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EDITORIAL

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Truth Prevails

As with all other prophets of God, the Promised Messiah^(as) was to meet with stern opposition from the very people he had been commissioned to guide back unto the right path. The Holy Qur'an is full of examples where the righteous have become victims of physical violence and verbal abuse at the hands of their adversaries who shield their iniquity under the guise of zealous religious piety. In the case of the Promised Messiah^(as), however, his opponents went a step further and waged a campaign to discredit him in the eyes of the uninformed.

Not only were there personal character attacks which embodied a shocking violation of the Islamic sense of decency and morals in social intercourse, his teachings were deliberately traduced and he was falsely accused, amongst other things, of being sponsored by the then British Government in his claim to prophethood and that, God forbid, he repudiated the

status of the Holy Prophet^(saw) as *Khataman Nabiyyeen* – the Seal of the Prophets.

Even after the demise of the Promised Messiah^(as), such utterly false allegations which unfortunately all too often gain the assent of the unthinking multitudes have continued to be made against the Ahmadiyya Community disseminating far and wide the seeds of prejudice, ignorance and error.

Especially in Pakistan where the Community has its Headquarters, it has repeatedly had to defend itself against such outrageous and baseless accusations made through the media and nourished from the pulpits of pseudo-clergy across the nation. The Community has been accused without the least shred of evidence of being agents of the Zionist state of Israel; it has been accused of changing its Qiblah from Makkah to Qadian; it has been accused of altering the text of the Holy Qur'an; it has been accused of altering the Islamic

credo – *There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah* – by substituting the name the Holy Prophet of Islam^(saw) with that of Hadhrat Ahmad^(as), its Holy Founder.

The authorities in Pakistan have accorded the Community no protection – legal or otherwise – from these false accusations. On the contrary, they have been complicit in the storm of vituperation and wave of persecution against the Community caused by such fabricated allegations because, according to the authorities, they hearthen feelings of ordinary Muslims.

The controversy caused by the Danish cartoons caricaturing the blessed person of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the protestations they drew from Muslims of all denominations around the world is still fresh in our minds. Some of these protests regrettably were violent, others, as in the case of the Ahmadiyya Community, were peaceful condemnations.

But where Islam and its Holy Founder^(saw) strongly admonish

against the falsehood, there should be no need, in a so-called Islamic state, for the Community to have to defend itself against fabrications. Islam regards the telling of lies as a major sin. The Holy Qur'an goes as far as to impute idolatry to falsehood. Says the Holy Qur'an:

Shun therefore the abomination of idols and shun false speech.

(Ch.22: V.31)

The Promised Messiah^(as) explains this juxtaposition of falsehood alongside idolatry. Falsehood is an idol, he maintains; he who relies upon it ceases to trust in and hence loses God. No true Muslim therefore can resort to such in veracity as we find obtaining amongst the hostile opponents of the Ahmadiyya Community.

Notes & Comment

Fareed Ahmad – Devon and Cornwall, UK

Seeking a Free World

Slavery has been a horrid chapter in human history and historically a part of human life pretty much the world over. People of all faiths and cultures have both suffered and perpetrated slavery at one time or another. In Islam, Prophet Muhammad^(saw) gave clear direction to free slaves, yet subsequent generations lost sight of this noble message of equality and liberty and reverted to trading in slaves placing their greed over their morals.

Without doubt the commendable efforts of the likes of Wilberforce that resulted in the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807 in Britain provide some reassurance and faith in humanity. Yet it is disheartening to see, that two hundred years on, his vision of a world without slavery is still not a reality.

Sadly even today slavery exists –

from physical slavery that is sometimes disguised as bonded labour, to social and economic slavery whereby poorer nations are trapped by political manoeuvrings of wealthier nations.

There is also slavery in the developed world itself in the form of human trafficking (with women being sold into prostitution) and farm and factory labourers (commonly migrants from Eastern Europe who are forced to work ghastly hours simply to pay off extortionate loans taken out for the ‘privilege’ of such work). It seems that those who perpetrate slavery today, as with those who perpetrated it in the past, have little regard for compassion and justice provided they can either escape the law, or mask their crimes in legal terminology and political debate.

It is too easy for us to lose sight of these issues in our daily life

but we need to be more vigilant and check our actions to see that those with whom we deal share our values of freedom for all. We are keen to buy cheap food or cheap clothes but who pays the price for our bargains?

On this anniversary of the abolition of slavery let us hope and pray that together we can win this war on slavery that has been raging since time immemorial. Our commemoration of this great Act will only truly be worthwhile if we use it to renew our sense of resolve and commitment to abolish slavery in all forms now and forever.

Verse 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 of names of places are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

ESSENCE OF ISLAM:

Part 18 – Spiritual Characteristics of Surah Fatihah

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.

A spiritual characteristic of the *Surah Fatihah* is that to recite it in one's prayers with full attention and to establish its teaching in one's heart, believing it to be true, brings about the illumination of one's soul. One's mind is expanded thereby and the darkness of humanness is dispelled and the worshipper begins to experience the grace of the Fountainhead of grace. He is encircled by the lights of being accepted by the Divine and progresses towards being honoured by the converse of God and derives benefit from true

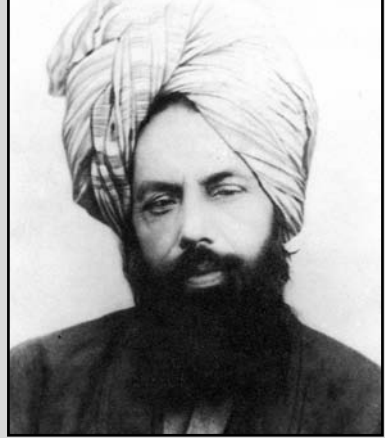
visions and express revelations. He is counted among those who are close to the Divine and such wonders of inspiration and acceptance of prayers and the disclosure of hidden matters and Divine support proceed from him the like of which is not found among others. For such of our opponents who deny this, the proof has been set out in this book.

Invitation to All Seekers after Truth

This humble one is ready to satisfy every seeker after truth

not only from among our opponents but even among those who agree with us nominally and who are Muslims on the outside, but whose faith is veiled and whose bodies are without life. In this dark age they do not believe in heavenly signs and consider revelation impossible and describe it as illusion and imagination. They have a very narrow concept of human progress confined to intellectual problems and conjectures. Their concept of God Almighty is that of someone extremely weak and lacking strength.

This humble one submits respectfully to all these people that if they deny the effectiveness of the Holy Qur'an and adhere to their old ignorance, they should take advantage of the opportunity that this humble servant is prepared to satisfy everyone from his own experiences. It is proper, therefore, that as seekers after truth they should turn to me and should observe for themselves the characteristics of the Divine Word which have been mentioned above, and



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.

emerging out of gloom and darkness should enter true light.

So far this humble one is alive, but life is uncertain. It is proper, therefore, that on hearing this

announcement attention should be paid to the establishment of truth and the removal of falsehood so that if my claim should not be established a reason may become available for denial; but if my claim is established then the opponents should give up their false notions and should embrace Islam so as to escape humiliation and disgrace in this life and chastisement and torment in the next.

Observe, therefore, brethren and dear ones and philosophers and pundits and Christian ministers and Aryas and followers of nature and Brahmo Samajists, that I proclaim openly that if anyone doubts the characteristics of the Holy Qur'an that I have mentioned and has any hesitation in accepting them, he should turn to me without delay and by keeping company with me for some time steadfastly and sincerely, should witness the accuracy of the above statements with his own eyes, lest after my passing away someone might assert unjustly that he was not

invited openly and had not become aware of my claim so that he could have followed it up and asked me for its proof.

So, brethren and seekers after truth, please observe that I say it openly and, trusting in God, Whose lights I see day and night, I assume the responsibility that if you will seek the truth with sincerity of heart and will keep company with me for some time steadfastly and in good faith, it will become obvious to you that the spiritual qualities that have been mentioned are truly to be found in the *Surah Fatihah* and the Holy Qur'an. How blessed then is the person who, emptying his heart of bigotry and rancour and being eager to embrace Islam, should pay attention to my invitation in sincerity and good faith for achieving the purpose in view, and how unfortunate is the man who should pay no attention to this open invitation and should become deliberately an object of the curse and wrath of God Almighty. Death is near and the termination of life is at the door. (*Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani*

Khazain, Vol.1, pp.626-635, footnote 11)

The *Surah Fatihah* briefly comprehends all the purposes of the Holy Qur'an. This is referred to in the verse:

And We have, indeed, given thee seven oft-repeated verses, and the Great Qur'an.
(Ch.15:V.88)

This means that: O Prophet! We have bestowed upon thee the seven verses of the *Surah Fatihah* which briefly comprehend all the purposes of the Holy Qur'an and, in contrast with them, there is the Great Qur'an which sets out religious purposes in detail.

For this reason, this *Surah* is known as the Mother of the Book and the Comprehensive *Surah*. It is the Mother of the Book because all purposes of the Holy Qur'an can be derived from it, and it is called the Comprehensive *Surah*, as it briefly comprehends all types of learning contained in the Qur'an.

It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet^(saw) has said that reciting *Surah Fatihah*, is like reciting the whole Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an and the *Ahadith* show that the *Surah Fatihah* is a mirror that displays the Qur'an. For instance, it is one of the purposes of the Holy Qur'an that it sets out all the perfect praise of God Almighty and states clearly the complete perfection that He possesses. This is briefly set forth in the *Surah Fatihah* in the verse:

All praise belongs to Allah.
(Ch.1:V.2)

which means that all types of perfect praise are established for Allah Who is comprehensive of all excellences and is worthy of every type of worship.

The second purpose of the Holy Qur'an is that it manifests God's being the Perfect Fashioner and the Creator of the universe, and sets forth the beginning of the universe, and describes as a creation of God all that is part of the universe and proves the

falsehood of those who are opposed to this. This purpose is set forth briefly in the phrase:

Lord of all the Worlds.

