



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 "In the name of Allah,
 The Beneficent, The Merciful".



THE CALL

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HEARTY EID GREETINGS

The year 1982 has been an evenful one for the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-i-Islam Inc, Trinidad & Tobago, not only from the aspect of Islamic propagation but also in the overt acceptance of our views by the community at large.

Our Jalsa culminated the year 1981 with the bridging of a gap in Ahmadi-Sunni relationship when Shaikh Gulshair al-Shukri al-Juma, Missionary and representative of Darul Iftaa, Saudi Arabia, courageously accepted our invitation to deliver the feature address. This was followed by lectures at the Subratee Trace and Torrib Mosques where Shaikh Gulshair confirmed among other things the correctness of the Islamic practice enforced by Ahmadies of NOT STANDING for "tazeem"

Quite recently confusion has reigned in the ranks of the Sunni Jamaats as more and more truth seeking muslims are firmly advocating correct Islamic practices that were formerly thought to be innovations by Ahmadies. One such incident led to physical violence in a fracas outside an ASJA Mosque. In retaliation ASJA Imams are now resorting to reading out announcements in their Mosque indicating that those who read eight rakaats "taraawih" or are bareheaded should not enter the Mosque. Although this is a blatant defiance of the Holy Qur'an (96:9-14):

"Have you ever noticed him who tries to forbid a servant of (Allah) from praying? Have you ever considered whether he is giving the lie to truth or turning his back (upon it)? Isn't he aware that Allah sees (all)?"

The Holy Qur'an also informs us in 2:114: "Who could be more wicked than those who proclaim interdicts in the Masjids of Allah!"

But even in the non-muslim world, the views expressed by the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement of Islam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Mujaddid of the fourteenth century and the Promised Christ, that Jesus of Nazareth did not die on the cross but is buried in Kashmir-these views are becoming an acceptable reality. In 1982 a book entitled The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail was published by three Christian researchers who had the backing of the BBC, Commenting on Jesus' Crucifixion they wrote on page 314: "In short Jesus's apparent and opportune "demise" which, in the nick of time, saves him from certain death...is to say the least, suspect. It is too perfect, too precise to be coincidence. It must either be a later inter-polation after the fact, or part of a carefully contrived plan. There is much additional evidence to suggest the latter." (Compare this view with 3:53 where the Qur'an says the Jews planned and Allah planned and Allah is the Best of Planners.) Commenting further they write on page 315:

مَعَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَحَقَّ تَمَرُ التَّوْبَةِ

We believe in the Tinity of Prophethood in Muhammad.

For a wounded and exhausted man, a sniff or taste of vinegar would induce a restorative effect, a momentary surge of energy. And yet in Jesus's case the effect is just contrary. No sooner does he inhale or taste the sponge that he pronounces his final words and 'gives up the ghost'. Such a reaction to vinegar is physiologically inexplicable. On the other hand such a reaction would be perfectly compatible with a sponge soaked not in vinegar, but in some type of soporific drug... But why proffer a soporific drug? Unless the act of doing so, along with all the other components of the crucifixion, were elements of a complex and ingenious stratagem—a stratagem designed to produce a semblance of death when the victim, in fact, was still alive." Again the authors point out on page 317: "...when Joseph asks about Jesus's body, he uses the word soma—a word applied only to a living body. Pilate, assenting to the request, employs the word ptoma—which means 'corpse'. According to the Greek, then, Joseph explicitly asks for a living body and Pilate grants him what he thinks, or pretends to think, is a dead one." Finally they conclude on page 318:

"...where did Jesus go the?... According to certain Islamic and Indian legends, he eventually died at a ripe old age, somewhere in the east—in Kashmir it is claimed most frequently."

Among its own members and well-wishers, the Ahmadiyya Anjuman has intensified its educational activities through its Continuous Education in Islamic Studies where honorary missionaries are recruited to conduct symposiums at various centers. This year the theme was 'Can I Live Islam in Trinidad and Tobago in the context of Carnival, Christmas, the Work Ethic and the News Media.'

