

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

[3:111] You are the best people
raised for the good of mankind

Service to Humanity Haqūq-ul-'Ibād

The Holy Qur'an on Human Rights

The Holy Prophet's Example in Serving
Humanity

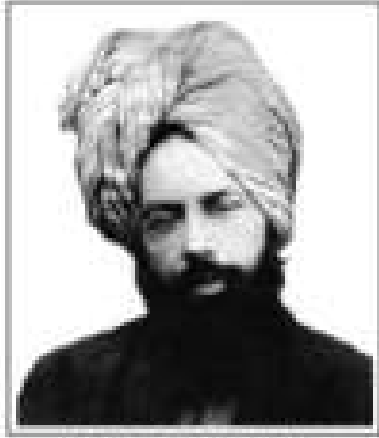
Promised Messiah's Teachings
on Love and Serving Others

Major World Religions on Service to Others

A Century of Services to Humanity through
the Ahmadiyya Khilafat.

Humanity First USA and Its Services

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 195 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

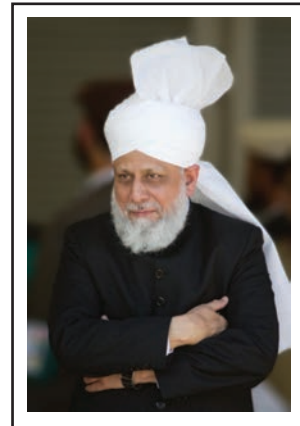
The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hadrat Ahmad(as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257).

It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifat-ul-Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah.

www.alislam.org



Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifat-ul-Masih V

The Muslim Sunrise

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.



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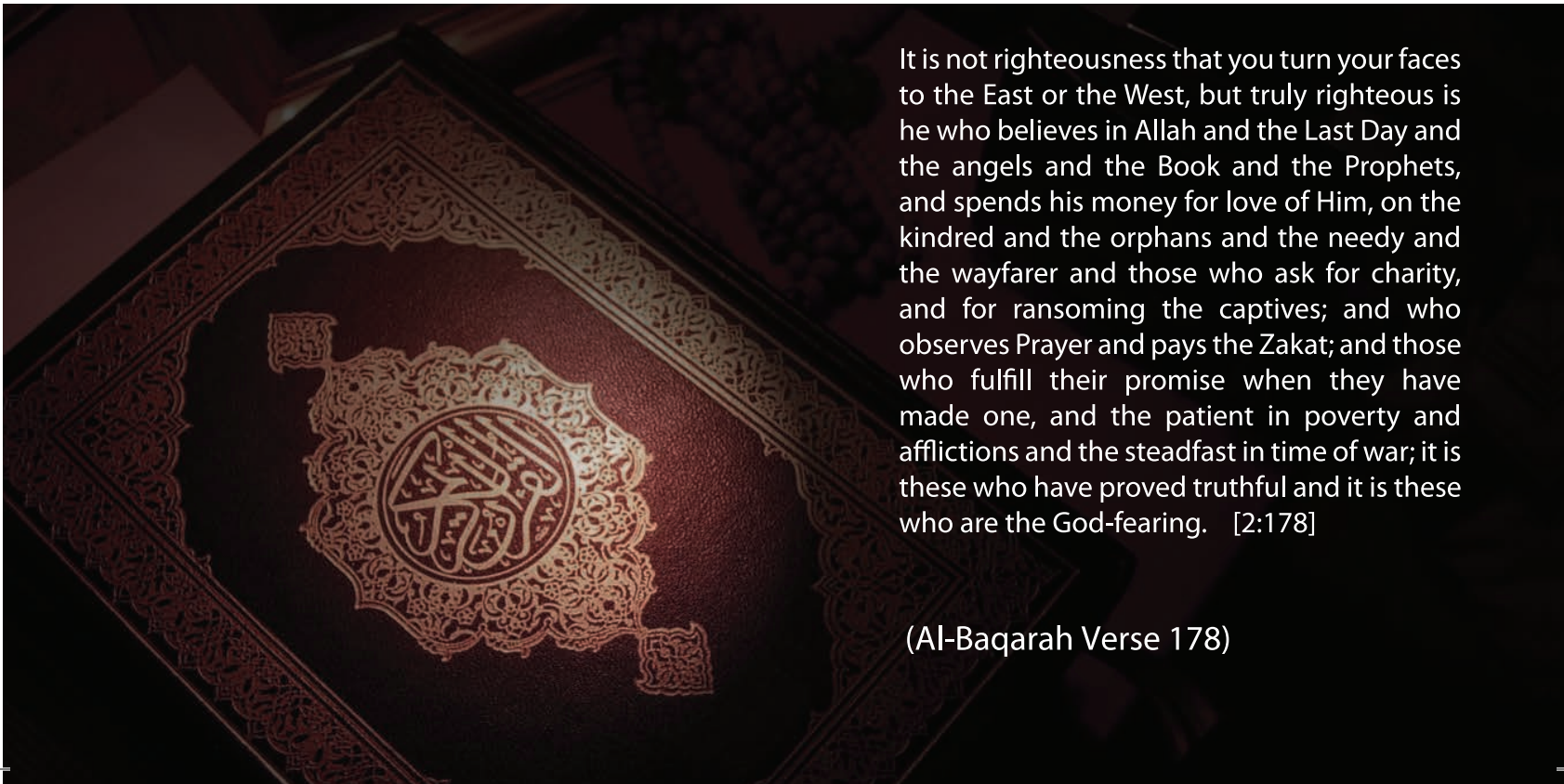
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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ ﴿١﴾
 لَیْسَ الِیْتِمٰنُ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهُكُمْ قِبَلَ
 الْمَشْرِیْقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الِیْتِمٰنَ اَمَنْ
 بِاللّٰهِ وَالْیَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتٰبِ
 وَالرَّسُوْلِیْنَ ؕ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلٰی حُبِّهِ ذَوٰی
 الْقُرْبٰی وَالْیَتٰمٰی وَالْمَسْكِیْنِ وَابْنَ
 السَّبِیْلِ ؕ وَالسَّآئِلِیْنَ وَفِی الرِّقَابِ ؕ
 وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتَى الزَّكٰوةَ ؕ وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ
 بِعَهْدِهِمْ اِذَا عٰهَدُوْا ؕ وَالصَّٰبِرِیْنَ فِی
 الْبَآسَاءِ وَالضَّرَآءِ وَحِیْنَ الْبَآسِ
 اُوْلٰئِكَ الَّذِیْنَ صَدَقُوْا ؕ وَاُوْلٰئِكَ
 هُمُ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٢١٧﴾

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for ransoming the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakat; and those who fulfill their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and the steadfast in time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing. [2:178]

(Al-Baqarah Verse 178)



IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

(Paigham e Sulh) , Message of Peace

“My countrymen, a religion which does not inculcate universal compassion is no religion at all. Similarly, a human being without the faculty of compassion is no human at all. Our God has never discriminated between one people and another. This is illustrated by the fact that all the potentials and capabilities which have been granted to the Aryans have also been granted to the races inhabiting Arabia, Persia, Syria, China, Japan, Europe and America. The earth created by God provides a common floor for all people alike, and His sun and moon and many stars are a source of radiance and provide many other benefits to all alike. Likewise, all people benefit from the elements created by Him, such as air, water, fire and earth, and similarly from other products created by Him like grain, fruit, and healing agents, etc. These attributes of God teach us the lesson that we, too, should behave magnanimously and kindly towards our fellow human beings and should not be petty of heart and illiberal.

Friends! Take it as certain that if either of our two nations would not treat God’s attributes with respect and will not shape its conduct in accordance with the conduct of God, then, that nation will soon be wiped out from the face of the earth. Not only will it destroy itself but it will also jeopardize the future of its generations to come. The righteous of all ages have testified that following God’s ways works like an elixir for the people. Moreover the survival, both physical and spiritual, of human beings depends on the same eternal truth that man should follow the virtuous attributes of God Who is the Fountainhead of all that is essential for survival.

God commences the Holy Qur’an with the following verse which is in Surah Al-Fatiha:

“All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.”(1:2)

That is, all perfect and holy attributes belong exclusively to Allah, Who is the Lord of all the worlds.

The word *alam* comprises all different peoples, all different ages and all the different countries. The commencement of the Holy Qur’an with this verse was designed to counter the views of such people as attempted to monopolize God’s unlimited providence for their own nation and imagined that the other nations did not belong to God or that having created these other people, God discarded them as being of no consequence, or else perhaps they were shelved to oblivion by Him, or (God forbid) they were not even created by Him.”



EDITORIAL

SPRING 2014

According to Islam we have two obligations: to Allah and to His creatures. The first is termed *Haqūq-ul-Lah* in Arabic, and the other is *Haqūq-ul-Ibād*.

Our obligation to Allah includes believing in His existence, praying to Him, thanking Him and worshipping Him with utmost humility.

Our obligation to His creation is to serve humanity, the animals and all other living things He created such as the trees and the plants.

We cannot fulfill one obligation without the other. If we truly believe in Allah as the Creator, and worship Him, how can we ignore the needs of His creation or the needs of His sons and daughters?

Islam has also emphasized that God would forgive us for not fulfilling the obligation to Him but not the violation of our obligations to His creation. In hadith, we find that God would equate not providing food to a hungry person as if one deprived God of food.

The best example of serving the creation is in the life history of our Prophet Muhammad(sa). Even before he claimed to be a prophet, he fervently served humanity. In his youth, he would help the poor, the needy, the orphans and widows. He was the person whom people looked up to for help when they were in need. His sphere of help multiplied with his status as the Mercy for Mankind.

The words of his wife Khadija(ra), in response to his fearful first encounter with Gabriel, describe his selfless life before prophethood in a concise and comprehensive manner. She consoled him in the following words:

“Allah will never disgrace you thus. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist those afflicted by calamity.”

These words summarize in a clear and concise manner the character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) even before he received his first revelation. This is a description of a man committed to the service of humanity and it became the foundation of his love for Allah. This is why Allah referred to him becoming the light upon light. What was in his nature about doing good became illumined infinitively through the revelation of God.

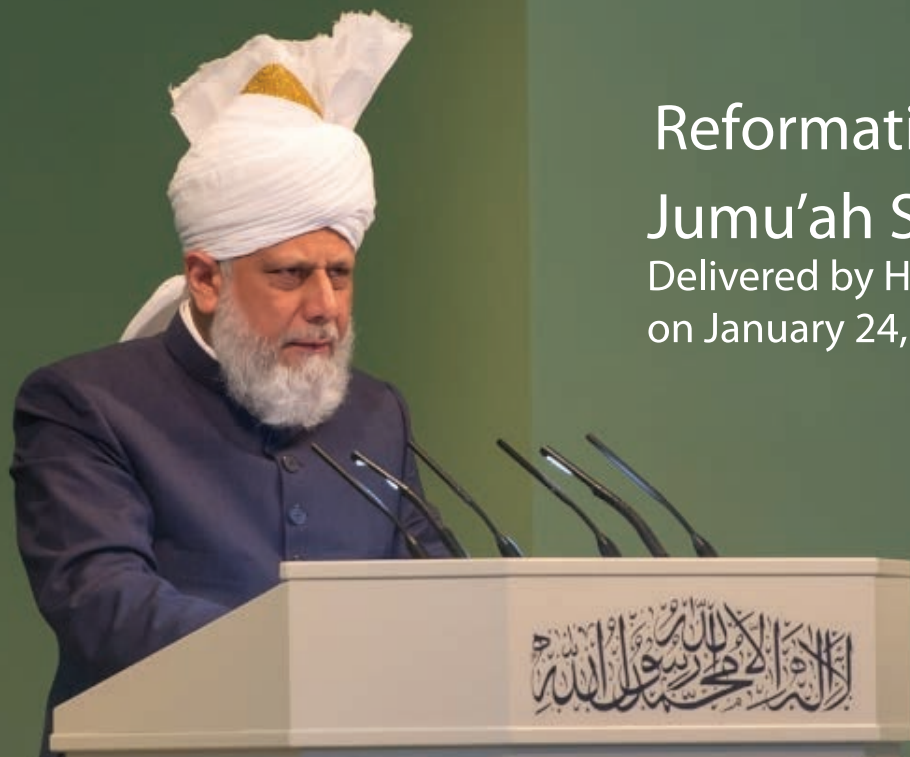
This issue presents articles about serving humanity as described by Islam. With this humble effort to increase awareness of the lofty trust we have been given, we pray that this gesture will inspire some to help the needy around them. This is a path that leads to God and earns His pleasure, while fulfilling our basic obligation to our fellow beings.



Reformation of Practices

Jumu'ah Sermon Synopsis

Delivered by Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad
on January 24, 2014



The subject of reformation of practices continued in the Friday sermon today with emphasis on ways and means of obtaining best results for the betterment of a large section of the Jama'at. It was expounded in the last two Friday sermons that reformation of practices is enhanced by instilling strength of resolve, which for religious purposes is strength of belief, and by removing lack of knowledge and by removing lack of capacity to implement matters. Some points were taken in today's sermon from elucidation by Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him).

Huzoor said that he also wished to say that our missionaries, office-holders, ameers and others who have advisory capacities within the Jama'at, should particularly keep Huzoor's discourse in view so that they may go on to reform practices of the Jama'at. Many such aspects are time to time presented by Huzoor before the Jama'at and with the blessing of MTA Ahmadis all over the world are able to listen to Huzoor's discourses and with the grace of God this proves effective. However, it is the task of the missionaries, ameers and office-holders to formulate their programs in accordance with these discourses so that these important matters are brought to the attention of the Jama'at again and again so that it is extremely clear to every Ahmadi and is instilled in them what their practices should entail.

The first source of reformation of practices is strength of resolve or strength of faith. Prophets of God come to inculcate this; they demonstrate fresh and living signs of God. Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the abundance with which our Jama'at has fresh signs of God before it is matchless.

There is no other religion apart from Islam with signs of ever-fresh Word of God, living miracles and signs demonstrating the existence of God which cleanse human hearts from all kind of adulteration and grant it knowledge and closeness of God. Why then, do we still find weaknesses of practices in our Jama'at? Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that in his opinion the reason for this is because our religious scholars, missionaries and preachers have not paid special attention in disseminating this. Just as what Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said 75 odd years ago was true then, it is true today and attention needs to be paid to it. And just as we gradually move away from the time of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), efforts should be made to have proper planning in this regard.

Why is it that we can debate the matter of death of Jesus (on whom be peace) in minute detail and can produce reference upon reference before the detractors and silence them but similar effort has not been made by the religious scholars of the Jama'at to present the correct teaching of the Jama'at before it! As a result, there are people in the Jama'at who can respond to the matter of death of Jesus (on whom be peace) very well and can respond to objections raised by Maulwis. There are many Ahmadis here too who give very good and conclusive answers on the internet and media and some send details of this to Huzoor. In this sense we are armed very well. However, very few people can be found who would have knowledge of how the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) presented God before us and what has he said about gaining knowledge and nearness of God and the glory with which God's Word and miracles were manifested to him.

It so happens that a person may be well-versed on the issue of death of Jesus (on whom be peace) but due to having no knowledge of the aforementioned aspects, he experiences weakness of faith, his faith falters leading to weaknesses in practice. Knowledge of the issue of death of Jesus (on whom be peace) does not bring about reformation of practices. Unless religious scholars of the Jama'at, missionaries and all office-holders who are responsible to act as role models and do reformation, do not pay the level of attention which is required and do not correlate these matters with the advent of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), a section of the Jama'at with weak strength of resolve and which cannot reform itself, will remain.

We need to find out and analyze how many of us are eager as regards worship of God! Not just in Ramadan, or sit Itikaf in Ramadan and simply relate it for the rest of the year. Rather, by making this love of worship a part of our life throughout the year so that we have nearness of God on a permanent basis. How many of us experience acceptance of prayers through God's love and to whom He speaks? Having accepted the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), it is the obligation of every Ahmadi to try and attain this level for he came to bring about this very revival of Islam. If each Ahmadi knew the station of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and felt the pain to fulfil the objective of his advent and was aware of how many great signs God showed for him and indeed to many of those who accepted him, then each one of us would wish for that station and make efforts to attain it. Strength of faith would be burnished to the level where it generates strength of resolve and a passion to gain nearness of God.

We copy others in worldly matters to attain something good. Each individual emulates or copies others in this regard according to his or her mind-set and capacity. For example, seeing someone wearing a nice outfit makes one want to have something similar. Nowadays television has brought the world so close that let alone people from the middle class, even the poor wish for such and such amenities. They see others have television or fridge and they also want it. They do not try to understand that perhaps the other person may have been given the item as a gift and they should not feel covetous. Immediately effort is made to take out a loan. Or some people even have the habit of requesting aid/help in such matters. Certainly, the Jama'at helps those with limited means in need of help according to its means but those who make requests should ask for legitimate items and also be mindful of their self-respect. Similarly, those who are better off also covet a newer model of television or a better car etc. and take out loans for this purpose.

Huzoor explained that one big cause of the economic downturn in the world these days is the interest on the debt which was incurred to purchase such items. Interest/usury is a big curse. It is purchasing merchandise on interest which ultimately bankrupted many.

In terms of worldly matters people copy and emulate others but we do not emulate and copy in religious matters. We do not emulate the model of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and his companions in doing which there is no question of incurring any loss, in fact there is immeasurable gain! What is the reason then, that we do not emulate these models? It is quite evident that either knowledge of these matters is not given therefore realization is not generated or the knowledge given is few and far between and we forget that God demonstrates His fresh signs even today and our attention to these matters is negligible. Whereas during the course of the day we repeatedly see adverts for worldly things and acquisition of material things gets entrenched in our minds. If question is ever raised about the validity of acquiring certain items due to lack of funds, the response is that do the poor and their children not have sentiments! Curiously these sentiments do not come to the fore when for example revelations of the Prophet Messiah (on whom be peace) are mentioned. No desire is expressed to be recipient of Word of God and His sign and love! A main reason for this mind-set is that our religious scholars, our missionaries and office-holders do not try to repetitively mention in their respective circles that efforts should be made to attain love of God as indeed there is need to do so! Or their own examples are such that they do not draw attention of others. Incidents of God's help and succor and His signs demonstrated for the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and his companions are not mentioned with the required stress and as a result they do not instil the belief that God did not limit His attribute to time and place and He demonstrates His attributes today as He did before. If such matters are explained repetitively and ways to connect to God are also explained and the promises God made to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) are mentioned, children and youngsters would never raise the question why prayers are not accepted. When connection with God is strong, the philosophy of prayer is understood. What needs to be told is that in this age nearness to God can be gained by connecting to the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and God manifests Himself with all His glory. If seeking piety and nearness to God becomes widespread in our Jama'at, we can have a large group of people through whom sin can be erased to a great extent. Claim cannot be made to erase sin completely, however sin can be overcome to a large extent and a large section of the Jama'at can be of people who can overcome sin.



