

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with people in the best possible manner.” (The Quran 16:125)

The Muslim Thinker

Quarterly journal of
THE AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA‘AT ISLAM LAHORE (U.K.)
(Founded 1913 as the Working Muslim Mission)

A periodical devoted to showing that Islam is:
PEACEFUL – TOLERANT – RATIONAL – INSPIRING

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Letters are welcome and should be sent to The Editor at the address on front cover. Any articles in this magazine without an indication of author or source are contributed by the Editor.

The *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore* is an international Muslim association, founded in 1914, dedicated to the propagation of Islam. It presents the *true, original* message of Islam, as found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, a message obscured today by grave misconceptions.

We believe that Islam seeks to *attract the hearts and minds of people* towards the truth, by means of reasoning, persuasion and a display of its own inherent beauty. It condemns the use of coercion, force or political power to advance the faith.

Some Islamic teachings which we stress are as follows. Islam is:

- (1) **Peaceful:** Only allows use of force in unavoidable self-defence; teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.
- (2) **Tolerant:** Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any belief or religion.
- (3) **Rational:** In all matters, it urges use of reason and the ever-growing knowledge of mankind; blind following is disallowed, and independence of thought granted.
- (4) **Inspiring:** Worship is not a ritual, but a living contact with a living God. God listens to man, answers his prayers, and speaks to His righteous servants even today.

Our Founder, *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* (d. 1908), was a servant of Islam, with the mission of bringing about the spiritual and intellectual victory of Islam. He believed that, after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, NO prophet is needed nor can one arise. However, Divinely-inspired reformers will continually arise to rejuvenate the religion and rekindle a true, living faith within the hearts.

Our Teachings

From the work *Kishtī-e Nūh* (Noah's Ark)

by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Relationship with God

To follow me it is necessary in the first place to believe in One God, the Creator and the Supporter of all existence, powerful over all, eternal, everlasting and unchanging in His attributes, neither being a son nor having a son, and free from suffering injuries, cross or death. Being far off, He is yet very near, and being near He is still very far. He is One but His manifestations are many. For those who renew themselves, He is a new God, and His dealings with them are new. They witness a transformation in God to the extent to which they transform themselves. But it is not God Who changes, for He is unchanging and perfect in His attributes from all eternity. It is a new manifestation of Divine which is disclosed to a man when he is transformed by a renewal of his mind. As a man rises higher, a higher manifestation of Divine power is revealed to him. When he shows an extraordinary transformation, Almighty God reveals to him extraordinary manifestations of His power. This is the root from which signs and miracles spring.

Such is my Lord, in Him you must believe and Him you must set before you. Let God be uppermost in your mind; let Him be dearer to you than your own selves, your comforts and all your connections. Be constant and firm in His path so that no storm might shake you. The world trusts in its resources and prefers not God to its own dear objects, but you should trust in God alone and prefer Him to all else, so that you may be numbered in heaven with His people. Almighty God has been exhibiting His signs of mercy from ancient times, but you cannot avail yourselves of His tender mercies until you are one with Him and fulfil all the laws of righteousness. His will must be

your will and His desires your desires. Be faithful to Him in adversity and lie at His door whether He hearkens to your voice or not, so that His will be done in all cases. If you trust in Him thus, the Living God Who has long hidden His face from the world will manifest Himself in you. Is there anyone among you who acts upon these ordinances, who can seek to do the will of God and submit to the decree of Heaven without uttering a word of complaint? When adversities encompass you all about, your faith in Him should be the greater.

Treatment of fellow beings

Let all your power be exerted to establish His unity upon earth. Be kind and merciful to the creatures of God. Let not your tongue speak evil against them or your hands do injury to them. Do not oppress them, but try your best to do good to them. Speak not the word of pride and vanity to anyone though he be your subordinate or servant. Abuse not anyone though he might abuse you. Walk upon earth in humility and meekness and sympathise with your fellow beings that you may be accepted of God. There are many who show meekness outwardly but inwardly they are ravening wolves. There are many who are smooth in appearance but they have the nature of a serpent. You cannot be accepted of your God until your tongue conforms to your heart. If you are in a high place, glory not in your greatness and do not look down upon the lowly but have mercy on them. If you are learned, glory not in your learning and do not despise the ignorant with vanity but give them a word of kind advice. If you are rich, glory not in your wealth and behave not proudly towards the poor, but serve and assist them. Shun the paths that lead to destruction. Fear God and be righteous. Worship not the creatures, but severing all your earthly ties become wholly devoted to God. Let not your delight be in this world. Serve God only, and devote your life to His service. Hate every impurity and evil for God's sake, for your Lord is holy. Let every morning bear witness that you have passed the night with righteousness, and let every evening bear witness that you have passed the day fearing God.

