

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Editorial

The issue of suffering and poverty often comes up in reference to God in conversation. Extremes of wealth meet face to face with extremes of religion. There are some who no longer see a need for worship because they feel that they are fully in control of their own destiny, while others who feel they no longer have any hope are adopting so-called fundamentalism and violence in the name of religion.

The former approach is borne out of a lack of accountability and of a lack of understanding of the balance of the Universe. They may be healthy and wealthy today, but things can change very fast, and a life can be lost in an instance. Sometimes these people lose compassion for those less well off than themselves.

The latter use religion as a tool with which to launch their self-

centred attempts to forcibly reclaim power and wealth for themselves, whereas the religious angle they claim to uphold actually goes against the fundamentals of the teachings they claim to represent. In both cases, the parties depict a lack of personal and real contact with God. The feature article this month demonstrates that suffering is actually a means to reformation, and not a form of cruelty. Those that have faced no hardship and made no sacrifices should worry about the spiritual progress they have made.

Another article describes the nature of God based on the personal contact and experience of the Promised Messiah^(as). It is this personal contact that shows that we will not take our current wealth and health, good or bad, with us in the next life. Therefore whether we are rich or poor, healthy or ill, it is what we do with our circumstances that will benefit or harm us in the end.

Fazal Ahmad

The Issue of Evil and Suffering – The Islamic Perspective

This article, based on a speech delivered at an earlier Ahmadiyya Annual Convention in Toronto, Canada, covers the reason behind suffering among innocent people, and the potential benefits that man can derive from such circumstances.

by Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad Ayaz OBE - UK

The world today presents a devastating scenario surmounted by evil and precipitated with suffering and pain. Pain and suffering affect so many people, including the innocent, the God-fearing, small children and the young and old alike, each and every day. Even I, you or the person sitting next to you may be going through a period of immense suffering – whether physical, mental or emotional.

Suffering affects us all in one way or another and there is no escape from it. But why? Why should we and others suffer? Why would the One God, who

has created us out of His love and in His image let us suffer? Why did He not create a world without evil?

At first sight it is extremely difficult to comprehend or justify suffering. It may be credible to justify suffering that is truly self-inflicted or suffering as a result of punishment. But why should the innocent, young children or the God-loving suffer?

I shall attempt to help you to understand the Islamic perspective of evil and suffering.

Islam brings light and reason to

suffering and in essence one can then actually realise that '*suffering is not always suffering*'.

Buddhism defines suffering (*dukkha*) as resulting from:

1. Torment e.g. old age, sickness and death;
2. Absence of pleasure;
3. The necessity of giving up what one loves and what one has become attached to, because of the inescapable transitory quality of all phenomena.

It further claims that man's selfish desire is the cause of suffering i.e. his craving for thirst (*tanha*). It proposes an eight-fold path to attain liberation (*nirvana*).

Hinduism believes that all suffering is self-inflicted and justifies it with the concept of Reincarnation – lower or higher life forms based upon the conduct in the previous life.

Islam rejects this concept because with His infinite powers of creation and evolvment, God does not need to recycle life and so evolves it continuously to higher levels.

The Buddhist definition is valid but the affliction must be discussed at the universal as well as human level. The question of the presence of evil is more fundamental and the rational approach presented by Islam is the best.

We live in a world of cause and effect and if we observe keenly we find that the entire universe is bound together in this system. It is because of this unchangeable principle of cause and effect that man has been able to make advances in scientific knowledge. A cause may be primary or the effect of yet another cause linking into a continuous chain. If this process comes to an end, it must be obvious that the final cause must exist by itself; it must be

absolute. It is also obvious that a finite cause cannot be absolute for it will exclude some domain of process. It will not be the ending cause. Whichever cause or existence is absolute, all comprehensive and self-subsisting, must of necessity be infinite. The Holy Qur'an declares:

Thy Lord is the final cause of all causes.

(Ch.53: v.43)

He is Absolute and Infinite in all aspects, in each and every attribute. Therefore, to be Absolute, His Power of Creation must express itself at infinite levels in each and every species. Whatever level can be imagined, matter, non-matter, anti-matter, fertile, barren, expanding, contracting, life, death, consciousness, unconsciousness, man with no eyes, with one eye, no legs, no arm, ugly, attractive, dim, bright - all levels must exist.

The further away a level moves from the Absolute, the wider will be the gulf of relativity. It is this separation from the Absolute which implies privation and evil. The existence of the world in itself is not evil.

Evil according to Islam does not have a positive existence. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

Do you not see how your Lord lengthens the shadow? Indeed if He pleased He would have made it fixed, but We make the sun a guide thereof withdrawing it gradually.

(Ch.25: Vs.46-47)

A shadow is cast by the objects that obstruct the light of the sun. It lengthens as the object moves away from the sun and contracts as it moves closer to the sun, disappearing altogether when the object is directly under the sun. The parable describes evil as a shadow resulting from the absence of Divine Light. Evil is

not a positive existence in itself. We can imagine a source of light but we cannot imagine an object as a source of darkness. The only way an object becomes a source of darkness is by obstructing the light. Likewise, it is only the absence of goodness that constitutes evil.

In this light, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV (the 4th Successor to the Promised Messiah^(as)) explained suffering in his book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*:

God did not create suffering as an independent entity in its own right, but only as an indispensable counterpart of pleasure and comfort. The absence of happiness is suffering, which is like its shadow, just as darkness is the shadow cast by the absence of light. If there is life, there has to be death; both are situated at the extreme poles of the same plane, with innumerable

grades and shades in between. As we move from death we gradually move towards a state of life which is happiness. As we move away from life we move away with a sense of sorrow towards death.

This is the key to understanding the struggle for existence, which in turn leads to a constant improvement in the quality of life and helps it to achieve the ultimate goal of evolution. The principle of the survival of the fittest plays an integral role in this grand scheme of evolution. This phenomenon is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Allah says:

Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He has power over all things; it is He Who has created death and life that He might try you - which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty,

the Most Forgiving.
(Ch.67: Vs.2-3)

The profound philosophy of life and death, the innumerable shades in between and the role they play in shaping life and improving its quality are all covered in the above verse. It is the very scheme of things that God discloses here. We know that life is only a positive value, and death merely means its absence, and no sharp border exists separating one from the other.

It is a gradual process, the way life travels towards death and ebbs out; or from the other direction we can view death travelling towards life gaining strength, energy and consciousness as it moves on. This is the grand plan of creation, but why has God designed it so?

‘That He may try you, which of you is best in deeds’, is the answer provided by the Holy Qur’an.

It is the perpetual struggle between life and death that subjects the living to a constant state of trial, so that all who conduct themselves best survive and gain a higher status of existence. Herein lies the philosophy and the machination of evolution as described in these verses. It is this constant struggle between the forces of life and death which provide the thrust to the living to perpetually move away from death or towards it. It may result either in this improvement or deterioration in the quality of existence in the wide spectrum of evolutionary changes.

(pp. 180-182, *Revelation, Rationality Knowledge and Truth*)

Thus loss, decline and death have been the vital constituents of the motive force of evolution. The question of suffering at the human level which is either self-inflicted or caused by events outside one's control such as natural disasters or accidents also needs to be elaborated.

Islam believes that only God is Absolute. Therefore on the plane of relativity, which is the human plane, there cannot be either absolute determination or absolute free will. Man enjoys discretion only to the extent of his pre-determined freedom. Beyond this freedom man is at the mercy of events outside of his control. Thus the human suffering can either be self-inflicted or imposed on him by outside events such as natural disasters or freak accidents.

However, man cannot be credited or discredited, for certain, for the consequences of his actions. There can be

innumerable causes determining the resultant states and according to Islam no one has the right to judge except God. This earthly life according to Islam is *Darul Ibtala*, a world of test and trial and of earning, and the hereafter is *Darul Jaza*, the place of true reward both for the blissful state and that of deprivation. The Holy Qur'an says:

As for man, when his Lord tries him and honours him and bestows favours on him, he says 'My Lord has honoured me.' But when He tries him and straitens for him his means of subsistence, he says 'My Lord has disgraced me.'
(Ch.89: Vs.16-17)

The next verse says that this is not the case. Both situations are a test and a trial, as is the case with everything else in this world.

The states of pain and suffering

are an indicator, a reminder to make man aware that he needs to change direction, and take corrective action. It can thus turn out to be a blessing. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

And indeed We have sent Messengers to peoples before thee, then We afflicted them with poverty and adversity that they may become humble.

(Ch.6: v.43)

Again in Chapter 2 of the Holy Qur'an, Allah says:

We shall surely try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and of fruits of your labour and sometimes your dear children will die, then give glad tidings to the steadfast, who, when a misfortune overtakes them do not lose heart but affirm, we belong to God and to Him shall we return. It is these on whom are blessings

from their Lord and mercy and it is these who are rightly guided.

(Ch.2: Vs.156-158)

The Promised Messiah^(as) says:

This moral quality is called steadfastness or reconciliation to the divine will. From one aspect it might be called equity or justice. Throughout a person's life, God Almighty manifests thousands of matters in accord with the wishes of a person and bestows uncountable bounties upon him, so that it would be inequitable on his part that on such occasions when God calls upon him to submit to His will, he should turn away, not pleased with the will of God and should be critical, or lose faith or go astray.