(Ch.1:V.2)

The third purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to establish the unearned grace of God and to set forth His general Mercy. This purpose is conveyed briefly in:

The Gracious.

(Ch.1:V.3)

The fourth purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to establish that grace of God which follows upon effort and diligence. This is set forth in:

The Merciful.

(Ch.1:V.3)

The fifth purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to set forth the true condition of the hereafter. This is comprehended in the phrase:

Master of the Day of Judgement.

(Ch.1:V.4)

The sixth purpose of the Holy

Qur'an is to set forth the sincerity and servitude and purification of the soul from that which is beside Allah, and the remedy of spiritual ills and the reform of moral qualities and the upholding of the Unity of God in worship. This is included briefly in the affirmation:

Thee alone do we worship.

(Ch.1:V.5)

The seventh purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to establish God as the true source of all action, and of all strength and benevolence, and help and steadfastness, and obedience and freedom from sin, and the acquisition of all the means of doing good, and the reform of the here and the hereafter, and to emphasise the need of seeking His help in all matters. This purpose is set forth briefly in the affirmation:

Thee alone do we implore for help.

(Ch.1:V.5)

The eighth purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to set forth the fine

points of the straight path and to emphasise the need of seeking it through prayer and supplication. This is briefly included in supplication:

Guide us in the right path.
(Ch.1:V.6)

The ninth purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to set forth the way and manner of those who become the recipients of God's bounty and grace so that the hearts of the seeker after truth might be comforted. This purpose is included in:

*...the path of those on whom
Thou hast bestowed Thy
blessings.*
(Ch.1:V.7)

The tenth purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to set forth the qualities and way of those with whom God was displeased and of those who lost the way and fell into all sorts of innovations so that the seekers after truth should be warned of their ways. This purpose is included in:

*...those who have not
incurred displeasure, and
those who have not gone
astray.*
(Ch.1:V.7)

These are the ten purposes that are set out in the Holy Qur'an and that are the roots of all verities. So they are all briefly mentioned in the *Surah Fatihah*. (*Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khazain, Vol.1, pp.580-585, footnote 11*)

Perfection in Conduct by Following the Holy Qur'an

Those who put their trust in reason alone are as defective and deficient in action, faithfulness and sincerity of conduct, as they are deficient in knowledge, understanding and certainty. Their group has not set up an example which should prove that they are included among millions of holy people who are the faithful servants of God and are acceptable to Him. The blessings of these were so manifested that through their preaching and admonition with prayer and attention, and the influence of

their company, hundreds of people began to tread the straight path and, becoming the men of God, turned wholly to their Lord. They paid no attention to the world and its contents, and cut off altogether from the delights, comforts, joys, renowns, prides, properties, and kingdoms of this world. They followed the path of righteousness whereby hundreds of them lost their lives, and thousands of heads were cut off, and the earth became wet with the blood of hundreds of thousands of holy ones. Despite all these calamities, they exhibited such fidelity that like devoted lovers they laughed while their feet were shackled, were joyful while suffering pain, and were grateful in the midst of misfortunes. For the sake of the love of the One they abandoned their homes, chose disgrace in place of honour, distress in place of comfort, poverty in place of wealth, and were content with indigence, solitude and helplessness in place of every kind of relationship, association and joy. By shedding their blood and having their heads cut off and laying down their

lives, they set a seal upon the existence of God. By the blessing of following the Word of God they acquired such special lights as have never been found in others. Such people were not only to be found in ages past, but this group of the elect is ever present in Islam and refutes its opponents by its illumined being.

Thus we have proved conclusively that as the Holy Qur'an conveys one to the high grade of intellectual perfection, in the same way, one attains through it to the stage of perfection in conduct also. The lights and signs of being accepted by God have always appeared and continue to appear in those who have followed this Holy Word and not in others. For a seeker after truth this proof which he can observe with his own eyes is enough, namely, that heavenly blessings and Divine Signs are found only in the perfect followers of the Holy Qur'an and that all other sects, who turn away from revelation, whether Brahmos, Aryas or Christians, are altogether deprived of this

light of truth. We make ourselves responsible for satisfying everyone who denies this, provided such a one, being eager to embrace Islam sincerely, should turn to us in complete good faith and steadfastness and sincerity for seeking the truth.

(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 1, pp. 350-352, footnote 11)

Prophecies in the Narrated Stories in the Holy Qur'an

The stories set out in the Holy Qur'an are in reality prophecies which have been stated in the form of stories. In the Torah, they are merely stories but in the Holy Qur'an, every story is a prophecy concerning the Holy Prophet^(saw) and Islam and these prophecies have been very clearly fulfilled. The Holy Qur'an is an ocean of verities, insights and prophecies. It is not possible that a person should believe fully in God Almighty except through the Holy Qur'an. A characteristic special to the Holy Qur'an is that by following it perfectly all obstructions that exist between man and God are removed.

Followers of other religions mention the name of God by way of a tale, but the Holy Qur'an shows the countenance of the True Beloved and makes the light of certainty enter the heart of a person. God, Who is hidden from the whole world, is seen only through the Holy Qur'an.

(Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, pp. 271-272)

Uniqueness of the Holy Qur'an in All its Qualities

The Holy Qur'an is not matchless merely on account of the beauty of its composition, but is matchless on account of all its excellences which it claims to comprise and that is the truth, for whatever proceeds from God Almighty is not unique only on account of one quality but on account of every one of its qualities. Those who do not accept the Holy Qur'an as comprehensive of unlimited verities and insights, do not value the Qur'an as it should be valued. A necessary sign for the recognition of the holy and true Word of God is that it should be unique in all its qualities, for we

‘THE STORIES SET OUT IN THE HOLY QUR’AN ARE IN REALITY PROPHECIES WHICH HAVE BEEN STATED IN THE FORM OF STORIES. IN THE TORAH, THEY ARE MERELY STORIES BUT IN THE HOLY QUR’AN, EVERY STORY IS A PROPHECY CONCERNING THE HOLY PROPHET^(SAW) AND ISLAM AND THESE PROPHECIES HAVE BEEN VERY CLEARLY FULFILLED.’

observe that whatever proceeds from God Almighty is unique and matchless even if it is only a grain of barley, and human powers cannot match it. Being matchless means being unlimited, that is to say, a thing can be matchless only when its wonders and qualities are unlimited and have no end.

As we have just stated, this characteristic is found in everything created by God Almighty. For instance, if the wonders of a leaf of a tree are investigated for a thousand years, that period would come to an end, but the wonders of the leaf will not come to an end. That which has come into being through unlimited power, must

comprise unlimited wonders and qualities. The verse:

Say, ‘If the ocean became ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof as further help.’
(Ch.18:V.110)

supports this, for the whole of creation is Words of God... Thus this verse means that the qualities of creation are without limit and endless. Now when every created thing possesses unlimited and endless qualities and comprises numberless wonders then how could the Holy Qur’an, which is the Holy Word of God Almighty,

be confined to the few meanings which may be set out in a commentary of forty or fifty or a thousand volumes, or could have been expounded by our lord and master the Holy Prophet^(saw) in a limited period? To say so would almost amount to disbelief, if it is deliberately persisted. It is true that whatever the Holy Prophet^(saw) has set forth as the meaning of the Holy Qur'an is true and correct, but it is not true that the Holy Qur'an contains no more than the insights that have been set forth by the Holy Prophet^(saw). Such sayings of our opponents indicate that they do not believe in the unlimited greatness and qualities of the Holy Qur'an. Their saying that the Holy Qur'an was revealed for the benefit of the unlearned, further proves that they are wholly bereft of the light of the recognition of the Holy Qur'an, and do not realise that the Holy Prophet^(saw) was sent not only for the unlearned, but that people of all grades are included among his followers. God, the Glorious, has said:

Say, 'O mankind! Truly I am a

Messenger to you all from Allah.' (Ch.7:V.159)

This verse shows that the Holy Qur'an was revealed for the perfection of every capacity. The following verse also points to this:

...but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets. (Ch.33:V.41)

The notion that whatever the Holy Prophet^(saw) has said with reference to the Qur'an cannot be exceeded is obviously false. We have established with conclusive and certain arguments that it is necessary for the Word of God Almighty that its wonders should be unlimited and matchless.

If it is objected that if the Holy Qur'an comprises hidden wonders and qualities, then why were the earlier people deprived of their knowledge? The answer is that they were not deprived altogether of Qur'anic wonders, but were bestowed whatever in God's design was needed by them of the knowledge of those

wonders and whatever was needed in this age has been manifested in this age.

That which is the basis of faith, by knowing and accepting which a person can become a Muslim, has been proclaimed clearly in every age. I wonder wherefrom have these Maulavis, who lack intelligence, gathered that God Almighty was under obligation that whatever of His favours and bounties was to be manifested in future must be proved to have existed in past ages also.

(Karamat-us-Sadiqin, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 7, pp. 60-62)

Standards for a True Commentary of the Holy Qur'an

The first standard of a true commentary on the Holy Qur'an is the testimony of the Qur'an itself. It should be remembered that the Holy Qur'an is not like other books dependent upon something else for proof or disclosure of its verities. It is like an orderly structure the whole of which is disturbed by the displacement of one of its bricks.

It comprises no verity which is not supported by ten or twenty testimonies contained in it. When we interpret a verse of the Holy Qur'an we should consider whether it contains other testimony in support of the meaning that we have adopted. If other testimony is not available and the meaning that we have adopted is found to be opposed to other verses, we should realise that that meaning is false for it is not possible that there should be any contradiction in the Holy Qur'an. The sign of true meaning is that a whole host of clear testimony from the Holy Qur'an should confirm it.

The second standard for a correct interpretation of the Qur'an is the commentary of the Holy Prophet^(saw). There can be no doubt that the person who understood the meaning of the Holy Qur'an best was our dear and grand Prophet^(saw). Thus if an interpretation by the Holy Prophet^(saw) becomes available, it is the duty of every Muslim to accept it instantly without hesitation, and whoever fails to do this would be

guilty of heresy and philosophising.