True inner reform

Fear not the curses of this world, for they are like the smoke which disappears instantly and cannot turn the light of your day into the darkness of night; but fear the curse of God which comes down from heaven, and brings ruin, both in this life and the next, upon the heads of those upon whom it descends. You cannot save yourselves with hypocrisy, for your Lord sees the inmost secrets of the heart. Can you deceive Him? Therefore stand uprightly before Him, purge your hearts of every impurity and cleanse them of every dross. If the slightest darkness remains in you, it shall overcome your light and all shall be darkness. If there is vanity, hypocrisy, self-approbation or idleness in you, you cannot be acceptable in the sight of God. Be not deceived that a few words which your lips utter are the goal of your life, for Almighty God wishes to bring about a thorough transformation in your lives. He demands of you a death, after which He shall breathe a new life into you. Be at peace with each other and forgive the trespasses of your brethren, for wicked is the person who does not agree to be at peace with his brother. He is in danger of being cut off, for he sows the seed of dissension.

(From the translation published in the *Review of Religions*, 1902.)

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Deliver the Message

Importance of the propagation of Islam.

by Shaikh Sharif Ahmad, *Imam*, A.A.I.L.L.(U.K.)

“O messenger, deliver that which has been revealed to thee from thy Lord; and if thou do it not, then thou hast not delivered His message. And Allah will protect thee from men. Surely Allah guides not the disbelieving people.” (5:67)

This verse is a part of the chapter revealed to the Holy Prophet in Madina between 5th to 7th year of *Hijra*. The Holy Prophet had been enjoined to convey to others what had been revealed to him. To lay emphasis on this issue, it had been clearly termed as non-performance of his messengership if he failed to deliver the message. It is to be borne in mind that a messenger is sent to a people when they are in utter darkness. Morally, the Arabs were sunk deep in the mud of indecency; socially they were worse than beasts; and intellectually they were stranded in the cobwebs of superstitions and uncertainties. What was worst in fact was considered by them to be the best. The task of a messenger of Allah is to lift them out of the abyss and take them to the pinnacles of a highly civilised, decent and virtuous life, and to reshape the style of their lives in the spiritual mould of his teachings and example.

Holy Prophet protected by God

The Holy Prophet's clarion call sounded strange to them. Taking his opposition to be an affront to their centuries-old notions and beliefs, they rose up against him, and opposed him tooth and nail. Finding him undaunted, they felt no hesitation in removing him from their midst. Confrontation with a whole people needs a prowess of very high degree. The Holy Prophet was soon surrounded by a small but courageous band of men, women and children, prepared to lay down their lives for the cause of Islam.

A very heavy responsibility was placed on the Holy Prophet by saying: deliver that which has been revealed to you by your Lord, failing which you will be considered to have not performed your duty. The Holy Prophet was not a self-appointed prophet. He was chosen by God for this purpose and deputed to be His messenger. He was promised full protection:

“And Allah will protect thee from men.”

It not only encouraged the Messenger of Allah, it also deepened in the hearts of his Companions the truth of the message received by him. The Holy Prophet was to deliver the message to mankind. His

safety ensured the success of his mission. This promise and prophecy, though made in the 6th or 7th year of *Hijra*, was virtually operating from the day the Holy Prophet was charged with the heavy and onerous duty of the reformation of mankind. In spite of ruthless and stormy opposition in Makka, ever changing tactics of the opponents, their concerted efforts to eliminate the Holy Prophet immediately before his migration to Madina, the Makkans could not harm his person. After *Hijra*, the wars imposed on him was the final and apparently very effective plan to eliminate the Muslims and their Master. Every attempt proved futile, producing only adverse effect. From every trial the Holy Prophet and his Companions emerged victorious. Finally, the Holy Prophet's triumphant entry into Makka was the last nail in the coffin of his opponents.