(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, p.41)

To those who persevere in the face of trial, Allah has

promised:

Upon those who affirm, God is our Lord and turn away from false gods and are steadfast, that is to say, remain firm under trials and calamities, descend angels, reassuring them: fear not nor grieve, and be filled with happiness; and rejoice that you have inherited the joy that you have been promised. We are your friends in this life and the hereafter. You will find in the next life all that you desire, and you shall have there all that you ask for. That is how you will be entertained by a Forgiving and Merciful God. (Ch.41: Vs.31-33)

Now the question may well arise as to how one can find contentment and paradise in this world when one is perpetually burdened with afflictions and problems of one kind or another? First it should be known that they are really

blessings in disguise and that Allah clearly states in the Holy Qur'an that He causes them in order to test and build one's faith. They offer opportunities for one to demonstrate the depth of one's faith and calibre of one's character. Furthermore if one meets them with patience and fortitude, one gains the reward of Allah both here and in the hereafter. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

And We will surely try you until We distinguish those among you who strive for the cause of Allah and those who are steadfast. And we will make known the facts about you. (Ch.47: v.32)

Allah has made it absolutely clear in the Holy Qur'an that life's journey is not intended to be one of ease. He says:

And we created man to face hardships. (Ch.90: v.5)

One should never moan or

despair over trials and tribulations as this is an indication of weakness and ingratitude to Allah. The Holy Prophet^(sa) has said :

'For a Muslim, life is full of good, and nobody but a true believer finds himself in that position, for if he meets with success he is grateful to God and becomes the recipient of greater favours from Him. On the other hand, if he suffers pain and tribulation, he endures it with patience and thus again makes himself deserving of God's favours.'

The second Khalifah^(ra) has truly stated:

'Burdens are not always burdens.'

This truth is confirmed by a well-known American writer who has said that in every adversity there lies the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit.

That is to say one can find and gain some advantage from every adversity. He wrote:

'I am thankful for the adversities which have crossed my pathway, for they have taught me tolerance, sympathy, self-control, perseverance and some other virtues I might never have known.'

Charles Darwin – the famous natural scientist of the last century was a man who suffered from ill health but made use of it to his advantage. He said:

'If I had not been so great an invalid, I should not have done so much work as I have accomplished.'

The Holy Qur'an teaches that one should be patient in times of adversity when things seem to go wrong and against one's personal interests. One should not despair or become unduly frustrated. Only then can one

enjoy the sweetness of paradise in the midst of the storms of life. Misfortunes are inevitable. One must learn to bear and cope with them patiently and successfully. This is one of the important battles of life in which one must emerge victorious. One should not weaken under adversity but resolve to remain poised and strong in behaviour during the darkest night, just as one would during the sunniest day.

Normally one worries an unnecessary amount over adversities, set backs, failures and disappointments. By doing so one cannot enjoy peace of mind which is one of the blessings of paradise. Worrying is generally caused not so much by the problem itself, but by the wrong attitude one adopts towards it. Take two people with identical problems. One frets and fumes and becomes highly distracted. The other remains cool and calm. The problem was one and the same

but the opposite reactions of the two persons were caused by their different attitudes. Islam teaches that one should approach every adversity or problem with a patient attitude and if one does this then the state of one's mind remains stable and poised with the result that the heart remains strong and at rest in spite of disturbing influences. One should, therefore, endeavour to be patient and seek the good in everything. Allah has decreed that no one will escape hardships and misfortunes. One should expect them and when they come to make the best of them without complaints or grievances and with a positive attitude. Then one can begin to find paradise in this world no matter what circumstances one has to meet in life.

A sense of loss is a vital constituent of the motive for evolution that leads to higher consciousness, which is essential for deeper bliss and

happiness and eventually to a certain knowledge of the Divine. Variety and disparity, in other words inequality, play a meaningful role in advancing human society. Of course, as a consequence of such a universal system, an individual can sometimes be at the mercy of circumstances outside his control and thus remain at an unfair disadvantage. This is the aspect of suffering which is foremost in the mind of those who repeatedly ask - why the suffering?

Islam claims that an individual's loss will be more than compensated in the hereafter. There is a Hadith which states that whatever afflicts a true believer, even if it be the prick of a thorn, will be counted as a recompense for his sins.

Individual handicap is taken into consideration when determining a new level of life in the hereafter. Even in the hereafter infinite levels of the

blissful state continue to exist in Paradise. Hell, according to Islam, is also a place of purification. After purification, all human beings are destined to enter Paradise. In the light of the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, the Promised Messiah^(as) says:

‘This thought is inherently foolish that man should stay in hell forever, in the same way as God is Everlasting. After all, God also has an involvement in their errors because He created in them powers that were weak. Consequently the hell dwellers have a right to benefit from that weakness embedded in their nature by God.’

(Chashma Masihi, p.47)

How true and how wonderful is the declaration of the Holy Qur'an:

And My Mercy is All-Embracing. (Ch.7: v.157)

Compensating factors do exist in this very life. We know that the seat of both physical and psychological suffering is consciousness. However, the threshold of pain is different for different individuals. It is relative and the perspective changes when viewed from different angles. This is well illustrated by the well-known anecdote of the man who had lost one leg. He was somewhat relieved of his deep grief when he saw a man who had both legs missing.

Suffering is a great teacher, cultivating and culturing our conduct. It develops and refines sensibilities, teaches humility and in more than one way prepares us to be able to turn to God. It is said that if man felt pain in the tongue each time he spoke ill of others, the social evil of backbiting may disappear.

Man can misuse his freedom and inflict an unbearable

suffering on others. Although Allah has provided an in-built coping mechanism to sustain the pain, if the pain reaches beyond the bearable capacity of the individual, immediately a valve is triggered which switches off his consciousness and the man is no longer aware of his pain.

Another compensating factor is mentioned in a Hadith. The Holy Prophet^(sa) said that among those whose prayers receive acceptance are the afflicted. Suffering sustained as a result of love and devotion becomes a pleasure. To an onlooker, the loss of sleep and the inconveniences suffered by a mother tending to her child may appear as suffering, but the mother in fact derives pleasure from it.

This is why suffering has been regarded as a test of one's love and devotion, and the prophets have always invited their followers towards sacrifices

and suffering on the path of love and devotion to God. A Hadith talks of a martyr who was told by God that He would grant any wish the martyr made. The martyr asked God whether he could be sent back again and again so that he could give his life repeatedly in the cause of Allah. Allah replied that if He had not already decreed that the dead cannot return, He would have fulfilled his wish.

It is impossible to put in words the deep joy of unparalleled bliss one feels as a result of the deep love that Gracious God bestows on His true servants who persevere in the face of trial and tribulations and prove their love of God.

Addressing Allah, the second Khalifa^(ra) says in a couplet of his poem:

*'What I suffer at Your Hand
Is not a wound
But a remedy indeed
So continue to inflict the*

*wounds
Without yielding
And in this regard
Show no concern for me.'*

Suffering, according to Islam, can be the gateway to resurrection, to rebirth and to new creation. Suffering in all cases is a transitory state leading to lasting bliss, joy and happiness.

It is comparatively easy to see God in one's gains, successes and achievements and to be grateful to Him. It takes higher spiritual awareness to see God in one's losses, failures and occasions of frustration. He is equally there, if not more so, to recognise Him as the Forgiving God, and to be thankful to Him. It was perhaps in view of this opportunity of God-realisation, by resigning one's will to the Will of Allah, that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said:

'When Allah destines good for someone, He afflicts him.' (Sahih Bukhari)

Comparing steadfastness with the moral qualities related to the discarding of evil, the Promised Messiah^(as) says:

'To abstain from adultery is not difficult, not to commit murder is no great achievement and to avoid a false witness is no great thing; but to choose God over all other things and bear the miseries of the world for His sake with true love and eagerness; nay, but to create miseries of one's own choice is a supreme spiritual station that is not possible to reach by anyone except the righteous. It is the worship for the performance of which man has been commissioned.'

(*Haqeeqatul Wahi*, p.55)

Steadfastness no doubt wins the pleasure of Allah and deserves great spiritual reward, but what is its true definition?

The Promised Messiah^(as) says:

'The true and perfect grace that conveys a person to the spiritual world depends upon steadfastness which cannot be shaken by any trial. It means a strong relationship with the Divine, which a sword cannot cut asunder and fire cannot consume, nor can any other calamity damage it. The death of dear ones or separation from them should not interfere with it, nor should fear of dishonour affect it, nor should a painful death move the heart away from it in the least degree. This door is very narrow and this path is very hard. Alas, how difficult it is.'

(*The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, p.58)

Again on page 89 he says:

'The perfection of steadfastness is that when one is encircled by calamities and life and honour and one's good name are in peril in the

cause of Allah; and no means of comfort are available, so much so, that even visions and dreams and revelations are suspended by God as a trial and one is left helpless among terrible dangers; at such a time one should not lose heart nor retreat like a coward nor let one's faithfulness be put in doubt in the least. One should not let one's sincerity and perseverance be weakened. One should be pleased with one's disgrace; one should be reconciled to death; one should not wait for a friend to lend his support in order to keep oneself firm; nor seek glad tidings from God because of the severity of the trial. One should stand straight and firm despite one's helplessness and weakness and lack of comfort from any direction. Come what may, one should present oneself for sacrifice and should be completely

reconciled to divine decrees, and one should exhibit no restlessness nor utter any complaint, right till the end of the trial. This is the steadfastness which leads to God. This is that perfume, the fragrance of which still reaches us from the dust of messengers and prophets and faithful ones and martyrs.

This is also indicated in the supplication:

Guide us along the path of steadfastness, the path that attracts Thy bounties and favours, and by treading along that one which wins Thy pleasure.

(Ch.1: Vs.6-7)

(ibid).

The suffering, the trials, the tribulations through which Ahmadiyya Community has and is going through today may appear to be a glass of bitters, but indeed they are the fountain

from which the victory of Islam will spring and mankind will be encompassed in eternal light leaving no room for evil to exist. So let us bear it all with absolute faith in the fulfilment of the decrees of God Almighty.

Let us perceive and bear suffering in the true Islamic perspective and the true Islamic spirit with absolute submission

to the will of Allah to seek His love and pleasure under all circumstances. The second Khalifa^(ra) has put this thought in a beautiful heart-rending couplet:

*Oh! Our Lord! Whether it is
Thy blessings or any trial
We are happy in that which
Has Thy pleasure*

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 wa sallam*' 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 '*Alaihis salatu wassalam*' for the respect a Muslim reader utters.