For this purpose, missionaries, ameers and office-holders should try to reform in their individual spheres and reform people by telling them that God informed the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) that those who will follow him completely will gain Divine nearness and God listens to most prayers of such people. With the grace of God we have such people in our Jama'at. They write to Huzoor about their experiences and Huzoor often relates them. These experiences motivate and inspire others to emulate them so that a close connection with God is established.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) once said:

'No other body of people in the world has accepted a God Who answers and listens to prayers. Most certainly a Christian cannot say that he has accepted Christ who listens to his prayers and answers! There is only One God Who speaks; the God of Islam, Who has been presented in the Holy Qur'an and has stated: 'Pray unto Me; I will answer your prayer...' (40:61) And it is completely true that if a person believes in Allah the Exalted with true intention and purity of heart, and makes spiritual endeavors and remains engaged in prayers, ultimately his prayers will definitely be answered.'

If these matters are repetitively presented before the Jama'at, it can greatly fortify strength of resolve which can overcome thousands of sins and can grant Divine nearness that would never falter. The purpose of the advent of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) was indeed to save mankind from sin and to forge a relationship with God which would make pleasure of God precedent over everything and His worship would be offered with eagerness. Huzoor related a few examples of how Ahmadiyyat brought about lifestyle changes in people.

Our missionary from Kyrgyzstan writes that an Umer Sahib who is now 58 years old took his Bai'at in 2002. He was a born Muslim but held communist views. Umer Sahib says that the day he took his Bai'at was a memorable day which he equates to a new birth. He had tried many other religious communities but found no change in himself. Since taking Bai'at he has undergone a spiritual revolutionary change. Salat was something alien to him before Bai'at but now five daily Prayers have become an integral part of his life and it is not conceivable for him to miss Tahajjud Prayer. He says his heart is filled with the belief that if a person sets out to search the truth, he finds his destination which becomes a source of spiritual training for him and he finds tranquility of heart.

Our missionary from Africa writes that Idrisso Sahib, who took Bai'at in 2013 says that he was born to an idolatrous father on the day of Eid, and was thus given a Muslim name and made a Muslim. He used to go to the mosque as a youngster but once returning from Friday Prayers he sustained an injury which made him question why he sustained an injury after worship of God, so he became a Christian. He moved from church to church and denomination to denomination. Meanwhile he had a disagreement with his wife and faced many problems. Many Reconciliation efforts were made between him and his wife but to no avail. It was at this time he met an Ahmadi who did Tabligh to him. He told Idrisso Sahib that he had tried all ways and means but none had worked and he offered his formula which was to pray to God. He said he too would pray for Idrisso Sahib and his wife to be reconciled and as the condition was for both of them to pray with sincerity of heart it would be heard and once Idrisso Sahib's problems were resolved he would have to accept it as a result of the truthfulness of the Imam of the Ahmadi person.

Gradually all problems faced by Idrisso Sahib were resolved and he was reconciled with his wife. He now says that this way is the real way of Islam and he called his situation a sign of the truthfulness of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). A huge transformation has come about in him. This is also a sign for our long-term Ahmadi families whose families are filled with anxiety. Problems are brought before Huzoor where husbands do not pay their dues and wives do not pay their dues. People should strengthen their belief and try for reformation of their practices. They should turn to God and their problems will be resolved. Everyone should try this method and abandon egotism and not follow mind-set of how to retort to each other etc. Rather, help should be sought from God Who shows the right way.

Our missionary from Ghana writes that a new Ahmadi Jabreela Sahib came to see him and said that it was time of harvest and his idolatrous father had asked him to make an offering to the idols for a good harvest of his crop of yams. The Ahmadi teacher told him to desist from idolatry and also keep his father away from it and taught him Dua e Istakhara. With the grace of God, he yielded a very good crop.

His idolatrous father said that the God of his son was the true God and he burnt all the idols he had kept. Such is the strength of belief which is being generated in those who are accepting the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace).

Our missionary from Eldoret, Kenya writes that an ex-employee who had been dismissed somehow entered the compound of our mosque and planted a prohibited drug in the ceiling. He later reported to the police that the Ahmadi missionary dealt in drugs under the guise of Islam. The police raided the mosque and found the illegal substance. Our missionary explained to the police that this was someone's mischief but he was not listened and they took him away and imprisoned him. The judge gave a hearing date. Huzoor was informed of the situation and Huzoor sent a prayerful reply. A second hearing took place. The missionary writes that each time he faced the judge he would look at him most attentively, then saying the words 'gentleman, sit down', he would turn to the lawyers and give them a hearing date. Two days before his day in court our missionary was anxious as he offered his Fajr Prayer. He prayed and then as he was about to recite the Holy Qur'an he thought of seeking a good omen from the Qur'an; open the Qur'an and seek a message from whichever word his eyes fell on first. When he opened the Qur'an his eyes fell on the verse: 'We said, 'Turn cold, O fire, and be a source of peace for Abraham!' (21:70) He felt assured at the good message. Later, he went to collect his post and received Huzoor's letter in which Huzoor had written that may God keep him safe from all harm and in His protection and may the plans of the hypocrites be unsuccessful and the Jama'at be saved from every trouble and may God grant it further advancement. After reading the letter our missionary was confident that God would bless him. When he appeared before the judge, he asked him to sit down as before and after speaking to the lawyers told him that there was no case against him and he was free to go. Thus, if faith is strong then one has belief in God's power and one only but only turns to God. Indeed, God shows His signs. While these matters strengthen one's own faith they also cause others' faith to be strengthened.

The second factor for reformation of practices is strength of knowledge or having knowledge. Sometimes it is erroneously thought that some sins are big and others small. As a result it gets embedded in one's heart and mind that some sins are small and inconsequential. Attention was drawn in a recent sermon that some asylum seekers make false submissions in their cases. Not only do they harm their own case, they are also a cause of disrepute of the Jama'at.

Someone told Huzoor that after listening to the Friday sermon, an asylum seeker went to a lawyer/solicitor who is also an Ahmadi and is perhaps also serving the Jama'at in some capacity.

He had probably listened to the Friday sermon. The solicitor added some incorrect information to the case saying it was important to add it as there could be no case without it, this in spite of the fact that Huzoor had said no false information should be used. Persecution of Ahmadi is so clear and evident that any solicitor's cunning or falsehood is not needed to make up a case.

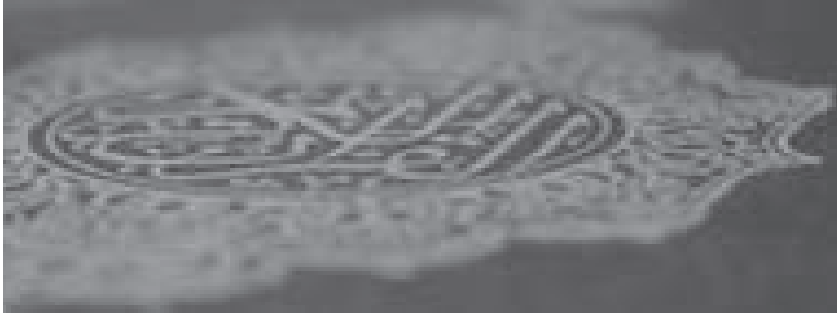
Missionaries and office-holders should also repeatedly advise against falsehood. It should be repetitively mentioned that there is no such thing as small or big sin, sin is sin and it should be avoided. Every falsehood is falsehood and this shirk (to associate partners with God) should be avoided. If one's connection with God is strong there is no need to worry, signs will manifest themselves. Those who advise others should also remember that they themselves should be ever in search of higher levels of strength of resolve and in practical terms there should be uniformity between their word and deed. They should not be those who say something and do something else. There is need to draw attention of the Jama'at again and again to these matters and if everyone starts their task in this regard, change will be visible.

These days children are informed of certain immoralities in schools in the name of education. Our Nizam needs to actively inform children and youngsters of the reality. Parents need to be mindful of their own condition and educate themselves about the harms of the information which is given to children in the name of education in schools. Here children are taught some very unnecessary things at a very young age and the argument given is that this makes them aware to differentiate between good and bad. Whereas in fact it does not do that, rather, it instils wrong thoughts in majority of children from an early age. Parental models and surrounding models are mostly bad rather than good. Thus, missionaries, office-holders of auxiliary organizations and parents, all have to make joint effort to arrange for correct information, as opposed to incorrect information to be disseminated. We cannot stop the way things are done in schools and we cannot interfere, however by identifying to our children what is foul and immoral we can take them in confidence and show them our own good role models and save them from the effect of the environment. May God enable all of us to perform our obligations in a good manner!



THE HOLY QUR'AN ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Arif Humayun



PART 1: THE QUR'AN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Islamic worship consists of two major components: obligations towards God **(2)** and obligations towards His creation.**(3)** The obligations towards God—like the five pillars—are meant to train humans for honoring commitments, inculcating discipline and cleanliness, first feeling for, and then helping the poor, and finally unity of all human beings. The outcome of this training is to prepare Muslims to help fulfill their obligations towards the Creation. The Qur'an prescribes a perfect gradation of moral values and defines three stages of human relations—absolute justice, granting someone more than their due, and to treat others with such grace and overwhelming benevolence as one would treat one's kindred. To act with absolute justice is the minimum requirement for Muslims; those seeking God's pleasure must be benevolent—that is, he must render good without any thought of return, and forgive wrongs and injuries till beneficence towards fellow beings becomes part of his nature and flows out of him as naturally as affection for close kindred. Simultaneously, every kind of trespass against person, property and honor should be eschewed and rude behavior and evil thoughts and designs must also be guarded against. These form the major Qur'anic teachings for ensuring that the rights of individuals are safeguarded as a matter of faith.

PART 2: THE QUR'AN AND THE UN-HRD

This part is excerpted from Islam and Human Rights **(4)** and summarizes the core of each UN-HDR Article and cross-references it to the Qur'an. Space limitations prevent a detailed analysis, but interested readers are encouraged to review the source.

The Preamble summarizes the general terms and goals of the Declaration and the methods to accomplish them. The Preamble is adequately referenced by two Qur'anic verses **(5)** which exhort Muslims to perform and support all good deeds and suppress evil. They actually go further than the Preamble because the Qur'an incentivizes the good behavior with a reward in the hereafter.**(6)**

Articles 1 and 2 stress the freedom, equality and dignity of human beings; they urge people to interact with others as equals, without discrimination and in the spirit of brotherhood. The Qur'an stresses this equality which is derived from the unity of its common Creator who created humans from the same species and to whom all humans owe allegiance and obedience.**(7)** Additionally, this theme is captured in several additional verses **(8)** and is also reinforced by the Prophets exhortations (ahadith).**(9)**

Understanding the interconnectivity between the Holy Qur'an and Human Rights, as defined by the United Nations Human Rights Declaration (UN-HRD) of 1948, is critical for two reasons—defeating radicalism and improving the quality of life in Muslim societies. Unfortunately, the Muslim world has not only failed to acknowledge the ideals outlined in the UN-HRD, they—through the 57 member Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC)—have rejected the document as un-Islamic and adopted an "Islamic" version that focuses on (legislative) sharia, the so-called Islamic Law. This article will establish that the ideals contained in the UN-HRD are embedded in the Qur'an—the primary source of Islamic teachings—and that the OIC's rejection of the UN-HRD is driven by short-sighted political motivations. The Qur'anic teachings on human rights are discussed in the first part, followed by the cross-referencing of the entire UN-HRD to the Qur'an in the second part. The final part will highlight the background behind the OIC's rejection of the UN-HRD and its destructive consequences.

THE UDHR

On December 10, 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for safeguarding the fundamental freedoms for all individuals, irrespective of race, sex, language, or religion. Member states pledge to undertake "joint and separate action" to protect these rights. The UN Declaration of Human Rights proclaims basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights common to all human beings and serves as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations." This statement of ideals has been upheld and celebrated as: "... the broadest consensus of contemporary civilization on the subject of Human Rights."**(1)**



Article 3 embodies what has come to be regarded as truism. Several articles that follow spell out some of the specific elements “the right to life, liberty, and security of the individual.” Islam emphatically safeguards these rights. Suicide is forbidden**(10)** as is infanticide,**(11)** and a sense of horror is conveyed for taking innocent life.**(12)** Additionally, the Qur’an provides comprehensive commandments for dealing with parents, children, and safeguarding the rights of orphans.**(13)** The Prophet also emphasized the contents of Article 3 in his Farewell address.**(14)**

Article 4 is designed to secure the abolition of slavery and all forms of servitude. By stressing equality among human beings, Islam prohibited slavery, discrimination, and servitude in all forms. The Prophet freed all slaves against the prevalent practice of slavery in pre-Islamic Arabia and even adopted a slave as his son after he refused to accompany his parents.

Article 5 is directed against torture, cruelty, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Prophet, while prohibiting cruelty and torture, regularly admonished people to behave with calmness, dignity, and courtesy and subjecting people to inhumane or demeaning treatment. He even expressed displeasure at the practice of branding a donkey on the face.**(15)**

Articles 6-8 are designed to secure recognition and equality before the law and the protection of the law without discrimination for all people. Several Qur’anic pronouncements are emphatic about justice and upholding the law.**(16)**

Articles 9-12 have a similar message. While Articles 9-11 safeguard against the arbitrary exercise of executive or administrative authority and for the due administration of justice where a criminal charge is involved and a penalty might be incurred, Article 12 deals with the same matters but from the perspective of protecting the individual’s privacy. The Qur’anic pronouncements for dispensing justice and dealing with people fairly have already been discussed under Articles 6-8. Islam seeks to uphold the basic values through legislative safeguards and strives constantly to ensure their observance in every sphere by emphasizing the moral responsibility of the individual, society and the State. Likewise, the Qur’an categorically defends the individual’s right to privacy.**(17)**

Articles 13-15 relate to nationality, freedom of movement and residence and asylum. The Qur’an encourages travel and the pilgrimage – the fifth pillar of Islam – requires travel to Mecca. The purpose of travel and movement stressed by the Qur’an is more comprehensive than the referenced Articles. Travel is encouraged so people can witness the signs of God, educate themselves and reinforce their faith.**(18)** Similarly, Islam encourages granting asylum and protecting those who are persecuted.**(19)** Providing asylum to the persecuted who migrated is a decent act.**(20)**



Article 16 deals with the right to marry, equal rights for spouses, consent to marriage and the protection for the family. In Islam, family is recognized as the natural and fundamental unit of the society. Islam regards married life as a natural state;**(21)** celibacy and monasticism is prohibited.**(22)** It not only accords it the fullest protection, but also shows how the protection can be made effective. Here are some Qur’anic pronouncements about marriage in the footnotes.**(23)**

Article 17 recognizes the individual’s right to own property and accords it full protection. There is no prohibition against owning property in Islam and it applies to both men and women.

Articles 18 and 19 are about securing the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, and expression, including the freedom to change one’s religion and to manifest it in teaching, practice, worship, and observance, and the freedom to seek, receive and impart information. Islam accords absolute freedom, even in matters of faith; the Qur’an affirms that “there should be no compulsion in religion”**(24)** and several verses reaffirm this point.**(25)**

Article 20 secures the right of free peaceful association which is, in fact, consequent upon the right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression. The need for this specific formulation was felt with the advent of the industrialization and capitalism when people were forced to work under dangerous and inhumane conditions. Islam's stand on freedom of conscience is uncompromising, even in matters of faith (as shown in Articles 18 and 19). Islam encourages association with others for attainment of righteous actions.(26)

Article 21 recognizes every individual's right to participate in the government and to have equal access to public services in their country, and that peoples' will should be the basis of government. The Qur'an does not specify any form of government but defines that the government be based on the principles of equality, peace and justice, prescribing that authority in public matters be vested in the people best capable of exercising it (27) and that the state conduct its affairs in consultation with the people.(28)

Articles 22 to 28 can be grouped together because these are directed towards securing a reasonable standard of living for everyone through proper education, appropriate and adequate training, and gainful employment so the individual may have full opportunity to develop. Moreover, the individual's dignity should be safeguarded. Most of these have already been covered in previous sections but the Qur'an makes the state responsible for providing the basic necessities to its subjects.(29)

Articles 29 and 30 represent the truism that every right carries with it a corresponding duty and responsibility. Freedom rightfully occupies a place in the front; yet to ensure due freedom for everyone, the freedom of each must be curbed, restrained and regulated. As has been widely observed, our real freedom is the right to discipline our freedom.

PART 3: OIC's rejection of the UN-HRD and its destructive consequences

The ironic contradiction between the Qur'anic pronouncements and their convergence with the UN-HRD on the one side, and the OIC's rejection of the UN-HDR on the other, is hard to rationalize. The OIC rejection cannot be ignored because the OIC claims to be "... the collective voice of the Muslim world and ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world..."(30) Recently, two non-Muslims—a university professor and an office bearer from a large interfaith group—have shared their views, based on the OIC's position, that Islam and the UN-HRD are incompatible. The only obvious explanation to this perplexing phenomenon is that the OIC is pursuing a political agenda by suppressing the individual freedoms of expression and association under the guise of apostasy, blasphemy and sharia. OIC's 2013 Report on Islamophobia (31) cites "freedom of speech as the main cause of Islamophobia." With this mindset, the OIC is exploiting the so-called Islamic Sharia laws (jihad, apostasy and blasphemy) to suppress dissent and any opposition to their nefarious objectives. This has resulted in an increase in intolerance, the persecution of minorities, and widespread radicalism in Muslim societies.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The UN Human Rights Declaration is a set of guiding principles for preventing exploitation and enabling humans to reach their true potential in life. These guiding principles are fully consistent with, and embedded in Qur'anic affirmations. The IOC's rejection of the UN-HRD as "un-Islamic" is motivated on political considerations and is not supported by the Qur'an.



1 Zafrullah Khan, "Islam and Human Rights." Islam International Publications, Inc. 1967

2 The five pillars of Islam: "Affirmation, obligatory prayers, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage to Mecca."