In the last words of the verse, there is yet another promise:

“Surely Allah guides not the disbelieving people.”

It is also a prophecy, and its fulfilment is as obvious as the Holy Prophet's immunity from the hands of his opponents. They always looked misguided. Their plans, schemes, machinations and tactics ended in complete failure, as if all of their schemes were engineered by misguided and perverted brains.

Muslims' duty of delivering message

Admittedly the Holy Prophet was the most successful of all the religious personalities. He not only delivered the Divine Message, but also ensured that to whomever the message was delivered fully, they understood it and were acting upon it. Not only the Holy Prophet but also his Companions were very clearly directed in the following words:

“Continue then in the right way as thou art commanded, as also (should) those who turn (to Allah) with thee. And be not inordinate (O man). Surely He is Seer of what you do.”
(11:112)

It is thus incumbent on all of the followers of Islam that they

should continue to deliver the message received by them through the Holy Prophet to their contemporaries. They should consider the warning extended to them equally, that if they fail to deliver the message they will be guilty of not performing their duties properly. If they tread the right path, make it obligatory for themselves to take the Quran to all the four corners of the earth, they will also be the recipients of the blessings and the favours promised by Allah to their Master.

Propagation of Islam in England

We see today millions of Muslims in China. We hear the call of *Allahu-Akbar* from the minarets of hundreds of mosques in that country. The seed of Islam in China was sown by only one Companion of the Holy Prophet. Islam was a hated name in Europe. It was considered to be the creed of barbarous bedouins, backward and ignorant people. Today Islam occupies an honoured position in the hearts of those who happen to know something of this religion. Much credit for this change must go to Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, the pioneer Muslim missionary to England. The love of Islam was imbued in his heart by *Hazrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The Khwaja was alone in a country where the voice of *Allahu-Akbar* had hardly been heard. The call first looked strange. Then it became familiar, and at last a time came when men like Lord Headley, Sir Abdullah Archibald Hamilton, Sir Umar Hubert Rankin and Habibullah Lovegrove embraced Islam. Today the Muslim fraternity mentions the names of those distinguished personalities with pride and love. They also know that it was Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din who brought them in the fold of Islam. They are required to be told that Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din was a disciple of *Hazrat* Mirza and had drunk deep at the fountain made to flow by that great Reformer of the fourteenth century *Hijra*. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din diverted the flow of that stream to Europe and England. His name stands imprinted in the pages of history and that of the Reformer of the century who infused in the Khwaja the love of Islam.

When Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din set foot on the soil of this country,

he carried Islam in his head. There was very little literature available at that time. The Holy Quran, with English translation and commentary, was published in 1917 by Maulana Muhammad Ali. Hazrat Maulana's second greatest work, *The Religion of Islam*, was published in 1936. A few pamphlets and booklets were all the Khwaja brought with him. Today we have, by the grace of Allah, literature which has virtually overwhelmed the religious world. All that is needed today is to take that literature to those of our non-Muslim friends who really stand in need of it.

The Divine order "deliver that which has been revealed" stares us in the face. To obey it, will lead to success; its disobedience is an unpardonable sin. We also know that this world will not end until the sun of Islam rises from the West. Rise it will, but ensure that its rays fall on us while we are still alive. Whoever carries the message of Islam to his fellow beings will find the hand of Allah working for him.

"We will soon show them Our signs in the farthest regions."
(41:53)

It is Allah's promise:

"And who is more true in word than Allah." (4:88)



Easter and other festivals

Their pagan origin.

(Taken from an *Islamic Review*, of the 1920s.)

Easter Sunday is the day of the greatest Christian festivity. Jesus, they say, arose from the dead; this day he overcame death and brought a new life to mankind; so goes the belief.

But the festival existed thousands of years before Jesus was born.

Easter was the goddess of spring, in whose honour the festival was celebrated about the end of March or the beginning of April. The Saxons of the pre-Christian days used to enjoy their Easter eggs and hot cross buns while worshipping the goddess whom they called *Eostre*.

The celebration of the festival with hot cross buns and eggs was not peculiar to this country. The Egyptians and the Greeks of the olden days did the same. Eggs and buns were regarded as signs of creation by the old Egyptians; spring brings life to creation, hence the festivities at this particular time of the year. The same is true in India and Persia till today, festivals taking the names of *Besaakhi* and *Nauroz*. The sign of the cross is also a legacy of the ancient day worship of Mithra, the sun-god.