The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for '*Radhiallahu ta'ala*' 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 '*Rahemahullahu Ta'ala*' means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

The Essence of Islam: Allah the Exalted – Part 4

This is the fourth 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) Hadhrat 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, Allah have mercy on him and 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, Volume 1*. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.



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

In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

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

Two Types of Divine Attributes - Immanent and Transcendental

(cont'd) ...

As Allah is not subject to death so also He is not subject to even temporary cessation of His senses like sleep or slumber; but others are subject to death, sleep and slumber. All that you see in the heavens or in the earth belongs to Him and manifests itself and exists through Him. There is no one who can intercede with Him without His permission. He knows all that is before or behind people, that is, His knowledge comprises that which is manifest and that which is hidden. No one can

encompass any part of His knowledge except that much which He permits. His power and His knowledge encompass the heavens and the earth. He supports all and nothing supports Him. He is not wearied by supporting the heavens and the earth. He is above all weakness and feebleness and lack of power.

Throne of Allah – His Station of Singleness and Transcendence

At another place it is said:

Your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods and then settled Himself on the Throne.

(Ch.7: v.55)

This means that having created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them and having manifested His attributes of resemblance, He then addressed Himself to His station of transcendence and aloneness, in

order to demonstrate His attributes of transcendence which station is beyond of beyond and is farthest away from creation. That station which is the highest is called the Throne.

The explanation of this is that in the beginning all creation was nonexistent and God Almighty manifested Himself at a station which was beyond of beyond and is named the Throne, that is a station which is higher than and above all the worlds. There was nothing except His Being. Then He created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. When creation came into being, He “hid” Himself and desired that He should be known through His creation.

It must be remembered that Divine attributes never fall into permanent disuse. Except God, no one enjoys eternal personal existence, but the permanence of species too is requisite. No Divine attribute falls into

permanent disuse, but there is temporary disuse. As the attribute of creation and the attribute of destruction are inconsistent with each other, therefore, when the attribute of destruction comes into full operation, the attribute of creation falls into disuse for a period. In short, in the beginning it was the time of the operation of the Divine attribute of Singleness and we cannot say how often this period repeated itself, except that it is eternal and without limit. In any case, the attribute of Singleness has priority in time over other attributes.

That is why it is said that to begin with, God was alone and that there was no one with Him. Then God created the heavens and earth and all that is in them and in that context He manifested His attributes that He is Noble, Merciful, Forgiving, and Acceptor of repentance. But he who persists in sin and does not desist is not

left without chastisement. He also manifested His attribute that He loves those who repent, and His wrath overtakes only those who do not desist from wrongdoing and disobedience.

Nothing approximates to the Attributes of Allah

All His attributes are appropriate to Him. They are not like human qualities. His eyes etc. are not physical and none of His attributes resemble human attributes. For instance, when a man is angry he suffers from anger himself and his heart loses its comfort and perceives a burning sensation and his brain is oppressed and he undergoes a change; but God is free from all such changes.

His wrath means that He removes His support from one who does not desist from mischief and, according to His eternal law, He metes out to him such treatment as a human being metes out to another when he is angry.

Metaphorically, it is called God's wrath. In the same way, His love is not like the love of a human being, for a human being suffers in love also when he is separated from his beloved. But God is not subject to suffering. His nearness also is not like the nearness of a human being, for when a human being approaches near someone he vacates the space which he had occupied before. But God, despite being near is far, and despite being far is near. In short, every Divine attribute is distinct from human qualities. There is only a verbal resemblance and no more. That is why in the Holy Qur'an, Allah the Exalted says:

There is nothing whatever like unto Him.
(Ch.42: v.12)

That is: Nothing approximates to God Almighty in its being or its qualities.
(Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, *Ruhani Khaza'in*, Vol. 23, pp. 272-276)

Permanence of Allah's Attributes

God will never cease to operate. He is always the Creator, the Providence, the Sustainer, the Gracious, the Compassionate and always will be. In my opinion, it is sinful to debate about the One of such Majesty. God has not imposed belief in anything which He has not demonstrated.

[*Malfoozat*, Vol. IV, p.347]

As the stars appear stage by stage God's attributes also appear stage by stage. Man is sometimes under the shadow of the Divine attributes of Glory and Self-Sufficiency and sometimes he is under the shadow of His attributes of Beauty. That is indicated in His saying:

Every day He reveals Himself in a new state.
(Ch.55: v.30)

It is a foolish notion that after sinful people have been

THE BASIC ATTRIBUTE OF GOD ALMIGHTY IS LOVE AND MERCY AND THAT IS THE MOTHER OF ALL ATTRIBUTES. IT IS THE SAME ATTRIBUTE WHICH SOMETIMES COMES INTO OPERATION IN THE SHAPE OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GLORY AND WRATH FOR THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN REFORM, AND WHEN THE REFORM HAS BEEN EFFECTED THEN LOVE APPEARS IN ITS TRUE FORM AND REMAINS IN OPERATION FOREVER AS A BOUNTY.

condemned to hell the Divine attributes of Mercy and Compassion will cease to operate and will not be manifested, inasmuch as the permanent cessation of the operation of Divine attributes is not permissible. The basic attribute of God Almighty is Love and Mercy and that is the mother of all attributes. It is the same attribute which sometimes comes into operation in the shape of the attributes of Glory and Wrath for the purpose of human reform, and when the reform has been effected then Love appears in its true form and remains in operation forever as a bounty. God is not like a short-tempered person who loves to torment. He

wrongs no one, but people wrong themselves. All salvation lies in His Love and all torment is to draw away from Him.

[Chashma-e-Masihi, *Ruhani Khaza'in*, Vol. 20, pp. 369-370]

General Attributes Mentioned in the Holy Qur'an

The attributes of God, to Whom the Holy Qur'an calls us, are set out as follows:

He is Allah, and there is no god beside Him, the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Gracious, the Merciful. (Ch.59: v.23)

Master of the Day of Judgement. (Ch.1: v.4)

The Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of peace, the Bestower of security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted.
(Ch.59: v.24)

Allah has the power to do all that He wills. (Ch.2: v.21)

Lord of all the worlds, the Gracious, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Judement. (Ch.1: Vs.2-4)

I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. (Ch.2: v.187)

the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining.
(Ch.2: v.256)

Say, He is Allah, the One! Allah, the Independent and Besought by all. He begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him.
(Ch.112: Vs.2-5)

That is, God is One and has no associate: that no one else is worthy of worship and obedience. He is so described for if He were not without associate, there would be the possibility that His associate might overcome Him and His Godhead would then be put in danger. No one else is worthy of worship means that He is so perfect and His attributes and excellences are so high and exalted that, if out of all existence, a God were to be chosen on account of His perfect attributes or if one's mind were to imagine the best and highest attributes, that God alone would be the most exalted and none else could be greater than Him. To associate anyone lower with Him in His worship would be utterly wrong.

He is the Knower of the unseen, means that He alone has full knowledge of Himself and no one can encompass His Being.

We can wholly observe the sun, the moon and every created thing, but we are unable to observe God wholly. Then He says that He is the Knower of the seen. Nothing is hidden from Him. Being God it could not be presumed that He was unaware of anything. He observes every particle of this universe, which a human being cannot do. He knows when He will destroy this system and set up the Judgement. No one except Him knows when that will be. He alone knows all these times.

He is Most Gracious; that is which means that before the coming into being of creatures and their actions, out of His pure grace and in consequence of no action of anyone, He makes provision for the comfort of everyone; as for instance, He made the sun and the earth and all other things for our use before any action proceeded from us. This bounty is called in the Book of God *Rahmaniyyat*,

and on account of this attribute, God Almighty is called *Rahman*.

He rewards good actions with gracious rewards and does not let go waste anyone's efforts. On account of this attribute, He is called *Rahim* and this attribute is called *Rahimiyyat*.

He has in His own hands the recompense of everyone. He has no agent to whom He has committed the governance of heaven and earth, having withdrawn Himself from it, leaving it to the agent to award punishment or reward.

He is the Sovereign, Most Holy, that is His sovereignty is subject to no defect.

It is obvious that human sovereignty is not free from defects. For instance, if the subjects of a human sovereign were all to leave the country and migrate, his sovereignty could not be maintained, or if

his subjects were afflicted with famine, he would not be able to recover any revenue; or if his subjects were to dispute with him and question the basis of his sovereignty, what qualification for his sovereignty could he put forward?

But the sovereignty of God is not subject to any of this. In an instant, He can destroy the whole kingdom and create a new one. Were He not the Creator and All-Powerful, His sovereignty could not be maintained without injustice, for having forgiven the world once and bestowed salvation upon it, how could He have obtained another world to rule? Would He seize upon those who had attained salvation and revoke His salvation tyrannically? In such case, His Godhead would be called in question and like worldly sovereigns His sovereignty would prove defective. Those who make laws for the world fall into different moods and

have recourse to tyranny when they find that they cannot achieve their selfish purpose without tyranny. For instance, a law permits that to save a vessel, the occupants of a boat might be allowed to perish, but God should not be subject to any such dire necessity. Had God not been All-Powerful, possessing the capacity of creating from nothing, He would have been compelled either to have recourse to tyranny or to adhere to justice and be deprived of His Godhead. The vessel of God carries on with full power and justice.

