

The background of the book cover features a dark teal to black gradient. In the upper left, there is a yellow crescent moon and a yellow five-pointed star. A large, white, stylized calligraphic script, possibly representing the word 'Allah', is centered on the right side. A faint, dark geometric pattern of lines is visible in the background.

Approaching the West

Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B

Majlis Anṣarullāh, U.S.A.

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Foreword

A vital issue confronting the Muslim world today is the lack of unity brought about in large part by the absence of any continued and significant leadership. The refusal of the majority of Muslims to recognize that concept of Khilafat (successor-ship) could cater to their needs is at the core of their current struggle. The institution of Khilafat was foretold by God and provided by Him to the God-fearing. Islam is a living religion sent for all people for all times; its blessings, including the blessings of Khilafat, are not limited to and specific period.

In this comprehensive study of the institution of Khilafat since its inception, its meaning for modern man and its inextricable link to prophethood Mubasher Ahmad has provided valuable insight as well as solution to the problem facing the Muslim world.



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Approaching the West

... Say: 'To Allāh belong the East and the West. He guides whom He pleases to the right path.' (The Holy Qur'ān, 2:143)

For as the lightening comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (The Bible, Matthew, 24:27)

Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him), the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islām, was born in the East. His birthplace, Qādiān, is a remote village in India, where he was born in 1835. Under Divine inspiration, he initiated the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at in 1889. His mission to spread Islām was of universal magnitude. He repeatedly received God's reassuring revelations that his message shall reach all the people of the world:

I shall carry thy message to the ends of the earth. (Al-Ḥakam, Vol. II, Nos. 24-25, August 20-27, 1898, p. 14. Translation from Tadhkirah, Muḥammad Ṣafrullāh Khān, London, 1976, p. 184)

A Warner came into the world, and the world accepted him not but God shall accept

him and will demonstrate his truth with powerful assaults. (Anjām Ātham, pp. 51-62, Translation from Tadhkirah, Muḥammad Zafrullāh Khān, London, 1976, p. 168)

Though Qādiān was an unknown small village, it is amazing to note that Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad's message did reach the West in his lifetime. It happened so fast that the Biblical prophecy concerning the 'Coming of the Son of man' was certainly fulfilled: like lightening coming out of the East and shining over the West. Let us, therefore, examine some aspects of the success story.

Contacts between Western countries and the Indian populace were already in place, especially through traders and Christian missionaries. Portuguese, Dutch, French and British had their special business interests in India during several preceding centuries. Along with the merchants, the Portuguese missionaries arrived at the Malabar Coast in the late 15th century. They became so powerful that by the mid-sixteenth century they installed Inquisition in Goa to force the entire Hindu population to accept Roman Catholicism as their faith. Those who refused to convert to Christianity were burnt alive at the stake in the public!

Protestant missionaries began their work throughout India in the 18th century. Later, when the British acceded to power, the government scrupulously abstained from converting its native subjects to Christianity, but under Imperial protection, Christian missionaries were free to carry out their work. Protestant missionaries started arriving from Britain after the British Parliament promulgated a decree in 1813. The first Anglican Bishop was consecrated in Calcutta

in 1814. Later, non-British missionaries were also granted permission to establish their missions in India. The missions received grants-in-aid for educational purposes from endowments established by the British government and even by some local States. In the 19th century, Christian missions became so numerous and diverse in India that they were a noteworthy feature of the British Empire. The missionaries were aggressively engaged in attacking Islām and other native religions, and prominent British statesmen announced that the British sovereignty was God's work to redeem the whole of India and to find its salvation in Jesus Christ.

Moreover, Western influence was reaching India through the British public education system which was initiated in 1854 by Sir Charles Wood (later, Lord Halifax), and many primary, secondary and high schools were established. Superior education was mainly given in English. Universities with affiliated colleges were functioning in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and the Punjab, exposing young minds of Muslims and Hindus and other native Indians to Western sciences, arts and philosophies for their "mental and moral progress." Among educational institutions, mission schools and colleges were run by Christian functionaries and missionaries with the hope to use the institutions as factotums to promote Christianity. In addition, anti-Islāmic literature was being profusely produced by Christian scholars and missionaries. The reputable British Universities of Cambridge and Oxford were not only sending missionaries to India, they were busy preparing apologetic material to prove the superiority of Western civilization over the oriental cultures and religions.

Besides Western education system, a wide variety of books, magazines and newspapers carrying Western thought and information were constantly pouring into Indian bookstores. Schools, colleges and universities had libraries where publications from the West were accumulating. In contrast, there was hardly any effort made by the Muslim scholars (‘ulama) to communicate teachings of Islām either on mass scale or to send missionaries to European countries and the Americas. The West’s access to Islām was through translations done by their own scholars, especially the “Orientalists” and those interested in mysticism (Şūfism) of Islām. Literature against Islām, prepared by Christian evangelists and apologists like the German missionary Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865), was propagated in various languages. He had authored ‘Balance of Truth’ (Mīzān al-Ḥaqq) trying to prove the superiority of Christianity over Islām. This book became very popular among Christian missionaries who used its material to refute the message of Islām.

Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) could not read, write or speak English, but he kept himself fully informed about the Western thoughts and trends. Some of his companions, such as Ḥaḍrat Muftī Muḥammad Şādiq (may Allāh be pleased with him) and Maulawī Muḥammad ‘Alī, who were well-read in English, were engaged by Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) to read English books, magazines and newspapers to prepare appropriate responses in that language from Islāmic perspective under his personal instructions. European and American visitors sought his audience in Qādiān, and he would respond to their enquiries at great length through

English interpreters. Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) understood the Western mindset with an astonishing clear and deep insight. He would appreciate their secular advancement in technology, agriculture and scientific fields, but pity their moral and spiritual degradation! He had full conviction that if the West was approached properly and prayerfully, it would incline towards the truth of Islām and discard the false creed of the Divinity of Jesus and accept the Unity of God!

In his book *Izālah Auhām* (1891), he wrote,

The rising of the Sun from the West (as predicted by the Holy Prophet of Islām to happen in the latter days) means that Western countries, which have for centuries been in the darkness of non-belief and error, shall be illuminated by the Sun of righteousness, and shall partake in the blessings of Islām. I once saw myself (in a vision) standing on a pulpit in London and delivering a reasoned speech in English on the truth of Islām and thereafter catching several white-feathered birds sitting on small trees, whose bodies resembled those of partridges. I understood this to mean that, though it may not be given to me to proceed personally to London, my writings would be published among those people and many righteous Englishmen would fall prey to truth. Western countries have so far not been conspicuous for their attachment to spiritual truths, as if God had bestowed divine wisdom

on the East only, and the wisdom of the world on Europe and America. All the Prophets from the first to the last have appeared in Asia, and spiritual men other than the prophets who attained nearness to God have also been confined to the Eastern peoples. But God wishes now to extend His beneficence to the West. (Izālah Auhām, p. 516)

Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad's vision was fulfilled by the fact that first his writings did reach the West in his life time, and later his own son and successor, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Khalīfatul-Masīḥ II (may Allāh be pleased with him) came to London in 1924 and delivered a speech inviting the West to accept Islām. Later, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Khalīfatul-Masīḥ III (Allah's mercy be on him), came to London several times and addressed the Western nations. Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad (Allah's mercy be on him), Khalīfatul-Masīḥ IV, migrated to UK in 1984 and made London his headquarters. He also established MTA (the Muslim Television Aḥmadiyya)—a satellite transmission system that spreads the message from London to the entire world every day of the year! In 2003, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Masroor Aḥmad (may Allah strengthen him with His mighty support) was elected to be the Fifth Khalīfah, and the location where the election took place was London! In addition, Islām International Publication Ltd. is now constantly producing a profusion of Islāmic literature from United Kingdom.

Plans to spread the true message of Islām among Europeans and Americans were discussed and implemented by Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) by himself. He initiated

several advertisements for publication in the Western media and sent letters to thousands of eminent Westerners inviting them to study Islām. At one point (1885), he mailed 16,000 registered letters to world's renowned religious leaders, scholars and thinkers asking them to remove any doubts that they might have against Islām by communicating to him. Many outstanding men, such as Alexander Webb (an American journalist and diplomat), F. L. Anderson (New York) and Dr. A. George Baker (Philadelphia) accepted Islām through corresponding with him directly.

In 1893, he wrote a book entitled *Ā'īna-i-Kamālāt-i-Islām* (Mirror of Islām's Excellences) and once again he issued a notice specifically praying for the Caucasian race—the British people—to accept Islām. He concluded with the following prayer,

O Gracious God! Guide the tender hearts of all the nations, so that they may have faith in Thy chosen Prophet (Muḥammad) and in Thy Holy Qur'ān, and that they may follow the commandments contained therein, so that they may thus benefit from peace and true happiness which are especially enjoyed by true Muslims in both the worlds, and may obtain absolution and eternal life which is not only procurable in the next world, but is also enjoyed by the truthful and honest people even in this world. Especially the English nation who have not yet availed themselves of the sunshine of truth, and whose civilized, prudent and merciful empire has, by obliging us through

kindness and friendly treatment, exceedingly encouraged us to try our utmost for their numerous acts of welfare, so that their fair faces may shine with heavenly effulgence in the next life. We beseech God for their well being in this world and the next. O God! Guide them and help them with Thy power, so that they may have faith in Thy Book and Prophet, and embrace Thy religion in multitudes! Amen! Amen!

In May-June of 1897, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign, he wrote a booklet entitled 'Toḥfa-i-Qaisariyyah' (Gift for the Empress) and sent it to Her Majesty through the Viceroy of India, inviting her to Islām. He presented the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may peace and blessings be on him) and the significance of Islāmic principles that could lay a foundation for universal peace and unity of mankind. He also suggested to the Queen to hold an interfaith conference so that the British public could be informed of the teachings of Islām. On June 23, 1897, a congregation was called for special prayer and he prayed for Her Majesty in these words:

Almighty God! As Thy Wisdom and Providence has been pleased to put us under the rule of our blessed Empress enabling us to lead lives of peace and prosperity, we pray Thee that our ruler may in return be saved from all evils and dangers as Thine is the kingdom, glory and power! Believing in Thy unlimited powers, we earnestly ask Thee, All-powerful

Lord to grant us one more prayer, that our benefactor the Empress, before leaving this world, may find her way out of the darkness of man-worship with the light of ‘Lā Ilāha Illallāhu, Muḥammad-ur-Rasūlullāh,’ [There is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is His Messenger]. Do Almighty God as we desire, and grant us this humble prayer of ours as Thy Will alone governs all minds. Amen!

This prayer was translated and read out in six languages—Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Punjabi, Pashto and English. (Jalsa-i-Aḥbāb, Rūḥānī Khazā’in, Vol. 12; pp. 288-300)

On the initiation of the 20th century, he decided to publish an English monthly magazine with the objective to inform and educate its readers about important current topics with particular emphasis on Islāmic perspective. Consequently, the first issue of The Review of Religions was published in January 1902. It was well-received in some Western countries. Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) expressed the purpose of the magazine in the following words.

As the members of our Jamā‘at are already aware that the principle purpose of my advent is to remove all the fallacies and the misconceptions which have been caused by Christianity, and to invite people to the true Islām. This objective has also been described by the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) in such words that the Messiah will “break the cross.” To fulfill this very mission,

this magazine has been started. (Al-Ḥakam, September 30, 1903)

Maulawī Muḥammad ‘Alī worked as its editor and translated Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad’s articles into English. Also, he himself wrote articles from the notes dictated to him by Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad on vastly diverse subjects concerning Islām and Christianity. For example, Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) wrote on the truthfulness of Islām and Prophet Muḥammad; Holy Prophet’s spiritual influence, success and superiority of his teachings over other religions. On Christianity, he wrote on the nature of the miracles of Jesus Christ, his teachings, crucifixion, life after surviving crucifixion, traveling to India, his death and burial. Articles related to other religions were also written. Quickly the magazine became popular in the English speaking countries and received encouraging reviews from eminent sources such as Count Tolstoy, Review of Reviews (London), and the Editor of the Encyclopedia of Islām.

Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad proclaimed that the West had not gone without witnessing the signs of God concerning the Second Coming of the Messiah. Earthquakes, showers of shooting meteors, and the eclipses of the sun and the moon in the month of Ramaḍān were Divine signs fulfilling old prophecies, but the West had yet to witness a magnificent sign in the form a prayer-dual. Dr. Alexander Dowie, a man with a spectacular career as a faith-healer, founding father of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church and establisher of the city of Zion in Illinois, USA, had threatened the Muslims of the world with destruction if they did not accept Jesus as their Savior. He had claimed to be the Third Manifestation of

Elijah, the forerunner for the Second Coming of Jesus—who would, according to Dr. Dowie’s claim, descend in Zion. He also engaged in using abusive language insulting the Holy Prophet of Islām. In 1902 he prayed for the annihilation of Islām. Only one voice of concern was raised from the Muslim world, indeed from the East. Responding, Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad wrote to Dr. Dowie, beseeching reason and restraint, urging him to stop proclaiming for the destruction of millions of Muslims. But Dr. Dowie heightened his expression of animosity and insulted Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad by declaring,

Do you think, I shall reply to these gnats and flies. If I put my foot on them, I would crush out their lives.

When reasoning was of no avail, Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad offered an easy way to prove the truthfulness of his claims. Dr. Dowie should simply pray only for one man’s death and destruction—that of Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad! It was a challenge for a prayer-dual (mubāhalah) stating that whosoever of the two was a liar should die a miserable death during the lifetime of the other! Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad was 12 years older than Dr. Dowie at the time (1902) and not in good health, whereas Dr. Dowie was in robust health and enjoyed great prosperity and popularity.

This challenge was amazingly unique to the Western mind, and the American news-media picked it up immediately. In mid 1903, more than thirty newspapers and periodicals, including Chicago Interpreter, Literary Digest, New York Mail and Express, Rochester Herald, Boston Advertiser, Washington Pathfinder, Chicago Inter Ocean, Baltimore American, Houston Chronicle, and Morning

Telegraph reported it. In fact, the news swept in the West like lightning.

On February 20, 1907, Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad published a prophecy that he had received from Allāh entitled 'A Prophecy of a New Sign.' He wrote,

God says that He will show a new Sign which will contain a glorious victory. It will be a Sign for the whole world, and it will be by God's own Hands and from the heaven. Let everyone wait for it because God shall show it very soon, so that He may make it evident that this humble person who is being abused by all nations is from Him. Blessed are those who may derive benefit from it. (Qādiān ke Ārya aur ham, p. 2)

Within less than two weeks of the publication of the above prophecy, on March 9, 1907 precisely, Dr. John Alexander Dowie died a pathetic death. Once again, the news of Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad's astonishing victory in the prayer-dual spread as lightning in the West coming from the East! The Chicago Evening American summarized Dr. Dowie's life-story in the following words.

Gigantic success and tragic failure punctuated his life. Here are some remarkable works and reversals that marked Dowie's career: He built a creed; he was excommunicated. He built a city; he was expelled from it. He amassed a fortune of millions; he was reduced to virtual poverty. He

elevated Voliva to great power; Voliva ruined him. He drew about him thousands who worshipped him; he died deserted by all save a handful of the faithful.

The Sunday Herald of Boston wrote a detailed article on June 23, 1907 under the heading: Great Is Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad the Messiah: FORETOLD PATHETIC END OF DOWIE AND NOW PREDICTS PLAGUE, FLOOD AND EARTHQUAKE. Calling him a seer, the paper stated:

The Indian gentleman has been well known in the eastern pastures of the world for many years. His claim is that he is the “true Messiah who was to come in the last ages” and that God has showered him with Grace. He first came to the attention of the United States in 1903 on account of controversy with Elijah III. Since the death of Dowie, the Indian prophet’s reputation has soared, for did he not tell the death of Dowie, that it should take place within his (the Messiah’s) lifetime, should take place “with great sorrow and torment”?

Another person who attracted Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad’s attention was one Rev. John Hugh Smyth-Pigott who lived in Britain. As a matter of fact, he had “inherited” the messiahship in 1899 by succeeding Henry James Prince (1811-99)—a doctor and an Anglican clergyman who had claimed to be the immortal Holy Ghost in flesh. Rev. Prince was the founding father of the Agapemonite sect within Christianity. He had many beautiful and wealthy women admirers who supported him in 1840s to establish his scandalous community, the

Abode of Love [Agapemone] on a piece of 200 acres of land at Spaxton in Somerset. He could persuade his followers to give up all or part of their earthly possessions in order to be 'saved.' The Agapemone became wealthy enough to build an extravagant temple, the Ark of the Covenant, at Clapton in London. Rev. J. H. Smyth-Pigott was a handsome and charming man who, like his predecessor, Rev. H. J. Prince, loved the company of young and beautiful women. He had more than 3,000 followers who lived very well, enjoying good food and drinks, and playing billiards in the company of attractive young ladies. All of his followers were promised immortality.

In 1902, Rev. Smyth-Pigott claimed to be the Messiah—Jesus incarnate—"God, not man." When the news reached Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him), he took notice of his deceitful claims and said that similar false claimants had emerged at the time of the Messenger of Allāh (may peace and blessings be on him) but were quickly annihilated. He predicted that the same would be the case of Rev. Smyth-Pigott. A revelation "Allāh is severe in punishing!" (in Arabic: annallāha shadīdul-'iqāb) was made public to be applicable on Smyth-Pigott (Al-Badr, February 20, 1903).

On August 23, 1903, Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) issued another notice expressing his heartfelt pain that even in this age false claimants were emerging among the followers of Jesus Christ. For this abhorrent situation, he blamed the Christian dogma of the Divinity of Jesus. Dowie had claimed to be Elijah in America, and Smyth-Pigott had become Jesus the God in London! Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad said that the difference between the two was that Dowie did not dare

to call himself Jesus, but Smyth-Pigott was viciously bold to announce his Godhead. Soon after, the prophecy concerning him started to unfold, bringing him to manifest disgrace!

Smyth-Pigott was married to a lady named Catherine who was consecrated as the 'Bride of the Lamb.' There were dozens of most beautiful women residing in the Abode of Love, and Smyth-Pigott would choose seven 'spiritual brides' each week. In 1904, to the surprise of the predominantly female community, he chose an outsider beauty named Ruth to be his 'Bride of the Lamb' or his 'Chief Soul Bride.' Soon after, the 'spiritual' nature of their relationship was exposed to be no more than sexual intimacy as Ruth got pregnant—three times—giving birth to 'Glory', 'Power' and 'Life.' On discovering this immoral and disgraceful relationship of Smyth-Pigott with one of his unmarried disciples, the Church of England took stern action against him, and he was defrocked and thus utterly humiliated. But Smyth-Pigott persisted in his arrogance and announced: 'I am God. It does not matter what they do.' After some time, a new 'Bride of the Lamb,' Sister Grace, was brought into the Abode of Love under the pretext that she would receive religious instructions. But when Smyth-Pigott wanted to have sexual relationship with her, the earlier 'Bride of the Lamb' Ruth protested strongly and created an embarrassing scene for him. In retaliation, Ruth was defrocked in public. Soon after, she left the community without her children. After that unpleasant incident, the membership of his church steadily declined. The public got extremely angry and became violent towards the remaining members of his church. Many times rowdy crowds demonstrated outside the gates of the Love of

Abode. Once, the mob mistook one male member for Smyth-Pigott and he was brutally beaten up and tortured to death. Smyth-Pigott's notoriety was widely publicized by the press and thus he was put to shame in the eyes of the entire world in the lifetime of the Promised Messiah, Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him). Later, his health and prosperity also began to dwindle and eventually 'the immortal God' died in March 1927. His death further reduced the numbers of Agapemonites. By 1929, only thirty women and three men were left, two of them were gardeners. Later, the house was changed into a nursing home for elderly women. The last known member of the sect, Miss Ruth Ranken, died in 1956 at the age of sixty. The building was sold in 1962. Now, in the town where the Abode of Love was situated, hardly anyone knows who Smyth-Pigott was!

Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad (peace be on him) was fully appreciative of all the scientific advancements made by the Western nations. He praised their inventions acknowledging them to be helpful in the process of globalization—especially in the fields of transportation and communication. He utilized all modern means to spread his message to the farthest corners of the earth. He remained ever thankful to God for enjoying freedom of religion and expression under the civilized and fair justice system of the British Empire. He was also aware of the political and economical weak condition of the Muslims, but did not believe that their progress lay in merely copying the West. He believed in the power of prayer and seeking help and guidance from Allāh the Exalted and treading the path of righteousness. He remained critical of the Western philosophies that led mankind towards atheism

and immorality. Western civilization was superficially attractive, while lacking some of the basic moral principles. He abhorred ‘man-worship’ prevalent in the Christian West. Use of alcohol, pork consumption, lack of modesty, absence of ‘purdah’ between genders, sexual promiscuity, depression, suicides and occurrence of crime were the themes that he expounded constantly, presenting the remedy of righteousness and spiritual reformation to the West

He had great trust in the potential ability of the Western people to recognize the truth. He emphasized that the teachings of Islām should be presented to them in a manner that suits their temperament. Knowledge of their languages and cultures was essential. He was fully convinced that the noble and righteous souls in the West shall be attracted to the message of truth, and the glorious Sun of Islām will shine over the West. He took all possible measures to reach out to the West. With the special Grace of Allāh, he succeeded. He laid down firm foundation for presenting the beautiful face of Islām upon which his Successors (Khulafā) have now built a world-wide network of Islāmic missionary work! There is hardly any country in the West where the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at has not reached!

Concepts of Khilāfat: Political and Nonpolitical

To understand the concepts of Khilāfat, we have to go back to the Qur'ān as its original source. In Arabic, the term Khalīfah means successor, deputy, vicegerent. In the Qur'ān, the terms Khalīfah (in singular) and khulafā' and Khalā'if (in plural) have a wider connotation than merely civil or political leadership. The Qur'ān uses the title of Khalīfah for political as well as non-political figures. For example, the title of Khalīfah is used in the Qur'ān for King David who ruled Israel after winning a civil war that had followed the death of King Saul. First he ruled for seven and one-half years over the tribe of Judah, and then, after exterminating the house of Saul, he united the Jewish tribes and became the anointed king over all Israel. He was a skillful diplomat and a brilliant military leader. After his death, his son Solomon inherited an empire that covered a wide area in the Middle East. The Muslims consider David and Solomon not only kings of Israel, but also prophets of God. About King David, the Qur'ān says:

‘O David! We have made thee a vicegerent [Khalīfah] in the earth; so judge between men with justice, and follow not vain desires, lest it

should lead thee astray from the way of Allāh.’

... (38:27)

This verse of the Qur’ān makes it clear that establishment of justice, abstaining from vain desires, and staying on the path of God are essential for a Khalīfah. A Khalīfah being a political leader is required not to go astray from the moral and spiritual path.

For the non-political leadership, Adam is repeatedly called a Khalīfah in the Qur’ān:

And when your Lord said unto the angels: ‘I am about to appoint a vicegerent [Khalīfah] in the earth,’ they said: ‘Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood?—and we glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.’ He answered, ‘I know what you know not.’ (2:31)

In Islāmīc theology, Adam is understood to be the first Prophet of God, but not necessarily the first human being. The use of the title of Khalīfah for him indicates that Adam may not be the first human being created by God upon the earth some seven thousand years ago, as he was a “successor” a “Khalīfah” to others who had gone before him. It opens up the possibility to consider that there were other humans who might have lived and perished. The eminent Muslim scholar and mystic Muḥayyuddīn Ibnī ‘Arabī has referred to a saying of the Prophet of Islām that God had brought into being no less than a hundred thousand Adams. (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah, iii. 607.)

Moreover, the words Khalā'if and khulafā' (the plural of Khalīfah) are used in the Qur'ān for succeeding generations or nations in the sense that God made them the leading nations because of their piety as against those people who were ruined in the past because of their sinfulness.

The Qur'ān specifically uses the term khulafā' (in plural) indicating the institution of Khilāfat as a special favor and blessing of God to the people, not only by giving them temporal power, but more specifically as a reward for them for remaining righteous. In this sense, from the Qur'ānic perspective, the concept is that Khilāfat is a gift of God, and to retain this esteemed position, the Qur'ān requires vigilance on the part of the believers in maintaining moral and spiritual uprightness and upholding firm faith in the existence of God.

In the Chapter of the Qur'ān entitled Al-Nūr—The Light, it is clearly stated that God has promised Khilāfat to those who possess faith, and do good works:

Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear: They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me... (24:56)

Thus, according to the fundamental source of Islām, the Qur’ān, God’s promise to establish Khilāfat among the believers is firmly rooted in their moral and spiritual condition, provided they keep it wholesome. In this specific sense, it can be argued that according to the Qur’ān, Khilāfat deals with religious and spiritual leadership more than the political authority among the Muslims. In other words, a Khalīfah is required essentially to establish the Unity of God, His worship, and to engender a pious and religious society, as distinct from holding some political influence. Therefore, in the Qur’ānic sense of the word, a Muslim political ruler may not necessarily be called a Khalīfah if he himself is not morally upright, or does not endeavor to maintain good religious behavior among the Muslims. On the other hand, a non-political leader who institutes and works for the intrinsic moral and spiritual values of Islām in a Muslim society could be called a Khalīfah though he may not hold any temporal office.

The Mission of the Prophet

The concept of Khilāfat in its essence is a continuation of the mission of the Prophet so that the objectives of Khilāfat and prophethood remain the same. The question may be asked: What was the mission of the Prophet of Islām? To answer this question, I would like to refer to the earliest period, when Prophet Muḥammad started his call.

To escape the bitter persecution at the hands of the Quraish of Mecca, a small party of eighty Muslim men and women had taken refuge in Abyssinia (the modern day

Ethiopia) where a Christian ruler by the name of Najāshī (or Negus) was well-known for his just and compassionate rule. The opponents of Islām, the Meccans sent their envoys to fetch those Muslims back, but the Christian king of Abyssinia refused to do so unless he heard the Muslims to present their case in his court. When asked by the king to explain the new religion, Ja'far bin Abū Ṭālib, a leader of the refugee Muslims, made the following statement:

O, king! We were plunged in the depth of ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols, and lived unchastely; we ate dead bodies, and spoke abominations. We disregarded every decent human feeling, and ignored the duties of hospitality and good neighborhood. We knew no law but that the might is right. Then, God raised among us a man of whose birth, truthfulness, honesty and purity we were well-aware. He called us to the Unity of God, and taught us not to associate anything with Him. He forbade us from the worship of idols; and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful and to discharge the rights of neighbors. He forbade us to speak evil of women; or to usurp the property of the orphans. He commanded us to stay away from sin, and abstain from evil. He taught us to offer prayers, render alms and to observe fast. We have believed in him, and accepted his teachings and his injunctions to worship God, and not to associate anything with Him. For

this reason our people have risen against us, have persecuted us because we have stopped the worship of idols made out of wood and stones and other abominations. They have hurt us and tortured us. Finding no safety among them, we have come to your country, and hope you will protect us from oppression.

Thus, in these words, Ja'far bin Abū Ṭālib summarized the mission of Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islām. The mission was obviously for a moral and spiritual reformation, and it remained at the heart of his Prophethood till the last day of his life.

The Rightly Guided Khalīfahs not only discharged their responsibilities as the heads of the expanding Islāmic empire, but also continued to carry out Prophet's main mission. They understood that the religion of Islām was completed in the life of the Prophet, and the revelations of the Qur'ān had ceased with the death of the Prophet, but to keep his mission going was of paramount importance to them.

They carried on the Prophetic mission concerning spiritual, moral, legal and intellectual growth of the community the best way they could. They led the five daily prayers as Imām-uṣ-Ṣalāt; and imparted religious knowledge, its precepts and underlying wisdom to the fellow Muslims through their Friday prayer sermons, mutual discussions, speeches, edict and rulings. They fully utilized the institution of Mushāwarat, that is, mutual consultation, as was ordained in the Qur'ān and practiced by the Prophet himself. They upheld the rights of the poor, the needy, the

orphans and the widows, and remained above any party-politics. That's why they are known in Islāmic history as Khulafā'-ur-Rāshidūn—"the rightly guided Successors" of the Messenger of Allāh.

Imām / Imāms in the Qur'ān

In the Shī'ah tradition, instead of using the title Khalīfah, the Successors to the Prophet are called Imāms, and institution of Imāmat starts with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib as the first Imām who was a son-in-law of the Prophet, married to Prophet's daughter Fāṭimah. After 'Alī, his two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusain, are the succeeding Imāms. The religious and spiritual leadership remains within the family of the Prophet.

The title of "Imām" is also taken from the Qur'ān. "Imām" in singular form has been used only once in the Qur'ān and that too in reference to a promise made by God to Abraham:

... I will make thee a Leader [Imām] of men.
... (2:125)

In other places, the plural form of Imām "a'immaḥ" is used in the Qur'ān. At three places, the Imāms are the Israelite Prophets like Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and the kings:

And we made them leaders who guided people by Our Command... (21:74)

And We made from among them leaders, who guided the people by Our Command, whilst they themselves were steadfast and had firm faith in our Signs. (32:25)

And We desired to show favor unto those [Israelites] who were considered weak in the earth [land of Pharaoh], and to make them leaders and to make them inheritors of Our favors. (28:6)

Political Khilāfat in Islāmic History

Most of the Muslim rulers throughout Islāmic history used the title Khalīfah, but in fact many of them digressed from following the moral precepts of Prophethood. The Umayyah family initiated a new phase in the history of Islām, changing the election of Khilāfat by mutual consultation to a system of inherited monarchy. The House of Umayyad ruled the Muslim world for almost a century. After them the Abbasid retained the political power for next five centuries. The Umayyad and Abbasid kings kept the title of Khalīfah. When the Mongols attacked Baghdad in 1258, the then “Khalīfah” al-Musta‘ṣim was executed. Three years later, a surviving member of the Abbasid family was installed as a Khalīfah at Cairo under the patronage of the Mamlūk Sultanate; but it remained a “shadow” Khilāfat, mostly limited to ceremonial and religious matters. The Turkish Ottoman Muslim rulers preferred to use the title “Sultan” for themselves, but the seventh Sultan of Ottoman dynasty Maḥmūd II and his son Salīm I claimed to be the Khalīfahs to justify their conquest of Islāmic heartland. The last Abbasid Khalīfah at Cairo, al-Mutawakkil III, was imprisoned and taken to Istanbul, where he reportedly “surrendered” the Khilāfat to Salīm I in 1517. But gradually the institution of Khilāfat lost much of its legitimacy in the

eyes of the Muslim Ummah. Clearly, the so-called Khalīfahs were far-removed from the moral and spiritual norms set by the Prophet and the early “Rightly Guided khulafā” to be serious contenders to the leadership of Muslims. None of them could claim the religious and spiritual leadership of the entire Muslim Ummah.

