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Exterior tower of the 9th century Islamic great Mosque in the Medinah of Sousse, Tunisia. Photographer Ryan Fox copyright, BigStock Photo Library

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Shermeem Butt– Cambridge, UK

The Facts Behind the ‘Veil’

The Leader of the UK’s House of Commons, Jack Straw, recently sparked a row by writing in an article that he asked Muslim women to take off their veils at his constituency surgeries. These ill-advised and ill-timed remarks by the former Foreign Secretary about the Muslim observance of the veil in his endeavour for better community relations have started a debate which seems disproportionate at best. The Prime Minister and many cabinet members have joined this debate and the media abounds with their and other people’s irresponsible comments. Most of the opinions that are allowed to be voiced are of those who are completely against it or those for whom the veil is an oddity. No real effort is seen to be made to understand the other side of the argument.

Most noticeably the media was prompt to inform us all that no where does the Qur’an stipulate

covering of the face. Many have put it down to specific cultures. It needs to be said that the covering of the face is in line with the interpretation of the Holy Prophet^(saw) of the Qur’anic verses that specify general covering up for women. We understand from the Holy Prophet’s^(saw) Traditions that indeed the veil was observed in his time and as such forms part of the *Sunnah* precept that we follow.

In order to understand the phenomenon of the observance of the ‘veil’ by Muslim women, an attempt needs to be made to recognise its intrinsic worth rather than casually dismiss it as male subjugation or cultural icon.

The Muslim faith is a complete code of conduct and a way of life. Each of its tenets compliments the other. Observed in isolation, some beliefs or practices might appear irrational to the uninformed. However, the

teaching of Islam is based on the rationale of the human psyche; it recognises the disparity of the gender and boldly addresses it.

It is a natural human instinct to preserve all faculties we are endowed with and ensure that they are not abused. A woman's physical beauty, just like her personality and intellect, is one such precious gift and needs to be cherished and its exploitation avoided. Correspondingly, the reality of the female beauty and the scope of reaction it generates are acknowledged in Islam. Measures are put in place to avoid any potential social mishaps. It is for this reason that the injunction is to cover the natural beauty of a woman when going out or facing men outside the immediate family. The Holy Qur'an states:

Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts ... And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and they not display

their beauty and embellishments except that which is apparent thereof and that they draw their head covers over their bosoms...
(Ch.24:Vs.31-32)

Furthermore, the use of an outer cloak is enjoined.

The veil and the philosophy behind it is a means to prevent the free mixing of the sexes and the subsequent milieu that creates general wantonness which in turn leads to fraught issues such as rape, unwanted pregnancy, forced abortion – negative aspects that cause the breakdown of the family and can ultimately tear the fabric of society. By definition, the veil discredits the concept of women as an open object of desire, recognises the rightful dignity of women on merit alone and thus works towards neutralising this social collapse.

Perhaps it is not out of place to mention here the overtly alluring female imagery that is employed in the West in the field of

advertising to name one. Some claim it is by virtue of Western women's emancipation that they are allowed to take control of their lives. On reflection, it is the depth of true male subjugation that has turned women into commodity. In such a social environment, when liaisons go wrong, the man casually walks off and it is always the woman who bears the brunt. The veil is a defence against analogous matters getting out of hand.

In recent times some cultures within Islam have presented a distorted depiction of the belief where the concept of veil has been taken to preposterous limits. This stems from illiteracy among the masses and the subsequent inaccurate misinterpretation of the teachings of Islam. This is plainly reprehensible and has resulted in a grave negative perception in the West about the veil.

Contrary to popular belief, Islam does not solely enjoin women to 'hold back'. In fact, the Muslim doctrine initially instructs men to

restrain their eyes, followed by instruction to women to cover. The specific guidelines given in the Holy Qur'an are to Muslim women to cover their heads and to wear a loose outer covering when going out. However, in essence, the veil is a state of mind, its physical shape varying from culture to culture. The spirit of the veil, adopted by Muslim women in compliance to the word of the Holy Qur'an, is to cherish the feminine beauty granted by God and to guard it. It is a direct demonstration of this mindset and perhaps, in that sense, an icon of Islamic values.

The concept of the veil is in concordance with the wider Islamic social values. It is not designed to oppress and is not a symbol of male tyranny. Islam lays great emphasis on a woman's role as a mother and wife. She is a homemaker and the prime nurturer of the future generation. These roles are granted elevated status. While much is made of the fact that, in Islam, man is appointed a guardian over his family, the

detail that he is solely responsible for the livelihood and general wellbeing of the family is totally disregarded. There is indeed balance in the allocation of duties between men and women. However, women are also expected to seek education and if desired to go out to work. There is no conflict in the observance of veil and leading a fulfilled working life. As a matter of fact, incongruous as it may seem to the outside world, the veil is a liberating experience. In defusing the manifest feminine charm, it brings women on an even keel with men on an intellectual and cerebral level and opens a way for them to be judged on their merit.

By Shermeen Butt, UK.

References to the Holy Qur'an item count 'Bismillah...' (In the Name of Allah...) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted and should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in *The Review of Religions* will be found at one verse less than the number quoted.

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(saw)' or 'saw' 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*' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. 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 '*Rahemahullahu Ta'ala*' means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

ESSENCE OF ISLAM:

The Holy Qur'an's Lofty Station – Acknowledge by the Holy Qur'an Itself – Part 12

This series sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as), Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa) and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad 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, may 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.

‘All knowledge is comprised in the Qur'an, but the intellect of people falls short of it.’

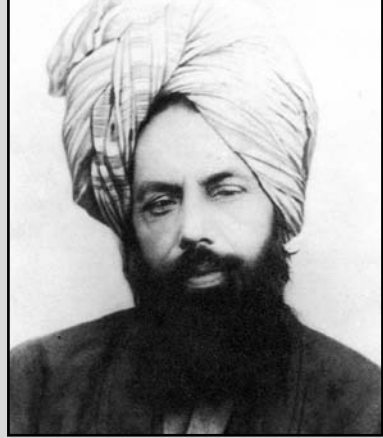
One of the principal causes of people going astray in this age is that in the eyes of most people the greatness of the Holy Qur'an no longer prevails. One group of Muslims has become the follower of misleading philosophy. They seek to decide every matter by reason. They claim that the highest arbiter available to man for the

settlement of disputes is reason. When they find that the existence of Gabriel, Izrael and other angels that are mentioned in religious books, and the existence of heaven and hell as is established in the Holy Qur'an, cannot be proved by reason, they immediately reject them and begin to have recourse to flimsy explanations. They interpret angels as meaning powers, revelation only as a faculty, and heaven and hell as meaning merely spiritual comfort or pain.

They do not seem to realise that reason alone is not the instrument for discovery of the unknown. Indeed high verities and extreme insights are far above the reach of reason and are established only through true visions. If the touchstone for verities were to be reason alone, the great wonders of Godhead would remain hidden and man's understanding would remain incomplete and imperfect and he would not be rid of doubts and suspicions. The end of this one-sided understanding would be that in the absence of guidance from above and without any knowledge of the lines of thought that are set in motion by the Power on High, all sorts of doubts would arise with regard to the existence of the Creator Himself.

Therefore, the idea that reason alone is sufficient for unravelling all the intricate mysteries of the True Creator, is wholly unsupported.

The second group has discarded reason altogether and has also left aside the Holy Qur'an which



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

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

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

is the fountainhead of all knowledge of things Divine and has taken firm hold of stories and meaningless sayings. We desire to draw the attention of both these groups to the Holy Qur'an and to urge them to value its

greatness and its light, and to make use of reason in receiving the guidance of its light. They should leave aside the sayings of other people, and even if they should find a *Hadith* which contradicts the Holy Qur'an, they should discard it immediately, as God Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

...Then in what thing will they believe thereafter.
(Ch.7:V.186)

In what discourse, leaving aside the Holy Qur'an, will they believe?

It is obvious that, for us Muslims, the Holy Qur'an is an authority of the highest grade which is absolute and certain. Most *Ahadith*, even when authentic, are at best useful probabilities.

...Surely conjecture avails nothing against truth...
(Ch.10:V.37)

Study the following verses carefully and then consider whether it is proper to leave aside

the Word of God and to set up some other guide or arbiter. These verses are:

Surely, this Qur'an guides to what is most right.
(Ch.17:V.10)

This Qur'an guides to the way which is straight;

Herein, surely, is an important message for people who worship God...
(Ch.21:V.107)

To the worshippers it provides guidance about true worship;

And verily it is a reminder for the righteous.
(Ch.69:V.49)

To those who are righteous, it is a reminder of the excellences of righteousness;

And surely, it is the true certainty.
(Ch.69:V.52)

Consummate wisdom...
(Ch.54:V.6)

It is wisdom *par excellence*;

...And We have sent down to thee the Book to explain everything...
(Ch.16:V.90)

It is certain truth and is universal in scope;

...Light upon light!...
(Ch.24:V.36)

It is light upon light;

...a cure for whatever disease there is in teh hearts...
(Ch.10:V.58)

A cure for the souls;

It is God, the Gracious Who has taught the Qur'an.
(Ch.55:Vs.2-3)

The Gracious God revealed the Holy Qur'an.

...Who has sent down the Book with truth and also the Balance... (Ch.42:V.18)

He has revealed the Book which

is the truth and is a balance for weighing the truth.

...the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination.
(Ch.2:V.186)

It is guidance for mankind and contains the exposition of guidance. It discriminates between truth and falsehood by its reasoning.

It is surely a decisive word.
(Ch.86:V.14)

It is a decisive discourse.

...there is no doubt in it.
(Ch.2:V.3)

It is free from doubt.

And We have not sent down to thee the Book except that thou mayest explain to them that concerning which they differ, and as a guidance, and a mercy for a people who believe. (Ch.16:V.65)

We have revealed it to thee so that it might decide matters concerning which there is difference and so that believers may be provided with guidance and mercy.

Therein are the everlasting taechings.(Ch.98:V.4)

It comprises all the verities which were contained in the previous books in a scattered form.

Falsehood cannot approach it either from before or from behind it...
(Ch.41:V.43)

Falsehood cannot approach it from fore or aft.

This Book contains clear evidences for mankind and is a guidance and a mercy for a people who possess firm faith.
(Ch.45:V.21)

It comprises clear proof for people and is a guidance and a mercy for those who have faith.

In what word, then, after

rejecting that of Allah and His Signs will they believe?
(Ch.45:V.7)

Then leaving aside Allah and His Signs, in what discourse will you believe?

It follows that if a *Hadith* is contradictory of the Holy Qur'an, it must be rejected. If it can be interpreted as being in accord with the Holy Qur'an, it might be accepted.