Then He is the Source of Security, that is to say, He is Himself secure against all defects and misfortunes and hardships and bestows security upon His creation. Had he been subject to misfortunes, for instance, had He been subject to being killed by people or by being frustrated in His designs, how would anyone's heart feel

secure that God would save him from misfortunes? The false gods are described in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

Those whom you call gods instead of Allah, cannot create even a fly, even if they were all to join hands to do so; and if a fly were to take away something from them, they do not have the power to recover it therefrom. Ignorant are those who worship them and helpless are those whom they worship. (Ch.22: Vs.74)

Can gods be like this? God has all power above every other powerful one and He overcomes all. No one can seize Him or beat Him. Those who fall into such mistakes do not rightly estimate God and do not know what He should be.

Then God is the Bestower of peace and sets forth reasons in support of His excellences and His Unity. This is an indication

that a believer in the True God will not be put to shame in any company or before God Himself, inasmuch as he is furnished with strong arguments. But a believer in an artificial god is always in great distress. Instead of putting forward reasons he describes every senseless thing as a mystery so that he should not be laughed at and thus he seeks to hide established errors. Then He says:

The Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted. (Ch.59: v.24)

God is Guardian over all and Supreme over all. He sets everything right and is exalted above everything. Then He says:

He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. (Ch.59: v.25)

He is the Creator of body and soul. He gives shape to the

bodies in the womb. All beautiful names that can be conceived of belong to Him. Then He says:

All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.
(Ch.59: v.25)

Inmates of the heaven and the earth glorify Him alike. This verse indicates that there is life on celestial bodies and that the dwellers therein follow Divine guidance. Then He says:

Allah has the power to do all that He wills. (Ch.2: v.21)

That is, He has power to do all that He wills, which is a great reassurance for His worshippers, for if God were not powerful and were helpless, nothing could be expected of Him. Then He says:

Lord of all the worlds, the Gracious, the Merciful, Master of the Day of

Judgement. (Ch.1: Vs. 2-4)

I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. (Ch.2: v.187)

He is the Sustainer of all the worlds. He is Gracious, Merciful and Master of the Day of Judgement, and has not delegated His power to anyone else. He hears the call of everyone who calls on Him and responds to it, that is to say, He accepts prayers.

He is the Ever-Living and All-Sustaining. If He were not Ever-Living there would be the fear lest He might die before us.

Then it is said that He is Single, has no father and no son and no equal and no peer (Ch.112: Vs.2-5).

[*Islami Usul ki Philosophy, Ruhani Khaza'in*, Vol. 10, pp.372-376]

... to be continued

The Philosophy of Revival of Religion

Text of an address delivered by the Fourth Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association in Islam, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, (may Allah have mercy on him), in Sydney, Australia.



I address you today on the Islamic Philosophy of the revival of religions. Religions are always revived through Divine intervention. A reformer is sent by Allah the Almighty to turn the people away from materialism and return them to their Creator. Such a reformer invariably calls for immense sacrifices in the name of God. He invites people to toil and sweat; to persevere and be patient, and informs them that those who seek to live must be prepared to part with their lives. He prepares them for a long and painful struggle against blind opposition and persecution at the hands of those whom they love and endeavour to save. Indeed this is the only real and eternal

philosophy of religious revival: every philosophy opposed to it is mere fantasy.

I must mention though that all sects of Islam are not in unison on this subject. A large number of Muslims believe that a fundamental change has come about in the form of religious revival. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, on the other hand, believes that this historical process is constant and unchanged. Lest the difference of opinion amongst Muslims create a wrong impression, I deem it necessary to enumerate those shared fundamental beliefs which bind all the Muslims together, whatever denomination they belong to.

Every Muslim, regardless of sect, believes in the oneness of God and in the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). Every Muslim believes that Islam is the ultimate religion for the salvation of mankind. All Muslims believe that Islam will continue to fulfill all of man's spiritual needs till the Day of Judgement. All Muslims believe that the Law revealed through the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) is unchangeable and that the Qur'an is incorruptible and unalterable to the extent even of an iota or a dot. Muslims of all shades of thought believe that the edicts of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) have validity and authority till the end of mankind. Muslims of every sect believe that it is only through a bond with the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) that the light of eternal truth may be perceived. These basic points of creed are shared by all Muslims without exception.

With so much in common, there still remains the fundamental

difference which sets the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community apart from other Muslims—the difference on the issue of revival of Islam. All other differences emanate from this main issue.

How is the resurgence of Islam to come about? How is a new life and new vigour to be infused into it? Like the Ahmadiyya Community, all other Muslims, too, profess that the answer lies in the promised advent of Christ, Son of Mary, and in the appearance of the promised Imam Mahdi (the reformer appointed by God who would be divinely guided). This point of apparent concord when interpreted, actually generates two diametrically opposed views.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community regards the prophecy of the advent of Christ as a figure of speech. It believes that the prophecies regarding the Imam Mahdi are also allegorical. We believe that the truly glorious import of these prophecies cannot be understood

THE AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY REGARDS THE PROPHECY OF THE ADVENT OF CHRIST AS A FIGURE OF SPEECH. IT BELIEVES THAT THE PROPHECIES REGARDING THE IMAM MAHDI ARE ALSO ALLEGORICAL. WE BELIEVE THAT THE TRULY GLORIOUS IMPORT OF THESE PROPHECIES CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD IF THEY ARE TAKEN AT THEIR FACE VALUE. IN COMPLETE CONTRAST TO THIS, THE OTHER SECTS OF ISLAM INSIST ON A LITERAL FULFILLMENT OF THESE PROPHECIES.

if they are taken at their face value. In complete contrast to this, the other sects of Islam insist on a literal fulfillment of these prophecies. This is the fundamental difference that distinguishes and sets apart the Ahmadiyya Community from other sects.

A Background to the Prophecies

The prevailing decline of the Muslims and their internecine strife are matters of which the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was not uninformed. Through divine revelation, he prophesied fourteen hundred years ago that Muslims would split into seventy two sects. He described

the pitiable plight of the Muslims in such detail as if a view of our era had been unfolded before his very eyes. The Prophet's^(sa) Traditions contain a graphic description of our times. He said,

‘Islam will have nothing left of it except its name. Mosques, though full of worshippers will be devoid of guidance. Their religious scholars will be the worst creation under the canopy of Heaven.’

However, along with these terrible portents, he also gave glorious tidings. He said that inspite of this dire distress, the

Islamic nation would not perish:

‘How can my followers be destroyed when I am at their beginning and Jesus, Son of Mary, at their end.’

(*Masnad Ahmad: Kanzal Aamal*, Vol. 7, p.203)

Then he said:

‘How will you be when Mary's Son will descend among you; and he will be your guide from amongst you?’

(*Bukhari*: Book of Prophets)

And he repeated the news in these words:

‘I swear by Him Who has my life in His hand that the Son of Mary will indeed descend among you, and he will arbitrate with justice.’

(*Bukhari*: Book of Prophets)

The Holy Prophet^(sa) also gave tidings of a great Imam-Imam Mahdi who would appear along with Jesus^(as), Son of Mary.

The Ahmadiyya Community is at one with the other Muslim sects in believing that the resuscitation of Islam and its global triumph are linked with the advent of Christ and the appearance of the Imam Mahdi. However, it differs from the rest in the interpretation of these prophecies. It insists that the prophecies be seen in the light of the divine law revealed in action and in consonance with the history of the earlier prophets. The other Muslim sects, on the contrary, assert that the prophecies have no inner, deeper message and adhere to their literal sense.

Non-Ahmadi Muslims’ Concept

In all fairness to our opponents, I shall now endeavour to elucidate the view point of our opponents who equate Islam’s renaissance with its economic and political dominance. There is perhaps an explanation for it. Lust for power and greed for gold have traditionally dominated human strife. The acme of national

revival therefore would mean political and economic ascendancy. Divine favour would, according to them, fittingly manifest itself to bring about this result. This, more or less, is the view held by many, concerning the revival of Islam. According to this belief, the advent of the Messiah will herald the era of Islam's political conquests while the appearance of the Imam Mahdi will bring about their economic dominance.

First, I shall outline their concept of the Messiah's advent. They believe that the very Jesus^(as), Son of Mary, whom the Qur'an declares a prophet of the Israelites, will descend bodily from the sky. He will immediately set out with sword in hand and hack to death all enemies of Islam! His global sweep shall have three grand objectives. The first objective will be the destruction of the Cross, not figuratively, but literally! He will set about destroying the symbol of Christian faith with such vigour

that not a trace shall be left of it. There will not remain a single Cross to be seen in a church, home or around any neck.

According to them, his next important task will be the extermination of swine of every variety – domestic as well as wild! So, the followers of the Cross will then be left with neither a Cross for prayer nor a pig for dinner. Thus, Christ^(as) will deprive the Christians of the articles not only of their spiritual sustenance but also of their physical nourishment.

The third task for the Messiah will be the killing of 'Dajjal', the Antichrist. Now who is this Antichrist? According to Traditions, if taken literally, as some would have it, he will be a one-eyed Colossus who will come riding an ass of extraordinary proportions. He will be so tall that his head will stand higher than the clouds. All prophets have warned their followers against the evil of this Antichrist. Now, while the

Antichrist is busy ravaging the earth, the Messiah will descend from the heavens. He will engage the Antichrist in battle near Damascus and slay him. He will then conquer the entire world. Having done this, he will hand over its governance to the Muslims.

This, in sum, is their philosophy of the Muslims' political resurgence and ascendancy. It absolves the Muslims totally from waging any political struggle whatsoever. Now, those who are basking in the assurance that they will inherit the earth without moving a muscle can see no possible reason to concern themselves with political thought and action. They live in blissful oblivion of their decay and degradation. For, everything else apart, they know most assuredly that the happy hour is not far when a divine being will descend from the heavens and unleash a campaign of conquests. He will slay the swine. He will wreck the Cross. He will subjugate all powers of

the East and the West. Then, he will beckon to the waiting Muslim masses and say, 'Come hither, ye soldiers of God; come here, O virtuous ones! Come and take this sceptre of the kingdom of the earth.' This is the bellicose view of Muslim renaissance which the Ahmadi Muslims find abhorrent. They simply cannot subscribe to it in its crude literalism.

