fighting nation, but because he had committed an offence the punishment of which was death. However some of our theologians, merely seeing that the persons slain were prisoners of war, concluded that it was justifiable to slay a prisoner of war. But as pointed out above this conclusion is utterly erroneous and unwarranted according to the plain teachings of Islam and the practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa).

Such, in short, is the outline of the Islamic teaching with regard to the prisoners of war. Now, every sensible man can see how extremely fair this teaching is which God vouchsafed to the world through the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa). Even the most advanced and enlightened nations

of the present day have not been able to give to the world a better law than this. It is a law which, while calculated to put a check upon the undue prolongation of war and the aggression of one nation against another, has been tempered with mercy and kindness in a most remarkable way. The truth is that in the law of Islam relating to war prisoners, the element of clemency and benevolence has been made to outweigh even that of self-protection and defence. Certainly, no nation on earth has prescribed such a beneficent treatment towards its enemies.

Female prisoners of war

A female prisoner of war has the same avenues open to her to effect her release, namely, be freed for ransom, be freed in an exchange of prisoners of war, be freed at the termination of hostilities, or make use of the *Mukatabat* provision already discussed in detail, or just be freed as an act of grace by the captors.

If, however, a female prisoner of war does not avail of any of the

above modes of release to make it possible for her to return home, it is obvious that she feels unsafe in going back to her nation and chooses to stay with the Muslims. In that case, she will not be allowed to stay in this society without getting married. This is to safeguard her morals as well as the morals of the society.

In the Muslim society, everyone is expected to get married. There is no room for bachelors or spinsters so that the chastity and moral well being of the society is safeguarded.

Conclusion

To sum up, the teachings of Islam about slavery fall under two main heads:

Firstly, the teachings which relate to that class of people who had already been fettered in the shackles of slavery, and whose manners and habits had consequently become degraded in the extreme. They were leading servile lives and had wholly lost that spirit of freedom which enabled a man to lead an

independent life in this world. The programme adopted by Islam with regard to these people was that they should first be uplifted morally and socially, and as their condition improved, they should be set at liberty; and Islam so arranged that when these slaves were liberated, their liberty was true and real and not merely nominal and spectacular. This programme was carried into effect under State supervision so that there could be no laxity or negligence in this respect.

Secondly, those fundamental teachings which Islam gave with regard to slavery as such. According to these teachings the enslavement of any free man or woman was strictly forbidden. It is true that in certain cases the prisoners of war were deprived of their liberty, but that was only a retaliatory and a temporary step, and when we go into details of this system, we find that it was not slavery in the true sense of the term but was really imprisonment, and even this practice is not allowed by Islam in the present times, for now the

system of state prisons has been introduced and the opponents of Islam no longer make slaves of Muslim captives, nor distribute them among their individuals but keep them as State prisoners. It would, therefore, be unlawful for the Muslims as well to commit their prisoners to individual custody and thus give their action a semblance of slavery.

I must conclude my article with the extremely beautiful and most beloved words of the Holy Prophet^(sa), the last words spoken by him in this world of matter. Ali^(ra) son of Abu Talib and Anas^(ra) son of Malik, both eminent companions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and Ummi Salma^(ra), wife of the Holy Prophet^(sa), report as follows:

‘The last words that the Holy Prophet^(sa) was heard to say, when he was in the agony of death, and the soul was fluttering to leave his mortal frame, were, ‘Stick fast to the prescribed Prayers and to my injunctions with regard to slaves’. (*Ibn Majah*)

When the Holy Prophet^(sa) spoke the above words, there were before him his devoted wives who had been the companions during his life and who had remained utterly faithful to him in times of privation and hardship. There also were his beloved daughter and her children and others that were near and dear to him. There, too, were the faithful

Muhajirin, the refugees from Makkah, in whose devoted companionship he had passed the troubled days of his life. The loyal *Ansar*, the helpers of Madinah, who watered the plant of Islam with their blood, were also near him. And that was a time after which the Holy Prophet^(sa) was to have no other earthly opportunity of making any communication to his followers, and he knew full well that the words of advice uttered by him on that occasion would carry the greatest weight with his relations, friends and followers.