Say, 'All this is through the grace of Allah and through His mercy; therein, therefore, let them rejoice. That is better than what they hoard.'
(Ch.10:V.59)

The meanings of the remaining verses is: Tell them that by the Grace and Mercy of Allah this Qur'an is a precious possession which you should accept with joy. It is better than the properties which you gather together.

This is an indication that no property is as valuable as knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge of Holy Qur'an and Promised Messiah

This is the wealth concerning which it had been prophesied that the Messiah would distribute it so much that people will have their fill of it. The prophecy does not mean that the Messiah would collect together material wealth concerning which it has been said:

Verily, your wealth and your children are a trial...
(Ch.64:V.16)

and that he would deliberately put people on trial by distributing wealth among them. In his first advent also, the Messiah felt no attraction towards worldly wealth. He has stated in the Gospel that the property of a believer are not gold and silver, but are the jewels of verities and understanding. This is the property that is bestowed by God Almighty on the Prophets, which they distribute. It is concerning this property that the Holy Prophet^(saw) said:

‘I am a distributor and Allah is the Bestower.’

It is stated clearly in the *Ahadith* that the Promised Messiah would come into the world when knowledge of the Qur'an will be lost and ignorance will prevail. That is the time which is referred to in the *Hadith*:

‘If faith ascends to the Pleiades it will be brought down by a man of Persia.’

It has been revealed to me in a vision that the climax of that age will begin in the Hijri year which corresponds to the value of the letters of the verse:

It is We Who determine its taking away.
(Ch.23:V.19)

which amounts to 1274.

Consider this well, and do not pass over it in haste and supplicate God that He should open your minds to it. A little reflection will make you understand the prophecy contained in the *Hadith* that in the latter days the Qur'an will be taken away from the world, its

‘THE CLEAR MIRACLE OF THE HOLY QUR’AN WHICH CAN MANIFEST ITSELF TO EVERY PEOPLE AND BY PRESENTING WHICH WE CAN SILENCE EVERYONE, WHETHER AN INDIAN, PERSIAN, EUROPEAN OR AMERICAN, IS THE UNLIMITED TREASURY OF INSIGHTS, VERITIES AND WISDOMS, WHICH ARE EXPOUNDED IN EVERY AGE ACCORDING TO ITS NEED ...’

knowledge will be lost, ignorance will prevail and the eagerness and sweetness of faith will depart from the hearts. Among them is the *Hadith* that if faith will ascend to the Pleiades and will disappear from the earth, a man of the Persians will extend his hand and will bring it down. This *Hadith* shows clearly that when ignorance, faithlessness and error, described as smoke in the other *Ahadith*, will become widespread and true

faith will become so rare as if it had been drawn up to the skies, and the Holy Qur’an will be abandoned as if it had been raised towards God Almighty, at that time, a man of Persia will take hold of the faith from the Pleiades and will descend with it to the earth. Be sure, therefore, that he is the son of Mary who was to descend.

(Izala-e-Auham, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol. 3, pp.452-456)

Verities of the Holy Qur’an in This Age

I was young and am now old and people can bear witness that I never concerned myself with worldly affairs and was always interested in matters of the faith. I have found the Word which is called the Qur’an of the utmost holiness and full of spiritual wisdom. It does not deify any man and does not bring God into contempt by excluding souls and bodies from His creation. The Holy Qur’an in the end brings down that blessing on the heart of man for which a religion is embraced and makes him the heir of Divine grace. Then having

found a light, how shall we revert to darkness and having eyes how shall we become blind?

(Sanatan Dharam, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 19, p.474)

It is well established that the Holy Qur'an has duly perfected the faith, as it affirms itself:

This day have I perfected your religion for you and have completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.

(Ch.5:V.4)

Thus there is no need for any other book after the Holy Qur'an, for it sets out all that is needed by man. Now only the door of converse with God is open, but not automatically. True and holy words which are obviously charged with Divine help and comprise many hidden matters, are acquired after the purification of the soul only through following the Holy Qur'an and obeying the Holy Prophet^(saw).

(Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, p.80)

For every revelation the way of Allah mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, is the guide, guardian and leader. It is not possible that any revelation should be vouchsafed contrary to this way, for that would amount to falsifying Holy Scriptures.

(Majmua Ishtiharat, Vol. 2, p. 84)

The clear miracle of the Holy Qur'an which can manifest itself to every people and by presenting which we can silence everyone, whether an Indian, Persian, European or American, is the unlimited treasury of insights, verities and wisdoms, which are expounded in every age according to its need and stand as armed soldiers to refute the thinking of every age. If the Holy Qur'an had been limited in its verities and insights, it would not have amounted to a perfect miracle. Beauty of composition is not a matter the miraculous nature of which can be appreciated by every literate and illiterate person. The clear miracle of the Holy Qur'an is the unlimited insights and fine points which it comprises. A person

who does not admit this miracle of the Holy Qur'an is altogether deprived of the knowledge of the Qur'an. He who does not believe in this miracle does not estimate the Qur'an as highly as it should be estimated, and does not recognise God as He should be recognised, and does not honour the Holy Prophet^(saw) as he should be honoured.

Bear it in mind that the miracle of unlimited insights and verities which are contained in the Holy Qur'an has accomplished more in every age than has the sword. All the doubts that every age raises according to its circumstances, and all the claims of superior insights that are put forward, are completely refuted by the Holy Qur'an. No Brahmū Samajist, Buddhist, Arya or any other philosopher can put forward a Divine verity which is not already comprised in the Holy Qur'an. The wonders of the Qur'an will never cease. As the wonderful qualities of the book of nature have never come to an end in any previous age, but appear ever fresh and new, the

same is the case with this Holy Book, so that the Word of God and the Work of God should be proved to be in accord.

As I have written before, very often the wonders of the Holy Qur'an are revealed to me and are such that they are not to be found in the commentaries. For instance, it has been revealed to me that the period that elapsed between the creation of Adam and the advent of the Holy Prophet^(saw) is mentioned in *Surah Al-'Asr* in the value of its letters and amounts to 4,740 lunar years. This fine point which discloses the miracle of the Holy Qur'an is not mentioned in any commentary. In the same way, God Almighty has disclosed to me that the meaning of:

*Surely, We sent it down on the
Night of Destiny.*
(Ch.97:V.2)

is not only that the Qur'an was revealed in a blessed night, but that it also has another meaning which I have set out in my booklet *Fath-e-Islam*. Which

commentary mentions all these verities? It should be borne in mind that a multiplicity of meanings of the Holy Qur'an does not create any contradiction, nor import any defect in the guidance of the Qur'an. Indeed the light of the greatness of the Qur'an is enhanced by the addition of one light to another. Since time on account of limitless changes gives rise to limitless ideas, as a matter of course, it is necessary for the Holy Qur'an to manifest itself in ever new forms, to disclose ever new knowledge, and to refute all innovations and novelties. In these circumstances, if a Book which claims to be *Khatam-ul-Kutub* were not to meet new contingencies, it would not establish its claim. If this Book comprises everything that is needed in every age, we would have to confess that it comprehends unlimited insights, and that it takes care of the needs of every age.

It should also be remembered that the way of Allah with every perfect recipient of revelation has

been that the hidden wonders of the Qur'an are revealed to him. It often happens that a verse of the Holy Qur'an is conveyed to the mind of a recipient of revelation and its purpose is something different from its original meaning. Maulavi 'Abdullah Ghaznavi has written in a letter that on one occasion he received the revelation:

'We said: O fire be cool and a means of peace and security.'

but that he could not comprehend its import. He then received the revelation:

'We said: O steadfastness be cool and a means of peace and security.'

Then he understood that in his case fire had meant steadfastness.

(*Izala-e-Auham, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 3, pp.255-262*)

This is an age in which thousands of objections and doubts have been raised and Islam has been attacked from many directions.

God Almighty has said:

And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures thereof and We send it not down except in a known measure.

(Ch.15:V.22)

There is not a thing but We have unlimited treasures thereof, and We send them down in regulated and known quantities.

Thus, this was the age of the disclosure of spiritual and temporal verities that are hidden in the Qur'an which refute and reject every kind of philosophical and unphilosophical faith, for they could not be disclosed without their need having arisen. Now that attacks were made by the new philosophy, the time came for the manifestation of those insights. It was not possible that without the manifestation of those insights, Islam could be victorious against all false religions. A victory by the sword means nothing and is wiped out by the decline of temporary power. True and real victory is

‘AN INTELLIGENT PERSON CAN EASILY UNDERSTAND THAT NO CREATION OF GOD THE GLORIOUS IS WITHOUT FINE AND WONDERFUL QUALITIES. IF ONE CARRIES OUT A RESEARCH TILL THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT INTO THE QUALITIES AND WONDERS OF A FLY, THEY WOULD NOT COME TO AN END. THEN ARE NOT THE WONDERS AND QUALITIES OF THE HOLY QUR’AN EVEN AS MANY AS THOSE OF A FLY?’

that which is achieved with an army of insights and verities. This is the victory that Islam is now achieving. This prophecy related to this age and it was so understood in the past. This is an age that demands that the Holy Qur'an should disclose all the meanings which are hidden in it...

An intelligent person can easily

understand that no creation of God the Glorious is without fine and wonderful qualities. If one carries out a research till the Day of Judgement into the qualities and wonders of a fly, they would not come to an end. Then are not the wonders and qualities of the Holy Qur'an even as many as those of a fly? Without doubt, those wonders are in excess of the total wonders of the whole of creation and to deny them would be to deny the Divine origin of the Holy Qur'an for there is nothing in the world which proceeds from God Almighty and does not comprise unlimited wonders.

The verities and fine points which foster understanding are always disclosed according to need. New corruptions call for ever fresh meanings, which are full of wisdom. It is obvious that the Holy Qur'an is a miracle in itself, and the greatness of its miracle is that it is comprehensive of unlimited verities, but they are manifested at their due time. As the difficulties of the time demand, those hidden

insights are disclosed. Look! secular knowledge, most of which is opposed to the Holy Qur'an and is so misleading, is spreading rapidly. Currently, wonderful changes are being brought about in mathematics, physics and philosophy. Was it not necessary that at such a time the door to progress in faith and understanding should also have been opened, so that facilities might become available for repelling every new mischief? Know it for certain then that the door has been opened and God Almighty has determined to disclose the hidden wonders of the Holy Qur'an to the arrogant philosophers of the world. Half-baked Mullahs, who are the enemies of Islam, cannot frustrate this design. If they do not desist from mischief, they will be destroyed and visited by such Divine wrath that will grind them to dust. These fools do not apprehend the prevailing circumstances. They desire that the Holy Qur'an should appear as defeated, weak, small and insignificant, but it will now march forward like a champion.