The third standard is interpretation by the companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw). There is no doubt that the companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw), were the first heirs of the lights of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and of his knowledge, and that they were bestowed great grace by God Almighty and their perception was aided by God for they not only professed but practised.

The fourth standard is reflection upon the Holy Qur'an with one's pure spirit, inasmuch as the Holy Qur'an has a relationship with purity of spirit. God the Glorious says:

Which none shall touch except those who are purified.
(Ch.56:V.80)

This means that: A person with a purified heart appreciates the holy insights of the Qur'an on account of his relationship with the Qur'an. He recognises them and smells them and his heart bears

witness that this is the true way.

The light of his heart is a good standard for testing the truth. Unless a person is purified in practice and passes through the narrow path through which the Prophets have passed, he should not become a commentator of the Qur'an out of impertinence and arrogance, for his commentary would be based upon his opinion and such commentary is forbidden by the Holy Prophet^(saw) who has said:

'He who interprets the Qur'an on the basis of his opinion is in error, even if he should put forward a commentary which he considers right.'

The fifth standard is the Arabic lexicon, but the Holy Qur'an supplies so many means itself that it is not very necessary to have recourse to the lexicon, though it adds to one's understanding. Sometimes by having recourse to the lexicon attention is drawn to the mysteries of the Holy Qur'an and a hidden matter is discovered.

The sixth standard of appreciating the spiritual system is the physical system, for there is complete accord between the two.

The seventh standard is the revelation and visions of the saints. This standard in a way comprises all other standards as the recipient of revelation is a complete reflection of the Prophet whom he follows, and with the exception of Prophethood and new commandments, he is bestowed everything that is bestowed on the Prophet. The certain and true teaching is disclosed to him and he receives everything by way of bounty and favour that is bestowed on the Prophet whom he follows. He does not indulge in conjecture, but speaks having seen and expounds having heard. This way is open for the Muslims for it cannot be that there should be no true heir.

(Barakat-ud-Du'a, Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 6, pp. 17-21)

It should be remembered that we are not permitted to make any

change in the text or sequence of any verse in the Word of God, except when the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself should have done so and it can be proved that he did so. In the absence of such proof we cannot disturb the sequence of the Holy Qur'an, nor can we add anything to it. If we do so, we would be guilty of an offence and would be accountable for it.

(Itmam-ul-Hujjah, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 8, p. 291)

Ten Systems of Roots in the Holy Qur'an

It should be remembered that the Holy Qur'an is comprehensive of ten systems of roots:

1. The system in which the existence of God and arguments in support of it, and such Divine attributes, names, actions, ways and habits are set out as are special to the Being of Allah, the Glorious; also those phrases which relate to His perfect praise regarding His glory, beauty and greatness.
2. The system which is compre-

- hensive of the Unity of God and arguments in support of it.
3. The system in which the qualities and actions, and conduct and habits, and spiritual and physical conditions are manifested by creatures in the presence of God Almighty in accord with His pleasure or contrary to it.
 4. The system which contains complete guidance from God concerning admonitions and the teaching of moral qualities and doctrines, and the rights of God and the rights of His creatures, and wise knowledge, and limits and commandments, and directions and prohibitions, and verities and insights.
 5. The system which expounds what is true salvation and what are the true means of achieving it and what are the signs and conditions of the believers and of those close to God who have achieved salvation.
 6. The system that sets out what is Islam and what is disbelief, and what is *shirk*, and arguments in support of Islam, and answers to objections.
 7. The system which refutes all the false doctrines of the opponents of Islam.
 8. The system that comprises warnings and good news, promises and sanctions, world of the hereafter and miracles, illustrations and prophecies which foster faith, and such stories as serve to admonish, warn or convey good news.
 9. The system that comprises the life history and holy qualities of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his excellent example, and the arguments in support of his Prophethood.
 10. The system that sets forth the qualities of the Holy Qur'an and its effects and its characteristics.

These are the ten systems which are found in the Holy Qur'an in their perfection like ten circles. In these ten circles, God Almighty has made use of such pure and distinct roots that sane reason immediately testifies that this complete and perfect system of roots was appointed in the Arabic language for the service of the Qur'an. That is why this system of roots is in full accord with the educative system of the Holy Qur'an, which is complete and perfect. The system of roots of other languages is not in accord with the educative systems of those books which are called Divine, and which are said to have been revealed in those languages; nor are the ten circles mentioned above found in those books. It is one of the strong proofs of the deficiency of those books that they are deprived of the necessary circles, and that the roots of the language have not been able to keep company with the teaching of those books. The reason for this is that those books are not the real books, and served only a temporary purpose. There is only one real Book which

came into the world which was to serve the welfare of mankind forever. It was revealed with the ten perfect circles, and its system of roots is in accord with its educative system, and every one of its ten circles is accompanied by its system of roots according to its natural quantity and values in which distinct roots are appointed for the manifestation of Divine attributes, and for the explanation of four types that have been mentioned, and for every circle of teaching a perfect circle of roots is available.

(Minan-ur-Rahman, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 9, pp. 150-152, footnote)

An independant report (reproduced with prior permission) that destroys the myth that being a majority in their headquarters, Ahmadis may be able to obtain police protection. A chilling reminder of the ostracisation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, their continuing persecution and the absence of any protection by the authorities in Pakistan.

Rabwah:

A PLACE FOR MARTYRS?

Part two

Report of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group mission to Pakistan into internal flight for Ahmadis. Mission members: Frances Allen, Michael Ellman, Jonathan Ensor.

By Dr Jonathan Ensor – UK

Potential Risk Factors Faced by Ahmadis in Rabwah

Prior to travelling to Pakistan the mission identified potential risk factors faced by Ahmadis. The interview questions and sources were selected to investigate these factors with a focus on the treatment of Ahmadis in Rabwah. As previously noted, it quickly became apparent to the mission that an understanding of the national context is important when considering the potential risks to and protection for Ahmadis in Rabwah. The following material should

therefore be read taking account of the perspective offered in the previous section, ‘The Position of Ahmadis in Pakistan’.

The potential risk factors identified by the mission are: the blasphemy laws; practising or expressing the Ahmadi faith; preaching by Ahmadis; threats and physical attacks; and attacks on property. Evidence collected by the mission relating to each factor is set out below. However, it should be noted throughout that, according to the British High Commission, there is

under-reporting of Ahmadi persecution, making it difficult to make an accurate assessment of the frequency of attacks against Ahmadis.

Blasphemy laws

The mission were provided with a report detailing prosecutions of Ahmadis during 2005 compiled by the community in Rabwah through their contact with Ahmadis throughout Pakistan (Appendix D). The report documents a total of 60 FIRs registered against Ahmadis, 25 of which were recorded at ‘Chenab Nagar’ (Rabwah) police station (note that FIRs may be registered at any police station regardless of the place of residence of the accused). The same document also provides a summary of cases recorded against Ahmadis from April 1984 to Dec 2005. The summary catalogues the total number of cases by the description of the transgression: for example, a total of 404 FIRs instituted against Ahmadis for posing as a Muslim. These statistics are not

disaggregated by location.

The Ahmadi community explained that once an individual receives bail they are required to appear at a case hearing approximately every month. The location of the case hearing will depend on where the FIR has been lodged. This allows a complainant to lodge an FIR in, for example, Karachi, with the effect that a resident of Rabwah would be required to travel a great distance every month. The community pointed out that travelling to repeated bail hearings is expensive, may cost the individual his job through regular absence, and may place the Ahmadi at risk as he has to travel the same route on regular occasions. The testimonies of Rabwah residents Rashid Ahmed, ‘MN’ and Abdul Shakoor to the mission, recorded in Appendix A, provide examples. In January 1990, Rashid Ahmed received bail following the registration of a case under section 298c. Since then he has had to attend court in

Chiniot (approximately 30 minutes drive from Rabwah) every 15 days, sometimes having to wait all day for his case to be called. Each time the police fail to produce witnesses and the case is adjourned, without any criticism of the police. He has applied for the case to be dismissed, but he believes the magistrate is too frightened of the mullahs to order this: he has been told the police will arrange for all the witnesses to come together on one occasion. In a separate case, ‘MN’ has to attend court in Chiniot every 15 or 30 days following an FIR under section 298c that was registered in 1988. The court refuses to dismiss his case and his bail has been cancelled on two occasions. Similarly, Abdul Shakoor had four FIRs lodged against him in December 1990 by a mullah in Rabwah: Mr Shakoor has to attend court in Chiniot every month but each time the case has been adjourned because the mullah has failed to appear and has not been arrested to do so.

Applications to have his case dismissed have been made, all without success (see Appendix A for the testimonies of ‘MN’ and Abdul Shakoor).

Addressing the lengthy prosecution of FIRs in court, DPO Salimi pointed out that cases against Ahmadis often have ‘complicated social implications’ quite different to normal criminal activity. The police often do not want to prosecute, but they have to, even where the complaint itself is ‘very stupid’. If a witness then fails to attend court, they can be arrested, but ‘it is a tricky business,’ and not usually the fault of the police. The Senior Government Advisor fleshed out these problems, noting that the social pressure around the Ahmadi issue has a real impact on the effectiveness of all levels of the police and judiciary (see section 4.2, ‘State Protection’, below).

The Ahmadi Community Representatives informed the

mission that if an individual fails to appear at a bail hearing several actions are put in motion: first, the police will look for the person. Next, if s/he is not found, they are then ‘at large’ and the case is reported to the court, at which point the person becomes a ‘proclaimed’ offender. Anyone can arrest a proclaimed offender within one month of the proclamation, after which time the person’s property is sold. The warrant issued by the court is valid anywhere in Pakistan. The Representatives noted that a common (but illegal) practice is to detain family members of the accused. DSP Tatla, however, insisted that the police do not interrogate family members of accused people, unless they are personally concerned in the charge. The Representatives also informed the mission that when relocating in Pakistan access to many everyday services requires the production of an identity card. All details are held by the national Database and Registration Authority. It was

not known if this database is interrogated to find missing or proclaimed offenders. The services identified by the Ahmadi Community Representatives as requiring production of an ID card included:

- 1) passport/ driving licence
- 2) water/ electricity
- 3) schooling
- 4) employment
- 5) buying/ renting land
- 6) hospital visits

Moreover, there are police checkpoints on the roads and police will often ask for ID cards from those travelling by public transport at night.

