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# EDITORIAL

*By Bockarie Tommy Kallon*

Allah Almighty informs us in the glorious Qur'an that He never afflicts a people with the punishment of His wrath until after He has sent a Warner unto them (Ch.17: V.16). The world has, in this age, witnessed pestilence, famine, wars, earthquakes and other calamities of unprecedented severity and unparalleled magnitude in such rapid succession as to embitter life. This, in itself, is testimony that Allah, the Exalted, must have raised that Divine Warner before these catastrophes visited the earth.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> of Qadian, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, was indeed that Divine Warner who was raised as the Promised Messiah of the Latter Days. His entire life was devoted to the establishment of the Unity of Allah and the truth of the Holy Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup>. In light of Divine revelation vouchsafed

unto him of impending chastisement for mankind and out of a deeply moved and disturbed heart, he admonished humanity to discard the worship of false gods and turn, in sincere repentance, to the One True God.

This month features the reiteration of that message in the form of an address delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad<sup>(ru)</sup>, the Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad<sup>(ru)</sup> cautions against the dark aspects of the social tendencies of the so-called modern man and warns of the severe calamity which awaits him if, in his delusions of grandeur, he continues to violate the limits prescribed by His Maker.

However, as Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad<sup>(ru)</sup> concluded, Allah Almighty has promised in the Holy Qur'an that His mercy encompasses all things (Ch.7:

V.157). It is with this Message of Hope that he implored:

‘Basing myself on this Qur’anic fundamental, I, Fourth Successor of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> of Qadian, Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement, call all of you to my Lord and your Lord and convey to you the good news that these grave prophecies of ruin and destruction can be averted and man can become heir to God’s mercy instead of earning His chastisement.’

As we enter into the new year with the dream of world peace as elusive as ever, with grave tensions around the world threatening man with self-immolation, it is our sincere hope that humankind would seriously reflect and act upon this admonition even if after more than two decades since it was given.

We wish our readership a happy, peaceful and blessed 2005.

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

# Notes & Comments

Loyalty to One's Nation – An Article of the Muslim Faith

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The radical Hizb ut-Tahrir movement in Britain has held many controversial meetings where its sponsors and supporters have argued that Islamic and British identities are incompatible, and the term 'British Muslim' is an oxymoron. Long before their conference last year, they had been ostracised by mainstream Muslim communities for treating the Union Jack and British traditions with utter contempt.

However, these and similar extremist groups, adamant to polarise Muslim and Western worlds, have successfully attracted youth ready to die in what they see as a Jihad against the infidel. Indeed, some Muslims born and raised in the UK have ventured to the East with this misguided dream of 'martyrdom' in mind.

This has led to an ongoing debate in Britain about loyalty and Islam. Can Muslims, affected by the plight of their brethren in other parts of the world, be justified in combating soldiers from their own country, serving their own Government?

Islam places great emphasis on the spiritual kinship between all Muslims, irrespective of denomination and nationality. The strength of fraternity in the *Ummah*, or body of Muslims globally, is a testament to their profound love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>. However, the Qur'an also deems obedience to one's Government – whether it is Muslim or not – as a religious duty (Ch 4: V.60).

The question arises, then, how Muslims can balance both commitments, particularly when

their own country is at war with fellow believers. It is not the first time Muslims have faced this dilemma. But whilst many intellectuals throughout Islamic history have attempted to address this issue, only the name of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>, an unrivalled inspiration in Muslim scholarship, stands out.

Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>, who lived under British rule in India and is today regarded by millions as the Messiah of Islam, was instrumental in enlightening Muslims on the principle of loyalty. Notwithstanding the ills of colonialism, he observed there were many virtues of Queen Victoria's reign, one being its guarantee of freedom of faith. 'The life, property and honour of Muslims are safe,' wrote Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> in his paper *British Government and Jihad*. 'We live under the protection of a peaceful and kind Government which has never shown any religious prejudice.' He elucidated the illegality in Islam of defying such an authority – even if it clashed

**'A true Muslim can never raise his voice in hatred against his fellow citizens, nor for that matter against the ruling authority or Government of the time. It is the responsibility of a true Muslim that he should remain loyal and fully abide by the laws of the land of which he is a subject.'**

*Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad*

with Muslim nations. Although Muslims may question the state's policies, they are duty-bound to comply. Disagreement is one thing, disobedience quite another.

Contrast the call for Jihad by the present-day cults – thirsty for the blood of their own protectors – to the example of the first Muslims in Makkah. It should be remembered that for the first thirteen years of his ministry, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was a persecuted citizen in his own city. Not only were his teachings ridiculed, they resulted in physical torture for

anyone that joined him. Even as the Makkah tyrants dispossessed them of their properties – forcing a mass migration to Madinah – the Muslims’ response remained that of patience. It was only when the persecutors decided to launch a dedicated campaign to terminate the new faith and its followers once and for all, that Islam became entitled to self-defence.

As Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> explained in another work *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*:

‘The Muslims had been expelled from their ancestral homes, many innocent men and women had been martyred, and still the wrongdoers were not prepared to restrain themselves, and continuously obstructed the progress of Islam. In these circumstances the divine law of security demanded the safeguarding of the persecuted ones against total destruction. The Prophet’s wars were directed towards rooting out the mischief of

those who were bent upon murder. If Islam had not had recourse to measures of self-defence, thousands of innocent women and children would have been slaughtered and an end would have been put to Islam.’

Can Muslims anywhere today claim to suffer the same plight to the same degree as the early believers, for any retaliation their part to be justified?

Clearly, Muslims who enjoy the liberty to practice and preach their faith are required to honour the government of their country and to live as decent, law-abiding citizens. As the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> said: ‘One who is not grateful to people is not grateful to Allah’”

It is in this spirit that Ahmadi Muslims around the world proudly raise their national flags at many gatherings, as witnessed in October 2003 when they hoisted the Union flag at the opening of Western Europe’s largest mosque in Morden, Surrey, UK. On that occasion,

the present worldwide Ahmadiyya head, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, pointed out:

‘A true Muslim can never raise his voice in hatred against his fellow citizens, nor for that matter against the ruling authority or Government of the time. It is the responsibility of a true Muslim that he should remain loyal and fully abide by the laws of the land of which he is a subject.’

This is a Community which upholds the banner and timely message *Love for All, Hatred for None*. Ahmadi Muslims, in particular, consider it a religious responsibility to make a positive contribution to their country. Many have led the way and found this possible only through active community participation. Not only will this enable Muslims to fulfil their duties as citizens, it should help to promote a greater appreciation of Islam among the indigenous population.

For Muslims, assimilation should come naturally, not least because the celebration of diversity was originated by Islam itself. When the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> won the hearts and minds of Arabia, he created a single and unified but ideologically diverse state that removed local tribal prejudices and ensured a healthy integration of rich and poor, black and white, people of different languages and dialects, those belonging to various cultures and indeed faiths.

Evidently, being faithful to a government that ensures religious freedom and tolerance constitutes an important article of Islamic faith. The peace of any civilized nation also depends on upholding these precious values. The sooner the militants change and step into line, the better.

*by Waqar Ahmad Ahmedi – UK*

# ALLAH the Exalted

(Part 6)

This series sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET<sup>(sa)</sup> 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 Sahib, Allah have mercy on him and reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Allah be pleased with him and is quoted from *The Essence of Islam*, Volume 1. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.

*From the Writings of the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>*

It is well-established that of the objects that are visible in the universe, none is indispensable. For instance, the earth is spherical and according to the estimate of some, its diameter is approximately eight thousand miles, but there is no firm reason why this shape and this bulk should be essential for it, and why is it not permissible that it should be of greater or lesser bulk or should have a different shape. From this it follows that this shape and bulk, the combination of which constitutes existence, are not essential for the earth.

In the same way, the existence and continuation of all things is dispensable. Besides, in many cases circumstances come into operation which threaten the continuation of certain things and yet they are not wiped out. For instance, despite severe famines and epidemics from the very beginning all through, the seed of everything has always survived, while reason permits, indeed it demands, that on account of thousands of hardships and calamities which have afflicted the world from the beginning, it should have happened sometime that in consequence of severe



famines, corn which provides sustenance for humanity should have become unavailable, or through the severity of epidemics the human species should have disappeared, or some species of animals should have been wiped out, or the machinery of the sun or the moon might have gone out of order, or of numberless other things which are necessary for the proper working of the universe, something might have got out of order. It is contrary to expectation that millions of things should escape disorder and disruption and should not become victims of calamity.

In conclusion, such things whose existence and continuation are not essential in their own right, and whose going out of order is more of a possibility than their continuation, and their suffering no decline and their coming into being and continuing in an orderly way, and the continued availability of billions of things needed in the universe, are a clear proof that for all of them there is a Bestower of life, Protector and Sustainer, Who



**The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>.**

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup>. 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.

combines the perfect attributes in Himself. That is to say, He is the Controller, the Wise, the Gracious, the Compassionate, Eternal and Ever-Living, free from every defect, not subject to

death or destruction and even free from slumber and sleep which have a resemblance to death.

He is the Being Who combines in Himself all perfect attributes, Who brought into being the universe with perfect wisdom and appropriateness and chose its existence in preference to non-existence. He alone, on account of His perfection and His creation and His *Rahimiyat*, and His Self-Existence and Self-Sustenance, is worthy of worship.

This above is the translation of this part of the verse:

*Allah – there is no God but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth.*

(Ch.2: V.256)

It should be observed with what nicety, dignity, and wisdom has the Holy Qur'an in this verse put forth the reasoning in support of the existence of the Creator of the

universe and in how few words vast meanings and wise points have been comprehended. For everything in the heavens and earth it has established by firm reasoning the existence of a Creator possessing perfect attributes in words whose excellence and comprehensiveness have not been equalled by anything said by a philosopher.

The philosophers of defective intelligence have not been able to appreciate that souls and bodies were created and are not eternal, and have remained unaware that true life and true existence and true sustenance belong only to God. This deep understanding can only be learnt from the verse in which it is stated that true life and eternal existence belong only to Allah Who combines all perfect attributes in Himself. Except Him, nothing else enjoys true existence and true sustenance. This very thing has been presented as an argument for the need of a Creator of the universe and it is affirmed:

*To Him belongs whatsoever is*

*in the heavens and the earth.*  
(Ch.2: V.256)

That is to say, that as the universe possesses neither true existence nor true sustenance, it necessarily needs a cause through which life is obtained and is sustained. It is also necessary that that should be comprehensive of all perfect attributes and should control the universe by His will and should be Wise and should know the unseen and that is Allah.