It will roar like a lion and devour the entire worldly philosophy and shall demonstrate its own supremacy and fulfil the prophecy:

...that He may cause it to prevail over all religions...
(Ch.61:V.10)

This verse also appears in *Al-Tauba* (Ch.9:V.33) and in *Al-Fath* (Ch.48:V.29).

and culminate in the spiritual fulfilment of the following prophecy:

...He will surely establish for them their religion...
(Ch.24:V.56)

It is not possible to establish faith in the world to its perfection by means of compulsion. Faith is established upon the earth when no other faith remains standing in opposition to it and all opponents lay down their arms. That time has now arrived and cannot be blocked by the ignorant Mullahs. Now the son of Mary, whose spiritual father is none other than

the True Teacher, who also resembles Adam on this account, will distribute Qur'anic treasures among the people, so much so, that the people will become satiated and will be unable to accept more, and everyone will have had his fill according to his capacity.

(Izala-e-Auham, Ruhani Khazai'in, Vol.3, pp.464-467)

A RESPONSE TO THE POPE'S REMARKS ABOUT ISLAM

The English rendering of a Friday Sermon by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V in response to Pope Benedict XVI's lecture quoting and ancient dialogue containing false and unfounded allegations against Islam and its Holy Founder^(saw)

It was in the news yesterday that during a lecture at a university in Germany, the Pope spoke with reference to another writer about certain Islamic teachings, the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^(saw) which do not have the remotest connection to Islam.

This is their way to most cleverly speak with reference to another person, thus trying to save their own skin yet putting across what they wish to say. The Pope has tried to create a false impression about the Holy Qur'an, Islam and the Founder of Islam^(saw) by saying certain things. While this must have created disquiet among the Muslims, it also demonstrates their own inner feelings against Islam.

Such is the stature of the Pope that no matter with what reference he spoke, it was not appropriate for him to have made these

observations in the current climate when, in the world, in the West, hatred against the Muslims is being generated through one reference or the other. For the Pope to have stated such a matter is akin to inflaming the situation. What was needed was for him to say that although today some militant Islamic organisations have adopted an erroneous method, the teaching of Islam is contrary to this and in order to establish peace in the world we should work together so that innocent humanity may be saved from destruction. Rather than this, he has tried to lead his followers to believe that this is what the teaching of Islam is.

I thought that the Pope was a sensible learned person and would have some knowledge of Islam. However, he has shown his total lack of knowledge through this. In light of the teachings of the

Messiah^(as) [Christ] whose successorship the Pope claims, he should have tried to create peace in the world. Indeed [the Messiah] gave the teaching of even treating one's enemy with decency.

By attributing these wrong matters to the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the Holy Qur'an, on one hand the feelings of Muslims have been trifled with, as I said before. On the other hand, by way of reaction, those Muslims who have no control over their emotions may take improper actions that would give the others further propaganda opportunity against Muslims. In addition, it would further increase hatred for Muslims in the hearts of the followers of the Pope and the people of the West who consider Islam to be an extremist religion.

May Allah, the Exalted, have mercy and save the world from evil and disorder. This should be the prayer of Ahmadis at all times. In conjunction with prayer, each country should respond to the questions raised [in the lecture]. These are the only two weapons we have and are the ones that we are going to employ. Other than in

this way neither has an Ahmadi ever demonstrated a reaction nor will it, Insha'Allah (God willing), ever be the case [that an Ahmadi will react in a different way].

I shall read out a summary of the Pope's objections against the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^(saw) – the details of which were sent from Germany.

He says, 'I read a dialogue, the text of which was published by a German university professor. This ancient dialogue took place in Ankara in 1391 between a patron of knowledge, the Emperor Manuel and a Persian scholar. It was later scribed by a Christian scholar.'

They acknowledge that as the dialogue was published by a Christian, the Pope has primarily put patron's point of view across. Their sense of fairness is evident here in that little mention is made of what the Muslim scholar said and it is their own point that is mostly mentioned. Anyhow, as regards the question raised, he says he wishes to talk about that point in his lecture which includes the Emperor's mention of Jihad and

that the Emperor certainly had knowledge of it. He gives the reference of verse 257 of *Surah Al Baqarah* (Chapter 2) which states that 'there is no compulsion in religion' – in Islam. However, he goes on to say that the Emperor was definitely also aware of the later Qur'anic teachings on holy war or Jihad, the details written in the Holy Qur'an with this reference, for example regarding the People of the Book and disbelievers that they should be treated in a different way – here they give their own reference. He then says that the Emperor puts a fundamental question to his co-conversationalist in astonishing harsh words as to what is the mutual connection between religion and compulsion – reiterating it.

The Emperor says: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." He goes on to say that the Emperor expounds that it is contrary to reason to spread religion with force; this teaching is in contrast with the

nature of God and nature of the soul. He says that God is not pleased by blood and not acting reasonably is contrary to God's nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. He then says that for the Emperor, who was shaped by Greek philosophy, the above-mentioned sentence is a distinct reality that according to the teachings of Islam, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality.

He goes on to give a reference of a French expert on Islamic studies who quoted Ibn Hazm in that nothing can force God to make the truth evident to us and if He so wishes, humans would also have to worship idols. Who knows if Ibn Hazm actually said this or not? No reference follows this quotation.

He then asks that is the conviction that acting unreasonably contradicts God's nature merely a Greek idea or is it always and, *per se*, true? He believes, he says, that a deep mutual conformity can be seen between the Greek school of thought and a belief in God that is

based on the Bible. Anyhow the rest is a lengthy lecture.

As I said before, it is acknowledged therein that the words of the Emperor are detailed in comparison to the answers given by the Persian scholar and clearly the Christian who wrote this account was going to strengthen his own arguments to demonstrate his superiority. The arguments of the other side are not presented. Certainly fairness could not have been employed. Anyhow whatever it was, I shall state, in light of the Holy Qur'an and the blessed model of the Holy Prophet(saw), what we Ahmadi Muslims understand briefly because much cannot be said here. However, answers to these questions shall Insha'Allah be prepared for the Pope and we will also try and deliver these to him so that if he was hitherto unaware of the true teaching of Islam, he might find out a little, providing he studies them and reflects over them with fairness and being mindful of his stature.

We have great reverence for Jesus(as) in our hearts and we

believe him to be a prophet of God. In fact, we believe in and respect all the prophets of God who came to any nation. Christians too should care for the feelings of Muslims and hold the Holy Prophet(saw) in respect and esteem.

As I said, the Pope gives reference of the Emperor and says that the Emperor certainly was aware of verse 257 of *Surah Al Baqarah* (Chapter 2) and this is the verse that maintains that 'there is no compulsion in religion.' He says this *Surah* is from among the early *Surahs* – although it is not one of the very early ones, it is of the first few Madinah years or so. The Pope states that the Emperor was also aware of the later *Surahs* and he was aware of the later teachings of Jihad.

Whether he was aware as such or not, he definitely had a prejudiced outlook. He says that the Holy Qur'an carries instruction of different treatment for disbelievers and People of the Book – whereas there is no compulsion in religion – and that, God forbid, the teachings of Holy Prophet(saw) is

only about evil and inhuman teachings and nothing else. According to them, God forbid, the Prophet^(saw) said that Islam should be spread with the force of the sword. They themselves attribute something wrong to Islam which is not even remotely connected to its teachings and then they go ahead and declare it to be contrary to reason and contrary to the justice of God.

They say that a wise person does not need power or force or weapons. They are absolutely right to say so. However, why are their current day superpowers interfering with nations thousands of miles afar, employing force? They have not answered this. They should advise their own first as to whether what they are doing is right and wrong. Besides, in whose account do they put the internal wars in the history of Christianity? Do they not take note of those? In whose account do they credit the Spanish Inquisition? I shall not go into its detail, they are all aware of it.

The Pope says that the Emperor was also aware of the later

teachings. What is the teaching of Islam about propagating religion and how did the Holy Prophet^(saw) act on it? This “person in the know” was, according to the Emperor, not aware of it. However, I shall present the Holy Prophet’s^(saw) practical example.

Islam is a religion based on nature; it certainly does not teach one to turn the other cheek. Those, to whom this teaching is given, should say to what extent they abide by it? This is the flaw of their teaching that has distanced the Christians of this age from Christianity. Today no one even attends the weekly Sunday mass at the church apart from the elderly. They have started renting out church buildings for other functions. In the West, numerous churches carry the ‘For Sale’ sign. An American professor, Edwin Lewis, wrote, “the people of the 20th century are not prepared to believe in Jesus as God.” The president of St. Johns College, Oxford, Sir Cyril, said that it should always be remembered that a large portion of men and women from Europe and America have not remained Christian and

perhaps it would also be correct to say that their majority is comprised of such people. Similarly, there are various statements of these people about Africa; they acknowledge that this teaching is dwindling. The reason is that they know that now there is only one solution: they have to use cunning ploys against Islam.

What is the reality behind the concept of force in Islam that non-Muslims present? It is said that the Emperor was aware of the commandments of Islam! Let us see what the Holy Qur'an states. Allah, the Exalted, got the Holy Prophet(saw) to proclaim:

Say, 'It [Islam] is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve...'
(Ch.18:V.30)

The directive is for no compulsion in religion.

Then Allah, the Exalted, states:

Say, 'O ye men, now has the truth come to you from your Lord. So whosoever follows the

guidance, follows it only for the good of his own soul, and whosoever errs, errs only against it. And I am not a keeper over you.'
(Ch.10:V.109)

The Holy Prophet(saw) also exhibited a practical example of this. The Ansar (Medinite Muslims) had given away some of their children to Banu Nazir at birth and when due to some transgressions and wrong doings of theirs, Banu Nazir were given the penalty of exile, the Ansar wanted to take their children back and tried to stop them [from leaving]. The Holy Prophet(saw) said that once they had given the children away it was final. There is no compulsion in religion and hence the children would stay with the guardians.

This was indeed his teaching to which his Khulafa and Companions, having comprehended it, adhered to it. A slave of Hadhat Umar(ra) relates that he was often asked by him to convert to Islam and on his refusal he would say that it was alright as there was no compulsion in Islam. When Hadhrat Umar(ra) was close to his

death he told his slave that the slave was liberated and was free to go wherever he wanted to go. This is the teaching and the examples in Islam of religious freedom that even a slave was not compelled. Yet the Pope maintains that Islam entails cruelty and harshness.

The Holy Qur'an states:

Say to those who have been given the Book and to the unlearned, [that is, the idolaters] 'Have you submitted?' If they submit, then they will surely be guided; but if they turn back, then thy duty is only to convey the message. And Allah is Watchful of His servants.
(Ch.3:V.21)

That is to say, now it is up to God in that He would decide who is to be seized, who is to be punished and who is to be treated in what way. These are the [Islamic] commandments. This last verse was revealed after the victory of Makkah when Muslims had power. Rather than objecting, these people should employ wisdom and justice.