During the mission’s interview with the Ahmadi Community Representatives it became clear that blasphemy FIRs are registered as a result of complaints from three main sources: those lodged by members of Khatme Nabuwwat, those precipitated by police or government intervention, and those used to settle personal

rivalries or enmity. Examples of each follow.

FIRs instigated by Khatme Nabuwwat

Mr Rehman noted that Khatme Nabuwwat are present in Rabwah and are known for both instigating FIRs, and identifying those with outstanding FIRs and passing them to the police. Mr Rehman's comments are borne out in the cases of 'MN' and Abdul Shakoor, related to the mission and recorded at Appendix A. Both cases revolve around blasphemy FIRs lodged by Mullah Khuda Bakhsh, a member of Khatme Nabuwwat. Mr Rabnawaz agreed that Khatme Nabuwwat had filed FIR's against Ahmadis, and said that Ahmadis had filed FIRs against his members including one pending against him personally (the Ahmadi Community Representatives subsequently denied that they had successfully filed FIRs against Mr Rabnawaz's members or against Mr Rabnawaz, and they stated that if

an attempt was made to do so, they were sure the police would not accept it). Mr Rabnawaz stated that the cases go on for a long time, as do all cases in Pakistan, but he said that it was usually about 6 months from FIR to conclusion of case. Sometimes they were adjourned at the Ahmadi defendants' own request, or because only one of several defendants had turned up as they had fled the country and were 'criminals living in Europe'.

FIRs instigated through police or government intervention

The Ahmadi Community Representatives highlighted the fact that some FIRs are filed against Ahmadis by the police, whilst others follow the direct intervention of the Federal Government. The testimony provided by Rashid Ahmed to the mission (Appendix A) provides an example of this practice, in which Mr Ahmed was charged with blasphemy under an FIR registered on 22 May 1989 on the order of the

Home Secretary of the Provincial Government, Punjab. The mission were also shown a variety of examples of this practice by the Ahmadi Community Representatives: an FIR dated 15 December 1989, filed by the Station House Officer in Rabwah, which is against the entire population of Rabwah (accused under 298c of practising Islamic social etiquettes and worship. See Appendix B3: Police report (FIR) against the entire population of Rabwah, 15 December 1989); a June 2006 FIR filed by the District Police Officer (DPO) against Latif Butt FIR 21/06 for preaching; and a recent circular issued by the Ministry of Interior. The circular requests provincial authorities to take immediate action against the circulation of Ahmadi literature. The document is dated 8 May 2006 and is from the Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan addressed to Home Secretaries of four provinces – Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and

North West Frontier Province (NWFP) – and provincial police officers. The circular asks the recipients to take action against Ahmadi activities involving the distribution of letters and newspapers, propagation of the Ahmadi faith, and collecting funds. The mission were also shown a second circular, dated 8 June 2006, addressed to the Deputy Inspector General of Police Karachi (with copies to Station House Officers, Karachi). This second document states that the contents of the circular has been duly noted and instructions have been given to Station House Officers to take immediate action, including preventative measures (see Appendix B4: Circulars from the Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan, 8 May 2006 and 8 June 2006).

The mission asked DSP Tatla (Rabwah) about the circular. DSP Tatla explained that he had received the circular from the Ministry of the Interior and that it is normal to receive such

circulars from the Government. In this instance, an FIR was issued in September 2006 as a result of the circular, citing the Ahmadi newspaper '*Alfazal*' for printing 'objectionable material' (see Appendix B9: Press report of closure of *Alfazal*, September 2006). DPO Salimi (in Jhang), however, was not aware of the circular and doubted its authenticity: he stated that it was not uncommon to see forged letters. He had not received this particular circular, but had only been in post since the middle of September. Referring to the *Alfazal* incident, the Ahmadi Community Representatives noted that the FIR resulting in the closure of the newspaper was ordered by the Assistant Inspector General of Police (Operations) acting on the government's initiative. There was no civilian complainant involved. The case was listed as FIR No. 480/06 dated 9 September 2006 at Chenab Nagar Police Station, District Jhang. The FIR states that the *Alfazal* promotes hatred and injures the feelings of Muslims;

however, the FIR does not specify any extracts from the newspaper that are defined as objectionable. The Community Representatives told the mission that on 9th September 2006 the offices of *Alfazal* were raided by the police. The editor, publisher and printer were not present at the offices but the police arrested two men not connected with the newspaper. In a further raid at his home Mr Sultan Ahmad Dogar, a printer, was arrested. Two days after his arrest Mr Dogar was presented before the Anti-terrorism Court in Faisalabad. The Judge ordered his return in a week and he was remanded. On 18 September Mr Dogar was refused bail and a hearing date of 25 September was set for trial. On 25 September the case did not proceed and Mr Dogar was remanded again until 4 October. As of October 2006 the case is still pending and Mr Dogar remains on remand. (See Appendix B10 Translation of FIR 480/06, provided by the Ahmadi Community, Rabwah; and B9: Press report of closure of *Alfazal*, September 2006).

FIRs resulting from personal enmity

The Ahmadi Community Representatives informed the mission that FIRs are also used to settle personal scores. For example, in a case known to the community an Ahmadi became a village headman through the local tradition of primogeniture. However, his first cousin (a non-Ahmadi) wanted to take over the headman role, and so filed a blasphemy charge against him. The Ahmadi subsequently spent four years in prison.

Practising or expressing faith

The Ahmadi Community Representatives explained that the blasphemy laws severely restrict the ability of Ahmadis to practise their faith as a group or as individuals. The laws create a situation where even carrying out everyday religious practices runs the risk of prosecution. As Ahmadis are ‘non-Muslims’ in the eyes of the law, even using the greeting ‘Assalamu Alaikum’ can result in a

blasphemy prosecution. The community explained that their books and literature are banned, public meetings are not allowed and there is a ‘constant fear of prosecution’ under the blasphemy laws (see section 2.3 ‘Blasphemy Laws and First Information Reports’ and Appendix B1: Notifications from the Government of the Punjab banning Ahmadi materials, 19 July 2006; 1 September 2006; and 9 September 2006).

As noted above, the mission were provided with a report detailing prosecutions during 2005 compiled by the community in Rabwah through their contact with Ahmadis throughout Pakistan (Appendix D). The report documents a total of 60 FIRs registered against Ahmadis, 25 of which were recorded at ‘Chenab Nagar’ (Rabwah) police station, and provides a summary of cases recorded against Ahmadis from April 1984 to Dec 2005. The summary catalogues the total

number of cases by the description of the transgression: for example, a total of 404 FIRs instituted for posing as a Muslim. These statistics are not disaggregated by location.

When asked about the Ahmadi faith, Khatme Nabuwwat (Islamabad Chapter) informed the mission that anyone who claims that there was a Prophet after Muhammad is an infidel and their claim is false, baseless and a crime. Khatme Nabuwwat's view is that freedom of religion has limitations and does not include freedom to misinterpret Islam. Ahmadis should not assert themselves to be Muslim because they do not believe in the laws of the Prophet – this view is endorsed by Parliament and the constitution. Khatme Nabuwwat see them-selves as 'protectors' of Islam: Islam has the right to the protection of its 'life, religion, property and honour'. When asked how they achieve this, the Chapter informed the mission that Khatme Nabuwwat spread

understanding of the finality of the Prophet through preaching and books, not through force.

See also section 3.1 'Blasphemy laws', above.

Preaching

The Ahmadi Community Representatives explained that they are a 'preaching religion' in the sense that they have a moral obligation to spread their beliefs. However, no pressure is placed on people to convert. The risk of prosecution under the blasphemy laws for even everyday religious practices means that individuals tend to convey the message of their religion to people they know, such as relatives and friends who are usually other Ahmadis or sympathetic to their cause. However, if they are asked a question about their religion, or if their beliefs are challenged, then they are under a 'moral obligation' to explain their faith. As noted above, the community emphasised that the blasphemy laws are framed in such a way as

to create a ‘constant fear of prosecution’ for Ahmadis in Pakistan (see section ‘2.3 Blasphemy Laws and First Information Reports’, above, and Appendix C: Copy of Ordinance No. XX Of 1984 and 1986 Amendment to the section 295c of the Pakistan Penal Code).

The community also informed the mission that in June 2006 the District Police Officer (DPO) ordered a case be filed against Latif Butt for preaching (FIR number 21/06).

See also section 3.1 ‘Blasphemy laws’, above.

Threats and physical attacks

The Ahmadi Community Representatives stated that in Rabwah they felt intimidated and were frequently threatened. They informed the mission that the main perpetrators of attacks on persons and property in Rabwah were members or supporters of Khatme Nabuwwat who have a mosque

and madrassa in Rabwah. The community representatives referred to graffiti on the wall of the mosque in the Muslim Colony of Rabwah which reads ‘wholesome security of Islam and the faith lies in total liquidation of Ahmadis’ (see Appendix B2: Photographs supplied by the Ahmadi Community). The community stated that they face threats from Khatme Nabuwwat’s members and supporters within Rabwah, and from those coming to Rabwah from other areas of Pakistan for conferences. The mission was told that the Ahmadi community feel particularly intimidated and threatened on these occasions. The senior community members advise their community to stay indoors and women are told not to attend prayers.

Mr Rehman confirmed that Khatme Nabuwwat are present in Rabwah and are known to incite people to attack Ahmadis in speeches broadcast on loud-speakers from their mosque.