Pagan origin of Christian sacred days

The fact that the date of Easter has to be fixed according to the full moon, at the spring equinox, clearly shows that the festival has more to do with the worship of some luminary than with any event in the life of Jesus. These views are strengthened when we consider other Christian sacred days. Christian scholars only speak the truth when they confess their inability to ascertain the date of the birth of Jesus. No one can do so with certainty. That the day of the birth of the sun-god was celebrated by the sun worshippers in the pre-Christian world on or about the 25th of December in Persia, Rome, Egypt, or Greece, is an established fact. Then comes the Sabbath Day in Christian lands. Jesus observed the Sabbath, but it was on Saturday, and not on Sunday; and so did the apostles and the early fathers of the Church. The change was brought about by Constantine, whose favourite god was Apollo, the sun-god.

Jesus takes Apollo's place

Political reasons induced Constantine to embrace Christianity. He kept everything of old worship in the newly created Church excepting the figure-head. The seat of Apollo was given to Jesus, while every other thing was left as it was before. The altar, with its face towards the East, the chancel, the choir, the acolytes, the pages, the monks

and the nuns, with the characteristic tonsure in honour of the disc of the sun, and the Cross itself — in short, every paraphernalia of a Catholic Cathedral — is the remnant of the Temple of Apollo. Sunday is not God's day, but the day of the sun-god. It is not the church of Jesus which is adhered to, but the Church of the sun-god, and if today she has lost her hold on the public mind, the reason is obvious. Ignorance and credulity will accept and revere anything in any form, but the modern mind is too enlightened to stand the absurdities of the medieval days.

Cross — Symbol of sun-worship

The cross as a symbol is of immemorial antiquity, far antedating the Christian era. Almost all ancient religions were different forms of sun-worship, with the Cross as its symbol. The seasons of the year, depending on the position of the sun, have been divided into four parts — spring, summer, autumn and winter. If you divide the earth's orbit around the sun into four parts, it will form a cross. The revivification of the earth in spring, at the vernal equinox on March 21st, when the sun enters the sign Aries, heralds the regeneration of vegetation and the life of Nature, hence the festival of Easter, which is celebrated even today in different forms under different names in Persia and India.

Mythical life of Persian sun-god

Mithra was the sun-god, and the Cross was his symbol. He was born of a virgin, in a cave, on December 25th. He had twelve companions or disciples (the twelve months); he was buried in a tomb and rose again. He was called Saviour and Mediator, and was sometimes figured as a lamb. Sacramental feasts were held in remembrance of him. Mithraism was adopted by the Romans and brought by them to England and France. Mithraic remains have been found in various places in England and on the continent. In Ireland, a figure on a cross has been found, but the effigy wears the Iranian regal crown and not the crown of thorns.

Some sort of baptism was also in vogue in the Mithraic ritual which

was performed by marking the forehead with a cross; the worshippers also partook of a sacrament of a small wafer; it was a round cake, emblematic of the solar disc; the worshippers named their host *Mizd*, and some authorities derive the word *mass* from the same.

Christmas — birthday of various sun-gods

The date of Christmas throws a good deal of light on the subject; the 25th of December, or some date very near to it, happens to be the birth-date of many gods in various mythologies — Bacchus, Osiris, Attis, Adonis and Quetzacoatl — the respective sun-gods of Greece, Egypt, Phrygia, Phoenicia and Mexico. If they were born on the 25th of December, their parents must have had their marriage on the 25th of March, which day is, again, Our Lady's Day in the Christian calendar. It is curious that the conception of Ishtar, the mother of the sun-god, was kept as a festival in Phoenicia and was celebrated on the same date. In this connection it may be mentioned that there was a cave at Bethlehem in which Mithra was worshipped in pre-Christian days. The existence of the said cave is admitted by the Christian Fathers (Irenaeus among other).

The story of the Passion is, again, a repetition of an old Passion Play, acted thousands of years before the reported events of the Cross and Resurrection.

Do these facts need any comment? Are they not eloquent enough to show that the Church of Christ is really the Church of the sun-god? (The facts given above may be verified from scholarly sources such as: Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, and Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.)