3 Qur'an 19: 91

4 <http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Islam-HR.pdf>

5 Qur'an 3:105

6 Qur'an 3:114-6

7 Qur'an 2:22-3; Qur'an 4:2; Qur'an 16:73; Qur'an 49:14

8 Qur'an 35:40; Qur'an 95:5; Qur'an 32:7-10; Qur'an 45:14; Qur'an 75:3

9 Bukhari IV under Good behavior; Tirmidhi II under Virtue etc.; Chapter on Benevolence and Bukhari I under faith.

10 Qur'an 4:30

11 Qur'an 17:32

12 Qur'an 5: 33

13 Qur'an 6:152-3.

14 www.mei.columbia.edu/HANDOUT15.PDF

15 Muslim II (Book of Ahadith). Section Dress and Adornment. Chapter Prohibition against beating or branding an animal on its face.

16 Qur'an 4:66; Qur'an 42:16; Qur'an 4:59; Qur'an 25:73; Qur'an 5:9; Qur'an 4:36.

17 Qur'an 24:28-3

18 Qur'an 30:23; Qur'an 29:20-1; Qur'an 22: 46-7; Qur'an 22: 27-8.

19 Qur'an 4:101.

20 Qur'an 59:10.

21 Qur'an 30: 22.

22 Qur'an 57: 28.

23 Qur'an 2:188; Qur'an 4:2; Qur'an 4:20.

24 Qur'an 2:257.

25 Qur'an 18:30; Qur'an 10:109; Qur'an 39:42.

26 Qur'an 58:10-11; Qur'an 4:115.

27 Qur'an 4:59.

28 Qur'an 3:160; Qur'an 42:39.

29 Qur'an 20:119-20.

30 www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en

31 www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/upload/islamophobia/2013/en/islamophobia_report_2013.pdf



THE HOLY PROPHET'S EXAMPLE IN SERVING HUMANITY

Bushra Bajwa

Prophet Muhammad(sa) experienced the utmost cruelty from people who rejected his message of peace. Once, he was prostrating in prayer when a few fellow Meccans dumped the entrails of a camel on his back. The Prophet(sa) could not rise from his position because of the weight of the entrails. On a daily basis, the Holy Prophet(sa) encountered garbage piled up on his doorstep. On another occasion, a group of disbelievers put a mantle around his neck and dragged him, until Hadrat Abu Bakr(ra) was able to rescue him. Such was the harsh treatment of the Meccans towards the Messenger of God. Yet God tells us in the Qur'an, "Haply thou wilt grieve thyself to death because they believe not," (26:4). Rather than harboring any feelings of anger or hatred towards the disbelievers, the Prophet(sa) felt great anguish for them and prayed for the salvation of their future generations. His virtue of complete mercy and kindness towards others is the finest model for all of mankind. His example will now be looked at in detail.

Islam on Relationships with Fellow Beings

The teachings of Islam place as much emphasis on service to humanity as on the worship of God. In fact, man's conduct with his fellow beings is so pertinent to his spiritual development, that prayer is deemed meaningless without it. In the Qur'an it is said,

"Indeed Allah requires you to abide by justice, to treat with grace and to give like the giving of kin to kin..." (16:91).

This verse brings to light the extent of man's duties and obligations towards his fellow beings. Muslims are commanded to not only exercise justice towards each other, but also to add benevolence to the act of justice, that is returning more than the others' dues, and then to move further to the third stage of human relationships, which is kindness to one's kindred—a natural display of affection as demonstrated by a mother for her child.

How can all this be achieved? Allah tells us that

"Verily you have in the Prophet of Allah an excellent model, for him who fears Allah and the Last Day and who remembers Allah much," (33:22).

The Holy Prophet(sa) demonstrated an excellent conduct to all people. He showed deep care towards his family, laid down great emphasis in looking after the underprivileged groups of society and set down codes for regulating and harmonizing social and moral behavior.

Caring for one's family

The Holy Prophet(sa) promoted great respect and obedience for one's parents. He instructed believers to care for them in old age and taught that Paradise lies at the feet of one's mother. Hadrat Abu Umamah(ra) narrated that once a man asked the Holy Prophet(sa) about the rights of parents upon their children. He replied that: 'The parents are the Heaven or Hell for their children.' The Holy Prophet(sa) was an exemplary husband. He was kind, caring and gentle and treated his wives with love and respect. He helped his wives with housework. Hadrat Ayesha(ra) related how the Holy Prophet(sa) helped with the household chores. She said, "The Holy Prophet would mend his shoe when needed or sew his clothes if they required repair." He also laughed and joked with his wives. It is related that the Prophet(sa) once challenged his wife Ayesha(ra) to a foot race which she won. Some time later he challenged her to a re-match and this time he won. Later, he laughed and said, "Ayesha we are now even."

The Holy Prophet(sa) held all relatives in high esteem. He also paid his dues to those connected to relatives. It is narrated that even after Hadrat Khadija's(ra) death, whenever the Prophet(sa) sacrificed an animal, he would send a portion of it to Hadrat Khadija's(ra) friends.



The Holy Prophet(sa) also taught "respect your children and cultivate in them the best of manners." In particular, he inculcated in the Arabs the value of having daughters and advised them to educate girls just as they educate their sons.

Care of the Underprivileged Groups in Society

The Holy Prophet(sa) was ever concerned to improve the conditions of the poorer sections of the community and raise their status in society. Giving of charity was institutionalized in Islam with Zaka'at. It requires that a certain percentage of an individual's wealth has to be given to the poor every year. At the same time the Holy Prophet(sa) also laid great emphasis on respecting the feelings of the poor. In one of his sayings he declared that no feast of the rich is blessed by God unless the poor are invited to it. On another occasion he said,

"Let no man imagine that his wealth or standing or power is the result of merely his own efforts or enterprise. That is not so. Your power, your wealth and your position are all earned through the poor."

The Holy Prophet(sa) brought to attention the care of orphans. He said, "He who takes care of an orphan, whether related to him or a stranger, will be like these two in Paradise," and he raised his forefinger and middle finger by way of illustration.

The Holy Prophet(sa) was also very keen on improving the condition of women in society. He declared women were equal to men. Islam became the first religion which conferred upon women the right to inherit. Moreover, women in Islam became absolute owners of their property as husbands cannot obtain any control of it simply by virtue of their relationship. And he also demonstrated that widows and divorcees should also be taken care of by marrying divorcees and widows and thus setting an example for future generations.

Perhaps the most underprivileged class at the time of Holy Prophet(sa) was that of the slaves. The Holy Prophet(sa) took steps to improve the conditions of slaves and laid the foundation of a movement to eliminate the unjust and cruel practice of slavery from this world altogether.

The Qur'an commanded the Muslims to treat the slaves with kindness and the freeing of slaves was declared to be a true virtue. Thousands of slaves were therefore freed simply as an act of kindness.

General Social and Moral Code:

So far we have looked at the Holy Prophet's(sa) kind treatment towards specific groups of people. But the traditions of the Holy Prophet(sa) and the teachings of the Qur'an have laid down a social and moral code for Muslims in their dealings with all of their fellow beings. Developing one's character along this code is the key to developing one's own flawless character as well as the establishment of a harmonious society.

The Holy Prophet(sa) taught that when believers meet each other they should greet each other by saying 'Salaam' (peace) to each other. This is a prayer of peace and blessing upon each other that would result in the development of love and harmony amongst people.

The Holy Prophet(sa) told his followers to be forgiving and to overlook the faults of others. He always demonstrated kindness towards others and was fair and gentle in his dealings with all people. Hadrat Abu Hurairah(ra) relates that once a rustic passed water in the mosque and some people got up to rough hand him, whereupon the Holy Prophet(sa) said, "Let go of him and pour a bucket of water over it to wash it out. You have been raised up to make things easy and not to make them hard." He also said "Gentleness adorns everything and its absence leaves everything defective".

Another attribute of the Holy Prophet(sa) which he wished to pass on to his followers was that of good hospitality. If someone visited the Holy Prophet(sa) and he happened to be eating, he would readily share his food with his guest. Once a non-believer came to see the Holy Prophet(sa) and such was his hospitality that he asked someone to bring him goat's milk. The non-believer drank to his fill. The next morning he accepted Islam as he so was impressed with the Holy Prophet's(sa) hospitality. Another advice the Prophet(sa) gave was "Give gifts to each other, as this will make you love one another."

God names The Holy Prophet(sa) "O Perfect Leader" in the Holy Qur'an. The Prophet(sa) is the epitome of the beautiful teachings of Islam that teach love for all. By following his fine example, Muslims and all people can learn how to care for one another and create a utopia for themselves in this life as well as the next.



Fire of Devotion to the Beauty of Muhammad(sa)

Written by the Promised Messiah(as)

*I am ready to offer my heart and soul
For the beauty of Muhammad(sa)
My body is merely the dust of the lane
Treaded by the progeny of Muhammad(sa).*

*I have seen with my heart's eye
And heard with perceptive ears;
The trumpet of the beauty of Muhammad(sa).
Echoes everywhere.*

*This ever-flowing water which I distribute
Freely among God's creatures;
Is but a drop from the ocean
Of the excellences of Muhammad(sa).*

*The fire that burns within me
Is the fire of love of Muhammad(sa);
The water that I possess
Is from the sweet and pure water of Muhammad(sa).*

(Majmū'ah Ishāharat, Vol 1, P. 97)



POETRY CORNER

THE PROMISED MESSIAH'S TEACHINGS ON LOVE AND SERVING OTHERS

By Monsura Sirajee

The Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) was sitting with some of his companions when a Jewish funeral procession passed by. He immediately stood up, out of respect. Assuming that the Prophet(sa) had mistaken the funeral procession to be that of a Muslim, one companion informed the Prophet Muhammad(sa) that the funeral was actually for a Jew. The Prophet(sa) replied, "Was he not human?"

In many ways, this dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad(sa) and his companions highlights the perennial obstacle to establishing true love and peace between humans—the barriers individuals create between each other. When conflicts arise, the common humanity that binds mankind dissolves quickly; instead, the otherness of the opponent is emphasized, and in the case of certain religious groups, the favor of God is monopolized. The Holy Prophet Muhammad's (sa) response to his companion repudiates the notion of a community's distinctiveness at the expense of a shared sense of humanity. This is affirmed in the Holy Qur'an, in which God states that the Muslim community can be considered the "best of people" only insofar as they serve humanity, stating,

"You are the best people raised for the good of mankind" (3:111).

It is unfortunate, then, that the Prophet's(sa) response to his companion bears witness against the actions of certain contemporary Muslims, who flagrantly deny the humanity of both non-Muslims and their fellow Muslims alike. They are content with ascribing to themselves the first label of the verse—"the best of people"—but not the second: promoting activities for the service of humanity.

The mission of the Promised Messiah and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as), was to revive the message of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(saw), particularly his teachings regarding *Haqūq-ul-Lah* (the rights due to God) and *Haqūq-ul-Ibād* (the rights due to humans).

Although *Haqūq-ul-Lah* and *Haqūq-ul-Ibād* are some - times presented as two separate aspects of true faith, in his final book, *A Message of Peace* (1908), the Promised Messiah(as) shows how the two are intimately related. He begins by discussing how the bounties of God are not confined to one people. All people, through the sheer grace of God, benefit from natural elements such as air, water, and fire. Furthermore, a foundational teaching of Islam is that no people have been deprived of a prophet of God, all of whom have preached the same message—the oneness of God. For the believer, these facts are a sign of God that should motivate action. The Promised Messiah(as) writes that the unconditional and limitless grace of God "teaches us the lesson that we, too should behave magnanimously and kindly towards our fellow human beings." In this way, the Promised Messiah teaches Muslims that service to humanity is not tangentially related to the faith but an affirmation of the shahada (the proclamation of faith). If one truly believes that there is none worthy of worship and none worthy of emulating than God, then one cannot help but take on His characteristic of generosity.

In other writings, the Promised Messiah further explains the ways in which the advancement of one's relationship with the Creator is reliant upon one's relationship with His creation. The Promised Messiah writes, "I tell you that the habit of thinking ill of others is a great affliction which destroys a person's faith."



This spiritual malady should not be taken lightly." Indeed, it is one of the greatest obstacles to achieving nearness to God. The Promised Messiah(as) explains, "Even if you have malice about a worldly matter with one person your prayers cannot be accepted. It should be remembered very well not to have enmity with anyone over worldly matters. What worth does this world and its matters have that one should keep enmity regarding them?"

In obedience to the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa), the Promised Messiah(as) repeatedly exhorted his followers to exhibit sincere love for all humans, regardless of creed, a remarkably progressive view considering his residence in a country preoccupied with caste and religious identity. "Benevolence does not imply that it should be only for your brothers and relations," he writes, "but it should be for anyone, any human, and any of God's creation. Do not consider whether someone is a Hindu or a Christian." This religious tolerance is an active state and goes beyond just accepting the presence of other faiths. God in the Holy Qur'an states,

**"...and we have made you into
tribes and sub-tribes so that
you may know each other"
(49:14).**

Indifference to the condition of others in the name of "tolerance" has no place Islam. The Promised Messiah expected his followers to create genuine and deep connections with others.

He writes,

**"If you wish that God in heaven
is pleased with you, then be as
if you are two brothers from
one womb."**

Like all states of spirituality, the Promised Messiah(as) describes inculcating love of humanity as a gradual process. After removing malice and forging sincere connections with others, one of the final steps in developing true love is to develop extreme meekness, a great virtue found in all of God's prophets. The Promised Messiah writes,

**"If you wish to find Allah the
Almighty, seek Him near the
hearts of the meek."**

It is in descending and subduing our egos that we will ascend towards God.

Far from sporadically declaring his love for all of humanity, the Promised Messiah(as) repeatedly emphasized love and service, considering it to be a hallmark of the Ahmadiyya community. The Promised Messiah(as) solidified his commitment to and high standard of unconditional love for all creatures in the Ten Conditions of Bai'at, a pledge Ahmadi Muslims take when joining the community. Four of the ten conditions clearly require Ahmadi Muslims to devote themselves to love and service and shun any activity that may harm others.

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 might be

IV. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means

VI. That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness

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

The ultimate goal of love and service to humanity is to be connected to the ultimate mission of the Promised Messiah(as) and all of God's prophets—to promote tawhid, the oneness of God. "You should strive to your utmost to spread the idea of His Singleness and Unity all over the earth," the Promised Messiah writes. "Be kind and merciful to all of humanity for they all His Creatures. Always work for the good of mankind." In this way, the Promised Messiah reminds us that exhibiting sincere love for all and hatred for none is the way Muslims can act out the proclamation of faith—there is none worthy of worship except Allah.



MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS ON SERVICES TO OTHERS

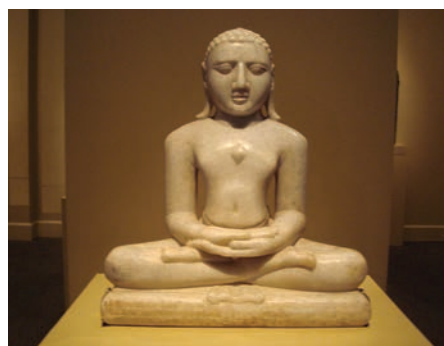
By Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B

Expression of love and compassion towards the needy and the deprived is a basic human instinct that knows no boundaries. Therefore, all major world religions teach their followers to remain caring, loving and serving of others regardless of differences of personal beliefs. This is a common thread woven in all major world religions. One of the reasons may be that organized religions cannot exist in a social vacuum; there is a communal bond within their members, and service to others helps to promote its approval. Those religions that endorse the existence of a deity connect the service to humanity as a tool to win the pleasure of the Divine.

In Hinduism, the presence of God is in everything that exists, and specifically in human beings. Hindus who believe they are the chosen ones of God adopt a compassionate attitude towards serving humanity. Through rendering services to others they draw spiritual solace. Among many Hindu gods, the most universally worshipped deity is that of Hanuman – the monkey god – who is considered as the god of service, because he served Lord Rama most humbly and sincerely, readily offering his services to save Rama's wife Sita Ji, and bravely fighting the demons who had stolen her from her husband.



In the classic Sanskrit epic, Mahabharata, the most important segment is Bhagavad Gita, or "The Song of God." It states: "Living creatures are nourished by food, and food is nourished by rain; rain itself is the water of life which comes from selfless worship and service." [1] On the subject of service the great Hindu poet and philosopher Sir Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "I slept and dreamed that life was joy. I woke up and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy." Thus to remain connected with Divinity, every person has to surrender one's self to the service of others. That's why many Hindu temples and ashrams – premises for spiritual retreats – have social service locations where the needs of the sick, the poor, the elderly, the hungry and the underprivileged are carried out. But still, the belief in a caste system has disadvantaged Hinduism from fully realizing the values of selfless services. The Brahmins are the superior class and the Shudras the serving class – the lowest of all – by the process of birth. Then there are Dalits – the untouchables – considered in Hinduism as the filth and the unclean echelon of Hindu society.



Statue of Adinatha, the first tirthankara and the traditional founder of Jainism

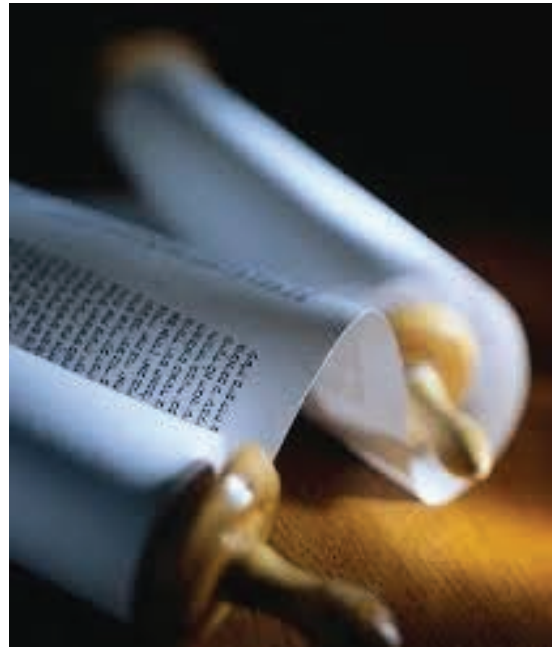
Jainism is an off-shoot of Hinduism. It expresses reverence for life and good moral behavior, and it rejects the Hindu caste system. It gets closer to human services as it emphasizes denying self-centered personal desires. It takes all forms of life as sacred, including that of insects and all animals. Hence, all forms of life should be cared for and kept unharmed. The followers of Jainism are staunch believers in Ahimsa – that is, non-violence towards all things, and consider their religion a path of compassion and love. In Jain society, the temple is the center of religious and social works and the monks and nuns play an important role in guiding what services to perform to help the others.