Khatme Nabuwwat are repeatedly in the news, for example for inciting violence or attacking the library at Rabwah. In a testimony recorded by the mission, Ahmadi community member ‘ZB’ told the mission that her husband was attacked by a mob in Sialkot following an edict by the local head of Khatme Nabuwwat, Mullah Manzoor. The edict resulted from his conversion to the Ahmadi faith. Following his attack, the police refused to enter an FIR and he fled to Rabwah. In 2004 he was shot at whilst in Rabwah following the distribution of his photograph at a Khatme Nabuwwat conference. The full testimony of this case is recorded at Appendix A.

The Ahmadi Community Representatives told the mission that although the Ahmadis have not been granted permission to hold their annual convention in Rabwah since 1983, Khatme Nabuwwat hold 3-4 large events each year. These events have marches through the streets of

Rabwah that are escorted by the police (the mission viewed a video showing a march through Rabwah; see also Appendix B2: Photographs supplied by the Ahmadi Community).

The Ahmadi Community Representatives described how the marches are accompanied by the shouting of ‘filthy, dirty slogans that are designed to provoke’; one common slogan is ‘death to Ahmadis’. The events sometimes result in violence, such as in 2004 when Rabwah resident Ghulam Tahir was attacked by a mob. The community told the mission that this year two major Khatme Nabuwwat conferences were held in Rabwah during September despite the Government of Punjab directing all district governments to forbid religious meetings and rallies for 30 days from 1 September 2006. Special permission was granted to the clerics to hold these conferences. On 7 September 2006 (the anniversary of Ahmadis being declared non-Muslim) the 19th

Annual International Khatme Nabuwwat Conference was held at the Madrassa Usmania in the Muslim Colony of Rabwah, whilst on 21-22 September 2006 Khatme Nabuwwat held their 25th annual two day conference at Rabwah. Mullah Arshad confirmed that Khatme Nabuwwat holds three conferences in Rabwah each year, on the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet, and on 7 and 21-22 September. According to the Mullah, the latter is a national event that attracts about 50,000 people; the others are local with 4,000-5,000 attendees. When asked why Khatme Nabuwwat meets regularly in Rabwah, Mullah Arshad explained that Khatme Nabuwwat's mission is to invite Ahmadis to rejoin Islam and therefore they hold large gatherings where there are the greatest number of Ahmadis. Khatme Nabuwwat have been refused permission to hold meetings, but the last time this happened was in 1997. The Islamabad Chapter of Khatme

Nabuwwat explained that Khatme Nabuwwat hold meetings in different places, one of which is Rabwah. In contrast to Mullah Arshad, the Chapter members stated that the main Rabwah gathering brings 15,000-20,000 people to the town from all over Pakistan. When pushed as to the reason for staging such a large meeting in Rabwah, it was stated that Khatme Nabuwwat want it to be known to everyone that Rabwah is a part of Pakistan and that there is no exclusive city in Pakistan for Ahmadis: 'Rabwah is not their place.'

When asked about Khatme Nabuwwat's mission to invite Ahmadis to rejoin Islam, one member of Islamabad Chapter explained that their aim was to persuade Ahmadis to repent. However, in accordance with the Islamic teachings, as an apostate an Ahmadi will be given three days to repent and if s/he fail to do so s/he will be sentenced to death. None of the Chapter members were willing to elaborate on this comment.¹

The mission asked the members of the Islamabad Chapter of Khatme Nabuwat about reports from sources such as the US Department of State human rights reports and the Ahmadi Community of violence against Ahmadis, marches and shouting of slogans that demand that Ahmadis be killed. The Chapter members insisted that the reports were false and that the marches were staged by the Ahmadis who are ‘great conspirators’. The Khatme Nabuwat conferences never march through the town – only within the perimeter of their mosque, however it was not explained how this was achieved with many thousands of participants. Khatme Nabuwat do not attack or kill and the Chapter members had not seen or heard of slogans advocating violence. By contrast, Mullah Arshad acknowledged and supported the slogan ‘death to Ahmadis’ and stated that it refers to the fact that the Ahmadi belief is a dead belief and Ahmadis are causing a schism in society. The Mullah does not believe in

killing Ahmadis. The Mullah did not believe that the sloganeering might incite violence against Ahmadis: nothing of the sort happens in Rabwah. (DPO Salimi informed the mission that the expression ‘Death to Ahmadis’ was ‘just a slogan’, and he did not think it amounted to an incitement to violence.) Reflecting the statements of the Islamabad chapter, Mullah Arshad maintained that Ahmadis have made up stories of their arrest: they even dress in police uniforms and go and arrest other Ahmadis to create a story and so they can escape to Europe and make money. When asked about reports of arson and violence, Mr Rabnawaz denied there had been cases of arson against Ahmadi homes and stated that any shooting that had occurred had been between the Ahmadis themselves. Moreover, Ahmadis had fired on Muslims and Mr Rabnawaz himself had been abducted and tortured. The case is still ongoing as the defendants, Mr Rabnawaz claimed, had escaped and are now living in luxury outside Pakistan.

Responding to the suggestion that abusive sloganeering and violence are associated with the Khatme Nabuwwat conferences, Mr Rabnawaz stated that the Ahmadi community have full religious freedom, yet they will not allow Muslims into Rabwah, even as hawkers. Similarly the Islamabad Chapter of Khatme Nabuwwat told the mission that Rabwah has been totally reserved for Ahmadis and Muslims are not permitted to enter. However, the mission met with DSP Tatla and Mr Ibrahim, Secretary to the Mayor of Rabwah, both non-Ahmadi Muslims, in the centre of Rabwah. Moreover, Mr Ibrahim stated that all 11 members of the Local Council in Rabwah are non-Ahmadis, whilst the HRCP noted that the police in Rabwah are all non-Ahmadis. Nevertheless, the Islamabad Chapter of Khatme Nabuwwat stated that they want it to be known that Rabwah is a part of Pakistan and that there can be no exclusive city in Pakistan for Ahmadis. Referring to the Ahmadi community, the Chapter

members insisted that ‘Rabwah is not their place.’

Attacks on property

As noted above, the mission were informed by the Ahmadi Community Representatives that the main perpetrators of attacks on property in Rabwah were members or supporters of Khatme Nabuwwat. The Community told the mission that they face a constant threat of physical violence, including against their mosques and educational establishments. The marches following anti-Ahmadi conferences have resulted in arson and attacks on Ahmadi mosques, in one case resulting in the destruction of a mosque. Mr Rehman noted that Khatme Nabuwwat are repeatedly in the news, including, for example, for attacking the library in Rabwah. The Ahmadi Community Representatives noted that the violence is different in different places and at different times, highlighting the example of the destruction in the village of Jhando Sahi which had been reported by the Pakistani press

and documented by Amnesty International (see Appendix B8). During mob violence in June 2006 the whole Ahmadi community had their homes and businesses attacked by local non-Ahmadis.

The Ahmadi Community Representatives also told the mission of the desecration of Ahmadi graves. The Ahmadi community in Rawah have a cemetery on the edge of the town, next to which is the mosque belonging to Khatme Nabuwwat's Mullah Arshad. The Ahmadi community explained how they had built a wall to protect their cemetery but the Khatme Nabuwwat members still entered the site and damaged grave stones. The mission visited the cemetery and photographed the damage to the gravestones, located immediately adjacent to the cemetery boundary with the Khatme Nabuwwat mosque (see photographs in Appendix F). Mullah Arshad insisted that there was no truth in the story that Khatme Nabuwwat desecrated Ahmadi graves: Ahmadis do it

themselves and then blame Muslims. The Ahmadis have a security system at the cemetery and moreover Muslims do not believe in and condemn the desecration of graves. Mr Rabnawaz stated that photographs of desecrated gravestones were fabricated.

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1. This is a controversial and contested reading of the teachings of Islam.

The Role of Truth and Reconciliation in Enhancing Democratic Governance: the case of Ghana

A paper presented at a workshop on 'West Africa: Regional Issues and Challenges of Reconciliation' held at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra from May 3rd-5th 2006.

By Maulvi A Wahab Adam – Accra, Ghana

Reconciliation, from the religious perspective, is very important for peaceful societal existence as it allows man to demonstrate the moral quality of benevolence. For this reason I have chosen to preface this presentation with the story of Joseph^(as) and his brothers as narrated in the Holy Qur'an.

Having been thrown into a well and left for dead, having been found by a trader and sold as merchandise, and having spent some time in prison, Joseph^(as) was elevated to a very high status in the court of a king. It was during this period that an opportunity came for Joseph^(as) to remind his brothers of what they did to him. Crestfallen and

shocked at the enormity of their crime and the realisation that Joseph^(as), in his position, could exact his pound of flesh, they confessed:

...We have indeed been sinners.

(Ch.12: V.92)

Responding, Joseph^(as) told them:

No blame shall lie on you this day; may Allah forgive you! And He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.

(Holy Qur'an, Ch.12: V.93)

This large-hearted and generous pardon granted by Joseph^(as) to his brothers, constitutes his greatest and most outstanding

resemblance to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw).

Like Joseph^(as), the Holy Prophet^(saw) gained honour and power in flight and banishment. When, after years in exile, he entered his native town as a conqueror and Makkah lay prostrate at his feet, he asked his people what treatment they expected from him. 'The treatment that Joseph accorded to his brothers', they replied, to which the Holy Prophet^(saw) declared, 'Then no reproach shall lie on you this day.'

An unparalleled example of reconciliation!

I accepted to be a member of the National Reconciliation Commission out of my deep religious conviction of the value of reconciliation as a condition for peace in our dear country of Ghana. It is refreshing that this workshop is taking place some three weeks after the Government announced that an amount of 13 billion Ghanaian

Cedis has been allocated for the provision of reparation to victims of human rights violations who petitioned the Commission for redressal of their grievances. It is my hope that the reparations and further counselling for the victims would contribute immensely to healing and closure for the victims and also impact on the reconciliation process.