In addition, over one hundred children and adults are taught at weekly classes, to read the Arabic Language. More than fifteen percent of these are already being trained in the correct reading and teaching of the Holy Qur'an. A Public Lecture organised on the subject 'New Evidence on the Death of Jesus' was attended by about three hundred persons of various faiths. A Research Group has been initiated to formulate a greater understanding of the Holy Qur'an on such subjects as the Concept of God, of Jinn, of Angels, of the Unseen etc.

During the month of Ramadaan, especially, several Jamaats associated with the Ahmadiyya Movement utilised lay persons in an inter-Jamaat exchange of short talks, nightly, on topics relevant to the welfare and improvement of the community.

The occasion of Eid 1982, then, is an experience in achievement felt by every member, well-wisher and support of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Islam Inc. of Trinidad and Tobago. If Eid is a refilling of an empty physical stomach after a period of total abstinence, it is also for us, a fulfilling of a spiritual void in the heart of Muslims who have for too long abstained from a close study of the Holy Qur'an. Ramadaan is the recurring anniversary of the revelation of the Qur'an, God's gift of His Own WORDS to man; Eid is the recurring happiness in sharing this gift among ourselves.

Part One

The biggest gulf that yawns between the two faiths is the divergent views of the Cross taken by Christianity and Islam. And we must be very clear on this fact. The Christian position on this point is dogmatic, beyond the pale of rational interpretation. That is what takes away the very basis of a common ground. If the Christian position on this point can be made susceptible to a rational approach — of which signs are not wanting — the main hurdle in the way of a closer spiritual comradeship between the two faiths would have been cleared. The true significance of the Cross is the crux of the question. But for divergence on this, Christianity and Islam are two sides of the same coin.

In this connection, the most notable contribution comes in the form of a remarkable book, *City of Wrong*, an English rendering by Dr. Kenneth Cragg of an Arabic book, *Qaryah Zalimah*, by an Egyptian scholar, Dr. Kamel Hussein, the following lines are inspired by the belief that an objective quest of the truth about the Cross of Christ is the only way truly to promote better understanding between the two faiths, and, in that spirit are devoted to a study of the points raised in the book.

City of Wrong is a most moving book, perhaps the first of its kind, which no one interested in the problems of right and wrong, good and evil, the ultimate norm of moral values, how these values may be trampled in the name of collective good, even in that of God and religion, can afford to miss.

It is a story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, told in the form of fiction, the theme being to turn the searchlight on the various factors — religious, political and social — caught up in that grim drama on that fateful Good Friday, which culminated in the conviction of Jesus Christ on a charge of heresy, and the sentence of death against him:

Whether, however, Jesus was actually crucified or not, whether somebody else in his likeness was crucified, as the common Muslim belief goes, or whether he in person underwent crucifixion as the Christians

believe, is considered by the author immaterial to the theme of his story, and is left untouched. The mere fact that a Teacher of such lofty moral stature as Jesus Christ should be sentenced to die on the cross is, according to him, enough of condemnation of the main actors, systems, standards and institutions that happened to be involved therein.

The author, Dr. Kamel Hussein, is a man of versatile genius — surgeon by profession, an educationist, a thinker, author, philosopher, and a distinguished man of letters. The translation into English under the above title is by an equally distinguished man, Dr. Kenneth Cragg, Editor of *The Muslim World* and a Professor of Arabic and Islamics in various universities in America and the Middle East. The original was adjudged a masterpiece of literary art and awarded the State Prize for Literature by the Egyptian Government.

The translation is equally deserving of public appreciation, inasmuch as it does not lose, as most translations do, the thrill and grip of the original, and is inspired by the sole motive to promote Christian-Muslim understanding. As the distinguished translator puts it in his Introduction, the idea in rendering the book into English is to provide a meeting point at the deepest level between Christianity and Islam, and make the moral challenges in *Qaryah Zalimah* available to a wider English-reading public.