What was that to which his thought turned? It was to the

downtrodden slave that his thought was directed to in the last moments of his life and that thought made him forget all other earthly connections. Ah! What a friend, what a benefactor of slaves that God gave to the world, but alas, the world knew him not!

Hadhrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad is the author of many articles in defence of Islam. His 'Seerat Khatamal Anbiyya' ranks as the best biography on the Prophet of Islam^(sa).

REFERENCES

1. Chambers Encyclopaedia, under Slavery.
2. Encyclopedia Britannica, under Slavery
3. Paul, VI, S; Peter, II., 18. In connection with these references it should be noted that modern editions of the *New Testament* use the word 'servant' instead of 'slave', but the context clearly shows that it is the slaves that are really meant in the passages in question.
4. *Rig Veda I.* 126/1 to 3; *Mahabharat, Sabha Prab Adhiyai* 149; *Manu* 8/415 and *Iharat Varash ka Ithas vol. II*, p. 51.
5. *Zurqani vol. I*, pages 266-70, and *Tarikh Kamil*. Chapter on the persecution of Muslims.
6. Muir, Prisoners taken at Badr.

Advertise your business in

The Review of Religions

and see sales scale to new heights. Existing adverts can be placed and sponsorship on regular features is available in this longest running worldwide Muslim monthly magazine. Rates available on request from the

Manager at:

The Review of Religions

16 Gressenhall Road

London SW18 5QL

Religion is Peace Symposium

On April 25th the Ahmadiyya community hosted a Peace Symposium at Baitul Futuh Mosque in London, where speakers from a number of different faiths spoke to a large audience about the subject of peace within their own religion. We produce below, speeches from religious representatives from the Buddhist and Jewish faiths with the kind permission of the two speakers.

A DHARMA TALK ON BUDDHISM'S EMPHASIS ON PEACE

by *Phrakru Sarnu Lom*

Despite the fact that we can find happiness with the aid of science and hi tech that provides us with physical comfort and efficiency, there has still not been the possibility of everyone achieving a true sense of peace in human world. On the other hand, if we don't use hi tech carefully, it regulates not only our modes of action alone but it also rules over our modes of thought and feeling. As a result we can be grown up mechanical not only in hand but also in head and in heart and we may neglect inner peace altogether. The plain truth is that our peace and happiness depends on our mind, which is within us not on materials, which are outside us. Therefore, from time immemorial, the only possible way for mankind, for all of us to have both temporary and

ultimately peaceful happiness is only through the training of the mind. According to this, Buddhism and other religions of the world have an important part to play.

Ever since the 5th Century BC the Buddha who discovered Buddhism has been the Light of Asia. His teaching gives light and radiance over the region from Kabul Valley in the west to Japan and Thailand in the Far East, from Java in the south to Siberia in the North. Today His teaching attracts many people around the world. For this reason in the year 2000 the United Nations realised that the Buddha is the true spiritual Teacher of peace. Therefore, the UNO reserves one day of each year to pay heartfelt tribute to the Buddha whom millions of people around the world look upon as their guide.

Throughout his ministry from his First Sermon and other discourses

the Buddha urged both monks and family people to tread and follow the Middle Way. The cardinal feature of his teaching is the emphasis on respect for the religions of others and tolerance of all people, regardless of race, culture and nationalities. His teaching is above all a religion of peace.

In the Third Century BCE, the Buddhist emperor, Asoka, carved in the rock, 'One should not honour only one's own religion... but one should honour religions of others. In so doing one helps one's religion to grow and also renders service to the religions of others'.

The Buddha did not set out to convert people to any belief system or dogma. His mission was to show people the way to liberation and peace from violence and suffering. To this end he always taught the system of truly ethical conduct of daily living, which he advised and recommended to all people.