Having served as a Commissioner on Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission, I have come to appreciate, for its healing value, the urgent necessity for every nation to make the effort to confront its past. Let me say that the agonising and incredulous stories which assaulted my ears and imagination, can only be described as evil and inexplicable. But I have come through that experience with hope and confidence in the future of mankind and my dear country in particular. This hope is anchored on the fact that most of the victims, after narrating

their testimonies of pain and suffering, at the loss of dear ones, and of a future destroyed, expressed their willingness to forsake revenge and commit themselves to forgiveness and reconciliation. It is this truth that gives me hope for the future.

The National Reconciliation Commission opened its doors to victims of human rights violations on September 2, 2002. Public hearings began on January 14, 2003 at the Old Parliament House, where almost fifty years earlier, on March 5 1957, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had tabled the motion of the destiny for Ghana to become the first colony, South of the Sahara, to achieve independence from colonial rule. At the inauguration of the Commission in 2003, the then Attorney General, Nana Akuffo Addo said:

‘The inauguration of the public hearings is one more milestone on our tortuous, but determined path towards consolidating our democracy

and fulfilling the goals of our national motto: Freedom and Justice.’

In all, over 4,000 persons petitioned the Commission. During the hearings, which were held in the national capital and regional capitals to give the people easy access and a sense of participation in the national reconciliation process, victims spoke, some amid tears, of killings, torture, detention, disappearances of relations, seizure of property, ill treatment and dismissals. For some petitioners, the Commission was able to exhume and hand over to them, the remains of relations, who had been executed and buried in mass graves.

Working parallel to the public hearings were five committees that examined possible institutional culpability in fostering a climate that allowed human rights violations to thrive. The five committees were those on security services, the legal profession (including the

judiciary), the media, organised labour and students movement, professional bodies (other than legal), and religious bodies and the chieftaincy institution. With hindsight, I think another committee to look at ethnicity as being responsible for some of the human rights violations, could have been worthwhile. Besides, the institutional hearings should have been conducted in public and opened its doors to testimony from members of the public.

On October 13, 2004, the Commission submitted its report to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Ghana. The report embodies recommendations for reparations, the source of funding for reparations, institutional reforms, and specific actions for the nation to symbolically demonstrate contrition and acknowledgement towards victims of human rights violations. The report had this conclusion:

“We must not be tied down to

our past mistakes or misfortunes. Doing so would produce nothing but further suffering. Instead, we have to make serious efforts to put all the pains behind us, and help to build a new Ghana where the conditions that produced such pain and suffering would not be permitted to recur. Every Ghanaian must make a personal pledge that ‘NEVER AGAIN!’ shall such wrongs be a feature of governance or a feature of life on this beautiful land of our birth.”

If a feature of governance that shall not accommodate such wrongs is democratic governance, then the question to be asked is has the National Reconciliation Commission enhanced democratic governance in Ghana?

Answering this question must take into account the work of a truth commission as both a forward-looking and backward-looking exercise. As a nation

looks back at its dark past and acknowledges responsibility, it must look into the present and the future and make them become illumined by the past. Successful truth commissions are those that leave in their place follow-up institutions to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the recommendations of the commission.

The completion of the work of a truth commission is the end of the beginning. Much more remains to be done in Ghana's pursuit of a human rights culture. Thus the responsibility has now shifted away from the Commission to the state and to civil society. The extent to which the National Reconciliation Commission has impacted positively on democratic governance can be located in the performance of the two important factors.

It is worth noting that Ghana's truth commission was dictated by its own mode of transition. It was not defined in terms of the

four well-known categories:

- a) Full defeat in an armed war e.g. the treatment of Germany after World War II;
- b) Transition through a dictator's loss in an election e.g. Chile;
- c) Transition through compromises and negotiation e.g. South Africa; and
- d) Transition from a long standing communist regime e.g. East European countries.

Ghana's truth commission was set up 10 years after the country had returned to democratic governance following eleven years of military rule during which a lot of human rights violations occurred. Three elections had been held, the last one leading to a change of government. During this time, indices of democratic governance were present, however imperfect: constitutional rule, independent judiciary, rule of

Law, free media, civil society and a certain level of government accountability.

Significantly, the then president, a military dictator turned politician, acknowledged the need for reconciliation and set in motion a process to de-confiscate properties earlier confiscated. It was an ad hoc arrangement that did not go far. A truth commission, that would have subjected his human rights record to public scrutiny, was not even discussed.

This was unlike that of South Africa where the ANC set up a commission to probe human rights violations allegedly committed by its members during the liberation war well before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up.

The government that set up the national reconciliation commission, then in opposition, had political space to sell its message and with the support of a free

media, defeated the ruling party in the 2000 elections. In its manifesto, it had promised to set up a truth commission to investigate human rights violations as part of the process towards reconciliation. These are the antecedents to the establishment of Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission. Any assessment of the role it has played in enhancing democratic governance will have to look at the level of democratic governance in the pre-NRC period and attempt to establish whether there has been an improvement over that in the post NRC period.

In the absence of any empirical evidence, any conclusion on improved democratic governance after the NRC will be speculative. However, there are areas that attention must be focused. No doubt civil society has become more active. Advocacy is being intensified to increase public participation in policy making, legislative process and social dialogue. That

the Domestic Violence Bill, Freedom of Information Bill and the Disability Bill are being laid before Parliament for passage testify to the active advocacy of civil society. The Coalition Against Water Privatisation has virtually put a hold on government action in the sector. In the area of conflict prevention and resolution, civil society has been playing a crucial role. For the current level of stability in Dagbon and the ending of the 80 year-old Alavanvo-Nkonya dispute, credit should go to the involvement of civil society, including the religious bodies.

More importantly, Ghanaians have recognised that perennial political instability has not benefited the country and they have a shared responsibility to help sustain the current democratic dispensation. Above all, the gross human rights violations that occurred under the various military regimes and the First Republic that reduced the dignity and self-esteem of the people, have contributed in con-

vincing them that an incompetent constitutional government, founded on the rule of law, is better than a military government and therefore there is the need for patience until the next elections during which they will exercise their franchise to retain or change it.

If these modest indices constitute an enhancement of democratic governance in the country, then the National Reconciliation Commission was not set up in vain.

PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON – Was he a monotheist?

By Zia H Shah MD, Syracuse, USA

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)

First Muslim in US Congress

Keith Ellison made history in January 2007 by becoming the first Muslim member of the US Congress and embellishing the occasion by taking a ceremonial oath on the copy of the Holy Qur'an once owned by the third President of the USA, Thomas Jefferson. Mr. Ellison is an Afro-American who converted to Islam during his college years. In a very strategic move, he succeeded in taking his oath of office using Thomas Jefferson's own copy of the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an was acquired in 1815 as part of a 6,400-volume collection that Jefferson sold for \$24,000 to replace the

congressional library that had been burned by British troops the year before, in the War of 1812. The book's leather binding was added in 1919. Inside, it reads, '*The Koran, commonly called 'The Alcoran of Mohammed.'*' Jefferson marked his ownership by writing the letter 'J' next to the letter 'T' that was already at the bottom of pages.

Speaking to ABC News in a broadcast, Ellison said it was only natural that he would take his oath on the Holy Qur'an, the book of his Islamic faith. 'It's the scripture that I read every day and it's the book that I draw inspiration from,' said the incoming lawmaker, who converted from Roman Catholicism to Islam while a student in college. Ellison, who is also the first black US lawmaker from Minnesota, said that as he goes about the business

of learning to be a lawmaker, he will take a page from the book of baseball legend Jackie Robinson, who made history as the first black player in the sport's major league. 'It's like Jackie Robinson: Did he worry about being the first black baseball player? No. He worried about getting a hit. He worried about getting on base', said Ellison. He also remarked that he chose this copy of the Holy Qur'an because it showed that a visionary like Jefferson believed that wisdom could be gleaned from many sources.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the principal author of the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) of the United States and the nation's first secretary of state (1789-94), second vice president (1797-1801), and third president (1801-09). Jefferson was an early advocate of the total separation of church and state (*Virginia Statute for religious Freedom*), and the most eloquent American proponent of individual freedom as the core

meaning of the American Revolution.

Edwin Gaustad has written a religious biography of Thomas Jefferson titled *Sworn on the Altar of God*. He writes:

'Jefferson would gather ideas as a reaper gathered corn, selecting and retaining the most delectable, ignoring or discarding what he regarded as unsuitable to his taste. Many of Jefferson's fellow deists found English and Scottish thinkers more congenial, less radical, less unnerving than those of France. But Jefferson reaped there too.'¹

In other words he sought ideas from all sorts of philosophers from all different times. Jefferson seemed to have a special ability to decipher right from wrong and useful from useless. He showed that in so many different spheres of life. Jefferson liked books as they gave him new and good ideas. He was a great collector of books. When Thomas Jefferson

went abroad as an emissary to France in 1785, the opportunities for book buying marvellously multiplied. Reading readily in French, Jefferson devoted every free afternoon to examining all the principal bookstores, turning the leaf of every book with his own hand and trying to absorb everything which related to America, and indeed whatever was rare and valuable in every science. Gaustad writes:

‘Besides haunting the bookstalls in Paris, ‘I had standing orders’, Jefferson wrote, ‘during the whole time I was in Europe on its principal book-marts, particularly Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Madrid, and London.’”²

Who was this genius Jefferson? What were his religious beliefs? What ideas did he ‘borrow’ from the Holy Qur’an? Were his ideas closer to the Holy Qur’an or to the Holy Bible?

Influence of Islam

It was generally not customary in

18th century Europe or America to give credit to the Muslims, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw) or to the Holy Qur’an. We will examine this issue later in the article. But if this be true, the result of this phenomenon is that we cannot examine the question as to what Jefferson borrowed from the Holy Qur’an in any reasonable fashion, as there is no written proof of that. On the contrary, it is much easier to examine as to whether his ideas were closer to the Holy Qur’an or to the Holy Bible? By answering this question we can make some judgement to the first issue as to what he may have ‘borrowed’ from the Holy Qur’an.