In the idiom of the Holy Qur'an, Allah is the name of the Being Who is comprehensive of all perfect excellences. That is why in the Holy Qur'an the name Allah is described as comprehensive of all perfect attributes and at various places it is stated that Allah is He Who is Lord of the worlds and is Gracious and Merciful and controls the universe by His will, is Wise, Knower of the unseen and All-Powerful and is Eternal and Ever-Existing, etc. It is well established that in the idiom of the Holy Qur'an, Allah is the name of the Being Who is comprehensive of all perfect

attributes. That is why this verse begins with the name of Allah and proceeds:

*Allah – there is no God but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining.*  
(Ch.2: V.256)

That is to say that the Sustainer of this transitory universe is a Being Who is comprehensive of all excellences.

This is an indication that it is a wrong notion that in this universe, which exhibits such perfect orderliness, some things can be the originating cause of others. On the contrary, for this wise project a Creator is needed Who should exercise control by His will and should be Wise and All-Knowing and Merciful and Immortal and should be comprehensive of all perfect attributes. It is Allah alone Who possesses perfection in His Being.

After establishing the existence of the Creator of the universe, it was necessary to impress upon a seeker after truth that that

Creator is free from every kind of association. This was indicated by:

*Say, 'He is Allah, the One; Allah, the Independent and Besought of all. He begets not nor is he begotten; and there is none like unto Him.'*

(Ch.112: Vs.2-5)

It should be observed how concisely in this brief statement the Being of the Creator has been shown to be free from every kind of association. Association can be of four types. It could be in respect of number or rank or descent or action and effect. In these verses, it has been declared that God is free from association of all these types and it has been made clear that He is the One in number and is not two or three, that He is unique in His rank of being the Besought of all and He alone is Self-Existing while everything else is mortal and is ever dependent upon Him. He has no son who can claim to be His partner and no father to share His power. No one can be His

equal in His works so that no one can claim partnership with Him on this account. Thus, it has been made clear that God Almighty is free from association of any of the four types and is One, without associate.

Then the Holy Qur'an sets forth an argument in support of His being One, without associate, by stating:

*If there had been in both the heavens and the earth gods other than Allah, then both the heavens and the earth would have ended up in chaos.*

(Ch.21:V.23)

*Allah has not taken unto Himself any son, nor is there any other god along with Him; in that case each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would surely have dominated over others.*

(Ch.23:V.92)

This means that there been a plurality of gods they would

acted against each other and their differences would have corrupted the universe. Each one of them would have worked for the welfare of his own creation and for whose comfort, he would have considered it permissible to destroy others, which would also have created great corruption.

Then it is stated:

*Say, 'Call on those whom you think to be gods beside Him; then you will know that they have no power to remove affliction from you or to avert it.'*

(Ch.17: V.57)

This means that those who deny the existence of God are told that now that they are being pressed hard by the arguments in support of Islam and its glory and power, they should call for help on those whom they claim to be the associates of God. They will then know that they will not be able to remove any affliction from them, nor to bring about any change favourable to them.

The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> is directed to challenge the pagans, to call their associate gods to help them against the Holy Prophet and to give him no respite and that he should tell them that his Supporter and Helper is the God Who has revealed the Qur'an to him and that He provides for the success of His true and righteous Messenger but that those upon whom you seek help are neither able to help you nor can they help themselves.

Then the Holy Qur'an proceeds to establish through the law of nature that God is free from every defect and shortcoming:

*The seven heavens and the earth and those that are therein extol His glory; and there is not a thing but glorifies Him with His praise; but you do not understand their glorification.*

(Ch.17: V.45)

This means that reflection upon the heavens and the earth would show that God is Perfect and Holy and is without sons or

associates, but that this would be realised only by those who possess understanding. It is also stated:

*They say, 'Allah has taken unto Him a son.' Holy is He! He is Self-Sufficient. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you say against Allah what you know not? (Ch.10: V.69)*

This means that to be dependent upon a son is a deficiency and God is free from every deficiency. He is Self-Sufficient and Independent, Who needs no one. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Do you charge Him with something of which you have no knowledge? Why should He be dependent upon sons? He is Perfect and is alone Sufficient to carry out the obligations of Godhead and needs no other instrument.

Some people say God has daughters whereas He is free from all these deficiencies.

*What! For you the males and for Him the females! That indeed is an unfair division. (Ch.53: Vs.22-23)*

*O ye men, worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you, that you may become righteous; Who made the earth a bed for you, and the heaven a roof, and caused water to come down from the clouds and therewith brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Set not up, therefore, equals to Allah, while you know. (Ch.2: Vs.22-23)*

*And He it is Who is God in heaven and God on earth. (Ch.43: V.85)*

*He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden. (Ch.57: V.4)*

*Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. (Ch.6: V.104)*

He is the Creator of everything and nothing is like unto Him. It is a clear argument in support of His being the Creator, that He has created everything according to a measure and has fixed its parameter limits (Ch.25: V.3), which proves the existence of the Measurer and Limiter. He is proved worthy of All Praise and is the only true Benefactor in this world and the next. All command belongs to Him and everything returns to Him.

God will forgive every sin for whomsoever He wills, but He will not forgive *Shirk* – associating anything with Him. (Ch.4: V.49).

*Let him who hopes to meet his Lord do good deeds and let him join no one in the worship of his Lord.*  
(Ch.18: V.111)

*Associate not partners with Allah. Surely associating partners with God is a grievous wrong.*  
(Ch.31: V.14)

*And call not on any other god beside Allah. There is no God but He. Everything will perish except Himself. His is the judgement, and to Him will you be brought back.*  
(Ch.28: V.89)

[*Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in*, Vol. 1, pp. 493-499, sub-footnote 3).

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A speech delivered in 1982 by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV<sup>(ru)</sup> in Zurich where he admonishes that by carrying out a change in ourselves we can save ourselves from destruction.

## *A Message* *of* HOPE

(Part 1)



**M**an's past and present, and his present and future are inter-related and are thus links of the same chain. As his past influences his present, his present reveals indications of his future which are discernible only by those gifted with far-sightedness. Yet, as the future progressively approaches the present, these indications become clearer so that the whole world is able to perceive them.

As we strive to peep into the future of man, basing ourselves on his present, we are confronted with a terrible prospect. We

perceive clearly that today's man is rushing forward towards self-destruction and appears to be bent on collective universal suicide.

Today, when we are approaching the end of the twentieth century with its aircraft, nuclear armaments and the hydrogen bomb, it requires no extraordinary degree of intelligence or keen perception to conclude that man is threatened with self-immolation. But as long ago as the beginning of the seventh century when human imagination could have had no



conception of today's conditions, nor could anyone have conceived the possibility of the development of such fearful instruments of destruction, the Holy Qur'an announced:

*We call to witness the passage of time that surely man progressively suffers loss.*  
(Ch.103:Vs.2-3)

In these brief but comprehensive verses Allah, the Exalted, cites the present age as a sure witness that man is progressively advancing towards loss and thus indicates that today's man is preparing means of his own destruction in consequence of which humanity would arrive at a terrifying end.

To presage in the distant past that of which there could have been no conception at the time and which is confirmed centuries later is sure proof that this witness of the Holy Qur'an is not mere chance nor is it the boast of a soothsayer or an astrologer but is a grave warning on behalf of the Being Who is All-Knowing

and All-Aware, Whose vision comprehends past, present and future. Today this warning is strongly reinforced by clear and solid scientific evidence.

This is not all. That All-Knowing and All-Aware Being, has set forth along with this warning the basic laws and principles governing human life and human culture and has indicated the courses which lead human society towards loss. It also points out the ways by treading along which human society may safeguard itself against loss and ruin.

One of these basic laws is that no people are confronted with ruin and destruction until after the appearance of a Divine Warner who admonishes them and dissuades them from pursuing destructive courses and calls them to righteousness. Such a one uncovers the dark aspects of social tendencies and guides people towards light and brightness so that every observing eye may behold the reality and every believing heart may accept the eternal verities.

This basic law conclusively establishes that despite factors predicating destruction and strong fears of ruin there exists the possibility that if man should so desire and become firmly determined this dreadful prospect could be averted. But the decision that today's man desires to save himself, that he wishes to convert darkness into light, disorder into security, and fear into peace of mind, must be made by man himself. The choice is his. In other words, man has the power to make or mar his future. This is indicated by the Holy Qur'an:

*Surely Allah would not bring about a change in the condition of a people until they carry out a change in themselves.*

(Ch13:V.12)

This is not a matter of irrevocable Divine decree which has been determined in heaven. This is a matter which relates to man himself and is within his own choice. It is something which he has to determine for

himself upon his earth. The ball is, so to speak, in man's own court. If he so desires he can still bring about a change in his own circumstances and can embark upon a journey towards guidance, light, success and prosperity. But it must be remembered that little time is left; the goal is far distant and the journey is long. If man desires to save himself, safeguard himself and his future generations against ruin and destruction, rescue himself from the whirlpools of uncertainties, wild fancies and baseless fears and seeks to achieve the joys and delights of certainty and faith, he must hasten towards adopting his new course of conduct.

Of the factors that can operate towards safeguarding man against loss, a basic and important one is that the concept of absolute justice must be universally accepted, adopted and put into effect. It should override all relative considerations and must be given effect to in all conditions and circumstances. We should not

pay mere lip service to it. Its effective adoption is the first and basic condition for the establishment of peace and security in all human relationships. This concept of absolute justice should completely be above distinctions of caste, colour, creed and culture. Black and white, western and eastern, Christian and Jew, Muslim and non-Muslim must be accorded absolute justice in all conditions and whatever circumstances.

Any stage in which such a system of justice is not zealously maintained but is replaced by a standard of justice which is relative and is influenced by considerations of loss or benefit is bound, sooner or later, to slither into decline and fall. Such a partial and relative standard of justice generates dissatisfaction, disorder and insecurity which ultimately spells ruin.

This is the testimony of ages. Allah, the Exalted, cites this testimony and admonishes today's man to take steps to

safeguard himself against that which threatens his future. At the same time the Holy Qur'an sets forth a system of the administration of justice which is free from any distinction of caste, colour or creed and disregards all political and geographical boundaries.