Next to a Jain temple usually there is a dharamsala (religious society) to serve the needs of the poor, the destitute, orphans and the homeless. Jains are well-known for providing training to poor women in crafts to make them financially independent. Most of the big Jain temples have outpatient consulting clinics. Additional facilities are created at other places to provide health care and education. In India alone there are more than 100 hospitals and over 4,000 schools managed by Jains. In addition, there are hundreds of professional colleges and a few universities that offer education in engineering, medicine and business management. The Federation of Jain Educational Institute in Poona, India, is famous for enhancing the quality of education in schools.



The essence of Buddhism is self liberation from pain and suffering and to serve others with kindness and compassion. To serve others is essentially to help them find a way how to prevail over the problems and hardships of life! In Buddhism, the Noble Eight Fold Path is living a life of detachment from all those elements that cause physical and mental suffering. Those who want to serve others, first they have to practice the fundamental Buddhist principles in their personal lives by giving up all worldly comforts. Buddhist monks play an important role by displaying love and compassion for others, by becoming their servants and even, if need may arise, by sacrificing their lives for others. The greater emphasis on inner happiness in comparison to material progress creates a dilemma for Buddhists in helping others materially and economically. This is where a difference arises between the devoted monks and laypersons. For a layperson/family-man the advice is to apply the principles of "persistent effort," "protection," "good friendship" and "balanced living." That's why, to maintain Buddha's Middle Path, the Dalai Lama says: "It is quite obvious that without material progress we will lack many material comforts.

In the meantime, without inner peace, material things alone are not sufficient. There are many signs which indicate that material progress is not sufficient for men. There is something lacking. Therefore, the only way is to combine the two." [2]



In the Torah and Talmud, the sacred texts of Judaism, instructions to take care of others, serve the widow, the orphan and the stranger are mentioned many times -- more than any other commandment given to Jews. In Judaism, service to others is closely connected with serving God. The Jewish people have remained a closed community, especially under persecution; therefore, understandably their services to others were confined to the deserving members within their own community. Charitable acts such as assisting the marginalized members of society remained focused on persons within the Jewish community. God's commandment to the Children of Israel in Leviticus 19:18 emphasizes the rights of the neighbor: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." However, mostly the definition of "neighbor" has been "fellow Israelite" or "member of the covenant" -- meaning, another Jew. However, with the passage of time the philanthropic contributions of Jewish individuals and organizations have broadened the circle of the recipients of their help, and in modern era, especially in United States of America, Jewish social services extend the "acts of compassion" to meet many needs of the non-Jews as well. In addition to financial help, the services are in the areas of health care and academic research.

The New Testament teaches: "Faith without works is dead" [3]. Therefore, the social services are closely connected with having faith in God. The Christian tradition of helping the needy and the poor is strong from the very beginning as set by Jesus(as) himself in his lifetime. He used to heal people miraculously. The New Testament narrates: "And Jesus(as) went about all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kind of disease among the people. Then his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them" [4]. He taught: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" [5]. Christians attribute to him even the miracle of raising the dead, and feeding thousands of hungry people. Adding to the Jewish tradition of "You shall love your neighbor", Jesus(as) preached, "But I say to you, love your enemies" [6].

The Holy Qur'an, the sacred scripture for Muslims, opens with a prayer praising Allah the Creator and Sustainer of all the peoples [7]. Immediately after the opening prayer, the Holy Qur'an defines the righteous people as those who are mindful of God, believe in the Unseen, keep up prayer, and spend out of what God has provided them [8]. Thus offering prayer to God and offering one's possessions to serve others are two fundamental principles of Islam; and both are closely connected with each other. The Holy Qur'an equates those who avoid acts of charity and benevolence, with those who do not have any faith at all in God and the Day of Judgment [9]. At another place the Holy Qur'an defines a righteous person as one who "spends his money for the love of God on the relatives, and the orphan and the needy and the way-farer and those who ask for help and for emancipating the slaves; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakat" [10]. Payment of Zakat is an act of benevolence to help the needy, and it is a pillar of Islam, a religious obligation to win the pleasure of God. In Islam, it is not only through spending money that one can serve others; service to humanity can also be provided by utilizing one's physical energy, and also by providing emotional, intellectual and spiritual assistance to others. The Holy Qur'an also prioritizes those to be served: First priority is given to close family members, among whom foremost are parents, specifically in their old age; then the orphans and the needy; then the neighbors; then co-workers and employees; and then strangers and way-farers. Special instructions are given to free slaves. And if a financially strained person needs a loan, the Holy Qur'an encourages lending to the needy, but it prohibits in strongest terms the charging of any interest or usury on the loaned amount. The Holy Qur'an says: "Those who take usury will rise up on the Day of Resurrection like someone whom Satan has smitten with insanity" [11]. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad(as) was most generous in helping others and he set his personal example as a model for all Muslims to follow.

The youngest of all major world religions is Sikhism which has its roots in Islam and Hinduism. Selfless community service, called Seva is central to Sikh religious obligations. The Sikh sacred text, Guru Granth Sahib dictates: "Whoever has good destiny inscribed on his forehead, applies himself to Seva – selfless service" [12]. That's why a Langar Khana – a free kitchen – is a part of Gurdawara – the Sikh place of worship. Food is prepared and served to all who come to worship or just to visit the temple. The tradition of feeding all—without any discrimination of caste, social status or creed – was initiated by Guru Baba Nanak sahib, the founder of Sikhism. The Sikh community volunteers provide food cooked daily at the Langar Khana. They serve food as a religious duty, keeping in mind that as there is a close connection of food to physical nourishment, similarly God is closely connected with spiritual life. Sikhs consider serving others as carrying out the work of their Gurus – the saintly spiritual teachers. Not only do they feed people at the Langar Khana, they also make sure that no one goes hungry within one mile radius of their Gurdawaras. The concept of Seva is not limited to feeding the hungry; it is very broad and includes social services that involve all kinds of charitable acts. Sikhism summarizes the merits of service in these words: "One who serves and seeks no recompense finds union with the Lord. Such servant alone takes the Master's guidance, says Nanak, as on him is Divine grace" [13].

To conclude, it can be said without any reservation that all major world religions converge together on serving humanity in one way or another, and spiritual life is not complete unless physical, emotional and financial needs of the deserving are taken care of with full compassion and wholehearted exertion. To render service to others is one of the principle objectives of all major religions.

[1] Bhagavad Gita, 3:14

[2] Ken Jones, The New Social Face of Buddhism, A Call to Action (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2003), 73.

[3] James 2:20

[4] Matthew 4:23, 24

[5] Matthew 5:7

[6] Matthew 5:44

[7] Al-Fateha 1:2.

[8] Al-Baqarah 2:3, 4

[9] Al-Ma'un 107:2-8

[10] Al-Baqarah 2:178

[11] Al-Baqarah 2:276

[12] Gura Granth Sahib, Paanaa: 1142, Line: 4

[13] Adi Granth, Sukkmani 18, M.5 pp 286f



A CENTURY OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY UNDER KHULAFAT-E-AHMADIYYAT

By Falah Shams

The ninth condition of bai'at laid down by the Promised Messiah, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as), is,

“That s/he (the initiate) shall keep themselves 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.”

The Promised Messiah established this condition in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and the Tradition—comprised of the Sunnah and Hadith—of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa), who was himself a mercy for all of mankind. His service to orphans, widows, the sick, the elderly, the needy and the helpless is unmatched in history and began well before he even claimed to be a prophet.

The Holy Qur’an commands Muslims to help the needy only for the sake of God. It says:

“And for the love of Him, they feed the poor, the orphan and the prisoner, saying, ‘We feed you for Allah’s pleasure only. We desire no reward or thanks from you.’” (76:9-10)

Khulafa of the Promised Messiah fulfilled this Qur’anic commandment by following the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) and the instructions of the Promised Messiah. In their own capacities, and as prevailing conditions allowed, they served all sections of humanity, without regard to race, religion or creed.

One institution that Promised Messiah started was the *Langar Khana*. All Khulafa have kept that tradition of establishing *langar khanas* not only at the central location but also in countries throughout the world. It is a unique establishment where anyone can go and have food and shelter.

The following are but a few examples of services the Khulafa rendered to humanity. By no means is it an exhaustive list. Everything presented here has been taken from well-known and widely published material, such as the History of Ahmadiyyat. Under the instruction of the Holy Qur’an, only Allah can know how much service they truly rendered to humanity, without announcement and publicity.

Khalifat-ul-Masih I (1908-1914)

Medical Service – Qadian, being a remote village in the Punjab, did not have a hospital. Moreover, its residents were generally poor and unable to afford private medical services. Khalifat-ul-Masih I, Hadrat Hakeem Nur-ud-Din, who was a physician by profession, was employed in the service of humanity well before he even moved to Qadian. Throughout his life he relentlessly tended to the health of the poor and needy. He established a practice in Qadian, which was like a clinic or a mini-hospital, and was open to everyone. He himself diagnosed patients and provided them medicine, along with his special prayers. He was the only person providing for the medical needs of a large number of people in Qadian.





Education – At the time, there was no formal system of education for the general public in Qadian and a large segment of its population was illiterate. Khalifat-ul-Masih I was very concerned with providing basic education to the community in general, and Ahmadiis in particular. While the Talim-ul-Islam High School had been established in 1898, during

his Khilafat, it was relocated to better facilities and expanded. This move marked the beginning of Qadian's formal education system, which now benefited the general public.

Individual cases of the poor and needy would continuously come to the attention of Khalifat-ul-Masih I. Despite the small size of the Jama'at then, and its meager resources, he always responded by awarding education grants and providing cost-of-living allowances.

Khalifat-ul-Masih II (1914-1965)

It is the variety of programs undertaken over the 51-year period of the second Khilafat, that of Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad(ra), which reflects the true spirit of establishing formal systems of service to humanity. **Noor Hospital** – Not a single licensed physician, let alone a hospital, existed near Qadian at the onset of the second Khilafat.



Thus, on June 21, 1917, Khalifat-ul-Masih II laid the foundation for Noor Hospital, which was completed in September 1917. On February 2, 1919, Dr. Hashmatullah sahib arrived from Patyala to serve at the hospital full-time. He subsequently added a Ladies Ward to the hospital. Noor Hospital became the only hospital serving the general public in the area without regard to race, religion or creed.

Orphans of war – Scores of children had been orphaned as a result of World War I (1914-1918). Thus, in 1918, Hadrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II provided 5000 rupees for the education of Muslim children who had become orphans because of the war. The Jama'at already had a system and many programs in place for orphans, but this was a special and noteworthy contribution, especially when one considers the size and financial limitations of the Jama'at in 1918.

Girls' School – In rural India, then and now, girls had far less access to education than boys. Thus, on March 17, 1925, Hadrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II established a school specifically for the education of girls. Hazoor taught the Arabic language himself due to the shortage of teachers. Male teachers would teach the girls from behind a curtain due to the lack of female teachers. His three wives and daughter attended the first class. Maulana Sher Ali(ra) taught English and Muhammad Tufail sahib taught geography.

Riot Relief – In May 1927, riots broke out in Lahore and Muslims were killed over a span of two to three days. Hazoor immediately dispatched the Director General, or Nazir Aala, Zulfaqar Khan sahib and the Director of Social Services, or Nazir Amoor Aama, Hadrat Mufti Muhammad Sadiq(ra), to assess the situation. Maulvi Fazl-ud-Din sahib was sent to serve as legal counsel for victims. They established an "Information Bureau", interviewed the injured and relatives of the martyred. Ahmadi physicians arrived to provide free medical assistance and treatment.

On June 6, 1927, Tarjuman, a non-Ahmadi weekly magazine, summed up the effectiveness of this service:

"Mirzai [Ahmadi] Muslims helped the Muslims affected by the riots on a large scale in every way, meaning legal help as well as provided cash to help them."

Assistance to Kashmiris – The Muslims of Kashmir, then and now, suffered terribly at the hands of their non-Muslim rulers. Hadrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II, out of grave concern for their plight, suggested the establishment of a national committee of influential Muslims to advocate for their cause and provide them aid. This non-Ahmadi majority then unanimously elected him president of what came to be known as the All-India Kashmir Committee. My father, Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Shams, also served on this committee as the assistant secretary of the committee under Hazoor. Hadrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II also established the Kashmir Fund to aid the oppressed people of Kashmir.

The history of India and Kashmir notes this undertaking as a remarkable service to relieve the plight of Kashmiris and aid in their early struggle for freedom.

General Education – In 1947, after the partition of British India, the Jama'at established the town of Rabwah in Pakistan. Even before the formal establishment of Talim-ul-Islam High School, Nusrat Girls School, Talim-ul-Islam College and College for Girls and Jamia Nusrat, temporary schools were established in Lahore and Ahmad Nagar to assure the continuation of education of the community.

These institutions in Rabwah provided high quality education to members of the community as well as the non-Ahmadi Muslims who came from all over Pakistan. The institutions' high academic and disciplinary standards attracted many non-Ahmadis despite their different religious beliefs. Hazoor's instructions were very clear to the principal of the college (who later became the 3rd Khalifa) The Jama'at should not use these institutions as means of conversion to Ahmadiyyat but only to provide the best education to any student who attended.

It was under the guidance of the Khalifat-ul-Masih II that schools were also established outside of Pakistan. Schools were established for the benefit of the general public in Trinidad, British Guiana, Nigeria, Palestine, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, Fiji and Indonesia. During the second khilafat, more than 50 schools were opened in the above noted countries.

Fazl Omar Hospital – Like Qadian before it, Rabwah also did not have a hospital, which was no surprise as the Jama'at had built the city from the ground up. On February 20, 1956, Hadhrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II laid the foundation of Fazl Omar Hospital, which was inaugurated on March 21, 1958. He set up this hospital in the early years in Rabwah to provide medical services to the residents of Rabwah and surrounding villages. It started out as a simple hospital with basic medical services, but has since evolved into one of the most modern medical facilities in Pakistan. Today it is organized and structured as a full service hospital with departments of ICCU, Surgery, E.N.T., Gynecology, Dental, Children's Hospital, Emergency and General Medicine. The hospital also maintains radiology and ultra sound equipment.

In addition to the hospital in Rabwah, over seventeen hospitals were established across the subcontinent and in African countries during the second khilafat.

Disaster Relief – The Indian subcontinent was and is consistently victimized by natural disasters and the poor are most adversely affected. Hadhrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II organized Majlis Khuddam ul Ahmadiyya in such a way that they were always ready to serve humanity, whether by helping flood victims around Rabwah or victims of an earthquake anywhere in Pakistan. This tradition of course is still being followed and the Jama'at provides medical, financial and other help to victims of all types of disasters all over the world.

Khalifat-ul-Masih III (1965-1982)

Nusrat Jehan Scheme – Through reports from their missionaries abroad, Jama'at Ahmadiyya had come to learn of the abject poverty and widespread illiteracy in Africa, and longed to help

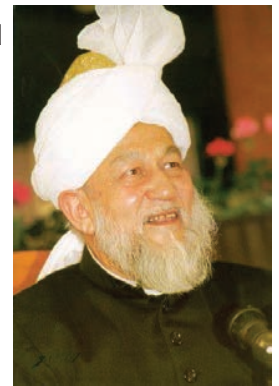


its people. Khalifat-ul-Masih III, Hadrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad (rh), thus launched the Nusrat Jehan Scheme in 1970, a major social, educational and economic development initiative that would support a large number of hospitals and schools in West Africa. In 1970, both the first school and hospital of this scheme were established in Ghana. Within two years, there were 14 hospitals and

9 Higher Secondary Schools operating in West African countries. Under this scheme about 41 hospitals and about 500 schools have been established in 12 different countries serving the general public.

Khalifat-ul-Masih IV (1982-2003)

Homeopathy – Khalifa-tul-Masih IV, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), had been doctoring the public with homeopathic medicine for many years before his khilafat. He increased this service through the community members during his khilafat at a much higher level. In 1994, he started series of lectures in homeopathy on MTA, whereby thousands were able to learn and then administer aid to the infirm.



He also published a book, Like Cures Like, on the subject as reference material. It was under his guidance that more than 600 clinics in 55 countries had been established to help the general public free of charge. These clinics provided medical aid using the homeopathic system to patients who were unable to obtain medical relief from other sources. A special department had also been added to the Fazl Omar Hospital in Rabwah to promote research on Homeopathy.

Housing for the needy – Hazoor felt that proper housing was needed in Rabwah for the needy so he launched a program to build houses for their benefit. By 2001, 95 houses were built in the Rabwah neighborhood of Boyoot al Hamd. Under this program, 37 houses were also built in Qadian for the exclusive use of the needy.

Humanity First – Hadrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV launched many programs and schemes throughout his khilafat. However, to combine such efforts in service of humanity, he set up an organization called Humanity First. The mission of this organization is to serve disaster struck and socially disadvantaged individuals and families in poorer communities around the world. Drawing strength from its global diversity, resources and experience, Humanity First aims to:

1. Relieve suffering caused by natural disaster and human conflict
2. Promote peace and understanding based on mutual tolerance and respect
3. Strengthen people's capacity to help themselves

Since its founding in 1994, Humanity First has expanded to many countries on five continents and carries out not just disaster relief but also sustainable development programs.

Humanity First was constituted as a non-religious charitable organization so it would easily be able to assist wherever there was a need, without receiving objections that it was a religious organization trying to propagate or take credit.

Khalifat-ul-Masih V (2003-Present)



Service in Africa – Khalifat-ul-Masih V, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba) was also dedicated in the service of the poor prior to his Khilafat. In 1977, Khalifat-ul-Masih III sent him to serve in Ghana. He became the founding principal of an Ahmadiyya Secondary School in Salaga, in northern Ghana, where he spent two years.

To this day the school is progressing successfully. He spent another four years as principal of another Ahmadiyya Secondary School, this one in Essarkyir, which is in central Ghana.

Tahir Heart Institute – As noted earlier, Fazl Omar Hospital in Rabwah has become one of the most state-of-the-art facilities in all of Pakistan. Huzoor, seeking to build on its success, directed the establishment of the Tahir Heart Institute, which is one of the world's most modern facilities for the treatment of heart diseases. The USA Jama'at contributed over \$3 million to purchase the equipment needed to operate the Institute.