The feeling behind Dr. Cragg's labour of love, we hope, will be reciprocated in the world of Islam. Too long have Christianity and Islam, paradoxically in violation of their own basic messages, frowned at each other, misunderstood and misjudged each other, and for that matter met each other in a bitter historical encounter. If there are any two faiths which are the closest to each other in a great deal that constitutes the substance of religion, these are Christianity and Islam. In the present-day world of ideological conflict, the two once again find themselves thrown into a common destiny. There is a growing realization that by pooling their moral and spiritual resources, Christianity and Islam can play a decisive role in the making of a new and a better world — a world rooted in the concepts of a Divine dispensation and the sanctity of the human personality. That purpose, Dr. Cragg tells us, the *Qaryah Zalimah* should eminently serve. ●

*“And there is none of the People of the Book
(particularly Jews and Christians) but he will
believe in this before his (own) death.”*
(H.Q. 4:159)

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM CLOSING THE GAP

Part Two

A fateful Friday in Jerusalem

The plot of the story opens dramatically with a glimpse of the daily routine of life of the simple people of the city of Jerusalem two thousand years ago. When the day on that Good Friday dawned, it was just one more common day. The simple folk at sunrise, as usual, set about their daily avocations. The sheep boys drove their flocks to the neighbouring hillocks in search of fodder. The artisans opened their shops to ply their trades. Those who had nothing to do idled away their time in the streets. One topic of general interest which formed the gossip of the town was the preaching of this new Teacher, who taught a new gospel, and the heated discussion at the preceding night's meeting of the Rabbis as to how to deal with his dangerous new preaching. Nobody, however, dreamed what big events were going to happen on that fateful day — events that would go down into history.

This air of the dramatic runs throughout the book from page to page and chapter to chapter, strewn with the most arresting of doings, heart-searching talks and profound philosophic discussions, revolting scenes of man's inhumanity to man, and, above all, the prostitution of the sacred names of God and religion by men of high scholarship and even deep piety. Indeed the whole thing is a most devastating satire on the so-called religiosity, exemplified in the eminent Jewish rabbis who sat in judgment on Jesus Christ, and in the name of religion perpetrated the worst crime known to history. On one hand, as the story paints them, these leaders of Jewry were so punctilious in the observance of their religion that for fear of defilement they would not enter the judgment hall of the Roman Governor, Pilate, but on

the other hand they saw nothing wrong in sending an innocent man to the cross — and a man of the gentleness of Jesus Christ who taught people to love even their enemies.

Terrible inhumanity in the name of religion

The irony of the whole thing is put in the mouth of Pilate, who is driven almost mad at the horror of being required to put an innocent man on the cross. He “pondered in his palace on the trials and tribulations that afflict the lives of rulers and the wrongdoing and callousness required of them”. And he has a long discussion on the subject with a friend, a Greek philosopher, who just then happens to enter the palace. And when the latter starts a lengthy discourse on the rights and wrongs of the day’s doings, Pilate loses all patience, and in utter disgust, bursts out:

“Give me a rest from this philosophy of yours. It has been borne in upon me that we men of action can find no value in philosophy when any really serious issue confronts us” (p. 171).

And he goes on to utter the same indictment against religion, saying:

“Nor are the men of religion any better guides for us in the life of action than you are. What they have traditionally to say about truth and error, good and evil, is fine talk so long as it remains tradition, creed and faith. But it all becomes vague and ambiguous when the time for action arrives. Don’t you realize that the Jews, most meticulous as they are in following the doctrines of their estimable faith, yet consider the lighting of a candle on the sabbath a heinous crime? Crucifying the preacher of this new gospel, however, is duty positively enjoined by loyalty to religion and nation!” (p. 177).

And in utter desperation and confusion of mind, Pilate says all he could do in the face of this failure of both philosophy and religion to give any clear guidance was to do what his Roman tradition dictated. His philosopher friend, who still goes spinning elaborate moral theories, he cuts short, saying:

“I have no wish to divert you from your search. But what I am after is guidance. I used to think I had reached it by the way of religion, or religion and reason. But what the people of Israel have done today in the name of religion has destroyed every vestige of my hope for guidance there. From now on I shall seek it no more. I will remain a simple Roman soldier doing what is enjoined on me by the principles and traditions of my nation and by the consensus to which Rome has come” (p. 175).

And that is the end of the story, so far as Pilate is concerned. He goes ahead with his duty as a Roman, brushing aside all qualms of conscience, and pronounces the grim judgment to put Jesus on the cross.