In this context, Islam prescribes the following fundamental principles:

*(Allah commands you that when you are called upon to judge between the people, you do it with justice.*

(Ch.4:V.59)

*(Allah has enjoined that when you speak, observe justice even though the person concerned may be a kinsman.*

(Ch.6:V.153)

*Allah enjoins equity and benevolence and graciousness as between kindred.*

(Ch.16:V.91)

Another fundamental factor in

the due administration of justice and the peaceful settlement of disputes is the bearing of true witness. This is the factor upon which the structure of justice is raised. In this context the Holy Qur'an has laid down the following principles:

*Witnesses should not refuse to testify when they are called upon to do so.*  
(Ch.2:V.283)

*Conceal not testimony; and whoever conceals it makes his heart certainly sinful.*  
(Ch.2:V.284)

*Be strict in observing justice and bear witness only for the sake of Allah, even if it be against your own selves or against parents or kindred.*  
(Ch.4:V.136)

If according to strict justice a person should be found entitled to something and he should, out of benevolence and goodwill and for the purpose of winning Allah's pleasure, voluntarily forego a portion of that to which

he is entitled, such conduct would promote an atmosphere of general goodwill and righteousness in society. Among the characteristics of believers, the Holy Qur'an has mentioned that they control their tempers when they are roused and exercise forbearance towards their fellow beings.

(Ch.3:V.135).

Islam seeks to establish so high a concept of justice that it has safeguarded the rights even of offenders and enemies. In such juxtaposition, when human nature is inclined vengefully, Islam seeks to restrain that tendency. For instance, we are admonished:

*Whoso transgresses against you, you may exact retribution from him in proportion to his transgression, and in doing so be mindful of your duty to Allah and remember that Allah is with those who are mindful of their obligations to Him.*  
(Ch.2:V.195)

Further, there is the direction:

*Fight in the cause of Allah only those who fight against you, but transgress not. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors. (Ch.2:V.191)*

In the context of regulating international relations smoothly and maintaining universal peace, the Holy Qur'an lays down that in the settlement of international differences and disputes the same standards of justice, righteousness and the fear of God should be maintained as an individual would desire to maintain in his own dealings with his fellow beings and no discrimination should be made between allies and opponents. It is said:

*O ye who believe, be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity. Let not a people's enmity towards you incite you to act contrary to justice; be always just, that is closest to righteousness. (Ch.5:V.9)*

For the purpose of lasting settlement of international disputes and the maintenance of international peace, the Holy Qur'an has prescribed as follows:

- (a) Should differences arise between two states, other states should exert themselves to bring about a settlement of the differences;
- (b) Should a settlement not be reached all other states should propose a just settlement and seek to persuade both parties to the dispute to accept it and carry it into effect;
- (c) If the proposed settlement is not accepted by one party to the dispute, or a party after having signified acceptance of the proposed settlement should fail to carry it into effect, all other states should join in fighting the recalcitrant state in order to compel it to accept and carry into effect the proposed settlement;

(d) When in consequence of pressure or of fighting, the state in default agrees to fall into line, the proposed settlement of the original difference should be carried into effect and none of the intervening states should seek to derive any benefit for themselves out of the situation, for any such attempt would lay the foundation of fresh disputes (Ch.49:V.10).

If the United Nations Organisation and the great powers were to follow sincerely these directions laid down in the Holy Qur'an international peace would be made secure universally.

Specifying the basic causes of international entanglements, the Holy Qur'an condemns economic exploitation of weaker people by stronger ones. It directs:

*Do not look covetously upon that which We have bestowed upon certain sections for a*

*brief enjoyment of the embellishments of worldly life, that We may try them thereby.*

(Ch.20:V.132)

Another cause of international differences is the superiority complex of some of the advanced nations in consequence of which they look down upon other people and resent them. The Holy Qur'an condemns such an attitude and directs:

*Let no people deride another people, haply they may be better than themselves.*

(Ch.49:V.12)

This is the teaching which seeks to eliminate all discrimination on the basis of colour, race and creed and puts to an end to non-beneficent alliances and pacts and replaces them with alliances devoted to the promotion of positive values. For instance, we are directed:

*Co-operate with one another for the promotion of piety and rectitude.(Ch.5:V.3)*

Islam aims at converting the human race into a single people which should be devoted to the upholding of the true and real Unity of the Divine. It is only by the free acceptance of this system of absolute justice and by giving effect to it that human society can flourish in an atmosphere of mutual love and brotherhood wherein everyone big and small, rich or poor, man or woman can flourish and survive in the full enjoyment of his or her personality and individuality. It is only in such a society that everyone would be assured of his full rights and no one would seek for another that which he would not desire for himself.

But if among any people or at the international level such a standard of justice does not prevail and is not maintained, all higher values like mutual goodwill, piety, beneficence and good behaviour gradually fall into a decline and are replaced by selfishness, meanness and partisanship.

The Holy Qur'an sets forth this basic principle of spiritual rise and fall in the following manner:

*We have endowed man with every type of faculty and capacity (to aid him in his spiritual progress) and have instructed him in the ways of guidance as well as of error, yet alas he attempts not the scaling of the height. What is the scaling of the height? It is the freeing of a bondman, it is the feeding of and providing for an orphan or a poor person lying in the dust and to be of those who believe and exhort one another to steadfastness and to the exercise of compassion.*  
(Ch.90:Vs.9-18)

When the system of absolute justice prescribed by Islam is established among a people the hearts of its individuals are surcharged with such a fountain of true sympathy and compassion for their fellow beings as cannot be confined within any limits and to which no strings are attached. Such a people set out on the path

of spiritual progress. Its members seek to wipe out slavery from the world, whether it is slavery that was current in the ancient days, when people were subjugated by force, and, having been subdued, their individuals were enslaved and were sold in the markets, or it is slavery operating today, in which poorer and less developed people are reduced into a condition of bondage through the system of conditional economic aid, which is aimed at establishing and maintaining economic or political domination over weaker peoples. They seek to abolish poverty from the world; they feed the hungry and do not seek to exploit poverty or hunger for their own benefit. They help people because of their need and do not employ economic aid or the supply of food as a weapon for promoting their own interest. A people desirous of spiritual progress do not embark upon barbarous bombardment of unarmed civilians in Vietnam for safeguarding their own interests, nor do they conspire to establish the state of Israel in the Middle

East for the purpose of subordinating the Arab people, nor do such people seek to maintain their dominance over Poland by suppressing the struggle of the workers for their freedom, nor do they send their forces into Afghanistan for the purpose of extending their hegemony over South Asia.

These are some of the instances of the employment of economic aid as a weapon for the furthering of national purposes rather than for the betterment of poorer people. The true purpose in such cases is not to help an oppressed people but strengthen one's allies through every means whether proper or improper. The moment a dependent people begin to seek freedom from dependence, they are deprived of all further aid.

As a contrast to all this the Holy Qur'an directs:

*Render not vain your charity  
by reproaches or injury.*  
(Ch.2:V.265)



This means that people seeking spiritual progress do not seek to impress the recipients of their beneficence with their own goodness. They do not employ their own wealth and power for the purpose of continuing their domination over poorer people or for the purpose of subduing them. Their efforts towards the wiping out of bondage of every description and towards the removal of want and hunger are divorced altogether from their personal or national interest. They have a natural eagerness for compassing their true purposes; they strive for them and urge others to do so purely for the sake of winning the pleasure of their Maker and are in consequence blessed with His mercy and His grace.

In Ch.103:Vs.2-3, the Holy Qur'an has drawn attention to the principle that when a society is afflicted with injustice and wrongdoing, it is bound to suffer loss. But today's society is not afflicted with only one disorder. Today, humanity is afflicted with such numerous ills as are rapidly uprooting its foundations, in

consequence of which humanity, having been deprived of serenity and peace of mind, has become submerged in the slough of despond and is advancing every moment towards ruin.

Shakespeare, through Hamlet's mouth, has given expression to a sense of frustration in the words:

'The time is out of joint; O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right!'

We do not employ Shakespeare's language and do not give expression to any sense of frustration. We affirm that we have been brought into being to set the time right and rescue humanity from ruin and destruction. We claim that if the world will listen to us and will sincerely accept that to which we invite it, the dangers that threaten it would be averted. We have been raised for the purpose of pointing out the way treading along which humanity can safeguard itself against the terrifying end that threatens it and this world can become a

region of peace, security, comfort, joy and delight. We desire intensely that we may be blessed with success in this effort and we are determined that we shall be ready and prepared to sacrifice our all in this struggle, and even if we are put an end to in the course of it we would deem it a great good fortune for ourselves.

When we say that we have been raised for this purpose, we do so in accord with the principle set out in the Holy Qur'an that before a people is confronted with destruction and ruin Allah, the Exalted, sends a Warner who warns them in good time of the ruin towards which they are being impelled in consequence of their misdeeds and guides them towards the path of success and prosperity.

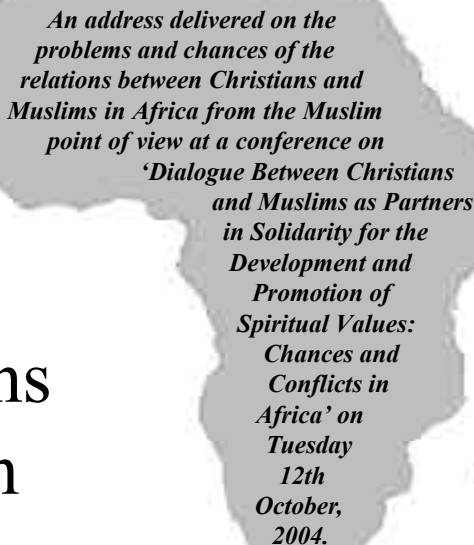
In accord with this basic divine principle Allah, the Exalted, sent a Warner in this age also and assured him that He would make his truth manifest through powerful assaults. Out of a deeply moved and disturbed

heart this Divine Warner admonished humanity in the light of the knowledge vouchsafed to him by Allah, the All-Knowing and All-Aware, and in prose and verse set forth in advance that which was approaching.

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# Problems and Chances of the Relations between Christians and Muslims in Africa



*An address delivered on the  
problems and chances of the  
relations between Christians and  
Muslims in Africa from the Muslim  
point of view at a conference on  
'Dialogue Between Christians  
and Muslims as Partners  
in Solidarity for the  
Development and  
Promotion of  
Spiritual Values:  
Chances and  
Conflicts in  
Africa' on  
Tuesday  
12th  
October,  
2004.*

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By Abdul Wahab Adam, Amir & Missionary In-Charge, Ahmadiyya Mission, Ghana

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Mr. Chairman,

I deem it a great honour for me personally and for the Muslim Community in Ghana to be invited to take part in this Conference of the Catholic Bishops of Africa and the Catholic Bishops of Germany.

My topic for today is 'Problems and Chances of the Relations between Christians and Muslims in Africa – from the Muslim point of view'.