Humanity First International – Huzoor has also further strengthened the efforts of Humanity First and challenged them with new programs, especially to help the distressed people of Africa. Both fundraising and programming have increased significantly under his guidance.

As with the Jama'at, Humanity First rendered all this service without regard to race, religion or creed. It is worth noting that it served even in countries where the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at is heavily persecuted—Indonesia and Pakistan are a couple which have been mentioned.

Summary

Literally thousands of cases can be cited where khulafa have served and prayed for humanity. We can only highlight the obvious ones as a sample of what has already taken place and continues to take place. Insha'Allah, with the grace of Allah, service for humanity will keep on growing at a much larger scale under the guidance of the present and future khulufa. The Jama'at has progressed a great deal in its service to humanity. From the little hospital in Qadian that provided only basic medical treatment to the public, we have now arrived at a stage where we are providing relief all over the world without the assistance of any government or aid from any other self-interest groups. Allah has made it a part of our faith that without the service of humanity, it is impossible to create a bond with Him. Indeed the Promised Messiah has stated, "A religion which does not inculcate universal compassion is no religion at all. Similarly, a human being without the faculty of compassion is no human at all" (A Message of Peace, p. 7).

He further clarified how the service of humanity should take place without regard to their religious beliefs. He stated: "Our principal is that you should show kindness to all human beings. If a person looks at his Hindu neighbor whose house has caught fire and does not get up to help him put it out, I say to you truthfully that he is not from me. If a person among my followers sees that someone is trying to murder a Christian and does not help him escape then I say to you as a matter of fact that he is not one of us" (Siraji Munir p. 28).

We thank Allah for giving us the opportunity under the system of khilafat to be part of the group of people who help others only for the hope of receiving Allah's pleasure.



HUMANITY FIRST USA AND ITS SERVICES

Serving humanity is an essential Islamic teaching. In fact, every Muslim is obligated to assist their fellow human being because loving Allah's creation is a part of worshipping Him. Humanity First, a non-profit organization—established by the fourth khalifa (successor) of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), and staffed primarily by Ahmadi volunteers—is a real life example of this Islamic teaching. Since 1994, Humanity First has been responding to natural disasters and carrying out development work. Its mission is to serve the victims of natural disasters and provide long-term development for disadvantaged communities. First established in the UK, today Humanity First is working in 41 countries across six continents. In the U.S., Humanity First officially registered as a non-profit organization in 2004. Humanity First is primarily funded by individual donations, corporate gift matching, and fundraising; it is operated by volunteers from various fields, including physicians and engineers.

Disaster Response

In the face of natural disasters, Humanity First coordinates with authorities to place volunteers in areas of greatest need. One of Humanity First's relatively unique attributes is that it is able to mobilize its volunteers on short notice. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, for example, Humanity First sent teams consisting of doctors and non-medical volunteers with cartons of tents, food, and water to help the affected communities. Its volunteers joined with the Red Cross and the National Guard in Gonzales, Louisiana to set up temporary relief clinics and a 600-person shelter. Humanity First also collaborated with Continental Airlines to provide free tickets and suitcases to help victims who need transportation. In addition to providing everyday necessities, such as food, water, diapers, and paper products to shelters, HF donated and helped setup a wireless network at Baker City School system in Louisiana, and provided transportation to numerous displaced victims to government offices, bus stations, and places of employment. HF-USA's efforts are not relegated to the U.S., however.

In 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake rocked Haiti, and left more than 200,000 dead, and 300,000 injured. Humanity First teams swiftly moved into the country and set up operations, serving more than 23,000 patients in various locations, including the Base Camp Medical Clinic in Port-au-Prince, 28 Mobile Medical Clinics and at partner locations.

By Khalida Jamilah

After the relief phase, HF-USA continued to assist help with its rehabilitation efforts. While there, HF volunteer Dr. Clayton Bell discovered that the Seguin region, located in the Southeast Haiti, was in dire need of healthcare services. Seguin is an isolated mountainous area that is home to 60,000 people. Within four months of learning of this need, in June 2010, Dr. Bell led Humanity First's efforts to establish Cloud Forest Medical Clinic, in cooperation with 'Haitian Christian Outreach' and 'Where the Stars Still Shine.' This clinic was able to reintroduce healthcare after eight years of absence due to its isolated nature. Over 6,000 patients were treated there. Humanity First transitioned from disaster relief to development work in the affected areas, thereby ensuring the Haitian people were able to sustain themselves.



Humanity First (HF) was amongst the first few humanitarian organizations that arrived at the disaster zone in Haiti.



When the Haiyan Typhoon hit the Philippines, Humanity First installed four Community Water Purification systems, each unit with the capacity to deliver 5,000 liters of clean drinking water per day, enough for 1600 people. Similar to Haiti, Humanity First provided supplies to an isolated area named Barangay Island, home to 1400 people who had not received any aid. Resident of Barangay had no access to food or water, and every single one of its 159 homes had been destroyed. Using helicopters, Humanity First, in cooperation with the Canadian military, delivered life-saving supplies to the area. For shelter, Humanity First equipped local carpenters with tools and materials so they could help the affected communities in rebuilding projects themselves. This was a prime example of self-sustaining development aid that Humanity First provides.



During the long-term care, Humanity First will train local eye-care professionals on diagnosis, treatment and surgical techniques. This training will help to provide care even after the vision camps end. Since 2010, Humanity First USA has, in collaboration with Humanity First Guatemala, arranged annual two-week trips to Guatemala to provide free cataract surgery, treating over 50 patients each visit.

The other two major projects under Health and Medical are "Water for Life" and "Feed the Hungry." Under Water for Life, Humanity First has provided clean drinking water to over 25,000 Ghanaians by refurbishing more than 50,000 boreholes in northern Ghana. Building water wells improved living conditions for the Ghanaian community, improving their health, increasing school attendance, community safety, and agricultural production.

Steven Abisa, primary school teacher, posted the following testimony on the Humanity First website about Water for Life: "The borehole will help our schoolchildren a lot. Usually they go to fetch water during break time, but they end up coming back to school late because going to fetch water takes longer than the total break time. Last year, in fact, a student drowned in a nearby river when he went to fetch water."

Feed the Hungry's aim is to make America hunger-free by reducing food waste. According to its website, hunger cost America about \$167.5 billion due to lack of healthiness, education and productivity. In addition, about 220 billion pounds of food is wasted per year, which is enough to fill 90,000 seats at a football stadium. Plus, people are also wasting \$15 for every \$100 they earn. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been supporting the Feed the Hungry initiative since the latter's inception by organizing food drives at their local mosques and at food shelters. Clearer concluding sentence needed.

Human Development

Disasters (natural and manmade), war, and poverty make for miserable living conditions. People living in those circumstances are often unable to sustain themselves, and thus become socioeconomically disadvantaged. For this reason, Humanity First has continuously worked on "Human Development" projects in post-conflict zones. Alongside this, Humanity First also initiated several projects for developing communities that are not affected by disasters or war—but just live in poverty and have not found an opportunity to build their future.

There are two programs under the "Human Development": (1) Health and Medical (2) Educational and Vocational. Health and Medical Programs are designed to provide services to various vulnerable communities living in various part of the world. One example of Medical Programs is "Gift of Sight," through which HF ophthalmologists provide short- and long-term care to those with visual disabilities. Short-term care consists of vision camps with eye care professionals diagnosing eye disease, providing surgical referrals and providing surgical treatment.

Education and career training also play an important role in developing communities. Thus, Humanity First's Educational and Vocational Programs aim to provide primary education for children and vocational training for adults both in the underprivileged communities living in the United States and around the world. The "Our Kids, Our Future" initiative is designed to support the most undeserved school districts across America by training local volunteers living in those communities. Some of the services include establishing computer labs, providing grants to motivated teachers, and school supplies for students in need.

For vocational support, Humanity First USA had helped fisherman in Indonesia following the 2004 tsunami by donating fishing nets and supporting the ability to catch fish and shrimp as a food source for the entire village. Similarly, Humanity First USA assisted Liberian farmers following the civil war. Those farmers were unable to sustain themselves because they did not have the tools to cultivate cassava, the staple food in Liberia. In 2008, Humanity First USA created cassava processing plants in Gohn Town, Tewor District, and Grand Cape Mount County. This project helped farmers expedite cassava growth and increase quality, which was being processed by hand at the time. The plants also created jobs and established a community structure by administering and managing similar commercial developments.

As you read this article, many of our fellow humans desperately need our help. It will not hurt us to sacrifice our free time to volunteer and assist people in need. Humanity First's achievements teach us that even the smallest effort to help will create a big impact. Serving humanity will strengthen our compassion for each other, particularly for those who are underprivileged. If we put ourselves in the shoes of such needy people, we will understand more about the essence of serving humanity. We don't have to travel to Guatemala, Haiti or African nations to help our fellow man; we can start by looking toward our neighbors, who live in poor conditions; we can visit a food shelter nearby and start to get involved, because big impacts begin with small actions.

The author is a Media Studies student at UC-Berkeley, and a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Women Auxiliary Media Watch.



MUSLIMS FOR LIFE CAMPAIGN IN USA FIRST THREE YEARS

By Aasim Ahmad

“... whosoever killed a person — unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land — it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and whoso gave life to one, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind.” --
The Holy Qur’an, 5:33

The verse cited encapsulates the aim of the Muslims for Life campaign. Three years ago, the Muslims for Life campaign was started by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. For three years Muslims across America have come together in support of their fellow Americans sponsoring and organizing blood drives. Blood drives have been organized from Chicago to Austin. In those three years, great successes have been achieved and thousands of lives have been saved.

The Muslims for Life campaign came into being as a response to the 10 year anniversary of the September 11 tragedy. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community desired to make a difference in the face of loss and tragedy. More importantly, as the oldest Muslim organization in the United States, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community felt compelled to respond to the decade long memory of September 11. One of the responses was the Muslims for Life campaign.

The campaign was two-fold. The first element was to focus the community’s efforts each September, starting in 2011, on blood drives. Thus, in memory of the loss experienced by Americans, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community would strive to promote life and prevent loss. Blood drives are essential and in continuous need. In fact, due to difficult weather this winter and the resulting cancellations of blood drives, the Red Cross and other agencies have already noted a need for blood. This represents the critical need for blood drives as often as possible.

The second element the Muslims for Life campaign aims to promote is the truth about Islam. The “Muslims” responsible for the deaths of innocents during September 11 and terrorists in general have painted such a miserable and flawed image of Islam that Muslims the world over have had trouble expressing the truth about Islam. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has responded in a number of ways including the Muslims for Life campaign. The protection and promotion of life is one of the truths of Islam and the Muslims for Life campaign allows Muslims to show this to be the case in every community a blood drive is held.



Islam teaches a Muslim to protect and respect all creation. Further, Islam promotes tolerance. In fact, chapter 109 verse 7 of the Qur’an clearly states that each person will ultimately choose his or her own religion and chapter 2 verse 257 states there is no compulsion in religion. Thus, there is nothing that should prevent a Muslim from aiding his fellow man regardless of any personal choices that person has made. The Muslims for Life campaign advocates this tolerance and neither limits its benefits to any one group nor does it limit participation. The goal is simply to do the most good for the most people.



From the start, this campaign became more than what it was intended for; the Muslims for Life campaign became a beacon of unity as various other churches, synagogues, and local human rights organizations came together to support this common cause. The Red Cross, MedStar, Carter Blood Care, and the American Islamic Congress (AIC) have all become partners in this campaign for life. Local Mayors like Bucky Johnson from Norcross, GA and other officials have also shown their support of these blood drives strengthening local bonds. These partnerships reveal the sincere spirit behind the Muslims for Life campaign. All people can unite for the sake of true sacrifice.

In 2011, this new and untested idea witnessed remarkable success. The campaign established a goal of collecting 10,000 pints of blood, but actually collected nearly 12,000 pints of blood all in the month of September. This was a fitting way to honor those who had fallen 10 years ago. This great success also served to establish a lasting tradition and the blood drives continue up to the present day.

The second year of the campaign witnessed 376 blood drives at nearly 200 locations. The total collection of blood again surpassed 11,000 pints. This blood drive was scheduled between August 11 and September 11. As 2013 comes to a close, the final tallies are being made with the goal having been 12,000 additional pints of blood. The Boston Marathon bombing was also being remembered this past year and the blood drive efforts continued past September until October 11. The three year goal was to achieve 36,000 pints of blood, a remarkable achievement if met.



The Muslims for Life blood drive campaign shows no signs of slowing down and will continue on as long as there are Ahmadi Muslims to organize them. The process of revealing the true nature of Islam has been slow, but every life that gets touched by campaigns like Muslims for Life will go a long way in spreading this truth. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has always been more about action than words alone. There are, in fact, many other campaigns running concurrently with Muslims for Life. There is a Muslims for Loyalty and Muslims for Peace program also aimed at servicing the community to show the true nature of Islam and what it means to be a Muslim.

ZAKAT AND SADAQAH: THE ISLAMIC BID FOR SOCIO-POLITICAL PEACE AND SOLIDARITY

By Rabia Mir

Modern day secularism has developed over time to accommodate multiple, often vying systems of religious beliefs. But implicit in this ever pervading secularist ideology is the notion that religion should be relegated to the spiritual domain alone. That it should be limited to a personal exercise in order to facilitate cohesion and congruency in the public sphere. The trouble with this implicit ideal embedded in secular ideology is the negation of religion as a tremendous and immense force for good. Service to humanity, for example, compassion and almsgiving, can be found in all world religions. And all world religions seek to instill in their adherents the very life blood that flows through the veins of a secularist sociopolitical vision: equality, harmony, and justice. Islam, in particular, embodies a sociopolitical vision that stems from the spiritual but spreads far beyond the personal to the public. This Islamic sociopolitical vision that occupies simultaneously the spiritual and secular realms exists primarily in the religious injunctions of zakat and sadaqah.

Zakat is an Arabic word meaning to purify.⁽¹⁾ The wealthy by parting with their wealth for the well-being of the poor and for society in general, generate a purity of heart, by way of their sacrifice of their own expenses for the betterment of society. Zakat is one of the five pillars of faith. That is, it is an obligatory form of charity, incumbent upon qualifying Muslims to pay to the presiding Islamic infrastructure. Whether that infrastructure takes the form of a state government or simply community leadership, is irrelevant. Eligible Muslims, as per Islamic Law, are required to give a stipulated amount "to be determined by the state of the economy in a particular country."⁽²⁾ Historically, however, the amount is ascertained to be 2.5%. This payment is often considered a form of taxation. Indeed, much like taxes, individual members of the community do not control precisely where their Zakat goes. All that is certain is that the money will be put to use within the parameters outlined within the Qur'an: Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and for those employed in connection with their collection and distribution, and for those whose hearts are to be comforted, and for the freeing of slaves, and for those burdened with debt, and for those striving in the cause of Allah, and for the Wayfarers. This is an ordinance from Allah. Allah is all All-Knowing, Wise (9: 60)

Zakat is hardly a novel concept. All world religions require of their believers almsgiving in some way, shape or form.⁽³⁾ But it is fascinating to note that almsgiving has taken on a much more sophisticated form to ensure equality, harmony and justice in the Islamic stipulation of Zakat.

Firstly, it is important to establish what makes an individual eligible for payment of Zakat. It is the holding of "disposable assets above specific thresholds which have remained in the hands of owners beyond one year."⁽⁴⁾ So Zakat, like other taxes, is not enforced upon all the individuals that reside within an Islamic state and/or under some form of Islamic authority. Rather, it applies only to those who have a significant amount of wealth which has been withheld by the owner from circulating through the economy for one year. Clearly, a person with assets who can afford to withhold spending on them is clearly a person of means, and demanding each such person to contribute to the welfare of the state enables several things. Firstly, the modern world is a glaring example of haves and have nots. Not only that, in recent years, the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer. The reasoning behind this is entrenched within various elements of economic policy and emergent economic trends, all of which facilitate wealth acquisitions as an entitlement that supersedes the obligation of serving those in need. Zakat, on the other hand, is sophisticated in that it demands of the wealth holder to part with a relatively small portion of his wealth when his wealth fails to make the economic circuits thereby ensuring that he does not benefit from his wealth at the expense of others. That is, Zakat perpetuates equality within society by way of wealth distribution that does not undercut the wealthy's will to work, nor does it undermine the poor's incentives to strive. And in this way, the economy does not fall prey to political and personal stagnation nor lethargy. And because of an ever churning economy that strives for all rather than simply satiates some, equality can be arrived at to a great extent.

Justice is also achieved by way of Zakat. Consider for a moment, third world countries, prone to the corruption of their politicians, who accumulate wealth by conducting business in their native land and storing their acquisitions elsewhere.





So even as they benefit from a certain region's populace, they take great pains to ensure that they in turn do not benefit this populace. This is a grave injustice that has spelt disaster in many a nation around the globe. Zakat guards against such injustice with minimal infringement upon the general will of the wealthy. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Zakat inculcates a sense of unity and cohesion between seemingly disparate members of society. The rich and poor, divided as they are by their different places in the social strata, come upon their common humanity. That is in the form of Zakat, economic gaps are bridged slowly, but surely.

The Promised Messiah(as) states:

"What is Zakat? It is taken from the rich and given to the poor. It teaches the highest level of human sympathy. Thus by coming together of the rich and the poor, the Muslims gain strength. It is a must for the rich to help the poor, and even if it were not so, it is a demand of human sympathy to do so. But nowadays, I see that people care the least even if their neighbor is starving to death, so engrossed are they with their own comfort and enjoyment. I can't hold back what Allah has told me. Sympathy is a very precious gem that a man has. Allah Almighty says: "You cannot achieve virtue until you spend out of that which you love." This is not the Way to please God, for instance a Hindu's cow becomes ill and he presents it as Man. There are many who give to the poor rotten crumbs which are of no use to anyone, and they imagine that they have given charity. Allah does not accept such things, nor is such charity acceptable. He clearly says that you cannot achieve virtue until you spend out of that which you love. Virtue cannot be called virtue until you spend for the propagation of the faith and the sympathy for mankind out of your possessions which you love."**(5)**

Sadaqah is another form of charity within Islam. It is not highly sophisticated. Rather it is an extremely simple injunction placed upon the believers. This simplicity renders it accessible across the economic and social strata, even as its consequences may bear the hallmarks of sophisticated change. Sadaqah, unlike Zakat is not obligatory. While Zakat is an enforced form of almsgiving and can only take a monetary form, Sadaqah is voluntary and is broader in scope than zakat.