The 36th Sultan, Maḥmūd VI, was exiled by European Allies, and after his death the Sultanate was abolished in 1922. However, his cousin, the Crown Prince ‘Abdul-Majid II, was elected by the Turkish National Assembly in Ankara as Khalīfah. Later, on March 3, 1924, he was deposed and expelled from Turkey along with the rest of his family. This was followed by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) formally abolishing Khilāfat for ever. ‘Abdul-Majid II, therefore, is considered to be the last political Khalīfah among the Muslims.

Şūfī Orders and Nonpolitical Khilāfat

However, during the inherited monarchies, the moral and spiritual essence of Khilāfat survived to some extent through the religiosity of conservative Islāmic Scholars (‘Ulamā), but mostly it was preserved and sustained by Imāms, Mujaddids (the religious reformers), Auliya (Saints), and especially the Şūfī (the mystics) orders.

The lavish lifestyle of the elite ruling class under the monarchical political rulers had caused a reaction, and many pious Muslims were led towards mysticism. Eminent Şūfī leaders emerged since the eighth century, and with the passage of time this trend was further heightened. The

famous Ṣūfī orders of Naqshbandiyah, Qadiriyah, Suhrawardī, Chishtiyah, Mawālāwiyah, and many others, were formed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The use of the title of Khalīfah became customary among the deputies and successors of the founders of Ṣūfī orders. For example, Quṭb-ud-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī (d. AD 1235) was a contemporary saint and the principal Khalīfah (deputy) of Mu‘īn-ud-Dīn Chishtī (d. 1236)—the founder of the famous and highly respected Chishtiyah Order among the Muslims. Farīd-ud-Dīn Mas‘ūd Ganj Shakar (d. 1265) was a Khalīfah (successor) of Bakhtyār Kākī; and his Khalīfah was Niẓām-ud-Dīn Auliya of Delhi, India (d. 1325).

The Ṣūfī Khalīfahs were held in great esteem and they exercised moral and spiritual authority over the hearts and minds of the people by laying emphasis on piety, and resistance to worldly temptations, and showing them ways how to attain nearness to God through esoteric doctrines and practices. They were saintly persons with full faith in the power of prayer. They experienced true dreams and visions, received personal revelations, and performance of miracles was attributed to them.

Aḥmadiyya: A Modern Non-Political Khilāfat

I would like to talk about briefly the institution of a non-political Khilāfat in modern times which is in existence now for hundred years, and its popularity and strength is steadily growing. It is known as Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat.

The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat is of interest to study because it is a dynamic, reformist and internationally fast growing movement; while it categorically rejects militant Jihād and the use of terror and violence for any reason in any form. It is the only well-knit international Islāmic organization that endorses a separation of mosque and state. It does not believe that Islāmic life can be enforced by any government over its population. It strives at the grass-root reformation of the Muslims, and believes that religion is a personal choice of individuals, and protection of freedom of religion is the hallmark of Islām. The Aḥmadī Muslims believe in a workable possibility of the concept of “separation of State and Church” within Islāmic countries.

The Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at started out of a small village called Qādiān, in the Punjāb, in India. The founder, Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1835-1908) claimed to be the awaited Mahdī and the Messiah of the Muslims. He initiated a Messianic movement to revive the faith of Islām in its moral and spiritual dimensions, and announced, like Jesus Christ did in his time, that there were two main Commandments of God: One was to love and obey God; and the second was to practically demonstrate compassion and love for all mankind.

To achieve these objectives, his methodology was also clearly defined: He stated that his course of action was “to work for the betterment of mankind in the manner of the Israeli prophet of Nazareth, the Messiah, with extreme humility, meekness, modesty, love and courtesy” (Tablīgh Risālat, Vol. 1, p. 11). He taught his followers to protect the

sanctity of both religion and government by becoming religious souls as well as loyal citizens.

He founded the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at in 1889, and soon a vibrant community of believers was established around him. Upon his death, an eminent religious scholar, Al-Ḥājj Maulānā Nūr-ud-Dīn was unanimously elected as his first Khalīfah on May 27, 1908, to continue his mission. He was entitled Khalīfatul-Masīh, that is, Successor to the Messiah. On the demise of Al-Ḥājj Maulānā Nūr-ud-Dīn in 1914, Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (1889-1965) was elected to be the second Khalīfah of the Aḥmadiyya Jamā‘at. However, at the time of his election, a split occurred, and a dissident section of the Aḥmadiyya Jamā‘at shifted to the city of Lahore. This group worked under the leadership of Maulānā Muḥammad ‘Alī, who was called the Amīr, instead of Khalīfah, and the organization is called Aḥmadiyya Anjuman Ishā‘at-i-Islām (Aḥmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islām).

The main body of the Aḥmadiyya Community remained loyal and united under the leadership of the Second Khalīfah, who led it for 52 long years. He passed away in 1965. At the death of each preceding Khalīfah, elections of the Successors have been conducted in 1965, 1982 and 2003. Presently, Mirzā Masroor Aḥmad is the fifth Khalīfah of the Jamā‘at.

Khilāfat through Elections

The branches of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at are established in more than 180 countries. Every country elects a national President or (Amīr) and a National Executive

Body through the process of voting. The elections of the National Amīrs are approved by the Khalīfah. In every country, there are local chapters that elect Presidents and executive bodies to minister the local Jamā‘at affairs. The office holders are elected through a voting process by the members, and approved by the Khalīfah.

While all other officeholders are elected for fixed terms by the members of the community, the Khalīfah is elected for life by an Electoral College. The Electoral College consists of all the National Amīrs, the executive heads and secretaries of Central Directorate, and all missionaries who have worked abroad (in foreign countries) outside for at least three years. The Khalīfah is elected on the basis of his piety, religious knowledge, and services rendered to the Jamā‘at, and not on the basis of his personal agenda. There are no self-promoting candidates during the life of an existing Khalīfah. As a matter of fact, canvassing in favor of any individual is strictly prohibited before or even during the election process. There is no candidate; names are proposed by the electoral college.

While respecting the will of the people to adopt varying political systems that may suit them for administration of their public affairs, the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat does not aspire for any political authority in any country. It teaches its members to remain loyal to one’s country, and to respect and obey the laws of the land wherever one may chose to live. They are taught to bring about the desired change in law, wherever necessary, through legitimate legal process, and not by creating chaos and disorder, Therefore, it strongly rejects violence and terrorism for any cause in the name of Islāmic Jihād.

Administrative Structure of the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat

Administratively, the Khalīfah heads various departments of the organization, such as education (Ta‘līm), and moral training (Tarbiyat), preaching (Tabshīr), propagation of Islām through missionary work (Tablīgh), finance (Māl), public relations (Amūr-i-Khārija), social services (Amūr-i-‘Āmma), publications (Taṣnīf), and system of arbitration (Qaḍā). The Khalīfah presides over meetings of an Advisory Consultative Council (Majlis-i—Mushāwarat) which discusses and approves the Annual Budget as well. The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat gives utmost importance to the consultation process between elected leaders and representatives of the Community. The institution of Mushāwarat is vitally important process under Khilāfat.

The Aḥmadiyya Jamā‘at owns its own satellite TV channels that work hours, 7 days a week, throughout the year, broadcasting multiple programs on international level in several languages, including Arabic and Urdu. The Khalīfah leads the five daily prayers wherever he may be. His Friday sermons (Jumu‘ah Khutbahs) are relayed through satellite TV with simultaneous translations in various languages.

To conclude, I submit that though the political Khilāfat is a desirable concept for the present day Muslims of the world, but the current diversity of political systems within Islāmic countries, and the sectarian division and mutual hatred among the Muslims will not allow a unified government that would be able to forcefully impose Islāmic Sharī‘ah. It will

not happen. The other alternative is the process of reformation of Muslims from within to live a pious Islāmic life under a non-political leadership, and such moral and spiritual Khilāfat will be able to bring a unity among the diversity of Muslim nations, who may run their governments trying to achieve freedom of religion and justice for all.

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3

Khilāfat and Caliphate

The commonly used English words Caliph and Caliphate are both taken and transformed from the Arabic terms Khalīfah and Khilāfat. The term caliph is in English use since 1393, and caliphate since 1614. One of the reasons for the richness of English vocabulary is its ability to borrow and absorb foreign words and phrases in abundance. English speaking people use words taken from almost every other language in the world. For example, from Indo-Pakistani languages such as Urdu, Hindi and Sanskrit, English has obtained camphor, ginger, musk, sugar, punch, guru, nirvana, bungalow, jungle, cheetah, thug, pundit and Aryan. From Farsi are bazaar, caravan, dervish, jasmine, magazine, rook and checkmate. From Hebrew are the words Amen, jubilee, kosher, Satan and messiah. Similarly, numerous names, phrases and terms are taken from Arabic language. To mention only a few: Admiral (amīr-ul-baḥr, or amir-ar-rah, amiral), Gibraltar (Jabal-uṭ-Ṭāriq), alchemy (al-kīmiyā), alcohol (al-kuḥūl), algebra (al-jabru wal-muqābilah), algorithm (al-Khuwarazmi), arsenal (dār-uṣ-Ṣanā'ah), assassin (ḥashīshīn), coffee (qahwah), elixir (al-iksīr), emir (Amīr), fakir (faqīr), minaret (minārah), Ottoman (Uthmān), Saracen (sharqiyīn), sofa (ṣuffah), talisman (ṭilasm), and zero (ṣifr).

The Concept of Khilāfat in the Holy Qur’ān

For our discussion, we would like to make a distinction between Khilāfat and caliphate for reasons other than mere etymological development of the words. In Arabic, Khalīfah means “successor, deputy, vicegerent,” and “Khilāfat” is the dominion of a Khalīfah, or the institution that runs under the leadership of a Khalīfah. In English, “caliph” is the chief civil and political Muslim ruler regarded as a successor of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). But in the Holy Qur’ān, the words Khalīfah (in singular) and khulafā’ or Khalā’if (in plural) have wider connotations than “caliph” and “caliphs” in English. For example, the Holy Qur’ān uses the title of “Khalīfah on the earth” for Prophet Adam as “God’s deputy or vicegerent on the earth” (2:31). In Arabic we can call him Khalīfatullāh, but we cannot call him as ‘God’s Caliph.’ Similarly, David is called a “Khalīfah,” a vicegerent of God in the Holy Qur’ān.

‘O David! We have made thee a vicegerent [Khalīfah] in the earth; so judge between men with justice and follow not vain desires, lest it should lead thee astray from the way of Allāh.’
... (38:27)

But we never say “Caliph David” in the English language; he is called “King David.” Moreover, in the Holy Qur’ān the words Khalā’if and khulafā’ (plural of Khalīfah) have been used for some nations or specific generations in the sense that God did a great favor to them and made them dominant over the earth:

... And remember the time when He made you the inheritors of His favors [khulafā'] after the people of Noah, and increased you abundantly in constitution... (7:70)

And remember the time when He appointed you as khulafā' after 'Ād, and assigned you an abode in the land. (7:75)

But in English we do not refer to any nation or generation as “Caliphs.”

The Holy Qur'an specifically uses the term khulafā' indicating a special favor of Allāh to the people not only by granting them worldly power, but more specifically as a spiritual reward for their righteousness. In this sense, to retain the blessing of Khilāfat, vigilance is required as it is a test and a trail for righteous people.

And He it is Who has made you successors [Khalā'if] of others on the earth and has exalted some of you over the others in degrees of rank, that He may try you by that which He has given you... (6:166)

Then, We made you their successors [Khalā'if] in the earth after them [that is, the earlier generation], that We might see how you would act. (10:15)

Who answers the distressed person when he calls upon Him, and removes the evil, and makes you successors [khulafā'] in the earth? Is

there a God besides Allāh? Little it is that you reflect. (27:63)

In this verse the blessing of Khilāfat is closely connected with God's answering prayer of the distressed, and removing a sorrowful state. Again,

Verily, Allāh knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth. Verily, He knows full well all that lies hidden in the breasts. He it is Who made you vicegerents [Khalā'if / successors] in the earth. So he, who disbelieves, will himself suffer the consequences of his disbelief... (35:39-40)

In the above quoted verses, the Holy Qur'ān lays emphasis on the moral, ethical and spiritual aspects as a requirement for the believers to receive the favor of Khilāfat from God.

Allāh has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will, surely, make them successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will, surely, establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will, surely, give them in exchange security and peace after their fear; They will worship Me and they will not associate anything with Me. Then whoso disbelieves after that, they will be the rebellious. (24:56)

God's promise to establish Khilāfat as a blessing for mankind is firmly rooted in the moral and spiritual condition of sincere believers. In this specific sense, we make a distinction between Khilāfat and caliphate. Caliphate deals with civil and political domain of the rulers in Islāmic history, but Khilāfat deals with moral, religious and spiritual leadership of mankind. Khilāfat exerts to establish the worship of One God, to see that the people remain prayerful, do good works, live freely, and maintain peace. Therefore, a political ruler who might be called "Caliph" may not be a Khalīfah in the true Qur'ānic sense of the word.

A Prophetic Ḥadīth

In the famous book of Aḥādīth, Musnad Aḥmad by Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, there is one prophetic Ḥadīth narrated by Ḥaḍrat Hudhaifah (may Allāh be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him.) said: "Prophethood will remain among you as long as Allāh wills. Then Khilāfat on the lines of Prophethood shall commence, and remain as long as Allāh wills. Then corrupt and erosive monarchy would take place, and it will remain as long as Allāh wills. After that, despotic kingship would emerge, and it will remain as long as Allāh wills. Then, the Khilāfat shall come once again based on the precept of Prophethood." In this Ḥadīth, the promise of Khilāfat is connected with Prophethood on two separate occasions. In between the two eras of Khilāfat, the reference to "the corrupt/erosive monarchy" and "despotic kingship" is what we would like to term as "Caliphate." Most of the Muslim monarchs used the title "Khalīfah," but they had in fact

digressed from following the precept of Prophethood. The Arabic words showing the relationship between Khilāfat and Prophethood are “Khilāfat ‘alā minhājūn-nabuwwah”, that is, Khilāfat on the lines of Prophethood. This means that a Prophet’s true Successors (khulafā’) would continue to follow the example of the Prophet and lead the believers in the same way as the Prophet guided them. This elucidates the principle that Khilāfat in its essence is a continuation of the mission of the Prophet. The objectives of Khilāfat and Prophethood remain the same. The Holy Qur’ān makes it clear that the main objective of Prophethood is the moral and spiritual development of mankind. With regards to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may peace and blessings of Allāh be on him), the Holy Qur’ān declares: “We have sent to you a Messenger from among you, who recites Our verses/signs (āyāt) to you, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you that which you knew not” (2:152). This verse enumerates four functions of the Prophet:

1. Recital of God’s verses/signs (āyāt) to establish firmness of faith in the existence of One God, and to worship Him alone.

2. Purification of souls by bringing a moral change in human conduct through mutual love, sympathy and unity among the believers, and by eradicating sinful inclination from the hearts of the believers.

3. Teaching the Book, namely the Holy Qur’ān, that contains Laws and Commandments of God to establish a just and benevolent society.

4. Teaching wisdom (ḥikmah) to increase human knowledge concerning natural and social laws.

In the footsteps of the Prophet, these four objectives related to spiritual, moral, social and intellectual enhancement of mankind continued to be the main functions of the rightly guided Khilāfat.

The Rightly Guided Khilāfat

Towards the end of his life, Prophet Muḥammad was also given political authority as the head of the newly emerging Muslim State, with its capital in the town of Yathrib—later known as Madīnat-un-Nabī (City of the Prophet)—where he had settled in AD 622 after emigrating from his hometown, Mecca. To be a statesman was an added responsibility to his moral and spiritual authority over the believers, and he conducted brilliantly the administrative affairs of the nascent Muslim community utilizing mutual consultation (Mushāwarat) with his competent and close companions.

The Prophet has been acknowledged as one of the most successful and influential statesman in the world history. However, it is clear that the main objective of his mission as the Messenger of God was moral and spiritual reformation.

After leading his followers for 23 years on ‘the straight path’ of Islām, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) passed away in AD 632. His companions elected Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr (Allāh be pleased with him) as his first Khalīfah. Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr continued to uphold the unity among the Muslims, leading them in following the principles of Islāmic teachings in full obedience to Allāh and His

Messenger. After him, the next three successive khulafā', namely, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar ibn al- Khaṭṭāb, Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān bin 'Affān and Ḥaḍrat 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be pleased with them all) were among the most devoted of the companions of the Prophet. They carried on his mission under very difficult and complex circumstances. Thus, when the Prophet was no more among the believers, Khilāfat on the precept of Prophethood (Khilāfat 'ala minhajun-nabuwwah) was firmly established. The Khalīfah would lead the prayers as Imām-us-Ṣalāt. He would impart religious and spiritual knowledge to the fellow Muslims; maintain justice and piety in society, and remain above any party-politics. In addition, he administered all matters with mutual consultation (Mushāwarat) as was ordained in the Holy Qur'ān. He was also the commander-in-chief as Amīr-ul-Mu'minīn.

The Text of the Holy Qur'ān Preserved

One of the major tasks in the hands of the khulafā' of the Messenger of Allāh was to preserve the text of the Holy Qur'ān. When many ḥuffāz (those who commit the entire Qur'ān to memory) were killed in a battle, on the advice of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, codification and compilation of the Holy Qur'ān started under the directive of Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr. He entrusted the work to Ḥaḍrat Zaid bin Thābit, a close companion of the Prophet who presented the Holy Qur'ān in a complete Book form, to Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr. At the death of Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr, the compiled Book passed into the hands of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar who in turn bequeathed it to his daughter Ḥaḍrat Ḥafṣah, the widow of the Holy Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allāh be on him.). It was the same text that later formed the basis of the copies distributed on a large scale by the third Khalīfah, Ḥaḍrat ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān to every part of the Islāmīc world.

Treatment of Non-Muslims under Islāmīc Rule

In less than thirty years, from the deserts of Arabia, the Muslims reached Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Jerusalem, Egypt, Cyprus, and Tripoli in North Africa; Iran, Afghanistan, and Sindh in India. The powerful Byzantine Empire in the North West and the ancient Persian Empire in the East were defeated by Muslims. One of the standing orders of Khilāfat was that the conquered people were not to be forcibly converted to Islām. The Holy Qur’ān clearly condemns compulsion in religion, and it specifically respects the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians, calling them *ahl al-kitāb*, the People of the Book. They, along with Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists, were considered as *dhimmi*s (protected subjects). Muslims paid *Zakāt* (an annual tax to assist the poor), but the non-Muslim *dhimmi*s were exempted to pay *Zakāt*. Instead, they paid a poll tax called *jizyah*. In return, their lives, properties, honor and freedom of religious practice were safeguarded by the Islāmīc government under the system of Khilāfat.

Dynastic Monarchies

The rapid expansion of Islāmīc domain created many challenges. There were mischief mongers who were busy

creating discontent and disunity among the Muslims. Unfortunately, they succeeded in creating a military rebellion against the third Khalīfah, Ḥaḍrat ‘Uthmān. A group of soldiers came to Medina (in AD 656) from Fuṣṭaṭ, Egypt, and murdered him in his house while he was reciting the Holy Qur’ān. Demands to punish ‘Uthmān’s murderers were put to Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī who was elected as the fourth Khalīfah, and this situation subsequently led to civil wars. A close relative of Ḥaḍrat ‘Uthmān, Mu‘āwiyah, who was at that time the governor of Syria, confronted Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī. After failed attempts at negotiations and arbitration, Mu‘āwiyah forcefully tried to depose Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī, declaring himself to be the caliph.

Some extremists, known as Kharijīs (Kharijites, seceders outsiders), rebelled against Mu‘āwiyah and Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī both. Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī dealt with them harshly and crushed their armed rebellion. Later, one of the Kharijīs killed Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī in 661, thus ending the era of the rightly guided khulafā’. By then, Medina the capital of the Prophet was no more the power center. Mu‘āwiyah, who had taken power by force, was the first military and political leader to initiate Caliphate in the sense of hereditary monarchy. Damascus was the capital of his kingdom. According to Professor Hitti, Mu‘āwiyah was not only the first, but also one of the best of the Arab kings. He was shrewd, diplomatic, cool and calculating. In his lifetime, not only he nominated his own son, Yazīd, to be the next ruler, but also made the subject take “Bai‘at” (an oath of allegiance) to Yazīd in various parts of the empire. He himself went to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina for this purpose. The only persons who refused to make Bai‘at were

Ḥaḍrat Ḥusain, son of Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī, ‘Abdullāh son of Ḥaḍrat ‘Umar, ‘Abd-ur-Raḥmān son of Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr, and ‘Abdullāh son of Ḥaḍrat Zubair. Their stand was that Khilāfat could not be degenerated into a hereditary monarchy. Nevertheless, Yazīd, who did not have the moral integrity for being a Khalīfah, inherited the kingship from his father in AD 680. Thus a new phase in the Islāmīc history started, leading to kingship to be run by members of Umayyah family. This phase is distinct from “Khilāfat.” The caliphs were successful political leaders, but not necessarily men of moral integrity with full religious knowledge anymore; thus, hereditary monarchy eroded the true nature of Khilāfat and it transgressed into royal Caliphate.

In the words of Karen Armstrong,

The Umayyad caliphs would gradually transform the disparate regions conquered by the Muslim armies into a unified empire, with common ideology. This was a great achievement; but the court naturally began to develop a rich culture and luxurious lifestyle, and became indistinguishable in many respects from any other class. (Islām: A Short History, Karen Armstrong, p. 41)

The Caliphate

After the four “rightly guided” Successors to the Prophet, the “Caliphate” (or dynastic monarchies) started, and it remained among the Muslims for more than 1250 years. Mu‘āwiyah founded the Umayyad dynasty in 661, and his

son, Yazīd I, became caliph in 688. The House of Umayyad ruled the Muslim world for almost a century. In 749, the Abbasid (descendents of Prophet's uncle Ḥaḍrat 'Abbās ibn 'Abd-ul-Muṭṭalib) overthrew the Umayyad and retained power for next five centuries. However, they suffered a great tragic setback when the Mongols attacked Baghdad in 1258, and the then Caliph al-Musta'ṣim was executed. Three years later, a surviving member of the Abbasid family was installed as Caliph at Cairo under the patronage of the Mamlūk Sultanate; but this remained a "shadow"/titular Caliphate, and mostly limited to only ceremonial and religious matters.

Turkish Sultans Assume the Caliphate

The Turkish Ottoman Muslim rulers used the title "Sultan" for themselves, but the seventh Sultan of Ottoman dynasty, Maḥmūd II (1432-1481) and his son Salīm I, claimed to be Caliphs to justify their conquest of Islāmic heartland. In the beginning, they used the title "Caliph" symbolically, but it took a kind of permanency when the Ottoman Empire defeated the Mamlūk Sultanate in 1517. The last Abbasid Caliph at Cairo, al-Mutawakkil III, was imprisoned and taken to Istanbul, where he reportedly surrendered the Caliphate to Salīm I.

The Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman dynasties ruled in multifaceted forms of administrations. At times, multiple Caliphates were running parallel to each other. Internal conflicts, rebellions and rivalries leading to oppression and bloodshed were not uncommon. Thus, slowly and gradually, the institution of Caliphate lost much of its legitimacy in the

eyes of the Muslim Ummah. Clearly, the caliphs were far-removed from the norms set by the Prophet and the early khulafā' to be serious contenders to the leadership of Muslims. None of them could claim to be the spiritual and religious leader of the entire Muslim Ummah. The objectives of Prophethood were mostly discarded. But in secular matters, cultural advancements were made in various sciences and arts creating a new and robust civilization. The moral and spiritual essence of Khilāfat survived to some extent through the religiosity of conservative Islāmīc Scholars ('Ulamā), but was mostly preserved and sustained by Auliya (Saints), Imāms (spiritual and religious guides), Mujaddids (religious reformers) and the Ṣūfīs (mystics).

End of the Caliphate

During the World War I (1914-1918), the Turkish Ottoman Empire fought against Britain and her Allies, and was defeated. By the end of World War I, the Turkish Ottoman Empire was occupied by European allies, and its territories were divided among them. Maḥmūd VI, the 36th Sultan was exiled, and after his death the Sultanate was abolished in 1922. However, his cousin, the Crown Prince 'Abdul-Majid II, was elected by the Turkish National Assembly in Ankara as 'Caliph.' Later, on March 3, 1924, he was deposed and expelled from Turkey along with the rest of his family. This was followed by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) formally abolishing Caliphate and the shari'ah court system. 'Abdul-Majid II, therefore, is considered to be "Ākhir Khalīfat-ul-Muslimīn," the last Caliph among the Muslims.

The Khilāfat Movement

When European allies decided to partition the Ottoman Empire territories, there was a strong reaction among the Muslims of the world. In late 1919, some Indian Muslim leaders started 'Khilāfat Movement,' to preserve the integrity of the Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire. A Khilāfat Committee was formed with two goals to achieve, "First, to urge the retention of the temporal powers of the Sultan of Turkey as Caliph, and second to ensure his continued suzerainty over the Islāmic holy places." The Khilāfat Movement was based on a non-factual premise that the Ottoman Caliph was the 'Universal Caliph' to whom all Muslims, everywhere in the world, owed allegiance.

In 1920, a famous Indian Muslim scholar and leader, Maulānā Abul-Kalām Āzād, published a book called *Mas'ala-i-Khilāfat* (The Issue of Caliphate), in which he stated, "Without the Caliphate, the existence of Islām is not possible, the Muslims of India with all their effort and power need to work for this." Surprisingly, the Muslim leaders of the Khilāfat Movement then asked a Hindu leader, Mohan Das Gandhi, to help them with what was purely an Islāmic cause. To gain strength for his own political agenda, Gandhi willingly agreed to give his support to the Muslims in creating mass agitations and applying diplomatic pressure on British Government. However, the Muslim political leader Moḥammad 'Alī Jinnāḥ (who later became the founder of Pakistan) was opposed to Gandhi's political tactics, and the Khilafatists used to jeer at him. However, when the Turkish Muslims under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

abolished Caliphate in 1924, the Indian Muslims were deeply hurt and humiliated and the Khilāfat Movement collapsed.

Futile Attempts to Revive Caliphate

Presently, there are more than fifty countries with predominantly Muslim population but all are without a Caliph. In 1979, following what was an “Islāmic Revolution” in Iran, indeed the secular kingdom of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was replaced by a religious based power structure. The Islāmic Republic of Iran claims to run the affairs of the state on Shī‘ah Islāmic principles; but the Iranian religious leaders are unable to call for a global Imāmate or Caliphate. They are waiting for the appearance of the “hidden Imām” who is the constitutional Head of the Islāmic Republic of Iran!

Muslims are coming to the realization that the root cause for their failure in reviving Caliphate is the decline in their observance of religious practices and lack of spirituality. Several Islāmic political parties and groups (including the militant al-Qā‘idah) are calling the Muslims to get united for the restoration of a global Caliphate; but apparently there is no agreement on its methodology. US President George W. Bush seems to be perturbed about such calls coming from the terrorist groups. He wants to “open a new chapter in the fight against enemies of freedom, against those who in the beginning of 21st century call Muslims to restore Caliphate and to spread Sharī‘ah.” President Bush thinks that the so-called Jihādists/militants “hope to establish a violent political utopia across the Middle East, which they call

Caliphate, where all would be ruled according to their hateful ideology... This Caliphate would be a totalitarian Islāmic empire encompassing all current and former Muslim lands, stretching from Europe to North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.” But the Aḥmadi Muslims have full conviction that nothing like that shall ever emerge, and President Bush need not have any concerns about a rising Caliphate of this nature. According to the Prophecy of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may peace and blessings of Allāh be on him), the promised Khilāfat on the precept of Prophethood (‘ala minhājūn-nabuwwah), which is purely spiritual in nature, has already been established, since 1908, within the world of Islām under Divine Will. It is known as Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat.