Next comes the non-Ahmadi Muslims' concept of the economic resurgence of Islam. The scholars of the other sects hold the view that the remedy of the economic plight of the Muslims lay not in struggle and sacrifice but in the appearance of the Imam Mahdi. This Imam Mahdi will be a contemporary of the Messiah. His most important act on arrival will be the distribution of limitless largess among the Muslims of the world. His bounty will be boundless; his generosity will defy description. This overwhelming wealth will far exceed the Muslim's capacity to garner

it. Thus will come to an end all lust for goods and greed for gold. This is the panacea, as conceived by some, for the economic ills of the world of Islam. According to this belief, the appearance of Imam Mahdi is in itself the answer to the economic misery of Muslims. There is no need for sweat, tears and toil. There is no necessity to explore the earth's treasures, to peep into the heart of the atom and to seek out the secrets of space. Neither effort nor industry, nor inventiveness or application is needed. All that is needed is the arrival of the Mahdi. Again we differ and again we, the Ahmadi Muslims, find this concept childish, crude and unacceptable.

The Correct Interpretation According to Ahmadi Muslims

Although the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community does not in any way reject the prophecies concerning the descent of the Messiah and the appearance of the Mahdi, it does emphasise that to put a literal meaning on

them is the height of naivette and ignorance. We believe that it is as a result of not grasping fully the exalted station of the Holy Prophet^(sa) that such a serious error is made in understanding his deep and philosophical message. Men of insight and wisdom often use parables and allegories to outline subjects of such great import but the superficial eye cannot perceive their meaning.

The Ahmadi Muslims believe that the whole range of subjects covering the Messiah, the Antichrist and his ass is allegorical. The Messiah, therefore, is not that earlier prophet who was sent among the Israelites. The Ahmadis believe that Jesus Christ^(as) died a natural death after surviving the torture of the Cross. The Messiah of the prophecy was in fact to be a new person who was to be born amongst the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). Because of some characteristics and qualities he was to share with Jesus^(as), he would be given

the title of ‘Messiah, Son of Mary’ in much the same way as a great dramatist is called Shakespeare. The reference to the Cross, too, is a simile. The Messiah will not literally go around wrecking crosses: he will defeat the Christian faith with strong reasoning and powerful arguments.

The destruction of the Cross, therefore, stands for the ideological rout of Christianity. Similarly, the word ‘swine’ is not to be taken in the literal sense. It connotes the cultural filth of the western world which turns men into beastly beings. The word swine stands for the so-called sexual anarchy sweeping across America and Europe. It stands for the disgusting debauchery which claims even innocent children as its victims. The Traditions most assuredly did not convey that the Messiah would hunt down herds of wild boar or domesticated pigs. This would be a strange image of a prophet of God. It would rather remind one of Ajax,

a hero from Greek mythology, who cut to pieces herds of cattle and flocks of sheep in the mad belief that they were the Greek army’s chieftains!

The Antichrist, too, like the Messiah, the Cross and the Swine is symbolic. He symbolises a great and powerful nation which rules not only the earth but also space. The Cross and the Swine are in fact symbols pertaining to this nation. The Traditions say that the Antichrist’s right eye will be sightless but his left eye will be large and bright. This is a symbolic description of the fact that though this nation would be devoid of spiritual light yet its material insight and therefore material attainments, would be great.

Lastly, the Ahmadi Muslims consider the Antichrist’s ass to be a symbol too – a symbol that was used to describe the means of transportation of the days to come. All the features describing this ass are without exception identifiable with the

fuel-powered vehicles invented by the West. Consider the salient features of the ass as described in the traditions – it will eat fire, it will travel over land, over sea and above the air; its speed will be so great that it will cover a journey of months within the space of a few hours; the passengers will travel not on its back but in its belly which would be lit up; it will announce its departure and ask passengers to take their seats. The fulfillment of these things with such wondrous exactness is a glorious testimony of the truth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him.

According to Ahmadi Muslims, the prophecies relating to the advent of the Imam Mahdi are also symbolic. The wealth he will distribute amongst Muslims is the wealth of spiritual knowledge and wisdom, and not worldly wealth. The refusal of some to accept it further indicates what kind of wealth it was to be; for man is never satiated with material wealth: it

is only the spiritual treasures that he spurns.

Thus Ahmadiyyat rejects the philosophy of Islamic renaissance as explained above and propagated by the other sects of Islam. It holds that this philosophy is at variance with the real intent of the Qur'anic teachings, at variance with the history of the prophets and most of all at variance with the demonstrated actions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(as). Ahmadiyyat shuns this ideological opiate which lulls nations into inaction and leads them into the world of make-believe and fantasy.

Ahmadiyya Philosophy of Revival of Religion

This philosophy is no different from the one that is the common heritage of all religions. This is the only philosophy which history supports. Although the Scriptures and the legends mention many who ascended to the heavens, there is not one instance or account, since Adam,

of the bodily return of anyone of them to earth.

So, regardless of the difference in the manner of the professed ascent to the heavens by some, there is none who is reported to have returned to earth after a long disappearance. Reformers have always appeared from the ordinary stock of human beings and have always been rejected and scorned by man. No ceremonial arches are ever erected to welcome them. No garlands are offered. No lamps are lighted in joyous illumination.

On the contrary, those who came in the name of God were persecuted for committing this 'crime'. Their paths were strewn with thorns. Dust was heaped on their heads and stones were thrown at them. They were crowned with the crown of thorns. Every conceivable torture was inflicted on them. You see them now, returning from the town of Taif bathed in blood from head to foot. You see them again,

in the battlefield of Uhad, half-dead from their wounds, buried under the bodies of those who laid their lives for them.

You will find their followers suffering a similar fate. Every conceivable torment is practised on them. They are dragged by their feet through rough alleyways. They are made to lie on burning sands under a sizzling sun. They are thrown on live coal and held there till the embers die down. They are thrown out of their homes. They are driven into exile. They are threatened with starvation. They are put to the sword. The husbands are taken from the wives and the wives from the husbands. Parents are deprived of their children. Every right that life bestows is denied to them. They are neither allowed to pray nor to build mosques. They are deprived of the right to announce their faith. They are not even permitted to name their own creed.

Thus is man granted a new

spiritual life. This is the path that leads to the revival of religion. This is the phenomenon that we see at work in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) and in the life of every prophet before him. It is by treading this perilous path that the prophets have ever revived their nations. This is the philosophy of the revival of religions since the days of Adam^(as) to the days of the Holy Prophet^(sa). When such is the case, how can we then accept that the Almighty has decided to change this inviolable and time-honoured practice?

How can we then accept that the Muslims will inherit the earth without shedding a drop of their blood and without making a stroke of effort? How can we believe that they will succeed without treading the path of sacrifice? It did not happen before. It will not happen again. The Promised Messiah^(as), the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community affirms this eternal and everlasting truth when he warns the nation thus:

‘There has not been a Prophet who was not laughed at. So it was to be that people laughed at the Promised Messiah.

The Almighty says:

Alas for My servants, there comes not a Messenger to them but they mock at him.
(Ch.36:V.31)

So it is a sign from God that every prophet is mocked. Now, who can mock a person who physically descends from the heavens in the company of angels amidst a waiting crowd? The wise, therefore, can see that the bodily descent of the Promised Messiah from heaven is false belief. Remember! No one will descend from the sky. All those who oppose me and are now alive will die and not one from amongst them will see Jesus, Son of Mary, descend from heaven. Then

their children and their children's children, too, will die, and Mary's Son will still not have descended. Then will God fill their hearts with fear that the days of the ascendancy of the Cross are near and yet Jesus, Son of Mary, has not come down from the heavens. The wise will then tire of this belief. And before three centuries have passed from this day, Muslims and Christians alike will discard this false creed in disgust and despair. There shall be only one religion in the world and only one Guide. I have come but to sow the seed. This seed has been sown at my hand. It will now grow and bear fruit and there is no power on earth that can harm it.'

(Tadhkarat-ush-Shahadat-ain, pp.64-65)

Every fair minded person can see from this comparison that the Ahmadiyya viewpoint is based on the history of religions while the philosophy of its opponents is

mythical and contradicts the history of religious revival. We learn from history that everyone appointed by God was faced with a storm of opposition. All prophets came with the message of truth and eternal life but were opposed by those who preferred falsehood to truth, and spiritual death to spiritual life.

This indeed is the process of the birth of religions. When impurities and corruption crept into religions, their rebirth also took the same course. The reformers sent by God also suffered as the prophets had suffered. Whenever the Almighty chose to revive a nation spiritually, it split into two groups - those who saw the truth and those who opposed it. And neither group ever changed its demonstrated attitude. The Holy Qur'an describes this oft repeated cycle in a most effective and moving manner. A study of the Qur'an shows that:

Religions are born and revived through divinely appointed

EVERY FAIR MINDED PERSON CAN SEE FROM THIS COMPARISON THAT THE AHMADIYYA VIEWPOINT IS BASED ON THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS WHILE THE PHILOSOPHY OF ITS OPPONENTS IS MYTHICAL AND CONTRADICTS THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS REVIVAL. WE LEARN FROM HISTORY THAT EVERYONE APPOINTED BY GOD WAS FACED WITH A STORM OF OPPOSITION. ALL PROPHETS CAME WITH THE MESSAGE OF TRUTH AND ETERNAL LIFE BUT WERE OPPOSED BY THOSE WHO PREFERRED FALSEHOOD TO TRUTH, AND SPIRITUAL DEATH TO SPIRITUAL LIFE.

reformers. Never have the scholars ever reformed a religion through conferences and consultations.

The divinely appointed reformers are invariably rejected by their people and treated with arrogance and disdain. Such reformers are always opposed by violence. They are accused of corrupting the religion of their forefathers. They are branded heretics and held guilty of apostasy.