The Quran's verdict. The modern discovery that these Christian beliefs and festivals are copied from ancient idolatrous nations was indicated in the Quran centuries earlier. Referring to the exaggerated status that is claimed for Jesus, the Quran tells Christians:

“O people of the Book, exaggerate not in the matter of your religion unjustly, and *follow not the low desires of nations who went astray before* and led many astray, and went astray from the right path.” (5:77)

Introduction to Islam

Answers to common questions about Islam.

(For continuity, the first question below is repeated from the last instalment.)

10. *Is there a list of basic Muslim beliefs?*

Yes. The *Kalima* itself is known as the 'brief expression of faith'. It summarises the basic Muslim beliefs, which are five in number. These are belief in:

1. God, Who possess the most perfect and excellent qualities.
2. Angels, who act upon the heart of each person, inspiring him to do good.
3. The Prophets and Messengers of God sent to all the nations of the world, who taught virtue by their own high moral example.
4. The Books of God, which were revealed to all the nations through their respective prophets, containing guidance on how man should live and conduct himself.
5. The life after death, when each person shall become conscious of all the deeds, good or bad, he did in this life, and shall face the consequences.

11. *What is the most important point Islam teaches about belief?*

It is this, that *belief* does not just mean believing something in one's heart, but also acting on the belief. Mere faith counts for nothing if not carried into practice. The purpose of belief is to show us what to do in practice. No 'belief' by itself can bring salvation.

12. *How does this apply to the five beliefs of Islam?*

It applies as follows:

<i>Belief in:</i>	<i>Means we should:</i>
God	Try to perfect ourselves and acquire the best qualities.
Angels	Follow our good thoughts and impulses.
Prophets	Try to model our lives on the examples set by the righteous in all the nations on earth.
Books of God	Follow all the truths, in whatever scripture or religion they may be found.
Life after death	Remember that all our actions, good and bad, open and secret, will be judged.

13. *What are the basic practices a Muslim has to perform?*

In order to submit to God, and also to be at peace with his fellow beings, a Muslim has to perform his duties to God and his duties to man. The duties to God are: prayer (*salaat*), fasting (*saum*), and the Pilgrimage to Makka (*hajj*). The duty to man is to spend one's resources, time, energy, money, etc. for the welfare of others, and in particular to give a part of one's wealth and possessions to help those in need; this is known as *zakaat* or charity.

14. *What is the main point to remember about these practical duties?*

It is that the purpose of performing these duties is to draw us closer to God, and to lead us to do good to others and refrain from wrongdoing in our daily lives. Therefore, we should carry out these duties, not as rituals, but remembering God from the bottom of our hearts. Performing these acts of worship can only benefit us if we use them as the basis for improving our character and conduct in daily life. If a person prays and fasts, but fails to do good and give up bad habits, his prayer and fasting will be useless.

ISLAMIC BELIEFS: 1. GOD

15. *What is the basic teaching of Islam about God?*

Islam teaches that there is one, and only one, God Who is the Creator

and Controller of the entire universe. He is unique in every respect, and there is nothing which bears any likeness to Him. He is the Knower of all things, and has full power over the whole of creation. He does not stand in need of anything at all, while everything is totally dependent on Him. He possesses all the perfect qualities, and man should worship Him, and Him alone.

16. *Is there any name for God that Muslims use specially?*

Yes. According to Islam, the *personal* name of God is the Arabic word *Allah*. Personal name means that it is the name which refers only to Him, and to Him rather than to any particular quality that He possesses. It is pronounced:

AL — as in *alarm*.

LAH — *la* as in *large*.

The word *Allah* denotes that God is *the One Who possesses all the perfect attributes*. The Quran itself gives this meaning when it says: "Allah has the most excellent names (or qualities)"; ch. 7, v. 180. The names of God in other languages, such as *God* in English, or *Khuda* in Urdu, only convey some particular attribute of the Divine Being, and they are also used for others than God (as in *god, gods, goddess, etc.*). *Allah*, however, has only ever been applied to God Himself.



Television Review

1. *Encounter*. ITV Sunday 28 January 1990

This programme in the *Encounter* series showed the daily work of the senior Imam of the Central London Mosque, Gamal Solaiman. Through the activities shown, the Imam came over as a moderate, balanced and enlightened figure. It was clear that the programme

was presenting the lenient, accommodating and gentler side of Islam, as must have been the Imam's intention, manifested in the solution provided to various individuals' problems.