The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat

Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1835-1908), peace be on him, claimed to be the Imām of the Age, the Mahdī, and the awaited Messiah—a Prophet of God, but in full subordination to the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him). He initiated the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at in 1889. Though he lived in a small village, Qādiān, in the Punjab, India, he claimed that his mission was universal—to revive faith in One God, to remove the love for materialism, and to unify all mankind. He declared,

I have been sent to strengthen faith in God by proving He exists and by making His Being manifest to the people. The condition of faith has become so weak that the Hereafter is now

taken as a mere fantasy, and the actions of men clearly show that the degree of certainty with which they believe in this world, and the sort of trust which they put in worldly means, they do not possess such conviction about God and the Hereafter. They pay a lot of lip-service to God, but their hearts are dominated by the love of the world alone. Therefore, I have been sent so that Truth and Faith may again dominate, and fear of God may again be kindled in the hearts of men! These are the ends for which I have come! (Kitāb al-Bariyyah, pp. 293-294)

He admonished his followers:

Be united, and give up all miserliness, rancor, jealousy and lack of compassion. There are two great Commandments of the Holy Qur'ān. One is Unity, love and obedience of the Lord, hallowed be His name; and secondly, sympathy with your brethren and with the whole of mankind. (Izālah Auhām, pp. 446-452)

This age has become empty of true righteousness and purity. The way of the Holy Prophet, which is the means of purification, has been discarded. Now God Almighty desires that the time of Prophethood should be revived in this age, and the same righteousness and purity may be re-established. Thus the purpose of God Almighty in setting up this (Aḥmadiyya) Community is that the lost understanding

might be re-established in the world through this Community. (Speeches, pp .21-22)

To achieve these objectives, his methodology was clearly defined,

This humble one is appointed by the Omnipotent and Most Glorious God to work for the betterment of mankind in the manner of the Israeli prophet of Nazareth, the Messiah, with extreme humility, meekness, modesty, love and courtesy. To those who are unaware of the right way, I am to show them the straight path through which they can achieve true Salvation, and feel in this very world the signs of achieving heavenly life, and experience the enlightenment of being accepted and loved by God. (Tablīgh Risālat, Vol. 1, p. 11)

Khilāfat on the Precept of Prophethood Revived

The Promised Messiah successfully initiated his mission, and a vibrant Community of believers was firmly established in his lifetime. Upon his death, on May 27, 1908, his first successor, Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Nūr-ud-Dīn (May Allāh be pleased with him) was unanimously elected. He was entitled Khalīfatul-Masīḥ to continue the mission of the Mahdī and the Promised Messiah. On his demise, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (1889-1965) was elected on March 13, 1914, to be the second Khalīfah of the Aḥmadiyya Jamā'at. He constituted an Electoral College for Khilāfat

elections, which has conducted smooth elections in 1965, 1982 and 2003 of the successors at the demise of each preceding Khalīfah. Presently, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Masroor Aḥmad (may Allāh be his strength) is the Fifth Khalīfah of the Aḥmadiyya Jamā‘at. Thus, Khilāfat is once again firmly established on the precept of Prophethood.

Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat and Caliphate

Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat is the bona-fide institution that has set goals to lead mankind on the path of righteousness, to bring unity among the nations of the world, and to establish peace and security by safeguarding freedom, life and honor of all human-beings! The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat is distinct in many ways from the so-called “Caliphate” of the past monarchies. The Khalīfah is elected by means of and with the help of prayers on the basis of piety and righteousness. As the Holy Qur’ān guides,

Verily Allāh commands you to make over
the trusts to those entitled to them ... (4:59)

Khilāfat is a responsibility to be entrusted to the most deserving person who is capable of serving God and His servants, devoting his time and faculties under the authority of the Word of God and examples set by the Holy Prophet of Islām. The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat believes in promoting peace and harmony by reforming human character from within on moral basis. It rejects the use of force and violence in matters of faith. According to the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat, the methods to propagate one’s religious convictions should always remain peaceful; that is, encouraging mutual dialogue and

gentle persuasion among various faith traditions. It exhorts to establish fundamental human rights at all levels, and promotes human services.

The Institution of Shūrā in the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat

The Holy Qur’ān makes mutual consultation (Shūrā) incumbent upon the leadership to utilize in policy making and administrative matters (3:160). The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat, therefore, gives utmost importance to consultation between elected leaders and competent representatives of the Community. Shūrā is a vitally important process under Khilāfat. At the same time, the members of the Community are fully trained to listen and obey the final decisions made by the leadership in conjunction with obedience to the Commandments of God and those of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allāh be on him).

The Essence of the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat

The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat differs significantly from the misplaced aspirations of some Muslim groups for political and militaristic dominance over the entire world. The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat is nonpolitical; spiritual and religious in nature. Thus, the Aḥmadīs do believe in the concept of “separation of the State and the Church.” While respecting the will of the people to adopt varying political systems that may suit them for beneficial administration of their public affairs, it does not aspire for political authority. Though the ideal Islāmic state calls for the head of the government to

exercise both the secular and religious authority, the institution of Khilāfat can and should remain focused on moral and spiritual matters only, providing necessary guidance to the political leaders to the maintenance of justice and social harmony.

While other Muslims wait for a Mahdī who would wage a “bloody” Jihād against the infidels, the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat holds the motto of “Love for all, hatred for none.” Following the teachings of its founder, it believes and practices the Jihād which entails overcoming sinful and immoral temptations of one’s own self, remaining firm in faith, and improving the quality of social life. It abhors terrorism, and strongly rejects violence. It teaches loyalty to one’s country, and to respect and obey the law of the land where one lives. Desired change in laws should be brought about through the legitimate legal process, and not through creating chaos and disorder in a country. The Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat is fighting the “good fight” against ignorance, disease, hunger and immorality. By doing so, it upholds the conviction that it will remain the recipient of the Divine support as long as it is working under God’s Commandments.

To conclude, the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat has successfully emerged as the leading force among Muslims to follow the precepts set by the Holy Prophet of Islām. It is engaged in establishing faith in the Unity of God all over the world. It teaches the Holy Qur’ān, and promotes knowledge and wisdom. It is exerting to bring uniformity among the people belonging to various races and ethnic groups. It is promoting moral reformation of individuals, teaching mutual love and

respect. Above all, the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat is helping man to establish a living and loving relationship with God.

4

Khilāfat in the Dispensations of Moses and Jesus

The Qur’ān is unique in its claim that God sent His guidance to all the people of the world,

... there is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent. (35:25)

And, surely We sent Messengers before thee [Muḥammad] to their own people, and they brought them clear Signs... (30:48)

Some of these Messengers, like Abraham and Lot, Ishmael and Isaac, Moses and Aaron, were contemporaries of each other, some worked in close geographical vicinities, and others were raised at different times among the people living in various isolated parts of the world. The Qur’ān also makes clear that all the Messengers of God met strong resistance at the hands of their own people; the reason being multifarious: The people were “evildoers” (zālimīn), “sinners” (mujrimīn), “unbelievers” (kāfirīn), “oppressive” (jabbārīn), “ignorant” (jāhilīn), “polytheists” (mushrikīn), “rebellious” (fāsiqīn), and “in manifest error” (fī ḍalālin mubīn). They disputed with the Messengers, rejected their

truthful guidance, persecuted them, and even attempted to kill them. Nevertheless, the arduous process of reforming such people continued throughout the lifetimes of the Messengers, and after their death, the task was assigned to others to carry on their mission. From Islāmic perspective, all Messengers of God had their successors elected or nominated for completion of their missions. It was through their “Khalīfahs” that the goal was achieved for which the Messengers were sent. Elaborating this point, the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) writes:

“It has always been the way of God, ever since He created man in the earth, that He helps His Messengers and the Prophets, and grants them victory—as He has said, ‘Allāh has decreed that He and His Messengers shall certainly prevail’ (58:22) ... God manifests with powerful Signs the truthfulness of their claims, and sows at their hands the seed of righteousness which they want to spread in the world. However, He does not fully complete this mission at their hands, causing them to die at a time when it is feared that apparently they had not fully succeeded. He gives to their opponents a chance to heap ridicule on them. When these opponents have had their laugh, He then shows another manifestation of His powerful hand, creating a situation which works for the full attainment of the aims that were partially achieved.” (The Will, pp. 4-5)

Among God’s Messengers, whose assigned mission was kept sustained through their successors (khulafā’), let us study the dispensations of two important Messengers—Moses and Jesus. Moses was assigned the mission to liberate the Children of Israel from the slavery of the Pharaoh, and to bring them back from Egypt to Canaan—the Promised Land. To avoid an armed conflict with the war-like people of the Philistine, Moses chose not to go through their country, and led the Israelites through a longer route that passed through the wilderness of Sin. On arriving at Mount Sinai, he received the divine Laws, including the Ten Commandments. During the time that Moses spent at Mount Sinai, he designated Aaron, his elder brother, the duty to supervise the Children of Israel. Aaron acted as his deputy for forty days and nights. Referring to this event, the Qur’ān states,

And We made Moses a promise of thirty nights and supplemented them with ten. Thus the period appointed by his Lord was completed—forty nights. And Moses said to his brother, Aaron, ‘Take my place amongst my people in my absence, and manage them well and follow not the way of mischief-maker.
(7:143)

The Arabic words used in this verse for “Take my place” are ‘akhlufnī for that the root word is ‘kha-la-fa,’ the same root from where the term ‘Khalīfah’ is derived. “Khalīfah” not only means a “successor,” who comes after his predecessor, but it also means a “deputy” who might be appointed in the lifetime of an authority.

Moses and the Children of Israel left Sinai and moved forward toward Canaan. Due to their constant fault-finding and rebelliousness, the Children of Israel remained a continuing source of frustration and exasperation for Moses. The Qur'ān confirms, "None believed in Moses, save a seed of his people" (10:83). For forty years the care and burden of the Children of Israel remained heavy upon the mind and heart of Moses. Once near the land of Canaan, Moses started to plan on how to conquer the land of Canaan, and to do so, he sent twelve chiefs to Canaan to collect intelligence. One of them was Joshua. On their return, ten of them gave discouraging information, but Joshua, along with another chief named Caleb, gave a positive report, and exhorted the Israelites to proceed and possess the land. Moses himself did not reach the land of Canaan in his life. Before passing over to Jordan, he died in the valley of Moab.

On Moses' death, Joshua succeeded him as the new leader of the Israelites. He had been a close companion of Moses, remaining always on his side faithfully, assisting him all along for forty long years. He belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. He was a fearless soldier, and a successful military commander. After the Exodus from Egypt, he had defeated the Amalekites at the battlefield of Rephidim. When Moses was away at the Mount Sinai to receive God's commandments, Joshua had accompanied him part of the way, and was the first to receive him on his return. When the Children of Israel engaged themselves in worshipping the golden calf, Moses removed the tabernacle (the sacred tent-shrine) from their camp, and appointed Joshua to safeguard it.

Under God’s instructions, before the conquest of Canaan started, Moses made Joshua his deputy, and announced his future leadership as God’s choice. As Moses had led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, Joshua would lead them into Canaan. Moses was 120 years old when he received revelation that his death was near, and was asked by God to appear in the tabernacle along with Joshua. The Old Testament describes the event as follows:

The Lord said to Moses, “Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourself in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him.” So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. Now the Lord appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 31:14-15).

First, God revealed to Moses the future rebelliousness of Israel, their moral and spiritual decadence, apostasy, breach of the Covenant, and their continual idolatry that would result in arousing God’s wrath against them, and that God would forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:16-18). After that,

The Lord said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before the entire congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, so that all the congregation of the

Children of Israel may be obedient” (Numbers 27:18-20).

Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with these people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them; and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He is One who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed (Deuteronomy 31:7-9).

In this way, Joshua was declared to be the first Khalifah of Moses by Moses himself under God’s command. God assured Joshua that He will be with him as He was with Moses. Consequently, Joshua defeated the Canaanites with God’s miraculous help, and settled the Children of Israel in the Promised Land. Thus, he successfully completed the mission of Moses. He lived an irreproachable life, always remaining loyal to God and His commandments. He proved to be a great military and spiritual leader, discharging all his duties vigilantly, always seeking guidance and help from God. He was a calm and impartial judge, and led the people in religious rituals. After remaining Israel’s leader for three decades, he died of old age.

As was revealed to Moses just before his death, the Israelites once again under the influence of Canaanites took to idolatry and started worshipping Baal, the false Phoenician god. As a Divine punishment, they lost several territories, including the city of Debir in the south-west of Hebron to their oppressive enemy, Chushan-rishathaim, the

king of Mesopotamia. Under the tyrannical subjugation, the Israelites cried out to the Lord, repented of their sins. God listened to their cries and raised Othniel, son of Kenaz, as their deliverer. Caleb, the contemporary of Joshua, was assigned the task to re-conquer the city of Debris. He offered a prize, the hand of his daughter Achsah, to be given in marriage to the one who would capture the city. Othniel achieved a strategic victory, conquered the city of Debir, liberated the captive Israelites, and won the prize.

Othniel succeeded Joshua as the next Khalīfah in the Mosaic dispensation. Joshua and Othniel, among others, are called ‘Judges’ in the Jewish tradition. But the term ‘Judge’ should not be confused as if it was restricted only to a member of Judiciary. The duties of a ‘Judge’ included a variety of administrative obligations, including the defense of the Israelites from their enemies and the preservation of domestic unity through maintaining law and order. A Judge was like a governor, an administrative head of a community or a tribe. As a tribal leader, administration of justice was an essential requirement; therefore, a Judge being in highest administrative position of authority had to dispense impartial justice, taking care of the widows, the orphans, and the strangers. The Biblical Judges were in fact military rulers who were raised by God to deliver Israelites from their enemies. After Joshua and Othniel, there was a chain of Judges who provided leadership to the tribes of the Israelites. Among them, some prominent figures called the “Major Judges,” were Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. Meanwhile, many Prophets were sent to the Children of Israel as their spiritual leaders. The Qur’ān says,

And verily, We gave Moses the Book, and caused after him Messengers to follow in his footsteps... (2:88)

Surely, We took Covenant from the children of Israel, and We sent Messengers to them... (5:71)

With the ensuing of monarchy in the later years of the Judges (1200-1000 BCE), the Israeli kings acted as the supreme Judges as the heads of the state. Saul was the first Israelite king who ruled them for 20 years (1020-1000 BCE), and David was the second and the greatest of all the kings, and he ruled for 40 years (1000-961 BCE). David founded a dynasty that lasted for four centuries. David and his son Solomon were not only the kings of Israel, they were Prophets of God as well; and as such were the Khalīfahs in the dispensation of Moses. The Holy Qur’ān confirms this position of Khilāfat among the Israelites, and calls David as a Khalīfah,

... and indeed he had a position of nearness with Us and an excellent retreat. ‘O David, We have made thee a vicegerent [Khalīfah] in the earth; so judge between men with justice, and follow not vain desire, lest it should lead thee astray from the way of Allah.’ ... (38:26-27)

His son Solomon (961-922 BCE), a king and a Prophet of God among the Israelites, succeeded David as his Khalīfah. He built the First Temple in Jerusalem in 950 BCE. After his death, his kingdom was divided among two of his sons. Northern Israel (with Ten Tribes) was ruled by Jeroboam,

and Southern Judah (with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) came under the jurisdiction of Rehoboam. A majority of present day Jews claim their descent from the tribe of Judah.

Two hundred years after Solomon's death, in 722 BCE, the Assyrians conquered the Northern kingdom of Israel that was ruled at that time by an Israeli king named Hoshea. The Assyrians destroyed the Temple built by Solomon, and enslaved the Israelites. They scattered the ten Jewish tribes into the eastern zones such as Persia, Afghanistan, Kashmir and India. In the Jewish tradition, these are called the Ten Lost Tribes. In 587 BCE, the Israelite king Zedekia lost the Southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon. After five more centuries, the Roman Empire emerged, and they started to expand their territories. They annexed Syria in 64 BCE; and next year they conquered Jerusalem. In 37 BCE, Herod was appointed as the king of Judea by the Roman Senate on behest of Mark Antony. Romans annexed Egypt in 31 BCE, and thus the entire Mediterranean area was under their control before the birth of Jesus.

According to the Gospels, Jesus (peace be on him) started his ministry after getting baptized by John the Baptist who had been proclaiming the near approach of 'the Kingdom of Heaven.' Jesus claimed to be the awaited Messiah of the Israelites, and as such, he can be considered as the last Khalifah in the Mosaic dispensation. However, the majority of Israelites rejected him, because they were expecting a political leader, a king and an army commander like David to lead them to freedom out of the Roman rule. Contrary to their expectations, Jesus initiated a Messianic dispensation, without any political or military struggle against the

Romans! The Jewish religious leaders hatched a plot to get him killed on the false charge of subversion against the ruling Roman authorities. But he survived the attempted crucifixion, and secretly migrated towards India in search of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Before his departure from Jerusalem, he nominated his closest disciple Peter to be his deputy in his absence, and instructed him to complete his mission among the Jewish people who lived in Palestine and its vicinities.

According to the Gospels, Jesus announced Peter to be his successor, saying,

You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:18-19)

Thus, Jesus prayed for Peter that forces of evil may not hinder his preaching of righteousness to the people, and that he may succeed in opening the gates of the Kingdom of God to other people. Peter was a humble fisherman from Galilee. His former name was Simon, son of Jonas. He and his brother Andrew were originally disciples of John the Baptist (Yahya). When John the Baptist announced Jesus to be the Messiah, and said, “He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is from the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth... For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure,” Andrew and Peter both recognized Jesus

as the Messiah, and accepting his call, both became his committed followers. Later on, Peter and eleven other disciples received the formal title “Apostles” from Jesus.

Peter the Apostle succeeded Jesus as his appointed Khalīfah. Like Jesus, he did not hold any political or military power. Peter’s Khalīfat can be defined as ‘servant of the servants of God: a servant of his brother bishops, a servant of the whole People of God.’ The Christians call it ‘Petrine Ministry.’ He tirelessly remained engaged in preaching the message of Jesus among the Jewish communities in Palestine, and traveled extensively to the Greek city of Corinth, and to Antioch in Syria to form early Christian communities among the Jews. It is noteworthy that once Peter became the Khalīfah of Jesus, his whole personality was transformed in an amazing manner. He had denied Jesus three times when Jesus was captured and tormented; but from that timid disposition, he changed into a fearless and aggressive preacher, and turned into a determined and courageous leader, ready to endure pain and oppression for the sake of his mission. Later in his life, he went to Rome, where he was imprisoned, and was crucified in 63 CE by the order of the Roman king Nero. Historically, Peter is recognized by Roman Catholics as the first Bishop of Rome, and as such the first pope.

Saint Linus succeeded Peter as the second pope, but very little is known about him in Christian history. Both Peter and Paul had ordained him to be the head of the early Christian Community in Rome, which mostly comprised of converts from the Gentiles—the non-Jews. He had worked closely with Paul in Rome, trying to preach to the pagans. When Paul

wrote his last letter before his death to his protégé Timothy, he mentioned the name of Linus and his father Claudian as sending greetings to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:21). St. Linus is considered to be the second pope after Peter, being the bishop of Rome. As such, one of his main duties was to maintain the unity of the rapidly expanding Church. His Khilāfat lasted for 12 years—from 66 CE to 78 CE.

St. Anacletus (78 CE—91 CE), who was of a very humble origin, was the third successor to Jesus. He probably belonged to a slave family. He initiated some organizational structure in the early Roman Christian communities, and sub-divided Roman Church into twenty-five parishes. It was like establishing small Jamā'ats among an expanding community of believers in a big city and its vicinities. The “church” meetings were conducted in private houses.

The list of succession of Christian leadership that followed is long, and, at times, some of the popes have been controversial figures. The Roman Catholics tradition keeps a record of all the popes. There has been a long chain, and presently, Benedict XVI is the 265th Pope by virtue of his office of Bishop of Rome. He was elected on 24 April 2005 after the demise of John Paul II who had led the worldwide Roman Catholic Christians for 27 years.

The Roman Catholic Church considers the pope to be the Vicar of Peter, who carries on Peter's ministry by keeping alive the Christian faith. A pope is also called the Vicar of Jesus Christ. The title 'Vicar' can be understood to mean as a “substitute.” In other words, the popes stand in for Peter and Jesus, but do not replace them. Originally, all those who were appointed as “bishops” to oversee a Christian

community were considered “vicars” of Christ, but later, in mid-twelfth century, the title ‘Vicar of Christ’ was exclusively given to the Bishop of Rome. Almost after half century of that decision, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) started using that title to augment his universal power over religious as well as political authorities. However, in 1964, the Second Vatican Council pronounced that all bishops were the ‘vicars’ of Christ because they administrated churches within their jurisdiction as the ambassadors of Jesus. The pope, therefore, is “Vicar of Christ” being a bishop (that is, the Bishop of Rome), and not because he is a pope. His distinctive title is the Vicar of Peter.

5

Religious Law and Terrorism

To start with, let me say a few words about “Religious Law” in general. Then I would like to submit a few historical events concerning some attempts in recent history to impose religious law, specifically with reference to the Islāmic religious law (known as Shari‘ah) in Pakistan, pointing out the encountered difficulties in its implementation and its connection with terrorism in that country. Towards the end, I would like to share the good news that the future is not in the hands of those who believe in and practice violence, hatred and terrorism. The future is in the hands of those who are working for the establishment of human rights, freedom of religion, justice, peace and mutual love and respect.

Religious Law is considered by its followers as decreed either by a Higher Spiritual Power or promulgated by men of God under the Divine inspiration and authority. Whether it is the Hindu Manu Smriti, or Judaism’s Halakhah, or the Christian Divine Canon, or the Shari‘ah of Islām—Religious Law always claims to have rules and regulations comprehensive enough to govern a broad spectrum of human life. It includes codes of ethics and morality. It shapes rituals and customs. It tries to cover almost all aspects of

human life—starting from the conception of a child in a mother’s womb, baby’s birth, growth of a child into adulthood, dietary regulations, what is permissible and what is forbidden, marriage, parenting, old age and finally the death and the rituals how to dispose of the dead body.

The religious measures and injunctions, if followed sincerely and obediently, give the hope to their followers to have a better life even after death. If the religious law is broken, it constitutes a sin; and committing a sin contains drastic consequences for the believer in this life and in the life to come! Unless forgiven by a Higher Authority or saved through the Divine Grace, the earthly life and the next life are believed to become very unpleasant! The religious law (of any belief-system), therefore, is taken very seriously by its sincere followers!!

The Divinely inspired or revealed scriptures, such as the Vedas, the Torah, the Gospels, all the other inspired books of the Bible, and the Qur’ān have created deep social, economical, political and psychological effects on their adherents. Lives of millions of individuals, character of numerous communities, and features of many cultures and civilizations have been shaped—directly and indirectly—by the dictates of religious laws! Administrations and judiciary systems have been founded on many religious precepts. Rules of war and peace have been drawn from the Holy Books. Empires have been created and demolished in the name of, or for the sake of, a particular organized religion!

However, historically speaking, the religious law has also been misused by religious men in authority as well as by politicians to gain individual and/or collective (self-centered)

interests! Minorities have suffered. Advancements in social philosophies and scientific discoveries have clashed with some religious precepts. In many situations, a religious law has been found inadequate. Therefore, many find it necessary to keep the religious canon separate from the affairs of the State. On the other hand, some still believe that a secular State shall remain devoid of moral and ethical precepts unless a specific Religious Law (of their liking) is established as the governing framework to nourish a spiritual society.

Now, I would submit some specific instances in recent times when attempts were made to enforce some of the provisions of Islāmic Law in Pakistan, but failed and resulted in acts of terrorism among the Muslims living in that country. Let me make it very clear that it was not the failure of Islām as religious force, but it was most certainly the failure of those individuals who wanted to use Islām for their own political gains. In matters of religion, whenever there is lack of sincerity, the results could be devastating.

For example, in 1977, an army General named Zia-ul-Haq deposed the democratically elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar ‘Alī Bhutto. To win mass popularity, General Zia-ul-Haq made “Islāmization of Pakistan” the pivotal policy objective of his administration. He persistently promoted the role of Religious Law in the affairs of the State. Tens of thousands of Islāmic radicals were given jobs in judiciary, the civil services, and other government-run institutions. During the Martial Law period, General Zia created a Shari‘ah Court system as a separate and distinct body outside the existing judiciary “to examine and decide

the question of whether or not any law is repugnant to the provisions of Islām.” The Sharī’ah Court had officiating members that included religious learned men who did not have any legal qualification. General Zia-ul-Haq retained the power to appoint or modify the term of the officiating members of the Sharī’ah Court, and made it certain that the religious-based Sharī’ah Court could easily be manipulated to approve and endorse his administrative policies. He went so far as to declare that the Sharī’ah Court could not challenge any Martial Law regulation or order! In other words, he himself and his military command were kept above the Islāmic Law. Thus, the ability to manipulate religious law for achieving his personal, political or administrative ends was kept wide open.

In his fervor to introduce Religious Law in Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq attempted, in 1980, to raise the Islāmic Zakāt tax which caused a violent discord between Shī’ah Muslims and Sunnī Muslims in Pakistan. We all know that Zakāt is one of the five “pillars” of Islām. But the proposed taxation was not in line with the Shī’ah religious tradition. They argued that to give Zakāt was a pious charitable act done voluntarily and not under compulsion of any legal or financial system. They protested against the compulsory collection of the Zakāt by a Government that they perceived was towing the majority Sunnī Muslim religious line.

The Sunnīs, under the instigation of their ‘Ulamā, the religious leaders, violently responded to the Shī’ah minority protests. By the end of 1980, both Shī’ahs and Sunnīs were killing each other in a vicious cycle. For the next ten years, the tragic situation continued to deteriorate. Paramilitary

organizations, well-equipped with modern weaponry, emerged on both sides, and Pakistan saw the worst sectarian violence and terrorist activities in its history. The ill-conceived efforts to implement a portion of Islāmic religious law ended up increasing the level of terrorism in Pakistan.

However, we should keep in mind that the religion of Islām does not promote but rather forbids such disgraceful measures that were taken by the Sunnīs and the Shī‘ahs against each other on the issue of Zakāt—a charitable act.

Here we must identify some of the methods used by the extremists and militants to exploit and misinterpret Islāmic teachings to justify acts of terrorism. Among the traditionally accepted sources of Islāmic Law (Sharī‘ah), the Qur’ān, the Sunnah (the practice), and the authentic sayings (Aḥādīth) of the Prophet are considered as the absolute arguments or authorities, and Ijmā’ and Ijtihād are treated as arguments obtained by legal reasoning.

By the Qur’ān’s own declaration, some of its verses are open to interpretation. Some of them can easily be taken out of the context by the opportunists. In an emotionally charged discourse, religious leaders often intentionally misinterpret some of the Qur’ānic verses in order to provoke acts of violence. The target audience can be motivated to act in a certain emotional way. They can be indoctrinated into thinking as if they are pleasing God by submitting to His Will—to His commandments—and thus earning high spiritual merits in this life and the Hereafter.

Similarly, some actions of the Prophet are misconstrued and misrepresented. The believers are instigated, without

giving full consideration to the historical background of a particular action taken by the Prophet, to commit violence and to feel good about it. To add fuel to the fire, several Aḥādīth (sayings of the Prophet) are used to make their actions appear to be meritorious Islāmic virtues! In addition, centuries-old religious verdicts and instructions (known as Fatwās) of some of the past Imāms are exploited.

Among all the subjects, the most potent weapon in the hands of the agitators and the terrorists is the religious obligation to wage Jihād against the enemies of Islām as a personal duty of each and every Muslim. In terms of Jihād, unfortunately, to create a perception of hostile forces working against Islām is not difficult at all for the Mullās (or the Muslims religious leaders). Instantly, Islām can be presented as being in absolute danger of being extinguished by the “infidels.” A fiery Imām can easily sow the seeds of hatred against the Hindus, the Jews, the Christians, the atheists and even some fellow Muslims declaring them as “infidels” and thus deadly enemies of Islām. Moreover, an oppressive ruler, a financially exploiting landlord, a hypocritical politician, or even other Muslims branded as apostates by the ‘Ulamā can be seen as ready targets to be eliminated in defense of Islām.

In such an emotionally charged and religiously volatile environments created by the religious leaders with ulterior motives, those nations who actually commit acts of aggression against Muslims, or attack an Islāmic country, or illegally occupy a Muslim land, cannot avoid severe reprisals. If Muslim civilians, especially children, women and elderly,

are killed by enemy weapons, the religious law of retaliation is brought to the forefront!

The enemy, by their aggressive action, thus provides the radical religious leaders and militants “justification” to kill noncombatant civilians, including children, women and elderly, among the hostile people. If Jihād cannot be conducted in a conventional manner, and most often it is not, then some specific targets are selected and suicidal bombers are sent to eliminate the enemy by blowing themselves up. Taking one’s own life is considered Ḥarām (forbidden) in Islām, therefore, it is an unforgivable sin; but it has been twisted and is being taught as a means of instantly gaining the highest spiritual status of a martyr—a ‘Shahīd’.

Fortunately, there are many Islāmic scholars, political leaders and legislators who are now willing to condemn violence and terrorism done in the name of Islām. The good news is that this trend is gaining momentum. But many may not be aware of the fact that there is one vibrant international movement in Islām that has been preaching and practicing non-violence and peaceful use of Jihād over 100 years. The Aḥmadi Muslims do not condone acts of violence and do not acknowledge terrorism as Islāmic Jihād. The founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, made it very clear, more than hundred years ago, that mutual differences should not be settled through the use of force, and that Jihād as a military struggle—as a Holy War—was not needed in this day and age to protect the religion of Islām!

The Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious body without any political agenda, and fully determined not to politicize their religion. Presently the Aḥmadi Muslims are in more than 175 countries. They do not use violence anywhere in the world. As a matter of faith, they do not believe in the use of violence at all. Numerically speaking, they are on the increase and millions are joining in each year.

They have always remained loyal to the countries where they live. In Pakistan, where their International Headquarters are located, they have served the country in its best interest, producing internationally famous men like Sir Muḥammad Ṣafrullā Khān who had served the pre-partitioned India as a Member of the Punjab Legislative Council (1926-35), and a Judge of Indian Supreme Court (1941-1947). When Pakistan was created, Sir Ṣafrullā Khān was appointed the first Foreign Minister of Pakistan, and later he served as the President of the 16th General Assembly of the UNO, and retired as a Judge and the President of the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Another prominent Aḥmadi Muslim was Dr. ‘Abdus Salām who was the first Muslim from Pakistan to win the Nobel Prize in Theoretical Physics in 1979. Dr. Salām served the President of Pakistan, Ayub Khān, as his Scientific Advisor.

The Aḥmadīs have been persistently persecuted in Pakistan over the past several decades, but in response they have always shown full restraint and reason, and have never taken law and order in their hands.

The Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad saw that the Muslims were in need of moral reformation, and that the soul of Islām was

calling for “a struggle within.” He called for every Muslim to protect their morals and spiritual values against decadence! That was the Jihād of the time. He also pointed out that the real enemies of Islām had waged an intellectual warfare against Islām and it needed a response by the Jihād of the pen and not of the sword.

He declared that the concept of a continuous armed struggle against non-Muslims was an erroneous principle. The Qur’ān did not divide the world into Dār al-Islām (abode of Islām—the territory where Islām was supreme) and Dār al-Ḥarb (abode of war—that is, the rest of the world conceived as fighting against Islām). As the Muslims are free to spread the message of Islām through preaching, through peaceful means, through Da‘wat Ilallāh—by calling mankind to God, the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community is now leading in this form of Jihād.

Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad made a clear distinction between the real Islāmic Jihād and political or economical warfare. Aḥmadīs believe that to kill innocent non-combatants is a sin prohibited by Islām, and to commit suicide is an even a greater sin. To combine the two sinful acts together in suicidal attacks does not make it a meritorious act at all.

In addition to explaining the theological concept of Jihād, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad founded a dynamic community (a Jamā‘at) of Muslims—known as the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islām—to practice and implement what he preached. All the members of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at have to take a pledge on oath that under the impulse of any passions, they shall cause no harm

whatsoever to the creatures of God in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by their tongues nor by their hands nor by any other means; and that they shall keep themselves occupied in the service of God's creatures, for God's sake only, and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of their God-given abilities and powers.

The Aḥmadiyya Muslim community, therefore, condemns the use of violence in any shape or form for any reason! Their official motto is "Love for all, hatred for none." The good news is that this Movement is gaining momentum, and each year millions of Muslims are joining the Aḥmadiyya Movement, despite bitter persecution and legal hurdles created by some Islāmic countries. If the Aḥmadiyya Movement continues to grow with the same speed, it is hoped that the use of violence and terrorism shall be eradicated from the thoughts and actions of Muslims.

Not only that, the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at has made a prophetic announcement concerning those who would continue the use of violence in the name of religion, who would shed blood, spread disorder calling it Jihād so as to serve their own agendas. He said that whoever shall engage in bloodshed in the name of Islām shall be routed out in the end. Whoever would shed blood and spread mischievous disorder shall be defeated and disgraced!

The Aḥmadīs, over the last century, have been against the so-called Jihād that is presently defaming Islām, making it appear to be a barbaric religion, and the Prophet of Islām to be a savage militaristic dictator! The Aḥmadīs uphold that presently a "Greater Jihād"—Jihād al-Akbar (25:52) is needed, but that can only be done by implementing the

Qur'ānic morals among the Muslims, keeping the spirit of Islāmic Sharī'ah working within the establishment of peace, justice and love. The Great Jihād is to preach the message of PEACE (i.e., Islām). Striving for the propagation of Islām, and dissemination of its teachings, is the Jihād which the Muslims are perpetually enjoined to carry on.

If the spirit of Islāmic Sharī'ah is properly and rightfully infused among the Muslims, it would help prevent acts of terrorism. The upholders of the Sharī'ah have to instill in the Muslims the respect for life that the Qur'ān teaches. According to the Holy Qur'ān, to kill a person without due process of Law is as if one has killed all of mankind; and whoso saves a life, the Qur'ān says, "It shall be as if he had saved the life of all of mankind" (5:32).

As I have said earlier, the spirit of the Religious Law is common in the Holy Scriptures—the Vedas, the Torah, the Gospels and the Qur'ān. I would like to quote, therefore, a passage from the New Testament, Matthew, 22:35-40.

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him (Jesus) a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as your self. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

May we all learn to love our Compassionate and Most Merciful God, and also to love our neighbor as ourselves! May the love of our God not become a source for terrorizing our neighbor!

(Presented at 2005 Interparliamentary Conference on Human Rights and Religious Freedom, held at Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, DC, on November 28–December 1.)

6

Obsession: Radical Islām's War against the West: A Response

(The documentary film "OBSESSION: Radical Islām's War against the West" presents dreadful and graphic scenes taken from the Arab TV showing radical Mullās all over the world preaching hatred and exciting violence and Jihad against the West and the United States of America. It is a propaganda film prepared to scare the Christians and to get sympathy for Jews and Israel. The following response to the documentary film was presented on June 9, 2007 at the Annual Meeting of the Northern Illinois Conference Evangelical Association held at St. Charles, Illinois. After listening to the response, many Christian clergymen criticized the film and said that it was prepared with wrong motives.)

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful.

O Lord, our God, help us to have our hearts united in nourishing and serving Life, and

grant us wisdom and strength to counter the evil of those who preach violence and promote death!

O our Loving God, let the compassion, mercy, and forgiveness—as preached and practiced by Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) against his bitterest of enemies—replace anger, revenge, violence and oppression!

O Lord, our God, let the unconditional love—as taught by Jesus Christ—prevail over hatred and animosity that over-shadow our times!

O our Merciful God! Let the light of Justice and Peace dispel the pitch darkness of war and injustice! Enable us—the Children of Abraham—Christians, Muslims and Jews—to stand together in unity to help those who are victims of transgression in any form at any place! Amen.

[1]

Religious Extremism in Islām

First, we should be honest in self-criticism, and try truthfully to identify the causes of the war waged by radical Muslims against the West, particularly the United States of America.

We should acknowledge the fact that for millions of Muslims all over the world, the image of America is troublesome: To them it seems as if the USA is determent to invade, occupy or dominate the oil-rich Muslim countries for economical gains. America calls for freedom and democracy, but at the same time it has supported world's worst authoritarian dictators and oppressive governments in the past, such as the Shah of Iran and Pakistani army dictator General Zia-ul-Haq. The Muslim public feels that the U.S.A.'s attitude towards Israel is different as compared with the Muslim countries. Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land, establishing illegal settlements, and use of force is not condemned by America. But any Palestinian resistance to Israeli illegal occupation is denounced as "terrorism" and is responded by Israel with overwhelming armed attacks. This causes further radicalization of resistance factions in Palestine and elsewhere in the Muslim world.

America is known as providing financial help in support of the military strength of Israel to maintain its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands. The radical Muslims resent the fact that Israel is getting \$ 3 to \$ 6 billion of American tax-payers' money every year. It equals to 15 million dollars each day. This financial aid is perceived as used against the Muslims. They see the atrocities committed against their children, women and civilians conducted by means of the American money are convinced that the state of Israel also possesses weapons of mass destruction.

In addition, we should also understand that America's close connection with the oil-rich Saudi Arabia is seen with

suspicion by the Muslim radicals. The holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located in Saudi Arabia. The US armed forces' presence in Saudi Arabia to protect the Saudi monarchy and its oil fields provides fuel to the fire to the radical Muslim agitators. The fact which is not well known to most of the Americans is that the Saudis profess a radical form of Islām known as Wahhābism, and the Saudi Kingdom most generously funds the theological schools known as madrasas all over the world. We should know that these madrasas are the breeding incubators of radicalism in Islām. In these madrasas, orphan and poor boys are admitted and trained to become Mujāhidīn. They are trained to make explosives and other weapons, and how to use them. Also, the students are brainwashed to become suicidal bombers. The Wahhābī Saudis also provide training to the imāms (religious leaders) from all over the world—including the United States. These imāms, trained in Saudi Arabia, come to the Western countries and lead Muslim congregations teaching and preaching radicalism to the young Muslims attending their mosques.

The documentary “OBSESSION” was released in 2006, but it fails to show the response of the West against radical Muslims. It is completely silent to the fact that a global war against terrorism has been leashed out by the West and is still going on with full force.

Within hours of September 11 attacks, Muslim leaders worldwide, including all major Islamic organizations in the United States denounced the attacks as sinful and illegal acts from Islamic perspective. The majority of Muslims all over the world believed that the 9/11 attacks could not be acts of

Jihad because all the victims were civilians, including several Muslim individuals.

In response, the United States immediately decided not only to eliminate the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, but also punish those who harbored them—the suspect list included Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Iran. The War on terrorism started with attacks on Afghanistan—one of the poorest, most remote, and least industrialized countries on earth. The United States and its allies took military action and toppled the Ṭālibān which had given the leaders of al-Qā'idah sanctuary in Afghanistan; destroyed the terrorist infrastructure, killed or captured a majority of al-Qā'idah's leadership; cut off al-Qā'idah's funding and seized its effects, thus severely damaged the organization led by the suspect terrorist Osama bin Laden. Over 20,000 al-Qā'idah and its allied Sunnī militants have been killed so far. More than 3,000 civilians were killed in Afghanistan as a result of U.S. bombing with number of injured estimated to be in the tens of thousands.

The al-Qā'idah leader, Osama Bin Laden is still alive. We must realize the fact that killing or capturing Bin Laden would not end terrorism. On the contrary, new generations of terrorists are already creeping up in various parts of the world. Political turbulence in the Middle East has helped a new breed of al-Qā'idah-style militants to gain footholds where they had rarely been active on such a scale. Every day a new movement is born. Dozens of groups that have declared themselves as franchises of al-Qā'idah or modeled themselves on it have appeared in recent years in Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan and Yemen.

The alleged plot to attack New York's John F. Kennedy International airport shows that such groups are now breeding in Trinidad, Tobago and Guyana. Thus the south of the U.S.A. is not safe. Potential threats of attacks are now coming from Caribbean and Latin America as well. Therefore, it seems that so far the war on terrorism is proving counter-productive.

After Afghanistan, we went after Iraq. The whole world knows well that Iraq had no role in September 11 attacks and had no established connection with al-Qā'idah. However, after 9/11 attacks, the U.S. government claimed that Iraq was a threat to the United States on the pretext that Iraq could begin to use its alleged Weapons of Mass Destruction to aid terrorist groups.

The Muslims of the world saw this just an excuse to dominate a region that was rich in oil, and it had nothing to do with the allegation of having weapons of mass destruction. Invasion of Iraq was launched on March 20, 2003. Saddam's regime was quickly toppled, and only 40 days after the invasion, on May 1, 2003, President Bush claimed victory in Iraq. But do we really have a victory in Iraq? The war is still going on.

In Vietnam, the US spent a total of \$120 billion to fight the war for eight and a half years. This year, the Senate has approved \$120 billion war -funding only for the current year! The total cost of Iraq War is in excess of \$1.2 trillion! More than 3,500 U.S. soldiers have been killed, and more than 22,000 U.S. Military personnel have been wounded in action so far. An estimated 67,000 Insurgents have been killed or detained. In addition, more than 600,000 Iraqi civilians

have been killed [Washington Post] thus causing a tremendous increase in the suffering of ordinary people among the Muslims. And we wonder why the radicals among them hate America!! Still we want to know why the radical Mullās are crying “Death to America!” Millions of Iraqi Muslims—nearly 15% of the population—have fled their homes since the invasion in 2003 [UNICEF]. Half the refugees are children.

[2]

Jihād in Islām:

As the term Jihād” has been repeated many times in the documentary, therefore, please allow me to explain what Jihād in Islām is! It is a great tragedy in the history of Islām that the concept of Jihād was distorted by over-zealous preachers and radical Muslim scholars. The founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islām, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (may peace be on him) recognized this dangerous trend that was entirely contrary to the teachings of the Qur’ān. More than 100 years ago, in his book entitled “The British Government and Jihād,” published in AD 1900 in India, he wrote,

It should be remembered that today’s Islāmic scholars (who are called maulawīs) completely misunderstand Jihād and misrepresent it to general public. The public’s violent instincts are inflamed as a result and they are stripped of all noble human virtues... I know for certain that the maulawīs who persist

in propagating these blood-spattered doctrines are in fact responsible for murders committed by ignorant, egotistical people... They should remember that their understanding of Jihād is not correct, and human sympathy and compassion are its first casualties. (Pp. 8-9)

May God bring these maulawīs back to the right path! They have misled the populace into believing that the keys to Paradise lie in beliefs that are oppressive, cruel, and completely immoral...

Is it not shameful that a complete stranger should be unjustly killed while occupied in his daily affairs, thus widowing his wife, making his children orphans, and turning his house into a funeral parlor? Which Ḥadīth (saying of the Prophet) or verse of the Qur'ān authorizes such behavior? ... Foolish people hear the word Jihād, and make it an excuse for fulfillment of their own low desires. Or perhaps it is sheer madness that inclines them towards bloodshed. (Pp. 14-15)

The tradition prevalent among the Muslims of attacking the people of other religions, which they call Jihād, is not Jihād of the Divine religious Law (Islāmic Shari'ah). Rather, it is a grievous sin and a violation of the clear instructions of God and His prophet. (P. 20)

Thus, he gave a clear verdict that to kill innocent people in the name of Jihād is forbidden in Islām. Anyone who wages war on false pretext is an enemy of God. Furthermore, he predicted that those who engage in terrorist acts in the name of Jihād shall be utterly humiliated and defeated in the end!

Sanctity of Life: The Holy Qur’ān teaches sanctity of human life and reaffirms the Biblical teachings that whosoever unjustly kills a single person, it shall be as if he slaughtered all mankind; and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had protected the life of all mankind (5:33). “You kill not the life which God has made sacred” (6:152). Killing of the innocent and committing suicide both are grievous sins in Islam. The Quran forbids suicide (4:30), and it is an unforgivable sin in Islam.

The Qur’ān gives comprehensive instructions against all evil thoughts and plans, all kinds of abusive behavior and every form of cruelty and inequity. The Qur’ān gives injunctions to protect the person, property, honor or good name of another person. The Qur’ān declares it in unambiguous words, God does not love those who create disorder on earth (5:65) and (28:77); He does not love who are unjust (3:57); and does not love those who exceed the limits (2:191) and (5:88).

What is the true meaning of Jihād? Jihād does not mean “Holy War.” It means striving, contention and taking action dedicated to a noble cause: In Arabic language, Jihād is a verbal noun derived from the root jahada, which is defined as exerting one’s utmost power, effort, endeavor, or ability in

contending with an object of disapprobation (An Arabic-English Lexicon, Edward Lane).

As a matter of fact, Jihād in Islām is of different kinds. Various terms have been used to make distinction between them, such as: Jihād of the heart, Jihād of the tongue, and Jihād with the pen. The greatest Jihād in Islām is remaining firm in faith, and to overcome sinful temptations of one's own self.

Jihād in the Bible: For Christians it would be easy to understand the concept of Jihād by some examples taken from the Bible: In Luke 13:22-24, the Bible says about Jesus Christ, "And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying towards Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, 'Lord, are there few to be saved?' And he said unto them: Strive to enter in that narrow gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." This striving and making an utmost effort to enter the narrow gate—(that the Holy Qur'ān calls it the straight path) is the highest form of Jihād in Islām.

From Islāmic perspective, St. Paul was asking the Philippians to engage in a Jihād when he wrote to them,

That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1: 27)

In Islām, striving by means of the Qur'ān is called the Great Striving—Jihādan Kabīran (25:53).

Again, in the First Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul wrote,

This charge I commit onto you ... fight a good fight; holding faith, and a good conscience. (1 Timothy, 1:18)

In the same Epistle, St. Paul wrote,

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee from these things and follow after righteousness, goodness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses. (1 Timothy, 6:9-12)

This fighting the good fight, holding faith and good conscience, laying hold of eternal life is what we call the real Jihād in Islām. It is entering through the narrow gate. It is staying on the straight path.

The next form of Jihād is the struggle to improve the quality of social life by removing societal evils and establishing good moral values. This is Jihād against poverty, ignorance, disease, hunger, immorality and crime. Social and moral reformation under the guidance of the Qur’ān is called the “Jihādan Kabīran”—a “mighty striving”—the Great Jihād (25:53). The last form of Jihād is to repel an armed

aggression in self-defense for maintaining religious freedom. As compared to other forms of Jihād, fighting against an armed and aggressive enemy is called in Islām Jihādan Saghīran—the lesser Jihād.

The Qur’ān says,

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made because they have been wronged—and Allāh indeed has power to help them—Those who have been driven out of their homes unjustly only because they said, ‘Our Lord is Allāh’—And if Allāh did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques wherein the name of Allāh is oft commemorated. And Allāh will surely help one who helps Him. Allāh is indeed Powerful, Mighty— (22:40-41)

This concept of Jihād is closer to the Christian doctrine of “just war.” But it is not called a “holy war” in Islām. Modern Western thought, strongly influenced by Crusades-era terminology of “holy war,” tries to portray Jihād as an Islāmic war against all the non-Muslims. But most clearly, the permission to fight back is not to destroy the churches, temples or synagogues. On the contrary, the Qur’ān makes clear that it is to protect them along with protecting the mosques. In other words, it is to protect religious freedom for all those who worship God in accordance with their own faith traditions.

The great spiritual Jihād of standing firm in faith against satanic temptations and social evils is of permanent nature—an ongoing obligation for all the Muslims. But the lesser Jihād, fighting in self-defense is only occasional and isolated, and is to be conducted only in a crisis situation. Only a legitimate head of state has the authority to declare war. Any preacher or so-self-made leader, or scholar has no right to pronounce an armed struggle against an aggressor. Moreover, the strict rules governing the conduct of warfare are to be obeyed; for example, non-combatants cannot be killed. Women, children, elderly and the clergy or monks cannot be targeted. Property cannot be wantonly destroyed. Disfiguring of dead bodies is prohibited. Prisoners of war are to be treated humanely.

The Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islām believes that the doctrine of Jihād has been entirely perverted by the so-called “fundamentalists” and it needs to be rescued, and the offenders stopped by all possible means.

[3]

What is ahead of us?

Now the question arises, What can we do together—Muslims and Christians living in the United States of America? I think it is imperative that we should review our Government’s foreign policy with an honest self-criticism, and ask our elected law-makers and the Administration to avoid all such actions which are counterproductive, and instead of reducing terrorism are actually helping more terrorist groups to emerge among the radical Muslims.

Americans should be made aware of the miserable condition of Palestinian Christian and Muslim refugees. We need to be more sympathetic to their plight and right to return to their homeland to live a decent life. Moreover, human rights of religious minorities need to be protected. American public in general and the faith-based communities in particular have to become more vocal and more effective in safeguarding human rights of the suffering—be they Muslims or Christians or any other faith community. Similarly, humanitarian help needs to be provided to the victims of war in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Muslim and Christian civilians in Palestine.

Churches in America need to work closely with moderate Muslims. We must try to guard against judging Islām by double standards. We interpret differently the violent texts in the Bible in their historical contexts, but we pick up verses from the Qur’ān to prove as if Islām teaches perpetual violence. Christian faith leadership, whether Catholic or Protestant, instead of demeaning Islām and the Prophet of Islām, should condemn attacks on Islām that are done regularly through the media, and by some Christian leaders. Christian attacks on Islām or the Prophet Muḥammad do not help solve the problem. They actually aggravate the present tense situation. No Muslim ever, even the most hateful and radical ones, shall insult Jesus or Moses. They express their full reverence for them as the prophets and chosen ones of God.

We need to wage an information war against the hate-preaching Mullās and against their perverted ideology of Jihād. The Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community has taken the

lead to rebut modern day radical scholars such as Maulānā Maudūdī, Ḥasan Al-Banna, Sayyid Quṭb and ‘Abd al-Salām Faraj. All are invited to read *Murder in the Name of Allāh* (1953) by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad—the Fourth Spiritual Head of the International Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community.

The Muslims living in the West need your support to educate Church members by circulating anti-radical literature produced by moderate and peace-loving Muslims, especially by the Aḥmadiyya leadership. To counter the radical propaganda such as “Islām is under attack by the West,” “Islām is in danger;” or “America is leading the West to conquer Muslim lands to destroy Islām,” I suggest that we, the Muslims living in the West, have to show that Islām is not in danger in the West; we are free to practice and promote our faith in America; many mosques are coming up, and the number of Muslims is rapidly growing.

There is a need of an ongoing interfaith dialogue, and the commonalities between Islām and Christianity need to be elaborated. The Qur’ān stresses that the People of the Book—the Muslims, Jews and Christians, should work together on the commonly held values. We must promote our shared values of love, mutual respect, tolerance and freedom of worship. We have to improve our understanding of our neighbors’ faith. For Christians, it will be helpful to remove existing misunderstandings about Islām, which is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity, and is the fastest growing religion, not only out there somewhere, but also in Europe and in our own country America.

In the past, the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims have worked together in advancement of sciences, medicine,

philosophy and many other fields. It is time to create a new culture of co-existence and cooperation. Instead of thinking of clash of civilizations, let's think together to create a new Judeo-Christian Islāmic civilization based on mutual respect, love, peace and justice!

The task ahead is not an easy one to achieve, but we have hope for the future. We have the will to work hard, with patience and steadfastness. Please allow me to conclude my remarks by reading out a small poem by entitled "Love Can Wait" written by Lon Woodrum, a writer, teacher and Christian minister:

Love Can Wait

Hate moves
With swift impatience,
Bent to know the fall of pity
And the end of faith,
Feverish to see
Its banners blow
In darkness over fields of death.

But love is patient
Till all time is passed;
Love waits on God,
Sure in its stand:
No matter what the years
May bring, at last
All ages gather
To His command.

What is Sin?

Search of a Definition among Religions

Sin has many names and many forms: It could be a hidden thought, a word expressed, or an act committed or omitted. Some may see it as impurity of soul, a moral offence, an ungodly or unholy deed. The concept of sin varies quite widely among different belief systems. There are those who believe in one God, others in many, and some in none, but in one way or the other, they all believe in the presence of sin. For those who have faith in the existence of God and accept His authority over human affairs, it may seem easy to answer what sin is. God has clearly spoken to His chosen ones and revealed His Will, telling them the difference between right and wrong, what to do, and what not to do. Anything that is against a commandment of God is a sin. It is like committing a crime in the realm of God—an act of omission of what He wants the believer to do; or a disobedient commission or rebellion against what He forbids! For example, in the Torah, God makes it clear,

“You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God.” (Lev. 18:4)

Failing his responsibility to discharge any one of the obligations makes a person sinful. In theistic faiths, commandments against sin are not only transmitted through revelations and oral traditions, they have been put down into writings. These written religious scriptures contain rules and regulations that usually encompass the entire life cycle, from birth to death. Set of laws concerning human body, food, sex, marriage, upbringing of children, social behavior, ethics, agriculture, commerce, acquisition of property, funeral, disposal of the dead, and inheritance are all covered! For example, in Judaism, Tanakh (that includes the 613 commandments of the Torah and the books of Prophets and the Writings) elaborate the binding interpersonal obligations as well as the duties towards God. The Hindus have their Puranas, Vedas, Niti Shastras and Shruti scriptures. The Christians believe in the Bible as the Word of God inspired and inerrant in its original writing. The Muslims believe in the Qur’ān as their Holy Book, Word of Allāh, revealed to Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) through the archangel Gabriel; and there are books of Ḥadīth that contain narrations of the Prophet’s personal conduct and his sayings. The Sikhs have Guru Granth Sahib and Dasam Granth as the sanctified collections of the teachings of their Gurus. To ignore an authoritative God’s expressed directives constitutes sin with adverse consequences to the noncompliant. If there was no religious

Law, there was no sin. “Apart from the law, sin is dead,” said St. Paul (1 Cor. 15:56).

To commit a sin also shows sinners’ mistrust in God, and an expression of ingratitude and infidelity. Sin is every thought or action that annoys God, and His loving relationship with the sinner is broken. Sin is lawlessness, transgression and rebellion against Divine love, grace and mercy. God is caring, loving and gracious, then, a sin on the part of His servant is no less than an emotional flaw, insensitivity, towards the benefactor! A step taken towards sin is a step away from God. All spiritual merit of nearness to God depends upon remaining away from sinfulness. Sin is an indication that the very faith in the existence of God is shaken. Fear of losing God’s love is the means to stay away from sin. Sin is a sickness of soul; an ignorant attitude towards the High; a breakage of healthy relationship between man and the Divine.

Hindus have innumerable virtuous duties to perform and a vast number of vices to avoid as part of their dharma. Dharma is similar to Jewish Halakhah, or Islāmic Sharī’ah. In Hinduism, the concept of sin also relates to the teachings of gods, goddesses, and avatars, but mostly it is a mental attitude against the norms of the established dharma that controls their daily lives. Sin is a reaction created in the mind before, during, or after an action. According to Hinduism, it is falling below the standards of dharma that leads human soul to lower levels, and to be reincarnated after death in an inferior form of life. A sin is considered to carry a negative consequence, a suffering, to be redeemed through the process of transmigration of the soul! Interestingly, in

Hinduism, humanity is divided into various castes, some higher than the others, and as such their sins are also perceived differently, having high or low levels of gravity! Historically, almost all of the intricate moral and religious principles of behavior (called Shastras—books of do’s and don’ts) were enforced by Brahmans, the highest caste in Hinduism. They had made separate sets of rules for each caste and its subcategories. For example, in the Hindu state of Nepal, up till 1963, a Brahman was exempt from death penalty because killing of a Brahman was prohibited in the Hindu Scriptures, and it was thought to be a sin to give capital punishment to him. Similarly, punishment prescribed for adultery committed by a Brahman with a woman of a lower caste was significantly less than for a man who belonged to a lower caste than that of the woman. If sin is an act of body opposing the spirit, then greater the resistance to the cosmic Law of dharma which holds all things together, the bigger is the sin. Soul needs to be saved and liberated at all costs. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says,

“Triple is the gate of hell, destructive of the soul: namely, Kama (sensuality/lust), Krodha (hate/anger), and Lobha (covetousness). Therefore, one should forsake these three major sins, and work for the good of his soul and reach the supreme state.”

This supreme state is called mokasha in Hindu dharma—that is, liberation from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth.

In a religion which is usually silent about God, such as Buddhism, sin is not defined as an offense against established instructions of a God or gods, or a broken

relationship with the Divine. The Buddhists call it *kelisa*, which means impurity and defilement through harmful thoughts and evil emotions, which tarnish and pollute the mind. It is a deviation from the path of spiritual contentment and clarity of mind. Sin is caused by the craving for earthly possessions; this desire to cling on to earthly goods is within everyone, and it needs to be avoided at all cost. There are many *kelisa*—sinful pathways, such as killing, greed, anger, delusion, jealousy, stealing, sexual impurity, and lying, etc., and these are all poisons for the soul. By getting rid of these sinful thoughts and impulses, the soul gains happiness and contentment, and the mind becomes free of pollution and darkness.

Historically, if an established perception of a particular sin needs to be changed, then some religious or spiritual authority has to either abrogate the existing view, or modify the previously upheld parameters concerning that sin. In the history of world religions, new faith movements were created by charismatic personalities with strong convictions who departed from old sets of rules defining sins. For example, Siddharta Gautama and Mahavira both reacted to Hindu Brahman traditions and they established new religious parameters in the forms of Buddhism and Jainism. Same was the case in Christianity against Judaic laws. Christianity came into existence as a departure from the Jewish organized religion or way of life. First, Jesus himself neglected some of the Jewish rituals, and then Paul took exception and made several additional changes, at least for the Gentiles, in the Mosaic Law. Jesus and Paul did not try to do away with all of the Jewish rules of moral conduct; in fact,

they encouraged their followers to adhere to the essential ones. When asked about the most important commandments, Jesus condensed them into the two, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” and “Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.” Paul taught the new converts to remain virtuous, and prayed for them to “abound in every good work” and “being fruitful in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8) (Col. 1:10). However, the Jewish religious custom of circumcision was a practical hurdle in the way of bringing the Gentiles and the Romans into Christianity. The tradition of circumcision was based on a command of God given to Abraham as a token of God’s everlasting covenant with him. The Torah clearly had quoted God saying to Abraham, “This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your seed after you; every man child among you shall be circumcised” (Gen. 17:10). The Jews had kept the terms of this covenant most sincerely over the centuries. The disciples of Jesus were not willing to ignore this vitally important practice. That is why Apostle Peter vigorously disagreed and debated with Paul on the issue of circumcision. Similarly, there were some other impediments concerning Jewish dietary laws. Paul argued that no one would be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing the Law, because through Law the believers become conscious of sin (Romans 3:20).

The parents of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, his wife and early disciples were all Hindus, but he did not adhere to Hindu ceremonial devotions. Later on, other Sikh Gurus rejected many of the Brahmanical rites and rituals,

and non-observance of those Hindu practices ceased to be considered as a sin for the Sikhs. All the inter-caste hierarchy, and related rights and obligations were effectively removed from the list of vices. Under the influence of Sikh Gurus, the norms of piety were shifted more towards the moral conduct of love and service to others than to the formal Hindu religious ceremonies. The Sikhs are monotheists, and their notion of sin depends upon what takes them away from God. Guru Granth Sahib sets a clear definition of sin,

Those who turn away from the Holy Master are renegades and evil; bound to their desires, they ever suffer and avail not themselves of the chance to get away from the path of sin. (Guru Granth, 233)

The Sikh Holy Scripture says,

Sinners like stones are sunk; by the Master's teaching will they be saved. (Guru Granth, 163)

The root cause of evil is egoism—to get lost in selfish material gains, forgetting the real needs of the soul, the atman. When man is not focused on the commandments of God, and makes his own laws, and becomes self-centered, he is a sinner. He is called “manmukh”—the one who disobeys God's hukum (command) as taught by the Gurus! Thus many Hindu sins were re-defined in Sikhism.