Save yourself from the Fire, even if it is by offering a fragment of a date (as Sadaqah), and for the one who does not even have that much, by saying a kind word. (Bukhari-Kitab-ul-Adab).**(6)**

Sadaqah as such is offered not in the form of any specified amount, but is based on the intent and capacity of the giver. Unlike Zakat, it does not have infrastructural significance, nor is it imposed upon all members of society as a method of mitigating wealth accumulation. Rather, it is an effort to offer support where the giver deems it necessary thereby enabling the giver to establish and demonstrate good will towards others of her/his own accord. Nor are the poor exempt from the giving of Sadaqah, the way they might be, in the case of Zakat, should they not own any assets. Those who cannot offer monetary support to those in need but are in need themselves can participate in the giving of Sadaqah by a mere kind word. Forgiveness and mercy towards a despised enemy, a kind word said to those grieving, visiting the ill, offering company to the lonely, all these are forms of Sadaqah, i.e. charity that supersedes any monetary value.**(7)**

Sadaqah, as such, has a simple spiritually inspired humanitarian motive behind it. A believer is advised to practice the giving of Sadaqah as a way of guarding against hardships (of this life and of the hereafter) and as a way of winning God's mercy. But despite this seemingly strictly spiritual significance of Sadaqah, the practice also has profound social implications. Sadaqah binds the giver to the receiver by way of a simple generous or gracious act. As such and in effect Sadaqah generates a sense of community. Individuals, whether rich or poor are given a spiritual incentive for providing for those in need. These provisions may take a monetary form but they may also take on a form of pure and simple good will. This good will inevitably fosters social cohesion, wherein persons occupying different positions on the economic ladder may engage with one another where they would normally not. Such a sense of community in turn facilitates a sense of social justice, wherein the social and economic engagement between rich and poor may inspire one to recognize the economic hardship imposed on the other by way of economic policy and/or trend, and in the other to refrain from acts of resentment and revolt. In this way, Sadaqah may bring about a state of social harmony between classes. And this social harmony and justice may very well result in the building of economic bridges that could drastically diminish the economic divide, engendering to some extent a vision and ultimately a reality of socio-political equality. That is, a simple injunction of giving generously and graciously can lend strained ties strength and enable effective social change.

Almsgiving is hardly a new phenomenon. Every world religion has prescribed it in some way, shape or form for its followers. The Islamic injunctions of Zakat and Sadaqah can be attributed some degree of novelty on account of their sophistication and simplicity respectively. Zakat is an infrastructural imposition upon all wealthy members of society. Its purpose is to provide a systematic method of distributing wealth fairly and alleviating poverty and hardship accordingly. Sadaqah on the other hand is a far simpler form of charity that lends itself to both the wealthy and the poor and is purely voluntary rather than mandatory. Further, it embodies within itself the seed and striving for economic and social change. Ultimately both these injunctions emerge from a faith based belief. As such, they are religious in nature. However, their consequences reach far beyond the scope and sphere of the religious. Almsgiving, rooted in religious dogma is a force that has the power to supersede all boundaries of class, creed and culture, promoting unity, brotherhood and social peace.

1 Ahmad, Mirza Tahir. *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*. Surrey: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1997. Print. Pg 180.

2 Ibid. Pg. 181.

3 Ahmad, Waheed. *A Book of Religious Knowledge*. Ohio: Fazl i Omar Press, 1995.

www.alislam.org/books/religiousknowledge/title.html

4 Ahmad, Mirza Tahir. *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*. Surrey: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1997. Print. Pg 180.

5 Composed and Published by Tahrik –e-Jadid Anjuman Ahmadiyya Pakistan. *An Introduction to Financial Sacrifice*. Surrey: Raqem Press, 2005. Pg. 95.

www.alislam.org/library/books/An-Introduction-to-Financial-Sacrifice.pdf

6 Haid, Sheikh Abdul. *Basics of Religious Knowledge*. Surrey: Islam International Publications Ltd., 2008. Pg. 93.

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NEW WORLD ORDER SYSTEM OF AL-WASIYYAT

By Shazia Sohail

The term New World Order is “primarily associated with the ideological notion of global governance only in the sense of new collective efforts to identify, understand, or address worldwide problems that go beyond the capacity of individual nation-states to solve.” Karl Marx put forth the ideal of Communism that called for the enforcement of equality through forcible dispossession of the rich and was promulgated by Lenin in Russia after a bloody revolution. To forestall a similar revolution in their own countries Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, and Franco in Spain assumed power under National Socialism slogans. At the same time England, France and the United States were making more and more social reforms within their capitalist economies to address poverty within their own borders. The world has witnessed the failure of Communism and National Socialism to address the needs of people even within their own territories. As for social democracy, while it offers some great solutions for eradicating poverty within a country, it is not immune to challenges brought on by the advancement in technology and globalization as well as changing social trends undermining family structure and community health.

In 2010, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet started The Giving Pledge, also known as the Billionaires’ Club with only two requirements for joining. Firstly, one must be worth at least a billion dollars and, secondly, one must be willing to donate at least half of it to charity. The giving can occur by naming charities in their will. Many of the members have pledged more than 90% of their wealth and it remains to be seen if this initiative will be successful in alleviating poverty worldwide. However, Robert W. Wilson, a philanthropist who donated about \$600 million during his life, had the following to say to Bill Gates when asked to pledge: “Your ‘Giving Pledge’ has a loophole that renders it practically worthless, namely permitting pledgees to simply name charities in their wills. I have found that most billionaires or near billionaires hate giving large sums of money away while alive and instead set up family-controlled foundations to do it for them after death. And these foundations become, more often than not, bureaucracy-ridden sluggards.” In the US a foundation only has to disburse 5% of its capital to charitable ventures to qualify as a charitable foundation.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that moral values directly impact the economic wellbeing and health of a nation. “The tie between single-parent households and poverty is an economic, not a moral, assertion. Poor single parents naturally find it harder to hold full-time jobs and invest in the welfare of their children.” “And it would require encouraging the norm of marriage before childbirth and catalyzing the work of community institutions (including religious nonprofits), which give people the skills and values to succeed in a free economy.” Since the start of the War on Poverty announced 50 years ago by Lyndon Johnson “many children were deprived of economically stable and supportive two-parent families, leading to dangerously stalled social mobility and creating divisions of class that are inconsistent with the American ideal.” Care for the elderly is another component of strong and stable family structure the absence of which puts a great burden on economy. Studies have also shown that corruption has an adverse affect on economic growth since it “favors a particular class of people and creates inequality in opportunities” and also leads to “frustration and sociopolitical instability.”

The world is therefore in need of a system that can not only bring about a peaceful, voluntary and equitable redistribution of wealth to eradicate poverty and reduce class distinction but can also provide a moral code that can help put these high ideals into practice. The religion of Islam is uniquely suited for this task.

It is one of the clearly stated objectives of Islam to create social and economic equity through various humanitarian and voluntary measures. If someone does not have enough means for adequate food, clothing, water and shelter then the state must provide it. We see in God’s promise to Adam and Eve that ‘It is provided for thee that thou wilt not hunger therein, nor wilt thou be naked. And that thou wilt not thirst therein, nor wilt thou be exposed to the sun (20:110-120).’ In today’s complex world, medical care and education are to be regarded as basic necessities as well and their importance was highlighted even during the time of the Prophet Muhammadsa8. If an individual state is not able to meet these basic needs of its people then it becomes the collective responsibility of the global community to fulfill them.



Islam primarily seeks to bring about social and economic equity through abolition of slavery, laws of inheritance whereby wealth gets divided, prohibition of hoarding and interest, voluntary charity and zak'at. It promotes a simple lifestyle by various measures like prohibiting eating or drinking out of vessels of gold and silver and wearing of silk by men, and encourages the rich spend freely for the relief of the poor and needy. "In addition to compulsory taxes, Islam encourages voluntary donations. It proceeds by the method of persuasion which results in an increase of goodwill and affection between the different sections."

Islam addresses the issues of poverty and class distinction in a comprehensive manner. Since social issues change with time it allows for prophets and their successors to determine specific steps to be taken, in the light of Qur'anic teachings, to bring about an equitable disbursement of resources that transcends national borders. Recognizing that a time would come when class distinction would extend to nations, where some countries would become extremely rich by exploiting the natural resources of weaker countries rendering them poverty stricken, it promises the appearance of a Messiah who would prescribe solutions suited to the time. Hence in 1905 Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah(as) and Mahdi, announced a system of Will whereby members were urged to donate from 1/10th to 1/3rd of their properties for this purpose.

Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad(ra) described the system of the Will (Al-Wasiyyat) in his 1942 discourse titled Nizam-e-Nau (New World Order of Islam) in the following words:

"The Promised Messiah(as) therefore, announced under Divine Command that God had ordained that those, who desired to win real Paradise today, must volunteer from 1/10th to 1/3rd of their properties and belongings. He went on to prescribe that the properties obtained by this means would be devoted towards strengthening the foundations of Islam by means of propagation of the teachings of the Qur'an, the spread of Islamic literature and the setting up of Islamic missions.

He also said, 'Every matter that is connected with the strengthening and propagation of Islam, into the details of which it would be premature to enter just now, will be accomplished by means of the properties so obtained.' That is to say, this money would be spent in the achievement of everything which is essential for putting into force Islamic teachings and giving effect to them. He indicated that it was premature to describe these matters in detail, but that somebody else would go into their detailed exposition when the time comes."

The Promised Messiah(as) indicated in his book "Al-Wasiyyat" in 1905: "These funds will also be devoted towards securing the welfare of the orphans and the needy who do not possess adequate means of subsistence."



Explaining this Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad(ra) states in Nizam-e-Nau: "It would not be correct to assume that the money collected under the system can only be spent on the propagation of Islam. I have already quoted Al-Wasiyyat to show that this fund is to be used for the achievement of several objects. The Promised Messiah(as) has stated that all plans calculated to promote the spread of Islam in the world would be fit objects on which to spend these funds. Only, it was premature to describe those plans in detail. This means clearly that many of these objects could be explained only in the future. When Islam is given practical effect and its beauties begin to be appreciated, there will be several purposes on which it would not only be proper but necessary to spend money out of this fund. Further, the Promised Messiahas has drawn attention to the orphans and the needy and has pointed out that they also would be entitled to relief out of this fund. These words point to the Islamic social and economic system under which it is directed that food, clothing, shelter, medical relief and means of education must be provided for every human being. In the circumstances of today this cannot be accomplished by means of taxes alone. It is necessary that wealth and property should be devoted towards this purpose."

He goes on to explain: "It is objected sometimes that the progress of the community is so slow that it is not possible to foresee when this New Order may become established. The answer is that a structure which is not raised on firm foundations soon falls to the ground. These hastily constructed social and economic systems which are being advocated today will pass away very quickly. The only system, that will endure, will be the one based upon the willing cooperation of human beings. The grass grows today and withers tomorrow, but the tree which has to yield fruit takes long to grow and then endures for long. As our community grows, this system also will grow with it. The Promised Messiah(as) has said in Al-Wasiyyat, 'Do not think that this is all fancy. This is the decree of the Almighty, the Ruler of the earth and the heavens. I am not worried over how all this property will be collected and how a community will grow up to accomplish all this in the strength of its faith. What I do worry about is lest, after our time, those who are put in charge of these funds should be tempted by their volume and should yield to such temptation and incline towards the world. So I pray that God may continue to provide this Movement with honest and faithful workers who should work for the sake of God, though it would be permissible that in the case of those, who have no other means of subsistence, an allowance may be made out of these funds.'"

Finally he states:

"New Orders are always established in the world by prophets raised for the purpose by God. They have no bitterness against the rich, and no bias for the poor. They are neither of the East, nor of the West. They are the messengers of God and proclaim the teachings which furnish the foundations of true peace. Today also, peace will be established only through the teachings of the Promised Messiah(as) the foundations of which were laid in Al Wasiyyat in 1905."





SAYINGS
OF THE
HOLY PROPHET
MUHAMMAD(sa)

ABU HURAIRAH

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said: A man proceeding along a track became very thirsty. Arriving at a well he descended into it and came out after taking a drink and saw a dog with its tongue lolling out trying to lick up mud from extreme thirst. The man thought this dog is suffering from thirst as I was suffering. So he descended once more into the well, filled his leather sock with water and came up holding it by his teeth and gave the dog a drink. Allah appreciated his action and forgave his sins. The Holy Prophet was asked: Messenger of Allah, are we rewarded for kindness to animals also? He answered: There is a reward for kindness to every living thing. (Book of Bukhari)

Jabir relates that the Holy Prophet said: If a Muslim plants a tree, then whatever is eaten from it is charity on his part and whatever is stolen from it is charity and whatever is subtracted from it is charity. If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and men and beasts and birds eat from it, all of it is charity on his part. (Book of Muslim)

Adiyy ibn Hatim relates that he heard the Holy Prophet say: Shield yourselves against the Fire, even if it be by giving away half a date in charity.

There is not one of you but that his Lord will speak to him without the intervention of an interpreter. He will look to his right and will behold only his deeds and will look to his left and see only his deeds. He will look in front and only see the Fire close to his face. Then shield yourselves against the Fire, even if it be by giving away half a date in charity, and if even that should be lacking, by saying a good word. (Books of Bukhari and Muslim)

IN REMEMBRANCE OF BROTHER YUSEF ABDUL LATEEF

By Alhaj Dhul Waqar Yaqub

My first meeting with Al-Hajj Dr. Yusef Abdul Lateef was at the Dayton Mosque (currently Masjid Fazli Umar), 1970 and it was my very first Jalsa Salanah. While standing in the food line some one pointed out one of the servers saying, "That's Yusef Lateef." Advancing up the line and reaching the spot where Yusef was serving, he said, "As salamu alaikum brother" as he placed the food on my plate.

I was awe struck. Yusef Lateef serving me!!! I was overwhelmed. I asked myself, "Is this what Ahmadiyyat is about?" Everything was so new. A new language, people with unfamiliar names that were difficult to pronounce, let alone try to remember. Nevertheless, I remembered the name Yusef Lateef and I recall what he was doing. He was serving people. At that stage of my conversion process I was able to mentally formulate what was expected as an Ahmadi Muslim. It was a very significant facet to grasp and the image of Yusef serving stayed fresh in my mind for a very long time.

My next encounter, with brother Yusef, occurred during the Jalsa Salanah held at Lake Forest College. I was standing in the food line waiting to get in the cafeteria when Yusef came and stood behind me. I turned around to give the Islamic greeting of "As salamu alaikum" when another brother inserted his self between us. This third brother introduced himself to Yusef, gave him a business card and began a sales pitch. He was a tailor by trade and was trying to sell his services to Yusef and his musical performance group. Yusef courteously rejected his offer, but the sales brother kept advancing reasons why it would be to his benefit to have his own personal tailor for him and his group. The strain for patience was apparent on Yusef's face as he matter-of-factly stated, "I don't require that the musicians I work with dress a certain way. Everyone is an individual and they have different taste. It would be wrong of me to impose on them a dress requirement, which has nothing to do with the quality of their work." The sales brother excused himself with an apology, an embrace and an explanation i.e. he was just trying to make a living.

In December, 1973 and into January, 1974 I had the blessing of performing the rites of Al-Hajj and journey to Medina, Saudi Arabia. While on the plain of Arafat brother Yusef arrived and joined our group. I noticed that he was intently focused and self contained. There were a few members of our group who recognized him and tried to engage him in world conversation. He kindly reminded them that we should engross ourselves in the remembrance of Allah.



After completing the hajj rites our group embarked upon the journey to Medina, which was a long bus ride three hundred miles north. Aside from an occasional nit-pick from one of the non-Ahmadi Americans the bus ride was uneventful. We stopped at an open air restaurant along the Red Sea for lunch. The group was feeling at ease after the tenseness of Mecca's multitude and the mental concentration of performing the rites of Al-Hajj correctly.

Brother Yusef and his wife, Tahira were a couple of newlyweds. It was obvious that he wanted her to have the "spiritual experience" of the hajj journey. He provided her with minute attention by answering her many questions. As a part of the group we all sat together while eating fish and rice from the same plate. We took delight in the narrative that this would foster love between us. In fact, bonding together was something we all felt. Brother Yusef seemed especially cheerful and lighthearted. At that time, brother Yusef was about fifty-three (53) years of age and was in just as good physical health as I was at twenty-eight years old.



While in Medina, the group became known as the Americans. Students from the Islamic University of Madinah made it a point to visit us at our hotel and eventually we received a dinner invitation from a Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Dr. Khan worked as the Director of the Islamic University Clinic and was the Arabic-English translator of the meaning of Sahih Al-Bukhari. Nine to ten members of our hajj group accepted and attended the dinner including brother Yusef.

As a result of the Ahmadi agitator, Dr. Khan acted out verbally against Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as). During the disturbance, brother Yusef acted with the dignified bearing of a statesman. Not one feather seems to be ruffled and not one single cross word was uttered from him. As we left Dr. Khan's residents I vented to brother Yusef about my disappointment. Even though it was apparent that Dr. Khan was not knowledgeable about our query, that didn't seem to be enough for me. I wanted to do something but, I was reminded by another Ahmadi companion about our commitment to maintain peace and not argue as long as we were on the soil where the Holy Prophet (sa) walked. With a smile, Brother Yusef advised me by saying, "Brother Yaqub, you're not going to be satisfied unless you do something. Why don't you write Hazur (Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Hadrat Khalifat-ul-Masih III) about this experience? If he writes you back, which I'm sure he will, I would appreciate it if you would share his response with me." After returning back to my home, I wrote and gave Hazur details about our dinner engagement with Dr. Khan. Hazur responded and I share that response with brother Yusef.

In 1976-1977, I had the occasion of attending our international Jalsa Salanah in Qadian and Rabwah. While walking to the Jalsa Gah in Rabwah, I saw brother Yusef walking just ahead of me. I caught up to him and he greeting me like I was his long lost trusted companion. We stood talking when an old lady came to brother Yusef with her hand out asking for alms. Brother Yusef went in his pocket and gave her an American dollar. The old lady looked at the currency and hurried away. Within ten seconds the old lady returned with fifteen more women. She pointed toward brother Yusef and they mobbed him. Without the slightest hesitation Brother Yusef went into his pocket and gave each lady one dollar. They all hurried away and fearing another mob action I step forward telling brother Yusef that we should hurry to get inside the Jalsa Gah or he would be here the rest of his life or until he run out of money. He said, "I think your right brother Yaqub. Let's go." We rushed into the protection of the Jalsa Gah and sat down without a word passing between us about what just happen.