Before his sermons, whether a short one or a long one, he says:

NATTI SANTI PARAM
SUKHAM,

*The highest bliss and happiness
is the peace of mind.*

LOKA MISAM SANTI
PEKKHO PROOHAYA

*All must cultivate the element of
peace.*

How can we develop the peace of mind? The essential answer is to follow the religious principles. The Buddha's teaching shows both democracy and science, which means the two gods for modern people. But one needs to study and practise it correctly in accordance with the Middle Way and with individual status and maturity. On the whole the Teaching of the Buddha bases on Truth and correct Reason. He strongly stated, NATTI DOSA SAMO AGGI..... These 'Greed, Hatred, Delusion' are real Fires. These fires cause misunderstanding and estrangement between two groups of people, the result of which always brings about all kinds of grief, sorrow and suffering to mankind.

The present circumstances reveal not only a sickening and serious imbalance of compassion and love, but they also testify, give evidence, as witness to this truth. Please look around and see what happens not according to what we like or do not like but look at the fact without distortion. We find and see trouble

and violence almost everywhere.

Therefore we should not allow ourselves to be burnt by the fires of hate, greed and delusion. If we let them occupy our minds and hearts we will find no peace. Buddhism does not recommend the use of force, which is conducive to killing. Whatever is evil, Buddhism does not support it at all.

The Buddha pointed out quite clearly that the most important element of peace, whether in ourselves, in our families and in our society at large, is true love, real compassion, tolerance and charity. May I suggest that all of us who live here in the multiple-culture should cultivate true love, compassion and tolerance or plant them in our minds and hearts. Only through this sole way can we and the world achieve peace, which is the long wished for and dreamed of. And only through this practice can man justifiably be called civilised.



About the Author – *Phrakru Sarnu Lom*

The Venerable Lom is one of the chief Thai Monks teaching Buddhism at the Buddhapadipa Temple in Wimbledon, London. He is also the Secretary to the Temple and a member of the interfaith groups for Wimbledon, Merton, Kingston and Wandsworth.

In short the Buddha advises us:

*Not to commit any evil
But to cultivate love and
compassion
And to purify the minds
This is the steppingstone to peace.*

May all the accumulated merit, which all of us have made today be conducive to the progress of peace.

A JEWISH VIEW ON PEACE

by Rabbi Danny Rich

I am honoured to be able to contribute a Jewish view to the symposium: 'Religion is Peace'. I shall cover war and peace, for a major aspect of the Jewish understanding of peace is the absence of war.

The Hebrew word most often rendered as 'peace' in English is 'shalom' which enters Hebrew vocabulary in the first book of the Hebrew Bible, Genesis.

Its verbal origin means 'to be whole, to be complete, to be sound', and is used in the Hebrew tradition in the senses of Divine kindness and mercy, of alliance between friends and allies, of an individual who is physically, mentally and morally 'at one', and of the absence of war and marauding.

The Hebrew prophets are abundantly clear that the whole purpose of Jewish and human life is the eradication of war and the fulfilment of a 'Messianic' peace. Thus the words of the 8th Century BCE *Isaiah* (2:2-4) are engraved in the Great Hall of the United Nations building in New York:

'In days to come the mountain of God's house shall be established as the highest mountain, towering above the hills, and all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall go and say 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal One to the house of the God of Jacob, so that we may learn God's ways, and walk in God's paths'. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Eternal God from Jerusalem. And God shall judge between the nations and decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'

War, that is the absence of peace, is in Jewish tradition at best a necessary evil, and thus Jewish tradition neither glorifies war nor extols the warmongers. Jewish heroes are rarely warriors. King David was refused the privilege of building the Temple because he had engaged in warfare (*I Chronicles* 22:8) and the Babylonian Talmud (*Megillah* 10b) depicts, at the very moment of Hebrew liberation from Egyptian slavery, God rebuking the

angels for bursting into song while the Reed Sea covered the Egyptian pursuers: *'My creatures are drowning in the sea and you would sing before me.'*