Mr. Chairman, let me begin by extending to all of you the Islamic salutation of 'Peace': *Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakaatuh* – Peace be unto you and the Mercy of Allah and His blessings.

## **Pope's Call for Dialogue**

I vividly recall that when His Holiness Pope John Paul II paid a visit to Ghana, religious leaders were given the opportunity by the Catholic Church of Ghana to meet His

Holiness at the Independence Square, here in Accra.

His Holiness the Pope had three messages.

One for the Catholic Church, the other for non-Catholic Christian Churches and yet another for the non-Christian religions. Among the non-Christian religions was Islam. His Holiness in his message to Muslims, stressed the fact that both Christians and Muslims believe in the Prophet Abraham<sup>(as)</sup>. Indeed both Muslims and Christians are his children through Ishmael<sup>(as)</sup> and Isaac<sup>(as)</sup>. The Pope also said that Muslims are required to believe in the Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ<sup>(as)</sup> and also that the Holy Qur'an mentions the Mother of Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> with great respect. He then, on the basis of all these, suggested Muslim-Christian dialogue as a means of forging Christian-Muslim understanding and cooperation.

To me, if anyone required any assurance about the need for Muslim-Christian dialogue,

understanding and cooperation, that assurance had come from His Holiness, the Pontiff and Head of the Catholic Church himself.

### **Islam**

When we come to Islam, the Holy Qur'an, which constitutes a guide for all Muslims, declares in unambiguous terms that Christians are closest to Muslims.

*And thou shalt assuredly find those who say 'we are Christians,' to be the nearest of them in love to the believers.*

(Ch.5:V.83)

The Holy Qur'an gives reasons for this assertion:

*That is because amongst them are savants and monks and because they are not proud.*

(Ch.5:V.83)

Then the Holy Qur'an calls upon all adherents of religions:

*O people of the Book! Come to*

*a word which is equal between you and us – that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him. (Ch.3:V.65)*

The Holy Qur'an also appeals to adherents of all religions to cooperate in all matters that are good and in righteousness.

*And help one another in righteousness and piety; but help not one another in sin and transgression. (Ch.5: V.3)*

### **Mosque**

It is common knowledge that the Holy Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup> gladly opened the doors of his own Mosque for members of a Christian delegation to worship in it. How then, in the whole wide world, can any Muslim dare close the doors of his mosque to a Christian worshipper?

### **Mutual Respect**

In view of these clear-cut injunctions from the Holy Qur'an, the adherence of which were exemplified by the Holy Prophet

of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup>, it is beyond comprehension that Muslims and Christians, and for that matter, adherents of other religions, cannot live together in mutual respect and cooperation and indeed, as partners in development!

### **Inroads**

Christianity and Islam have made great inroads upon the African continent and the indications are that the influence of the two great religions will continue to be felt for a long time to come.

In many homes and families in this country, it is common to find members of the home or family professing one faith or another, including the Traditional African religion, and yet living at peace with one another.

Let me give you one example. While I am the Amir or Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Ghana, my late uncle's son, Rev. Nub Ben Abubakar, is the Diocesan Methodist Bishop of Kumasi. This example can be multiplied to show that co-

existence among the various faiths is not only possible but also common here.

### **Annual Conferences**

For a long time now, the Annual Conferences of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission have been enriched by the presence of representatives of other faiths who have always delivered fraternal messages tending to emphasise the ultimate aim of religion, which is to make the human being better, physically, emotionally, intellectually, morally and spiritually.

I recall that the Catholic Church has had the occasion to invite me to give a similar fraternal message at their conferences held in Kumasi, Pedu and elsewhere in Ghana.

So have representatives of the Catholic Church, including His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson, and other Christian leaders been gracious enough to honour our invitation to deliver fraternal messages at our conferences.

We can safely conclude that this country has been spared the tragedy and the trauma of the kind of religious conflict that has unfortunately claimed so many innocent lives elsewhere on this continent.

It would be seen that in Ghana, ethnic groups and families have members who subscribe to varied faiths. Yet they live together in harmony; they collaborate in decision-making for development, they strengthen and enhance social relations and even participate in their various religious festivals.

The renowned African political scientist, Prof. Ali Mazrui, in a lecture delivered in Accra on July 12, 2004, described this unique relationship as ‘the ecumenical spirit of the African.’

### **Problems**

This is not to say that there have been no problems regarding relations between Christians and Muslims in this country or on the continent of Africa. Indeed the celebrated African intellectual

was quick to add that occasionally, this religious diversity creates differentiations that are fuelled by external factors. These contribute to conflict situations that lead to violence.

Mr. Chairman, this constitutes the underlying problem that militates against harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians. Six major factors that engender such religious differentiations readily come to mind. They are fanaticism, misunderstanding, lack of respect for spiritual leaders, the concept of Jihad, political mobilisation, post September 11 developments and forced conversion.

### **Fanaticism**

Fanaticism is the first. This phenomenon is the excessive belief in the rightness of one's cause to the exclusion of all others. To the fanatic, the other belief systems do not exist and even if they exist at all, they are inconsequential. Such systems, must of necessity, be eliminated for his own to predominate.

Such a psychological frame of mind predisposes the fanatic to be intolerant of other religions. To him, cooperation with adherents of religions not his own, is an anathema. To him, people of other religions are irrelevant in his global view. 'Cleansing' them from the society finds justification from his scripture.

In many parts of Africa, both in Islam and Christianity, there has not been a shortage of fanatics, whose utterances and actions have constantly undermined co-operation between believers of these two religions.

It is important that we keep an eye on such religious fanatics and take steps through education, to curb their excesses.

The 4th Successor to the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has this to say on salvation:

'The question of salvation, howsoever innocent it may

appear to be on the face of it, is potent in its danger to peace in the religious world.

It is one thing for a religion to declare that those who seek to be redeemed from Satan and attain salvation should rush to the safe haven of that religion; it is there that they will find salvation and eternal liberation from sin. But it is quite another thing for the same religion to declare in the next breath that those who do not come hither to seek refuge will be damned eternally one and all. Whatever they do to please God, however much they love their Creator and His creation, however much they lead a life of purity and piety, they would most certainly be condemned to an everlasting fire...

Unfortunately this seems to be the attitude of the clergy of almost all religions of the world against those who do not conform to their faith.’  
*(Islam’s Response to*

*Contemporary Issues, pp.23-24)*

According to the Holy Qur’an, salvation cannot be monopolised by any single religion of the world.

The Holy Qur’an makes this clear:

*Surely, those who have believed, and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians – Whoso believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds, on them shall come no fear nor shall they grieve.*  
(Ch.5:V.70)

### **Misunderstanding**

But there can also be plain misunderstanding. For example, again and again, Muslims have stressed that their religion is Islam and not Muhammadanism, and that they are Muslims and not Muhammadans. Yet, even among some enlightened Christians, this error persists. Muslims worship Allah directly and not through the Holy Prophet



Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>. Indeed, Muslims are enjoined to pray for the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> anytime his name is mentioned, just as Muslims would say a short prayer for other prophets of Allah.

Muslims have great reverence for Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> and his mother, Mary. One chapter of the Holy Qur'an is named after her. Several verses of the Holy Qur'an testify to her piety, chastity, truthfulness and her high spiritual status. Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> is treated with great respect.

Indeed when His Holiness Pope John Paul II made reference to the reverence that Islam has for Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> and his mother, he was referring to the momentous positions taken by the Catholic Church at the Vatican Council I and II: the admission that Islam reveres Jesus Christ<sup>(sa)</sup> and his mother, Mary.

The question is, is the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>, the Prophet of Islam, treated with the same respect and reverence with which Muslims treat Jesus Christ<sup>(sa)</sup> and his mother?

There is also the wrong notion that Islam was spread at the point of the sword. The surprising thing is, no-one tries to explain how the very large Muslim population of Indonesia came into being when no Muslim armies had invaded that vast country!

It has to be admitted that some of the problems that have characterised the relations between Christians and Muslims in Africa have been caused by Muslims. Ignorance of Christian doctrine, blind fanaticism, over zealotry, misinterpretation of the actual import of Qur'anic teachings and appeals to dubious sayings and actions attributed to the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> of Islam have created friction that has sometimes led to blood-letting where there should be peaceful co-existence. *Jihad* is an example.

The term '*Jihad*' is simply translated as Holy War, an aggressive war waged by Muslims against non-Muslims! This is not correct.

The Holy Qur'an makes this clear:

*Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made because they have been wronged – and Allah indeed has power to help them.*  
(Ch.22:V.40)

The subsequent verse clarifies further the nature of the wrong done. It states:

*Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah'.*  
(Ch.22:V.41)

The historical context should not be overlooked under any circumstance.

In that same verse, another case is made for fighting.

*And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft*

*commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed, Powerful, Mighty.* (Ch.22:V.41)

These verses from the Holy Qur'an unequivocally establish that there are only three types of war in Islam. They are:

1. Those undertaken in self defence.
2. Those undertaken as chastisement against aggression.
3. Those undertaken for the establishment of freedom of religion and conscience

Islam teaches its followers to bear in mind the fact that *there should be no compulsion in religion.*  
(Ch.2:V.257)

It is a fact that coercion can only produce hypocrites, not true worshippers. The sword can only bend heads but cannot win hearts. So it is inconceivable that Islam would urge its followers to

compel others, on the point of the sword, to become Muslims.

As shown from the Qur'anic verses, by freedom of religion is meant not only the freedom to accept Islam, but also freedom to accept any other religion. It is also clear that the protection of places of worship, which is enjoined by the Holy Qur'an on Muslims, extends to synagogues, cloisters and churches. Indeed mosques are the last to be mentioned in the verse of the Holy Qur'an.

I want to assure you that mere brutal fighting is opposed to the whole spirit of *Jihad*. The scholar's pen or the preacher's voice or the wealthy man's charity are said to be the most valuable forms of *Jihad*.

### **Political Mobilisation**

The fourth impediment to Christian-Muslim cooperation is religious mobilisation for political objectives. Some social scientists have opined that religion has been the source of conflicts. According to this

thesis, many conflicts have religion as the underlying factor; and while it is very tempting to conclude that the initial conflicts have resulted in a cycle of violence that has hardened memories of hate in religious communities, the reality is that no true religion advocates violence.

The history of prophets is there for all to see. This history bears testimony to the fact that it is they, the prophets and their followers, who are persecuted and tortured by disbelievers and not the other way round. How then can anybody honestly suggest that religion breeds hate and conflict?