The creed professed by the opponents prescribes death or banishment as the punishment for apostasy. The reformers are offered a choice of either a return

to the fold or exile, failing which they are threatened with death.

The reformers never advocate violence. Their followers demonstrate steadfastness of such a high degree that they would rather be exiled or killed than recant.

The reformers do not entice people with promises of power and high office: they dispel worldly ambition. They do not lure people with wealth; they inculcate the spirit of sacrifice. The rich who believe consider it their good fortune to give their all in the service of God; the mighty shrug off the trappings of power. It is then that divine

providence adjudges them fit to take over temporal power.

This is the process of religious revival of nations that the Qur'an and the Scriptures reveal. All prophets from Adam^(as) to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) went through these stages. They gave their nations new life by leading them over the path of suffering and sacrifice. They taught love. They inculcated love of hard work, of sustained effort and incessant actions. It is this revolutionary spirit which breathes life into dead nations. This oft-demonstrated and unchanging divine law is in consonance with man's nature, conscience and intellect. It is this law that the Ahmadiyya Community acknowledges.

As can be seen, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's concept of revival of religions is not a new-fangled philosophy born of human intellect. It is derived from that continuous and unaltered historical process which is preserved most

accurately and truly in the Holy Qur'an. It is founded on those eternal principles and truths which are the basis of every true religion. For instance, the Qur'an declares:

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking, And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.'
(Ch.2: v.257)

Alas for My servants! there comes not a Messenger to them but they mock at him.
(Ch.36: v.31)

Surely Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts.
(Ch.13: v.12)

When the Prophet Shu'aib^(as) was

threatened by his people:

'We will drive thee out O Shu'aib, and the believers (that are) with thee, from our town, or you shall have to return to our religion.' he merely replied, *'Even though we be unwilling?'*
(Ch.7: v.89)

Noah's^(as) people, too, threatened him with stoning if he did not desist:

They said, 'If thou desist not, O Noah, thou shalt surely be one of those who are stoned.'
(Ch.26: v.117)

This treatment was not reserved for just a few prophets. The Qur'an summarises people's attitude to the prophets in these words:

And those who disbelieved said to their Messengers, 'We will surely expel you from our land unless you return to our religion.'
(Ch.14: v.14)

Abraham^(as) was punished for recanting from the religion of his forefathers and for voicing the truth. The chiefs vented their wrath by declaring:

They said? 'Burn him and help your gods, if at all you mean to do anything.'
(Ch.21: v.69)

Jesus Christ^(as) was nailed to the Cross because he disagreed with the Jewish Scribes over the interpretation of the Bible although he avowed openly:

'Think not that I have come to abolish the law, and the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.'
(Matthew: 5:17-18)

May I remind you that the central difference between Jesus Christ^(as) and the Jewish scholars

was on the interpretation of the verse *'And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven'* (2 Kings; Chapter 2, Verse 11). The scholars stuck to the literal and apparent meanings of the verse. They believed that Elijah would descend bodily from heaven before the advent of Christ. Jesus Christ^(as), on the other hand, asserted that this was an allegory, that the language was symbolic and not literal. He declared that Zacharia's son John was the Elijah who was to descend from heaven. Jesus^(as) knew full well that John was born on earth and had certainly not descended from heaven.

In answer to the question 'Then why do the Scribes say that first Elijah must come', he replied: 'Elijah does come and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the son of man will suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.'

(Matthew 17:10-13)

Lastly and above all was the suffering of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). In his own words, 'No Prophet suffered as much as I did.'

Therefore, the history of religions teaches us that prophets have always been normal human beings. They do not descend from heaven like the heroes of some mythical tale. They have always suffered trials and tribulations. Their followers gain glory not through the toils of someone else but through their own sweat and blood.

Saladin – the Legend of Salahuddin

A thousand years ago, the Christian nations of Europe embarked upon a war from which we get the term Crusades.

Yet in the midst of battle, the Christians acknowledged the scruples of a great and just Muslim leader, Salahuddin Ayyubi (known to them as Saladin), who fought them hard but with dignity. As we will see, his example is one we could all learn from.

The Spread of Islam

Following the death of the Holy Prophet^(sa) in 632 CE, his successors took the message of Islam across the Middle East, Northern Africa and Southern Europe. By 634, all of Arabia had accepted Islam, by 635 Damascus followed, and by 640, Egypt had joined the fold.

The Muslims provided security to the Christians and Jews wherever the Muslims gained influence, and were well regarded by the Christians and Jews. Examples were in Palestine, Spain and Egypt where outside influences had kept the Christians and Jews subjugated for years before the

arrival of the Muslims.

When Khalid bin Waleed took Damascus in 635 CE, he set the precedent for the way that the conquering Muslims dealt with their non-Muslim subjects. The non-Muslims, largely Jews and Christians in Damascus for instance, were afforded full protection of their lives, possessions and places of worship in return for a tax known as *Jizya*.

In 638, Jerusalem capitulated in a bloodless episode. Again the city dwellers and their Greek Christian Patriarch Sophronius were offered the same *Jizya* terms. The people of Jerusalem

were shocked that the Jizya was less cumbersome than the tax they had been paying previously to their Byzantine masters. They then expected a grand entrance by the powerful Muslims, but instead were even more shocked to see Caliph Umar^(ra), the leader of the fastest expanding empire in the world, arriving walking barefoot and sharing a camel with his slave. This was the spirit of simplicity and brotherhood of the zealous Muslims.

News of the rapid advance of the Muslims in the Middle East would have been greeted with concern and interest by the Christian Kings of Western Europe. But that concern would have reached fever-pitch when they heard the news that the Muslims had taken Spain in 711 CE and were advancing towards Paris in the West, and the heartland of China in the East.

It was only after a defeat to Charles Martel in Tours in 732 CE, a mere 150 miles from Paris

and less than 250 miles from the British coast, that the Muslims decided that they had overstretched themselves, and retrenched to the borders of Spain.

The Crusades

Christianity was starting to fare badly at the hands of politicians who launched programmes (Inquisitions) against any Christians that they thought to be heretical. In Spain, these Inquisitions were later to be launched against the Muslims and Christians as well.

The Popes yielded great power in the Catholic faith. It was Pope Urban II who called for the Christians to launch an expeditionary war at the Council of Clermont on 27 November 1095. The aim was to repel the Muslims and to reclaim the Holy Land, and also to protect Constantinople (ironically it was the Crusaders themselves who ransacked Constantinople in 1204 and this led to the taking of the city by the Ottomans). The

Pope urged action, and promised a reward of God's favour and a seat at His Throne.

In part this resurgence was sparked by the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim who had tampered with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1009 against the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an teaches that, to denigrate the deities of other faiths or to harm their places of worship is not just evil, but would attract reprisals on Muslims.

Soon, in 1099, the Crusaders captured Jerusalem and created a Christian kingdom, planting Godfrey of Boulogne as the new prince. The attack on Jerusalem had been horrific, with no mercy shown to even women and children. Rivers of blood ran through the narrow streets of the city. More than seventy thousand people were massacred at this occasion by the ruthless Crusaders.

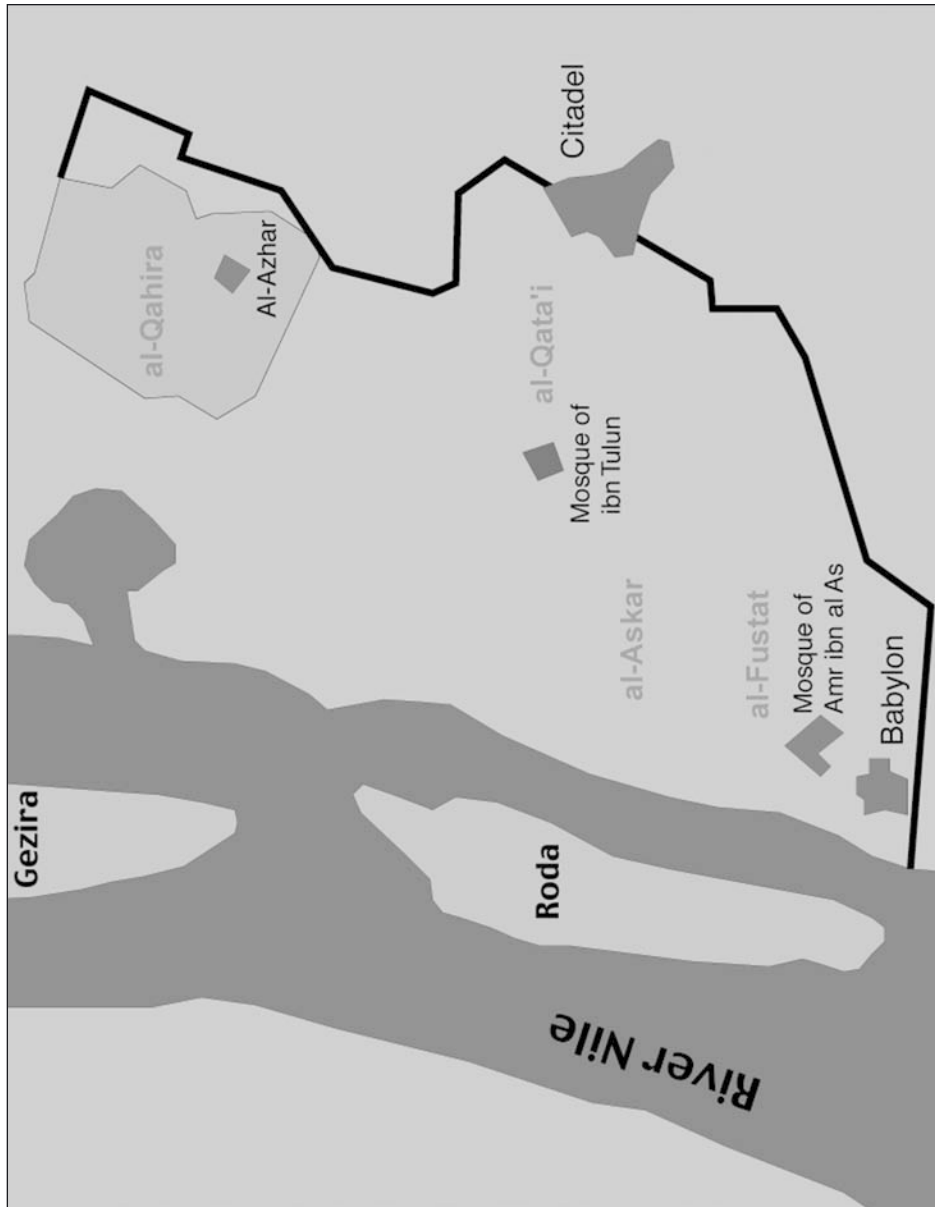
The Crusaders, drawn from several European countries, and

organised into Knights Orders such as the Templars and Hospitaliers, found themselves with a city full of booty. Not only were they told that their sins would be forgiven, but they now had the chance to be rich merchants.