In spite of the Jewish horror of war, Judaism does not adopt a pacifist attitude. Whilst everything possible should be done to prevent war, defence (perhaps including a pre-emptive strike) is not only permitted but may be obligatory. The Talmud declares starkly (*Sanhedrin* 72a) *'If a person intends to kill you, be the first to kill your enemy.'* Killing the one who is about to kill you is not a matter to be undertaken without regard for the innocent and neither is excessive violence sanctioned. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 74a) goes on to say:

'It has been taught by Rabbi Jonathan ben Saul: If one was pursuing his fellow to slay him and the pursued could have saved himself by maiming a limb of the pursuer but instead killed his pursuer, the pursued is subject to execution on that count'.

From these texts emerged the 'just war' theory. For Judaism a 'just war' requires moral justification to

begin the war and moral means in fighting the war. Self defence or defence of an innocent bystander is such a justification, but Judaism requires that in an offensive or pre-emptive war the executive (the King in ancient Israel) must gain the approval of the Sanhedrin.

Judaism mandates that a declaration of war is preceded by a clear offer of peaceful resolution, giving the enemy the right to surrender and non-combatants the opportunity to flee. Whilst military targets are fair game, Jewish teaching protects the environment (from the admonition in Deut 20: 19 – 20: not to destroy fruit bearing trees), a principle that Moses Maimonides (circa 1135 – 1204) expanded thus:

'Not only one who cuts down fruit-bearing trees but also one who smashes household goods, tears clothes, demolishes a building, stops up a spring, or wastes food in a destructive way violates the command: 'You must not destroy.'"
(*Mishneh Torah, 'Laws concerning Kings and Wars' 8-10*)

Thus Jewish teaching permits war if the war is against an enemy who

threatens you or other innocent persons. The war must be declared by a balance of the executive and the legislature, following a clear offer of peace and time for the innocent to flee. The war must then be conducted conscious of the following responsibilities: to protect the environment and minimise damage to persons, property and natural resources, to resist glorification and remain aware of the tragedy and necessary evil of war, and to pursue and promote avenues for peace wherever practicable.

The object of the war is, ironically, the advent of real universal peace as predicted by the 8th Century Hebrew Prophet *Micah* (4:4) when 'everyone shall sit under their vine and under their fig-tree and none shall make them afraid.'

It is to that peace to which I shall now return. Peace and justice were the highest of rabbinic values. Rabban Simeon bar Gamaliel declared (Avot 1:18) 'By three things the world is preserved: by truth, by judgement and by peace'. These aspects are three parts of the same for when justice is done, the truth is vindicated and peace prevails.

The hope for peace is a part of every Jewish statutory time of prayer, and the Talmud (Berachot 64a) reminds scholars that their role is to increase peace in the world. Passivity was not good enough. Following Psalm 34:15 '*Seek peace and pursue it*', the Midrash (Numbers Rabbah, Hukat 19:27) declared: '*The Torah does not command you to run after or pursue other commandments, but only to fulfil them on the appropriate occasion. But peace you must seek in your own place and pursue it even to another place as well*'.

Peace does not just happen. As my teacher, Rabbi John Rayner wrote: '

'It is not enough to pray for peace; it is not enough to talk of peace. We have to work for it: to challenge those who foster conflict and refute their propaganda; to ascertain and make known the truth, both when it confirms and when it runs counter to conventional views; to denounce injustice when it is committed against us but also when it is committed against others; to defend human rights, not only our own but also theirs; to insist that peace requires sacrifice – of pride, or



About the Author – *Rabbi Danny Rich*

Rabbi Danny Rich JP BA hons began his Rabbinic studies at Leo Bæck College in London. He served as an assistant to Rabbi Julia Neurberger at the South London Liberal Synagogue. He became a fulltime Rabbi at Kingston in 1988. Danny was ordained in 1989, submitting a thesis on ‘The Teachings of Torah to non-Jews’. He serves as a Director of the Youth Department of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and for 15 years as Director of the Kadimah Summer Camp. Danny serves as a Jewish chaplain to HM Prisons, Kingston Hospital and also the Surrey Oaklands NHS Trust. He is the founding chairman of the Ditton Branch of the Council of Christian and Jews and the first Chair of the recently formed Kingston Inter-Faith Forum.

wealth, or territory; to practice and promote the way of moderation, compromise and reconciliation; and to build bridges of respect and understanding, trust and friendship, across the chasms that divide humanity’.