In Islām, the Sharī'ah law is based on the guidance given in the Qur'ān, demonstrated by the Sunnah of the Prophet, and elaborated in the fiqh (legislative) rulings by the Muslim

jurists. From Islāmic perspective, the ultimate purpose of man's creation is to “worship” God (51:58); that is, to know and love Him so much that one’s personality transforms and starts reflecting the beautiful attributes of God. Thus, the final objective for man is to become God’s image on earth. In other words, man becomes united with God, becomes at one with Him. Indeed, for achieving this purpose, one has to devote one’s life entirely in the service of God by surrendering personal egotistical inclinations to His will. Such a selfless service to God requires obeying all of His commandments, using all human faculties to the maximum. Anything that takes one away from the worship of God in this sense, or diminishes one’s love for Him or for His creation would amount to sin. Islām categorically rejects the concept of what is known as “original sin.” All humans are born pure and innocent, without a tarnish of sin on their souls. According to the Qur’ān, the mistake committed by Adam and Eve was in a state of forgetfulness. Once they realized their error, they felt a deep sense of remorse, and asked God for His help and forgiveness. They had to face dire consequences of their mistake by losing the carefree bliss of living in the Garden, but their repentance and prayers were accepted by the Merciful and Ever-Forgiving God. They were forgiven, and subsequently remained united with God. No one “inherited” sin through the process of reproduction. If sin is defined as breaking of God's Law and steering away from God's love, then no one is born in sin. An act of sin is perpetrated when a person is able to make the distinction between what is right and what is wrong as prescribed by God, and he/she intentionally chooses to go against the will of God. No sin can be attributed to a newborn child. The

most one may assume is that humans are self-centered by nature, and gratifications of some basic instincts may be expected. However, this tendency does not make a person a sinner until a clear commandment of God, or some rule of moral or spiritual discipline is broken with calculated intent. Frailty of human character is taken into consideration, but still sin cannot be attributed as innate to human nature.

Another way to understand the nature of sin is by defining it as “missing the mark.” But this does not imply that all human imperfections are sins. If a student misses good grades in an examination, it is no sin. A person in good health may fall ill, but this does not make him or her sinner. Thousands of job applications are declined every day; neither the applicants, nor the employers feel any spiritual degradation. “Missing the mark” is a vague expression, therefore, it is necessary to define the ultimate standard, the benchmark relevant to sin. For example, if the objective is to have a loving relationship with God, then any act, thought, or tendency that keeps the believer away from God’s love would become a sin. This would also include the factors that may lead a person towards an act of sinfulness. If the goal of life is to achieve “nirvana,” then one must prepare himself or herself to advance on the path of spiritual progress in stages by remaining good and avoiding evil. There are many pitfalls in the realms of “desire,” and “form.” A misstep, any sign of enslavement to inappropriate cravings, may bring the soul down into countless hells, because missing the mark is a sin!

An act committed against the voice of pure conscience could also be deemed as sin. ‘Conscience’ is considered by some as a God-given gift, deeply embedded in every human

mind. It is thought to be an intuitive feeling that surges up when a moral error is made, and creates remorse in the heart. Conscience has been called the nerve-center of the soul. Others consider it as judgment of reason which is nourished in the mind since childhood. A good family and healthy social environment may play a crucial role in implanting the seed of “good” or “clear” conscience. Paul believed that even the most backward had a conscience and he justified non-observance of some of the Mosaic laws by appealing to the conscience of the new converts. He substitutes some of the Jewish laws with what is ‘written in their hearts, their conscience’ (Romans 2:15). He laid down the rule that a man should follow his own conscience; to go against the conscience is sin. Making an appeal to human conscience, however, may become risky, and Paul knew that ‘The conscience of him who was weak’ would make him commit sinful acts. If the men of knowledge were not careful in their behavior, they could easily mislead others, and ‘wound their weak conscience’ (1 Cor. 8:10-12).

The nature of conscience is itself a controversial subject among psychologists and religious leaders. If individual ‘conscience’ is left to be the only touchstone to determine what is morally correct, and what is sinful, then its practical implications may bear conflicting results. It is not only that some are with ‘weaker conscience’ than the others are; it is also a fact that some consciences are ‘evil’ and ‘corrupted;’ and some are ‘dead’! A conscience which is not fully developed can make wrong choices. If it is not an innate faculty, then it could easily become a mental trait produced by social learning; and it will vary drastically among

individuals born and raised in different social environments. A Hindu Brahman's conscience may react differently on intermixing with the members of 'untouchable' (shudar) caste, as compared with the consciences of all those who believe in the equality of human beings. Moreover, 'the voice of reason' in the head can easily be denied and dismissed by hard-core sinners. Also, there are sociopaths born with perverted consciences! How much the inherited genes play a role in someone becoming a saint or a sinner is yet to be determined! How to develop a sensitive conscience that may make precise moral judgment is a continuous challenge for all those who want to tackle with sin in their specific socio-religious settings.

It is a universally accepted principle that the value of a good or a bad action is in the intention. In the Manu code of conduct in Hinduism, if there was a breach of an instruction, a sin was presumed to have taken place. The presence or absence of an evil intention did not determine if the sin was committed or not. Consideration of intention or non-intention was only to decide the degree of severity of the sin and its corresponding punishment. If the sinner was helpless due to insanity, senility, poverty or ill health, the gravity of the guilt was diminished, and punishment was lighter than normal. But there was no clear cut agreement on the mode of treating intentional and accidental sins. Sometimes prayers and mantras were recommended for unintentional guilt, and penances were required for the redemption of intentional violations. At other times, penance was essential for treating unintentional wrongdoing, and penalties were proscribed for intentional transgressions.

What about a person who is compelled to commit a sinful act to avoid an evil of larger magnitude? If the motive is noble and pious, can a wrong become right? The Hindu code of Manu provides the answer in the positive. It recognizes the mitigating effect of compelling circumstances. For example, to save a life, one is allowed to tell a lie.

In some cases a man may give false evidence from a pious motive, knowing well that the facts were different, but he will not lose heaven. Such evidence they call the speech of gods. Wherever the death of a shudra, or a viasya, or kasatriya, or a Brahmana would be caused by a declaration of the truth, a lie may be told; for such falsehood is preferable to the truth. (Manu 8.103-4)

The Mosaic laws seem to be a bit strict on unintentional sinning. There were redemptive penalties to pay for accidental sins committed “through ignorance against any of the commandments (of God) concerning things that should have not been done” (Lev. 4:2). These penalties were in a decreasing order of costs depending on sinner’s status among the Israelites. An anointed priest had to offer a blemish-less young bullock, because he represented the entire congregation before God, and his sin brought guilt on the heads of his people. A ruler’s offering was less expensive—a healthy male goat-kid, because he was merely a civil or military leader, and his act defiled the Divine sanctuary less seriously than the religious leader’s sin did. The offering required of a man who did not hold any religious or civil office was the lightest of all, a female goat-

kid (Lev. 4:3, 22, 27). That means that even in Judaism an unintentional wrongdoing was regarded a sin as it offended the holiness of God, and was considered as an encroachment upon His rights!

In the Islāmic Aḥādīth literature, the Book of Bukhārī holds an eminent position. It is a collection of the oral traditions of the teachings and personal conduct of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of God be on him), transmitted down through generations. The Ḥadīth that Imām Bukhārī selected to place at the very beginning of his collection reads, “All deeds are determined by intentions alone; a person receives (as a consequence of) what he really intends.” This means that the spiritual reward or punishment does not depend on the apparent nature of an act; if the intention is evil, regardless how good an action may appear it would still be in the category of sins. God sees what is in the hearts. In the Holy Qur’ān, it is repeatedly stated that God knows what men reveal and what they conceal. He is well aware of what is in the depths of their hearts (11:6). He who desires the reward for the deeds of this world, God grants him thereof; and he who desires the reward of the Hereafter, God will certainly grant him thereof (3:146). The Qur’ān narrates the story of Moses that a man was killed at his hands, this was without any intent of harm or murder; and the Muslims therefore do not believe that this constituted a sin on the part of Moses. If there is no intention to break the Law of God, but a wrongful act takes place accidentally, it is considered an error, but no sin at all. At times, a person may not be able to follow a commandment of God to the letter, and feels compelled under particular

circumstance to do what might otherwise be wrongful; then it is no sin. For example, to eat the flesh of swine is forbidden in Islām, but if that becomes the only means of survival in terms of life and death then it is not a sin to eat it.

What is the remedy for sin? According to the Holy Qur’ān, man is fashioned in the best of forms.

Surely, We have created man in the best of
creative plans. (95:5)

Humans have full potential to remain connected with God and to become one with Him. From birth, the natural relationship between man and God is healthy and well-balanced. Human heart is like a mirror designed to absorb and reflect the light of God. Sin is like a poison, or a dark cloud. By committing an act of sin, or entertaining even a sinful thought, the wholesome spiritual relationship between man and God undergoes a negative change. If not corrected, slowly the heart starts losing its brilliance and becomes proportionately dark. If a sinful state is not effectively cured in a timely manner, spiritual death may become imminent. Metaphorically speaking, the heart becomes lightless. Sin can make a man the worst of the worst –the lowest of the low (95:6). But man is endowed with wonderful powers and natural faculties to rebound back into the light of Ever-Forgiving God Who loves him. The helping factors are many, but of the utmost important are faith and good works (95:7). A person should never lose hope! There is no need to become desperate of God’s mercy! Reformation and redemption may look difficult, but are always possible. Regardless how deep one may get into sins, God has granted ability to each and every one of us to overcome our shortcomings and

weaknesses. Full trust in God's love, seeking His help through prayers, and by taking the needed remedial measures, one can trounce sinfulness!

Love and fear of God play an important role in shunning sinful inclinations, and to overcome evil temptations. To shun sinfulness, one should always keep in mind that death is a certainty, and one day our earthly life is sure to end; and then, after death, there is certainly accountability before God for all our actions. Those who do not believe in Hereafter, tend to become bold in committing sins. Once a person is fully convinced that there is an Almighty God watching over him/her, and Who would punish him/her for his misdeeds, then it becomes rather difficult to disobey Him. Once the deadly nature of sin is realized with full certainty that it is like a poison for the soul, consequently leading to a tormented spiritual death, then naturally man would desist from committing it! To have certainty and complete faith in the existence of God, to have full knowledge of His powers, and to realize one's accountability to Him in the Hereafter, are the main factors that help us to retain our righteousness and piety. Once the heart becomes fully drenched in the Greatness and Glory of God, no one dares to break His Law. But if one holds dearer someone other than God in one's heart, then the misplaced love leads to sin. God is often replaced by our love for the self, uncontrolled gratification of natural urges, or material gains of this life. In short, any thing that keeps us away from God's love, mercy and grace, can be called sin! Nevertheless, even when we lose His love, there are ways to regain and absorb God's love, grace and mercy.

To save ourselves from sin, and to remain unsullied, we must seek help through prayer from the Gracious and Merciful God. “O, ye who believe! fear Allah and seek the way of approach into Him and strive in His way that you may prosper” says the Holy Qur’ān (5:36).

Sincere remorse needs to be expressed in full humility. Asking for forgiveness of sins from God helps to fortify us against the onslaught of sins. Without Divine protection, we tend to become victims of temptations. Security from sin is obtained through the grace of God. Once a man’s heart and mind are “possessed” by God’s grace, then his conscience keeps a watch over his thoughts and actions, and he gains a new strength to fight against sin. He starts feeling a natural revulsion in his heart against sin, and finds joy in virtue.

In addition, the Holy Qur’ān teaches us that keeping the company of the righteous is an extremely useful factor that contributes to develop strong moral character to stay away from sin: “O ye who believe! fear Allāh and be with the truthful” (9:119). Good and virtuous domestic and social environment plays a vitally important role in keeping a disposition against commission of sins. To create morally wholesome and appropriate environment, one has to make a conscious effort and diligent planning. In fact, proper planning and praying to God should both go hand in hand! The Messiah and Mahdī of our time, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (may Allāh’s peace be on him) says,

Man needs to eschew sin, and do good deeds. He should worship God the Exalted and obey Him. When he stays away from sin and worships God, then his heart is filled with

abundant blessing, and this is the goal of man's life... When he prudently develops a plan, and also commits himself fully to earnest prayer, then God Almighty grants him salvation, and consequently he comes out of sinful life. (Malfūzāt, Vol. 9, pp. 397 and 406)

As God is the Most Loving, He fully responds to man's life of worship, and bestows His blessings, mercy and grace upon the seeker of His love. God helps and leads him towards Himself, and grants him a taste of His union and full reconciliation in this very life. God becomes an eternal source of happiness and joy in a man's life. In other words, it is always possible for man to attain a spiritual height where acts of virtue flow through him most naturally, and he begins to dislike acts of sin! It is an uphill struggle, but success is promised.

Those who shun major sins and indecencies, except for minor slips—verily your Lord is expansive in forgiveness. He knows you full well from the time when He created you from the earth, and when you were embryos in the bellies of your mothers. So ascribe not purity to yourselves. He knows him best who is truly righteous. (53:33)

8

Prophets of God: Islāmic Perspective.

Who is a Prophet?

To make prophecies concerning some future events is not the only function of a Prophet of God. No doubt, the knowledge of the unseen is given to him, and he can foretell some minor or major developments, but there is more to his task as a Prophet. The Holy Qur’ān declares that every nation in the world has had a Prophet,

... for every people there is a Messenger.
(10:48)

Again,

... there is no people to whom a Warner has
not been sent. (35:25)

Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be on him) once said that there were 124,000 prophets sent to mankind throughout the history. According to the teachings of Islām, a Prophet is never self-appointed. It is always God Who selects a man from among the people and “reveals” to him his mission. The terms “Prophet” (**nabiy**; pl. **nabiyyūn** and **anbiyā**), “Messenger” (**rasūl**; pl. **rusul**) and “Envoy” (**mursal**,

pl. **mursalīn**) are interchangeably used in the Holy Qur’ān. Thus, from Islāmic perspective, a Prophet claims to be ‘sent’ from God. He declares to be an ambassador of the Divine who carries His message for uplifting the moral and spiritual condition of his people.

Mission of the Prophets of God

In essence, all the Prophets brought the same message to their people—Worship One God, shun sinfulness and transgression, and love and serve each other. Next to worship of One God, the most important task assigned to them was “purification” by working moral, social and spiritual reformation among their people. Their main purpose was to free humans from the bondage of sin. They reproved and denounced sin and called for repentance. They were bearers of good news to those who believed and acted righteously; and they forewarned those who rejected the clear Signs of God that the consequence of their evil lifestyle would be severe! They made the terror of the Divine Judgment clear to the sinners. All the Prophets were “witnesses” over specific groups of people bearing personal testimonies to the existence of God, and that the doors of spiritual advancement were open to all. In addition, imparting “wisdom” in physical and intellectual matters, establishing a just society and taking care of human rights were included in their divinely assigned functions.

The Holy Qur’ān tells us that the earlier Prophets were given limited tasks and they remained focused on eradication of some specific evils prevalent among particular

people of their time. For example, Prophet Abraham smashed idol-worship and established monotheism. Lot was to stop homosexuality. Moses liberated his people from pharaohs, and gave the Commandments of God. Jesus taught mutual love to the Israelites against rigid legalist approach to life. But when the means of communication among nations developed, and the world started to proceed towards globalization, then a universal Prophet, Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), was sent to the entire mankind. He was asked by God to declare,

Say, ‘O mankind, truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allāh to Whom belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth... (7:159)

Again,

And We have not sent thee but as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner, for all mankind... (34:29)

And We have sent thee not but as a mercy for all peoples. (21:108)

Islām teaches that all the Prophets are commissioned by God for the same purpose, that is, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. They exerted to achieve that goal by bringing mankind into submission of God’s Will. As far as their acceptance by the believers and obedience to them is concerned, in Islām there is no division between them, and all the Prophets are considered as one body. The Holy Qur’ān directs the Muslims,

Say ye, ‘We believe in Allāh and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves.’ (2:137)

Again,

This Messenger [Muḥammad] of Ours believes in that which has been revealed to him from His Lord, and so do the believers; all of them believe in Allāh, and His angels, and His Books, and all Messengers, saying ‘We make no distinction between any of His Messengers;’ and they say, ‘We have heard and are obedient. Our Lord, we implore Your forgiveness, and to You is the returning.’ (2:286)

In Islām, to reject any one of the Prophets is an act of disbelief.

Surely, those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers and desire to make a distinction between Allah and His Messengers and say, ‘We believe in some and disbelieve in others,’ and desire to take a course in between,

These indeed are veritable disbelievers...
(4:151-152)

However, as the scope of the divinely assigned mission varied from Prophet to Prophet, the Holy Qur'ān states that there are different ranks of the Prophets.

... And We exalted some Prophets over the others..." (17:56)

These Messengers of whom We have exalted some above others, Allah spoke to them and exalted some of them in degrees of rank... (2:254)

For example, Moses and Muḥammad (peace be on them) resemble to each other as the Law-bearing Prophets. But the sphere of Mosaic Law was limited to the Israelites while the Law of Islām as revealed to Prophet Muḥammad has universal application. There are many Prophets who did not bring any new law, and they followed the law brought by previous Prophets.

... We gave to Moses the Book and caused after him Messengers to follow... (2:88)

Some characteristics of the Prophets

All Prophets, according to Islāmic teachings, were free of sin. They received the Holy Spirit from God and were divinely inspired. They had firm faith in that what was revealed to them as from God. They imparted to others what they received from God. They were the most righteous among their people, were truthful, just and possessors of high morals. They were selected by God from among the people, and they spoke local languages. They were all loving

persons, serving others selflessly, concerned about their welfare. They always remained submissive to the will of God, and worshipped none but One God. They were able to show miracles and signs to prove the power of God and to bring their people to God. They remained strongly connected with God, having constant communication with Him. Their prayers were accepted. Blessed by God and His angels, they became a source of blessing for their followers. Usually, they were family men, married, with children. Being mortals, they met their death, as any other human.

Obeying all the Prophets is required by God. The believers are instructed to revere them and adhere to their teachings faithfully. After saying the name of a Prophet, the words “peace be on him” are added to show respect and loyalty to them. They are to be followed, but not to be taken as Lords beside the One God. However, all the Prophets faced bitter opposition. Satan put obstacles in their way. At times they were mocked at, fought with, and rebelled against; attempts were even made by their enemies to kill them. But they remained patient, steadfast, resolute and courageous. In the end, with the help of God, they were victorious over all opposition. Thus, in their personal lives they set an example as models for others to be followed.

The chain of Prophets started with the advent of Adam. He was the first Prophet, a vicegerent of God on the earth. The Holy Qur’ān mentions only a few Prophets by name. Some of them are well-known. Biblical Prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, and Jesus, while others are non-

Biblical, such as Hūd and Luqmān. Many are not mentioned by name.

And We, indeed, sent Messengers before thee [Muḥammad]; of them are some whom We have mentioned to thee ; and of them are some whom We have not mentioned to thee...
(40:79)

As the Holy Qur'ān emphatically claims that all nations in the world have been sent Prophets, therefore, it would not be wrong to conclude that the founders of world religions, such as Buddha Rama, Krishna, Confucius, Zoroaster and Mani must have been among the Prophets of God.

In the Holy Qur'ān, Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be on him) has been mentioned as the Seal of all the Prophets and is believed to be the best of the bests, the final Law-bearing Prophet. In the words of the Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islām, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the status of Prophet Muḥammad is the highest of all.

When we estimate justly, then out of the whole series of Prophets, we find one of the high courage and alive and greatly dear to God, the Chief of the Prophets, the pride and the crown of the Messengers, whose name is Muḥammad Mustafā and Aḥmad Mujtabā (peace and blessings be on him). (Sirāj-i-Munīr, Rūhānī Khazā'in, Vol. 12, p 82)

Reconciling the Existence of God and Human Suffering

According to the Holy Qur'ān, our present life, with all its joys and sufferings, is merely transitory and illusionary. The passage of human life continues after crossing the valley of death. Our present life is but temporary and fleeting, and the life after life is permanent and perpetual. Death may be the ultimate human suffering in this world, but it is certainly not the end of life. Death is just like a door through which we have to pass to enter into a new dimension of life. In Islām, the next life is a reality beyond any doubt. Both the dimensions of human life—the life in this world and life yet to come—are welded together, one merging into the other like a splendid waterfall turning into a mighty river. The only difference is this that the second phase of human life is reflective of how we conduct ourselves in the first phase of life. The joys as well as the sufferings shall continue in the life Hereafter.

Therefore, according to Islāmic perspective, many who might have lived a life full of sufferings in this transitory world may enjoy the most blissful and everlasting life in the next world in what is known as the Heaven; and many who

might have enjoyed sinful pleasures of this material world, may go through a grievous torment in life yet to come in what is known as the Hell. It all depends on how we carry out ourselves under given circumstances in this life.

Islām acknowledges that life is full of suffering, starting as early as the very process of human conception in a mother's womb and during the process of childbirth. In the Holy Qur'ān, we read,

And We [that is, GOD] have enjoined on man to be good to his parents—his mother bears him in suffering after suffering of weakness... (31:15)

Again, we read,

There has, certainly, come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing worth mentioning. We created man from a mingled sperm-drop which We cause to pass through trials; then We might try him; so We made him hearing, seeing. We have shown him the way [giving him full freedom of choice], whether he be grateful or ungrateful. (76:2-4)

Again, we read in the Holy Qur'ān:

And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother bears him with pain, and brings him forth with pain [of childbirth]... (46:16)

Not only both the mother and the new born baby have to go through a tremendous painful suffering in the process of

child-birth, the Holy Qur'ān also acknowledges the existence of human suffering in various forms throughout human experience.

First, there are natural disasters—the climatic tragedies like earthquakes, floods, lightening, storms and famines. We can also include in such calamities the outbreak of contagious, epidemic and endemic diseases, plagues and pestilence. Moreover, there are innumerable illnesses and bodily sufferings.

These calamities and diseases do occur in consequence of a wider circle of natural laws that are necessary to exist in the vast universe, in which human life is an important but still a very small portion.

The laws of nature, that sometimes cause these sufferings, are put in place by God, the Creator, actually to support and evolve life on the earth in its totality. If these natural laws are taken out of the universal design of God, the Creator, the very existence of every living thing will be jeopardized. Therefore, the disasters that are caused by natural laws are no reflection of the Creator's cruelty over humans. According to the Holy Qur'ān, the study of natural phenomenon makes us understand that, despite the devastation suffered by some humans, God's Mercy (rahmah) is the most overwhelming attribute in Nature that creates, maintains and evolves all forms of life including human life.

Secondly, there are the man-made inflictions that cause other humans to suffer physical pain and mental anguish and sometimes even death, such as, false accusation,

wrongful imprisonment, kidnapping, rape, theft, physical and emotional abuse, economical exploitation, slavery, wrongful occupation of other's property and land, war and holocaust. The list of these sinful acts and social and international crimes is very long indeed. We may also add to the list the environmental destruction and pollution caused by us humans.

These and similar other inflictions caused by some are due to the abuse of what we call the freedom of man's will. And, we certainly cannot say that freedom of will is an evil in itself. Without free will, man would lose the very essence of his existence. Therefore, causing suffering, pain and death to others through the misuse and abuse of one's free will, humans remain responsible to God, and not God to humans.

To eliminate suffering caused by humans, God has commanded us not to inflict any harm on others, and those who do so, must face the consequences. Therefore, to establish, a JUST society is one of the most important obligations taught by Islām. Those who may escape the corporal punishment in this world, for them God's punishment shall be waiting in the life to come.

Thirdly, there are acts of "self-inflicted suffering": These could be accidental or intentional. The Holy Qur'ān prohibits inflicting self-injuries, specifically committing of suicide. The sufferings that we may inflict upon ourselves are mostly caused by our mental condition that we have the choice to control with or without the help of others. These miseries are usually caused by our anger, jealousy, depression, or getting into addiction, such as, drug-abuse, alcoholism, and gambling. For all these kind of self-inflicted sufferings, man

himself remains responsible and accountable to God, and not the vice-versa. God is ever ready to forgive our trespasses against our own souls.

The Holy Qur'ān is very clear on this point that even the smallest of an action—good or bad—committed in this life by any human being will not go waste!

Then whoso does an atom's weight of good will see it, And whoso does an atom's weight of evil will also see it. (99:8-9)

Again, the Holy Qur'ān says:

Every soul shall taste of death. And you shall be paid in full your rewards only on the day of Resurrection. So whosoever is removed away from the Fire [of Hell] and is made to enter Heaven [that person] has indeed attained his goal. And the life of this world is nothing but an illusionary enjoyment. You shall surely be tried in your possessions and in your persons... (3:186-187)

Therefore, according to the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān, it does not matter how much a person suffers in this world, as long as he or she is engaged, according to his or her capacity, in repelling the evil and doing the good works. The joys and comforts of the life yet to come are far greater, unparalleled, and everlasting as compared with human sufferings of this life! The human sufferings of the present life are termed as “a trial”—a test, an evaluation and a validation to measure the success and strength of each human soul, its capacity to do good deeds.

Therefore, according to the Holy Qur'ān, all the tragedy, affliction, anguish, grief and fear that we may have to go through in this life are actually tests and trials from God. If we succeed in the test by remaining prayerful and patient, showing complete perseverance, and trust in God during the period of suffering, and we continue doing good deeds, and we avoid evil thoughts and actions, then the end result is that God grants us boundless joy, happiness and His everlasting pleasure.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

Do you think that you will enter heaven while there has not come to you the like of that which came to those who passed away before you? Poverty and afflictions befell them and they were violently shaken until the Messenger and those who believed along with him said, 'When will the help of Allah come?' Yea, surely the help of Allah is nigh. (2:215)

Thus, by understanding the continuous nature of life in its totality, the human suffering does not remain an issue to be settled by challenging the existence or goodness of our Lord God—the Creator. Once we are able to conceive and believe that every soul has to enter another dimension of life by passing through the door of death, only then we can fully appreciate the existence of God Who reaches the depth of our souls to enhance its strength through our endurance of sufferings, and thus makes us the winners in the long run.

The Holy Qur'ān further elaborates this point by narrating to us how all the men and women of God, the

prophets, the messengers and the righteous persons—both male and female—have gone through all sorts of human sufferings. None of them ever lost their hope, their trust in God’s help. They endured all the pain, anguish and fear with utmost patience, sincerity and perseverance. At the end, they all were the winners.

For example, Adam and Eve had to encounter the devil—the whispering tempter—that made them suffer to forget a clear commandment of God. As a consequence, they lost Paradise and entered into a life of labor and pain. But still they retained dominion over all other creatures on the earth and received forgiveness of God. Abraham was put to many terrible trials; the most difficult one was to offer his first-born child in sacrifice. He ended up being the father of nations—his progeny becoming countless like the stars in heavens. Job’s (Ayub’s) sufferings are proverbial, but he retained his confidence in Divine Goodness, and his suffering became a medium of refining his righteousness. Moses had to run for his life under the threats of Pharaoh and for 40 long years he suffered many pains and disappointments by the hands of his enemies and his own people, but he never lost his faith in the Almighty God. And we all know the story of Jesus and his mother Mary. Virgin Mary had to suffer the grievous insults from her people on becoming pregnant prior to getting married. Jesus the beloved of God suffered physical torture and was put on the cross with the intent to be killed on the wood—to die an accursed death! But God did not forsake him, and God did honor his mother. Now billions revere them both as innocent and sinless.

It is also a matter recorded in history that the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad (may peace and blessings of God be on him) was the most successful man both in the realms of religion as well as in temporal affairs. He has been acknowledged as the most influential man in history. His main task was, on the one hand, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, to establish firm faith in the existence of ONE GOD—and to establish perpetual worship of the Most-Loving and Most Merciful God; and, on the other hand, his mission was to establish a just and benevolent social order. Despite tremendous personal pain and anguish that he was made to suffer through his life on this earth, he achieved an unparalleled success in both the domains

After receiving an answer to his heart-rendering prayers concerning the moral depreciation, social injustice, lawlessness and mutual fights in the fragmented nation of his fellow countrymen in Arabia, when he started his mission as the Prophet of God to remove all social, moral and spiritual ills around him, he suffered the most bitter persecution and oppression at the hands of his own people—those very people that he wanted to help and guide. He was scorned and derided, abused and tormented. Trash was thrown in his way, and filth was laid on his head. The vagabonds beat him up most severely; throwing stones and rocks, making him bleed almost to death. Some of his followers were brutally murdered. Some of his dear ones were split apart alive by tying their legs to two strong camels and making them run into opposite directions. Some of the women, who believed in him, were butchered shamelessly by his enemies.

Even when he and his followers were forced to leave their hometown Mecca and they settled in Medina—a town more than 200 miles away from Mecca, the enemy did not allow them to live in peace, and initiated armed attacks and made them suffer the horrors of war. The brutal enemy mutilated the dead bodies of his dear ones. They cut their noses and ears, and in one instance even took out the liver and chewed it raw. He himself received severe injuries on his face in one of such battles.

Not only that, he suffered many personal domestic tragedies in his life. He lost some of his children while they were young, and some died in his lifetime as grownups. He had four sons, but all of them passed away in their infancy. Despite all the enormous human suffering throughout his life, Holy Prophet Muḥammad (may peace and blessings of God be on him) always had a warm smile on face. Throughout his life he remained cheerful and a tremendous source of peace of mind and comfort for all who got in touch with him. He succeeded in establishing a firm faith in the existence of God in the hearts of thousands upon thousands, and he successfully replaced injustice with equity, cruelty and oppression with forgiveness and mercy.

By studying his personal sufferings juxtaposed on his most successful life, and through his practical demonstration of compassion, peace, comfort, service to others, love for all and hatred for none, we find the most shining example in the person of the Most Noble Prophet Muḥammad (may peace and blessings of God be on him) of reconciling the existence of a Compassionate and Loving God and human suffering. It was not merely an intellectual reconciliation; it was a factual

and most impressive reconciliation between God and human suffering in action.

Therefore, for us Muslims and all others, the important matter is to learn how to handle human sufferings, retaining full faith in a Loving God! The Holy Qur'ān teaches us,

... truly righteous is ... the patient in poverty and afflictions and the steadfast in the time of war; ... (2:178)

Again, in the Holy Qur'ān we read,

O ye who believe, seek [God's] help through perseverance and Prayer; surely, Allah is with those who patiently persevere [Ṣābirīn]. And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah that they are dead; nay they are living, only you perceive not [their life]. And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits [of your toil]; but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. Who, when a misfortune overtakes them, say, 'Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.' It is these on whom descend blessings from their Lord and also mercy [raḥmah], and it is these who are rightly guided. (2:154-158)

At the end, I would like to say, All praise belongs to God, the Lord of all the universes, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, and the Master of the Day of Judgment.