An office worker was seeking the Imam's advice about his anxiety that in performing his ablutions (*wuḍū*) at work, he was only wiping over his socks, not having the facilities to wash his feet. The Imam reassured him that Islam allowed this concession for such circumstances, and that his *wuḍū* was indeed proper. It could also have been added that what really matters is how far one attains the object of prayer. A *wuḍū* performed most meticulously is useless if the ablutions and the prayers are treated as nothing more than rituals.

A *Shariah* council was shown, which seemed to have the functions of an Islamic domestic court. A woman had applied to it to have an Islamic divorce decree issued. She had been divorced for some time in the civil courts, but wanted the marriage nullified under Islamic law as well. Her husband had refused to give her the Islamic divorce, and hence she took the case to this body. The council considered the case and agreed to her application. While this instance showed Islamic law acting sympathetically towards a wife against her unreasonable husband, why should a man in the first place have the arbitrary and absolute power of divorcing his wife and of withholding the divorce? If the positions are reversed and the man wants the divorce, the woman cannot withhold it from him and compel him to approach courts or councils to obtain an Islamic annulment. These inequities are due to mistaken interpretations given to Islamic teachings.

Brookwood cemetery

A scene in the film showed the Imam arriving at a cemetery, indicated on the caption as *Brookwood cemetery, Woking*, praying for all the deceased, and then attending to a couple of graves. We wish it to be known that it was through the strenuous efforts of the late Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981), the second head of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, while he was in charge of the Woking Muslim Mission during the First World War, that the Muslim burial ground at this cemetery was established. Buried there are several early British

Muslims associated with the Woking mission, and some members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement who served at Woking. As Muslim prayers for the dead are meant only for the Muslim deceased, the Imam's words of prayers show that he includes Ahmadis among Muslims, and we congratulate him on his generosity of spirit.

We must also point out that while the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement obtained a cemetery in England to be used by all Muslims, our members in many parts of world are being denied the right of burial in Muslim cemeteries by the so-called orthodox Muslim religious leaders. In some countries, such as South Africa, there have even been civil court actions to determine whether Ahmadis could be buried in cemeteries allocated for Muslims. Thus does tolerance stand in contrast with bigotry.

2. *Antenna*, BBC2 Wednesday 31 January 1990

This science programme carried a feature presented by Mr Zia-ud-Din Sardar, well known commentator on the subject of Islam and science, the main thrust of which was that Islam can provide an ethical and moral framework enabling scientific developments to be exploited for the benefit of mankind, not to its detriment. The Islamic concepts of *tauḥīd*, *khilāfa*, *istiṣlah* ("public interest"), and *ijmā'* were referred to as having the following implications: (1) that all nature was one, (2) that man was God's trustee on earth to act as custodian of His creation and not its absolute master, (3) that "public interest" must be the paramount consideration in putting the discoveries of science into practice, and (4) that *ijmā'* or public consensus could be used to decide whether certain lines of research (such as embryo research) should be pursued. Concern was expressed by Mr Sardar and the Muslim scientists he interviewed over the disturbing and disastrous consequences of an uncontrolled science, for example, animal experiments, global pollution, spread of nuclear weapons, and modern medical attitudes. A science tempered by the ethics of Islam would be free of dangers of this kind.

How original is this?

It must certainly have been valuable for viewers to learn that Islamic teachings have a bearing on what are considered to be advanced areas of life, and provide guidance on modern problems. But one is bound to notice that none of the points made could be considered as an exclusively Islamic contribution. Have not various organisations and individuals, who do not belong to Islam or even to any religion, been deeply perturbed about these issues for years? There have been protests, and even illegal acts, to stop animal experiments, spread of pollution, proliferation of nuclear weapons etc. There has been discussion for over two decades about the need for "social responsibility" in science, and associations have been formed to promote this idea. Alternative medicine too has been so much in the news. Can it therefore be seriously suggested that it is Muslim scientists, much more so than anyone else, who are concerned about this abuse of nature because the principles of "Islamic science" lead them to recognise these evils?