At this point the scene drops on the story, so far as Jesus is concerned. The author's purpose, to expose the bankruptcy and inhumanity of some most sacrosanct human institutions, has been sufficiently served without pursuing the story to its bitter end, and giving the reader a glimpse of the scene of the actual crucifixion. This abrupt *finis* to the story, however, leaves the translator unsatisfied. In his Introduction, he calls this a big snag in the story as a work of art in leaving a big moral issue involved in the Cross of Christ enshrouded in darkness. He puts down this suppression of the most vital link to the author's understandable hesitation to tread on this delicate ground as to what actually happened to Jesus after the pronouncement of judgment against him, the issue being the subject of much controversy in the House of Islam. ●



CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM CLOSING THE GAP

Part Three

Crucifixion story as given in the Qur'an

This controversy within the House of Islam, the translator tells us, stems from the Qur'anic words *wa lakin shubbiha Lahum*, which, he says, is susceptible grammatically of two different interpretations, leading to two different views as to the fate of Jesus after conviction. This is how the author introduces the subject:

"It may be well at the outset to clarify briefly the sum of what the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, has to say on the Cross of Christ. The pivotal passage is that in Surah IV, 156, which reads: 'They (i.e. the Jews) say we killed the Messiah, 'Isa (Qur'anic name for Jesus), son of Mary, the Apostle of God. But they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him. It seemed so to them. Those who had altercations on this matter are dubious about it, and in fact in the absence of sound knowledge are following conjectures. The sure fact is they did not kill him. On the contrary, God raised him to Himself, God the strong and the wise' " (p. x).

Commenting on the Qur'anic words *wa lakin shubbiha lahum*, the Translator says:

"The Quranic text is enigmatic, since in Arabic the 'hidden', pronoun in the passive verb, translated 'made to seem so', may refer to crucifixion ('it') or to Jesus ('He'). In the first case the meaning would be that death by crucifixion 'seemed to happen' but in fact did not. The victim was Jesus in person, and he was Himself actually and physically nailed to the Cross. But He did not there succumb. When taken down from the instrument of death, He had not in fact expired.

Subsequently in the tomb. He revived, and was 'spirited away' (quite physically if the phrase may be permitted) by the disciples" (p. 11).

Among the orthodox circles, however, the Translator goes on to say:

"The pronoun in question is taken as personal, and relating to Jesus. It means that He was not killed nor crucified, not in the sense that He did not succumb and die by crucifixion, but that he never came into the position of a victim. The 'seeming' was not a 'death' (only apparent) on His part, but a mistake in identity, seemingly ordered and arranged by God's intervention, on account of which another victim, having all the personal appearance of Jesus, was by error condemned and executed as if he had been Him" (p. 11).

Crucifixion of a double was an anti-climax

The Translator is not at all satisfied with either of the above two views of the event of the crucifixion. To take his objection to the second view, he considers it as an anti-climax, fizzling out the whole significance of the Cross and its challenge to the conscience of humanity. We cannot do better than reproduce *in extenso* how his mind reacts to this story of some double of Jesus being put on the Cross:

"Is not the entire moral significance, here so movingly argued, spiritually jeopardised, perhaps in a way evaporated, if the encounter never really happened? The question asks us not only to the heart of this history but to the heart of theology. Jesus' devotion and readiness to die arose from His fidelity to His message, and this in turn from His relationship with God. Is God then properly to be thought of as frustrating the climax of that devotion? Does Jesus, insisting as He does upon loyal obedience unto death, remain the valid spokesman of a Heaven that intervenes to save Him when He would not save himself? If God, as the Quranic hypothesis affirms, saw that climax differently, had Jesus seen it rightly? Is a love that suffers to the uttermost the truly Divine pattern of wrong's retrieval and man's peace with God? Or is the really Divine thing the attitude of self-saving which runs flatly counter to the heart of the teaching of the Sermon? Or in crude brevity: on which side is Heaven? The answer involves the triangular situation that exists both in this book and in the history that generates Christianity, between Jesus, His contemporary opponents and the Divine will. It would appear to the Christian that the whole logic of City of Wrong is that the mind of Jesus is the mind of God. To believe Him rescued at the last, while a sufferer, innocent of His role in the world, expires in His stead, is not only an anti-climax. It jeopardises the integrity of a single whole, the totality of the whole Christ in His import for mankind. What is this darkness in which the world is darkened during the three hours of a Friday afternoon? Is it, or is it not, a darkness in which a mistake of identity works out its bitter way before an onlooking Heaven? Only when the shadows that remain around this question are dispelled does the darkness itself become luminous. Yet to be reverently and wistfully within those shadows, as the author and his kinship of readers are, is to be on holy ground" (pp. 23, 24).