(This paper was presented at an Interfaith Symposium in Zion City, Illinois, on December 8, 2002.)

Signs of Allāh

What is a Sign of Allāh?

A “Sign” is a practical operation or a verbal expression of God’s will intended to lead men to a Divine purpose, to establish a relationship between God and His people. In the Holy Qur’ān, a “Sign” (Āyah; pl. āyāt) has several connotations. Most commonly, an Āyah is understood to be a communication from God. All the verses (complete lines) of the Qur’ān are called “Signs” (āyāt) because every one of them constitutes a sign of guidance and wisdom for mankind to stay close to God.

And thus do We make clear the Signs, that
they may be admonished and that they may
return to Us. (7:175)

However, a “Sign” of God, in the real sense of the word, means a wonder and miracle, a spectacular event that appears from God to lead men to know Him. For example, Moses performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the wilderness. A logical and convincing argument is also known as a “Sign” (Āyah). In addition, the Qur’ān uses the term “Signs” for all natural phenomena. A careful study of natural things and their functions tends to give strong indication that there is a creator and sustainer of all that

exists Who is All-Wise and Benevolent. Sometimes, a prophet/messenger of God also shows a Sign as a warning. Such a Sign becomes a pending judgment on unbelief. The Qur'ān declares,

And We send no Signs but to warn. (17:60)

God also shows His Signs against His enemies, the sinners, as punishment for their rejection of truth. For instance, Noah's flood was one of such Signs (54: 16). The greatest of all the Signs is to become one with God, to "see" Him by attaining the utmost nearness to Him. This Sign was bestowed in its full glory upon the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him),

Surely, he saw the greatest of the Signs of his Lord. (53:19)

Signs and Symbolism

There are signs mentioned in the Qur'ān that are symbolic. For example, the quickening of the earth after its death is a symbolic sign for the revival of peoples who are morally and spiritually dead.

Has not the time arrived for those who believe that their hearts should be humbled at the remembrance of Allāh and at the truth which has come down to them, and that they should not become like those who were given the Book before them, but their hearts were hardened, and many of them are wicked? Know that Allāh is now quickening the earth after its

death. We have made the Signs manifest to you, that you may understand. (57:17-18)

The worldly life is temporary and illusionary; materialism is discouraged by the Qur'ān.

The example of life on earth is like that of water that we cause to descend from heaven. Then with it mingles the vegetation of the earth of which both the people and the cattle partake. It continues to be so until the earth blossoms forth in full bloom and ripens into loveliness—then while those who possess it deem themselves supreme over it, there suddenly descends Our decree at night or during the day. Then We render it a field that is mown down as if it had not existed the day before. Thus do We expound the Signs for a people who reflect. (10:25)

Variety of Signs:

The Holy Qur'ān also mentions a variety of other significant Signs in different connotations. For example, “The Station of Abraham” (3:97); the “Ark” or a “contented heart” given to Israelites (2:248); a person (Prophet Ezekiel) who saw in a vision that he slept for 100 years (2:260); the Sign of a “she-camel” that Prophet Ṣāliḥ gave to his tribe Thamūd (7:74); “Mary and her son Jesus” were Signs for the children of Israel (23:51), (5:76); “the table of food” given to Jesus was also a Sign (5:114); “spoils of war” are mentioned as a Sign for the believers (48:21); “adornments of Allāh”

including “good and pure provisions” (7:33); He it is Who shows you His Signs, and sends down provision for you from heaven; but none pays heed save he who turns to Him (40:14); economical differences (39:53); “clothes” to cover human shame, and the raiment of righteousness being the best dress (7:27)—all these are called “Signs of Allāh” in the Holy Qur’ān.

Signs are shown through Prophets of God

God shows Signs in favor of prophets and their followers as a proof that they are truthful and that He is on their side. Prophetic Signs have two revelatory elements. First, the announcement of a revealed prophecy for a future event and, second, the symbolism of that event. When a Sign takes place, overcoming all impediments, the authority of the prophet showing the Sign is attested that he is from God.

Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before thee, but when he sought to attain what he aimed at, Satan put obstacles in the way what he sought after. But Allāh removes the obstacles that are placed by Satan. Then Allāh firmly establishes His Signs. And Allāh is All-Knowing, Wise. (22:53)

Objective of the Signs

The objective is to establish the truth, to provide guidance, salvation and righteousness to mankind through Gnosis of the Divine, the One God. We read in the Qur'ān,

He it is Who sends down clear Signs to His servant, that He may bring you out of every kind of darkness into the light. And verily, Allāh is Compassionate and Merciful to you. (57:10)

Referring to Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him), the Qur'ān says, he is

A Messenger, who recites unto you the clear Signs of Allāh, that he may bring those who believe and do good deeds out of every kind of darkness into light... (65:12)

He it is Who has raised among the Unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves who recites unto them His Signs, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest misguidance. (62:3, [3:165])

These are the Signs of Allāh, We rehearse them to thee while they comprise the truth; and Allāh wills not any wrong to His creatures. (3:109)

The Verses of the Qur'ān are Signs of Allāh

... These are verses [āyāt—Signs] of the clear Book. (12:2, 26:3, 28:3)

... These are the verses [Signs] of the Book that is full of wisdom. (10:2)

... These are the verses [Signs] of the Book. And that which has been revealed to thee from your Lord is the truth, but most men believe not. (13:2)

... These are verses [Signs] of the Book and of the illuminating Qur'ān. (15:2, [27:2])

And remember what is rehearsed in your houses of the Signs of Allāh and of wisdom. Verily Allāh is the Knower of subtleties, All-Aware. (33:35)

And let them not turn thee away from the Signs of Allāh, after they have been sent down to thee; and call mankind to your Lord, and be not of those who attribute partners to Him. (28:88)

The chapters (Sūrahs) of the Qur'ān and the entire Qur'ān are also referred to as comprising of manifest “Signs.”

This is a Sūrah which We have revealed and which We have made obligatory; and We have revealed therein clear Signs, that you may take heed. (24:2)

Thus We have sent it (the Qur'ān) down as manifest Signs and surely Allāh guides whom He will. (22:17)

This is a Book which We have revealed to thee, full of blessings, that they may reflect over its verses [Signs], and that those gifted with understanding may take heed. (38:30)

A Book, the verses [Signs] of which have been expounded in detail ... in eloquent language ... for a people who have knowledge. (41:4, [41:45])

And in like manner We sent down the Book to thee, so those whom We have given true knowledge of the Book believe in it (the Qur'ān); and of these Meccans also there are some who believe in it. And none but the ungrateful deny our Signs... Nay, it is collection of clear Signs in the hearts of those who are given knowledge. And none but the wrongdoers deny Our Signs. And they say, 'Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say, The Signs are with Allāh, and certainly I am a clear Warner. (29:48, 50-51)

Some of the Signs are open to interpretations

He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it are verses [Signs] that are decisive

in meaning—they are the basis of the Book—and there are others that are susceptible of different interpretations. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue such thereof as are susceptible of different interpretations, seeking discord and seeking wrong interpretation of it. And none knows its right interpretation except Allāh and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, ‘We believe in it; the whole [of the Qur’ān] is from our Lord.’—And none heed except those gifted with understanding.— (3:8)

All the Prophets and Messengers rehearsed the Signs, by the leave of God, to their contemporaries.

The Prophets and Messengers were made distinct from others by giving them Signs for the guidance of their people.

And thy Lord would never destroy the towns until He has raised in the mother-town thereof a Messenger, reciting unto them Our Signs; nor would We destroy the towns unless the people thereof were wrongdoers. (28:60)

And, indeed, We sent Messengers before thee [Muḥammad], and We gave them wives and children. And it is not possible for a Messenger to bring a Sign save by the command of Allāh. For every term there is a divine decree. (13:39)

And We did send Messengers before thee; of them are some whom We have mentioned to

thee, and of them there are some whom We have not mentioned to thee; and it is not possible for any Messenger to bring a Sign except by the leave of Allāh. But when Allāh's decree came, the matter was decided with truth, and then there perished those who uttered falsehoods. (40:79)

And He shows you His Signs; which then of the Signs of Allāh will you deny? (40:82)

'O company of Jinn and men! did not the Messengers come to you from among yourselves who related to you My Signs and who warned you the meeting of this your day?'
... (6:131)

Noah reminded his people of their duty through the Signs of Allāh (10:72). Moses was given great Signs to perform:

And We did send Moses, with Our Signs and manifest authority. (40:24)

Prophets after Moses continued to show Signs of Allāh:

... We brought forth generations after Moses, and life became prolonged for them. And thou were not a dweller among the people of Midian, rehearsing Our Signs unto them; but it is We who sent Messengers. (28:46)

Ask the children of Israel how many clear Signs We gave them. But whoso changes the gift of Allāh after it has come to him, surely, then, Allāh is severe in punishing. (2:212)

Bartering the Signs of Allāh!

“Selling” or “bartering” the Signs of Allāh is another significant phrase used in the Holy Qur’ān.

O children of Israel! Remember My favor that I bestowed upon you, and fulfill your covenant with Me, I will fulfill My covenant with you, and Me alone should you fear. And believe in what I have sent down which fulfils that which is with you, and be not the first to disbelieve therein, and barter not My Signs for a paltry price, and take protection in Me alone. (2:41-42, [5:45])

Bartering of God’s Signs with something lesser in value means to discard the covenant made with God and, instead, give precedence to worldly life and material objectives that have no real value.

And barter not the covenant of Allāh for a paltry price. Surely, that which is with Allāh is better for you if you only knew. (16:96)

The Qur’ān has very strong words for those who indulge in such a losing business.

Those who conceal that which Allāh has sent down of the Book [that is, the Signs] and take in exchange for that a paltry price, they fill their bellies with nothing but fire. Allāh will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And for them is a grievous punishment. It is they who have taken error in

exchange of guidance and punishment for forgiveness. How great is their endurance of Fire. That is because Allāh has sent down the Book with the truth; and surely, they who disagree concerning the Book are gone far in enmity. (2:175-177)

Abrogation of some of the Signs!

Based on certain statements in the Holy Qur'ān, the issue of “abrogation” of some revealed verses is discussed by scholars and commentators of the Qur'ān.

Whatever Sign We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof... (2:107)

Misunderstanding the meaning of this verse, erroneous opinion was formed as if some of the verses of the Qur'ān were revealed to cancel out some other verses of the Qur'ān. But the upholders of this opinion could not agree among themselves how many verses of the Qur'ān are “abrogated.” Some commentators claimed that up to five hundred verses were abrogated, but then there were others who thought that only five verses of the Qur'ān were abrogated! Furthermore, it was not clear whether the abrogated verses were still kept as an integral part of the text of the Qur'ān or they were completely deleted from the text. If these verses were not taken out of the Qur'ān, then what was the need to keep them in the text? However, a careful study of the Qur'ān makes it clear that the “replacement” or “abrogation” of the Signs is not in reference to the revealed verses of the Qur'ān

itself. The reference is to the revealed messages given to previous Prophets of God. Some previous revelations had become either antiquated or forgotten. The new communications sent down to Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) replaced them. The Qur’ān superseded the instructions given through some of the past Prophets. Taking the word “Āyah” in the sense of a legal code, the “abrogation of Signs” would mean that in certain matters, the Law of Islām is different from some of the previously revealed religious instructions. Obviously, in such a case the followers of the previous scriptures would not like this change, and they would erroneously regard it as an evidence of the Qur’ān being a forgery.

And when we bring one Sign [Āyah] in place of another—and Allāh knows best what He reveals—they say, ‘You are but a fabricator.’ Nay, most of them know not. (16:102)

The previous Scriptures were meant for specific people and for a limited time. The verses of the Qur’ān gave comprehensive and global instructions to mankind for all times to come.

This is a Book whose verses have been made unchangeable and then they have been expounded in detail. It is from One Wise, and All-Aware. (11:2)

Abrogation of some of the Signs may also mean that if the disbelievers express their repentance during a course of given time, a “warning of punishment” promised to the

rejecters of the truth is averted, or replaced by a Sign of mercy and forgiveness from God.

Signs as Miracles and Wonders

The Holy Qur'ān is replete with references to Signs of Allāh as miracles and wonders that appeared to lead men to God: God's Prophets and Messengers performed them. For example, the Qur'ān declares,

... We sent Moses with our Signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they rejected them. Behold, then, what was the end of those who created disorder! (17:104, [10:76])

And of a truth We gave Moses nine manifest signs... (17:102, [27:13-14, 11:97])

And We did send Moses with Our Signs, saying, 'Bring forth your people from every kind of darkness into light, and remind them of the days of Allāh.' Surely, therein are Signs for every patient and thankful person. (14:6)

Jesus was also sent to the House of Israel with miracles. Allāh directed him to say to the Israelites,

... 'I come to you with a Sign from your Lord, which is, that I will fashion out for you a creation out of clay after the manner of a bird, then I will breathe into it a new spirit and it will become a soaring being by the command of Allāh; and I will heal the night-blind and the leprous, and I will quicken the dead, by the

command of Allāh; and I will announce to you what you will eat and what you will store up in your houses. Surely, therein is a Sign for you, if you be believers.’ (3:50)

Obviously, here Jesus is speaking in symbolic language. He was given the Sign to transform his humble and poor disciples into saints soaring high in lofty regions of spirituality. He cleansed them of many moral impurities, healed them of spiritual blindness and revived them from dead to forge a living connection with God Almighty. The important point to note is that all such Signs and wonders are performed by a Prophet ‘by the command of Allāh.’ Thus, in reality it is the power and authority of the Divine presence working behind the Signs.

Signs in the Creation

The Holy Qur’ān emphatically declares that cosmos is replete with the Signs that lead to an awe-inspiring recognition of the Glorious God.

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water that Allāh send down from the sky and quickens therewith 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. (2:165)

The significance of these Signs becomes evident to men of understanding who remember Allāh while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth. They come to the conclusion that their Lord has not created all this in vain (3:191-192).

Verily, it is Allāh Who causes the grain and the date-stone to sprout. He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living. That is Allāh; wherefore, then, are you turned back? He causes the break of the day; and He made the night for rest and the sun and the moon for reckoning time. That is the decree of the Mighty, the Wise. And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you may follow the right direction with their help amid the deep darkness of the land and the sea. We have explained the Signs in detail for a people who possess knowledge. And He it is Who has produced you from a single soul and there is for you a home and a lodging. We have explained the Signs in detail for a people who understand. (6:96-99)

Diverse aspects of natural phenomenon are named in great detail as Signs to prove that God the Creator exists and is in full control over all His creation. In this category, several Signs are mentioned in the Qur'ān inviting us to study them seriously and draw conclusions that a

Benevolent, Wise and All-Powerful Creator is worthy of our worship. The following are some of the natural Signs.

Plains, mountains and rivers (13:4, 21:32); diverse tracts adjoining one another (13:5); winds as bearers of glad tidings (13:47); lightening and rain (30:25); dead land revived with water descending down from the clouds (57:18)—And the dead earth is a Sign for them: We quicken it and bring forth therefrom grain, gardens of date-palms and grapes, and We have caused springs to gush forth therein (36:34-35); crops and fruits of all kind (6:100); trees and pastures (16:11); things growing out of the earth in varying colors (16:14); various kinds of vegetations (20:54-55); gardens of vines, corn-fields, and date-palms, growing together from one root and others not so growing, being watered with the same water and yet some of them excelling others in fruits (13:5); intoxicating drinks and wholesome fruits (16:68); all sorts of animals (42:30); domesticated animals—the cattle, horses, mules and asses (16:6-9); honeybees (16:69); birds (16:80); sea, fish and pearls (16:15); creation of the universe from a closed up mass (21:31); water as the source of all forms of life (21:31); creation of humans from dust (elements of the earth) and passing through evolutionary stages (30:21); creation of the two opposite sexes (13:4); creating of spouses to find peace of mind, and putting the emotions of love and tenderness in between them (30:22); procreation from an insignificant drop of fluid (16:5); diversity of tongues and colors among human races (30:23); sleep and death (39:43).

Commenting on the sad situation that there are many who ignore the Signs of Allāh as evidence of a Creator, the Holy Qur’ān declares,

And how many a Sign is there in the heavens and the earth, which they pass by, turning away from it. (12:106)

Asking for Signs

The Holy Qur'ān details the skeptical attitude of those who remain determined to reject the truth. They keep on asking for more signs: And those who have no knowledge say,

... 'Why does Allah not speak to us, or a Sign come to us direct?' Likewise said those before them what was similar to their saying. Their hearts are all alike. We have certainly made the Signs plain for a people who firmly believe. We have sent thee with the Truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner. And thou wilt not be questioned concerning the inmates of Hell. (2:119-120)

Nay, they say, 'These are but confused dreams; nay, he has forged it; nay, he is but a poet. Let him then bring us a Sign just as the former Prophets were sent with Signs.' (21:6)

The rejecters do not hesitate demanding for some weird Signs, such as asking the Prophet to dig a deep channel into the earth or to climb up a ladder unto heaven (6:37); to cause pieces of sky to fall down on them (26:188). Demanding new Signs seems to be an old habit of the disbelievers. For example, in the New Testament we read Jesus being asked to show a Sign,

The Pharisees also with Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but ye not discern the signs of the time? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed. (Matt.16:1-4, [Mark 8:11-13, Luke 11:29-30, John 2:18]).

To accede to the demand of showing more Signs would be a futile exercise. God seldom shows Signs on demand. Asking for a fresh Sign implies that the Signs already shown were not enough and did not establish the Prophet's truth. Therefore, God requires the disbelievers to reflect on the past Signs and get a lesson. And they say,

‘Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord?’ Has there not come to them the clear evidence in what is contained in the former Scriptures? (20:134).

Rejection of God's Signs

Denial of fresh Signs remained a serious flaw among generation after generation among the disbelievers. The Holy Qur'ān not only identifies the reasons of disbelief, but

also makes clear the drastic moral and spiritual consequences of such a denial of truth. The Holy Qur'ān with English Translation and Commentary published under the auspices of Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, comments,

The opponents of God's Prophets are in the habit of rejecting their claims on the basis of mere hearsay and make belief. The result of such a hasty rejection is that the hearts of rejecters become sealed and they become deprived of the power to understand the arguments and Signs which God shows to establish the truth of His Messengers... the hearts are sealed only when disbelievers refuse to make use of their God-given power of reasoning and understanding. (Vol. II, p. 813)

The Holy Qur'ān makes it clear that a clear warning was given to mankind from the very beginning that the rejecters of God's Signs would be severely punished:

Then Adam learnt from his Lord certain words (of prayer). So He turned towards him with mercy. Surely, He is oft-Returning (with compassion, and is) Merciful. We said: 'Go forth, all of you, from here. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso shall follow My guidance, on them (shall come) no fear, nor shall they grieve. But they who will disbelieve and treat our Signs as lies, these shall be the inmates of Fire; therein shall (they) abide. (2:38-40)

Unbelievers who cry lies to God's Signs are referred to at numerous places in the Holy Qur'ān.

... Signs and Warners avail not a people who will not believe. (10:102)

Surely, those who deviate (from the right path) with respect to Our Signs are not hidden from Us. Is he, then, who is cast into the Fire better or he who comes out safe on the day of Resurrection? ... (41:41)

The Holy Qur'ān explains by telling us,

And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allāh or gives the lie to His Signs? Surely, the unjust shall not prosper. (6:22)

Evil is the case of the people who treat Our Signs as lies. And it was their own souls that they wronged. (7:178)

And those who reject Our Signs; We will draw them to destruction step by step in a manner which they do not know. (7:183)

Those who took their religion for a pastime and sport, and whom the life of the world beguiled, this day, then, shall We forget them as they forgot the meeting of this day of theirs, and as they used to deny Our Signs. (7:52)

Those who dispute concerning the Signs of Allāh without any authority having come to them; grievously hateful is this in the sight of Allāh and in the sight of those who believe.

Thus does Allāh seal up the heart of every arrogant, haughty person. (40:36)

... They rejected the Signs of their Lord so We destroyed them for their sins. And We drowned the People of the Pharaoh, for they were all wrongdoers. (8:55)

... We cut off the last remnant of those who rejected Our Signs... (7:73)

... their works are in vain... (7:148).

... those who disbelieve in the Signs of Allāh, these it is who are the losers... (39:64);

... and they ruin none but their own selves; only they perceive not (6:27);

... they incurred the wrath of Allāh... (2:62);

(they were given) “severe punishment” (3:12); a painful punishment (3:21, 34:39); smitten with wretchedness (3:112); the inmates of Hell (5:86, 17:99, 22:52, 22:73, 39:72, 57: 20, 18:107). Those who reject Our Signs are deaf and dumb (6:40). Surely, humiliation before Allāh and a severe punishment shall smite the offenders because of their plotting (6:125, 22:58).

Those who dispute concerning the Signs of Allāh without any authority having come to them—there is nothing in their breasts but a feeling of greatness which they will never attain. So, seek refuge in Allāh. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (40:57)

That is the reward of the enemies of Allāh—the Fire. For them there will be an abiding home therein as requital because they used to deny Our Signs. (41:29)

Those who oppose Allāh and His Messengers will surely be abased as those who before them were abased; and We have already sent down clear Signs. And the disbelievers have a painful punishment. (58:6)

Woe, on that day, unto those who reject,

Who deny the Day of Judgment.

And none denies it save every sinful transgressor,

Who, when Our Signs are recited unto him, says: “Fables of the ancients!”

Nay, but that which they have earned has rusted their hearts.

Nay, they will surely be debarred from seeing their Lord on that day.

Then, verily, they will burn in Hell.

Then it will be said to them, “this is what you used to reject.” (83:11-18)

Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the Signs of Allāh, and mocked at them. (30:11)

Signs of Allāh will Never cease to Come

Commenting on the verse ‘And nothing could hinder Us from sending Signs, except that the former people rejected them’ (17:60), the editors of the English Translation and Commentary write,

The verse beautifully states that heavenly Signs will never cease to appear. It ... proceeds to refute and demolish the only possible objection against the appearance of the heavenly Signs. The objection is: When the people to whom the Signs were first shown did not profit by them, where was the warrant that their successors would do so? The arguments given to this objection are:

(a) If the rejection of heavenly Signs had been a reasonable ground, no Prophet after the very first Prophet—Adam—would have appeared. But this did not happen and fresh Prophets continued to appear in all ages and fresh signs continued to be shown at their hands, which showed that the rejection of the Signs never proved a barrier in the way of appearance of new Signs.

(b) Prophets are sent in the world in order to warn wrongdoers of their aggressions and iniquities and of the impending divine punishment in consequence of those iniquities.

Any such punishment without a previous warning and without showing Signs would be contrary to divine mercy. (English Translation and Commentary, Vol. 3, pp. 1444-1445)

Those who believe in the Signs of Allāh

O children of Adam! if Messengers come to you from among yourselves, rehearsing My Signs unto you, then whoso shall fear God and do good deeds, on them shall come no fear nor shall they grieve. (7:36)

Some of the rewards bestowed upon those who accept the Signs of Allāh are: Mercy and forgiveness (6:54); steadfastness, resignation in God's will (7:127); fear of God, holding Him in reverence (23:59).

True believers are only those whose hearts tremble when the name of Allāh is mentioned, and when His Signs are recited to them they increase their faith, and who put their trust in their Lord. Who observe prayer and spend out of that which We have provided for them. These it is who are true believers. They have grades of ranks with their Lord, as well as forgiveness and an honorable provision. (8:3-5)

These are the people on whom Allāh bestowed His blessings from among the

Prophets, of the posterity of Adam, and of those whom We carried in the Ark with Noah, and of the posterity of Abraham and Israel; and they are those whom We guided and chose. When the Signs of Gracious God were recited unto them, they fell down, prostrating themselves before God and weeping. (19:59)

And We made among them leaders, who guided others by Our command, while they themselves were steadfast and had firm faith in Our Signs. (32:25)

O My servants, there is no fear for you this day, nor shall you grieve;

You believed in Our Signs and submitted,

Enter you the Garden, you and your wives, honored and happy. (43:69-71)

Signs of the Latter Days

The Holy Qur'ān narrates many earthly and heavenly Signs, some in metaphorical language, as indications to recognize the Latter Days when the Second Coming of the Messiah and the final triumph of Islām are predicted to take place. The Holy Qur'ān reinforces the Signs as documented in some previous Scriptures.

In the New Testament, for example, some of the Signs were foretold by Jesus about the coming of the Son of man.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon

shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other. (Matt. 24:30, 31)

And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. (Luke 21:11)

In the Holy Qur'ān, similar and additional Signs are given: Only in Sūrah Al-Takwir, Chapter 81, the following Signs are mentioned.

Special eclipses of the sun and the moon; religious leaders (the stars) becoming corrupt and losing their spiritual light; the mountains blown away and passages made through them; replacement of camels by better and swifter means of transportation; animals gathered together; primitive people settles in organized colonies; flow of rivers diverted and linked through canals; large battle-ships fighting in open seas; sea-waters getting ablaze with fire; oceans joined together; mass immigrations of rural populations towards urban areas; interaction and intercommunication becoming fast; vast and rapid circulation of printed material; amazing progress in sciences

and technology; global wars and wide-spread natural catastrophes. Then, after a long moral decline, the re-emergence of Islām shall occur. The spiritual darkness shall be dispelled and a brilliant new day shall dawn on Islām through the Promised Messiah—appearing from the East.

And say: ‘All praise belongs to Allāh; He will soon show you His signs, and you will know them.’ And thy Lord is not unaware of what you do. (27:94)

Soon We will show them Our Signs appearing on the horizon and within themselves until it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is Witness over all things? (41:54)

The Decalogue Enhanced

Approximately three thousand and four hundred years ago, Moses and his followers, after escaping from Egypt and arriving at Mount Sinai, received the Ten Commandments. According to Deuteronomy 5:22, the entire assembly of Israel heard the great voice of God, ‘out of the midst of the fire, of cloud, and of the thick darkness.’ The Ten Commandments, thus received directly from God, could be grouped into two sections. The first four commandments related to God Himself, and the remaining six concerned man’s relation to his neighbor. May be that’s why the finger of God inscribed the Decalogue on two separate stone tablets (Exodus 31:18).

With the passage of time, many supportive rules and rituals were developed around the Ten Commandments and a rigorous legal regulatory system was formed. Jesus retained the Mosaic dispensation of Law, but he did not preach its literal implementation. He emphasized the essence of Law, that is, the element of unconditional love for God and for one’s neighbor. He summed up the Mosaic Law into two great commandments. When asked by one of the Pharisees, a lawyer, which was the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus replied,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Unfortunately, the New Testament writers introduced Trinity in Christianity and thus compromised the first commandment concerning the Unity of God. Jesus himself was raised to the status of God, a joint partaker of the same Divine nature with Him.

The Holy Qur'ān expands both categories of commandments. For man's spiritual enhancement it provides guidance in detail about obligations toward God (Ḥuqūqullāh), and firmly establishes the Unity of God providing convincing arguments against the concept of Trinity and all forms of polytheism. For man's moral interaction with others, it establishes a comprehensive and realistic system of regulations dealing with man's obligations toward others (Ḥuqūq-ul-'ibād). The Holy Qur'ān not only reinforces the Ten Commandments given to Moses and the Children of Israel, it improves upon them for better implementation on a universal scale, and corrects the mistaken attitude of Christianity on both the fronts.

To Moses, God proclaimed the first commandment in the following words,

I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of

bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before Me. (Exodus 20:1-3, Deuteronomy 5:6-7).

The Holy Qur'ān declares,

And your God is One God; there is no God but He, the Gracious, the Merciful. (2:164)

And to Him belongs whatever is in heavens and the earth and to Him eternally belongs the right to determine the path. Will you then fear any other than Allāh. (16:53)

If there had been in both the heaven and the earth gods other than Allāh, then both the heaven and the earth would have ended up in chaos. Glorified then be Allāh, the Lord of the Throne, far above what they attribute to Him. (21:23)

The Holy Qur'ān also deals with the concept of Jesus being Divine, and rejects it as false. It proclaims,

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

... Holy is He and exalted far above what they attribute to Him! The Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son when He has no consort, and when He created everything and has knowledge of all things? (6:101-102)

Allāh has not taken unto Himself any son, nor is there any other god along with Him; in that case each god would, surely, had sought domination over others. Glorified be Allāh far above that which they allege; He is the Knower alike of the unseen and the seen. Exalted is He above all that which they associate with Him! (23:92, 93)

... So believe in Allāh and His messengers, and say not ‘They are three.’ Desist, it will be better for you. Verily, Allāh is only One God... (4:172)

The Holy Qur’ān makes it clear that the Unity of God (Tauhīd) has been a universal teaching proclaimed and practiced by all the Prophets of God throughout the ages. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Luqmān, Ṣāliḥ, Shu’aib, Moses and Jesus—all preached that God was One in His person, One in His attributes and One in His works. The Qur’ān rejects plurality of Godhead in any form. All the Prophets who followed Moses kept the first commandment and worshipped only One God. The Holy Qur’ān declares it to be the greatest of all the sins to associate any partner with Allāh. Allāh will not forgive a person who dies in a state of Shirk, that is, who worships other god(s) beside Allāh (4:117). The Holy Qur’ān declares,

... Surely, associating partners with Allah is a grievous wrong. (31:14)

Shun, therefore, the abomination of idols, and shun false speech,

Devoting all your worship and obedience to Allah, not associating anything with Him. And whoso associate anything with Allah, falls, as it were, from a height, and the birds snatch him away or the wind blows him away to a far off-place. (22:31, 32)

God created man as the best of all creations—as His vicegerent (Khalifah) on earth. To worship any entity other than One God throws man into abysmal spiritual degeneration.