Brother Yusef earned a Doctor of Education Degree, from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1975; M.S. Degree in Music Education, from the Manhattan School of Music, New York City in 1970; B.A. degree in Music, from the Manhattan School of Music, New York City in 1969. He attended the New School for Social Research, New York City to study philosophy.


Knowing brother Yusef as an educator allowed me to be on familiar terms with him from that perspective. His doctoral thesis, *An Over-view of Western and Islamic Education*, provides a blueprint for the understanding of the relationship of education to Islamic life. Yusef spent his life learning. This was not a temporary undertaking but lifelong learning that was very dynamic. In talking with brother Yusef about the process of education and learning he would refer to that verse in the Qur'an, which states, "Read in the name of thy Lord Who created the Universe, Who created man from a clot of blood. Read and they Lord is the greatest benefactor: He taught through the pen; He taught man what he did not know" (96: 2-6).

Of course there is a lot that is said about brother Yusef as a musician. However, if one referred to his music as jazz he would have responded—politely, firmly, insistently, frequently—that he does not play jazz. He considered the term "jazz" as being racially derogatory and profane. When I made the mistake of referring to his music as jazz brother Yusef said, "If you would, describe my music as "autophysiopsychic music," which means music that comes from the mental, physical and spiritual self. I'll be grateful for that."

Brother Yusef was known for introspection. He was in touch with his own feelings and emotions and was a deep thinker. At the same time he had a high regard for physical fitness, giving it equal status with that of training of his mind. He was an energetic person having interest in swimming, jogging, archery and tennis.

When asked if he considered himself a spiritual person, as opposed to a religious person, brother Yusef said, "Well, spirituality is the relationship between the individual and the creator, as I see it, and I'm of course trying to develop that relationship with my creator. Morality, as I see it, is the relationship between one human and another—I'm trying to develop both of those qualities in my life."





Brother Yusef was also a writer. He wrote a short poem titled When,
which is as follows:

When tears begin to flow in the wrinkled crevasses of our faces and
We are no longer thankful for what we have been given,
WE WILL HAVE PROVIDENCE TO CALL ON.

When we no longer recognize the beauty of sunrise, twilight and sunset
and
Our sleep is no longer peaceful,
WE WILL HAVE PROVIDENCE TO CALL ON.

When we no longer hear sounds of peace, love and kindness in our
hearts, and
Our eyes fail to see the beauty of Providence's creation,
WE WILL HAVE PROVIDENCE TO CALL ON.

When we no longer enjoy seeing the ballet of leaves and
Feeling the gentle touch of the wind, rain and snow,
WE WILL HAVE PROVIDENCE TO CALL ON.

When our hearts are no longer strangers to the truth, and
We remain humble,
THEN WE STILL HAVE PROVIDENCE TO CALL ON.

We miss our dear beloved brother Yusef.
inaa lila hey wa inna elehey rajeoon

“Life of Muhammad”
by Mirza Bashir-ud-Din
Mahmood Ahmad

BOOK
REVIEW

Review by Seher Mujeeb Chowdhry

Life of Muhammad was originally published in Urdu by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad (1889 - 1965), which was then translated into English in 1990. Its latest edition came out in 2005 by Islam International Publications LTD.

Journey back in time to where one relied on the skies as their map, where horses and camels were regular modes of transportation, to a time where people knew little of morals and education was scarce, one man would rise and take on a savage people devoted to a centuries old belief, and revolutionize the world forever. This book opens up this world in the most realistic way, painting the story of the very man who defied the odds and came out victorious - the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).

Thanks to the research of the author, Mirza Bashir-ud-Din, he has rejuvenated the story of the life of the greatest and most influential man that ever lived in history. There have been a number of books written on his life, however this edition gives a good view of what it was like from beginning to end. Prophet Muhammad (sa) was an exceptional human being, so much so that it is impossible to portray all aspects of his life in one book. It goes beyond belief given the conditions of Arabia at the time of his birth as described by Mirza Bashir-ud-Din, how anyone could stand out so pure as Muhammad (sa) did, and not succumb to the backward way of life where one worshipped idols, gave way to feuds and war, and mistreated women and slaves.

Life of Muhammad tells of a human from Arabia who was denied happiness from the very beginning, losing his father before he was even born, then his mother when he was six, then his grandfather. For Muhammad (sa) life had already been unkind to him yet his good character and demeanor remains, so much so that he is nicknamed ‘trustworthy’ and ‘truthful’ by the Arabian inhabitants. He grows up to work as a shepherd until his exceptional reputation reaches the ears of a rich widow by the name of Khadija, who employs him to take her caravan of goods to Syria for trading.

Fortunately he had been to Syria before with his uncle in his youth for business, so this was no new venture for him. It was due to the successful outcome and “unexpected profits” of this trip for Khadija’s caravan that leads to her invitation of marriage to Muhammad (sa), which he humbly accepts. Khadija gives her property and slaves to her husband who gives it away among the poor and sets the slaves free.

Life changes for Muhammad (saw) when he receives his first revelation, which traumatizes him greatly. It is only when Khadija’s Christian cousin, Waraqa bin Naufal, concludes to a distraught Muhammad that it was the angel Gabriel who had visited him, just as he had visited Moses, that Muhammad (sa) realizes that things were going to change. And he is right. With his proclamation of Prophethood as commanded by God he is ridiculed by the Meccan chiefs. The Meccans, so attached to their forefathers’ way of life, are threatened by this change, and so at first ignore him, but soon realize the seriousness of the issue when he gains more followers. Thus begins a great opposition that tests the human spirits and challenges the army of believers who are named Muslims. Eventually Muhammad (saw) and his followers, who by now are ever growing in number, escape to a nearby city called Medina as refugees, but while on the defence are forced to fight for themselves against the ever opposing Meccan idol worshippers, war after war. Finally a treaty is formed, the conditions of which favor the Meccans more than the Muslims. However the Meccans themselves soon breach this treaty, resulting in the Muslims returning to Mecca and conquering it in peace.

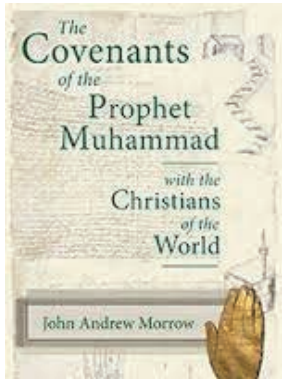
There is testimony of his life by two of his wives, Khadija who he married at 25 years of age before his ministry, (she was 40), and Aisha, who he married when he was 53. This book is a very good read for readers who wish to learn about the Prophet of Islam and how he conducted his life, his treatment towards others, his attitudes and dealing with Muslims and non Muslims alike.



The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World by John Andrew Morrow

BOOK REVIEW

Review by Zia H Shah



John Andrew Morrow, has recently published a much needed book of 466 pages, titled, *The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World*. The Prophet Muhammad's treaties with the Christians of his time, which John Andrew Morrow has rediscovered in obscure collections and often newly translated, uniformly state that Muslims are not to attack peaceful Christian communities, but defend them "until the End of the World."

Dr. John Andrew Morrow is a scholar who received his PhD from the University of Toronto and completed the full cycle of Islamic seminary studies. He was raised in a multilingual family in Montreal and Toronto, Canada. Morrow is a Native North American of the Metis nation and proudly identifies himself as an "Aboriginal Person." He has served as a faculty member and administrator at numerous colleges and universities, and has authored and edited many books.

Morrow presents six covenants written by the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be on him, to Christian communities and argues that these letters and treaties, which proclaim and define peaceful and mutually respectful relationships between the Muslims and the Christians are the foundation of universal compassion and brotherhood in Islam.

These covenants include, the Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad with the Monks of Mount Sinai, the Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World, the Covenant with the Christians of Persia, the Covenant with the Christians of Najran and the Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad with the Assyrian Christians.

The text of these covenants, which is included in the book, can also be found online at The Covenants Initiative.

Morrow has organized the book into four parts. The first part is labeled as "context," and describes the background and arguments for the authenticity of the documents and spans the first 200 pages of the book. In chapter 7, which is about the Armenian Christians of Jerusalem, Morrow argues for the Covenant by the Prophet, by using two later documents, The Firman of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab with the Armenian Christians of Jerusalem and the Covenant of 'Ali with Armenian Christians of Jerusalem.

The second part, which is approximately 120 pages, is about the text of these covenants and various translations. For example, it gives six different English translations of the Covenant with the monks of Mount Sinai. The extant Arabic manuscript is also included. The first of these translations, is quoted from a book by Pococke, detailed in bibliography, which is also quoted by John Davenport in his famous book, *An apology for Mohammed and the Koran*, published in 1869, which is available online in archive.org and the specific portion of the book, is also available online in a post in the Muslim Times.

In the third part of the book, spanning some 50 pages, Morrow discusses the specific challenges facing our understanding of these texts, including the records of witnesses associated with the various covenants, the transmission of the documents themselves and the broader contextual implication of the covenants.

The fourth part of the book, spanning some 75 pages, is an extensive appendix, detailed bibliography, maps, photos and a detailed index.

Morrow also examines "The Constitution of Medina," a key document of the Prophet's concerning the importance of human rights in Islam. According to Morrow, the "Constitution" created a community out of "a unique system which had never existed before and which has never been since despite honest efforts to emulate it." He writes about the constitution:

"Determined to bring an end to the bitter infighting between the Arab war lords of the tribe of Khazraj and their Jewish rivals, the Prophet prepared the Constitution of Medina and in so doing, established the first Islamic state.

Identity and loyalty were no longer to be based on family, tribe, kinship, or even religion: the overriding identity was membership in the ummah of Muhammad. The Constitution of Medina decreed that the citizens of the Islamic state were one and indivisible regardless of religion. Be they heathen, People of the Book, or Muslims, all those who were subject to the Constitution belonged to the same ummah. In doing so, he created a tolerant, pluralistic government which protected religious freedom. The importance of this is so extraordinary that it is often misunderstood."

He further writes about the Constitution of Medina:

"It could be argued in passing that the resemblance of Greek democracy to the current 'liberal' democracies of the Western world is no coincidence. The Constitution of Medina can also be compared with that of the Roman Republic (509 BCE - 27 BCE). The Republican Romans also spoke of the 'government of the people;' however, this was more fictitious than real. The consuls--those who ruled the people--acted like kings, presided over the Senate and the People's Assembly, which was composed of representatives of military units, and simply represented the economic elite. As for the Senate, made up of the dominant players in matters of politics, it represented the aristocracy. Common people were simply numbers to be counted. (Ironically, in some present-day democracies, the roll of the populace in the political process is similarly nullified.) As for the plebeians (from plebs or masses), which comprised the vast majority of Romans, they could not rule, elect rulers or make use of land, all of which was reserved for the patricians or nobles. These same landowners controlled the Senate. However, in the community created by means of the Constitution of Medina, every single member of society enjoyed enjoyed before the law as all privileges of class were abolished. The rich and the poor; the noble and the laymen; the Arabs and the non-Arabs; the blacks and the whites; the men and the women; and the children and the adults all had the same rights. Even Muhammad, as the Messenger of Allah was not above the law. As he himself said in a rhetorical question, even if his daughter Fatimah were to steal which, as a saintly soul is inconceivable, he would have given her the punishment for theft. Given the Constitution of Medina's genuinely progressive mandate, one might question why this document is ignored in favor of the less democratic offerings from the 'Greek democracy' and the 'Roman Republic.'"

The message of the six covenants, described in this book, is certainly in keeping with the Quranic message of brotherly relations with the Christians and other "people of the book." I quote three verses here in this regard:

"And thou shalt assuredly find those who say, 'We are Christians,' to be the nearest of them in love to the believers. That is because amongst them are savants and monks and because they are not proud." (Al Quran 5:83)

And:

"This day all good things have been made lawful for you. And the food of the People of the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And lawful for you are chaste believing women and chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you, when you give them their dowries, contracting valid marriage and not committing fornication nor taking secret paramours." (Al Quran 5:6)

The Holy Quran defines defensive war or Jihad, as securing Churches, Synagogues and Mosques and religious freedom for everyone:

"Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' — And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty." (Al Quran 22:41)

Dan Wilkinson, who is a writer from Montana has nicely reviewed the book, online:

"Thoughtful, accessible and scholarly, The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World offer important evidence for understanding Islam as a religion founded on ideals of respect and tolerance, ideals that, if evinced today in the way that Muhammad originally intended, have the potential to redefine modern religious and cultural interactions."

Karen Leslie Hernandez, a Theologian from Boston University School of Theology, wrote about this book:

"How can this book do as Morrow claims, and maybe, 'save a few lives?' Since this is the most thorough examination of these covenants, I believe that Morrow has started something good. Identifying the actual authenticity is surely impossible, but, using these covenants as ideas on how the religious landscape looked back in the time of the Prophet, as well as how Christians were viewed by Muslims, is extremely important and relevant to what we are witnessing today in regard to violence in the name of religion."



Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, USA and allies have invaded Afghanistan and Iraq and with the new events of Arab spring, there is upheaval in all the Muslim countries. These events have led to erosion of different minorities especially Christians. The Muslims in the Muslim majority areas have to realize that they cannot blame local Christians for the acts of foreign governments. There cannot be guilt by Association. If John commits a murder, we cannot hang Mark for it. Such extension of guilt, real or perceived, is not sanctioned by these covenants or the teachings of the Holy Quran, which on scores of occasions urges believers to be just. One of the often quoted verses of the Holy Quran states:

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

The "Covenants Initiative" within the book represents a movement by Muslims, both prominent and unknown, in support of Christians under attack, in the Muslim majority countries. In this context, these treaties desperately need to be better known among Christians, Muslims, and the general public, to promote Universal Brotherhood in our Global Village.

Dr. Bridget Blomfield of University of Nebraska, who is also the director of the Islamic Studies program at UNO, has beautifully summarized the book in the following words, which are quoted from the back cover of the book:

"This book documents what is possibly the third foundational source of Islam: the Prophet's treaties and covenants among people of the Abrahamic faiths. Dr. Morrow brings forth exceptionally important findings that dictate peaceful coexistence among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and includes multiple translations for comparison of how the Prophet and his followers treated Christians and Jews with respect and care, far beyond a mere tolerance."

This book, is by no means the final word on research about these covenants, but, a good starting point, for a much needed subject. It provides many difficult-to-obtain material: facsimiles of primary sources in Arabic and Persian; corrected versions in modern Arabic typescript; and alternate translations.





NEWS VIEWS, '& REVIEWS

Over Thanksgiving dinner a friend asked me a usual question: "What are you thankful for today?"

My answer was rather unusual: "I am thankful to live in the most Islamic country of the world."

With a stunned face, my friend instantly reacted, "America, the most Islamic country!?"

To alleviate his astonishment I tried to differentiate a Muslim country from an Islamic country. A country is a Muslim country if most of its residents call themselves Muslims but an Islamic country is one where most, if not all, Islamic values prevail, regardless of the size of its Muslim population.

Puzzled once again, he exclaimed, "What Islamic values?"

To elaborate, I highlighted fundamental Islamic values that sadly most Muslim countries are devoid of today but America still embraces.

My first example was cleanliness. Every Muslim knows Prophet Muhammad declared cleanliness equivalent to half of the Islamic faith. The Islamic concept of cleanliness ranges from personal hygiene to environmental well-being. Today no Muslim country — with or without oil money — can come close to the cleanliness standards we enjoy in America. America's Environmental Protection Agency and Centers for Disease Control have unprecedented authority and latitude to ensure environmental safety and public health.

After cleanliness, I reverted to charitable giving, which is, in fact, one of the five pillars of Islam. Numerous verses of the Quran urge Muslims to help the needy and feed the hungry. No doubt Muslims around the world are generous in giving, but Americans simply outdo them. According to the World Giving Index, which ranks 153 countries across the globe for their charitable behavior, no Muslim country ever surpassed the U.S. America even topped the list in 2011.

My friend countered, "That's because America is rich. Every year, Muslim countries raise hundreds of billions of dollars in charity."

"True," I acknowledged, "but corruption devours most of it." I advanced my argument by quoting many verses from the Quran that demand Muslims show the utmost honesty, truthfulness and justice in all worldly and religious matters. However, the behavior of Muslim countries tells an opposite story. Many Muslim countries were ranked in the bottom 25 of 176 countries by the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index of 2012. No Muslim country ranked in the top 25 least-corrupt countries, where America stood at 17th position.

My friend, who seemed to understand my viewpoint by now, questioned again: "Many other non-Muslim countries are better than America in the corruption index. Why is America the most Islamic country?"

"Religious freedom," I answered without difficulty. America champions the highest standard of religious freedom, a lost Islamic value, protecting the rights of all human beings, regardless of their color or creed. Prophet Muhammad set the precedent for Muslims by writing the historic Charter of Medina when he founded the first Islamic state in 622. The Charter of Medina safeguarded fundamental human rights for all citizens living under one state, including Jews, Christians, Pagans and Muslims. Ironically, 1,400 years later, most Muslim countries treat their minorities as second-class citizens and allow chaotic Muslim mobs to burn churches and temples. Let alone minorities of other faiths, some Muslim sects who do not conform to their puritanical definition of Islam face brutal persecution. Today, Muhammad's Charter of Medina is reflected in the U.S. Constitution. While some European countries have banned building minarets on Mosques and stopped Muslim women from wearing the Islamic veil, American courts have struck down any such attempts as unconstitutional.

My friend finally rested his questioning.

I am not sure if I convinced him, but I genuinely believe America is the most Islamic country in the world today, and I am so grateful that I live here. May God bless America!

M. Imran Hayee is a professor of electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He belongs to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, which is one of the oldest Muslim organizations in America.

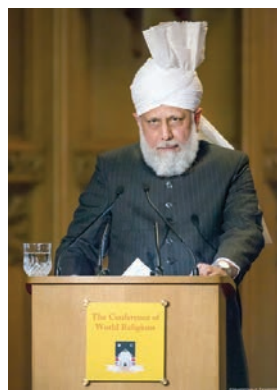
Historic Conference of World Religions

Held at Guildhall, London



God is a Living God so the world should turn towards Him says Hazrat Mirza Masroor

The World Head and Fifth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, delivered the keynote address at the historic 'Conference of World Religions' on 11 February 2014.



The conference was organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the UK, as part of its centenary celebrations, at the famous Guildhall in the City of London. The theme of the much anticipated event was 'God in the 21st Century'.