The semblance of religion's involvement in conflicts is attributed to the fact that it is religious sentiments that have been mobilised and exploited by unscrupulous politicians to achieve their selfish goals. Under such scenarios, those who dissent and question the religious basis of politicians' actions are branded as traitors who deserve

to be silenced, tortured and even killed.

Another dimension to political mobilisation of religious sentiments has to do with power relations and allocation of national resources. More often than not, in many countries of the world, where the majority of the elite, who wield political power, belong to either Islam or Christianity, invariably, empirical evidence supports the view, that they formulate and implement policies aimed at empowering members of their religion at the expense of the others.

Ironically, while they do this, in the name of their religion, they deliberately gloss over their own religious teaching that they should be honest and just to all people because all of them are children of God. Again, they close their hearts and minds to another equally important religious teaching that we must wish for others what we wish for ourselves.

What happened in places like Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Bosnia, Iraq and South Africa under the obnoxious apartheid regime, to mention but a few, and currently in Sudan, is a typical manifestation of exploitation of religion to advance the political interest of the ruling elite.

### **Post September 11 Developments**

The fifth factor is external. The end of the Cold War has given rise to the view in the West that postulates that, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Islam is the next adversary to Western and, therefore, Christian civilisation. Post September 11, 2001, has aggravated this view. Islam is being equated with terrorism. Some Christian groups see this as an opportunity to wage a 'crusade' against Islam. This battle is not being fought with conventional, chemical or biological weapons. Central in the armoury is propaganda through mass media.

For us in Africa, the fallout from this propaganda war is the creation of tension between Muslims and Christians. We have become not only proxies but also pawns in this war. Where the tensions lead to violence, it is our own people who become victims. Infrastructure is destroyed and the clock of development is turned back.

There is a lot that can be gained from close collaboration between Muslims and Christians in Africa. Harmonious relationships are moral and spiritual imperatives for adherents of all faiths. Besides, our collective efforts, properly harnessed, can create a congenial environment for our children to live in peace, in spite of the diversity of their religious beliefs.

But there is a challenge. The challenge is for the leadership of the two religions to emphasise the noble virtues that are common to all religions. Our differences in beliefs must be regarded as differences of opinion of family members.

Besides, teachers of our religions must educate our members to eschew the tendency of seeing people of other faiths as unworthy of any share in the national cake when they are in positions of trust and decision-making.

### **Forced Conversions**

Our educational institutions should be used to foster harmony without any attempt to use such educational facilities for the purpose of forced conversion. It will interest you to know that both the former and the present Moderators of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana are products of the T.I. Ahmadiyya Secondary School in Kumasi, here in Ghana. To balance the equation, I must say that I am also a product of the Methodist School of Brofoyedru, in the Adansi District of Ashanti, also in Ghana.

If we are to cement ties between Christianity and Islam, nothing can be more effective than that leaders of our respective religions initiate projects that

should be executed jointly by their followers. By so doing, they would be breaking whatever barriers that inhibit their desire to partner each other for their collective development.

Revered Chairman, here in Ghana, some conscious efforts have been made in this direction and it must be pointed out that it started with sincere collaboration between the Catholic Church and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission.

It was in Kumasi in the 1980's that after a symposium organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission and addressed by representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, emphasis was placed on the commonalities between all these major religions. There and then, an idea to set up a Council of Religions was mooted.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter Akwasi Sarpong, Archbishop of Kumasi, through Rev. Fr. Lefirink, of blessed memory, and I worked together and encouraged representatives of other faiths to

join hands in creating inter-religious peace in this country. The effort was blessed with the birth of the Forum of Religious Bodies which has finally culminated in the formal inauguration by His Excellency the President of Ghana of GCRP (Ghana Conference of Religions for Peace).

As if to show appreciation for what the Catholic Church and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission have done for inter-religious harmony in this country, religious bodies in this country met and graciously elected His Eminence Peter Cardinal Appiah Turkson, as Chairman and my humble self as Vice Chairman for GCRP for a period of one year, after the expiration of which term, there will be fresh elections, Insha'Allah – if Allah permits.

The Cardinal, I must say, is a fine man, highly polished, respectful, tolerant and fully committed to Christian-Muslim dialogue. He inspires great confidence in religious circles of this country.

## **Conclusion**

We must be thankful to the Almighty for this development, for Ghana is one of the few countries in the world where leaders of various religions do sit together to discuss matters affecting the nation, sign joint pastoral letters and speak to the entire nation with one voice.

It is in Ghana that by the grace of the Almighty, leaders of various religions have met to formulate together policies on the fight against HIV/AIDS and called for com-*passion* towards those living with HIV/AIDS.

It is in Ghana that religious organisations lend credibility to Presidential and Parliamentary elections by jointly observing such elections after which they prepare reports on their findings.

Revered Chairman, it is agreed on all hands that the relative peace that we enjoy in Ghana today, which is so crucial for development, can be attributed to religious tolerance that Christians and Muslims have consciously

cultivated and promoted in this country.

It is important that our two religious communities appreciate the value of what we have achieved, through the sheer grace of the Almighty, in the area of inter-religious harmony, mutual respect and cooperation and hold fast to it.

We have every right to congratulate one another for this. We need to glorify God and give thanks to Him for His favours upon us. We also need to constantly remind ourselves of this precious gift of God and jealously safeguard it.

It is our sincere prayer to the only Power Who not only listens to prayer but also accepts it, to accept, out of His grace, our humble supplications. Amen.

Thank you and I wish you most successful deliberations.

# Christian Muslim

## *Dialogue and Criticism*

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By Mansoor Ahmed Shah, UK

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**M**an is a gregarious animal and communicates with other men. In the beginning, people lived in small families and tribes and shared values and beliefs. Individuals either abandoned their views under pressure from the mighty or the majority or separated from the family or tribe to live as hermits or form new alliances. Societies began to come into contact with other societies and as with individuals differences began to manifest themselves.

It is strange that when it comes to trade and industry, science and education, health and food, freedom and human rights, democracy and politics, and to some extent concern for the environment, there is a freer acceptance of the unfamiliar but when ideologies and beliefs are involved, there is resistance. Is this because those who are put in charge of such competing ideologies and beliefs do not understand their own ways and as a result their own

rigidities dictate zero-tolerance? Or, is it ignorance of the other that breeds suspicion, resentment and even hatred?

Sometimes differences are resolved by mutual reconciliation and compromise on values that are common and by abandoning some dearly held principle. The story is often told of the pedant insisting that two and two is four, the extremist insisting that two and two is six and the compromiser saying: 'Let us not fight about it but agree that two and two is five.' However, history does not record very many compromises of this form. In the sphere of religion, compromise has led to the making of something more legal and acceptable, apologies and defence, catechism or talks to hold further dialogue or inter-faith participation. In its more basic form, inter-sect differences within mainstream religions have ranged from fist-banging violent debates, further divisions, boy-



cotting or ostracising the minority, to banning orders and perhaps the latest trend is the appointment of ministers of religions (while all this time we thought that the term applied only to the clergy and not some cabinet member). However, now that man lives in what is known as the global village, is there any room for ignorance and the fear of the stranger? Has the climate changed sufficiently for moderation to prevail and tolerance to flourish?

It is amazing that the people who claim that they are, arguably, the true descendants of the Patriarch Abraham, i.e. the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims, should sling so much mud at each other. In doing so they do not care whether they are attacking each other's God, the holy founder of the faith or the sensitivity of an individual. It would appear that there is no room for compromise as the misguided followers of these people of the Book (and one assumes that they are therefore learned) battle it out in twisting history, misquoting and frequently levelling criticism from which they themselves or their beliefs are by no means free.

There is plenty in Jewish literature attacking Christ<sup>(as)</sup> as an illegitimate

child and alleging that Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> and Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> borrowed their teachings from the Judaic prophets and subjecting both of them to uncouth language. Likewise, Christian writers have not refrained from attacking Judaic teaching as austere and Islam as bereft of love and repeating misrepresented events borrowed from past Christian critics. As for the so-called Muslims, their defence was book burning or drafted in an un-understandable language and came across as anti-zionist or downright blasphemy.

Blasphemy, by the way, is not a concept recognised by Islam. Its nearest equivalent is possibly the word 'calumny' but no Islamic state has the authority to punish this offence. Faiths that do recognise it as an offence curtail the freedom of speech and conscience and cannot as such be attributed to God.

It is in this context that this article examines Christian Muslim response to each other.

In November 1979, a conference was held on the Deliverance of Jesus from the Cross at the Royal Commonwealth Institute, London. There was considerable public interest leading up to the conference

but at the eleventh hour the British Council of Churches issued the following statement to dampen any hopes:

‘We are reluctant to make any public comment on the London conference. Orthodox Islamic authorities have for a long time repudiated as non-Qur’anic the Ahmadiyya claim that Jesus died a natural death after going to Kashmir: orthodox Muslims in London should, therefore, perhaps be the ones to do any necessary commenting on this London conference and its theme. Our reluctance also stems from our awareness that Christianity has often indulged in aggressive and negative attacks on the central tenets of other religions, attacks of a sort comparable to these Ahmadiyya attacks on the central Christian tenet: we do not wish to appear over defensive when such attacks are directed at us.’

That drew the following response from Hadhrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih III<sup>(ru)</sup>:

‘I wish to make it quite clear that all Islamic sects, despite their differences, are united on

the Unity of God, the righteousness of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> and on his being the Seal of the Prophets and the most exalted of them all. On the question of the unity of God and the doctrine of Trinity there is no difference.

‘...While we agree that Christianity has often indulged in aggressive and negative attacks on the central tenets of other religions in language which was often open to serious objection, we cannot agree that the belief of the Ahmadiyya Movement and its publication through a conference, or otherwise, that Jesus was an exalted divine messenger and that nothing should be attributed to him which should be inconsistent with his high status as a divine messenger, is an aggressive or negative attack like the Christian attacks against the tenets of other religions.’

Greatly smarted by this retort, in what seemed to be a hasty u-turn, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches recommended some years later:

### Preparation for dialogue

- That Churches study and make known the World Council of Churches publication *Christian Meeting Muslims: WCC papers on 10 years of Christian-Muslim dialogue* (Geneva 1977) and the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians* (under revision).
- That Churches undertake catechetical preparation and pastoral and theological training of people of both young and old, laity and clergy, for encounter with Muslims and people of other living faiths and ideologies.
- That Christian and Muslim international, regional and local bodies be encouraged to continue planning bilateral conferences, planned and executed on a cooperative basis and involving both men and women, that further consideration be given to the possibility of arranging multi-lateral conferences between Muslims, Christians and others; and that real attempts should be made to involve young people in such meetings.