According to Dr. Cragg, this simply does not fit in either with the theme of the story or the role of Jesus

on the stage of history, as the bearer of a new dispensation of God's love for mankind. Here is a great moral Teacher, he tells us, who creates a commotion by his bold revolutionary cry, denouncing all that was sham and cant in the religiosity of the day, preaching love of God and man, and cheerfully bearing sufferings and sacrifices in the cause of Truth. Here is a man who stands undaunted before the frenzied fury of the Jewry, facing all manner of indignities, persecutions, tortures with fortitude, even facing the prospect of death with the sublime resignation: "Thy will, not my will". For such a great character to think in terms of saving himself when the supreme moment of mounting the Cross comes — it simply does not make sense. With these reflections, the Translator dismisses the version of Jesus' double having suffered crucifixion as untenable.

Shubbiha in the sense of mistaken death

As regards the other view that the doubt arose not out of mistaken identity but out of mistaken death, the Translator does not say where, according to him, the flaw lies. He contents himself with saying that it is not the orthodox view. This again is not the whole truth. Eminent scholars throughout the history of Islam have rendered *mutawaffika* as *mumituka* — i.e., "I (God) will cause you (Jesus) to die a natural death". That was the view commonly in vogue among the Prophet's Companions, is borne out by Abu Bakr's public utterance on the Prophet's demise. Reciting the Qur'anic verse that "Muhammad was but a messenger of God and the messengers before him had passed away," he consoled the Muslims who were in a distracted state of mind on hearing about the sad event. This is conclusive evidence to prove that the idea of Jesus being alive never existed in the early days of Islam, and that it is a latter-day infiltration.

The "Azhar" view of Crucifixion

In recent years, no less an authority than the Rector of the greatest seat of Islamic learning, the Azhar University of Cairo, Professor Mahmud Shaltut, has expressed the same view. In demand for an authoritative *fatwa* (verdict) as to the validity or otherwise of the common notion among Muslims that Jesus was still alive somewhere in heaven, he, after fully thrashing out the question in the light of the Qur'an and the Hadith,

totally rejects the view. The following extracts should suffice to show what the authoritative contemporary orthodox view is:

"The word 'tawaffaitani' in this particular verse primarily means natural death which is known to everybody. The Arabic-speaking people understand this and only this meaning of the word with reference to the context. Therefore, had there been nothing else to indicate the end of Jesus in this verse even then it would have been improper and wrong to say that the Prophet Jesus was alive, and not dead ...

"So one fails to understand how the word 'heaven' is deduced from the word 'towards Him' (ilaih). By God! it is an outrage on the plain exposition of the Holy Qur'an, and such an offence is committed simply on account of belief in such stories and narratives which are devoid of accuracy, not to speak of their established authenticity ...

"To sum up:

"1. There is nothing in the Holy Qur'an, nor in the sacred traditions of the Prophet, which authorizes the correctness of the belief to the contentment of heart that Jesus was taken up to heaven with his body and is alive there even now, and would descend therefrom in the latter days.

"2. The Qur'anic verses about Jesus show that God had promised to cause him to die a natural death, then to exalt him and save him from the mischief of the disbelievers, and this promise had certainly been fulfilled. His enemies could neither kill him nor crucify him, but God completed the span of his life and then caused him to die."

This should set at rest the oft-repeated plea of our Christian friends that the Qur'an itself upholds the Divinity of Jesus by teaching that he is above the reach of death and has been alive all these two thousand years up in heaven. The greatest living authority in the world of Islamic scholarship, as quoted above, describes this as an "outrage" on the plain meanings of the Qur'anic verses. He emphatically declares that according to the Qur'an, Jesus was saved from death on the Cross, that after being saved, he enjoyed the rest of his span of life, and after completing that span, he died a natural death.