The balance between human knowledge gained by experimentation or observation and the ‘revealed truth’ has been a constant dilemma for mankind. This was a burning struggle for Jefferson also. His struggle was compounded by the fact that the main revelation with which he was familiar was the Bible.

Having read the Holy Qur'an in a period which was extremely hostile to Islam, he could not possibly fully embrace it. Moreover, George Sale's English translation that he owned was not unbiased either. Did revelation as he knew it in the form of the Bible have any role in human affairs? 'And if God spoke to humankind mainly or even exclusively through the medium of nature, what did nature tell us about that God? About His eternal truths? About the nature and destiny of women and men?'³ The adulterated accounts of the Bible did not satisfy Jefferson. After extensive studies of different books Jefferson concluded:

'Christianity had traditionally rested not upon reason or experience but upon mystery and miracle. The Bible, moreover, portrayed a deity quite different from that revealed in nature, a deity that reason could neither explain nor defend. How rational could it possibly be for the God of the whole universe to

reveal himself solely to one small nation in the eastern Mediterranean and to leave the rest of the world in utter ignorance of his existence? It seemed even more irrational to believe that the Supreme Being of the cosmos had 'sent his only begotten son', who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by men, who had offended him that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger.'⁴

Jefferson, like many of those authors whom he had read in his youth, had no trouble accepting the argument for God's existence from the magnificent design evident in Allah's creation. His thoughts were perfectly in keeping with the verses of the Holy Qur'an quoted above and the verses of *Surah Al-Hashr*:

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)

‘It was impossible’, Jefferson wrote to John Adams, ‘for the human mind not to perceive and feel a conviction of design, consummate skill, and indefinite power in every atom of its composition.’ This was the case whether one contemplated the heavens above (‘the movement of the heavenly bodies, so exactly held in their course by the balance of centrifugal and centripetal forces’) or the earth below (‘the structure of our earth itself, with its distribution of lands, waters, and atmosphere, animal and vegetable bodies... insects as mere atoms of life, yet as perfectly organised as man or mammoth’).⁵

Qur’an and the study of Nature

Every enlightened reader of the Holy Qur’an knows that it urges us to reflect on the Laws of Nature. It draws examples from cosmology, biology and physics, among other branches of science, as signs for all men of understanding.

For example, the Holy Qur’an says:

Do they not then look at the camel, how it is created? And at the heaven, how it is raised high? And at the mountains, how they are firmly rooted, and at the earth, how it is spread out?

(Ch.88: Vs. 18-21)

And again:

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water which Allah sends down from the sky and quickens thereby the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth – are indeed Signs for the people who understand.

(Ch.2: V.165)

Seven hundred and fifty verses of the Qur'an (almost one eighth of the Book) exhort believers to study nature, to reflect, to make the best use of reason in the search of the Creator, the Almighty Allah. This contrasts with 250 verses in the Holy Qur'an with regard to different commands.⁶

One Creator of the Universe

Jefferson was not only a genius but also a free and an independent thinker. It was easy for him to see that our universe speaks of one Creator, call Him Allah or by whatever Name but there cannot be three creators of this world. There are no creations of the Holy Ghost or of Jesus Christ^(as) that we can see.⁷ We Muslims love Jesus^(as) dearly and applaud him as a prophet. But he did not create anything to merit a status equal to Allah Almighty. There is one theme in the creation of this universe be it living or non-living. In the living beings, there is similar RNA and a common kind of DNA. The theory of evolution ties all living beings to one ancestry or lineage.

The physicists are working on a string theory that will unite all forms of matter and energy into one. If there had been other gods besides Allah in the heavens and the earth, then there would have been chaos in the universe.⁸

Sir Isaac Newton saw that there is no changing of the laws of nature and that the universe follows the rules of mathematics. In other words, he understood the true meaning of the verse of *Surah Rum*:

So set your face towards religion ever inclined to truth – and follow the nature of Allah after which He fashioned all mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah. That indeed is the religion which is firmly upright and supports others to be upright.
(Ch.30: V.31)

Pertaining to Jefferson, Edwin Gaustad writes:

‘Newton taught Jefferson that God’s world was orderly,

dependable, regular and predictable. From his *Principia* (1687), the whole Western world learned that patient observation and careful mathematical calculation could reveal previously unknown truths about the nature of the universe. Planets did not ‘wander’ but moved according to specific laws; like all matter in motion, they proceeded not by chance but by design. England’s ‘greatest and rarest genius’ (in David Hume’s words) placed science firmly in the centre of the modern world; indeed, Newton helped create the modern world.’⁹

For Jefferson, the laws of Nature were God’s laws; they did not have an independent status all their own. They came into being by God’s decree, and they continued to operate, as Newton demonstrated, through God’s unceasing providential direction. Unlike many other deists, Jefferson did not hold that God created the world and then retired from the scene; rather, he

believed that God continued to create and sustain the world moment by moment. Gravity was not a property of matter: it was God’s law for the orderly operation of matter, one of the means by which he brought order out of chaos.¹⁰ To a close observer of nature, which Jefferson surely was, the conclusion could not be denied: we see ‘evident proofs of the necessity of a super-intending power to maintain the universe in its course and order.’¹¹

Here again his thoughts were perfectly in keeping with the throne verse of the Holy Qur’an:

Allah – there is no God but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth... His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth; and the care of them burdens Him not; and He is the High, the Great.
(Ch.2: V.256)

Jefferson's views were far more in line with the sublime teachings of the Holy Qur'an than any rudimentary mention of this subject in the Holy Bible. Yet the Holy Qur'an historically got no credit for these views. Why? I believe the answer is obvious. The political and the religious atmosphere of the West was not conducive to giving any credit to the Holy Qur'an, to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw) or to Islam. It does not allow that even today. Perhaps Karen Armstrong, an Orientalist who used to be a catholic nun knows best the reasons for this. Explaining the prejudices of the west towards Islam she writes:

“In the 12th century, Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, initiated a dialogue with the Islamic world. ‘I approach you not with arms, but with words,’ he wrote to the Muslims whom he imagined reading his book, ‘not with force, but with reason, not with hatred, but with love.’ Yet his treatise was entitled Summary of the Whole

Heresy of the Diabolical Sect of the Saracens and segued repeatedly into spluttering intransigence. Words failed Peter when he contemplated the ‘bestial cruelty’ of Islam, which, he claimed, had established itself by the sword. Was Muhammad a true prophet? ‘I shall be worse than a donkey if I agree,’ he expostulated, ‘worse than cattle if I assent!’”¹²

She concludes her essay by stating that this prejudice is still all too pervasive:

“Neither the Danish cartoonists, who published the offensive caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad last February, nor the Christian fundamentalists... would ordinarily make common cause with the Pope; yet on the subject of Islam they are in full agreement.”¹³

History of Scientific Thought
The West learned a lot from the Muslims. What does the West

owe to the East? To give the reader a glimpse let us go back in history, the place is Baghdad. Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khawarizmi was a mathematician and an astronomer whose major works introduced Arabic numerals and the concepts of algebra into European mathematics. Al-Khawarizmi lived in Baghdad, where he worked at the ‘House of Wisdom’ under Caliph al-Ma’mun. The House of Wisdom acquired and translated scientific and philosophic treatises, particularly the ones in Greek. It also published original research. Al-Khawarizmi’s work on elementary algebra, *Al-kitab al-mukhtasar fi hisab al-jabr wa’l-muqabala*, was translated into Latin in the 12th century, from which the title and term Algebra derives. The English translation for the name of the book is *The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*.

Al-Khawarizmi made many contributions to mathematics and gave mankind the concept of

zero and Arab numerals. Before him the Roman numerals followed were actually alphabets like X, C, L, XII etc. It was not possible to make simple additions. It was Al-Khawarizmi and other Arab mathematicians who showed that if we line up 1000, 100,005 and 101 in proper order it is easy to add these three numbers.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 1000 \\
 100,005 \\
 101 \\
 \hline
 101106
 \end{array}$$

Contrast the simplicity of this addition to adding relatively smaller numbers XXIV and LXXVI to get C. Roman numbers were used in Europe until the middle ages. Today simple additions appear as common sense to us but in the past, a vast majority of population could not do simple calculations. There used to be specialists like modern day accountants who were in charge of the tedious tasks of addition and subtraction, and earned their living as such.

The very first step in the development of science was accurate quantification of different parameters. Mathematics and Algebra were absolutely essential for the young tree of science in Europe to blossom. Carly Firoina, Ex CEO of Hewlett-Packard, had this to say in 2001:

‘Although we are often unaware of our indebtedness to Islamic civilisation, its gifts are very much a part of our heritage. The technology industry would not exist without the contributions of Arab mathematicians.’

Dr Abdus Salam, the first Muslim Nobel laureate in Physics, writes about the contribution of Muslims to science and the process of transmission of knowledge from the Muslims to Europe in the following words:

‘To emphasise that science is the shared heritage of mankind, and that the history of scientific discovery, like the history of all

civilisation, has gone through cycles, I recalled in my Nobel lecture, a historical episode, when some 760 years ago, a young Scotsman left his native glens to travel south to Toledo in Spain. His name was Michael, his goal to live and work at the Arab universities of Toledo and Cordova. Michael reached Toledo in 1217 AD. Once there, Michael formed the ambitious project of introducing Aristotle to Latin Europe, translation not from the original Greek, which he knew not, but from the Arabic translation which was then taught in Spain. From Toledo, Michael travelled to Sicily, to the Court of Emperor Frederick II. Visiting the medical school at Salerno, chartered by Frederick in 1231, Michael met the Danish physician Hendrik Harpestraeng, later to become Court Physician of King Eric IV Waldermarrson. Hendrik the Dane had come to Salerno to compose his treatise, preserved in seven volumes at the National Library in Stockholm, on blood-letting and surgery.