That, is Peace the Jewish way.

Let me conclude with two midrashim which takes us back to the early chapters of Genesis and the legend of the creation. The Rabbis asked: ‘Why was only one man and one woman made at creation? So that in future no person could say to another: ‘My ancestry is better than yours.’

Elsewhere we read that humanity was created *btselem elohim: in the image of God*. This should teach us that like us every other human being has a spark of *btselem elohim*. How could the other be an enemy if one could

look in their eyes and see the same spark of *btselem elohim*.

My Journey into the Ahmadiyya Community

By Dara Fulton, USA

In February 2002, I went to school on a winter day and attended my English poetry class at 10am. I had recently met a young lady, Bushra Bajwa, in my class. We began talking about the class, the assignments that our professor gave to us, and at an instance I became interested in getting to know her better. We both attended Queensborough Community college. It did not take long to begin talking more to a point where one day we met up after our classes, and walked to the bus stop. As our conversation increased, I realised we had a lot in common. I asked about her Pakistani culture and the scarf she was wearing on her head. When she told me she was Muslim, I was intrigued and wanted to know more about it.

I have had Muslim friends before: they were sisters in my fourth grade class. They too wore a scarf on their head, long skirts, and

long shirts. I did not understand the significance of the scarf, the clothing, or the religion. At that time I did not ask, but was always curious to know. As I asked my new friend about the Muslim faith, she shared some things about the purpose of the scarf, her culture, and attending their holy temple, the mosque. She also told me about a Tabligh meeting, which is a meeting where non-Muslims are invited to attend, to discuss and ask any questions or express concerns about Islam, and the Ahmadiyya community. Ahmadiyyat is one of the many sects in Islam that promotes peace, and love for all humanity.

There was a Tabligh meeting the following Sunday; she invited me to attend and I did. I went to the Queensborough Jama'at where I met a lot of sisters, many were American as well as Pakistani sisters. I was happy to see the diversity there, because I

am an African American woman, and was not sure if I was going to be the only American there. I met up with my friend and she introduced me to a few others. As the meeting began, each sister expressed her love for Islam, and her personal experiences in how she converted to Islam. Some of them were born in the religion, but more were converted to Islam. I also met a woman who, like me, was a non-Muslim and had an interest in Islam.

I was impressed and moved by the love each sister expressed over Islam, and the way they welcomed me into the meeting. I participated in the discussion where I mentioned my friend, and my curiosity in learning more about Islam. After the meeting was over, I hugged everyone and thanked them all for allowing me to attend their meeting. I felt so moved by them that I knew I had to keep in touch with all of the sisters. By June I was invited to attend Jalsa Salana: a gathering of sisters and non-Muslims where there are prayer services, discussions, and

food served. It is held every year in Maryland where the main Ahmadi Mosque is located. There I got a chance to meet my friends and got to know them a little better.

From there, I received pamphlets and books on Islam from the sisters. My interest grew, and my relationships with the sisters got closer. I started to feel I wanted to become an Ahmadi Muslim, but was not sure if I was ready. I was aware of the rules of Islam and the principles that are enforced. Furthermore, I was also aware that it was a year after the September 11th attack of 2001; and Muslims were faced with many challenges in their communities. People prejudiced against Islam and ignorant of its real meaning of peace and love were attacking many. Islam does not tolerate terrorism or violence. Unfortunately, the media has continuously showed the attacks on America and across the world. It has given Muslims a bad image. My fear became dominant; I was afraid of not being accepted, maybe even attacked. I

I FEEL PROUD TO BE AN AHMADI MUSLIM BECAUSE OF WHAT AHMADIYYA STANDS FOR: LOVE FOR ALL, HATRED FOR NONE. I AM HAPPY TO BE PART OF A COMMUNITY AND A RELIGION THAT PREACHES LOVE, PEACE, AND RESPECT FOR HUMANITY.

had concerns my family would not accept my new-found religion.