The conclusion is perfectly obvious that the hidden pronoun in the Qur'anic word *Shubbiha* (*made to seem so*) refers not to the *person* but to the *death* of Jesus on the Cross. It was a *seeming* death — not real death.

It is surprising that our Christian friends should so stubbornly refuse to see this most natural and sensible interpretation of the event of crucifixion, which is a perfectly natural sequence of events, inasmuch as Jesus, the central figure and hero of the drama, in person goes through the ordeal of suffering to its uttermost extremity, and at the last moment Divine intervention comes to his help.

MUHAMMAD'S SOLUTION TO NATIONAL HATRED

by Maulaana Sadrud—din

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) gave his attention to the finding of a solution to the problem of national and class hatreds and achieved marvellous success with regard to it. Whereas, on the one hand, God apprised the Prophet of the dangers of national prejudice, which sets man against man, on the other hand, He also revealed unto the Prophet the Divine treatment for the eradication of this widespread epidemic. The remedy is contained in the following verse:

“O mankind! Lo! We have created you from a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct. Lo! God is Knower, Aware” (49: 13).

The whole human race has been addressed in this proclamation, which says: Ye people of the world, just ponder over the fact that having been born of the same parents you are all but members of one and the same community. Gradually you spread over different parts of the world receiving different impressions and imprints from different tracts of land. For example, the climatic effects of warm plains and cold hills created in you dissimilarity of features and physiognomy, and for the same reason your colours and your speeches also became different. Moreover, geographical causes produced in you different habits and peculiarities. It was on the basis of these facts that you chose different names for the identification of your groups. But the essentials of your humanity did not change despite your living in different places. You are so many sections of one and the same human family, and it should be clearly understood that by the adoption of different tribal names the real fact of human nature does not change. The people of the hills naturally become accustomed to the life of labour and hard work. They have to go out for hunting to procure their food, and the distinctive qualities of bravery and hardihood are, in this way, evolved in them. Sometimes they make oppressive use of their strength and strike terror into the people of the plains by plundering and pillaging them. Similar traits are also developed in the people of islands. Very much like the hillmen, the islands, too, make wrong use of their prowess and start committing piracy on the high

seas, and become, in this way, a permanent danger to the weaker section of the human race. In like manner, people who have taken up their abode in colder countries begin to take pride over the white colour of their skins, and look with contempt upon those people who, on account of the different climate in which they live, have coloured skins. God Almighty, therefore, says to people living elsewhere: Your tribes, races and nations are convenient labels by which you may know certain differing characteristics. It is wrong to make these differentiating characteristics the ground for considering yourselves superior. Your species and your humanity is one and the same; your nature as human beings is also the same. Superiority cannot be claimed merely for belonging to a particular tribe or clan nor for having a particular skin. It can be achieved only through righteousness and fear of God. Greatness can be attained only by that nation which possesses lofty character and has the welfare of humanity at heart. But the nation lacking in these qualities will not be able to acquire exalted stature. This is the universal law of life, in accordance with which nations as well as individuals will be tried and judged. It matters not whether a man is a Hindu or a Sikh, a Jew or a Christian; whether he is a man of the West or of the East — all will be adjudged in the light of this Great Law. A man may have his residence anywhere on the surface of this earth: if he is honest and true he will surely deserve respect and regard in the eyes of God. And to every individual who leads a life of rectitude this law holds out a guarantee of honour and glory.

The last pilgrimage

The Prophet Muhammad, on the occasion of his last pilgrimage to Mecca, delivered a sermon on this very principle of human equality to the large concourse of people, which, in substance, ran as follows:

“Ye people, your God is one, and one also is your father (Adam); that is to say, you are all members of the Great Family of the All-Loving God. Therefore, there should be amongst you goodwill and affection, sincerity and harmony, and it should be clearly understood that no Arab as such has any kind of superiority over the non-Arab, nor a coloured man over the white, and likewise no non-Arab as such has any kind of preference over the Arab, nor any white man over the coloured man. There are many different nations among you, and true unity can be established and maintained among you only if you agree to believe that real superiority, in the sight of God, lies not in the fact that you are members of a particular nation or that you

have a particular person of eminence as your progenitor, but that the true and real superiority, in the eyes of God, belongs only to that nation or individual who is the most God-fearing and who does the noblest deeds!"