Hendrik's sources were the medical canons of the great clinicians of Islam, Al Razi and Avicenna, which only Michael the Scot could translate for him. The schools of Toledo and Salerno mark the beginning of the creation of Sciences in the West. At these schools a candle was lit from a candle already burning brightly in the lands of Islam.¹⁴

Mr. Zakaria Virk, a Canadian Muslim historian, has examined this subject in greater depth in some of his writings. In his article published in *The Review of Religions* in 2003, he starts his description by quoting from Robert Briffault's *The Making of Humanity*:

'It was under the influence of Arabian and Moorish revival of culture and not in the 15th century, that the real renaissance took place.'¹⁵

Jefferson was a believer; he was a believer in One God. He unhesitatingly rejected the atheism of some of the French

philosophers, finding it illogical and untenable. For the atheist, said Jefferson, the universe had simply always existed. It has no cause, no beginning in time. For the deist, on the other hand, the great canvas of creation cried out for a First Cause, possessing intelligence and power; power in the production, and intelligence in the design and constant preservation of the system.¹⁶

Jefferson's belief in a God, Who is the creator of the universe, can be seen from the clues in the US Declaration of Independence in terms like 'Creator' and 'Nature's God'.

Corruptions in Christianity

Joseph Priestly was a chemist who had created a name for himself in discovering Oxygen and Carbon Dioxide. But he was as notorious in Europe as he was famous. He received his notoriety from writing a book: *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* originally published in 1782. Priestley was besieged by mobs in Birmingham, England, and having lost both his

home and his laboratory to their fury, had retreated in 1791 to London. Even there his radicalism in religion and his embrace of France magnified his unpopularity and aggravated the danger he faced. So in 1794, at the urging of Jefferson and others, he migrated to America, settling in Pennsylvania for the last decade of his turbulent life. In 1797 in Philadelphia, Priestly delivered a series of lectures on Christianity. It was here that Jefferson met him and learned much from Priestley's lectures, but he gained even greater intellectual satisfaction from reading his book. In any case, this one book influenced Jefferson's religious views profoundly. In reading it, Jefferson made a critical discovery for and about himself. He thought that he had utterly rejected Christianity; now he found to his relief and perhaps to his delight as well, that he had only rejected a hopelessly corrupted form of Christianity. Somewhere underneath all the layers, pure gold could yet be found. Priestley argued, for

example, that the real 'mystery' of the Trinity was that so many Christians believed it, for Jesus^(as) did not teach it, the Bible did not proclaim it and Reason could not honour it. Jesus^(as) lived as a human being, claimed to be nothing more than the 'son of man', whose mission was to show all humankind how it should live and what God expected of it. The Old Testament honoured monotheism, as did the New Testament.

Jefferson embraced Priestly's views whole-heartedly. The description of President Thomas Jefferson in Wikipedia.com is very revealing:

'Miracles and references to the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus are notably absent from the Jefferson Bible. The Bible begins with an account of Jesus' birth without references to angels, genealogy, or prophecy.'

In August of 1804, Jefferson wrote to Benjamin Rush: 'I shall

some of these days ask you to read the *little volume* on Jesus.’ Rush, who had responded positively to an earlier work by Jefferson named ‘the Syllabus’ sent the year before, now gave a disconcerting reply. Rush was not ready to give up his ideas about the divinity of Jesus^(as). So he wrote back, unless Jefferson’s *little volume* advanced the divinity of Jesus^(as) ‘and renders his death as well as his life necessary for the restoration of mankind, I shall not concur with its author.’ Jefferson, who had abandoned all notions of atonement and divinity, therefore, declined to send his modest editing effort to his good friend.¹⁷

Divinity of Jesus^(as)

In the Gospel according to John, where Jesus^(as) makes the most unambiguous claims to divinity (‘the Father is in me, and I in him’; ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me’; ‘I am in the Father, and the Father in me’; etc.), Jefferson repeatedly turned away from all such claims.

One of the most striking examples of this occurs in chapter 13, where Jefferson included the verses (21-26) relating to the Last Supper. Then verse 31 begins, ‘Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said...’

What Jesus^(as) said at that point was, ‘Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.’ But Jefferson dropped that and the two following verses to jump abruptly to the moral message: ‘A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another’ (v. 34).

When quoting from John, Jefferson kept his blade busy. Finally, in passages treating the last days of Jesus^(as), Jefferson stayed with the mortal man who died on the cross and was buried. After the soldiers pierced Jesus^(as)’ side with a sword, ‘Joseph of Arimathea... besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus and Pilate gave him leave.’ (John 19:38). After preparing the body for burial,

disciples transported it to a new tomb in the crucifixion garden. At that point, taking fragments from John and from Matthew, Jefferson's scriptures concluded: 'There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.' No resurrection, no appearances of a risen Lord, no ascension into heaven. A great teacher, the greatest of all moral teachers, had died and was buried.¹⁸

John Adams was an early advocate of American independence from Great Britain and became the second President (1797-1801) of the United States.¹⁹ The origin of evil, John Adams noted, was perhaps known only to omniscience, but we can be sure that it did not all begin in a garden. We poor mortals have nothing to do with it, but to fabricate all the good we can out of all inevitable evils." One way to eradicate a large class of evils, Adams added, was to employ our reason to dispose of our own unnecessary apprehensions and imaginary fears.

Original sin, if such a thing even existed, was ignorance, said Volney. It was definitely not, for the Jeffersonian, an Edenic action that forever after paralysed humankind, corrupted one's nature, or destroyed one's moral sense. Man was not a worm, not a moral midget, but one designed by God and empowered by him to conquer the infirmities, moral or physical, of this world.²⁰ These were again the views completely in agreement with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an gives a repeated message of personal responsibility and stresses one's good deeds for one's salvation. The concept of atonement is totally foreign to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and also to teachings of the Torah for that matter.

After his presidency years, expressed general agreement with his friend Joseph Priestley's Unitarianism, that is, the rejection of the doctrine of Trinity. In a letter to a Ohio pioneer he wrote:

‘I rejoice that in this blessed country of free inquiry and belief, which has surrendered its conscience to neither kings or priests, the genuine doctrine of only one God is reviving, and I trust that there is not a young man now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian.’²¹

His dream, however, of large scale conversion to the belief in One God was not to come true in the time of his contemporaries. It had to wait until the advent of Islam in the West. But it certainly seems that he was laying down the groundwork for the grand prophecy of the Holy Qur’an:

He it is Who has 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 dislike it.
(Ch.61: V.10)

His belief in One God

Jefferson wrote at length on

religion and most scholars agree with the claim that Jefferson was a deist, a common position held by intellectuals in the late 18th century.²² He believed in One God and was a Unitarian.

Historically, Unitarianism believed in the oneness of God and not the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one God) proclaimed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Historic Unitarians believed in the moral authority, but not the deity, of Jesus^(as). Throughout the world, many Unitarian congregations and associations belong to the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. In the United States and Canada many Unitarians are Unitarian Universalist or UU, reflecting an institutional consolidation between Unitarianism and Universalism. Today, most Unitarian Universalists do not consider themselves Christians, even if they share some beliefs quite similar to those of mainstream Christians.²³ There is a small percentage of Unitarian

Universalists who have a Christian-centric belief system.

If the Holy Qur'an has a fundamental claim to any idea then it is to the idea of monotheism. It is said that one third of the Holy Qur'an is dedicated to this fundamental Islamic doctrine. The Torah also has a claim to monotheism but it is only the Holy Qur'an that offers monotheism which is not limited to a select few but is available for each and every human being and is preserved in its pristine purity and unparalleled beauty.

It is hard to know whether Thomas Jefferson borrowed the idea from the Holy Qur'an directly or indirectly. But the fact remains that the Holy Qur'an has been the best and the most articulate advocate of monotheism. So, it will not be partiality to give it credit whenever a good case is made for monotheism in more recent history. Even if Thomas Jefferson learnt monotheism completely from the Holy Qur'an, it was not possible for him to give credit to it. In his

autobiography talking about the year 1769 Thomas Jefferson writes:

‘Our minds were circumscribed within narrow limits by an habitual belief that it was our duty to be subordinate to the mother country in all matters of government, to direct all our labours in subservience to her interests, and even to observe a bigoted intolerance for all religions but hers.’²⁴

However, he was certainly a strong proponent of One God and denied Trinity in very unambiguous terms. This was as if he was professing his belief in the first half of the Creed of Islam, ‘There is no God but Allah.’

Jefferson formulated a Bible for his own use. He took two copies of the New Testament in the King James Version and cut out those verses from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that in his view best conveyed the ‘pure and unsophisticated doctrines’ of Jesus^(as). Having

undertaken the task of separating the authentic and original Jesus^(as) from the later Platonised and mythical Jesus, Jefferson told John Adams:

‘We must reduce our volume to the simple evangelists, select, even from them, the very words only of Jesus, paring off the amphibologisms into which they have been led, by forgetting often, or not understanding, what had fallen from him, by giving their own misconceptions as his dicta, and expressing unintelligibly for others what they had not understood themselves. There will be found remaining the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man. I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging the matter which is evidently his, and which is as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.’²⁵

Jefferson worked without knowledge of manuscript transmission or oral traditions or any of the biblical apparatus that later centuries would introduce. Rather, taking reason and nature as his trusted guides, he determined by sense and sound what had fallen from the lips of Jesus^(as) himself. The result was pure gold, gold separated from the dross, as he told William Short much later. In examining the Gospels carefully, Jefferson found ‘many passages of fine imagination, correct morality, and of the loveliest benevolence.’ Jefferson noted that all that beauty sat trapped in ‘so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism, and imposture.’ Something had to be done to extract the gold. He also pointed out ‘and I found the work obvious and easy.’²⁶

Conclusion

Jefferson was not just an individual; he held several institutions in himself. It is important to study him from different angles, especially his

ideas on the separation of church and state as exemplified by his writing of the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (1779, 1786), a statute that forms the backbone of many religious freedom legislation. The world is badly in need of his ideas on religious freedom and keeping the politics away from religious intolerance and bigotry. It is hoped that other Muslim writers with a background in politics, law and history will endeavour in this rich field.

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