... Shall I seek for you a god other than Allāh, while He has exalted you above all peoples? (7:141)

... Is Allāh better or that which they associate with Him? Or, Who created the heavens and the earth, and Who sent down water for you from the clouds wherewith We cause to grow beautiful orchards? You could not cause the trees to grow. Is there a god with Allāh? Nay, they are a people who deviate from the right path. Or, Who made the earth a place of resort, and placed rivers in its midst, and placed upon it firm mountains, and put a barrier between the two waters? Then, is there a god with Allāh? Nay, most of them know not. Or, Who answers the cry of the distressed person when he calls upon Him, and removes the affliction, and makes you inheritors of the earth? Then, is there a god with Allāh? Little is it that you reflect. (27:60-63)

The Second Commandment also emphasizes the Unity of God.

Thou shalt not make any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, not serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6, Deuteronomy 5:8-10)

The Jews upheld this commandment, but the early Christians took a departing turn and proclaimed that God Himself broke this commandment by appearing in the shape of a man. Apostle Paul wrote,

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:5-7)

Throughout the centuries, the Christians have graven images of Jesus believing him as Divine and they bow themselves to his image without any restraint.

The Holy Qur'ān makes it clear that God is invisible and incomprehensible,

Such is Allāh, your Lord. There is no god but He, the Creator of all things; so worship Him. And He is Guardian over every thing. Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. And He is the Incomprehensible, the All-Aware. (6:103-104)

Not only that, God is in full knowledge of everything Unseen.

And with Him are the keys of the Unseen; none knows them but He. (6:60)

The Holy Qur'ān negates the thought that an image or an idol is only an outward symbol of the Divine and that one needs it to remain focused on God. A true believer can worship the Unseen God with awe in his heart.

Verily, those who fear their Lord while He is hidden from them—for them is forgiveness and a great reward. And whether you conceal what you say or make it public, He knows full well what is in your breasts. (67: 13, 14)

Not to make any image of God was fundamental to Abraham's teachings to his people.

And before this We gave Abraham his guidance and We knew him well. When he said to his father and his people, 'What are these images to which you are so devoted?' They replied, 'We found our fathers worshipping

them.’ He said, ‘Then, you as well as your fathers have indeed been in manifest error.’
(21: 52-54)

The handmade images of God were broken by Abraham, and he argued with his people to prove emptiness of their religious tradition, saying,

... Do you then worship, instead of Allāh that which cannot profit you at all, nor harm you? (21:67)

The Holy Qur’ān also takes a serious note of the Israelites worshipping the golden calf.

The Third Commandment prohibits taking the name of God in vain.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain. (Exodus 20:7, Deuteronomy 5:11)

The Holy Qur’ān makes a special reference to this commandment explaining that truly vain is all that which prohibits one from righteousness. It is a great violation of God’s sacred name when used for acts of injustice and transgression.

And make not Allāh a target of your oaths that you may thereby abstain from doing good and acting righteously and making peace between men. And Allāh is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (2:225)

Specifically if one man swears foolishly and unjustly in the name of God, such an oath is nullified and he is made accountable for his ill-intention.

Allāh will not call you to account for such of your oaths as are vain, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned. And Allāh is Most Forgiving, Forbearing. (2:226)

Allāh will not take you to account for such of your oaths as are vain, but He will call you to account for the oaths which you take in earnest... (5:90)

In the Holy Qur'ān, God is called the Truth (Al-Ḥaqq) and all truth proceeds from Him. Vanity is equated with falsehood. Vanity and truth, therefore, cannot go together.

And confound not truth with falsehood nor hide the truth knowingly. (2:43)

... it is Allāh Who is the Truth, and that which they call on beside Him is falsehood and because Allāh is the High, the Great. (22:63)

The fourth commandment relates to the observance of the Sabbath day of the Jews.

Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass,

nor any of thy cattle, nor stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well thou. (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

The Sabbath was declared the day for rest, because, according to the Bible, after completing His creation in six days ‘God rested on the seventh day’ (Gen 2:2).

For in six days the Lord made heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:11)

But as a matter of fact, it was an early Babylonian tradition to curtail certain activities on that day and to consider it as holy based on astronomical reasons. The Mosaic Law enforced its sanctity by cessation from labor, traveling and trading, and dedicating it unconditionally to God. The penalty of defiling the Sabbath was death (Exodus 31:15; 25:2).

The Mosaic Law had fixed Saturday as the Sabbath—the chief time of public worship, but early Christianity shifted it to Sunday, the first day of the week in the Roman calendar, dedicated to the worship of the sun. Shamash was the great sun god of the ancient Middle East. Sunday was also to commemorate the “Lord’s Day” when Christ was “resurrected” like rising of the sun—a day to “Rejoice.”

The Holy Qur’ān refers to the violation of Sabbath day, and strongly rebukes the tendency among the Jews and the

Christians to break a covenant made with God by aping other people in worldly pursuits.

And We raised high above them the Mount while making a covenant with them, and We said to them, ‘Enter the gate submissively’ and We said to them, ‘Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath. And We took from them a firm covenant. (4:155)

And ask them concerning the town which stood by the sea. When they profaned the Sabbath... (7:164)

And surely you have known the end of those amongst you, who transgressed in the matter of Sabbath. So We said to them, ‘Be ye apes, despised.’ (2:66)

... We cursed the people of the Sabbath... (4:48)

The punishment for profaning the Sabbath was imposed upon those who differed regarding him, Abraham and his religion, and your Lord will surely judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning wherein they differed. (16: 125)

The Holy Qur’ān teaches us that Allāh does not need to take rest.

Allāh—there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Neither

slumber overtakes Him, nor does He fall sleep... (2:256)

He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He knows all things. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, then He settled Himself on the Throne. He knows what enters the earth and what comes out of it, and what comes down from heaven and what goes up into it. And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allāh sees all that you do. (57:4-5)

Therefore, there is no Sabbath day in Islām in the sense of God resting on the seventh day. On every Friday, however, there is a special congregational prayer in the early afternoon. The Arabic name for the day is ‘Jumu‘ah’ which means the day of gathering.

O ye who believe! when the call is made for Prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allāh, and leave off all business. That is best for you, if you only knew. And when the Prayer is over then disperse in the land and seek of Allāh’s grace, and remember much that you may prosper. (62:10-11)

Thus, before and after the Jumu‘ah prayer, the Muslims are allowed to work and earn their livelihood, keeping God in their hearts all the time.

Creation of the heavens and the earth in ‘six days’ is not a reference to our ‘days’ caused by the planet earth’s revolving on its axis. The Holy Qur’ān makes it clear that God’s ‘days’

are not the same as ours. A ‘day’ of God could be a thousand years long (22:48) or even fifty-thousand years long (70:50). Therefore, it is a reference to ‘six periods’ or ‘stages’ of extensive length of time. God’s settling on the Throne means Him being in full control of the natural laws that regulate the creation. God has, after creating everything, the final governing authority to sustain and develop His creation to its perfection—be it physical or spiritual. Therefore, the Holy Qur’ān, teaches us to glorify and worship the Creator, Sustainer and Nourisher (Rabb) of all the worlds (1:2).

The fifth Commandment in the Decalogue deals with honoring the parents—father and mother both. Honoring the parents is to be demonstrated through obedience (Gen. 27, 8, 13). God promises that an obedient child's life may be prolonged, and his/her provisions may be expanded. Islām confirms this commandment. In the Holy Qur’ān, showing kindness and thankfulness to parents comes next to the worship of God.

Your Lord has commanded, “Worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with kind words; and lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness; and say, ‘My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.’” (17:24-25)

A mother deserves special respect and kindness as she bears a child “in weakness upon weakness” (31:15). The Holy Qur’ān teaches that Muslims are to be kind and obedient to

their parents even if they are non-Muslims. If the non-believing parents try to make them worship other god(s) besides Allāh, then only this specific desire of theirs should not be obeyed.

And if they [your parents] contend with thee to make thee set up equals with Me concerning which you have no knowledge, obey them not, but be kind companion to them in all worldly affairs; and in spiritual matters follow the way of him who turns to Me... (31:16)

The next commandment “Thou shalt not kill” has been repeated in the Holy Qur’ān in diverse ways, and sanctity of life is given paramount importance. It reaffirms the Biblical teaching and states that whosoever unjustly kills a single person, it shall be as if he slaughtered all mankind; and whosoever saves a life, it shall be as if he had protected the life of all mankind (5:33). Killing of the innocent and committing suicide both are grievous sins in Islām (4:30; 17:32). The Holy Qur’ān also prohibits abortion, declaring it as a killing.

... you kill not your children for fear of poverty... (6:152)

Another way to look at the sanctity of life is to consider the provisions of death penalty in the Bible and the Holy Qur’ān. Torah's teachings in this respect are harsh. A child who disrespects, rebels, curses or hits his parents is to be punished with death (Exod. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9). A man was stoned to death for collecting sticks on the Sabbath day (Numbers 15:32-36) because violating the Sabbath,

according to Mosaic Law is punishable by death (Exod. 31:14-15). Showing contempt towards a priest or judge is a crime that asks for capital punishment.

‘And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that stands to minister there before the Lord the God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and you shall put away the evil from Israel.’ (Deut. 17:12)

In addition, the following crimes/sins attract death penalty in the Bible: For not being circumcised; not purifying oneself after touching a dead body; not observing the Day of Atonement; eating yeast at Passover time; eating offering while unclean; eating the fat of the offering; eating blood; for making sacred incense illegally and for coming near the sanctuary illegally. The list of sins deserving capital punishment is in fact longer than this!

In the Holy Qur’ān, death penalty through due process of law is limited to only a few extremely serious crimes such as premeditated murder, or murder committed in the course of armed robbery, or treason against the State endangering lives of civilians or soldiers. In case of a murder, victim's suffering relatives have the option to spare the life of the convicted killer by accepting blood money as compensation. In cases of armed robbery, or treason, where no one is killed, lesser punishments are prescribed such as imprisonment or banishment (5:33-34).

Next to killing an innocent person, is the prohibition of committing adultery. The commandment ‘Neither shalt thou

commit adultery' is so serious in nature that the Torah makes adultery a crime punishable with death.

‘And the man that commits adultery with another man’s wife, even he that commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.’ (Lev. 20:10; Duet. 22:22)

The death penalty is by stoning or burning with fire (Duet. 22:24; Lev. 20:14). In the same strain, the sins of engaging in bestiality and homosexuality also carry sentences of death (Exod. 22:19; Lev. 20:13). Christianity carried the concept of adultery to new levels. Divorcing a wife, except for adultery, and marrying another woman is committing adultery (Matt. 19:10). Similarly, to retain an adulterous wife, to marry a betrothed maiden, and to marry a Jew or an idolater are considered acts of adultery according to the New Testament writers.

In Islām, adultery and fornication are forbidden (25:69) and the punishment for committing these sins, after being convicted with full evidence, is a hundred stripes (24:3). Stoning to death or burning by fire is not prescribed in the Holy Qur’ān. Punishment for adultery for a married slave-girl is half than that of a free, married woman (4:26). Homosexuality is forbidden.

And if two men among you are guilty of it, punish them both. And if they repent and amend, then leave them alone; surely Allāh is Oft-Returning with compassion and Merciful. (4:17)

In connection with the crime of adultery, the Holy Qur'ān makes it clear that such an accusation needs irrefutable evidence. At least four truthful eyewitnesses are required prior to imposing any punishment. False accusation of adultery against an innocent person is no less a serious crime.

And those who calumniate chaste women but bring not four witnesses—flog them with eighty stripes, and never admit their evidence thereafter, and it is they that are the transgressors, except those who repent and make amends, for truly Allāh is Most Forgiving, Merciful. (24:5-6)

The Holy Qur'ān goes a step further and details the necessary preventive measures to safeguard chastity and to prohibit committing sexual immorality. To do so, the Holy Qur'ān forbids covert or uninvited visitations and social mixings between the opposite sexes. Respect for the privacy of homes is required (24:28-30). Men and women are commanded to restrain their eyes and guard their chastity (24:31, 32). Women are required not to expose their charms to men (24:32). The institution of “Purdah”/ “Ḥijāb” is thus closely connected with the preventive measures against sinful situations that lead to destroy social and domestic peace.

In addition, to prevent sexual misdemeanor, Islām encourages the institution of marriage (4:4, 4:26). The Prophet of Islām forbade celibacy, and said,

Whoever of you have the means to support a wife, he should get married, for this is the best means of keeping the looks cast down and guarding the chastity. (Bukhārī)

Furthermore he said,

The man who marries perfects half of his faith. (Mishkāt)

The Holy Qur'ān encourages marriage of orphan girls and slave girls, and re-marriage of the widows at the earliest (2:222, 2:235-236, 4:4, 4:26, 24:33).

In contrast, the Bible has some passages that discourage marriage. For example, priests must not marry divorcees or widows of non-priests (Ezek. 44:22.) The Lord came unto the prophet Jeremiah and expressly forbade him to marry and have children (Jer. 16:1-2). He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife (1 Cor. 7:32-33). He who marries does the right thing but he who does not marry does better (1 Cor. 7:38); It is better not to marry (Matt. 19:10). According to the Gospel narration, Jesus himself never married and is quoted to say: The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage (Luke 20:34-35).

The next Commandment is: Neither shalt thou steal. This commandment is repeated in several places in the Bible, and the punishment for stealing is severe. In the New Testament,

the thieves being unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10). In case of kidnapping, the culprit is surely to be put to death (Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7). In Islām, stealing is also considered as a serious offence against society and severe punishments are prescribed, but death is not included.

And as for the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands in retribution of their offence as an exemplary punishment from Allāh. And Allāh is Mighty, Wise. But whoso repents, then will Allāh surely turn to him in mercy; verily, Allāh is Most Forgiving and Merciful. (5:39-40)

Thus the door of repentance and reformation is open. Cutting off of the hand may also be taken metaphorically, meaning that the causes for stealing be removed so that he may not repeat the offence. As there are various levels of punishments depending on the seriousness of the crime, the exemplary punishment is to be given only to the habitual culprits. Lesser punishment can be given by the judge keeping the personal or societal environment in which the act of stealing took place.

For establishing justice in the society, law of evidence plays an important rule. And truthful testimony is required in every day transactions. A false witness can play havoc for the law-abiding citizens. Hence the commandment 'Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor.' The Lord hates false witness (Prov. 6:19); and a false witness shall perish (Prov. 21:28). Jesus was put in great trouble because,

according to Matthew and Mark, many false witnesses came forward against him (Matt. 26:59-60; Mark 14:56-57).

Islām gives utmost importance to avoid falsehood in giving testimony (25:73), but specifically not to defame others falsely.

O ye who believe! Let not one people deride another people, who may be better than they, nor let women deride other women, who may be better than they. Do not slander your own people, nor taunt each other with derogatory names. It is bad indeed to earn foul reputation after professing the faith; and those who repent not are the wrongdoers. (49:12)

Bearing witness concerning any matter that may affect the honor, life or property of a person, one must adhere to true testimony.

O ye who believe! be strict in observing justice, being witnesses for the sake of Allāh, even though it be against yourselves or against parents and a close relative—whether he be rich or poor, Allāh is more regardful of them both than you are. Therefore follow not the low desires so that you may be able to act equitably. And if you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allāh is well aware of what you do. (4:136)

Islām not only takes care of neighbors, but for the sake of justice one should not bear false witness even against enemies.

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

The tenth commandment forbids the urge of covetousness, fostering of desires in one's heart that may lead to overt actions: Neither shall thou desire thy neighbor's wife; neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbor's. The Holy Qur'ān broadens the scope of these prohibitions and does not keep them limited between the neighbors only. The Holy Qur'ān teaches not to covet things that may belong to any man or woman.

If you keep away from the more grievous of the things which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your minor evils and admit you to a place of great honor. And covet not that whereby Allāh has made some of you excel others. Men shall have a share of that which they have earned, and women a share that which they have earned. And ask Allāh of His bounty. Surely, Allāh has perfect knowledge of all things. (4:32-33)

Here, along with the prohibition of covetousness in general, the believer is instructed to pray to God Who is most bountiful and has the power to bestow His favors even in a greater measure. God's bounty and grace are unlimited. To have vain desires in one's heart is a work of Satan.

He holds out promises to them [mankind] and raises vain desires in them, and Satan promises nothing but vain things. (4:121)

The Holy Qur'ān thus enhances the scope of the Ten Commandments in a very positive manner.

And worship Allāh and associate naught with Him, and show kindness to parents, and to relatives, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbor who is a kinsman and the neighbor who is unrelated, and the colleague, and the wayfarer, and those who are under your control. Surely, Allāh does not love the proud and the boastful. (4:37)

To summarize Islāmic teachings concerning commandments about man's obligations toward God and toward others, I would like to quote Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Mahdī and the Promised Messiah (peace be on him),

To be truly righteous it is necessary that a person abandoning utterly such outstanding vices as adultery, theft, trespass, hypocrisy, egotism, scorn of fellow beings, miserliness, should eschew all low morals and should make progress in high moral values. He should behave towards his fellow beings with politeness, courtesy and sympathy and should cultivate true fidelity and sincerity towards God Almighty. (Malfūzāt, Vol. IV, p. 400)

When a man's love of God becomes perfect and its fire burns up human passions, then God's love for him suddenly falls upon his heart and pulls him out of the foulness of lower life. He then acquires the color of the holiness of God the Ever-Living and All-Sustaining, and partakes by way of reflection in all Divine attributes. (Chashma-i-Masīhī, Rūhānī Khazā'in, Vol. 20, p. 380)

The Hour

The Qur'ānic Teachings on the Last Day and Hereafter

The Holy Qur'ān makes it clear that there are many who either question the reality of the Hour or ignore it, and that their rejection of the inevitable is to their own loss.

Cursed be the liars,

Who are heedless in the depth of their
ignorance.

They ask: 'When will be the Day of
Judgment?'

It will be the day when they will be
tormented at the Fire. (51:11-14)

“Woe, on that day, unto those who reject,

Who deny the Day of Judgment.

And none denies it save every sinful
transgressor,

Who, when Our Signs are recited unto him,
says: 'Fables of the ancients!'" (83:11-14)

And they say, ‘There is nothing except this our present life, and we shall not be raised again.’ And if you could only see when they are made to stand before their Lord! He will say: ‘Is not this (the second life) the truth?’ They will say. ‘Yes, by our Lord.’ He will say, ‘Then taste the punishment because you disbelieved.’ (6:30-31)

But those who are gifted with understanding and firmly grounded in knowledge, say,

‘Our Lord! Thou will certainly assemble mankind on the Day about which there is no doubt; surely, Allāh breaks not His promise.’ (3:9-10.)

And when it was said, ‘The promise of Allāh is certainly true, and so is the Hour, there is no doubt about its coming;’ you said, ‘We know not what the Hour is; we think it to be nothing but conjecture, and we are not convinced.’ (45:33)

The Hour is Sure to Come

Belief in the reality of the Last Day is an article of faith for Muslims. To have faith in the reality of the Hour is very strongly counseled by Allāh Himself in the Sūrah ‘Al-Qiyāmah,’ The Resurrection:

Nay! I call to witness the Day of Resurrection. And [in support thereof] I call to

witness the oft-blaming conscience, that the Day of Judgment is a certainty. Does man think that We shall not assemble his bones? Yea, We have the power to restore his very finger-tips. But man desires to continue to sin as he proceeds... (75:2-6)

The Holy Qur'ān repeatedly asserts that the Hour is sure to come. To quote a few relevant verses:

The Hour will surely come; there is no doubt about it; yet most men believe not. (40:60)

Surely, the Day of Decision (Yaum al-Faṣl) has an appointed time. (78:18)

Surely, the Hour will come; I may reveal it, that every soul may be recompensed for its endeavor. (20:16)

... Allāh is the Truth, and that it is He Who brings the dead to life, and that He has the power over all things:

And because the Hour will certainly come, there is no doubt about it, and because Allāh will raise up those who are in the graves. (22:7-8)

Different Names

In the Holy Qur'ān, various names are used for the day when the domain of the human race shall be completely wiped out from the surface of the earth, and a new

dimension of life shall commence in the Hereafter. In the very beginning of the Holy Qur'ān, in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, four major attributes of God are mentioned, and one of them is that He is Māliki Yaumid-Dīn—the Master of the Day of Judgment (1:4). Other commonly used terms in the Holy Qur'ān related to the inevitable event in the future are the Day of Resurrection (Yaum al-Qiyāmah), the Hour of Doom (Al-Sā'ah), the Last Day (Yaum al-Ākhir), and the Day of Judgment (Yaum al-Dīn). The Holy Qur'ān gives such importance to the belief in the Hour that some of the Sūrahs are wholly devoted to the description of the events that shall take place on that day. One Sūrah is named Al-Qiyāmah—the Resurrection, another is entitled Al-Ghāshiyah—the Overwhelming Calamity, and still another is called Al-Qāri'ah—the Striking Calamity. Dealing with the same subject matter, one Sūrah is named Al-Haqqah (the Inevitable), and at other places the Holy Qur'ān calls it Yaum al-Faṣl—the Day of Decision and Yaum al-Ḥisāb —the Day of Reckoning. The Hour in the sense of 'end' or 'termination' has been used in the Holy Qur'ān to indicate also the death of individuals as well as a crushing defeat of an enemy. For example, 'The Hour' used in the sense of a 'sudden death' is:

Those indeed are the losers who deny the meeting with Allāh, so much so, that when the Hour shall come on them suddenly, they will say, 'O, our grief for our neglecting this Hour!' (6:32)

The same term is used in the sense of a crushing defeat that breaks the power of an enemy:

Do they say, ‘We are a victorious host?’ The hosts shall soon be routed and shall turn their backs in flight. Aye, the Hour is their promised time; and the Hour will be most calamitous for them and most bitter. Surely, the guilty are in manifest error and suffer from madness. On the day when they will be dragged into the Fire on their faces, it will be said to them, ‘Taste ye the touch of Hell.’ (54:45-49)

The symbol of the Arabs who opposed the Holy Prophet was the moon, and their power was doomed as the Holy Qur’ān prophesied:

And the Hour has drawn nigh, and the moon is rent asunder. (54:2)

The term ‘the Hour’ is also used in the Holy Qur’ān to indicate the termination of a Prophet’s dispensation. For example, Jesus has been called “the Hour” in the sense he was the last Prophet in the Mosaic dispensation.

But verily he [Jesus] is a sign of the Hour.
(43:62)

No prophet appeared among the Jews after him, and the Muslim dispensation replaced the Mosaic dispensation.

Signs of the Coming of the Hour

There are several events mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān as signs of the Hour. They are to appear prior to the final destruction of the present life on the earth. For example, in

Sūrah Al-Zilzāl (The Earthquake), shaking of the earth is described in following words:

When the earth is shaken with her violent shaking,

And the earth throws up her burdens,

And man says, ‘What is the matter with her?’

On that day will she tell her news,

It will be because your Lord would have so revealed to her.

On that day will men issue forth in scattered groups that they may be shown the results of their works.

Then whoso does an atom’s weight of good will see it,

And whoso does an atom’s weight of evil will also see it. (99:2-9)

Again, in Sūrah Al-Nabā:

The day when the trumpet will be blown; and you will come horde after horde; and the heaven shall be opened and shall become all doors; and the mountains shall be made to move and shall become as if they were a mirage. Surely, Hell lies in ambush, a home for the rebellious; they will tarry therein for ages. (78:19-24)

The Day shall be of climatic in nature, cosmic in its scope:
One of the signs will be the dark visible Smoke—Al-Dukhān:

So watch thou for the day when the sky will
bring forth a visible smoke,

That will envelope the people. This will be a
painful torment.

On seeing it the people will cry, ‘Our Lord,
remove from us the torment;’

... We shall remove the punishment for a
little while, but you will certainly revert to
mischief. (44:11-12, 16)

He inquires ‘When will be the Day of
Resurrection?’ When the eye is dazzled,

And the moon is eclipsed,

And the sun and the moon are brought
together, On that day man will say, ‘Whither to
flee?’ Not at all; there is no refuge! With thy
Lord alone will be the place of rest that day. On
that day will man be informed of that which he
has sent forward and of that which he has left
behind. In truth man is a witness against
himself,

Even though he puts forward his excuses.
(75:7-16)

So when the stars are made to lose their
light,

And when the heaven is rent asunder, And
when the mountains are blown away like dust,

And when the Messengers are made to
appear at the appointed time. (77:9-12)

When the earth is shaken with her violent
shaking, and the earth heaves out her burdens,
and man says, ‘What is the matter with her?’
That day will she tell her news, for your Lord
has so directed. On that day people will come
in diverse groups that they may be shown the
consequences of their action. Then whoso will
have done the smallest particle of good will see
it, and whoso will have done the smallest
particle of ill will also see it. (99:2-9)

The rising of super-powers of Ya’jūj and Ma’jūj (Gog and
Magog) is another sign of the approaching End Time. Ya’jūj
is interpreted to be the Christian nations of the West, and
Ma’jūj, the atheist nations of Russia and China:

... even when Gog and Magog are let loose,
and they shall hasten forth from every height.
And the true promise draws nigh, then behold,
the eyes of those who disbelieve will fixedly
stare and they will say, ‘Alas for us! we were
indeed heedless of this; nay, we were
wrongdoers! (21:97-98)

Another sign is coming out of the “beast” (dā’bbah) from
the earth. The Holy Qur’ān tells:

When the sentence is passed against them,
We will bring forth for them a creature out of
the earth which shall injure them because
people did not believe in Our Signs. (27:83)

The Arabic word *dā'bbah* connotes an earthly insect/worm/germ and it is interpreted either as appearance of devastating plagues in the Latter Days, or spreading of a craze for materialism among Western nations 'whose labor is all lost in pursuit of the life of this world' (18:105).

Some other Signs are narrated in *Sūrah Al-Takwīr*:

When the sun is wrapped up, and when the stars are obscured, and when the mountains are made to move, and when the she-camels, ten-month pregnant, are abandoned, and when the beasts are gathered together, and when the seas are made to flow forth one into the other, and when people are brought together, and when the girl-child buried alive is questioned about, 'For what crime was she killed?' When the books are widely spread abroad, and when the heaven is laid bare, and when the Fire is caused to blaze up, and when the garden is brought nigh, then every soul will know what it has brought forward. (81:2-15)

The Hour will be Sudden

No one knows the exact time of the End other than God, but whenever it arrives, there will be an element of suddenness and surprise:

And to Allāh belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth; and the matter of the Hour is but as the twinkling of an eye. Nay, it is nearer still. Surely, Allāh has power over all things. (16:78)

To Him alone is referred the knowledge of the Hour... (41:48)

Men ask you concerning the Hour. Say, ‘The knowledge of the Hour is with Allāh alone.’ And what will make you know that the Hour is nigh? (33:64)

Do they, then, feel secure from the coming on them of an overwhelming punishment from Allāh or the sudden coming of the Hour upon them while they are unaware? (12:108)

A Calamitous Time

The Holy Qur’ān gives a vivid picture that it would be a devastation of universal proportions when the purging shall be made:

The great Calamity! What is great Calamity? And what should make you know what the great Calamity is? The day when mankind will

be like scattered moth, and the mountains will be like carded wool. Then as for whose scales are heavy, he will have a pleasant life. But as for him whose scales are light,

His mother will be ‘Hāwiyah.’ And what should make you know what that is? It is a burning Fire. (101:2-12)

And indeed We have destroyed people before you who were like unto you. But is there anyone who would receive admonition? (54:52)

On the day when this earth will be changed into another earth, and the heavens too; and they will all appear before Allāh, the One, the Most Supreme. (14:49)

Verily, that which you are promised must come to pass. So when the stars are made to lose their light, and when the heaven is rent asunder, and when the mountains are blown away. (77:8-11)

When the heaven is cleft asunder, and when the stars are scattered, and when the rivers are made to flow forth into canals, and when the graves are laid open, each soul shall then know what it has sent forth and what it has held back. (82:2-6)

Do not such [deceiving] people know that they will be raised again unto a terrible day, the

day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds? (83:5-7)

When the heaven bursts asunder, and gives ear to her Lord—and this is incumbent upon her—and when the earth is spread out, and casts out all that is in her, and becomes empty; and gives her ear to her Lord—and this is incumbent upon her. (84:2-6)

The Creator and the Destroyer is the One

Say, 'It is Allāh Who gives you life, and then causes you to die: then He will gather you together unto the day of Resurrection (Yaum al-Qiyāmah) about which there is no doubt. But many people know it not. (45:27)

Again, the Holy Qur'ān declares:

It is Allāh Who created you in a state of weakness, and after weakness gave strength, caused weakness and old age. He creates what He pleases. He is All-Knowing, the All-Powerful. And on the day when the Hour shall arrive, the guilty will swear that they tarried not save an hour—thus were they turned away from the right path. But those who are given knowledge and faith will say, 'You have indeed tarried according to the Book of Allāh, till the Day of Resurrection [Yaum al-Ba'th]. And this

is the Day of Resurrection, but you did not care to know.’ So on that Day, their excuses will not avail the wrongdoers; nor will they be allowed access to His threshold. (30:55-58)

Allāh originates creation; then He repeats it; then to Him shall you be brought back. And on the day when the Hour will arrive, the guilty shall be in despair... And on the day when the Hour will arrive—on that day they will become separated from one another. Then those who believed, and did good works, will be honored, and made happy in a Garden. But as for those who disbelieved, and rejected Hereafter, these will be brought forth in punishment. (30:12-17)

The Guilty shall be Chastised

... on the day of Judgment they shall be driven to a most severe chastisement... (2:86)

... Allāh will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And for them is a grievous punishment. (2:175)

... Allāh will neither speak to them, nor look upon them... (3:78)

... those who are niggardly in spending what Allah has given them of His bounty... That with respect to which they were niggardly shall be put as a collar round their necks on the Day of Resurrection. (3:181)

Surely, if those who disbelieve had all that is in the earth and as much over again, to ransom themselves therewith from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection, it would not be accepted from them; and they shall have a painful punishment. They will wish to come out of the Fire, but they will not be able to come out of it, and they shall have a lasting punishment. (5:37-38)

As regards the Pharaoh who denied the Signs of God, and persecuted the Children of Israel, the Holy Qur'ān declares:

He will walk in front of his people on the Day of Resurrection and will lead them on to the pit of Fire even as cattle are brought to a watering-place. Evil is the watering-place and those who are led to it. They are chased by a curse in this life and on the Day of Resurrection. Evil is the gift and so are those given such a gift. (11:99-100)

... And on the Day of Resurrection We shall gather them together on their faces blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode shall be Hell; every time it abates, We shall increase for them the flame. That is their recompense, because they rejected Our Signs and said, 'What! when we die and are reduced to bones and broken particles, shall we really be raised up as a new creation?' (17:98-99)

‘But whosoever will turn away from My remembrance, his will be a straitened life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind.’ (20:125)

Record Books of Good and Evil Deeds

God has created man with a soul—an inner self; and all his actions leave permanent impressions upon it in the minutest detail. Those impressions are ‘saved,’ and on the Day of Judgment, they shall become manifest. A person shall be able to see/read, so to say, his own book of records of good or bad deeds:

And every man’s record of deeds have We fasten to his neck; and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him a book which he will find wide open. It will be said to him, ‘Read thy book. Sufficient is thy own soul as a reckoner against thee this day.’ (17:14-15)

So whoever does good works and is a believer, his effort will not go unappreciated and We shall surely record it. (21:95)

And everything they have done is recorded in the books [zabūr]. And every matter, small and great, is written down. Verily, the righteous would be in the midst of Gardens and streams; in the seat of Truth with the Omnipotent King. (54:53-56)

Do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private counsels? Yea! And Our messengers [that is, the angels] remain with them recording everything. (43:81)

This is Our Book; it speaks against you with truth. We caused all that you did to be fully recorded. (45:30)

And the Book of their deeds will be placed before them, and thou wilt see the guilty ones fearful at what is therein; and they will say, ‘O woe to us! What kind of Book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great but has recorded it.’ ... (18:50)

Nay the record of the wicked is in Sijjīn [a register of a prison]. And what should make you know what Sijjīn is? It is a Book written comprehensively. (83:8-10)

Verily, thou, O man, art toiling along towards thy Lord, a hard toiling; until thou meet Him. Then as for him who is given his record in his right hand,

He will, surely, have an easy reckoning,

And he will return to his family, rejoicing.