### Relationship between Christians and Muslims

- That Christians and Muslims spare no effort to live and work with each other, and with others, towards reconciling conflicts and helping local communities to act upon their own choices in self-development towards a more just and participating society.  
(Extracts from *Newsletter* published by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations No.4 November 1980)

On September 11, 2001, all such lofty principles went into hibernation. Islam began to be branded as a belligerent and barbaric faith. Muslims began to be classified as terrorists. Muslim women were spat on in the streets. ‘Go home, Bin Laden’ were the cries from the nationalists. Muslim men began to find it difficult to get a job. Muslims found it difficult to get visas, their e-mails and phones began to be monitored as if they were the pariahs. They were subjected to greater security surveillance than any one else.

In this climate, there were u-turns on both sides. One camp retracted that the war on terrorism was not a

crusade against Islam. Another camp that had fought against communism and in doing so had promoted and financed terrorism was issued edicts that suicide bombing was not permitted in Islam as late as September 2004. The Jama'at Islami and its Wahabi principals began to do their utmost to shake off their recognition as the promoters of violence and unrest. These u-turns have unfortunately left us with a tangled mess where we cannot be certain whether the 'Christians' and 'Muslims' are attacking each other or shooting themselves in the foot.

Despite this confusion, there have been other restatements of broadly the same objectives as set out by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations quoted earlier.

For example, the Institute on Religion and Democracy offers the following guidelines to individuals, churches, and Christian organisations:

1. 'Seek to understand Islam and Muslim peoples. Most U.S. churchgoers know little about Islam. If our churches are to show Christ's love effectively to our Muslim neighbours (near

and far), we must clear away misconceptions and gain accurate insights into Muslim beliefs and practices.

2. 'Open ourselves to talk with all varieties and stations of Muslims. Of course, we recognise that some Muslims will decline the invitation to dialogue. But we must let them make that choice...
3. 'Give testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because it is our duty to do so...
4. 'Make sure that the Christians entering into dialogue with Muslims have a firm grasp of an orthodox faith in the mainstream of the Christian tradition... Churches do no favour to the Muslims by sending out Christian "representatives" whose own faith is uncertain, confused, self-contradictory and who are unable to distinguish between confessional essentials and their own idiosyncratic views.
5. 'Endeavour to have the Christian side of the dialogue represent not just the U.S. churches, but also the global

Christian community. It would be preferable to have persons in attendance who could address Islam from an African or Asian Christian perspective – particularly Christians who have lived as a minority group within predominantly Muslim nations. ...

6. ‘Affirm some points of theology and morality that Islam and Christianity have in common...
7. ‘Address the deep differences between Islam and Christianity. Most basically, these relate to the person of Jesus Christ, who is at the centre of our Christian faith.... In addressing these differences, Christians show themselves wiser and more winsome when they place their emphasis on positive affirmations of their own Christian faith...
8. ‘Work together with some Muslims on certain public issues in which we and they may have similar concerns (for instance, free exercise of religion in the United States, opposition to abortion, and promotion of refugee resettlement)...
9. ‘Find ways in which our churches might practically show the love of Christ by being of service to our Muslim neighbours, here in the U.S. and internationally...
10. ‘Discuss concepts of democracy, human rights, and religious freedom, as promulgated in international covenants to which most Muslim nations have subscribed. U.S. Christians should discuss how we find these concepts in accord with our Christian faith, how western societies developed these concepts historically, and the benefits that they have brought our societies.
11. ‘Allow the open expression of concerns, fears, and grievances regarding the other party in the dialogue. A dialogue cannot advance very far unless it addresses the problems that each side perceives in the other. U.S. Christians must expect to hear Muslim complaints about the medieval crusades, modern western

imperialism and contemporary American society... Muslims must take primary responsibility for their own societies, as the historian Bernard Lewis argues.

12. ‘Intercede for fellow Christians (and other religious minorities) who suffer persecution or restriction in predominantly Muslim nations. Particular concerns relate to bans on religious proselytism or conversion, state attempts to restrict or control religious activities, attempts to subject Christians to Islamic *sharia*, and other legal and political structures that treat Christians as second-class *dhimmi*... Christians in Muslim nations ought to enjoy the same freedoms that Muslims do in the West...’

In Christian-Muslim dialogue, it is inappropriate and damaging to:

1. ‘Attempt to meld Christianity and Islam, pretending that they have the same basic teachings and that the differences between the two are merely trivial points of theology.
2. ‘...If Christians do participate in inter-faith organisations, these should be merely forums for dialogue and channels of limited cooperation – not bodies that pretend to a false unity where none exists.
3. ‘Try to formulate and celebrate common acts of worship...
4. ‘Expect that all blame for Christian-Muslim conflicts can be assigned to parties in the dialogue. The conflicts are too complicated and long-standing, and the dialogue too incomplete, for this assumption to hold. As Paul Marshall observes, “The Muslims who actually participate in dialogue are not usually the ones engaged in murder, kidnapping or the rape of Christian women” (*Their Blood Cries Out*, p. 220)... We must not imagine that the differences between Islam and Christianity can be reduced to particular clashes.
5. ‘Speak of the world as if it were neatly divided into spheres of influence, Muslim and Christian (and other), with no overlap or movement between the spheres. ..We cannot accept

the notion that there is an “Islamic world” in which western Christians have no right to “meddle”...

6. ‘Talk only to elite Muslim scholars and religious officials who present a ‘textbook version’ of Islam. It may be even more important to know the “popular Islam” as it is practised on the street. We may learn more, and have a more fruitful conversation, by going to the local Muslim grocer than by going to the imam at the mosque.
7. ‘Play political games inside the Muslim community, elevating leaders that we Christians favour and ignoring those that we dislike.
8. ‘Assume that dialogue, in itself, is the solution to the theological and political issues between Christians and Muslims. Dialogue may clarify the real issues and remove some imagined issues. It may enable Christians and Muslims to work together more readily on matters where cooperation is possible. Mutual ignorance is a problem between Christians

and Muslims; however, it is not the deepest problem. As Paul Marshall remarks, “The [extreme Islamist] people engaged in persecution are neither stupid nor uneducated.... We will not understand persecution if we think it is a mere misunderstanding to be resolved through more education and chatty conferences” (*Their Blood Cries Out*, p. 220).’

One can see that these guidelines have very many miles to go yet because they do not engender a healthy dialogue but allow the positions of the participants in a dialogue to continue to maintain their own views with extreme rigidity. This is the preservation instinct of the caveman that we mentioned earlier. Then the concept of reciprocity assumes that what happens in some Arab states is representative of Islam whereas they have their own political agendas for preserving their governments. Reciprocity also begins to re-identify Christianity as a religion of the West and Islam as a religion of merely the Middle East although even within the Arab world, there are Arab Christians and Arab Muslims.

Man likes praise but he is averse to criticism no matter from which angle it hails. It seems that everyone enjoys ridiculing the Muslim, his beliefs and what he stands for. Some of these include Muslims themselves who because of their misguided notions about Jihad possibly pose the biggest threat to Islam today. There has been a flood of books and articles and internet pages which have unfortunately reduced the tiny thread that seemed to exist and that could possibly have promoted Christian-Muslim dialogue to breaking point. Living under the canopy of the only superpower there is, many Christians and Jews have begun to recycle the most irresponsible rubbish attacking the teachings of the Holy Qur'an or the life and character of the Holy Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup>. For example, in *History of Islam, Muhammad, Muslims, Jins and the Koran* (p.4) on [www.bibleprobe.com](http://www.bibleprobe.com) it says, 'The Koran teaches that the world is flat. This doctrine is believed by Islamic scholars even today.' Also that, 'Mohammed was in fact a terrorist, criminal and murderer whose entire life was based on victimising innocents and indulging in mindless violence, carnage and massacre.' (*Ibid*, p.10) [We spare our readers the rest of this article.] Is this the form of responsible dialogue that can

promote understanding between two of the world's leading faiths? In view of these expressions, some have begun to question whether there can be any meaningful dialogue between the dominant and the subordinated.

When it comes to ideology, Islam does not consider itself in any form inferior to any other religion (Ch.4:V.126). It openly claims that it is a universal religion whereas others are not (Ch.7:V.159; Ch.10:V.58; Ch.22:V.50; Ch.34:V.29). It claims that it is based on the truth and truth must triumph. Islam claims that Muslims are the best of people (Ch.3:V.111). Therefore, it must certainly be able to stand up against any allegation or falsehood no matter from which quarter. Unfortunately, that is not a lesson that Christianity, despite its dwindling flocks, has yet learnt. Attacking a wounded lion is a dangerous strategy.

How should Muslims respond in this climate? The Holy Qur'an had forewarned the Muslims many centuries before:

*You shall be surely tried in your possessions and in your persons and you shall surely hear many hurtful things from those who were given the Book before you*



*and those who set up equals to Allah. But if you show fortitude and act righteously, that indeed is a matter of strong determination.*

(Ch.3:V.187)

Muslims are urged to tolerate things with patience but to be vigilant and not drop their guard:

*(The God-fearing) suppress anger and pardon men.'*

(Ch.3: V.135)

*And revile not those whom they call beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in ignorance.*

(Ch.6: V.109)

*O ye who believe! Be steadfast and strive to excel in steadfastness and be on your guard and fear Allah that you may prosper.*

(Ch.3:V.201)

Then the Muslims are urged to have a party of people who can respond to the attacks of the enemy in a responsible manner:

*And let there be among you a body of men who should invite to goodness, and enjoin equity*

*and forbid evil. And it is they who shall prosper.*

(Ch. 3:105)

So when Islam talks of co-operation amongst other faiths, it is on the principles of goodness, enjoining equity and forbidding evil and there is plenty on this score where religious leaders can come together and create a better world society.