As regards the various Islamic concepts, noted above, which could provide an ethical framework to govern science, again these values are widely advocated by those outside Islam, and so this report did not offer much which a non-Muslim would consider as novel or original. For instance, conservationists regard man as part of nature and say that he has no right to maltreat other living things, which is the same idea as man being the custodian and not the master of nature. Again, if Islam has *ijmā'*, then modern democracies have elected legislatures which represent public opinion.

The problem is not so much with modern science itself, nor is it that there is a lack of good principles to guide man in this sphere. It is that those who exploit the discoveries of science violate these principles because of being motivated by greed, for personal, business or national ends. The report should therefore have shown how Islam, besides providing the necessary teachings to use science beneficially, proposes to restrain these human weaknesses. It mentioned producing Muslim scientists who work "only for the pleasure of Allah". But

the exploitation of their work will depend on Muslim industrialists, business people, bureaucrats and politicians. How is it proposed to produce people in these categories who work only for the pleasure of Allah?

“Islamic Science”

It is not clear what was intended by this term, but a lecturer teaching this was shown comparing the theory of evolution with instantaneous creation. He told his class that, according to Islam, creation happened instantly because the Quran uses the expression *kun, fa-yakūn* (God says “Be”, and it is). This is not Islamic science but a naive, simplistic interpretation of the Quran. It may be noted that to God Almighty all time is one, and therefore even if two events are separated by millions of years *on the human scale*, in Divine terms there is no delay between them. Therefore the Quranic expression, “God only says to it, Be, and it is”, does by no means indicate immediate creation. In another connection, the report made the point that a Muslim scientist would tend to prefer theories involving ‘oneness’ because this accords with the belief in *Tauhīd*. On this basis one might argue that a theory which postulates that various life forms can be traced to a common origin is more acceptable in Islam than the belief that each living thing was a separate creation from the beginning.

Omissions

The feature omitted to mention or make clear certain key points which show that Islam is the only religion which satisfies the needs and demands of the scientific age. Firstly, Islam accepts, indeed urges, the use of observation and reasoning as a means of advancing knowledge and discovering truth. It makes even religious doctrines subject to the test of reason, though they cannot be established by it. Secondly, Islam is the only religion whose teachings directly led its followers, at an early stage in its history, to study nature and develop science. When Muslim supremacy and civilisation was at its height, so was the Muslim contribution to science; and when their civilisation went into decline so did their research of science.

In discussing the early Islamic contribution to the sciences, it was rightly said that the Muslim scientists questioned everything freely and showed an independent spirit of enquiry; hence their success. We ask, however, whether the "Islamic science" of today is reviving that spirit, or rejecting it when its conclusions clash with traditionally received interpretations of religion?



Muslim history – an echo of Israelite history

Dr Israr Ahmad agrees with Hazrat Mirza
Muslim downfall similar to that of the Israelites.

Dr Israr Ahmad is one of Pakistan's foremost Sunni religious scholars, and a well-known speaker and writer on the teachings of Islam. Recently he wrote a series of articles in the Pakistani newspaper *Jang*, in one of which he commented on a prophecy of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, relating to the decline of the Muslims in their later history, as follows:

"The Holy Prophet Muhammad foretold that the same evils would arise among his followers as had arisen among the Israelites. He said: 'If they — the Israelites — had crawled into the hole of a lizard, you will crawl into it too'. His words go so far that although one is hesitant to quote them, but they are the words of the Holy Prophet which I put before you. He said: 'If there was a wretched man among the Israelites who committed incest with his own mother, then among you also shall arise such a wretched man'.

"The meaning is that all the evils, in terms of religion, doctrine, thought, knowledge and deeds, which came to prevail among

the Israelites, shall also come to prevail among the Muslims. The text of the hadith is as follows: *'All the things which happened to the Israelites shall also happen to my followers, just as one shoe matches the other shoe'*. This is a most eloquent comparison. Look at a pair of shoes, and because the front parts of the two point in opposite directions, you see one shoe being apparently different from the other. But put the soles of the two shoes together, and they are identical. Similarly, the circumstances of the Israelites and the Muslims appear to be different, because after all, there is the span of fourteen hundred years, and so there is some difference on the face of it. But if you look between the lines, you find that there is not a hair breadth's difference. And as to the condition of the Jews described in the Holy Quran, each one of us must look at himself to see whether he has not fallen prey to that condition."