The Christian Crusaders from Western Europe had been ransacking the Middle East. When they reached Cairo led by Amaury the 1st of Jerusalem, they burnt down the old Muslim quarter of al-Fustat. The city would have fallen to the Crusaders but for the intervention of the Sultan of Syria.

Far from uniting the Muslims, some of the Muslims used the Crusades as an opportunity to gain revenge on local rivals, and some allied themselves with the Franks. It was in this dire scenario that renewed and urgent action was needed to unite and lead the Muslims. The Jews also sought protection for just as they were finding under the Inquisition, the Crusaders had no

Saladin – the Legend of Salahuddin



Islamic Cairo - shows location of Salahuddin's Citadel and the older Mosques of Ibn Tulun and Al-Azhar.

need to spare them also. The Jews also found their old alliance with the Muslims useful once again.

Salahuddin

Salahuddin Yusuf ibn Najmuddin Ayyub ibn Shadlhi Abu'l Muzaffar Salah al-Din al-Malik al-Nasir, better known as Salahuddin Ayyubi in the Muslim World or just Saladin in the West, was born in Tikrit in modern Iraq in 1137 CE.

He was born into a Kurdish clan known as the Ayyubids who had originated from Armenia. His father Najmuddin Ayyub, was a Kurdish general serving in the army of the Sultan of Mosul.

Salahuddin's early career

Salahuddin was given an excellent education and began to show promise at an early age. His father was a Governor and moved to Mosul. He gave his son a strict and disciplined upbringing. Even at that age, young Salahuddin had made an impression on Nooruddin Mahmud, the monarch of Syria.

He became a lieutenant under his uncle Asaduddin Sherkoh. He was known for his leadership skills and also for his sense of duty and honesty.

He was a devout Muslim, and so preferred a modest lifestyle and simplicity. The pomp and show that others around him were attracted to was not for him.

Salahuddin defends the Muslims

As events unfolded around Salahuddin, he saw the attacks by the Crusaders, but instead of the unity he would have expected, he saw the Muslim world disintegrating and brothers fighting amongst themselves. By this time, there had been almost two centuries of attacks and rule in the Middle East by the Crusaders.

The Crusaders had been pushing out from the Holy Land in several directions, and Egypt was now very weak. As Cairo too came under attack, the Sultan despatched his

WHEN THE CRUSADERS HAD CAPTURED JERUSALEM, A RIVER OF BLOOD HAD ENGULFED THE CITY. WHEN SALAHUDDIN RE-CAPTURED THE CITY, NOT A DROP OF CHRISTIAN BLOOD WAS SPILT.

Commander Sherkoh and his vizier, Salahuddin. After his uncle Sherkoh had defeated the Crusaders in the city, Salahuddin was appointed Prime Minister of Egypt in 1171 and strengthened the administration and army in Egypt. He then used Cairo as his base to repel the Crusaders in Jerusalem and Syria.

He repelled the Crusaders in Syria and took Damascus in 1175. His army then pushed into Turkey and took Konya (better known as the home of Rumi). He managed to exert greater pressure on the Crusaders by uniting the tribes and regions around their troop settlements, and surrounding them from various sides. There followed six years of relative calm between 1176 - 1181 in which various agreements that he had negotiated held firm. It gave

both sides time to re-group and consider their tactics.

Salahuddin controlled most of North Africa up to Libya, Mesopotamia and Arabia, but it irked him that the Muslims still had no freedom in Jerusalem. He was taunted about this by the Crusaders.

Salahuddin reclaims Jerusalem

In earlier years, Salahuddin would have been wary of other Muslim factions stabbing him in the back while he sought to deal with the Crusaders. But he had used his time wisely to create alliances, and therefore could now plan his capture of Jerusalem with a great deal more confidence.

Even under a truce, Lord Reginald of Chatillon, based at

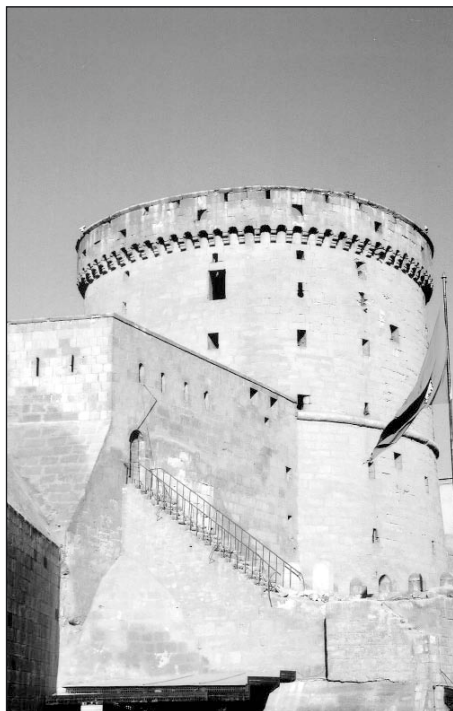
 Saladin – the Legend of Salahuddin

the castle of Karak (modern Jordan) had broken the truce by attacking and looting caravans heading from Makkah to Syria. He had not even spared the women and children. They were all booty to him. He even sent his troops into Arabia to within striking distance of Makkah and taunted ‘since they trusted in Muhammad, let Muhammad come and save them!’

The Christians were divided, as many leaders such as Reginald sought the throne vacated by the death of Baldwin V.

Salahuddin gathered a massive army and gradually reduced the Crusaders to a shambles. His army then took Tiberias where he allowed the Christians nobles to escape in peace.

By 1187, he had re-taken Jerusalem by agreeing surrender terms with the Crusaders. The leaders and Knights managed to pay off their freedom but left thousands of poorer Christians to fend for themselves when the



Salahuddin's Citadel in Cairo

time for the treaty had expired. But Salahuddin freed the poor people even though they thought that he was going to take them into captivity.

When the Crusaders attacked Jerusalem about 90 years before, they had annihilated all of the inhabitants of the city. When Salahuddin eventually recaptured Jerusalem, not a single person

was killed.

The Crusaders managed to get reinforcements under the leadership of Richard the Lionheart and in 1191, he took Acre in Palestine and butchered the local Muslim population. Then there followed a series of encounters between Salahuddin (Saladin) and Richard which spawned the legend of Saladin's chivalrous behaviour in battle.

Salahuddin ruled Egypt for 22 years, and in order to secure his position, he built the Citadel fortification on one of the hills overlooking the city. He also established Madrasas and Khanqahs (Islamic schools and Sufi monasteries) in the city. He was intent that Sunni Islam become strong in the region again.

In the west, Salahuddin is best known for the way in which he fought the Crusaders. When the Crusaders had captured Jerusalem, a river of blood had engulfed the city. When

Salahuddin re-captured the city, not a drop of Christian blood was spilt.

In response, Richard the Lionheart, Frederik of Germany and the Emperor Phillip of France sent a huge army to defeat the Muslims. With his modest force, Salahuddin held off and defeated the Crusaders. He did not just win, but the manner of his victories impressed the Crusaders. Even during the height of battle, he still allowed the Christians to enter Jerusalem as pilgrims and in peace.

When Richard was ill and distressed, Salahuddin sent him fruit and gifts and made a treaty with him. These two great leaders had grown to respect each other.

Salahuddin died in Damascus in 1193 at the age of 56 years.

The Ayyubids

His son al-Kamil took on his mantle and extended the Citadel in Cairo. The Ayyubids kept control until 1250, and then their

elite troops, the Mamluks, originally freed slaves, took power when one of their elite, al Mu'izz Aybak, married the widow of the last Ayyubid leader. They ruled for over 250 years.

In the centuries that followed, Muslim leaders were distracted by glamour and wealth, and this shift in focus was evident. The focus on Mosque and university building was replaced by a zeal for elaborate palaces and harems. Hard work was replaced by games. Gradually their influence on the world around them waned.

Conclusion

In an ironic twist of history, Salahuddin was born in Tikrit in Iraq almost a thousand years ago, scene of much bombardment in the recent Iraq war.

He was forced into a situation created by the Knights of Europe, yet he is remembered by history for the manner in which

he conducted his own defensive war. And his success came despite having little unity or support from other Muslims at the start.

There are lessons in this for all of us. In some quarters it is suggested that the only way to win a battle is to play foul, yet he proved conclusively (as had Cyrus 1500 years before him) that the manner of victory is just as important as the victory itself.

The most outstanding example which would have inspired him would have been the torture that the Muslims had faced at the hands of the Makkans just a few hundred years before Salahuddin. Yet when the Muslims accompanied the Holy Prophet^(sa) back to conquer Makkah, not only was no blood spilt, but the Holy Prophet^(sa) forgave all of the people that had tortured and killed his community for so many years.