A solution of how to respond to false allegations is perhaps best provided by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> of Qadian (1835-1908) who claimed that he was the Messiah and World Reformer awaited by people of most faiths. His contemporaries were busy issuing memoranda and memorials to the British government following the publication of the scurrilous *Ummahatul Momineen* making some vile accusations against the wives of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. The Promised Messiah's<sup>(as)</sup> argument was that such memorials were self defeating and an admission of weakness on the part of Muslims. He argued that it was equally unwise that each person should begin to issue a retort against this book and instead he recommended that the person who responds should possess

qualities which are paraphrased very briefly as follows:

- 1) The person should command such expertise in the Arabic language that in any confrontation, he should put to shame his opponent. He must be superior to his opponent in the understanding of God's words and preferably should be acknowledged as an expert in Arabic in his country. When he enters into a debate with an opponent, the audience would at once recognise which of the two speaks with authority and who commands respect.
- 2) The person should not merely know a few Hadith (traditions), Fiqh (jurisprudence) and Tafseer (commentary) or be known as a Maulawi (priest) but he should be equipped with the God-given qualities of research, deliberation, sharp-wittedness, prompt response and adducing indisputable proofs. He should be a wise and pious person.
- 3) He should have reasonable knowledge of science, medicine, astronomy and geography because when presenting wonders of nature, such knowledge is indispensable.
- 4) He should be able to quote in Hebrew from that part of the Bible which deals with prophecies etc. A person who is conversant with Arabic should not find it too difficult to learn Hebrew.
- 5) The fifth condition is that the person should have a real contact with God and be sincere and loyal, and should be the beloved of God with sincerity, outward purity, high morals and wholly devoted to God because knowledge of the religion is from on-high and it is closely associated with righteousness, cleanliness and the love of God (Ch.56:V.80).
- 6) The sixth condition is knowledge of history because this knowledge is very helpful in a debate. For instance, very few Muslims would know that Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> had five brothers born from the same mother, yet they did not believe in Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> and on the contrary had severe reservations about his truth.

- 7) He should have some ability in logic and be eloquent in the art of debating because by their combination, the mind is sharpened.
- 8) The eighth prerequisite for written or oral debate is that the person should possess or have access to a vast treasure of books that are reliable and generally accepted for their authenticity and can shut the mouth of any clever and deceiving opponent.
- 9) The person should be free from other pursuits and be devoted to the service of his religion because it is difficult for one person to handle two things at the same time.
- 10) Finally, the tenth condition is that he should possess miraculous powers because in pursuit of true light and complete satisfaction a person is hungry for seeing miracles, e.g. through the acceptance of his prayers, these represent the final decision manifested in the presence of God Almighty.

Promised Messiah, *Ruhani Khazain* Vol. 13 pp. 370-375)

The Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> stated that these memorials served the interest of the Christian priests who wanted that the Muslims should not act on their teaching:

*Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them in a way that is best. Surely, thy Lord knows best who has strayed away from His way; and He knows those who are rightly guided.*

(Ch.16:V.126)

One hopes that the century that has just dawned on an enlightened man but has unfortunately started on the wrong foot as far as religious dialogue is concerned, shall quickly move away from the arguments and methodologies of centuries past. If the sheep has to drink from the same fountain as a wolf, then inter-faith dialogue must be based on recognising and respecting differences and not attacking founders of religions with the same stick that we have used in the past.

*(AlBalagh or Faryad Dard by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,*

Search for

# ‘Enlightened Moderation’

in Pakistan

In response to an article written by Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf in *The Washington Post* on May 31, 2004 entitled, ‘A Plea For Enlightened Moderation’, this piece makes a rational plea to the Pakistani intelligentsia to truly assess the factors preventing Pakistan from achieving ‘Enlightened Moderation.’

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By Dr Atif Mian, USA.

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All of us feel great pain and anguish in the social and political chaos engulfing our Pakistani nation. The problem of religious extremism has reached epic proportions. Here is a snapshot from the very recent history: A large number of Shias gunned down in broad daylight, at least two serious attempts on the President’s life, shootings and bombings in different places of worship, killings of minorities and foreigners on a regular basis, a serious attempt on the Prime Minister’s life and now an armed revolt against the Pakistani army in the frontier.

These are not isolated incidents, or incidents which only affect a particular region of the country. The insanity is being perpetrated everywhere and affects everyone in Pakistan. The result is that the educated and progressive minds left in Pakistan feel hostage to the mullahs and their extremist machinery, while those outside Pakistan are afraid to come back and invest, teach, visit or even play cricket. In fact many religious organisations in Pakistan have implicitly or openly declared a militant ‘war’ against the incumbent president and his law enforcement agencies including the army. One shudders to think what would happen in the near future to Pakistan if this trajectory of religious extremism continues.

This is not the way Muhammad Ali Jinnah's<sup>1</sup> Pakistan was supposed to be. How did the very religious elements that hated Jinnah, called him *Kaafir-e-Azam* ('the great infidel'), resisted the creation of Pakistan, and even tried to murder Jinnah, actually become the dominant political force in Pakistan? The answer lies in the gradual process of decay with everyone from Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Zia-ul-Haq and the military, to US and Saudi Arabia providing support to these extremist elements at different points in time. The support was provided under differing rationales: some were tempted by short term political advantage, others were driven by twisted ideologies, and yet others succumbed to the fear of social unrest threatened by the mullah.

However, whatever the causes, the fact is that today we are dangling at the precipice of social and political disaster as a nation. General Musharraf is correct in pointing out that the biggest threat facing Pakistan today is from within and not from the outside.

This internal threat is the threat of religious extremism and intolerance. It is the threat of a self-righteous and arrogant mullah who roams the streets of Pakistan thinking he is above the law of the land. He believes that he has divine authority to murder, plunder and destroy with impunity.

In a recent book, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan*, Muhammad Amir Rana superbly traces the history, organisational setup and ideologies of 237 religious organisations spanning all the major sects in Pakistan, including Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahle Hadith and Shia. According to the book, each sect has a number of different organisations designed to achieve separate objectives. For example, the Deobandi sect of the Hanafi school of thought has a total of 45 religious organisations in Pakistan. Maulana Fazlur Rehman's JUI (*Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*) is the main political party of this sect and organisations such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Harkatul

Mujahideen and Sipah-e-Sihaba serve as its militant wings. These organisations often have close associations with one other. Commenting on the organisations from the Deobandi school of thought, for example, Muhammad Amir Rana writes: ‘Important position holders of Sipah Sahaba, Lashkare Jhangvi, Tehreeke Khuddame Ahle Sunnat, Tehreeke Difa Sahaba and other similar organisations have at the same time held important offices in Jamiat-e-Islam, and sectarian organisations of the Deobandi school consider the Jamiat their mentors and attend their rallies and functions.’

The close relationship between religion, politics and militancy is not exclusive to any particular sect. As pointed out in the book, this pattern is repeated in all the major Sunni and Shia sects in the country. Use of force and militancy is sanctioned and promoted by a majority of the clergy. The definition of Jihad has now expanded to include the killing of minorities, opposing

politicians, religious leaders and now the army as well. Moreover, the distorted definition of Jihad is now accepted if not practised by large sections of our society.

The masses, many of whom are either illiterate or not willing to study religion independently, put their trust in the multitude of clergy and scholars belonging to the religious organisations above. Therefore, when General Musharraf proclaims that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance, does he have the religious scholars (of whatever sect) to back his claim? The answer is no. As the above book points out, all the major organised sects in Pakistan are actively promoting militancy and violence to further their agendas.

If Islam were to be defined by the majority religious scholars of Pakistan then it *does* become a religion of militancy and violence. It becomes a religion that frowns upon differences of opinion and suppresses another person’s religious freedom by force if necessary. It becomes a

religion that allows vandalising shops, setting vehicles on fire and carrying out threatening processions to pressure governments into acceding to its demands. In short, Islam as presented and practised by the publicly recognised scholars of Pakistan is an ugly religion.

However, true Islam is not to be defined by the clergy of today. True Islam is to be found in the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, a book that reminds its reader at least 23 times:

*Create not disorder on the earth.* (Ch.2:V.12)

A book so pluralistic in nature that far from killing innocent Christian, Jews or Hindus, it exhorts its followers to guard and respect their freedom of religion and places of worship:

*And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of*

*Allah is oft commemorated.*  
(Ch.22:V.41)

A Hindu may reject Moses<sup>(as)</sup>, Jews may reject Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> and Christians may reject Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> but a Muslim is told that he cannot call himself a believer if he does not believe and respect all prophets of all the great religions of the world:

*And We did raise among every people a Messenger.*  
(Ch.16:V.37)

Far from condemning followers of other religion to damnation, the Qur'an accepts all righteous men and women as good human beings and declares:

*Surely, the Believers and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians – whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds – shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.*  
(Ch.2:V.63)

When these are the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, how can such a universal and unifying religion be linked to hatred, terrorism, and violence?

General Musharraf is, therefore, correct in pointing out that true Islam is a religion of 'peace and tolerance', but the question remains, which organised religious movement in the Pakistani society is preaching this message? Where are the clerics, mosques and thinkers at the forefront of a religious movement aimed at suppressing the rising tide of religious extremism and intolerance? Who is going door to door in Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi and Jhang to convince the public that the militant version of Islam presented by the mullahs is illogical and unjustified? Are the various *Jamiats*, *Jama'ats* and *Majalis* (parties and organisations) created in the name of Islam presenting and practising a peaceful and tolerant version of Islam? Unfortunately no recognised religious movement in Pakistan is preaching or prac-

tising the peaceful and tolerant message of Islam.

This should not come as a huge surprise. After all, how can the same religious parties and organisations that have led Islam to be recognised with hatred and intolerance be expected to lead the Muslims towards peace and moderation? Therefore, when our leaders talk about changing the image of Islam and taking the country towards 'enlightened moderation,' they should also point out which religious movement has the ability to do so.

What Pakistan needs is a rational and progressive religious movement that presents an alternative to the militant and intolerant version of Islam proliferating the country; a peaceful, tolerant and rational alternative that is, in fact, the true face of Islam.

The good news is that Pakistan does have such a reformist religious movement in the form of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. I was fortunate enough to



learn about it and ultimately accept its message. However, unfortunately the same movement is persecuted, suppressed and constitutionally banned to convey its message in Pakistan. The Movement was initiated by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> of Qadian, who claimed to be the reformer of latter days as prophesied by our beloved Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>. He claimed to be the reformer who was prophesied to come at a time when Muslims would have reached rock bottom and *'their clergy would be the worst of creatures under the canopy of the heavens. Evil plots will hatch from them and to them will they return'* (Mishkat ul Masabih). A reformer who was prophesied to come and settle the ideological differences among the divided Muslims as an *'arbiter and judge'* (Bukhari) and one of whose primary missions was to *'put an end to wars'* or *'abolish jizya'* (Bukhari).

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian wrote more than 80 books in total. The sole purpose of his

writings was to rejuvenate, in spirit and in practice, exactly the same Islam that is contained in the Qur'an and revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>. He repeatedly asked the world and the Muslim clergy in particular, to refrain from militancy and bloodshed in the name of religion and accept the peaceful and true teachings of Islam.