Around 500 delegates attended the conference, including faith leaders from various countries, politicians, government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, academics and representatives of various NGOs.

The conference also received messages of support from Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Prime Minister David Cameron and several other dignitaries.

During the event the various faith leaders considered what role religion could play in today's world and whether religion continued to be a force for good. The keynote address delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad sought to answer these questions in light of Islam's true teachings.

The Khalifah highlighted that all the major religions of the world taught the worship of God and love and compassion for mankind in their original form. His Holiness said that if these original teachings were upheld today it would lead to a harmonious society, free from conflict and war. He also condemned governments across the world for prioritising defence and military spending above and beyond social welfare and humanitarian projects.

Speaking about how the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) responded to the most horrific and sustained persecution, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"When the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) gained victory over the sworn enemies of Islam, who in the past had left no stone unturned in their efforts to destroy the religion, he responded with peace and forgiveness."



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said there was no contradiction between Islam's peaceful teachings and the fact that some wars were fought during the early years of Islam. He said that those wars fought had been defensive wars, fought not only to protect Islam, but also to protect the people of all religions.

Citing the example of the Battle of Badr, where 300 ill-equipped Muslims defeated a much stronger army comprising 1,000 soldiers, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"Where on the one hand this was a victory for Islam, it was also a timeless triumph for every person who desires for peace to be established in the world. It was a victory for every person who desires for human values to always be preserved and it was a victory for all people who believe religion to be a force for good and for establishing peace in the world."

His Holiness clarified that any wars fought during the era of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) or his four Rightly Guided Successors were entirely defensive in nature and fought only to "end cruelty" and "establish peace". However, later wars fought during the eras of certain Muslim monarchs were fought to expand kingdoms and gain power.

Commenting on this, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said: "Those wars fought to expand kingdoms and to increase power were not in any way fought in accordance with the teachings of Islam as taught by the Holy Quran."

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said that Ahmadi Muslims believed the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi and that he had come to end all religious wars, to bring mankind towards its Creator and to draw the attention of the world towards fulfilling the rights of one another.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad appealed for the people of all religions to work together towards creating a just society based on mutual respect and tolerance.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"I hope and pray that we, who are the representatives of different faiths and religions, and who have gathered here today to practically demonstrate these loving teachings, all strive towards worshipping the One God, by treating His Creation with justice and by fulfilling their due rights.

Certainly these are the original teachings of all religions. We should utilise all of our resources and capabilities to foster a better society, to help God's Creation and to spread love, affection and peace at every level. The urgent and critical need of the world today is to establish peace and faith in God."



His Holiness called on the leaders of all nations to prioritise social welfare above and beyond unnecessary militarisation.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“The urgent and critical need of the world today is to establish peace and faith in God. If the world understood this reality then all countries, whether large or small, would not, in the name of defence spending, allocate millions and billions of dollars to expand their military capabilities. Rather, they would spend that wealth to feed the hungry, to provide universal education and to improve the living standards of the developing world.”

The Khalifah concluded by reiterating the fact that God is a “Living God” who continues to listen to the prayers of mankind.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“In order to protect ourselves and to save mankind we need to turn towards God Almighty and we need to attach ourselves to that Living God who did not forsake the Prophet Moses and his people and nor did He forsake the Prophet Jesus and his disciples. Nor have true Muslims been deprived from attaining the blessings of God and seeing their prayers accepted.”

Earlier in the evening, a range of faith leaders and dignitaries took to the stage to highlight their respective beliefs. All of the speakers also took the opportunity to express their gratitude to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community for organising such an event that promoted inter-faith dialogue.

Rabbi Jackie Tabick, Joint President of the World Congress of Faiths said:

“We should be supportive of one another in our spiritual lives and be true to our own faiths whilst understanding and valuing the oneness amongst us.”

Umesh Sharma, Chairman of the Hindu Council UK quoted sacred Hindu texts highlighting the peaceful teachings of the Prophet Krishna. He also said that Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad “leads by example” in his efforts to develop peace in the world.

Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP, the Attorney General said:

“The right of individual conscience is the basis of everything and so it is essential that people are free to practice their religions without coercion of any kind. I would also like to thank Your Holiness (Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad) and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community for its astonishing contribution to the United Kingdom.”



Geshe Tashi Tsering, read a message from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which said:

“Virtues of love and altruism are the basis of all religions and so a respect for all religions is essential. All religions are a means of inner-peace. I give my full heartfelt support to the Conference of World Religions.”

Prof Kwaku Danso-Boafo, High Commissioner of Ghana read a message from the President of Ghana, which said:

“This Conference will be a means of helping to bring peace in the world.”

Sheikh Moafaq Tarif, Spiritual Head of the Druze Community of Israel said:

“All the great religions agree on the Unity of God... Let us all come together and join hands together against violence.”

Dr Katrina Lantos-Swett, Vice-Chair United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, said:

“I am always uplifted and moved by the spirit amongst Ahmadi Muslims. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is living proof that religion can be a means of peace.”

Dr Lantos-Swett also acknowledged the role of the late Sir Chaudhry Zafarullah Khan in negotiating the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the fact that he signed it on behalf of the State of Pakistan.

Baroness Berridge, Chair of the UK Parliamentary Group on International Religious Freedom outlined the work of the Parliamentary Group and said that its objective was to “prick the conscience of Governments” towards establishing religious freedom.



Archbishop Kevin McDonald, representing the Roman Catholic Church, spoke of the World Day of Prayer for Peace organised by the late Pope John Paul II in 1986 and said that “today’s conference is another moment of the coming together of the people of different religions in peace and justice.” The Archbishop also read a message of support from Cardinal Peter Turkson, the President of the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice. The Rt Hon Baroness Warsi, Senior Minister of State at the Foreign Office, said:

“It is testament to the openness, the pragmatism and the humility of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community that their flagship global event celebrated all faiths.”



Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber, representing the Chief Rabbi of Israel addressed Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad as the ‘Khalifah of Islam’ and said: “Humankind in the world are not its masters but its custodians. Let us return to the simple notion of faith and the sanctity of God.”



The World Conference concluded with a silent prayer led by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad. Earlier in the evening, His Holiness held a series of private meetings with dignitaries and delegations from various countries and he also led the Maghrib and Isha prayers at the Guildhall.

“Good without God” by Greg Epstein **BOOK** Review by Rizwan Khan **REVIEW**

Goodness and Evil are Dependent on Free Choice

Humanism is founded on the assumption that it is possible to define goodness without God. However, the very concept of goodness and evil cannot be conceived of without free will. Humanists define their beliefs as being based on “observation, experimentation, and rational analysis”, and that “science is the best method for determining this knowledge” [Good Without God, 280]. However, free will is a concept that cannot be proven to exist, and without free will, even if good and evil existed, there is no way to choose between the two. For example, we do not say that a volcano is evil when it kills the inhabitants of a village because we assume that it does not have free will. But on what basis do we assume that it does not have free will? Just like us, a volcano is a complex combination of molecules. Everything it does is the result of a series of cause and effect; everything we as humans think and do is also the result of a series of cause and effect. There is nothing that happens in our brains that is outside of measurable chemical reactions. If we believe that a mysterious outside force called free will can influence the measurable cause and effect happening in our brain, then we have no reason to reject that the same mysterious force can affect the cause and effect happening in a volcano. Why is it that when a volcano kills the inhabitants of a village, it is not evil? In the same way, why is it that when a tiger kills the inhabitants of a village, it is not evil, but when a human does, it is evil? Upon scrutiny, we find that just as there is no evidence to prove that a volcano has free will, or a tiger has free will, there is also no evidence to prove that a human has free will.

One may argue that we must have free will because we are free to change our behavior anytime we choose. After all, a volcano cannot choose to change its behavior because, with enough information, we can perfectly predict the behavior of a volcano, we can predict exactly when it will erupt and exactly what chain of cause and effect will make it erupt. We can hardly consider it to have free will if we can predict exactly what it will do next and why it will do what it does next. However, scientifically, this is also exactly the case with humans. For example, everything that has happened since the big bang has happened as a result of cause and effect. If we had enough information, we could have forecasted the forming of our galaxy at the time of the big bang because the chain of cause and effect had already been set in motion. From that moment, it was inevitable that our galaxy would eventually be formed. We could have predicted the forming of our galaxy with as perfect accuracy as we can predict the rising of the sun tomorrow.

The reason we can predict the exact time the sun will rise tomorrow is because the chain of cause and effect has already been set into motion, and with enough information, we can predict exactly what will happen to our sun a million years from now. A human, and every action it does, would not be outside of that forecast because we are also simply a result of the same process. The chain of cause and effect that resulted in molecules coming together to form our bodies was set in motion at the time of the big bang, and it could have been perfectly forecasted. Our brains are nothing more than a combination of molecules; our lives a series of chemical reactions. The fact is that every one of our actions is the result of a long series of cause and effect. The assumption that a mysterious outside force called free will is influencing these chemical reactions is scientifically nothing but fiction. Thus, it cannot be said that a human has free will because, with enough information, every thought and action can be predicted in a measurable way.



Free will turns out to be scientifically a baseless assumption. One way to understand this fallacy is through steps. We agree that a volcano does not have free will, but what about a tree which is slightly more complex; if not a tree, what about a mouse which is slightly more complex; if not a mouse, what about a tiger which is slightly more complex; if not a tiger, what about an ape which is slightly more complex; if not an ape, what about a prehistoric human who is slightly more complex? What was the point in our evolution after which we had free will and before which we did not? The reality is that there is no actual difference between humans and volcanos; they are combinations of molecules with different degrees of complexity. Thus, to try and scientifically prove that humans have free will and other animals and objects do not is futile because there is no basis to define free will, no evidence to conclude that free will exists.

One may argue that evidence of free will exists in the fact that we experience it within ourselves, that we make decisions every day according to our preferences and we could decide otherwise if we wanted. However, if anything, observation leads to the contrary. Our decisions are based on our opinions, but our opinions are not the result of our free will, they are pre-programmed and the result of cause and effect. For example, when we see a kitten, we find it beautiful, but when we see the rotting corpse of a kitten, we find it repulsive. There is nothing objective about the decision to react this way; both are simply images that are nothing more than a combination of colors. We did not choose to have this opinion, it was pre-programmed into us and we involuntarily react to one image with attraction and to the other with repulsion. Our thoughts and opinions are nothing more than chemical reactions, and just as we can add baking soda to vinegar and make a model volcano erupt, in the same way, we can add chemicals to the human brain and make it react in very specific ways. For example, a mouse may seem to have more free will than a volcano; it is an animal whereas a volcano is an object. However, if a certain hormone is injected into a mouse, its behavior will change in a measurable and predictable way, and we can repeat the experiment in a lab with consistent results. A mouse is no different from any other combination of molecules and neither are we. We can introduce a chemical to the human brain, and with enough knowledge, predict exactly how that person's thoughts and behavior will change. The fact is that all of our opinions are the result of pre-programming and cause and effect, and these opinions dictate the decisions we make. Each of our decisions is a measurable chemical reaction that occurs in our brain. Again, there is no evidence of humans being anything more than a complex series of chemical reactions.

Scientifically, free will does not exist, and without free will, it is not possible for the concept of good and evil to exist. Some humanists argue that if a person believes in the existence of God, by this line of logic, he has no reason to reject belief in the flying spaghetti monster. However, by the same line of logic, if a humanist insists on believing that we have free will, he has no reason to reject the belief that the single cell organisms that are a part of us have free will. He also has no reason to reject the belief that the universe of which we are a part has free will; this would not be far from belief in the existence of God. Without belief in the existence of God, one cannot justify belief in free will.

Goodness and Bad are Relative

Again, humanism is founded on the assumption that it is possible to define goodness without God. However, there is no way to objectively identify anything as being universally good or bad.

The very idea of something being better or worse is completely subject to circumstances. For example, the meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs was bad for the dinosaurs, but good for us. In the same way, a nuclear holocaust would be bad for us, but good for the hypothetical species that succeeds us. Consider the story of 'Planet of the Apes' for a moment; humanists, or 'Apeists', that exist among the future Ape society would consider the nuclear holocaust that wiped out humanity to have been good, the same way we consider the meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs to be good. What is disastrously bad for one could be very good for another. Considering how infinitely large the universe is, it would be absurd to imagine that a universal definition of better or worse exists, that anything could factually be good or bad.

One may object that humanists do not define goodness universally, but as that which is in the "greater good of humanity" [Good Without God, 280]. However, on what evidence does one have the right to confine ethics to only humans. Many vegans argue that animals have the right to live just as humans do. Again, one way to understand this fallacy is through steps. If a plant does not have the right to life, then what about an insect; if not an insect; what about an animal; if not an animal, what about a prehistoric human? What was the point in our evolution after which we had the unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and before which we could ethically be killed? There is no such point, and any line one draws on who ethics and morality apply to and who they do not apply to would be imaginary. If we can justify killing animals for the 'greater good of humanity', we have no scientific right to object to those who conducted ethnic cleansing for the greater good of humanity, or to those who conducted holocausts for the greater good of their race. Just as humanists consider plants and animals expendable for the greater good of their species, many supremacists consider other races expendable for the greater good of their race. There is no evidence on which one can prove or disprove any race's or species' definition of goodness.

The inescapable reality is that without God, goodness cannot be defined, it cannot exist. Humanists cannot scientifically justify any concept of goodness; it is nothing more than an unfounded belief that they hold. Humanists define their convictions as based on "observation, experimentation, and rational analysis", and that "science is the best method for determining this knowledge" [Good Without God, 280]. However, without God, to believe in goodness is to blindly adhere to an arbitrary set of rules for no better reason than it being the way 'it ought to be'. God and goodness are inseparable, and in order to believe in goodness, one cannot escape belief in God. Humanists critique theists for adhering to baseless beliefs, and then proceed to adhere to beliefs just as baseless. Our issue is not with humanists being good; it is with this glaring internal contradiction, this hypocrisy. We affirm that it is possible for a humanist to be good without God, but it is impossible for a humanist to himself believe in goodness without God.



PERSPECTIVE

WORSHIP RITUALS (Falahud Din Shams)



Jesus(as) son of Mary(ra) was hiding in the garden of Gethsemane. Warrants for his arrest had been issued and the Roman soldiers were looking for him everywhere. He was worried for his life since Romans were known to be vicious and it was likely that they would sentence him to death. This was the time for him to pray earnestly to God to save his life. This is when, according to the New Testament, he put his forehead on the ground and asked for this cup of death to be removed.

I was trying to imagine how many different ways one could put his forehead on the ground and be able to pray in a dignified manner. Lying flat on the belly or trying to keep your knees from touching the ground would not work. The only possible way is how the Muslims pray; knees on the ground and prostrate with your forehead on the ground and pray. This may be unacceptable to Christians since they don't pray that way, but that is the posture Jesus(as) son of Mary(ra) used in his time of desperate need.

Body gestures while praying vary from religion to religion. Some sit on chairs and some sit on the floor, some bow and some just stand and sing hymns. Islam has its own way of worship which is unique from any other faith.

In order to understand the gestures of worship, we need to appreciate the body language used in various cultures and countries. The Japanese bow to show respect to others. Persian kings had their courtiers sit in front of them on the floor with their legs folded. Hindus touch their forehead on the feet of their idols in the temple. In some countries touching your ears is a symbol of asking forgiveness or admission of guilt. Americans fold their hands in front when showing respect. The middle-Easterners prostrate in front of their kings and deities; that is probably why Jesus put his forehead on the ground.

That just about covers all the cultural mannerisms on our planet, give or take a bend.



In Islam, with the wisdom of our Holy prophet Muhammad(sa), the gestures for worship have taken an international posture. It integrates a variety of postures used by all the cultures in a dignified manner. It is truly a composite of international body language expressing humility, servitude, and obeisance before our Lord.

After cleansing ourselves, we start our prayers by touching our ears, standing with our hands folded and we begin recitations. Then we bow and to make sure we go the same distance, we hold on to our knees. This probably keeps us stable as well. Everyone is not used to doing it like the Japanese, who vary the depth of the bow according to one's status. Then we stand up straight and praise the Lord. Next, we prostrate just like Jesus(as) did in the garden of Gethsemane and show our ultimate humility and helplessness in front of God. After that we sit with our legs folded and repeat the prostration.

I think there is another reason for all these gestures in addition to the fact that Islam is truly the only international faith so it was prudent and logical that it should have all the positions from all cultures. People in various cultures are used to experience the true feeling of humility and relationship with their God in their particular gesture while praying. A Middle-Eastern feels the utmost satisfaction when he prostrates. An American experiences the feeling of respect and awe in his soul when he is standing with folded hands in front of his Lord. The same applies for all other cultures and their gestures while praying.

Islam gives the chance to anyone who adopts it to experience those feelings since it has a component from each culture. The rest of the gestures may not give one the experience of heartfelt communion with God but one of these positions could do the trick.

However, Islam is not form over substance. The physical position we pray in is not as important than the prayer itself. One can pray sitting, standing, lying flat on his back or on his side and God hears the prayer. The key point is to pray.



While we are talking about the gestures, Muslims face the Ka'abah in Mecca while praying. That unites Muslims all over the world. With the Earth being round, I'm not sure how everyone can face the Ka'abah. I am not a geography expert so I trust Google search will give me the correct qiblah. God, the Reader of hearts, knows my intention is to face His House in Mecca.



The Holy Qur'an has stated very clearly that it is not important if we face the East or the West while praying (2:178). It states that the real good comes from believing in God with all His helpers i.e. the prophets and angels and serving humanity especially the relatives, the orphans, the widows, the sick, the travelers and friends who seek help. That is how we reach God in our endeavor to create a bond with Him. That is the key to achieve goodness or if you want to use the religious terminology, righteousness or piety.

Islam offers the ultimate in use of body language to show physically how humble we are in front of our Creator. Physical gestures impact the soul to adopt certain attributes. We experience this all the time. Remember the last time your boss cracked a dumb joke and you forced yourself to laugh? It uplifts your soul. Actors use this technique all the time.

We reach our Lord so long as we have the earnest desire coupled with a spirit that's humbly devoted to God and His commandments, especially the ones about serving others as charity.

Sometimes charity comes in unusual ways...possibly even laughing at your boss's dumb jokes.



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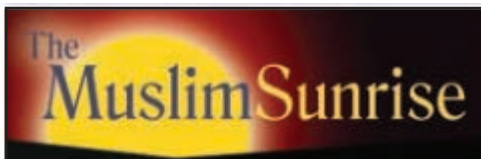


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