One year later my fears were suddenly gone. I had a dream that I was at a banquet with all the sisters including Bushra. Everyone was talking, laughing, and having a good time. They looked so happy. I was sitting with my legs crossed on a mat when suddenly I got up and went to my friend. I gently pulled her by the arm and said, 'I have something to tell you!' She looked at me and asked, 'What?' I said 'I'm ready to become an Ahmadi Muslim.' Her face lit up in excitement, grabbed me and said 'Oh my God! Come, we have to go tell everyone now!' I do not know what happened next, everything drifted away.

When I woke up, I felt so uplifted as if everything was going to be all right.

From June 2002 to November 2003, things in my life were not well and I began to feel depressed. Money became scarce, I had to stop school due to financial difficulty, and I lost my job. But after I had that dream, I felt all that was going to change. I first told my friend of my dream, and then contacted the other sisters. Then I had a meeting with my mother and brother. During the middle of having dinner, I came out and said 'I'm going to become an Ahmadi Muslim.' My mother was surprised; she thought the decision was sudden. I told her of my dream, and she knew then that was God's way of saying it

was time for me to convert. I expressed the interest to my dad and he too was happy over my decision.

I attended Juma prayers at the Queensborough Jama'at on Friday, November 21, 2003 and informed some of the sisters and the Missionary's wife of my decision of converting to Islam. I felt converting during the month of Ramadan was special, because it is the holiest time of the year for Muslims. As I signed my name, I felt so proud of myself because I felt I was doing what Allah wanted me to do.

I feel proud to be an Ahmadi Muslim because of what Ahmadiyya stands for: *Love for All, Hatred for None*. I am happy to be part of a community and a religion that preaches love, peace, and respect for humanity. I met some really nice sisters and hope to meet more in the future. My goal is to learn about Islam to the fullest extent, and participate in as many events, charities, or community services that are offered in the Ahmadiyya Community. Thank you to

everyone who welcomed me into the Ahmadiyya community, into their personal lives, and may Allah bless all of you. Amin.

Noah's Ark – Another Viewpoint

By Latif Qureshi

In a recent television programme a well known presenter discussed the Bible story of Noah's Ark. The presenter travelled to the Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey where the ancient Ark was supposed to have landed after the floods subsided. The discussion that followed the programme included some archaeologists and scientists. They discussed the story of the deluge and the building of a giant boat that saved Noah^(as), his family and the pairs of animals of all kinds from drowning and ultimate destruction. They doubted the occurrence of such a flood that could engulf the entire earth. Some even doubted the existence of a person named Noah and whether he could build a boat of the size of Titanic just with planks of wood.

By a strange coincidence, despite their differences, that three major religions of the world - Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe in

the existence of a prophet of God who was called Noah^(as). They all believe that he built an Ark. They all believe in an enormous flood that played havoc but that Noah^(as) and his companions escaped in their Ark.

The prophet Noah^(as) is mentioned in at least eight chapters of the Muslim scripture – the Qur'an¹. One chapter is even named 'Noah'. The story in the Qur'an is a simple one. It tells us that God chose a man called Noah to convey His message to the people. The message was basically to stop worshipping idols and return to the One True God and follow the revealed guidance. Some of his people who were considered to be rather lowly accepted his message whereas all the others rejected it. Those who rejected the message were warned about the dire consequences of rejection. A destructive flood was predicted that would destroy the non-

believers. Those who believed in the message of Noah^(as) were promised safety. They were commanded to build an Ark. They were mocked by their fellow men while they were busy building the Ark. Eventually the appointed time did come and the prediction of the prophet Noah^(as) was proved to be correct. He, his family and believers along with their needed animal escaped the destruction that befell all others.