This is the one criterion of superiority and excellence for mankind. Indulgence in national pride cannot, in any way, be regarded as an argument of superiority and greatness. Such a pride, on the other hand, is positively harmful and breeds hatred and contempt for the other nations, and often becomes the cause of a great disaster. It disunites and scatters the members of God's great family, sowing in the minds feelings of ill-will and animosity. This is displeasing to God. It is in order to eradicate this disease and bring peace to the world that the Qur'an enjoins upon us the observance of right conduct and fear of God as the only true criterion of superiority before God.

This sermon reflects the Prophet's mind. Unlike some of the leaders of European countries, the Prophet of Islam did not tell his people, the Arabs, that they were the best people in the world, and that they had, therefore, the right of imposing themselves over other nations. He made, instead, an announcement of quite the opposite kind, declaring that the Arabs had no superiority over any other nation, and that if the other nations were more imbued with the fear of God and rendered great service to His creatures, they would occupy a higher place in the estimation of God. For the attainment of superiority, he observed, there is only one means, viz., to have firm faith in God and to cleanse the self by abstaining from all kinds of ugly thoughts and behaviour, and besides that, to be inspired to the human race. This principle about which the Prophet spoke on the occasion of his last pilgrimage to Mecca before a huge gathering of his devoted disciples is, obviously, beautiful, beneficial and of universal nature. This sublime teaching went deep into the hearts of the people. This emphasis on the oneness of humanity and the practice of virtue as being the criterion of superiority among individuals as well as nations is a great service which the Prophet has rendered to the cause of mankind.

This excellent teaching of the Prophet Muhammad raised the moral level of the nation to a high degree. It was quite a new kind of teaching, addressed to the conflict-ridden tribes of Arabia. The tribal chiefs, like

the wealthy members of European aristocracy, did not like to mix freely with the poorer people, nor did they like to attend the meetings in which the Prophet mixed with the poor people on a footing of equality. Such an action was repugnant to their customs. So they complained to the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, that his nephew in permitting the poor people to attend his meetings had violated the traditions of Arabia and that if he continued mixing with the poor and downtrodden they would not suffer themselves to be present in those gatherings, nor accept his teachings of this type. But how could the Prophet who had God-given, unflinching resolution in all such matters, and who believed his teaching to be beneficial for the human race, exclude from his company the poorer people for the rich and the proud?

Uplifted the underdog

The Prophet, while he established true fraternity and equality among the nations, also bestowed his benign attention on those poor people who had been in the position of servants and slaves in private households. He said in respect of them:

"Your servants are your brethren."

And again:

"The man, under whom God has placed his fellowbrother, should look upon and regard his servant or slave as his own brother, and give him the same food to eat which he eats himself, and the same clothes to wear which he wears himself."

The result of this teaching and training was that the entire nation was blessed with a new outlook. A spiritual and moral revolution came over every heart and mind. It was indeed a marvellous achievement, a wonderful phenomenon that the Prophet brought about. ●

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practical politics for the world's revealed religions to merge themselves into a universal world religion, thereby supplying one of the most crying needs of contemporary civilization. Even if that consummation is a counsel of perfection and is destined to remain a distant ideal, these twin principles of Islam — universality of revelation and faith in all the world prophets — constitute the only practical basis on which the world's revealed religions can meet together as friends and colleagues in a common quest, and pool their spiritual resources to combat the forces of Godlessness. ●

UNIVERSALITY OF DIVINE REVELATION – THE EXCLUSIVE CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAM TO THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF MANKIND

Universality of Divine revelation is, indeed, the exclusive unique contribution of Islam to the religious thought of mankind. The Qur'an specifically deals with the Chosen People idea, and deprecates it as a man-made myth. Says the Book:

“And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the sons of God and His chosen ones. Say: Why does He then punish you for your sins? Nay, you are (as much) human beings as the rest of His creatures” (The Qur'an, 5: 18).