But as for him who will have his record given to him behind his back,

He will soon call for destruction,

And he will burn in a blazing Fire. (84:7-13)

The writing down of good and evil deeds should not be understood as if papers, pen and ink are being used. It is the preservation of a record of all our actions in an unknown domain of God, different from the material things.

Full Justice Accorded

And the weighing [wazn] on that day will be true... (7:9)

And We shall set up just balances [mawāzin—measures/scale] on the Day of Resurrection, so that no soul will be wronged in the least. And even if it be the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We would bring it forth. And sufficient are We as reckoners. (21:48)

Every soul shall taste of death. And you shall be paid in full your rewards only on the Day of Resurrection... (3:186)

On the day when Allāh will raise them [those who opposed Allāh and His Messenger] all together, He will inform them of what they did. Allāh has kept account of it, while they forgot it. And Allāh is Witness over all things. (58:7)

... thy Lord will surely judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they differed. (16:125, [45:18])

... whosoever acts dishonestly shall bring with him that, concerning which he has been

dishonest, on the Day of Resurrection. Then every soul shall be fully paid what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged. (3:162)

The God-Fearing shall be Rewarded

The life of this world is made to appear attractive to those who disbelieve; and they scoff at those who believe. But those who fear God shall be above them on the day of Resurrection; and Allāh bestows His gifts on whomsoever He pleases without reckoning. (2:213)

Say, ‘Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good things of His providing?’ Say, ‘They are for the believers in the present life and will be exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.’ Thus do We explain the Signs for a people who have knowledge. (7:33)

And on the Day of Resurrection, you will see those who lied against Allāh with their faces darkened. Is there not in Hell an abode for the proud? Allāh delivers those who fear Him to their rightful place of security and success; evil shall not touch them, nor shall they grieve. (39:61-62)

Our final prayer

Our Lord, give us what Thou hast promised to us through Thy Messengers; and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, Thou breakest not Thy promise. (3:195)

Āmīn!

Notes on Qur'ānic References

1. Translation of the Qur'ānic quotations is taken from The Holy Qur'ān translated by Maulawī Sher 'Alī with alternative translation of, and footnotes to, some of the verses by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor of the Promised Messiah, published by Islām International Publications Limited, UK, in 2004.

2. References to the quotations from the Holy Qur'ān are given in parentheses at the end of the quotations.

3. The first number in the reference to the Holy Qur'ān indicates the Sūrah (Chapter) number and the number(s) following the colon indicate the Verse number(s). For example, (7:175) indicates Verse number 175 of Chapter 7 of the Holy Qur'ān.

4. The verse numbering system in this work includes Tasmiyah (Bismillāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm) at the beginning of the Chapter as the first verse except for the one Chapter that does not start with Tasmiyah. In some other translations, which exclude Tasmiyah while numbering verses, the same reference in item 3 above would be (7:174).

5. Verse references in [brackets] refer to verses which contain subject matter equivalent to that in the preceding reference or quotation.

6. [Additions in brackets] within a quote are by the author to clarify the context of the verse.

7. Unquoted portions of a verse or a quote are designated by ellipses (...) in partially quoted verses or quotations.

Glossary

‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd-ul-Muṭṭalib: Uncle of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him)

Abū Bakr Ḥaḍrat (Allāh be pleased with him): The first successor to the Holy Prophet, Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him.

aḥādīth أَحَادِيثُ : Plural of ḥadīth.

Aḥmad, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd (1889-1965): Second successor (1914-1965) to the Promised Messiah, peace be on him.

Aḥmad, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām (1835-1908), peace be on him: The Promised Messiah. Claimed to be the Second Advent of Jesus.

Aḥmad, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Masroor (Born 1950), may Allah strengthen him with His mighty support: Elected as the Fifth successor to the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) in 2003.

Aḥmad, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Nāṣir (1909-1982), Allah’s mercy be on him: Third successor (1965-1982) to the Promised Messiah, peace be on him)

Aḥmad, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir (1928-2003), Allah’s mercy be on him: Fourth successor (1982-2003) to the Promised Messiah, peace be on him).

Aḥmadī أَحْمَدِيّ : A follower of Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him.

Aḥmadī Muslim أَحْمَدِيّ مُسْلِم : see Aḥmadī

Aḥmadīs: Plural of Aḥmadī

Aḥmadiyya أَحْمَدِيَّة : see Aḥmadiyyat

Aḥmadiyyah أَحْمَدِيَّة : see Aḥmadiyyat

Aḥmadiyyat أَحْمَدِيَّة : Muslim sect believing Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad to be the Promised Messiah (second coming) and the Mahdi awaited by Muslims, peace be on him.

a’immah: plural of Imām

‘alaihiṣṣalām عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ : peace be on him

al-Ḥājj, El-Ḥājj الْحَاجُّ : a person who has performed the prescribed Islāmic pilgrimage to Mecca during its appointed days. Ḥājjī

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: Fourth successor to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), his cousin and son-in-law.

Allāh الله : The one and only God.

Āmīn [Āmeen] آمِينَ : So be it. Amen.

Amīr, Ameer أمير : Commander, Head. National head of the Aḥmadiyyah Community.

Amīrul-Mu’minīn, Ameerul-Mu’mineen أمير المؤمنين : The Commander of the Faithful. Khalīfah.

Anbiyā: plural of nabī. Prophets.

Anjuman Ishā‘at-i-Islām: Also known as the Lahori Aḥmadis. The group of Aḥmadis who do not believe in the prophethood of the Promised Messiah, and do not pledge allegiance to the Aḥmadiyya Khilāfat.

Auliyyā: plural of walī. Saints. See walī.

āyah: a verse, sign

āyāt: verses, signs

Bai‘at بَيْعَت : pledge of initiation, covenant of association.

Entering the pledge of allegiance with the Aḥmadiyya khilāfat.

Bhutto, Zulfikar ‘Alī: Ruled Pakistan 1971-1977. Hanged in 1979 at the age of 52.

Bukhārī: The most reliable source of the sayings of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allāh be on him.

Dār al-Ḥarb: abode of war

da‘wat ilallāh: calling towards God

dhimmīs (protected subjects). While Zakāt was collected from believers, non-believers paid jizyah; in return their lives, properties, honor and freedom of religious practice were safeguarded by the Islāmic government.

Dowie, Dr. John Alexander (1847-1907): Challenged to a prayer duel by the Promised Messiah, peace be on him.

Farīd-ud-Dīn Mas‘ūd Ganj Shakar: A Muslim saint (d. 1265).
 Fatwā فتوى : a jurisprudic edict
 Fāṭimah: daughter of Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and wife of his cousin Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with both).
 Fiqh فقه : jurisprudence. legislative rulings.
 Ḥadīth حَدِيث : Saying of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam.
 Ḥarām: forbidden
 Ḥasan Ḥaḍrat: son of Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with both)
 Ḥijāb حجاب : Modesty. Niqāb. Veil. Parda. Outerwear for Muslim ladies.
 Ḥikmah حكمة : wisdom, foresight
 Ḥikmat حکمت : wisdom, foresight, practice of medicine
 ḥuffāz: Plural of Ḥāfiẓ. Those who commit the entire Qur’ān to memory
 Ḥuqūq-ul-‘ibād: man’s obligations toward others
 Ḥuqūqullāh: obligations toward God
 Ḥusain Ḥaḍrat: son of Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with both)
 Ijmā‘: Consensus
 Ijtihād: rational deduction concerning a legal issue
 imām إمام : leader, chief, guide
 Imām-uṣ-Ṣalāt: A person who leads the formal Islāmic worship.
 Islām اسلام : submission.
 Jamā‘at جَمَاعَت : Community, Organization
 Jamā‘at Aḥmadiyyah: The Aḥmadiyyah Community.
 Jihād جِهَاد : strife
 jizyah: While Zakāt was collected from believers, non-believers paid jizyah; in return their lives, properties, honor and freedom of religious practice were safeguarded by the Islāmic government.
 Jumu‘ah, Jum‘ah, Jum‘a, Jumu‘a جُمُعَة , جُمُعَة : Friday. (Friday Prayer Services)

Khalīfatul-Masīh, Khalīfat-ul-Masīh, Khalīfah al-Masīh
خَلِيفَةُ الْمَسِيحِ : Successor to the Promised Messiah, ‘alaihissalām.

Kharijīs (Kharijites): Seceders. Outsiders, ecternal, foreign.
Khilāfat, Khilāfah خِلَافَة : succession, caliphate

Khilāfat-i-Aḥmadiyya خِلَافَتِ أَحْمَدِيَّة : Aḥmadiyyah Khilāfat.

Khulafā خُلَفَاء : Plural of khalīfah.

Khulafā’-ur-Rāshidūn: Righteous Successors

Lā Ilāha Illallāhu, Muḥammad-ur-Rasūlullāh, '[There is no
God but Allāh and Muḥammad is His Messenger].

Madrasah, madrasa: School

Mahdī مَهْدِي : Rightly guided.

Majlis-i-Mushāwarat: Advisory council. Consultative
Committee.

Malfūzāt: sayings of the Promised Messiah, ‘alaihissalām.

Maulānā مَوْلَانَا : our master, our lord, our chief. Title of respect
for Muslim religious scholars. Revered person.

Maulawī, Maulwī مَوْلَوِي : Muslim priest, Muslim divine.

Promised Messiah (Second Coming): Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām
Aḥmad (1835-1908) (peace be on him).

MTA: See Muslim Television Aḥmadiyya

mubāhalah: mutual imprecation. prayer duel.

Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq (1872-1957): A companion of the
Promised Messiah, peace be on him, who was the first
Aḥmadiyya missionary to the US (1921-192). He founded
the Muslim Sunrise in the US in 1921.

Muḥammad مُحَمَّد : Praiseworthy, commendable, laudable.

Holy Prophet of Islām (571-632), peace and blessings of
Allāh be on him.

Mu‘in-ud-Dīn Chishtī: A Muslim saint (d. 1236)

mujaddid: rejuvenator, religious reformer

mujāhid: struggler, fighter, warrior

mujāhidīn, mujahideen: plural of mujāhid.

Mujtabā: Chosen. Elect.

Mullā: Muslim clergy

mursal: envoy, sent

mursalīn: pl. of mursal

Mushāwarat: mutual consultation

Mushrikīn: polytheists. practicing Shirk.

Muslim Television Aḥmadiyya (MTA): 24/7 satellite television broadcast from London available on www.alislam.org as well.

Muṣṭafā مَصْطَفَى : chosen, selected, preferred, favorite. The Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him).

Nabī: a prophet

Najāshī: Negus of Abyssinia

Nūr-ud-Dīn, Ḥaḍrat Al-Ḥājj Maulānā (May Allāh be please with him): First successor (1908-1914) to the Promised Messiah, peace be on him)

parda پَرْدَه : Ḥijāb, niqāb, modesty, purdah, veil, curtain, screen or concealing garment used by some Hindus and Muslims to hide women from the gaze of men or strangers.

Pardah: see parda

Promised Messiah (Second Coming): Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1835-1908).

Purdah: see parda

Qaḍa قَضَا : judgment, injunction. system of arbitration.

Qādiān قَادِيَان : A town in northwest India where Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, ‘alaihi-salām, lived.

Qur’ān, Quran, Koran قُرْآن : recitation, a book most read. The Holy Book revealed to Muḥammad, ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam, in Arabic over 23 years.

Quṭb-ud-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī: A saint (d. AD 1235)

Rabb: sustainer. nourisher

raḥmah, raḥmat: mercy. (God’s) mercy

Ramaḍān (Ramadhān, Ramazān, Ramzān) رَمَضَانَ : Islamic lunar month ascribed for prescribed fasting.

Rasūl, Rasool: messenger, prophet, (pl. rusul)

Rūḥānī Khazā’in: Spiritual treasures. Collection of the writings of the Promised Messiah, peace be on him.

rusul: messengers, prophets, (pl. of rasūl)

Salām, Dr ‘Abdus: The first Muslim from Pakistan to win the Nobel Prize in Theoretical Physics in 1979.

ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : peace and blessings of Allāh be on him.

Shahīd: Martyr; also, witness

Sharī‘ah شَرِيعَةٌ : (Islamic) jurisprudence, divine law, code, law.

Shī‘ah: A Muslim sect ascribing succession after Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) to ‘Alī (may Allāh be pleased with him).

Shirk شِرْكٌ : Association of aught as partner in person and attributes to God.

Shūrā: advisory council

Ṣūfī: A follower of Sufism.

Sufism: Being a Ṣūfī. A simple life of righteousness and service to the cause of man and God.

Sunnī: Traditionists. A sect of Islam.

Sūrah سُورَةٌ : A chapter of the Holy Qur’ān. There are 114 Sūrahs (chapters)—of various lengths—in the Holy Qur’ān.

Ta‘līm: education

tablīgh تَبْلِيغٌ : preaching, propagation

Tanakh: Jewish Bible

tarbiyat, tarbiyah تَرْبِيَّةٌ : training

Tauhīd: Unity of God

‘ulamā عُلَمَاءُ : (religious) scholars. Plural of ‘ālim, a (religious) scholar. {ulema}. ‘Ulama is already a plural so it will be wrong to add an s to it (‘ulamas) to make its plural.

‘ulema: see ‘ulamā

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: The second successor to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him)

Ummah, Ummat أُمَّة : nation, people.

‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān Ḥaḍrat (Allāh be pleased with him): The third successor to the Holy Prophet, Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him.

Vedas: Ancient Hindu texts.

Wahhābī: Muslim sect founded by Muḥammad bin ‘Abdul-Wahhāb in the eighteenth century.

walī ولى : guardian, caretaker, custodian, friend, companion, saint, master, chief, owner, ruler, leader, superior

Yathrib: Present day Medina or Madinah in Arabia. Came to be known as Madīnat-un-Nabī (City of the Prophet) after the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) migrated there from Mecca.

Yaum al-Ākhir: the Last Day

Yaum al-Ba‘th: Day of Resurrection

Yaum al-Dīn: the Day of Judgment

Yaum al-Faṣl: the Day of Decision

Yaum al-Ḥisāb: the Day of Reckoning.

Yaum al-Qiyāmah: Day of Resurrection

Zafrulla Khān, Sir Muḥammad Zafarullāh Khān مُحَمَّد ظَفَرُ اللَّهِ خَانَ

: (February 6, 1893 - September 1, 1985). Barrister-at-Law, Lincoln’s Inn, 1914. Member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1926-1935. Member, Governor-General’s Executive Council, India, 1935-1941. Judge, Supreme Court of India, 1941-1947. Foreign Minister, Pakistan, 1947-1954. Judge, International Court of Justice, 1954-1961 (Vice President, 1958-1961). Permanent Representative, Pakistan at United Nations, 1961-1964. President, General Assembly of United Nations, 1962-1963. Judge, International Court of Justice, 1964-1973 (President, 1970-1973).

Zaid bin Thābit: a close companion of the Prophet who presented the Holy Qur’ān in a complete Book form, to Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr.

Zakāt زَكَاة : Prescribed alms.

Zia-ul-Haq: Military dictator who ruled Pakistan 1977-1988. Died in a military plane crash.

Zoroaster: Ancient Persian prophet and poet.

Zabūr: Book of Psalms

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Note on Transliteration

In this American edition, the transliteration of the Arabic words and expressions has been converted to the Royal Asiatic Society standards as follows.

The ا is represented by ' , a sort of catch in the voice, and by the a'rāb, if applicable, as indicated below.

The ا is represented by a or the a'rāb, as indicated below.

The ب is represented by b.

The ت is represented by t.

The ث is represented by *th*, pronounced like *th* in the English word *thing*.

The ج is represented by j.

The ح is represented by ḥ.

The خ is represented by *kh* pronounced like the Scottish *ch* in *loch*.

The د is represented by d.

The ذ is represented by *dh* pronounced like the *th* in the English words *that* and *with*.

The ر is represented by r.

The ز is represented by z.

The س is represented by s.

The ش is represented by sh.

The ص is represented by ṣ.

The ض is represented by ḍ pronounced like the *th* in the English word *this*.

The ط is represented by ṭ.

The ظ is represented by ṣ.

The ع is represented by ' , a strong glottal specific to Arabic.

The غ is represented by *gh*, a sound approached very nearly in the *r grasseye* in French.

The ف is represented by f.

The ق is represented by q.

The ك is represented by k.

The ل is represented by l.

The م is represented by m.

The ن is represented by n.

The ه is represented by h.

The و is represented by v or w.

The ي is represented by y.

The *fatḥa* is represented by an *a* (pronounced like the *u* in the English word *bud*) when short, and by *ā* (pronounced like the *a* in the English word *father*) when long, by *ai* (pronounced like the *ay* in the English word *say*) when followed by a *ya*, and by *au* (pronounced resembling the *ou* in the English word *sound*) when followed by a *waw*.

The *kasrah* is represented by an *i* (pronounced like the *i* in the English word *bid*) when short, by *ī* (pronounced like the *ee* in the English word *deep*) when long.

The *ḍamma* is represented by a *u* (pronounced like the *oo* in the English word *wood*) when short, by *ū* (pronounced like the *oo* in the English word *shoot*) when long.

The Holy Prophet

Muḥammad

Peace and blessings of Allāh be on him

The greatest prophet ever to live, Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him), was born in 571 at Mecca in Arabia. The city of Mecca had grown around an ancient holy site rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael (peace be on them), which came to be known as the Ka'bah (literally meaning, 'a cube'). His father had died a few months before his birth. His mother died when he was six years old. He was cared for by his grandfather 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib until he died two years later, his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, then became his guardian.

In his teens he joined an organization whose members pledged to help the needy and the oppressed. Due to his honesty and consistent support of the oppressed, he came to be known as the Truthful and the Trustworthy.

At age 25, he accepted a marriage proposal from a pious trader Khadijah (may God be pleased with her), 15 years senior to him.

He preferred to spend his time in worship and meditation, retreating often to the cave of Ḥirā for days at a time to pray in solitude. He received his first revelation in the cave of Ḥirā when he was 40. His wife Khadijah, his close friend Abū Bakr, his cousin Alī (may God be pleased with them), were some of the first people to accept his call to the religion of Islam that he was commanded to spread.

His fervor to spread the anti-idolatry message of equity and goodwill met with extreme opposition and severe persecution of the faithful, his followers. To escape the persecution in Mecca, a group of Muslims immigrated to the Christian state of Abyssinia in 615. Meccans declared a boycott of the Muslims and segregated them outside Mecca for three years. The year 619 was one of great sorrow for Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him). His uncle and protector, Abū Ṭālib, and his wife, Khadijah (may God be pleased with her), who stood by him during the early years of his call, both died.

While the resistance to Islām in and around Mecca was relentless, he found acceptance to his message 250 miles to the north in Yathrib with a deputation from the town accepting Islam in 620. He migrated to Yathrib in 622 escaping Meccan persecution. Yathrib, today's Medina in Arabia, came to be known as Madīnatun-Nabī, city of the prophet. Meccans followed the Muslims with swords to their new haven, were defeated in the Battle of Badr, but inflicted damage to the Muslims in the Battle of Uḥud. Muslims continued spreading the message of peace in spite of persecution and attacks culminating in the bloodless fall of Mecca to them in 630. Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) entered the city at the head of "10,000 saints" fulfilling the Biblical prophecy about the advent of a prophet among the Ishmaelite (Deuteronomy 33:2, 18:15).

After Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) passed away in 632, his long time companion, Abū Bakr, was elected to lead the Muslims until 634, followed by 'Umar until 644, Uthmān until 656, and his cousin Alī until 661 (may Allāh be pleased with them). Barely half a century had elapsed since the first revelation to Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him) and Islam had already made in-roads to the banks of the Indus River to the east and gained strength across North Africa to the west. (Reference: Words of Wisdom, Zīrvī, Mīān and Aḥmad, 2000)

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi
Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad

Peace be on him

Born in 1835 in Qadian, India, Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) remained devoted to the study of the Holy Qurʾān, and to a life of prayer and solitude. Finding Islam the target of foul attacks from all directions, the fortunes of Muslims at a low ebb, faith yielding to doubt and religion only superficially followed, he undertook a vindication and exposition of Islam, first in his epochmaking *Barāhīn-i-Aḥmadiyya*, issued in four volumes. The book gave Muslims pride in their religion, confidence in the integrity of their faith and cemented the robustness of its tenets. The book came to be known as the best written in defense of Islām in centuries, with high praise in recognition for its author as the defender of Islām.

Islām, he said, was a living faith through which man could establish contact with his Maker and enter into communion with Him. The teachings contained in the Holy Qurʾān and the Law promulgated by Islām were designed to raise man to moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection. He advocated undertaking defensive wars with the power of the written word through Jihād of the pen, rather than through use of the sword, and clarified that Islām forbids murder of innocent people in the name of Jihād.

Most of the friends of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) turned into his enemies when he announced that Jesus (peace be on him) of old had actually died, though not on the cross, and God had appointed him the Messiah mentioned in the prophecies of the Bible and the Holy Qurʾān. In 1889, he began to enroll for his Movement now established in centers and mosques for the preaching of Islām all over the world. Though he and his community faced extreme persecution from the very first day, he announced that God had told him that He would cause his message to reach the corners of the earth.

He wrote more than eighty books, mostly in Urdu and some in Arabic and Persian. He showed his truthfulness not only through the prolific words but also through prophecies revealed to him by God. Timely fulfillment of the prophecies and exposition of his claims led to miraculous growth of his community during his lifetime. Not only some of the great scholars of the time but a large number of seekers after truth from among the masses saw his truth and joined his community.

After the death of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) in 1908, his first Khalīfah (successor) was *Maulawī Nūruddīn* (may God be pleased with him) until 1914, followed by Mirzā Bashīruddīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (may Allāh be pleased with him), the promised son of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) as the second Khalīfah until 1965. Mirzā Naṣīr Aḥmad (Allāh's mercy be on him), a grandson of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) was the third Khalīfah until 1982. Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad (Allāh's mercy be on him), a grandson of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) was the fourth Khalīfah until 2003. Mirzā Masroor Aḥmad (may Allāh be his support), a great-grandson of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) is the fifth Khalīfah since 2003. Thus the Khalīfat of the promised Messiah (peace be on him) remains intact and ongoing.

Today, while celebrating the hundred years of Khilāfat, with missions in almost every country of the world, the Aḥmadiyya community is privileged to broadcast 24-hour satellite programs, televised on Muslim Television Aḥmadiyya (MTA), in defense of Islām and to promote Islāmic values the world over. (Reference: Introductory note in *Three Questions by a Christian Answered*, 1972)

Conditions of Initiation

by *Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qādiān*

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (peace be upon him)

The initiate shall solemnly promise:

I. That he/she shall abstain from *Shirk* (association of any partner with God) right up to the day of his/her death.

II. That he/she shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they may be.

III. That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the commandments of God and the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him*); and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajjud (pre-dawn supererogatory Prayers) and invoking *Darūd* (blessings) on the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him*); that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask forgiveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.

IV. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allāh in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.

V. That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trials; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allāh and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune; on the contrary, he/she shall march forward.

VI. That he/she shall refrain from following un-Islamic customs and lustful inclinations, and shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy Qur'ān; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him*) the guiding principles in every walk of his/her life.

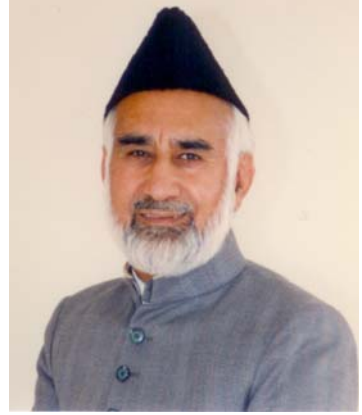
VII. That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness.

VIII. That he/she shall hold faith, the honor of faith, and the cause of Islam dearer to him/her than his/her life, wealth, honor, children and all other dear ones.

IX. That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures for His sake only; and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.

X. That he/she shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of Allāh, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death; that he/she shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connection demanding devoted dutifulness.

(Translated from *Ishtihār Takmil-i-Tabligh*, January 12, 1889)

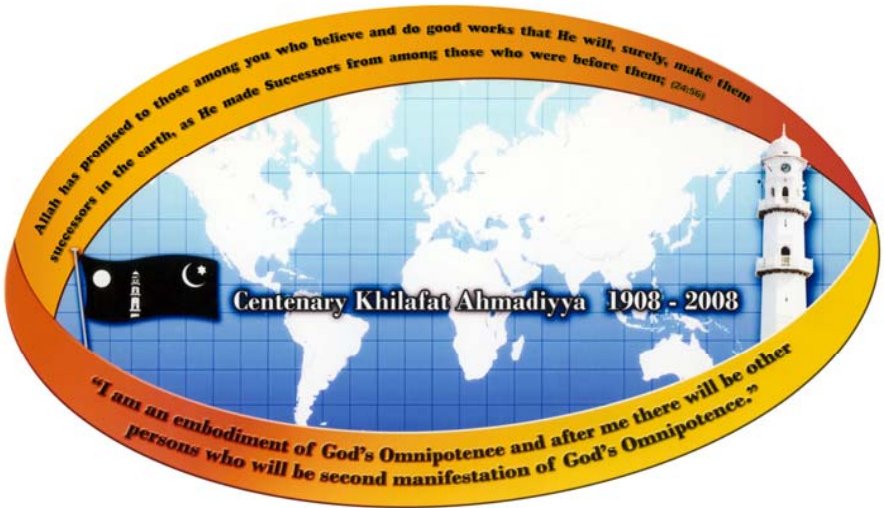


Mubasher Ahmad

Mubasher Ahmad was born in Qadian, India in 1942, earned his M.A. (English), M.A. (Urdu), and LL.B. (Law) degrees from the University of Peshawar where he served as the President of English and Modern European Languages Literary Society (1963-64). Prior to emigrating from Pakistan to the United States in 1969, he taught English at the College of Agriculture, University of Peshawar, as an Associate Professor for five years (1964-69).

He has served Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as the President of Washington, DC Metropolitan Chapter in years 1980-84, and National General Secretary for several years. In 1988, he devoted his life to convey the message of Islam by facilitating Islamic information and its relevance to modern societies. He has addressed numerous academic, religious and civic institutions, actively promoting multicultural and interfaith understanding. Presently, he is serving the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as its National Spokesperson and Regional Missionary in the West Midwest Region of USA and is a member of the Editorial Board of the Muslim Sunrise magazine.

He has written and translated numerous religious discourses and articles from Urdu into English, including translations of *The Truth About The Alleged Punishment for Apostasy in Islam* by Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih IV (rahimahullah) and *Refutation of the Allegations of Insult to Jesus Christ*. He is a bilingual poet, with varied compositions in Urdu and English.



A vital issue confronting the Muslim world today is the lack of unity brought about in large part by the absence of any continued and significant leadership. The refusal of the majority of Muslims to recognize that concept of Khilafat (successorship) could cater to their needs is at the core of their current struggle.

The institution of Khilafat was foretold by God and provided by Him to the God-fearing. Islam is a living religion sent for all people for all times; its blessings, including the blessings of Khilafat, are not limited to and specific period.

In this comprehensive study of the institution of Khilafat since its inception, its meaning for modern man and its inextricable link to prophethood, Mubasher Ahmad has provided valuable insight as well as solution to the problem facing the Muslim world.



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