The Holy Qur'an states:

And We sent Noah to his people, and he said, 'Truly I am a plain Warner to you that you worship none but Allah. Indeed I fear for you the punishment of a grievous day.' The chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, replied, 'We see in thee nothing but a man like ourselves, and we see that none have followed thee but those who, to all outward appearance, are the meanest of us. And we do not see in you any superiority over us; nay, we believe you to be liars. (Ch.11:Vs.26-28)

Till, when Our command came and the fountains of the earth gushed forth, We said, 'Embark therein two of every kind, male and female, and thy family, except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and those who believe.' And there did not believe and live with him except a few. And he said, 'Embark therein. In the name of Allah be its course and its mooring. My Lord is assuredly Most Forgiving, Merciful.' And it moved along with them on waves like mountains. And Noah cried unto his son, while he was keeping apart, 'O my son, embark with us and be not with the disbelievers.' He replied, 'I shall soon betake myself to a mountain which will shelter me from the water.' He said, 'There is no shelter for anyone this day, from the decree of Allah, excepting those to whom He shows mercy.' And the wave came in between the two; so he was among the drowned. And it was said, 'O earth,

swallow thy water, and O sky, cease raining.’ And the water was made to subside and the matter was ended. And the Ark came to rest on al-Judi. And it was said, ‘Cursed be the wrongdoing people.’

(Ch.11: Vs.41-45)

Unlike the Holy Bible, the Holy Qur'an does not specify that the male and female of all species were accommodated in the Ark nor does it make any exaggerated claim about the size of the Ark. The Holy Qur'an, nevertheless, points to the lesson that mankind must learn from this deluge that those who do not believe in the message of a Warner, have to face the consequence of their disbelief and the punishment about which they had been warned soon overtakes them. Nothing is left of them. So although others may doubt that such prophets ever existed, history loses all trace of such people to whom they were sent.

Although this may seem a story and every one has a right to question its truth, there is one

thing about it that makes it seem genuine. This story is repeated time and again. Every time when a people or nation becomes corrupted a man is appointed by God to guide them into the right path.

But initially, very few people accept the message delivered by him. Majority of those who do accept him are usually young, poor and lowly. His sincerity and sanity is always questioned. He and his followers are always tortured and ridiculed. His efforts are looked upon with suspicion. The powerful men of the land oppose him with all their might. Yet these appointed messengers are always successful. Their message slowly gains wide acceptance and those opposed to them are eventually overcome and destroyed.

After Noah^(as) similar events occurred at the time of Abraham^(as). Moses^(as), Jesus Christ^(as) and the Prophet Muhammad^(sa) of Islam.

This story has a special lesson for

our age because a similar person appeared less than a hundred years ago in the spirit of all the prophets of God². He was a devout follower of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) and also claimed to be a prophet of God. He said that he was the Promised Messiah^(as) and the reformer awaited by all the major religions of the world. He invited the whole mankind to the ways of the God. True to the old tradition only a few people – young, poor and lowly accepted his message initially. He was however, given the glad tidings that his message would reach and be accepted in the far corners of the earth.

He appeared as a witness of the bounty of God on the human race because the Mighty God revealed Himself to mankind through repeated revelations to him.

He became a bearer of glad tidings for the human race because those who accepted his message were promised ultimate success.

He was also a warner because he

warned the human race about dire calamities that awaited them if they rejected him.

He also built an Ark. This time it was in the shape of a book and he named it 'Noah's Ark'³. This book contains the teachings of the Qur'an by following which all the human race can achieve salvation. At the time of the writing of this book, the Indian subcontinent was about to descent in the grip of a severe pestilence in the form of a plague epidemic. This epidemic played havoc in India and claimed more than 10 million lives. However, there was no trace of the plague when the prophecy of a severe pestilence was recorded in the Promised Messiah's^(as) *Braheen Ahmadiyya*. He proclaimed that any person within his four walls and following the teachings in his book would not die from plague. It appeared that following these teachings was a more effective protection against the plague epidemic compared to the inoculation offered by the British Indian government of the time. People in large number

joined his community during the time of the epidemic and escaped death. He also predicted many other important events including the world wars and the fall of the Russian empire.