However, my intention in this article is not to convince the reader of the truth of Ahmadiyyat. My goal is more modest. It is to appeal to the rational and progressive minds in Pakistan that if we are sincere in spreading 'enlightened moderation' in our society, we should no longer choke the voices of moderation and tolerance with our own hands. The Holy Qur'an reminds us that,

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

Further that:

*And there is nothing for man but the fruits of his endeavours.* (Ch.53:V.40)

How is it then that we can hope to achieve either ‘enlightenment’ or ‘moderation’ without being bold enough to change the laws of the country along the same lines?

Today the law of the land states that members of the Ahmadiyya Community must be declared non-Muslims against their will (Second Amendment, 1974). By law, Ahmadis cannot say the *Kalima* (the Muslim declaration of faith), *Adhan* (the Muslim Call to Prayer) or practise their religion openly. If they do, they are subject to imprisonment and fines (Pakistan Penal Codes 298 B & C). In fact the law is so vague that just being an Ahmadi is a criminal offence if anyone chooses to prosecute.

Thus the only organised religious movement in the country that preaches the message of peace and ‘love for all, hatred for none’ is banned by its own government. Here lies the irony. While we tell

non-Muslims that we believe in a peaceful, tolerant and enlightened version of Islam, we in Pakistan continue persecuting a peaceful religious community in our own country precisely in the name of Islam! Why blame the West then for tarnishing the image of Islam when we have done so ourselves through our own actions?

We, as Pakistanis, should show the world that true Islam has no tolerance for religious intolerance. We should show through our actions the beautiful teaching of the Qur’an that:

*There should be no compulsion in religion.*  
(Ch.2:V257)

Far from allowing a government to suppress religious freedom, Islam does not even give a prophet that authority:

*Thou hast not been appointed to compel them in any way.*  
(Ch.50:V.46)

Also:

*But If they turn away, We have not sent thee as a guardian over them. Thy duty is only to convey the Message.*  
(Ch.42:V.49)

What a powerful statement of moderation it would be if we could throw out the messages of hate, suppression of religious practices and declarations of non-Muslims as the Holy Qur'an exhorts us:

*And who is more unjust than he who prohibits the name of Allah being glorified in Allah's temples and seeks to ruin them?*  
(Ch.2:V.115)

Moreover:

*Say not to anyone who greets you with the greeting of peace, 'Thou art not a believer.'*  
(Ch.4:V.95)

Today the face of Islam presented by our religious leaders defies moderation, enlightenment and objectivity.

Enlightened Moderation? Perhaps the following can be the first step towards enlightenment:

*Allah commands you that ...When you judge between men, you judge with justice.*  
(Ch.4:V.59)

One hopes and prays that those in power may have the courage to stand for justice and repeal those laws and regulations that stifle the voices of moderation and enlightenment in our country each day.

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## FOOTNOTE

1. The founding father of Pakistan.

### about the **AUTHOR**

Dr. Atif Mian is an Assistant Professor of Finance at the University of Chicago Business School. He completed his Bachelors in Mathematics and Ph.D. in Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He accepted Ahmadiyyat, the true Islam, in 2002.

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

### GOD REALLY EXISTS: *We Believe in a Living God*

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Sir,

Mr. Jonathan Miller, avowed atheist, and 'fifth brainiest person in Britain' according to *Prospect* magazine, claims in T2 of *The Times* of October 11th 2004 that there is no God, no afterlife and no paradise. '*Belief in God is an intellectual nonsense.*' Whatever human consciousness is, he says: '*It exists only inside our brains.*' In other words, it is grounded in matter. Take away that matter (as when we die) there can be no consciousness. Therefore, there is no afterlife, no paradise, no paranormal or supernatural. All that too is literally in the mind. He says that the idea of a mind that continues to exist after the brain has dissolved, is inconceivable. It seems that *Prospect* magazine and Richard Morrison of *The Times* have accepted shallow statements and incorrect analyses of Mr. Miller.

In fact, Mr. Miller fails to address the testimony of numerous individuals of every age and from every people, who have claimed that they have had contact and conversation with the Supreme

Being. Moses<sup>(as)</sup> met God on Mount Sinai. God appeared to Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> on Mount Seir. God shone forth to Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> on Mount Paran. The Reformer of the Age, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> of Qadian, India stated:

*'The same Mighty and Holy God has manifested Himself to me. He has talked to me and said that He is the High Being, to establish Whose worship all the Prophets were sent.'* (Government Angrezi aur Jihad, Zamima Risala Jihad, Roohani Khazain Vol.17 p.29)

Despite all his research abilities and intellect, Mr. Miller ignores the testimony of large numbers of persons throughout the history of mankind. He also ignores the evidence that they gave – the same message of a single Creator. Surely, they were not all liars.

Moreover, nowhere in his statements does Mr. Miller consider the five proofs of the existence of God found in the Muslim Holy Book, the Qur'an. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> has explained these in his famous book, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* (English translation published by the London Mosque 1979) from which the following has been reproduced:

1. *Our Lord is He Who has bestowed upon everything its appropriate*

*faculties, and then guided it to the achievement of its appropriate purposes. (Ch.20:V.51)*

If we “reflect upon the shape and form of all creatures that inhabit this universe, we are impressed by the wisdom of God Almighty.” (p.57) All animals, including man, who live on land and in the seas and birds that soar in the skies, are created in the form best suited to their particular requirements and needs. If they make use of them properly, they can attain their fullest potential.

*2. Thy Lord is the final cause of all causes. (Ch.53:V.43)*

“If we observe carefully, we find that the entire universe is bound together in a system of cause and effect. This system is at the root of all knowledge. No part of creation is outside this system. Some things are the roots of others and some are branches. A cause may be primary or may be the effect of another cause and that, in its turn, may be the effect of still another cause and so on. Now, it is not possible that in this finite world this pattern of cause and effect should have no limit and should be infinite. We are compelled to acknowledge that it must terminate with some ultimate cause. That ultimate cause is God. This verse sets forth the argument very concisely and affirms that the system of cause

and effect terminates with God.”  
*(ibid. p.58)*

*3. The sun cannot catch up with the moon, and the night which is a manifestation of the moon, cannot prevail over the day which is a manifestation of the sun. Neither of them can move outside its orbit.”  
(Ch.36:V.41)*

“Were there not a Regulator of the whole of this system behind the scenes, the system would fall into chaos. This proof is very striking in the estimation of astronomers. There are so many grand heavenly bodies gliding through space that the slightest disorder in their movements would bring about the ruin of the whole world. It is a great manifestation of Divine Power that these bodies neither collide nor change their speeds, nor alter their courses in the slightest degree. Nor has their circulation during such a long period of time worn them out, nor has their machinery suffered any disorder. If they are not under the supervision of a Guardian, how is it that such a grand organisation continues to carry on through numberless years entirely on its own?” *(ibid, pp.58-59)*

*4. Can there be any doubt in the existence of God, Who has originated the Heavens and the Earth? (Ch.14:V.11)*

We also know from history that the presence of perfect symmetry and the existence of perfect harmony in the laws of nature have convinced many scientists to believe in God. Even the great scientist, Einstein, had to declare that there is a Creator of this well-organised universe, Who has created with perfect wisdom.

God has set forth another proof of His existence:

*All that is on the earth will perish and only the countenance of the Lord, Master of Glory and Honour, will survive. (Ch.55:Vs.27-28)*

“If we assume that ultimately the earth might be reduced to particles and the heavenly bodies might be broken down and everything overtaken by a blast which would wipe out every sign of their existence. Yet reason acknowledges and right conscience deems it necessary that after such destruction there should survive one, who is not subject to destruction and can undergo no change and should continue in its pristine state. That One is God, Who has created everything mortal and is Himself immune from mortality.”  
*(ibid, p.59)*

5. We also observe that belief in God is a universal phenomenon. History tells us that such beliefs were common to all ages. Even among the Aborigines

of Australia, the ancient Maya of Mexico and Central America there existed a belief in an Omnipotent and Ultimate Supreme Being, whom they regarded as the Creator of the Universe.

Even though the vision of God varies from people to people, we find the belief in God is common to people of all the ages. The Holy Qur’an states:

*God inquired from the souls, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ and they answered: ‘Indeed.’ (Ch.7:V.173)*

“In this verse, God has set forth the characteristic with which He has invested the souls, that is, that by its very nature, no soul can deny the existence of God. Those who do so, do so because they can find no proof of His existence according to their own fanciful imagination. Yet they acknowledge that for every other created thing there must be a creator. There is no one in the world so stupid that if he falls ill he insists there is no cause for his illness. If the universal system of cause and effect had not been made up it would have been impossible to predict the time of a tornado, or of the eclipses of the sun or moon, or that a patient would die at a certain time, or that a disease would be reinforced by another disease at a certain stage. Thus a research scholar who does not acknowledge the existence of God, in effect does so

indirectly for he too, like us, searches for the causes of effects. This is an acknowledgement of a sort, though it is not perfect. Besides, if through some device, a person who denies the existence of God could be made unconscious in such manner that he should pass under the complete control of God, discarding all fancies, emotions and impulses of his earthly life, he would, in such a state, acknowledge the existence of God and would not deny it. This is testified to by eminent experts. The verse that we have cited also indicates that a denial of the existence of God is only a manifestation of this earthly existence, for the true nature of man fully confesses His existence.”

*(ibid. pp.59-60)*

Surely, a research scholar like Mr. Miller who does not acknowledge the existence of God, in effect, does so indirectly for he too searches for the cause of effects. As explained by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>(as)</sup> above, this is a kind of acknowledgement in the existence of God, Who is the final cause of all cause. In truth, no ‘brainy’ person can deny the existence of God. Once the existence of God is established then, the concepts of paradise and afterlife have to be accepted as well.

Mr. Jonathan Miller admits that several billion intelligent people in the world continue to believe in a ‘supernatural

agency’ but he says that our religious impulses are the last vestiges of primitive man’s defense mechanism. He says that in order to guard against predators the primitive man had invented a supernatural force, which was on his side. Mr. Miller’s notions certainly cannot explain the claims which millions of people in all ages, especially the followers of true Islam have made that they enjoy communion with that Supernatural Agency. They have declared that God speaks to them and tells them not to be afraid of calamities or of enemies. He reassures them that He is with them and He will help them through His inspiration, revelation and heavenly signs. He often tells them of future events which come to pass exactly as they were told. Surely, to such people God or a Supernatural Agency is not an imagination but a reality. This closeness to God Almighty can be attained by anyone through prayers and only through prayers. We are hopeful that if Mr. Miller and people like him leave their fanciful imaginations and tread on this path they will experience God in their daily lives.

*Rashid Ahmad Chaudhry*

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