Not a single example of compulsion can be found in Islam. They object against the Holy Prophet^(saw) that he used force, whereas it was not even acceptable to him that anyone should accept Islam with duplicity.

A Tradition relates that a disbelieving prisoner was presented to the Holy Prophet^(saw) who questioned as to why he was captured as he was a Muslim. The Prophet^(saw) replied that if he had accepted Islam beforehand it would have been alright but now that he was a prisoner of war he was purporting to be a Muslim only to seek a release. He did not wish to convert him to Islam with compulsion rather it was his wish that people would submit to God with their hearts and mind. Therefore, later on that prisoner was released in exchange for the release of two Muslim captives.

If Islam sanctions war it is only at the time when the enemy is waging war or is creating oppressive circumstances. As soon as the circumstances turn normal and the persecution comes to an end, the commandment is that there is no

HISTORY IS REplete WITH INCIDENTS THAT INVALIDATE THE ACCUSATION BY THE NON-MUSLIMS THAT [PEOPLES'] RELIGION WAS CHANGED FORCEFULLY. WE HAVE JUST HAD A GLIMPSE OF THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY PROPHET(SAW). HE ONCE SAID A MUSLIM WHO IS GUILTY OF KILLING A NON-MUSLIM WHO HAS COME UNDER A MUSLIM GOVERNMENT VIA A VERBAL OR WRITTEN PACT WILL BE DEPRIVED OF PARADISE ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT IN ADDITION TO THE WORLDLY PUNISHMENT [GIVEN TO HIM].

justification for war. Allah, the Exalted, states in the Holy Qur'an:

And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.
(Ch.2:V.194)

The assertion here by Allah, the Exalted, to 'fight those disbelievers who fight you until there is persecution in the land' is expounded by Ibn Umar who relates:

'We abided by this Divine commandment. In the days of the Holy Prophet(saw) the Muslims were very few in number and any person who accepted Islam was persecuted for religious reasons by the disbelievers. Some were murdered whereas others were imprisoned. We thus battled to the time when Muslims grew in number and strength and the oppression against them ceased.'

Allah, the Exalted, states:

O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.
(Ch.5:V.9)

Indeed it was this very sense of

justice that brought about a revolution at the time of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and this revolution was created later as well. On examining the lives of the Companions^(ra) one finds that the revolution which came in their lives does not occur by changing a person's religion by force, rather it comes when hearts and minds are altered; it comes about when the enemy is treated with such courtesy and civility that even the enemy is charmed.

For instance, at the time of the victory of Makkah, Ikrama, who was the severest opponent of Islam, fled. In order to bring him back, his wife requested the Holy Prophet^(saw) for his pardon and he was thus pardoned. This brought about an incredible revolutionary change in him. Such a revolutionary change cannot be brought about with the force of the sword. The manner in which his faith developed cannot happen without love. The way his heart was replete with sincerity cannot come to pass without love. The sense of sacrifice was increased [in him] in a manner that cannot take place without a change of

heart. The sense of honour he exhibited for Islam can only be created by understanding its teaching. The Companions^(ra) in general exhibited incredible examples of love and sense of honour for Islam. History is replete with such incidents and thus was the case of Ikrama who I am mentioning here.

Earlier, Ikrama fought against the Holy Prophet^(saw) in every battle and tried his best to annihilate Islam. Eventually, after the victory of Makkah, he considered subordination of the Holy Prophet^(saw) as a source of disgrace for himself and fled as I just mentioned. However, once he accepted Islam, his faith and sincerity was such that during the Khilafat of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) he demonstrated matchless sacrifice in destroying the rebels. During one battle when furious fight ensued and people were being cut down in the manner that grass is chopped off with a sickle, Ikrama took a few comrades and went into the heart of the enemy's force. Some had tried to stop him from doing so as the fighting was turning extremely dangerous and it was not right to

leap into the enemy's forces in this manner. Nevertheless, Ikrama went forward asserting, 'I have fought the Holy Prophet^(saw) for the sake of *Lat* and *Uzza* [two pre-Islamic idols], today I shall not stay behind fighting in the way of Allah.' At the end of the hostilities, his body was found riddled with spear and sword wounds.

Ikrama's sense of monetary sacrifice was such that whenever he received a portion from the spoils of war, he would give it as *sadqa* (charity); spending liberally for the service of faith.

Changes of this ilk are brought about through a change of hearts and not with the force of the sword. History is replete with incidents that invalidate the accusation by the non-Muslims that peoples' religion was changed forcefully. We have just had a glimpse of the teaching of the Holy Prophet^(saw). He once said a Muslim who is guilty of killing a non-Muslim who has come under a Muslim government through an oral or written pact will be deprived of Paradise on the Day of

Judgement in addition to the worldly punishment given to him.

As for the way of his Khulafa, it is related in a Tradition that once Hadhrat Umar^(ra) passed through a place where severity was being used to collect the *Jizya* (poll-tax paid by non-Muslims) from the non-Muslims. Seeing this he promptly stopped and asked in an angry tone what the matter was. He was told that those people did not pay the *Jizya* saying that they did not have the capacity to pay it. Hadhrat Umar^(ra) said then there was no reason to burden them with something for which they did not have the capacity. He said those people were to be left alone and that he had heard from the Holy Prophet^(saw) that a person who hurts others in this world will be under God's chastisement on the Day of Judgement. As a result, the *Jizya* of those people was pardoned.

In light of the advisory sayings of the Holy Prophet^(saw), Hadhrat Umar^(ra) was so concerned about his non-Muslim subjects that before his death he left a specific will for the Khalifa who was to follow him, the wording of which

was: 'I advise the Khalifa who follows me to have a most gentle and compassionate way with the non-Muslim subjects of Islamic government; to fulfil their pacts, to protect them and to fight their enemies for them and never to put a burden or responsibility which is beyond their capacity on them.'

If compulsion was used to convert them to Islam then why would this be the case?

A pact was drawn between the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the Jews of Khyber when he first went to Madinah. He would send his Companion, Abdullah bin Rawa^(ra), to them for the division of crops. In accordance with this teaching, Abdullah bin Rawa^(ra) would extend the gentlest of treatment in the division of the produce. He used to divide the harvest in two, give the Jews the option to take the portion of their choice and would take the remaining portion himself.

As I said before, in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Prophet^(saw), Hadhrat Umar^(ra) was most concerned about the rights

and welfare of non-Muslim subjects of the Muslim government. He would periodically advise his governors to take special care of the non-Muslims and would also himself regularly enquire of them if they had any difficulty. Once a delegation of non-Muslims came to Hadhrat Umar^(ra) and the first question he put to them was whether they had suffered any inconvenience from the Muslims. They replied that they had received nothing but the best of fidelity and treatment from the Muslims.

At the conquest of Syria, the Muslims collected tax from the non-Muslim population of Syria. However, soon afterwards there was imminent danger of another war from the Roman empire. The Muslim Amir of Syria, Hadhrat Abu Ubaida^(ra) returned all the collected tax to the Christian population, maintaining that as their rights could not be fulfilled due to the war, it was not fair for them to keep the tax. The Christians were spontaneous in prayers for the Muslims that God may give them victory over the Romans and may they once again

be the rulers of the land. Such was the treatment of the Muslims. As a result, when victory was achieved once again and the Muslims returned [to Syria] the tax was once again collected as before.

Would they now explain if this is what compulsion is? If those who make accusations against the blessed person of the Holy Prophet^(saw) were fair and studied history, they would find out how much compassion he had for the non-Muslims. If he invited [people] to Islam, he would do it with love and gentleness because it was only beneficial for the individual's soul.

A Tradition relates that the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his Companions cared greatly for the feelings of the non-Muslims at the time when they were in power and government. Once, a young Jewish man fell ill in Madinah. When the Holy Prophet^(saw) came to know, he went to visit him. When he saw that he was in a frail state he did some *Tabligh* (preaching) about Islam to him. The Jewish youth was impressed by the *Tabligh*. However, as his

father was alive and stood nearby he looked at his father in a searching manner. The father told the son that if he wished to accept [Islam] he could do so. The son recited the *Kalima* (declaration of faith) and became a Muslim. The Holy Prophet^(saw) was most pleased at this and thanked God that the soul had been saved from the torment of fire.

The reality of the accusation of cruelty – that Islam has been spread by the use of force – has been clarified by the Qur'anic teachings that I mentioned and the few examples of the blessed model of the Holy Prophet^(saw). It is now clear how Islam was spread and what I had earlier mentioned as to what went on during the Spanish Inquisition has also uncovered their reality. However, I shall present a few examples of what the fair-minded Christians among them say about the Holy Prophet^(saw).

Thomas Carlyle writes:

“Our current hypothesis about Muhammad that he was a scheming impostor, a

falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to anyone. The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only... It is really time to dismiss all that. The word this man spoke has been the life-guidance now of a hundred and eighty million of men these twelve hundred years. These hundred and eighty million were made by God as well as us. A greater number of God's creatures believe in Muhammad's word at this hour than in any other word whatever. Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain, this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by? I, for my part, cannot form any such supposition."¹

Sir William Muir who, in places has written some prejudiced material as well, writes:

“We may freely concede that it [Islam] banished forever many

darker elements of superstition which had for ages shrouded the [Arabian] peninsula... nor were social virtues wanting – Islam may boast a degree of temperance unknown to any other creed.”²

Edward Gibbon said:

“His beneficial or pernicious influence on the public happiness is the last consideration in the character of Muhammad^(saw). The most bitter or most bigoted of his Christian or Jewish foes will surely allow that he assumed a false commission to inculcate a salutary doctrine, less perfect only than their own. He piously supposed, as the basis of his religion, the truth and sanctity of their prior revolutions, the virtues and miracles of their founders. The idols of Arabia were broken before the throne of God; the blood of human victims was expiated by prayer, and fasting, and alms, the laudable or innocent arts of devotion... he breathed among the faithful a spirit of charity and friendship; recommended the practice of

the social virtues; and checked, by his laws and precepts, the thirst of revenge, and the oppression of widows and orphans. The hostile tribes were united in faith and obedience, and the valour which had been idly spent in domestic quarrels was vigorously directed against a foreign enemy.”³

John Devonport has written that it would be a huge mistake to assume that the creed taught by the Qur'an was propagated by the use of the force. He says that those who are unbiased would freely acknowledge that through the religion of Muhammad^(saw) sacrifice of human was replaced with worship of God and charity and it infused a spirit of generosity and social harmony instead of enmity and chronic hostilities. He wrote that the Prophet^(saw) was a true blessing for the Eastern world and it was particularly for this reason that he did not need to employ the bloody strategies which were used without exception and indiscriminately by Moses^(as) in order to obliterate idolatry. He concludes that it is idle to be insulting in

ignorant condemnation of such an excellent source that nature provided to influence beliefs and propositions of human beings for a long period in time.⁴