Indeed, no idea is more repugnant to the whole tenor of the message of Islam which conceives of the whole of humanity as something like one family. The Qur'an makes it a point to eradicate this tendency of the human mind which makes all good the monopoly of one's own people and sees no good in others. Citing the Jews as saying “that the Christians have no good in them” and the Christians as saying the same of the Jews, the Book generalizes and describes this frame of mind as being born of ignorance. This is now it deprecates this self-centred attitude:

“Even so said those who have no knowledge like what they (the Jews and the Christians) say” (The Qur'an, 2: 113).

Apart from the narrow religious sense, in the general sense of human behaviour as well, the Qur'an thus deprecates the monopolistic frame-of mind:

“O you who believe, let not one people mock other people; maybe they are better than themselves (The Qur'an, 49: 11).

The Qur'an goes much further, and recognizes good in others wherever it is found. After enumerating certain iniquities committed by the Jewish people, it hastens to add that the Jews are not bad, saying:

“They are not all alike. Among the People of the Book there is an upright section who recite God's messages at night time and who adore Him” (The Qur'an, 3: 113).

By unsparing denunciation of the Chosen People idea and the monopolistic attitude and by inculcating the universality of the gift of revelation, Islam has indicated the only path along which, as visualized by Toynbee, it becomes something within the realm of

We accept Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement as the

Muhammad of the 14th century and we affirm that he never claimed to be a Prophet.

PRESENTING THE QUR'AN TO VENEZUELAN

The following is the translation of an article in Spanish prepared by our honorary missionary Mrs. O. Anie Jamaludeen-Wazir for the benefit of the Venezuelan people. Mrs. Jamaludeen here presents the Holy Qur'an to non-muslims. The translation from the Spanish was done by Mr. Kalamazad Mobammed of The Mosque, Fireburn.

The Qur'an is the Sacred Book of Islam. The Qur'an is the Book in which there is no doubt. It is the Guide for those who fear God. Qur'an means Recitation or more properly reading aloud and preaching.

The Qur'an has other names, for example: *Kitaab ul-laah* meaning the Book of God, *Kalimat ul-laah* meaning the Word of God, and *Tanzeel* meaning a Book that comes from on High. In addition it is known as: *al-Kitaab* (The Book), *an-Noor* (The Light), *al-Hudaa* (The Guide), *Al-Furqaan* (The Discrimination) *as-Zikr* (the Reminder) and *al-Hikmat* (The wisdom).

The contents of the Qur'an comprises the fundamentals of Theology, Jurisprudence, Liturgy and Islamic Ethics. It prohibits idolatry but prescribes monotheism, prayer, charity, respect for elders, women and children, pilgrimage to Makkah and fasting in the month of Ramadaan.

The Qur'an is the work of God alone! and Chapter 11 Verse 14 & 17 reminds us of this fact!

"The people will say: Muhammad is he who has forged this Qur'an. Say to them: Then bring ten forged chapters like it, and call upon whom you can beside Allah, if you are truthful. But if you cannot, then *know that it is revealed by Allah's knowledge* and that there is no god but He...." "So be not in doubt about it. *Surely it is the Truth from your Lord...*"

The Qur'an is almost 1500 years old and yet it has retained its original purity. Not even an iota (dot) has been changed. It was revealed on the night of *Lailat-ul-Qadr*. This is called the Sacred Night, the Blessed Night or the Night of Majesty. The Qur'an was revealed in parts or piecemeal to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years.

How did the Prophet Muhammad receive the first revelation from God?

While the Prophet (upon whom be peace and blessings of God) was in the cave of Mount Hira, the Angel Gabriel brought him a silken piece of linen covered with letters and told "Read". Muhammad replied: "What must I read?": Then the Angel Gabriel pressed him forcefully against the linen, then released him and repeated this threetimes. The Angel then told him:

"Read in the name of Thy Lord who creates, Creates man from a clot, Read and thy Lord is most Generous, Who taught by the Pen, Taught man what he knew not. (96:1-5)

When Muhammad recovered he heard a voice from the heaven telling him: "Muhammad, you are the Messenger of God and I am Gabriel" Such was the experience of the first revelation of the Quran.

The Quran is a Book for all peoples with laws for the whole of mankind. It is not a Book for the pious only. It is divided into 114 chapters each with a varying number of verses. The Qur'an is revealed in verses which rhyme as in poetry. There sometimes arise objections because the Qur'an is revealed in the form of verses and not as a sequential story.