(*Jang*, London edition, 19 October 1987, page 3.)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad applied exactly this prophecy about a hundred years ago to the condition of the Muslims in these times. In the extract below, he cites the same saying referring to "shoes" which Dr Israr Ahmad has quoted. Writes Hazrat Mirza:

"Moses' people had so thoroughly gone astray by the fourteenth century (after Moses) that righteousness and virtue had disappeared altogether. The Jewish divines were pre-occupied with needless dissensions and selfish controversies, much evil and wickedness had spread among them, and the worldly condition of the Jews had suffered great disintegration as well. Precisely this is the condition of the Muslim people at this time, and events before our eyes are plainly testifying that in reality this people and its divines are following in the footsteps of the Jews of Jesus' time. . . .

"Leaving aside the prophecies for a moment, look at the situation rationally as a truth seeker, as to whether the case of the Muslims of this age and the Jews of Jesus' time fulfils the words

'one shoe matching the other', or not. Look at the Gospels with care and read whether what Jesus has described of the condition of the Jewish priests and lawyers, exposing their hypocrisy, is to be found in the present day Muslim religious leaders, or not. Is it not true that our leaders, like the Jewish priests, are day and night engaged in futile disputes, are utterly devoid of spirituality, and are constantly attempting to prove others as *kāfir* while they themselves know not what Islam is? ... Pick up the histories of the Jews and see how intensely similar are these Muslims in their religious and worldly destruction to the Jews of Jesus' time." (*Shahādat al-Qur'ān*, published 1893, pp. 43,44)

Just compare Dr Israr Ahmad's concluding words with the following from Hazrat Mirza:

"When we read in the very first part of the Quran passages regarding the Jewish priests, to the effect that 'you preach goodness to others, but forget your own souls' [etc.] ... the heart cries out spontaneously that all these verses apply to most of our own religious leaders." (*ibid.*, p. 48)

Hazrat Mirza's claim

Hazrat Mirza has presented this resemblance as an evidence of his claim to be the Messiah whose advent is promised among Muslims. The prophecies about the similarity of the Muslims to the Israelites do not merely speak of the resemblance of the evils arising in the two nations. Muslims are also promised in the Quran and the Hadith that *khakīfas* (deputies to the Holy Prophet Muhammad) and inspired saints would be raised among them *instead of, but in the likeness of*, the prophets of the Israelites. It is prophesied in particular that the Messiah would appear among the Muslims. Referring to both aspects of this intense similarity, Hazrat Mirza wrote:

"Just as in the last days of the Mosaic law a prophet arose named Jesus, in a time when the moral condition of the Jews

had deteriorated completely — they had strayed very far from real piety, virtue, mutual sympathy, unity and true godliness, their knowledge and thought was confined merely to formalism and letter-worship, and in their worldly position they had become weak and humiliated — similarly it is necessary that among the Muslim people too there should arise a *muhaddas*, in the likeness of that prophet and of his time, when they have also degenerated in the same manner as that in which the Jews had fallen in Jesus' time." (ibid., p. 43)

The resemblance with the Israelites is in two points, he wrote, and the second must be accepted if the first is acknowledged. These two points are:

"... firstly, in the disintegration of the nation, the decline in worldly standing, and the change for worse in virtue, faith and righteousness; and secondly, in the coming of a *mujaddid* at such a time, who has the name Promised Messiah and who restores the original state of faith. ... Since our Muslim brethren accept that one of these two signs has been fulfilled in this age, to turn away from the second sign is just like saying that the sun has undoubtedly risen but it is not daytime yet." (ibid., p. 48)

What an elegant and simple explanation has Hazrat Mirza given! If Muslims have degenerated to a condition akin to that of the Jews of Jesus' time, as was prophesied, then the Messiah who was to revive the Muslims must have appeared as well, in accordance with the rest of the prophecy.

Note that Hazrat Mirza has plainly stated in one extract that the Messiah to arise among Muslims would be a *muhaddas*, and in another that he would be a *mujaddid*. Therefore, in his capacity as the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza claims *not to be a prophet*, but to be a non-prophet who receives revelation (i.e. *muhaddas*), and a reformer like the several Muslim religious reformers who had preceded him.

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