Edward Gibbon again writes:

“The wars of the Moslems were sanctified by the Prophet, but among the various precepts and examples of his life, the caliphs selected the lessons of tolerance that might tend to disarm the resistance of the unbelievers. Arabia was the temple and patrimony of the God of Muhammad; but he beheld with less jealousy and affection the nations of the earth. The polytheists and idolaters, who were ignorant of his name, might be lawfully extirpated by his votaries; but a wise policy supplied the obligation of justice...”⁵

Count Tolstoy writes:

“There can be no doubt that the Prophet Muhammad was one of the greatest reformers who have rendered great services to human society. It is sufficient

to say that he guided an entire nation to the light of truth, and made it incline towards tranquillity and peace, and preferred a life of asceticism, and prevented bloodshed and human sacrifice; he showed them the way to advancement and civilization. This is a great achievement that can only be made by one who is given strength; such a man is deserving of respect and honour.”⁶

George Bernard Shaw writes:

“I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him – the wonderful man – and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity.”⁷

Rev. Bosworth Smith writes:

“Head of the State as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Popes pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar. Without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports.”⁸

Pringle Kennedy writes:

“Muhammad was, to use a striking expression, the man of the hour. In order to understand his wonderful success, one must study the conditions of his times. Five and half centuries and more had elapsed when he was born since Jesus had come into the world. At that time, the old religions of Greece and Rome, and of the hundred and one states along the Mediterranean, had lost their vitality. In their place, Caesarism had come as a living cult. The worship of the state as personified by the reigning Caesar, such was the

religion of the Roman Empire. Other religions might exist, it was true; but they had to permit this new cult by the side of them and predominant over them. But Caesarism failed to satisfy. The Eastern religions and superstitions (Egyptian, Syrian, Persian) appealed to many in the Roman world and found numerous votaries. The fatal fault of many of these creeds was that in many respects they were so ignoble... When Christianity conquered Caesarism at the commencement of the fourth century, it, in its turn, became Caesarised. No longer was it the pure creed which had been taught some three centuries before. It had become largely de-spiritualised, ritualised, materialised...

How, in a few years, all this was changed, how, by 650 AD a great part of this world became a different world from what it had been before, is one of the most remarkable chapters in human history... This wonderful change followed, if it was not mainly

caused by, the life of one man, the Prophet of Mecca...

Whatever the opinion one may have of this extraordinary man, whether it be that of the devout Muslim who considers him the last and greatest herald of God's word, or of the fanatical Christian of former days, who considered him an emissary of the Evil One, or of certain modern Orientalists, who look on him rather as a politician than a saint, as an organiser of Asia in general and Arabia in particular, against Europe, rather than as a religious reformer; there can be no difference as to the immensity of the effect which his life has had on the history of the world."⁹

S. P. Scott writes:

“If the object of religion be the inculcation of morals, the diminution of evil, the promotion of human happiness, the expansion of the human intellect, if the performance of good works will avail in the great day when

mankind shall be summoned to its final reckoning it is neither irreverent nor unreasonable to admit that Muhammad was indeed an Apostle of God.”¹⁰

There are many references but I shall be brief.

Ruth Cranston writes:

“Muhammad never instigated fighting and bloodshed. Every battle he fought was in rebuttal. He fought in order to survive... and he fought with the weapons and in fashion of his time... Certainly no ‘Christian’ nation of 140,000,000 people who today dispatch [this is a book written in 1949] 120,000 helpless civilians with a single bomb can look askance at a leader who at his worst killed a bare five or six hundred. The slayings of the Prophet of Arabia (saw) in the benighted and bloodthirsty age of the seventh century look positively puerile compared with our own in this ‘advanced’ and enlightened twentieth century. Not to mention the mass

slaughter by the Christians during the Inquisition and the Crusades – when, Christian warriors proudly recorded, they “waded ankle-deep in the gore of the Muslim infidels.”¹¹

John Devonport has written that it can be said with certainty and absolute truth that if instead of the Muslim freedom-fighters and the Turks, the Western princes had ruled over Asia, they would not have treated the Muslims with the religious tolerance that the Muslims extended towards Christianity. This is because Christianity aimed cruelty with great prejudice and brutality towards its own co-religionists with whom it had religious differences.¹²

The Promised Messiah^(as) states:

“The reader of the article has raised an objection that there is a commandment in the Holy Qur’an for the use force for making people Muslims. It seems this person possesses neither intelligence nor knowledge of his own and has merely borrowed it all from

padres. The padres have, out of sheer meanness and prejudice, as is their wont, made false allegation in their books that there is a commandment in Islam to make Muslims by force. So, this person, and his brothers have, without any personal research and investigation simply reproduced the false allegation of the padres. In the Holy Qur'an, the verse very clearly declares:

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong.
(Ch.2:V.257)

“What, then, is the need to use force? It is amazing that despite the Holy Qur'an declaring so positively that no force should be applied in religion, the darkened hearts that are filled with grudge and enmity falsely accuse that there is forced conversion in the Word of God.

“Now, we will present another verse of the Qur'an and seek

justice from the fair-minded to tell us, fearing God, if the teaching of forced conversion is proven, or, on the contrary, its prohibition is affirmed? The verse is as follows:

And if anyone of the idolaters ask protection of thee, grant him protection so that he may hear the word of Allah; then convey him to his place of security. That is because they are a people who have no knowledge.
(Ch. 9:V.6)

“It is evident that if the Holy Qur'an had taught forced conversion, it would not have commanded to give protection to a disbeliever by taking him to a place of security if he wished to hear the Qur'an and, after listening to it, still remained a non-believer. It would have commanded to make a disbeliever a Muslim as soon as he came under the control of Muslims.”
(*Chashma-e-Ma'rafat, Ruhani Khazain, vol.23, pp.232-233*)

The second objection raised by

them is that the God of Islam is not compatible with reason. The God of Islam is One Who invites people to reason in order to acknowledge His Being. If everyone's concept of God is that He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and is the Master of everything then they should also acknowledge that He is Omnipotent, possesses all powers. Rather than dismiss the concept of God in Islam, Islam requires reason and reflection.

The Promised Messiah^(as) states:

“The God in Islam is the same God Who is visible in the mirror of the law of nature and is discernable in the book of nature. Islam has not presented a new God but has presented the same God Who is presented by the light of man's heart, by the conscience of man and by heaven and earth.”
(Tabligh-e-Risalat, Ruhani Khazain, vol.6, p.15)

He further states:

“We now call attention to the attributes of the God to Whom

the Holy Qur'an calls us, which are as follows:

He is Allah, there is none worthy of worship except Him, the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Gracious, the Merciful.

(Ch.59:V.23)

The Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Bestower of Security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted.

(Ch.59:V.24)

He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

(Ch.59:V.25)

Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.

(Ch.2:V.110)

Lord of all the worlds. The Gracious, the Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgement.

(Ch.1:Vs.2-4)

I answer the prayer of the supplicant.
(Ch.2:V.187)

The Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining.
(Ch.3:V.3)

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)

“*There is no worthy of worship beside Him*’ (Ch.59:V.23) means that God is One without associate and no one else beside Him is worthy and obedience.

“This affirmation is made because, were He not without associate, there might be an apprehension that He might be overcome by a rival, in which case Godhead would always be in peril. The affirmation that no one is worthy of worship beside Allah means that He is so perfect and His attributes are so excellent and exalted that if we were to select a good

God out of the universe Who would be equipped with perfect attributes, or were we to contemplate in our minds the best and most exalted attributes that God should possess, He would be more exalted than all our fancies – Whom no one can excel and over Whom no one can be more exalted. That is God. To associate anyone in Whose worship would be the greatest wrong.”

Thus Islam is free from all kinds of associations with God. The wrong association with God is being done by Christians who, having made a god out of a prophet of God, consider him an equal to God.

The Promised Messiah^(as) further states:

“‘He is the Knower of the unseen’, that is to say, He alone knows Himself. No one can comprehend His Being. We can comprehend the sun and the moon in their entirety, but we cannot comprehend God in His entirety. He is the Knower

of the seen, that is to say, nothing is hidden from Him. It is not to be imagined that He should be unaware of anything. He has every particle of the universe within His sight; but man does not possess such comprehensive vision. He knows when He might break up this system and bring about the Judgement. No one else knows when that would happen. It is God alone Who has knowledge of all those times. Then it is said: 'He is the Gracious One.' This means that before the coming into being of animates and before any action proceeding from them, out of His pure grace and not for any other purpose, nor as a reward for any action, He makes due provision for everyone; as for instance He brought into being the sun and the earth and all other things for our benefit before we came into being and before any action had proceeded from us. This Divine bounty is designated *Rahmaniyyat* in the Book of God, and on account of it God Almighty is called *Rahman*. He rewards righteous

action richly and does not let go waste anyone's effort. On account of this attribute, He is called *Rahim*, and the attribute is designated *Rahimiyyat*.

“Then it is said: ‘He is Master of the Day of Judgement.’ (Ch.1:V.4) This means that He keeps the recompense of everyone in His own hand. He has appointed no agent to whom He has committed the governance of the heavens and the earth, having withdrawn from it altogether, being no longer concerned with it, leaving to the agent the determination of all recompense at all times.”

He has no need at all because He possesses all powers. He does not have the need to set up a council of gods, which would then help Him. Therefore, as far as the use of reason and rationality is concerned, it cannot be said that Islam's concept of God is irrational. The concept not compatible with reason is of those who have created three gods to run God's sovereignty on democratic lines. If even one of them [these

gods] disagrees, it would be difficult to reach a decision.

He further states:

“Then it is said, He is ‘the Sovereign’ without any default. (Ch.59:V.24) It is obvious that human sovereignty is not without fault. For instance, if all the subjects of an earthly sovereign were to leave their country and to migrate to another country, his sovereignty would come to an end. Or if all his people were afflicted with famine, how could any revenue be collected? Or if the people were to enquire from him what is it that he possesses beyond that which they possess on account of which they should obey him, what could he say in answer to their questions? But God’s sovereignty is not subject to any default. He can destroy everything in one instant and can create another kingdom. Had He not been such a Creator, possessing all power, His kingdom would not have endured without injustice. For instance, having

forgiven and having bestowed salvation upon the people of the world once, how would He have acquired another world? Would He have sought to catch those upon whom He had already bestowed salvation so that He might send them back into the world, and would have revoked His forgiveness and salvation unjustly? In such case His Godhead would have proved defective and He would have become an imperfect ruler like earthly sovereigns who frame ever new laws for their people and are infuriated time after time; and when they find in their selfishness, that they cannot carry on without injustice, they have recourse to it without compunction. For instance, in terrestrial sovereignty it is considered permissible to let the passengers of a small vessel be destroyed in order to secure the safety of a large vessel, but God is under no such compulsion. If God had not been All-Powerful and had not the power to create out of nothing, He would have been compelled either to have

recourse to injustice like weak sovereigns, or would have clung to justice and lost His Godhead. God's vessel continues its voyage with full power on the basis of justice.