His name was Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) and like all other prophets of God, he was a human being. He, finally at an age of 73 years, passed away in 1908 leaving behind a thriving community that carries on his mission of saving the mankind to this day.

His message has already reached the far corners of earth and circulates round the globe twenty-four hours a day through a worldwide television network.

He is the Noah of our age. We do not need to look for his Ark at the heights of Mount Ararat. We also do not need the help of any archaeologists or scientist to discover him. We only need a guiding vision and a clear conscience to recognise him.

Bibliography:

- ‘The Holy Qur’an’: Chapters:3 verse 36, 7 verses 60-65, 10:72-74, 11:26-50, 23:24-30, 26:106-123, 54:10-16 and 71:2-29.
- *Ahmad, The Guided One:* by Iain Adamson.
- *Kishtie Nuh* (Urdu) by Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam.

Letters to the Editor

Sir

For the past eight months, I have been receiving your The Review of Religions and as a result have become quite interested in the teachings of Islam and its inherent qualities.

I would be grateful if you could send me information about the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in the Republic of Ireland as I would like to find out more about Islam in its true form. Also I would like information on how I may obtain a copy of the Holy Qur'an for study.

Christopher Pender
Republic of Ireland

Sir

I want to congratulate Abdul Kudus Alimi for 'Journey to Truth: Hinduism' (The Review of Religions, January 2004). But I request him to be aware of the modern translators of the Hindu Scriptures. Please refer to 'whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice' (page 54) quoted from Bhagavad Gita, IV:7. The actual Sanskrit word in the Bhagavad Gita is 'yada yada' which

only means 'whenever' and never 'wherever'. The old and faithful Hindu translators have translated the words yada yada as whenever as can be seen from a 40 year old translation where:

'Arjuna, whenever there is decline of righteousness, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I body Myself forth'

(The Bhagavad Gita IV:7)

Impressed by the Qur'anic teachings that God has raised Prophets amongst all nations, modern Hindu translators of their Scriptures have added the word 'wherever' along with 'whenever' to read incorrectly: whenever and wherever there is decline of righteousness, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I body Myself forth.

Mr Alimi should be aware of these facts; however, if my comments are incorrect, one of your readers could perhaps correct me.

S M Shahab Ahmad,
Canada.

Subscription

The Review of Religions

If you would like to order a copy of any issue published in 2003, please send £1.50 (or equivalent) providing us with your full name and address. Delivery will be on a first come, first served basis, and in the absence of a copy being available your money will be returned

-
- Are you a subscriber to *The Review of Religions*?
 - Have you renewed your subscription for the next year?

Why not sponsor a reader to *The Review of Religions* by subscribing for him/her and we will send the first edition on your behalf with your compliments

We hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of the magazine. *The Review of Religions* will continue to provide discussion on a wide range of subjects and welcomes any comments or suggestions from its readers.

To ensure that you regularly receive this monthly publication, please fill in your details below and we will put you on our mailing list.

The cost of one year's subscription is £15 Sterling or US \$30 for overseas readers (Please do not send cash). **Payments by US residents should be by check payable to "AMP" (US dollars 30) and sent direct to 'The Review of Religions', Baitul Zafar, 86-71 PALO ALTO ST, HOLLISWOOD, NY 11423-1203 (USA).** All other subscription payments should be made payable to the London Mosque and sent to the address below:

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



Please tick in box if
you wish to receive
The Review of Religions
2003 CD

Please put me on the mailing list for the Review of Religions for 1 year. I enclose subscription payment of £15.00 or US \$30.00 (please see instructions above residents). OR if you wish to receive a CD of all the articles published in 2003, please tick the white box above and enclose payment of £5.00, please also add an appropriate sum for postage.

Name: _____

Address: _____