Salahuddin had shown a similar spirit when he re-captured

Jerusalem.

He was a man of honour and faith. He shunned glamour and wealth, and preferred simplicity.

A physician from Baghdad called Abdel Latif described Salahuddin in the following terms:

‘a great prince whose appearance inspired at once respect and love, who was approachable, deeply intellectual, gracious and noble in his thoughts. All who came near him took him as their model ...’

(Lane-Poole p.248)

He was a deeply religious man, and his view of islam was orthodox, but at the same time based around the very simplicity shown by the Holy Prophet^(sa) and a spirit of sacrifice.

There could be no better example of chivalry for us all to follow.

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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, two speeches from religious representatives from the Christian and Hindu faiths with the kind permission of the two speakers.

The Christian Perspective

Some thoughts by the Venerable Dennis Ede, formerly the Archdeacon of Stoke on Trent 1989-1997. Honorary priest in charge at Tilford Parish in the diocese of Guildford (Church of England / Anglican) 1997-2002.

I am writing from a Judaeo-Christian position, since Jews and Christians share the custody of the scriptures enshrined in what is called the Holy Bible.

The Jewish Bible comprises the 39 books of the pre-Christian era from approximately 2000 BC, starting with the book of Genesis

and finishing with the prophecy of Malachi, (these books are referred to by Christians as the Old Testament); there are several other writings including the 15 sacred writings which are peculiar to Jews and Christians in what is called the Apocrypha.

There are also sacred writings for the Jews only, such as the Mishna and Talmud which are not given the same priority as for example the others. Christians have a collection of 28 sacred writings, not received nor recognised by Jews, including the four gospel records of the ministry of Jesus the Christ, plus a history of the time immediately after Jesus' ascension, then letters and other scriptures finishing with a poetic vision of 'beginnings and

PEACE IS IRONIC, IN THAT IT DOES DENOTE AN ABSENCE OF WAR, YET IT ALSO MEANS MUCH MORE THAN THAT. MUCH OF THE STORY LINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS SET IN A PERMANENT STATE OF WAR. ... THERE IS ALWAYS A PINING FOR PEACE, BUT NOBODY IS SURE WHAT PEACE MEANS.

endings' in a book called 'Revelation'. These form the core of evidence for the Christian faith known as the New Testament. What I now have to say is an attempt at a distillation of Judaeo-Christian evidence about peace.

Peace is ironic, in that it does denote an absence of war, yet it also means much more than that. Much of the story line of the Old Testament is set in a permanent state of war. For example Moses in Egypt 1350 BC is chosen by God to lead the Hebrews across the Sea of Reeds through the Sinai Desert eventually settling in 'a land flowing with milk and honey', but not before they have fought it out with the tribes in possession of these territories.

There is always a pining for PEACE, but nobody is sure what peace means. Clearly God is at times displeased with those chosen to bring about his purposes, to wit, the Children of Israel or the Jews, but God is equally if not more displeased with Israel's opponents, for example, the Philistines the Hivites, the Perizites and the rest.

On whose side is God? It is not always clear. Certainly when the Hebrews were in disfavour in about 600BC, a tyrant king Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon (modern day Iraq!) advances to take most of them into captivity in Babylon; however after 60 years God chooses a disbelieving monarch, Cyrus King of Persia to emancipate these

Hebrews from slavery allowing them to return to their homeland in Jerusalem.

What amazes me in all this is how religion, peace and war are all inter-twined. The religion cannot be told without the politics, nor politics without the religion. For me one of the great stories in the book of Judges centres on a man called Samson, a crude brute of a man, whose strength is in letting his hair grow; his wife betrays him to his enemies and they cut his hair, he becomes limp, they then capture him, but he has the last laugh.

His hair re-grows, his strength returns and though his eyes have been disorged, he manages to destroy more than 3000 in the temple of Dagon by collapsing the pillars of the temple by his great strength. How, you will ask, was God achieving peace in that situation?

The story line of the New Testament is equally strange. It is

about a man sent by God to sort out mankind once and for all. This man speaks wisely, he behaves compassionately, he seeks justice for the weakest, he challenges those in authority their bogus religiosity and their power politics. He becomes popular among the people without aiming to be, but in the end they all turn against him, he faces a false trial, is humiliated, abandoned by his closest friends, is murdered by crucifixion, then after three days reappears and says to them: 'PEACE be with you'. What a strange story.

In 2000 years, humankind has been educated, has discovered science, technology, art, literature, music, poetry plus so much else, but we are still a threat to one another. We ask why is this our story line? We have a thousand answers, but still we do not know why.

Peace is not simply the absence of war, it is much more positive. It is when we say to our enemy:

HOW MANY FOLKS WOULD AGREE WITH THE TITLE OF THIS SYMPOSIUM: RELIGION IS PEACE? VERY FEW I FEAR. THIS RELIGIOUS REJECTION IS PARTLY CAUSED BY INTELLECTUAL ARROGANCE SINCE THE 18TH CENTURY, PARTLY TO DO WITH SPIRITUAL LAZINESS YET SELF-SUFFICIENCY, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OUR CULTURE TELLS US WE DO NOT WANT TO BE OBLIGATED TO GOD OR ANYONE ELSE.

‘I want you to prosper, be safe, have good health, have a family, even become rich, I want for you all that is good!’.

Jesus in his sayings told his hearers:

‘you must love your enemies; it’s too easy just to love their friends!’

Jesus also said that we need to be self-critical if we want peace:

‘why’ he asked ‘do you see the spec in you neighbour’s eye and see not the plank in your own?’

Peace is about living in

community and not behind gated executive estates. We cannot have peace on our own; but in our individualised society when we do not even know the folks next door, our concept of peace is about self-preservation. We can only have peace if we desire peace for our neighbour, and if we seek that inner peace which only our Divine Maker can bestow on us. Peace is thus triangular.

Today religion is much discredited. How many folks would agree with the title of this symposium: Religion is Peace? Very few I fear. This religious rejection is partly caused by intellectual arrogance since the

18th century, partly to do with spiritual laziness yet self-sufficiency, but also because our culture tells us we do not want to be obligated to God or anyone else. Religion is also discredited because of what we have done to it!

Speaking for Christians, at times I feel that we have been sucked into contemporary consumerism and a lust for money as a solution to all problems. If you were an agnostic, would you today be attracted to religion? We do not have a good track record of inter-faith relationships, we even bicker within our own faith!

Is our today's enterprise in harmony precipitated by the contemporary warlike scene? But fear not! God, Allah, Yahweh, the Unseen One, the Creator, the Communion of Divine Beings, call it what we will, in the end his humour, his compassion, his hidden purpose will see us through; and what of

ourselves, perhaps we are just half awake, half seeing, half hearing, perhaps to quote an scene in the Christian Gospels, *'we now just see people as if they are trees'*, well, that is a start at least.

I congratulate our hosts the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK for this initiative so that we can confront these issues and be honest and not a little self-critical in the process.

Religion is Peace Symposium

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The Hindu Perspective



Some thoughts from Jai Swaminarayan, a Hindu volunteer from the Sri Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden, North London.

Namaste! Good evening! Jai swaminarayan

Thank you for giving me this wonderful privilege of addressing friends in such an exotic spiritual ambience – I truly feel at home with you all.

My spiritual master, Puiya Pramukh Swami Maharaj arrived in London yesterday. He sends you all his greetings and his love.

Words are very important and even more important in the context of today's forum – 'Religion for Peace'. After great deliberation, we thought it would be most appropriate if I read out two extracts as our interfaith messages.

The first message I would like to read to you is actually an extract from our unique exhibition in *akshardham* which is our large monument near Ahmadabad in India. Over 3 million people a year visit this monument. This message is therefore conveyed to a large number of people every year.

The message reads:

*'All religions stand side by side,
and go hand in hand;
they are but one family.*

*born on the same earth,
growing under the same skies,
they share the same threads of
purity and morality.*

*like windows in an endless
tapestry of man's eternal
search,
they give visions of truth and
reality
and the real truth of all religion
is harmony.*

our prayers may differ in words

*and ways,
but they convey the same
feelings!*

*our pilgrim places may differ in
place and form*

but they carry the same sanctity

*our morals may differ in phrase
and style*

*but they preach the same
message,*

*our religions may differ in
symbols and names.*

*but they reveal the same
meaning*

UNIVERSAL HARMONY?.

The second message I would like to read out to you is an extract from His Holiness's speech that he made on the 29th August 2000 at the millennium world peace summit of spiritual leaders at the United Nations.

*'let us
teach our followers that
religion does not grow
by **quantity** of numbers, but by*

quality of spirituality;

*vertical depth is much more
important than **horizontal**
spread;*

*If the follower of every religion
becomes a better and true
follower, then our world will be
a much better world.*

*Therefore, we should steer our
followers away from fanaticism
and **towards** harmony and pure
living.*

*Let us guide ourselves and our
followers not only to tolerate
but to respect other religions,
not just to exist but to co-exist.*

*we must not progress at the cost
of others,
but sacrifice a part of ourselves
for the good of others,*

*because in the good of others
lies our own,
in the progress of others rests
our own
and in the joy of others abides
our own.'*

Thank you for listening to these two short extracts. May I wish you all the very best in pursuing the goal of religion for peace. May God guide us so that we learn to love and live with each other.

*The Lord lives in the heart
of every creature. He turns
them round and round
upon the wheel of his
Maya. Take refuge utterly
in Him. By His grace you
will find supreme peace,
and the state which is
beyond all change.*

(Bhagavad Gita 18.61-62)

*With this peace the
dreadful I appease,
with this peace the cruel
I appease,
with this peace all evil
I appease,
so that peace may prevail,
happiness prevail!*

(Atharva Veda 19.9.14)

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