“Then it is said, He is ‘the Source of Peace’, that is to say, He is safeguarded against all defects, and misfortunes and hardships, and provides security for all. If He had been liable to being afflicted with misfortunes, or being killed by His people, or could have been frustrated in His designs, how could the hearts of people in such cases have been comforted by the conviction that He would deliver them from misfortunes?

“God Almighty describes the condition of false gods in the following words:

Those on whom you call beside Allah cannot create even a fly, though they should all combine together for the purpose; and if a fly should snatch away anything from them they cannot recover it therefrom.

Weak indeed are both the seeker and the sought. They esteem not Allah with the estimation that is His due. Surely Allah is Powerful, Mighty.
(Ch.22:V.74-75)

Their worshippers lack intelligence and they themselves lack power. Can such as these be gods? God is One Who is more powerful than all those who possess power. He is the Mighty, Who is supreme over all. No one can apprehend Him or kill Him. Those who fall into such errors have not a true concept of God's attributes.

“Then God is the ‘Bestower of Security’ and sets forth proof of His attributes and His Unity. This is an indication that he who believes in the True God is not embarrassed in any company, nor would he be remorseful in the presence of God, for he is equipped with strong proofs. But he who believes in a false god finds himself in great distress. He describes every senseless thing

as a mystery so that he should not be laughed at and seeks to hide demonstrable errors. Then it is said, He is 'the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted.' This means that He safeguards all and is supreme over all and sets right all that might have gone wrong and is completely Self-Sufficient.

He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.
(Ch.59:V.25)

"This means that He is the Creator of the bodies as well as of the souls. He determines the features of a baby in the womb. To Him belong all the beautiful names that can be thought of. The dwellers of the heaven and the dwellers of the earth glorify Him. This is an indication that the heavenly bodies are also populated and their dwellers follow Divine guidance.

Allah has the power to do all

that He wills.
(Ch.2:V.21)

"This provides great comfort for His worshippers, for what can be expected of a god who is weak and without power?

"Then it is said: 'He is the Lord of the worlds, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgement.' (Ch.1:Vs.2-4) This means that He provides for the universe and is Himself the Master of the Day of Judgement and has not committed Judgement to anyone else.

"Then it is said: '*I answer the prayer of the supplicant when He prays to Me.*' (Ch.2:V.187), '*the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining.*' (Ch.2:V.256) The life of every life and the support of every being. He is the Ever-Living, for if He were not Ever-Living, His worshippers would be apprehensive lest He should die before them.

"Then it is said: 'Say: He is Allah, the One... He begets not,

nor is He begotten; and there is no one who is His equal or like unto Him.' ” (Ch.112:Vs.2-5)
(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, pp.58-62)

The Promised Messiah^(as) states:

“It should be remembered that the religion renowned as Christianity is in fact a Pauline religion and is not from Christ. Nowhere did Jesus^(as) teach of trinity. As long as he lived, he taught the Unity of God without associating anyone with Him. After his death, his apostle and brother Jacob (also known as James) who was a holy person, continued to teach the Unity of God. Paul started opposing this saintly person for no reason whatsoever and initiated teachings which were contrary to the true doctrines. Eventually, Paul advanced in his ideas to such an extent that he established a new religion. He made his followers completely break off from following the teachings of Torah. He taught that after the redemptive death of Jesus, there was no need to follow the

religious law (the Mosaic code of conduct) and that as the blood of Jesus was sufficient to rid all sins, it was not essential to follow the Torah. He then added another impurity to this religion and made eating the flesh of swine permissible, although Jesus^(as) had declared swine as unclean. This is the reason why he has a saying in the Gospels: ‘Neither cast ye your pearls before swine.’ Thus, if the pure teaching is called “pearls” by Jesus^(as) then it is certainly obvious that by comparison he called the unclean “swine”. The fact of the matter is that the Romans used to eat flesh of the swine just as in these days all the Europeans consume it. In order to win over the Romans, Paul made it permissible to eat the flesh of swine, although it is written in the Torah that the flesh of swine was always forbidden, and even touching it is not allowed. In short, all the defects in this religion were introduced by Paul.”

(Chashma-e-Masihi, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 20 pages 374-375)

There is an assertion by the Pope that there is a deep similarity between the Greek school of thought and belief in a God based on the Bible. Well, in reality this is not the religion brought by Jesus^(as) rather this was an attempt to please the Romans. The fair-minded Christians are aware of this as Edward Gibbons writes:

“The creed of Muhammad is free from suspicion or ambiguity and the Qur’an is a glorious testimony to the Unity of God... The prophet of Mecca rejected the worship of idols and men, of stars and planets, on the rational principle... The first principle of reason and revolution was confirmed by the voice of Muhammad: his proselytes, from India to Morocco, are distinguished by the name of *Unitarians*.”¹³

Indeed it is the God of Islam that compels one who reflects with reason that reasonable and rational proofs of such a God are found in Islam.

Therefore, in conclusion I say to

each Ahmadi that we can only successfully go through the current mounting opposition against Islam by turning to Him and by seeking help from Him. So supplicate to God more than before that He may manifest His Power and the world is rid of false gods.

If today these people are on the offensive against Islam and the Holy Prophet^(saw) on the basis of their wealth and power, it will be the force of our prayers, Insha’Allah, that will break their arrogance and conceit.

So call on the God Who is the God of the universe, Who is the Lord of all the worlds, Who is the God of the Holy Prophet^(saw) so that the Kingdom of the One God Who has no partner is established on the earth soon. Muslim countries should also think and consider bringing the mutual conflicts amongst themselves to an end, to cease their disagreements and enmities, to try and promote the name of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and to desist from actions that give others the audacity to deride it. May Allah, the Exalted, help them.

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Scientific Advancement and Signs of the Latter Days - (part 1)

By Dr. Kaleem Malik – Chicago, USA

An address at the Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, USA.

Various verses of the Holy Qur'an and the Bible point to diverse signs marking the Latter Days. This age is described by many different defining characteristics which, when taken together as a collective sum, unmistakably point to this very era that we are living in currently. There is no other religious scripture or philosophy which describes the Latter Days with such clarity and precision as does the Holy Qur'an and in doing so proves its absolute veracity. In fact, the traditions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) also reflect the Qur'anic description with complete harmony with regard to these defining characteristics. The vivid descriptions do not just confine their imagery to a single facet of human imagination but foretell events concerning the multifaceted scope of life. The imagery produced by the Qur'an depicts a sharp image of society of the Latter Days including

their political condition, social condition, moral condition, the advancements, progress and achievements of man and celestial and cosmic events – all virtually drawing a complete map of the Latter Days.

There is no doubt that each of these descriptions can be discussed at great length. However, we will confine ourselves to just the modern scientific advancements and signs of the Latter Days and we shall see that each scientific advancement is a glorious tribute to the truth of the Qur'an and the truth of the Holy Prophet^(saw). What is the importance of recognising the age of the Latter Days? Well, most religions agree that in the Latter Days a Divine Reformer will appear and lead mankind to salvation. In order for this to happen, it is absolutely essential for these two occurrences to manifest simultaneously, that is, the appearance of a Divine Reformer and also the appearance of the signs of the Latter Days,

which serve to facilitate the truth of such a Divine Reformer.

It has been 115 years since the claim of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian that he was the very Divine Reformer promised to most major religions to appear in the Latter Days. This last century has produced wonder after wonder to not only support the claim of this Promised Messiah^(as) but more importantly to establish the truth of the Holy Qur'an, its prophesies and the truth of Hadhrat Mohammed Mustafa^(saw). In just the realm of scientific advancement, this last century bears ample testimony to manifestation of the signs of the Latter Days. Let us realise that it took man over fifty thousand years to traverse the ice age, the stone age, the bronze age and the dark age but in just the last one hundred years alone, man has witnessed the industrial age, the atomic age, the nuclear age, the computer technology age, the information age and the space age. There has been a sudden discovery in this age of coal, petroleum, uranium, plutonium and their uses prove exponential. In fact, the sum of all advancements made by man from the beginning of time does not equal the number of advancements of just the last one

hundred years. When such signs are viewed by fair-minded, objective individuals, they become glaringly obvious.

The Holy Prophet^(saw) has said:

‘He who dies a death without recognising the Imam of the age, dies a death of ignorance.’

It is not unjust, therefore, to call a person *Jahil* or ignorant, if, after such signs are blatantly spelled out, he still cannot recognise them. The real wonder is that they were revealed 1400 years ago to a relatively primitive people and uttered from the mouth of one who himself could neither read nor write.

So what are these prophesied signs and what role has scientific advancement played to reveal these signs? In fact, we shall demonstrate that the impact of modern scientific advancements has actually qualified our age to satisfy the awaited signs of the Latter Days. Now, most scholars would agree that the signs of the Latter Days have been satisfied but fail to point out the Messiah or Divine Reformer who was destined to appear in the Latter Days.

To simplify our discussion let us divide the scientific advancements into categories and address as many as time will allow.

Surah Al-Takwir (Chapter 81 of the Holy Qur'an) sheds much light on this subject.

Under the various branches of technology, we shall examine the scientific advancements in:

- Transportation technology
- Space technology including physics and astronomy
- Nuclear technology
- Information and Communication technology
- Technology of Medicine

Let us begin with transportation technology. The entire age of the Latter Days is mentioned by the Holy Qur'an as the age of *Dajjal* or the Anti-Christ. This Anti-Christ is only symbolic for the mighty powers which are evident today in the powerful Christian nations. All signs of the age are mentioned with reference to this Anti-Christ and just one of those categories of signs

which identify this Anti-Christ points to the new modes of travel which man had never seen before.

Revolutionary modes of travel by land, by sea, by air, are all described without exception, in a manner fully endorsed by the verses of the Holy Qur'an. Allah says in *Surah Al-Takwir*:

And when the mountains are made to move.
(Ch.81:V.4)

The moving of mountains may signify:

- Great and powerful nations spreading their influence and might from place to place.
- The movement of great and heavy loads (as had never been conceived before, e.g., cargo)
- The blasting away of mountains with explosives to create the very roads of transport through them.

Then Allah states:

When the she-camels, ten-month pregnant, are abandoned.
(Ch.81:V.4)

The *Sahih Muslim* compilation of Traditions records Holy Prophet^(saw) to have said:

‘The camel as a means of transport will be abandoned and will not be used to go from place to place.’

At the time this verse and tradition were disclosed, no one would dare conceive giving up the camel or animals for transport. But Almighty Allah was stating 1400 years ago, that such means of transport would appear that would be so swift and so powerful as if mountains were on the move and the camel or animals would be obsolete for this purpose.

The Anti-Christ would use such a vehicle. The Holy Prophet^(saw) continually describes the vehicle of transport of this Anti-Christ as a symbolic donkey. We see today how glowingly obvious the description of this donkey applies to fit the very modes of modern transport, which all have one thing in common – they are all propelled by combustion engines, drawing their energy from fire. This is exactly how the Holy Prophet^(saw) described this fire-eating donkey!

Today, the Muslim world agrees on

the attributes of this donkey and its appearance to mark the Latter Days but they await the literal beast as described by the Holy Prophet^(saw) that would be so massive in appearance, so gigantic, so monstrous, as the world has never seen before. It would be so tall that its head would disappear beyond the clouds, its ears would be huge, it would move with great speed so as to cover large distances in hours or days, which before took months to cover by other animals.

This donkey which the Anti-Christ would use as his transport would also be a means of transport to the public. The Holy Prophet^(saw) describes that people will climb into its belly from the openings on his sides. The belly would be lit and equipped with seating. The donkey would make stops to allow people to get in and get off periodically and before departing on its journey would signal with a loud noise to announce its departure. The next time we board an airplane and the announcement is made, “now boarding flight such and such departing to such and such place” or the next time we board a train or cruise ship and the loud bell or whistle sounds signalling its departure, remember that we are

sitting in that symbolic donkey that was predicted with precision to be modern transport.

The prophecy continues to say the fire consumed by the donkey would not scorch the passengers in this belly. The donkey will be able to travel by sea, moving from continent to continent. The donkey will carry mountain loads of food upon its back. The donkey will be able to fly. It would take such gigantic leaps as to cover the distances between the East and West. One foot of the beast will be in the east and one in the west, obviously suggesting he would take off from one continent and land in another. In the air, it would move above the level of the clouds. On its forehead it would carry the moon which immediately gives the image of a headlight which most modern vehicles have.

There is no doubt that, in prior centuries, this Tradition, with all of its brilliantly detailed descriptions would have created such mental strain to visualise such a donkey – just imagine the layman as well as the intellectual contemplating this beast in the previous ages. We may even be amused by their innocence and naivety and helpless

wonderment of such a donkey. But today, by the light of this age, by the mercy of Almighty Allah, even a child given these descriptions, will effortlessly point out that the donkey is actually the steamship, the freight ships, the locomotive, the trains, the airplanes and the very automobiles used today. Scientific advancement has put to rest the tales and fantasies and myths of the mullahs and has ushered in the awaited age by producing and fulfilling the signs with manifest.

Incidentally, it was in 1835, the year that the Promised Messiah^(as) was born, that the first railroad was introduced in England; in 1925, the first diesel engine; in December 1903, the Wright brothers would fly the first motorised plane; and, in 1969, the Apollo astronauts landed on the moon. In just sixty-six years, man went from gliding over fields to walking on the moon. In 1913, Ford installed the first assembly line to produce automobiles in mass numbers. In between this time, we have seen countless civilian and military flight operations forever changing the way we live.

There is no doubt that future ages will have great means of transport but only this age can exclusively

testify that all of these modes of transport, as described by the Holy Qur'an and the *Ahadith*, first appeared, without exception, in this age. Because concurrently a firmly established Messiah has also appeared in this age, further advancement of science will serve to embellish these signs and further embellish the beauties of Qur'anic prophecy and *Ahadith*. The collective appearance of these signs has brilliantly taken place in a revolutionary manner. In fact, the collective appearance of these signs coupled with the presence of a Divine Reformer, the Promised Messiah^(as), have established the truth of the Holy Qur'an, the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the very claim in support of the Promised Messiah^(as) himself.

The subject of transport continues in the next several verses.

And when the beasts are gathered together.
(Ch.81:V.6)

We go from abandoning the camel as transport, to gathering all sorts of beasts. The gathering of beasts would obviously require some advanced system of transport to move this cargo. The animals could

not ride on each other's backs. Today most major cities of the world have elaborate zoos to proudly exhibit their collection of diverse animals from all over the world, a concept inconceivable at the time but bearing powerful testimony that great ships and freight from every continent and corner of the globe gathered these animals, literally fulfilling this prophecy of the Holy Qur'an. In 1804, the first zoo was established in Paris; 1826, in London; 1844, Philadelphia; 1889, Washington DC; and, in 1899, the world famous Bronx Zoo.

The next verse states:

And when the seas are made to flow forth one into the other.
(Ch.81:V.7)

Sujjirat (the Arabic word used in the verse) meaning the seas shall be filled gives the image of the seas filled with ships and vessels. It also means the seas will be set on fire, clearly pointing to technology inconceivable at the time. Setting the seas on fire describes the intense firepower of naval warfare in our age. Incidentally, this is also the age of huge oil spills which, by no exaggeration, have literally set

thousands of square miles of sea on fire.

Sujjirat meaning the seas are made to flow into one another also reveals a great prophecy. The Holy Qur'an also says:

Verily, He will merge the two oceans, joining them together. Between them is now a barrier; they encroach not one upon the other. (Ch.55:Vs.20-21)

The world has witnessed the fulfilment of these prophecies of such grandeur. From 1859-1869, the construction of the Suez Canal and from 1903-1914 the construction of the Panama Canal smashed this temporary barrier at the appointed hour and allowed the seas to flow into one another, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

Once again scientific advancement supports the Qur'an and the Qur'an urges scientific advancement towards truth.

The next verse states:

And when people are brought together.
(Ch.81:V.8)

The bringing together of people from great distances across vast continents and oceans can only be facilitated by modern means of transport which would be so fast and efficient making it possible to unite the diverse races of people to meet one another and learn of one another's similarities and differences and enhance human interaction like never before. There is no wonder that the era of modern travel had to be also the era of the Promised Reformer. It is the task of this Promised Messiah to weld mankind into one community, a task virtually impossible if camels, donkeys, and horses were the means to bring people together. It is this age and this age alone which bears witness to the bringing together of people, their cultures, their languages, their ideas, their cuisine and their art – all with such sophistication and complexity of interaction and engagement as never before in history. This too, as a sign of the Latter Days, has been fulfilled through scientific advancement of travel and communication.

A subsequent verse states:

And when books are spread abroad. (Ch.81:V.11)

Now, having fully described the transportation age and its great impact on physically uniting the people of the world, this verse speaks on the most powerful way of joining people together – enter the communication age. Another sign of the Latter Days is the joining of people through wider, extensive publication of literature, including books, newspapers, magazines, journals, libraries and bookstores. As implied by this prophecy, it is the invention of the modern press, which has revolutionised this mass publication of literature in our age with global distribution that has augmented the physical coming together of people. Never before was such quantity of literature published as compared to this age. Such proliferation of literature must also signify an intense burst of knowledge, research and investigation.

So in the age when books would be extensively published, the character of such an age would be highly advanced in knowledge, obviously through means of sophisticated educational schools and institutions, colleges and universities. Knowledge would be the means of gaining power. What a wonder that such a powerful verse was revealed

to the Holy Prophet^(saw) – one who could neither read nor write.

So what does this era produce? This era produces such a servant who is granted the title by Allah Himself, *Sultan-e-Qalam*, that is, Sovereign of the Pen. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) went on to write over 80 books and published scores of articles, sermons and discourses in the defence of Islam and expounded on the jewels and secrets of the Holy Qur'an. This is the age that has produced such a Community that has published such quality and quantity of Islamic literature as compared to the total of the last 1400 years. This is the age that has exponentially made possible the printing of literature through such technological advances as fax machines, printers, photocopiers and scanners, all of which have now found their way as common household equipment in the West. The invention of the telegraph, telephone, television, radio and computer has opened dazzling dimensions to the publications and spread of information and knowledge. How many countless books are published online? Allah only knows. This prophecy, revealed 1400 years ago, portrays such a picture of the information age and the tele-communication age as was

never conceived by man before. Did not the Holy Prophet^(saw) describe the donkey of the Anti-Christ as having such large ears that he could hear what is in the East and what is in the West. The very phone we use to call, say, London from New York provides us with call waiting and three-way calling to connect to a friend in California simultaneously. Such are the technological breakthroughs of the Christian world which have all become coincidentally evident in the age of the Promised Messiah^(as).

Some other specific advancements of this age are listed below:

- In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.
- In 1901, Marconi received the first transatlantic radio signal.
- In 1920, Electric consumer appliances proliferate with the industrial age.
- In 1926, KDKA begins to broadcast live radio and television develops.
- In 1945, ENIAC, the first electronic analyser or computer is developed.
- In 1947, the transistor is invented.
- In 1971, the first commercial micro processor is invented.
- In 1975, the personal computer industry is launched.
- In 1992, the internet gives rise to the World Wide Web.

So once again these brilliant scientific advancements which have abundantly accumulated in this era prove to be the signs of the Latter Days as prophesied by the Holy Qur'an and *Ahadith*. Unlike this age which stands out for all of mankind to witness, never before could we have labelled a prior age as the information age. Future ages will no doubt improve communications but the predictions have been satisfied in this era.

(Continued next month)

The Qur'an and Muslism

Today - (Part 1)

By Dr. Abd-Latif Busari, Abuja, Nigeria

Most of the major religions of the world share the belief in one invisible Supreme God Who created all things and exercises power and control over their affairs. This God also communicates with man and to achieve this, He chooses human representatives who act as messengers to deliver messages for the guidance of mankind. Such messages are usually in the form of revelations and since they are believed to come from God, they are regarded as divine. Among the world's major religions whose divine revelations are still available in one form or the other are Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The collections of Holy Scriptures for each of these religions include: *Vedas* (Hinduism), *Avesta* (Zoroastrianism), *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible) and *Mizvoth* (Judaism), the Holy Bible (Christianity) and the Holy Qur'an (Islam).

Al-Qur'an

This is the name of the Islamic Holy

Scripture. The word means 'a book that is oft recited', and the name occurs several times in the Qur'an itself:

The month of Ramadhan is that in which the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance for mankind...

(Ch.2:V.186)

And We have not taught him poetry, nor does it befit him. It is but a reminder and a Qur'an that makes things plain.

(Ch.36:V.70)

Besides this name, it is also referred to as *al-Kitab* (the Book), *al-Furqan* (the Discriminator), *al-Dhikr* (the Reminder), *al-Hikmat* (the Wisdom), *al-Tanzil* (the Revelation) and *al-Karim* (the Bounteous). According to Islamic belief, it is the revealed word of God – literally vouchsafed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw), by Angel Gabriel (Jibrail). Muslims believe it contains the last and final laws to be

granted to mankind by God. The Qur'an itself bears several testimonies to its divine origin:

And this Qur'an is not such as might be devised by anyone except Allah...
(Ch.10:V.38)

The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the All-Knowing.
(Ch.40:V.3)

Early History

According to Islamic history, the Holy Prophet^(saw) had the habit of retiring to a cave in the outskirts of Makkah for meditation¹. It was on one such occasion in around 610 AD when he was aged about forty years, that an angel appeared to him and five verses of *Surah Al-Alaq* (Ch.96) were revealed to him.

*Recite in the name of your Lord Who created,
Created man from an adhesive clot.
Recite! And your Lord is the Noblest.
Who taught by the pen.
Taught man what he knew not.*
(Ch.96:Vs.2-6)

This marked the beginning of his

prophetic ministry. It also marked the beginning of several visitations that spanned 23 years by the angel during which new verses were revealed or older ones rehearsed. Indeed, it is reported that the angel always rehearsed the whole of the Qur'an, from the beginning to wherever it ended at that time, during the month of *Ramadan* – which is the 9th month on the Islamic calendar. This practice has been re-enacted down the ages by Muslims all over the world, who attempt to finish the recitation of the Holy Qur'an, from the first to the last verse several times or at least once within this month.

Unique Characteristics

Right from the very beginning, the language in which the Qur'an was revealed is Arabic and up to now it remains the only language in which it is often recited, even though its text has been translated into virtually all the major languages of the world. The translation is to assist non-Arab Muslims in different parts of the world to understand the message of their Holy Scripture in their own languages, but its use in religious worship and sermons is still in Arabic. This is according to a divine directive:

We have made it a Qur'an in clear, eloquent language that you may understand.

(Ch.43:V.4)

Therefore, it is obligatory for all Muslims to learn the Arabic language or at least memorise few portions of the Qur'an in Arabic in order to engage in Islamic worship. This requirement has ensured that the Qur'an retains its original language and it is one of the means by which corruption or adulteration of its text has been prevented.

Another unique characteristic is that unlike some other scriptures such as the Bible, the whole of the Qur'an was revealed to one man – the Holy Prophet^(saw) – and it was compiled and handed down to later generations of Muslims as he had received it². It is also worth noting that the Qur'an was not authored by the Holy Prophet^(saw) in the same sense of the *Gospel According to St. John* being authored by Apostle John. He was only the medium through which it was revealed to mankind:

On the Messenger lies only the conveying of the Message. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you hide.

(Ch.5:V.100)

And We send not the Messenger but as bearers of glad tidings and as warners. So those who believe and reform themselves, on them shall come no fear nor shall they grieve.

(Ch.6:V.49)

Indeed the Qur'an does not contain the opinion of the Holy Prophet^(saw) let alone those of his companions or disciples. Rather, the sayings and practises of the Holy Prophet^(saw), have been compiled into a separate volume called the *Ahadith*. The fact that the whole of the Qur'anic revelation was dictated, as soon as it was revealed, by the Holy Prophet^(saw) to several scribes who immediately wrote it down; the fact that several companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) committed the whole Qur'an to memory and were constantly reciting it during the life of the Holy Prophet^(saw); the fact that copies of the Qur'an that were made by Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) and Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) (the first and third Khulafa respectively) transcribed from the original collections of the manuscripts written down during the Holy Prophet's^(saw) life and validated by those companions who had committed it to memory – all ensured that the Qur'an we have

today is as it was exactly revealed to the Holy Prophet^(saw) over 1400 years ago. This is actually in fulfilment of a divine promise by Allah to safeguard the Qur'an:

Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely, We will be its Guardian.
(Ch.15:V.10)

The Qur'an thus occupies a unique position among all divine revelations in having its protection divinely ordained and its history in the past 1400 years bears this out. This is quite unlike most of the earlier revelations which were transmitted by oral tradition, through several generations, in the course of which the purity of their teachings had been altered. The Holy Qur'an alluded to this mistreatment and distortion of the word of God by past adherents where Allah cursed those who write words into their scriptures and impute it to God.

And some of them are illiterate; they know not of the Book but their own false notions, and they do nothing but conjecture. Woe, therefore, to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: 'This is from Allah,'

that they may take for it a paltry price. Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn. (Ch.2:Vs.79-80)

Speaking about the Bible, a Christian scholar, Dr. Robert Horton has this to say:

'Over the years there were many religious writings. Some of these have been lost. Some were not good enough to include in the Bible. What we have today has come from long years of collecting, sorting and editing of the many documents... Often the authors of these writings were not known and some of the books were given the names of men who did not, in fact, write them.'³

For most of the major religions, the text of their divine scriptures, as we have them today, was not written down until many centuries after the Prophets who brought the message. Using the Bible as an example, at each step of the collection, compilation and copying of the various 'books' that make it up, those charged with these responsibilities took several liberties, sometimes well-inten-

tioned, but nevertheless contributing to the corruption of the original divine teachings. This is the opinion of several Christian authors and scholars^{4,5}. For instance, Adolf Harnack wrote thus:

‘.....the fourth Gospel does not emanate or profess to emanate from the Apostle John, who cannot be taken as an historical authority... the author of the fourth Gospel acted with sovereign freedom, transposed events and put them in a strange light. He drew up the discussions himself and illustrated great thoughts with imaginary situations.’⁶

Among religious scriptures, the Qur’an alone stands out as not having had this history of corruption of its text.

Spiritual Essence

The invaluable moral precepts and teachings, designed to provide everlasting guidance for mankind, are the true essence of the Qur’an:

This Book contains clear evidences for mankind and is a guidance and a mercy for a people who possess firm faith.
(Ch.45:V.21)

Muslims believe it is a scripture with practical injunctions, which if strictly followed gives one the assurance of meeting with Allah’s pleasure. The Qur’an contains valuable spiritual guidance on man’s relationship with God, his Creator, and guidance on man’s relationship with all other creations of God. Though guidance on these subjects may also be found in some other divine scriptures, the Qur’an additionally contains other teachings that are quite unique to it. For example, it is only the Qur’an that categorically recognises the truth in other divine scriptures. When describing true believers, it says they are those:

Who believe in that which has been revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and they have firm faith in what is yet to come. (Ch.2:V.5)

To show its acceptance of the validity of these earlier revelations, the Qur’an says:

And We did send Messengers before thee, of them are some whom We have mentioned to thee, and of them there are some whom We have not mentioned to thee... (Ch.40:V.79)

An attempt to discriminate between Messengers of God who brought these revelations is disapproved of:

...We make no distinction between any of His messengers.
(Ch.2:V.286)

Other unique teachings include its unequivocal rejection of the use of force or coercion in matters of faith:

There should be no compulsion in religion.
(Ch.2:V.257)

The Qur'an reveals deep insight on the subjects of life after death, paradise and hell:

They ask: 'When will be the Day of Judgement?' It will be the day when they will be tormented at the Fire. Taste ye the consequences of your mischief. This is what you were hastening towards.' But surely the righteous will be in the midst of gardens and springs.
(Ch.51:Vs.13-16)

And no soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden from them, as a reward for their good works. (Ch.32:V.18)

The Qur'an promotes of the status of women:

But whoso does good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, shall enter Heaven, and shall not be wronged even as much as the little hollow in the back of a date-stone.
(Ch.4:V.125)

The Qur'an has also cleared all the past prophets of the various slanderous charges against their persons.

Relationship With Other Scriptures

A cursory look at the history of world religions shows that usually almost all the adherents of a particular faith exhibit antagonism towards any new prophet. It is as if they believe that after their own prophet and the message he brought, there can be no other prophet again. In other words, their revealed law or guidance is final. Muslims also share a similar belief but with an important difference. Islam teaches that religion has over the ages undergone an evolutionary development and that revelations are progressive. The Holy Qur'an informs that Allah has sent revelations to many others before:

Thus Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, reveals to you and has revealed to those that preceded you.

(Ch.42:V.4).

Such revelations were granted according to the capacity of the people to understand and comply with the laws. So, the Qur'an has come at the end of a long chain of divine scriptures. The earlier scriptures were actually meant for specific peoples at specific periods in the spiritual development of mankind. Thus, progressively advanced laws were being revealed to mankind until the final stage is reached culminating in the revelation of the Qur'an. Being the most advanced, the Qur'an sheds complete light on all the essentials of faith and makes manifest what had hitherto remained obscure to mankind:

O mankind! There has indeed come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts, and a guidance and a mercy to the believers.

(Ch.10:V.58).

The message of the Qur'an is not only universal, it also serves the

spiritual needs of mankind forever:

Say, 'If the ocean became ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord came to an end, even though We brought the like thereof as further help.'

(Ch.18:V.110)

Its truth will eventually prevail over all other revealed truth:

He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, even if those who associate partners with God hate it.

(Ch.61:V.10)

It is in order to fulfil this divine plan that the Qur'an has been granted special protection:

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

(Ch.15:V.10)

This is to save it from the fate that befell the earlier revelations and ensure that its message remains pure and unadulterated forever.

Also, in relation to earlier revelations, not only does the Qur'an affirm their truths and enjoins Muslims to believe in them:

And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and they have firm faith in what is yet to come.

(Ch.2:V.5)

It also claims that it has been foretold in the earlier scriptures. We read thus:

And verily this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Spirit, Faithful to the Trust, has descended with it, on thy heart, that thou mayest be of the Warners in plain and clear Arabic tongue.

(Ch.26:Vs.193-197)

Islamic scholars have identified passages of such references about the Qur'an in earlier scriptures. For example, according to Qassim Ali Jairhazbhoy⁷, the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his Revelation were foretold in Hindu Scriptures such as the *Bhavishya Purana (Para 3, Khand 3, Adhya 3, Shalok 5-8)* as well as in *Atharva Vedas (Kanda 20, Sukta 127, Mantra 1-3)*. The Holy

Scriptures of both Jews and Christians also foretold and bear testimony to the divine origin of the Qur'an. In Deuteronomy 18:18-19, we read:

‘I will raise up for them a prophet like unto you (Moses), from among their brethren and will put My words in his mouth and he will speak to them all that I command him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.’

Muslims believe that the revelations in the Qur'an are the very words of God spoken to Muhammad^(saw). They also believe passages in John 14:15 and John 16:7-13 to refer to the Holy Prophet^(saw) as he is ‘the Prophet’ the Jews were expecting besides Christ^(as) and Elisha^(as) (Ilyas) and the *Paraclete* that Jesus^(as) promised to send once he is gone.

The Qur'an and Muslims Today

The fate that befell earlier revelations as previously mentioned is that over time the corrupting influence of man had distorted their original message and introduced alien doctrines. According to

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(rw), a common form of distortion of religious truth is the deification of a prophet by his latter day adherents, making him a god or son of god⁸ usually after his death. The distortion may not stop at religious practices; it may even be incorporated into the religion's scriptural texts. It is this latter type of distortion from which the Qur'an has, by divine ordinance, been protected.

(continued next month).

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